**Objectives and intended outcomes of PALC (Participatory Action Learning in Crises)**

**PALC seeks to establish information systems that are owned, managed and used by communities in crisis themselves. It aims to rapidly enable crisis-affected communities (and facilitating agencies) to better understand the community-based capacities and opportunities for self-help and for collaboration with others. In doing so it seeks to strengthen the effectiveness, efficiency, accountability, inclusiveness, conflict sensitivity of their own community-led response and inform the planning and interventions of external actors (Gov, NNGO, INGOs, UN).**

Overview of possible components of a ‘complete’ PALC Process

1. Formation of some sort of **community-based group of PALC volunteers** for information collection, documentation and dissemination
2. Rapid identification and **mapping of active self-help** agents: e.g.existing CBOs,informal traditional institutions, new Self-Help Groups (SHGs), key individuals - who are already helping others in the community beyond their immediate extended families and could do more
3. Supporting crisis effected communities to rapidly improve their understanding of the opportunities for self-help by undertaking their own **appreciative inquiry**(rapid identification and disseminationof successful coping mechanisms, initiatives and ideas)
4. **Animating SHGs& CBOs** from within affected population to develop their ideas for expanding self-help and **informing** them how to apply for additional support if needed (funds, skills, contacts and linkages) … this links directly to rapid application for emergency micro-grants
5. Identifying optimum local systems of **accountability and transparency** that can be used to strengthen screening and monitoring of community proposals and ‘protect’ local groups from negative impacts of grants
6. Monitoring for any aspects of interventions inadvertently **doing harm** (whether related to wider conflict issues, security and protection issues, community cohesion and solidarity, negative power-shifts)
7. Improving understanding of **inclusion**issues and who is falling between the gaps in on-going self-help (whether based age, gender, ethnicity, economic or social status, handicaps etc) and needs extra help
8. Increasing awareness of **psycho-social** issues and opportunities for local response
9. Sharing local ideas and facilitating discussion on opportunities for **addressing root causes** of vulnerability and crisis
10. Helping local stakeholders to rapidly capture and share lessons (**experiential learning**) from completed and ongoing interventions to inform further autonomous action by communities (i.e. based on what works, what doesn’t)
11. Supporting crisis affected communities to clarify what they *cannot* achieve through self-help (gap-analysis) and**prioritisingkey roles of externalactors** (Government, NGOs, Private Sector)
12. Exploring options for strengthening local **coordination**systems where relevant, that can complement and inform Government and cluster coordination systems.

**The role of the PALC facilitator:**

**the “eyes, ears and voice” of the locally led response**

1. Search for and sharing experiences of self-help, local solutions, ideas: appreciative inquiry, animating, mobilising, “catalyst”
2. Informing people about Support for Community-led Response and how to apply for assistance for their own interventions: skills, micro-grants, mentoring, connections
3. Giving special encouragement to women and marginalised groups to develop their ideas into action plans
4. Contributing to psycho-social recovery
5. Identifying gaps (targeting or sectoral) and gathering ideas on how to deal with them (to inform ‘collaborative’ coordination)
6. Identifying best local ways of reducing risks of doing harm and of strengthening accountable and transparent use of micro-grants
7. Facilitating evaluations and lesson learning from community group interventions/micro-grants
8. Starting community conversations about longer term resilience and addressing root causes; encouraging people to look at longer term issues and opportunities
9. Contributing to local coordination and information storage

**Training Community PALC volunteers**

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| **Key sessions of orientation and co-design workshop with PALC volunteers** | **Time needed** |
| 1. Clarify the role of the PALC volunteer as the **“eyes, ears and voice” of the locally led response** | 30 mins? |
| 1. Providing simple information about “Support for Locally-led Crisis Response” and the opportunities for supporting community-led initiatives (let them know about criteria) so they are able to then share this information with the active groups and individuals that they meet: the **“voice” function** | 30 mins? |
| 1. Agreeing on the key issues to be explored by PALC and how they will collect the information about each one: the **“eyes and ears” functions (FGDs)** | 1-2 hours? |
| 1. Power-sensitive approach | 30 mins? |
| 1. Psychosocial understanding | 1 hour |
| 1. Agreeing on a very **flexible action plan** for collecting and disseminating information: *who* will go to *where* (i.e. which areas) and *when* (i.e. which days and approximate times) | 0.5-1 hour? |
| 1. Agreeing on how to **document and store information** if needed and ensure it is used and shared | 30 mins? |
|  | 4-6 hours |

