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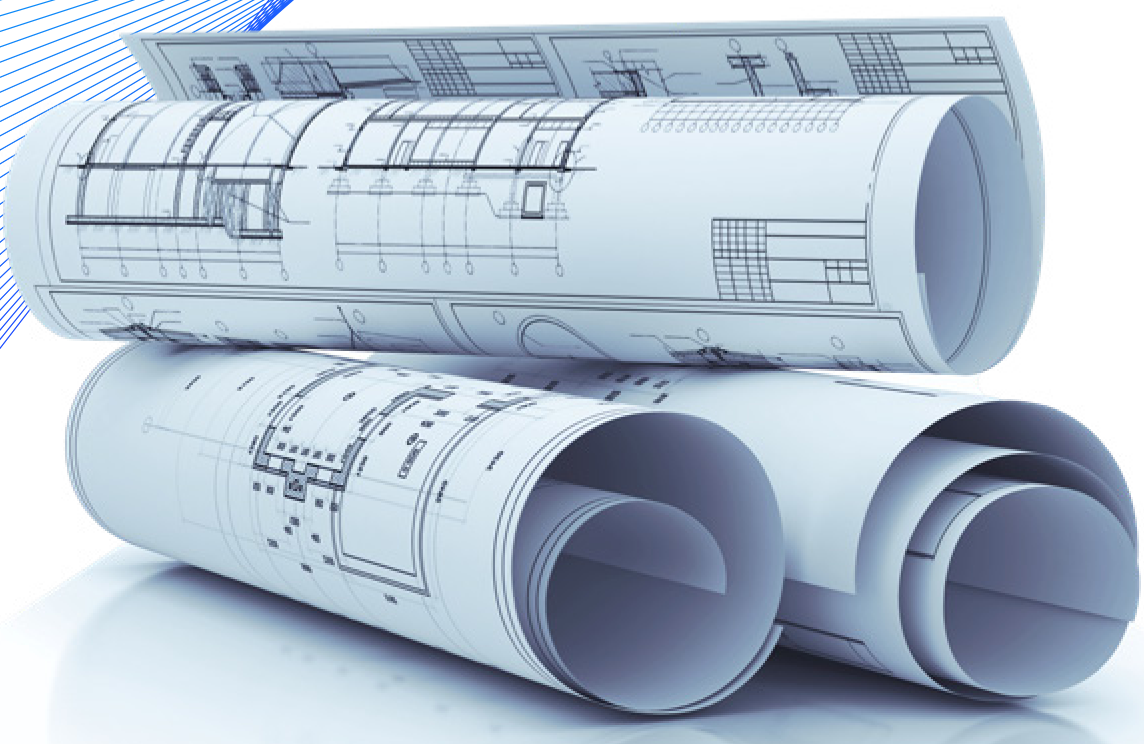
Disaster recovery

Lessons from around the world



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Introduction

Natural and manmade disasters, from earthquakes and cyclones to war and famine, injure or kill thousands of people each year, displace many more from their homes, and can threaten entire societies and economies. The successive crises of the war in Ukraine, which has so far forced about 14 million people to flee their homes,[1] and the COVID-19 pandemic, which has seen a global loss of life of 6.5 million people to date,[2] painfully illustrate the impacts of large-scale crises.

In addition to human suffering, the economic damage of disasters has risen for six decades.[3] The war in Ukraine has created recovery needs of $350 billion in just the first four months of the conflict.[4] In the last decade, natural disasters have cost the world more than $1.5 trillions.[5] And this trend is only likely to accelerate with climate change.

Our research shows that well-planned and executed recovery efforts can help significantly reduce the human, social, and economic costs of disasters, and shorten their duration.

At their best, recovery planning and implementation deliver more than a return to normal: they strengthen human capital, communities, and governance, renew infrastructure, and accelerate equitable economic development. They also stimulate private investment, laying the foundation for sustainable, inclusive growth.

Based on our analysis of six disaster recovery programs, beginning with the Marshall Plan in 1948, a successful recovery effort 1) avoids the worst possible outcomes of a crisis, such as prolonged displacement and mass poverty, 2) strengthens and fortifies society in ways that make it more resilient and better able to withstand the next crisis, and 3) makes efficient use of funding, talent, and other resources to rebuild systems, infrastructure, and economies.

The evidence suggests that large-scale recovery outcomes are better when planning begins early and is updated regularly. Indeed, our analysis of the six case studies found that strong planning capabilities and continuous evaluation have been essential elements of every timely, successful recovery. Planning for recovery before a crisis ends offers additional advantages, including maximizing support from the international community.

In this paper, we review key lessons from recovery efforts in the wake of wars and natural disasters around the globe, from the perspective of the affected communities. The analysis points to critical principles and the building blocks of a successful recovery architecture.

