

# Changing International Trends in Disasters and the Role of Christian Agencies

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ZERO DRAFT

## ***Preface***

The aim of this paper is to encourage discussion amongst like minded agencies (through the Global Connections Forum and the Integral Alliance) on the best way the church and church-based organisations can address the increasing intensity and frequency of natural and man-made disasters. ***It is offered as a zero based draft, available for other agencies to comment on and evolve, so we can gravitate to a collective position to inform and influence disaster response.***

This paper introduces Tearfund's theological perspective on the Christian call to serve the poor; explains some of the trends in both natural disaster and conflict apparent today and the trends of disaster responses within these contexts. It also highlights the significance of these changes to Christian agencies currently operating in or seeking to operate in these environments, with a desire to represent Jesus and the church as well as possible. And finally, it highlights what we believe are some of the vital contributions that Christian agencies can make in the context of disaster response.

The paper is in 3 parts:

- Section A explores the theological foundation of why Christian organisations should be involved in disaster response, and its relationship to the mission of the Church, articulated through Integral Mission
- Section B then gives an overview of the trends to raise awareness of the changing context within which we work, and introduces concepts of resilience and risk reduction
- Section C then brings these together, presenting conclusions on how the church and Christian agencies could and should react.

## **SECTION A – THEOLOGY**

### ***The inextricable link between Integral Mission and Disasters***

Tearfund's definition of Integral Mission is: "... the church speaking of and living out its faith in Jesus Christ in every aspect of life. It is prayerful and God-guided work, seeking to restore relationships between God, humanity and the world, and is the work of the church in contributing to the positive physical, spiritual, economic, psychological and social transformation of people. It is about answering God's call to love one another as he has loved us, and, in the practice of development about recognizing that people are more than their hunger or despair; they are complex and precious, made in God's image and they are loved by God". As the Micah Declaration puts it: "our proclamation (of the gospel) has social consequences... And our social involvement has evangelistic consequences."

Tearfund believes in what Timothy Keller calls the “inseparable relationship of evangelism and social justice” (Keller, 2010), and agrees with Tom Wright that it is a ‘false dichotomy’ to distinguish between the work of saving souls and the work of improving the lives of humans, especially the suffering poor. Jesus’ gospel is not that we can escape from the world but that He is Lord of the world and that His resurrection over death transforms the world, and us within it - and that we in turn can be part of His transforming work.

But what does this look like? Luke 4 shows us Jesus reading from Isaiah 61 in reference to Himself as Messiah: “He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.” He taught and sent his disciples to do likewise (John 20:21), and we are called to follow in their footsteps. Our imitation of Christ calls on us to show God’s love (and our love) practically, in the here and now, in service, as well as in the proclamation of the Good News of salvation.

The story of the Bible is the story of God’s mission to show His love to His creation, and to restore His relationships with humanity and the rest of creation after the fall. It is the story of how He calls people to join Him in this mission, from Abraham and Moses, to the Apostles, to the Church today. Christ calls us to love the Lord our God with all our hearts and minds, and our neighbours as ourselves: to worship and to serve. Integral Mission is the term we use to describe this discipleship – our expression of and participation in the mission of God in every aspect of our lives.

As such, the church is called to respond to the fact that there are people living in poverty, vulnerable to disaster. Because this vulnerability often directly results from injustice (e.g. governments prioritising protection for the rich but not the poor), oppression (e.g. refugees from violence settling in hazard-prone areas), and the degradation of creation (e.g. deforestation, climate change), our response should involve disaster response, risk reduction, climate change adaptation and conflict prevention.

Tearfund’s interlinked work of responding to disasters, protecting the poor from future disasters, changing unjust disaster-related policies, and restoring the health and integrity of the environment express this understanding of the mission of the church as Integral Mission:

#### **Key Principle 1: Created for worship**

- **As Christians we believe that humans, along with the rest of creation, are created to worship God. Worship and intimacy develop our expression of the image of God in us and transform the way we live in the world.**

Genesis tells us that the world was created by God, that it is good and that God desires relationship with the created order. We recognise that the beauty of creation reflects its maker and has an inherent value. Worship and glory-giving is the natural response of humans and all of creation to God:

*"Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it. Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them; let all the trees of the forest sing for joy. Let all creation rejoice before the LORD." (PSALM 96:11-13)*

In Luke 19:40, Jesus tells the Pharisees that even the stones will cry out worship to Him if humankind fails to do so.

Humans, made in God's image, have a special relationship to God, and a special responsibility to His creation. Our worship and our relationship are personal and intimate, growing our love and reflection of God's image in us to the rest of creation, and this deepening relationship leads us to love and care for creation, and for other people, as He does.

### **Key Principle 2: Restoration of relationships**

- **We believe that as Christians we are called to be part of God's restorative work in the world; restoring 3 key relationships: 1) between God and humankind, 2) between humankind itself (across race, gender, language, ability etc) and 3) humankind with the rest of creation.**

After the fall shattered our perfect relationship with God the creator, He has been actively redeeming the world, beginning with the call of Abraham, the calling of Israel and giving of the Law and the words of the prophets and culminating in the saving work through Jesus Christ; His life, death and resurrection. The saving work of Christ is the point at which all fallen relationships between God and humans, humans with each other and with rest of creation were restored. The mission of God's people is to proclaim and demonstrate that restoration throughout the world. Romans 8:18-25 proclaims that Christ will restore not just humankind but all of creation. The hope of redemption is both present and future. It began on Easter Sunday and is always moving towards completion. The Kingdom of Heaven "exists now in our world, but not yet fully and completely." We are redeemed through our faith in Jesus Christ now, but we also eagerly await the New Creation – the hope and expectation that this redemption of all creation will be fully revealed.

