A SOCIAL REPAIR ORIENTATION TO DISASTER RECOVERY: EVIDENCE FROM NORTHERN PAKISTAN

Omer Aijazi

About the Report

This report introduces a social repair orientation to disaster recovery for humanitarian policy makers and practitioners. It draws on four months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in two remote Himalayan valleys in Northern Pakistan: Neelum valley (Pakistan administered Kashmir) and Siran valley (Khyber Pakhtun Khwa Province).

About the Author

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Village Basoo, Siran valley: Oral history interviews taking place in a participant's home. Pictured on the left is research assistant Mubashir Nawaz Khan and on the right Abbas, a survivor of the 2005 Kashmir and Northern Areas Earthquake.

Photo credit: Omer Aijazi, permission was obtained from Mubashir and Abbas prior to publication of this photograph.

Acknowledgements

Cover photograph: A sacred shrine in Siran valley decorated with coloured flags. Religion and spirituality play an important role in everyday life.

Photo credit: Omer Aijazi

"Fireplace"
Photo credit: Omer Aijazi

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Sharda, Neelum valley: Remains of an ancient temple, which was once celebrated as an important center of learning in the Himalayan region. These ruins stand near the Line of Control between the Indian and Pakistani administered portions of Kashmir.

Photo credit: Omer Aijazi

Executive Summary

This report examines processes of social repair after natural disasters and contributes to the development of a social repair orientation to disaster recovery relevant for humanitarian policy makers and practitioners. It presents evidence from four months of ethnographic field research conducted in two remote Himalayan valleys in Northern Pakistan (Neelum and Siran). **The research illuminates the various ways disaster survivors negotiate the impacts of natural disasters on their everyday lives, relationships and sense of self. Key insights include:**

- Disaster survivors actively remap their physical and social worlds and re-open previously familiar spaces in the aftermath of disasters
- Disaster survivors excluded from social networks work to reinvent their social locations and lifeworlds to maintain a relational presence within their communities
- Social repair in the context of intense political fragmentation takes the form of locating ideological affiliations in spaces outside inherited familial political networks
- It is rather difficult to separate material experiences of disasters from their social or existential dimensions; the holistic concept of social repair allows us to negotiate these fluid categories in relation to long-term disaster recovery
- It is challenging to differentiate and isolate experiences of one form of social disruption from another; therefore social repair for long-term recovery extends beyond the immediacy of the event
- Cultural revival and spiritual regeneration are important tools for social repair
- Social repair and long term disaster recovery cannot be isolated from broader frames of structural violence

"Doorways", photograph submitted by Naima Yaqoob, Siran valley

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Introduction

Natural disasters are an important global phenomenon, which challenge human progress and wellbeing. According to the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), in the last 12 years (2000-2011), 1.1 million people have been killed by natural disasters, 2.7 billion affected and 1.3 trillion USD worth of economic damage reported globally. Fatalities from natural disasters match and often exceed those from war and conflict. The World Bank and Earth Institute estimate 3.4 billion people currently reside in regions at risk of natural disasters. While disasters do not discriminate their impacts do. The Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre estimates that even though only 11 % of the global population at risk from natural disasters lives in developing countries, they account for 53 % of reported deaths. In addition to the loss of human life, disasters also undermine progress towards sustainable and equitable development. It is useful to understand disasters as forms of collective violence, which disrupt the lives of large numbers of people in multiple ways, and are intensified by prevailing political, social and economic conditions. Similar to mass violence, disasters erode societal structures including networks of familial and intimate relationships that provide the foundations of community.

Broader processes of remaking life following natural disasters remain relatively unnamed and unexplored within current humanitarian practice and scholarship

Humanitarian interventions after natural disasters play an important role in sustaining life, minimizing deaths and material restoration. If delivered carefully, humanitarian services can even pave the way for sustainable long-term recovery. Due to resource constraints, differentiated vulnerabilities and issues of access, humanitarian assistance is typically only received by a small percentage of affected populations and that too for only a short period of time. However unsettled in both material and social domains of life disaster survivors must re-establish societal structures, revive social relationships and re-constitute their notions of the self to enable long-term recovery. For better and improved delivery of humanitarian services, it is important for humanitarian policy makers and practitioners to understand these social and interpersonal processes by which disaster survivors gradually return to a life of normalcy. These broader processes of remaking life following natural disasters remain relatively unnamed and unexplored within current humanitarian practice and scholarship.

This report proposes a social repair orientation to disaster recovery, as it relates to intimate processes of social remaking that disaster survivors engage in as they move from a space of social disruption towards a life of meaning. Evidence on the centrality of social repair processes to long-term disaster recovery is provided from four months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in two remote

Himalayan valleys in Northern Pakistan in the context of the 2010 monsoon floods and the 2005 Kashmir and Northern Areas earthquake as well as recurring relationships of structural violence and inequity.

Social repair is the process by which survivors of disruption (such as disasters, violence, conflict) strive to lead a *moral life* amidst overwhelming uncertainties, risks and constraints.[1] These are set of actions and embodied processes that individuals mobilize to reconstruct social relations, negotiate strategies for coping with disruption, and to get on with daily life. A social repair orientation takes its conceptual break from the diminishing notion of material restoration and survival, which informs current humanitarian policy and practice and invests in a more holistic understanding of life after disasters.

Social repair is the process by which survivors of disruption (such as disasters, violence, conflict) strive to lead a *moral life* amidst overwhelming uncertainties, risks and constraints

Northern Pakistan

Pakistan is of significant interest to the humanitarian community as a site of repeated humanitarian crises including natural disasters and conflict, proximity to Afghanistan, internal struggles with extreme religious ideologies and frontline role in the global War on Terror. A diverse nation of 192 million, humanitarian attention towards the different regions of the country varies considerably as negotiated via national and local micro-politics as well as considerations of safety, access and global programmatic priorities.

Northern Pakistan's rugged terrain at once beautiful and inhospitable has been overcome by generations of local residents who have learned to negotiate the extreme topography and the long arduous winter months. It is important to understand that the geography and weather of the region intimately shape everyday life and structure notions of community and belonging, setting residents apart from mainland Pakistan. Individual villages typically lack any central social spaces, which could serve as a focal point for locals. Rather the family unit organized into immediate and extended households forms the standard parameters of one's social world and social relations. Complex caste and kinship relations further exacerbate this sense of fragmentation, as

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[1] For a complete theoretical discussion on social repair see Aijazi, O. (2015). Theorizing a social repair orientation to disaster recovery: Developing insights for disaster recovery policy and programming. *Global Social Welfare: Research, Policy and Practice 2*(1): 15-28; Aijazi, O. (forthcoming). Social repair and structural inequity: Implications for disaster recovery practice. *International Journal of Disaster Resilience in the Built Environment;* Das, V. (2007). *Life and worlds: Violence and the descent into the ordinary*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press; Kleinman, A. (2006). *What really matters. Living a moral life amidst uncertainty and danger.* New York: Oxford University Press; Riaño-Alcalá, P. (2015.). Emplaced witnessing: Commemorative practices among the Wayuu in the Upper Guajira. *Memory Studies.*

do ancient systems of land ownership and tenancy. Land ownership varies across the region but in its worst form comprises of inequitable arrangements between tenant farmers and powerful landlords created through the divide and conquer sensibilities of British colonial rule but kept in place in modern Pakistan by local political elites and their systems of electoral patronage. The remoteness of the region and its lack of integration into mainland Pakistan exacerbate its political, social, cultural and economic marginalization. This is readily visible in Pakistan's policy agendas, which fall short of any sustained commitment towards the equitable development of Northern Pakistan. Typically villages are sparsely connected to mainland Pakistan, to each other and across waterways. Accessing communal amenities where they exist such as schools, hospitals and marketplaces is a constant struggle.   While residents have learned to negotiate this lack of connectivity in extraordinary situations of health care emergencies, extreme weather and disability, life in the mountains is uncertain and unforgiving.

