Chronic Poverty Report 2023
Pandemic Poverty

Equitably responding
to and recovering
amid polycrisis

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Chronic Poverty Advisory Network

CPAN is a network of researchers, policy makers and practitioners across 15 developing countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Malawi, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Philippines, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe) focused on tackling chronic poverty and getting to zero extreme poverty and deprivation, and by sustaining escapes from poverty and preventing impoverishment. It is looking to expand this network to the 30 countries with the largest numbers of people in poverty. It has a 'hub', which is currently hosted by the Institute of Development Studies in the United Kingdom.

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Key messages

The pandemic was only one of multiple intersecting or sequential crises in many contexts, though responses to these were often focused on single hazards. This may limit the effectiveness of interventions, at best, or create additional sources of risk and vulnerability that cause impoverishment.

There are three traditions of policy and practice from which insights can be drawn on how 'polycrisis' can be responded to better: the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus, disaster risk management (DRM) and social protection.

Poverty-reduction strategies from development agencies in conflict contexts sometimes explicitly or implicitly acknowledge and respond to polycrisis, by considering and responding to evolving needs. During the pandemic, there were examples of manging the conflict-climate nexus by identifying multiple hazards through early warnings and releasing contingency funds.

Strategies to integrate Covid-19 considerations into disaster risk reduction (DRR) were often supported through existing DRM funds. Risk assessments and trigger designs (e.g. an anticipatory action undertaken once an event occurs or a pre defined threshold is reached) were also modified during the pandemic.

Social protection was sometimes used to respond to Covid-19 and disasters. However, cash transfers need to continue for long enough and be big enough to deal with back-to-back crises in such a way that the payments help re-establish modest resilience in beneficiary households.

Where responses to multiple crises were inadequate, many households and communities relied on micro-level coping strategies. Community-level responses to working 'on' polycrisis benefitted from localised knowledge of population risks and needs, and the ability to quickly reorient existing platforms (e.g. social movements or institutions) to respond.

Responding effectively to polycrisis requires disciplined government amid strong multilateral partnerships, adopting a multisectoral, multidisciplinary approach to respond to both equity and risk. Digitalisation was a key modality enabling these efforts, as was the degree of flexibility of the fiscal space and funding sources. It is often a combination of these responses that increase the effectiveness of working 'in' and 'on' polycrisis.
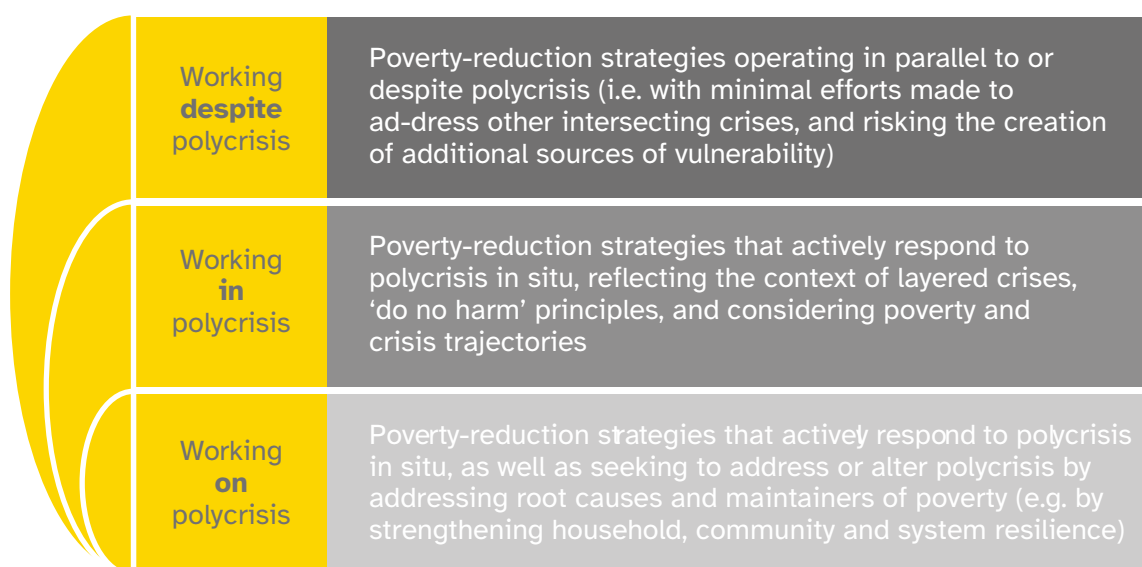
7.1 Overview

This chapter outlines disadvantages of responding to singular hazards amid multiple, intersecting global crises – now known as polycrisis – before interrogating how different actors and agencies have addressed polycrisis by centring or drawing attention to equity alongside risk in their responses. It examines insights from DRM, the HDP nexus and social protection, viewed largely through a resilience lens. The reality is that many poverty-reduction strategies operate in parallel to or 'despite' polycrisis.

The chapter argues that, where slightly effective, most responses during the pandemic managed to work 'in' polycrisis, by being sensitive to the context of intersecting challenges. However, even in this effort, pandemic responses by and large fell short of attempting to mitigate harm in this process, as observed through the discussion of the health-economy policy dilemma in Chapter 2. Less evident still were attempts to work 'on' polycrisis simultaneously to manage sequential or contemporaneous crises in ways that could help avoid impoverishment, downward mobility and destitution. Figure 7.1 outlines this focus on working 'despite', 'in' and 'on' crises,[1] while the analysis focuses on positive examples of equitable, risk informed responses to and recovery amid polycrisis.

Figure 7.1: Working 'despite', 'in' and 'on' polycrisis

Working **despite** polycrisis	Poverty-reduction strategies operating in parallel to or despite polycrisis (i.e. with minimal efforts made to ad-dress other intersecting crises, and risking the creation of additional sources of vulnerability)
Working **in** polycrisis	Poverty-reduction strategies that actively respond to polycrisis in situ, reflecting the context of layered crises, 'do no harm' principles, and considering poverty and crisis trajectories
Working **on** polycrisis	Poverty-reduction strategies that actively respond to polycrisis in situ, as well as seeking to address or alter polycrisis by addressing root causes and maintainers of poverty (e.g. by strengthening household, community and system resilience)

Source: Authors' own adapted from Diwakar *et al*. (2021).

7.2 Single-hazard approaches are inadequate amid polycrisis

The pandemic itself may be considered a polycrisis. It was a global health crisis, but lockdown responses also contributed to soaring prices and inflation that characterised the economic crisis. At the same time, **the pandemic was only one of multiple layered or sequential crises. For example, several countries experienced natural hazard-related disasters ('disasters') over the pandemic period, while others remained or became newly** embroiled in violent conflict, not least

Life-History Figure 6: Hassan, Afghanistan

HASSAN

Male
Internally
displaced
person
Afghanistan
Born 1966

Well-being

Poverty line

Born

Farms on
father's land and
lives with his
family

Migrates to Iran to
earn money for dowry

Father dies in car
accident, family needs
to cover cost of
funeral

Married and
has a baby

Fighting in district, family
flees to Herat; he works
as rickshaw driver and
agricultural worker