In the meantime, we are called to imitate Christ and to seek the Kingdom: to pray, as the Lord's prayer says, "Let your Kingdom come, on earth, as it is in heaven." We are called to pursue restored, Godly relationships with each other, and with creation, and to live in a way that expresses our hope in the Kingdom and reveals it to the world around us. Jesus disciplined his followers so that they could be like Him in the world, after He was gone, to participate in the mission of God. As mentioned above, the Bible story is not about how God rescues the world...but how He rescues it through us.

### **Key Principle 3: Care of Creation**

- **Humans are unique in our call to be stewards of creation. The way we live and treat creation impacts all people, including ourselves, and we are called to care for it, as a part of our expression of God's image in us.**

There is an 'indissoluble link' between human activity and the created order: in particular in the way humans live their individual lives and conducts relationships within society impacts the state of creation. As the Wholly Living report (2010) makes clear, changes to our environment - to God's creation - have a profound human cost, especially upon the poorest who are on the frontline and disproportionately dependent upon natural assets as a principal source of income, and lack the financial resources to adapt to the threat. Huge numbers of people are already suffering and dying in droughts, floods and epidemics due to growing strain on natural resources and the negative effects on the climate.

Care of creation is explicitly recognised as an integral element of our Christian mission by much of the church, including the Anglican Communion, for whom it is one of the *Five Marks of Mission*, and by the Lausanne Movement. Tearfund subscribes to the statement made by the Lausanne movement in Cape Town in 2010 that: 'The earth is created, sustained and redeemed by Christ. We cannot claim to love God while abusing what belongs to Christ by right of creation, redemption and inheritance.' In expressing our love of God and God's love for his creation we are called to consider the impact that our actions have upon our fellow humans living within that creation, and on the state of creation itself. In serving Jesus where the need is greatest, Tearfund is committed to love and work alongside the most vulnerable who are largely those affected by our treatment of God's creation and our belief that as Christians we need to address the issues of global poverty and climate change in tandem, and with equal urgency.

#### **Key Principle 4: Knowing God through serving the poor**

- **Practical love for our neighbours is one of the ways in which we come to know God better: if we do not love our neighbour in practice, we are missing out on knowing God in full.**

We have already talked about the way in which our worship of God increases our ability to express His love in the world, including to our fellow humans and to creation. In his book *Compassionate Ministry – Theological Foundations*, Bryan P. Stone writes of a dynamic circle of what we believe and what we do. He notes that works of compassion, justice, serving the poor and marginalised, are not just a response to us knowing God, but a practice of compassion that leads to a greater the knowledge of God and a deepening of our relationship with him.

There is a key distinction between knowing about God and knowing God. In Matthew 7:21, Jesus says "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). That is not to say that we serve the poor in order to deepen our relationship with God: our heart to serve the poor comes out of that relationship and our desire to be obedient to his commands. The deepening relationships with him that come to us from that are an additional blessing.

In Matthew 25 Jesus says: 'For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked

and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' (Matt 25: 35-36). For John, in his first letter, it is also very clear that 'the one who does not love does not know God' (1 John 4:7-8). For him it is straightforward, it is impossible to know God apart from serving and loving one's neighbour. In verse 20 he says 'those who do not love their brothers and sisters who they can see, cannot love God who they have not seen.'

### **Tearfund's Quality Standards shaping our practice of Integral Mission**

Whilst there is always a need to prioritise, the following are applicable in all contexts:

- **Values:** In upholding our core values we stand against all forms of exploitation and abuse, fraud, bribery and any other conduct which is incompatible with these values.
- **Impartiality:** the provision of assistance must always be provided on the basis of need and not subject to favouritism or discrimination.
- **Accountability:** ensuring the full participation of project participants, being transparent and sharing information, and receiving and responding to their feedback.
- **Do no harm requirements,** which relate to a number of the Quality Standards, for example: Gender (ensuring projects enhance safety for women and girls); Conflict (ensuring the project design does not heighten people's vulnerability to violence and conflict), Environment (ensuring projects do not lead to environmental damage)

Tearfund believes that these minimum standards of professional quality help us answer Christ's call to serve the most vulnerable and marginalised, regardless of their race, religion or nationality; with honesty and integrity; providing a practical witness of our response to God's love for us by loving others. Tearfund believes that disaster response work is an outworking of a desire to show God's love to others at the point of their greatest vulnerability; to provide food when they are hungry, sustenance when they are thirsty, clothes when they are lacking, shelter when they are displaced in a foreign land and companionship when they are imprisoned. We are to do this, as Jesus did, across lines of ethnicity, religion, gender or status (Matt 5:46-48, cf Good Samaritan.) It is from this basis that transformative relationships can then be established.

It is our willingness to see the image of God in the poor and marginalised that reveals our heart towards Christ. The more we practice compassion, the deeper our knowledge of God. The deeper our knowledge of God, the more we practice compassion: it is a circle of action and reflection. It is in serving the poor and meeting God in this way that we come to know more of God's heart for the poor, His compassion for and salvation of the marginalised, to understand more of who He is and how He loves, and are further shaped in our roles as co-labourers of His restorative work

It is from this theological foundation of service as worship, our part in God's restorative work amongst humankind and creation, caring for creation as part of worship and reflection of God's image in us, and of serving the poor and marginalised as an expression of His love and our obedience that grows ever deeper as we live as disciples, that Tearfund carries out its vision. It is this vision that leads us to follow Jesus to where the needs are greatest and this is increasingly where disasters strike communities, where people are already in a position of chronic poverty and vulnerability and less able to respond to shocks.

