Exploring potential pathways for strengthening disaster risk management in conflict

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Abstract
Despite a growing interest in the conflict-disaster nexus, major knowledge gaps persist on operational knowledge and guidance on conflict considerations in disaster risk management programming. The objective of the study was to identify potential pathways for strengthening disaster risk management efforts in fragility-, violence-, and conflict-affected contexts. A collective case study was conducted of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC) and four National Societies (Ethiopia, Nigeria, Sudan, and South Sudan), which all operate under conditions of fragility, violence, and/or conflict. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 11 strategic- and operational-level staff from the National Societies, and four global level staff from the IFRC with the aim to compare strategic considerations to operational conditions. Four potential pathways were identified, namely: 1) Integration of disaster risk management efforts, moving away from projectised and short-term programming to ensure reaching disaster risk reduction and resilience building objectives. 2) Contextualisation of programmes and capacity building to assess and design programmes appropriately according to the scale, intensity, and type of conflict. 3) Localisation by working increasingly through local staff and volunteers to capitalise on access, accompanied by increased focus on safety and security of local staff. 4) Dissemination of the humanitarian principles to all stakeholders involved in conflicts, to increase the operational effectiveness, safety, and access. The author recommends further research at the operational level and into the political implications of disaster risk management in conflict and urging donors to support pilot programming and a shift to longer-term programming.

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Abbreviations

BPI   Better Programming Initiative

DM   Disaster management

DREF   Disaster Relief Emergency Fund

DRM   Disaster risk management

DRR   Disaster risk reduction

FbA   Forecast-based Action by the DREF

FCV   Fragility-, conflict-, and violence-affected contexts

ICRC   International Committee of the Red Cross

IFRC   International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

NS   National Society

NSD   National Society Development

PMER   Planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting

RCRCM   Red Cross Red Crescent Movement

RQ   Research question

SAF   Safer Access Framework

TWG   Technical Working Group

The following abbreviations will be used to refer to interviewees:

SRCS   Sudanese Red Crescent Society

SSRCS   South Sudan Red Cross Society

NRCS   Nigeria Red Cross Society

ERCS   Ethiopia Red Cross Society

HoDM   Head of Disaster Management

HoCCD	Head of Country Cluster Delegation
DM	Disaster Manager / Disaster Management Officer
ADM	Anonymous DM Officer
Ops	Operations Manager / Operations Coordinator
SG	Secretary General
SGA	Secretary General Advisor
GVA	Geneva (global level)
DREF-O	Disaster Relief Emergency Fund Officer
FbA-O	Forecast-based Financing Officer
DRR/FCV	Anonymous member of Disaster Risk Reduction in Fragile, Violent and Conflict Contexts Working Group / Forecast-based Action in Conflict Practitioner's Group

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Summary

Despite increasing interest in the conflict-disaster nexus in recent years, major knowledge gaps persist on how to implement disaster risk management (DRM) in fragility-, conflict-, and violence-affected contexts (FCV). The purpose of this thesis was to help fill some of these gaps of knowledge, namely the need to examine practical examples of DRM in FCV, and gaps in guidance on conflict considerations in DRM. The objective of the study was to **identify potential pathways for strengthening disaster risk management efforts in fragility-, violence-, and conflict-affected contexts**.

Chapter 2 introduces the methodological considerations of the study. The research was carried out using a primarily inductive research approach through a collective case study. The case was geographically bounded to the African continent, and organisationally bounded to include the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the membership National Societies (NS) within the Africa region. The criteria for potential inclusion in the case study was for the NS to be within one of the 20 states in active armed conflict in Africa in 2021 (according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute). Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews, and secondary data were collected through a document review of academic and grey literature. Interviewees were selected using purposeful sampling to enable data collection from both strategic and operational staff at the country- and global level. The final sample was 11 country-level interviewees from four African NSs and the IFRC present in-country (Ethiopia, Nigeria, Sudan, and South Sudan), three from IFRC's headquarters in Geneva and one from a relevant global technical working group.

Chapter 3 outlines the central key concepts applied throughout the thesis, namely DRM and FCV, and central concepts related to understanding these. Disasters are defined as socio-politically rooted, as opposed to naturally occurring phenomena. DRM is defined as activities related to preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery with the aim to strengthen resilience and reduction of disaster losses. The concept FCV is explained through a presentation of conceptualisations of violence- and conflict scales, fragility, and the nature of contemporary conflicts. Chapter 4 presents the case, beginning with an overview of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement (RCRCM) and its components, followed by a brief introduction of each of the four countries and NSs included in the case study.

Chapter 5 simultaneously presents the findings from the data analysis and discusses those findings. The cross-cutting findings from the 11 operational country-level interviews are

presented as the anchoring perspective and discussed by comparison to academic research on the topic and/or strategic perspectives from the four global-level interviewees, and strategic documents from the IFRC and other parts of the RCRCM where relevant. The most consistent finding throughout the interviews was the need for overall strengthening of DRM in order to strengthen DRM in FCV. A number of themes specific to operating in FCV were also identified, namely: Access (i.e., the space of an organisation to operate freely) and security of staff and volunteers. Working through volunteers was consequently identified as both a strength and a risk. Programmatic design considerations related to the phased approach of DRM, ensuring longer-term objectives, and donors allowing for flexibility and adaptability in accountability were also highlighted. The image, brand, and perception of RCRCM, as connected to the seven fundamental principles of the organisation, was noted to facilitate operations in FCV.

Based on these findings, four potential pathways for strengthening DRM in FCV were identified:

1) **Integration:** DRM in FCV should not be seen as a standalone project but integrated into efforts to achieve overall stronger frameworks and capacities for DRM, while still building capacities specific to operating in FCV. It is necessary to move away from the primarily short-term and projectised DRM programmes to meet DRR objectives and resilience building.

2) **Contextualisation:** Programming approaches will differ according to the scale, intensity and type of FCV. A stronger framework for assessing and planning according to this must be achieved.

3) **Localisation:** Working through local staff and volunteers may offer unique access in FCV, but it also poses additional safety risks to those actors, and the ethical issue of risk transfer is pertinent.

4) **Dissemination:** Dissemination of the humanitarian principles to all stakeholders in a conflict can help ensure safety and access, to increase operational effectiveness in FCV.

The final chapter summarises the findings of the study and identifies a number of areas for further research, particularly anchored in the operational perspective. To take the findings from the study further, the author recommends pursuing further support for pilot projects and a shift at the global level in the approach to operating in FCV, particularly from donors. Furthermore, it is underlined that while the scope of the study is limited to operational conditions, it is crucial to consider the systemic root causes and political implications of disasters and DRM in FCV.

1. Introduction

The conflict-disaster nexus has seen increasing interest in recent decades. Research has guided the development of policies and strategies on the topic, but there are still major gaps on how to implement disaster risk management (DRM) and disaster risk reduction (DRR) programming[1] in fragility-, conflict-, and violence-affected contexts (FCV) (Peters, 2019, UNDRR, 2021). The gaps remain despite statistics starkly highlighting the dire need to develop effective DRM programming for FCV contexts: 58% of deaths by disasters occur in the 30 most fragile states in the world (Peters and Budimir, 2016), and between 2009-2018, almost four out of every five conflict-affected countries also experienced disasters in the same year (Mena & Hilhorst, 2021). Generally, disasters have much larger consequences in FCV, due to low resilience, high vulnerability, and limited capacity for DRM in such contexts (Peters & Peters, 2018; Peters et al., 2019).

Academic research on the relationship between disasters and conflict has been ongoing since the 1970s (Peters et al., 2020). It has shifted from a preoccupation with establishing direct causal links between the two, to a more holistic focus on understanding nuances, dynamics, and compounding effects between the two (ibid). When shifting the focus from establishing direct causal linkages to instead *'emphasise the causal conditions of vulnerability'* (Hollis, 2018: 20), several studies conclude that there is evidence of disasters and violence manifesting because of similar vulnerabilities (Wisner, et al. 2003; Kelman & Peters, 2020). Some researchers have suggested that disasters may only incite or exacerbate conflict in contexts where there are pre-existing conditions for conflict (Omelicheva, 2011). Global trends indicate a positive relation between the reduction of disaster deaths attributed to the progress in DRM efforts, while also showing that the statistics on disaster consequences in all regards remain high in FCV (Peters & Budimir, 2016).

Still, broad consensus on the topic is elusive, and several knowledge gaps have been highlighted in research. Particularly, there is a gap in operational knowledge and guidance on conflict considerations in DRM (Peters et al., 2020; Peters et al., 2019; Tänzler & Scherer, 2019). Peters and colleagues suggest that there is currently more need for researching practical issues of DRM in FCV, than for further research on the relationship between the disasters and conflict (Peters et al., 2019). They highlight the need to explore how to effectively implement DRM in FCV, review lessons learned, and to systematically examine practical examples, to explore

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[1] While these two can be seen as having differing goals and methods, this thesis defines DRR as a subset of DRM (as explained in chapter 2) and thus only refers to DRM onwards.

applications to other contexts (ibid).

The purpose of this thesis is to help fill some of these gaps of knowledge, namely the need to examine practical examples of DRM in FCV, comparing strategic considerations to operational conditions. This was done through a collective case study of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and its member National Societies (NS), by comparing strategic goals and policies on DRM, with the conditions experienced at the operational level of four African NS's that operate under FCV: The Nigeria Red Cross Society, Sudanese Red Crescent Society, Ethiopia Red Cross Society, and the South Sudan Red Cross Society. The study considered perspectives from both the NSs, and the IFRC, to fulfil the following research objective.

1.1. Objective and research questions

To **identify potential pathways for strengthening disaster risk management efforts in fragility-, violence-, and conflict-affected contexts**, by answering two research questions:

> RQ1. *What are the similarities and differences in the experiences and practices of disaster risk management in fragility-, violence-, and conflict-affected contexts at different organisational levels of African National Societies and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies?*

> RQ2. *How can identifying these similarities and differences help to inform strengthening of disaster risk management efforts in fragility-, conflict-, and violence- affected contexts?*

2. Methodology

This study applied a primarily inductive research approach through a case study. This approach allows for the consideration of contextual factors to explain observed phenomena, without aiming to test a given hypothesis. The following section will outline the related methodological considerations.

2.1. Case study and case selection

Case studies are the empirical investigation of phenomena observed in real-life contexts within bounded systems (Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Yin, 1994). Case studies can be particularly

useful for studying contexts where connections between phenomena and contexts are not clear (Yin, 1994). Researching several units within a case, or more than one case, is referred to as collective case studies, and has potential for higher generalisability than other types of case studies (Johnson & Christensen, 2014).

In this study, a collective case study was carried out to compare similarities and differences between several units in a single case. The case was organisationally bounded to consider two units (actors): The IFRC and the membership NSs. These two actors and the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement will be further described in Chapter 4.

The case study was geographically bounded to the African Continent, and thus the IFRC Regional Office for Africa, which supports 49 NS in sub-Saharan Africa[2] (IFRC, n.d.d.). In 2021, there were at least 20 states in active armed conflict across the 49 sub-Saharan African countries (SIPRI, 2021). Of these, 10 conflicts were categorised as low-intensity, sub-national armed conflicts (Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Kenya, Sudan, Madagascar, and Uganda). 10 were categorised as high-intensity armed conflicts (Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Somalia, Mali, South Sudan, Burkina Faso, Mozambique, Cameroon and Niger). These were the 20 countries chosen as eligible for inclusion in the case study. However, due to language constraints of the researcher, only interviewees working in anglophone countries were contacted, consequentially excluding francophone countries in conflict from the study.

2.2. Data sources

The research included multiple sources of primary and secondary data, in line with the usual characteristics of case studies (Creswell, 2013). Primary data were collected through interviews, and secondary data were collected through a document review.

2.2.1 Primary data collection

Primary data were collected mainly through semi-structured interviews, which offer versatility, flexibility, and reciprocity between the researcher and interviewees (Kallio et al., 2016), through a balance of open-ended questions and theoretically informed questions. This is appropriate and even necessary for an inductive research approach aiming to holistically investigate experiences and understandings of subjects while still adhering to predetermined

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[2] The regional office for Africa does not cover countries in Northern Africa (Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco), which are covered under the Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa.

constructs within the researched discipline (Galletta, 2013; Given, 2008).

Interviewees were scoped using purposeful sampling, e.g., selected based on their specific purpose associated to answering the research questions through expert knowledge and/or relevant experiences (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Through maximum variation sampling interviewees were selected based on specific characteristics and/or criteria aimed at reflecting differences in perspectives (Creswell, 2013). The variation criteria for the sampling can be seen in table 1.

Table 1. Interviewee sampling criteria

Category	Case unit	Example	Relevance/insights
Operational staff	NS	Disaster management (DM) delegates and officers, Heads of Department	Perspectives on the most immediate operational level and DRM implementation
Higher-level staff	NS	Secretary generals, deputy secretary generals	Perspectives on the intermediate strategic level, between operational staff and higher-level strategies on DRM
Country-level operations staff	IFRC	Disaster management delegates, operations coordinators	Perspectives on the strategies and policies within the IFRC, and their translation from the global/regional level to operational implementation
Geneva-level staff	IFRC	Staff working strategically with DRM	Will be interviewed after initial data analysis of country-level staff interviews, to give strategic perspective to the findings

A total of 30 experts were contacted, from the anglophone, African countries in active conflict described in section 2.1. as well as from the IFRC headquarters in Geneva and associated technical working groups (TWG). The final sample was 11 from the country-level including NS and IFRC staff, three from IFRC Geneva and one from a relevant TWG. While this sample size can be considered relatively small, this is to be expected from a process of purposeful sampling, particularly considering that the number of relevant staff was limited. The sample

size is not considered a limitation to this study, as focus has been on ensuring richness of data rather than quantitative breadth. An overview of the 15 interviewees can be seen in table 2.

