DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND RECOVERY

THE RESEARCH SUPPORTING AND ENCOURAGING THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANISATIONS

CSIA | Community Services Industry Alliance

Queensland Government

DISASTER RECOVERY IS DEFINED AS:

"the coordinated process of supporting affected communities, families and individuals in the reconstruction of the built environment and the restoration of their emotional, social, and economic wellbeing, as well as the natural environment" (QldRA 2016:7).

RECOVERY IS CONSIDERED:

"part of disaster management, which includes the broader components of prevention, preparedness and response. Depending on the nature of the event, many recovery activities begin during the event, or as part of the initial response, while planning and preparation for recovery should be continuous throughout the year" (QldRA 2016:7).

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ABOUT THE COMMUNITY SERVICES INDUSTRY ALLIANCE (CSIA)

The Community Services Industry Alliance (CSIA) is here to advance the business of community service organisations.

We are:

- independent of government funding for core operations
- funded by members
- a voice on business issues for the Industry
- a source of expertise and advice for organisations
- delivering practical outcomes for organisations
- comprised of both not-for-profit and for-profit organisations
- a crucial resource for the Community Services Industry.

The CSIA focusses on:

- building a broader and bigger investment base
- creating useful connections and working together
- identifying new thinking and innovative ideas
- valuing performance and outcomes
- providing trusted advice to the Industry.

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w. csialtd.com.au
p. 07 3180 1360
e. info@csialtd.com.au

FOREWORD

Community-based organisations (CBOs), particularly the smaller ones, play a vital role in meeting community needs in most regions across Queensland.

In times of disaster, they perform myriad roles at the front-line of responding to people in crisis. Their relationships with vulnerable people are critical to their capacity to provide support at what can be a devastating time. Very often, they are also responding to broader community needs before, during, and after disasters.

At the same time, CBOs are often faced with their own business continuity challenges. Their own infrastructure can be threatened or compromised at exactly the time there is huge demand for their resources and capabilities.

This research paints a picture of the value that CBOs play before, during, and after disasters. It illustrates how CBOs – with their decentralised contact points – reaching beyond centralised efforts and adding considerable capacity to disaster management and recovery efforts.

It also highlights how CBOs fit within the fabric of formal disaster responses and augments broader efforts to help communities prepare and recover as quickly as possible.

The companion toolkit provides information, resources and ideas about how CBOs can work proactively to achieve business continuity, and be ready to assist people and households at the worst times.

It is also intended to be used in conjunction with a suite of resources including a planning template available through the CSIA, and based on research by Griffith University. It is a starting point in raising the profile of CBOs in the context of disaster recovery and resilience.

CBOs are experts in responding to the needs of already vulnerable people.

They can scale-up and adapt to disaster situations in responsive and creative ways. They view individuals in their broader context, understanding that the fabric of community life is both challenged and built when times are tough.

It is the intention – through these resources – to raise the profile of CBOs and strengthen their role in how disasters are managed in Queensland.

It is also hoped that organisations will use these materials to prepare for future events, thus further cementing their capacities and profile as uniquely engaged, responsive and connected to people and places.

Belinda Drew
Chief Executive Officer
Community Services Industry Alliance (CSIA)

DISASTERS: WHAT THEY ARE AND WHAT THEY MEAN

Disasters encompass many different scenarios and come in many different forms. Their consistent commonality is the capacity to severely disrupt your business operations, and the communities you support.

There are many variables impacting how susceptible Queensland's diverse communities may be to the range of disasters they commonly experience.

Just one of the variables determining the fallout of disaster is warning time. When there is no time to prepare for a disaster, the consequences are often catastrophic for businesses and broader communities alike.

Queensland communities can be exposed to a gamut of disasters, including:

- cyclones
- hail storms
- storm clusters
- flooding
- bushfires.

The increasing upturn in the role of technology in everyday life brings with it a brand new, substantial and looming threat: cyber-attacks. This was demonstrated with great ferocity during the 2017 cyber-attacks on more than 100 countries, most notably leaving the UK health system in disarray within moments.

On their own, the more common of the disasters just mentioned can have a multitude of impacts. Some of which include:

- varied capacities and resource levels for preparation and recovery
- substantial damage to private homes and public buildings
- complete loss of housing, leading to homelessness and displacement from communities
- loss of power, water, and communication
- blocked access to essential infrastructure, households, and communities
- road damage and dangerous changes to the physical environment
- closure of education facilities, with a flow-on effect for workforce capacity as child care arrangements are changed
- isolation of already vulnerable communities and households
- loss of valuables by individuals and households
- overwhelmed existing services, trying to keep up with the growing immediacy of need
- accumulated experiences of trauma and loss for individual people and households
- threat to life.

