

Survivor- and community-led crisis response

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Practical experience and learning

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About the authors

This paper was compiled by Justin Corbett, Nils Carstensen and Simone Di Vicenz as part of a collective effort that builds on the work of the Local2Global Protection (L2GP) initiative's growing community of practice around community and citizen-led responses to crises. The authors are aid practitioners and documentarists with significant practical experience from numerous countries and crises across the world. All three are driving forces within L2GP. Since 2009, L2GP has worked to document and promote local perspectives and responses in crises. This work has inspired the evolution of the survivor- and community-led crisis response approach in close collaboration with a multitude of local, national and international actors. L2GP is hosted by DanChurchAid, ACT Church of Sweden and Christian Aid but works as an independent and open-source collective. For more please visit www.local2global.info

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About HPN

The Humanitarian Practice Network at ODI is an independent forum where field workers, managers and policy-makers in the humanitarian sector share information, analysis and experience. The views and opinions expressed in HPN's publications do not necessarily state or reflect those of the Humanitarian Policy Group or ODI.

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Cover photo: Members of the protection group in the village of Raboud, West Bank, Palestine.
Credit: Nils Carstensen/L2GP

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Introduction

If you give a stick to someone, it means they've been given power. Empowerment means letting them make decisions, giving them resources. Why do we hold on to the power? Release it! Let them use it!¹

At the launch of his book *Aid on the edge of chaos* in 2013, Ben Ramalingam² likened existing aid systems to 'a series of wind-up clocks':

We act as if we can predict and often exactly manage the behaviour of systems around us by breaking them into manageable parts and working on individual pieces. The role of aid managers and leaders is to engineer, and construct change through reductionist analysis, through prediction, planning and control. These assumptions underpin large amounts of what the formal aid system tries to do – especially 'Big Aid'.³

Ramalingam went on to explain how 'frustration with this model is running at fever pitch whether with donors, NGOs, UN agencies or national governments. Everyone is trying to force reality into the requirements of this model – at an often high personal and professional cost. In the face of failures, it seems this model is being applied ever harder'.⁴

Discussions in the run-up to, during and subsequent to the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) recognised that the humanitarian system as we know it is not suited to meet the tasks and challenges at hand, much less the challenges of the future. The associated Grand Bargain produced 10 thematic work streams and 51 commitments to address some of the acknowledged shortcomings of the existing humanitarian system. These include commitments on transparency, localisation, cash, participation and the so-called 'nexus' between development, humanitarian action and peacebuilding.

Specific work streams, and a large body of associated research, conferences and other initiatives, have sought to identify how best to deliver on these commitments. Still, most observers and stakeholders agree that actual progress and change on localisation and participation has been modest.⁵

1 Darare Gonche, Iremo, Marsabit. Opening sequence of the video 'Community-led crisis response', L2GP, 2019: www.local2global.info.

2 Ben Ramalingam's presentation at ODI for the launch of his book: <https://youtu.be/BhSSFUJPtTM>

3 Ibid., approx. 05:20

4 Ibid., approx. 09:40

5 See for instance Metcalfe-Hough et al. (2020) *Grand Bargain annual independent report*: p.52 and p.76 (<https://odi.org/en/publications/grand-bargain-annual-independent-report-2020>) and L2GP (2020) 'Localisation in numbers: humanitarian funding flows and leadership in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Nigeria, oPt, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Ukraine' (www.local2global.info/research/the-humanitarian-economy/localisation-in-numbers).

This Network Paper introduces and explains existing knowledge and experience with an emerging way of working in humanitarian programming. For now, we call this approach ‘survivor- and community-led crisis response’ or ‘sclr’, as it seeks to enable external aid actors to connect with, support and strengthen crisis responses identified, designed, implemented and monitored by existing or new self-help groups among crisis-affected populations. Box 1 defines what is meant by survivor and community-led responses and places it in the growing vocabulary around ‘localisation’. This way of working has evolved through experimentation and experience from crises in Myanmar, Kenya, Sudan, the occupied Palestine territories (oPt), the Philippines and Haiti – as well as like-minded ways of working in other contexts, including Ethiopia, Côte d’Ivoire, Sierra Leone and Liberia.

The learning and experiences underpinning this paper were gathered in close cooperation with hundreds of self-help groups and a multitude of local, national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Most of the NGOs involved are part of a loose community of practice⁶ coordinated through the Local2Global Protection⁷ initiative (L2GP). While this paper attempts to sum up this vast individual and collective experience, it will not be able to do justice to the rich experience anchored with individual activists, participants and organisations. For that level of insight, as well as detailed guidance, training and the co-design materials underpinning current sclr activities, please see L2GP’s website,⁸ which provides a growing body of open-source documentation, training resources and knowledge-sharing.

Sclr long predates the WHS and the Grand Bargain. But, as it happens, this approach may help humanitarian actors deliver on their Grand Bargain commitments in practice. Sclr is not intended as a *substitute* for existing ways of working, nor is it a ready-made solution that can be rolled out automatically in just any context. Rather, it is intended to *complement* existing externally led aid interventions. Importantly, sclr as a way of working has to be customised to each specific context, and will, due to its nature, continue to *evolve* and *adapt* as experience is gathered and contexts change.

As this way of working has evolved, a number of guiding principles have emerged and are the subject of continued practice, research and reflection. These include stressing the importance of understanding crisis-affected individuals and groups as first responders, and reforming and changing existing aid systems and practices to better support locally led responses. For more on these emerging guiding principles, see Chapter 3.

6 For details, please see the ‘About the authors’ section on p.2.

7 Since 2009, L2GP has worked to document and promote local perspectives and responses in major humanitarian crises. This work has inspired the evolution of the sclr approach in close collaboration with a multitude of international, national and local organisations. L2GP is hosted by DanChurchAid, ACT Sweden and Christian Aid but works as an independent and open-source collective.

8 www.local2global.info.

The approaches proposed here are far from perfect, but do represent a workable interface between a 'Big Aid' system confined (for reasons not likely to change any time soon) within the limitations of excel sheets, predefined proposal and reporting formats, narrow timeframes, 'compliance angst', log frames and 'theories of change', and on the other hand the life-long and ever-changing process of survival, self-protection and (hopefully) recovery confronting crisis-affected individuals and communities every day.

Faced with growing documentation and recognition of citizen activism, mutual aid and self-help in response to crises related to conflicts, climate change or pandemics such as Covid-19, creating space for truly user-led ways of working will be crucial if humanitarian organisations are to remain relevant to current and future challenges. Adopting the sclr ways of working is one step in that direction.

We became stronger and now we feel like we have a voice. Now women from other communities are approaching us to ask for our expertise and guidance on how to voice their priorities in their communities (Woman from the village of Abu Alurqan, Palestinian West Bank).⁹

Box 1 What's in a name: terminology around locally led responses to crises

Inevitably, recent interest in localisation is adding to the already heavy load of terminology and acronyms in the humanitarian sector. While there are (as yet) no widely accepted, absolute definitions, Imogen Wall and Kerren Hedlundⁱ see 'locally led' as an umbrella term encompassing responses that are genuinely conceived by local actors (i.e. those who are already part of the local political and socioeconomic geography of the affected area). This definition distinguishes such responses from other types of localisation where international agencies support local actors to undertake projects that remain externally driven (including the practice of subcontracting).ⁱⁱ

Within the broad range of 'locally-led' responses, it has been necessary to find a term that distinguishes those that are led and managed specifically by *survivors and communities from crisis-affected populations* themselves, i.e. where localisation is taken all the way down to those experiencing the disaster. L2GP – and the NGOs it works with – adopted the acronym 'sclr' ('survivor and community-led responses to crises') for this purpose. The term is intended to be broad enough to be adopted by any agency to refer to processes that recognise, and seek to strengthen, autonomous collective self-help among people facing crises.

9 Grundin and Saadeh (2018) *Learning from community-led resilience responses in the occupied Palestinian territories* (https://usercontent.one/wp/www.local2global.info/wp-content/uploads/L2GP_PalestinianTerritories_Report_2018_WEB.pdf).

However, as part of the initial co-design process in each new context, national NGOs taking on the approach for the first time are encouraged to give it their own name. While many have stuck with sclr, some have preferred ‘scla’ (‘supporting citizen-led action’), in part to avoid the at times patronising and ‘othering’ nature of the overused term ‘community’, and in part to give a slightly more political edge to the empowerment process involved. In Francophone countries, the acronym RMC has been adopted (soutenir les Réponses aux crises Menées par les Communautés/survivants), while Arabic, Boranna, Burmese, Karen, Shan, Cebuano and Tagalog equivalents are also used. For the sake of simplicity and to avoid confusion with those already familiar with the original acronym, the term sclr will be used here as essentially a generic description for any approach that enables crisis-affected people to have greater control over interventions aimed at improving their survival, recovery and future protection. To emphasise the point, sclr is used in lower case throughout the paper. It has no branding or ownership implications, and anyone can adapt and rename it as they wish.

A final point on terminology: while crises themselves (whether hazard-related or manmade) are clearly humanitarian, it seems inaccurate to also refer to the responses emerging from sclr as ‘humanitarian’. A defining characteristic of people-led initiatives is that they transcend the artificial sectoral barriers (between humanitarian, protection, livelihoods, service delivery, development, peacebuilding, mental health and the rest) that the formal aid sector has put in place over the last 50 years. In this sense, sclr approaches automatically operate within the humanitarian–development nexus and promote initiatives that would fall outside current siloed understandings of ‘humanitarian’ programming.

i Wall and Hedlund (2016) *Localisation and locally-led crisis response: a literature review*. L2GP (www.local2global.info/research/localisation-and-locally-led-crisis-response)

ii Other approaches for supporting survivor and community-led responses are also being developed by the DEPP-funded Linking Preparedness, Response & Resilience Project (LPRR), led by Christian Aid and presented at the March 2018 DEPP/START ‘Preparing for shock’ conference in Geneva (<https://disasterpreparedness.ngo/learning/preparing-shock-day-1-accountability-deficit-roi-impossible-dilemmas/>).

Chapter 1 Supporting community- and citizen-led response to crisis: an overview of the basic practice

A large body of evidence (chronicled over the last 10 years by several sources¹⁰ including L2GP) highlights the significance of autonomous self-help among populations hit by humanitarian and protection crises. The role of crisis-affected people as the *first* (and *last*) responders is universally acknowledged, even if too often ignored by aid professionals. The importance of self-help in strengthening dignity, psychosocial recovery and resilience is also increasingly recognised. The multitude of initiatives taken by individuals and groups across the world during the Covid-19 crisis has only added to this growing recognition of the importance of autonomous crisis responses by affected people.¹¹

However, despite this apparent heightened awareness, and despite continued calls for more participatory and ‘nexus’ approaches to humanitarian aid,¹² there has been little change in how mainstream humanitarian interventions are implemented in practice. Crisis-affected populations continue to be treated largely as helpless victims whom we, as ‘humanitarians’ (whether national or international, NGO, United Nations (UN) or governmental), must reach using *our* interventions, teams, standards and protocols if they are to survive.

There are several reasons for this institutional inertia, some of which are explored in more detail in Chapter 4. One central impediment has been the lack of practical methodologies to enable agencies to support community-led responses to humanitarian crises without undermining expectations with regard to speed, accountability, inclusiveness, do-no-harm principles, safeguarding and, increasingly, ‘value for money’. The tendency has been to delay any participatory programming and push it towards the later ‘rehabilitation and development’ phases, which are seen to have the time and operating environments considered necessary for enabling community agency.

With this in mind, L2GP has focused its efforts on supporting practitioners to develop a systematic means of supporting crisis-affected populations to lead their own responses to humanitarian disasters. The approach is highly adaptive and can be adopted by mainstream humanitarian actors in a wide range of contexts. The aim is not to replace existing humanitarian programming, but to introduce effective tools, systems and skills that could *complement* current practices and enable a more comprehensive approach that maximises the potential synergy between externally driven aid and community-led responses to humanitarian crises.

10 Anderson et al. (2012) *Time to listen: hearing people on the receiving end of aid*. CDA Collaborative Learning Projects; multiple L2GP papers (www.local2global.info); multiple papers from the Linking Preparedness, Response & Resilience Project (www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/about-us/lpr-empowering-communities-lead-humanitarian-response).

11 Taminga (2020) *Improving the response to Covid-19: lessons from the humanitarian sector around communication, community engagement and participation*. CDAC Working Paper.

12 See the WHS Commitment ‘transcend humanitarian-development divides’ (<https://agendaforhumanity.org/core-commitments.html>).

1.1 Overview of an emerging practice for supporting community-led crisis responses

Sclr was conceived as a way to strengthen the scope, scale and impacts of autonomous collective self-help among people facing sudden-onset and protracted emergencies. It was intended to be used alongside existing emergency programming (and access the same humanitarian funding streams). Figure 1 shows the core components of sclr while Box 2 offers additional explanation of the components. Specifically, sclr aims to:

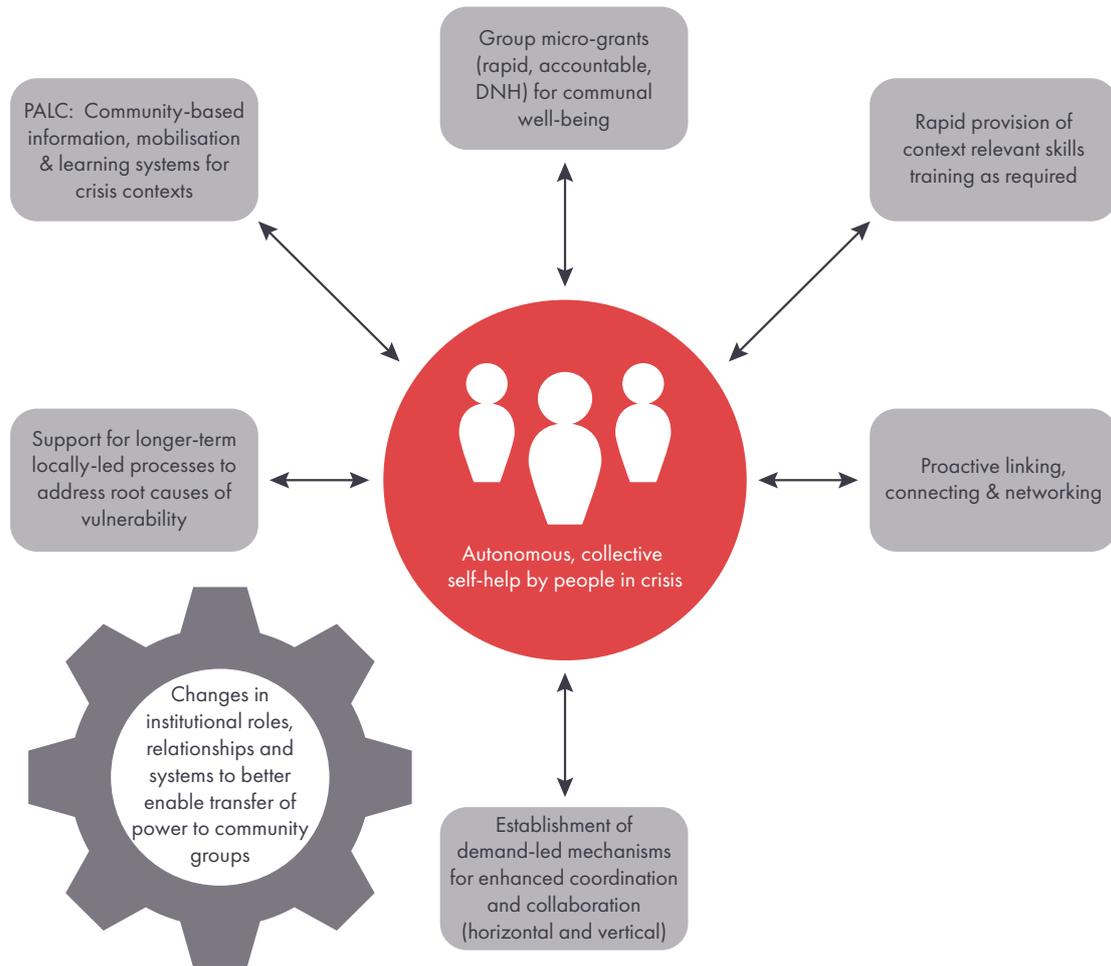
1. Enhance immediate survival and recovery by increasing the responsiveness, speed and outreach of the overall combined response.
2. Strengthen the sense of dignity, self-worth, connectedness, social cohesion and broader well-being of survivors.
3. Initiate longer-term, people-led processes aimed at tackling the root causes of vulnerability to crises.

The approach uses a mix of community-based participatory techniques adapted to meet the requirements of sudden-onset humanitarian disasters (speed, scale and cost-effectiveness), and to ensure required levels of accountability, inclusiveness and do-no-harm within the complex demands of life-threatening crises. The basic practice, with only minor adaptations, has proved effective both in sudden-onset and protracted humanitarian and protection crises. The selection and sequencing of component tools, and the speed at which they are used, may change, but the guiding principles and core methodology remain the same.

Sclr is intended to be facilitated primarily by local teams of national NGOs (or relevant national government departments) and supported by international agencies and donors as required. Where necessary, international NGOs (INGOs) can play an initial enabling and capacity development role to support local actors to develop systems and facilitation skills, as well as the organisational management needed to handle large grants direct from donors for rolling out sclr approaches at scale. The capacity-building and grant-management role of INGOs should be seen as temporary and demand-led. As soon as possible, the national NGO (NNGO) can move to being the budget-holder (i.e., directly funded by the donor) able to subcontract, if required, selected INGOs to provide specific support services.

Following an initial co-design and training workshop, NNGO (or government) teams rapidly deploy to the crisis area and start to identify self-help groups (SHGs) of affected people who are already undertaking or trying to undertake self-help initiatives that contribute to wider communal well-being. Whether newly formed SHGs (emerging from the crisis itself), or well-established community-based organisations (CBOs), the NNGO encourages them to build on their existing achievements, knowledge, resources and opportunities to design and implement their own initiatives for wider community well-being. Where appropriate, the NNGO supports community volunteers to take on this mobilising and information-sharing role.

Figure 1 Core components of the sclr approach



Source: www.local2global.info/training

Box 2 Summary outline of components of core sclr approach

1. **Participatory action learning in crises (PALC)** – a shorthand for a community mobilisation and facilitation that combines appreciative inquiry, identifying locally relevant do-no-harm mechanisms and supporting experiential learning and information sharing.
2. Systems for rapid, accountable and do-no-harm use of **group microgrants** as one means to enable and scale up *collective* action by citizens aimed at enhancing survival, protection, well-being, recovery or transformation.
3. Rapid provision of **demand-led skills training** that SHGs consider will increase the effectiveness, scale or impact of their initiatives.
4. Actively **linking, connecting and networking** SHGs, both horizontally (within crisis-affected populations) and vertically (to duty-bearers and other organisations and programmes that could support resilience).
5. In protracted disaster responses that involve multiple local SHGs and agencies, support for the development of **locally relevant mechanisms for improving coordination, collaboration and information sharing**. May also serve as platforms for informing and improving synergy with external interventions.
6. Proactively seeking opportunities for local groups to initiate and sustain their own longer-term **transformative processes for tackling root causes** of vulnerability.
7. Promoting changes in **organisational cultures and institutional relationships** to allow core sclr attributes (victims as leaders, power transfer, nexus-friendly, risk tolerance, learning-by-doing) to become standard good practice in humanitarian programming.