Considering
migration to Iran
as the only option

COVID-19 affects rickshaw
business and employment
opportunities

Wife and mother get
COVID, no medical
treatment due to lack
of resources

Covid-19

1990   2000   2010   2020   2021

COVID-19 on top of insecurity deepened Hassan's economic difficulties and restricted access to his regular means of coping, such as through migration or access to health services, causing his wellbeing to deteriorate over time.
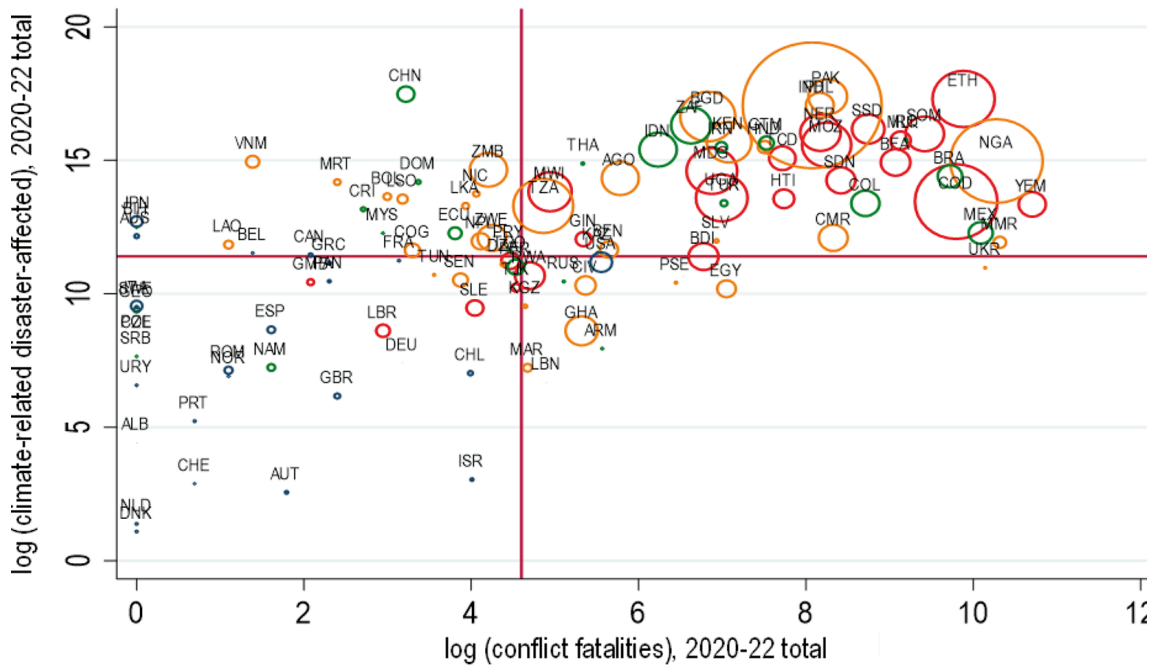
Source: Authors' own.

the Russia-Ukraine conflict which further intensified the global economic crisis. Life-History Figure 6 provides an example of how sequenced crises prompted impoverishment and then destitution in Afghanistan.

Figure 7.2.1 plots the number of people affected by climate-related disasters against the number of fatalities due to political violence or protests in 2020–22. There is a clear correlation between countries where large numbers of their populations are directly affected by disasters and violent conflict, shown in the top right quadrant. Moreover, the correlation is strongest among LICs, where large shares of people continue

to live in poverty, reflecting a mutually reinforcing dynamic between crises and poverty. It is worth noting, though, the familiar refrain that correlation is not causation. Even so, there is a wealth of evidence on the relationship between low disaster risk-governance capacity in conflict-affected contexts, which impedes the ability of citizens and governments to put in place the necessary risk management measures required to address disaster risk and impacts (ICRC 2020).

Figure 7.2.1: Populations affected by climate-related disasters and violent conflict (aggregate, 2020–22)

Note: weighted by number of population in poverty before the pandemic (based on latest available year after 2010)
Source: Authors' own based on Diwakar (2023) analysis of ACLED (2020-22), EMDAT (2020-22), and World Bank PIP (2022).

Despite these layered relationships, common responses to crises typically focus on single hazards. This was also the case before the pandemic, where only a small number of countries adopted a risk-informed process to prioritise responses to critical risks when they emerged, and a small subset in turn mapped interdependencies across sectors in responding to risks (OECD 2018). More fundamentally, many countries did not have established, systematic and collaborative or inclusive processes for devising and revising a risk register.

During the pandemic, this trend continued, where DRM and public health systems often treated Covid-19 in a unidimensional way, adopting a relatively homogenous toolkit of measures to curb transmission of the virus. This inherently meant that they were working 'despite' polycrisis, when intersecting crises emerged. The challenge with this approach is that it can lead to less effective interventions, at best, or create additional sources of risk and vulnerability that cause impoverishment and destitution.

Thus, DRM strategies to move populations to evacuation shelters – for example, during floods, hurricanes or wildfires – could increase Covid-19 transmission rates if not accompanied by social-distancing measures (Janzwood 2020). In addition, inadequate responses to Covid-19 drove the creation of new conflict risks in the absence of mitigation measures (Hilhorst and Mena 2021), as discussed in the next subsection.

7.3 Lessons from policies and programmes in conflict-affected contexts

There have been a suite of international principles to improve coordinated responses amid crises. Often applied to conflict-affected areas (though this is changing), the HDP nexus aims to work coherently before, during and after crises, and focuses on promoting collective outcomes as common objectives. What differentiates the nexus from its predecessors – such as the relief-to-reconstruction continuum, Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development, and the HDP nexus – is its focus on system change, placing people at the centre of the approach, integrating gender, climate change and other considerations, stressing the importance of conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding, and promoting more formal commitments; for example, through the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Development Assistance Committee's recommendations to its donors and UN signatories (OECD 2019). However, **despite principles and 'new ways of working' that in theory render the HDP nexus particularly well placed to provide a coordinated response, practical implementation and evidence on HDP nexus action is limited in general, especially in response to polycrisis, including the pandemic** (ALNAP 2022; Peters 2023) (Box 7.A).

Box 7.A: Leveraging the HDP nexus during the Ebola crisis in the DRC

Context	Response	Lessons learnt
In 2019, the DRC was grappling with Ebola, forced displacement, violent conflict, and community resentment against the in-ternationally funded system developed to respond to Ebola.	The World Bank's State and Peace-building Fund sup-ported technical as-sistance and dialogue to develop the pilot emergency cash-for-work programme, to: strengthen community resilience, address gaps in infrastructure that were blocking humanitarian and medical responses, improve acceptance of medical teams, and help rebuild trust.	The World Bank's support helped build HDP partnerships with public health agencies, humanitarian actors and peacekeeping forces. This included working with WFP, the United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Organ-ization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) peacekeepers, UN Hu-manitarian Air Service, and experts in geo-enabling for monitoring and super-vision to: facilitate aid personnel's ac-cess to local communities, help monitor the situation, share data on violence and adjust implementation strategies in response. The model is now helping support continued investments in the DRC's social protection system through public works, unconditional cash trans-fers and technical assistance, including creating a social registry for use during crises.

Source: summarised from Ticzon (2021)

Nevertheless, there is scope to learn from humanitarian and development actors operating in conflict-affected contexts during Covid-19 and other pandemics. Box 7.A illustrates one such example of working 'on' polycrisis through systems strengthening. Another example, the Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) in January 2023 drew attention to intersecting drivers of humanitarian needs to predict the evolution of needs. Of interest in working 'in' polycrisis, the HNO incorporates consideration of (OCHA 2023):

- **Changes between years** – The HNO adopted a longitudinal analysis, recognising that intersecting risks were shifting from Covid-19 and conflict in 2021, to drought, climate change and economic shocks in 2022. It accordingly calculated needs with a stronger emphasis on the more recent crises.
- **Seasonality** – Within the year, the HNO also recognised seasonal influences on needs such as 'the onset of winter, rainfall patterns, agricultural planting and harvest seasons, and others' (*et al.*).
- **Inter-sectoral assessment** – It adopted an intersectoral approach based on joint planning assumptions of needs across sectors in response to intersecting crises.
- **Horizontal and vertical disaggregation** – The overview estimated needs disaggregated by sector, severity of needs, location, and markers such as age, sex and disability, thus foregrounding equity considerations in assessing needs.
- **Commitment to flexibility** – Recognising the uncertainty inherent in its assumptions, the HNO committed to updating the needs assessment continuously, as conditions change.