*Tearfund's Vision is to see 50 million people released from material and spiritual poverty through a worldwide network of 100,000 churches.*

## **SECTION B – ANALYSIS OF TRENDS AND APPROACHES**

### **CHANGING TRENDS – THE NEW NORM?**

#### **Key Highlights**

- The number, intensity and complexity of natural disasters is on the increase.
- Those most affected by disasters are the world's poorest.
- Vulnerability to hazards is increasing, particularly from conflict, climate change, urbanisation and population density, migration, food insecurity and food price fluctuations.
- Poverty is expected to become increasingly concentrated in fragile and conflict-affected states.
- Conflict and fragility increase the impact of natural disasters and natural disasters exacerbate pre-existing conflicts.
- Climate related disaster vulnerability is increasing and is likely to be felt most in fragile and conflict-affected states.
- Governments and agencies still prefer to spend their money on response rather than risk reduction, including preparedness, prevention and mitigation

#### ***Trends in natural disasters***

The intensity and frequency of natural disasters is undoubtedly on the increase according to EM-DAT: the OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database and the church must consider its response. Research from 1980 to 2011 illustrates that disasters have steadily increased, and the intensity and the amount of damage they cause has also significantly increased.

#### **Statistics to make the church think**

Up to 352million people will be living in the 49 most hazard prone countries in 2030, most of them in South-East Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.

### ***The plight of the marginalised***

Tearfund's own report *Dried Up and Drowned Out* affirms through personal stories, that it is the most vulnerable people on earth that disproportionately feel the impact of these increasingly intense and frequent natural disasters (Roach, 2012). According to the UNISDR Global Assessment Report of 2011, "Over the past 30 years, the world's population has grown by 87 percent. The proportion of the population living in flood-prone river basins has increased by 114 percent and on cyclone-exposed coastlines by 192 percent. More than half of the world's large cities, with populations ranging from 2 to 15 million are currently located in areas of high risk of seismic activity." The people at greatest risk are those with makeshift housing, who live in high-risk land spaces, in overpopulated urban sprawl.

### ***The plight of women***

Women and children make up 60% of the world's chronically hungry, women bear the greatest burden of childcare, water and fuel collection, cooking and care for the elderly, and their wages, in the majority of countries are 70-90% less than men's. Inequality exacerbates their vulnerability and reduces their ability to cope with a disaster. It is women looking after multiple children, breastfeeding or pregnant who are at greatest risk.

### **Statistics to make the church think**

Operation World tells us that 1 in 6 people live in shantytowns, and yet only 1 in 500 missionaries work in shantytowns and 1 in 100,000 national pastors are in shantytowns, and yet 250,000 people per day migrate from rural to urban settings. So the church is increasingly missing the most vulnerable and unreached people.

### ***Years of development gains lost***

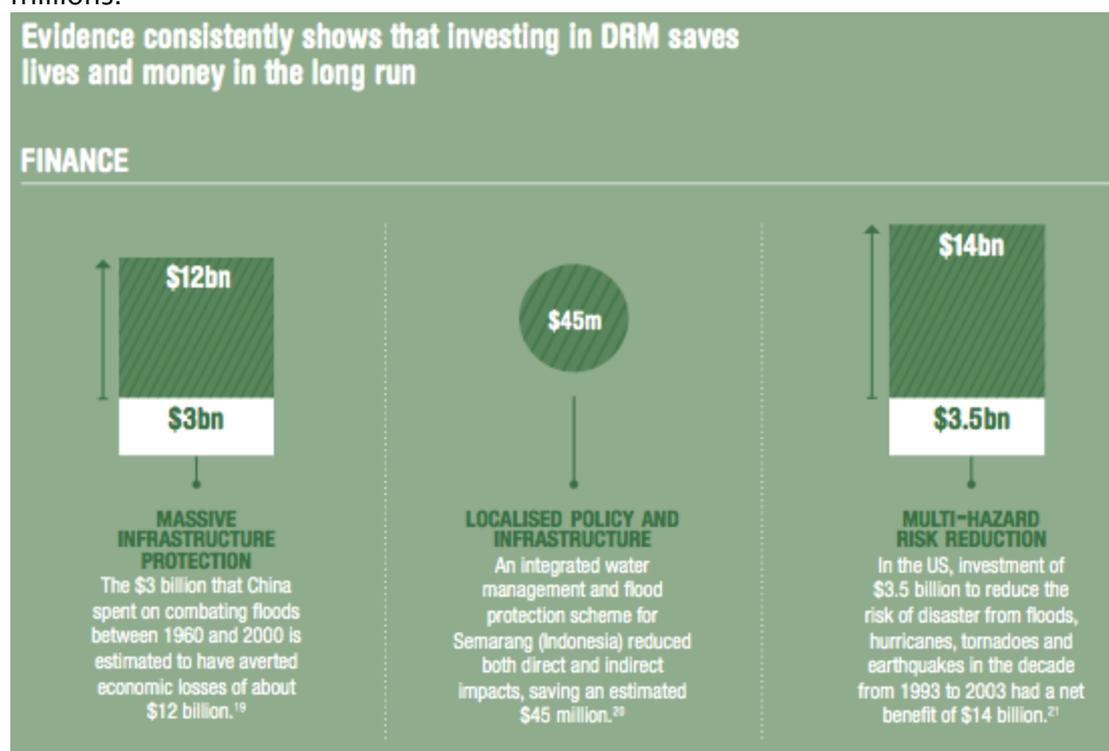
Not only do disasters disrupt the life of an affected community, they are proven to reduce development gains and knock people, communities and economies to greater levels of poverty than before the disaster struck. For example, during the 1991-92 drought in Africa, Zimbabwe's GDP dropped by 9.5%. Hurricane Mitch in 1998 set back development 20 years across the Central American countries it affected.



