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THE APM PROJECT MANAGEMENT AWARDS 2022 *meet the winners*

INSIDE

Levelling up or levelling off? / The Big Interview: Birmingham 2022's Annie Hairsine

STEPPING INTO DISASTER ZONES



'HOW DO WE START A HUMANITARIAN PROJECT IN A PLACE STRUCK WITH DISASTER?' ASKS APM'S ANNIE MIRZA. FOR HER, IT'S A PERSONAL STORY, AS SHE SEES HOW THE DEVASTATING FLOODS IN PAKISTAN HAVE AFFECTED HER FAMILY THERE. PLUS, HOW A TIMELY APM REPORT PRESENTS THE LATEST THINKING ON WORKING IN DISASTER ZONES.



As the world moves on from climate disasters, people on the front line remain; this time, hip-deep in literal and metaphorical murky water. If the project is 'aiding those in crisis', where do we start? People remain steadfast and accepting of the difficulties life throws at them, adapting with optimism. But from rebuilding a few homes to a country's entire infrastructure, tackling a crisis like this is frustrating. The 2022 floods in Pakistan came in catastrophic proportions – like a scene from *The Day After Tomorrow*, only my relatives were FaceTiming their reality. Monsoon rains come every year, floods happen every year – this time it was different.

My relatives live in different regions of Pakistan; houses I played in as a

child evolve almost every time I visit. One household, not prone to flooding until the last few years, has added flood steps and 'lifted' their front door from the outside so you step down into the main house; the doorframe inevitably gets shorter. The outdoor steps receive a new top step, so they rise high enough to be above the floodwater levels. Then the doorway is cemented from the ground up to meet the new highest step. It worked again this year, but they're planning on adding more steps just in case.

Villages have drowned and aid workers struggle to find the means to reach them, and once they do, there are hundreds of urgent and complex humanitarian issues. People must choose what to prioritise depending on their

circumstances. Once the flood waters drain away (if they do) and makeshift homes are found, fears turn to starvation and disease. Food remains scarce, farmers have lost their crop and livestock have drowned, so where food is available, it's expensive, or there is nothing to sell or trade. It's essential to have basics available, but also to think ahead: how can we begin to rebuild and grow food?

Home births and dirty water

Clean water is another urgent issue. A few relatives always say they're 'unaffected by flooding' because their streets and homes aren't filled with water, but their water tanks are infiltrated with sewage and livestock carcasses. They have no clean water available and



Main: a flooded road at Badami Bagh vegetable market, Lahore. Below: a doctor gives medical assistance to a flood-affected girl with malaria. Bottom: people affected by floods receive relief aid.

services to clean tanks can't get through flooded roads. Planning ahead, they rely on water dispensers they saved and filled with clean water months ago.

Many don't have the luxury of water tanks or storage space. People are forced into poor conditions with dirty water that spreads deadly diseases like malaria, cholera and dengue.

How are they meant to prepare safe food or stay hydrated? Urgent issues grow: medical supplies, makeshift hospitals and medicine distribution – sick patients who need urgent care are stranded, either because there isn't a hospital anymore or roads are blocked. Some of my relatives who are pregnant mentally prepare for the possibility of home births.

ALAMY

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The electricity and gas supply has been more erratic too. Pipes and electricity lines have collapsed, cutting off power, and bad planning (inner cities have messy wiring going into the ground) means electricity is switched off for weeks. So, what happens in hospitals, let alone homes, when electricity isn't working and back-up generators fail? If flood victims



are offered uncooked rice, do they even have the means to cook it?

Complex, expensive, chaotic

The focus shifts daily to the most pressing needs. The time to sort this out is short; it's a complex, expensive and chaotic environment. Monsoon season will start again, so how do we rebuild in a few months? How do we ensure that electricity and phone lines won't be cut? How can farmers rebuild and prepare? If people can afford to plan ahead, where do they store food so water won't seep in? Do we focus on dealing with the damage done, or do we prepare to avoid damage recurring?

This goes beyond repairing a house and dealing with the immediate issues. Entire villages have been wiped out. We can't stop the flooding and the rain, but we can rebuild in an adaptable way that allows growth. Making the right decisions at the right time is vital, and good project management can bring life-saving benefits.



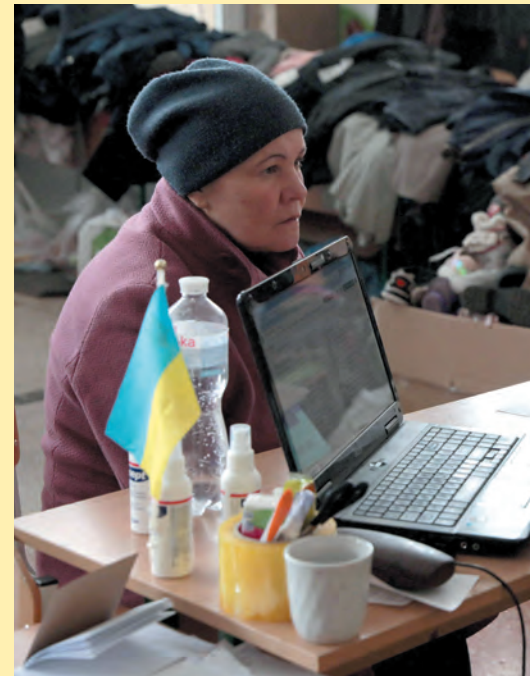
We can't stop the flooding and the rain, but we can rebuild in an adaptable way that allows growth

MANAGING PROJECTS IN POST-CONFLICT AND DISASTER ZONES

In a new report, APM shares advice on managing humanitarian projects in extreme and uncertain environments that have lessons for all project professionals. Read on for an edited extract.

On Thursday 24 February 2022, when Russian tanks rolled into Ukraine, the invasion triggered a humanitarian emergency on a scale that hasn't been seen in Europe for decades. According to the UN, some 7.7 million people have been displaced within the country, and an estimated 13 million people are stranded in areas directly affected by the conflict. The response has also been massive. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs says that at least 250 organisations – more than 60% of them Ukrainian – have been actively delivering aid, comprising local, national and international NGOs, UN agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross, volunteers and faith groups. Many of those already present in Ukraine before the conflict have since pivoted towards emergency humanitarian work.

In March, the Ukrainian government created the Coordination Headquarters for Humanitarian and Social Affairs, a new entity designed to coordinate aid from foreign governments, international organisations and large businesses, and to channel it through local agencies. Nevertheless, Ukraine highlights many of the issues that frequently arise in emergency situations: lack of capacity; security risks; difficulties of access; sometimes poor coordination between agencies; and even corruption. For the vast majority of the agencies involved, some form of project management framework is an intrinsic



part of their ability to respond and to deliver a positive impact in situations where uncertainty is the defining characteristic – be it a conflict, earthquake, famine, flood or pandemic, or the challenge of extreme deprivation.

Being effective in an emergency situation

It can be argued that different aspects of uncertainty are the hallmark of any project-based work. Trends such as globalisation and digital transformation have been disrupting whole industries and compressing the time over which change takes place. The enormous investment gambles that sparked the 2008 financial crisis have bequeathed an air of volatility and incipient crisis in economies around the world; the COVID-19 pandemic provided a crash course in living with uncertainty on a day-to-day basis.

It's clear that many of those working in humanitarian fields consider managing projects to be an important role. Humanitarian training provider Bioforce, in a study of more than 1,500 humanitarian professionals, found that when asked to select a single profession that they most closely affiliate to, 16% of all respondents chose project management – the highest for any professional group.

Many NGOs and humanitarian agencies have long since developed their own framework for managing projects on the ground. There's also