Table 2. Interviewees for primary data collection

	Ethiopia	Nigeria	Sudan	South Sudan
NS Operational staff	Head of DM Department	Head of DM Department	Head of DM Department	Head of DM Department
NS higher-level staff			Advisor to the Secretary General	Secretary General
IFRC country-level staff		Regional Operations Coordinator Operations Manager	Head of Sudan and Eritrea Country Cluster Delegation	Senior Disaster Management Officer
Other	Anonymous participant with experience to give insights to IFRC perspective			
IFRC Global	– Forecast-based Action Senior Officer, Geneva – Disaster Relief Emergency Fund Senior Officer, Geneva – Anonymous DM Officer, Geneva – Anonymous member of the *Anticipatory Action in Conflict Practitioners Group* in the Anticipation Hub[3]			

Each interviewee was given a Participant Information Sheet (appendix 8.1) and asked to sign a Consent Form (appendix 8.2). All interviewees were offered anonymity, which three interviewees preferred. Fourteen of the interviews were conducted online via Zoom, and one interview was conducted in writing due to technical issues on the date of the interview. An

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[3] A platform hosted by German Red Cross, IFRC and the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre

interview guide was developed and applied to the interviews with the 11 country-level staff (See Appendix 8.3. for NS staff and Appendix 8.4 for IFRC staff), whereas the four global-level staff were interviewed through a semi-structured interview focusing on their specific technical area of expertise.

To enhance credibility of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) each participant received a draft of the data analysis from their interview, for verification and approval. Subsequently, participants were given a chance to read through the interpretation and discussion of the data and give input. Only a few participants gave minor feedback in terms of clarification of statements from the data collection.

2.2.2. Secondary data collection

The conceptual framework applied throughout the study (presented in Chapter 3) was developed from academic literature, identified using keyword searches in the following databases: Google, Google Scholar, LUBSearch, Researchgate, as well as ReliefWeb and Climate-Diplomacy.org, which contains both academic articles and grey literature. Reference tracing was used to identify additional literature.

Achieving research saturation on a topic as complex, quickly evolving, and intersectional as the disaster-conflict nexus is challenging. Any analytical sacrifices made in this vast network of complexities will leave out something arguably essential but was nonetheless necessary to keep the scope of the research manageable. Thus, the keyword search was limited to the following topics, deemed by the researcher to be the most directly relevant: disaster, conflict, fragility, disaster-conflict nexus, climate-conflict nexus, disaster risk management, disaster risk reduction, peacebuilding, and disaster diplomacy.

A document review of grey literature[4] was conducted through a keyword study of strategic and policy documents from the IFRC database, www.ifrc.org. Grey literature was also found and included from the above-described academic literature search and applied throughout the thesis. For a topic as niche and practical as DRM and particularly DRM and FCV, grey literature is a necessary inclusion, as academic research on the topic remains limited (Siddiqi, 2018). This thesis attempts to contribute to filling this research gap and urges a broader acceptance of the role and value of including grey literature in academic research on DRM. The benefit of including grey literature in this research process is that it: a) gives an insight into the state of

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[4] Documents which are not controlled by commercial publishing organisations or peer reviewed (Adams et al., 2016).

knowledge and strategies within the studied organisation that would otherwise be harder to obtain; and b) it connects an important link between academic research and practice, within the boundaries of the case. A drawback of grey literature application is its limitations in terms of searching efficiency and replicability of searches, and the risk of biases in the information gathered (Adams et al., 2016). However, the grey literature used in this study has been produced by highly recognised organisations and thinktanks, are entirely evidence based, and despite not being peer-reviewed the reports undergo rigorous internal reviews.

2.3. Data analysis – primary data

All data were analysed using NVivo 12, a qualitative analysis programme using a coding query system to find relationships across data types in an efficient and transparent way (Hoover & Koerber, 2011).

A thematic qualitative analysis was conducted for the 11 interviews with country-level operational and strategic-level staff from NSs and IFRC. This dataset was subsequently compared to strategic perspectives from four interviewees based at the global IFRC level.

The data were inductively analysed using the *data management spiral*, where data are first organised, then read multiple times in its entirety while memoing, before being broken down into categories, codes and themes (Creswell, 2013). This method keeps the integrity of the inductive approach. Beginning with a *lean coding approach* (ibid.) the data were divided into 2 broad categories for analysis – operational and strategic. These categories were expanded into more nuanced codes – 8 overall codes and 18 sub-codes. This process is illustrated in figure 1. Finally, this analysis was simultaneously presented and discussed in relation to the two research questions presented in section 1.1.

Figure 1. Overview of data analysis coding system
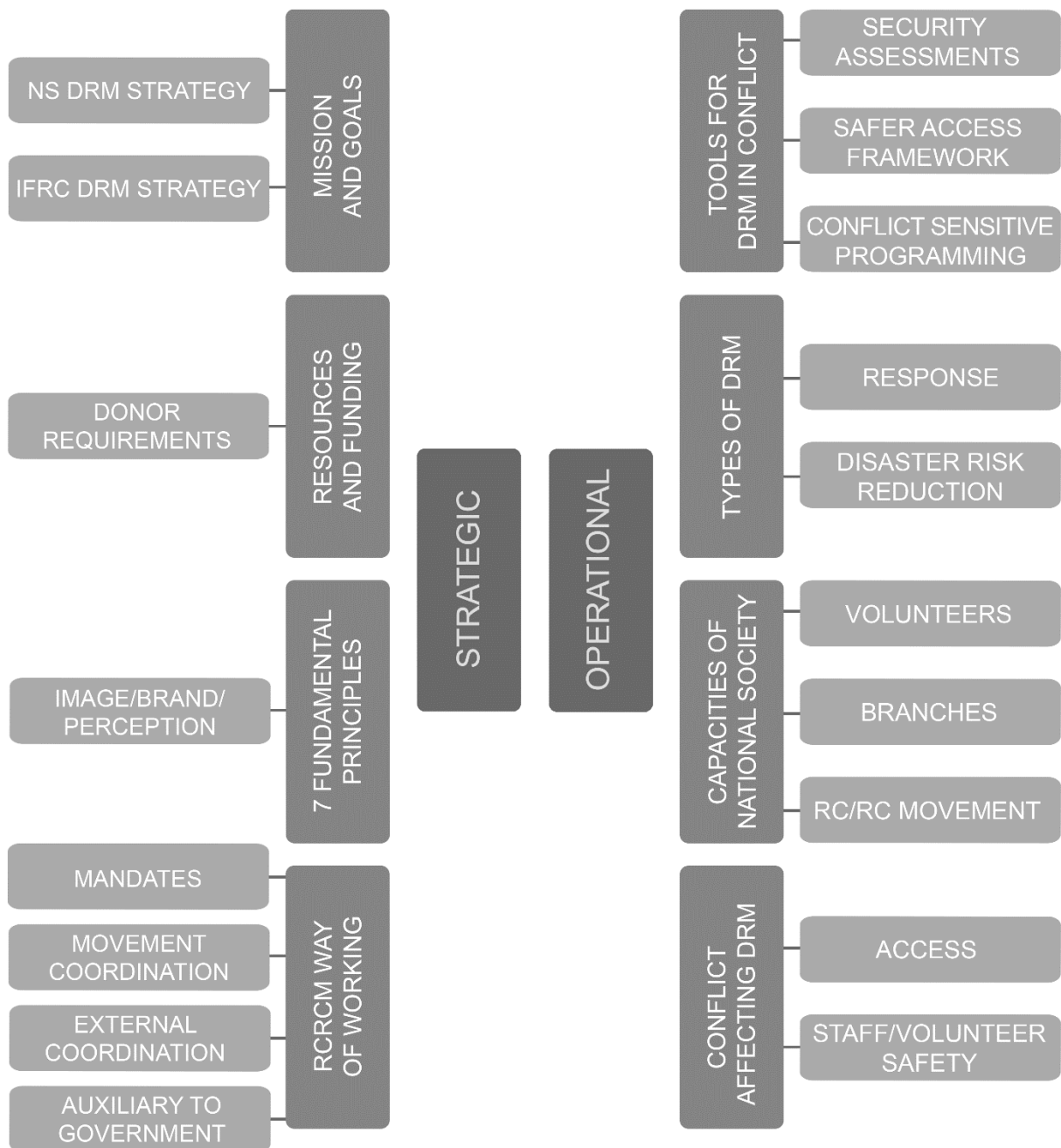
2.4 Limitations of methodology

Case studies are time and resource consuming, necessitating a clear and reasonably narrow boundary for the case, which ultimately affects generalisability (Gilham, 2000). While the aim of applying a collective case study is to bring a rich level of nuance into the research, the findings are still limited to a single context and organisation. Furthermore, the four countries included in the case study all experience different types and levels of FCV (as briefly described in table 3 of section 4.2.). This matters because different types of FCV have different operational implications that may affect the findings of the study, however making such analysis falls outside the delimitations and aim of the study. This limits the opportunity to make any generalisations related to conflict-types. This is not considered a limitation of the study *per se*, as this type of generalisability was not the aim, but it is important to keep in mind when considering the findings of the study.

The conceptual framework of the study considers particularly the DRM and FCV. Both concepts are embedded within a wide range of schools of research, from risk management, climate change studies, sociology, global politics, development studies, through conflict, peace, security, and military studies, to name a few. While ideally, any study of a topic as complex as the disaster-conflict nexus would consider each of these and pursue a truly cross- disciplinary approach, this was not feasible within the scope of this study. Thus, the conceptual framework and subsequent discussion relies largely on studies on DRM, while drawing influence from other sectors where relevant. Leaving out highly relevant nuances like the impact of climate change, military and securitisation, and global politics was a necessary analytical sacrifice, but is acknowledged as a limitation.

The topics discussed in the interviews are generally understood to be sensitive - both discussing the highly politicised topic of conflict, as well as undertaking research that is potentially critical towards the employers of those interviewed. It may not be ethical to push interviewees to explicitly discussing conflict in the context they live and work in. To avoid undue intrusion (Social Research Association, 2003) the issue was approached by first and foremost offering all participants anonymity. During the interviews, the questions were designed to (as much as possible) avoid questions requiring any value-judgement by interviewees in relation to sensitive topics, and interviewees were informed of their right to refrain from answering questions.

Finally, it is important to assess any potential biases of the researcher (Creswell, 2013). The research of the IFRC has been carried partially simultaneously with the researcher's deployment

as a Disaster Management Intern in the IFRC's Africa Regional Office, the contract ending before the research was concluded. All research was carried out completely independently of the IFRC, with no interference, dependencies, or expectations in the process. There are no identified conflicts of interest that would contaminate the gathered data. It is also important to acknowledge the background of the researcher, as an outsider from the context that is studied. The acronym WEIRD - Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, and Democratic (Heinrich et al, 2010) - adequately summarises the researcher's background. While one or several of these characteristics may also be applicable to the interviewees, any differences in any of these characteristics may lead to ignorance and prejudgements that can influence the communication processes, data analysis and conclusions drawn by the researcher. At the same time, studying a specific context as an outsider may also free the researcher of some conditioning, personal opinions and preconceived ideas.

3. Conceptual framework

This chapter outlines the central key concepts applied throughout this thesis, namely DRM and FCV, and central concepts related to understanding these. The aim of the chapter is to provide an understanding and conceptualisation of the central terminologies used throughout the thesis, which is particularly important as each of them are subject to contestation or differing definitions by various scholars and schools of research, as well as within practice communities (Peters & Kelman, 2020).

3.1. Disasters and disaster risk management

Disasters are the consequence of the interaction between a hazard event and conditions of exposure, vulnerability, and capacity (Wisner et al., 2003). In DRM contexts, the definition of disasters offered by UNDRR is widely used: *"A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society at any scale due to hazardous events interacting with conditions of exposure, vulnerability and capacity, leading to one or more of the following: human, material, economic and environmental losses and impacts"* (UNDRR, n.d.a). This definition, however, does not indicate how conditions of exposure, vulnerability and capacity are created, and how these in turn create conditions for hazard events to become disastrous. Each component of disaster risks is created from social, political and economic conditions (Peters, 2018), interlinking disaster risks with domestic and international political processes (Nelson 2010).

There is consensus in research that disasters disproportionately affect poor states and communities, and that socio-political conditions determine capacities to prepare for and respond to disasters (Nelson, 2010; Peters et al., 2019). The process of creating and maintaining vulnerability can be deliberate or not, but vulnerability is usually produced under conditions of powerholders making choices over those holding less power (Kelman, 2016). Even though the term is still widely used in politics and academic studies alike (Nelson, 2010), 'natural disaster' is misleading, as without the human conditions of vulnerability and exposure, natural hazard events such as earthquakes and floods would not become disastrous following UNDRR's definition. By acknowledging vulnerability as fundamentally political rather than technical, Kelman (2016) deems disasters fundamentally political, and Peters and colleagues (2019) further highlight disasters as non-conflict neutral.

Following this line of argument, this thesis applies UNDRR's definition of disasters as serious disruptions of society caused by the interaction of hazards and exposure, vulnerability, and capacity, but highlights that these conditions are highly political and are created through power-relations, socio-political and economic processes. Key socio-economic and politically shaped variables such as class, occupation, caste, ethnicity, gender, disability, health, age, immigration status, social networks, and access to resources can influence vulnerability (Wisner et al., 2003)[5]. Reduction of vulnerability can thus be facilitated through socio-economic, governance and developmental processes, but also through reduction of disaster risks in the form of DRM (ibid). It is thus important to highlight that while this definition may indicate a call for political solutions, DRM also has a place in reducing vulnerability.