The remoteness of the region and its lack of integration into mainland Pakistan exacerbate its political, social, cultural and economic marginalization

Livestock play an important role in daily life, which in addition to being a source of nutrition, assist with the preparation of agricultural land and can be sold for cash during emergencies. Labour in the region is typically gendered. Women are responsible for tending livestock, which is closely linked to a yearly pattern of temporary migrations. In the summer months, women along with their children and livestock temporarily relocate to higher altitudes for improved grazing opportunities. Agriculture is typically subsistent, due to small land holdings, weather variability and lack of farming inputs as well little or no access to markets. The seasonal agriculture cycle intimately shapes everyday life, and a typical household revolve their schedule around the various seeding, growing and harvesting cycles. Considerable energy goes into planning and preparing for the winter season, when the remoteness of the region is accentuated and reliance on land and agriculture is challenged. Typically households stockpile firewood for the winters when un-navigable rain, snow and ice restrict mobility. Mostly women collect firewood and this is a daily negotiation with forest guards who patrol the region's dwindling protected forests. Similarly in preparation for the winter months, corn the staple crop is also harvested, dried, ground into flour and stored in traditional containers along with dehydrated vegetables such as tomatoes and parsley as well as potatoes and legumes. Crop choice and output varies across the region depending on soil and irrigation conditions, limiting how much food residents can store for the winter. Similarly, grass is also cut and dried as fodder for feeding livestock during the harsh winters.

During the summer months women and children migrate to temporary dwellings with their livestock to benefit from improved grazing opportunities. These grazing spaces can be reached after several hours of hiking from the nearest village center

Photograph submitted by Mohammed Zaheer, Neelum valley

Natural disasters, persisting vulnerabilities and structural violence

The micro-processes of everyday mountain life in Northern Pakistan are heavily impacted by natural disasters. The 2005 Kashmir and Northern Areas earthquake disrupted the region, killing 73,000 residents, severely injuring over 128,304 and affecting at least 5.1 million people throughout Northern Pakistan. In 2010 monsoon floods ravaged the region again, affecting another 20 million Pakistanis across the country. Similarly, a large flood also devastated parts of Northern Pakistan in 1992, details of which are poorly documented. These large-scale disasters are in addition to frequently recurring smaller events such as seasonal landslides, snowstorms, flash floods and glacier melts. While environmental and geo-physical causes are stipulated for triggering natural hazards in this region, their consequences are accentuated by persisting social, economic and political vulnerabilities as well as structural violence.

A locally made bridge connecting the valley across the raging Neelum river. Bridges such as this, constructed and maintained by local residents are common in the region

Photograph submitted by Shafiqa Butt, Neelum valley
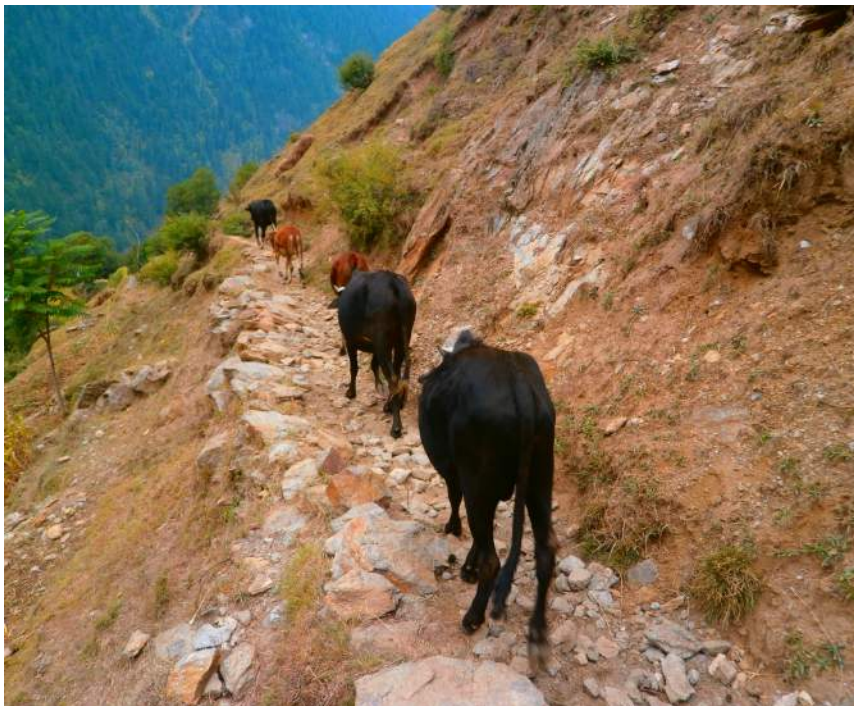
Steep, narrow pathways are the only way to navigate the mountainous region

Photograph submitted by Rihana Tahir, Neelum valley

Unresolved conditions of inequity not only exacerbate the consequences of natural disasters on the already vulnerable but also inform and influence their recovery strategies

Unresolved conditions of inequity not only exacerbate the consequences of natural disasters on the already vulnerable but also inform and influence their recovery strategies. Therefore it is important to gain a more nuanced and detailed understanding of these underlying forces embedded in different ways in the various valleys, localities and sub-regions that form the diverse and fragmented region of Northern Pakistan. Each sub region has its own historiography of oppression, inequity and skewed power relations, which are fundamental to the ways people, respond to and/or recover from natural disasters.

Neelum valley

Neelum valley is a deeply forested and heavily militarized region in Pakistan's administered portion of Kashmir. A single jeepable road links the valley to the nearest urban centre of Muzaffarabad. While Neelum is less than 100km from Muzaffarabad, the journey can take up to 7 hours to complete due to poor road conditions and frequent landslides.

Neelum takes its name from the blue colour of the raging Neelum river which flows through the valley and the blue sapphire gemstone found in abundance in the resource rich region. Residents identify as Kashmiris and form a distinct social, linguistic and ethnic group. Like other areas within the disputed region of Kashmir, the residents of Neelum valley also struggle to maintain and preserve their cultural identities.

Efforts at maintaining a Kashmiri identity include concerted attempts at preserving local/regional languages, which are not taught in state schools as well as ensuring the circulation of customary practices and cultural forms. Residents categorically call themselves Kashmiris and often state, "this is Kashmir and that is Pakistan" while pointing in the direction of mainland Pakistan. Unlike Indian administered Kashmir, the Neelum region enjoys a somewhat synergistic relationship with Pakistan, which is interested in the cultural assimilation of Kashmiris. Kashmiris in Neelum go to great lengths to ensure that their younger generations accurately remember the historical polity of Kashmir and firmly hold onto their Kashmiri identities.

The former princely state of Kashmir, despite being divided into Pakistan, China and India, continues to maintain sharp cultural differences from its host countries. Pakistan and India both claim ownership of Kashmir and have fought two wars over it in addition to numerous border skirmishes.

"Neelum valley"

Photograph submitted by Muhammed Saeed Khan, Neelum valley

In 1972 the Himalayan territory of Kashmir was divided amongst India and Pakistan via a United Nations monitored de-facto border known as the Line of Control (LoC). Also known as Asia's Berlin Wall, the 720 km long LoC cuts through Neelum and arbitrarily divides the valley into the two nation states, separating historic landscapes, communities and neighbourhoods. A bridge connects both sections of the valley and twice a month (the frequency changes) residents are allowed to cross on either side to reunite with family and friends. While most border regions are sparsely populated and are at a distance from large population centers, this is not the case for Neelum, which forms a near continuous borderland between the nation states of India and Pakistan. Therefore the valley is heavy militarized, dotted with numerous army check posts and cantonments with thousands of Indian and Pakistani soldiers eyeing each across the LoC. The valley's border status also implies that residents, their homes and properties are under constant threat of being caught in cross-border firing between the two belligerent states.