The approach allows for the *rapid* provision of the additional resources (whether funds, skills, connections) that community groups might need to improve the scale and impact of their own interventions, in ways that strengthen accountability and inclusiveness and minimise risks of harm. A key attribute of sclr is the use of microgrants to empower informal, unregistered SHGs rapidly and at scale in chaotic conditions, without creating problems related to misuse, dependency or weakening of social cohesion. Such risks are minimised using the combination of measures referred to as PALC (participatory action learning in crises) that seek out and support autonomous manifestations of integrity and inclusive self-help while building on local social values and systems of community, horizontal accountability and conflict sensitivity. These measures are complemented by a series of checks and balances (including rapid capacity assessment, peer-group references, conventional financial reporting) built into the microgranting procedures that are designed to be ‘safe-to-fail’. By enabling real-time experiential learning, PALC also ensures that potential problems and weaknesses as well as successes can be detected early on. Throughout the process, the sense of local ownership and responsibility engendered by the explicit transfer of decision-making and resources is a powerful basis for good practice.

The range of local initiatives supported by sclr depends on the particular opportunities and needs prioritised by the many different SHGs that become active during any given disaster. They may focus on immediate survival and well-being, or protection and recovery or longer-term processes that address root causes of vulnerability. Since sclr is designed to be used alongside and complementary to mainstream targeted aid (and is not trying to meet all needs in any one targeted population), there is space for affected people to exploit the additional opportunities for strengthening wider communal well-being that are usually overlooked by external humanitarian programming. The result is thus automatically a nexus approach that reflects the range of local ideas, capacities, knowledge and common humanity found in all crisis contexts.

1.2 Rolling out sclr in practice: the core steps

The following step-by-step description provides a sense of the main sequences within what is currently seen as a ‘standard’ sclr process. Given the wide range of contexts sclr can be used in, it is difficult to describe its application without appearing overly prescriptive. The speed and scale of roll-out will also vary. In a rapid-onset emergency, the facilitating agency may issue microgrants to self-help groups within the first 48 hours of a disaster, and then maintain a very high rate and scale of support.¹³ In protracted, chronic crises where there is less urgency (e.g. simmering conflict and drought in Marsabit, Kenya; marginalisation and war in Northern Shan in Myanmar or the Nuba Mountains in Sudan; protection and rights crises in Palestine), sclr approaches can move more slowly. That said, the basic approach remains the same and the following core steps are valid across all contexts. Figure 2 provides an overview of the individual steps in an sclr initiative, and these are detailed in the text below. The detailed training guidelines and all the operational formats and templates for implementing this core approach are available as open-source documents on the L2GP website (see www.local2global.info/training).

- 1. The Facilitating Agency (FA)¹⁴ is introduced to sclr and adapts the basic approach.** During a 4–6-day co-design/training workshop, the FA is introduced to the core sclr concept and principles and adapts the main tools, incorporating their own ideas and expertise and customising the approach to better fit their local context. Participating staff are equipped with the skills and organisational systems to immediately start rolling out the approach. One co-design/training workshop can be used to help up to three FAs.
- 2. The FA is funded.** The initial grant for an FA using sclr for the first time might typically be around \$50,000 for a ‘learning-by-doing’ three-month pilot. This could fund around 10–15 citizen-led

13 In the first weeks after Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar in 2009, Paung Ku, a local NGO, provided support to some 30 new initiatives a week designed and managed by emergent survivor groups. Please refer to Chapter 2, Box 8 for more detail on this response.

14 The agency facilitating the sclr approach is referred to as the ‘Facilitating Agency (FA)’. This is usually a local or national NGO, but could also be a Local Government Unit (LGU).

crisis response initiatives with microgrants (e.g. at an average value of \$2,000–\$3,000 each), and cover the FA’s operational costs. In sudden-onset emergencies, where community groups are using microgrants for rapid lifesaving interventions that might be implemented in days, the same grant of \$50,000 might only be enough for a few weeks or less. An annual grant of about \$330,000 could support around 100 initiatives within a 12-month period (see Box 3).

- 3. PALC process initiated with appreciative inquiry.** The combination of community engagement practices used in sclr is referred to as participatory action-learning in crises (PALC). The PALC process starts with community facilitators from the FA (trained during the co-design workshop) moving rapidly through a population to identify – and raise wider community awareness of – existing autonomous local responses to the crisis. In particular, they look for actions already being taken by crisis-affected groups to help those around them. Using a modified ‘appreciative inquiry’ approach,¹⁵ PALC facilitators encourage groups to think through what they could do to build on their local capacities, experiences and opportunities to expand the scope and scale of autonomous self-help initiatives. This is the crucial first step in treating crisis-affected people as agents of survival and recovery, not as victims. For groups interested in expanding their initiatives, PALC facilitators introduce them to the process for accessing assistance from the FA (i.e. via microgrants, demand-led training, connecting and networking) and encourage them to develop their own actionable plans. Simple, user-friendly formats (in the relevant local language) are provided to help the group formulate their ideas into action plans and budgets, which they can then submit as proposals for a microgrant. Box 4 in Chapter 2 provides examples of the wide range of intervention types proposed by local groups.
- 4. PALC continued: strengthening accountability, inclusiveness and do-less-harm.** While conducting appreciative inquiry, PALC facilitators are also tasked with identifying the local social and cultural norms that can be built on to strengthen accountability, conflict mitigation and safeguarding. They seek out those groups traditionally constrained from leading (be they women, youth or minority groups), and discuss locally appropriate mechanisms for avoiding the process being overly dominated by traditional power holders. Findings are fed back into agreed protocols for reviewing proposals from citizen groups, shaping how judgements are made, decisions shared, and funds transferred.
- 5. Community PALC volunteers.** The FA staff working as PALC facilitators look out for active, able and motivated members of affected populations who are interested to be trained and supported as community volunteers to undertake PALC functions as described above. This process varies much with context: in some cases, community volunteers take a lead role in facilitating PALC right from the start of sclr; in others they may have little or no role and PALC remains fully dependent on FA staff.

15 For more on appreciative inquiry and the ‘5 Ds’ (definition, discover, dream, design, deliver) see, for example: www.betterevaluation.org/sites/default/files/ILAC_Brief06_inquiry.pdf.

- 6. Applications for support reviewed and acted on.** Simple but robust systems for reviewing the relevance, feasibility and potential impact of proposed initiatives (as well as the integrity and capacity of applicant groups) enable FA staff to rapidly assess incoming proposals as they are received. In less urgent crises, it may take one to two weeks (or even a month) for applications to be processed but following sudden-onset disasters, FA teams can move much quicker, with turnaround times of 24 hours or less.
- 7. Disbursement of microgrants.** Following the signing of a simple agreement, funds are transferred by bank transfer, mobile phone or in cash, using the context-specific mechanisms defined by PALC and grantees to maximise transparency and accountability. The contract provides a simple book-keeping template and guidelines for user-friendly financial recording and reporting.¹⁶ The average microgrant size is around \$1,500, with some as low as \$200 and a maximum ceiling set between \$3,000 and \$5,000. Most citizen groups have never received a grant or worked as a team before (many are emergent, crisis-provoked collectives; some members will be illiterate), so maximising the group's sense of ownership and transparency to their wider community is important. Adopting safe-to-fail mechanisms has proven more effective than trying to enforce a controlled, fail-safe approach. Where necessary, the FA will provide a simple (1–2-hour) training session on book-keeping and provide appropriate ledgers and cash receipt books. The sclr use of group microgrants are closely aligned with CaLP's newly published guidance on 'group cash transfers'.¹⁷
- 8. Accessing demand-led skills training, linking and networking.** Not all self-help groups seek microgrants, and many may want other forms of support – training in skills and/or linking and connecting both horizontally (e.g. collective action for larger projects, or strengthening advocacy or peer group learning) and vertically (e.g. for lobbying or accessing services, justice or rights). In addition to linking and networking, the FA can deliver some training. However, often the FA will need to source the expertise or skills training requested. Building up a pool of local trainers is an important FA role.
- 9. Groups implement their initiatives.** Groups implement their own projects themselves, with no involvement from the FA except when requested or in special circumstances. This is an important part of resilience strengthening and is central to the process of transferring power, instilling a genuine sense of local ownership and learning by doing. It also allows sclr to go to scale by significantly reducing demands on FA staff, logistics and costs. Assistance from the FA is provided: a) when a group's action plan and budget is reviewed and, if necessary, discussed and improved; b) through training or networking when requested; and c) when facilitating reflection and experiential learning post-implementation. However, where some groups would clearly benefit from additional mentoring, PALC facilitators will provide it or link them to other local actors who can.

16 Illiterate groups are not excluded – they are encouraged to find someone in their community who can transcribe proposals and reports. For guidance and templates used throughout the PALC and microgrants process please refer to www.local2global/training.

17 Find CaLP's detailed guidance for the use of group cash transfers at: www.calpnetwork.org/publication/group-cash-transfers-guidance-and-tools.

- 10. Reporting and capturing lessons.** The duration of any one micro-project varies enormously. They may only need a few days (e.g. a lifesaving relief food purchase and distribution for 1,000 people; an urgent peacebuilding meeting between two tribal groups in a conflict area; training and traps to deal with rat-infested grain silos) or they may last for several months. Regardless of the duration, groups are expected to submit final activity and financial reports on the completion of their planned action and expenditure according to timeframes specified in their microgrant agreement. Sclr promotes reporting as a means of strengthening local accountability and contributing to groups' own learning. Often, the process is combined with a facilitated reflection exercise.¹⁸
- 11. Lessons shared, and groups actively connected.** From the start, PALC facilitators are looking for opportunities to link groups to enable experience-sharing, confidence-building and wider collective action. Activities generate lessons and opportunities for collaboration. Sharing lessons and connecting groups are important parts of the resilience-building process. In the Nuba Mountains of Sudan, merely sharing local ideas and local knowledge about self-protection (e.g. early warning systems, digging foxholes, preparing wild foods and medicines, effective first aid, psychosocial measures) proved critically important. Connecting citizen groups active in the local response to the Marawi crisis in the Philippines, PALC facilitators of the NNGO facilitating sclr helped local people establish a forum for lobbying central government and to share experiences about what worked and what didn't. In Northern Shan in Myanmar, PALC volunteers highlighted the significance of learning new skills through experiential learning, including: mobilisation skills, capacity and opportunity assessments, basic project management including financial management and accountability, procurement, advocacy and negotiation towards local authorities, first aid, household budgeting, human rights, women's rights, local peacebuilding, location-specific protection and survival skills.
- 12. Cycles can repeat.** The experiential learning session (summarised above) marks the closure of the first project cycle. In many cases, having successfully achieved their aims, groups may decide to dissolve. Others, however, may feel sufficiently motivated by their initial experience to develop new initiatives. The FA may be able to support them directly for a second cycle (or more¹⁹) or may focus instead on linking them to other actors who can provide support. In Marsabit, a local NGO has been deploying trained PALC facilitators with no microgrant fund of its own, focusing on connecting citizen groups with ideas for responding to drought, conflict and livelihood collapse to others who might support them from local government, civil society or the private sector.²⁰
- 13. Conversations offering opportunities for addressing root causes.** Throughout the sclr process, PALC facilitators can encourage groups to reflect on the root causes of the problems

18 PALC facilitators use the simple 'What? So what? Now what?' model for facilitating experiential learning: understanding the event (What?); making sense of the facts and implications (So what?); identifying the course of action or new solutions (Now what?). For more, see: www.fearlessculture.design/blog-posts/what-so-what-now-what.

19 In the Nargis response, some groups of survivors received three or four cycles of support from the local consortium facilitating sclr and went on to become longer-term CBOs.

20 Upcoming L2GP learning brief on use of sclr in Marsabit, Kenya; expected publication mid-2021 at www.local2global.info.

they face – and opportunities for addressing them. At the same time as some groups are accessing immediate survival foods or non-food items (NFIs), others may be choosing to focus on peacebuilding interventions, governance issues, advocacy, access to justice or social cohesion and cultural issues. This is about ensuring that groups understand they can think and act more comprehensively and be supported to reduce vulnerability to future crises. In this way, populations can be helped to move more organically into locally owned and demand-led community-based disaster risk reduction (CB-DRR) processes (in contrast to being encouraged to participate in externally devised DRR projects).

14. Exploring need and options for introducing alternative coordination mechanisms. In some disasters, especially where locally led responses are numerous, existing coordination mechanisms provided through the cluster system or national government may not be relevant for, or even accessible to, community-based groups. In others (especially in active conflicts, such as parts of Sudan and Syria), there may be no aid agencies or formal coordination mechanisms at all. In all cases, there are opportunities to establish more locally owned, demand-driven mechanisms not just for local coordination, but also for active collaboration between groups – whether for implementing more ambitious interventions or for collective advocacy and lobbying. The FA can support the establishment of such fora or platforms and explore how to connect them with the coordination architecture of the national government or the UN. Examples of such local systems have emerged in Mindanao (responding to the Marawi conflict), Sudan (responding to the ‘Two Areas’ conflicts) and Myanmar (responding to the Cyclone Nargis disaster).

15. NNGOs, INGOs, LGUs and donors reflect on their organisational systems and institutional relationships. The process of adapting organisational systems and protocols to allow aid agencies to better transfer power, and start ‘letting go’ in practice, is as important as adoption of the technical steps summarised above. Supporting relevant organisational development is thus a crucial part of the sclr process – and requires the active role of senior leadership. This has remained a largely organic process progressing at varying speeds, and is often too slow and underestimated.²¹

16. Disconnecting sclr from aid. How long should repeated cycles of PALC and microgrant disbursement be made available? At what stage can humanitarian aid be phased out as the main enabler of sclr processes and replaced by other sources of assistance (e.g. national government, private sector, people-to-people support) – and how can these best be activated? What are the exit strategies? These questions have no easy answers and are highly context-dependent. In all cases to date, the national facilitating agencies have been keen to maintain the approach and have ceased only because of a lack of funding. Three interrelated processes are crucial to delinking the local response from aid: increasing the role of national and local government; linking local groups horizontally (with each other) and vertically (with potential funding channels in the government, the private sector and non-formal donors); and increasing capacity-building for local CBOs and community PALC volunteers (see below).

21 One area where progress has been made has been in convincing donors and INGO finance managers that microgrants can be billed as final expenditures, so that individual grantee financial reports (and accompanying receipts and vouchers) from recipients do not have to be submitted to donors as part of the accounts. For more on this, please refer to CaLP’s 2021 guidance on Group Cash Transfers: www.calpnetwork.org/publication/group-cash-transfers-guidance-and-tools/

Figure 2 Simplified depiction of sclr process



Source: www.local2global.info/training

1.3 PALC facilitators and PALC volunteers

The core PALC processes are initially carried out by a trained staff member of the FA. However, the aim is to equip individuals from the crisis-affected population to take on as many of these functions as possible, operating as part-time 'community PALC volunteers'. Disaster contexts often generate high levels of volunteerism, which sclr can tap into. Youth groups, with high levels of energy, mobility and usually strong literacy are often good candidates to become community PALC volunteers, as was seen in the Nuba Mountains in 2011. Or it can be elderly people with time on their hands and strong community spirit (as seen among host populations supporting IDPs in the conflict in Marawi), or people who have suffered particularly badly from the crisis and want to get active and help others. People eager to offer their time as PALC volunteers may become apparent during the first few days of a sclr response, while in other cases it may take weeks or months to identify them.

PALC facilitators deliver simple training (ranging from four hours to two days) to equip volunteers with skills and systems to facilitate appreciative inquiry and other aspects of PALC. They also develop a context-relevant management/mentoring protocol with the volunteers. This may involve meeting up weekly or monthly to allow an exchange of information, experience, feedback and ideas. Where appropriate and possible, small incentives are provided (e.g. backpacks, umbrellas, T-shirts or coats) and small cash contributions to costs (e.g. local transport, mobile phone credit, tea money) in addition to basic stationery and sclr templates and formats.

Box 3 Core issues that PALC teams may investigate over the course of the response

Appreciative inquiry – assessing opportunities for maximising self-help

- What initiatives are community members already undertaking to successfully meet priority needs? Are there effective actions that could be scaled up to help others?
- Who and where are the active groups and individuals who are already carrying out initiatives to meet wider community needs (outside of their immediate family)?
- What sort of support would they need to increase scale and impact? Funds? Skills? Connections and alliances?

Accountability, inclusiveness and avoiding harm

- How to ensure that microgrants don't cause problems by provoking misinformation, tensions or conflict?
- How to ensure local accountability and that grants are used according to approved plans?
- Are there tensions or instances of increased insecurity inadvertently caused by interventions? What can be done to address these and avoid them in the future?
- Are parts of society in need of help that are being left out, and what can be done to support them?
- Are there particular needs that cannot be met locally? Are key relief or recovery items available from markets at reasonable prices and in the quantities needed?
- Is there evidence of psychosocial problems and mental trauma? Are some sections of the community suffering more than others? Can local self-help respond sufficiently to psychosocial issues?

Reflecting, learning and capturing lessons

- Facilitating groups' experiential learning on completion of their projects – what lessons can be learned? What would they do differently next time?
- Facilitating FA's learning – what lessons can be learned? What would the FA do differently next time?

Longer-term resilience and addressing root causes

- What are the ideas for building back better? For reducing vulnerability to similar disasters in the future? For beginning to address root causes of crises and vulnerability?

Coordination and sharing lessons and information

- What priorities for local coordination are communities requesting? What are the options for establishing or supporting local coordination mechanisms to meet these needs?
- What are the opportunities to strengthen positive collaboration between external interventions (authorities, NGOs, INGOS, UN) and community-led interventions?

1.4 Scale, timeframes and operational budgets for rolling out sclr

Table 1 shows an indicative budget for a 12-month period during which one FA disburses 100 microgrants at an average of \$2,000 each. In a typical operation this might require five full-time staff (an sclr manager, three PALC facilitators and a finance assistant) and contributions to the costs of a finance officer, an administration and logistics officer and a programme manager. An intervention of such a scale and timeframe could typically impact the well-being of some 50,000 people, depending on the nature of the crisis and the micro-projects generated by people's initiatives.

Table 1 Budget breakdown for a 'typical' 12-month sclr programme in a severe crisis

Main budget line items	Indicative one-year costs (\$)	% of total
Microgrants	200,000	60%
Staff	65,000	20%
Transport	25,000	8%
Office, rent, services, stationery	20,000	6%
Management/administration	20,000	6%
Total	330,000	100%

In more protracted crises, an operation of this scale would often be preceded by an initial 3–4-month pilot requiring a budget of around \$50,000, of which perhaps some \$30,000 is used to disburse approximately 15 microgrants. This provides a useful on-the-job learning opportunity for an FA new to using the sclr approach in crisis contexts.

In one year, a single FA could disburse many times more microgrants if needs so dictated and the budget allowed. Equally, it could move more slowly in contexts of protracted crises where the urgency of lifesaving imperatives is less, and initiatives need more support and time to be developed. The transfer of funds and budgetary control to large numbers of informal groups of local people via microgrants is a key feature of sclr's approach to shifting power. When developing a grant for an FA, the number of microgrants expected to be disbursed will have a major influence on the size of the total budget needed for rolling out sclr and the proportion needed for facilitating the process. The greater the rate and scale of microgrant disbursement (as in sudden-onset emergencies), the lower the proportion of the total budget needed to cover the operational costs of the FA.

During the response to Cyclone Nargis, more than \$1 million worth of microgrants (approximately 500) were disbursed during the first six months or so by the Myanmar consortium, using sclr. Total operational costs were only 22% of the budget, with the remaining 78% going directly to

community groups. Similarly, the Philippine NGO using sclr to respond to massive displacement, trauma and destruction as a result of the Marawi crisis (distributing more than 200 microgrants) achieved approximately a 25/75% split between operational costs and microgrants.

In contrast, during more protracted crises, the relative cost of operations may rise to 45% (as has been seen in the use of sclr for peacebuilding processes in Sudan). Similarly, in initial pilots in Northern Shan in Myanmar, Palestine and Northern Kenya, the relative operational costs increase, although always remaining less than the total value of microgrants disbursed. This is because, with the emergency-induced drive of rapid communal self-help reduced, disbursement rates tend to be slower. Furthermore, local initiatives are often longer-term, more ambitious and more complex (and more transformational), and may require more accompaniment.