This leads to the central concept of this thesis, DRM, which also draws on UNDRR's terminology of DRM as *"the application of disaster risk reduction policies and strategies to prevent new disaster risk, reduce existing disaster risk and manage residual risk, contributing to the strengthening of resilience and reduction of disaster losses"*, including but not limited to activities related to preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery (UNDRR, n.d.b). A choice was made to embed within this definition both disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation, understood as subsets of DRM. While some researchers agree on this converging approach, it should be acknowledged that doing so is also contested by others, based on key differences in agendas and methods of the different concepts (see a discussion of this topic in

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[5] A useful, albeit simple, model for explaining this interaction between vulnerability and hazard exposure is the Pressure and Release model (Wisner et al., 2003). Here, disasters are conceptualised as the intersection of two opposing forces, namely the processes which create vulnerability, as described above, and the manifestation of a natural hazard event. The model describes a progression of vulnerability, from deeper lying root causes created at societal and global levels, through the dynamic pressures that are manifestations of the root causes, which in turn create unsafe conditions and thus vulnerability (ibid).

Mercer, 2010).

Acknowledging that disasters are made possible through social, political and economic systems manifesting into disaster vulnerability, means committing to the idea that DRM should aim for tackling the root causes of vulnerability (Kelman, 2016). Conflict is also a result of these processes, and thus the concept of conflict and its drivers must be understood to effectively carry out DRM in FCV (Peters et al., 2019).

3.2. Fragility-, conflict-, and violence-affected contexts

Throughout the thesis, the term fragility-, conflict-, and violence-affected contexts or FCV is used. Presupposing and embedded within this seemingly straightforward term are a number of nuances and conceptualisations that will be highlighted below in order to give a comprehensive conceptualisation of the term.

Violence- and conflict scales

In the broadest sense of the word, conflict is a naturally occurring and unavoidable part of human interaction (OECD, 2018), arising when *"two or more persons or groups manifest the belief that they have incompatible objectives"* (Kriesberg, 2007: 2).

Violence and conflict have been conceptualised differently in several scales, for example from de-escalation to escalation (Kriseberg, 2007), or from constructive conflict resulting in benefits to destructive conflict resulting in grievances (OECD, 2018; Peters & Kelman, 2020). Conflict can also mean the presence or absence of peace, which can further be broken down into notions of *negative peace* - the mere absence of direct violence- or *positive peace* - which is the complete absence of any form of violence (Galtung, 1996).

Gurr proposes a scale of 'communal political action' - that is, violent actions initiated by a group with common interests, directed to influence state authorities or other non-state groups. These actions range in scope and intensity from violent protests, mass riots, terrorism, coups, guerrilla activity, to inter- or intrastate war (Gurr, 1993). All these actions are what this thesis will refer to as *violent conflict*. This conceptualisation excludes interpersonal forms of violence, but it is important to note that in many of the violent actions described by Gurr, interpersonal violence and particularly sexual- and gender-based violence is used as a tactic of repression as well (Marsh et at., 2006).

Fragility

The term conflict is often used to denote contexts where there is a lack of rule of law, armed or violent confrontation, insecurity, human rights abuses, and/or political instability (OECD,

2018). This shows the close connection between conflicts and fragility – another concept that is defined differently by many different agencies, despite its common usage in international and national policies alike. Using the definition by Brinkerhoff (2010: 66), *"state fragility is directly related to capacity deficits"* stating some of the following characteristics: inability to assure basic security, provide basic services, and ensure economic opportunities for citizens; not maintaining citizen confidence and trust; polarised sub-groups with histories of distrust and/or violence. It has also been suggested to use the term "fragile situations" as opposed to the commonly used "fragile states", highlighting that fragility is not necessarily bound to states but can occur at local, national or regional levels (African Development Bank Group, 2021). The demarcations between drivers of fragility and consequences of fragility and how these intersect with conflict are not always clear. Poverty, inequality, and low levels of economic development can be both the consequence of poor governance and fragility (Omelicheva, 2011), as well as drivers of conflict and fragility - albeit one driver among several, and not the single defining characteristic of fragile situations (OECD, 2008).

Phases of contemporary conflicts

Violent conflicts have changed in their nature in the past decades. Conflicts are becoming more protracted, more regional in nature, more divisive among major political powers. They are more often asymmetric conflicts centring around inequalities and power struggles, and increasingly including non-traditional warring actors such as criminal networks and other non- state actors (UNDPPA, 2020; Miall, 2004). Instability has also risen in countries with relatively strong state institutions, which challenges the traditional notion of economic growth being a driver of peace (UNDPPA, 2020). Contemporary conflicts are described by Miall as often having either cyclical or bell-shaped models of conflict phases, meaning that they shift in and out of active violent conflict, often resulting in complex humanitarian emergencies involving many local and global actors (Miall, 2004).

3.3. Applying the framework

As presented in the introduction of this thesis, agreement of what happens in the nexus where disasters and conflicts converge is as contested as any of the definitions themselves. The concepts presented above aim to equip the reader with some key takeaways, needed to guide the understanding of the ensuing discussion.

First and foremost, it should be clear by now that conceptualising both disaster and conflict is very complex, and everyone's understanding of the term will differ. This is important to

consider when addressing RQ1, '*What are the similarities and differences in the experiences and practices of DRM in FCV at different organisational levels of African NSs and the IFRC?'*. The framework presented above aims to give some insight into the complexity of dealing with conceptualisations and what they mean for DRM implementation.

Secondly, effort has been made to highlight how politics and vulnerability play a major role and must be part of the considerations when discussing 'natural disasters' and conflicts separately. Understanding both disasters and conflicts as socially and politically created highlights the need to design DRM efforts that target political and power challenges. This has been highlighted to acknowledge that while the anchoring perspective of this thesis is the operational level and looking into organisational and programmatic processes, these are inseparably tied to the root causes of disaster vulnerability as introduced above. The thesis does not aim to produce findings or solutions at this level, but the researcher urges readers to keep these considerations in mind throughout.

4. Case description

The following section aims to provide the necessary background knowledge to understand the collective case study. It begins with an overview of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement and its components, followed by a brief introduction of each of the four countries included in the case study (Nigeria, Sudan, Ethiopia, South Sudan) and the National Societies of each country.

4.1. A brief overview of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement

The Red Cross Red Crescent Movement (RCRCM) is the world's largest humanitarian network (RCRCM, 2006), consisting of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and 192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (NS).

The mission of the RCRCM is to '*prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found, in particular in times of armed conflict and other emergencies'* (Council of Delegates, 2015: 3). The core values and actions of the RCRCM are shaped by seven Fundamental Principles which are outlined in the Statues of the RCRCM (RCRCM, 2006): Humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity, and universality. The three components of the RCRCM work under different mandates and missions, all adhering to the Fundamental Principles.

NSs are auxiliaries to their state governments, meaning they are neither government institutions

nor separate non-government organisations. There are 192 NSs across the world[6], their roles and responsibilities varying based on the agreement with the relevant governments. NSs operate through paid staff and a vast network of volunteers that aim to be present in communities before, during and after disasters (IFRC, n.d.b.). In situations of armed conflict, NSs provide services in accordance with the Geneva Conventions in liaison with state governments (IFRC, 2006).

The IFRC is a membership-based organisation that unites and supports member NSs[7] through a global secretariat and regional offices. The IFRCs mission is to '*inspire, encourage, facilitate, and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies*' (IFRC, n.d.a.). This mandates coordination, capacity strengthening, and supporting the work of member NSs to carry out their work effectively (IFRC, 2019).

The ICRC's mission is to '*protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance*' (ICRC, n.d.a). Through the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol I, the ICRC has the mandate to act under international armed conflicts as well as non-international armed conflicts. The ICRC may offer its services to governments in situations where international humanitarian law does not apply, without this constituting interference in the internal affairs of that state (ICRC, n.d.b.).

4.1.1. Exclusion of the ICRC from the case study

A decision was made to limit the scope of the case study to only the IFRC and NSs. This decision was based on the following observations.

There is an overlap in the mandates of the IFRC and ICRC since disasters can and do happen under conditions of conflict. While the ICRC may initially seem like the most obvious choice for a case study on DRM in FCV, the mandate of the ICRC (to assist people affected by armed conflict) is not directly linked to DRM in the same way as the mandates of the IFRC and NSs.

The IFRC has a Disaster Risk Management Policy applying to the IFRC and all member NSs, which covers the approach to disasters in all contexts, including fragile, protracted and conflict contexts (IFRC, 2020). While this policy commits to working in coordination and cooperation

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[6] Recognised states without NSs are Nauru, Niue, Oman and the Vatican City, alongside a number of states with limited or contested recognition.

[7] Note that not all NSs are members of the IFRC. The following NSs are not members: Faroe Islands Red Cross, Indonesian Red Crescent Society, Red Cross of Kosovo, Kosovan Red Crescent Society, North Cyprus Red Crescent Society, Kurdish Red Crescent, Sahrawi Red Crescent, Red Cross Society of the Republic of China, Red Swastika Society.

with the ICRC, it does not apply directly to the ICRC (ibid.). The ICRC also responds to disasters in conflict zones (ICRC, n.d.c.) as a part of its unique access to those zones, but the activities carried out by ICRC on behalf of war-affected communities is not directly related to DRM and the organisation does not have any policies or strategies pertaining to DRM. Thus, the ICRC was not deemed a directly relevant actor to the purpose of this study, which is consequentially only Federation-wide rather than Movement-wide, however as a member of the RCRCM, ICRC will still be addressed wherever relevant.

4.2. Countries and National Societies

Table 3 below briefly introduces each of the four countries included in the case study, providing key information on conflict landscape, disaster risk profiles, and the National Society. The aim is not to give a comprehensive insight into the complex and rich histories of conflict and disasters in the countries, but rather to give an adequate introduction to understand the conflict and disaster dynamics that will be addressed through the data collection and analysis. A more comprehensive overview of the countries and sources can be found in appendix 8.5.

Table 3. Key information overview of the four case study countries

NIGERIA		
Disaster risk profile	**Contemporary FCV overview**	**NS**
Floods are prevalent across all states. North-east: Drought, desertification and storms South-west: Rainstorms, windstorms, coastal erosion South-east: Gully erosion, landslides South: Coastal- and gully erosion	Separatist movements, insurgency and state repression drives instability and violence. Boko Haram insurgency in north-east Biafra, Niger Delta Republic, and Oduduwa Republic separatist movements in south Farmer-herder conflicts in central and southern regions, fuelled by environmental degradation and displacement Land disputes and intercommunal violence across country, particularly in south	Established in 1961 Mandated to respond to conflicts, mitigate suffering, and improve health and disease prevention 37 branches (in 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory) 500.000 volunteers
ETHIOPIA		
Disaster risk profile	**Contemporary FCV overview**	**NS**
North and east: Floods and droughts Central and west:	Elections in 2018, with the selection of ethnically Oromo president replacing three decades of Tigrayan	Established in 1935, recognised by law in 1947

Landslides	ethnic presidency, sparked tensions.	
Earthquakes, with a particularly high risk in northern Afar	In October 2020, tensions turned violent between Tigray's People's Liberation Front and government. Fighting continues, mainly affecting Tigray, Amhara and Afar regions	11 regional branches, and 177 district branches 47.000 volunteers
25 active volcanoes in the region		

SUDAN

Disaster risk profile	Contemporary FCV overview	NS
Wide exposure to frequently occurring hazards: Floods, droughts, wildfires, storms, volcanoes, earthquakes Climatic hazards expected to increase, as Sudan is one of the most climate change vulnerable countries in the world	Ethnic clashes, farmer-herder clashes and land competition led to conflict in Darfur, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile in 2003. Fighting between government and rebellion groups like Sudanese Liberation Army. Months of protests against then-president Al-Bashir in 2019, leading to ousting through military coup. A joint military-civilian government was established. Government still contested, with a military coup in October 2021 again sparking protests Tensions remain in border areas to South Sudan (see below)	Established in 1956 Mandated to carry out emergency response, first aid and health interventions since 2010 15 branches and 75 units 35.000 volunteers

SOUTH SUDAN

Disaster risk profile	FCV overview	NS
Flooding most predominant hazard, particularly along the River Nile Also exposed to droughts and wildfires.	Gained independence from Sudan in July 2011. Tensions remain over shared oil revenues and border demarcations. Conflict ensued internally following independence, due to in-fighting in government, armed rebellion groups, and ethnic divides. Flare-ups particularly in 2013 and 2016. A peace agreement was signed in September 2018, leading to formation of a unity government in February 2020. Intra- and intercommunal violence and community-based militias is an increasing problem across country.	Established in 2011 Acknowledge as auxiliary to government 17 branches 21.000 volunteers

5. Findings and discussion

The data analysis process, as described in section 2.3 yielded two broad categories for analysis - operational and strategic - and 8 overall themes and 18 sub-codes at two different levels, as visualised in figure 1 in section 2.3. This chapter will present findings that cut across these themes, to answer each of the two research questions (RQ) presented in section 1.1.

The chapter will simultaneously present the findings from the data analysis and discuss those findings in relation to the relevant RQs. Under each RQ, the cross-cutting findings from the 11 operational country-level interviews will be presented as the anchoring perspective. These findings will be discussed by comparison to academic research on the topic and/or strategic perspectives from the four global-level interviewees, and strategic documents from the IFRC and other parts of the RCRCM where relevant. The aim is to compare the experienced operational conditions and practices to academic and strategic aims and initiatives, to be able to meet the research objective of **identifying potential pathways for strengthening DRM efforts in FCV**.

Please refer to the abbreviations list for an overview of how interviewees titles have been abbreviated and will be addressed henceforth.

