INTRODUCTION

Disaster Strikes

When disaster—an earthquake, flood, hurricane, wildfire, or tsunami—strikes, help rushes in from around the country and the world. For decades, this kind of assistance has been provided in both developing and developed countries; a great deal of study has been conducted to learn lessons and apply them when considering the next crisis. The main concern is that disasters are increasing around the world.

Disaster Studies, Future Disasters

Accordingly, disaster studies has grown into a worldwide field with specialized university departments for graduate and postgraduate programs around the globe. There are scholarly publications and conferences; nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), donors, United Nations programs, and national and local agencies specializing in disasters; and international, national, and local agreements, policies, strategies, plans, budgets, programs, and projects to analyze and implement in anticipation of, or in response to, disasters. And there are many specializations in the fields of disaster emergency preparedness, relief, recovery, reconstruction, and long-term development that cover a wide range of concerns and sectors: policy, planning, funding, health, education, housing, water and sanitation, livelihoods, environment, food security, infrastructure, administration, agriculture, human rights, human trafficking, climate change, and so on.

However, despite a great deal of study, it is widely recognized that the lessons learned are often not applied, resulting in assistance that too often is weak or failed. Many of these same organizations and analysts often observe and express disappointment with the gaps between theory and practice. This is discussed in detail in another book in this Berghahn Books "Catastrophes in Context" series entitled *Disaster Upon Disaster: Exploring the Gap Between Knowledge, Policy and Practice* (Hoffman and Barrios 2020).

The reality remains: "Disasters, both natural and technological, are becoming more frequent and more serious as communities become more vulnerable. They are impacting ever-larger numbers of people around the world" (Oliver-Smith and Hoffman 2002: 5). While disasters—and the losses and destruction they bring—will grow, so too will the need for physical reconstruction. With disasters also having major impacts on lives, livelihoods, and communities, there will be an intensified need to address social concerns as well. A main question is: can that increasing need for physical rebuilding, and the process to achieve it, also be a vehicle for social restoration and development? Better yet, how can the reconstruction and social development benefit each other while also reducing risks and vulnerabilities?

Making Things Happen offers some answers to the above questions, drawing on the experience in PERRP (Pakistan Earthquake Reconstruction and Recovery Project). It shows how a structured, representative, guided community participation program can help improve project efficiency and effectiveness while also significantly building on local capacities that can be used in further recovery and development. For this kind of participation program to occur in infrastructure reconstruction projects, a social component needs to be included, and that is the main subject of this book.

Other Literature

Given that postdisaster reconstruction of public infrastructure is such a widespread and common need, one might reasonably expect there would be a commensurate amount of research and literature about it—but this is not so. While there is mushrooming literature on the constituent parts of postdisaster reconstruction—hazards, construction, and the people whom construction is meant to benefit—these subjects are siloed, and there is a shortage of published work about many other aspects of disaster reconstruction. In the vast literature on construction in nondisaster times and contexts worldwide, there is a dearth of content about end users, while in the literature on disasters, there is scarce coverage of reconstruction, particularly of infrastructure, in this project location—especially in the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K) region.

While there is a fair amount of literature about shelter and how it may be rebuilt by local people, there is little discussion of how local people can play highly important roles in large-scale public infrastructure reconstruction. Here, public infrastructure refers to facilities from which the public benefits, which are usually government owned and operated: schools, health facilities, roads, energy grids, and water systems.

The sources used in this text come from academic research in disaster studies, development studies, and community participation and development; scholarship in engineering and construction project management; the worldwide construction industry; organizations involved in hazard- or disaster-related agreements, policy, and planning; and institutions and groups such as governments, NGOs, donor agencies, the United Nations (UN), and international financial institutions (e.g., the World Bank). At times when disasters occur, the media also play a role as sources of information, as reconstruction is often highly politicized. While there might very well be a general assumption or even direction that the local people should be involved in reconstruction, how this could occur almost always remains vague.

Of particular note is the construction industry and its sources of funding or financing. Due to scale and demand for specialized know-how, public facilities are usually rebuilt by commercial construction firms or NGOs with advanced construction skills. This is not likely to change. As disasters increase, it is a safe bet that demands for their technical expertise will grow. The trouble is, while the construction industry is also generating a large amount of information and literature, it includes relatively little about disaster reconstruction. Furthermore, as discussed in more detail in chapter 6, stakeholders in the construction industry are often considered to be only the companies and financing sources involved—excluding local people, even when they will be the main users of the new facilities.