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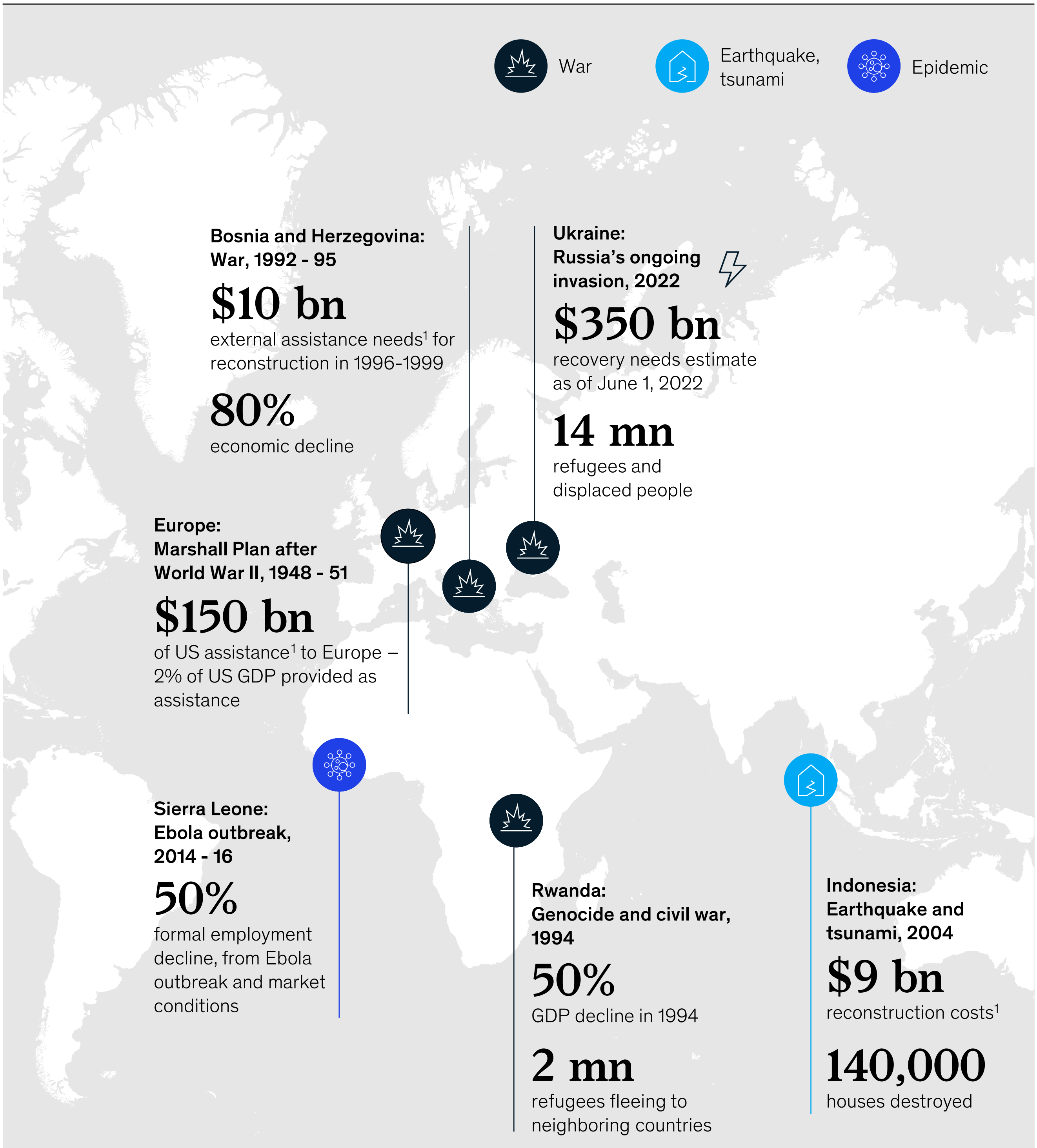
1 *Ukraine Situation: Flash Update #32,* United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees—Regional Bureau for Europe, October 7, 2022.
2 *WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard,* World Health Organization, 2022.
3 Hannah Ritchie and Max Roser, "Natural disasters," *Our World in Data,* 2014, updated November 2021.
4 *Ukraine Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment,* World Bank Group, July 31, 2022.
5 "Natural disasters," 2014.

Exhibit 1

Cases referenced in this paper



1. Current value

Source: World Bank; United Nations; Badan Rehabilitasi dan Rekonstruksi (BRR); government of Sierra Leone

Building blocks of successful past recoveries

Based on a library of case studies on long-term disaster recovery efforts from extraordinary events around the world our analysis explores the potential for pitfalls and what best practice looks like. Several factors often contribute to the success or failure of these efforts, namely, recovery design, partner institutions, governance, and funding.

