



VILNIUS UNIVERSITY  
BUSINESS SCHOOL

INTERNATIONAL PROJECT MANAGEMENT

*Subhra Kar*

MASTER THESIS

<i>TITLE</i>	<i>TITLE</i>
<i>Strateginis projektų valdymo praktikos pritaikymas rekonstrukcijos projektuose po konflikto atkūrimo kontekste</i>	<i>Strategic Adaptation of Project Management Practices in Reconstruction Projects within Post-Conflict Recovery Contexts</i>

**Student**

Subhra Kar

**Supervisor**

Associate Prof. JANIS PAKSIS (M.Sc.)

Vilnius 2025

## **SUMMARY**

VILNIUS UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL  
INTERNATIONAL PROJECT MANAGEMENT STUDY PROGRAMME  
SUBHRA KAR  
STRATEGIC ADAPTATION OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN  
RECONSTRUCTION PROJECTS WITHIN POST-CONFLICT RECOVERY CONTEXTS

Supervisor - Associate Prof. Janis Paksis (M.Sc.)

Master's thesis (project) was prepared in Vilnius, in 2025

Scope of Master's thesis (project) - 66 pages

Number of tables used in the FMTP - 6 pcs

Number of figures used in the FMTP - 8 pcs

Number of bibliography and references - 48 pcs

The FMTP described in brief: The aim of this research is to understand limitations of traditional PM frameworks in post-conflict context and to propose an adaptable and culturally sensitive approach that can improve project effectiveness and sustainability.

Problem, objective and tasks of the FMTP: Traditional project management frameworks often struggle in post-conflict contexts due to dynamic risks and limited resources. This study reviews relevant literature, identifies key challenges through expert insights, develops an adapted project management approach for fragile environments.

Research methods used in the FMTP: Quantitative research method was used with semi-structured individual interviews.

Research and results obtained: Seven key themes were generated, and recommendations were drafted.

Conclusion of the FMTP: Research indicates that the rigidity of traditional project management practices often makes them ineffective within weeks in post-conflict environments. These practices require contextual adaptability to manage uncertain risks and reduce delays, a need that is validated through feedback from professionals with direct post-conflict experience.

Information about the publication of FMTP results or adaptation for Publication: The results are well drafted and ready to be published.

## **SANTRAUKA**

VILNIUS UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL  
TARPTAUTINĖ PROJEKTŲ VADYBOS STUDIJŲ PROGRAMA  
SUBHRA KAR

STRATEGINIS PROJEKTŲ VALDYMO PRAKTIKOS PRITAIKYMAS REKONSTRUKCIJOS  
PROJEKTUOSE PO KONFLIKTO ATKŪRIMO KONTEKSTE

Vadovas - docentas Janis Paksis (M.Sc.)

Magistro darbas (projektas) parengtas Vilniuje, 2025 m.

Magistro darbo (projekto) apimtis - 66 puslapiai.

Magistro darbe (projekte) naudojamų lentelių skaičius - 6 vnt.

Magistro darbe (projekte) naudojamų iliustracijų skaičius - 8 vnt.

Bibliografijos ir nuorodų skaičius - 48 vnt.

Trumpas magistro darbo aprašymas: Šio tyrimo tikslas - suprasti tradicinių projektų valdymo sistemų ribotumą pokonfliktiniame kontekste ir pasiūlyti pritaikomą bei kultūriškai jautrų požiūrį, kuris galėtų pagerinti projektų veiksmingumą ir tvarumą.

Magistro darbo problema, tikslas ir uždaviniai: Tradiciniai projektų valdymo modeliai dažnai susiduria su sunkumais pokonfliktinėse aplinkybėse dėl dinamiškų rizikų ir ribotų išteklių. Šiame tyrime apžvelgiama susijusi literatūra, remiantis ekspertų įžvalgomis nustatomi pagrindiniai iššūkiai, sukuriamas pritaikytas projektų valdymo metodas nestabilioms aplinkoms.

Magistro darbe naudoti tyrimo metodai: Naudotas kiekybinis tyrimo metodas su pusiau struktūruotais individualiais interviu.

Tyrimai ir gauti rezultatai: Buvo suformuluotos septynios pagrindinės temos ir parengtos rekomendacijos.

Magistro darbo išvada: Tyrimai rodo, kad dėl tradicinių projektų valdymo praktikų nelankstumo jos dažnai tampa neveiksmingos per kelias savaites po konfliktinėje aplinkoje. Šioms praktikoms reikalingas prisitaikymas prie konteksto, kad būtų galima valdyti neapibrėžtą riziką ir sumažinti vėlavimus - šį poreikį patvirtina specialistų, turinčių tiesioginės po konfliktinės patirties, atsiliepimai.

Informacija apie magistro darbo rezultatų paskelbimą arba pritaikymą publikavimui: Rezultatai yra gerai parengti ir paruošti publikavimui.

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	i
List of abbreviations .....	ii
Abstract .....	iii
Santrauka.....	iv
1. Introduction .....	1
1.1 Background.....	1
1.2 Relevance of the project.....	1
1.3 Research gaps.....	2
1.4 Research questions .....	3
1.4.1 Primary Question:.....	3
1.4.2 Sub-questions:.....	3
1.5 Aim & Objectives.....	3
1.5.1 Aim .....	3
1.5.2 Objectives .....	3
1.6 Assumptions of Research.....	4
1.7 Limitations of the research.....	4
1.8 Chapter summery .....	4
2. Literature Review .....	6
2.1 Purpose of the Study .....	6
2.2 Theoretical Framework .....	6
2.2.1 Resource and Supply Chain Issues .....	7
2.2.2 Human Resource Issues .....	7
2.2.3 Governance and Institutional Issues .....	7
2.2.4 Infrastructure and Environmental Issues.....	8
2.2.5 Social and Humanitarian Issues.....	8

2.3	Review of Similar & Relevant Research.....	8
2.3.1	Heritage and Identity.....	9
2.3.2	Conceptual Frameworks and Theories .....	9
2.3.3	Construction Industry Challenges and Delays .....	10
2.3.4	Resource Mobilization, Donor Behavior, and International Politics .....	10
2.3.5	Comparative International Lessons.....	11
2.3.6	Synthesis and Implications .....	11
2.4	Review of Completed Projects .....	12
2.4.1	Reconstruction of the Old Bridge in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina.....	12
2.4.2	Revive the Spirit of Mosul, Iraq .....	13
2.4.3	Kabul Riverfront Transformation Project .....	13
2.4.4	Reconstruction of the 100-Bed Hospital in Gardez, Afghanistan .....	14
2.4.5	Urban Heritage Recovery in Nablus, Palestine.....	15
2.4.6	Heritage Reconstruction in Aleppo, Syria.....	15
2.4.7	Conclusion .....	16
2.5	Post-Conflict Reconstruction Theories .....	16
2.5.1	Cultural Continuity and the “Thread of Identity” .....	16
2.5.2	Trauma, Resilience, and “Building Back Better” .....	17
2.5.3	Value-Based and Context-sensible Recovery.....	17
2.5.4	Inclusive and People-Centered Approaches .....	18
2.5.5	Organizational and Governance Theories .....	18
2.5.6	Integration with Peacebuilding and Development.....	18
2.5.7	USAID Approaches to Conflict-Sensitive Reconstructions .....	19
2.5.8	Conclusion .....	19
2.6	Traditional Project Management practices.....	20
2.6.1	PMBOK Guide (Project Management Institute, 2021).....	20

2.6.2	PRINCE2 (Office of Government Commerce, 2009)	21
2.6.3	IPMA Individual Competence Baseline (2015)	22
2.6.4	Comparative Analysis	23
2.6.5	Conclusion	24
2.7	Inferences	24
2.8	Chapter Summary	25
3.	Research Methodology	27
3.1	Introduction	27
3.2	Research Design and Rationale	27
3.3	Ethical Considerations	28
3.4	Research Methodology	28
3.5	Participation Selection Logic	29
3.6	Data Collection Procedures	29
3.7	Data Analysis Plan	30
3.8	Validity and Reliability	31
3.9	Ethical Procedures	31
3.10	Chapter Summary	32
4.	Research Results and Findings	33
4.1	Introduction	33
4.2	Profile of Respondents	33
4.2.1	Profiles	33
4.2.2	Research Setting	37
4.2.3	Demographics	38
4.3	Data Collection	38
4.4	Data Analysis	39
4.5	Study Result	39

4.5.1	Development of Codes, Categories and Themes .....	39
4.5.1	Thematic Findings .....	44
4.6	Experts' insights .....	45
4.6.1	Challenges Experienced.....	45
4.6.2	Areas of Adaptation Felt .....	49
4.6.3	Key Factors that Contribute to Success.....	52
4.6.4	Key Lessons Learnt from reconstruction projects.....	54
4.7	Evidence of Trustworthiness.....	55
4.7.1	Credibility .....	55
4.7.2	Transferability.....	55
4.7.3	Dependability .....	56
4.7.4	Confirmability .....	56
4.8	Chapter Summary.....	56
5.	Recommendations & Conclusions.....	57
5.1	Introduction .....	57
5.2	Interpretation of Findings .....	57
5.3	Limitations of the Study .....	60
5.4	Recommendations .....	60
5.5	Implications of the Study.....	64
5.6	Conclusion .....	65
6.	Bibliography and References .....	67
7.	Annexure.....	70
7.1	Annexure 1: Sample of online Survey via Microsoft Form.....	70
7.2	Annexure 2: Sample transcripts of online Interviews .....	75
7.3	Annexure 3: Use of Artificial Intelligence .....	86
7.4	Annexure 4: Sample of Questions asked during online Interviews .....	92

## List of Table

Table 1 list of experts contributed and their basic details ..... 35

Table 2 Development of Codes ..... 40

Table 3 Development of Themes from Codes ..... 44

Table 4 Major challenges derived from experts' interviews..... 47

Table 5 Areas of PM Framework need modification..... 49

Table 6 Phases of project where flexibility should be adopted ..... 51

## List of Figure

Figure 1 Expert's Role in Post-Conflict Reconstruction & Recovery Projects ..... 36

Figure 2 Years of Professional Experience within Post-Conflict Context ..... 37

Figure 3 Country or Region of Experience ..... 37

Figure 4 Key Challenges Experienced ..... 48

Figure 5 Importance of Strategic Adaptation of Project Management method..... 49

Figure 6 Areas of PM Framework need (most) modification..... 51

Figure 7 Phases required most adaptations ..... 52

Figure 8 Key Factor to Success ..... 53

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I want to express my heartfelt thanks to my thesis supervisor, Mr. Janis Paksis, for his guidance throughout the research process. I appreciate Ahmed Shandalah, Nuria Roca Ruiz, Fabrice van Teselaar, Mohammed Khalid Sameer, Marcus Tudehope, Hellen Almoustafa, Maria Rita Acetoso, Mustafa Nouri, Ritika Kapoor, Roman Hussein, Narin Hasib, Paula Ion, and Nadya Saad Al Aghidi for generously shared their time, knowledge, and experience. I also thank Eglė Stundžytė for helping me with the English to Lithuanian translations.

Lastly, I want to thank my wife. For her constant support, keeping belief in my work, which helped me finish this thesis.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AKTC	Aga Khan Trust for Culture
ALIPH	International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage
EU	European Union
ICCROM	International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPMA (ICB)	International Project Management Association (Individual Competence Baseline)
KARIT	Kabul Riverfront Transformation Project
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSP	National Solidarity Program
PM	Project Management
PMBOK	Project Management Body of Knowledge
PMI	Project Management Institute
PRINCE2	Projects in Controlled Environments
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific & Cultural Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

## **ABSTRACT**

Post-conflict reconstruction takes place in very difficult situations where government bodies, international agencies, NGOs, local communities, and private companies need to work together in a very difficult context. In most cases, almost all the key physical infrastructures are demolished or damaged along with trust, institutional structure, and social systems.

This study looks at how project management (PM) practices can be strategically adapted for post-conflict reconstruction projects. It is based on my own professional experience as a Lead Architectural Designer for the United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Iraq.

The research focuses on the challenges of using widely known PM frameworks from PMBOK (Project Management Body of Knowledge), PRINCE2 (Projects in Controlled Environments), and IPMA (International Project Management Association) in the countries affected by war (like Iraq and Afghanistan, to some extent Ukraine). The study will use a combination of literature review, case studies of completed or almost completed projects by reputed international organizations, and in-depth interviews with subject matter experts/professionals who are (or were) directly working (or worked) in the previously mentioned countries in these contexts.

The purpose of this research is to understand how current PM strategies work in a post-conflict context and how PM frameworks can be modified to suit post-conflict context. By combining insights from multiple literatures, case studies of completed projects, and professional expert interviews. The study aims to understand what changes are key to make these frameworks more effective in post-conflict context.

The final goal is to suggest a few additional frameworks which are more flexible, adaptable and more practical in war-torn settings, and culturally aware. This framework should help improve coordination among key stakeholders, make projects more sustainable, and increase their overall positive impact on communities recovering from war.

## SANTRAUKA

Po konflikto atstatymas vyksta labai sudėtingomis aplinkybėmis, kai vyriausybės institucijos, tarptautinės agentūros, NVO, vietos bendruomenės ir privačios įmonės turi dirbti kartu labai sudėtingomis sąlygomis. Daugeliu atvejų beveik visa pagrindinė fizinė infrastruktūra yra sunaikinta arba sugadinta, taip pat sugriuvęs pasitikėjimas, institucinė struktūra ir socialinės sistemos.

Šiame tyrime nagrinėjama, kaip projektų valdymo praktikas galima strategiškai pritaikyti pokonfliktiniams atstatymo projektams. Jis grindžiamas mano profesine patirtimi, įgyta dirbant vyriausioju architektūros projektuotoju Jungtinių Tautų Švietimo, mokslo ir kultūros organizacijoje (UNESCO) Irake.

Tyrimas sutelkia dėmesį į iššūkius, susijusius su plačiai žinomų projektų valdymo sistemų iš PMBOK (Projektų valdymo žinių bazės), PRINCE2 (Projektų kontroliuojamose aplinkose) ir IPMA (Tarptautinės projektų valdymo asociacijos) naudojimu karo paveiktose šalyse (pavyzdžiui, Irake ir Afganistane, tam tikru mastu Ukrainoje). Tyrime bus naudojama literatūros apžvalga, žinomų tarptautinių organizacijų užbaigtų arba beveik užbaigtų projektų atvejų analizė ir išsamūs interviu su šios srities ekspertais/specialistais, kurie tiesiogiai dirba (arba dirbo) minėtose šalyse šiose srityse.

Šio tyrimo tikslas – suprasti, kaip dabartinės projektų valdymo strategijos veikia pokonfliktinėje aplinkoje ir kaip projektų valdymo sistemas galima pritaikyti pokonfliktinei aplinkai. Derinant įvairių šaltinių informaciją, užbaigtų projektų atvejų tyrimus ir profesionalių ekspertų interviu, tyrimu siekiama suprasti, kokie pokyčiai yra svarbiausi, kad šie modeliai būtų veiksmingesni pokonfliktinėje aplinkoje.

Galutinis tikslas – pasiūlyti keletą papildomų modelių, kurie būtų lankstesni, lengviau pritaikomi, praktiškesni karo nuniokotose vietovėse ir atsižvelgtų į kultūrinius ypatumus. Šis modelis turėtų padėti gerinti pagrindinių suinteresuotųjų šalių koordinavimą, užtikrinti didesnę projektų tvarumą ir padidinti jų bendrą teigiamą poveikį karo nuniokotoms bendruomenėms.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background**

Post-conflict reconstruction is very complex and sensitive. It is not only about rebuilding damaged houses, roads, bridges, or schools. It is also about restoring institutions, governance, and trust among communities. The work requires time, resources, and strong cooperation between many players, like, government bodies, international agencies, donors, NGOs, local communities, and private contractors.

Usually, International donors invest large amounts of money and effort in recovery from a post-conflict country. Many projects faced serious problems like long delays, extensive cost overruns, or very weak long-term results. Well-known PM frameworks are designed mainly for stable environments, where risks are fewer, governance is well established, and stakeholder roles are clear. In war-affected countries like Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and other countries, these conditions do not exist, and the same PM methods often do not work.

This situation shows the need for Project Management approaches that are flexible and adaptable. Based on my own professional experience as an Architectural Consultant (Design Lead) for UNESCO projects in Iraq, this research will explore how current PM practices are being used, what challenges they faced, and how it can be adapted. The goal is to create a more adaptable and culturally sensitive framework. Which can further enhance coordination, sustainability, and positive impact in reconstruction projects.

### **1.2 Relevance of the project**

Post-conflict reconstruction is one of the most urgent challenges in today's world. Many countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria continuing to struggle with the long-term impacts of war. International donors, NGOs, governments, and local communities invest significantly into rebuilding tangible infrastructure, institutions, and social systems. Despite these efforts, many projects do not achieve desired results or as planned. Usually they deliver short-term outputs, such as repaired buildings or restored services, but fail to create long-term sustainability, and resilience of community.

A major factor behind this problem is the way PM is practiced in fragile contexts. Well-known frameworks (like PMBOK, PRINCE2, and IPMA) provide valuable structures for managing projects primarily in stable environments not in post-conflict settings. In post-conflict settings,

government institutions are weak (some extent corrupted), resources are limited, social conditions are fragile, supply chains are broken, physical infrastructures were demolished. Finding raw materials, including skilled workmanship, become challenging; traditional models often do not work as expected.

This project is relevant because it addresses a real gap between global PM standards and the real realities of post-conflict reconstruction. By studying both theoretical background and real-world practices through case studies (other research and completed projects) and expert interviews, this research will explore how existing PM strategies can be adapted flexibly to address the challenging conditions.

The findings are expected to benefit not only academic research but also national & international agencies that are directly involved in reconstructions in post-conflict settings. A flexible and culturally sensitive PM framework can help improve coordination among different stakeholders, reduce inefficiencies, and increase sustainability. In this way, this thesis project contributes both to academic knowledge and to practical solutions for development in war-affected societies.

### **1.3 Research gaps**

PM strategies are widely used in reconstruction projects, but there are very little research which focuses on how these methods work in post-conflict context. As mentioned earlier, most of the existing frameworks are created for stable countries where institutions' roles are clear, and governance is strong. These conditions are often missing in countries recovering from war, which makes the direct use of these frameworks difficult.

Some studies have looked at project success in development under humanitarian contexts, but there is still no specific framework for post-conflict reconstruction. Different organizations UN agencies (UNESCO, UN Habitats, UNDP, ILO, IOM, and similar), USAID and other international agencies often use their own project management methods. This lack of standardization leads to duplication and inefficiency.

Many PM frameworks are imported from the Global North and are not adjusted to local realities. As a result, projects may meet technical targets but fail to achieve long-term sustainability or community acceptance. As a building block it might be constructed (with struggle) but more often fails to achieve its primary purpose.

Therefore, there is a clear research gap in developing a flexible, adaptable and culturally sensitive PM framework that connects global project management standards with the unique challenges of post-conflict reconstruction. This study aims to fill that gap by combining theories, case studies, and expert insights from real life post-conflict environments.

## **1.4 Research questions**

### **1.4.1 Primary Question:**

How can project management frameworks (as elaborated in PMBOK, PRINCE2, IPMA) be adapted to improve effectiveness, cultural relevance, and sustainability in post-conflict reconstruction projects?

### **1.4.2 Sub-questions:**

- a. What are the main challenges in applying existing PM frameworks in post-conflict environments such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and Ukraine?
- b. Which elements of PMBOK, PRINCE2, and IPMA require adaptation in post-conflict settings?
- c. How can lessons from past reconstruction projects help to design more adaptable and context-sensitive project management framework?
- d. What role do local communities play in the success or failure of project management strategies in post-conflict reconstruction projects?

## **1.5 Aim & Objectives**

### **1.5.1 Aim**

The aim of this research is to evaluate how existing PM frameworks perform in post-conflict reconstruction projects. Develop and validate a flexible, adaptable and culturally sensitive addition to PM framework that can improve the overall effectiveness, and sustainability of reconstruction in the post-conflict context.

### **1.5.2 Objectives**

- a. Review existing literature available on PM frameworks and post-conflict reconstruction theories.
- b. Identify and analyze the main challenges of applying conventional PM practices in post-conflict context through case studies and expert insights.

- c. Develop a flexible and culturally sensitive PM framework suitable to post-conflict reconstruction needs.
- d. Validate the proposed framework by consulting experts with direct experience in post-conflict recovery and incorporating their feedback.

## **1.6 Assumptions of Research**

- It is assumed that PM frameworks such as PMBOK, PRINCE2, and IPMA can be applied, at least in part, to post-conflict reconstruction projects.
- It is assumed that the case studies and projects report available from Afghanistan, Bosnia, Iraq, Palestine and Syria, will provide required information to evaluate the effectiveness of project management approaches.
- It is assumed that cultural, political, and social factors play an important role in the success or failure of reconstruction projects.
- It is assumed that experts with experience in post-conflict reconstruction projects will provide honest and reliable insights during interviews and surveys.
- It is assumed that the proposed addition to PM framework, once developed, can be used by organizations or institutions working in post-conflict context.

## **1.7 Limitations of the research**

- The study primarily focuses on a few post-conflict countries. The findings may not represent all post-conflict contexts.
- Access to authentic project data may be limited, as many reconstruction reports are not publicly available.
- The number of experts available for interviews may be limited due to their availability.
- The research relies on case studies and expert opinions, which may introduce personal bias.
- Time and resource limits of a master's thesis may restrict the depth of research and the possibility of testing the proposed framework in real projects.