Many humanitarian crisis contexts are protracted examples of polycrisis. For example, **Yemen was already facing armed conflict, drought and economic collapse when the 2016/17 cholera epidemic began. The humanitarian response was to a 'crisis within a crisis', in which agencies responded primarily with a more intense form of ongoing activities** (UNICEF 2018). Priority districts were identified and the plan was revised as the epidemic spread. Eventually, the targeting strategy was sharpened to identify hotspots within districts for rapid response to reduce transmission. Reliance on existing systems was the norm due to the government and humanitarian actors adapting slowly, constrained by limited access permissions resulting from conflict-related insecurity in certain areas (*et al.*; KII). In this context, limited preventive action working 'in' polycrisis constrained the government's efforts to respond when additional crises struck.

Poverty-reduction strategies from development agencies in conflict contexts also sometimes explicitly or implicitly acknowledge and respond to polycrisis, highlighting crisis sensitivity in their responses, and thus collectively responding to equity and risk. A review of several projects in sub-Saharan Africa before the pandemic, implemented by German development agency GIZ, highlighted the importance of responding to multiple risks over time, many of which overlap (Diwakar, Shepherd and Salomon 2020). Box 7.B provides an example of a GIZ project in South Sudan that considered multiple fragilities that overlap with conflict in its business case, including how it sought to equitably address this polycrisis.

Box 7.B: Working 'in' conflict amid high prices and inflation

GIZ's engagement in South Sudan through its rural development and food security project implicitly identifies a vicious cycle of armed conflict and poverty.

In response, advisory services and training are provided to improve food security and agricultural livelihoods, alongside access to agricultural inputs, thus mitigating the negative effects of high prices. A focus on building human capacity through providing advisory services and training is potentially also helpful as a way of protecting gains of the intervention against the effects of conflict and other crises, by building human capital as an intangible asset that can offer resilience. Finally, the project also adopts flexible responses and sequencing to adapt to conflict and risk.

Source: Authors' own adapted from Diwakar *et al*. (2021).

Overlaps between conflict and disasters (including those that are climate related) offer another area of learning. **Before the pandemic, a growing literature on the conflict-disaster nexus and, more recently, an upsurge in interest in climate related disasters in contexts of fragility, conflict and violence, suggest priority actions to integrate conflict considerations into DRR programming** (Box 7.C). These recommendations span project cycles, from design-phase considerations of conflict within DRR strategies, to adapted implementation of DRR tools and approaches that are people centred, and which bring together operational learning from contexts of fragility, conflict and violence. Rather than simultaneously addressing conflict and disasters, such approaches have focused instead on conflict sensitivity within DRR programming. Integrating equity considerations alongside these conflict-risk dimensions could help more effectively respond to polycrisis related to the conflict-disaster nexus.

Box 7.C: Encouraging DRR in, and adapted to, conflict settings

- Integrate conflict considerations into DRR strategies.
- Invest in DRR activities in contexts affected by fragility, conflict and violence.
- Develop an integrated cadre of DRR and conflict specialists.
- Adapt DRR decision-making processes, tools and approaches to include greater consideration of conflict conditions and indicators.
- Harness operational learning to deepen understanding of the benefits and limitations of DRR in contexts of fragility, conflict and violence.
- Learn from affected people's experiences and coping capacities and how they deal with linked disaster and conflict risk.

Source: summarised from KII with school principal, Ethiopia (2022)

During the pandemic, there were additional examples of managing the conflict disaster nexus; for example, by identifying multiple hazards through early warning systems and accordingly releasing contingency funds. Such early warning systems operated at multiple levels. In Karamoja, Uganda, elders forecast severe hunger in 2020, 2021 and 2022, which they attributed to the effects of multiple hazards on their livestock and crops (Cullis and Lotira Arasio 2022). At subnational level, the Pro-Resilience Action (Pro-ACT) Early Warning System project implemented by WFP and the Food and Agriculture Organization similarly found that 'the livestock sector continues to be affected by parasites and tick-borne diseases, coupled with raids and livestock theft', thus recommending in its *Consolidated Karamoja Drought Bulletin* in 2022 that contingency funds be activated (Cullis and Lotira Arasio 2022).

At international level, Famine Early Warning Systems Network and Integrated Food Security Phase Classification reports for Karamoja identified multiple hazards, including erratic rainfall or drought, floods, locusts, African armyworm, Covid-19, high food prices and cattle raiding affecting the population's crop- and livestock-related livelihoods (Cullis and Lotira Arasio 2022). However, there was a lag of 18 months between communication of crises in 2020 and receipt of humanitarian assistance,

driven partly by reduced humanitarian assistance internationally, and the crowding out of crisis support in the context of the Horn of Africa drought crisis (*et al*.).

In many conflict-affected contexts during the pandemic, governments sought to strengthen authoritarian control; for example, by supressing social protest. Participants in social protests were arrested in the Philippines and Zimbabwe, which authorities argued was necessary to control the transmission of Covid-19 (Hilhorst and Mena 2021). Bangladesh may have also kept colleges and universities closed longer than necessary in part to prevent outbreaks of protests (KII). At the same time, as discussed in section 6.5, social movements could play an important role in responding to the pandemic's negative socioeconomic impacts.

Another response by governments was to pass legislation to further increase their control over conflict-affected areas. This was observed, for example, in Zimbabwe where a registration and tax system was implemented that required informal traders to register their business and pay tax, including if they were low-income workers; and in the Philippines, which passed the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020, further strengthening the government's ability to silence opposition voices (Hilhorst and Mena 2021).

7.4 DRM for polycrisis

DRM is a natural entry point for responding to polycrisis. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 encompasses a broad range of threats and hazards; and, as a separate but related process, the subsequent hazard definition and classification review expanded this to include societal hazards (ISC and UNDRR 2020; Peters *et al*. 2019). Reflecting this, **some countries acknowledge a range of natural hazards and other hazards in their DRM frameworks**. For example, Indonesia's Law No. 24/2007 on Disaster Management describes a 'non natural disaster' as a 'non-natural event or a series of non-natural events such as technological failure, modernization failure, and epidemic' (GFDRR and World Bank 2020). Cambodia similarly differentiates between disasters related to nature and others caused by humans. It seeks to manage both through a national-level National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM), with the prime minister as its director, subnational committees and disaster management members in other ministries. This meant that during the pandemic, the prime minister was able to quickly create a management committee on Covid-19 with the NCDM as its facilitator, and with provincial- and commune-level committees headed by commune chiefs (KIIs). Cambodia's response operated primarily as a technocratic, information-driven, centralised decision-making process that enabled a rapid response (KII). However, at local level, interviews with villagers revealed that many people were unaware of support from DRM committees, suggesting that increased information sharing vertically would have improved its effectiveness.

In some cases, the Covid-19 response was supported through existing DRM funds, illustrating a partial means of working 'on' polycrisis. Flood-prone rural areas in Nepal relied on DRM funds to distribute face masks and soap, and engage in community sanitation and public-awareness campaigns about Covid-19 transmission risks. However, there are trade-offs to this approach, as it comes with the risk of crowding out other disasters (Allan, Connolly and Tariq 2020). Indeed, in the Philippines, responses to climate related disasters in 2020 were smaller and more localised, given the overarching focus on Covid-19. Instead, many other disasters in the country were supported through existing infrastructure contained within the Pantawid Pamilyank Pilipino Program, a government conditional cash transfer programme (Donoghoe *et al*. 2022). Even so, there were exceptions to these trends; for example, assistance to Typhoon Rolly victims in November 2020 was provided through the Philippines' Covid-19 Adjustment Measures Program (Farhat and Borja 2021). Finally, in other contexts, some interviewees from Kenya felt that the pandemic was dealt with purely as a health crisis, with DRM agencies brought into the response too late, and thus had difficulty fitting into the response agenda. Moreover, a post-disaster recovery plan to support businesses and communities was absent (KIIs), reflecting how disaster recovery in its entirety was largely neglected (AU and UNDP 2022).