Our research has shown that societies that take steps in three response areas are more likely to foster successful long-term recoveries:

1. Agree on a holistic vision and clear priorities.
Planning has been based on a comprehensive assessment of needs that looks beyond broken infrastructure. Sustainable recovery also includes boosting economic growth and reinvigorating social infrastructure such as health and education, and incentivizing talent to return. The most successful response and recovery leaders update and adjust assessments as more data becomes available.

In a major disaster, the scale of needs can overwhelm communities and their capacity to respond, so identifying the most urgent needs can help focus efforts to benefit affected communities immediately. Clearly defined goals with measurable outcomes can be tracked; setting goals will naturally become more effective as more data becomes available. Similarly, priorities will evolve as the area moves from immediate disaster response to recovery.

2. Stand up a strong in-country institution to coordinate recovery.
Major disasters present unprecedented challenges that local and even national governments may not be fully equipped to handle. Effective responses require the constant coordination of multiple stakeholders, including ministries, local authorities, donors, and other external stakeholders. Project management, prioritization, sequencing, and strong executive capabilities are vital. As the case studies show, affected country's government could benefit from deciding to set up a dedicated coordination institution within existing institutional frameworks to boost critical recovery skills.

3. Coordinate external partners and support collaboration.
Acting quickly is often critical for successful recovery. Early recovery is enabled by effective use of available mechanisms and can help avoid irreversible consequences for lives and livelihoods in the affected areas. Thus, streamlined collaboration with key external partners is of paramount importance to accelerating recovery efforts. Building and maintaining trust among fund providers and recipients can help better direct funds, speeding recovery progress and improving results.

In this article, we analysed half a dozen responses to major crises, with deep dives into three key areas of recovery. These building blocks, based on hard-won lessons, can help stakeholders work toward a successful recovery in a future crisis.

1. A holistic vision and clear priorities and timelines

In most successful disaster recovery efforts, leaders build lines of communication with international and domestic stakeholders as soon as a crisis hits. The faster a response effort begins, the sooner it can help save lives and bring relief. While no single plan or strategy can steer all decentralized efforts, a clear vision of recovery goals, and the route to get there, can be helpful. This plan is usually drafted by the impacted government, which can help align diverse parties behind a common strategy to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the recovery.

As can be seen in the case studies, many of the most successful recovery programs share some common features:

Holistic recovery: Rebuild more than just infrastructure

The biggest disasters typically include large-scale destruction of physical infrastructure—but recovery efforts tend to fall short when they focus only on this physical aspect. A holistic approach to reconstructing both visible and invisible elements of a region is required, including a well-developed recovery vision with clearly articulated aims. Europe's recovery after World War II included reconstructing buildings, streets, and bridges, for example, but also rebuilding economies and societies across the continent.

Thus, a comprehensive recovery strategy could contain the following elements:

— rebuilding and upgrading physical infrastructure and restoring a safe environment

— accelerating resilient economic growth

— safeguarding lives and livelihoods

— strengthening governance and civil society

A strategic focus on long-term targets in these areas can improve clarity among direct stakeholders and rally the population around a unified vision. Indeed, a successful recovery plan might be defined not only as a stable return to normal, but as an opportunity to leapfrog development and improve equity, resilience, and growth.

The Marshall Plan following World War II was based on a vision articulated by US Secretary of State George C. Marshall in a speech in 1947. "It is logical that the United States should do whatever it is able to do to assist in the return of normal economic health in the world," he explained, "without which there can be no political stability and no assured peace."[6] Thanks in part to the Marshall Plan, Western Europe has enjoyed nearly 75 years of relative peace after centuries of violent conflict.

Measurable goals: Use quantifiable performance indicators to plan recovery

The overarching aims of disaster recovery can be broken down into specific goals. In the Marshall Plan, the vision was translated into quantifiable goals at the European level, and each country developed its own recovery plan, which was then tracked. The Marshall Plan aimed to help participating countries become independent from outside assistance by doing the following:

— promoting agricultural and industrial production

— restoring and maintaining the soundness of currencies, budgets, and finances

— facilitating and stimulating growth in international trade among European countries and between Europe and the rest of the world

It is easier to monitor results when goals are measurable and focused on outcomes rather than inputs or processes. For instance, in education—often a priority sector for development—an input-focused target such as "spend $100 million on schools" may not be as effective

[6] *The Marshall Plan Speech,* George C. Marshall Foundation, December 2021.

as an outcome-oriented goal such as "deliver a full year of high-quality education to 40,000 children."

The process of setting up measurable goals can be illustrated by the recovery effort in Indonesia after the 2004 earthquake and the tsunami that followed. The nation formed a rehabilitation and reconstruction agency, known as the BRR, which divided high-level goals, such as "fully reconstruct 140,000 units of destroyed housing," into lower-level KPIs, including the number of houses that should be built in each month, quarter, and year. These milestones provided built-in opportunities to celebrate interim successes while maintaining clear long-term goals.

Rwanda's initial recovery and reconciliation efforts following its civil war and genocide in 1994 put the country on a positive trajectory of social and economic development. Its government set ambitious targets for the rule of law, human rights, education, and economic stability to help restore trust among the population and the international community.