Until 2003, when India and Pakistan reached a historic ceasefire, the LoC was the scene of protracted conflict in the form of cross-border mortar shelling and firing. This lasted some 14 years and has resulted in a large number of casualties, permanent disabilities, loss of infrastructure and disruption to social life in addition to severe psyco-social trauma. The LoC also served as a point of recruitment by local Mujahideens (armed fighters) to cross into India and engage in an armed struggle for the liberation of Indian administered Kashmir. Many residents of the region have chosen to join this militia group either for economic or political reasons serving as porters, foot soldiers and guides. Landmines still dot some parts of the valley, particularly near potential border crossing points. Mudslides, flood and rainwater often carry these undetonated landmines into village communal spaces.

Due to the region's sensitive nature, residents are under constant surveillance by military and national intelligence agencies and have learned to live alongside intensive scrutiny. Telecommunication facilities are also discouraged in the region by the military and phone and Internet services are extremely limited.

Owning to its relative stability over the last few years, the region has opened itself to tourism. Neelum's tourism sector though under resourced has benefitted from the diversion of tourists from the scenic but troubled Swat valley. While portions of Northern Pakistan in the Khyber Pakhtun Khwa province struggle with insecurity and terrorism, Neelum enjoys relative safety. In 2011, the valley welcomed some 250,000 visitors and in 2012 another 600,000. However its status as a border region and the possibility of escalation between Pakistan and India at any given time, discourage any real investments in local

infrastructure such as roads and tourist facilities. Both India and Pakistan have yet to pay any serious attention to proposals for demilitarization of the region despite support from resident Kashmiris.

An underground shelter used by families to protect themselves during cross-border firing and mortar shelling. Though the Neelum region has enjoyed relative stability in the recent past, residents still maintain such spaces in anticipation of a sudden outbreak of violence

Photograph submitted by Naveed Alam, Neelum valley

Despite having the status of a district, Neelum is minimally mainstreamed into mainland Pakistan lacking the social, political and economic services national inclusion guarantees. Residents have to travel long distances on an expensive and unpredictable transportation system to access basic health services. Education facilities are also lacking particularly beyond primary schooling, especially for women. Residents have responded to poor access and quality of the public education system by starting their own private schools. These typically charge a modest fee but are seen as providing better quality instruction. Higher education opportunities are also extremely limited and many youngsters opt for distance education options (delivered through postal mail) such as via the Allama Iqbal Open University in Islamabad. Nonetheless literacy rates for women in Neelum are as high as 50%.

Students attend lessons at a private school. Despite charging a modest fee, affording local residents opt for these schools as they are seen as providing a higher quality of instruction then state managed schools. They also tend to be located centrally within villages minimizing issues of access particularly for female learners

Photograph submitted by Farhat Shaheen, Neelum valley

Other ways residents have addressed lack of state services is by investing in small micro-hydro plants for local power generation (inspired by a series of similar projects implemented by UNDP in the 1990s). These plants, locally owned and maintained provide a few hours of electricity after sundown. In terms of legal services, the Jirga system (local system of conflict resolution) operates alongside the national justice system and residents are free to choose either of the two.

Important livelihoods for the valley include small-scale farming, livestock rearing, sale of forest resources and migrant labour (particularly young men who temporarily migrate to mainland Pakistan during the winter months). Residents are generally self-reliant when it comes to food. This is evident from the local village bazaars, which sell limited items. As in the rest of the region, corn is the most important crop. Additionally, many households maintain small vegetable gardens which women typically tend. Vegetables such as potatoes, tomatoes, varieties of spinach and green beans are grown at home and stored for winters. In general the soil in the region is rich in nutrients and residents have set up elaborate irrigation systems. Fruits and nuts such as apples and walnuts are also found in abundance in the region.

Food security is closely tied to land ownership. Most residents of Neelum are legal owners of their land and even though some feudal relations exist, they are not as severe as in the rest of the region. However, a 2013 survey conducted by WFP reports 32% of the valley's

female residents and 22% of children suffer from malnutrition. At the time of fieldwork, WFP was implementing a nutrition program in the region for pregnant and nursing women as well as young children.

Locally grown potatoes stored in an underground cavity for use in the winter months

Photograph submitted by Nusrat Jamal, Neelum valley

While the region has been relatively secure since the 2003 ceasefire, unregulated deforestation and climate change have made residents of the valley vulnerable to frequent natural disasters such as flash floods and landslides particularly during monsoon seasons. The 2005 Kashmir and Northern Areas earthquake heavily disrupted Neelum. In addition to destroying houses, schools and hospitals, the earthquake created new vulnerabilities such as large numbers of permanently disabled survivors, female headed households and children without guardians. In 2010, monsoon floods that submerged nearly 1/5th of the country also disrupted everyday life in the valley. Destruction caused by the flooding was concentrated along the LoC destroying crops and sweeping away mud houses, bridges and irrigation channels. In the aftermath of these disasters, Kashmir became a site of significant humanitarian intervention, though it can be argued that due to its remoteness the Neelum valley did not benefit proportionally. The UN declared March 2014 as the end of Kashmir's decade long process (2005-2014) of relief provision, social reconstruction and recreation of political society. However fieldwork indicates that communities in Neelum are still grappling with the consequences of these past disasters as well as cross-border conflict.

Siran valley

Siran is another one of Northern Pakistan's several forgotten valleys, hidden amongst the cracks and crevices of the lesser-known Himalayan region. It rarely appears on any map and is rather unceremoniously absorbed into the boundaries of the larger Khyber Pakhtun Khwa province. Khyber Pakhtun Khwa (KPK) translates as the "land of the Pashtun people." KPK till 2010 was called the North-West Frontier Province, a name reminiscent of British colonial rule. The shift in nomenclature, decided by a referendum in the national assembly, reflects the unique ethnic and cultural aspirations of the Pashtu speaking Pashtun people. However the province is far from homogenous and includes a large number of non-Pashtun ethnic groups such as the Hindko speakers of Siran. Residents of the valley speak Hindko, an ancient mountain language, which reflective of the language politics of Pakistan, is not taught in schools but quietly passed between generations.

"Siran valley"

Photograph submitted by Banaris, Siran valley

A well-maintained road links the valley to the urban conglomeration of Mansehra, which roughly takes three hours to travel. Siran enjoys a better sense of connectivity to mainland Pakistan as evident from its somewhat permanent telecommunication and power generation (electricity) system. Similar to other valleys in Northern Pakistan, the population of Siran is dispersed into numerous small villages and majority of residents live in difficult to access mountainous areas. Modest houses with mud and corrugated iron sheet roofs dot the valley's

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mountainscapes. These iron sheets are remnants of the intense humanitarian action that took place in the wake of the 2005 earthquake While this temporarily brought Siran into national and international spotlight, the valley quickly faded into the background as a result of an equally rapid humanitarian withdrawal. To an outsider these houses appear out of place, but are rather strategically located based on local understandings of what constitutes as acceptable topography, flat enough to construct a homestead.

Mansehra district (marked in red) where the Siran valley is located. The valley does not have a district status. Therefore all local government offices are located outside the valley in the urban center of Mansehra

The terrain is rugged and homes are connected via narrow makeshift, mountain pathways. Residents overcome this lack of connectivity with considerable ease and do not let the trivialities of topography interfere with everyday life. Some more formal pathways exist, but these are reserved primarily for livestock, young children and the occasional outsider.