Chapter 2 Learning from practice: experience with survivor- and community-led crisis response to date

Experience from the case studies in Box 4 and Annex 1 demonstrates a number of strengths, challenges and potential weaknesses when working in a way where affected individuals and communities lead their own responses. One overarching experience across all the countries and crises where sclr has been put into practice is the degree to which individuals and groups embrace this way of working. One woman in a small Bedouin community in the Palestinian West Bank put it like this: ‘Previous NGOs behaved with village members as if they were teaching third-graders dictation’. She explained how the new approach feels different: ‘It is like we all gather with the NGO staff to form our own grammar rules’.

In Northern Shan, Myanmar, community members ranked the sclr way of working very highly when asked to what extent they felt they had the opportunity to make their own decisions freely, based on community ideas, opportunities and priorities. A local research team who interviewed 105 community members concluded that ‘the single strongest and most frequent feedback received from all villagers participating in the lesson capture exercise spoke to their appreciation of a process that unequivocally transferred ownership of interventions to local people. For all involved, it was the first time that they had been allowed to own and manage aid resources to implement initiatives that they had identified and designed according to their own ideas’.²² Feedback from users of this way of working in Agusan (Mindanao) in the Philippines likewise explained to a research team there that, ‘We feel in charge of our own interventions; it always feels good. Through meetings, we were able to determine if any project is destructive to community’.²³

Another overarching strength of the sclr way of working is how it leads to a set of responses that are at the same time holistic, flexible and relevant to the local context. When seen together, the locally led responses listed in Box 4 cut across the so-called humanitarian–development–peace nexus. That said, this quality may also be one of the most challenging aspects of this way of working vis-à-vis existing humanitarian coordination and funding structures. The diversity, adaptability and unpredictability of people-led responses rarely sit well within any predefined ‘cluster’ – nor do they fit neatly into most calls for predefined proposals. This gap – or contradiction – between high end-user satisfaction and poor compliance with existing external coordination and funding structures risks isolating community-led ways of working from mainstream attention and coordination, and ultimately from mainstream funding opportunities.

22 KHMK Resource Team (2019) *Social research and lessons learned workshop on use of sclr in Northern Shan state*. Research report funded by L2GP and DCA/NCA Myanmar. Available on request to L2GP.

23 Antequisa and Corbett (2018) *Survivor and community led crisis responses in the Philippines*. L2GP (https://usercontent.one/wp/www.local2global.info/wp-content/uploads/L2GP_locally_led_crisis_response-philippines_report_2018_final.pdf).

The following sections summarise practical experience with sclr to date. As much of this is based on experience gathered at community level, we prioritise how citizens and community activists themselves have expressed their experiences – occasionally at the expense of framing the narrative in more academic terms.

2.1 Appreciative inquiry: a vital supplement to conventional needs assessments

Facilitating a lesson capture exercise with five Myanmar NGOs applying sclr approaches in Northern Shan, Kayin and Kaya States, the consultant concluded that the use of community-led appreciative inquiry was critical. From his discussions with villagers and local NGO staff, he identified four benefits from facilitating communities to undertake their own strengths-based opportunity analysis.²⁴

- It is more motivating and catalytic: by helping people to recognise what their community is already achieving, it inspires further self-help, encourages a more constructive mindset and avoids complaints, shopping lists of wants and the usual narrative of victims waiting for saviours.
- It is more informative: by spreading practical knowledge about existing coping mechanisms, it can inform how crisis-affected people respond.
- It increases the sense of local ownership by making local knowledge, ideas, ways of working, energy and resources the starting point of interventions.
- It contributes to more positive relationships between FA staff and communities by prioritising respect for local knowledge and achievements, rather than outside assumptions and expertise.

The villagers interviewed frequently expressed their appreciation of NNGO staff choosing to focus on local success stories, capacities and ideas, rather than problems and weaknesses. As isolated and marginalised rural communities, they found such an approach refreshing – a few even said ‘liberating’. When they then learned that there might also be assistance to help them put their ideas into action themselves, they became even more interested. According to the consultant, ‘The appreciative inquiry approach contributed to a shift in mind-set’. It was the ‘spark that led communities to look at their own opportunities and develop their own action plans instead of waiting for outsiders to come to help them’. Box 4 provides examples of interventions subsequently supported by microgrants.

Something similar has been seen across all the contexts where local NGO staff have used appreciative inquiry approaches as the starting point for sclr. The range of experiences has been very different, however. In the first weeks after Cyclone Nargis, appreciative inquiry was limited to delivering clear messages of support for survivors’ efforts to help their communities, while also sharing a rapidly growing range of examples of how other villages were responding effectively. Turnover time for a cash grant in the Nargis response could be as little as 24 hours (see Box 4).

24 KHMK Resource Team (2019) *Social research and lessons learned workshop on use of sclr in Northern Shan state*. Research report funded by L2GP and DCA/NCA Myanmar. Available on request to L2GP.

At the other end of the spectrum, the process adopted by EJ-YMCA in Palestine (based on the existing Participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (PVCA) methodology) took many weeks, sometimes months, and involved frequent visits and discussions before microgrants were disbursed. With the resources available to allow a more protracted process and a very different set of problems to address, the facilitation process was given much more time and support. The underlying premise of building on local strengths, capacities and opportunities, however, remained critical. Indeed, EJ-YMCA considered it important to initiate a systemic change to counter 30 years of eroded self-reliance, confidence and hope. As one villager put it: ‘Now I know that we don’t have to wait for some donor to come and solve our problems. We can plan and come up with solutions ourselves.’²⁵ Recent initiatives to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 in this and other Palestinian villages confirm how experience with sclr can help local groups move and act very rapidly. For instance, villages with existing sclr groups were very quick to mobilise mutual aid to support particularly vulnerable families and individuals (getting groceries or essential medicines for example), organising creative collective purchase of essential supplies in collaboration with EJ-YMCA (pre-paid credits to accessible shops and suppliers) and establishing voluntary village-level ‘Covid checkpoints’ and isolation facilities for possibly infected individuals.²⁶

Following the ‘5 Ds’ model of appreciative inquiry, the approach can adapt to operational parameters that might limit the sorts of activities that can be supported in a given context. The first D – ‘define’ – requires facilitators to clarify from the start the focus of the subsequent inquiry. In one project, part of Philippine NNGO ECOWEB’s response to the humanitarian crisis triggered by the Marawi conflict in 2018, the donor would only fund initiatives directly related to livelihoods. In this case, PALC facilitators used appreciative inquiry to help IDPs explore their capacities and opportunities for starting up livelihoods. Subsequent initiatives were based on local strengths, ideas and networks, and included pop-up grocery shops, rice-trading, fishing, poultry, weaving, a welding cooperative and an ice-cream enterprise. In the same crisis, but working with a more flexible donor, ECOWEB’s appreciative inquiry generated a wider range of micro-projects, from NFI distributions for IDPs, local soup kitchens and temporary nursery schools to water infrastructure repair, peace marches and cultural events. Similarly, in responding to the December 2017 Typhoon Vinta²⁷ emergency in Mindanao, appreciative inquiry revealed the role of the few remaining stands of mangroves in protecting homes, farmland and people caught up in flooding. Several subsequent survivor-led initiatives chose to combine meeting immediate needs with mangrove planting.

A number of NNGOs in Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Central African Republic (CAR) and Mali are using sclr explicitly to promote community-led initiatives to strengthen local human security and contribute to longer-term stability and peace. Here, PALC facilitators use

25 Grundin and Saadeh (2018) *Learning from community-led resilience responses in the occupied Palestinian territories* (https://usercontent.one/wp/www.local2global.info/wp-content/uploads/L2GP_PalestinianTerritories_Report_2018_WEB.pdf).

26 First digest of Covid-19 community- and citizen-led responses, April and August 2020. Part of L2GP’s ongoing research into community response to Covid-19. See: www.local2global.info/news-blog.

27 Upcoming L2GP learning paper on lessons from ongoing application and adaptation of sclr in Philippines, expected publication mid-2021.

appreciative inquiry to help affected populations explore their capacities and opportunities for leading on protection, conflict mitigation and resolution, as well as contributing to longer-term peaceful solutions. This has revealed the potential for supporting a wide range of interventions that strengthen immediate survival and well-being (including relief, livelihoods, psychosocial needs and services) in ways that are not only conflict-sensitive, but also actively pro-peace. Examples include crossline peace markets for basic needs, crossline veterinary services, communal water services, pro-peace education, agreements on grazing arrangements, strengthening traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, pro-peace cultural events, support for prisoners, civic education, anti-hate speech campaigns and facilitating cross-conflict community communication.

2.1.1 Appreciative inquiry versus needs assessments

A common observation across all the case studies is how the use of appreciative inquiry (along with microgrants) strengthened self-help processes that organically respond to predominant needs at any one time without requiring externally led needs assessments. Thus, during the first weeks of the Cyclone Nargis response, survivors' micro-projects focused on using local transport, markets and connections to rapidly access food, fresh water, medicines and shelter. No needs assessment was required to inform the natural shift that was seen after about two months towards livelihood recovery and infrastructure repair. Similarly, traditional externally driven needs assessments were not required to help communities in the Nuba Mountains in Sudan identify successful coping mechanisms to survive bombing and starvation (see Box 5), or for a semi-pastoral community in Marsabit in Kenya to explore ideas on livelihood diversification and reducing ethnic violence.

Clearly, different groups have different priorities, opportunities and ideas, even within the same crisis-affected community at the same point in time. Such nuances are rarely captured by standard needs assessments. That said, the case studies also show complementarity between the two. Conventional needs assessments were key in successfully informing the design and implementation of large-scale household cash transfers for immediate (unconditional) responses to crises in Sudan, in the various crises in Mindanao and, to a lesser extent, in northern Kenya, Myanmar and Palestine. With basic survival needs being covered to some extent by household cash transfers or in-kind distributions, affected populations could focus their efforts (supported by appreciative inquiry and microgrants) on other issues. When local markets run out of key commodities (e.g. durable plastic sheeting in Myanmar, some weeks after the Cyclone Nargis response went to scale) or particular needs are beyond local agency alone (e.g. coping with Covid-19, cholera or measles outbreaks, or large-scale livestock destocking), clearly needs assessments of some sort are required.

2.1.2 Challenges when using appreciative inquiry

While feedback from affected communities consistently reflects positive experiences with appreciative inquiry approaches, it is evident that staff from local and international NGOs involved in the sclr pilots found it difficult to move beyond conventional problem analysis and

externally led needs assessments and switch to community-led approaches. This was especially apparent where the INGO was still compelled to write reports based on needs assessments and justify interventions based on predefined/pre-assessed needs to comply with internal or donor-prescribed requirements. Equally, improved design and delivery of training on appreciative inquiry for PALC facilitators is needed, as well as better orientation for management and support staff in NNGOs, INGOs and donors.

2.2 Stop looking for the nexus, it's here

In every crisis and disaster where sclr approaches have been tried so far, they have resulted in more responsive, varied and context-sensitive interventions than those usually found with conventional (externally driven) projects. Community members identified this responsiveness to local realities in different ways across the case studies. One male community member in a Palestinian village summed up his impressions: 'If all NGOs worked the way this project works in support of the community and our protection group in their advocacy and talking to local authorities, a lot more could be achieved – as is now happening with the electricity here in Mneizal'.²⁸

Box 4 illustrates the wide range of initiatives prioritised by different groups. The manner in which sclr approaches were applied varied significantly across all these contexts, and in several individual cases span the entire humanitarian–development–peace nexus. In every case populations in crisis had the opportunity to access support (including microgrants, skills training and connecting/networking opportunities) to enable them to implement their own initiatives. In many of the examples in Box 4, volunteers and community members contributed hours, days and weeks of work, in-kind materials and their own funds. In some cases, initial grants and mobilisation were used to leverage additional support from other NGOs or the local authorities.

Despite the wide diversity of responses described in Box 4, a number of trends are apparent across these different contexts. First and foremost, the responses demonstrate a high degree of responsiveness, relevance and context-sensitivity.

In most of the case studies, conventional relief distributions were happening in the same areas at the same time, albeit at varying scales and levels of outreach. The notable exceptions (where there was no other external support at all) were in remote villages during the first 10 weeks after Cyclone Nargis, in many parts of the Nuba Mountains and in isolated parts of upland Mindanao. What comes through across the case studies is that groups adjust their own interventions according to their particular felt needs, while balancing these against what else, if anything, is being provided.

28 Grundin and Saadeh (2018) *Learning from community-led resilience responses in the occupied Palestinian territories* (https://usercontent.one/wp/www.local2global.info/wp-content/uploads/L2GP_PalestinianTerritories_Report_2018_WEB.pdf).

Box 4 Activities prioritised and implemented by community members in humanitarian and protection crises

Northern Shan and Kayah State, Myanmar, 2018–2020 (responses to civil war, flooding, marginalisation, poverty)

Installation of water systems (for homes and irrigated farming); construction of multipurpose community halls and meeting places; renovation of health clinics; installation of solar lights along village roads and houses, repair of village roads; brick-making enterprise to generate income for youth; purchase of public address system by youth groups; establishment of football competition and trophy; tailoring of traditional clothes and sewing training; communal grinding, milling and threshing machine; drug addiction rehabilitation centre; water purification; grocery store; fuel and fencing post store; agroforestry and fertiliser distribution centre; wholesale rice and oil enterprise – the latter five activities generate funding for a local church-based education programme (the only education available for these communities).

Northern Kenya, 2018 (responses to protracted drought, hunger, water shortages, ethnic conflict, livelihood collapse)

Weaving and marketing traditional mats; local shops selling essential household commodities; brick-making; butchering and meat storage and marketing; livestock feed production; trading in sheep and goats; fish storage and marketing; rotational savings and loan groups; camel milk storage and marketing; water points, banana seedling production, hay storage, peace meetings; coordination with county government; peacebuilding initiatives.

Mindanao, Philippines, 2017–2018 (conflict and displacement, flooding, earthquake, typhoon)

- Agusan River – response to flooding: collective food purchases; livelihood activities; relocation of entire village from dangerous location; income generation (floating cafeteria/tea house) and training in financial management.
- Surigao – response to earthquake: repairing/rebuilding homes through household cash grants accompanied by advice and guidance on reconstruction.
- Marawi – response to armed conflict and massive displacement: staples (or ingredients to supplement food aid distributed by other actors); buying NFIs not provided by other aid actors; establishing crèches to allow parents to seek work, assistance or information; small-scale individual and collective livelihood initiatives (selling street food or gardening to provide additional nutrition and income). Building on these initial activities, a subsequent grant was used to start local conflict mitigation activities.

Occupied Palestinian Territories (oPt) (responses to occupation, conflict, livelihood collapse, protection, protracted and deteriorating marginalisation and exclusion)

- West Bank, 2016 to date: rehabilitation and advocacy initiatives to improve village health clinics, schools and nursery facilities and community centres; improving culverts and village and agricultural roads; providing electricity; increasing protection against violence/harassment of children and adults in and around villages.
- Gaza, 2019–2020: installation/maintenance of desalination filter; solar-powered street lights; medical services and hygiene kits for schoolchildren; care and support to pregnant women and children; rehabilitation of streets, parks and a community centre; advocacy towards municipality related to hygiene and a community initiative covering psychosocial support sessions; first aid training; and the provision of 10 safe bus stops.

Conflict areas, Sudan, 1997–2002; 2011–2020 (responses to civil war, acute malnutrition, isolation from public services)

Women-led community protection awareness, training and activities covering hunger, nutrition, survival during land and aerial attacks, psychosocial well-being, nutrition, hunger, first aid; veterinary services and medicines/vaccines; communal farming; school feeding and teacher support; community-level peacebuilding and conflict mitigation; cross-conflict reunification; pro-peace advocacy; transitional justice initiatives; civic education around rights and transitional process; peacebuilding in prisons; good governance at county/district level.

Irrawaddy Delta, Myanmar, 2008 (Cyclone Nargis response)

Purchase, transport and distribution of relief commodities; water supply; livelihood recovery; bridge and road building; village crèches; support for orphans; psychosocial support; youth clubs; mangrove planting; radios; networking; advocacy and lobbying of duty-bearers.

Mangkhet, Philippines, 2018 (Typhoon response)

Microfinance for farmers; public building repair to act as emergency evacuation centres; gardening; DRR equipment; farm inputs; local government skills training.

Rakhine State, Myanmar, 2017–2018 (responses to severe complex political emergency and armed conflict)

Fish net production; chicken rearing; school fees; cash grants.

Kayah and Kayin States, Myanmar, 2017 (responses to protracted civil war and flooding)

Rodent pest control and skills for pest management; pig rearing; cycle repair shop; agricultural seed supply.

Amhara/Wollo, Ethiopia, 1996–2001 (responses to structural poverty, recurrent drought)

Establishment of seed banks; village spring development; fish-farming; beekeeping; blacksmithing tools and skills; pasture development; catchment protection.

Haiti 2018–2019 (responses to structural poverty, drought)

Nutritional assistance to infants; repair of community facilities; assistance to small traders and subsistence farmers; infrastructure (latrines, road improvement, water distribution line, extension of the electricity network).

Based on affected individuals' and groups' own up-to-date knowledge and analysis of needs, threats and opportunities, and in some cases assisted by their own PALC process (see Chapter 1), groups decide on and implement their own responses immediately – as people in need at all times and in all parts of the world have always done – with or without the support or attention of external actors, including external humanitarian actors.²⁹

During the first few weeks of the response to Cyclone Nargis, almost all proposals from informal community self-help groups were for lifesaving food, water, shelter and NFIs and public health (especially disposing of dead bodies). As the same groups perceived that immediate needs were being met (either through sclr approaches or as mainstream aid kicked in), their priorities, and with them their proposed activities, shifted to collective livelihood recovery activities (fishing nets, vegetable garden inputs, poultry raising, communal shops and trading), as well as communal infrastructure repair (bridges, wells, schools) and local social services such as kindergartens (see Boxes 4 and 8 for more detail).

Following a devastating flash flood of the Augusin River in north-east Mindanao in 2017, several isolated villages remained without humanitarian assistance of any kind for weeks due to difficulties of access, local conflict dynamics and the political marginalisation of the indigenous inhabitants.³⁰ When a local NGO finally arrived to facilitate a sclr approach, affected communities rapidly identified a number of initiatives that recognised that different village members had different needs. Thus, the portfolio of microgrants covered a variety of responses: emergency food and NFI provision, rebuilding damaged and destroyed homes in new locations, livelihood recovery and advocacy for further assistance. Again, no time-consuming needs assessments were required.

During a severe drought in 2016–2017 in northern Kenya, government and NGO support to affected communities focused on cash and voucher assistance, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and

29 Bennett et al. (2016) *Time to let go: remaking humanitarian action for the modern era*. HPG (<https://odi.org/en/publications/time-to-let-go-remaking-humanitarian-action-for-the-modern-era>).

30 Antequisa and Corbett (2018) *Survivor and community led crisis responses in the Philippines*. L2GP (https://usercontent.one/wp/www.local2global.info/wp-content/uploads/L2GP_locally_led_crisis_response-philippines_report_2018_final.pdf).

food and water distributions to households. In parallel, local self-help groups spent complementary group cash grants on livelihood recovery and diversification, along with access to services such as water, education and basic commodities. A minority focused on direct short-term relief (food and cash) and addressing ethnic conflict through peace meetings.³¹

The case studies described here and summarised in Box 4 demonstrate how community-led responses have delivered across the development–humanitarian–peace nexus in practice – and in some cases long before the term rose to prominence around the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016. The cases also illustrate how people in crises, when left to decide on response priorities, do not distinguish between ‘humanitarian’, ‘development’ or ‘peace’ responses, nor do they frame their actions to fit a clear, sequential continuum from relief to recovery.