> *RQ1.   What are the similarities and differences in the experiences and practices of DRM in FCV at different organisational levels of African NSs and the IFRC?*

The most consistent finding throughout the country-level interviews was the need to strengthen the general, overall capacity for DRM, from the national to the branch and volunteer level. Areas of focus mentioned were strengthening the technical knowledge and skills of staff and volunteers, and the many support services that facilitate DRM (e.g., human resources, logistics, finance, planning, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting (PMER), prepositioning of stocks, digital transformation, and hardware/infrastructure). The main IFRC strategic initiative highlighted by nine of the 11 interviewees was National Society Development (NSD) – what is in non-IFRC contexts often referred to as capacity development. NSD includes efforts to strengthen NS governance, leadership, organisational capacity, and design and delivery of programmes and services. NSD is a crucial element for DRM because otherwise *"it's like building a house with a very poor foundation."* (IFRC Sudan HoCCD). The dedication to capacity development was also reflected in the global-level interviews as well as the IFRC's global strategies. NSD is a major strategic priority of IFRC, featured clearly in the Global Plan

2022, the Strategy 2030, and the Africa Agenda for Renewal where one of the four flagship initiatives for the African region in 2021-2030 is NSD. The IFRC Disaster Risk Management Policy (2019b) puts NS capacity development for all stages of DRM and particularly for preparedness as a central priority. Thus, the strategic focus on capacity development seems to be integrated and agreed upon at all levels of the organisation.

The need for stronger organisational capacities to enable effective DRM is neither a new finding, nor specific to working in FCV. The need for capacity development for DRM has been consistently brought up at World Conferences on DRR and as strategic priorities for INGOs and other humanitarian organisations to reduce disaster losses, yet many challenges to implementing it remain (UNISDR, 2005; Hagelsteen & Burke, 2016). In the context of this thesis, it does raise the question of whether capacity development for DRM is the same for FCV and non-FCV contexts. Many of the crucial elements highlighted by the country-level interviewees do indicate that, yes, the need to ensure technical capacities of staff and organisationally are similar to those highlighted in research on capacity development for DRM in general. For example, Scott & Few (2016) list human and material resources, organisational structures, coordination, decision-making processes, and enabling mechanisms (ownership, engagement, flexibility, adaptability, design, and sustainability) as key activities, most of which were also brought up by interviewees for this study. The most obvious conclusion to draw from this would be that if capacity for DRM is strengthened in general, then capacity for DRM in FCV will be strengthened. But even if capacity development is similar across contexts, there might still be a need for increased focus on this in FCV, as these areas are statistically harder hit by disasters (Peters & Peters, 2018; Peters et al., 2019). Further, several experiences and practices were highlighted as being specifically relevant to operating in FCV. The following will look at each of the elements identified at the operational level as being particularly pertinent in FCV outside of the general need for stronger DRM capacities.

Access and security

Access – in the sense of the agency space of an organisation to operate freely and meet humanitarian needs (Collinson & Elhawary, 2012) - was mentioned by most (8) interviewees as a central consideration when operating in FCV. Five interviewees highlighted the unique breadth of access gained through the vast volunteer networks in the countries, but most highlighted challenges with access due to conflict, which can become *"bottlenecks for DRM, especially in emergency interventions"* (ERCS HoDM). ADM Ethiopia states that access has never been formally denied to the NS in Ethiopia by any actors, but that access has always been

an issue of staff and volunteer safety. Seven interviewees highlight the challenges of ensuring security for volunteers and/or staff as a major obstacle to carrying out DRM in FCV, with security assessments[8] being the main tool for decision-making on access.

Considerations of access and safety are largely absent from key IFRC strategic and policy documents in DRM. The IFRC *Disaster Risk Management Policy* does state that it covers disasters "in all contexts, including fragile, protracted and conflict situations", and recognises that operations may cause staff and volunteers 'mental and physical stresses' (2019b: 6), but it does not clearly or directly address issues of safety, security, or access in relation to staff, volunteers, or DRM programming. The *Better Programming Initiative* mentions access once as a goal to be ensured through conflict-sensitive programming (2016a). The *Emergency Response Framework* acknowledges security issues as a possible reason to not follow the IFRC default response strategy (2017). *Climate-smart Disaster Risk Reduction* (2020a) does not address either access or safety. From the global level interviews, GVA ADM mentioned an ongoing process to further integrate safety and access into preparedness for effective response[9] efforts in collaboration with ICRC. DRR/FCV presented the results of a draft analysis of gaps in DRR in FCV programming that showed the need for a better rollout of security management.

What this indicates is that there is relatively little focus within the DRM strategies of the IFRC on one of the most pertinent issues to carrying out DRM in FCV from the operational perspective. Central elements of mitigating risks to volunteers and staff include visibility and dissemination of the RCRCM to ensure acceptance and trust from communities, governments, and even warring parties. These elements were mentioned by seven interviewees as a key strength to enable operations in FCV. Generally, when discussing safety and access for DRM, ICRC was mentioned as the key actor, even when discussing NS- and IFRC-driven DRM programmes. The Safer Access Framework (SAF)[10] by ICRC was particularly identified as a tool that helped strengthen operations in FCV. The benefit of SAF is the formalised approach to

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[8] Assessments identifying security risks, often including recommendations for security controls, 'red' or 'green' light indications for actions, and/or geographic classifications of security and access

[9] Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) is an approach for NSs to systemically and cyclically assess their response systems and take actions to remedy gaps, through NS-driven workplans to strengthen their overall response capacity (IFRC, n.d.c.)

[10] The Safer Access Framework (SAF) is developed by ICRC with the aim to increase safety and effectiveness of NS response operations in sensitive and insecure contexts, including armed conflict, through a focus on NS capacity strengthening. The key elements of SAF are: 1) Context and risk assessments; 2) Legal base, statutory instruments and policies; 3) Acceptance of the organisation; 4) Acceptance of the individual, e.g., staff and volunteers; 5) Identification through the RCRCM emblems; 6) Internal Communication and coordination; 7) External communication and coordination; 8) Operational security risk management (ICRC, 2014)

dissemination of the RCRCM to all stakeholders in FCV, helping to facilitate context analysis, security, access, visibility, and acceptance. Although SAF has not been specifically developed for DRM, the eight key elements of SAF (see footnote 8) largely reflect the operational conditions and challenges described by NSs for implementation of DRM in FCV. Interestingly, SAF was mentioned by all five NS staff, GVA ADM and DRR/FCV, but only by one country-level IFRC staff. This could indicate a gap in the Movement- wide integration of the tool, likely because the NSs coordinate directly with ICRC on SAF in FCV- areas that fall under ICRC's mandate, but the country-level IFRC staff do not, although there are many valuable lessons for DRM implementation to be found within SAF.

Volunteers as a strength and a risk

The access and community acceptance provided through the vast volunteer and local branch network of the NSs were consequently identified by all interviewees as major enablers for carrying out DRM in FCV. Working through volunteers provides capacity to respond in a timely manner, as local volunteers will already be close to the incident. They are also community members, which interviewees generally said gives the advantage of community acceptance, facilitating trust towards the organisation and local ownership of DRM efforts. All of these are ultimately enabling factors for access as well as sustainable and appropriate DRM efforts that are community-based and community-owned.

The key issue in operating through volunteers was identified as the safety risks and the fact that as community members, volunteers are as affected by FCV as everyone else. For example, several interviewees mentioned that volunteers are also displaced with the rest of the community when conflict intensifies. Two interviewees raised the ethical question of accepting the risks posed to local staff and volunteers, in situations where the IFRC and Movement Partners will not go because of security risks.

> *"If those volunteers [who were killed on duty] were working for one of the*
> *partners, then I begin to question why one of the partners would allow those*
> *volunteers to work in such volatile area when they know that they [themselves] will*
> *not go there." – NRCS HoDM*

A research project by the Swedish Red Cross called *Volunteering in Conflict and Emergencies* had similar findings in relation to the unique access gained through volunteers, as well as the issues of risk transfer (Thomas et al., 2018a). In the thematic paper *The dangers of being local*, raises the issue of seeing local communities as homogeneous and stable, and thus making a

reductionist assumption that local volunteers will be accepted. This creates the risk of seeing volunteers as safer than they are when operating in FCV, especially since locals do not have safe exit strategies from the communities they are part of (ibid). The paper concludes that "*being the 'wrong' local is riskier in some conflicts and emergency settings than being a non-local*" (ibid: 4) and *"On many occasions, being 'distant' is often beneficial and safer than being local"* (ibid: 7). Data from the study was collected directly from volunteers. Since interviews for this thesis were carried out with HQ NS staff, it is consequentially some organisational levels removed from the volunteer-level. This may explain why the NS staff generally saw volunteers as having default community acceptance, where the volunteer study concludes that this is a misconception – indicating a potential knowledge gap at the NS level on volunteer and branch-level staff safety. However, several interviewees did mention the need to train branch staff and volunteers better on working in FCV, both in terms of safety as well as DRM-related technical skills specific to FCV.

While the data collection for this thesis did not go deeper into the issue of safety for local staff and therefore will not make definitive conclusions on the root of the issue, the findings do indicate a need for increased focus on this issue in relation to DRM programming in FCV. This also gives an interesting perspective to the wider humanitarian localisation agenda. This agenda, in short, is centred around decentralising humanitarian work by providing more funding directly to local actors, investing in capacitating local first responders and at-risk populations for disaster preparedness, and generally fighting the paternalistic structural dominance of the massive international relief industry (Van Brabant & Patel, 2017). The IFRC has committed to contribute to the Grand Bargain's Localisation Workstream[11]. Through its unique network of volunteers, the IFRC is a major player in the localisation agenda, but at the same time comes a heightened responsibility to ensure the safety and appropriate capacity of volunteers to work in FCV. Lessons learned from working through RCRCM volunteers in FCV can provide great insights into how to achieve localisation goals for FCV-contexts in the broader humanitarian sector, granted that greater attention is paid on how to do this in a safe and ethical manner.

Response versus disaster risk reduction

Interviewees discussed DRM programming in FCV both in terms of disaster response activities as well as DRR and resilience-building activities. Most of the activities carried out in FCV by the NS were described as responding directly to the given conflict-situation in terms of

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[11] A cooperation between signatories of the 10 Grand Bargain commitments set at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, to facilitate implementation of localisation commitments (IFRC, 2021).

provision of items for basic needs, support for refugees, psychosocial support, first aid and health/medical support, and casualty evacuation. In each country were also examples of responding to either floods (Sudan, South Sudan) or drought/hunger (Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Sudan) in areas also affected by conflict. A few examples of DRR and resilience-building programmes were mentioned, most often funded bilaterally through a Partner NS as opposed to through the multilateral IFRC funding mechanisms. The main takeaway from the interviews, as mentioned by five interviewees, is that in FCV where humanitarian needs are high and continue to rise, foregoing DRR programming is a necessary sacrifice to be able to meet the need for life-saving response activities.

> *"You have to balance, based on the resources you have, between provision of immediate humanitarian needs. (…) And then you have the long term. So, it's really the priorities, based also on the level of funding you have. But probably, that's also just an excuse, because you put so much energy and time on the immediate needs, because of all the pressure going with it (…). From all our headquarters, everyone insists on getting our boots on the ground and moving and responding." – IFRC Sudan HoCCD*

This does not entirely reflect the IFRC's DRM strategy, wherein a majority of the eight commitments focus on strengthening community and organisational capacity for preparedness, risk reduction, longer-term recovery, and resilience building, while only one commitment focuses on response. Peters (2019) suggests that this issue may be due to the projectised approach of piecemeal efforts, which cannot lead to an appropriate and sustainable scale of DRR in FCV. GVA ADM stressed that it is not only a matter of gathering more support and investment, but also ensuring *meaningful* investments, which can only be ensured through *"common ways, common approaches, common understandings, and support that is better coordinated."*, leaving behind a projectised approach to preparedness, instead embracing it as a continuous effort.

It is also interesting that the funding tools highlighted by NS staff as being most useful for operations in FCV were not tools supporting longer term programming. The *Disaster Relief Emergency Fund* (DREF)[12] was mentioned by several interviewees as a useful way to access quick funding for response to and in FCV.

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[12] The *Disaster Relief Emergency Fund* (DREF) is a funding mechanism that enables provision of immediate financial support to NSs in response to disasters. DREF allocations of up to 1 million CHF can be released within 24 hours, and support response operations for up to six months (IFRC, 2020b).

The *Forecast-based Action by the DREF* (FbA)[13] was highlighted as one of the newer IFRC initiatives that had influenced the NS's approach to DRM. Both funds were originally developed to respond to disasters induced by natural hazards, but interviews with GVA DREF-O and GVA FbA-O underlined that efforts are ongoing to make the two funding tools more fit for the purpose of working in and on FCV. For example, GVA DREF-O acknowledged the need to consider longer timeframes and better integration of readiness and early recovery actions.

This is happening as a reaction to the changing landscape of protracted crisis, and the situations which the DREF is being applied for – with an increase in applications for funding to prepare for and respond to for example political unrest, as is the case in Sudan. Still, a number of obstacles are halting the process. A central issue to applying FbA in conflict is reviewing the triggers that are currently accepted for activation of anticipatory actions. GVA FbA-O explains that since the framework was originally developed for natural disasters, scientifically based forecasts and 'hard triggers' are currently the generally accepted activation modality. But global-level efforts are being made to consider how to integrate '*expert judgement triggers*', using the expertise of national societies to forecast situations like conflict escalation. Several NS interviewees also underline the capacities within the branches, volunteers, and local communities themselves, to do context analyses both in and on FCV. Locals will know best the conflict dynamics in their own context, which can be used to prepare for and anticipate conflicts. The central issue here lies in verification of the expert forecasts and ensuring accountability towards donors when the skill of the forecast cannot be determined. This issue of donor accountability for programming in FCV will be discussed later. GVA ADM and DRR/FCV both stressed that the novelty and increased focus on FbA in recent years should complement and not take away from efforts to achieve integrated, full- cycle DRM efforts. The issue thus becomes a matter of a) integrating more elements of preparedness and early recovery into response programming, and b) finding other ways to ensure long-term, integrated programming for DRR and resilience building.