Source: Overseas Development Institute, 2011

And still the international community and national governments prefer to put money into emergency response over preparedness and mitigation, despite

evidence of investment in risk reduction and mitigation activities saving lives and millions.



Source: Overseas Development Institute, 2011

### ***Trends in fragile and conflict affected states***

As with natural disasters, conflict robs countries of hard won development gains and by 2025 poverty is expected to be concentrated in fragile and conflict-affected states (Kharas and Rogerson, 2012). In the same way, hard won peace gains can be lost if natural disaster risk is not addressed. The ODI paper *'When disasters and conflict collide'* concludes, perhaps unsurprisingly, that 'there is strong evidence to suggest that conflict and fragility increase the impact of natural disasters' and that 'natural disasters exacerbate pre-existing conflicts'. Not only this, but future projections predict that climate related disaster vulnerability will be felt most in fragile and conflict affected states (ODI, 2014).

### **Statistics to make the church think**

Between 2005 and 2009, more than 50% of people affected by natural-hazard disasters lived in fragile and conflict-affected states and in some years the figure was more than 80%.

Overseas Development Institute, 2011

### ***Increasing pressures on environmental resources***

Maplecroft Global Risk Analysis notes an increase in conflicts in Africa and Asia this year and climate related disasters are increasing, putting an ever greater strain on natural resources which is expected to increase conflicts globally as well. Three of the last four emergency responses launched by Tearfund were to situations of

conflict – Syria, Philippines, Central African Republic and Iraq, and some authors note that these conflicts were exacerbated by climate and environmental pressures.

The ODI research asserts that 'Violent conflict and insecurity destroy livelihoods, infrastructure and basic services that make a population resilient'. A lack of social contract or functioning governance between the state and its citizens that is often inherent in conflicts creates a vulnerability to natural hazards that is worse than in a state that has functioning governance.

### ***Factors that combine to create the perfect storm***

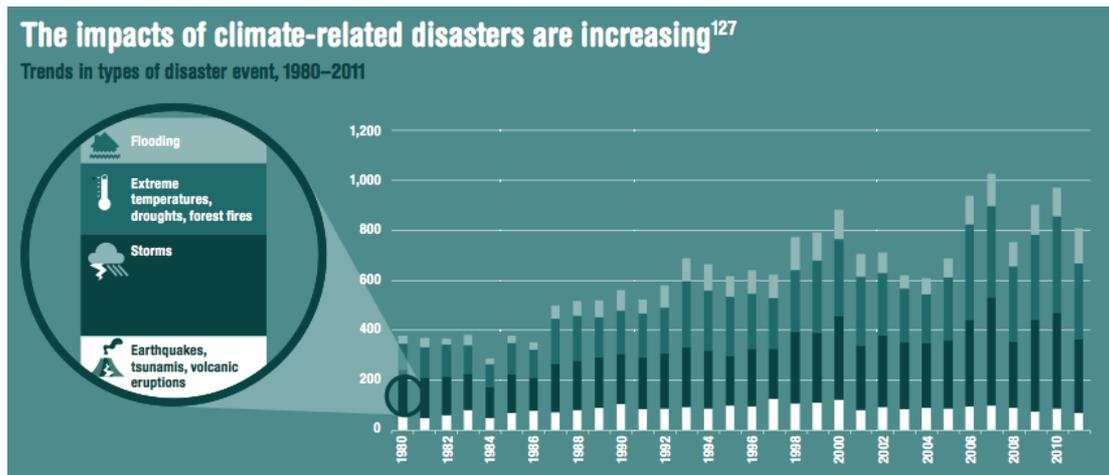
The World Development Report concretised the link between natural disaster risk and that of conflict and fragility in 2011 by including natural disaster deaths as a key indicator of a countries' overall security and acknowledging that 'multiple stressors raise the risk of violence' (World Bank, 2011:17 cited in ODI, 2014).

A stressor is defined as a long-term trend that undermines the potential of a given system or process and increases the vulnerability of actors within it. Various stressors increase the impacts of natural disasters. These can include conflict, climate change, urbanisation and population density, migration, food insecurity and food price fluctuations.

### ***The plight of the displaced***

Countries in a state of conflict or fragility are at greater risk of changing settlement patterns and forced migration, often leading populations to settle in high risk areas and leading them to take up risky livelihoods, whilst living in greater vulnerability to shocks and stressors. Such settlements are often subject to deforestation, increasing the risk of landslides and erosion, reducing their resilience and increasing their vulnerability in the face of a quick onset natural disaster. UNDP has noted that in some situations these areas are coupled with low rule of law and an environment of criminality, which inhibits people from heeding early warnings for fear of looting their property (UNDP, 2011:16, cited in ODI, 2014). Such displaced communities suffer from having little political voice and governments have little incentive to spend money on risk reduction activities for their benefit, thus increasing their exposure to the hazards.