## **1.8 Chapter summery**

This chapter introduced the study and explained why traditional PM frameworks need to be adapted for post-conflict reconstruction. It described the background of recovery in war-

affected countries like Iraq or Afghanistan, where rebuilding physical infrastructure is difficult, due to weak institutions, broken supply chains, shortage of skilled labour, and political instability.

The relevance of the project was established by showing the gap between traditional PM standards and the realities of post-conflict context. The research gap identified the lack of sensitive PM framework for reconstruction projects in fragile environments.

The chapter also sets out the research aim as to evaluate and adapt existing PM frameworks for post-conflict contexts and the objectives as reviewing available literature, identification of challenges, case studies, expert insights, framework development, and (if possible) validation. In addition, the assumptions and limitations of the research were presented, noting constraints such as data accessibility, expert availability, and the time limitation for the master's thesis.

Overall, Chapter 1 established the foundation of the study by explaining the problem, highlighting research gaps, aim, objectives, assumptions, and limitations leading towards the development of a flexible and culturally sensitive PM framework for post-conflict construction projects.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this literature review is to understand how PM practices are applied in reconstruction projects within post-conflict contexts. The focus is on tangible reconstruction projects, such as the rebuilding of houses, schools, hospitals, and heritage monuments. The review will study primarily major frameworks as explained in PMBOK, PRINCE2, and IPMA. And analyse how these methods work in reconstruction projects in fragile conditions.

By combining insights from PM theories and reconstruction practices in post-conflict environments, this chapter will try to identify the limitations. This will create the foundation for developing a flexible, adaptable and culturally sensible addition to PM framework.

### **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

For my research, I am primarily considering PM frameworks as described in PMBOK, PRINCE2, and IPMA ICB. These models are worldwide widely used in the construction & reconstruction sector. However, their application in post-conflict reconstruction projects is not simple, as they were designed for stable environments. And stable environments are prominently different than post-conflict context. Where presence of functioning institutions, skilled manpower, and reliable resources are very rare.

PMBOK, developed by the Project Management Institute (PMI), provides a process-based guideline that covers the entire project life cycle. It is organized into five process groups (initiating, planning, executing, monitoring and controlling, and closing) and ten knowledge areas, such as scope, cost, time, risk, and stakeholder management. PMBOK is especially strong in both construction & reconstruction projects.

PRINCE2, developed in the UK, is a structured methodology built on seven principles, seven themes, and seven processes. It defines clear roles, responsibilities, and documentation, making it popular among government and donor-funded projects. Its strong governance can be an advantage in large reconstruction projects. However, in fragile environments, where institutions are weak and stakeholders are confused & changing very frequently, PRINCE2 may be too rigid and bureaucratic to adapt.

IPMA ICB, from the International Project Management Association, takes a competence-based approach. It highlights three dimensions of competence: technical (methods and tools), contextual (understanding the project environment), and behavioral (personal and leadership skills). This approach is little relevant in post-conflict projects as it recognizes the importance of individual people's skill set. Still, this framework assumes that competent professionals and required quality materials are available, but these are not the cases in war-torn countries.

In practice, post-conflict reconstruction projects face challenges that these frameworks are able to address properly.

The common issues include:

### 2.2.1 Resource and Supply Chain Issues

In post-conflict situations, reconstruction projects go through many problems with the resources and supply chains. Local industries or factories are often destroyed, which leads to a shortage of raw materials. At the same time, supply chains are broken because roads, bridges, seaports, airports including transport systems are damaged. Which makes it difficult to get raw materials on time. Local construction contractors usually work with either old or less advanced equipment with limited technology. And its results slow down the reconstruction process and end up with increased costs.

### 2.2.2 Human Resource Issues

The availability of skilled manpower is a tremendously serious issue. Because many professionals either migrated or displaced or lost their lives during conflict. On the other hand, foreign professionals are scared to come and work in such areas due to safety risks, lack of comfort, and difficult living conditions. This reduces availability of expert professionals for important reconstruction projects.

### 2.2.3 Governance and Institutional Issues

Poor government institutions and weak governance create big obstacles for reconstruction of a building. Unstable political situation and unclear responsibilities contribute to the confusion in the decision-making. Lack of transparency in contracts, and corruption in tendering processes make the situation much worse. In addition to these, many projects face financial limitations due to its strong dependency on international donors' money. Funding might be irregular.

#### 2.2.4 Infrastructure and Environmental Issues

Reconstruction becomes even more difficult when basic infrastructure is not in place. Shortage of electricity, lack of water supply, and irregular transport systems are often making construction sites hard to manage. On top of this, environmental problems such as rubble, contamination, and unexploded bombs or landmines (in extreme cases) make sites unsafe and very risky to everybody.

#### 2.2.5 Social and Humanitarian Issues

Finally, the social and humanitarian situation adds more challenges. Refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) put additional pressure on housing demands, schools, and health services. At the same time, cultural and social tensions may come up if reconstruction projects are seen as helping only selected communities or not respecting local traditions.

These above-mentioned conditions make it difficult to apply PMBOK, PRINCE2, or IPMA directly. PMBOK expects stability in processes, PRINCE2 depends on strong governance, and IPMA assumes skilled professionals are available. In post-conflict settings, none of these assumptions fully hold true. Therefore, the theoretical framework of this research combines the strengths of these three while understanding its limitations too. The study aims to adapt and integrate elements of PMBOK, PRINCE2, and IPMA into a project management framework which is flexible, adaptable, and culturally sensitive. And also which can meaningfully address the unique challenges of reconstruction projects within post-conflict context.

### 2.3 Review of Similar & Relevant Research

No doubt post-conflict reconstruction is challenging. Scholars, professionals, and international organizations agree that rebuilding societies after war is never only about physical repair. It involves restoring governance, reviving livelihoods, addressing displacement, and rebuilding trust among traumatised communities. As Žuljević and Carabelli (2024) argue, even highly visible projects such as the reconstruction of bridges or monuments must be understood as part of a wider process of community identity expression.

In my own professional experience as an architect cum urban designer with UNESCO in Iraq, I understood that projects were shaped by technical details, and cultural forces simultaneously. Reconstructing a mosque or a heritage site, or even a residential house was never just a construction work; it was a decision about who belongs, whose history is valued, and

how local people are included in the process. To frame these experiences within a broader academic discussion, this chapter reviews 20 research papers and the outcome has been organized into five themes: Heritage and identity, Conceptual frameworks, Construction industry challenges, Resource mobilization & donor behavior, and finally Comparative international lessons.

### 2.3.1 Heritage and Identity

Heritage has been described as one of the most powerful tools of post-conflict recovery. The reconstruction of Mostar's Old Bridge in Bosnia, studied by Žuljević and Carabelli (2024), demonstrates how monuments can be used as symbols of unity. The project was dominated by international players, with limited community involvement, which reduced its capacity to promote real relations and attachments.

A different approach is seen in Kosovo, where Legnér (2018) studied the restoration of Kullas, traditional stone towers. Here, international support was combined with capacity building of local craftsmen, making the process both a cultural and an economically sound.

In Syria, heritage reconstruction took more political direction. Munawar and Symonds (2022) show that displaced people themselves often rebuilt parts of Aleppo informally, but formal state-led programs were selective and often exclusionary. Munawar (2025) documents show how heritage sites in Aleppo and Homs were deliberately destroyed. And it also explained how reconstruction policies were used to reward loyalists and alter demographics. Soufan (2021) analyses how debates on authenticity shape post-war reconstruction in Syria. He argues that reconstruction is not only a technical job but also a negotiation over identity.

In Iraq, UNESCO's flagship project, the 'Revive the Spirit of Mosul' illustrates both promise and challenge. While projects such as the Al-Nuri Mosque restoration are globally celebrated, community voices often feel partially marginalized. From my own work in Iraq, I found that projects where local masons and residents including Syrian refugees and IDPs were included created stronger trust and pride. Those planned mainly for international visibility, however, sometimes failed to resonate with local needs.

### 2.3.2 Conceptual Frameworks and Theories

Sakalasuriya, Haigh, and Amaratunga (2018) present a framework that links reconstruction interventions to social, political, economic, and environmental outcomes. It

emphasizes that interventions can create both positive and negative effects. The Institute for Inclusive Security (2010) proposes a three-phase model of response, transformation, and sustainability, structured around four pillars: security, justice, socio-economic well-being, and governance.

Jabareen (2013) makes a critical distinction between “post-conflict reconstruction” and “ongoing conflict reconstruction,” showing that contexts like Iraq rarely reach a fully post-conflict stage. This insight is very essential for project managers, it highlights the need for flexibility in context where conflict still persists.

In Iraq, my experience aligned with these arguments. Standard frameworks assumed stable conditions, but in reality, project plans were repeatedly disrupted by security & other key issues. Adaptive project scheduling and community engagement proved more useful than rigid adherence to conventional models.

### 2.3.3 Construction Industry Challenges and Delays

In Afghanistan, Amarkhil and Elwakil (2019) describe how corruption, weak governance, and lack of skilled labour negatively affect reconstruction projects. Their later research paper lists eleven key constraints, ranging from security concerns to untrusted supply chains, but also identifies opportunities such as international fundings and capacity building of local workforce.

In Iraq, Al-Attabi (2025) documents 74 causes of project delays. Incompetent contractors and owner-related inefficiencies are among the most critical. The findings mirror those of Al-Samarrai (2022), who note that corruption in procurement processes is one of the largest barriers to timely delivery and badly affects the project budget too.

The solutions proposed across these studies are consistent: transparent procurement, stricter contractor prequalification, realistic & flexible scheduling, and capacity building of local communities. From my work in Iraq, I confirm that international donors often imposed unrealistic deadlines, while local contractors struggled with outdated technology or insufficient training. This mismatch frequently produced delays and poor-quality results.

### 2.3.4 Resource Mobilization, Donor Behavior, and International Politics

Van Gennip (2005) observes that donor countries often prioritize their own strategic interests over local primary needs. In Syria, Asseburg (2020) described how aid has been

channeled through regime-controlled networks, rewarding loyalists and sidelining opposition areas. Marks and Lang (2025), in their report ‘Beyond the Fall: Rebuilding Syria After Assad’, examine the macro-level obstacles that shape reconstruction in fragile environments. They highlight how international sanctions and liquidity crises severely restrict supply chains for construction materials directly delaying reconstruction activities. The report also shows how donor withdrawal and aid fragmentation create financial uncertainty, leaving projects incomplete. The study also reinforces the argument that project managers must navigate not only technical and logistical issues but also wider political and economic barriers.

### 2.3.5 Comparative International Lessons

Harake (2025) contrasts Rwanda and Bosnia, showing that Rwanda’s centralized, community engaged recovery was more effective than Bosnia’s fragmented, donor-driven model. Ukrainian studies (2023–2024) show that reconstruction can be linked with SDGs. By contrast, Syria demonstrates the dangers of politicized reconstruction. As Asseburg (2020) and Mahli (2025) observe, reconstruction policies there have deepened inequalities and cemented political control.

For Iraq, these comparisons underline two major lessons: fragmentation of authority is a severe obstacle, and reconstruction should be tied to long-term economic transformation, not just short-term physical repair.

### 2.3.6 Synthesis and Implications

Across these 18 studies, common themes emerge:

- Heritage can serve as a tool for reconciliation or exclusion, depending on participation
- Frameworks must adapt to instability, as rigid models fail in fragile contexts
- Construction industries require reform through capacity building
- Donor politics strongly shape outcomes
- Reconstruction linked with sustainable development offers resilience

The literature shows that post-conflict reconstruction is a complex cultural process. Rebuilding involves trust and identity, not just engineering. This is evident in places like Bosnia, with its bridges, Afghanistan with its hospitals, Aleppo with its markets, and Mosul with its mosques, minarets & churches. My work with UNESCO in Iraq supports these ideas. Recovery works best when it is inclusive, flexible, and sensitive to culture.

## 2.4 Review of Completed Projects

Studying completed post-conflict reconstruction projects is important for understanding how theory translates into practice. Literature offers conceptual frameworks, but real-life projects show the daily challenges of managing reconstruction in fragile situations. Post-war settings often involve damaged infrastructure, political instability, weak governance, and broken social trust. For project managers, these factors make reconstruction projects not only technical challenges but also tests of flexibility and risk management.

This section reviews six completed projects, which include five heritage reconstruction projects and one infrastructure project. Across Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, and Syria. The projects are the Old Bridge of Mostar, the Revive the Spirit of Mosul initiative, the Kabul Riverfront Transformation Project (KARIT), Reconstruction of the 100-Bed Hospital in Gardez, the urban heritage recovery of Nablus, and the reconstruction of Aleppo's Old City.

### 2.4.1 Reconstruction of the Old Bridge in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Old Bridge of Mostar, originally constructed in 1566 under Ottoman rule, was destroyed in 1993 during the Bosnian war. Reconstruction began in 1997 and was completed in 2004 under the joint leadership of UNESCO, the World Bank, and the City of Mostar. Financially supported by international donors including Turkey, Croatia, and Italy (World Bank, 2005; UNESCO, 2006). UNESCO (2004) explains that the technical challenge was immense: the bridge had to be rebuilt using original stone and using traditional Ottoman methods, while also meeting international safety standards. Politically, Bosnia's post-war governance was fragmented, and different ethnic groups disagreed on whether the bridge should be rebuilt as it was or left in ruins as a memorial. World Bank (2005) notes that managing multiple donors through a Project Coordination Unit required careful negotiation and transparency to avoid duplication and mistrust.

These issues were mitigated through strong governance arrangements. A Scientific Committee oversaw technical and conservation decisions, while the World Bank coordinated a Multi-Donor Trust Fund to ensure financial accountability. UNESCO (2006) highlights the use of public communication campaigns that framed the bridge as a symbol of peace and reconciliation, rather than a reminder of conflict. The successful reopening in 2004 demonstrated that heritage reconstruction can play a unifying role if project managers balance authenticity, governance, and symbolic meaning.

#### 2.4.2 Revive the Spirit of Mosul, Iraq

After Mosul's liberation from ISIS in 2017, UNESCO launched the 'Revive the Spirit of Mosul' initiative in 2018. It became one of the largest cultural recovery programs in Iraq, targeting the restoration of iconic landmarks such as the Al-Nouri Mosque and its Al-Hadba Minaret, the Al-Tahera Church, and the Al-Saa'a Convent, along with more than 120 heritage houses, schools, and Mosul University Library (UNESCO, 2018; UNESCO, 2023).

UNESCO (2025) reports that security conditions were extremely fragile, with unexploded IED and unstable rubble/ debris making sites dangerous. Supply chains were broken, so materials and equipment had to be brought from Baghdad or Erbil or imported at very high cost. Donor fragmentation further complicated management, as the UAE, EU, ALIPH, and others financed different parts of the project, each requiring separate reporting. Another major obstacle was the shortage of skilled artisans, since many had left Mosul during the war.

These challenges were mitigated through inclusive and adaptive strategies. UNESCO (2018) explains that responsibilities were divided clearly among donors. For example, the UAE financed the Al-Nouri Mosque restoration while the EU supported heritage houses and schools. Large-scale training programs were established, with over 2,800 youth trained in cultural heritage restoration domain to fill the skills gap (UNESCO, 2023). Consultation platforms with Iraqi authorities, religious leaders, and community representatives were created to build trust and sincerity. Cultural revival activities, including film labs, art exhibitions, and music events, complemented physical reconstruction and helped bring life back to the city.

The Mosul case shows that reconstruction in fragile contexts must be both technical and social. It is not enough to rebuild only the structures; projects must also restore livelihoods, cultural identity, and community trust.

#### 2.4.3 Kabul Riverfront Transformation Project

The Kabul Riverfront Transformation Project (KARIT), launched in 2018 by AKTC with 18 million Euro from German funding, aimed to modernize the city's historic center. It planned to restore 19<sup>th</sup> century Machine Khana warehouses, create public spaces, and establish a contemporary art gallery (Geranpayeh, 2022).

However, the project was heavily disrupted by political changes. After the Taliban takeover in 2021, the German government withdrew its funding, leaving the project 80 percent complete.

Sanctions blocked alternative financing, and procurement of materials became unreliable. Geranpayeh (2022) explains that the unfinished site became hazardous and required ongoing maintenance at AKTC's expense.

Despite AKTC's efforts to maintain partial operations and lobby for new donors, the project remains incomplete. KARIT shows how sudden political shifts and donor withdrawal can derail large-scale urban projects, leaving managers with limited options. It highlights the importance of flexible financing models and contingency planning in fragile environments.

#### 2.4.4 Reconstruction of the 100-Bed Hospital in Gardez, Afghanistan

The reconstruction of the 100-bed hospital in Gardez, represents a significant example of the complexities involved in managing large-scale infrastructure projects within a post-conflict environment. Implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and funded primarily by USAID, the project aimed to strengthen essential healthcare services heavily affected by conflict and instability. Construction began in 2008 under a wider initiative to improve public facilities, with an initial completion date set for 2011. However, the project experienced multiple disruptions, ultimately extending until 2016, well beyond the planned timeline.

From the beginning, the project faced a series of interlinked operational and management challenges. Several contractors failed to meet performance requirements, resulting in repeated delays, termination of contracts, and long pauses before follow-up contractors could be mobilised. Technical assessments documented substantial deficiencies, including leaking roofing systems, incomplete fire-safety installations, inadequate emergency lighting, poor exterior finishing, and unresolved issues in the water-treatment facilities. Investigators also highlighted that the hospital had been constructed on an active seismic fault line without adequate reinforcement, raising concerns about long-term safety.

Beyond construction quality and supervising issues, sustainability emerged as a key concern. The hospital's operational costs were projected at nearly four times that of the previous facility, placing a significant burden on the Afghan Ministry of Public Health. Limited local capacity for operations and maintenance further compounded the risk of systems deterioration. In response, IOM delivered extensive O&M training to hospital staff before.

Overall, the Gardez Hospital reconstruction illustrates the critical importance of adaptable project management in post-conflict settings. The case shows how rigid contractual processes,

fragmented stakeholder coordination, and technical oversights can significantly undermine project outcomes. Also demonstrating the value of capacity building, oversight, and contextual flexibility for long-term sustainability.

#### 2.4.5 Urban Heritage Recovery in Nablus, Palestine

Nablus, in the West Bank, has suffered repeated damage from conflict, particularly in its historic center. Reconstruction efforts have focused on restoring traditional markets, historic housing, and community spaces. ICOMOS–ICCROM (2018) highlights that unlike Mostar, where symbolism was central, projects in Nablus emphasized socio-economic recovery by employing local craftsmen and revitalizing small businesses.

Project managers faced severe constraints, including limited resources, disrupted supply chains, and restrictions on movement due to political conditions. ICOMOS–ICCROM (2018) explains that these challenges were addressed through community participation, integration of heritage recovery with livelihood support, and reliance on local skills and materials.

The Nablus case demonstrates that heritage reconstruction in fragile contexts can directly support resilience when it is embedded in daily economic and social life. It shows that even under occupation, community-driven approaches can sustain cultural identity and provide practical benefits.

#### 2.4.6 Heritage Reconstruction in Aleppo, Syria

Aleppo's Old City, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, suffered massive destruction during the Syrian conflict. Mosques, souks, caravanserais, and residential quarters were heavily damaged. ICOMOS–ICCROM (2018) describes how reconstruction has been complicated by disputes over authenticity: whether to rebuild monuments as exact replicas or reinterpret them in new forms.

The project management challenges were severe. Access to sites was dangerous due to unexploded explosives, and many artisans had been displaced or died. Supply chains for traditional materials were totally broken, and donor support was fragmented. Political contestation added further delays. According to ICOMOS–ICCROM (2018), mitigation strategies included phased stabilization of key monuments, training programs for young craftsmen, and community consultations to ensure acceptance of reconstruction approaches.

The Aleppo case highlights that heritage reconstruction is not only technical but also political and cultural. Project managers must balance authenticity and adaptation, manage unstable supply chains, and navigate political sensitivities to deliver acceptable outcomes.

#### 2.4.7 Conclusion

These case studies from Bosnia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, and Syria show that post-conflict reconstruction is shaped by a combination of technical, political, and cultural challenges. In Mostar, project success depended on balancing authenticity with communication. In Mosul, coordination among donors and investment in enhancing the skills were essential. In Kabul, phased planning and partnerships helped stabilize a fragile monument, while KARIT revealed the risks of donor withdrawal. In Nablus and Aleppo, heritage recovery was closely tied to community resilience and debates over authenticity.

For project managers, the common lesson is clear: reconstruction in fragile environments requires adaptive strategies that address not only engineering and logistical goals but also culturally sensible and withstand during political uncertainties. These completed projects provide practical insights that can inform the development of a strategically adaptive project management framework for Iraq and similar war-affected contexts.

## 2.5 Post-Conflict Reconstruction Theories

Post-conflict reconstruction theories combine insights into the reconstruction of cultural heritage attributes, project management, and some extent peacebuilding. While general frameworks such as peacebuilding theory, “Build Back Better,” and resilience are often applied broadly, specific guidance for cultural heritage recovery has been developed by international organizations such as ICCROM, ICOMOS, UNESCO and USAID for major physical infrastructural projects. These theories emphasize that reconstruction is not only about rebuilding physical structures, but also about restoring cultural identity, memory, and community confidence (Stanley-Price, 2007; ICOMOS–ICCROM, 2023).

### 2.5.1 Cultural Continuity and the “Thread of Identity”

Stanley-Price (2007) introduces the idea of a “thread of continuity”, where cultural heritage plays a crucial role in helping societies recover from trauma. Even while food, shelter, and health remain top priorities, communities often demand the rapid restoration of cultural landmarks, traditions, and crafts. This demand reflects a psychological need for stability and belongingness.