**Core issues that PALC teams may investigate over the course of the response**

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| **Appreciative inquiry – assessing opportunities for maximising self help**   1. What are the different initiatives that community members are already undertaking to successfully meet priority needs? Are there any examples of effective actions that could be scaled up to help others? 2. Who and where are the active groups and individuals who are already carrying out initiatives to help those in need from their wider community (i.e. outside their immediate families)? 3. What sort of support do they need to scale up their self-help and make it more effective: funds? Skills? Connections and alliances? |
| **Mechanism of Accountability, transparency and avoiding harm**   1. What are best means of making sure that providing micro-grants grants don’t cause problems by provoking confusion, misinformation, jealousies, gossip, local tensions or even conflicts? 2. What are the best means to ensure local accountability and ensuring that all the grants are used properly according to approved plans 3. Are there any tensions, conflict or cases of increased insecurity being inadvertently provoked by any possible interventions? And if so what can be done to address these and avoid them from occurring in the future? |
| **Gap analysis and inclusiveness**   1. Are particular parts of society who are in need of help being left out? e.g. Women, children, elderly, disabled, ethnic groups. And if so, what more needs to be done to support them? 2. Are we seeing that there are particular needs that ca not be met locally and will require external interventions? Are there any key relief or recovery items that cannot be obtained from markets at reasonable prices and in the quantities needed? 3. Is there evidence of psycho-social problems and mental trauma resulting from the crisis? Are there sections of the community suffering more than other? Is local self-help to psycho-social issues enough or is additional outside help needed? |
| **Coordination and sharing information with other actors**   1. What are the priorities for local coordination that communities are requesting? What are the options for establishing or supporting local coordination mechanisms to meet these needs? 2. What are the opportunities to strengthen positive collaboration between external interventions (authorities, NGOs, INGOS, UN) and Community-led interventions? |
| **Longer term resilience and addressing root causes**   1. What are the ideas for building back better? For reducing vulnerability to similar disasters in the future? For beginning to address root causes of such crises and such vulnerability? |

**Ideas for documenting PALC findings**

1. Alarge-scale**map** of the target area/sub-division/County of key information regarding the changing effects of the crisis and the interventions being made, including:

* the changing areas, households most affected by different aspects of the crisis
* on-going/planned/completed interventions (locally and external), indicating type of activity, coverage and implementer

1. a list of the **existing capacitiesfor building on**(e.g. local knowledge, expertise, skills, resources, SHGs, CBOs) within the community and LOCAL GOV, that could be further supported to allow local groups to increase their response to different needs generated by the crisis
2. a list (qualified and quantified) of the different types of **prioritised support** that would allow the local/survivor-led response fulfil its potential (scale of funds, specific materials or equipment not available from markets, types of skills training, advocacy, contacts)
3. a list of **prioritised interventions required by external actors** to fill gaps in the local response– i.e. pressing needs that local community cannot respond to even with micro-grant or training support.

**Facilitating PALC: a rough guide**

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| **Key steps for facilitating of PALC in the affected area** | **Rough idea of time needed** |
| **Day 1**   1. “Introduction meeting” with key community members/leaders | 1-2 hours |
| 1. Separate introductory meeting for women only | 1-2 hours |
| 1. Separate introductory meeting for youth | 1-2 hours |
| 1. Co-design/orientation session with community PALC volunteers and provision of stationary (plus other support) needed to start rapidly collecting, documenting and sharing information | 2-4 hours |
| 1. Facilitating initial rapid appreciative inquiry with trained PALC volunteers: including mapping of autonomous response, identification of most in need, spreading information about \*\*\*, clarifying best systems of accountability and transparency for micro-grants | Perhaps a few hours a day, from Day 1 onwards |
| 1. Establish community hub for sharing and storing information being collected | 2-4 hours |
| **1st week ... During which micro-grants are being disbursed**   1. Continuing initial appreciative inquiry, mapping of autonomous response, identification of most in need, spreading information about \*\*\*, clarifying best systems of accountability and transparency for micro-grants... During this week (even on day 1) \*\*\* team will have started to award micro-grants . | This might continue for a few hours every day for 1 or 2 weeks, perhaps more for very large disasters |
| 1. Continued documenting findings from initial information collections | 1 hour (every day) |
| **From 2nd week onwards (roughly!)**   1. Evaluating completed interventions (i.e. funded micro-projects) and sharing lessons | 2-8 hours per project (depending on size) |
| 1. On-going cross-checking on gaps (targeting, opportunities/needs, gender issues), do no harm and informing plans of external actors | On-going |
| 1. Exploring options for improved coordination | On-going |
| **From 3rd week onwards (whenever community groups express interest)**   1. Initiating discussions about strengthening community resilience, reducing vulnerability to future disasters and addressing root causes | On-going |

