Post-Disaster Reconstruction Models in the Asia Pacific: the cases of China, Iran and Myanmar

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Scope of Presentation

- China – Sichuan Earthquake 2008
- Iran – Bam Earthquake 2003; Tabriz Earthquake 2012
- Myanmar – Cyclone Nargis 2008
The China Model – Sichuan Earthquake 2008

- People’s Republic of China
  - South West China earthquake, Sichuan Province, May 2008 – between 80,000 (official estimates) and 400,000 dead or missing (Taiwan researcher) – across 10 counties

- China is now a prosperous country; has the government level resources for rebuilding

- Governance is authoritarian, top down
Approach to Relief Phase

- Immediate response – Central government took command
- Sent Premier Wen Jiabao immediately to scene of destruction to assess damage and loss of life
- Mobilized army in search and rescue operations
China Relief and Reconstruction Model

- Top Down Model
  - Enormous scale of destruction
- Central government afraid of civil unrest
- All schools collapsed; many children and teachers killed
China Reconstruction Policies

- Resources for Reconstruction
  - central government directed 10 most prosperous provinces to take financial responsibility for reconstruction

- Yingchue – epicentre – completely rebuilt; modern town, attractive buildings; promenade along lake; destroyed middle school kept as memorial to dead; parklike; many visitors; opposite is large, new, attractive commemorative museum; survivors rebuilt in situ
Reconstruction - Infrastructure

- Alternative approach – rebuilding elsewhere
- Beichuan – 30,000 dead; 10,000 survivors
- Many still unrecovered; in lake which emerged to cover city centre
- New city built some 50kms away in area thought to be safer
- Cost of reconstruction borne by Shandong Province
- New multi-lane highway to disaster site by central government to facilitate access in case of future disaster
Reconstruction of Families

- Many Families lost only child when schools collapsed

- In terms of China’s One Child Policy, this was a source of emotional trauma

- Many children were in teenage years; mothers in age group when reproductive health in question ie beyond normal child bearing years
Impact on Reproductive Health Policies

- Central Government gave permission for replacement children.
- Aware of emotional, socio-cultural issues in the reconstruction phase, not just physical infrastructure.
- Assisting with reproductive health technology.
- Mayor of Beichuan also local Family Planning Centre chief; centrally involved in this social engineering; seen as critical element in psycho-social recovery and reconstruction phase.
Iran Model

- Iran:
  - Bam Earthquake 2003 – 30,000 dead
  - Tabriz Earthquake 2012 – 185 villages impacted; 700 dead
- Reconstruction model: mixed public/private
Iran Government Reconstruction Policies

- Bam
  - mostly re-building in situ
  - still only partially rebuilt
  - government provided funds for reconstruction
  - people used these not to build back better, but to build back bigger
  - in many cases, funds insufficient for size of house contemplated; left incomplete
Iran – Family Policies Bam

- Islamic culture: Family reconstruction important

- Government provided incentives, funds in cases of re-marriage

- Many non-Bam people went to Bam to marry survivors; wanted the funds and land, assets gained by re-marriage

- Where re-marriage with another Bam survivor, tends to have flourished; where re-marriage with a person from another area, in many cases the new family formation has failed

- Bam only partially re-built; not thriving; privately funded rehabilitation centre (German and Iranian private sponsors) looking after disabled, orphans, single female headed households.
Iran – Tabriz Reconstruction

- Rural area outside Tabriz in northern Iran
- NGO – Iranian Psychological Services
- Privately funded; many merchants from Tabriz contribute; Tabriz social capital strong
- IPS – assisting survivors in 30 villages
- Also private funds providing reconstruction, solar powered electricity
Tabriz

- Most villages not yet rebuilt; survivors rebuilding themselves, making the mudbricks themselves
- Contrast between villages: where government has main responsibility for reconstruction, the result is slow, incomplete, poor quality
- Where private enterprise/NGOs have the responsibility, faster reconstruction, better outcomes
Myanmar Integrated Model

- Myanmar Cyclone Nargis 2 – 3 May 2008
- 140,000 dead or missing across 50 townships in two most heavily populated divisions, Yangon and Ayeyarwaddy. 37 townships severely impacted
- Scale of destruction too much for any one sector to take on reconstruction alone
- Immediate relief: by villagers themselves, especially in far flung sites, difficult to reach; then local NGOs, then INGOs and Government and International sector
Integrated National and International Resources

- From mid-May to early June 2008, progressive relief operations by all sectors
- Integrated model; Tripartite Core Group formed 25 May 2008;
- Opportunity for development approach
- Replacing destroyed education, health, infrastructure facilities, livelihoods, fisheries, agriculture
- Mainstreaming DRR
Post-Disaster Reconstruction Outcomes

Cyclone Nargis precipitated:
- a great flourishing of domestic civil society as a result of citizen action in spontaneous relief operations;
- awareness in governmental levels of the need to work with the international community;
- socio-political transformation;
- perceptions among different ethnic and religious groups of the need to work together, to set aside differences;
- linkages among various sectors working for community empowerment;
- new developments in bridging and linking social capital which capitalised on existing bonding level social capital among traditional communities.
‘We didn’t care if people were Karen, or Buddhist or Burmese, we made no distinction. Before Nargis, there was a lot of discrimination between religious groups, especially Christian, Muslim and Buddhist. When Nargis happened, no one could stay in the house. Everyone came out to work for the affected people …People don’t see religion and race, they just see human beings.’ (Interviewee for the Centre of Peace and Conflict Studies study, 2009, p. 34)

‘As a result of Nargis, we have been able to work with the mainstream Buddhist community. Many religious leaders have been a part of our trauma healing program. They are convinced now of the need for it and have even invited us to stay in the monastery.’ (Interviewee for the CPCS study, 2009, p. 35)