For example, after the destruction of the Old Bridge of Mostar, citizens insisted on its reconstruction not just as an architectural task, but as a means to restore identity and reconciliation. Similarly, in Mosul, the reconstruction of the Al-Nouri Mosque was strongly tied to reviving the city's spirit and trust (UNESCO, 2018).

This approach recognizes that cultural heritage is not a luxury but a foundation of recovery from post-conflict trauma & destruction. It connects well with my own professional experience in Iraq with UNESCO, where local communities consistently expressed that rebuilding heritage sites was as important as housing and infrastructure as it restored pride and confidence.

### 2.5.2 Trauma, Resilience, and “Building Back Better”

The ICOMOS–ICCROM Guidance (2023) highlights trauma as both a physical and psychological and emphasizes that post-conflict recovery must address these both. It raises the principle of resilience, where reconstruction strengthens the capacity of communities and heritage places to adapt to future risks. In this sense, “building back better” does not mean creating exact replicas, but ensuring that rebuilt structures are safer, more sustainable, and able to withstand future shocks.

For project managers, this theory suggests that post-conflict projects should integrate risk-informed planning, and community engagement. For example, in Aleppo, training programs were combined with rebuilding to reduce weaknesses to future conflicts (ICOMOS–ICCROM, 2018).

### 2.5.3 Value-Based and Context-sensible Recovery

According to the ICOMOS–ICCROM framework (2023), recovery must be value-based preserving as many authentic elements of cultural heritage as possible while also being context-sensible and community needs. This means that decisions about whether to reconstruct, restore, or adapt a site must be guided not only by technical feasibility but also by the values that the community attaches to it.

This resonates with Soufan (2021), who stresses that in Syria, debates on authenticity shaped whether communities accepted reconstruction projects. Similarly, in Mostar, authenticity was achieved only after wide consultation and scientific oversight (UNESCO, 2006; World Bank, 2005). These cases show that theoretical principles of authenticity and context-attentiveness are directly tested in practice.

#### 2.5.4 Inclusive and People-Centered Approaches

Both ICCROM (2024) and ICOMOS–ICCROM (2023) stress the importance of inclusive recovery, where communities are not passive beneficiaries but active participants. This includes consultation, participatory approach, and employing local artisans. For instance, Mosul’s recovery involved training thousands of youths in heritage skills, ensuring that reconstruction created livelihoods and ownership (UNESCO, 2023) among locals.

Stanley-Price (2007) also notes that cultural recovery often begins spontaneously at the community level through revived festivals, crafts, or religious practices before formal projects are launched. Therefore, project management theory in post-conflict settings must integrate bottom-up cultural revival with top-down planning.

#### 2.5.5 Organizational and Governance Theories

Another key theme is the role of governance. The ICOMOS–ICCROM Guidance (2023) emphasizes that effective reconstruction requires coordination among actors (key players), clarity of responsibilities, and linkage with broader recovery strategies. This aligns with lessons from completed projects: in Mosul, clear donor division reduced overlap, while in Mostar, a Project Coordination Unit ensured transparency (World Bank, 2005). Conversely, in Kabul’s KARIT project, weak donor continuity led to project suspension (Geranpayeh, 2022).

These examples highlight that theories of organizational management, including multi-stakeholder coordination, accountability, and transparent financing are critical for successful reconstruction.

#### 2.5.6 Integration with Peacebuilding and Development

The ICCROM Training Guide (2024) links cultural heritage recovery with broader peacebuilding and sustainable development agendas. It argues that reconstruction should be framed not just as conservation, but as a tool for reconciliation, and long-term resilience. This idea complements Boyce’s (2007) argument about “peace conditionality” and Jabareen’s (2013) work on reconstruction in ongoing conflict.

The integration of cultural heritage into broader recovery therefore turns projects into platforms for both physical and social rebuilding.

### 2.5.7 USAID Approaches to Conflict-Sensitive Reconstructions

The USAID frameworks provide an additional theoretical perspective that complements the models of reconstruction. USAID emphasizes that all post-conflict interventions must begin with a conflict-sensitive approach. It must ensure that development activities do not unintentionally worsen tensions or reinforce existing inequalities. According to the 'Analysis to Action: A Guidebook for Conflict-Sensitive Programming' (USAID, 2012), reconstruction should follow three essential steps:

- Understanding the conflict context
- Analyzing how a project interacts with that context
- Adjusting decisions to avoid harm.

This structured conflict analysis approach aligns closely with principles promoted by ICCROM and ICOMOS, especially the need to engage communities, acknowledge trauma, and respect local values during recovery.

USAID's Project Design Guidance (2011) further expands reconstruction theory by emphasizing adaptive management. In fragile settings, conditions often shift rapidly due to security incidents, political changes, or resource limitations. USAID recommends that project planning should therefore be iterative rather than linear, with continuous learning loops, scenario-based planning, and readiness to revise assumptions. This aligns strongly with the findings from real case studies, such as Mosul and Mostar, where flexibility and adaptive decision-making played key roles in overcoming delays and uncertainties.

Additionally, the USAID Program Design and Performance Management Toolkit (2010) highlight post-conflict reconstruction as a systems-oriented process. It stresses that infrastructure, governance, livelihoods, and social cohesion must be addressed together. The toolkit encourages planners to integrate cross-sectoral coordination, long-term sustainability planning, and community participation into reconstruction efforts.

### 2.5.8 Conclusion

Theories of post-conflict reconstruction emphasize that rebuilding heritage is inseparable from rebuilding society. Cultural continuity, trauma recovery, resilience, authenticity, inclusiveness, and governance are all core principles. These theories are not abstract; they are visible in real projects such as Mostar, Mosul, Nablus, and Aleppo. Post-conflict reconstruction must be

technically sound, culturally sensitive, and socially inclusive, balancing urgent needs with long-term sustainability.

While these theories focus on cultural, social, and governance dimensions of recovery, traditional project management frameworks provide the structured methodologies commonly used by international organizations. Understanding both sides is important before evaluating their applicability in post-conflict contexts.

## **2.6 Traditional Project Management practices**

Project management as a discipline has been shaped by internationally recognized methodologies that set standards for planning, implementing, and evaluating projects. Among these, the PMBOK Guide (2021), PRINCE2 (2009), and the IPMA (ICB, 2015) are considered the three pillars of traditional project management. Each has influenced the professionalization of project managers worldwide, offering structured approaches that emphasize predictability, control, and systematic delivery.

While these frameworks have been applied successfully in industries such as construction, IT, and public administration, they are primarily designed for stable environments. They assume functioning institutions, reliable supply chains, and predictable stakeholder behavior. This section explores their ideology, expectations placed on project managers, and the conditions they recommend as ideal.

### **2.6.1 PMBOK Guide (Project Management Institute, 2021)**

The Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK), developed by the Project Management Institute (PMI), is one of the most widely recognized project management standards. The 7th Edition (2021) moves beyond process-based guidance and embraces a principle-driven approach to reflect the changing nature of projects.

*Ideology & Focus:* PMBOK emphasizes that projects are undertaken to deliver value rather than simply outputs. It defines project management as the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to meet project requirements (PMI, 2021). This orientation stresses that projects must align with organizational strategy and stakeholder needs.

*Structure:* The guide introduces twelve principles, such as stewardship, stakeholder engagement, leadership, team performance, quality, adaptability, and continuous improvement.

These principles are supported by eight performance domains, including stakeholders, teams, development approach, planning, project work, delivery, measurement, and uncertainty.

- PMBOK expects project managers to:
  - Act as stewards, balancing organizational goals with ethical responsibility.
  - Engage stakeholders systematically and manage conflicts through structured processes.
  - Build and lead high-performing teams.
  - Tailor approaches to context while still maintaining structured oversight.
  - Use tools for planning, scheduling, and measuring performance.
  
- The PMBOK model assumes that project managers have access to:
  - Organizational governance structures that support formal planning and reporting.
  - Predictable financing and functioning supply chains.
  - Skilled professionals and mature institutions to ensure continuity.

*Connection to Fragile Contexts:* While PMBOK offers comprehensive guidance, its reliance on stable governance and structured processes limits direct application in post-conflict environments. For example, as seen in Mosul's recovery, broken supply chains and fragmented donor systems challenged the assumption of predictability (UNESCO, 2023).

### 2.6.2 PRINCE2 (Office of Government Commerce, 2009)

PRINCE2, short for Projects in Controlled Environments, is a methodology developed by the United Kingdom (UK) government. It is one of the most widely used frameworks in public administration and construction projects.

*Ideology and Focus:* PRINCE2 is process-driven and strongly focused on governance and control. Its central idea is that projects should be managed in clearly defined stages, with explicit responsibilities and accountabilities.

*Structure:* The methodology is built on seven principles (continued business justification, learning from experience, defined roles and responsibilities, managing by stages, managing by exception, focusing on products, and tailoring). These are operationalized through seven themes (business case, organization, quality, plans, risk, change, and progress) and seven processes, ranging from project initiation to closure.

- PRINCE2 expects project managers to:
  - Maintain a valid business case throughout the project lifecycle.
  - Work within clearly defined governance structures, with executive sponsors and project boards.
  - Deliver projects in stages, with approvals at each stage.
  - Apply management by exception, escalating issues only when tolerances are exceeded.
  
- The framework assumes:
  - Strong governance and executive sponsorship.
  - Detailed documentation and business case preparation.
  - A culture of compliance and accountability.
  - Stakeholders who follow defined roles and processes.

*Connection to Fragile Contexts:* PRINCE2's emphasis on business cases and complex documentation process makes it difficult to apply in unstable environments where governance is weak. In contexts like Afghanistan's KARIT project, where donor funding was withdrawn after political changes (Geranpayeh, 2022), maintaining a continued business justification became nearly impossible. Nevertheless, its structured processes are helpful in donor-driven environments, such as the Mostar bridge project, where multi-stakeholder governance was required (World Bank, 2005).

### 2.6.3 IPMA Individual Competence Baseline (2015)

The International Project Management Association (IPMA) developed the Individual Competence Baseline (ICB version 4) as a global standard for project managers. Unlike PMBOK and PRINCE2, which are process-focused, IPMA emphasizes competences what project managers should know and be able to do.

*Ideology and Focus:* The framework views project management as a combination of technical knowledge, personal qualities, and contextual awareness. It argues that success depends on both professional competence and the ability to adapt to cultural, social, and organizational contexts (IPMA, 2015).

*Structure:* The IPMA ICB (version 4) defines 29 competence elements grouped into three domains:

- i. Perspective: strategy, governance, compliance, power, culture, and values.
- ii. People: leadership, communication, teamwork, conflict resolution, integrity, and negotiation.
- iii. Practice: scope, time, organization, quality, resources, procurement, risk, change, and stakeholders.
- IPMA expects project managers to:
  - demonstrate not only technical ability but also behavioral and contextual awareness.
  - They should manage conflicts, communicate across cultures, and align projects with wider strategies.
- The framework assumes:
  - Mature organizations that can support leadership development.
  - Cultural awareness and professional capacity.
  - Access to continuous professional development.

*Connection to Fragile Contexts:* IPMA's emphasis on behavioral competences resonates with post-conflict conditions. In Mosul, for example, project managers had to manage interfaith sensitivities during the rebuilding of mosques and churches (UNESCO, 2023). Similarly, in Aleppo, negotiation and cultural awareness were as important as technical delivery (ICOMOS–ICCROM, 2018). However, IPMA still assumes that managers work in environments with sufficient institutional maturity, which may not be the case in war-torn societies.

#### 2.6.4 Comparative Analysis

While PMBOK, PRINCE2, and IPMA ICB each emphasize different aspects, principles, processes, and competences. They share common assumptions listed below:

- Stable institutions with predictable governance.
- Reliable supply chains and resource availability.
- Well-defined roles and clear accountability structures.
- Comprehensive documentation and systematic reporting.
- Stakeholder cooperation based on shared goals.

These conditions rarely exist in fragile post-conflict contexts. For instance, in Aleppo and Nablus, supply chain breakdowns and political contestation disrupted project delivery (ICOMOS–ICCROM, 2018). In Mosul, donor fragmentation complicated accountability structures (UNESCO, 2025). These examples show that while traditional frameworks set global standards, their direct application in war-affected environments requires strategic adaptation.

### 2.6.5 Conclusion

Traditional project management practices represented by PMBOK, PRINCE2, and IPMA (ICB) have professionalized the field and created global standards for planning, execution, and control. They expect project managers to deliver predictable outcomes within stable governance systems. However, as seen in real-life reconstruction projects such as Mostar, Mosul, Kabul, and Aleppo, these conditions are rarely met in fragile contexts. Theories of authenticity, resilience, and inclusiveness from cultural recovery frameworks (ICOMOS–ICCROM, 2018; Stanley-Price, 2007) show that project management in post-conflict recovery must move beyond traditional assumptions.

These traditional models remain valuable as reference points, but they highlight the need for adaptive, culturally sensitive frameworks tailored to environments marked by insecurity, resource scarcity, and political instability.

## 2.7 Inferences

- i. *Traditional Models vs. Fragile Realities:* Frameworks like PMBOK and PRINCE2 assume stable governance, but projects such as Mosul showed that fragmented donor systems and unstable supply chains undermine those assumptions (UNESCO, 2023). This highlights the gap between theory and fragile practice.
- ii. *Authenticity vs. Project Delivery:* Soufan (2021) and ICOMOS–ICCROM (2018) stress authenticity as central in heritage reconstruction, yet Aleppo’s case showed deep disagreements about replication versus adaptation. Traditional models do not address such cultural debates, leaving managers unprepared for this dimension.
- iii. *Donor Coordination and Control:* PRINCE2 emphasizes governance and stage control, which proved effective in Mostar where the World Bank coordinated a Multi-Donor Trust Fund (World Bank, 2005). But in Kabul’s KARIT project, donor withdrawal derailed progress (Geranpayeh, 2022), showing reliance on external sponsors is risky.

- iv. *Community Ownership vs. Documentation-Heavy Approaches*: IPMA ICB (2015) highlights people and context competences, which aligned with Nablus where community craftsmen revived markets (ICOMOS–ICCROM, 2018). In contrast, PMBOK’s documentation-heavy structure struggles in such contexts, where formal records are scarce.
- v. *Supply Chains & Resource Scarcity*: Traditional frameworks assume reliable resources, but in Mosul and Aleppo, broken supply chains forced delays and improvisation (UNESCO, 2025; ICOMOS–ICCROM, 2018). This mismatch shows the need for adaptive procurement strategies beyond PMBOK’s linear planning.
- vi. *Business Case vs. Political Shifts*: PRINCE2 requires continuous business justification, but the KARIT project lost validity once the Taliban takeover changed political realities (Geranpayeh, 2022). This shows how fragile contexts make long-term business cases nearly impossible to sustain.
- vii. *Skills and Capacity Gaps*: IPMA stresses competence, but projects like Mosul revealed severe shortages of artisans and engineers (UNESCO, 2023). Large-scale training had to be embedded into the project, a challenge not fully recognized in traditional models that assume skill availability.
- viii. *Symbolism and Legitimacy*: The Mostar bridge reconstruction (UNESCO, 2006) and Mosul’s Al-Nouri Mosque (UNESCO, 2018) illustrate that projects carry symbolic weight. Traditional models like PMBOK focus on outputs and outcomes but rarely address symbolic authenticity as a project success factor.
- ix. *Integration with Development Goals*: Mosul’s youth on-job training, capacity building of locals, combined cultural recovery with livelihood support. Traditional frameworks focus on project scope and schedule but often neglect broader socio-economic integration.

## 2.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter examines the foundations of project management in post-conflict recovery through five main areas.

The theoretical framework presented the globally accepted standards of project management. These models provide structure and clarity but are built on assumptions of stability, resource availability, and strong governance.

The review of similar and relevant research showed that reconstruction is more than technical delivery. Scholars such as Boyce (2007), Jabareen (2013), and Soufan (2021) argue that authenticity, community ownership, and hybrid approaches are central to success in fragile contexts. Research emphasizes that project managers must address politics, identity, and memory, not only scope and schedule.

The review of completed projects highlighted real-life lessons from Mostar, Mosul, Kabul's KARIT project, Nablus, and Aleppo. These examples showed recurring challenges such as donor fragmentation, supply chain breakdowns, skills shortages, authenticity debates, and political instability. Mitigation strategies included multi-donor coordination in Mostar, youth training in Mosul, and community participation in Nablus.

The section on post-conflict reconstruction theories drew from ICCROM, ICOMOS, and UNESCO guidance. It underlined the importance of cultural continuity, resilience, inclusiveness, and governance in recovery. Reconstruction is framed not just as rebuilding structures but as restoring dignity, identity, and confidence in the future.

Finally, the review of traditional project management practices explained how PMBOK, PRINCE2, and IPMA ideologies expect structured planning, business justification, and competence maturity. While valuable, these frameworks often conflict with the realities of war-torn environments.

Taken together, the chapter shows that traditional project management frameworks alone are insufficient for fragile contexts. Insights from research, theories, and completed projects highlight the need for an adaptive, culturally sensitive approach. Reconstruction in places like Iraq requires blending technical management with community participation, donor coordination, authenticity considerations, and socio-economic linkages. This synthesis lays the foundation for proposing a new project management framework tailored to post-conflict recovery.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter described the methodological approach adopted to explore how traditional PM frameworks were adapted to suit post-conflict reconstruction environments. The study sought to identify the gaps between globally recognized PM standards and the practical realities of implementing construction projects in post-conflict context such as Iraq and Afghanistan.

Most of the previous studies had focused mainly on identifying challenges and limitations, only a few guidelines developed by international organizations (including UN & USAID) had provided better directions for overcoming these challenges. Therefore, this research adopted a qualitative approach to capture how project management functioned in real-life post-conflict contexts. It draws on the practical experiences of subject matter experts whose professional involvement had contributed to the success of the reconstruction projects.

The study combined data from experts' interviews with information gathered from publicly available reports and guidelines published by UNESCO, USAID, ICCROM, and ICOMOS. The chapter further outlined the research design, participants selection logic & criteria, data collection techniques, and analytical process.

#### **3.2 Research Design and Rationale**

This study adopted a qualitative approach, as post-conflict reconstruction involved social, political, and cultural complexities which were not possible to understand through only numerical data (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). The qualitative approach was considered most suitable. Quantitative methods allowed an in-depth exploration of professional experiences and contextual challenges that shaped project outcomes. Supported by limited & controlled quantitative elements from the experts' online survey & then online interviews. Interview data were analysed using thematic analysis, following the six-step process proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006).

The research design integrated three key components:

- i. *Literature & document review*: to establish a theoretical foundation and examine previous studies, international guidelines, and policy frameworks related to post-conflict recovery and project management.

- ii. *Case study analysis*: focusing on completed construction projects such as Mostar, Mosul, Afghanistan, Aleppo, and Nablus to identify real-world management patterns and adaptive practices.
- iii. *Expert survey and interviews*: to gather insights from professionals with direct experience in post-conflict construction management. Highlighting challenges they faced and their strategies for overcoming on-ground challenges.

The combination of these three elements ensured better triangulation of available data. Findings from literature, practice, and professional experience complemented one another. This mixed yet predominantly qualitative design provided a balanced view of both the theoretical and practical aspects of managing projects in fragile contexts.

### **3.3 Ethical Considerations**

The researcher's professional background as an architect and urban designer with direct experience working in UNESCO-led post-conflict projects. This insider perspective added depth to the analysis but also required careful management of potential bias. Ethical principles guided all stages of the research, ensuring voluntary participation, confidentiality, and academic integrity. The researcher's dual role strengthened the study by linking theoretical insight with practical experience.

### **3.4 Research Methodology**

Based on research design, the study followed a structured process of data collection and analysis. The methodology focused on practical implementation rather than theoretical justification.

The data were gathered through the following steps:

- i. Review of publicly available research studies, reports, and guidelines to extract key concepts and identify common management challenges.
- ii. A set of post-conflict reconstruction projects were analysed to observe the adaptation of PM practices in real conditions.
- iii. Structured online survey among specific experts/ professionals working or worked in reconstruction projects, followed by short interviews with them for clarification and detail understanding.

All collected data were coded, categorised into themes by using Braun & Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis process. Triangulation across different data sources ensured validity and consistency. Ethical guidelines were followed at every stage.

### **3.5 Participation Selection Logic**

Participants for this study were selected through goal-directed sampling, focusing on professionals who possessed direct and relevant experience in post-conflict reconstruction projects. The inclusion criteria ensured that only individuals who could provide practical and context-specific insights were invited to participate.

The selection was guided by the following conditions:

- i. A minimum of four years of professional experience in reconstruction or project management within post-conflict context.
- ii. Direct involvement in post-conflict reconstruction projects, such as housing, infrastructure, heritage restoration, or community facilities.
- iii. Willingness to share insights and professional reflections through online surveys or follow-up online audio recorded interviews.

A target of 12 to 15 experts was planned to achieve an optimal balance between depth and diversity. This group represented a mix of professional backgrounds, including architects, engineers and project managers from international organisations. The selection aimed to include participants from different geographical location and professional contexts to ensure diversity in perspectives, capturing variations in management practices across regions such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and Ukraine. This diversity enhanced the credibility and generalizability of the findings within the broader post-conflict reconstruction domain.

Participants were invited through email, LinkedIn, or WhatsApp, using professional contacts and referrals. Each received a brief explanation of the study's purpose and scope. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were informed that their identities and responses would remain confidential and used solely for academic purposes.

### **3.6 Data Collection Procedures**

Data for this research was collected through complementary methods to ensure depth, validity, and triangulation.