During the pandemic, strategies to integrate Covid-19 considerations into DRR as well as peacebuilding were commonly observed, clear examples of working 'in' polycrisis. For example, the Government of Bangladesh's Cyclone Preparedness Programme was adapted to improve its ability to combat cyclones during the pandemic. Adaptive measures included modified dissemination of messaging through public announcements and digital platforms, combining early warning with Covid-19 prevention and protection messaging, use of PPE, accessibility of handwashing facilities,

and quarantining of suspected Covid-19 cases in different buildings (Lux 2020). Similarly, national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies adapted their actions to Covid-19 guidelines to ensure safe implementation, and adjusted targeting of populations to include Covid 19 risk factors (de la Poterie *et al*. 2022). In terms of conflict, peacebuilding coordination hubs were used to undertake Covid-19 assessments and support pandemic responses in Yemen (Saferworld 2020).

Risk assessments and trigger designs (e.g. where a pre-identified triggering mechanism is used to release pre-positioned financing) were also modified to account for the pandemic, which was often more ambitious than simply including Covid 19 sensitive protocols into DRM

(de la Poterie *et al*. 2022), and offering additional insights on ways of working 'in' polycrisis. In Bangladesh and India, a composite risk matrix approach was developed that considered Cyclone Amphan in May 2020, as well as Covid-19, to develop a system of dispersed evacuation shelters (Box 7.D), which included moving some evacuees to public buildings such as marriage halls (Potutan and Arakida 2021). In Mozambique, early actions to respond to cyclones were adopted at lower thresholds than those that had already been established, to allow for adequate time to respond to disasters during the pandemic (de la Poterie *et al*. 2022). Even so, many mechanisms continue to focus on certain triggers rather than others, which can limit their effectiveness when unanticipated crises occur (KII).

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Box 7.D: Composite risk matrix to design multi-hazard programming

During Cyclone Amphan in 2020, a composite risk matrix approach was developed, which included the impact parameters of the cyclone, as well as those of Covid-19. This helped design a complex system of evacuation shelters for 3 million people, informed by specific vulnerabilities (Srivastava 2020). Additional support was required because Cyclone Amphan and floods were identified as increasing the risk of Covid-19 transmission (Donoghoe *et al*. 2022). During the response, the significant advance warning to the cyclone, combined with impact based forecasts, allowed authorities in India and Bangladesh to repurpose shelters as quarantine facilities in some cases. Where the risk of Covid-19 transmission was high, shelters were half full to facilitate social distancing, whereas shelters in areas with highest exposure to the cyclone operated at full capacity. Ultimately, impact-based, risk-informed early warning systems guided the complex response, including a large-scale evacuation, which saved lives (Srivastava 2020).

In other instances, provision of enabling infrastructure intentionally or unintentionally contributed to addressing polycrisis. For example, Disasters Emergencies Committee water, sanitation and hygiene activities in Bangladesh were intended to raise awareness about Covid-19 and the importance of frequent handwashing with soap, as well as social

distancing at tap stands and other crowded venues (Proaction Consulting 2022), but are also implicitly helpful in reducing transmission of vector-borne diseases prevalent during floods. Similarly, in Ghana provision of free water and subsidised electricity to people in 2020 to mitigate the pandemic's impact was also observed to reduce the negative effects

of flooding on people's welfare. Specifically, in a context where floods contributed to electrical failures that required costly preventive maintenance for households, provision of subsidised electricity made it easier for households to cope (Turay 2022). This helped address risk, but also considered equity through providing continued access to electricity for people who would otherwise have faced difficulties in paying for electrical repairs.

Box 7.E: DRM and agriculture in Cambodia   +

Covid-19 exacerbates the existing vulnerability of the agriculture sector, which is already prone to floods and droughts, lack of market access, rising agricultural input costs and lower market prices. The pandemic and border closures disrupted agricultural value chains, resulting in rising agricultural input prices and demand shocks reported in rural study sites. Plant and crop cultivation was paused, further affecting local markets and small businesses. This was followed by devastating floods including in October 2022, which caused severe damage to rice paddy fields and other crops in 22 provinces. In response, the NCDM in Cambodia and the agriculture ministry collaborated to rescue flood victims and distribute flood-tolerant seed to them. The new rice seed could be planted year-round, reducing costs and producing greater yields, thus improving farmer's absorptive resilience capacities to climate change, and their ability to adapt and improve welfare amid Covid-19 legacy effects on agricultural prices and value chains.

Source: Authors' own analysis of KIIs in Cambodia.

7.5 Social protection responses to polycrisis

As noted in Chapter 3, social protection was significantly bolstered globally in response to the pandemic. There are promising examples of social-protection approaches that have been used to respond to Covid-19 and disasters. For example, analysis from the Philippines and India reveals that both countries modified their eligibility criteria for social protection, developed their identification systems of people who qualified for support and made existing programmes more flexible (Donoghoe *et al.* 2022). However, interviewees in India question the extent of this, noting that modification of beneficiary lists was largely inadequate, resulting in many people in need being unable to access support. Cambodia's

response to flooding and inflation also reflected targeting based on polycrisis (Box 7.F). Ethiopia's PSNP modified its schedule of cash transfers to provide them all in one go, instead of being spread over several months, and suspended public works requirements. However, marginalised groups received no special attention, nor was there any expansion of coverage to reach the new poor. Vertical expansion of rural and urban PSNPs was also delayed by months, potentially due to a lack of clarity about mandates for shock-responsive social protection, as well as donor financing, which required lengthy negotiations to raise funds (Maintains 2021); and the fiscal squeeze caused by conflict more broadly as discussed in Chapter 2.

Social protection was also scaled up in conflict-affected contexts during

the pandemic, sometimes in recognition of coinciding threats, such as violent conflict, the pandemic and food insecurity resulting from these crises. The World Bank's Yemen Emergency Crisis Response Project provides 'short-term employment and access to selected basic services to the most vulnerable and preserves the implementation capacity of two service delivery programs', namely the country's Social Fund for Development and Public Works Project (World Bank 2019). The Emergency Crisis Response Project is another attempt to operationalise the HDP nexus (Al-Ahmadi and de Silva 2018; Ghorpade and Ammar 2021), building on

the examples provided earlier. To help cope with the pandemic, the benefit size of its Emergency Cash Transfer also grew by 45 per cent relative to pre-Covid-19 levels through a one-time top-up in June 2020 (Gentilini *et al*. 2022). However, although an evaluation of the humanitarian response in the country described the scale-up as impressive, it still identified weaknesses, including in its targeting of the most vulnerable people (IAHE 2022). More broadly, fewer fragile states benefitted from social-protection interventions during the pandemic, when compared to other countries (Figure 7.5.1).

Figure 7.5.1: Cash transfers, wage subsidies, and debt relief by state fragility (2020–22)
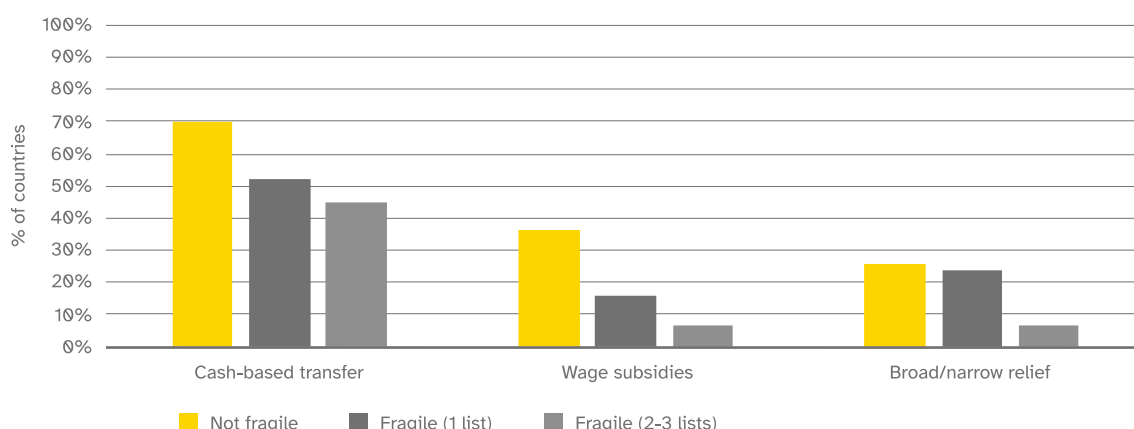
Source: Authors' own analysis based on Gentilini *et al*. (2022), World Bank (2023), OECD (2020) and FFP (2022).