Halima Liban of the Wayu women’s group in northern Kenya put it like this: ‘We have to work hard to cope with drought. We have children to feed, school fees to pay and our homes to run; during drought we have to go an extra mile to cope with its effects’. Silwan, a Palestinian resident of Jerusalem, expressed his frustration with traditional aid’s need to prioritise and categorise: ‘The most important protection threat? My house can be demolished; it is so difficult to find a job; my children are harassed by soldiers for no reason; I cannot move freely to any place 20 minutes from here. You want me to decide on the most important? All are equally important to have a normal life!’³²

31 LPRR Kenya project evaluation 2018.

32 Eguiguren and Saadeh (2014) *Protection in the occupied Palestinian territories*. L2GP (https://usercontent.one/wp/www.local2global.info/wp-content/uploads/oPt_full_study_final.pdf).

Box 5 Self-help and sclr in the Nuba Mountains, Sudan

In 2011, as war broke out again in South Kordofan and Blue Nile, Sudan, the vast majority of external aid actors rapidly evacuated areas controlled by the armed opposition group SPLA/M North. In the process, they left a war-affected population of more than a million people largely to their own devices (as they still are today). Building on existing survival and protection lessons from a previous conflict in 1987–2002, local civil society in the Nuba Mountains, supported by a few remaining external actors (who ignored the Sudanese government’s ban on access) has supported a large number of village-based protection and self-help groups.

Soon after the fighting resumed, volunteers began moving between villages undertaking training and awareness for residents and newly displaced people on basic, locally sourced survival and protection experience. This included how families could better protect themselves during aerial bombardment, basic first aid, knowledge of wild foods and traditional medicine and basic psychosocial support. These activities spread across Nuba, reaching an estimated 400,000 people by 2014:

As we found out that most of the victims of the fighting and the aerial bombardment were women and children, we realised that many of the younger women, men and the children had not lived in the war zone during the previous conflict. They had no idea of what to do when war and aerial bombardment began again. A standard training was developed, that lasts for four days and the volunteers who take part have to commit to bringing all they have learned back to their communities. Women who attend a particular mosque or church will go back and train those constituencies. Teachers will teach the children in their schools as well as other teachers. In this way, basic protection training has reached more than 400,000 people since the war started. The number of casualties has greatly lessened, and people are somehow able to cope better with both the bombings and the fear of the bombings (Nagwa Musa Konda, then director of NRRDO).

By 2016, the conflict in Nuba had become less intense and aerial bombardments eventually stopped altogether. As the situation changed, local protection groups shifted their priorities and opted to spend small group cash grants (through an sclr initiative) on collective farming of cash crops, which in turn supported basic education for children and adult literacy classes. Similar to the examples from Myanmar, Kenya and the Philippines, the ability to change focus and address new and different needs, threats and opportunities did not require any externally driven needs assessments: it happened by virtue of allowing villagers and local self-help groups to control their own priorities, designs, decisions, implementation and monitoring.

Source: Konda et al. (2016) ‘Women-led self-protection in Sudan’ *Forced Migration Review* 53 (www.fmreview.org/community-protection/konda-kodi-carstensen)

It seems particularly ironic that international aid agencies continue to be so perplexed about how to work in the so-called ‘nexus space’. It is the very creation of aid silos (clusters, sectors) by *the aid industry itself* that constrains support for more intuitive, organic and holistic responses in the first place. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the continued insistence by aid actors on fitting responses into sectoral confines remains the most important challenge and hindrance to a much wider and faster pick-up of ways of working that genuinely support citizen- and community-led crisis responses. As demonstrated throughout the examples referenced in this paper, community-led responses will, by their very nature, defy the rigid up-front categorisation demanded by many donors and aid agencies. Because of this paradox, community-led responses have been relegated to a niche existence on the outskirts of the larger aid system and funding flows – under-invested in and under-explored, and only occasionally brought out when humanitarian policy and conference jargon touches on ‘participation’ and ‘people-centred approaches’.

2.3 ‘We can do this together’: collective action and social cohesion

Many of the benefits of responsiveness highlighted earlier are already recognised as a key rationale for using unconditional (or multipurpose) cash transfer programming (CTP) for households in crises.³³ What is different about sclr approaches is that they aim to support and encourage collective action by groups and for the good of a wider group or community. Such support builds on the widespread phenomenon of autonomous collective agency that is widely acknowledged as a common endogenous response within all crisis-affected populations.³⁴ One female community volunteer in Area C of the Palestinian West Bank expressed it like this: ‘The training and the process have changed our thinking. Especially, the action plan and the group cash grant have made us think of what we can do together – not only what we can do individually or as a family’.

While individual cash transfers obviously provide much greater choice to households than in-kind distributions, they do little to strengthen collective responses. Indeed, research suggests that the provision of cash to individuals increases the tendency to pursue self-centred survival and recovery and detach from communal or collective self-help.³⁵ However, lessons from sclr activities so far show that there is considerable potential and need for collective responses, to complement individualised assistance such as household cash grants or in-kind assistance.

Box 4 shows how this way of working supports communities and self-help groups to address important issues of collective concern – issues that usually would be beyond the reach of individual households. A female protection group member in the village of Raboud on the Palestinian West

33 CaLP (2020) ‘Multipurpose cash assistance’. Webpage (www.calpnetwork.org/themes/multipurpose-cash-assistance).

34 See for instance papers on collective agency under the Frontiers research on ‘Active bystanders: the bystanders’ critical role as immediate responders during emergencies’: www.frontiersin.org/research-topics/8053/active-bystanders-the-bystanders-critical-role-as-immediate-responders-during-emergencies.

35 Evans and Popova (2014) *Cash transfers and temptation goods: a review of global evidence*. World Bank Group (<https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/617631468001808739/cash-transfers-and-temptation-goods-a-review-of-global-evidence>).

Bank highlighted this aspect, explaining that ‘the project succeeded because we worked together in the village. Many other NGO projects have failed – mostly because we were not really involved in the ideas and the plans. We did the electricity project cheaper, faster and better ourselves than any NGO could have done. But most important of all – we feel it is our own project – our own work’.³⁶

Summarising reflections on community-led responses to Cyclone Mangkhut in 2018 with Philippine NGO Afusing Batu Farmers’ Organization, Joana Villaflor found that ‘community-led projects enable local organisations to identify, design and implement relevant initiatives that build solidarity and strengthen sense of community. This is the essence of our Mangkhut response’.³⁷

Box 4 also illustrates how sclr approaches can address collective concerns often not met by other types of aid, including self-help groups starting income-generation activities, such as small teahouses/cafeterias in the Philippines or brick-making in Kenya. Other activities target shared protection concerns such as aerial bombardment in Sudan, drug use in Myanmar or settler violence in Palestine. Activities addressing shared infrastructure and essential services are also frequent priorities across the cases. Building or restoring village health clinics, improving access to fields or parts of villages, rodent infestation, improving nursery and primary school facilities and making electricity or water available to neglected villages or neighbourhoods also features prominently across the case studies.

When exploring what kind of community groups have worked best in a given setting, one important aspect to consider is the ability of existing or newly formed entities to contribute to social cohesion and connectedness. When asked to score ‘the effects of supporting community initiatives on social cohesion, solidarity and collective effort of village’, 105 participants in sclr activities in Northern Shan, Myanmar on average scored the sclr process at 4.8 out of 5.³⁸

Summarising lessons with community-led responses in five communities in the West Bank, Luna Saadeh and Sofie Grundin found that ‘combining participatory vulnerability and capacity assessment techniques with group cash grants led to genuine engagement of communities and enhanced their sense of ownership, strengthened their community well-being, leadership and sense of responsibility over the initiatives’. They also found that ‘group cash grants enabled communities to respond to their own risks and resulted in community volunteering. The cash benefitted the entire community, and not just specific individuals. Community members from five villages spent a day sharing their experiences with this way of working in Jericho

36 Grundin and Saadeh (2018) *Learning from community-led resilience responses in the occupied Palestinian territories* (https://usercontent.one/wp/www.local2global.info/wp-content/uploads/L2GP_PalestinianTerritories_Report_2018_WEB.pdf).

37 Villaflor and de Guzman (2019) *Healing and enabling: stories from Typhoon Mangkhut response*. Christian Aid and CaLP (www.calpnetwork.org/publication/healing-and-enabling-stories-from-typhoon-mangkhut-response).

38 Antequisa and Corbett (2018) *Survivor and community led crisis responses in the Philippines*. L2GP (https://usercontent.one/wp/www.local2global.info/wp-content/uploads/L2GP_locally_led_crisis_response-philippines_report_2018_final.pdf).

in December 2017. Observing this community cross-learning event, the external consultant concluded that ‘community members organising themselves and managing micro-projects created a sense of ownership in the community’.

Research associated with activities in the Nuba Mountains of Sudan over the last eight years confirms that community-led responses have helped villagers reinvigorate and re-energise a previously strong tradition of community collaboration, collective action and voluntarism.³⁹ Equally, the learning paper on the Philippines found that sclr activities in three different humanitarian contexts had ‘strengthened the level of collaboration between different groups within affected communities and promoted local leaders to work together to solve problems’.

The types of groups supported to date have varied considerably (see Table 2), making it difficult to draw categorical conclusions as to how different groups perform. In some cases, the importance of working with existing traditional social structures has been very apparent: the trust and respect commanded by the *K’ires* (traditional funeral associations in the north-eastern Highlands of Ethiopia) and their representative nature made them ideal recipients of cash grants for emergency seed purchase and distribution, and helpful in identifying additional communal initiatives following repeated droughts.⁴⁰ Elsewhere in Ethiopia, the value of supporting traditional community associations (*Iddirs*) in responding to HIV/AIDS was recognised.⁴¹ Similarly, in conflict areas of Northern Shan in Myanmar, local trust in the power of traditional community structures to avoid or reduce risks from insecurity meant that they were preferred recipients of microgrants.

In other cases, newly formed groups have proved effective vehicles for adapting sclr. Of the groups supported during the response to Cyclone Nargis, the majority were small pre-existing CBOs, both formal and informal, but a significant number were self-help groups spontaneously formed directly in response to the availability of cash grants. Research conducted after the Nargis response found that several of the 530 self-help groups supported with small group cash grants went on to become more formalised CBOs.⁴² But the majority of these groups solved the immediate task for which they had received the grant and then dissolved. Community-led responses in Sudan’s Nuba Mountains are rooted in self-help groups, which initially grew out of local women’s groups, but over the years have become protection groups in villages working across gender and age.

39 L2GP research interview with Dr. Abdallah Komi Kodi, KAMA development organisation, Sudan, 2016.

40 See Relief and Rehabilitation Network (1996) ‘Seed provision during and after emergencies’ *Good Practice Review* 4 (www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/gpr4.pdf); and Piguet and Raemi (2002) ‘Good rains do not compensate for chronic food insecurity, Wello and North Showa’, April, UN-Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia: pp.13–14 (<https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/ethiopia-good-rains-do-not-compensate-chronic-food-insecurity>).

41 Pankhurst and Haile Mariam (2000) ‘The “Iddir” in Ethiopia: historical development, social function, and potential role in HIV/AIDS prevention and control’ *Northeast African Studies* 7(2) (www.jstor.org/stable/41931342?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents).

42 Garner et al. (2013) *Paung Ku: leading from behind*. DFAT: p.55 (www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/paung-ku-leading-from-behind-phase-2-evaluation-report.pdf).

Based on these experiences, it appears that literacy and numeracy may be a challenge but not an all-out obstacle for small self-help groups to access group cash grants. For example, in northern Kenya a women’s group found support from a student in their community to fill in the short application form and were successful in securing a grant. In Myanmar, NGO community mobilisers see it as part of their job to help self-help groups complete the short proposal forms.

Experience from working with these very different community formations points to the importance of the involved NGOs analysing each specific locality/context closely before deciding whether to work with existing community structures or to give opportunities to new, more impromptu community groups to engage – or a combination of both.

Table 2 Overview of local groups and formations involved as key actors in sclr-style activities

Type of group	Specific groups supported to lead their own humanitarian response
Existing CBOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women’s groups • Youth groups • Farmers’ groups • School committees • Village development committees
Existing traditional social or cultural institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funeral associations (Ethiopia) • Sunday social groups (beer and bread) (Ethiopia) • Women’s and youth associations (most countries) • Professional associations (Myanmar, Sudan)
Existing economic interest groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irrigation groups • Collective grassing groups • Cooperatives • Fishermen sharing boats • Trading groups • Savings and loan groups
Faith-based groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faith groups led by priests/vicars/monks/imams in various countries and from various faiths
Self-forming (emergent) SHGs catalysed by the crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nargis response (Myanmar) • Earthquake response, Surigao (Philippines) • War response, Nuba (Sudan)
Self-forming SHGs as above, but very much centred on one active individual who emerges as a local champion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marawi response (Philippines)
New SHGs formed following mobilisation by NGOs promoting sclr approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IDP groups from Marawi, Philippines, West Bank (oPt)
New SHGs formed following mobilisation by NGOs for other reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection groups formed from PVCA process, West Bank (oPt)

2.4 'Building ourselves by ourselves': sclr as a catalyst for dignity, self-worth and psychosocial well-being

Practical examples of survivors and communities leading their own crisis responses highlight that feelings of power, pride, motivation and a sense of dignity are closely associated with owning and being responsible for activities and grants. This is in stark contrast to how externally led aid may be experienced, as for instance documented by the Syrian writer and researcher Kholoud Mansour in *Forced Migration Review*⁴³ and Kate Berry and Sherryl Reddy for HPN.⁴⁴ A 2018 HPG Working Paper on displaced Syrians in Lebanon⁴⁵ highlighted how many Syrians saw dignity as closely linked to upholding a sense of independence and the ability to make their own choices. Based on interviews with aid workers and displaced Syrians, the authors suggested that, 'for Syrians, *how* aid is distributed is more important, whereas for humanitarian workers the focus has been on *what* aid is delivered'.

The lessons capture research following sclr activities in Northern Shan in Myanmar in 2018–2019 concluded that 'perhaps the most prominent [feedback] has been that of communities highlighting the psychological and social importance they perceived when being supported to lead their own aid-assisted responses'. At the same time, this research, and a subsequent DanChurchAid internal review⁴⁶ of the process, also pointed to a number of challenges encountered:

- Delays in the internal INGO approval process related to the release of community cash grants caused delays in making funds available to the activities prioritised by the communities, frustrating the volunteer groups and slowing down their activities.
- NGO partners did not always find the right balance between providing technical guidance or budgeting advice in advance and allowing community groups to learn by doing.
- In some instances, local NGO staff facilitating the process did not have sufficient understanding of sclr to enable them to support and train PALC volunteers.
- The scale and timeframe of the pilot programme was too short to enable community groups to design and take forward projects that could strengthen inclusiveness and women's participation and allow them to begin to look at how they could contribute to tackling the root causes of protracted crises.

43 Mansour (2018) 'Protecting the dignity of displaced Syrians' *Forced Migration Review* 53 (www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/syria2018/mansour.pdf).

44 Berry and Reddy (2010) *Safety with dignity: integrating community-based protection into humanitarian programming*. HPN Network Paper No. 68: p.5 (<https://odihpn.org/resources/safety-with-dignity-integrating-community-based-protection-into-humanitarian-programming>).

45 Grandi et al. (2018) *Dignity and displaced Syrians in Lebanon*. HPG (www.odi.org/publications/11236-dignity-and-displaced-syrians-lebanon).

46 KHMK Resource Team (2019) *Social research and lessons learned workshop on use of sclr in Northern Shan state*. Research report funded by L2GP and DCA/NCA Myanmar. Available on request to L2GP. See also: DCA/NCA (2019) 'Survivor and community-led responses to crisis (sclr): lessons from Northern Shan state, Myanmar'. Internal review. Available on request from DCA or L2GP.

- Addressing the limitations imposed by the humanitarian community's focus on sectors, financial management and compliance will require profound changes to the institutional and organisational cultures that currently shape how humanitarian aid is delivered.
- Supporting NGOs and donors must adapt their institutional cultures and procedures to better support the SCLR approach and allow space for explicit transfer of ownership and control to community groups.

Experiences gathered by ECOWEB in the Philippines over several rounds of community-led responses rate the sclr as positive regarding dignity and self-esteem – as for instance expressed by Norjana Taurak, an IDP leader from Marawi in Mindanao: ‘This is the first time I received cash assistance that I never felt that I am an IDP, and I observed the process is dignifying’.⁴⁷ In a 2018 Palestinian community cross-learning event, a participant stated that ‘the project idea is around raising awareness and helping the community become organised. We have never been organised like this before. But now that we are, I can proudly say that we have been building ourselves by ourselves’.

Group members in Kenya mentioned the relief accruing from coming together in groups and experiencing successful outcomes from their own efforts. ‘We know each other and if we know a member is badly off – we talk to her and contribute to support her. In our meetings we also talk about our problems and advise each other. If a member needs something, we contribute, if one is not comfortable to share their problems, we send a member she trusts to talk to her’, a female member of a self-help group in Marsabit, Kenya explained.

A concrete example of how war- and conflict-affected people have prioritised community-based psychosocial activities at the same level as, for instance, food or medical support comes from Sudan's Nuba Mountains. As documented by, among others, Nagwa Musa Konda and Laila Karim, since the conflict resumed in 2011, village-based protection groups have made it a priority to support each other, and particularly those struck by sudden death or injury in their immediate family and community.⁴⁸

2.5 ‘Now women from other communities are approaching us to ask for our expertise’: inclusion and power relationships within communities

When introducing community-led crisis response to fellow aid workers, a common concern is that such activities may reinforce existing patterns of inclusion and exclusion, gender roles and other power dynamics. Acknowledging such risks, a significant part of the co-design workshops that precede all sclr activities addresses how to engage community members in such concerns. Contrary to some expectations, practice to date has shown that social inclusion may actually be

47 Antequisa and Corbett (2018) *Survivor and community led crisis responses in the Philippines*. L2GP (https://usercontent.one/wp/www.local2global.info/wp-content/uploads/L2GP_locally_led_crisis_response-philippines_report_2018_final.pdf).

48 Konda et al. (2016) ‘Women-led self-protection in Sudan’ *Forced Migration Review* 53 (www.fmreview.org/community-protection/konda-kodi-carstensen).

strengthened when a community, with guidance and support from experienced and dedicated community mobilisers, engages in deciding on, implementing and monitoring their own responses – including managing group cash grants. Additionally, many activities to date reveal effective community-based targeting based on need. There are several examples of people with disabilities being prominent members of self-help groups and examples where agreed percentages of income from micro-enterprises are earmarked for household support to people living with disabilities and others experiencing specific needs and/or challenges.

At the same time, when limited funding causes microgrant disbursement to fall very short of demand, difficulties inevitably still arise. In one remote part of Mindanao, people living physically apart from the main village complained of being excluded in the original round of invitations for activity proposals. On receiving complaints, other villagers offered to forego support initially intended for them, but this caused offence and was rejected. In Palestine, several villages have experienced internal disputes over which activities to choose, not least when powerful individuals, used to having their way in communal affairs, objected to the priorities decided by majority vote in the community. In such cases, experienced and well-trained local NGO staff have been crucial in insisting that solutions should be found by the communities themselves, as well as offering support and advice. Equally important has been that INGOs and donors have stood back, allowing errors or mistakes and supporting communities and the local NGO by providing a work environment where it is ‘safe to fail’, learn and adapt.