The stressor of climate related events account for a large and increasing proportion of all natural disasters, the impacts of climate related disasters are increasing, and climate change is likely to increase the rate and intensity of extreme weather events such as the highest yearly temperatures and rainfall.



According to the *Foresight: Migration and Global Environment Change: Final Project Report* (2011) the stressor of migration is on the increase and likely to shape the future landscape. In 2010, 42 million people were displaced by natural hazards, a figure that has increased from 17 million in 2009. In 2011 UNHCR published that its population of concern was 36.5 million, of which 27.1 million were IDPs.

### ***More people exposed in bigger cities***

Population growth is another stressor; the world population is predicted to reach 9.1 billion by 2050. Virtually all the population growth will occur in low-income, disaster-prone countries including Pakistan, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Ethiopia and the DRC, according to the 2011 Humanitarian Emergency Response Review.

A growing share of those people will live in disaster-prone megacities. Urbanisation is increasing, more than 61% of the global population (i.e. around 5 billion people) are projected to be living in urban areas by 2030. The 2010 Haiti earthquake showed both how devastating a major disaster in an urban area could be, and how many challenges it posed to agencies accustomed to providing rural disaster relief.

### ***The downward spiral of urbanisation and food insecurity***

Food insecurity is not diminishing either; there are estimated to be 1 billion chronically hungry people in the world. There are continued risks of food price spikes, an increasing demand for food production and for livestock-related diets high in meat and dairy. But despite this increased demand, climate change is expected to further reduce crop yields, leading to a hunger gap for millions.

## **SHIFTING OF POWER – THE CHANGING GLOBAL CONTEXT**

### **Key Highlights**

- Greater sovereignty is being exercised by nation states making it harder for international agencies to gain access and legitimacy
- There are new power-holders in the International development sphere – China, India, Brazil, South Africa, Turkey, the Gulf states
- These new partners are changing the nature of NGO relationships with developing countries and their respective governments.

- Donor governments are cutting Overseas Development Aid and expecting more evidence of impact and cost-effectiveness.
- The private sector is and will continue to be a new partner for long-term development and disaster response.
- New technologies, media and social media are playing an ever-developing role in disasters.

### ***Wider trends in the operating environment***

The increased influence of China, India, Brazil, Turkey and the Gulf states, brings new ways of working with developing country governments. Direct government to government contracts for infrastructure development are awarded in return for natural resources which could potentially increase environmental fragility. Governments increasingly exercising their right to sovereignty can result in rejection of intervention and increased restrictions on international assistance from traditional responders. This new paradigm may cause developing countries to be disinclined towards traditional, Western development opportunities, seeing them as outdated and less advantageous.

### ***Church and Private Sector – unlikely bedfellows***

Related to this there is an increased recognition of the role that the private sector and commercial partnerships can contribute to long-term economic development. This is leading to increased expectations from donor governments of engagement with the private sector, requiring NGOs and church organisations to forge business partnerships or risk becoming seen as obsolete partners in favour of the private sector. This raises concerns of conflicting interests between such partners and the reduced ability of the church then to speak out against systems and practices that exacerbate disaster risk and climate change for example, through carbon emissions, lobbying against regulations or prioritise profit over beneficiary accountability and personal and communal transformation.

### ***Can Christian NGOs grow and adjust to new opportunities and threats?***

Within the donor governments there are caps and cuts being put on International Development budgets and an increased expectation of proving the impact and cost effectiveness of interventions and their efficiency to produce lasting change. Western and Economic Northern NGOs are increasingly seeing themselves as brokers, conveners and facilitators and the Southern NGOs as the implementers. This new way of working requires development of a whole new set of skills from both development agencies and their staff.

Both the public and private donors are being influenced by increased media coverage of disasters; this includes the rise of social media, which brings the views of the population closer. Both of these are leading to a demand for increased transparency and accountability, and by raising the profile of the disaster they can increase response assistance. But they can also confuse figures and supply conflicting information that slows down efficient response or coverage.

## **FROM DISASTER TO DEVELOPMENT THROUGH RESILIENCE?**

## Key Highlights

- Resilience is the ability of an individual, group or system to deal with shocks, stressors and uncertainties, and to recover from them.
- Resilience is not new; it has long been part of Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation terminology and is used in many sectors.
- Resilience is not merely about preparing for known shocks but surviving wholly unpredictable, unforeseen shocks

In the face of the new norms of climate change and disaster risk and the changes to the operating environment of Christian agencies, Tearfund and many other organisations are reassessing the value of resilience. It is not just the humanitarian and development NGOs that are concerned with resilience; it is a term used by the Financial and Insurance sectors, the Health and Education sectors and is a key consideration in risk assessment and recovery from shocks. In the humanitarian and development sphere it is a way of addressing conflict, food insecurity, and climate change for example.

The UK Department for International Development (DFID) have confirmed their commitment to working towards resilience of communities in the face of natural and man-made disasters by embedding resilience in all country-programmes by 2015, following the Humanitarian Emergency Response Review of 2011, chaired by Lord Paddy Ashdown.

### **Recommendations from the Humanitarian Emergency Response Review, 2011, regarding resilience.**

*'The more resilient a nation, the less lasting damage disasters cause and the quicker they can recover. Resilience is about being prepared for disasters, and having good systems for responding to them. It is about investing in infrastructure, like building houses and hospitals that can withstand earthquakes, or schools that double up as cyclone shelters. But it is also about investing in human capacity; strengthening a government's capacity to respond; creating disaster management structures and plans; giving people support before drought forces them to sell all their possessions. It is about economic planning that recognizes disasters can happen and makes provision for them.'*

The report urges increased anticipation of disasters; being ahead of the curve rather than always behind, preparing for disasters as well as reacting to them. It urged an increased presentation of the science of climate change, which is improving all the time, and urged decision makers take action on this information and adapt their practices.