The kinds of consequences that come from this lack of awareness were frequently demonstrated in the Pakistani context discussed in this book. As observed by the social team of PERRP, other reconstruction projects, agencies, and contractors frequently were ineffective in dealing with the problems involving local people. This ineffectiveness was largely due to not anticipating the issues and how they could be prevented or mitigated, including contractor-community conflict, cultural insensitivity, land issues, access to the construction site, and contractor use or overuse of water, electricity, or other resources. Missing also was an understanding of the communities—the realities of their existing frictions, tensions, and conflicts—and of how outside assistance projects, including reconstruction, could exacerbate these kinds of situations, as well as what a project needed to prevent or handle them. In general, there was a lack of awareness that some construction problems have underlying social causes; such problems were one main reason for Pakistan's delayed reconstruction.

The fact is that the construction industry and those with humanitarian concerns are seen as having competing or contradictory interests, when in fact they can have parallel goals. Collaboration would benefit both construction firms and humanitarian groups and, most importantly, the end

users. Chapter 5 discusses more bringing these two sets of expertise together to build understanding and cooperation in what would be a new field of study and practice: the social anthropology of construction.

Overview of PERRP, Including Anecdotes and Ethnographies

As introduced in detail in chapter 1, *Making Things Happen* is a case study of a disaster reconstruction project called the Pakistan Earthquake Reconstruction and Recovery Program. Running from 2006 to 2013, PERRP responded to the October 2005 earthquake that struck northern Pakistan. In PERRP, lessons and theories were put into practice, resulting in a project considered unusually successful by stakeholders—from the donor agency to the local governments, affected communities and people, and the design and construction companies involved.

While much of the other infrastructure reconstruction in this postdisaster scenario was slow, stalled, or even abandoned, in PERRP seventy-seven large, earthquake-resistant schools and health facilities were reconstructed in only six years, with almost all the construction completed on or ahead of schedule—a rare if not unprecedented feat in Pakistan. The project achieved these outcomes despite being in a highly complex security and sociocultural setting: a disaster site, in a part of the world with a long history of tension and conflict, in conservative rural communities on mountainous Himalayan terrain. The project accomplishments were attributed mainly to an unusual combination of strong construction management, structured community participation, and respect for local culture.

This book—like the steel and concrete construction project it investigates—is multidisciplinary, written in detail from several perspectives about intersecting subjects. It is about a construction project considered through the lens of disaster reconstruction, community participation and development, culture, social structure, peace and conflict, and relief and development. It also includes the rarely discussed challenges involved in sociocultural experts, engineers, and other technical people working together effectively, and it presents the processes developed to achieve this cross-disciplinary collaboration. Together with unprecedented community participation in the reconstruction of government-owned facilities, PERRP's social and technical coordination worked to "make things happen"—an expression used daily throughout the project.

Included at the end of each chapter are over seventy anecdotes and ethnographies which recount some of the project's complexities on a day-to-day basis. These and other stakeholder remarks capture the voices of

some of the people involved and show a range of activities and incidents. The reader might like to read all of these anecdotes and ethnographies first, to get a sense of the range of issues and activities, as well as an understanding of how these illustrate points made in the other content.

What This Book Offers

While the rebuilding of destroyed houses, roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, and all aspects of the physical infrastructure is essential, desired, and welcomed, this book focuses on one aspect of reconstruction: the all-too-frequent negative reputation of construction. In many parts of the world, specifically in relation to the people in the vicinity of the reconstruction sites—who are most often the main end users of the completed facilities—the process of construction is often associated with missed opportunities, frustration, disappointment, damage, loss, conflict, legal proceedings, injustice, and more.

Disaster reconstruction, and even construction without a disaster, is infamous for being planned but never started. When it does start, it is slow, stalled, or even abandoned; even years later, much of what was destroyed has not been rebuilt, which was especially the case in the Pakistan disaster. Such failed construction may add to existing losses of trust, hope, and opportunities for the future. In contrast, as we will demonstrate in PERRP, the reconstruction process can be positive and productive, and it can even have dual achievement: not only speeding along construction, but also mobilizing communities, restoring hope, strengthening local recovery and increasing local capacities for further development. This book lays out this process in detail.