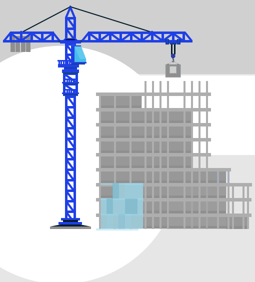
Rwanda's initial recovery and reconciliation efforts following its civil war and genocide in 1994 put the country on a positive trajectory of social and economic development. Its government set ambitious targets for the rule of law, human rights, education, and economic stability to help restore trust among the population and the international community. Since then, the country has steadily improved on many KPIs of social and economic development, including GDP, inflation, primary school enrollment, and HIV/AIDS prevalence—and is today doing far better than before the war in these areas.

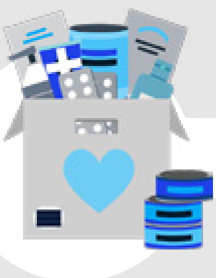
Breaking down bold, long-term targets into timebound milestones allows the government to monitor results, and gain and maintain credibility among stakeholders. The principle here is to start immediately and ramp up gradually. Most successful recovery initiatives begin with a set of activities as soon as possible to rebuild resilience and agility in the economy. Other efforts can gradually ramp up as stakeholders gain confidence and become willing to take more risks.

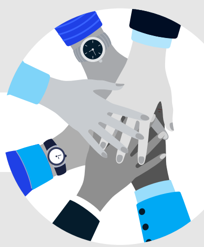
Clear timelines are helpful, because priorities differ at each stage of the recovery process. A recovery effort can be broken down into two main stages, the length of which will vary (see Exhibit 2).

Exhibit 2

Possible focus areas in a recovery







Stage 1 **Immediate disaster response and ramp-up of recovery**	Stage 2 **Long-term disaster recovery to improve livelihoods and boost the economy**
Rebuild and upgrade physical infrastructure and restore safe environment	
Restore damaged housing and critical infrastructure, such as logistics, energy, and heating	Upgrade infrastructure and urban planning, including digital technology
Accelerate resilient economic growth	
Support macrofinancial stability and the most exposed business	Stimulate private investment, attract foreign investment, and invest in human capital
Safeguard lives and livelihoods	
Provide humanitarian aid and support displaced people	Secure an equitable economy, upgrade social infrastructure, and ensure strong environmental standards
Strengthen governance and civil society	
Stabilize society and implement processes to deliver immediate disaster relief	Develop social and governmental institutions and build capacity to respond to future disasters

Stage 1: Immediate disaster response to save lives and ramp up recovery
The first stage focuses on humanitarian aid and laying the foundation for future activities. During this period, speed plays a crucial role, since meeting the most basic needs—physical and mental healthcare, food, shelter, and critical infrastructure—cannot wait.

Focusing on just a few goals can greatly help communicate a stricken region's priorities to partners supporting the recovery effort.

For clarity in communications and implementation, nations or regions will sometimes prioritize five to seven initial concrete goals. Sierra Leone, for instance, set specific strategic goals during the first phase of recovery from Ebola, such as achieving and maintaining zero infections, restoring access to basic health services, and getting kids back to school. These high-level aims were then broken down into more specific actions. Focusing on just a few goals can greatly help communicate a stricken region's priorities to partners supporting the recovery effort.

Stage 2: Long-term disaster recovery to improve livelihoods and boost the economy
Once immediate needs are met in the first stage, the second stage can focus on restoring well-being, fostering economic growth, and implementing more systemic changes. Possible focus areas for this phase are summarized in Exhibit 2. In the first stage of the response to World War II, the United States provided humanitarian aid such as food deliveries to Europe. These deliveries continued with the start of the Marshall Plan, but shifted from immediate food-related aid to raw materials and production equipment. Between 1948 and 1949, food-related assistance fell from roughly 50 percent to 27 percent, while assistance in the form of raw materials and machinery rose from 20 percent to around 50 percent.

During the recovery of Bosnia and Herzegovina after the Bosnian War, the World Bank developed a two-track assistance strategy. The first track was a wave of emergency projects to help kick-start the reconstruction of infrastructure and social sector efforts without waiting for financial normalization or World Bank membership. A broader assistance program followed, including formalizing World Bank membership, and developing and launching a medium-term assistance strategy to aid the systemic reform program, supported by the International Monetary Fund.

In Rwanda, the recovery effort also shifted focus as it progressed. In the beginning, efforts were concentrated on reconstruction, including what the World Bank called "rebuilding the economic and institutional base, and responding to basic needs in education, health, water, energy, transport, and communications."[7] Efforts later shifted toward long-term development, economic growth, and poverty reduction.

[7] International Development Association, *Rwanda: From Post-Conflict Reconstruction to Development,* World Bank Group, August 2009.