The data collection process was carried out in three main stages:

- i. Comprehensive review of research papers, publicly available reports, and institutional guidelines were conducted to establish the theoretical foundation of the study.
- ii. Structured online survey (Microsoft Forms platform) was developed and distributed to selected 15 professionals (13 took part) who met the study's inclusion criteria (refer section 3.5). The survey combined closed-ended and open-ended questions to capture both quantitative trends and qualitative insights.
- iii. Based on survey responses, 7 experts (out of 13) who had shown interest in contributing further were invited for short online interviews. Notes from these discussions were documented and recorded upon prior consent and were used to support thematic analysis.

All collected data were organised systematically and coded using qualitative content analysis. Recurring patterns, themes, and relationships were identified to interpret how traditional project management frameworks were adapted in fragile contexts. Cross-verification between literature, case studies, and expert opinions ensured the credibility and consistency of the findings.

### **3.7 Data Analysis Plan**

As the research followed a qualitative method, the analysis focused on coding the recurring ideas and thematic exploration, supported by basic descriptive statistics for validation as per Braun and Clarke (2006). The interviews were recorded during Microsoft Teams meetings, and transcripts were generated in Microsoft Word format. To ensure consistency, similar questions and responses were grouped under common categories such as key challenges faced, strategies adopted, & recommendations for improvement.

A thematic content analysis method was applied to the qualitative data obtained from survey responses and seven expert interviews. All textual data were reviewed, coded, and organised in themes to highlight core ideas related to project management challenges, adaptation strategies, and success factors. In the first phase, open coding was used to extract relevant concepts from participant responses. These codes were later consolidated into broader categories representing themes. In the second phase, axial coding connected these themes to the main research questions, revealing relationships between management practices and project outcomes.

Quantitative data were analysed using simple descriptive statistics, including frequency counts. This helped identify the common challenges, areas requiring flexibility, and perceptions regarding the adequacy of traditional frameworks. Numerical findings were summarised in tables, pie charts and bar charts (as suitable) to complement the qualitative themes and support cross-validation of results.

Finally, the findings were interpreted in relation to the research questions. Each major theme was analysed alongside conventional project management domains including scope, time, cost, quality, risk, and stakeholder management. This process helped identify how existing frameworks could be modified to align with the realities of post-conflict reconstruction environments.

### **3.8 Validity and Reliability**

Validity and reliability were maintained throughout the research process to ensure accuracy, credibility, and consistency of results. Triangulation was employed by comparing and integrating findings from three main sources as explained at section 3.4. This strengthened the validity of interpretations by confirming that the same themes appeared across different data sources.

Reliability was ensured through systematic coding, repeated reviews, and careful record-keeping. The researcher examined all codes and interpretations multiple times to minimise biasness and maintain consistency. All final interpretations were made manually by the researcher to preserve analytical judgement.

Participants' identities remained confidential, and only aggregated results were included in the report. All responses were stored securely and used solely for academic purposes. These measures collectively enhanced the dependability of the findings and ensured that conclusions were both trustworthy and verifiable.

### **3.9 Ethical Procedures**

Ethical considerations were carefully followed throughout the study. All participants were informed about the purpose of the research prior, and the voluntary nature of their participation was ensured. Before taking part in the survey and interviews, they were assured that their responses would remain confidential and would be used only for academic purposes. No personal

or sensitive data were collected. Consent was obtained verbally or in written form before participation. Data was stored securely and accessible only to the researcher.

The study adhered to the ethical guidelines of Vilnius University Business School and followed general academic standards for responsible research. By maintaining honesty, confidentiality, and respect for participants' contributions, the research ensured that all procedures met accepted ethical standards.

### **3.10 Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented the overall methodological framework adopted for the study. It explained the research design, rationale, participant selection, data collection, and analytical approach used.

The study followed a qualitative-dominant approach supported by limited quantitative elements to ensure both depth and validation. Data was collected through literature review, expert surveys, and interviews, and analysed using thematic content analysis with AI-assisted coding for efficiency. Ethical procedures, validity, and reliability measures were maintained throughout the process to ensure accuracy and credibility. Overall, the chosen methodology provided a systematic and context-sensitive foundation for understanding adaptive project management practices in fragile and recovering environments.

## **4. RESEARCH RESULTS & FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

A qualitative approach was used to capture real-world insights from experienced professionals, as recommended in Creswell & Creswell (2022). The goal of this chapter was to report these findings in a clear and organised way. The data was collected through structured surveys and in-depth interviews with thirteen professionals working; selection criteria were elaborated at section 3.5. Participants represented diverse organisations, including UN agencies and NGOs.

The results were presented through 7 key themes that emerged from the data. These themes were explained through the perspectives shared by the participants in their interviews and surveys, revealing common patterns of challenges and solutions. The analysis also explored how traditional project management frameworks were adapted to meet the realities of fragile, resource-limited, and politically unstable settings. By integrating empirical findings with theoretical understanding, this chapter aimed to bridge the gap between globally recognised project management standards and the practical implementation of reconstruction efforts in post-conflict environments.

### **4.2 Profile of Respondents**

#### 4.2.1 Profiles

*Expert 1:* Expert 1 is a Civil Engineer with more than 10 years of experience working on post-conflict construction projects (including reconstruction projects) in Iraq. He has worked with UN agencies and private construction companies in Iraq. Expert 1's experience includes heritage rehabilitation, housing repairs, and community infrastructure projects.

*Expert 2:* Expert 2 has worked as an Associate Project Officer with UN agencies in Afghanistan and Iraq. Expert 2 has up to 6 years of experience in post-conflict recovery projects, with a primary focus on heritage and cultural projects and community development projects.

*Expert 3:* Expert 3 is a Senior Architecture Advisor to UNESCO with more than 10 years of experience working on post-conflict construction and cultural recovery projects in Iraq & Afghanistan. Expert 3 has worked mainly on the reconstruction of heritage buildings and monuments, and public infrastructure initiatives.

*Expert 4:* Expert 4 is a Civil Engineer and is currently working in the capacity of National Project Officer with a UN agency in Iraq. Expert 4 has up to 9 years of experience in post-conflict contexts, with a primary focus on cultural heritage site restoration & reconstructions, public infrastructure, and institutional facilities in Iraq.

*Expert 5:* Expert 5 is a Livelihoods Specialist with up to 6 years of experience working in post-conflict recovery contexts with a UN agency in Iraq and Ukraine. Expert 5 managing multiple livelihood projects by developing community and public infrastructure.

*Expert 6:* Expert 6 is currently a Program Manager with a UN agency in Iraq. Expert 6 has up to 9 years of experience in managing post-conflict construction projects in Iraq, Afghanistan and Yemen. Expert 6's work focuses on project planning, field coordination, and implementation of construction activities.

*Expert 7:* Expert 7 is an Architect by training and has worked with a UN agency as an Architect cum project manager in Iraq. Expert 7 has more than 10 years of experience working in Iraq and significantly engaged in project coordination, architectural supervision, and research support for reconstruction projects.

*Expert 8:* Expert 8 is a Project Officer with a UN agency and has up to 9 years of experience working in Iraq. Expert 8's professional work includes managing construction projects, site execution solutions, stakeholder & contractor coordination, and technical compliance for UN-led reconstruction activities.

*Expert 9:* Expert 9 is a civil engineer by training and currently a Team Leader with a UN agency. Expert 9 has more than 10 years of work experience in Iraq. Expert 9 has worked as a Site Engineer before and engaged in direct field experience in supervising on-ground reconstructions in fragile environments.

*Expert 10:* Expert 10 is a Heritage Consultant from Syria and served as a project manager for a UN agency for projects in Yemen and is currently working in Iraq. Expert 10 has up to 6 years of experience working on post-conflict recovery and heritage documentation projects, combining the three countries mentioned. Expert 10 has predominantly worked on heritage digitisation, 3D scanning, and GIS documentation, which are key aspects to support the reconstruction of historic structures damaged by conflict.

*Expert 11:* Expert 11 is an architect by training and is currently associated with a UN agency in Ukraine. Past 9 years, expert 11 has worked in Afghanistan, Iraq and Ukraine in a managerial role and managed internationally funded projects to foster recovery through culture.

*Expert 12:* Expert 12 is a Project Manager with the Aga Khan Cultural Services Afghanistan, with more than 10 years of experience working in Iraq & Afghanistan. Expert 12 has served as a Project Manager, Architect, and Design Lead on major reconstruction projects in post post-conflict setting.

*Expert 13:* Expert 13 is a Conservation Architect with up to 6 years of experience working on post-conflict reconstruction projects with a UN agency in Iraq. Expert 13 has contributed to the development of conservation plans, supervised site implementation, and supported technical decision-making in fragile environments.

**Table 1**

*List of experts contributed and their basic details*

<b>Participant Code</b>	<b>Role</b> <i>(in post-conflict construction Projects)</i>	<b>Years of Experience</b> <i>(in Post-Conflict Context)</i>	<b>Countries worked in</b>
Expert 01	Civil Engineer	More than 10 years	Iraq
Expert 02	Associate project officer	4-6 years	Afghanistan, Iraq
Expert 03	Architect, Architecture Advisor, Project Manager and Construction Manager	More than 10 years	Afghanistan, Iraq
Expert 04	Engineer	7-9 years	Iraq
Expert 05	Manager of multiple livelihoods interventions	4-6 years	Iraq, Ukraine
Expert 06	Project Manager	7-9 years	Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen
Expert 07	Architect, Project manager	More than 10 years	Iraq
Expert 08	Project officer	7-9 years	Iraq

Expert 09	Site Engineer, Team Leader	More than 10 years	Iraq
Expert 10	Project Manager	4-6 years	Syria, Yemen
Expert 11	Project Manager	7-9 years	Afghanistan, Iraq, Ukraine
Expert 12	Architect, Design lead, Project Manager	More than 10 years	Afghanistan, Iraq
Expert 13	Conservation expert	4-6 years	Iraq

Source: Author. Derived from the survey with-in selective professional

## Figure 1

### Expert's Role in Post-Conflict Reconstruction & Recovery Projects

3. Role in Post-Conflict Recovery Projects

[More details](#)

13  
Responses

Latest Responses

"Worked as a conservation expert, developed conservation plan and oversaw ..."

"I have served as Project Manager, Architect, and Design Lead on post-conflic..."

"Managing international funded projects to foster recovery through culture"

...

5 respondents (38%) answered Project Manager for this question.



Source: Author. Derived from the survey with-in selective professional

## Figure 2

### Years of Professional Experience within Post-Conflict Context

4. Years of Experience in Construction Projects within Post-Conflict recovery context.

● Less than 3 years	0
● 4 to 6 years	4
● 7 to 9 years	4
● More than 10 years	5



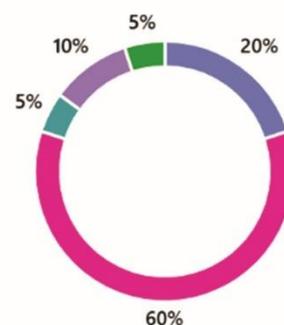
Source: Author. Derived from the survey with-in selective professional

## Figure 3

### Country or Region of Experience

5. Country or Region of Experience

● Afghanistan	4
● Iraq	12
● Syria	1
● Ukraine	2
● Other	1



Source: Author. Derived from the survey with-in selective professional

### 4.2.2 Research Setting

The research was conducted between October and November 2025. A two-phase data collection process was adopted to ensure both depth and diversity of insights. In the first phase, a structured online questionnaire was distributed to a carefully selected group of 15 experts who possessed significant working experience in the post-conflict context. Out of these, 13 participants completed the survey by 30 November 2025, providing valuable data on adaptive project management practices, challenges, and contextual strategies.

In the second phase, seven of these participants (7 out of 13) agreed to take part in follow-up online interviews. The semi-structured interviews were designed based on each participant's survey responses. This allows for a seamless transition from general observations to in-depth discussions on specific cases and strategies. (Refer Annexure 4 for sample interview questions.)

#### 4.2.3 Demographics

The study's participants represented a diverse mix of professionals from various disciplines, including architecture, engineering, heritage conservation, and project management. Their experience ranged from mid-level practitioners with at least five years in post-conflict construction to senior experts with over two decades of field exposure. Collectively, they brought insights from multiple regions affected by conflict, including Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and Ukraine.

This demographic diversity strengthened the reliability and applicability of the findings, ensuring that the perspectives captured were not limited to a single regional or institutional viewpoint. The combination of structured survey data and detailed interview narratives offered a balanced understanding of both the systemic and situational aspects of managing reconstruction projects in fragile environments.

### 4.3 Data Collection

This study collected data through interviews with seven expert professionals, while a total of thirteen experts shared their detailed inputs through Microsoft Forms. All interviews were conducted online using Microsoft Teams during October and November 2025. Each interview lasted between 25 and 35 minutes, and all sessions were recorded with consent. The recordings were later transcribed by the researcher, and brief notes were also taken during the discussions to ensure accuracy and completeness.

The interviews followed a consistent set of open-ended questions that allowed participants to express their experiences and viewpoints freely. Participants were selected based on the criteria defined in Chapter 3, which required at least four years of on-ground experience in post-conflict construction projects. The group included engineers, architects, project managers, and project officers, each contributing unique insights on how they managed uncertainty, risk, and decision-making in complex post-conflict environments.

After assessing the scope and richness of the interview data, the researcher decided to focus exclusively on analysing the expert interviews to maintain clarity and methodological

consistency. Consequently, all findings in this study were derived solely from participant interviews and survey input. The same interview format was followed for all participants, and no changes were made to the plan. The process progressed smoothly, with no unexpected challenges encountered during the data collection phase.

#### **4.4 Data Analysis**

This study followed an in-depth analysis process. The interview responses were first reviewed carefully to identify repeated ideas, common concerns, and important phrases. These patterns were marked with simple codes. Codes with similar meanings were then grouped together into broader categories, and these categories helped in identifying the main themes. This step-by-step process of moving from codes to categories and then to themes followed as described in Chapter 3.

To support the organisation of the data (more specifically, developing the codes), ChatGPT 5.1 (OpenAI, 2025) was used as an assisting tool (refer to Annexure 3 for AI generated transcripts). All final interpretations were reviewed and confirmed by the researcher to ensure accuracy and maintain analytical control.

#### **4.5 Study Result**

##### **4.5.1 Development of Codes, Categories and Themes**

Braun & Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis style was performed in all 13 interviews, and a first set of codes was generated by following the steps below:

- i. *Familiarisation*: All 13 expert responses (online forms and 7 interviews) were read multiple times to understand the overall meaning of the data. Notes were prepared on repeated ideas related to challenges and strategies adopted.
- ii. *Generating Initial Codes*: Segments of text were coded line by line. Codes were kept close to the experts' own words as much as possible.
- iii. *Searching for Themes*: Similar codes were grouped into broader categories, which were then organised into potential themes.
- iv. *Reviewing Themes*: Themes were checked against the original data to ensure they were supported by multiple experts.
- v. *Defining and Naming Themes*: Each theme was refined, given a clear name, and linked to the research questions.

- vi. *Producing the Report*: The themes were then described in narrative form, supported by codes, and related to existing literature and post-conflict reconstruction theories referred to in this research document.

**Table 2***Development of Codes*

<b>Codes No.</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Example codes</b>
Code: C1.1	Overlapping & unclear authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “too many ministries to approve one drawing”</li> <li>○ “no single focal point in government”</li> <li>○ “project owned by many actors, no one responsible”</li> <li>○ “local authority changing every few months”</li> </ul>
Code: C1.2	Bureaucratic delays & administrative burden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “approval takes months instead of weeks”</li> <li>○ “paper-based processes even for small changes”</li> <li>○ “UN and government procedures are very heavy”</li> <li>○ “procurement rules not designed for unstable areas”</li> </ul>
Code: C1.3	Political interference & misalignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “political pressure to change project location”</li> <li>○ “local politicians want visibility, not quality”</li> <li>○ “decisions taken far from field reality”</li> </ul>
Code: C1.4	Donor fragmentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “too many donors with different reporting formats”</li> <li>○ “duplication of projects in the same neighborhood”</li> <li>○ “short-term projects, no continuity after funding”</li> </ul>
Code: C2.1	Disrupted supply chains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “cement and steel arriving late or not at all”</li> <li>○ “roads blocked by many security checkpoints”</li> <li>○ “import restrictions &amp; international sanctions”</li> <li>○ “local market cannot provide quality materials”</li> </ul>

Code: C2.2	Cost escalation & unstable prices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “budget prepared in stable time, then prices doubled”</li> <li>○ “fuel prices change every week”</li> <li>○ “contractor cannot respect original BOQ”</li> </ul>
Code: C2.3	Logistical limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “remote sites, long travel time”</li> <li>○ “no storage facilities for materials”</li> <li>○ “equipment breakdown and no spare parts”</li> </ul>
Code: C2.4	Financial & contractual rigidity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “donor budget fixed, no correction for inflation”</li> <li>○ “contract does not allow variation for conflict-related delay”</li> <li>○ “Payment process very slow”</li> </ul>
Code: C3.1	Physical security & access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “cannot enter site on certain days due to clashes”</li> <li>○ “curfews limiting working hours”</li> <li>○ “unexploded ordnance discovered during excavation”</li> <li>○ “project area mined”</li> </ul>
Code: C3.2	Hidden conditions and unknowns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “finding human remains and dead bodies when digging”</li> <li>○ “building more damaged inside than visible outside”</li> <li>○ “no reliable as-built drawings”</li> </ul>
Code: C3.3	Impact on project planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “timeline changes every time security changes”</li> <li>○ “staff evacuated suddenly”</li> <li>○ “work stopped for weeks due to incidents”</li> </ul>
Code: C3.4	Emotional and psychological impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “teams tired and stressed”</li> <li>○ “communities traumatised”</li> <li>○ “hard to discuss technical issues when people are still grieving”</li> </ul>
Code: C4.1	Lack of skilled local workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “no qualified masons for traditional techniques”</li> <li>○ “experienced engineers have left the country”</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “contractors not familiar with conservation standards”</li> </ul>
Code: C4.2	High staff turnover and burnout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “key staff leaving mid-project”</li> <li>○ “national staff underpaid and overworked”</li> <li>○ “difficult to keep continuity in project team”</li> </ul>
Code: C4.3	Need for training and mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “training programs created for young architects”</li> <li>○ “on-the-job training for local labourers”</li> <li>○ “capacity building for government engineers”</li> </ul>
Code: C4.4	Dependence on external experts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “international experts fly in and out”</li> <li>○ “decisions taken by HQ, not by national teams”</li> <li>○ “difficulty transferring skills to local partners”</li> </ul>
Code: C5.1	Community expectations and identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “community insisted on rebuilding the same façade”</li> <li>○ “people see the project as symbol of dignity”</li> <li>○ “locals want rapid visible results, not just studies”</li> </ul>
Code: C5.2	Local participation and ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “community helped in design discussions”</li> <li>○ “hired local workers from the neighborhood”</li> <li>○ “local committees involved in monitoring”</li> </ul>
Code: C5.3	Cultural sensitivity and heritage values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “debates about authenticity of reconstruction”</li> <li>○ “need to respect religious and cultural norms”</li> <li>○ “balancing modern safety with traditional appearance”</li> </ul>
Code: C5.4	Communication and trust-building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “regular meetings with local leaders”</li> <li>○ “community not informed about delays”</li> <li>○ “need for transparent communication to avoid rumors”</li> </ul>
Code: C6.1	Limits of traditional PM tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “Gantt chart becomes unrealistic within weeks”</li> <li>○ “critical path changes every time security changes”</li> <li>○ “risk registers did not include political and social risks”</li> </ul>

Code: C6.2	Need for flexible planning and phasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “used rolling-wave planning”</li> <li>○ “phased approach: quick wins first, then long-term work”</li> <li>○ “multiple scenarios for same project”</li> </ul>
Code: C6.3	Negotiation with donors and headquarters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “requested no-cost extension”</li> <li>○ “had to justify change of materials to donors”</li> <li>○ “reporting formats too rigid for fast-changing context”</li> </ul>
Code: C6.4	Use of hybrid and context-specific approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “mixed humanitarian and development logic”</li> <li>○ “combined engineering standards with heritage guidelines”</li> <li>○ “used internal organisation framework, adapted on site”</li> </ul>
Code: C7.1	Operation and maintenance gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “no budget for maintenance after project ends”</li> <li>○ “staff not trained to maintain new systems”</li> <li>○ “complex equipment installed but no spare parts”</li> </ul>
Code: C7.2	Institutional ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “ministry accepted project but not fully ready to run it”</li> <li>○ “local authority changed and new one not interested”</li> <li>○ “unclear who is responsible after handover”</li> </ul>
Code: C7.3	Economic and social sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “projects must create jobs, not just buildings”</li> <li>○ “need to link reconstruction with livelihood programs”</li> <li>○ “reconstruction as entry point for social cohesion”</li> </ul>
Code: C7.4	Learning and replication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “lessons not documented”</li> <li>○ “no mechanism to transfer experience to new projects”</li> <li>○ “good practices depend on individuals, not systems”</li> </ul>

Source: Author. Developed using the transcripts of the experts' interviews

### 4.5.1 Thematic Findings

The thematic analysis of the 13 expert inputs (including seven detailed interview transcripts) revealed seven major themes that explain how project management practices are adapted and interpreted within post-conflict reconstruction environments.