When sclr activities began in the Palestinian West Bank, women described themselves as shy and not influential in the public sphere. During interviews for a subsequent evaluation, some explained how, at first, men were the final reference in community decision-making, which initially also may have had an impact on how women voted, for instance on priorities in action plans. ‘It is true we attended meetings and we began to talk. However, we tell men everything. They do not have time for the meetings, but when they come back home, we consult their opinions and they decide’, one interviewee explained.⁴⁹

Women and girls present at a later community cross-learning event explained how they had grown more confident through their participation in protection groups, and now claimed more space for their own decision-making – and in their communities in general. A woman from the village of Rabud explained how, ‘This claim could be true at the beginning of the project. Women were still shy, and they prioritised community interests over theirs. But later on, now our women, including myself, are stronger, more confident. We are active, we discuss our priorities and we take the lead in decision-making. Look at Amina, she was very shy and now she is a member of the village council!’. Amina (also from Rabud) added that, at the beginning, women were not empowered enough. They did prioritise community interests over their own interests, but this allowed women to gain the trust of the male members of their communities, so they could address women’s interests and

49 Grundin and Saadeh (2018) *Learning from community-led resilience responses in the occupied Palestinian territories* (https://usercontent.one/wp/www.local2global.info/wp-content/uploads/L2GP_PalestinianTerritories_Report_2018_WEB.pdf).

priorities at a later stage. Women in the project monitoring committees explained that they had gained experience through designing and managing projects. They also emphasised that they had secured greater bargaining power as a result of the process.

Women in the West Bank have played a crucial and very prominent role throughout the sclr process. One explanation may be that women are more present and thus active in communities, since men often seek employment outside their villages. In total, 53 protection group members were women and 28 men during the reporting period. Community cash grants have directly influenced the lives of 7,313 people, of whom 3,583 were women. A woman from Abu Alurqan emphasised that ‘EJ-YMCA’s activities have enabled women in Abu Alurqan to play a major role in the community. We became stronger and now we feel like we have a voice. Now women from other communities are approaching us to ask for our expertise and guidance on how to voice their priorities in their communities’.

In Northern Shan, an initial decision to spend a community grant in favour of the more powerful farmers in the village was subsequently overturned at a large community meeting, which instead voted in favour of extending electricity to a remote and marginalised section of the village. Learning and review processes undertaken alongside sclr activities in Kenya, the Philippines and Sudan⁵⁰ underscore that community-led responses, when undertaken with sufficient guidance and mentoring, can foster inclusion of youth initiatives, and in many cases have opened up opportunities for women to push through their priorities.⁵¹

When adapting sclr during the response to a drought in North Kenya in 2016–2017, 76% of applicants were women from self-help groups. As also illustrated in Box 6, women felt empowered to find ways to be economically self-sufficient, proactively engaging in decision-making, and in one case challenging social norms by promoting themselves as peace brokers, a traditionally male role. Several groups that used cash grants successfully were largely or entirely comprised of illiterate members or other excluded groups (women-headed households, people living with disabilities, HIV-positive individuals). Many of the groups supported were the very local, informal, unregistered, embedded groups that are usually invisible to external actors.⁵²

Inclusion regarding gender, age, diversity – none of course is a given in any of the examples above. Where sclr ways of working indicate that inclusion and real changes in power balances within a community (or between local powerholders/authorities) are happening, it can be traced back to awareness, trust-building, hard work and strong collaboration between individual community members, volunteers and community mobilisers from accompanying NGOs.

50 Konda et al. (2016) ‘Women-led self-protection in Sudan’ *Forced Migration Review* 53 (www.fmreview.org/community-protection/konda-kodi-carstensen).

51 Corbett (2018) ‘Learning review: lesson from ongoing pilots to support community-led response to crisis of the Linking Preparedness Response and Resilience (LPRR)’. L2GP (www.local2global.info/wp-content/uploads/LPRR-Humanitarian-response-Strand-Learning-Paper.pdf). LPRR was a DEPP-funded, multi-agency project, led by Christian Aid.

52 Ibid.

Box 6 Including the marginalised

In 2016, 35 women from the Watta community in Dirib Gombo, Kenya formed a group to support each other in coping with the hazards they faced, including discrimination. The group secured a grant to start a poultry project, where they reared chickens for eggs and meat, which were sold to hotels in Marsabit town and to community members. The women also diversified their incomes by using some of the profits to plant kale to improve their food security. The project has earned the women recognition and respect in the wider community. Community members, irrespective of their tribe, now visit them knowing there is a ready market for their chicken, and because they know where to buy eggs for their families. 'If there are fundraising initiatives in our village, we receive requests to contribute to the initiative as a group', said the chair of the group, Dabb Nur, adding: '*Tumemulikakamawangaza, tunang'arakamadhahabu, sasatunaonekana* – We are illuminated like light, we are sparkling like gold, we are now visible'.

2.6 Trust: beyond the tick-box exercises of accountability and transparency

Integrity and trust appear to be a crucial characteristic for groups receiving a community microgrant. Trust, so often ignored or underestimated in mainstream aid, came up in interviews with participants in sclr activities in all of the case studies: trust within a self-help group, between the group and the wider community, between the community and NGO staff – and all the way back to an INGO and their donor(s). Since a prerequisite for sclr ways of working is giving up control and delegating responsibility as much as possible to those affected by crisis, this entire 'chain of trust' is being stress-tested throughout the process (as for instance discussed in Palestine in Box 7). For this to work, it requires a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities as well as genuine transparency and accountability – not just the accountability tick-box exercises so frequently encountered in other programming. Supporting truly citizen- and community-led action means that issues such as exclusion, attempts at manipulation by individuals or specific groups of individuals or the imposition of external priorities (by local or international NGOs/donors) are addressed as the process and individual activities develop. So far, the experience is that, to the considerable surprise of some of those involved, trust seems to grow when ownership and decision-making move from the donor and INGOs to become first and foremost a matter between community members themselves, and between communities and local NGO staff.

Box 7 Trust

If you did not respect us, we would not allow you to come here.

Interviews with community members in the Palestinian West Bank stress the importance of the attitudes and behaviour of NGO staff working with sclr. Asking what was different from experiences with other NGO activities prompted comments like: 'Treat everybody equally. And treat everybody with equal respect'; 'Trust – between us in the community – and the trust between you and us. You come on time'; 'You are very modest, and you do not look down on us. Now, it's like you are part of us. If you did not respect us, we would not allow you to come here'; 'Honesty – don't raise false expectations. This will build trust'.

Attempts to shift power come with their own challenges. One is the dedication, time and, often, personal and professional qualities this way of working demands – particularly from community mobilisers, but equally from community volunteers. NGO staff need to come down from whatever status horse they might be riding – or driving. They have to see themselves and be received more as fellow community members than their usual role as representatives of an NGO holding all the strings, including the purse strings. If that does not happen, sclr ways of working will not realise their full potential. Time is another challenge. Working in this way, within and with a community, takes time, particularly at the beginning of the process. It is crucial that this is built into budgets from the beginning.

Equally, there have been instances of disagreement and frustration within communities, or between self-help groups and community members and authority figures, albeit these have been rare given that much more power and control over resources now rests with community or group members. Experience to date, though, has been that, while such disagreements and conflicts of interest occur, they have been manageable, and reasonable solutions have been found. As indicated in the section above, when conflicts of interest materialise, it is important to insist on the fact that ownership of funding and decision-making now rests with communities – and, implicit in that, solutions to conflicts or problems have to be found within communities. In some cases, this has required considerable time, support, diplomacy and patience on the part of the local NGO.

Another challenge arises when a donor, INGO or local NGO realises, well into the project, that someone in the organisation involved is refusing to sign off on the use of microgrants. This has caused real frustration and delay – not least with community groups enthusiastic and ready to begin their activities. To avoid this, it is crucial to ensure that all parts of this long chain – from the donor, through INGOs and local NGOs, to community groups – know, truly understand and have agreed to the 'guiding principles of sclr' (see Chapter 3) and have developed internal procedures and ground rules *before* activities begin. Truly understanding the ethos, mindset and technical modalities (see Chapter 1) required for signing over ownership of resources and decision-making

is crucial at every link in the chain of interdependent actors (community activists, NGOs, INGOs and donors). Experience from all the case studies shows that NGOs and INGOs in particular need to ensure that the mindset and technical modalities associated with sclr are taken on board *throughout* institutional hierarchies and systems, starting with community mobilisers and ending with mid-level and senior managers in country offices and headquarters.⁵³

As external actors take a step back and make space for local groups to take ownership of decision-making, implementation and monitoring, issues about how to ensure local accountability – vested within communities themselves – become a key concern. U Brang Dee, chair of a committee that implemented a micro-project in Man Maw in Northern Shan in February 2019, described how such concerns weighed on his shoulders. ‘It used to be very rare to see even a bag of cement in our remote village. Now, the valuable materials are in the village and we keep them properly, as much as we can. You will see how we are keeping the cement bags under my house. If possible, I would like to keep all cement bags in my bedroom for safety if my bedroom was strong enough because these bags are ours’.

In most villages and communities where sclr has been tried, groups and volunteers seek to ensure local (horizontal) accountability by making documentation (receipts, tenders) of all financial transactions available in a local community space accessible to all, for instance in a community centre, in public meetings and with trusted individuals. In the Palestinian West Bank, groups also use social media (Facebook), for instance to make photos of cheques and receipts available to community members. Social media is also used to announce meetings and post decisions. One female member of an accountability group in the West Bank explained how, ‘We learned a lot about getting our community directly involved – including how to actually find and hire the right contractor and the things needed for the project. All receipts and contracts were put on Facebook so all could see how the money was spent. We also learned that we could actually do the project cheaper than an NGO could do it’.

While Facebook groups worked well in some villages and for some community members, an evaluation of activities stressed the need to supplement this with posters and announcements and making all documentation available to the entire community – including those not using social media, or less comfortable with written communication. For example, in Kenya a group of illiterate women said: ‘We know the price of the items and we also know what was bought ... but we go with the youth who can write everything. Then we hold public *barazas* [meetings] to inform the larger community what has been bought, what has been sold and the profit made’.

The curriculum and guidance documentation that shapes the co-design workshop preceding sclr initiatives offers advice for NGOs engaging in community-led activities – including community micro-cash grants – to develop their own templates to support these aspects. Importantly, these co-design workshops also discuss what to do when things go wrong within a community, or

53 A number of learning and training resources on sclr are accessible at the L2GP website: www.local2global.info.

between community groups and the NGO. Stressing a ‘safe to fail’ mindset, rather than insisting on a ‘failsafe’ methodology, these sessions discuss ways to ensure that things that have gone wrong are recognised, communicated and addressed, not as failures but as learning opportunities for all involved – beginning with the local groups and actors (such as PALC volunteers, village committees and local government) who have to find the solutions, and ending with NGOs and donors, who have to decide how best to support volunteers in addressing challenges and problems.⁵⁴

While deferring decision-making power and responsibility for financial management, monitoring and accountability of cash grants to self-help groups is crucial for the sclr to truly deliver on its potential, it does pose challenges to mainstream NGOs (be they international, national or local) keen to document, understand and report back on activities that they are responsible and accountable for. As with the practice that has evolved with unconditional household cash grants, this is not an insurmountable challenge. Just as post-distribution monitoring assesses how individual cash grants have worked out and how they are being spent, NGOs can and should closely observe – and discuss – monitoring and accountability efforts by self-help groups undertaking actual activities. This provides essential documentation and learning opportunities for all involved – volunteers, local authorities, NGOs and donors. Importantly, examining what communities have prioritised and invested in, both with their own resources and possibly using a cash grant, provides a picture of needs, challenges and priorities that is often much more accurate and time-sensitive than any externally led assessment exercise.

Ultimately, though, the case studies all point to the importance of limiting detailed upward financial accountability to the point where a self-help group signs off on having received a community cash-grant, not what the grant has been spent on (as with unconditional cash grants). From that point onwards, financial accountability is a trust and transparency issue between the group and the wider community. The empowerment, motivation, pride and sense of dignity that come with having ultimate ownership and responsibility over the grant is emerging as an indispensable part of the sclr way of working – and why it delivers on a number of important indicators, including what one could be tempted to call ‘user satisfaction’. Practical evidence has shown that local accountability systems can often be stronger than more external, upward financial accountability, significantly limiting the temptation to misuse funds.⁵⁵ Enabling a strong sense of local ownership is key. As one member of a CBO in North Kenya put it: ‘This project is our choice; we are working hard to make it work. Even when we sleep, we have this project in our mind’.

54 Ibid.

55 Blagescu and Young (2005) ‘Partnerships and accountability: current thinking and approaches among agencies supporting civil society organisations’. HPG working paper (www.odi.org/publications/137-partnerships-and-accountability-current-thinking-and-approaches-among-agencies-supporting-civil); and Evans and Popova (2014) *Cash transfers and temptation goods: a review of global evidence*. World Bank Group (<https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/617631468001808739/cash-transfers-and-temptation-goods-a-review-of-global-evidence>).

2.7 Beyond immediate survival: addressing the big issues

As already touched on, one outcome of supporting community-led responses is a broader sectoral range of interventions than would be seen in conventional ‘humanitarian’ programming. But to what extent does the apparent ‘nexus’ nature of community-led programming promote autonomous disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) or contribute to more transformational change in other ways?

The case studies show that, when immediate survival and basic needs are covered, groups with opportunities to access multi-purpose collective grants tend to prioritise initiatives that generate longer-term improvements in well-being over those that only provide one-off or short-term gains. Thus – whether it is micro-projects aimed at repairing community infrastructure (water systems, schools, clinics), horticulture, establishment of small businesses or peacebuilding and lobbying – groups engage in initiatives that may result in sustained impacts over time. Even where life-threatening needs are *not* covered, collective initiatives often also – or very rapidly – include activities beyond immediate survival and protection. This has been the case in the Philippines following flash floods and the Marawi crisis, and in Myanmar post-Nargis. Groups affected by Typhoon Tembin⁵⁶ included replanting of mangroves in their community-led interventions while still in the early stages of recovery from a devastating storm that killed hundreds of people and displaced tens of thousands more.

While the majority of the first round of sclr activities in Marsabit in Kenya primarily looked at traditional livelihoods (livestock or trade), a few were concerned explicitly with peacebuilding. The 2019 lesson capture paper from Northern Shan state in Myanmar reflects how the sense of ownership over activities also helped motivate communities for further initiatives that progressively began to tackle root causes. Daw Saw Lwai of San Sate village touched on this as she explained: ‘Now we have accomplished our first mission to bring water into our village for the betterment of the next generation and we are dreaming again to improve the current road between the nearby town and our village. We would like to request to donors/NGOs to continue these kinds of people-managed projects in future as the small assistance makes a big change for us.’⁵⁷

This finding from Northern Shan resonates with feedback from community members across other parts of Myanmar, as well as from the Philippines, Kenya, Palestine and Sudan, where activities in many cases have continued beyond the first round of cash grants. By supporting second- or third-cycle microgrants over time, there appears to be a progressive shift towards longer-term, more ambitious initiatives.

56 Known locally as Typhoon Vinta, it struck Mindanao in 2017 killing 250 people and displacing or affecting approximately 70,000.

57 KHMK Resource Team (2019) *Social research and lessons learned workshop on use of sclr in Northern Shan state*. Research report funded by L2GP and DCA/NCA Myanmar. Available on request to L2GP.

For many impoverished communities in Palestine, power imbalances remain fundamental causal problems, whether with the Israeli government or with their own authorities. At the Palestinian cross-learning event, Amina Abu Znaid from the village of Rabud explained how she saw power dynamics between ordinary community members and local authorities being influenced by community-led responses: ‘I’m sure that most villagers here were marginalised by their own village council where the village council in the area would prioritise other villages. But through our work in this project, and now that I got elected to be a village council member, I understand that the best thing to do is to approach the village council and hold it accountable. Each village council has a budget allocated for each village. Everyone should feel confident, it is everyone’s right to approach the village council and discuss its plans for the village’.

The very act of creating community action plans and undertaking initial activities seems to change dynamics with external powerholders. A female protection group member in Beit Mirsim village recently described how, ‘Attitudes have really changed from before. The school, the clinic – now we are organised. Most important was that YMCA has not imposed anything on us. Now we have a meeting place and other organisations come here for the first time in maybe 10 years – UNDP, Oxfam, Ministry of Agriculture and Education, the Red Crescent and civil defence do trainings for us on first aid and stopping fires. NRC has helped with training on legal rights. We even had an awareness session on cybercrime. These are all things we did not know before’.⁵⁸

Perhaps the most obvious examples of how sclr approaches have enabled and supported crisis-affected people to engage with root causes are those involving local peacebuilding initiatives in crises caused by armed conflict. In northern Kenya, two groups’ micro-projects looked specifically at conflict resolution, with one women’s group also challenging gender norms as female ‘peace ambassadors’, starting peace dialogues with their husbands and male children in a time of escalating tribal conflict. A small but encouraging example of challenging religious divides (attributed to orientation on listening and empathy provided by the LNGO facilitating the process) emerged in one Rakhine community, where a male participant was involved in a motorcycle accident with a Muslim youth and, instead of blaming and creating trouble for him, responded with sympathy and care – recognising that this was ‘new behaviour’ for him. As the head of the Myanmar NGO⁵⁹ involved said: ‘sclr helped and encouraged us to believe in ourselves to move forward with our energy ... [to] solve our problems by our own efforts’.

When donor flexibility allowed, ECOWEB in the Philippines encouraged conflict-affected populations in Marawi to identify their own responses to the crisis with no sectoral constraints. In such cases, while the majority of emerging initiatives were still focused on immediate relief needs, some aimed at dealing with divisions between Muslim and Christian communities through creating

58 L2GP research interview, June 2020, Beit Mirsin, Palestinian West Bank.

59 Corbett (2018) ‘Learning review: lesson from ongoing pilots to support community-led response to crisis of the Linking Preparedness Response and Resilience (LPRR)’. L2GP (www.local2global.info/wp-content/uploads/LPRR-Humanitarian-response-Strand-Learning-Paper.pdf). LPRR was a DEPP-funded, multi-agency project, led by Christian Aid.

safe spaces for dialogue, while also attempting to inform government strategies, both for aid delivery and for dealing with root causes. In one case, as the danger of radicalisation and increasing anger and resentment felt by local youth (provoked by perceived ill-informed actions by central government) threatened to boil over, a local initiative for a peace march by the same youth activists was supported through ongoing sclr activities. This helped with efforts to lobby the government and allowed local youth to let off steam and find non-violent ways of expressing themselves.

During sustained armed conflict in parts of Sudan, continued support for local efforts to address protection issues allowed community-managed initiatives to successfully broker cross-frontline peace accords that resulted in significant improvements in local security (and livelihoods) for hundreds of thousands of people. Interestingly, these initiatives grew from the immediate need to enable low-profile trade in conflict areas across lines. The resultant local peace agreements allowed not only markets but also grazing, cultivation, collection of wild foods and water in areas previously too insecure and dangerous for civilians to enter. From these remarkable and very local achievements, additional longer-term initiatives have emerged around support for youth associations, cross-frontline animal health services, access to justice for women, human rights training for civil police and even informing national-level conflict transformation processes led by national civil society leaders and international actors. The activities in Sudan provide a particularly compelling example of how working in the ‘triple nexus’⁶⁰ can be achieved by enabling local communities to play a much greater role since they are not constrained by the siloed thinking of current mainstream aid.

2.8 Learning for real: putting meaning back into ‘capacity-building’

In the beginning of the project, as a woman from a remote village, I had very limited experience with buying materials. Previously, I only bought household-level materials and have never spent big amounts of money. So, I was reluctant to undertake the responsibility for procurement of construction materials. Slowly, slowly we collected information from different sources and persons and more and more contact number of supplier and truck car owners in our hand now. We also visited Kyauk Me [nearest town] to meet with suppliers. After buying construction materials, I felt relax to undertake the responsibility for procurement at any amount as I [now] had [gained] proper [experience with the] buying mechanism.

Daw Ban Htoi, a volunteer in Man Maw village in Northern Shan, points to another key finding emerging from the sclr experience – that capacity-strengthening and learning by doing is an integral part of sclr. Volunteers and other community members have engaged in a wide range of skills development across the case studies – as demonstrated in Box 4 and Annex 1 – and experience across countries shows, for instance, how simple bookkeeping training can be key to supporting groups in managing cash grants, as well as providing skills they can bring to other activities.