Agility: Maintain flexibility and review priorities regularly

Recovery needs can change constantly in response to external circumstances. While long-term planning is critical to setting a strategic course and aligning stakeholders, an inability to pivot can be costly. Successful recovery efforts have included highly flexible processes for planning, collection, prioritization, and budgeting of recovery projects, as well as continuous monitoring to assess needs and track implementation.

While long-term planning is critical to setting a strategic course and aligning stakeholders, an inability to pivot can be costly.

Indonesia is an example of building flexibility into the structure of the recovery plan. The BRR implemented the "block allocation model"—a flexible process for approving the state's yearly recovery budget. Instead of submitting detailed, line-by-line project items to parliament, the agency sought broad allocation of funds by district. These "blocks" were filled with projects that best covered the needs of each community at that point in time.

Under the Marshall Plan, European countries maintained flexibility on where they could direct counterparty funds. Products and equipment from the United States were subsidized, and companies paid for them in the local currency. These payments could then contribute to recovery efforts. While the United Kingdom focused on maintaining economic stability, Germany directed a large share of the funds to its newly founded Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW), a development bank, which financed a multitude of reconstruction projects.

2. A strong in-country institution to coordinate disaster recovery

Recovering from a large-scale disaster is a fundamental effort that takes years to complete, and thus requires robust organization and processes to work well. Given the overlap of policy areas addressed during recovery—financial, economic, social, and so on—many governments choose to set up or mandate an agency dedicated to coordination. This agency's goals are to maximize speed, effectiveness, efficiency, accountability, transparency, and continuity, and ease stakeholder coordination. This dedicated institution can also provide a single point of contact for all stakeholders supporting recovery efforts, including bilateral aid agencies, multilateral institutions such as the United Nations, international financial institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

In 1948, the 16 countries participating the Marshall Plan in Europe set up a dedicated coordinating institution: the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC). Each recipient country established its own national unit, responsible for liaising with the OEEC in Paris. The OEEC's aim was to create "a sound European economy through the economic co-operation of its members." While its first objective was preparing the European recovery effort, its role expanded to providing recommendations on aid and the liberation of trade in Europe, and coordinating the division of aid among recipients. The organization later became the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD.

Organizational focus: Ensure a dedicated coordination unit

The scale and urgency of recovery efforts can be overwhelming for governments, especially in an acute crisis. A dedicated organization responsible for recovery, potentially distinct to some degree from other existing government structures, can help manage recovery, with the following advantages:

— **Significant new capacity.** An agency distinct from existing government structures can use a more scalable and flexible hiring process, with special leeway on compensation to attract the best talent.

— **Rapid response processes.** Few traditional ministerial processes are designed for emergencies. Recovery calls for fast action and results with streamlined decision making—along with accountability and transparency.

— **Neutrality and autonomy.** The coordinating body can be designed to remain neutral and autonomous as it oversees recovery efforts, and be equipped to engage with ministries, international funders, and implementing companies.

— **Coordination of financial resource needs.** Recovery often requires coordinating more than the funding that state budgets have provided, which can be outside the remit of existing ministries.

— **Transparency and accountability.** Bilateral, multilateral, and NGO funders are often wary of contributing via government budgets. An independent coordinating organization can include international representation in its governance to assure probity and transparency of decision making and funds usage, regardless of whether it handles funds itself.

The Indonesian BRR improved its responsiveness to the needs of affected communities by streamlining and accelerating key processes, including for project approval and tendering, and decentralizing decision making. It built substantial capacity and capabilities: in about a year, it numbered more than 1,000 employees, over 80 percent of whom had private sector experience.

Executive alignment: Synchronize closely with the government

Long-term recovery efforts take place in the context of overall government policies, and this requires close coordination across all levels of government. Such coordination can help the government align on development priorities and devise clear lines of executive decision-making authority.

The coordinating body can synchronize with the government based on its organizational design and governance model. Local and central government representatives can be placed into the relevant organizations, for example, and governing structures can help coordinate recovery efforts and ensure stakeholder representation.

Case study: Indonesia's recovery agency (BRR)

In December 2004, a powerful earthquake in the Indian Ocean destroyed 800 kilometers of coastline in the Indonesian province of Aceh and triggered a devastating tsunami. A second tragedy struck the nation the following March: an earthquake hit the island of Nias. In all, the quakes left more than 200,000 people dead or missing. More than 900 organizations joined in the reconstruction, raising around $6.7 billion—more than $7,100 for every affected resident—to rebuild affected areas.

The government set up the Badan Rehabilitasi dan Rekonstruksi (BRR), a new, centralized, in-country recovery agency with a four-year mandate to coordinate the efforts of all stakeholders and facilitate the reconstruction process. It selected Kuntoro Mangkusubroto, the former Indonesian minister of energy and mineral resources, to lead the BRR, as he had significant public and private sector experience. The government also created two autonomous bodies within the BRR—the supervisory board and advisory board—to oversee the BRR's activities.