As previously outlined, complex caste and kinship relations further exacerbate the sense of fragmentation of everyday mountain life. In Siran, caste relations are particularly hostile between the landless and the landed Swati castes. Large quantities of land were awarded during British colonial rule to the Swati kinship group, who were seen as loyal subjects and were instrumentalized for the perpetuation of colonial rule. After independence and Partition, Pakistan's land ceiling laws miserably failed as opposed to in India, leaving the feudal system unchallenged. Even today, landless tenants pay an annual rent to their customary landowners based on an ancient tenancy system. Some legislative work has been done in the region to formalize land ownership of the landless class but these efforts have been met with extreme resistance and have only been moderately successful. The

relationships between landowners and tenants are often tense, and landowners possess considerable social power and clout in their villages including dominating economic opportunities and decision-making processes. Payments made to landowners via the historically agreed tenancy system places considerable amount of pressure on already marginalized residents.

A traditional, wooden storage container used to dry and store corn. Once ready, the corn is ground into flour. The container is typically placed on rooftops

Photograph submitted by Umair Shah, Siran valley

Like Neelum, the Siran region also struggles with lack of meaningful economic opportunities particularly for young people. For livelihood, residents depend on small-scale agriculture, sale of forest resources, livestock rearing and migrant labour. Approximately 90% of residents live below the national poverty line and female literacy rates are as low as 18%. Unlike Neelum and despite its natural beauty, Siran lacks any formal tourism infrastructure. The valley is the gateway to the mountain peak locally known as "Musa ka Musalla" (Moses' Prayer Mat), which stands at 4080 metres above sea level. The mountain peak draws trekkers and enthusiasts in the summer months allowing young men from the valley to find some employment as tourist guides and porters.

Taking influence from Pashtun tradition, residents of Siran practice a unique cultural interpretation of Islam, which permeates all aspects of public and private life. Like the rest of KPK, this cultural interpretation of Islam typically centers on patrimonial conducts of honour and protection of sexual propriety, allowing women limited mobility and social roles. Gender is both a sensitive and tricky matter in the valley and needs to be approached with great caution and cultural awareness. During the height of the Taliban movement in the Swat region of KPK, the valley produced

many fighters sympathetic to the Taliban cause but it is difficult to ascertain whether lack of economic opportunities or political motivation fuelled this recruitment.

A resident balances himself on a tree as he gathers nuts and fruit. Agriculture in the region is primarily rain fed restricting the types of crops that can be planted

Photography submitted by Abdul Basit, Siran valley

Unlike Neelum, Siran is not a separate district but a part of the very large district of Mansehra. This means the district government (local government) sits in the city of Mansehra quite oblivious of day-to-day issues faced by residents of the valley. One example of poor governance is illegal logging. The forested region of Siran is designated as a protected area under the supervision of a poorly staffed and severely under-resourced unit of the Forest Department. The province wide ban on logging seemingly only applies to local residents who struggle to collect firewood for domestic use and appears open to business to members of the timber mafia. The timber mafia (locally referred to as "blackies") are a dangerous network of relationships spanning from local residents to high-ranking officers in the Forest Department and in the provincial government itself. Illegal logging appeared less of an issue in Neelum due to several layers of surveillance (military check posts in addition to local policing and Forest Department staff). Several attempts have been made to curb illegal logging in the region by international development agencies including unsuccessful attempts at community forestry by the German Agency for Technical Corporation amongst others.

Unregulated deforestation and climate change have rendered the valley vulnerable to flash floods and landslides particularly during the monsoon season. The valley was severely disrupted by the 2005

Kashmir and Northern Areas earthquake, which destroyed approximately 95% of total physical infrastructure including homes, roads, agricultural terraces and water schemes.. Similarly, the 2010 monsoon floods also disrupted low-lying communities near the Siran river. Even more than a decade after the earthquake and several years since the floods, residents continue to struggle from the consequences of these events.

Flood protection walls built with the support of humanitarian organizations and local residents, occasionally protect homes in close proximities of the unpredictable Siran river

Photograph submitted by Gulshan Bibi, Siran valley

One important yet neglected area is that of mental health. A large number of fieldwork participants reported short-term memory loss, panic attacks and psychosomatic symptoms such as loss of vision, as lingering consequences of the 2005 earthquake. Combined with the general isolation of mountain life, this has led to increased drug and alcohol abuse amongst young people. A poorly staffed and under-resourced psychiatric hospital in Dhodial (Siran valley) serves the region, but the facility lacks any services for disaster survivors.

Siran appears relatively less food secure than Neelum. Agriculture in the region is rain-fed and dedicated irrigation facilities are lacking limiting the choice of crops that can be grown in the valley. Corn is the dominant crop of the region as elsewhere in much of Northern Pakistan. Residents rely on local shops for purchasing vegetables. This is evident from the shops themselves, which because of good road linkages with nearby urban centers are routinely stocked with food supplies. Reliance on the market system for food implies that residents are sensitive to price fluctuations and require access to money to operate in the cash economy.

Fieldwork

Ethnographic fieldwork was conducted from September 2014-December 2014 (total of 4 months) in Neelum and Siran valleys. Data collection was facilitated by two important grassroots organizations working in the chosen valleys: Sukhi Development Foundation (Neelum) and Haashar Association (Siran). These organizations maintain long-term relationships with communities in each research site and were active during the Kashmir and Northern Areas earthquake (2005) as well as the monsoon floods (2010). They provided assistance in navigating the research geography and offered valuable insights on local cultural protocols, minimizing the likelihood of potential harm to research participants.

Ethnographic fieldwork was conducted from September 2014-December 2014 (total of 4 months) in Neelum and Siran valleys

Site selection

Keeping in mind the fragmented nature of mountain communities, instead of approaching fieldwork through the traditional model of village selection, the geography was understood as a cluster of village conglomerations scattered around a common market system (bazaar), shared primary school and central community mosque. In Neelum, the village conglomeration of Changan was selected. Changan comprises a series of dispersed villages of varying sizes and distances from these central community features. From within this collection of villages, research participation was solicited.

Similarly in Siran, the Munda Guccha conglomeration was selected which consists of a similar network of villages scattered around a few central features. Both village conglomerations were selected after a series of initial field visits of the valley, consultations with field partners and considerations of reasonable access as well as safety. Site selection is tabulated as follows:

Neelum Valley	Siran Valley
Village conglomeration: Changan	*Village conglomeration: Munda Guccha*
Research participants resided in the following villages *1. Changan Markaz* *2.Changan Sehri* *3. Changan Kinhko* *4. Ju Dabbar*	*Research participants resided in the following villages* 1. Basoo 2. Basoo Baila Mughal 3. Basoo Niryan 4.Basoo Kalas 5. Taar 6. Nari Munda Guccha 7. Munda Guccha 8. Dedle Munda Guccha 9. Lungi Munda Guccha

Selection of participants

The study primarily targets heads of households, both men and women, who were present in their respective villages during and after the 2005 earthquake or 2010 monsoon floods. Efforts were undertaken to select participants from this subset based on a vulnerability criterion since pre-existing vulnerabilities and conditions of structural violence greatly influence disaster recovery strategies. An initial vulnerability criterion was developed in consultation with partner organizations and field research staff as well as by drawing on the author's previous experiences as a humanitarian in Pakistan. This initial vulnerability criterion was then modified in consultation with various village elders such as the Imam, schoolteachers as well as representatives of existing and former community organizations. Through further conversations with other village residents, gradually a relational criterion of vulnerability was shaped. The word relational is used to reflect the shared understanding of local vulnerability with residents of the valleys and the consultative process through which this understanding was developed. This approach enabled a mapping of vulnerability in the region by drawing on its constitutive elements as rooted within local life patterns, social worlds, power relationships, gender arrangements and considerations of caste and kinship relations. These were juxtaposed with more concrete criterions such as quality of shelter, access to income, availability of labour, social integration, kinship support, land ownership, disability, age, death of primary earner, distance from central amenities and other similar considerations. Having developed an understanding of vulnerability as it manifested itself in each of the valleys, names of potential participants were solicited from various community contact persons, elders as well as other residents. This way a list of potential participants was constructed in both field locations. The research team (comprising of the author as well as male and female research assistants) visited each potential study participant in his/her home, deepened their understanding of the participants life and if household conditions resonated closely with the understanding of vulnerability developed for each research site, appointments for interviews were set. A total of 11 households were selected in Neelum and 10 in Siran.