**Table 3**

*Development of Themes from Codes*

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Supportive Codes</b>	<b>Descriptions</b>
<i>Theme 01:</i> Fragile Governance and Institutional Complexity	C1.1, C1.2, C1.3, C1.4	Experts repeatedly described weak, fragmented, or slow governance as a central barrier to effective project management in post-conflict contexts. This includes overlapping authority, unclear responsibilities, political interference, and heavy bureaucracy.
<i>Theme 02:</i> Resources, Supply Chain, and Market Constraints	C2.1, C2.2, C2.3, C2.4	Experts consistently described difficulties in accessing materials, equipment, and finance because of conflict damage, sanctions, price fluctuations, and local market limitations.
<i>Theme 03:</i> Security, Risk, and Extreme Uncertainty	C3.1, C3.2, C3.3, C3.4	Security risks and unpredictable conditions were described as normal, not exceptional. These factors affected access, planning, staff safety, and implementation.
<i>Theme 04:</i> Human Resource and Capacity Gaps	C4.1, C4.2, C4.3, C4.4	Many experts highlighted a shortage of skilled workers, loss of institutional memory, and the need for strong capacity-building within local teams and institutions.

<p><i>Theme 05:</i> Community Engagement, Cultural Sensitivity, and Social Legitimacy</p>	<p>C5.1, C5.2, C5.3, C5.4</p>	<p>Experts stressed that reconstruction is not just technical; it carries social, cultural, and symbolic meaning. Community acceptance, participation, and cultural understanding were seen as essential for long-term success.</p>
<p><i>Theme 06:</i> Adaptation of Project Management Frameworks and Donor Procedures</p>	<p>C6.1, C6.2, C6.3, C6.4</p>	<p>All experts, in different ways, described that standard PM frameworks (PMBOK, PRINCE2, IPMA) and donor systems were not sufficient on their own and had to be adapted to context.</p>
<p><i>Theme 07:</i> Sustainability, Handover, and Long-Term Ownership</p>	<p>C7.1, C7.2, C7.3, C7.4</p>	<p>Experts were concerned not only with construction but also with what happens after handover: operation, maintenance, local responsibility, and long-term survival of the project.</p>

*Source: Author. Developed the 7 themes by combining the Codes developed from the transcripts.*

## 4.6 Experts' insights

### 4.6.1 Challenges Experienced

The discussion with experts started with the very first angle to understand the first research question, what the major challenges were faced while applying Project Management principles in post-conflict construction projects. Interesting and unique insights came up from the experts.

The interview data shows a lack of human resources with the desired skill sets. The Expert 3, who has experience working in Iraq and Afghanistan for more than 10 years, said, it is common in post-conflict contexts that, because of population movement, refugees, and displacement, many skills and skilled workers are lost. Many craftsmen and artisans have left, or their livelihoods have been interrupted, and they are now doing other things. So, conflict and post-conflict situations often lead to a general lowering of available talent. Other experts with multi-country

experience also mentioned similar experiences; a lack of locally available skilled workers; and emphasised on-the-job training for long-term sustainability.

Working in a post-conflict context is difficult; one expert prefers to mention it as 'challenging' and multiple sensations by the other countries to a war-torn country make it more challenging to work there (Expert 10). Not only executing the project but also getting simple approval of a design idea/ concept is challenging as the key stakeholders are not clear about their responsibilities or are not available or change very frequently.

Expert 11 draws a unique (and intangible) difficulty working within post post-conflict setting. After working with 3 different war-torn countries; despite their differences in history, culture, language, and landscape. It was realised that it is crucial to develop a good relationship and trust with the local communities. And need to pay close attention to building relationships with local stakeholders. Trust becomes essential. War brings trauma to communities, and as a reaction, people naturally become more cautious and defensive. It doesn't matter whether the conflict began because the territory was occupied by another state or by a terrorist group, as in the cases of Iraq or Afghanistan. In the end, it is always someone coming into your place and trying to take over. So, the affected communities tend to see outsiders as intruders, regardless of nationality. This creates a common challenge: people become hesitant to welcome foreigners.

In addition, with Expert 3, Expert 12 highlighted major problems related to having the necessary skill sets to implement work at the level of quality required. And added that procurement and access to materials, different types of materials and products needed as part of the design process and the project specifications are also very limited. In both Iraq and Afghanistan, the challenges are very similar. Another major issue is governance and the rule of law. There are no proper ordinances, zoning laws, or permitting regulations to protect historic districts in these two countries.

Major challenges in working with government institutions in post-conflict contexts, especially regarding land allocation for reconstruction, were highlighted by Expert 6. The core problem is the lack of a clear mandate among ministries. As a result, confusion develops over which agency has the authority to approve land and make decisions. This leads to long delays, repeated misinformation, and frequent changes in landownership claims. Even after securing site details, and mine-clearance confirmations, it was discovered that the land information was incorrect. Overall, the example reflects how weak governance, fragmented responsibilities, and

inefficient decision-making systems significantly delay reconstruction efforts and make project delivery extremely difficult.

In Iraq, many years of conflict have forced citizens to focus primarily on meeting their basic daily needs. Expert 13 highlights how efforts to restore tangible cultural heritage can simultaneously revive intangible cultural life in an almost destroyed and abandoned city. When the project in Mosul began, the city was essentially a ghost town with very few residents. However, as reconstruction progressed, the project itself helped bring life back to the area. By 2019, many shops around the church had reopened, and the local community began engaging with the project team. During site inspections, shop owners often offered water or small gifts as a gesture of appreciation, recognising that the reconstruction work was helping revive the local economy.

This experience further reinforces the point raised by Expert 11: gaining the trust of local communities is essential for the success of reconstruction projects in post-conflict contexts, as community engagement and livelihood revival go hand in hand with cultural restoration.

Expert 13 also mentioned the sudden discovery of 4 dead bodies while doing the landscaping work on one of the projects under the Revive the Spirit of Mosul program, which delays the work schedule by 2-3 weeks. Not only the dead bodies, but a good number of unexploded explosives were also discovered while rebuilding the church under the same project (Expert 4). Which finally got defused by government bodies but delayed the projects couple of weeks.

In the discussion, 4 major challenges and difficulties came up repeatedly. The chart below indicates the statistics of it.

**Table 4**

*Major challenges derived from experts' interviews*

<p>Resource and Supply Chain Issues:</p> <p>In post-conflict environments, construction projects struggle with disrupted supply chains, scarce raw materials, and outdated technology, causing major delays and higher costs.</p>	<p>8 out of 13 experts mentioned this.</p>
---	--

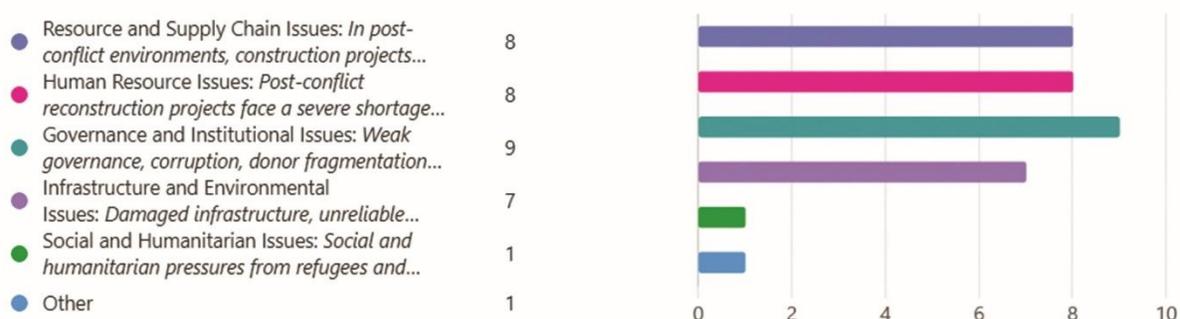
<p><b>Human Resource Issues:</b></p> <p>Post-conflict reconstruction projects face a severe shortage of skilled/ semi-skilled labour, as local professionals are displaced or lost and foreign experts avoid high-risk areas due to safety and living challenges.</p>	8 out of 13 experts mentioned this.
<p><b>Governance and Institutional Issues:</b></p> <p>Weak governance, corruption, donor fragmentation or coordination difficulties and unclear responsibilities, combined with financial dependency on unstable donor funding and legal disputes over land, create major obstacles to effective post-conflict reconstruction.</p>	9 out of 13 experts mentioned this.
<p><b>Infrastructure and Environmental Issues:</b></p> <p>Damaged infrastructure, unreliable basic services, and environmental hazards such as debris, contamination, and unexploded ordnance make post-conflict reconstruction sites unsafe and difficult to manage.</p>	7 out of 13 experts mentioned this.

Source: Author. Derived from the experts' survey inputs and semi-structured interviews with them.

## Figure 4

### Key Challenges Experienced (Experts' opinion)

10. What major challenges do you face while applying Project Management principles in post-conflict construction projects?



Source: Author. Derived from the survey with-in selective professional

After understanding the key challenges faced while working in post-conflict context(s), it was noticed that 11 out of the 13 experts preferred working by implementing institution-specific project management strategies rather than well-known/ well-established project management

theories, like PMBOK, PRINCE2 or IPMA. And interestingly, 9 out of 13 believe it is 'Very Important' strategic adaptation of Project Management methods is crucial for improving project success in a post-conflict recovery context, and the remaining 4 (out of 13) believe it is 'Somewhat Important'. In short, all 13 experts agreed to the need for flexibility and adaptability of traditional PM frameworks while working within post-conflict context.

## Figure 5

### *Importance of Strategic Adaptation of Project Management methods*

11. Kindly indicate how important you believe strategic adaptation of Project Management methods are for improving project success in post-conflict recovery context.



Source: Author. Derived from the survey with-in selective professional

### 4.6.2 Areas of Adaptation Felt

The experts shared their opinion on the areas where PM frameworks need modification to better suit post-conflict reconstruction. The chart below indicates the statistics of top 6 opinion on it.

## Table 5

*Areas of PM Framework need (most) modification - suggested by the Experts*

<p>Embed Flexibility and Adaptive Planning:</p> <p>Project plans should be dynamic, allowing scope, schedule, and resource adjustments as conditions evolve. Frameworks must support iterative planning rather than fixed baselines.</p>	<p>7 out of 13 experts mentioned this.</p>
--	--

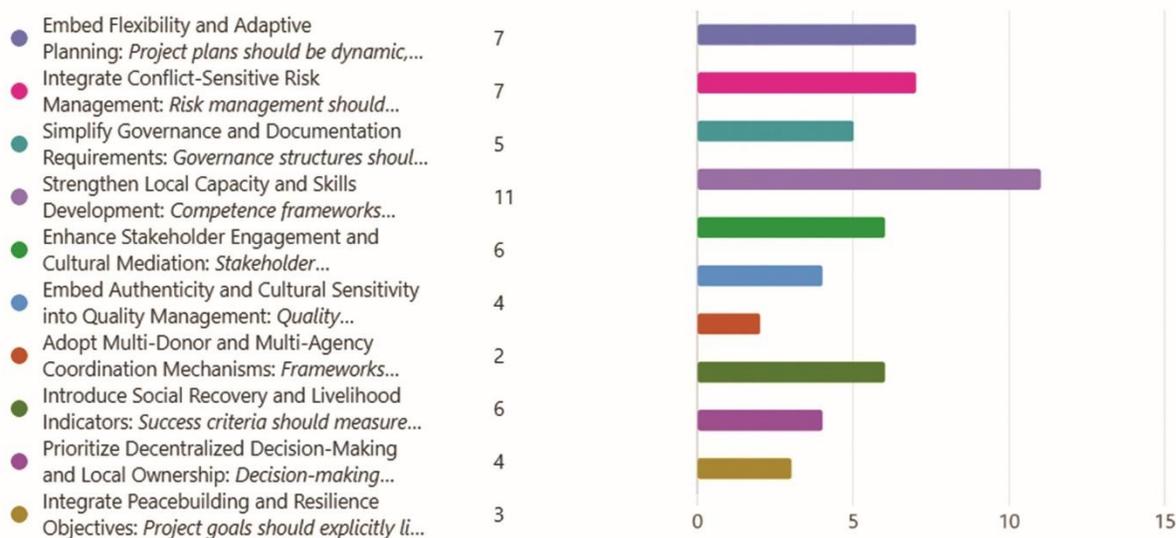
<p><b>Integrate Conflict-Sensitive Risk Management:</b></p> <p>Risk management should include political, social, and security factors alongside conventional cost, time, and quality parameters.</p>	<p>7 out of 13 experts mentioned this.</p>
<p><b>Simplify Governance and Documentation Requirements:</b></p> <p>Governance structures should be lighter and faster, with minimal documentation and short decision cycles to suit unstable institutional environments.</p>	<p>5 out of 13 experts mentioned this.</p>
<p><b>Strengthening Local Capacity and Skills Development:</b></p> <p>Competence frameworks should treat local training and knowledge transfer as core project deliverables to ensure continuity and ownership.</p>	<p>11 out of 13 experts mentioned this.</p>
<p><b>Enhance Stakeholder Engagement and Cultural Mediation:</b></p> <p>Stakeholder management must incorporate dialogue, mediation, and culturally sensitive engagement to build legitimacy and trust.</p>	<p>6 out of 13 experts mentioned this.</p>
<p><b>Introducing Social Recovery and Livelihood Indicators:</b></p> <p>Success criteria should measure social outcomes such as job creation, community resilience, and institutional rebuilding, in addition to project outputs.</p>	<p>6 out of 13 experts mentioned this.</p>

*Source: Author. Derived from the experts' inputs and interviews.*

Along with finding the areas of need adaptations most as explained above, the experts also highlight three key phases of project management that require (as they felt during their engagement) the most local adaptation and flexibility in post-conflict reconstruction contexts.

**Figure 6***Areas of PM Framework need (most) modification - suggested by the Experts*

12. Which areas of traditional project management frameworks, in your opinion, need modification to better suit post-conflict reconstruction? (Please select up to five areas, you consider most significant based on your experience.)



Source: Author. Derived from the survey with-in selective professional

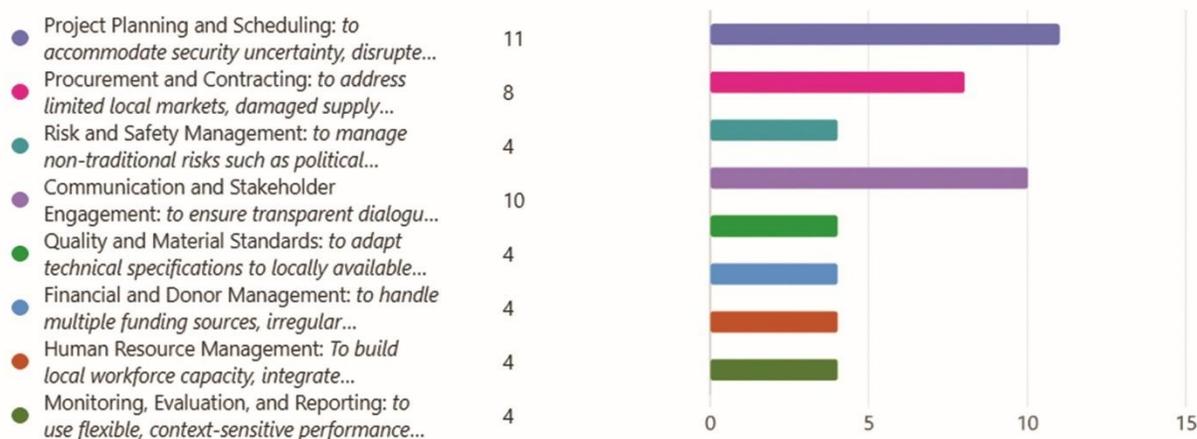
**Table 6***Phases of project where flexibility should be adopted - suggested by the Experts*

<p><b>Project Planning and Scheduling:</b></p> <p>to accommodate security uncertainty, disrupted logistics, and fluctuating access conditions.</p>	11 out of 13 experts mentioned this.
<p><b>Procurement and Contracting:</b></p> <p>to address limited local markets, damaged supply chains, and the need for simplified procurement aligned with local capacities.</p>	8 out of 13 experts mentioned this.
<p><b>Communication and Stakeholder Engagement:</b></p> <p>to ensure transparent dialogue among fragmented authorities, local communities, and international donors, promoting trust and legitimacy.</p>	10 out of 13 experts mentioned this

Source: Author. Derived from the experts' inputs and interviews.

**Figure 7***Phases required most adaptations*

13. Which project areas/ phases require the most local adaptation or flexibility in post-conflict reconstruction contexts?



Source: Author. Derived from the survey with-in selective professional

Above two tables and related discussion show the elements of PMBOK, PRINCE2, and IPMA require adaptation in post-conflict settings; and directly assist to answer the second sub-question as mentioned at chapter 1 (sub heading 1.4).

#### 4.6.3 Key Factors that Contribute to Success

The discussion with experts further enlightens the key factors that help them to mitigate and overcome sudden and unique challenges. Detailed understanding of this part would help to address the third and fourth sub-questions as mentioned at chapter 1 (sub heading 1.4).

According to the Expert 2, who has experience working in Iraq and Afghanistan for close to 6 years, said, engaging local communities, authorities, and civil society from the starting is key. And also share that Integrated, multi-sectoral approach is crucial. Linking culture, education, livelihoods, and governance are important for physical and social recovery needs. While sharing similar thoughts with Expert 2, Expert 3 stressed another key factor; Stakeholder-led development approach rather than donor-driven.

Expert 4 suggested understanding the local context and local community well is necessary. While engaging local communities with the project is must, maintaining a healthy coordination & collaboration with government is very important. Expert 6 introduced a very interesting concept of 'Built Back Better'; and said "*post-conflict reconstruction succeeds when it*

*treats infrastructure not as an end, but as a means to rebuild social fabric, livelihoods, and trust. The strongest projects combine technical quality, local empowerment, risk awareness, and cultural empathy — transforming reconstruction into a long-term investment in peace and resilience”*

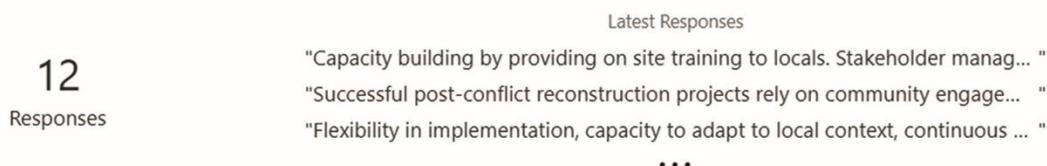
Accepting the importance of engaging local communities from the early phase, involving the professional with prior experience within a post-conflict context; Expert 9 highlights another valuable insight of maintaining information and update sharing of the project with common people and social media can be a good tool for it. This allows to maintain constant relations and mitigate spread of any miss-information which might lead to undesirable social tension.

Flexibility in implementation, Capacity to adapt to local context, Continuous coordination with local partners & stakeholders; these three key factors has been the identified by Expert 11. Here ‘flexibility’ indicates understanding the local cultural beliefs. It’s not always defined by religion they follow, major parts of it are defined by how they work. ‘Work culture’ of a particular region, which might (and most of the cases) be different from other countries. And similarly, capacity adapt to it and framing project scheduling accordingly is crucial.

## Figure 8

### Key Factor to Success

14. Based on your experience, what are the **key factors** that contribute to the success of post-conflict reconstruction projects? [More details](#)



10 respondents (83%) answered local for this question.



Source: Author. Derived from the survey with-in selective professional

*“Successful post-conflict reconstruction projects rely on community engagement, technical integrity, and institutional coordination. Ensuring local ownership and participation builds trust and sustainability, while adherence to sound conservation and engineering standards secures quality outcomes. Equally important is strong collaboration among donors, implementing partners, and local authorities to maintain coherence and long-term impact.”* – Expert 12.

While explaining the one of the keys to overcome challenges to capacity building of local people and enhance the capacity of local skilled/ semi-skilled workforces, Expert 13 share the experience how it helped to maintain the wall of a historic church in Mosul damaged with thousands of bullets. And also, how local arts students helped to restore old wall paintings. Expert 13 also highlights that, if every skill set needs to be imported from other countries, it not only over runs the budget, it also would not help to sustain the project in the long run.

Expert 6 highlights four additional factors. First, donors need to be well sensitized and allow flexibility when conditions change. Second, a well-balanced team of national and international staff, as it combines local knowledge with technical expertise. Third, projects should have generous timelines that include realistic contingencies. Finally, budgets must also allow for flexibility so that teams can respond to unexpected costs without stopping the work.

#### 4.6.4 Key Lessons Learnt from reconstruction projects

Further interaction with the Experts uncovers their version of take way from the reconstruction projects involved in post-conflict context. These insights further help to understand and answer the third and fourth sub-questions as mentioned in chapter 1 (sub heading 1.4).

Expert 3 suggests adopting flexibility to allow modification and adaptation of log-frames and KPIs during project implementation phase. And formulate projects incorporating ground data and knowledge of local conditions. While Expert 4 suggests considering considerable time buffer as delays from approving authority and bureaucracy (usually Government bodies) can severely hamper project deadlines. Expert 2 recommends building trust and preventing misinformation by maintaining continuous dialogue and visibility among local communities.

Using the correct form of advocacy with local decision makers, i.e. human rights-based advocacy with images of people suffering might be effective in the first world to generate attention and support, but the same might not be helpful with high government officials. So, understanding the needs and behavior and act accordingly is very important as per Expert 6. Expert 8

recommend maintaining “*strong coordination and engagement among government institutions, local communities, donors, and implementing partners to ensure shared priorities and efficient implementation.*” Expert 10 suggest flexible and context-driven approaches as each post-conflict setting is unique.

‘Good initial design’ is key, although being a manager, it might not be possible to be part of it in most of the cases as Expert 11 highlighted. It also suggests maintaining healthy communication and expectations with donors and stakeholders throughout the project cycle. Usually, they are not experts and want quick results and visibility. Along with it, taking adequate contingency funds to counter possible delays, investing time and resources to develop strategies to ensure proper engagement of local communities to enhance ownership & long-term sustainability is recommended.