The BRR conducted the following activities in the wake of the disasters:

— **Planning and policy.** The BRR helped local and central government stakeholders assess needs, identify priorities, and develop and refine sector reconstruction strategies. International organizations were involved in the planning phase and provided expertise and direct input. The World Bank, for example, conducted a needs assessment.

— **Project approval.** The BRR collected detailed information (in the form of a project concept note) on all reconstruction projects. Working with external experts, it confirmed that the projects 1) met minimum quality standards, 2) aligned with the sector reconstruction strategy, and 3) did not overlap with other efforts. Prequalified projects were then moved to the funding stage if funding was not previously secured.

— **Fund matching.** The BRR communicated unfunded projects and unmet needs to donors through its website, mail campaigns, and direct outreach. When it found matches, it connected donors to project owners.

— **Debottlenecking.** Based on information provided by project owners or its own analysis, the BRR identified bottlenecks and worked closely with relevant stakeholders, including the government, to remove these obstacles. This involved advocating to remove bureaucratic delays, drafting policy adjustments, and coordinating to break logistical bottlenecks.

— **Monitoring and evaluation.** The BRR gathered regular progress reports from project owners, conducted spot checks to verify progress, evaluated impact on the level of the economic sector, and more.

The following factors contributed to the success of the BRR:

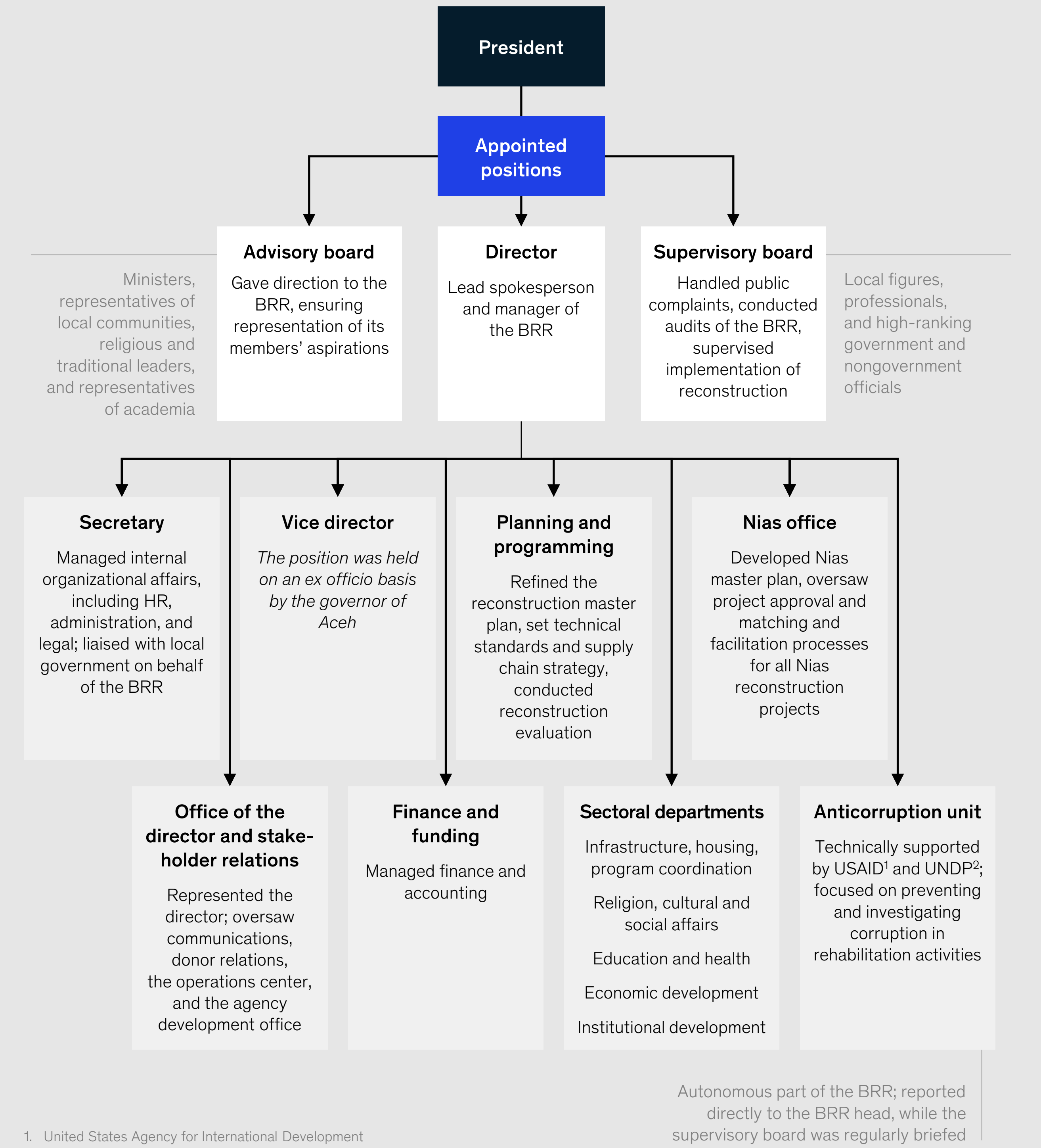
— **Coordinating all recovery activities.** Creating the BRR as a dedicated coordination unit allowed Indonesia to 1) streamline key public sector processes, 2) decentralize decision making for regions, which improved responsiveness to community needs, and 3) build recovery capacity and capabilities.