Data collection

All research interactions were designed according to local cultural, religious and social norms. Research assistants hired from local communities with the help of partner organizations assisted in data collection and navigation of cultural protocols. In each site, the research

Relational is used to reflect the shared understanding of local vulnerability with residents of the valleys and the consultative process through which this understanding was developed

staff included at least one female assistant to facilitate inclusion of women participants. The following methods were used for data collection: oral history interviews, walkabouts and village transects, ethnographic immersion, participatory photography (photovoice) and workshops.

Oral history interviews allowed for grassroots recollections of lived experiences of the two natural disasters under investigation. These were targeted at heads of households. Each study participant was interviewed twice. The first rounds of interviews were based on a set of open-ended questions that were drafted by the research team. This round focussed on building rapport with research participants and soliciting general information on lived experiences of disasters. These interviews were transcribed and the research team discussed each interview amongst themselves. Based on these discussions and initial brainstorming, a second set of interview questions was developed for each participant based on his/her responses during the first round. These questions were more specific and tailored to each participant's experiences of the disasters and unique life histories. In most cases, the interviews were conducted in participants' homes, surrounded by the rhythms of their daily lives. Family members were allowed to be present during the interviews particularly while interviewing female participants. A total of 11 households were interviewed in Neelum and another 10 in Siran. Equal numbers of men and women were interviewed.

Oral history interviews allowed for grassroots recollections of lived experiences of the two natural disasters under investigation

Walkabouts and village transects enabled the research team to gain intimate familiarity with the social-spatial lifeworlds of interview participants. After the completion of each interview, the participant was requested to share with the researchers the spaces and places they frequented as part of their everyday routines.

Participatory photography (photovoice) enabled the research team to gain a more nuanced and intimate understanding of the various resources that assisted in the participant's recovery process. Participants were given high-resolution digital cameras for ten days and requested to photograph the objects, people and spaces in their everyday lives that were important for them after the earthquake and flood. These photographs were then printed and *workshops* were held, in which participants reflected on the contents of their photographs elaborating on how the photographed content was instrumental in their everyday lives particularly after the disasters. Efforts were made to solicit young people in the community for this exercise, and these were primarily recruited from the same households, which were selected for the interview process. This

allowed the researchers to gain a more robust understanding of the complete household. A total of 10 participants were selected in each research site and they were equally distributed across gender.

These data collection methods were supplemented by ethnographic immersion and participant observations. Residents were informed of the times when the research team would be present in their villages to minimize mobility restrictions for female residents who were uncomfortable by the presence of outsiders. To further complement the data collection process, discussions were held with staff of various NGOs, humanitarian organizations and government departments operating in the region. The following table lists the total number of research participants for each data collection method:

	Neelum Valley	Siran Valley
Oral history interviews (each set comprises of 2 interviews)	11 (5 male, 6 female)	10 (5 male, 5 female)
	(Heads of households, total interviews: 42)	
Participatory photography (photovoice)	10 (5 male, 5 female)	10 (5 male, 5 female)
	(Youth aged 19-28, total photovoice collections: 20)	
Workshops	2	2
Consultations with humanitarian organizations and government officials	5	5
Ethnographic immersion	2 months	2 months

Key Insights from Field Research

Mountain communities such as those in Northern Pakistan face a set of unique challenges, including a fragile ecology, natural disasters, and long distances to markets and healthcare. Tourism brings benefits and potentially novel risks. Many communities have aging populations with out-migration of youth. Communities adapt to these challenges with diverse strategies, including engagement with their history and narratives valuing landscape and social relationships. Less functional responses also emerge including mental illness, drug use and alcoholism.

A significant portion of the population in Neelum and Siran experienced both the 2005 earthquake and the 2010 monsoon floods. In Neelum,

lived histories of the conflict also contributed to experiences of disruption. Study participants expressed a unique understanding of their life within their fragile ecosystems and equally fragile social worlds. Over time residents have learned to lead a life of relative normalcy despite being immersed in near continuous social disruption, offering important insights for humanitarian practice and policy.

The findings of this research illuminate the various ways survivors negotiate the impacts of natural disasters on their everyday lives, relationships and sense of self. This provides evidence for the conceptualization of a social repair orientation to disaster recovery and the relevance of such an approach for humanitarian policy makers and practitioners.

Permanent out-migration is rare and is usually a last option, because it implies a permanent dislocation from social networks, familiar landscapes and a cultural way of life

An important strategy for adapting to social disruption as well as general resource constraints is pulling children out of school and putting them to work. A household typically starts with their daughters followed by some or all of their sons depending on the conditions of the household. Girls help take care of their siblings and assist with the running of the home including cooking, cleaning, tending to livestock, collecting fire wood, fetching water and overseeing food production (e.g. vegetable gardens). This frees the adult mother who can invest her time in paid labor when available. Most dropouts happen during or after primary school (grades 1 to 5). Middle and secondary schools for girls are lacking in the region, and parents do not feel comfortable sending their daughters to schools further away reinforcing their decisions to stop formal education. The scarcity of middle and high schools reflect the Pakistani government's interpretation of the Education for All policy agenda and its focus on universal primary education. Out of schoolboys can directly contribute to the household income by working as unskilled labor (in nearby urban centers or further away in cities such as Lahore and Karachi as well as on the fields of large land holders) or other types of paid work.

Early marriage is another prominent adaptation strategy. Depending on household circumstances, girls are married off at very young ages sometimes in questionable unions to help reduce the pressures on a household.

Another set of important adaptation strategies is migration, temporary and permanent. Temporary migration is part of everyday life in

The findings of this research illuminate the various ways survivors negotiate the impacts of natural disasters on their everyday lives, relationships and sense of self

mountain communities. Women and children with their livestock seasonally migrate to higher altitudes (during summer months) to benefit from unrestricted grazing opportunities. Grazing opportunities are limited at lower altitudes for a variety of reasons. There are some important challenges faced by women and children during these seasonal migrations when they are unaccompanied by men. These include lack of suitable living quarters, exposure to rain and dangerous wildlife. Similarly, during the winter months, when mountain life is at a standstill, men migrate to urban Pakistan for poorly paid labor work and return home in the warmer months in time for harvest season and grass cutting. During the winter months, women typically manage the household on their own or occasionally in the presence of another male member.

Permanent out-migration is rare and is usually a last option, because it implies a permanent dislocation from social networks, familiar landscapes and a cultural way of life

Permanent out-migration is rare and is usually a last option, because it implies a permanent dislocation from social networks, familiar landscapes and a cultural way of life. Permanent migrations can be voluntarily or involuntary implying different levels of vulnerability. A large number of voluntary migrations took place after the 2005 earthquake in both regions. These primarily included local feudal elites with large land holdings who moved to nearby urban centers but continued to collect land rent from small farmers. Involuntary permanent migrations are undertaken by those who for various reasons are completely isolated from social networks, kinship ties and other arrangements of social protection, and must leave their village environment for reasons of survival. Such households typically end up in Pakistan's numerous informal settlements near or within urban centers.

Disaster survivors actively remap their physical and social worlds and re-open previously familiar spaces in the aftermath of disasters

Place attachment is exceptionally strong in both Neelum and Siran. Residents value their mountain lifestyles, surrounding natural beauty and a sense of freedom despite harsh living conditions. Residents have inhabited these spaces for generations, and are often life long residents of their respective villages. Over generations various social-spatial spaces have developed important meanings for residents. These include ancestral graves and other forms of landscapes, which nurture meanings and memory. Also present is a strong sense of pride and ownership in leading traditional lifestyles, which are closely interlinked with place. Residents expressed great satisfaction in rearing livestock through seasonal migrations and growing their own food, both of which are not possible in urban settings. Many residents preferred making incremental improvements to their homes in the valley, staying in place,

benefitting themselves and their future generations.