While problems for construction are numerous and the reasons for such delays and incompleteness vary widely, the central discussion of this book is about one of the main causes: the interactions between the reconstruction project and the local people. They can have very strong negative or positive effects on each other, and some of the problems for construction have underlying social causes. Conflict and long, costly court cases are a common result.

In other words, this book is about the sociocultural side of disaster reconstruction. It presents the many possible challenges to reconstruction and gives an example of how a structured community participation process was set up in a reconstruction project. In PERRP, a small social team was included for this purpose; we worked to develop an understanding of each community. Some of our strategies included identifying the social structure, social challenges, and possible underlying causes of conflict;

the community's strengths or capacities in dealing with conflict; and the community's capacities for participation and responsibility in the reconstruction project.

As any project needs to do, this social team also led the project to foresee potential problems and plan ahead. As shown in chapter 4, the PERRP social team started out by consulting with the various stakeholder groups, from community members to construction contractors and government officials, and then, from these different perspectives, identified the most common problems between communities and contractors. With this list, as shown in "What Could Go Wrong" (see table 4.5), the social team—in cooperation with project construction managers—worked backward through preventative measures and solutions. From these analyses, we developed several tools, including protocols, agreements with and between committees and contractors, lines of communication, and an integrated step-by-step technical and social process. Our later project assessments identified these approaches and tools as main ways that much conflict was prevented—they were, along with the way construction was managed, the reasons for the project going smoothly.

Importantly, this book sets out how community participation can be planned and implemented. Here, community participation is incorporated in a way that is specific, highly visible, structured, systematic, step-by-step, sometimes measurable, and integrated with the technical factors to help meet a project's overall goals more effectively.

More detail is laid out on these subjects as we move from chapter to chapter. Chapter 1 discusses the Pakistan disaster and PERRP's start there. Chapter 2 advises on what any project needs to do: understand the many contexts in which it will exist. Those contexts are factors that may affect the project, and which the project may have an effect upon in turn. These include other disasters; international relations and policy; conflict and collaboration; social structure, power, and culture; and resources, especially land. Chapter 3 explores the ideas of community and participation, their histories, and critical perspectives on them in construction development and disaster areas. Chapter 4, which discusses PERRP's social component, is set out in three parts: what was found upon arrival; the social team and its process; and how the communities worked and contributed. To encourage these components to work together, chapter 5 frankly addresses the infrequently discussed challenges of sociocultural specialists, engineers, and other technical specialists working together, and how these were managed in PERRP. Chapter 6 is about design and construction, and how community involvement benefitted both. Chapter 7 is about the Library Challenge, an activity not included in the original project plan, but one taken up by the schools, parents, communities, committees, local officials,

the media, police, book publishers and sellers, construction contractors, engineers, and the general public. The Library Challenge was a culmination of all the local cooperation and became a symbol of collaboration, fun, and hope. Chapter 8 is about the social anthropology of construction.

The conclusion to this book gives a final analysis of the project, with much of the content coming from focus group discussions by the project's social mobilizers and most experienced construction engineers and managers, who had, collectively, over five hundred years of experience in social mobilization and construction in Pakistan and other countries. In those sessions, the social mobilizers were asked, drawing on all their experience (including that in PERRP), to suggest improvements for reconstruction projects in future disasters.

That being said, I still feel compelled to provide a few words of caution. PERRP could have lessons for other disaster reconstruction projects, but it was only one project in one area of one country, and it was developed in response to one particular disaster. As situations and projects can vary greatly from country to country, in different times and circumstances, it must be stated that PERRP is not being presented as a universal recipe or blueprint for disaster reconstruction or community participation. It also must be said that, while there were some innovations, no claim is being made that PERRP invented new ideas. Those of us in the project drew on the cumulative centuries of experience among PERRP staff, and from many others from earlier times and from different disciplines. Project ideas went back to the basics—adopting, adapting, or combining innumerable other sources of expertise—and those ideas were simply put into practice.

Who Is This Book For?