Expert 12 recommend three key points; firstly, prioritize early community engagement to ensure local ownership and cultural relevance of interventions. Establishing clear coordination mechanisms among donors, government, and implementing partners to prevent duplication and finally, a balance between technical rigor and adaptive project management is essential to respond effectively to rapidly changing on-ground conditions. Expert 13 also said similarly and added an important dimension of developing social cohesion and collective identity by encouraging meaningful participation of local residents and craftsmen within the project framework.

## **4.7 Evidence of Trustworthiness**

### **4.7.1 Credibility**

A consistent, semi-structured interview process was followed for all participants. Each participant was asked the same set of core questions, which were carefully crafted based on their online submission via Microsoft Form. This ensured that responses could be compared while allowing participants flexibility to express their experiences.

### **4.7.2 Transferability**

Clear and detailed information about each participant’s role during work in the post-conflict context, years of experience, and nature of work was collected. This information helped readers understand the background of the experts. 7 out of 13 participants had worked in more than one war-affected country, which allowed the study to capture perspectives shaped by different socio-

political and cultural contexts. Additionally, the inclusion of professionals working under various employers, agencies, and institutions further strengthened the range of viewpoints. This diversity enabled readers and future researchers to assess whether the study's results apply to their own settings.

#### 4.7.3 Dependability

Dependability in this study was maintained by following a clear and well-documented research process. All steps, from participant recruitment to data collection and analysis, were carried out in a consistent and organised manner. The interview procedures, coding steps, and analytical decisions were recorded carefully, allowing the process to be reviewed and understood by others. The same interview guide was used for every participant, ensuring stability across data collection.

#### 4.7.4 Confirmability

The findings reflected the participants' experiences and not the researcher's personal opinions. The researcher used participants' own words when creating initial codes and maintained a neutral stance during interviews and analysis. Interview recordings, transcripts, and coding summaries were kept systematically, allowing others to trace how interpretations were formed.

### 4.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter presents insights from interviews with 13 professionals with real-world working experience within post-conflict contexts and shows the limitations of traditional PM theories. Through thematic analysis, seven key themes emerged, reflecting both practical challenges and effective approaches used in real-life settings. Participants described how unclear responsibilities within fragile governance, a lack of robust supply chain, lack of skilled workers, and uncertainty in terms of security negatively impact the project timeline.

The themes were closely tied to each research question and offered a deeper understanding of how community engagement and capacity building can be the key to mitigating most issues. The next chapter connects these findings to past research and offers recommendations to incorporate the PM strategies.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the results of the study by integrating the findings from the thematic analysis with the theoretical foundations, previous research, international guidelines, and practical lessons from completed post-conflict reconstruction projects. The purpose is to explain how these findings are related to establish the proposal for adaptable strategies shall be incorporated with traditional project management frameworks to make it more suitable for post-conflict context.

A qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews was used to collect insights from professionals with direct experience in post-conflict construction. All inputs were coded and interpreted into seven key themes. These themes describe how reconstruction projects operate under fragile conditions, how project managers adapt their methods, and what practices are needed to improve performance.

The discussion also links these findings to real-world projects, such as the Old Bridge of Mostar, Revive the Spirit of Mosul, and the Gardez Hospital project in Afghanistan. These examples showed that the expert views reflect broader patterns observed in multiple post-conflict geographical regions.

### **5.2 Interpretation of Findings**

The interpretation connects each theme to existing literature, post-conflict reconstruction theories, and the expectations of traditional project management frameworks.

#### **i. Fragile Governance and Institutional Complexity**

Governance emerged as a foundational barrier across all settings. The literature repeatedly notes that post-conflict states suffer from weakened institutions and unstable authorities with lack of knowledge of their role. The experts' observations fully align with this view: approvals took months, roles overlapped, and political interference hampered technical decisions. In the Mostar Bridge project, for example, reconstruction succeeded only when a dedicated Project Coordination Unit was established to centralise oversight.

Traditional PM frameworks expect clear governance structures, stable stakeholder with clear roles, and predictable approval channels with define duration to get approval. However, experts described environments where none of these conditions exist. This confirms that PM

practices for reconstruction projects requires adaptive approach considering the respective governance models and stakeholder's capacity.

ii. Resource, Supply Chain, and Market Constraints

Practitioners consistently highlighted unreliable supply chain, unpredictable price fluctuations, and material shortages. These challenges are supported by research from Afghanistan and Iraq, where damaged infrastructure and unstable markets frequently delay reconstruction. The Gardez Hospital project demonstrated how repeated contractor failures and material issues led to significant delays and huge cost escalation.

PMBOK and PRINCE2 assume stable supply chains and predictable procurement environments. In contrast, post-conflict markets require local sourcing strategies, alternative materials, flexible procurement, and contingency budgeting. Experts stress the point that procurement rules were too rigid for such contexts. Suggesting the need for adaptable contracting approaches based on the context which address rapid adjustments.

iii. Security, Risk, and Extreme Uncertainty

Security instability was seen as a daily operational reality. Experts described situations involving unexpected explosions, IED findings, curfews, and sudden access restrictions. Research from Afghanistan and Syria confirms that such uncertainties disrupt labour availability, material transport, and site supervision.

Traditional PM frameworks treat risk as a manageable element identified at the beginning of the project. However, in post-conflict areas risk is dynamic, requiring continuous & frequent reassessment. Scenario planning, rolling-wave scheduling, and field-based decision-making are essential tools. This corresponds with USAID's conflict-sensitive programming guidance, which emphasises iterative planning.

iv. Human Resource and Capacity Gaps

Experts reported shortages of engineers, craftsmen, and contractors with the right skills. The war years caused displacement of people, loss of institutional memory, and limited training opportunities. These findings are supported by previous studies from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria highlighting the erosion of human capital during conflict.

International projects often bring foreign consultants, but without strong local capacity building, sustainability becomes difficult. Heritage sites in Mosul, Kabul, and Aleppo showed the importance of training local workers to ensure continuity of traditional construction methods.

PMBOK and IPMA focus on competency and human resource development, but in fragile settings, capacity-building becomes a core project deliverable, not a supporting activity.

v. Community Engagement, Cultural Sensitivity, and Social Legitimacy

Experts emphasised that reconstruction is strongly tied to community identity and pride. This aligns with ICCROM's "Thread of Continuity" concept and UNESCO's findings from Mosul and Nablus, which show that communities demand the restoration of symbols of culture and memory.

Projects that ignored cultural expectations faced resistance or lack of ownership. Conversely, those that involved local residents early as seen in Mostar and Mosul gained higher acceptance among local communities. Traditional PM frameworks treat stakeholder engagement as a structured process, but in post-conflict settings it becomes a trust-building mechanism essential for project actual success and long term sustainability.

vi. Adaptation of Project Management Frameworks

Experts described using hybrid models combining elements of PMBOK, PRINCE2, and organisational procedures with field-based flexibility. Strict baseline schedules, rigid procurement timelines, and fixed designs proved impractical.

This aligns with USAID's Adaptive Management Toolkit and ICCROM's context-attentive approach. Reconstruction requires rolling-wave planning, early community involvement, early contractor involvement, simplified reporting system and dedicated set up for stakeholder coordination. PM methodologies need to be contextualized.

vii. Sustainability, Handover, and Long-Term Ownership

Most experts expressed concern about sustainability, especially regarding operations and maintenance. Completed projects such as the Gardez Hospital revealed major gaps: high operational costs, low institutional readiness, and limited technical capacity.

This supports the argument that post-conflict reconstruction must extend beyond physical repairs to strengthen governance, enhancing institutional capacity, and strengthening economic resilience. Without such integration, reconstruction became short-term achievement and fragile.

Traditional PM frameworks address handover and closure, but they do not fully describe the long-term institutional and socio-economic challenges typical of conflict-affected states. Experts believe sustainability planning should begin at the initial phase of design stage, not at project completion and involving community, bringing them as a part of the project and building their capacity is the key to long run success.

### **5.3 Limitations of the Study**

While the study provides meaningful insights, it has several limitations:

- i. Although 13 experts participated, most had experience in the Middle East and Central Asia. The results may differ in Europe, African or Latin American post-conflict contexts.
- ii. Expert interviews reflect personal experiences and perspectives, which may introduce biasness or selective recall.
- iii. All interviews were conducted online, which may have limited deeper probing or observation of non-verbal cues.
- iv. This study focused on tangible cultural reconstruction projects and may not fully apply to other sectors such as health programming, education systems, or governance reform.
- v. Some institutional documents were not available for review, limiting triangulation with official project records.

Despite these limitations, the study provides a strong evidence base for understanding adaptive project management in post-conflict contexts.

### **5.4 Recommendations**

- i. Adapt Project Management Frameworks to Real-World Uncertainty.

The study strongly recommends adopting traditional project management frameworks to suit the unpredictable nature of post-conflict environments. Experts repeatedly stated that rigid Gantt charts, fixed baselines, and conventional procurement procedures quickly became irrelevant and unworkable once security situations changed, supply of materials were delayed, or authorities modified regulations suddenly. Therefore, frameworks such as PMBOK, PRINCE2,

and IPMA should be applied in a more flexible way by respecting the local demand and responsively.

- Rolling-wave planning, where detailed plans are made only for near-term activities while longer-term components remain very flexible.
- Scenario-based scheduling allows multiple parallel workplans to reflect security or logistical uncertainties.
- Continuous risk review, with weekly or bi-weekly updates as required instead of static risk assumption.
- Flexible baseline management, where donors allow justified changes without long approval cycles.
- Adequate contingency, both financial and time, to continue the project while disrupted by sudden uncertainty.
- Dedicated unit(s) to coordinate with local or required government bodies and key security agencies of the region.

Project managers should have the authority to revise timelines, adjust activities, and reorganise work sequences without passing through lengthy approval processes. This adaptive approach was clearly reflected in the examples shared by experts working in Mosul and Kabul, who described how initial schedules became irrelevant within few weeks due to fast-changing realities of a post-conflict setting.

#### ii. Build Local Human Capacity & Reduce Dependency on International Experts

Across all expert interviews, a lack of skilled labour and trained professionals emerged as a major obstacle. Many qualified engineers and craftsmen had left their countries during years of conflict or died during the conflict. Projects relied heavily on international consultants, which limited sustainability and increased project costs. Based on these findings, it is recommended that reconstruction programs must invest in long-term capacity-building initiatives. These may include apprenticeships, on-the-job training for young engineers, architects and dedicated skills training for local artisans. Strengthening government capacity in procurement, supervision, and technical decision-making is equally important. When local professionals gain confidence and expertise, projects become more resilient, community ownership increases, and long-term maintenance becomes more realistic.

### iii. Strengthening Governance and Improve Coordination

The findings indicate that weak governance structures and fragmented institutional responsibilities were major causes of project delays. Experts reported long waiting periods for approvals and overlapping mandates between ministries. Stronger coordination mechanisms are therefore essential. Establishing dedicated Project Coordination Units (PCUs) can streamline communication, clarify decision-making pathways, and reduce bureaucratic delays. The Mostar Bridge project illustrated how such a structure contributes to transparency and efficiency.

Additionally, early stakeholder mapping and joint planning meetings can help identify responsibilities, minimise political influence, and ensure that government, donors, and implementing agencies work in a harmonised way. Strengthening governance is particularly important for long-term sustainability, as local institutions eventually take responsibility for managing reconstructed facilities.

### iv. Encourage Donor Flexibility and Align Expectations with Ground Realities

The study recommends greater donor flexibility. Many experts noted that strict timelines, rigid reporting formats, and inflexible budgets made it difficult to adjust projects when unexpected challenges arose. Aligning donor expectations with field realities can significantly improve reconstruction outcomes. Donors should allow reasonable no-cost extensions, budget reallocations, and adaptive procurement procedures when justified by security or logistical constraints.

Multi-year funding cycles are particularly important for large heritage projects, which require time for thorough documentation, design, and supervision. Effective dialogue between field teams and donors ensures transparency and builds a shared understanding of constraints and solutions.

### v. Improve Supply Chain Resilience Through Local Solutions and Strategic Planning

Broken supply chain was present in almost every expert's input. Materials often arrived late, significant prices fluctuated and import restrictions or sanctions limit access to specialised items. To address these constraints, reconstruction projects should integrate supply chain strategies into their core planning. Conducting market assessments early can help identify local suppliers, transport routes, and potential bottlenecks. Maintaining contingency budgets can reduce the impact of sudden price increases. Wherever possible, local alternatives of specific

materials and resources should be used, not only to reduce dependence on external suppliers but also to stimulate local economies. Experts noted that even small delays in the delivery of cement, steel, or essential tools could halt progress for weeks, demonstrating the need for strong logistical strategies.

vi. Incorporate Security, Safety, and Rapid Risk Assessment into Daily Management

Many experts described restrictions on site access, the discovery of unexploded explosives, mines etc. These conditions require security considerations to be fully integrated into project management processes. Regular security briefings, dynamic risk assessments, and rapid response planning should be part of daily management. Project managers should also include buffer time in schedules to anticipate unavoidable stoppages. Traditional project management frameworks view risk as something predictable and manageable, but expert insights confirm that risk in post-conflict settings is dynamic, uncertainty is known by character of it is unknown so it needs constant attention.

vii. Consider Community Engagement as a Core PM Function than an Add-on Activity

Experts explained that reconstruction carries emotional and cultural significance; communities often view restored buildings as symbols of dignity, recovery, and identity. As such, community participation should be integrated into project design, planning, and decision-making processes. Local committees, public consultations, and participatory design sessions help ensure alignment with cultural values and community expectations. Transparent communication regarding project delays, challenges, or changes is also essential for maintaining trust.

Projects in Mosul and Nablus showed that community support can significantly influence the smooth running of activities, whereas lack of engagement can create resistance or misunderstandings. Therefore, community engagement must be treated as a central project management function.

viii. Ensure Sustainability by Planning for Operations and Maintenance from the Start

Sustainability challenges were common in both expert interviews and completed project case studies, including the Gardez Hospital project. Many facilities faced operational problems after handover because local authorities lacked the skills, budgets, or awareness needed for proper maintenance. To improve long-term outcomes, sustainability planning must be integrated from the early design stage. This includes choosing technologies that are easy to maintain locally,

training staff before project completion, and ensuring that institutions understand their responsibilities. When sustainability is addressed early, reconstructed facilities are more likely to remain functional and impactful in the long term.

## **5.5 Implications of the Study**

### **i. For Project Managers**

The findings highlight that project managers working in post-conflict environments should adopt adaptive, context-sensitive approaches. The study indicates that rigid project schedules, fixed baselines, and standard procurement procedures are not adequate in post-conflict environments. Project managers need to build strong local relationships, gain local communities trust, continuously reassess the risks, and maintain flexibility in planning. This shift requires a mindset that values responsiveness, and cultural sensibility.

### **ii. For Donor Agencies**

The findings suggest that donor policies and procedures must become more flexible to accommodate uncertainties and shifting field realities. Strict procurement protocols, strict timelines, and rigid reporting formats can hinder progress. Donors should consider situation sensible adaptive funding models, rapid-response and simplified approvals system to support effective implementation. The research also highlights the need for donors to invest in long-term capacity-building for better project sustainability.

### **iii. For National and Local Governments**

The study demonstrates the urgent need to strengthen institutional capacity and improve coordination across ministries and local authorities. Weak governance, unclear role & responsibilities, and political interference were identified as major causes of delays and inefficiencies. Strengthening regulatory frameworks, improving transparency, and creating unified coordination mechanisms can significantly enhance reconstruction outcomes. The findings also imply that governments must prioritise operations and maintenance readiness to ensure long-term sustainability after project handover.

### **iv. For Local Communities and Civil Societies**

The study confirms that successful reconstruction depends on meaningful community engagement. Communities in post-conflict settings attach emotional, cultural, and symbolic value to reconstruction projects. When communities are involved in design, decision-making, and

monitoring, projects gain stronger acceptance. Civil society organisations can play an important role in facilitating dialogue, mobilising local support, and ensuring that cultural and social concerns are respected. The findings also suggest that reconstruction can be an opportunity to rebuild social cohesion and restore trust among displaced or divided populations.

v. For Project Management Education and Training

The results indicate that current project management training often does not prepare professionals for the realities of fragile, conflict-affected environments. Educational institutions and professional bodies should integrate conflict-sensitive project management, cultural heritage recovery, and adaptive planning into their curriculum. This has long-term implications for producing a workforce capable of supporting sustainable reconstruction.

vi. For Future Research

Further investigation could explore comparative reconstruction models across different geographical regions. Quantitative studies may also examine the relationship between governance strength, stakeholder coordination, and project success. Additionally, future research could assess how donor flexibility or community ownership influences long-term sustainability outcomes.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

This research set out to examine how commonly used project management frameworks such as PMBOK, PRINCE2, and IPMA work in post-conflict reconstruction projects, and whether these frameworks are suitable for such complex environments. It also aimed to understand how these methods can be adapted to improve effectiveness, cultural relevance, and long-term sustainability. To achieve this, the study used literature review, case studies, and inputs from thirteen experts who have direct experience working in post-conflict contexts.

The findings show that post-conflict environments are highly unpredictable and very different from normal project conditions. Experts explained that issues such as weak governance, changing stakeholders, security concerns, and lack of skilled manpower make it difficult to follow rigid project management procedures. In many cases, project plans prepared at the beginning become outdated within a short time. Because of this, practitioners often depend more on their past experience and organisational practices rather than strictly following standard project management guidelines.

Another important point that emerged from the study is the strong role of local communities in reconstruction projects. Many experts highlighted that projects cannot succeed if they focus only on physical construction. Building trust with local people, understanding their way of working, and responding to their daily needs are equally important. In several cases, experts shared that when communities felt involved and informed, they became more supportive of the project. This helped in reducing resistance and also improved long-term sustainability. However, building such trust takes time and effort, which is often underestimated in traditional project planning.

Flexibility was repeatedly mentioned by experts as a key requirement for working in post-conflict settings. This includes flexibility in project design, timelines, and budgets. Experts described situations where unexpected events such as land ownership disputes, delays in government approvals, or discovery of unexploded explosives caused project delays. In such cases, projects with rigid timelines and fixed budgets struggled to cope. On the other hand, projects that included time buffers and financial contingencies were able to continue with fewer disruptions.

The study also highlights the importance of coordination among donors, government institutions, and implementing partners. Experts pointed out that unclear mandates and frequent changes in decision-making authority often slow down reconstruction work. At the same time, a balanced project team consisting of both national and international staff was seen as helpful. While international experts bring technical knowledge, local staff contribute contextual understanding and community connections, which are equally important in post-conflict situations.

Overall, this research confirms that traditional project management frameworks are not fully suited for post-conflict reconstruction without adaptation. Rather than rejecting these frameworks completely, the findings suggest that they should be applied in a more flexible and context-sensitive manner. Incorporating community engagement, adaptive planning, and realistic risk management can make these frameworks more practical. By drawing from expert experiences and real project challenges, this study provides useful insights that can help improve the planning and delivery of reconstruction projects in post-conflict environments.

## 6. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND A LIST OF REFERENCES

### Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

1. Aleppo, F. (2024). *Aleppo's recovery: A comprehensive analysis of post-conflict reconstruction in Syria*. *Journal of Conflict and Reconstruction*, 22(1), 45–67.
2. Barakat, S. (2005). *Post-war reconstruction and development: Coming of age*. *Development in Practice*, 15(6), 741–749.
3. Jabareen, Y. (2013). *Conceptualizing post-conflict urban reconstruction*. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 8(1), 34–47.
4. Karit, T. (2023). *Post-conflict recovery in KARIT: Lessons from the field*. *International Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 12(4), 98–112.
5. Mostar, M. (2023). *Rebuilding after conflict: Case study of Mostar's post-war reconstruction*. *International Journal of Post-Conflict Recovery*, 15(2), 123–145.
6. Mosul, A. (2024). *Reconstructing Mosul: Challenges and strategies in post-conflict urban recovery*. *Journal of Urban Planning and Development*, 30(1), 67–89.
7. Nablus, R. (2021). *Rebuilding Nablus: A study of Palestinian post-conflict urban recovery*. *Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 19(2), 134–150.
8. Soufan, A. (2021). *Post-war reconstruction, authenticity and development of cultural heritage in Syria*. *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development*, 11(4), 425–439.
9. Toward Delay Mitigation in Iraqi Construction Projects. (2022). *Journal of Construction Engineering*, 12(3), 201–215.

### Books and Academic Monographs

1. These works offer foundational theory and long-term perspectives on reconstruction, peacebuilding, and development.
2. Boyce, J. (2007). *Peace conditionality and post-conflict reconstruction*. Oxford University Press.
3. Stanley-Price, N. (2007). *Cultural heritage and conflict: The "thread of continuity" concept*. ICCROM.
4. *Post-conflict Reconstruction & Development*. (2018). United Nations University Press.
5. *Post-war Reconstruction: An Architectural Perspective*. (2022). Oxford School of Architecture.

### Guidelines and Frameworks by International Organisations

1. ICCROM. (2024). *Analysis to Action: A Training Guide for Conflict-Affected Cultural Heritage*. ICCROM.

2. ICOMOS–ICCROM. (2023). *Post-Conflict Recovery Guidelines for Cultural Heritage*. ICOMOS & ICCROM.
3. ICOMOS. (2018). *Post-conflict rebuilding of historic cities: Lessons from Aleppo and Mosul*. ICOMOS Heritage Series.
4. *Cultural Recovery in Post-War Recovery*. (2023). ICCROM Publications.
5. *Training Guide for Cultural First Aid*. (2024). ICCROM.
6. USAID. (2020). *Program Design and Performance Management Toolkit*.
7. USAID. (2021). *Project Design Guidance for Conflict-Affected Environments*.
8. USAID. (2022). *From Analysis to Action: Guidebook for Conflict-Sensitive Programming*.
9. UN-Habitat. (2021). *Urban management in post-conflict settings*. UN-Habitat Research Series.