Place attachment has an even deeper meaning in Neelum, which is part of the historic polity of Kashmir. Maintaining attachment to land and landscapes is essential for Neelum residents to establish their voice in the territorial claims over Kashmir and their battle for cultural continuity. This is one reason why land ownership is much more transparent in the Neelum region.

The two large natural disasters altered landscapes and geography of both regions quite profoundly. Rock slides and raging floodwaters cut through these territories reconfiguring the size, shape and nature of individual land holdings. They also permanently blocked usual pathways to important places (such as water channels and grazing pastures). Disaster survivors described how they had to find alternate pathways to access their migratory routes, water reservoirs and other spaces that were integral to their everyday lives. Disaster survivors actively remapped their physical and social worlds and re-opened previously familiar spaces in the aftermath of disasters. This process of re-opening physical and social geographies was instrumental for their recovery journeys and constitute as acts of social repair.

Disaster survivors actively remapped their physical and social worlds and re-opened previously familiar spaces in the aftermath of disasters

Disaster survivors excluded from social networks work to reinvent their social locations and lifeworlds to maintain a relational presence within their communities

Several disaster survivors highlighted how after the loss of a male head of household, support was received from kinship relations. Many respondents felt that it would have been impossible for them to take care of their children and preserve the integrity of the home without such social support.

However, it should be noted that not all households were integrated into kinship and caste networks in the same way. Caste relationships are often tense and are sometimes rooted in histories of enmity, which manifest themselves through various modes of social exclusion. Similarly within any one particular kinship network, there may be divisions and intense fragmentation.

Some participants reported that despite being the most vulnerable in their respective villages they are purposely ignored by other residents just because they belonged to a caste, which possessed less social capital. Similar patterns of discrimination were reported during humanitarian relief distribution, when representatives of community organizations diverted assistance to only members of their own kinship

and caste networks. Several study participants also outlined how employees of humanitarian organizations, which were typically local residents, also reproduced these patterns of exclusion during relief provision. Since caste membership is hierarchical meaning some castes possess more social, economic and political clout than others, powerful members were also noted dominating traditional justice and conflict resolution mechanisms such as the Jirga system.

The politics of kinship and caste relations are particularly problematic for community members who have been excommunicated (e.g. through social boycotts) or are unable to maintain continued membership within these networks for a variety of reasons. For example unmarried or divorced women with no immediate or extended living family were susceptible to exclusion from these social arrangements. The two disasters not only amplified social fragmentation but also due to a large number of deaths and loss of property and livelihoods, accelerated this process of removal from social networks. Disaster survivors excluded from social networks worked to reinvent their social locations and lifeworlds to maintain a relational presence within their communities.

For example some female disaster survivors described how they become schoolteachers or birth attendants and actively worked to expand their social networks beyond those traditionally provided by family and caste.

Disaster survivors excluded from social networks worked to reinvent their social locations and lifeworlds to maintain a relational presence within their communities

Social repair in the context of intense political fragmentation takes the form of locating ideological affiliations in spaces outside inherited familial political networks

Local governance and democratic ideals when implemented in problematic ways can lead to further social fragmentation. The nationwide shift towards local governance and democracy has resulted in the heavy politicization of village communities. Political party workers who solicit votes based on patronage and promises of service provision, further fracture communities already fragmented by caste and kinship networks. During election times, the village environment is rather tense. Political party workers recruit votes by drawing on kinship and caste relations causing tensions within and between kinship relations. Residents, particularly youth, are continuously confronted with questions of identity, and there is tension within kinship and caste networks when political sensibilities are not consistent within a network.

These dynamics have been exploited after natural disasters. In the past, humanitarian relief has been allegedly channelled only to supporters of specific political parties depending on the ruling party at the time.

Similarly staff of relief and development organizations have been suspected of maintaining political affiliations that disrupt need based distribution of humanitarian assistance. Political fragmentation makes disaster recovery even more difficult particularly for those who lack any clear inclusion in familial political networks.

Similarly, Western notions of community participation as promoted within humanitarian and development formations can further fragment everyday social life. At the time of this research, community based organizations (CBOs) had been formalized under the supervision of regional rural support programs funded by the Pakistani government. The function of these formalized CBOs is to channel any humanitarian or development assistance directly to communities. These CBOs essentially serve as gatekeepers to local villages and neighbourhoods. As previously explained, since relationships between familial networks, political parties and humanitarian service delivery are fluid; each village was noted to host several CBOs formed under the patronage of various political parties. Humanitarian organizations cognizant of the problematics of these relationships often chose to bypass these formalized structures and mobilized villagers through their staff into village committees and other types of structures. This meant at any given time, multiple community structures existed in a single given village, each vying for representation and inclusion in the humanitarian and development decision-making process.

Social repair in the context of intense political fragmentation took the form of locating ideological affiliation in spaces outside inherited familial political networks. For example youth who had lived through these disasters, reported joining religious and spiritual revival groups outside of the traditional political party nexus or affiliating with a new revivalist political party launched by a former Pakistani cricket player. CBOs were also viewed rather negatively by residents and referred to as yet another lingering negative consequence of the two natural disasters.

Social repair in the context of intense political fragmentation took the form of locating ideological affiliation in spaces outside inherited familial political networks

Disaster survivors actively reinvent and reimagine their understandings of home and family

Disasters amplify social fragmentation by permanently or temporarily disrupting spatial arrangements of kinship and caste structures. Family members who once lived in close vicinity to one another were sometimes not able to maintain the same spatial presence in the village after the disasters. There were also large numbers of permanent out-migrations from the region weakening remaining social networks

within mountain villages. Similarly, it was not always possible to replicate kinship networks in displacement camps.

Humanitarian action though instrumental in saving lives, added to this weakening of social ties in important ways. Humanitarian assistance due to its limited and guarded nature, created unnecessary competition amongst residents and highlighted the negative aspects of caste and kinship networks. The competition for accessing limited assistance and inclusion in humanitarian projects, mediated by kinship and caste relations as well as political patronage, exacerbated social and economic inequity within communities. The problematic delivery of humanitarian assistance also fractured already strained relationships between various kinship and caste networks in addition to creating internal discord within previously unified social groups.

After the earthquake, considerable emphasis was placed on earthquake resilient housing reconstruction. This was logical since a large number of people died in their homes, schools or in other public facilities. In the interest of guaranteeing earthquake resilient homes, residents were expected to follow a pre-approved construction plan. Beneficiary payments for reconstruction were tied to the completion of the various phases of construction. While superior in terms of structural integrity, the earthquake resilient housing designs split communal living spaces into single family housing units, diffusing the collectivity of the extended family.

Changed housing designs accompanied changes in social relationships and as one resident remarked "now my brother doesn't even know whether I have enough to eat." Similarly, the payment process was disrupted by problematic realities of land ownership exacerbating antagonism between landowners and customary tenants. Several respondents reported having spent all their house reconstruction payments (or a large chunk of them) in challenging their landowners in court. In addition to single-family housing, the new designs replaced traditional mud roofs with corrugated iron sheets. While unanimously lauded for their durability, some residents reported how the loud sound of raindrops on the new roofs, made them feel out of place in their own homes.

Disaster survivors actively reinvented and reimagined their understandings of home and family

In addition to dealing with the obvious ruptures in their social and physical worlds by natural disasters, disaster survivors actively reinvented and reimagined their understandings of home and family. Coming to terms with these new understandings and learning to live with their implications constitute as social repair necessary for long-term disaster recovery.