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Box 7.F: Polycrisis management through a cash transfer programme in Cambodia

The Government of Cambodia in December 2022 expanded coverage of its cash transfer programme in recognition of inflation and flooding. The programme targeted 'at-risk' groups, namely households near the poverty line that are either:

home to a disabled person, [have] one child under 2 years old, elders older than 60 years old, if a woman is the only breadwinner and is living without a husband, and if there are no members between 19 and 59 years old (Seavmey 2022).

Poor and vulnerable households already receiving assistance under the special scheme to tackle Covid-19 effects did not receive support under this initiative.

As part of the initiative, the Ministry of Planning identified around 350,000 families (1.3 million people) who were near-poor but did not pass IDPoor identification. The first phase included monthly cash transfers for populations experiencing flooding, while two subsequent phases were scheduled for April and July 2023, during which identification of at-risk households would also continue through inflationary relief aid. Specific support provided by the programme is outlined below.

Flooding	Inflation
The government is targeting at-risk groups in 16 provinces, with each poor household receiving around US$20, and an additional US$4 for at-risk members identified above. People will be eligible to receive subsidies three times from 2022 to 2023.	At-risk groups will be given cash subsidies covering three main areas: Phnom Penh, urban and rural areas, with subsidies of US$20–25 per household, depending on location, and an additional US$5–7 per household member.

Source: KIIs; Seavmey (2022)

Some sectoral responses were linked to social protection, such as the focus on school feeding programmes highlighted in Chapter 5 that addressed hunger, and promoted education and gender empowerment with positive implications for economic growth. Food assistance for populations in need more broadly, where those in need are identified through consideration of polycrisis, is another example of working 'in' polycrisis, as the WFP case study in Box 7.G outlines. Such efforts are particularly useful in promoting equity during the cost of living crisis and food price inflation, which have compounded the effects of the pandemic. Where supported with measures to strengthen institutional capacity and food systems, for example, they also provide some evidence of trying to effect change in wider systemic processes of risk, thus working 'on' polycrisis.

Box 7.G: WFP's evolving response to polycrisis (2020–22)

WFP in 2020 developed a Global Response Plan to Covid-19. Its June 2020 update acknowledged rising food insecurity in the four years preceding the pandemic, which it attributed to armed conflict, climate change and economic downturn. The pandemic then disproportionately affected LICs and MICs through loss of jobs, declines in remittances and disruption of food systems (WFP 2020). In response, WFP scaled up its operations, in part to reach excluded groups, thereby involving equity considerations. In this process, it focused on people who were already in IPC 3 and 4 who were not receiving assistance, especially in fragile contexts, and certain groups such as refugees and migrant populations that relied on the informal sector and were often beyond the purview of national social protection programmes (WFP 2021).
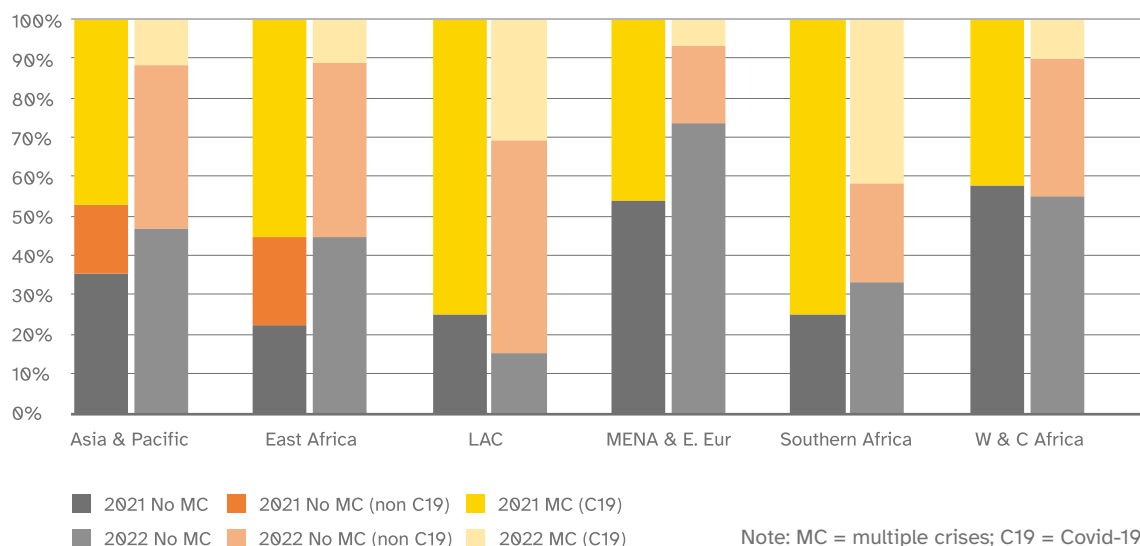
Continued:

How did its response evolve over time?
While the initial aim of the WFP response plan to Covid-19 focused on the pandemic, its operational plan in 2021 included many countries where the pandemic was not mentioned within its regional overview of countries. By region, Southern Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean had the largest share of countries with a WFP presence that referred to multiple crises, including the pandemic, in its operational plan. However, in the Middle East and North Africa and Eastern Europe, and in West and Central Africa, fewer than half of countries with a WFP presence referred to multiple crises in 2021 in their operational plans. Interestingly, one in five countries in East Africa with a WFP presence referred to multiple crises, but did not include the pandemic.

By 2022, even fewer countries acknowledged Covid-19 alongside other crises. Part of this was due to the indirect legacies of the pandemic; for example, in contributing to rising food and fuel prices, which were mentioned rather than Covid-19 itself. Only in Latin America and the Caribbean, however, was there an increasing share of countries that acknowledged multiple crises more broadly. Although this analysis is partial, relying only on evidence presented in WFP's Global Operational Response Plans, it nevertheless points to a general trend in the recognition of polycrisis across contexts.

Figure 7.5.2: References to polycrisis and Covid-19 in WFP's operational plans, by region (2021–22)

Legend:
- 2021 No MC
- 2021 No MC (non C19)
- 2021 MC (C19)
- 2022 No MC
- 2022 No MC (non C19)
- 2022 MC (C19)

Note: MC = multiple crises; C19 = Covid-19.

Source: Authors' own analysis based on WFP (2020, 2021, 2022).

Table 7.5.1: Examples of WFP references to and support for polycrisis including Covid-19, by region

Year	Asia and Pacific	East Africa	Latin America and the Caribbean
2021	**Indonesia** *Covid-19*: support government response in line with the Humanitarian Response Plan *Natural hazards:* technical assistance for National Logistic Cluster's capacity to coordinate and respond to Covid-19 and natural hazards, use of early warning for adaptive social protection	**Rwanda** *Congolese refugees, Burundian refugees and returnees*: life-saving support, critical food and nutrition assistance *Covid-19*: technical assistance for expanding social protection	**Haiti** *Impact of Covid-19, socio-political turmoil, below average harvests in 2020 for consecutive year*: scaleup direct food assistance, reinforce safety net and resilience activities to sustain livelihoods and safeguard nutrition, mitigating further emergency food assistance needs
	Middle East and North Africa and Eastern Europe	**Southern Africa**	**West and Central Africa**
	Lebanon *Economic crisis and Covid-19*: expand assistance to vulnerable households through National Poverty Targeting Programme with in-kind assistance transitioning to cash assistance and implementation of Emergency Social Safety Net programme	**Zambia** *Covid 19, weak public finances, deteriorating purchasing power, Congolese refugees, political tension ahead of August general elections*: assistance, support of safety net mechanisms and on-demand logistics support	**Nigeria** *NE – IDPs, NW – refugees, S – vulnerable populations in urban hotspots affected by Covid-19*: promote access to food, improved nutritional status of children, and pregnant or lactating women