— **Aligning reconstruction activities with the government.** As a ministerial-level agency, the BRR had the credibility to engage with domestic ministries. Because the BRR was established under the leadership of the Indonesian president and engaged local governmental institutions, the BRR and government were able to work hand in hand.

— **Engaging the best talent.** The BRR carefully selected leaders with good reputations and significant experience. The agency's head was known for reviving an Indonesian state-owned company, for example. The BRR attracted and retained top talent for other positions, offering compensation levels similar to those of international agencies.

Exhibit 3

Organizational structure of Indonesia's BRR



1. United States Agency for International Development
2. United Nations Development Programme

Source: Interview with Badan Rehabilitasi dan Rekonstruksi

As noted, Indonesia's president worked with the parliament to establish the BRR as a ministerial-level agency, which gave it the credibility to engage with domestic ministries. It included two autonomous bodies: the advisory board prepared general policies and directives, while the supervisory board provided oversight and monitored activities. Both included representatives of the central and local governments and reported directly to the president. This helped the BRR and government work hand in hand during Indonesia's post-earthquake recovery.

An effective recovery agency understands local conditions and has the capabilities to manage complex projects, mediate competing interests, ensure accountability, and show results early to build credibility with stakeholders.

As noted, the Indonesian government selected the former minister of energy and mineral resources to lead the BRR, as he had significant public and private sector experience and was known for reviving a state-owned company.

3. Effective collaboration and coordination with external partners

Most recovery programs require fast mobilization of significant public and private resources from domestic budgets and overseas aid. Coordinating this multitude of stakeholders can require international assistance from donor countries and their bilateral aid agencies, multilateral agencies such as the United Nations, and international financial institutions such as the World Bank. Private organizations including NGOs, foundations, enterprises, and individuals may also contribute—which requires direction and alignment with the recovery plan's strategic priorities.

With so many actors involved, aid may come in different forms. Some may provide food, medical supplies, tents, and other urgently needed humanitarian supplies, for example, while others may offer donations, grants, concessional loans, guarantees, war insurance, foreign direct investments, or export credits, which will help with longer-term recovery efforts.

In this complex context, effective collaboration among recipients and supporters improves decision making and accelerates the funneling of resources into the recovery, while minimizing waste, duplication of efforts, and unintended impacts on society. It can also help boost transparency and trust with donors.

The Marshall Plan, a joint effort by the United States and Europe, was governed by two implementing organizations, the US Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA) and the European-run OEEC. The OEEC's objectives were to continue the dialogue on European economic problems with the United States, coordinate aid allocation, ensure that aid was appropriately distributed, and negotiate policy reforms. The OEEC proposed plans and projects, and a regional office in Paris and offices in each recipient country observed the flow of funds and judged the effectiveness of each recovery effort. By asking the OEEC to take some responsibility for allocating US aid among participating countries, the ECA elevated the organization's status, helping to achieve the Marshall Plan's aims.

Financing: Offer direct-to-project funding to maximize donor support

International partners that choose to provide international recovery funds often manage these funds via bilateral aid agencies, or transfer money to local entities with the means to distribute resources, such as a reconstruction bank, to on-the-ground projects. These methods of funding management have different advantages and disadvantages, and recovery efforts can employ multiple models simultaneously.

One option is to offer donors direct-to-project financing for large-scale recovery projects, such as infrastructure investments. This financing relies on fund management on the donor side, either through aid agencies or international financial institutions, and offers high levels of donor control. One key element of such a funding mechanism is the effective allocation of available funds to specific projects, including the prioritization of projects and fast allocation of those funds. Moreover, matching donor interests and funds with specific projects can help maximize contributions. One such example was the BRR's market making in Indonesia's recovery, where the BRR consolidated projects from central and local authorities, prioritized and approved them, and communicated priority projects in need of funding to donors. It also organized regular coordination events, such as monthly donor roundtable meetings and a biannual coordinating forum, to highlight unmet needs and share funding priorities.

In other situations, it is more practical to manage funds locally. If a recovery effort requires many small initiatives and payouts, such as private market subsidies to support energy-efficiency improvements for homeowners, it may be preferable to bundle funds and have them directed and disbursed by a local fund, based on certain principles. Such funds are typically set up with a focused mandate and strong corporate governance, as with development banks such as the KfW in Germany. In the 1950s, the development bank focused on home repairs and energy supply to private businesses.