It is rather difficult to separate material experiences of disasters from their social or existential dimensions; the holistic concept of social repair allows us to negotiate these fluid categories in relation to long-term disaster recovery

Disaster survivors described the various ways the consequences of the natural disasters continue to linger in their daily lives. They reported a loss of trust in the physical world about which they are occasionally reminded when there is heavy rainfall or a small tremor. They reported a loss of relationships and a general weakening of their social networks as well as the destruction of familiar features of their landscapes (e.g. fishing spots which they accessed as a family but were rendered permanently inaccessible by the earthquake). Some survivors described how they still missed some of their belongings (such as photographs or favourite pieces of china), which were lost during the earthquake or floods. Others described the permanent loss of institutions such as a girl's school, which were never formally rebuilt, loss of businesses, which resulted in permanent changes in livelihoods or missing bodies of family members, which prevented some survivors from having a formal burial ceremony according to Islamic traditions. Some disaster survivors held the disasters responsible for triggering various physical ailments and embodiments such as blindness and reduced vision, short-term memory loss, inability to concentrate and body aches, which they continue to struggle with, till this day.

A social repair orientation to disaster recovery reminds us that recovery is not limited to material restoration. Disaster survivors shared that both the disasters (particularly the earthquake) were events of such great magnitude that they completely destabilized the foundations of their existence forcing them to question the protective guarantees of their physical and social worlds. They shared the various ways they brought their lives back onto some sort of meaningful trajectory. For example women who lost their husbands in either of the two disasters narrated how they had to reinvent gender identities in their communities by taking on the responsibilities and decision-making roles of their male counterparts. Others described how they had to work really hard to re-discover meaning in life such as by fully devoting their attention to their children or devoting themselves to a religious cause.

Disasters are experienced in multiple ways, their consequences linger and there is a lack of vocabulary to adequately capture these multitudes of experiences. It is rather difficult to separate material experiences of disasters from their social or existential dimensions; the holistic concept of social repair allows us to negotiate these fluid categories in relation to

long-term disaster recovery.

It is challenging to differentiate and isolate experiences of one form of social disruption from another; therefore social repair for long-term recovery extends beyond the immediacy of the event

For residents of Neelum, experiences of living for 14 years under the constant threat of cross border firing and mortar shelling, continues to haunt their everyday lives. Residents still maintain underground shelters or tend to natural places of refuge such as caves, openings beneath large rock formations etc. They are still caught between calculations of whether to invest in infrastructure amidst the unpredictability of another protracted cross-border skirmish or to encourage a future for their children elsewhere. Due to its unregulated nature, the period of intense cross border firing caused many civilian casualties and permanent disabilities. Residents rendered permanently disabled by the conflict were particularly vulnerable in the disasters, even though many of these over the years had managed to rebuild their social protection networks and alternate sources of livelihoods (such as reliance on children, regular stipend payments from private donors etc.). Similarly women widowed during the conflict also faced added vulnerability during the disasters.

Disaster survivors, who had also lived through the conflict, explained that it is impossible for them to distinguish their experiences of the disaster from the conflict in relation to their recovery efforts. The continued militarization of the region, the remnants of bullet holes and undetonated landmines all continue to circulate and recirculate the conflict in their daily lives as do some of the lasting consequences of the disasters.[2]

Survivors recalled how loss of a spouse from causes other than the disasters, betrayal by friends and relatives, physical injuries, disease- all mediated their disaster recovery and social repair journeys. For many survivors, often these experiences, which occurred outside the disaster event, completely overshadowed the disruption caused by the earthquake and floods. Therefore it is important to keep in mind that social repair and disaster recovery does not take place in a vacuum but in relation to various aspects of one's social world. It is challenging to differentiate and isolate experiences of one form of social disruption

It is challenging to differentiate and isolate experiences of one form of social disruption from another; therefore social repair for long-term recovery extends beyond the immediacy of the event

[2] A sense of fragility caused by the precarious security situation as well as frequent exposure to natural disasters, make it difficult for residents of Neelum to stand behind their claims of Kashmiri nationhood and cultural identity. This ambiguity is worsened by the fact that the Pakistani army remains one of the largest employers in the region particularly for young people. Many soldiers drafted from Neelum are torn between allegiance to the Pakistani state and allegiance to the polity of Kashmir.

from another; therefore social repair for long-term recovery extends beyond the immediacy of the event.

Connectivity needs to be understood in its social as well as spatial dimensions

As mentioned before, pathways and mountain trails allow residents sufficient mobility. Some better maintained pathways exist but they are primarily reserved for livestock and very young children. Lack of physical interconnectivity is more urgent for the elderly, those with mobility or vision impediments, the sick and pregnant women. Mountain pathways also become dangerous during rain and snow seasons. After the two disasters, humanitarian organizations invested considerable resources in rebuilding some of these destroyed pathways and formalized them to varying degrees depending on project design. However much of this repair work quickly become obsolete, not withstanding the pressures of rain and snow or because they were not maintained by community members despite their initial agreement to do so. Humanitarian organizations using schemes like cash for work, oversaw the cementing of some of these mountain trails, which according to residents become too slippery to walk after rain or snow, and were not safe for animals (donkeys, livestock) which require gravel for traction. However there is also a need to understand social fragmentation and isolation in these mountain communities with a similar degree of seriousness. Social isolation is particularly amplified during winter months when village interconnectivity is limited even for the most able bodied of residents. As outlined previously, improved and novel forms of social connectivity are important and necessary for social repair and long-term disaster recovery, particularly for those disaster survivors who cannot count on the protective guarantees and social cohesion typically provided by kinship networks.

Youth from the Neelum region (young men) gave examples of an annual cricket tournament that was regularly held in the region before the earthquake. Cricket teams from various villages across the valley were invited to play in the tournament. Residents reminisced how important this tournament was for them growing up in Neelum which provided an opportunity to meet other youngsters from across the valley. Residents have failed to revive the tournament ever since the earthquake. Interview participants pointed out that connectivity needs to be understood in its social as well as spatial dimensions.

Cultural revival and spiritual regeneration are important tools for social repair

Culture revival has a political dimension in Neelum as understood within the context of the struggles of the Kashmiri people. An example of this is the annual Black Day, which is commemorated throughout Pakistan administered Kashmir but is unheard of in mainland Pakistan. This is the day when India landed its army in Jammu and Kashmir and is used as an opportunity to remind young people of their Kashmiri identities. Schools often hold debate competitions on this day and political rallies and protests are also held. The agenda of these gatherings and rallies is typically demilitarization of the region, Kashmiri independence and calls to address the root causes of under-development. These are often punctuated with cultural performances such as songs and wearing of traditional costumes. Cultural continuity allows residents to lead a moral life despite the limitations and constraints of their everyday lives and those imposed by social disruptions such as disasters. As previously mentioned, residents pride themselves on being able to live unique mountain lifestyles which allows them to maintain a sense of historicity.

Cultural continuity allows residents to lead a moral life despite the limitations and constraints of their everyday lives and those imposed by social disruptions such as disasters

Similarly religion understood more holistically as spirituality allows disaster survivors to not only make sense of their experiences of social disruption but provides them the strength to accept heavy losses of life and destruction of property. Contrary to common perceptions that religion discourages agency, adherence to religious beliefs motivates survivors to make incremental changes to their everyday lives. Several survivors noted a personal spiritual resurgence ever since the disasters, motivating them to think about larger than life questions and take on challenges pertaining to inequity and social difference.

Memory work is an important instrument of social repair

The earthquake is commemorated every year in official ceremonies in both the KPK province and Pakistan administered Kashmir. In line with official directives, residents are encouraged to observe a minute of silence in respect of all those who lost their lives. In recent years, there have been some important silences in the official commemorations themselves, with notable politicians opting to be absent from the commemorative events. A similar prescribed set of remembering practices does not exist for the 2010 floods.