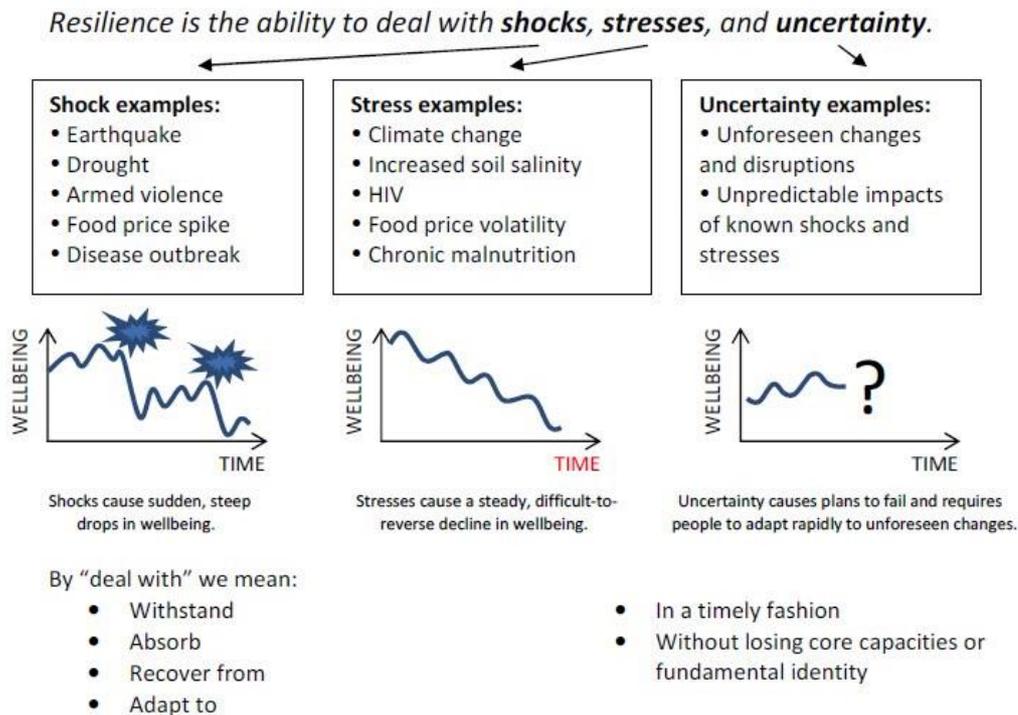
### **Defining Resilience**

By resilience we mean the ability of an individual, group or system to deal with shocks, stressors and uncertainties, and to recover from them. There are several definitions of "resilience" in the development world; though most have settled on

the vocabulary of “shocks and stressors” as the problem, and “absorb/adapt/transform” as the solution.

Tearfund’s Participatory Assessment of Disaster Risk has for some time sought to identify the vulnerabilities and capacities of a community to deal with disasters and then to plan ways of strengthening and employing the capacities and mitigating and reducing the vulnerabilities. All this is part of improving the resilience of a community to a disaster.

Tearfund uses this diagram to help understand what is meant by resilience.



Source: <https://sites.google.com/a/tearfundfriends.net/resilience/what-is-resilience/defining-resilience>

Resilience analysis helps to assess how resilient an individual, group or system is to stressors and shocks, such as natural hazards, conflict and insecurity, food shortages or high prices for example, and then what their capacity is to deal with them – how exposed are they to the shock or stressor, how sensitive are they/how much does it impact them, and what capacities do they have to adapt to the new situation? Finally then it assesses their reaction to the shock or stressor; did they survive, cope, recover, learn, or transform? Did they bounce back better, bounce back at all? Did they recover but find themselves in a worse situation than before? Or did they collapse completely into dysfunction and a breakdown of any resilience to cope with any future shocks or stressors?

### Case study – building drought resilience in the Sahel

The rains failed to come for the people of Abrik, in the grasslands of north central Niger, West Africa, in 2008 and 2009 causing the drought to be more widespread than previous years, hitting the entire country. The northern Sahel is always dry, getting only 250 to 300 mm of rain per year.

### **An integrated approach**

Jeunesse En Mission Entraide et Développement (JEMED), a small Christian NGO, has been working with the Tuareg and Fulani pastoralists since 1990, helping to build drought-resistant communities. Currently they serve communities totalling over 25,000 individuals, both Muslim and Christian. JEMED combines elements of climate change adaptation, Disaster Risk Reduction, natural resource management and community development into a single programme now referred to as "Resilient Development", a name developed by Tearfund.

**Frequent droughts** The idea of drought or climate proof solutions is central to JEMED's strategy. This idea came from the pastoralists themselves, who told JEMED in 1990 that "everything done must take into account the droughts, or it is of no interest to us". Between 1973 and 2000 only two major droughts occurred. Since the year 2000, three major droughts have occurred nationally as well as one local drought.

**Fixation points** The solution the pastoralists proposed in 1990 involves the establishment of a 'fixation point' in the group's dry-season territory; an adaptation of an existing practice of having a dry-season watering point. The water source becomes the hub in the group's territory. Usually this is a hand-dug well. Animals are used to draw the water.