60 See <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/learning-stream-navigating-nexus-topic-1-nexus-explained>.

Mentoring groups to identify and budget for specific technical training needs, such as soap making or food processing, may be as important as a cash grant. The role of NGOs thus may shift from being direct implementors to enabling, accompanying, supporting and mentoring volunteers and groups as they implement activities.

Most [other] responses end with a relief item distribution. But sclr is different. It involves small grants provision which allows affected community to develop skills and capacities together with the facilitating agency, so even after the crisis the community still has the project management and basic financial skill and any other necessary skill they can learn such as psychological first aid, so when another disaster happens they are ready (MTA, Paung Ku Myanmar).

Feedback so far points to at least two important aspects of this. On one level, it's about the entire process heightening abilities and motivation to address common challenges. At the same time, training and awareness on specific issues has its own merits, as a woman from the West Bank village of Jub Adhib shared with the cross-learning event in Jericho in 2018: 'Now we have the courage to advocate for our rights with the government, we have also learned the mechanisms to combat Israeli violations'. She went on to explain how the protection group in the village reacted when the Israelis confiscated their solar panels, the measures that they took, and how they were able to get the panels back. She also – with some pride – noted how Jub Adhib's name had been mentioned in several international media outlets.

Looking at the evolving list of demand-led training (see Chapter 1), a picture emerges of a gradual transfer, not just of decision-making power from NGOs and donors to self-help groups rooted in the affected population itself, but, equally important, a gradual two-way exchange of knowledge, skills and capacities between NGOs and community groups. As Eva Darare, Director of the Indigenous Resource Management Organization (IREMO) in Kenya, explained: 'Once people have utilised the community cash grant and benefited, then it can be shared as a learning that can be replicated elsewhere'.

2.9 Speed and scale (while waiting for Godot – or an angel investor)

As the activities in Box 4 illustrate, the sclr experiences presented in this paper vary with the nature of the crisis, including in regard to the speed and scale of individual interventions. While the majority have been relatively small-scale (reaching 5–20 groups/communities) with limited budgets (\$30,000–150,000) and working on a timeframe of months rather than weeks or days, two exceptions stand out: the responses to Cyclone Nargis (see Box 8) and the sclr-style responses in the Philippines.

In the Philippines, participating local NGO and CBO staff found that sclr allowed for rapid, collective, holistic and demand-drive action by multiple different groups. Although small-scale, these activities reached remote communities along the Augusan River before any other aid initiatives, and in some cases reached communities not served by any other actors. Likewise in

Northern Kenya, as one female member of the Kalesa self-help group explained: ‘Other projects within the community have taken time to materialise but this one, we were able to implement our planned activities immediately’.

When conflict broke out in Marawi in the Philippines in May 2017, almost an entire urban population of 200,000 people (with similar numbers from semi-rural surroundings) was displaced. Working with volunteers among the IDPs themselves, ECOWEB quickly discovered that the majority of displaced people did not choose to move to the evacuation centres set up by the government, UN and INGOs. Instead, they moved in with extended family and friends, or they attempted to make their own temporary shelters and settlements. Local networks helped locate and communicate with these scattered displaced populations: informing them of their options and the services available to them and providing them with an opportunity to strengthen their own self-help initiatives. Some 9,000 families (or 47,900 individuals) benefitted from sclr approaches including microgrants. Self-help groups among the IDPs used grants for a number of purposes: buying staples (or additional ingredients to contribute to food aid distributed by the government and aid agencies), buying NFIs not provided by aid, establishing crèches to allow parents to search for work, assistance or information, along with a range of small-scale individual and collective livelihood initiatives, such as selling street food or gardening to provide additional nutrition and income.

Despite the success of such sclr-inspired ways of working in rapid-onset emergencies in Myanmar and the Philippines, it has not been possible since to convince international aid actors and donors to use the approach in other rapidly emerging or evolving humanitarian crises. Several attempts have been made, but established actors continue to shy away, seemingly harbouring considerable scepticism towards the unpredictable (compared to traditional externally led interventions) character of truly citizen- and community-led ways of responding. Progress here may only come when – or if – a non-traditional donor steps in to support community-led and -owned responses at scale in a deliberate attempt to complement traditional, siloed and externally controlled humanitarian assistance.

Box 8 Paung Ku's community-led response to Cyclone Nargis

On 3 May 2008, Cyclone Nargis hit the Ayeyarwady Delta, southwest of Yangon. This was the worst disaster in Myanmar's recorded history, and among the deadliest storms ever recorded. The Delta is home to more than 7 million people, and more than 138,000 were killed by the direct effects of the cyclone, with around a third of the population (2.4 million) severely affected.

While immediate media coverage of the cyclone focused on the political and diplomatic barriers to international aid efforts, subsequent analysis has shown that a rapid and autonomous local response to the disaster was instrumental in preventing far greater losses. Hours after the culmination of the storm, thousands of self-help initiatives were spontaneously providing lifesaving support. This was soon matched by a second wave of gifts and donations by organised civil society actors (school-based, faith-based, developmental and private sector) and the wider public of Yangon and other cities and towns.

The Paung Ku consortium, made up of international and local NGOs, supported the spontaneous efforts of survivors in the immediate aftermath of the disaster. Pre-trained community mobilisers disbursed more than \$1 million to 320 CBOs and self-help groups within the first 50 days of operation. The first of these self-help groups started receiving community grants from Paung Ku within 72 hours after the cyclone struck the Delta. The majority of traditional aid actors only reached the remoter parts of the area some 5–6 weeks after Nargis struck. The Paung Ku Nargis Response and Local Resource Centre teams worked around the clock, seven days a week for the first month.

The time between NGO facilitators arriving in a new location and issuing the first microgrants to local self-help groups with lifesaving and recovery plans could be as little as 48 hours. For a devastated population still cut off from external aid,ⁱ little additional motivation was needed beyond explaining how groups could apply for microgrants and what others were already doing. It was later estimated that their efforts provided lifesaving relief to at least 350,000 survivors. For many this was the first assistance they had received.

Overall, about 10% of small-scale community proposals were rejected due to weak project design, acute lack of capacity or indications of lack of integrity. Most grants disbursed during the first two months were around \$3,000 each, with a range of \$100 to \$10,000. Initially, grants were used to meet specific food and household/shelter needs – all through local purchase. Within a month of the cyclone, an increasing number of proposals were also seeking livelihood support, such as purchase of seeds, tools, diesel, boats and fishing equipment. Despite the opportunistic 'pop-up' nature of the intervention, misuse of the small cash grants during the immediate phase of the response was remarkably rare. By the close of 2009, the initiative had disbursed more than \$2 million to about 530 groups in the Delta, which between them undertook almost 800 different activities benefitting some 550,000 survivors.

i The Myanmar Government at the time delayed international aid access to much of the Delta for many weeks after the cyclone hit.

Source: Based on: Corbett (2010) 'Innovation paper'. ALNAP (www.alnap.org/help-library/alnap-innovations-case-study-no-4-pknr). See also: ATP (2008) 'Helping the heroes: practical lessons from an attempt to support a civil society emergency response after Nargis' *Humanitarian Exchange* 41 (<https://odihpn.org/magazine/helping-the-heroes-practical-lessons-from-an-attempt-to-support-a-civil-society-emergency-response-after-nargis>).

2.10 Value for money: economy, efficiency, effectiveness and equity

Extracting learning on issues related to costs across a number of activities playing out in very different contexts, and where methodologies have been adapted considerably to fit the context, comes with considerable challenges. This methodological 'uneasiness' may in itself point to the need to develop monitoring and evaluation tools more relevant and suited to assessing sclr ways of working.

That said, previous sections of this paper have already pointed to some aspects of the (cost-) efficiency and value for money of sclr:

- Sclr ways of working appear to invite and motivate communities to allocate considerable resources (time, skilled or unskilled labour, in-kind and financial contributions) to the resources (community cash grants, skills training) made available by NGOs and donors,
- By supporting communities' self-help activities, NGOs are able to reach more people and communities than they otherwise would.
- Community members stress that, by leaving decision-making power to them, the risk of misplaced (or even useless) aid is considerably reduced. At the same time, several communities have stressed that they can buy goods and services and generally implement activities more cheaply than NGOs and donors can.
- Citizen- and community-led responses transform initial relief activities into longer-term outcomes more easily than classic humanitarian responses.

2.10.1 Economy: cheaper and more relevant support

Similar to unconditional cash transfers, sclr approaches in most cases offer a cheaper and quicker way to meet needs. There is evidence that self-help groups consider very carefully how to spend their grants, including researching available markets to get best possible prices on relevant commodities. The 2017–2018 learning review of sclr activities in Kenya and Myanmar⁶¹ found that ‘the most obvious immediate improvements on conventional externally-led aid relate to responsiveness, speed and cost-efficiency’. The review also found that ‘almost all communities highlighted the benefits of being able to manage the funds themselves to obtain what they needed, quickly and at costs below what outsiders could achieve using voluntary labour and locally available transport’. Capturing community lessons in Palestine similarly found that ‘in several cases private contractors hired directly by the communities are reported to have worked at reduced price or for free’.⁶² It is important to note that groups mostly spend their grants in nearby markets, contributing to the local economy and ensuring easy access to spare parts in the future.

In Palestine, several communities reported that the cash grants had helped the sclr groups start activities, and that this in turn had built the confidence and credibility to convince community members to contribute additional time, skilled and unskilled labour, in-kind contributions and their own money in order to realise their plans. External actors (local government and private entities, including members of the Palestinian diaspora), seeing the initiative moving ahead, then contributed funding and technical advice and expertise. In some cases, communities were able to mobilise significantly more than the \$5,000 grant made available through the project. In one village, where a mother and child health clinic was so derelict it was about to be closed down, the community raised \$2,000 from voluntary contributions, on top of the \$1,000 available from the cash grant. Another community used a \$5,000 sclr grant combined with strong and sustained advocacy to pressure local authorities to provide electricity to their village – an investment many times more valuable than the community grant, and something they had been promised for years. Box 9 illustrates similar lessons in Northern Shan, Myanmar.

61 Corbett (2018) ‘Learning review: lesson from ongoing pilots to support community-led response to crisis of the Linking Preparedness Response and Resilience (LPRR)’. L2GP (www.local2global.info/wp-content/uploads/LPRR-Humanitarian-response-Strand-Learning-Paper.pdf). LPRR was a DEPP-funded, multi-agency project, led by Christian Aid.

62 Grundin and Saadeh (2018) *Learning from community-led resilience responses in the occupied Palestinian territories* (https://usercontent.one/wp/www.local2global.info/wp-content/uploads/L2GP_PalestinianTerritories_Report_2018_WEB.pdf).

Box 9 Microgrants as seed grants

In many cases, microgrants acted as seed grants, catalysing community members to find additional resources to complete projects. While not all the data is collected yet, financial top-ups (from the community, Buddhist and Christian institutions, the private sector and local township government) ranged from 17% to more than 600% of the initial microgrant. In-kind contributions (including cement and other construction materials and transport) were also mobilised. These estimates do not include the contribution of voluntary labour by community groups involved.

Source: Extract from Northern Shan, Myanmar learning capture

2.10.2 Efficiency: increased reach

This ability to reach further with the same resources was also a prominent feature in the group cash grants released to impromptu self-help groups in the response to Cyclone Nargis. Here, 12 community mobilisers released and monitored the use of about \$1 million to a total of 320 self-help groups within two months.

In Northern Shan, the Tang Student Youth Union found that sclr ways of working helped reduce their workload: ‘Normally, our organisation played the project-implementing role and we needed to push people to fulfil the management and programme requirements to promote our accountability and reputation. However, when working with the sclr approach, the people become project holders and implementers and we only needed to provide some additional skills and suggestions and play a coordination role. So, a thinking was coming into my mind, that if this approach is extended with reasonable timeframe and reasonable budget, more people will be able to decide and create their well-being in their respective places through this “by the people approach”’.

Similar observations about greater reach and reduced workload on the NGOs involved have been made by local NGO leaders in Sudan and the Philippines. Comparing the sclr way of working with typical externally led approaches, a community and village council member in Wadi Fukin, Palestine explained how ‘the project succeeded because we worked together in the village. Many other NGO projects have failed – mostly because we were not really involved in the ideas and the plans. We did the electricity project cheaper, faster and better ourselves than any NGO could have done. But most important of all – we feel it is our own project – our own work. For instance, we only paid three individuals for some very specific skilled work – the majority of the work was done by community volunteers.’⁶³

63 Ibid

In most cases, between 54% and 87% of funding is made available to communities as group microgrants. In several of these small-scale projects, HR and running costs are relatively high due to the mentoring and accompaniment tasks associated particularly with the early stages of an sclr activity. Costs associated with community-level learning, skills and capacity exchange also feature prominently in several cases. In the two cases where sclr has been utilised at scale, Cyclone Nargis and the Marawi crisis, the costs of running activities (costs spent within NGOs) significantly decrease. This indicates potential to maximise the cost-efficiency of sclr approaches when going to scale.

Palestinian NGO EJ-YMCA has in some cases found it necessary to pay more than 40 visits to one community before it felt that the community had sufficient confidence, structure and knowledge to manage cash grants on its own. Activities in the West Bank, it should be noted, are framed as longer-term resilience and protection initiatives. Colleagues from MAAN and CFTA in Gaza have since built on experience in the West Bank supporting community-led initiatives on a considerably shorter timeframe (months rather than years), and the ratio between funds made available to communities and funds spent within the NGOs involved was more in favour of the former. Given the very significant ‘soft investment’ in resilience and local agency in West Bank villages, one should be careful not to read too much into this difference. The ‘investment’ in community-led resilience in the West Bank may well pay off in the long run, as early responses within these communities to Covid-19 would indicate.

Overall, sclr has been very well-received by local NGOs and community partners, who find that it builds on their expertise and provides an opportunity to address some of the shortcomings of classic humanitarian response. Nanette Regina Antequisa, head of ECOWEB, has been working with sclr approaches since 2016. She sees sclr as a way for a local NGO to increase its reach considerably: ‘Adapting and working with sclr approaches, we have seen much hope in an intervention that may empower survivors and communities to become more responsible over their own lives, their survival and their recovery. With such a changed paradigm and supported by more contextually knowledgeable local, national and international NGOs, we can then effectively and cost-efficiently implement humanitarian responses, which are more responsive to the needs of survivors and communities – and which encourage greater local accountability and ownership’.⁶⁴

64 Antequisa and Corbett (2018) *Survivor and community led crisis responses in the Philippines*. L2GP (https://usercontent.one/wp/www.local2global.info/wp-content/uploads/L2GP_locally_led_crisis_response-philippines_report_2018_final.pdf).

Chapter 3 Guiding principles emerging from practice

The standard practice described in Chapters 1 and 2 has been the starting point for applying sclr approaches in 18 very different humanitarian crises across nine countries.⁶⁵ In each case, agencies have adapted the core approach to fit the local context. Such flexibility, which remains a core feature of sclr, becomes possible when working from a foundation of agreed core guiding principles. Reflecting on the evidence from experience to date (shared in Chapter 2), this set of principles continues to evolve, allowing practitioners to refine (or even reinvent, if needed) sclr practices to fit new contexts. This evolving set of guiding principles is presented below and summarised in Box 10.

Box 10 Guiding principles underlying sclr approaches

1. Adopt a new mindset that recognises crisis-affected people as first and last responders.
2. Adopt strengths-based participatory assessments and appreciative inquiry methods.
3. Challenge gender narratives: women as leaders, not victims.
4. Strengthen (don't weaken) collective action, social cohesion and sense of community.
5. Support multiple different groups to reflect the heterogeneity of crisis-affected people.
6. Explicit transfer of power (using microgrants) to community groups.
7. Promote broader well-being and psychosocially informed approaches.
8. Recognise that a crisis-affected population's *natural* tendency is to respond holistically.
9. Develop new management systems and organisational cultures that incentivise staff to 'let go' and allow greater sharing of power.
10. Give more focus to supporting local government agencies to adopt and fund sclr.
11. Redefine relationships between donors, national and international agencies.
12. Support 'whole of system' change that motivates all aid departments to challenge assumptions and accepted norms that limit opportunities for humanitarian aid to enable local agency.
13. Optimise the balance between externally led and people-led approaches as two complementary parts of a more empowering mainstream aid response to humanitarian crises.

65 CAR, DRC, Haiti, Kenya, Mali, Myanmar, Palestine, Philippines, Sudan. Please refer to Annex 1 for more detail on these activities.

1. A significant **change in mindset** is needed to recognise **crisis-affected people as first and last responders** who could achieve even more if aid's starting point was to support their rich mix of self-help initiatives, rather than replacing them with externally planned and implemented interventions. Are we treating people as helpless victims or as experts in their own contexts? Are our interventions enabling or eroding people's potential for courage, compassion, kindness, hope, initiative, solidarity, self-mobilisation and collective action to respond to disasters?
2. Current norms in disaster programming and practice can inadvertently promote 'learned helplessness'. Relying on needs assessments (invariably problem-based and externally led) as the *only* starting point of humanitarian aid needs challenging. By introducing **strengths-based participatory assessments** from the very start, a different dynamic can develop. Such 'appreciative inquiries' reveal local capacities and opportunities for saving lives and accelerating recovery in ways (and at speeds) that needs assessments rarely, if ever, do. They contribute to changing the mindset of those facilitating them, helping aid actors to refocus on how to support, rather than replace, local capacities, knowledge, ideas and agency. Conventional needs assessments still have a crucial role, but as complementary rather than exclusive tools of analysis and planning.
3. **Challenging gender narratives: women as leaders, not victims.** Experiences from sclr challenge prevailing narratives around women related to victimhood, revealing that women are often the strongest local responders and (informal) leaders in humanitarian and protection crises. The same case studies point to opportunities for local cultural change in times of crisis – changes that may also open up new opportunities for women to lead. By paying particular attention to encouraging women to express their ideas and develop their initiatives, sclr approaches can in a small way accelerate change around gender norms by demonstrating how increased women's leadership is beneficial to all.
4. Much of the strength of autonomous local crisis response is its collective nature, bringing people together in ways that improve immediate survival, psychosocial recovery and longer-term resilience. Mechanisms that promote and strengthen such **collective action, social cohesion and sense of community** are needed to complement current humanitarian norms that too often impose Northern models based on household targeting and individual approaches. The role of PALC volunteers in encouraging activism, networking and knowledge-sharing is key in promoting local collaborative self-help. Similarly, *group* grants often leverage significant additional resources (from the extended community, the diaspora, the private sector, local government) in ways rarely, if ever, seen in standard (individual) cash programming.⁶⁶
5. Within any one population in crisis there will always be different communities, within each of which there will be a wide range of strengths, relationships, ideas and opportunities to drive local responses to as many different priority needs. A key principle of sclr is to **enable multiple initiatives from a broad range of groups**. Sclr approaches are not necessarily attempting to meet all needs; they add value by supporting the initiatives of whichever groups emerge

66 Building on the WHS commitment to cash programming as the 'preferred and default method of support' (*Agenda for humanity 2016*), sclr experiences reveal the potential of combining group cash transfers with standard household cash transfer programming, to better support opportunities for collective action aimed at wider community well-being.