Outside of state sanctioned remembrance practices, residents of the two valleys regularly hold religious ceremonies for family members who died during the earthquake or the floods. This includes family members and neighbours coming together to recite verses from the Quran and share a

meal. Food is also distributed to students in madrassas (Islamic seminaries) and amongst village residents who are considered marginalized and poor. Efforts are made to cook meat (which is otherwise rarely eaten) and free-range chickens and goats are slaughtered where possible, to honour the memory of loved ones.

Some survivors stated that recurring physical ailments, which they have experienced since the earthquake, are all manifestations of the memory of the earthquake itself (e.g. loss of vision, body aches, fatigue). Others noted that they still feel at unease when the month of October arrives (the month the earthquake occurred) or when there is heavy rain. They insisted that they carried the memory of the disasters with them in their daily lives and it was important for them to maintain a mental archive of the events, because forgetting them would imply that their experiences were trivial rendering their recovery journeys equally insignificant. This highlights that memory work is an important instrument of social repair.

Similarly disaster survivors in Neelum who had lived through the conflict usually insisted on talking about the conflict. They felt that suppressing their memories of 14 years of cross-border firing would render their sacrifices during the conflict not only invisible but also unimportant.

Social repair and long term disaster recovery cannot be isolated from broader frames of structural violence

Everyday attempts at regaining a sense of normalcy in one's life, re-establishing cultural continuity and leading a moral life as well as more apparent processes of reconstituting social relationships are all structured by existing frames of structural violence. For example caste and kinship relations as well as political affiliations sharply undercut efforts at rebuilding social cohesiveness within communities. Similarly the possibilities of a sudden outbreak of conflict, struggles for nationhood and a culture identity, as well as precarious land ownership status mediate resident's attachment to space and place. Gender expectations and norms undervalue women's contributions to the household and deny them decision-making powers making it difficult for women led households to thrive and make incremental improvements to their lives. Unprecedented illegal deforestation renders residents susceptible to repeated natural disasters and undermines mitigation efforts. Absence of regulations and prioritization of Northern Pakistan within the country's policy and developmental agendas, leave residents on the brink of inclusion in social service provision such as risky access to health and educational

Everyday attempts at regaining a sense of normalcy in one's life, re-establishing cultural continuity and leading a moral life as well as more apparent processes of reconstituting social relationships are all structured by existing frames of structural violence

facilities.

Implications for Humanitarian Policy and Practice

Disasters are totalizing events and they unsettle both material and social domains of life. Humanitarian systems operate by investing energies into addressing measurable needs and typically pay little attention to some of the other less quantifiable consequences of disasters, such as loss of community, erosion of a sense of self and dislocation from daily routines. Typically, some of these concerns are approached via bio-medical models of trauma, crisis and psychosocial resilience. While these approaches are important, they have the tendency to render broader cultural and political dimensions of social disruption invisible. Similarly, current conceptual frameworks of disaster recovery assume disaster survivors recover in temporally bound and linear ways mimicking the various phases of the disaster management cycle. Such a rendering of the disaster survivor is based on the oversimplification of the subject to facilitate technical, rational discourses of social interventionism. Currently, the only vocabulary present to understand the diverse and complex ways by which disaster survivors re-establish their lives after natural disasters are the functional categories of short-term coping strategies or long-term adaptive mechanisms.

A social repair orientation to disaster recovery provides the vocabulary to attend to broader processes of resuming life after natural disasters, which currently remain under-explored within humanitarian sensibilities

A social repair orientation to disaster recovery provides the vocabulary to attend to broader processes of resuming life after natural disasters, which currently remain under-explored within humanitarian sensibilities. It allows us to understand the agency of disaster survivors and their capacities to learn in crisis beyond existing vocabularies of coping mechanisms and adaptation strategies. More importantly, this shift in conceptualization allows us to approach disaster recovery from a different evaluative scale focussing on the various micro-processes of social recovery enacted by disaster survivors, which are simultaneously complex and non-linear. The concept of social repair enables us to comprehend disaster survivors as complex beings and as subjects of their own recovery, which extend beyond mere survival.

Social repair directs attention to the everyday both as a site of knowledge and an articulation of scale for observation which makes manifest otherwise hidden forms of impact and recovery. The routines of daily life have the potential to reveal the contestations that take place between external projects of social reconstruction and local aspirations of remaking. They also illuminate existing frames of structural violence,

which must be addressed and dismantled to achieve any meaningful form of recovery. Examining social repair processes provide valuable insights into the subjectivities of disaster survivors, which structure the needs of an individual or community after a crisis and influence their interpretation of the assistance/programming that is designed for them.

It is important to keep in mind that a social repair orientation to disaster recovery is not meant to replace existing mandates of service provision after natural disasters. Rather it encourages humanitarian policy makers and practitioners to re-evaluate disaster survivors' relationships with commonly understood needs such as a food, home/shelter, social spaces, etc. as being mediated by a complex set of relationships, memories and familiarity that is essential for returning to a life of meaning. This has direct bearing on the way humanitarian services are designed.

A social repair orientation encourages practitioners and policy makers to recreate conditions of everyday life as a starting point for recovery. This means, for example, restoring community playgrounds, places of worship, teashops and market places. This can also take the form of encouraging culturally validated roles to be part of recovery programming, for example, mothers who may have lost their own children in a disaster are put in charge of providing childcare or assisting in family reunification services as a way for them to regain a sense of motherhood. Similarly while the acknowledgement of human suffering at the state level can undoubtedly foster healing and restore some faith in democratic processes, it is the acknowledgement of suffering at the local level that creates new opportunities for the resumption of everyday life. One such example is that of communal spaces for the public mourning of individual and collective loss. Humanitarian practitioners and policy makers can assist in these localized processes of acknowledgement by creating culturally validated social spaces where experiences of loss and dislocation can be negotiated. A social repair orientation reflects the long-term nature of disaster recovery. It encourages practitioners and policy makers to adopt a longer time frame against which recovery is assessed. It also reveals to policy makers/practitioners the intimate nature of disaster recovery necessitating the development of intimate, community-specific and personal recovery indicators.

It is the acknowledgement of suffering at the local level that creates new opportunities for the resumption of everyday life

In summary a social repair orientation to disaster recovery:

- **Encourages humanitarian practitioners and policy makers to recreate conditions of everyday life as a starting point for recovery**
- **Reveals the intimate nature of disaster recovery necessitating the development of intimate, community-specific and personal recovery indicators**
- **Proposes creation of localized spaces for survivors to articulate, share and process their experiences of loss, dislocation and resumption of life after disaster**
- **Illuminates the inequities that hinder social repair, allowing practitioners to be mindful of these factors when designing disaster recovery and humanitarian interventions**
- **Highlights that material needs are mediated by complex sets of relationships, memories and familiarity that are essential for returning to a life of meaning**
- **Provides insights into subjective realities which are important because these structure the needs of a community after a crisis and influence interpretations of assistance/programming designed for them**

Further Readings:

Aijazi, Omer (2015). Theorizing a Social Repair Orientation to Disaster Recovery: Developing Insights for Disaster Recovery Policy and Programming. *Global Social Welfare: Research, Policy and Practice 2*(1): 15-28.

Aijazi, Omer and Panjwani, Dilnoor (2015). Religion in Spaces of Social Disruption: Re-Reading the Public Transcript of Disaster Relief in Pakistan. *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters 33*(1): 28-54.

Aijazi, Omer (forthcoming). Social Repair and Structural Inequity: Implications for Disaster Recovery Practice*. International Journal of Disaster Resilience in the Built Environment.*

The snow covered mountain peak known as "Musa ka Musalla" (Moses' Prayer Mat) dominates the viewscape in Siran valley. The peak sits at 4080 metres above sea level

Photo credit: Omer Aijazi

Apples harvested from Neelum valley

Photo credit: Omer Aijazi