Given the predicted growth of disasters and need for reconstruction, there is a tremendous need to examine what can be done to improve the reconstruction processes, which can also reduce the risks and vulnerabilities not only of the new buildings, but of the people. This book emphasizes the need to bring sociocultural, technical, and other expertise together in addressing this need.

For this purpose, this book is offered especially to practitioners, researchers, academics, and students in both the sociocultural participatory and technical realms such as architecture, engineering, and construction management, as well as to planners, aid and policy makers, and funding agencies preparing for future reconstruction. This book provides detailed exposure to one cross-disciplinary project in a particularly challenging situation, written from a practitioner's point of view.

This book aims to raise awareness about disaster reconstruction, social complexities around reconstruction sites, and the need to include a social component with sociocultural specialists in reconstruction work, which frees technical staff to concentrate on their own specializations. For social specialists, this book also suggests raising awareness about the complexities of construction in postdisaster situations and how the sociocultural skills in community participation can be applied to benefit both the people and construction. Importantly, the book urges readers working from either perspective—the sociocultural or the technical, including engineering and construction—to look ahead and plan for frank discussion on how to cooperate and complement each other's work.

Due to the multidisciplinary nature of its content, *Making Things Happen* may also be relevant to a broad range of linked interests and specializations of individuals and organizations related to disaster reconstruction: governments, NGOs, consultants, social activists, community leaders, design and construction planners, and managers in both the nonprofit and business sectors, as well as other scholars, researchers, and practitioners in fields of study such as disasters, peace, conflict and security, international development, community participation and development, land issues, culture, sociology, and social or applied anthropology.

This Book's Geographical Focus

In Pakistan, PERRP was carried out in two adjoining locations, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K), which is a disputed territory. Although some detail of PERRP's work in KP is included, this book is mainly about PERRP's work in AJ&K for a number of reasons. Destruction from the earthquake was concentrated in AJ&K; consequently, the government of Pakistan requested the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to undertake reconstruction mainly there. Accordingly, PERRP's main field office and staff were placed in Bagh district of AJ&K so as to work in the most locations and communities, with a second field office and staff in the Mansehra district of KP province. From the beginning, it was planned that most of the construction and activity would be in AJ&K.

This book's content, therefore, is mainly about AJ&K—not only because the project's main operations and the communities involved were located there, but also because KP and AJ&K are quite distinct from each other. I have chosen to focus mainly on the location with most activity to avoid developing a cumbersome comparative analysis of PERRP's social

processes in relation to KP's and AJ&K's particular cultures, histories, political and power structures, and cultural norms and practices.

Special Recognition

I have already mentioned this in my acknowledgements, but it cannot be emphasized enough that thousands of people contributed to this project. Despite the many challenges of the project area—the aftereffects of the disaster, the ongoing risks of conflict, and the hierarchical social structure with divisions, differences, and competing blocs of power—PERRP's results demonstrated how communities and people's willingness to collaborate can be very powerful, contrary to some arguments that claim that community is a myth (see chapter 3). Dedicated people, led by about six hundred committee members, helped make it all happen: teachers, students, parents, health facility staff, project staff, contractors, construction workers, and local officials, among many others.

Although they were from some of the poorest communities in the country, community members called on what strengths and resources they had to support the PERRP reconstruction and made it the right and popular thing to do. This was also a reflection of what any project can choose to do: treat the people with respect and confidence.

Project Key Terms

"Program" and "Project"

USAID's main assistance in response to this earthquake was in the form of the Pakistan Earthquake Reconstruction and Recovery "Program," to address needs in four sectors: reconstruction, health, education, and livelihood. Reconstruction was the flagship activity carried out using the umbrella name of the Pakistan Earthquake Reconstruction and Recovery Program, but this reconstruction work on the ground, as in this writing, was known interchangeably as a "program" or a "project."

Construction and Reconstruction

In the context of disasters, the word "reconstruction" is used as a catchall term to describe the act of putting back together the physical and sometimes intangible things that had been damaged or destroyed. In PERRP, we usually avoided using the word "reconstruction." The buildings would

be new, not repaired or retrofitted, and the word implied redoing or repeating construction in the dangerous ways that had led to so much destruction in the first place. As design and construction in PERRP were based on the international building standards and codes for earthquake resistance, it was not repeating mistakes from the past. Other than all the extra challenges created by the disaster, this reconstruction was still "just" construction. For these reasons, the reader will see throughout the word *construction* used frequently, and for variety, *reconstruction*.