### **Institutional Reports and Policy Documents**

1. Asian Development Bank. (2020). *Developmental post-conflict reconstruction: Lessons and emerging practices*.
2. *Developmental Post-Conflict Reconstruction*. (2020). Asian Development Bank.
3. Harake, W. (2025). *Iraq economic monitor: Managing reconstruction under fragility*. World Bank.
4. *Syria's Post-Conflict Recovery*. (2023). World Bank & UN-Habitat.
5. World Bank. (2024). *Post-conflict economic recovery and infrastructure reconstruction*.
6. *Beyond the Fall*. (2022). *Rebuilding Syria: Post-conflict challenges and pathways*. Center for International Policy.
7. Marks, J., & Lang, H. (2025). *Beyond the fall: Rebuilding Syria after Assad*. Center for International Policy.

### **Project Management Standards and Professional Frameworks**

1. Project Management Institute. (2021). *PMBOK® Guide* (7th ed.).
2. PRINCE2. (2009). *Managing Successful Projects with PRINCE2*.
3. IPMA. (2015). *IPMA Individual Competence Baseline (ICB), Version 4.0*.

### **Methodology and Research Design References**

1. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). *Using thematic analysis in psychology*. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
2. Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2022). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach* (6th ed.). Sage.

### **Project Reports and Case Study Documentation**

1. These references support your Review of Completed Projects and demonstrate real-world implementation challenges.
2. World Bank. (2005). *Reconstruction of the Old Bridge of Mostar: Completion Report*.
3. Old Bridge Area of the Old City of Mostar. (2006). *UNESCO–ICOMOS Mission Report*.
4. UNESCO. (2018). *Revive the Spirit of Mosul – Project Overview*.
5. UNESCO. (2022). *Seven years of reviving Mosul: Achievements and future directions*.
6. UNESCO. (2023). *Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities – Technical Report*.
7. European Union & UNESCO. (2023). *EU contribution to Mosul reconstruction programme*.
8. AKDN. (2021). *Restoration in Kabul: Cultural heritage and community impact*.
9. Gardez Provincial Hospital. (2022). *100-bed hospital assessment and reconstruction report*. IOM.
10. IOM. (2023). *Construction of 100-bed hospital in Gardez, Afghanistan*.
11. Geranpayeh, M. (2022). *Kabul Culture Project: Political shifts and donor withdrawal*.
12. Supporting NSP in Afghanistan. (2020). UNDP Afghanistan.
13. Project Management in Post-War Ukraine. (2023). UNDP Ukraine.

## 7. ANNEXURE

### 7.1 Annexure 1: Sample of online Survey via Microsoft Form

View results

Respondent

3 Anonymous

33:46

Time to complete

#### Background Information

1. Full Name \*

*Please share your full name, so that your valuable contribution can be duly acknowledged in the final thesis report.*

Fabrice van Teslaar

2. Profession and Current Role

*Please mention your profession and current role (for example, Architect – Project Manager at UN-Habitat Afghanistan).*

Senior Architecture Advisor - UNESCO Iraq

3. Role in Post-Conflict Recovery Projects

*Please describe your role while working on post-conflict recovery construction projects. You may indicate multiple roles if applicable (for example, Architect, Engineer, Project Manager, Design Lead, Site Engineer or similar).*

Architect, Architecture Advisor, Project Manager and Construction Manager

4. Years of Experience in Construction Projects within Post-Conflict recovery context. \*

*Please select the range that best represents your total years of experience in construction projects within post-conflict construction context. (If your experience is from multiple post-conflict countries or projects or organizations, please count your combined years of involvement.)*

- Less than 3 years
- 4 to 6 years
- 7 to 9 years
- More than 10 years

5. Country or Region of Experience \*

Please mention the countries or regions where you have worked on construction projects within post-conflict recovery context. (You may select more than one option, if applicable)

- Afghanistan
- Iraq
- Syria
- Ukraine
- Other

6. Type of Organization You Worked With

Please select the type of organization you were associated with during post-conflict construction work. (You may select more than one option, if applicable)

- International Organization (for example, UNESCO, UNDP, UN-Habitat, ILO, IOM, ICCROM, AKTC and similar)
- Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)
- Private Contractor / Consultancy Firm
- Academic or Research Institution
- Communications Group

7. Type of Projects You Worked On

What type(s) of construction or recovery projects have you worked on? (You may select more than one option)

- Heritage and Cultural Projects
- Housing and Community Development
- Public Infrastructure and Utilities
- Institutional and Social Facilities
- Other

8. Which Project Management framework is mostly followed in your projects? \*

Please select the framework or methodology that best represents your project management approach.

- PMBOK / PRINCE2 / IPMA (ICB)
- Organization-specific
- No formal framework used
- Other

9. What major challenges do you face while applying Project Management principles in post-conflict construction projects? \*

Please select the key challenges you have personally experienced while managing or implementing reconstruction projects in post-conflict settings. (Please select up to three areas you consider most significant based on your experience.)

Please select at most 3 options.

- Resource and Supply Chain Issues: *In post-conflict environments, construction projects struggle with disrupted supply chains, scarce raw materials, and outdated technology, causing major delays and higher costs.*
- Human Resource Issues: *Post-conflict reconstruction projects face a severe shortage of skilled/ semi-skilled labour, as local professionals are displaced or lost and foreign experts avoid high-risk areas due to safety and living challenges.*
- Governance and Institutional Issues: *Weak governance, corruption, donor fragmentation or coordination difficulties and unclear responsibilities, combined with financial dependency on unstable donor funding and legal disputes over land, create major obstacles to effective post-conflict reconstruction.*
- Infrastructure and Environmental Issues: *Damaged infrastructure, unreliable basic services, and environmental hazards such as debris, contamination, and unexploded ordnance make post-conflict reconstruction sites unsafe and difficult to manage.*
- Social and Humanitarian Issues: *Social and humanitarian pressures from refugees and internally displaced peoples, along with cultural tensions and ongoing security risks, make post-conflict reconstruction highly sensitive and difficult.*
- Other

10. Kindly indicate how important you believe strategic adaptation of Project Management methods are for improving project success in post-conflict recovery context. \*

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Neutral
- Somewhat not important
- Not important

11. Which areas of traditional project management frameworks, in your opinion, need modification to better suit post-conflict reconstruction? (Please select up to five areas, you consider most significant based on your experience.) \*

Please select at most 5 options.

- Embed Flexibility and Adaptive Planning: *Project plans should be dynamic, allowing scope, schedule, and resource adjustments as conditions evolve. Frameworks must support iterative planning rather than fixed baselines.*
- Integrate Conflict-Sensitive Risk Management: *Risk management should include political, social, and security factors alongside conventional cost, time, and quality parameters.*
- Simplify Governance and Documentation Requirements: *Governance structures should be lighter and faster, with minimal documentation and short decision cycles to suit unstable institutional environments.*
- Strengthen Local Capacity and Skills Development: *Competence frameworks should treat local training and knowledge transfer as core project deliverables to ensure continuity and ownership.*
- Enhance Stakeholder Engagement and Cultural Mediation: *Stakeholder management must incorporate dialogue, mediation, and culturally sensitive engagement to build legitimacy and trust.*
- Embed Authenticity and Cultural Sensitivity into Quality Management: *Quality assessment should recognize cultural authenticity and community acceptance as key success indicators, not only technical compliance.*
- Adopt Multi-Donor and Multi-Agency Coordination Mechanisms: *Frameworks should integrate coordination tools for managing diverse funding streams, overlapping mandates, and shared accountability.*
- Introduce Social Recovery and Livelihood Indicators: *Success criteria should measure social outcomes such as job creation, community resilience, and institutional rebuilding, in addition to project outputs.*
- Prioritize Decentralized Decision-Making and Local Ownership: *Decision-making should be delegated to local project teams and community structures to enhance responsiveness and sustainability.*
- Integrate Peacebuilding and Resilience Objectives: *Project goals should explicitly link reconstruction activities with broader peacebuilding and resilience agendas to contribute to long-term stability.*

12. Which project areas/ phases require the most local adaptation or flexibility in post-conflict reconstruction contexts? \*

The following question seeks to identify which project areas, in your experience, require the greatest degree of flexibility or contextual adjustment. (Please select up to five areas/ phases that need the most flexibility.)

Please select at most 5 options.

- Project Planning and Scheduling: *to accommodate security uncertainty, disrupted logistics, and fluctuating access conditions.*
- Procurement and Contracting: *to address limited local markets, damaged supply chains, and the need for simplified procurement aligned with local capacities.*
- Risk and Safety Management: *to manage non-traditional risks such as political volatility, social tensions, and on-site security hazards.*
- Communication and Stakeholder Engagement: *to ensure transparent dialogue among fragmented authorities, local communities, and international donors, promoting trust and legitimacy.*
- Quality and Material Standards: *to adapt technical specifications to locally available materials, traditional techniques, and cultural authenticity considerations.*
- Financial and Donor Management: *to handle multiple funding sources, irregular disbursements, and compliance with varied donor regulations.*
- Human Resource Management: *To build local workforce capacity, integrate community labour, and respond to shortages of skilled professionals.*
- Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting: *to use flexible, context-sensitive performance indicators that measure social recovery and community impact alongside physical outputs.*

13. Based on your experience, what are the **key factors** that contribute to the success of post-conflict reconstruction projects?

You may write in brief bullet points (2–3 sentences).

- Stakeholder-led rather than donor-driven.
- Previous experience with local actors and stakeholders.
- Social / community buy-in and support.

14. What **key lessons or recommendations** from your experience could help improve future post-conflict reconstruction projects?

*You may write in brief bullet points (2–3 sentences).*

Flexibility to allow modification and adaption of log-frames and KPIs during project implementation as often, and unavoidably, project formulation is based on incomplete data or partial knowledge of local conditions.

15. **To understand your professional experiences and opinions better, may I kindly request a short online interview with you (at a convenient time)?**

*Your insights will help improve understanding of how project management practices can be adapted and made more effective in post-conflict reconstruction contexts. \**

Yes, I am willing to participate

No, I am busy these days.

16. Your email Id \*

*Will be helpful for future communications only related to my thesis project.*

fj.van-teslaar@unesco.org

## 7.2 Annexure 2: Sample transcripts of online Interviews

November 3, 2025, 11:03AM

 **Subhra Kar** started transcription



**Subhra Kar** 0:03

So thank you Mustafa for your time today. So as mentioned I'm going to record the session, and this might help me for the future to revisit it to re understand whatever you are saying for my research and definitely by end of January I will delete this audio recording.



**Mustafa Nouri** 0:22

I have no problem. It's fine. Absolutely fine from my side.



**Subhra Kar** 0:27

Thank you. Very first, like, I would like to like you to introduce yourselves very briefly.



**Mustafa Nouri** 0:35

Sure. My name is Mustafa Nouri. I am a project manager. My background is architecture as a project manager with Aga Khan Cultural Services in Afghanistan office. I have been working in this current role. Since um, February. April, no February. Yeah, February, March of last year until now, but also in the same capacity. I worked with the same agency from end of 2016 until August of 2021.

When there was a political change, a sudden political change in Afghanistan, in the sense that the government fell and replaced by the Taliban regime, and due to sanctions, a lot of the projects that I was managing, the funding came to a stop. So that's this is a brief in in the recent experiences and as an architect I've done my studies in the USI have a professional licensing from the state of Maryland in the US most of my experience.



**Mustafa Nouri** 1:50

Until 2009, 2010 was in the US and the private sector. I had my own firm. I also worked with as a staff of other design firms before having my own firm and we did a lot of work in in the. Commercial area, most of the work in the Washington in tri-state areas, but also outside of Washington DC as well in other states in the US since 2009, ten I shifted from the private sector to.

To the development sector in the sense that I I started my work with the UN here in Afghanistan, specifically with the agency IOM International Organization for Migration. At that time there was a they had a large. Infrastructure projects funded by the US government and one of the conditions for from the US donor was that they needed to have a US trained US professionally licensed. Architect at the helm of the design activities. So that's why I was recruited and I worked with them for a while until I shifted to my current agency. So that's a brief.



**Subhra Kar** 3:01

Yeah, that's like quite good brief actually. OK. So my next question, basically the questions, I have total 5 questions and questions are in line with the online form you already submitted and bottom of the basically is a slide you can see the your response what you submitted there.

So my first question is something like as you worked in Iraq and Afghanistan both in post conflict context, so did you encounter any similar challenges or similar difficulties for like both the countries?



**Mustafa Nouri** 3:49

Yeah, there are lots of similarities. The major one is the difficulties of implementing projects that involve rehabilitation of historic monuments, historic sites. And conflict zone and post conflict zone. So Afghanistan at the time that I was working until the fall of the government was really in a conflict period. Whereas when I for a duration of 2 1/2 years or more or less recently working with what's the name with with the agency of UNESCO in Iraq.

There the similarities are similar in the sense that you know we have major problems of having skill sets required to be able to implement works at the quality that is going to be required. That's that's a big problem and definitely in terms of the procurement and access to materials, different types of materials and products as part of our design process and then the specification of the materials. For the different projects, there is definitely a limitation and you know in these two environment they're very similar.

And governance, the rule of law, the weakness of the agencies responsible for the for, for the preservation of archaeology, of of architecture of merit. Here we have a big issue we do not have. Ordinances and the zoning laws or the permitting laws to preserve historic districts in in these two countries. So the similarities are quite stark.



**Subhra Kar** 5:53

Good to start. OK, OK. So basically in both the countries, the resource in terms of material or in terms of human, both are kind of in difficult situation and also in stable governments is a kind of issues to technician if I'm not wrong.



**Mustafa Nouri** 6:13

Definitely, yes. Yep. Regulation. Regulation is very weak.



**Subhra Kar** 6:15

Regulations, yes, yeah. And like any particular not, not not one, one or two, maybe unique difficulties. What is like more suitable for Afghanistan or something other unique difficulties suitable for Iraq, something like that.



**Mustafa Nouri** 6:32

Unique difficulties. You mean one from each scenario from one from each country?



**Subhra Kar** 6:39

Like kind of like any particular difficulties you faced more into Afghanistan, but that was not part that was like quite easy in Iraq maybe.



**Mustafa Nouri** 6:48

OK, so I have actually a unique experience in which is vice versa and that has to do to some extent with the with the with the methodology of the implementation of works in Iraq which was under. The procurement or the, you know, the administrative process of the UN as a whole and of UNESCO as well, which is, which is that you have to work with a subcontractor and that makes it very even more difficult. Whereas in Afghanistan we have a big advantage with the agency that I'm with, with Aga Khan Cultural Services here, there is no such thing that you have to work with subcontractors for projects that are funded by our donors.

So that means that, you know, we have since our work started here in 2002 until now, we are direct implementer. We have our own teams of skilled workers and unskilled workers. Which is quite advantageous and this is a the difficulty in Iraq is that not only is it post conflict, but they don't have the knowledge base and the overall there as well there, but also you know the the requirement and the necessity. To work with subcontractors. So you know there is no subcontractor there that had the experience to do work, which is highly sensitive. So then there was a lot of the learning curve of the contractors had to flatten up and that was.

With our support, which was not really, you know, it shouldn't have been the case, but then it I know we had to. There was no other way. So there was a lot of handholding that had to happen because you're you're working subcontractor and these subcontractors, these are the people that have never done. These kind of works works in what's the name conservation works, whereas if you compare to other countries such as even in the neighboring country of Iraq and Turkey or in Iran, there because they've had a lot of projects that were funded by the by the state government or the. Or the central government of the preservation of, you know, historic buildings. There are contractors that are specialized, you know, and there this is, this is what we don't have in Iraq and also we don't have here in Afghanistan, but but then at least here we found a way out of.



**Subhra Kar** 9:17

Yes. So basically in Afghanistan as as a design agency you are having your own main bot to implement it. So you categorize like strengthen their capacity and using them their skills for longer run. But in case of Iraq this has to be sub like subcontract to the like other contract. So might not be same contractor on the different project. So you need to again train the other set of worker for similar kind of task. So time delays cost. OK, got it.



**Mustafa Nouri** 9:52

Exactly. Time to list cost. Knowledge is not there and that's the key thing. You know, like projects of conservation works. Historic with the name preservation work is really about working with laborers. And professionals that have experience.



**Subhra Kar** 10:19

OK, good. Thank you. I'll go to the next questions here. So obviously being a manager when you got a task, you prepared your own road map and kind of set deadline how to do time frame wise and. You figure out the challenges which is known to you, but did you encounter any kind of like challenges which was not known beforehand while planning your project? So that challenge and the strategies to mitigate that in this segment, I would like to know that.



**Mustafa Nouri** 10:57

So are you looking for a scenario and how it was resolved? Is this what we what you're looking for?



**Subhra Kar** 11:11

It's kind of yes, one or two scenarios and how a team like a manager, how you basically overcome it and does that your organizations, the kind of methodology you are following like your organizations is following, does that help it or you need to contextualize your thought or process to get the work done?



**Mustafa Nouri** 11:28

Actually it's it's both. It's both. You know, it was some scenarios come to mind. There are certain scenarios that are not predictable but could be anticipated. But then there are other scenarios that are just like from left field. It comes from nowhere and there's no way how much you prepare for it. You're not prepared for it. You don't, you know, and that's that's going to require impromptu ad hoc thinking on the part of the management, myself and colleagues.

On mitigation measures, you know, you know most of these scenarios that comes to mind right now. Again, if I, if I work, if I give you experiences for Afghanistan, you know. One case that involved, for instance, the contractor. This was working for the UN because there again we had to work with contractor. He walked off the job. He just walked off. Yes, he did. He couldn't finish the project. He undercoated and he he had major financial issues and he he just walked off there, you know, because we had a set of.

Rules or guideline on how to on on how to deal with that kind of situation. We made use of the guideline. You know colleagues from the procurement unit, from from from administration, from this source of resource management unit stepped in. And they gave the project management team, me and my colleagues a lot of support on how to quickly take action and to find alternative approaches to resolve this situation.

So this is one example where yes, the management framework did what's going to provide a road map on how to deal with the situation, whereas the other situation that that involves let's say a case of. Security related issues, you know, yes, of course there are, there are guidelines, but then sometimes you know these things are very, very difficult to anticipate. There is a, you know, a road blockage in the, you know, outside of the city here again in Afghanistan and I have a convoy. Of two vehicles and one vehicle I have is, you know, expert international experts that need to go to the job site and there is a road bomb, a road explosion that happened 2020 meters in front of

them. And there, of course, you know we need to take actions, but then there is no radios not working and the telephones are not working because it's in a remote place. So then what do you do?



Yeah, there's simply pure emergency situation attack.  
Hello. Hello. Mustafa, can you hear me? Hello. Hello.  
Mustafa, I lost you. Hello.



**Mustafa Nouri** 16:01

I'm so sorry, Internet dropped. So this is also this is a perfect example, perfect example of the of of a situation that you do not anticipate, right?



**Subhra Kar** 16:04

Yes, I think this segment also like one more part as you mentioned like that when like America suddenly took entire troop back and Taliban again starting to power all the kind of like situation changed happen. So does that also hamper very badly in the ongoing projects?



**Mustafa Nouri** 16:33

Absolutely. Well, I lost my job as a result of it and you know hundreds and hundreds of my colleagues because again we are because we are a self-implementing agency, we have on our payroll from let's say at the job site from the security to the cook to the. You know, to the store manager, it's just like it's like a we we are wearing different hats, not only in terms of the implementing agency, but also the design entity and the construction firm. It's all under one package.

A to Z. So this this is that means that there were large number of people who is job security were they're affected because of the Taliban takeover and the political consequences of that which means which meant that the majority of the projects funded by the international community. Different countries and so on, they had to be stopped due to sanctions. So it's pure politics that is that is affecting that has affected our work.



**Subhra Kar** 17:32

Yeah, yeah. So basically I think in this kind of like tough situations, there is no framework, no guidelines works, if I'm not wrong. Yeah, yes.



**Mustafa Nouri** 17:44

Nothing. Nothing. I'll give you. I'll give you another example again here. You might have come. You might have come across in the news about four weeks ago when when the government decided.

To block Internet access to Internet. Across the country, OK, impromptu, sudden, just sudden in 2025. How can you do work without Internet? You know, it's just impossible. Absolutely impossible. So no guideline, no framework, nothing would have made us prepared. Now that we went through

this experience, then you know we are obligated to anticipate that it can happen again. So we have to have a backup plan in case this happens, right?

But when it happened, did we know of it? Did we? Did we anticipate? Did we even think? No, we didn't. Yeah.



**Subhra Kar** 18:51

No, no, no, no. Yeah. So very fast time when it's happened that become as something sudden and surprising. Maybe after like somehow tolerate that then for like planning for OK, it might happen in future, so prepare for backup plan of Plan B.



**Mustafa Nouri** 19:07

Correct, correct. And also you know when it comes to risk management, honestly risk management is always using the rear view mirror is what what did happened during the past experiences, right? And yes, yes, you can somehow, you know, anticipate certain risks specific to a project. You can't, but it's a lot of guessing game. So I I I do have respect for, you know, for risk. Management. It is very important. Uh, but it it cannot be, um, it cannot consider everything.



**Subhra Kar** 19:52

Got it. Got it.



**Mustafa Nouri** 19:53

It's not. It's not reasonable. It's it's unfair.



**Subhra Kar** 19:56

Yeah, OK. So we'll be moving to the next question, like second, last question.



**Mustafa Nouri** 20:01

I hope that that my answers are quite in line with the questions.