- as responders in a given crisis. In some cases, these may only meet a small percentage of the needs of the affected population. ‘Community-led’ does not imply transferring power to one traditional ‘community leader’; rather, it describes an approach that recognises that new leaders at community level will be revealed by crises. Any citizen can be a leader if they have a practical idea to help their community around which they can mobilise fellow citizens to act.
6. Among the practical tools used to support community-led agency, the importance of microgrants stands out. Not only do they provide the means for affected groups to access the inputs they require for action, they also represent the **explicit transfer of power from aid actors to groups of local people**. This is essential in enabling a genuine sense of local ownership, which in turn provides the driving force for motivating further self-help, strengthening dignity and solidarity, accelerating psychosocial recovery, increasing efficiency and ensuring financial and social accountability. The microgrant thus serves multiple functions apart from paying for materials and services – its role as a catalyst for social and psychological aspects of self-help and recovery is equally important.
 7. The importance of helping crisis-affected people meet their *non-material* needs cannot be overestimated. A broader **well-being and psychosocially informed** approach is needed from the very start, away from emergency programming that treats people merely as recipients of essential material relief. Equally important for survival and well-being are interventions that nurture and promote self-worth, kindness, compassion, humanity, purpose, optimism, emotional stability, connectedness, dignity and celebration. The positive psychosocial impacts of encouraging and enabling collective action for the wider good are often as important as the physical outcomes. The remarkable community-based responses provoked globally by Covid-19 highlight the fact that being able to help others is a fundamental need especially prevalent among people in crises.
 8. People in crisis do not compartmentalise their lives to reflect the siloed programming of aid: community-led responses automatically operate within the nexus. Restrictions imposed by donors or NGOs on the scope of local responses tend to reduce end-user satisfaction and impact. Approaches are needed that explicitly **support the holistic initiatives** that emerge naturally from multiple self-help groups (each one with differing priorities and capacities for action). Disasters often open a window for political and social flux (challenging restrictions on civic action, responsiveness of authorities, traditional power dynamics, gender norms etc.), which can lead to longer-term transformational changes that reduce root causes of vulnerability. The ‘humanitarian’ impacts of local non-traditional emergency initiatives (such as peacebuilding, service delivery, access to justice, minority group rights, governance and advocacy, or cultural, spiritual and social issues) can be as significant as conventional relief distributions.
 9. Transferring responsibility, decision-making and funds to informal groups requires **new management systems and organisational cultures that do not disincentivise staff from ‘letting go’**. Becoming aware of ‘perverse incentives’ in aid organisations is an important

first step towards unlearning old ways⁶⁷ and replacing them with more appropriate systems. Imposing externally devised compliance and accountability procedures is not necessarily the best way of managing risk. Effective alternatives come by maximising communities' sense of ownership of interventions and resources and supporting local people (through PALC) to identify and strengthen context-appropriate measures for managing the risks of doing harm. These measures include building on and complementing local systems of horizontal accountability and transparency within communities, promoting local conflict analysis and resolution measures, building on indigenous safeguarding practices, seeking out the ideas of the voiceless and tapping into locally accessible resources. Such respect for local systems also does much for the dignity and self-worth of vulnerable people.

10. Much donor-driven humanitarian aid is still assumed to be the primary mandate and purpose of NGOs, whether national or international. This impedes national and local government from taking on their responsibilities to mitigate against and respond to disasters and build citizen resilience. It also detracts from civil society's crucial role as the *voluntary* social mechanism for promoting issues-based civic action, promoting rights, defending minority groups and whistle-blowing on power-holders. Supporting **national government agencies to adopt and fund sclr** approaches not only helps encourage them to take on their mandated disaster response/mitigation function (and release civil society to take up theirs), it can also contribute to more collaborative relationships between citizens and the state, which can do much to address root causes of vulnerability.
11. A **change in relationships between donors and national and international agencies** is required to help national aid actors (whether government or NGOs) to take direct responsibility for facilitating sclr approaches, and international agencies to move to supportive, gap-filling roles before gradually phasing out. The key feature of all sclr approaches is to build on the strong local knowledge, legitimacy and relationships of local organisations. 'Partnerships' between international and national agencies have much to offer – if they can move beyond their current predominant function as co-funding arrangements. Their focus, however, should not be to produce NNGOs in the image of INGOs; protecting and nurturing the strengths of 'localness' is as important as developing new capacities for securing direct funding. Ensuring that support for sclr approaches is mainstreamed into funding of national humanitarian agencies is one way to do this. More support is also needed to help link citizen-led action to alternative funding sources, including national and local government budgeting processes, the private sector and informal systems of support (e.g. people-to-people mechanisms, diaspora remittances).

67 Bennett et al. (2016) *Time to let go: remaking humanitarian action for the modern era* (<https://odi.org/en/publications/time-to-let-go-remaking-humanitarian-action-for-the-modern-era>) identifies the significant financial, cultural and regulatory barriers that prevent actors in the formal humanitarian sector from genuinely connecting with the crises-affected people that they are trying to serve.

12. Because a **'whole of system' change is required**, an attitude shift is needed across *all levels* of the aid sector, from donor head offices to NGO community facilitators, so that each of us contributes to a new practice aimed at supporting community-led responses to crises. Advocates of sclr need to engage as much with fund-raising, compliance, finance and human resource (and insurance and legal) departments of NGOs, UN and donors as they do with programming and frontline staff.
13. Sclr is not a silver bullet that negates or replaces existing humanitarian aid systems. It is intended to complement them by achieving **a better balance between externally led interventions and community- and citizen-led action**. The aim of sclr is not to try to meet all the needs of all crisis-affected people in any one targeted population, but rather to support those local initiatives for collective action which can improve the survival and well-being of communities as a whole. Integration between agency-led and people-led responses is not problematic and indeed provides exciting opportunities for synergy: this complementarity should be embraced.

Chapter 4 Addressing institutional and organisational challenges to supporting community-led response to crises

Across the different contexts studied, the obstacles to the application of sclr approaches have primarily derived from within the humanitarian aid sector, rather than from crisis-affected people themselves. It seems that vulnerable communities experiencing disasters are *more* able and willing to embrace new approaches promoting self-help than the aid organisations established to help them survive and recover. Over the last few years, we have noted a growing appreciation of sclr approaches among a small number of national and international NGOs – but the pick-up so far remains limited. So, what is stopping more mainstream humanitarian aid from adopting approaches like sclr? How can we overcome institutional obstacles preventing humanitarian actors from advancing localisation all the way to community level?

Core obstacles observed are described in this chapter, along with opportunities that might help incorporate community-led approaches more easily into mainstream aid. The constraints identified by this review resonate with those mentioned by other studies.⁶⁸ They highlight a range of ‘perverse incentives’⁶⁹ within institutional norms and protocols which undermine aspirations to shift power to local people. However, as these same studies point out: ‘numerous lessons learned papers have failed to drive progress’.⁷⁰ For this reason, L2GP continues to support the application of sclr approaches across a wide range of crisis contexts, to explore and demonstrate what is possible in practice.

4.1 Attitudes and perceptions about roles and capacities

Whether frontline staff or head office managers, this study found that most agency staff tend to underestimate the potential of people to lead their own response, while overestimating the efficacy of standardised interventions designed by professionalised, technical actors. Paternalistic perceptions easily become self-fulfilling, fuelling ‘learned helplessness’ in populations regularly exposed to mainstream humanitarian aid. A ‘saviour–victim’ narrative may also result in inaccurately assigning the status of vulnerability to women, adding to the challenges they face in demonstrating otherwise. Everyone is working with the best of intentions, but we often lack awareness of how our own assumptions are shaped by the cultural hegemony of aid that pushes us to assume roles either of saviour/implementer or victim/beneficiary. Until we challenge our own personal perceptions, institutional change will remain slow: victims aren’t expected to lead, saviours are. Such normative

68 See for example Bennett et al. (2016) *Time to let go*; Ramalingam (2013) *Aid on the edge of chaos*; Featherstone (2015) *The state of the humanitarian system report 2015* (www.alnap.org/help-library/the-state-of-the-humanitarian-system-report-2015).

69 Ibid., especially see: www.odi.org/hpg/remake-aid/#lettinggo2.

70 Bennett et al. (2016): p.56.

thinking may also explain why, despite clear evidence to the contrary, aid agencies continue to assume that sclr approaches cannot go to scale or be easily adopted within the very large, often sector-focused, contracts currently preferred by donors and a few ‘mega agencies’.⁷¹

4.1.1 Opportunities and possible solutions

- Instead of focusing on efforts to get ‘beneficiaries’ to participate in our (external) relief and recovery programming, start by asking: how can we better participate in the autonomous response of local people and support their initiatives for collective self-help?
- The change endorsed by the Grand Bargain and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and others is called the ‘participation revolution’, not ‘participation fine-tuning’ – it requires us to make fundamental changes in our assumptions and roles. It gives us the right and the responsibility to challenge the status quo and change the way we work.
- Explore the basis of assumptions and attitudes and recognise the prevalence of normative thinking within the sector that discourages shifting of power; recognise that, even with large donor contracts, sclr approaches can be deployed.

4.2 Siloed thinking, experiences and comfort zones

In testing sclr approaches, national NGOs have shared many instances where an INGO or donor’s predefined sectoral focus has prevented support for survivor-led responses. External concepts of what constitutes ‘appropriate’ humanitarian responses are given more weight than the diverse mix of ideas coming from people actually experiencing crises. In part, this reflects over-dependence on programmatic norms, which are poorly suited to respond to the complex mix of opportunities, capacities and priorities of crisis-affected people. Perhaps more insidious is the assumption that external actors are best placed to decide on the optimum ‘humanitarian response’ and the point where programming can move from relief to recovery and resilience-building. If local proposals fall outside the predefined response of funding agencies, support will usually not be approved. L2GP has, for instance, seen cases where NNGOs using sclr approaches during emergencies have not been allowed to support community initiatives to sustain volunteer teachers, facilitate community-led conflict mitigation, revive cultural events⁷² for psychosocial recovery, buy fishing nets or repair a destroyed bridge. Given the prevailing rhetoric in favour of local decision-making and the ‘nexus’, such contradictions further highlight the deep-rootedness of siloed thinking. Part of the problem may also be related to donors’ concerns regarding taxpayers’ perceptions of what comprises appropriate use of aid (not helped by misguided media reporting). In this regard, it seems more

71 For more on how money flows through the global humanitarian systems, please see: www.local2global.info/research/the-humanitarian-economy/gb19; www.local2global.info/research/the-humanitarian-economy/local-funding; and www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2015/07/01/it-s-all-about-money.

72 Requests were turned down for help to purchase instruments for music and dance, costumes and materials for traditional ceremonies, and repair of spiritual buildings.

needs to be done to educate the broader public in donor countries and appeal to their good sense that crisis-affected people are likely to be the most insightful arbiters of what best helps them survive and recover.

4.2.1 Opportunities and possible solutions

- Recognise that no one type of response can ever be effective. We can indeed include adaptable, multi-faceted, community-led programming alongside conventional humanitarian intervention to allow a more balanced approach to emerge.
- Remember that communities in crisis do not recognise divisions between different silos labelled ‘humanitarian’, ‘protection’, ‘developmental’, ‘peacebuilding’ or ‘disaster risk prevention’. Such labels do not represent intrinsic, indivisible truths about human agency. Instead, pool different expertise to inform approaches in context-sensitive ways, and do not let labels rigidly dictate what can or cannot be done.
- Ensure there are more staff in humanitarian teams with hands-on experience of community development processes and skills in community facilitation.
- Work with fundraisers, donor PR teams, informed journalists and survivors of disasters (in both the Global South and North) to help the wider public in donor countries better understand the critical role of emergency assistance in contributing to psychosocial recovery, emotional well-being, local dignity and self-help.

4.3 One-sided and inaccurate risk analysis

Humanitarian actors tend to focus on the risks of handing over power to crisis-affected people.⁷³ While the co-design of mechanisms which explicitly address such risks has certainly helped, INGOs, UN organisations and donor staff very rarely ask: ‘what are the risks of *not* handing over resources or decision-making?’. This study has witnessed the downside of relying *only* on mainstream, SPHERE humanitarian standards-respecting external interventions: missed opportunities for local solutions; reduced responsiveness; increased operational costs; eroded dignity and compromised psychosocial recovery; learned helplessness; reduced local resource mobilisation; and weakened potential for transformational processes addressing root causes.

Why these fears? Part of the problem may be that we allow our formal education, professionalism and ready access to resources to over-inflate our confidence that current, externally led humanitarian interventions are optimum. Furthermore, humanitarian teams are often not equipped to see both perspectives: it is now rare to find staff in humanitarian teams who have exposure to community development processes or skills in participatory facilitation. More worrying is the potential role of neo-colonialism and institutional racism in perpetuating such disconnects

73 Concerns are most commonly around potential risks related to: lack of capacity (too slow, too unskilled, too understaffed, too disorganised, too traumatised); lack of integrity (too unaccountable, too self-serving, too elitist, too male); or chances of doing harm (allowing elitist capture, exclusion, creating dependency, provoking conflicts).

and imbalances within the aid sector – an issue increasingly being acknowledged by humanitarian organisations and observers.⁷⁴ As aid workers operating in contexts of stress and extreme inequity, we are all susceptible to risks of unconscious bias; racism is a global phenomenon. However, the fact that it required the recent Black Lives Matter protests in the United States to prompt a discussion on racism within aid suggests a lack of self-awareness that needs addressing.

4.3.1 Opportunities and possible solutions

- As aid workers, we should put ourselves in the shoes of someone in the affected population and ask how we would feel if an external team set up their projects and activities while ignoring local initiatives, ideas, values and ways of caring for each other. Local people may in many cases have more experience in surviving crises than most aid workers do.
- When looking at risks of transferring power to people affected by crisis, always weigh them against the risks of *not* doing so. As external aid workers, a key indicator of achievement should be doing ourselves out of a job.
- Provide humanitarian aid workers with greater exposure to and training in people-led, participatory processes and community-based facilitation skills.
- All of us must take responsibility to be more (self-)aware of issues of institutional racism within the aid sector, recognise how it influences (and is perpetuated by) our assumptions and behaviour and better educate ourselves about what we can, and should, do about it.

4.4 Disparate frames of reference

Academic humanitarian literature on citizen-led self-help responses is currently almost entirely confined to disasters in the Global North. This may point to an uncomfortable trend in which disaster assistance ‘at home’ is better able to view survivors of crises as able *citizens* owning and managing their own responses, while perceiving people in ‘overseas’ contexts as often passive and helpless *victims*. Differing frames of reference were noted during the process of introducing the sclr approach: NNGOs often demonstrate more interest than INGOs in the political and transformational implications of sclr, and often seem to prefer the acronym ‘scla’ for ‘supporting citizen-led action’. Many national staff of both NNGOs and INGOs expressed appreciation (some even mentioned a sense of ‘liberation’) during co-design/training workshops when invited to start thinking of (and introducing) themselves as concerned citizens, rather than as aid workers linked to a specific employer (NGO/agency).

Findings in studies of local responses in the Global North correspond with those emerging from L2GP’s case studies in the South, indicating that the described difference in framing is not justified.

74 See for example: <https://medium.com/aidreimagined/video-how-to-be-anti-racist-in-aid-a6eaebc54d3e>; <https://blogs.icrc.org/law-and-policy/2020/07/16/race-equity-neo-colonial-legacies-humanitarian>; <https://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/powershifts-resources-anti-racism-in-development-and-aid>; and <https://icscentre.org/2020/06/30/anti-racism-in-the-aid-sector-a-call-for-all-of-us-to-act-and-accelerate-change-as-individuals-organisations-and-as-sector>.

A recent study of disasters in the UK, for example, notes that, ‘in practice, bystanders and victims themselves are the first to assist and aid those in need, actually helping in saving lives ... their assistance occurs immediately and significantly. This help, whose roots are altruistic, in fact, bridges the gap in responding to the emergency caused by the inappropriate and delayed response of the official emergency authorities.’⁷⁵ The same study recommends that the British government supports citizen-led action following disasters in the UK by:

- accommodating the public’s urge to help and supporting community group action;
- helping emergency planners to understand group psychology;
- working with, not against, local group norms and ways of doing things;
- not undermining shared identity during the response by imposing external criteria;
- listening to recovering communities and acting on this information; and
- mobilising wider solidarity.

Research into spontaneous community-led crisis responses in Australia⁷⁶ concludes that emergency organisations should address ‘institutional barriers’ to power-sharing to ‘empower and allow citizens to act autonomously’. The researchers stress the importance of emergent, community-based civic action groups organised by private households, and conclude that their high social and human capital infers significant capacities in terms of local knowledge, self-efficacy and access to resources. They recommend provision of direct support to such ‘bottom-up initiatives’ be integrated into mainstream responses.

There is a level of sophistication and advancement in studies into community-led responses in the Global North that is yet to be seen in discussions around ‘participation’ issues in international humanitarian programming. The importance of supporting autonomous citizen-led crisis response as a crucial first step towards longer-term resilience-building is highlighted by a range of researchers informing national disaster policies and strategies in the UK, US, Japan, Germany and New Zealand.⁷⁷ They highlight the need to allow ‘a more organic and spontaneous development of community capabilities’ at the grassroots level, and explore the use of ‘community adult educators’ to build psychosocial resilience, facilitate experiential learning and raise awareness of opportunities for transformative processes that could reduce vulnerability to future crises.

Increasingly, disaster research⁷⁸ in the core Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries seeks to explore how their *national* emergency responses can better understand, strengthen and build on the autonomous responses of affected groups of

75 See: www.frontiersin.org/research-topics/8053/-immediate-responders-during-emergencies.

76 Thalera and Seebauer (2019) ‘Bottom-up citizen initiatives in natural hazard management: why they appear and what they can do?’ *Environmental Science & Policy* 94.

77 Preston et al. (2015) ‘Community response in disasters: an ecological learning framework’ *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 34(6) (www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02601370.2015.1116116).

78 Drury et al. (2019) ‘Facilitating collective psychosocial resilience in the public in emergencies: twelve recommendations based on the social identity approach’ *Frontiers Public Health* policy practice reviews, June (www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpubh.2019.00141/full).

citizens. In contrast, the discourse around *international* humanitarian aid (funded and led by those same OECD countries) remains limited to increasing the feedback and cooperation of beneficiaries in externally driven interventions. This paradox deserves attention.

4.4.1 Opportunities and possible solutions

- Become familiar with the research into autonomous citizen-led crisis response in OECD countries to help challenge assumptions around norms of humanitarian aid in the Global South.
- Include action research components in crisis response proposals that explore different modalities for developing and testing sclr approaches alongside conventional externally led processes.
- Support or advocate for more research into supporting citizen-led crisis response in the Global South.
- Reflect on how deeply the neocolonialist mindset has seeped into the foundation of the formal aid sector and how it shapes the mental frames of reference that unconsciously mould attitudes towards (and portrayals of) crisis-affected people in the Global South.

4.5 The domination of compliance

The extent to which compliance policies have come to dominate humanitarian agencies and their responses probably represents the most common obstacle to handing over decision-making and financial control to crisis-affected people. While the original aims of the rules of compliance remain valid, the protocols set up to achieve them have become increasingly unwieldy and ineffective. The blueprint mentality and tools around planning and reporting on predictable outputs and outcomes – at the expense of a focus on process – encourages risk-averse attitudes and reduces the space for the organic creativity on which sclr approaches depend. Compliance protocols almost always ignore local values and ways of doing things – even when these may offer better ways of achieving the standards for which the compliance was intended in the first place. There is rarely a conversation with different members of targeted communities as to what *they* consider as the key risks requiring mitigation. In some contexts where sclr has been rolled out, specific laws or regulations enforced by national authorities throw up additional constraints on the use of sclr, for example regulations against cash grants for spontaneous self-help groups.

Such rigid imposition of externally designed protocols or regulations misses opportunities for more effective, context-relevant ‘good practice’ to emerge. It contributes to disempowerment and loss of dignity and pushes targeted populations – and aid workers – to find their own ways of circumventing external rules and procedures that are seen locally as irrelevant, impractical or even harmful. On top of this, the high workload generated by the compliance demands of an INGO and donor can swamp the capacity of NNGOs and create a rationale for delaying localisation (‘the local NGO does not have the capacity to ensure compliance’). Perhaps most worryingly of all, subsequent ‘capacity-building’ of national civil society becomes focused on moulding NNGOs into local replicas of INGOs that are increasingly structured and managed to meet the top-down compliance demands generated by the system. In the process, the intrinsic, value-added qualities of local civil society

(e.g. context sensitivity, local acceptance, indigenous knowledge, flexibility, creativity, willingness to take risks, courage) are replaced by the very attributes of aid underpinning perceptions of a system ‘unfit for purpose’.