Depending on the scale of the event, whole communities and regions can be impacted. The result can produce a significant planning and recovery challenge for state authorities, local governments, community-based organisations (CBOs) and households.

As a result, governments are concerned with the recovery of entire communities, above-and-beyond just their physical needs, and inclusive of social relationships, social capital and social infrastructure.

It is the full scope of needs at play before, during, and after disasters that brings into focus the critical importance of CBOs in strengthening planning and recovery, and in ensuring that vulnerable people are not left behind.

Even during times of disaster and recovery, it is possible to consolidate and strengthen relationships within and between communities, and harness the capacity created for continued effective engagement with government.

A recovery effort that restores infrastructure and rebuilds homes, but also results in stronger, more resilient and caring communities will have long term implications for mental health, community capacity, productivity and hope.

Useful links:

www.qld.gov.au/emergency/dealing-disasters/disaster-types.html

COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANISATIONS AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Community-based organisations (CBOs) are part of the fabric of community life. They may be in hubs and in clusters, but are also often decentralised to improve access.

Ongoing, they provide vital services and support to groups and broader communities. Their services can be specific, specialised or universal.

There are 1,188 charities registered in Queensland that list community services as their primary activity *(Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014, Counts of Australian Businesses June 2010-June 2014).*

According to data from the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission, approximately 72 per cent of CBOs are small or medium organisations, with about 48 per cent of those being small operators.

They are often characterised by:
• strong relationships with their community
• a needs-based focus, often within a specific location or place
• engagement with local volunteers
• the ability to mobilise local giving or philanthropy.

This profile suggests a great opportunity to engage many of these organisations in disaster recovery and management.

Yet the role of CBOs is not automatically cemented in current approaches to disaster management in Queensland.

Out of 78 Local Government Areas, data shows that in:
• 21 areas, CBOs played an advisory role
• 14 areas, CBOs played an active role
• 18 areas, CBOs were mentioned but their role wasn't defined
• 18 areas, CBOs weren't mentioned at all.
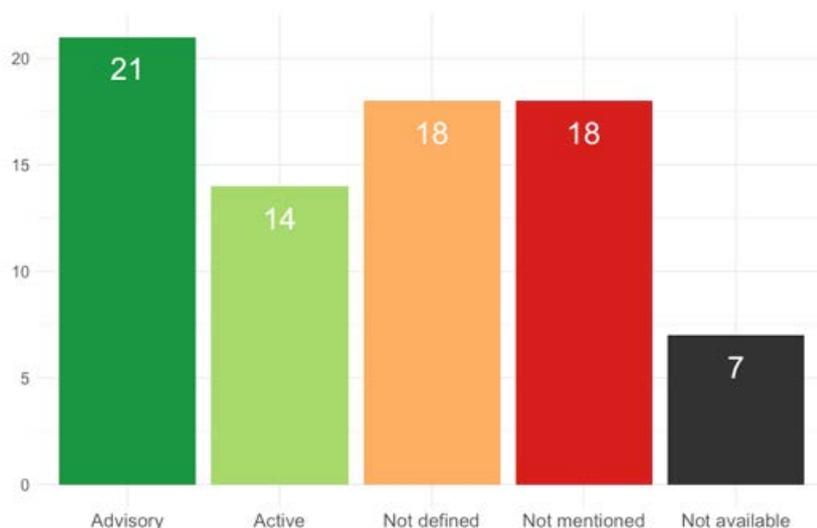
Source: Policy Innovation Hub, Griffith University

There is definitely scope to increase the active and formal involvement of CBOs in disaster management and recovery.

There is also an opportunity to raise their profile and improve the extent that they're acknowledged in disaster management systems.

