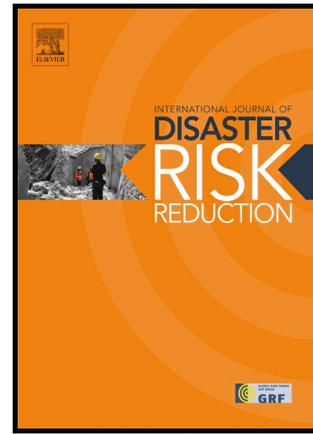


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Building Back Better with People Centered
Housing Recovery

Elizabeth Maly



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Title:

Building Back Better with People Centered Housing Recovery

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Abstract:

Since 2006 when “Build Back Better” (BBB) was used in Aceh to advocate for post-tsunami recovery that reduces risk and improves people’s lives, BBB has become widely-used in disaster risk reduction and recovery, post-disaster recovery plans, and was recently featured in the 2015 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. While improving pre-disaster conditions is a shared goal for recovery, BBB is shown to be both too broad a term to offer meaningful direction in relation to housing reconstruction, and also used too narrowly to describe safer construction without holistic consideration of what is “better” for people’s lives. This paper argues that “People Centered Housing Recovery” (PCHR) can address these limits of BBB and guide post-disaster housing reconstruction with multiple aspects: housing design and form that meet people’s needs; genuine participation of empowered residents in decision-making and construction; and holistic policies accountable to all residents. This framework of PCHR is used to examine cases of housing reconstruction and relocation after two disasters--the 2010 volcanic eruption of Mt. Merapi in Indonesia, and 2013 Typhoon Yolanda in the Philippines, and PCHR is suggested as a way to think about truly building back better for people.

1. Introduction

Two years after the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, United Nations Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery William Clinton called for “Building Back Better” in Aceh’s ongoing recovery [1], along with many agencies and organizations using “build back better” at that time to describe recovery goals [2, 3] In the decade since, “Build Back Better” became an increasingly popular way to describe a wide variety of disaster recovery goals, and featured in many disaster recovery plans [3,4,5]. In 2015, Build Back Better (BBB) became one of four Priorities highlighted in the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030* [6], the new international DRR guideline. Broadly used to call for post-disaster recovery that improves local conditions, BBB has become a shorthand for recovery that includes disaster risk reduction, or for good recovery practices in general.

Despite its widespread and growing use, BBB has several serious limitations related to post-disaster housing recovery. 1) Lacking a shared or precise definition, BBB remains a vague term used for a wide range of ideas [3,7]. 2) Yet BBB can also be narrowly defined as risk reduction through building or land use regulations, ignoring needs of affected people and potential impacts on their lives. 3) Describing general recovery goals in various sectors, few exceptions [7, 8] reflect knowledge of good

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