Year	Asia and Pacific	East Africa	Latin America and the Caribbean
2022	**Afghanistan** *Conflict, extreme climate shocks, severe economic decline, global food and fuel crisis*: scale up food, nutrition, livelihood assistance and cash-based transfers, pre positioning food in areas inaccessible during winter; new satellite offices to support early warning and anticipatory action	**Burundi** *Climate change, disasters leading to massive internal displacements, inflationary effect of Ukraine crisis, market supply disruptions resulting from Covid-19 containment measures*: basic food requirements of refugees, returnees, vulnerable people, and improving resilience	**Ecuador** *Challenges in recovering from impact of Covid-19, inflation, socioeconomic pressures, migration*: transitioning to new Country Strategic Plan 23, focused on crisis response, reducing malnutrition, sustainable food systems and service provision
	Middle East and North Africa and Eastern Europe	**Southern Africa**	**West and Central Africa**
	Armenia *Covid-19 socioeconomic impact, Ukraine crisis, military hostilities border with Azerbaijan and in Nagorno-Karabakh, increased food price*: respond to immediate humanitarian needs, enhance national capacities and mechanisms for resilient social protection systems and strengthen food security systems	**DRC** *Conflict, economic decline, high food and fuel prices, lingering impact of C19, conflict disrupting agricultural activity*: unconditional in-kind and cash assistance, school feeding, nutrition, large-scale resilience activities	**Cape Verde** *Covid-19 impacts, soaring food prices*: expanding Limited Emergency Operation to include direct assistance and capacity strengthening to support school feeding programme

Source: WFP (2021; 2022)

At the same time, the low value and short duration of social assistance during the pandemic (as discussed in Chapter 3), made it largely inadequate in response to the multiple waves of the pandemic and the layering of crises over time. Even so, by 2022 there had been additional measures in response to food price shocks. This may be observed as a more longitudinal form of equitable support in the face of sequential crises. Some of these measures also consider other forms of risk and crises. In Cambodia, for example, a cash transfer programme is targeting poor households that are affected by floods, and others that are affected by inflation (see Box 7.F). However, the response to food and energy price crises more broadly has been less striking in terms of countries implementing measures focused on food and cash transfers or subsidies (World Bank 2022), as noted in Chapters 4 and 5.

7.6 Households and communities coping with polycrisis

In this context, many households and communities rely on micro-level ways of coping. These are responses that are often to additional or layered crises, rather than the pandemic itself. Indeed, many people interviewed as part of the CPAN PMI across a spread of LICs and lower-MICs noted that the pandemic was not the main risk they were concerned with. This points to the need to better take into account individual and community priorities when addressing polycrisis. Their coping strategies were varied, as outlined in Chapter 1, with responses to conditions of polycrisis often dependent on households' initial conditions, such as their livelihood diversification, area of residence and asset holdings; demographic attributes, including age, gender and other dimensions of difference; and access to socio political networks and social protection.

As Boxes 7.H and 7.I elaborate, in contexts of polycrisis, many households were forced to repeatedly draw down on their assets, reflecting conditions of underlying vulnerability. This is understandable, given that vulnerability to crises as well as coping responses are in large part conditioned by people's systemic marginalisation and pre-existing social inequalities (Mangubhai *et al.* 2021; Few *et al.* 2020). Instead, as Box 7.I highlights, multi-sectoral programming to strengthen multiple resilience capacities offers examples of working 'on' polycrisis by addressing root causes and factors that maintain poverty and vulnerability.

- **Ethiopia, August 2021** – Several respondents with limited livelihood alternatives or assets such as land, expressed concerns about the duration of Covid-19, compounded by drought and conflict. Many were driven to adverse coping strategies such as child marriage, child labour and reduced food intake. Traditional support networks were strained:

People could not support each other because most of the people are poor and many of them are buying food items from the market. So, it is difficult to support poor people as the poverty and food shortage is affecting everyone in the community (LHI, female, Ethiopia).

- **Rwanda, 2023** – Price rises and climate change have continued to affect people's attempts to recover from Covid-19:

Imagine the one who was doing a business bar, he/she has spent all most one year and a half without opening, and those who used to work there at the bar as a part-time job were not able to work and then after that price increased without any saving to his/her. Finally, after the coronavirus, it was a time of making recover ourselves, but now we are facing the problem of climate change at even the war in Ukraine (KII, Rwanda).

As a result, some interviewees were driven to distress land sales to cope with resulting hunger:
The challenge I told you about is to sell the land not because you have planned that but because of the hunger. You sell it at a low price just to prevent kids to die of hunger, not for you to start another project that will bring benefit, but to see children getting what to eat (LHI, male, rural Rwanda).

- **Zimbabwe, May 2022** – Hyperinflation, Cyclone Ana, drought and livestock disease ('January disease') have had particularly negative effects on farmers and contributed to food insecurity. In early 2022, the most common coping response was to reduce the number, size and quality of meals. A male interviewee in Bindura spoke of '*reduced meals and resorting to poor quality food obtained after engaging in casual labour. These strategies have worked but it impacted on the health and wellbeing of my family.*' Other forms of coping include migrating and diversifying livelihoods, and '*urban agriculture; subletting urban homes; borrowing; reverse migration from urban to rural areas; illegally circumventing lockdown rules and transactional sex*' (Bird *et al.* 2023).

- **India, summer 2021** – Many crops are often wasted as a result of erratic climate patterns, but also have been because of lockdowns. Analysis of household interviews in India indicates that there was no systematic way to recover this loss, on the whole; however, a small share of better-off households were covered by crop insurance, which has offered potential for mitigating the negative effects of multiple crises during the pandemic and climate-related disasters.

Source: insights from CPAN PMI

Box 7.I: Resilience to polycrisis in Niger and Burkina Faso through multi sectoral programming

The Resilience in the Sahel-Enhanced Initiative (2014–19) sought to improve resilience to shocks among chronically vulnerable populations in the Sahel. Common crises over the initiative period included climate-related disasters (droughts and floods), violence (civil insecurity, theft by armed terrorist groups, displacement) and Covid-19, all of which contributed to the increased incidence of food price inflation and unemployment.

Coping strategies in polycrisis

To deal with multiple shocks, households 'intensified and shifted their coping strategies'. This was done mainly through selling livestock, as well as borrowing (from friends, relatives and moneylenders), reducing food consumption, drawing on savings, and migration. Many households diversified livelihoods into lower-return activities including day labour and petty trading. Amid prolonged crises, coping strategies became more frequent, including adverse coping strategies (e.g. withdrawing children from school to engage in labour, selling assets, borrowing from moneylenders, reducing food consumption).

Inflation

The endline evaluation of the Resilience in the Sahel-Enhanced Initiative developed a measure of 'comprehensive resilience programming' (CRP), where households participated in at least seven of eight interventions relating to agriculture production, livestock rearing, natural resource management, markets, financial services, human capital, DRM and governance. It found that exposure to CRP was associated with an increase that was 9.9 percentage points smaller than would have otherwise have occurred by the endline, and positive impacts on household absorptive and adaptive capacities. However, it had no significant impact on poverty.

Source: summarised from Smith *et al.* (2022)

There were a range of community-level responses to working 'on' polycrisis and centring equity in this response, which benefitted from more localised, in depth knowledge of population risk profiles and needs, as the Ethiopia example in Box 7.H notes. For example, in Nepal, community disaster management committees had highly gender disaggregated data on groups that were vulnerable to hazards that overlapped with many groups at high risk from Covid-19, such as older people, people with disabilities, pregnant and lactating women, and children (Okura *et al.* 2020). These committees identified a range of stakeholders to coordinate with in the Covid-19 response during disasters, spanning ward and municipality offices, international NGOs and women's groups (*et al.*).