**Subhra Kar** 20:07

Yes. I'm quite going to like put like help me to frame the next part. So here like based on your experience, what are the key factors that contribute to the success of post conflict reconstruction projects? OK, here you might notice initially I might use construction projects.

And here reconstruction project. Basically confusion happened when I started developing the project into like this thesis. It was conceived as a construction project, but in the time frame, OK, I realized the kind of like people are going to talk with or ideas getting with this mostly linked with reconstruction.

Constructions not pure like construction also cover like port, railway, Rd. bridge, everything. So I'm not going to cover those segment. I'm mostly covering the building or like building segment primarily. So that's why and those buildings which are already kind of like culturally strong

relevance. So I'm not putting directly the historic buildings, but I'm putting reconstruction projects in this topic.

**Mustafa Nouri** 21:10



Correct, correct. You know experience like based based on experience, both success and failures honestly you know lead lead me to lead me to conclude that yes of course preparation, pre-planning, coordination with stakeholders, all of these things do matter. So important, the uses of the facility, be it reconstruction or new construction, really matters, you know, and it's you really have to know what and why you're building this for.

What's going to be the use? Is it going to be used? Is there a need for it? I mean, these things are so important for for the success of the project. A lot of the project that we did that worked so, so, so well. I'll give you the example here in Kabul we did. The rehabilitation of the historic Babar Garden. Babar, who is the founder of the Mughal dynasty in India and is and in this region. He's buried here in Kabul and the garden was in shambles and it was reconstructed and there we put a good.

Framework on the management of the place post completion of the project that that there were income that was coming from the visitor and that money that work would be part of a trust dedicated to the management of the garden even though this garden is owned by. Kabul was any municipality, but it never went. That money never went to their coffers. It it stayed within the the garden is it was finished in 2008 and until today it is a success.

Well managed, well funded. There is a lot of, I mean there's proper staffing from gardeners to gatekeepers to to to the managers and so on. It makes sense. Because the use was the the future use was very well identified. There was a research done that yes, the city needs a garden, right? And there are also other stories and the other projects that you know we were, I was involved with.

But it was not conceived properly. I'll give you an example of the palatial homes that we did in Mosul in Iraq. But Nesco. Why? It was ill conceived. It came from the stakeholder. Yes, there was a lot of stakeholder owner, the beneficiary. It it was owned these two buildings, the two of them owned by the. State Board of Antiquities, a state agency of the government of Iraq, the federal government of Iraq, and they were so gung ho that these buildings would be culturally use. Ill-defined. What do you mean by culture use? What is it going to be? A museum? If it's a museum, who's going to be? What's going to be there? OK, so it was very ill-defined and the project was completed successfully in terms of architecture, quality of work, construction management, all of these things. Not flawless, but yeah, everything is good, very good quality. But then it is standing empty. It is standing empty. It's been now two years. So do I call this a success? It's a a success in terms of physical, what's her name? Work. Yes, of course it it was from a state of ruin to now a.

**Subhra Kar** 24:44



Yes, conclusion, yes.

Got it.



**Mustafa Nouri** 24:57

Full-fledged reconstructed building and the mode in the mall of the of the traditional Moslavian architecture. Beautifully done. But it hurts when it is empty. It's not a success, you know.



**Subhra Kar** 25:13

Yeah, got it.

So basically if somebody want to define project management success in terms of like budget and time, then it is perfect example. But in case somebody want OK after that outcome then it have a question.



**Mustafa Nouri** 25:28

Exactly. I know we live in a day and age where we are so used to catch frames of sustainability, right? But for me, for us, it should not be just a catch phrase. It should not be something a box for us to check off. Off when we deal with our donors and funders that yes, we're going to make sure that it's going to be sustainable. But what does it mean? I think that what it means is that the building needs to be properly used. It should be contributing to the urban fabric of the city. In a positive way. That's how it's gonna be sustainable.



**Subhra Kar** 26:08

Yeah, to basically sustainability in not in terms of material use, but also it should have the component which can keep it sustained financially in longer run.



**Mustafa Nouri** 26:20

Exactly, exactly, exactly, definitely.



**Subhra Kar** 26:21

OK. Or something called like a proper guided exit plan maybe?



**Mustafa Nouri** 26:28

Exit plan is fine, but even that's a bit of AI think it's a exit plan to me is a bit of a cop out. It's like you're going to be doing this thing and then you're going to be running away. No, we cannot. We cannot run away from these things. We we really have to think about.



**Subhra Kar** 26:38

OK

**Mustafa Nouri** 26:47



Much broader, a very awesome approach to to our work. Yes, there's going to be quality of work, architecture, design, blah blah blah, all of these things matter, but also you know this the the the the final. A product you know has there has to be a need for it used by humans and used.



**Subhra Kar** 27:12

OK. Yeah, final products should be basically fulfill the local people core context need so that, yeah.



**Mustafa Nouri** 27:20

Yes, their needs. And then exactly it could be that, you know, totally, I mean a myriad types of needs. A building that we finish, it could end up being a vocational school, or it could be a gallery for art, or it could be a a adaptive reuse from a historic building. That was abandoned into a commercial centre, whatever. OK, as long as it's appropriate for that context, for that neighborhood, for that area of the city and fully integrated with the urban fabric. And yes, the point that you made that, you know, there has to be money, you know, it has to be able to generate money so this way it can sustain itself. That'd be ideal, but of course in some countries.

The government is so well-funded that they're going to pay money for their, you know, like kind of examples of, I don't know what they do in Riyadh, capital of Saudi Arabia. You know, they don't, they don't care if the thing is self-sustainable. Just one second. I'm just going to put you on mute. Can I do that for because this is 4:00 in my.

My colleagues are leaving. I need something urgent from him before he leaves. I'm so sorry. Give me 5 minutes, OK?



**Subhra Kar** 30:42

Hello, hello. Good, good, good. So now we'll move to our last very last questions. It might look kind of similar, but you understand the difference like what the key lessons or recommendations from your experience could help improve the future post conflict reconstruction.



**Mustafa Nouri** 30:44

I'm all yours. I'm back.



**Subhra Kar** 31:02

Projects like your input, what we should adopt or something like that.



**Mustafa Nouri** 31:09

OK, You know the responses. So these are the responses that you that I have below. These are from from my inputs. All of these things of course matter, which is community engagement, coordination among donors and governments. Yes, of course these are, these are. Quite straightforward and logical, no? Um.

The key recommendation. You know, um, the office. Uh. What's the challenge that we have faced a lot? And it is a common, a common thread among a lot of the projects that we have done, including with you as well, that we work together and UNESCO. Here and also not only reconstruction, but also construction, you know, and it's not really, it's not limited only to historic preservation works, no new works as well. I think that a common thing among us, a lot of the

agencies. The implementing partners is that we fear to tell our counterparts the real. Cost that it takes to do this work. You know, we are hesitant. We always try to. Downplay or give a lower cost just to get the project.

I think that's a fundamental mistake and not only the overall cost of a project, but also when it comes to the to how to divide up the budget for a project we do not allocate enough money for. The human resources, the staff cost, the personnel cost because in post conflict as opposed to a normal economic, normal economies and normal societies, environments in post conflict.

It is pertinent to have a very strong human resource, more so than in a normal environment. So this is this is this is something that, you know, I would always recommend. And I always have this discussion with my upper management is that you know when we develop project proposals and project narrative and the budgets is that we need to be very conscious that we have a realistic. Proposal, monetary and also in terms of what we can really achieve.



**Subhra Kar** 34:07

Yes. So basically some something particularly OK like to get a project to get the project contract. Most of the cases being a contractor or be professionals we quote less so that key we get hired but sometime we overlook is like actual cost linked and. Ultimately project suffers. So in that case Anki like in at least post conflict situations when you like unknown to couple of like typical situations in that time maybe like you might consider like slightly more contingency in terms of project cost or in terms of like human resource.



**Mustafa Nouri** 34:33

Yes, exactly.



**Subhra Kar** 34:51

Cost. Than the normal situations, yeah.



**Mustafa Nouri** 34:53

Exactly. Yes, yes, you're absolutely correct about that because it takes a lot at the early stage of these projects to plan, you know, to have so that for the planning stage, you need to have good enough resources, you know, to be able to hire qualified people, to hire them. Long enough to carry this work, um to its conclusion. Um and a lot of the project that actually worked very, very well is that there was actually good amount of people and we should not be hesitant to say to our. I mean, this is the typical.

I know service provider client relationship is that we, you know as a service provider and that's what comes down to. It doesn't matter if we are international agency, but we are at the end of the day a vendor, OK, it's like a, it's like a store, it's like a store owner who's selling, I don't know, an iPhone to a client, you know.

To a customer, we try to please them too much and then we get blinded by what's really gonna be needed in order to do the work. The projects that have worked very, very well for the past, I

don't know, 20 plus years, I don't know how many years now, 29 years that I've done work is that those were the projects that were not.

Only well funded in terms of the construction cost, but also well funded in terms of the the teams that had to be recruited from the design to the implementation part.



**Subhra Kar** 36:23

OK. Good, good, good. So actually done with the four, 4-5 questions. What do we have? Formal part. Now I can like switch off the recording.



**Mustafa Nouri** 36:38

OK.



**Subhra Kar** stopped transcription

### 7.3 Annexure 3: Use of Artificial Intelligence

**PROMPT USED:** *Prepare thematic coding using Braun & Clarke (2006) and consider all 13 experts (survey + interviews) including 7 transcripts attached.*

Great, let's do the full Braun & Clarke–style structure for your data set (13 experts total: 13 forms + 7 interviews).

Below is something you can **directly use in your thesis** under *Data Analysis / Findings* as your **codebook + themes**. I'll keep the language at **B2 level**, with a clear **Indian academic tone**.

---

#### 1. Approach to Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

For your thesis, you can briefly describe that you followed these steps:

1. **Familiarisation** – All 13 expert responses (online forms and 7 interviews) were read several times to understand the overall meaning of the data. Notes were made on repeated ideas related to challenges, strategies, and adaptation of PM frameworks.
2. **Generating Initial Codes** – Segments of text were coded line by line. Codes were kept close to the experts' own words (e.g., “supply chain broken”, “too many approvals”, “no skilled masons”, “timeline imposed by donor”).
3. **Searching for Themes** – Similar codes were grouped into broader **categories**, which were then organised into **potential themes** that represented key patterns across all experts.
4. **Reviewing Themes** – Themes were checked against the original data to ensure they were supported by multiple experts and that they were internally coherent but clearly distinct from each other.
5. **Defining and Naming Themes** – Each theme was refined, given a clear name, and linked to the research questions.
6. **Producing the Report** – The themes were then described in narrative form, supported by codes and examples, and related to existing literature and post-conflict reconstruction theories.

---

#### 2. Initial Codes → Categories → Themes

Below is a **structured codebook** for your data set. This covers **all 13 experts**, including the 7 detailed transcripts.

##### Theme 1 – Fragile Governance and Institutional Complexity

##### Theme definition:

Experts repeatedly described weak, fragmented, or slow governance as a central barrier to effective project management in post-conflict contexts. This includes overlapping authority, unclear responsibilities, political interference, and heavy bureaucracy.

### **Key categories and example codes:**

- **C1.1 Overlapping and unclear authority**
  - Codes:
    - “too many ministries to approve one drawing”
    - “no single focal point in government”
    - “project owned by many actors, no one responsible”
    - “local authority changing every few months”
- **C1.2 Bureaucratic delays and administrative burden**
  - Codes:
    - “approval takes months instead of weeks”
    - “paper-based processes even for small changes”
    - “UN and government procedures very heavy”
    - “procurement rules not designed for unstable areas”
- **C1.3 Political interference and misalignment**
  - Codes:
    - “political pressure to change project location”
    - “local politicians want visibility, not quality”
    - “decisions taken far from field reality”
- **C1.4 Donor fragmentation**
  - Codes:
    - “too many donors with different reporting formats”
    - “duplication of projects in same neighbourhood”
    - “short-term projects, no continuity after funding”

## **Theme 2 – Resource, Supply Chain, and Market Constraints**

### **Theme definition:**

Experts consistently described difficulties in accessing materials, equipment, and finance because of conflict damage, sanctions, price fluctuations, and local market limitations.

### **Key categories and example codes:**

- **C2.1 Disrupted supply chains**
  - Codes:
    - “cement and steel arriving late or not at all”
    - “roads blocked by security checkpoints”
    - “import restrictions and sanctions”
    - “local market cannot provide quality materials”
- **C2.2 Cost escalation and unstable prices**
  - Codes:
    - “budget prepared in stable time, then prices doubled”
    - “fuel prices change every week”
    - “contractor cannot respect original BOQ”
- **C2.3 Logistical limitations**
  - Codes:

- “remote sites, long travel time”
- “no storage facilities for materials”
- “equipment breakdown and no spare parts”
- **C2.4 Financial and contractual rigidity**
  - Codes:
    - “donor budget fixed, no correction for inflation”
    - “contract does not allow variation for conflict-related delay”
    - “payment process very slow”

### **Theme 3 – Security, Risk, and Extreme Uncertainty**

#### **Theme definition:**

Security risks and unpredictable conditions were described as normal, not exceptional.

These factors affected access, planning, staff safety, and implementation.

#### **Key categories and example codes:**

- **C3.1 Physical security and access**
  - Codes:
    - “cannot enter site on certain days due to clashes”
    - “curfews limiting working hours”
    - “unexploded ordnance discovered during excavation”
    - “project area mined”
- **C3.2 Hidden conditions and unknowns**
  - Codes:
    - “finding human remains when digging”
    - “building more damaged inside than visible outside”
    - “no reliable as-built drawings”
- **C3.3 Impact on project planning**
  - Codes:
    - “timeline changes every time security changes”
    - “staff evacuated suddenly”
    - “work stopped for weeks due to incidents”
- **C3.4 Emotional and psychological impact**
  - Codes:
    - “teams tired and stressed”
    - “communities traumatised”
    - “hard to discuss technical issues when people are still grieving”

### **Theme 4 – Human Resource and Capacity Gaps**

#### **Theme definition:**

Many experts highlighted a shortage of skilled workers, loss of institutional memory, and the need for strong capacity-building within local teams and institutions.

#### **Key categories and example codes:**

- **C4.1 Lack of skilled local workforce**
    - Codes:
      - “no qualified masons for traditional techniques”
      - “experienced engineers have left the country”
      - “contractors not familiar with conservation standards”
  - **C4.2 High staff turnover and burnout**
    - Codes:
      - “key staff leaving mid-project”
      - “national staff underpaid and overworked”
      - “difficult to keep continuity in project team”
  - **C4.3 Need for training and mentoring**
    - Codes:
      - “training programmes created for young architects”
      - “on-the-job training for local labourers”
      - “capacity building for government engineers”
  - **C4.4 Dependence on external experts**
    - Codes:
      - “international experts fly in and out”
      - “decisions taken by HQ, not by national teams”
      - “difficulty transferring skills to local partners”
- 

## **Theme 5 – Community Engagement, Cultural Sensitivity, and Social Legitimacy**

### **Theme definition:**

Experts stressed that reconstruction is not just technical; it carries social, cultural, and symbolic meaning. Community acceptance, participation, and cultural understanding were seen as essential for long-term success.

### **Key categories and example codes:**

- **C5.1 Community expectations and identity**
  - Codes:
    - “community insisted on rebuilding the same façade”
    - “people see the project as symbol of dignity”
    - “locals want rapid visible results, not just studies”
- **C5.2 Local participation and ownership**
  - Codes:
    - “community helped in design discussions”
    - “hired local workers from the neighbourhood”
    - “local committees involved in monitoring”
- **C5.3 Cultural sensitivity and heritage values**
  - Codes:
    - “debates about authenticity of reconstruction”
    - “need to respect religious and cultural norms”
    - “balancing modern safety with traditional appearance”

- **C5.4 Communication and trust-building**
  - Codes:
    - “regular meetings with local leaders”
    - “community not informed about delays”
    - “need for transparent communication to avoid rumours”

## **Theme 6 – Adaptation of Project Management Frameworks and Donor Procedures**

### **Theme definition:**

All experts, in different ways, described that standard PM frameworks (PMBOK, PRINCE2, IPMA) and donor systems were not sufficient on their own and had to be adapted to context.

### **Key categories and example codes:**

- **C6.1 Limits of traditional PM tools**
  - Codes:
    - “Gantt chart becomes unrealistic within weeks”
    - “critical path changes every time security changes”
    - “risk registers did not include political and social risks”
- **C6.2 Need for flexible planning and phasing**
  - Codes:
    - “used rolling-wave planning”
    - “phased approach: quick wins first, then long-term work”
    - “multiple scenarios for same project”
- **C6.3 Negotiation with donors and headquarters**
  - Codes:
    - “requested no-cost extension due to conflict delay”
    - “had to justify change of materials to donors”
    - “reporting formats too rigid for fast-changing context”
- **C6.4 Use of hybrid and context-specific approaches**
  - Codes:
    - “mixed humanitarian and development logic”
    - “combined engineering standards with heritage guidelines”
    - “used internal organisation framework, adapted on site”

## **Theme 7 – Sustainability, Handover, and Long-Term Ownership**

### **Theme definition:**

Experts were concerned not only with construction but also with what happens after handover: operation, maintenance, local responsibility, and long-term survival of the project.

### **Key categories and example codes:**

- **C7.1 Operation and maintenance gaps**
  - Codes:

- “no budget for maintenance after project ends”
    - “staff not trained to maintain new systems”
    - “complex equipment installed but no spare parts”
  - **C7.2 Institutional ownership**
    - Codes:
      - “ministry accepted project but not fully ready to run it”
      - “local authority changed and new one not interested”
      - “unclear who is responsible after handover”
  - **C7.3 Economic and social sustainability**
    - Codes:
      - “projects must create jobs, not just buildings”
      - “need to link reconstruction with livelihood programmes”
      - “reconstruction as entry point for social cohesion”
  - **C7.4 Learning and replication**
    - Codes:
      - “lessons not documented”
      - “no mechanism to transfer experience to new projects”
      - “good practices depend on individuals, not systems”
- 

### 3. How You Can Use This in Your Thesis

You can now:

- Put a **summary table** in an appendix (Initial codes → Categories → Themes).
- In **Chapter 5**, present the **7 themes** as your main findings, each with:
  - a short definition (like above),
  - 2–3 key categories,
  - a few illustrative quotes from different experts.

If you want, I can now:

1. **Write the narrative “Thematic Findings” section** (5.3) using these 7 themes, OR
2. Help you build a **table** for your appendix (Codebook of Initial Codes and Themes), OR
3. Draft **one full theme** as an example (e.g., Theme 6: Adaptation of PM Frameworks) with quotes and link to literature.

## 7.4 Annexure 4: Sample of Questions asked during online Interviews

VILNIUS UNIVERSITY  
BUSINESS SCHOOL

Thesis Title:

**Strategic Adaptation of Project Management Practices in  
Construction Projects Within Post-conflict Recovery Contexts**

Interview with

**Maria Rita Acetosó**

*Chief of the Culture Unit - UNESCO Antenna in Ukraine*

By

**Subhra Kar**

31 October 2025

VILNIUS UNIVERSITY  
BUSINESS SCHOOL

This survey / interview is voluntary, purely for academic purposes.

Upon your approval, I would like to audio-record the interview.

The recording will be securely deleted by end of January 2026 .

**Your introduction in brief**

*Name, Current professional role, Location, total professional experience and any thing else you would like to add in brief.*

You have worked in Afghanistan and Iraq within post-conflict contexts. And now in Ukraine; where war is still going.

Question  
01.a

**Did you encounter any similar challenges or difficulties while managing projects in these environments?**

If yes, could you please share your experience or specific examples that illustrate these challenges?

Question  
01.b

**Did you face any unique difficulties? Which was not predicted before by you or team.**  
If yes, could you please share your experience?

**REFERENCE FROM THE SUBMITTED FORM:**

*What major challenges do you face while applying Project Management principles in post-conflict construction projects?*

- *Resource and Supply Chain Issues*
- *Human Resource Issues*
- *Governance and Institutional Issues*

Question  
02

**How did you & your team mitigate or overcome the challenges you faced during project implementation?**

**Did the organization's project management framework provide sufficient guidance, or did it require local or contextual adaptation to suit post-conflict conditions?**

Could you please share your experience briefly, highlighting key actions?

*REFERENCE FROM THE SUBMITTED FORM:*

*Which areas of traditional project management frameworks, in your opinion, need modification to better suit post-conflict reconstruction?*

- *Embed Flexibility and Adaptive Planning*
- *Strengthen Local Capacity and Skills Development*
- *Enhance Stakeholder Engagement and Cultural Mediation*
- *Adopt Multi-Donor and Multi-Agency Coordination Mechanisms*
- *Introduce Social Recovery and Livelihood Indicators*

Question  
03

**Based on your experience, what are the key factors that contribute to the success of post-conflict reconstruction projects?**

*REFERENCE FROM THE SUBMITTED FORM:*

*Based on your experience, what are the key factors that contribute to the success of post-conflict reconstruction projects?*

- *Flexibility in implementation*
- *Capacity to adapt to local context*
- *Continuous coordination with local partners & stakeholders*

Question  
04

**What key lessons or recommendations from your experience could help improve future post-conflict reconstruction projects?**

*REFERENCE FROM THE SUBMITTED FORM:*

*What key lessons or recommendations from your experience could help improve future post-conflict reconstruction projects?*

- Take into account possible delays and need of contingency funds.*
- Manage expectations of donors & beneficiaries (especially in terms of quick execution of activities),*
- Invest on strategies to ensure proper engagement of local communities so to enhance ownership (& sustainability)*