Implementing Agency and Contractors

Construction projects can be carried out numerous ways. When construction is needed, owners may do the construction themselves, or they might contract others to do it. In large scale commercial construction, especially involving governments and international donor agencies, it is common for projects to be tendered for competitive bidding by interested companies. The winning bidder is then contracted to do the job, and they may do it all themselves, or subcontract parts of the work to other companies. In any construction project, any number of contractors or subcontractors may be involved. As part of the United States government's response to Pakistan's request for postearthquake assistance, a request was issued for proposals and bids from qualified companies to carry out PERRP. The winning bid was from CDM Constructors Inc. (CCI), a subsidiary of CDM Smith, an American engineering and consulting firm. The company's role was overall project management, direction, and supervision of the Pakistani firms contracted to carry out the design and construction.

Although CCI was the main contractor, for the sake of clarity in this book it is referred to as PERRP's "implementing agency," while all the companies it hired are referred to as "contractors," who in some cases subcontracted. Also, while the contract was with CCI, on the ground in Pakistan the implementing agency was known as CDM.

Committees

In PERRP, groups were activated with different names according to location. In AJ&K, the groups were School Management Committees (SMCs) or Health Management Committees (HMCs), where health facilities were being built. In KP province, the groups were Parent Teacher Councils (PTCs) or Advisory Groups to the PTC. To simplify language, the reader will see the acronyms SMC, PTC or HMC used, or more often just the word "committee," referring to any of these groups.

Social and Technical Components

The project had two main components. The social component consisted of a team of social mobilizers—also called the sociocultural team—who were responsible for all the community participation and related activity. The technical component referred to engineers, architects, construction contractors, and design and construction managers.

Author's Reflections

For thirty years, I lived and worked full-time in conflict- and disaster-prone areas in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Azad Jammu and Kashmir, specializing in community participation in various forms and sectors of reconstruction and recovery.

My earliest learning experience about communities began in my early teen years in my family's remote sawmill community at Murphys' Corners in Ontario, Canada. This rural community consisted of my parents, grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, as well as sawmill workers, their families, and a few other community members. There, I frequently played the role of leader to all the kids in the community—organizing fun activities such as games or swimming at the lake because, in such a rural area, if we didn't organize activities ourselves, they would not happen.

I was aware of how among families, including my own, there were tensions over old differences. I saw how some were better-off and others were poor, and I wondered what might have been the causes of all these differences. Our great-grandfather had immigrated to Canada from Ireland at the time of the Irish famine in the mid-1800s, and so did the forebears of most of our neighbors, bringing with them the old political and religious differences between the Protestants and Catholics. Although by then a century had passed for our families in Canada, the differences had subsided, and we had practically no knowledge of them, there still was a clear separation, and some animosity and discrimination. My extended family members were the only Catholics in all the surrounding townships of Protestants. As such, my family was in the dichotomous position of being in the minority, even though my grandfather's sawmill was a main employer in the area. This was my introduction to community organizing in divided communities, and in retrospect, to arrangements of power at the community level.

Over time, I figured out what made people want (or not want) to participate in activities. I continued to be a community organizer as the founder and manager of clubs, associations, events, and projects through high

school and art college, and in my first career in the visual arts. But after a few years, my interests in making art and organizing activities around it were overtaken by my interests in the world. In 1984, I made a planned career change to international development and was assigned by an international development education NGO to work in Pakistan in an Afghan refugee urban enclave, which led to working in the Afghan refugee camps along the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan. There I worked with the refugees to mentor and train them to become their own community organizers, which played a lead role in the start-up of the first ever Afghan NGOs.