Given existing links with and knowledge of the communities they serve, WROs often

acted as first responders, prioritising those most in need (Njeri and Daigle 2022). Certain WROs in Bangladesh had access to the Chittagong Hill Tracts area, which otherwise requires additional government approval to access communities in need. As a result, though many government and international humanitarian response actors were absent from the area during the pandemic, the WROs reached communities that were otherwise often excluded from support (Feminist Humanitarian Network and Partners 2021). Similarly inclusive results were observed when using peacebuilding coordination hubs to deliver pandemic responses, as noted above.

There were also community-level responses to the pandemic in conflict affected contexts that relied on reorientation of social protest movements that existed prior to Covid-19, which in turn offered a platform to then respond to the pandemic while prioritising equity (Hilhorst and Mena 2021). For example, *ollas comunes* ('common pots') were created in Chile during the Great Depression in the early 1900s, and then resurfaced during the country's economic collapse in 1982. These operated in poor neighbourhoods as a communal kitchens and shared food with families in need, but they were also a symbol of discontent with the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (Rivera 2020). The *ollas comunes* have resurfaced a few times in between, including during the country's crises in 2018 as a means of social mobilisation, and during the pandemic (Hilhorst and Mena 2021). Social cohesion in these responses is important, along the continuum of pre-disaster, acute, post-disaster and recovery phases in building resilience to conflict and disaster. Social cohesion

can be supported through government interventions, including communication with the public; for example, through public information campaigns, and community-led recovery efforts (Jewett *et al.* 2021).

A variety of push and pull factors strengthened such community-level responses through increased localisation at multiple levels, both in terms of international staff devolving increased responsibility to in-country staff during travel bans, and in-country staff similarly devolving responsibility to community-level actors. For example, during lockdown, Bangladesh Red Crescent Society staff relied on community supervisors and community member volunteers to distribute hygiene kits and raise awareness about Covid-19 and the importance of social distancing and handwashing (Proaction Consulting 2022). This also necessitated increased advance training, and training of volunteers, which further improved local capacity.

Enabling such measures once again requires 'ex-ante funding and a focus on prepositioning goods as locally as possible offer strategies for navigating multi-hazard scenarios where stable, global, or national supply chains cannot be assured' (de la Poterie *et al.* 2021). At the same time, some argue that in increasingly prevalent contexts of protracted crises, much more community engagement is needed within humanitarian agendas compared to what relief-focused models tend to allow for, even with localisation (KII). In addition, in many contexts the shift towards localisation was reversed as lockdown restrictions eased, when international actors returned to direct-delivery modes of operation similar to pre-Covid-19 (KII).

7.7 Governance and ways of working amid polycrisis

Part of the challenge in responding to polycrisis is that different parts of the government or donor community prioritise different elements, sometimes related to sectoral competencies. This in turn contributes to interministerial competition for funds and political attention. In this context, **a disciplined government able to manage coordination across sectors and prioritisation is critical to working 'in' and 'on' polycrisis in ways that centre both equity and risk**. This can be supported through multisector frameworks. For example, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority in Nepal coordinated with the Ministry of Health and Population to 'harmonize pandemic response measures with disaster response measures in the three tiers of the government (i.e., at the federal, provincial, and local levels)' (Potutan and Arakida 2021). Similarly, the Department of Social Welfare and Development in the Philippines provided social assistance and a range of social services to respond to disasters more comprehensively (Donoghoe *et al.* 2022). It is not intended that national DRM agencies should lead or coordinate a pandemic response in particular, but rather that where health services deliver the response, close coordination with DRM authorities and capacities is critical, especially given the context of layered crises.

The presence and strength of pre-existing institutions was also an important factor in the ability of countries to respond effectively to Covid-19 and develop equitable mitigation strategies to the pandemic and layered crises. For example, Ethiopia, Kenya and South Africa relied on systems established in response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic to expand their coverage quickly during the Covid-19 pandemic, while the DRC adopted learning from its Ebola response during the Covid-19 pandemic (FAO 2020). In the Philippines, existing social registries and payment-delivery methods were built on during the pandemic, with coverage under an emergency subsidy programme that extended to low-income families and households working in the informal economy, and additional payments for households most affected by continuing restrictions in certain industries and sectors. This helped adapt identification of people who qualify for support to be more responsive to people's changing vulnerability, and to create new programmes to provide additional benefits for certain groups, such as informal sector workers (Donoghoe *et al.* 2022; Gentilini *et al.* 2020).

A key modality enabling these efforts to respond to complex crises was digitalisation. Digitalisation had a dual purpose, not only in disseminating information and resources during the pandemic (e.g. delivering funds, promoting early warning messaging), but also in strengthening contact tracing and monitoring movements of those signed up to the digital systems. This was the case with India's National Migrant Information System, developed by the National Disaster Management Authority, which supported migrants' movement between states, while also helping to monitor Covid-19 transmission, and enabling users to access information about treatment facilities, food and shelter homes in their vicinity (Potutan and Arakida 2021). However, these efforts require further consideration of equity, given that many people do not have access to the internet or connectivity. Learning from such models through a centralised database of hazards and procedural information promotes uptake of best practices (de la Poterie *et al.* 2021) and strengthens coordination of stakeholders in responding to polycrisis.

Flexibility of funding sources that can be rapidly reallocated for crisis mitigation (including by donors, reflecting the ear-marked nature of donor funding), and flexibility of fiscal space more generally, are also critical in responding to polycrisis. Given challenges in formalising modifications to their disaster protocols, only two of 14 Red Cross and Red Crescent national societies (in Bangladesh and the Philippines) examined in one study attempted to revise their Early Action Protocol budgets (de la Poterie *et al*. 2021). Legal contract amendments took many months to secure in the Philippines, or in the case of Bangladesh were not completed ahead of Cyclone Amphan. In this context, teams relied instead on funds from other stakeholders to meet needs (*et al*.). However, the focus on Covid 19, especially during 2020, meant that it often proved difficult to secure additional funds for other disasters. Instead, the example from Mozambique noted earlier of executing actions relying on lower thresholds than had previously been established, enabled actors to respond with agility and quickly move funds to mitigate crises. Other means of shortening timelines include: contracts that enable rapid procurement of additional materials or logistical support, national or international antic-ipation-specific rosters for paid staff, and the ability to rapidly train and deploy additional volunteers – or recruit them from other areas of the country – when local volunteers are insufficient, unable, or unwilling to act (*et al*.).

The responses and modalities noted above all require adequate resourcing and funding for DRM and resilience interventions more broadly. Yet DRM, especially its anticipatory action support, has been grossly underfunded; in 2021, 12 per cent of overseas development assistance went to DRR-related sectors, of which just 3 per cent went towards early recovery (Peters and Weingaertner 2023). Its absence severely undermines

the ability of governments and societies to pursue known preventative and mitigation actions for disasters, and by extension, polycrisis. The situation is particularly challenging in certain conflict-affected contexts, where disaster risk governance capacities and systems are, in general, insufficiently staffed and funded. As an interviewee in Zambia noted:
The way the [disaster risk management unit in the country] responds to disaster, we still feel there is still need for capacity to be built and a lot of funding for them to expand their operation. Even on paper they have a wider scope of how they define disasters but when it comes to what they respond to [it] is still very limited because of the resource constraints (KII).

It is often a combination of the responses above that increase the effectiveness of working 'in' and 'on' polycrisis in ways that centre both equity and risk management. For example, in India and Bangladesh, the: 'combination of early warnings for Tropical Cyclone Amphan, an effective disaster management governance structure, sound community-based response strategies, and careful monitoring of migrants' movements enabled disaster-affected areas to contain the spread of Covid-19' (GFDRR and World Bank 2020).

Learning from past crises, 'countries with better governance, stronger and well-coordinated institutions – backed by sufficient fiscal space… are better able to muster the multi-sectoral responses needed to mitigate damage' (Lind, Roelen and Sabates-Wheeler 2021). Complementing this is digital development access to finance, improved state-citizen relations, global and regional policy coordination, and collaboration among different stakeholders in the public and private sectors (*et al*.).