While the DREF is a funding tool specific to the RCRCM, the discussion on ensuring integrated funding for both response and resilience-building initiatives in FCV is also relevant in a broader context. The interviews indicate a need to be able to access funding quickly for response, but consistently for longer-term programmes, and for ensuring that funding tools are fit for purpose

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[13] The *Forecast-based Action by the DREF* (FbA) was launched in 2018 as an additional funding mechanism through the DREF, where funding for early actions in the face of imminent disasters can be released automatically, based on pre-agreed trigger points (IFRC, 2020b).

to operating in FCV by ensuring integration of DRR and resilience building into the dominant response activities. To do this, it is relevant to discuss both operational, programmatic considerations as well as donor perspectives.

Programmatic considerations - timelines and planning

A number of opportunities for strengthening DRM programming in FCV were suggested in the interviews. Generally, interviewees agreed that a stronger framework for security in terms of information management and volunteer and staff training is needed. Most also agreed that the current external and movement-based network and framework for security assessments was a strength to planning safer operations in FCV. Most programmatic challenges identified related to planning processes and integration of conflict sensitivity.

First and foremost, there is a need to work more systematically with different types and intensities of FCV, as well as to be able to assess and adapt to changes. The unpredictable nature and evolution of the conflict context and what this volatility means for the separation of mandates between IFRC and ICRC was highlighted by several interviewees. Examples were given from all four countries of conflicts evolving unexpectedly, or insecurity and violence spilling over from high-intensity conflict areas (under ICRC mandate) to previously non-conflict affected areas (under IFRC mandate), calling the separation of mandates and classification of risks in such a situation a grey area.

> *"Would we classify [the spill-over of violence from conflict] as conflict-related issues, or are these just risks or threats which are happening, but often of armed nature?" – IFRC Nigeria Ops*

The need for contextualisation of operations is also mentioned as a strategic area of focus by DRR/FCV, who not only highlights the need to differentiate between conflict dynamics (fragility, violence, conflict, high intensity, low intensity, post-conflict, and protracted crisis) but also other conditions such as the status, perception and capacity of the NS in the country. An interviewee suggests that this context assessment should come from many different levels. Volunteers and local staff should be trained on context assessments, trained national-level NS staff should give technical input, and there should also be integration of secondary data from external actors' high- level assessments. While this is described as the ideal, the same interviewee underlines that in many contexts this has not been reached. GVA ADM promotes taking a multi-hazard approach and developing capacities for preparedness for multiple contexts, because often the conflicts are not separate from other compounding disasters and

issues. This intention of overall multi-hazard preparedness would also prepare NS's more broadly for evolution, spill-over and unexpected surges of conflict. The interviewee highlights the need to strengthen capacity for context assessments as one of the currently most critical to strengthening overall NS preparedness for any type of hazard including conflict.

The discussion on strategic prioritisation of short-term response versus long-term DRR activities was also addressed from an operational, planning standpoint. Several interviewees highlighted that planning for long-term activities can seem futile in volatile contexts. Conflict intensity may change quickly and unexpectedly, hindering planned implementation, driving community displacement, high turnover of volunteers, or causing communities to adopt negative coping mechanisms. All of this means that efforts for longer-term planning can be *"reduced to zero in a minute"* (IFRC South Sudan DM). IFRC Nigeria Ops suggests a reconsideration of the 'phased approach'[14] for ensuring that DRR objectives can be met in FCV, essentially by either building DRR initiatives into the response phase, by finding ways to narrow the timeframe for DRR implementation, or a combination of the two.

Country-level interviewees mentioned several ways that DRM programmes are made conflict-sensitive, but as a bottom line several interviewees underlined the general need for more knowledge about conflict-sensitivity, conflict preparedness, and security and safety at all levels of the organisations, from NS headquarters to the volunteer level. The IFRC's *Better Programming Initiative* (BPI) documents from 2016 provide guidance on how to integrate the *do no harm*[15] approach into programming. The *Operationalizing Better Programming Initiative* (IFRC, 2016b) highlights a lot of the same areas as the interviews in this study: The need to utilise and build on local capacity, conduct solid context analyses, making efforts to avoid negative consequences of activities, and optimising PMER processes. While there are tools available through the IFRC to support NSs in DRM, and even tools like the BPI to optimise work in FCV, the tools need to be better disseminated in general, and particularly down to the branch level, as highlighted by IFRC Nigeria Regional DM. This is an initiative which is underway, according to DRR/FCV, who noted that an online course on conflict-sensitive

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[14] While there are different takes on which phases or processes are generally included in DRM, one of the most commonly used frameworks takes basis in the *disaster management cycle* consisting of an iterative process of preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery, through phases of pre-disaster, response and post-disaster DRM activities, linking also to long-term development activities (Coppola, 2015).

[15] *Do No Harm* is an often-cited approach, principle or objective, first used in the 1990's specifically for aid in conflict-affected contexts but spreading throughout the humanitarian world in the last decades. While there is no broadly agreed definition, it generally refers to the consideration and mitigation of potential negative effects of implementing humanitarian work (Charancle & Lucchi, 2018).

programme management has recently been developed and a rollout process is underway. The focus is building volunteer capacity on basic DRR, international humanitarian law, conflict-sensitivity, and skills like negotiation and mediation. In the preparedness arena, GVA ADM again describes a different approach, where initiatives are underway to strengthen the overall capacity for preparedness through a multi-hazard approach that integrates conflict-sensitivity but does not present a standalone training module on this. The two approaches are not mutually exclusive but underline the need to ensure that integrated approaches do include conflict-sensitivity modules in the contexts where this is relevant.

Donor perspectives and funding

A consistently identified challenge for doing DRM, mentioned directly by seven interviewees and indirectly by all, is the issue of limited funding as compared to the humanitarian needs in each of the four countries. Once again, these challenges with funding do not necessarily directly refer to doing DRM in FCV but reflect a general issue for the NSs and their work. However, conflict further strains the scarce resources in complex crises:

> *"This state of affairs has put tremendous duty on SRCS shoulder being the leading humanitarian actor (...). SRCS is overwhelmed with the tasks of responding and continue responding to those protracted emergencies." – SRCS SG Advisor*

The funding restraints were by some interviewees connected to specific challenges in terms of donor interests and requirements specifically for funding DRM programmes in FCV. Three interviewees suggested that foreign investments and interests tend to lean towards dealing with the conflicts themselves rather than dealing with the humanitarian crisis, and that appetite for funding natural disasters is less because of their often cyclical and repetitive nature causing donor fatigue. Ultimately this means that a relatively large amount of money may go into FCV, but not directed towards DRM. Donor interests ultimately decide the programming that can be implemented, which may, as a consequence, not always reflect the actual needs but rather donor priorities. The key enabler identified for being able to implement longer term DRR and resilience-building initiatives in FCV contexts were bilateral partnerships with other NSs, dedicated to implementing longer- term programming, as mentioned by both country-level interviewees and GVA ADM.

Funding and donor requirements also bring operational challenges specifically related to FCV. Two interviewees highlighted that earmarked or timebound funding may be a challenge due to the volatility of FCV, which sometimes makes it hard to strictly follow planning and live up to

accountability requirements. Earmarked funding also limits the NS's autonomy to direct resources where they may be needed, for example for volunteer capacity building. It was suggested by NS staff that these issues can be mitigated through a more systematised effort to communicate clearly with donors about these potential issues prior to planning and implementation, as well as providing operational updates more often than what is currently required.

It is important to highlight that there has been somewhat of a shift in funding appetite for DRR in recent years (Peters, 2017). There is indeed an increased global donor commitment to longer-term programming, yet still the objectives for DRM on FCV are not being reached and progress is slow (ibid.).

> *"The problem is, then how much of this is really reaching the local level? (…) You have accountability to the donor and accountability to the affected population. And accountability to the donor is until now still the determining factor, because then they say, 'oh, it's taxpayers' money' (…). And we need to then in the end, be accountable to them. And that's why the risk appetite is then rather low in some areas." – DRR/FCV*

Yet, if funding and programme implementation is centred directly at the local level, the dilemma of donor accountability arises. This alludes to a larger shift that is needed within the humanitarian relief industrial complex: The shift from top-down to bottom-up approaches, which has been discussed for decades under different terminologies and foci, latest the localisation agenda. Particularly in FCV, a shift from international staff to local branches and volunteers being the main implementers of DRM programming means that the currently rigid processes of planning, monitoring and reporting will have to be reviewed to fit the volatility of the context. The same goes for the previously discussed issue of validation of assessments made by local actors, for example to forecast conflict for anticipatory action. If the need for better DRM programming in FCV is to be met, there must be a consideration of alternative accountability mechanisms, which is a matter of donors understanding and catering to the operational conditions of working in FCV.

What several interviewees highlight is that there must be more flexibility to adapt planned programming to the changing context. This, however, requires a shift away from the current model of results-based programming often modelled from the Logical Framework Approach

(LFA)[16]. This approach has received criticism from both academics and practitioners as early as the 2000's (see for example Davies, 2004; Bakewell & Garbutt, 2005; Gasper, 2000). Any criticisms made of the framework's rigidity, inflexibility and donor-driven nature related to non-FCV contexts are, based on the testimonies from this studies' interviewees, even more pertinent for planning on FCV contexts. As Corbett and colleagues (2021) suggest, it may be necessary to leave behind the assumption that we can predict and control contexts through reductionist analysis and individual, projectised approaches. Peters (2019) calls for innovative approaches for DRR in FCV, and this may be one of the areas to focus on, as it serves as a bottleneck for many of the other issues identified in this study.

The auxiliary role of the National Societies

Somewhat unique to the RCRCM is the role of the NSs as being auxiliary to their governments. This was highlighted by eight interviewees as being a particular strength for the NSs' work in FCV, with SSRCS HoDM underlining that this auxiliary role does not mean the NS takes side with the government or any other parties in a conflict – *"Our operations are driven by needs"* – reflecting the importance of the seven fundamental principles. In fact, seven interviewees stressed the principles as an advantage to enabling work in FCV, particularly highlighting impartiality and neutrality as key principles for this.

The fundamental principles are highly connected to the brand, image, or perception of the NS's and the RCRCM in general, which was described by eight interviewees as well-respected and accepted by both communities and governments. This was seen as an advantage for carrying out operations in FCV because it grants a unique level of access as compared to other organisations. At the same time, maintaining this image poses a challenge to cooperate with other humanitarian organisations in conflict, which may not benefit from a similarly impartial and neutral image. Examples mentioned were the UN, because the UN was seen by governments as militarised and political, and some NGOs because these were not accepted by the community. This also relates to the strategic objective of dissemination of the RCRCM principles and mandates to governments, communities and actors involved in conflict, which allows for greater access and acceptance in FCV.

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[16] The Logical Framework Approach (LFA) is a widely used results-oriented planning method for humanitarian programming. It consists of a series of steps: Assessment and analysis of project context, situation/problem, stakeholders, risks and assumptions, followed by formulation of objectives, planning of activities and resources, setting of indicators and means of verification (Örtengren, 2016). The LFA most often results in a logframe matrix, summarising the main elements of the programme plan, which can be used for project management and donor accountability (Bakewell & Garbutt, 2005).

"Good trust among the organisations and relations with the local authorities, these are the main areas that enable us to work in the humanitarian aspect." –
ERCS HoDM

Where the country-level staff largely see the auxiliary role of the NS as a strength, the global-level staff highlighted areas of sensitivity in this regard. DRR/FCV underlines how the auxiliary role of the RCRCM limits the space to engage directly with conflicts, which means that RCRCM is currently more conservative than other actors when it comes to peacebuilding programming and conflict prevention. In relation to the development of strategies and funding tools for FCV, GVA DREF-O also highlighted that the IFRC risk being perceived as biased, which both affects the image of the Federation as well as the NSs.

"There needs to be more continuous engagement with gatekeepers who can help in ensuring access, for example in terms of security clearances and customs. This means with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and with non-state actors controlling areas. Engagement with all [emphasis added] stakeholders in the humanitarian space."- SSRCS SG

Ultimately, these opportunities and challenges brought on by the auxiliary role of the NS taps into a larger discussion on the politicisation of DRM, particularly in FCV contexts. Where the NS interviewees did not indicate any contradictions in working as auxiliary to the governments and still maintaining the principles of impartiality and neutrality – from the operational perspective – academics have been questioning the reality of this non-politicised position of humanitarian organisations for some time. Peters & Kelman (2020) argue that because implementation of DRM initiates change-processes with aims decided by one or more groups with an agenda, it cannot be socially or politically neutral. In the article *The Myth of Neutrality,* Seybolt suggests that *"The idea of uncompromising neutrality stems from the historical understanding of humanitarian emergencies as being caused by natural disasters."*, but that this cannot be maintained in the political environments of complex emergencies (Seybolt, 1996, para. 2). Seybolt argues that the principle of impartiality (to provide services equally to all persons according to need) is easier to uphold than the principle of neutrality (to be truly neutral in favouring of any involved parties) and that clearer distinctions should be made between the two. While the article was published well before the disaster-conflict nexus really took off in academic and practitioner circles, this suggestion seems as relevant now as then, based on the understanding presented by the interviewees of this study. As an auxiliary to the government, it is theoretically not possible to be truly neutral in a conflict between the government and any

other actor, however it is possible to impartially provide DRM programming. Of course, there are also FCV contexts that generally do not involve the government, where such distinctions may be less relevant. In either case, most (8) interviewees highlighted the need to better disseminate the principles and mandates of the RCRCM to all actors in a conflict – governments, communities, and warring parties. Dissemination is an issue particularly pertinent in FCV, also due to the often-high turnover of government officials and fluid displacement and migration patterns of communities in fragile contexts.

RQ2.   How can identifying these similarities and differences help inform strengthening of DRM activities in FCV?

Throughout the interviews with both country- and global-level staff, four different elements were consistently brought up in relation to both obstacles and opportunities for strengthening DRM in FCV. These four pathways will be presented below, with perspectives to the academic progress on each, and how they can be used to inform the next steps to strengthen DRM in FCV.