As the reader will see, this book frequently addresses the highly important subject of power and arrangements of power, especially at the community level. For a total of fifteen years before the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan, I lived and worked full-time with Afghans in the refugee camps; then, after the USSR withdrew their troops in 1989, I worked in communities in east, north, and west Afghanistan, and lastly in Kabul. This experience immersed me not only in the realities and complexities of conflict but also in the related arrangements of power within hierarchical, heterogenous, conservative communities with many divisions. These divisions had become more pronounced in the refugee camps—and perhaps even more so upon return to home villages. In the war period, parts of the social structure were in a state of quick change, from hereditary power (by ethnicity, sect, etc.) to the power gained by political alliances and weapons. In the villages, the elders had always held sway, but now it was younger men with weapons and outside connections. In such work, one learns that knowledge of and sensitivity to the culture is not only essential; it is a crucial part of conflict sensitivity—how to help without contributing to more conflict. Such work also benefits from not only knowing such challenges but also from seeking out the existing skills and strengths among the local people in any location.

In 1995, I took a break from this project work to study at the School of Oriental and African Studies in the University of London, receiving my MA in the Social Anthropology of Development—the work I had been doing all along. In 1997, I returned to Asia, this time to Bangladesh to head up a flood control embankment construction project, and later returned to Afghanistan. Over the years I worked as an independent practitioner, consultant, project manager, and social anthropologist in projects for UN agencies, NGOs, governments, donor agencies, and consulting firms, specializing in community participation applied to many sectors—agriculture, forestry, water management, education, health, land mines, construction, land issues, rangeland management, livelihoods, microfinance, forestry, refugee camp management, and conflict prevention and resolution—as stated, all in conflict- and disaster-prone areas.

Back in Afghanistan in 2002, following the invasion of that country by US and other foreign forces and the fall of the Taliban government, I worked as a consultant, researcher, and adviser to NGOs and the new government of Afghanistan. In 2006 in Kabul, I was recruited by CDM Smith to design and manage the PERRP community participation program and be part of senior project management.

In this kind of work, one project and its lessons lead into another. That experience has not made writing this book easy, as so many perspectives are possible. Even so, from this one project alone, I have written from my various roles—not as a visiting researcher, but as a full-time member of the senior management team, social anthropologist, participant observer, and social program designer and manager.

From all this experience, if there was only one lesson I have learned to pass on, it would be this: participatory and anthropological approaches help solve real-world problems, but that require knowing, from multiple perspectives, not only what exactly the problems are in the first place, but also what the "best" solutions are. It is such approaches—mainly observing and listening to the people—that can lead to participation and the people themselves identifying what is "best." In aid projects, this means being able to work within the overall power structure, but especially for those with the greatest stake: those for whom the benefit is intended.

"Making Things Happen"

The title of this book, *Making Things Happen*, comes from that expression used daily among PERRP project staff and community members as an affectionate, joking, catchall phrase to encourage and explain to one another the work being done. When going to a community meeting, mobilizers might say to each other, "Time to make things happen." Or, to explain being late back from the field, one might say, "Things were happening." A community-based committee member would point out something new, saying, "See, we made it happen like we said we would." An architect signed off a note, adding, "Made things happen."

As head of the social program, I frequently visited the communities, sitting down with committees, head teachers, teachers, and school children. One of my favorite discussions was to ask students what they saw happening in their community now that construction of their new school was underway. What could they see happening? Did they notice who is making it happen? And did they themselves, as students, ever make things happen? In such school settings, where learning is by rote and discussion is not yet part of the teaching style, such questions opened a floodgate of observations and

more questions. "When will construction be finished?" "What's the big hole in the ground?" "Will we have a computer room?" "We hear about shear walls and earthquake resistance, but can we get someone to explain that to us?" About the Library Challenge (see chapter 7), many wanted to know how they could help to get books.

These being far-flung rural areas, any construction site stood out, let alone one as big as a school or health facility—becoming the center of attention. Almost all the children had stories about walking by the construction site every day to their temporary tent school, how they would see the engineer and others working on the site and how they waved hello at each other. Many talked about going with friends, family members, and visitors after school to watch the workers digging in the ground, pouring concrete or carrying the steel rods up on the roof, the big trucks coming and going. As students and community members were briefed to stay out of the construction site for safety reasons, they and other visitors often sat on nearby hillsides, watching construction just for the fun of it. In one place, teachers talked about how their contractor sometimes worked at night even when it was snowing, using big lights run from generators. Some talked about project engineers coming into their classroom with the social mobilizer and teacher, to tell them about the construction. Students, and even many adults, watched how people were making things happen that they had never seen before.