The default in many recovery efforts is to rely on established systems of payment, supported by international financial institutions, for example. Using existing payment structures requires only minimal recipient-side setup. Joint account management and financing may help to closely involve donors with projects, including help and expertise beyond funding.

Financial frameworks detailed in recovery plans should allow for a combination of direct-to-project mechanisms for large recovery initiatives and smaller local funds to manage smaller, fragmented efforts.

Transparency: Build and maintain accountability through technology and auditing

To maintain stakeholder confidence, disaster recovery plans should include proper checks and balances, regular auditing, public reporting, and project implementation oversight. Funding should flow toward the people and businesses directly affected by the disaster.

Recovery situations around the world show that a rapid inflow of funds can lead to bottlenecks, waste, and other issues if governance and execution are not set up correctly. Effective financial governance will balance speedy fund distribution with measurable outcomes, while maintaining transparency and avoiding misappropriation.

To maintain stakeholder confidence, disaster recovery plans should include proper checks and balances, regular auditing, public reporting, and project implementation oversight. Funding should flow toward the people and businesses directly affected by the disaster.

Technology can be a critical enabler. Today, satellite or drone imagery can help experts make early estimates of housing and infrastructure damage, which in turn can be used to inform plans regarding gaps between estimated and claimed damage. An example of this is the rapid damage assessments published by the United Nations Satellite Centre.[8]

Auditing through dedicated internal units and independent third-party accounting firms has helped build trust and avoid the misuse of funds during disaster recovery. Public reporting helps interested parties "follow the money" from initial commitments to final spend. A recovery agency can be tasked with making sure resources are allocated effectively and projects are implemented on time and on budget.

[8] *Chernihiv Rapid Damage Assessment Overview Map,* United Nations Satellite Centre, September 15, 2022.

During Indonesia's earthquake recovery, the BRR dedicated resources and leveraged assistance to build and run an effective anticorruption unit inside the organization, which reported directly to the supervisory board. The BRR brought in international experts to design the unit and appointed a foreign national as its head. The BRR also engaged external auditing bodies, including private professional accounting firms and governmental auditing agencies, and initiated forensic audits in suspect areas and to follow up on complaints.

Under the Marshall Plan, the United States established bilateral agreements with each country to track progress toward program objectives. Commitments included stabilizing the currency, increasing production, and providing economic information to evaluate country needs and program results. Each year, participating countries submitted their program to the OEEC, which then made recommendations to the ECA.

Joint staffing: Engage partners to staff critical in-country positions

Formal collaboration agreements with NGOs, multilateral bodies, and funding partners can help crisis response leaders gain quick access to talent, including experienced personnel to fill key positions in the local organizations responsible for recovery, strengthening credibility and transparency.

In the Marshall Plan, the OEEC established a network of approximately 20 technical committees to provide recommendations on projects and policies to the executive committee and council. The "horizontal" committees dealt with general subjects such as trade and payments, while "vertical" committees specialized in particular commodities such as electricity, oil, and chemicals. The committees included OEEC experts, industrial representatives, and observers from the ECA on the US side.

In Indonesia, the BRR accepted technical assistance and secondments from other organizations, including donors, which helped build capabilities. It attracted staff from international agencies to fill critical positions, including head of the auditing unit, and involved external experts for advice.

Conclusion

Even under the best circumstances, managing a recovery from a major disaster is challenging for any government, because thousands of lives have been turned upside down and uncertainty abounds. Creating a clear understanding of best practices in planning and overseeing a recovery effort, including quick, coordinated engagement with domestic and international partners, can help societies not only return to normal, but improve infrastructure and the environment and accelerate equitable economic growth.

Based on our analysis of recovery initiatives, we have identified eight guiding principles and grouped them into three categories:

1. **A holistic vision and clear priorities and timelines**
   - 1.1. Holistic recovery: Rebuild more than just infrastructure
   - 1.2. Measurable goals: Use quantifiable performance indicators to plan recovery
   - 1.3. Agility: Maintain flexibility and review priorities regularly
2. **A strong in-country institution to coordinate disaster recovery**
   - 2.1. Organizational focus: Ensure a dedicated coordinating unit
   - 2.2. Executive alignment: Synchronize closley with the government
3. **Effective collaboration and coordination with stakeholders and contributors**
   - 3.1. Financing: Offer direct-to-project funding to maximize donor support
   - 3.2. Transparency: Build and maintain accountability through technology and auditing
   - 3.3. Joint staffing: Engage partners to staff critical in-country positions

Historical evidence demonstrates that adhering to the principles outlined in this paper can help leaders set up an effective disaster recovery process and deliver strong results relatively quickly. In this current period of global turbulence and uncertainty, governments and other stakeholders can learn from these historical examples to address future natural and humanmade disasters when they arise.

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