**A place of opportunity** Climate change has caused the pastoralists to shift their staple food from milk to grain which has increased their water needs and decreased their mobility. The fixation point provides a permanent source of water. A grain bank at the site allows pastoralists to buy grain at prices lower than in the market. Small cooperative shops run by women exist at the sites, as well as animal banks, selling animal fodder. This means that the people sell fewer animals to pay for the grain and other essential items and save money as they do not need to travel to market. Food security is improved, making the community more resilient in times of drought.

**Livestock** These protected areas serve as drought or dry-season reserves for donkeys and milk animals. JEMED then works with the communities to secure legal recognition of their land management rights, an important part of climate change adaptation. Small revolving loans of cash and animals within the community enable people to diversify their livelihoods. This allows the pastoralists to use the skills they already have with animals to gain profit and use it to fund other income-generating activities. Although this project cycle is prolonged, it allows communities to build up resilience and diversify their economies even under drought conditions.

**Signs of change** The result is that after the crisis Abrik only lost 47 per cent of its livestock to drought, compared with 70 per cent at most other non-JEMED sites. Abrik requested only a small amount of relief aid in 2010, which was a year of severe food crisis in Niger. Their economy had been diversified so that although the loss of animals hurt the pastoralists, it did not destroy them. They were able to survive two years of drought with little outside assistance and rebuild with no assistance. The people of Abrik are now resilient and no longer need JEMED.

See more: [http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/footsteps/footsteps\\_81-90/footsteps\\_88/combating\\_drought\\_in\\_the\\_sahel/](http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/footsteps/footsteps_81-90/footsteps_88/combating_drought_in_the_sahel/)

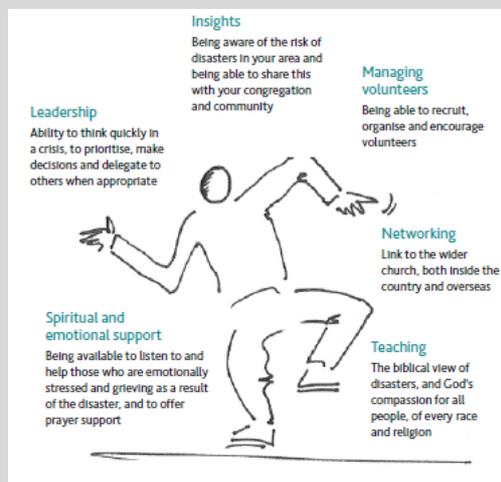
### ***The added value of resilience***

ODI researcher Simon Levine describes resilience very simply: “resilience isn’t about needs, and it cannot be understood through needs assessments. Resilience is not achieved by giving people what they lack today, but by making sure they can get what they lack for themselves, tomorrow” (Levine, 2014).

In practice, resilience work includes trying to ‘crisis-proof’ progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, i.e. trying to ensure any development made is not set back by a disaster. This could for example mean strengthening early warning systems that lead to timely action (e.g. evacuation, sale of livestock, early provision of relief); raising plinths in villages with high flood risk; multi-purpose cyclone shelters and climate resilient crops; providing people with regular cash and food transfers that are not affected by a shock but can actually expand at times of disaster thus protecting the asset base of a household in a time of shock; disaster risk reduction education in schools and school safety plans.

However, resilience is not merely a matter of preparing for “known” shocks (i.e. disasters that have happened in the past, are expected to recur, and can thus be concretely planned and prepared for). A resilient community is also one that can survive wholly unpredictable, unforeseen shocks. This requires trust; strong social ties both inside and outside the community; habits of collective experimentation and learning; ongoing access to up-to-date information about e.g. weather, climate, and markets; good leadership; an active relationship with government; and institutions that help the community take joint action. Churches can directly provide (or hinder) all these essential elements of general resilience as well as playing a key role in strengthening relationships with both direct and indirect effects on resilience.

In order to help churches and church-leaders to respond effectively to disasters in their locations, Tearfund created a full resource called *Disasters and the local church: Guidance for church leaders in disaster prone areas* (2011), in which it highlights spiritual and emotional support as one of the roles of church leaders in disaster response.



## THE ROLE OF CHRISTIAN AGENCIES IN RESILIENCE, RESPONSE AND RISK REDUCTION

### Key Highlights

- Spiritual and emotional concerns are part of resilience that can contribute to long-term transformational change.
- Resilience is more likely to be achieved if disaster response, humanitarian and development work recognises the value of personal transformation.
- Church-led work on restoring relationships can also improve the effectiveness of disaster response and risk reduction concerns.
- Church-led disaster response can improve relational and spiritual concerns.

Personal and community transformation are part of resilience. Christian agencies and church-based organisations are more attentive to personal transformation than many other actors in the humanitarian sphere. The Church cares about the relational health of individuals and communities, not just results and outcomes. This is arguably the fulcrum for transformational change. Transformational change is more likely to come about if disaster response, humanitarian and development work acknowledges the value of personal transformation that can lead to the desire for social justice and communal transformation, which in turn contribute to resilience. Christian agencies and church based organisations are in a unique position to address the resilience of individuals and communities to hazards and shocks through their relational and pastoral work.

### **Case study - Church-led disaster response leading to new understanding of church and new spiritual concern for affected communities.**

After the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, many people lost their homes and were given temporary accommodation in camps. The Pentecostal Mission in Port Blair, the Andaman Islands, listened to, prayed for and cared for people living in a camp, and also served food to more than 500 people a day.