7.8 Recommendations

So what can be done? **Political and economic governance structures require flexibility and reform by strengthening multilateralism and partnerships, and adopting a multisectoral and multidisciplinary approach** (Singh 2021). Strengthened resilience of governments during crises is in turn also contingent on high levels of societal trust, low corruption and high-quality political leadership (Brown 2022). This political leadership should extend to adequate cabinet oversight of crises and their intersections, supported by coordinated institutional strengthening (e.g. of data collection, coordination and crisis response), which improves the speed and consistency of crisis management and strengthens resource mobilisation (World Bank 2022). Indeed, countries that had invested in cross-sectoral coordination before crises were often more successful in scaling up responses during the pandemic (Donoghoe *et al.* 2022).

However, coordination is needed not just horizontally (e.g. sectorally) but also vertically (e.g. between international, national, subnational and local actors). The benefits of shifting decision-making and resources to the local level and supporting vertical coordination was observed through the in-depth knowledge, more equitable access and flexible responses community actors and local-level stakeholders provided amid polycrisis.

Delivering a coordinated response is also contingent on the availability of funding, financing mechanisms and – considering the pandemic context amid polycrisis – also on the digital systems in place. Integrating financing mechanisms, and enabling them to be flexible and sustained amid changing dimensions of polycrisis, is important to deploy these tools effectively (*et al.*).

Flexibility can be enhanced, for example, by using contingency funds that can be quickly mobilised if early warning thresholds are crossed, supported by streamlined protocols for surge capacity, in place of prolonged bureaucratic approvals (de la Poterie *et al.* 2021). This is, then, about the fiscal space, as well as leadership and the ability to cut through red tape for rapid action. Digital solutions can also enable faster action, especially when information is coordinated within centralised and accessible databases that offer a high level of disaggregation (e.g. in terms of gender, age and disability, but also severity of need, degree of polycrisis exposure, etc.).

Monitoring and learning through feedback loops to ensure the effectiveness of digital tools and interventions more broadly can also enable more effective responses to polycrisis. These recommendations are certainly not new, deriving from the history of work on adaptive management and use of cash in humanitarian responses. What was particularly new during the pandemic was the potential that was recognised for digital innovation, if managed safely, to strengthen the absorptive and adaptive resilience capacities of wider systems.

Ultimately, then, to work 'in' and especially 'on' polycrisis inherently requires a shift from focusing on single hazards to systemic risk and resilience, and adopting equity- and risk-informed approaches in response. Indeed, without effective risk management systems, the whole premise of dealing effectively with polycrisis is undermined: 'A systems approach for disaster risk reduction would necessarily begin with a focus on all facets of risk reduction, including preventing hazards, reducing exposure and vulnerability and building adaptive capacity' (UNDRR Stakeholder Engagement Mechanism 2021: 8).

This requires 'gaining familiarity with the most probable impacts of interactions between particular hazards, and if possible, how to prevent them', which can help practitioners develop interventions that address polycrisis (de la Poterie *et al*. 2021). This will often mean that interventions, whether from DRM, social protection or HDP nexus actors, typically need to continue for much longer than they currently do, and support household and community responses over the longer term. At the same time, beyond often largely technocratic solutions, a systems approach requires analysing structural political-economic conditions alongside the wider complexity and context specificity of crises (Leach *et al*. 2021). Indeed, this reflects research from other crises, which also highlights the risk that the role of power and politics contributes to incorrectly targeted interventions and social inequities (Few *et al*. 2020).

In light of this discussion, **there is considerable value in integrating DRM, the HPD nexus and social protection to ensure an equitable, risk-informed response to working 'in' and 'on' polycrisis**. Embedding these programmatic focal points within a framework of resilience also has considerable potential, allowing programmes to explicitly focus work 'on' polycrisis. Moreover, one of its values as a framework is that resilience inherently reflects compound, complex shocks and stresses, and the need to work in the near term 'in' and in the longer term 'on' polycrisis. An interviewee in Zambia highlighted the benefits of strengthened resilience: '*There is a lot that has to be done in prevention, invest more in early warning systems, invest more in resilience building and monitoring communities for resilience and any threats towards that we respond appropriate*' (KII). Another interviewee in Cambodia echoed this sentiment: '*Some policies can solve the pandemic problems. However, we do not know the uncertainties in the future, which needs resilience as protection*' (KII).

There is great scope for these programmatic areas to be explicitly coordinated, especially where this coordination makes use of each area's respective strengths, while protecting the humanitarian imperative. As noted earlier, coordination across these domains when responding to uncertainty and risk, and delivering equitable outcomes, is important. This could draw on the HDP nexus' commitment to collective outcomes and collaboration to more effectively foster poverty reduction amid complex crises, while also being grounded in its commitments to 'do no harm'. DRM agencies have the tools to adapt during crises, which can be expanded to more centrally consider polycrisis that include but are not limited to climate-related disasters, which are usually the agencies' main focus.

Finally, integrated social protection systems can act as a cornerstone to help tackle chronic poverty and destitution processes during polycrisis, while also preventing new households from falling into poverty. Examples of bringing these three sectoral entry points together are outlined in Table 7.8.1, underpinned by consideration of equity- and risk-informed approaches as integrative conceptual mechanisms for polycrisis response.

Table 7.8.1: Examples of working 'in' and 'on' polycrisis from the perspectives of DRM, the HDP nexus and social protection responses

Entry point	Working 'in' polycrisis	Promoting resilience working 'on' polycrisis
DRM	• Develop (sub)national impact scenarios through a multi-hazard approach (e.g. integrate geospatial Covid-19 platforms with disaster risk and conflict data platforms) • Consider impacts of non-natural and societal hazards on anticipatory/ adaptive capacities of DRM actors • Establish clear information for responding to intersecting hazards, ensuring these do not destabilise each other	• **Absorptive**: support community based disaster preparedness actors (incl. elders, WROs and other leaders) to consider effects of polycrisis • **Adaptive**: adapt national and local emergency management systems (incl. early warning systems) to consider non-natural disasters • **Transformative**: use DRM as an entry point to address other societal issues, such as intercommunity conflict, or to pursue peace, to enable longer-term effective responses to non-natural rapid-/ slow-onset disasters
HDP nexus	• Collate the latest evidence on risk and resilience factors for conflict and violence from (cross-/sub-) national mixed methods research • Organise periodic multi stakeholder discussions to understand changing risk factors and polycrisis trajectories • Develop a framework on how to incorporate 'do no harm' principles	• **Absorptive**: build networks of trusted relationships, including with community and customary leaders, exploiting synergies and supporting a plurality of stakeholders • **Adaptive**: combat wrongful exclusion through a multipronged approach, targeting potential excluded groups, and developing anti discrimination measures • **Transformative**: promote peacebuilding activities within or alongside poverty reduction
Social protection	• Consider whether/how social protection mechanisms may amplify pre-existing inequalities in contexts of polycrisis • Adapt vulnerability definitions, considering risk factors amplified due to polycrisis • Develop understanding of impacts of polycrisis to inform real-time updating of social registries	• **Absorptive**: strengthen shock responsive social protection to respond to polycrisis through its integration with disaster, conflict and social welfare sectors and agencies • **Adaptive**: expand coverage of social protection to vulnerable non-poor people • **Transformative**: investigate the scope for universality to respond to polycrisis (e.g. universal basic income, universal coverage during emergencies)

Endnotes

Chapter 7

1 Note: this is an adaptation of working 'in' and 'on' conflict as argued in Diwakar *et al*. (2020), drawing on GIZ's framing of the poverty-conflict interplay, and as elaborated in Diwakar, (2023) to polycrisis.

2 The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification has the following categories of food insecurity: (1) minimal/none; (2) stressed; (3) crisis; (4) emergency; and (5) catastrophe/famine (IPC n.d.).

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Getting to Zero

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