Frontline aid workers often explain that lack of flexibility is related to ‘policies’ or ‘donor requirements’ imposed from above. However, rarely will members of policy departments or senior management take responsibility for changing protocols that are recognised as overly demanding, while suggesting that it is others who are failing to manage flexibility. In many cases, the very same agencies (whether donor, UN or INGO) that created this practice, and the compliance policies and protocols to go with it, now appear unable or unwilling to change them, despite a growing awareness that they may indeed not be fit for purpose.

4.5.1 Opportunities and possible solutions

- Involve head office finance and compliance managers in the sclr co-design process. When working together, one often finds greater flexibility than originally assumed.
- Involve local people in identifying the contextual risks of doing harm and the best means of mitigation. The combination of PALC and microgrant procedures promoted in sclr approaches offers one such set of measures for doing this; surely there are others.
- Policies and protocols are not absolute truths set in stone – they can be changed and should be continuously tested and challenged: that is the only way practice continues to improve.
- Aid agencies need to recognise that community-led processes will not be successful if agencies don’t address and adapt their own internal cultures, procedures and organisational development needs. Change management within NGOs is as important as the promotion of new technical methodologies for sclr.
- Donors need to recognise their enormous opportunity to improve on the status quo by developing incentives that allow risk, embrace uncertainty, encourage flexibility and reward real learning.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

In the past we had opportunities to learn and understand communities, but it was through pre-defined activities. Now we are astonished by the new facts we learned about communities through this approach. We learned how to gain trust from communities. We have learned, after these long years of work with communities, that we could have made a better impact with less effort if we followed such an approach. It is not pretence; we have actually shifted power to communities (Ahmad, MAAN Development Center, Gaza).⁷⁹

The potential for using humanitarian aid to strengthen crisis-affected people's own initiatives, ideas and inclination to help each other (often through emergent, informal and ephemeral groups) remains largely untapped by the majority of mainstream humanitarian and protection interventions. Indeed, the motivation for such collective self-help is often undermined by mainstream relief. In contrast, the case studies shared in this paper present an inspiring picture of what survivors of crises can achieve through their own agency when supported to define and manage their own initiatives for improving the well-being of their wider communities.

Chapter 2 demonstrates in detail the significant benefits of strengthening opportunities for such collective self-help alongside more conventional humanitarian programming. Across a wide range of contexts, improvements are consistently documented in effectiveness, responsiveness, innovation, dignity, psychological recovery, social cohesion, female leadership, downward (and upward) accountability, conflict sensitivity, cost efficiency and speed. When multiple locally led initiatives are supported simultaneously, a nexus approach naturally emerges which appears particularly effective at generating holistic responses to conflict contexts. The synergy resulting from community groups' own intertwining of relief, peacebuilding and livelihood aims and actions has been particularly striking. Where attention has been given to facilitating experiential learning and connectivity, communities appear able to strengthen their own resilience and DRR, taking crucial *transformative* initiatives (often overlooked by mainstream humanitarian programming) towards tackling root causes of vulnerability.

The evidence presented here suggests that this emerging practice, referred to as sclr, allows mainstream humanitarian actors to provide effective support for citizen-led action across a wide range of contexts, from sudden-onset disasters to protracted crises. These sclr approaches can be applied rapidly, at low cost and at scale by national and local NGOs as a complement to the needs-based and household-focused approach of mainstream humanitarian aid, requiring neither a deep prior knowledge of a target area nor extended and costly periods of preparation. They meet and often exceed the levels of accountability, compliance and do-no-harm required by current humanitarian standards and slot naturally alongside current cash transfer programming.

79 Jarar et al. (2020) 'Learning brief: Gaza community led action in practice'. L2GP (www.local2global.info/research/local/sclr-gaza).

Furthermore, since sclr complements conventional humanitarian interventions, humanitarian workers are exposed to a different way of engaging with crisis-affected people. In all of the case studies presented here, NGO staff reflect that, by allowing them to transfer power to people in crisis, sclr helps them to see target populations in a new light: not as ‘others’ who require ever-increasing layers of upward accountability, compliance protocols and control to prevent them from disrupting externally defined projects and standards, but rather as fellow citizens who are knowledgeable, capable, resourceful and trustworthy, and desperately trying to maintain their dignity, self-worth and sense of a wider caring community. It may well be that the shift in mindset that accompanies such a change in perceptions will contribute as much as any policy directives to addressing the neo-colonial characteristics still so apparent within institutionalised humanitarian aid.

In the training, I felt nothing solid in my hand. It was very hard for me to visualize how this can be done ... I only started to trust the approach when the implementation started, and I witnessed people’s reaction. The people started to think about their resources and capacities (Maysoon, CFTA, Gaza).⁸⁰

Of course, like all approaches sclr has its limitations. Since it builds on the capacities of self-mobilising groups, its scope and level of impact depend on what these might be in any one affected population, and will vary accordingly across different contexts. As such, sclr cannot be relied on to answer all needs of all subsections of a population, but rather works well alongside more usual mainstream and targeted aid efforts. Sclr requires agencies to have a level of community facilitation skills to initiate PALC successfully – skills often more closely associated with ‘development’ approaches.⁸¹ In addition, because sclr explicitly seeks to support and strengthen collective agency aimed at the wider good, it is not necessarily effective at supporting actions required only at household level. While we are still learning about collective planning and agency around livelihoods, the individual/family nature of most sources of income may not lend themselves to the group-based approaches.

Much still has to be learnt about a range of other programmatic and operational issues. Are there contexts where new groups could be encouraged to form (especially among marginalised sections of society) without compromising the critical sense of ownership normally only found in self-mobilising groups? Can group grants be used to contribute to aspects of livelihood recovery, and if so how? Can local government become an active facilitator of sclr when national procedures are often so averse to community empowerment?

Our problem is that the NGOs who write the proposals always want to please the donor, even if they are wrong. It is time to change this (Community member, Gaza).⁸²

80 Ibid.

81 See Chapter 2 for more detail.

82 Ibid.

Sclr is no silver bullet, but it can help humanitarian aid embrace a more people-centred and holistic approach – to become more demand-led and less supply-driven, more respectful of the agency that arises from local communities and more adept at supporting it. It resonates with the increasing recognition of the importance of ‘mutual aid’⁸³ – as evidenced so prominently in the worldwide communal responses to Covid-19. Sclr also offers a practical means of reducing the paternalistic and neo-colonial tendencies of institutional aid. It is the combination of approaches that appears so important: the existing needs-based, household-targeted inputs of external humanitarian aid *plus* the strengths-based, organic, collective self-help of local people. This is why sclr also explicitly promotes new forms of context-driven coordination that can provide the space and means for these two complementary humanitarian systems to connect, communicate and collaborate.

There is a change in the perspective of the people. The only way we can uplift our lives is to help ourselves. Regardless of the amount of grants or assistance ... if we do not lead and share our work then we will remain at our weakest state. If another crisis occurs, we now know to focus on the opportunities to respond rather than the problems (Survivor of Marawi siege, Philippines).⁸⁴

As 2021 stills sees power undeniably entrenched with international actors, it is *they* who now have the responsibility to create space to mainstream these combined approaches. Their verbal commitments to the Grand Bargain’s participation revolution, nexus and localisation obligations are well documented, but to date progress has been slow in turning rhetoric into action.⁸⁵ Sclr provides one safe and accountable means for them to start shifting some of their power over planning, design, implementation and budgets to affected citizens and community groups themselves. The evidence presented in this paper indicates that concerns over financial and programmatic compliance can no longer be used to justify delaying such a shift. The fact that support for citizen and ‘bystander’ action is increasingly common within many donor countries further highlights the incongruence of stalling such a shift within disaster responses across the Global South.

It seems that a level of introspection and leadership from the head offices of humanitarian donors and aid agencies is still urgently required, as is a similar shift in the mindset of aid workers across the sector. This is not a radical request: rather, it is a common-sense invitation to become part of an inspiring and long-overdue process of promoting and strengthening proven ways of working that support the remarkable humanity, capacity, initiative and collective compassion of people in crisis. The risks of continuing to hold back seem much greater than those of letting go.

83 See for example: https://ssir.org/articles/entry/lessons_from_mutual_aid_during_the_coronavirus_crisis; and www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2020/06/08/coronavirus-transform-humanitarianism-aid#five.

84 Upcoming L2GP learning paper on lessons from ongoing application and adaptation of sclr in Philippines, expected publication mid-2021.

85 See for example: Els (2020) ‘Localisation in numbers: humanitarian funding flows and leadership in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Nigeria, oPt, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Ukraine’. L2GP (www.local2global.info/research/the-humanitarian-economy/localisation-in-numbers).

We leave you with some questions to encourage such introspection. Imagine your home was engulfed tomorrow by a major disaster that devastated the lives, possessions and livelihoods of your family and many thousands of others. When relief arrived, would you choose to be treated only as a victim, registered and codified to passively receive externally designed aid that might (or might not) meet your particular needs? Or would you welcome a simple means of accessing additional support that enabled you and your surviving relatives and friends to contribute to the survival, protection, recovery and well-being of those around you, according to your own knowledge, experience and priorities?

If you give a stick to someone, it means they've been given power. Empowerment means letting them make decisions, giving them resources. Why do we hold on to the power? Release it! Let them use it! (Darare Gonche, IREMO, Kenya).

Annex 1 Overview of the practical experience and activities that have shaped and informed the development of survivor- and community-led crisis response, 1996–2021

Sclr approaches have evolved through an ad-hoc but continuous process of reflection, design/ redesign and testing in practice. The practice has been shaped by responses to a wide variety of humanitarian crises spanning Africa, Asia and the Middle East covering responses to floods, cyclones, droughts, earthquakes as well as protracted political and military crises and conflict.

Table A1 lists the project activities that have directly informed the development of sclr in practice and this paper. There will doubtless be examples of similar approaches being used elsewhere, which were not known to the authors at the time of writing and therefore not part of the research and experience-gathering underpinning this paper.

Table A1 Examples of sclr approaches in practice

Location and date of sclr case study	Type, scale and nature of crisis	Nature, outreach, scale and approximate expenditure (\$) of sclr approach	Local agencies facilitating sclr approach	INGOs supporting and relevant publications/ references
Ethiopia North Wollo, 1996–2000	Recurrent droughts and chronic poverty Protracted crises	Pre-sclr activities. Supporting 100+ burial associations (<i>k'ires</i>) with community microgrants to establish, stock and manage their own seed and cereal banks, and plan and manage their own micro-projects. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach: approx. 50,000 people • Total: \$200,000 		SOS Sahel UK

Location and date of sclr case study	Type, scale and nature of crisis	Nature, outreach, scale and approximate expenditure (\$) of sclr approach	Local agencies facilitating sclr approach	INGOs supporting and relevant publications/ references
Myanmar Irrawaddy Delta, 2008–2010	Cyclone Nargis Sudden-onset disaster: 150,000 died; 2–3 million homeless; massive infrastructure destruction; trauma	Pre-sclr activities. Rapid local mobilization, action learning and community microgrants. 450 emergent self-help groups implement their own survival and recovery responses. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach: 500,000 people • Total: \$2,000,000 • Community grants: \$1,740,000 Establishment of demand-led coordination, networking and capacity-strengthening mechanism (the Local Resource Centre)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paung Ku (https://paungkumyanmar.org) • Local Resource Centre (LRC) (https://www.facebook.com/LRCMyanmar/) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SC-UK-led alliance of seven INGOs⁸⁶ • https://odihpn.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/12/humanitarian-exchange041.pdf • www.alnap.org/help-library/alnap-innovations-case-study-no-4-pknr
Myanmar Coastal Rakhine, 2010	Cyclone Giri Sudden-onset: 100,000+ homeless; 1.1 million affected; 170+ died; massive infrastructure destruction		Paung Ku, Myanmar	www.alnap.org/help-library/shelter-and-nfi-cluster-evaluation-cyclone-giri-response

86 The original INGO consortium that supported the initiation of Paung Ku (now an influential and successful registered national NGO) comprised SC-UK (host), Burnet Institute, HIV Aids Alliance, Norwegian Peoples' Aid, Oxfam GB, Swiss Aid and World Concern. The initial donor was AUSAid.

Location and date of sclr case study	Type, scale and nature of crisis	Nature, outreach, scale and approximate expenditure (\$) of sclr approach	Local agencies facilitating sclr approach	INGOs supporting and relevant publications/ references
Sudan Conflict areas, ⁸⁷ 2011–present	Ongoing civil war Sudden-onset and protracted: conflict with high civilian casualties; severe humanitarian, protection, rights and livelihood crisis; no negotiated access	Early sclr-style initiatives. PALC and microgrants used to support women- and community-led protection and survival; livelihood activities; local-level conflict transformation activities	Three local NGOs ⁸⁸	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Several INGOs and L2GP, supported by a range of larger institutional donors Papers, video, etc. at: www.local2global.info
Sierra Leone, Liberia 2014–16	Ebola epidemic Sudden-onset and protracted	Provision of microgrants to existing CBOs and emergent self-help groups to support community-led action	Multiple local CBOs (see details in evaluation report: www.genevaglobal.com/2016/05/Ebola-Crisis-Report.pdf)	GenevaGlobal
Philippines Mindanao, 2017	Agusan river flash floods and Surigao earthquake Casualties; destruction of homes and infrastructure; existing poverty	Sclr initiatives with remote, marginalised indigenous people for survival and recovery needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reach: approx. 2,000 people Total: \$37,000 	Ecosystems Work for Essential Benefits Inc. (EcoWEB) with SMVI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> L2GP, Humanitarian Leadership Academy and CORDAID www.local2global.info/sclr-in-the-philippines
Philippines Marawi, Mindanao, 2017–present (ongoing)	Siege of Marawi City Sudden-onset and protracted: conflict; civilian casualties; massive infrastructure destruction	Sclr initiative to provide immediate response to IDPs through PALC and micro cash grants. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reach: approx. 330,000 people Total: \$564,182 	ECOWEB	Christian Aid, Johanniter, United Methodist Committee on Relief, L2GP, Help Germany, Good Neighbors, MMCEAI-AWO, OPAPP, IOM, CORDAID, UPCSWCD, HLA, WVI and IDEALS-ICCO

87 More details available on request.

88 More details available on request.

Location and date of sclr case study	Type, scale and nature of crisis	Nature, outreach, scale and approximate expenditure (\$) of sclr approach	Local agencies facilitating sclr approach	INGOs supporting and relevant publications/ references
Philippines Lanao del Norte and Itogon, 2018–2019	Vinta and Mangkhut typhoons Landslides; floods,	Sclr initiatives for target communities and local government units • Total: \$100,000+	ECOWEB	Good Neighbors (South Korea) AWO (Germany) Help Germany
Philippines North Cotabato, Mindanao, 2019–2020	Earthquakes Magnitude 6+; 200,000 people affected	Sclr response targeting more than 6,000 people • Reach: 800 households • Total: \$100,000	ECOWEB	Johanniter International Assistance
West Bank, Palestine Several phases, March 2018–February 2021	Protracted conflict Occupation/Naqba; poverty and livelihoods; protection; resilience; rights and justice	Sclr initiative, PALC/PVCA, community cash grants, advocacy, livelihoods, protection, health, education • Reach: 12 communities • Total: \$424,503 • Community grants: \$122,000	East Jerusalem YMCA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACT CoS, DCA/ Danida, L2GP, PAX, ICCO and CA • L2GP Palestine Learning Paper at www.local2global.info
Northern Kenya 2017–present	Drought, conflict and poverty Protracted, slow-onset crisis with periodic sudden-onset conflict	Sclr initiative for collective action with 40 micro-projects in three counties focusing on income-generating activities, water systems, education and peace building • Reach: 9,600 people • Total: \$121,000 • Community grants: \$67,200	PACIDA, CIFA, MioNET, Caritas Marsabit, Caritas Maralal, Caritas Isiolo, IREMO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christian Aid (LPPR/START/DIFID), CAFOD and L2GP • LPPR paper at www.local2global.info

Location and date of sclr case study	Type, scale and nature of crisis	Nature, outreach, scale and approximate expenditure (\$) of sclr approach	Local agencies facilitating sclr approach	INGOs supporting and relevant publications/ references
Myanmar Kayah, Southern Shan, Rakhine, Northern Shine, Kachin, 2017	Conflict, poverty and governance crises Protracted, slow- onset crisis with periodic sudden- onset conflict	Co-design workshop and sclr initiatives for collective action with 73 micro- projects in three states • Reach: 2,208 people • Total: \$38,000 • Community grants: \$26,000	KBC (Karen), DEAR Myamar, BBS, MFR, KBC Kachin/Shan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christian Aid (LPPR/START/DIFID), Kings College London and L2GP • LPPR paper at www.local2global.info
Myanmar Northern Shan, two phases: (1) 2018– 2019; (2) 2019–2020	Conflict and poverty Protracted with periodic sudden- onset conflict	Sclr initiative, training/co-design, PALC, microgrants, etc. • Reach: 43,001 people • Total: \$335,000 • Community grants: \$235,000	KBC (Kachin), MHDO, TSYU, CIDKP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCA (Danida) and L2GP, DCA with HARP, L2GP • Paper forthcoming; will be available at www.local2global.info
Yemen 2016–present	Acute protection humanitarian crisis Violent conflict; livelihood collapse; and starvation	Use of community microgrants to enable crisis- affected community groups to strengthen autonomous self- help and promote peace	Multiple local youth associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saferworld UK • www.saferworld.org.uk/youth-contributions-to-peacebuilding-in-yemen
Palestine, Gaza June–December 2019	Protracted crisis Occupation; poverty; war	Sclr initiatives, training/co-design, PALC, cash grants, etc. • Reach: seven communities • Total: \$147,680 • Community grants: \$103,500	MAAN and CFTA with seven community groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCA/CA/ACT, CoS/ Maan/CFTA, L2GP • www.local2global.info/research/local/sclr-gaza

Location and date of sclr case study	Type, scale and nature of crisis	Nature, outreach, scale and approximate expenditure (\$) of sclr approach	Local agencies facilitating sclr approach	INGOs supporting and relevant publications/ references
Haiti June 2019–February 2020	Protracted crisis Drought; chronic poverty; lack of services and economic opportunities; typhoons; poor governance; violence	Joint sclr capacity-building programme on sclr initiatives, co-design supporting 38 self-help groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach: 7,532 people • Total: \$214,000 • Community grants: \$160,000 	GADEL, KORAL, ATEPASE, ACDED, SCH, SJM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DKH, CA, ACT CoS and LWF • Paper forthcoming; will be available at www.local2global.info
Sudan 2019–present	Conflict Livelihood collapse; violent oppression by military regime followed by revolution	Sclr used to support citizen-led initiatives aimed at promoting peace, unity and justice and resolving/mitigating life-threatening conflict <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community grants: \$500,000+ 	Multiple NNGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saferworld UK • Paper forthcoming; will be available at www.saferworld.org.uk
DRC 2019–present		Initial piloting (\$25,000–50,000 per national agency) to contribute to improved protection, livelihoods and opportunities for peace	National Partnership of Children and Youth in Peacebuilding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace Direct • www.peacedirect.org/localactionfund
CAR 2019–present			Uru	
Mali 2019–present			Youth Association for Active Citizenship and Democracy	
Nigeria 2019–present			Peace Initiative Network	
Myanmar 2019–present			Paung Ku and Swe Ta Har	

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