As discussed in the methodology section, the data collection and subsequent findings are bounded to African NSs and IFRC, which means that some experiences and practices described are potentially only relevant within the case study. However, the following pathways are presented in such a way that they focus less on the case-specific elements and more on the holistic picture of operational experiences, strategic priorities and academic state of knowledge presented throughout the discussion. The aim is to present pathways that have potential applicability outside of the RCRCM the African continent. Each section will highlight examples of how the pathway can be implemented operationally, finding inspiration in practical applications found in academic and grey literature that explicitly consider or have been tested under conditions of conflict or fragility. The challenge remains that there are very limited case studies and documentation of lessons learnt from carrying out DRM in FCV (Peters, 2019). Highlighting practical examples aims to give an indication of what implementation could potentially look like when looking outside of normative DRM approaches implemented during peaceful times or in stable contexts, but it must be underlined that pilot projects and systematised evaluations are needed to further validate these suggestions in a more general context.

1. Integration

While there is a need to strengthen DRM implementation particularly in FCV, to better mitigate

the disproportionally large disaster consequences in those contexts, the findings suggest that pursuing an integrated approach may be appropriate. Integration here means ensuring funding and prioritisation of strengthening overall capacities for DRM and pursuing a multi-hazard approach in risk planning, while still making sure to integrate capacity development of skills particular to working in FCV. These skills can include context and security assessments, conflict sensitivity in programming, training on security, and applying the Safer Access Framework.

DRM efforts in FCV are generally still often disjointed, based on separate and siloed policies and programming for response, DRR and insecurity/conflict programming (Mitchell & Smith, 2011). In a broader programming perspective, taking an integrated approach to DRM in FCV means ensuring that there is a balance and progression between short-term response and FbA activities, and longer-term DRR and resilience-building initiatives. In any context, but particularly in FCV where long-term goals are hard to reach, efforts should be made to leave behind a fragmented, projectised approach to programming. Where long-term programming is not feasible, shorter-term programmes should aim to include elements of early recovery and DRR into the response-phase.

While the brunt of the integration approach will be implemented at the operational level – e.g., capacity building and project planning – the essential first step to achieving this is a shift in donor approaches and funding mechanisms for DRM in FCV. While donors are asking to see tangible results and impacts of their funding before committing to larger and longer-term programming in FCV, they have yet to provide many opportunities for local actors to achieve this, and there is a lack of funding for experimental approaches to DRM in FCV (Peters, 2019). Donor appetite for funding in stable contexts is higher, presumably because success is easier to achieve (Mitchell & Smith, 2011), but this means that developments in FCV contexts are few and slow. An ideal next step, considering the current state of knowledge academically and strategically on the disaster- conflict nexus, is to begin funding pilot programming with a commitment to long-term programming. This must include thorough and continuous integration of capacity building, alongside trialling different approaches to ensuring all elements of the disaster management cycle are integrated and implemented, in different time scales.

Mena and colleagues (2019) concretely suggest designing multi-year projects in FCV in phases, where graduation from one phase to another is dependent on evaluation and success of the previous phase. Combining this approach with the identified need for capacity development related specifically to operating in conflict could yield phased projects where graduation from each phase would build on appropriate conflict analyses and capacity development. This would

strengthen DRM projects in FCV since it would ensure accounting for volatility by reflecting the current situational picture. The set-up would make space for adaptation of planning efforts in a systematic way that would not be considered a negative deviation from a pre-defined implementation plan. The outcome would be multi-year projects ensuring that the necessary capacities are established, and implementation is appropriate for the current situational picture, potentially curbing donors' risk-aversion to funding futile projects in FCV.

2. Contextualisation

Practical considerations for DRM operations in FCV differ considerably depending on the scale, intensity, and type of conflict. In some situations, local organisations are fully able to assess and respond to the situation themselves, where high-intensity conflict may require external intervention and leave less space for DRR programmes (Mitchell & Smith, 2011; Mena & Hilhorst, 2020). Conflicts often transition in and out of different scales and intensities, and timeframes for transition between phases, and particularly for recovery, also differ depending on the type of FCV and the compounding effects of natural disaster (Mitchell & Smith, 2011). This directly affects the space for DRM programming, both in terms of response and DRR. Thus contextualisation, in this case, refers practically to the need for DRM programming to be purposefully fitted to the given context, which also necessitates a stronger framework for assessing the context, and the need for more knowledge about how to design programmes according to different FCV contexts.

The academic work on the disaster-conflict nexus has also until recently largely focused on establishing causal links between the two, rather than analysing the nuances of structural and contextual conditions in different types of FCV (Siddiqi, 2018). This means that there is a knowledge gap on contextualisation academically, as well as in terms of practical tools and guidelines for how to achieve contextually appropriate operations. The way forward for development of fit-for-purpose operational tools, guidelines and funding mechanisms should be further explored, building on top of the many initiatives underway as described by global-level staff in the IFRC.

The needs for both integration and contextualisation of DRM programming in FCV are not two mutually exclusive approaches. One potential way to ensure this is developing multi-hazard, multi- contexts overarching frameworks that are more adaptable and which integrate specialisation on FCV wherever relevant. Another potential approach is developing more contextualised frameworks that reflect the many different types of FCV but ensuring that these

frameworks also integrate general strengthening of DRM capacities. This is an area for further exploration and should be included in the currently ongoing strategic developments on the topic, with consideration of operational perspectives, as ensuring operationalisation of these strategies is essential. The key operational need is stronger assessment frameworks. Some organisations are already making efforts to ensure that multiple forms of assessment are carried out, to holistically address both conflict and disaster risks. For example, Cordaid has developed a tool for conflict risk analysis to accompany their *Participatory Disaster Risk Analysis* tool, to be used in their community managed DRR programmes (Cordaid, 2019). The conflict risk analysis assesses the type and level of conflict, conflict causes, conflict dynamics (trends, risks, opportunities), and conflict actors (stakeholders involved and power relations)[17] . Organisations can find inspiration in the contextualization tools that have been developed, by for example Cordaid, or develop their own. What is important is ensuring a systematised and prioritised framework for ensuring contextualisation of programmes.

To reach a sound foundation for the appropriate level of contextualisation of DRM programmes, local actors, external partners including researchers, and donors must all also better understand these nuances of FCV. While local actors and external partners must develop systematised frameworks for context assessment and monitoring, which must be communicated regularly to donors, donors must accept the volatile conditions of working in FCV when setting their accountability criteria.

It is thus necessary to find alternatives to the logframian thinking of establishing cause-and-effects related accountability criteria documented through inputs and outputs (Klein-Kelly, 2018). Klein-Kelly suggests operationalizing accountability in FCV through instead considering whether "appropriate care and attention" has been taken at the given point in time when evaluating outputs, rather than evaluating based on the outcome itself. Concretely, this means that PMER should take the form of a point-in-time snapshot focusing on outputs rather than impacts. What sets it apart from traditional results-based accountability is acknowledging that the context changes rapidly and decisions are made based on the information, resources and humanitarian space available at that given time. The evaluation criteria should be whether the actions are considered good by the affected populations, and if that is the case, acknowledging that *"trying, even if not succeeding, has a certain value"* (Klein-Kelly, 2018:

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[17] The Cordaid framework extends beyond this level of analysis, and also highlights the need to integrate peacebuilding and conflict risk reduction components, however this may be outside the scope and purpose of some humanitarian organisations working with DRM.

311). Klein-Kelly rightly highlights that this approach does not mean that any negative consequences of actions should be disregarded, and it does not mean abandoning a do no harm approach. Instead, taking this approach to PMER and accountability implicates the need for community engagement set-ups that can appropriately assess whether the necessary care and attention has been taken. Furthermore, practitioners must systematically document and archive the actions and reflections that form the basis of these assessments and evaluations.

3. Localisation

Achieving the localisation agenda in FCV contexts requires a number of specific considerations to be further explored. The relationship between the unique access gained through local staff and volunteers, and the specific safety risks and associated ethical considerations of exposing local staff and volunteers to those risks must be carefully explored from a more local perspective. Research initiatives like *Volunteering in Conflict and Emergencies* is a solid start for development of frameworks that integrate these considerations when planning DRM programming in FCV.

Global- and headquarter-level staff and donors should work to ensure funding and prioritisation of capacity building of headquarter-level, local staff and volunteers on conflict sensitive programme management, safety, negotiation, mediation, and dissemination of the humanitarian principles. Yet alongside a stronger local capacity for operating in FCV must also come a strengthened security framework to ensure that local staff and volunteers are not subjected to risks that headquarter-level and international staff are not willing to take.

Part of the Grand Bargain commitments is to *"Remove and reduce barriers that prevent organisations and donors from partnering with local and national responders, in order also to lessen their administrative burden."* (Grand Bargain, 2016: 5). In FCV contexts particularly, this means reconsidering the terms of accountability as noted above, allowing for more flexibility and adaptability in terms of planning and reporting to donors, as well as ensuring more access to funds for appropriate action (as described under integration). Then, it is essential to ensure strong security set-ups that consider the realities of local staff and volunteers. The general approach to mitigating security risks for humanitarian workers has been to operate remotely from safer locations and transfer the risks to local partners. The implication of this (outside the ethical one) is that information sharing, analyses and coordination structures are focused on upwards information flows, from the local actors towards the regional or international level, and the framework for feeding back to the local and operational level is

insufficient and slow (Lazreg et al., 2019). In practice, improving this requires frameworks that enable quick, reliable, and easy to understand information flows downwards and between local staff and volunteers as well. One such framework suggested by Lazreg and colleagues is the European Research Project iTRACK, a monitoring and tracking system aimed at improving staff safety in high-risk context (ibid.). It integrates information gathered from social media, news feeds and personnel with an automated system that detects threats and provides decision support for potential mitigation actions. A monitoring dashboard communicates any threats discovered to staff (ibid.).

4. Dissemination

Dissemination of the humanitarian principles and the importance of ensuring the humanitarian space, for the RCRCM and beyond, is a key consideration for ensuring access and safety. To enable operational effectiveness, there must be a larger movement on the dissemination of international humanitarian law, engaging all types of actors involved in conflicts. This is a key element of the ICRC's SAF, yet this study finds that in the RCRCM dissemination activities are not systematically integrated into the DRM sector. Rather, it is seen as a separate activity falling under the SAF and ICRC mandate. Taking a page from the SAF and exploring ways to ensure acceptance of the organisation as well as the individual (volunteer or local staff) in FCV should be integrated into both DRM programming in FCV and the general work of humanitarian organisations.

One case study on the importance of dissemination by Mena and colleagues (2019) highlighted the importance of dissemination activities being continuous instead of being tied to a specific programme or response. Examples from Afghanistan highlight that often, stakeholders were unfamiliar with concepts like DRR and DRM, and thus did not find the need to allow access for such activities in conflict situations. In these cases, negotiation processes for DRR projects took considerably longer than negotiating access for projects in better known sectors, such as health or education. Furthermore, the fact that dissemination and negotiation is often undertaken by DRM practitioners means that knowledge of for example international humanitarian law and general negotiation may be limited (ibid). What this indicates is the need for capacity building on mediation, negotiation and advocacy, as well as ensuring dissemination as a regular activity both within DRM programmes and beyond. Gathering lessons learned on this type of engagement with all types of actors, including armed groups, from an operational perspective would provide a steppingstone for moving forward on this agenda.

Furthermore, evaluations on whether dissemination of the humanitarian principles can ensure an adequate level of safety for locals working or volunteering in their local communities should be carried out. The concepts of 'impartiality' and 'neutrality' should also be further explored from an operational perspective, as most discussions on these have happened from an academic and theoretical standpoint. Findings from *Volunteering in Conflict and Emergencies* suggest that 'neutral' division of help can lead to volunteers being seen as partial to either governments or warring parties (Thomas et al., 2018b), and these perspectives and their relation to the dissemination of the humanitarian principles should also be further explored in a way that can cascade down to operational planning for DRM.

6. Conclusion

This thesis aimed to seek out operational perspectives (as an identified knowledge gap), to give insights into challenges and opportunities for better DRM in FCV. Experiences, and practices for DRM in FCV were explored through a multi-level organisational perspective through interviews with 11 operational-level staff in four African National Societies and four global-level IFRC staff, as well as input from IFRC strategic documents on DRM and academic research. Many of the findings from the operational perspective were also reflected in global strategies and initiatives of the IFRC and in the current state of academic research. Thus, many findings were not new or unique to this study, but what remained was the question of how to move from this knowledge to actually strengthening DRM operationally, to reach those in need. However, as one of still relatively few research projects looking into DRM in FCV from an operational perspective with inclusion of four cases, the thesis still contributes to filling a knowledge gap of merging the academic knowledge, global and organizational strategic objectives, and experiences from the operational level. More research of this kind is needed to reach broader generalisability of the findings of the study, and this thesis should be understood as a springboard for further research to find solutions to strengthening DRM in FCV.

The objective of the study was to **identify potential pathways for strengthening DRM efforts in FCV**, with the operational level as the anchoring perspective. Four potential pathways were suggested as possible foci for this, with the acknowledgement that this study provides insights with limited generalisability. The four pathways and suggestions for further research are summarised below:

1) **Integration:** DRM in FCV should not be seen as a standalone project but integrated into efforts to achieve overall stronger frameworks and capacities for DRM, while still building capacities specific to operating in FCV. It is necessary to move away from the primarily short-term and projectised DRM programmes to meet DRR objectives and resilience building. Further research should focus on how to develop and cascade FCV-related capacity building to the local level, and how to make the traditional disaster management cycle programming more fit for FCV. Donors are encouraged to fund long-term pilot DRM programming in FCV to make way for lessons to be learnt at the operational level.

2) **Contextualisation:** Programming approaches will differ according to the scale, intensity and type of FCV. A stronger framework for assessing and planning according to this must be achieved. Further research on how to develop fit-for-purpose tools and guidelines that are operationally feasible and appropriately reflect the volatility of FCV is needed.