**Introductory Meetings with Community leaders, reps and LGUs**

1. Rational for strengthening community resilience (coping, recovery, transforming).
2. Introduce the sclr approach in an appropriate way: PALC, micro-grants, skills training, psycho-social, peace building, networks, root causes, local coordination.
3. Inspire and catalyse! Encourage them to recognise their own potential for self-help and encourage them to do more as heroes, not victims
4. Get an initial idea what they think are their core collective strengths and what they have already achieved through their own local response
5. Begin to identify existing groups or key individuals who are already active and worth meeting
6. Let them know that you would like to have a series of meetings with different groups and key informants throughout the community over the coming weeks to inform them of sclr and get their ideas on how it can be most effective (PALC question checklist)
7. Introduce idea that training could be provided to establish a community team of PALC volunteers and begin to identify those who might be interested to participate in such a training
8. Fix a time to do a follow-up community meeting with women only, and another one with youth only
9. Start building trust. But also let them realise you are wise enough: not handing out cash grants unless clear criteria have been met. You can also raise the danger of grants and the need for accountability and transparency systems.

In later meetings, you can also introduce the idea of establishing coordination mechanisms that are more relevant and accessible to local CBOs and SHGs along with support for longer term local initiatives to tackle root causes of vulnerability, but this may be too much for the first meeting.

Ideas that might be included in an opening address for in the introduction meetings

*We are CSOs and LOCAL GOVs working together. Our starting point is to help* ***you*** *seek out and analyse the different ways that different groups in the community are successfully responding to this crisis; to help you identify how people are coping, to identify local solutions, to explore what is working and why. And to help you all get a better idea of what is your potential to do even more and help us understand what help you need from us and from others (Local Government, other NGOs, the Churches (or Mosques) or even private sector and concerned people).*

*Every community has its strengths, but often not everyone in the community knows them or shares them, neither within the village (or camp) nor externally to other villages. We want to help communities to identify what are the different successful coping mechanisms that different members of a community are using that are helping people to survive and recover – and then help you build on these and expand. If you have ideas and proposals on how you can quickly respond to local needs effectively, we can help you rapidly either with small financial support, or by helping you get relevant training or linking you to other organisations who can provide in-kind support.*

*There may be strengths within your community that you can build on to make your community even stronger, or to spread to households who can also benefit. Let us see what are the chances you have to do this yourselves. To build on your own strengths to make yourselves stronger as a community. To help you find the connection between your external successes and your internal strengths and how you maintain the spirit and mental strength to cope with the psychological and emotional challenges of the crisis.*

*We are not suggesting that you can tackle all the problems that you are facing from this disaster – but we know that you are already doing a lot and that with some relevant and urgent support you could much more. And if you take the lead in your response now, you can emerge from this disaster stronger and more united than before – and perhaps even start to tackle roots causes of such disasters so that your children do not suffer as you have. Government and other NGOs will still be helping but let them support you not as helpless victims but as leaders of your own response.*

*... Pause for initial feedback ...then explain more about how the PALC might be rolled out*

**Checklist of possible interventions by community groups**

1. Basic survival

* Food
* Emergency Shelter
* Drinking water
* Maintaining physical health
* Basic Sanitation and hygiene
* Safety – protection from violence

1. Rebuilding and recovery

* Livelihoods
* Homes
* Community infrastructure (schools, road, bridges, clinics etc)
* Basic services (education, health, markets, power etc)
* “Building back better”

1. Protection, rights and justice

* Maintaining law and order within the community and mechanisms of justice with equal access for all
* Responding to the increased risks faced by women and children from increasing risk of domestic violence, injustice and abuse that can come with crisis

1. Sense of community and Psycho-social issues

* Dealing with grief and shock
* Not giving up, maintaining good spirits
* Maintaining social values, respect for each other
* Keeping morale high in the community, good spirits, hope, dignity,
* Increasing collective action to help each other, whether from your community or displaced
* Community members increasing their warm-heartedness, kindness,
* Ability to not to be overwhelmed (emotionally) by things going wrong; ability to accept problems, adapt and seek solutions with a calm mind
* Helping people who have become traumatised, depressed, disturbed?

1. Conflict resolution and peace building

* Successfully avoiding or resolving conflicts within the community (internal)
* Successfully avoiding or resolving conflicts with outside forces (external threats)

1. Interacting with other institutions

* Successfully lobbying Government to provide support on any issues
* Successfully lobbying NGOs to provide support on any issues
* *if displaced:* Successfully interacting with host communities to find support

1. Addressing with root causes

...others?