The Pentecostal Mission's experience in disaster response enlarged their understanding of what it meant to be 'church', *'Our deeds were the real epistle – we can show love of God through our deeds – the living epistle!'*

Their practical response work also led to an improved spiritual relationship with the affected individuals, *'By being involved as we were, we had a burden of prayer for them which we did not have before.'*

Lasting change in response to the changes in the humanitarian and disaster context does not come about quickly. Churches and their congregations are long established in communities and likely to be representative of those communities. Long-term accompaniment of those in need, addressing risks and vulnerabilities is likely to lead to a longer-lasting improvement in individuals' and communities' lives

than short-term response work. The church, and particularly the local church has a particular role to play in working on the resilience of communities in the face of this 'new normal', which includes increased frequency and intensity of natural and man-made disasters. Because the local church is the local people – it needs all of us to equip it to become the Bride without blemish, to train leaders, envision congregations to work with impartiality and targeting to reach the most vulnerable, bring the whole gospel including restoration of relationships, etc, to the communities that it serves. – Living the gospel, not just preaching it.

### **Long-term presence of the church using biblical mandate to prepare for disaster**

Every year the Brahmaputra River floods for three months of the year. Tens of thousands of communities that live along its 500km stretch are surrounded by water. When there is particularly heavy rain, it erodes the higher reaches of their land and destroys infrastructure. Scattered Christian communities live throughout this area, a small minority in a predominantly Hindu population. Over a 9 year period these communities used their biblical mandate for a practical church response to the flooding and used their local congregations as a base from which to train and organize communities to take proactive steps to protect themselves and their property as best they could.

They began by introducing disaster management to key stakeholders including church leaders, sharing with them the concept of preparedness. Government authorities were also informed and a core team was recruited and trained with a specific biblical frame of reference for responding to disasters. Before the first rains, awareness-raising workshops were held in those communities. Some basic relief work was organised. When the floods had receded, large gatherings were held during the Christmas festivities to celebrate what had been achieved, to learn from what had happened and to plan for the coming year. Staff numbers were increased and volunteers trained and organised for rescue operations. Before the rains a large seminar was held where government officials and voluntary agencies were introduced to what was happening. Volunteer training continued and flood-proof wells were dug. There was a tree-planting programme and essential structures were built with food-for-work programmes. Training and practical works continued over the following six years.

Above all, communities began to believe that during the dry season they could do something to mitigate the destructive power of the river. Leadership and organisational capacity improved. Practical benefits became visible: trees, wells and infrastructure. Churches gained credibility in their community and at a macro level, the state government set up its own Disaster Management Authority after the seminar in Year 3.

## SECTION C – CONCLUSIONS

### *Where do we go from here?*

The purpose of this paper has been to outline the current context and trends in disasters and the humanitarian operating environment with a view to helping Christian agencies know how to change, adapt, and together work more effectively to deliver God's mission. Of course there are other factors beyond those outlined here but the key is to recognise the new norms, realise the impact they have on disaster response work and work out how best to work in these situations for the most affected people. This will include recognising the value of some work that is already done but it will also mean thinking through new ways of doing things that are not part of business as usual.

There are many contributions that Christian agencies can make for lasting change and reducing the negative impact of disasters and conflict amongst their local communities. The analysis of this paper leads us to suggest the following changes and adaptations to agency capacities, strategies and advocacy in light of the current context and the role of the church. These form Tearfund's invitation to collaborate on making these conclusions stronger and taking intentional action together.

We must:

### ***Conflict and Fragility***

1. Recognise that conflict has a permanent dynamic in disaster management, requiring an increased competence in varied analysis methods, such as political economy analysis, risk assessment, conflict sensitivity and peace building.
2. Share and model the message of forgiveness and non-violence in situations of conflict, modelling the call to love our enemies even in the midst of their conflict with us.
3. Keep governments and authorities accountable for their treatment and policies regarding the poor and marginalised.

### ***Resilience with emphasis on Risk Reduction and Climate Change***

4. Recognise the vulnerabilities of affected communities and work with them to identify strengths and capacities to increase their resilience, especially at times of disaster.
5. Focus spending and programming on prevention, preparedness and mitigation, in the name of resilience, over response. This includes integrated Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation work.
6. Recognise people's emotional and spiritual needs are key to their resilience and the churches' role in providing pastoral, prayerful contributions to personal and communal well-being.
7. Use the assets of church communities, such as church buildings, community centres, schools, social networks, methods of mass communication, volunteers for risk reduction and preparedness for disasters.
8. Recognise the software assets of church communities such as trusted relationships, respect and authority in the community, pastoral and emotional support, prayer and spiritual guidance.
9. Represent the case of the most vulnerable to responsible authorities.

10. Teach and act on the theology of creation care as part of Christian calling with church leaders setting an example.

***Partnership***

11. Establish new partnerships with the private sector and affected country governments.
12. Recognise the changing partnership environment and create models and systems that can adapt to the ever-changing context.
13. Reaffirm the value of partnership with local groups and individuals as experts in their own experience and well-placed first responders and find ways to reconcile such relationships with partnership with the private sector and new donor governments.
14. Use the churches' position in civil society to influence local governance and its representation of the needs of the most marginalised; mobilising others for the protection of the poor.
15. Work more with local networks and national level NGOs to help reduce the risk of disaster for the most vulnerable

**The world is changing fast, but God's Mission for the Church is that she should become strong and integral in her approach. Tearfund is inviting others to join a discussion on how to collaborate more effectively to equip the local church for disasters, development, resilience, building His Kingdom here on earth now.**

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