3) **Localisation:** Working through local staff and volunteers may offer unique access in FCV, but it also poses additional safety risks to those actors, and the ethical issue of risk transfer is pertinent. Efforts to build local capacity for operating safely in FCV should be pursued, but it is first necessary to further explore safety as a key element of implementing the localisation agenda in FCV.

4) **Dissemination:** Dissemination of the humanitarian principles with all stakeholders in a conflict can help ensure safety and access, to increase operational effectiveness in FCV. Further research is needed on whether dissemination of the humanitarian principles will actually ensure safety for local actors, while looking critically at what 'impartiality' and 'neutrality' mean from an operational perspective.

While global academic and strategic efforts to strengthen the understanding of the disaster-conflict nexus continue to increase, the time is ripe to begin applying these learnings at the operational level. Further research anchored in the operational perspective, as well as pilot projects and a shift at the global level in the approach to operating in FCV, particularly from donors, is needed to take these findings further.

This study is anchored primarily in the operational perspective, which creates some limitations in the breadth of perspectives and solutions that can be suggested. As per the applied definition of disaster being created from social, political, and economic pressures, DRM solutions must

also work to tackle those systemic issues causing disaster vulnerability. This perspective has been addressed by several other researchers (see for example Siddiqi, 2018 and Peters, 2019) and is indeed a crucial element for strengthening DRM in FCV, although it is outside the scope of this study. Reviewing the implications of the auxiliary role of the RCRCM NSs, and reinvestigating the application of the humanitarian principles, are areas in need of further exploration to tackle the political considerations of doing DRM in FCV to better understand and tackle root causes of conflict and disaster vulnerability.

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8. Appendices

8.1. Participant information sheet - Version 1, 05 March 2022

1. Research Title

Disaster risk management under conflict and fragility: Exploring differences between higher level strategies and operational conditions for DRM within the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in Africa.

2. Purpose of the information sheet

Before you consent to participating in the interview, it is important that you have a clear idea of the purpose of the research and how it will be carried out. Please take your time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Thank you for reading this.

3. Research purpose

The aim of the study is to investigate the similarities and differences in how Disaster Risk Management (DRM) is conceptualised, experienced and practiced under conditions of either conflict and/or fragility within the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (RCRCM) in Africa. The purpose of this research is to help fill two knowledge gaps within the disaster-conflict nexus, namely: The need to explore differences between higher-level strategies and operational conditions for DRM, and the need to examine practical examples of DRM in fragile- and conflict affected contexts.

The study is carried out as a part of the master's thesis for the Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Adaptation programme at Lund University. The research is carried out independently from the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (RCRCM) as a whole.

4. Your role

You have been asked to participate in this study, because of your position of working in either an African Red Cross/Red Crescent National Society or in the IFRC. Through your position, you will have knowledge and experience with either the disaster risk management programmes and operations carried out in your relevant context, or the relevant tools, policies and strategies

related to DRM in your organisation, or both. This knowledge is essential to examining practical and context-specific examples of DRM in fragile- or conflict affected contexts.

5. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in the interview. If you do decide to take part, you will be able to keep a copy of this information sheet and you should indicate your agreement on the written Consent Form which will be provided. You can withdraw from the study at any time, even after signing the consent form or after completion of the interview until the date of publishing of the study. You can also refrain from answering specific questions asked during the interview. You do not have to give a reason and there will be no consequences of any kind if you withdraw at any time.

6. The interview

You will participate in the study as an interviewee in a semi-structured interview. The interview can be conducted either online (via the platform Zoom) or physically in Nairobi, Kenya, depending on your preference and availability. The interview will be audio-recorded, if you consent to this on the Consent Form. The interview is expected to take approximately 1-1,5 hours. There are no other commitments or restrictions associated with participating.

The questions asked during the interview will focus on your experiences, opinions, and understandings of your work in your organisation, and the country context that you work in or with. The project is interested in strictly professional matters and will not be probing or inquiring about anything personal.

7. Use of interview and confidentiality

The information gathered through the interview will be analysed thematically alongside interviews from other African National Societies and the IFRC.

You may freely choose whether you wish for your position, job title and specific organisation to be fully mentioned or totally anonymised for all purposes of the study. Should you wish to participate anonymously, the anonymised data will not allow for you or your organisation to be identified, and your name and job title will not be recorded in any documents (published or unpublished).

You may freely choose whether you consent to being quoted verbatim (anonymised, if relevant) in the study, or whether you prefer any statements made during the interview to be paraphrased.

8. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There are no anticipated risks to you as a research participant. The research acknowledges that discussing conflict and fragility can be sensitive especially for an organisation that is auxiliary to the state. The interview questions will aim to focus solely on the DRM work of the organisation. There will be no specific questions relating to any political, ethnic, religious, or sensitive partisan topics. In any case, you have the right to refrain from answering any questions you do not wish to answer.

9. What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the interviews, it is the hope that the study will help highlight areas for development related to the DRM work carried out by RCRCM and beyond the specific case study. The results will be shared with participants to inform their professional work, if they so wish.

10. Results of the research project

The results of the research will be published in a final academic thesis. The research will be published in the Lund University Library and will be accessible online. If you wish to be given a copy of any reports resulting from the research, please let the researcher know.

11. Contact for further information

Lærke Jensen, la5712je-s@student.lu.se

8.2. Consent form – Version 1, 05 March 2022

Participant ID *[to be filled by researcher]:*
Title of Project: *Disaster risk management under conflict and fragility: Exploring differences between higher level strategies and operational conditions for DRM within the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in Africa.*
Name of researcher: *Lærke Uhrenholt Jensen*
Location of research: *Online via Zoom*

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet provided for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these satisfactorily answered.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.

I consent to the following conditions (tick only the boxes that you consent to)

- to audio recording

- to the use of my job title and my organisation in the published thesis

- to be quoted verbatim with reference to my name and affiliation

- to be quoted anonymously with no reference to my name or affiliation

- not to be quoted at all

3. I understand that my data will be securely stored in line with the Lund University's Data Protection Management Policy.

4. I agree to take part in the above study.

_____ _____ _____
Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____ _____ _____
Name of Researcher   Date   Signature

8.3. Interview guide for semi-structured interviews – National Society Staff

Segment	Question
Introductions	1) *Introduce purpose, thank for participation* 2) *Reiterate consent form / conditions of interview and freedom to stop and withdraw at any point* 3) *Assure that if that happens, any information given will be discarded and not used* 4) *Ask about anonymity and preference on being quoted* - Briefly introduce yourself, your current position, and your experience with DRM.

Segment 1: Open-ended questions.
 	
 Aim: Establishing a mutual understanding of key concepts, and letting interviewee establish their own narrative
	Setting a common framework
	
	 - How would you define disaster risk management?
	
	 - What is the disaster context of [X country]
	
	 - How would you describe the state of conflict/fragility in X (country/area)?
	
	 - Are there any areas in [Country] that are affected by conflict, which also experiences cyclical or frequent disasters?
	
	 - Do you see any links between disasters, fragility and conflict?
	     - If yes, how would you describe that link? (*e.g., do you find either element exacerbates or decreases the risk of the others?*)
	     - If no, *please elaborate on why you think these operate independently of each other*

Segment 2: Focused questions, detailed questions	*Talk about strategies* - What are the strategic goals for DRM in the NS?

Aim: Input to answering RQ1 and RQ1	- *Does the NS have a DRM strategy?* - *A DRM Policy?* - *What are more recent initiatives or goals for DRM in the NS?*

RQ1: What are the similarities and differences in the conceptualisations, experiences and practices of DRM in conflict at different organisational levels of the RCRCM?	- Are there any strategic goals of the NS in specifically relation to DRM under conflict/fragility? Which?
	
	- What are the strategic goals for DRM in IFRC?
	   - *Are you familiar with the IFRC DRM policy?*
	   - *Are you familiar with other strategic movement documents?*
	   - *What are the main DRM initiatives or goals that the Movement has introduced in recent years?*
	
	- Are you aware of any strategic goals of IFRC in relation to DRM under conflict?
	   - *How does IFRC address conditions of conflict/fragility in the cooperation with the NS?*
	   - *How do you see the IFRC addressing conflict conditions in globally and regionally?*
	   - *Do you think that IFRC is clear on the movement strategy for working with DRM under FCV?*
	
	More practical
	
	- What is the DRM set up of this NS?
	   - *Which staff works with DRM, how?*
	   - *Which DRM programming do you have?*
	
	- Would you say that the conflict/fragility in X influences the RC's DRM work?
	   - *If yes, how?*
	   - *If no, why do you think it does not?*
	Note: Reflect interviewees own description of conflict/fragility context

- Have you found that the DRM efforts carried out by NS has ever influenced conflict, either positively or negatively?

    - *If yes, how?*

    - *If no, why do you think that is?*

- Do you apply any methods or tools in your work to ensure conflict sensitivity? Which?

    - *Do you work differently in [non-conflict affected areas in the country]?*

- Do you work with the IFRC/ICRC, and if so, how? What are their roles in relation to your DRM work?

- Are there any actors you cooperate with specifically because of the conflict?

    - *Are there any actors you feel you should be cooperating with on either DRM or conflict-related work? Why are you not?*

Evaluating NS capacity

- Do you have the tools, policies and strategies needed to effectively carry out DRM work in conflict?

- What does the NS do well in terms of DRM under FCV?

- What does the NS need to improve in terms of DRM under FCV?

- What does RCRCM do well in terms of DRM under FCV?

- What does RCRCM need to improve in terms of DRM under FCV?

Segment 3: Clarification and wrap-up	*Relatively open segment*
Aim: Return to any points that were brought up previously in need of further clarification. Allow interviewee to bring up any points not discussed.	- Are there any topics you find important in this context that we have not discussed today? - Are there any other people you think I should talk to? *Thank the interviewee.*

8.4. Interview guide for semi-structured interviews – IFRC Staff

Segment	Question
Introductions	*1) Introduce purpose, thank for participation* *2) Reiterate consent form / conditions of interview and freedom to stop and withdraw at any point* *3) Assure that if that happens, any information given will be discarded and not used* *4) Ask about anonymity and preference on being quoted* - Briefly introduce yourself, your current position, and your experience with DRM.

Segment 1: Open-ended questions.
 	
Aim: Establishing a mutual understanding of key concepts, and letting interviewee establish their own narrative
	Setting a common framework
	
	- How would you define disaster risk management?
	
	- What is the disaster context of [X country]
	
	- How would you describe the state of conflict/fragility in X (country/area)?
	
	- Do you see any links between disasters, fragility and conflict?
	
	    - If yes, how would you describe that link? (*e.g., do you find either element exacerbates or decreases the risk of the others?*)
	
	    - If no, *please elaborate on why you think these operate independently of each other*

Segment 2: Focused questions, detailed questions
 	
Aim: Input to answering RQ1 and RQ1
	Talk about strategies
	
	- What are the strategic goals for DRM in the IFRC?
	
	    - *DRM strategy/policy?*
	
	    - *What are more recent initiatives or goals for DRM in the IFRC?*

|	

RQ1: What are the similarities and differences in the conceptualisations, experiences and practices of DRM in conflict at different organisational levels of the RCRCM?	- Are there any strategic goals of the IFRC in specifically relation to DRM under conflict/fragility? Which?
	
	    - *How do you see the IFRC addressing conflict conditions in globally and regionally?*
	
	    - *Any other strategic movement documents that are relevant in this regard?*
	
	    - *Do you think that IFRC is clear on the movement strategy for working with DRM under FCV?*
	
	- How does the IFRC DRM strategy align with the strategy on DRM for the NS?
	
	- How does IFRC address conditions of conflict/fragility in the cooperation with the NS?
	
	More practical
	
	- What is IFRC's DRM set up in [country]?
	
	    - *Which staff works with DRM, how?*
	
	    - *Which DRM programming do you have?*
	
	    - *How do you cooperate with and support the NS?*
	
	- Would you say that the conflict/fragility in X influences the RC's DRM work?
	
	    - *If yes, how?*
	
	    - *If no, why do you think it does not?*
	
	Note: Reflect interviewees own description of conflict/fragility context
	
	- Have you found that the DRM efforts carried out by NS/IFRC has ever influenced conflict, either positively or negatively?
	
	    - *If yes, how?*
	
	    - *If no, why do you think that is?*
	
	- Do you apply any methods or tools in your work to ensure conflict sensitivity? Which?
	
	    - *Do you work differently in [non-conflict affected areas in the country]?*
	
	- Is there any cooperation with the ICRC? What are their roles in relation to the DRM work?

	- Are there any actors you cooperate with specifically because of the conflict?
	- *Are there any actors you feel you should be cooperating with on either DRM or conflict-related work? Why are you not?*
	Evaluating NS capacity
	- Does the NS have the tools, policies and strategies needed to effectively carry out DRM work in conflict?
	- What does the NS do well in terms of DRM under FCV?
	- What does the NS need to improve in terms of DRM under FCV?
	- What does IFRC do well in terms of DRM under FCV?
	- What does IFRC need to improve in terms of DRM under FCV?
Segment 3: Clarification and wrap-up **Aim: Return to any points that were brought up previously in need of further clarification. Allow interviewee to bring up any points not discussed.**	*Relatively open segment* - Are there any topics you find important in this context that we have not discussed today? - Are there any other people you think I should talk to? *Thank the interviewee.*

8.5. Overview of countries included in case study

Nigeria

Nigeria is a Western African country with a population of approximately 220.000.000. The country has both equatorial climate zones in the south, tropical in the centre and arid lands in the north (CIA, 2022a).

The history of conflict for Nigeria is often cited to be mainly fuelled by ethnic divisions (see for example Osaghae & Suberu, 2005; Jacob, 2012; Ikelegbe, 2005). The inception of Nigeria as a colonial state, particularly the merger of southern and northern Nigeria into

Map of Nigeria (Source: CIA, 2022: https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/nigeria/map)
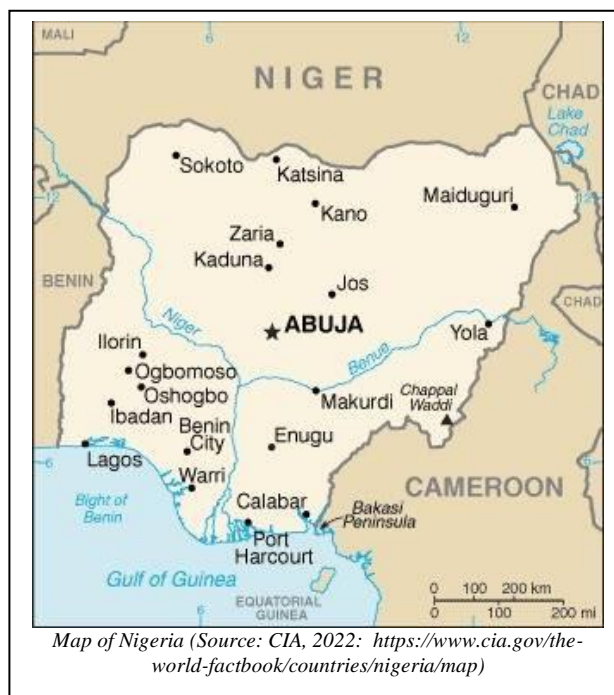
one British colony in 1914 and the application of divide-and-rule policies, has been described as the cradle of ethnic segmentation, polarisation and conflicts in post-colonial Nigeria (Osaghae & Suberu, 2005). Following the country's independence in 1960, power struggles between the north and south has resulted in recurring political tension and violence, perhaps most famously the Biafra civil war (1967-1970) (IPSS, 2018). The current conflict landscape in Nigeria is complex and multifaceted. Separatist movements, insurgency and state repression is driving instability and violence. The Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast has displaced more than two million people, and directly resulted in 35,000 deaths (UNDP, 2020). In the southern Niger Delta region, Biafran separatism has regained momentum in recent years, spiking agitations (Awoyemi & Okuande, 2020), alongside other separatist movements seeking independence for the Oduduwa Republic (Agboluaje, 2021) and Niger Delta Republic (Okafor, 2019). Environmental degradation in northern Nigeria has led to displacement of nomadic farmers to central and southern regions, which is fuelling increasing, often deadly conflict between herders and farmers (George et al., 2022; ICG, 2021). Land disputes across the country, and particularly in the southern oil region, also continues to spur inter-communal violence and conflict between the state, oil companies and communities (Jacob, 2012; Omeje, 2005).

In terms of disasters, droughts, desertification, windstorms and dust storms predominantly affect north-eastern states. Southwestern states are exposed to rainstorms, windstorms and coastal erosion, and south-eastern states exposed to gully erosion and landslides. Southern states

are exposed to coastal- and gully erosion. Floods are the most prevalent across all states (Mashi et al., 2019). The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) is mandated to undertake disaster risk management through the NEMA Act (ibid).

Through the Nigerian Red Cross Society Act of 1961, the Nigerian Red Cross Society (NRCS) is mandated to respond to conflicts, mitigate suffering, and improve health and disease prevention, as an auxiliary to the public authorities (Government of the Federation, 1961). With more than 500.000 volunteers in 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, it is one of the foremost responders to emergencies and disasters across the country (NRCS, n.d.).

Ethiopia

Ethiopia is an Eastern African country with a population of approximately 115.000.000 (World Bank, 2021a).

Ethiopia has implemented ethnic federalism since 1991, meaning that federal regions and states are defined by ethnicity and have autonomy, while maintaining the state as a political unit (Habtu, 2003). This system was meant to help manage ethno-linguistic diversity and reduce conflict, but the outcome has been mixed, even creating local and regional autonomy conflicts (Kefale, 2013).
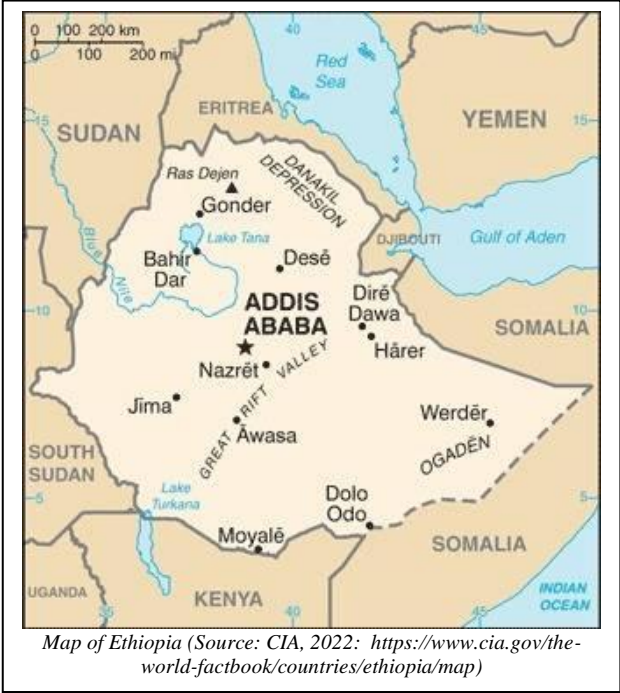
Map of Ethiopia (Source: CIA, 2022: https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/ethiopia/map)

Ethiopia is one of only two African countries -the other being Liberia – that largely were not colonised by European states following the Scramble for Africa, except for a brief Italian occupation from 1936-1941 (Akpan et al., 1985). Eritrea on the other hand was an Italian colony until 1951, after which the United Nations voted for the federation of Eritrea as a constituent of Ethiopia in 1952 (Britannica, n.d.). This Federation was supposed to be time limited to 10 years, but discontent with Ethiopian rule and limited Eritrean autonomy sparked an independence movement in 1961 (Lyons, 2019).

Between 1961 and 1991, the Eritrean war of Independence was fought between Ethiopia's government and Eritrean independence fighters. With the 1993 referendum for the Eritrean people, Eritrea became a sovereign state (Lyons, 2019). Tensions sparked again in 1998-2000 over border disputes, which ended with a peace treaty in December of 2000, but flared up again

in late 2007 (Lyons, 2009). Tensions remained high for years, the dispute finally ending in 2018 (Busari & Elwazer, 2018). Yet in 2018, ethnic tensions within Ethiopia began to escalate, with the election of the first ethnically Oromo president, Abiy, following almost three decades of authoritarian rule dominated by the Tigray ethnic minority (Felbab-Brown, 2022). In October 2020, the conflict turned violent as the Tigray' People's Liberation Front (TPLF) seized a military base, triggering a military offense rebuttal from the Ethiopian state (BBC, 2020). Fighting continued throughout 2021, largely centred around the Tigray, Amhara and Afar regional states. The death toll is estimated to be in the thousands or possibly ten-thousands, millions have been displaced, and acute famine is on the rise as of early 2022 (Walsh & Dahir, 2022).

The country has a tropical monsoon climate, and the most significant and recurring natural hazards are floods and droughts, prevalent in northern and eastern regions (World Bank, 2019). Other hazards include landslides, prevalent in central and western regions, and earthquakes with a particularly high risk of occurrence in the northern Afar region (ibid.). There are also 25 active volcanoes in two central regions, at risk of eruption (ibid.). The National Disaster Risk Management Commission (NDRMC), established in 2015, leads and coordinates DRM across the country (Council of Ministers Regulation No. 363/2015).

The Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS) was established following the Italian occupation of Ethiopia in 1935 and recognised by law through a national charter in 1947 (ERCS, n.d.a). ERCS has 11 regional branches, 177 district branches (ERCS, n.d.b), and more than 47,000 volunteers (ERCS, n.d.c). The NS has a Disaster Preparedness, Response and Risk Reduction programme, and a program for the Promotion of the Culture of Peace and Non-violence.

Sudan

Sudan is a North-Eastern African country, with a population of approximately 47.000.000 (CIA, 2022b).

Sudan was a colony of the British Empire until its independence in 1956. At that time, tensions were already existing between the north and south, with army coups in 1958 and 1969 (Frontline World, 2005). Sudan has experienced two civil wars in the 20th century. The first civil war ended in 1972, but another broke out in 1983. Peace talks gained momentum in 2002-04, and the final

Map of South Sudan (Source: CIA, 2022: https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/sudan/map)

North/South Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), signed in January 2005, granted the southern rebels autonomy for six years, followed by a referendum on independence for Southern Sudan on July 9th, 2011. Sudan and South Sudan have yet to fully implement security and economic agreements relating to the normalisation of relations between the two countries (CIA, 2022b). Tensions with the independent South Sudan remain, particularly over shared oil revenues and border demarcations which are yet to be finalised (BBC, 2019).

In 2003, conflict erupted in Darfur, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile (CIA, 2022b), as a result of land competition and ethnic clashes between herders and farmers leading to violent fighting and sparking rebellion led by groups such as the Sudanese Liberation Army (Frontline World, 2005). The conflict in Darfur has been called ethnic cleansing or genocide, with then President Al-Bashir being charged of war crimes and crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Court (ICC, n.d.). In April 2019, months of protests against the government culminated in an ousting of president al-Bashir by a military coup. By September 2019, a power-sharing deal established a joint civilian-military government, yet in October of 2021, another military coup led to the dismissal of civilian ministers, sparking months of protests (Human Rights Watch, 2021; BBC, 2021).

Sudan is exposed to numerous frequently occurring hazards, including floods, droughts, wildfires, epidemics, storms, volcanoes and earthquakes (World Bank, n.d.a.; HAC, 2009). Climatic hazards are expected to rise in frequency, as Sudan is suggested to be one of the most disaster hazard and climate-change vulnerable countries in the world (World Bank, 2021b). The

National Council for Civil Defence (NCCD) and the Humanitarian Aid Committee (HAC) are the key entities responsible for managing emergencies and disasters (ibid.).

The Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRCS) was established in 1923 as the Sudan Branch of the British Red Cross Society, and formally became the SRCS following independence in 1956 (Arab, n.d.). In 2010 through the Sudanese Red Crescent Society Act, SRCS got the mandate to carry out emergency response, first aid and health interventions (ICRC, n.d.d.). It has 15 branches and 75 units across Sudan, with an active volunteer base of around 35.000 (ibid.), and further 3.380.000 within the general volunteer network (SRCS, 2018). The three main programmes of the SRCS are disaster management, health and restoring family links (SRCS, n.d.).

South Sudan

South Sudan is an Eastern-Central African country, with a population of approximately 11.000.000 people (CIA, 2022b).

After decades of conflict, South Sudan gained independence from Sudan on 9th July 2011, making it the world's newest country (World Bank, 2021c). But following independence, conflict continued internally, due to the rivalry of then-president and vice-president, as well as other armed groups, due to ethnic divides and struggles for power (Wheeler, 2014). Flare-ups in the conflict,

Map of South Sudan (Source: CIA, 2022: https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/south-sudan/map)
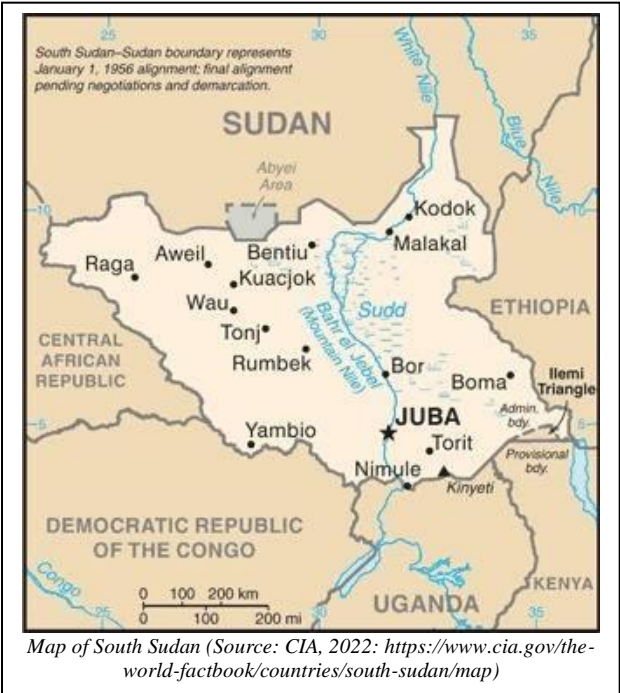
particularly in 2013 and 2016, have caused mass casualties and attacks carried out against civilians (ibid). Following several failed truces and peace agreements, the latest peace agreement was signed in September 2018. This led to the formation of a unity government, the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity in February 2020 (UN News, 2020).

Intra- and intercommunal violence remains an increasing problem, a result of the grievances of the war, the provision of weapons to communities by political and military leaders, as well as competition over land (UN Security Council, 2020). Some suggest that the 2018 peace agreement has led to more localised escalation in violence, as power struggles of authorities

have been moved to the peripheries of the country (Craze & Marko, 2022; Watson, 2021). A 2021 statement by the UN Mission in South Sudan claimed that more than 80% of civilian casualties in the country were attributed to intercommunal violence and community-based militias (UN News, 2021). With elections planned for 2023, the security situation remains fragile and there is risk of further escalation in violence (UN Security Council, 2022).

South Sudan is at risk of several natural hazards, including floods, droughts, wildfires and climate-related epidemics, with flooding being the most predominantly occurring disaster (World Bank, n.d.b). The Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management (MHADM) has the mandate to oversee all humanitarian work in South Sudan (MHADM, 2018).

The South Sudan Red Cross Society (SSRCS) was established following the 2011 independence (SSRCS, n.d.a.), and is acknowledged as an auxiliary to the government through the South Sudan Red Cross Society Act (2012). The NS has 17 branches across the country (SSRCS, n.d.b) and 21,000 volunteers (according to SSRCS SG). The core areas of work for the SSRCS are emergency response, community-based health care, and promotion of non-violence and peace (SSRCS, n.d.c.).