Advisory
Active
Not defined
Not mentioned
Not available
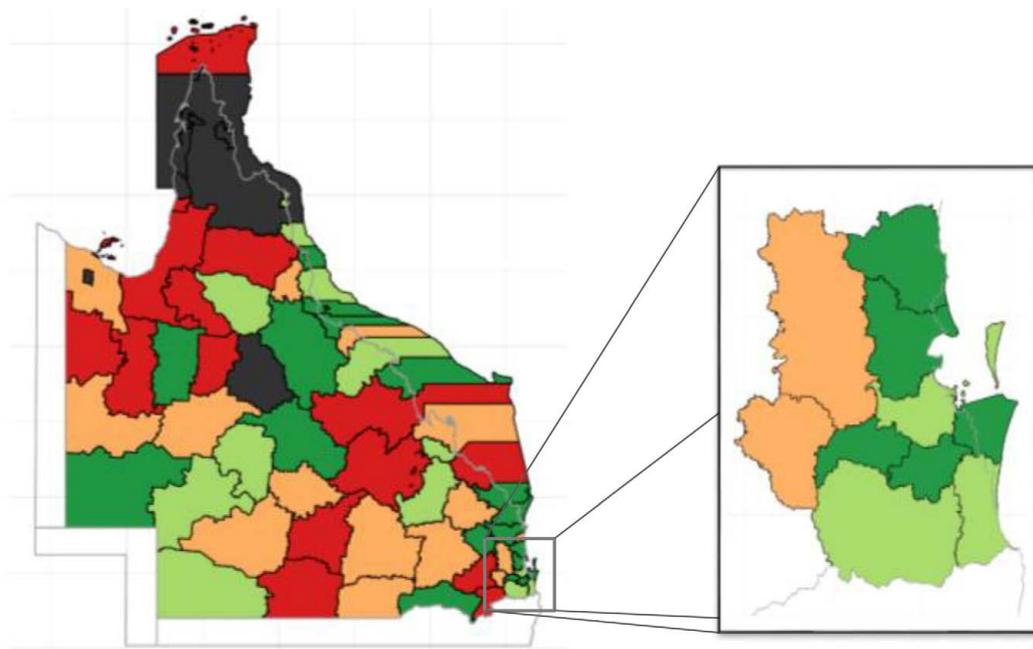
Source: Policy Innovation Hub, Griffith University

COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANISATIONS: STRENGTH AT THE FRONT-LINE

Community-based organisations (CBOs) themselves have identified a range of roles they play, or could potentially play, in disaster management and recovery.

Their strengths include:

- a profile and track record in responding to community need
- current service provision and program funding for responding to the needs of vulnerable people
- enduring service delivery relationships with people, including contact details and information about needs, strengths and vulnerabilities
- capacity to offer specialised and intensive case-management services to vulnerable people
- specialised service delivery in areas such as domestic violence, mental health and substance use (all of which can increase during times of significant hardship and stress)
- place-based approaches which bring detailed information about particular locations, including isolated and more remote communities
- existing networks and contacts with residents and local businesses
- existing linkages and referral pathways with other agencies
- access to contact information for local networks and working groups
- a proven track record of collaboration with a range of stakeholders
- harnessing local leadership on management committees and boards
- working with local leaders in formal and informal roles
- identifying and training local volunteers
- offering building-based infrastructure in diverse locations
- continuously assessing local needs and gathering information about what people need, where strengths are, and where gaps in resources exist.

There are many examples of CBOs that have redeployed their whole infrastructure to disaster management and recovery while also ensuring continued service delivery.

The true value of CBOs is in their ability to be responsive, flexible and decentralised.

COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANISATIONS: WHAT THEY NEED

Community-based organisations (CBOs) are seeking better connections with key organisations, stakeholders, planning processes and disaster management groups. They are continuously gathering important information that may help to refine and prioritise their disaster management and recovery efforts.

During consultations with smaller CBOs, the following five strategies and subsequent tactics for enabling them emerged.

1. FOCUSING ON STRENGTHENING THE ROLE CBOS PLAY

- Further legitimising the role of the CBO within disaster management and recovery processes and plans at local and state government levels.
- Supporting increased involvement in the Local Disaster Management Group.
- Supporting increased involvement in the Human and Social Recovery Group.
- Creating a stronger relationship – and more defined role – in relation to larger non-government organisations.
- Creating a strategy that addresses remoteness, isolation and disadvantage by developing the role of CBOs in linking with informal networks, key community leaders and champions.
- Resourcing CBOs for ongoing case management related to disaster recovery – focused on intensive assistance where needed – for vulnerable households. This type of case management would strive to address any existing or emerging needs such as:
  » housing
  » displacement
  » reunification
  » linkages with health services
  » financial assistance
  » access to benefits
  » income support
  » crisis interventions
  » trauma recovery.

2. INCREASING THE FLEXIBLE USE OF RESOURCES

- Providing additional resources to enable CBOs to play a consolidated or expanded role before, during, and after disasters, particularly in response to vulnerable people and places.

  This additional role could include contributing local plans and intelligence as a basis for directing the resources of larger organisations.
- Offering flexibility in funding contracts, thus allowing scope for a modified role and output before, during, and after disasters.

3. SUPPORTING THEIR WORKFORCE

- Generating learning and workforce development opportunities for CBOs that foster wider participation and effective service delivery models before, during, and after disasters.

  These should be inclusive of different stakeholders and sectors to ensure collaborative learning leads to improved collaboration in practice at all stages of a disaster.

4. INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

- Providing clarity to CBOs about key contacts and information pathways before, during, and after a disaster.

  This includes providing clear information about entitlements and eligibility for public assistance. CBOs are in contact with many people who are seeking assistance during such an event and are in a position to effectively triage and support enquiries.

- Providing CBOs with access and input to data about needs and outcomes as a basis for a data-driven approach to continuous improvements.

5. COORDINATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- Sharing processes and protocols with CBOs for when a vulnerable person or household is identified as having no existing supports.

  These processes and protocols should include how the appropriate support might be identified and put in place.

- Creating additional roles in the community that are focused on community building and social capital development. This is a way of strengthening resilience and reducing isolation through naturally existing networks.

RESILIENCE: A SYSTEMS VIEW

When natural disasters happen, the physical world can change dramatically, and as such is often where recovery efforts are focused.

Yet community-based organisations (CBOs) bring a holistic view of community need at times of great disruption. They understand that resilience is not just something that individuals have, but also something that a social system and locality has (Policy Innovation Hub, 2017).

Resilience is best understood as the capacity of a system to absorb the impact of disasters, and to recover and return to its pre-disrupted state, maintaining its essential characteristics.

Resilience is the characteristic of a system, focused on that system's ability to adapt, rather than on that system's stability.

A systems' approach within geographically defined boundaries allows for more effective and meaningful mitigation and recovery from disasters.

It helps to mobilise more resources and augment centralised responses.

The responsibility for resilience rests broadly with the participation of many different stakeholders. Resilience is only possible because of the connections between citizens, government, non-government, and business representatives.

When different roles, capacities, resources and expertise are synergised and harnessed, the best conditions for resilience are created.

Resilience is crucial at every stage of disaster management.

Those stages are as follows.

STAGE 1. ANTICIPATORY RESILIENCE PLANNING

This stage includes activities that enable communities to:
- assess risk
- form communities of interest
- exercise foresight
- enact mitigation and preparedness measures to manage risks.

STAGE 2. RESPONSIVE RESILIENCE PLANNING

This stage includes activities that enable social and organisational entities to:
- mobilise resources through emergent interpersonal and inter-organisational networks
- carry out plans
- improvise, and exercise creativity, in instances where plans fall short.

STAGE 3. AFTER A DISASTER – ADAPTIVE RESILIENCE PLANNING

This stage includes activities that enable social units to:
- reassess their circumstances
- learn from their disaster experiences
- adjust their strategies in light of the 'new normal' ushered in by disaster.

Tierney, 2014

UNDERSTANDING DISASTER MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS IN QUEENSLAND

1. QUEENSLAND INTERIM RECOVERY PLAN: A FRAMEWORK

Queensland has a significant history of natural disasters and a well-developed system of disaster management.

The State Government's recovery plan at the time of producing this kit emphasised a:

'collaborative, coordinated, adaptable, and scalable approach' to disaster recovery – which is much more in line with research in socialised resilience than previous plans – which revolve around building resilience. (QldRA 2016, quoted in the Policy Innovation Hub, 2017:11)

Disaster recovery is defined as:

"the coordinated process of supporting affected communities, families and individuals in the reconstruction of the built environment and the restoration of their emotional, social, and economic wellbeing, as well as the natural environment" (QldRA 2016:7).

Recovery is considered:

"part of disaster management, which includes the broader components of prevention, preparedness and response. Depending on the nature of the event, many recovery activities begin during the event, or as part of the initial response, while planning and preparation for recovery should be continuous throughout the year" (QldRA 2016:7).

Disaster management and recovery in Queensland occurs in three phases:

1. Post-impact and early recovery

Impact and damage assessments are undertaken alongside recovery works. These activities may occur in parallel to the response.

2. Recovery and reconstruction

The execution of deliberate, methodical recovery, reconstruction, and enhancement of all disaster affected communities, functions, and infrastructure.

3. Transition

The progressive handover of recovery and reconstruction responsibilities to agencies or organisations, including state or local government, and community-based or industry-led sectors.

Queensland's recovery plan begins and ends with a business-as-usual phase.

The plan places emphasis on the core importance of a community leading its own recovery after a natural disaster:

"The Recovery Plan acknowledges that disaster-affected communities are best placed to understand and identify their needs for recovery and that they have inherent strengths, assets, and resources that should be actively engaged during the response and recovery phases of a disaster. It also recognises that empowering communities to create their own solutions, in consultation with local government, can improve overall social cohesion and deliver sustainable recovery outcomes, including enhancement of disaster management capability and capacity to build resilience to future disasters." (QldRA, 2016:8)

2. PEOPLE WITH VULNERABILITIES IN DISASTERS

In keeping with the Queensland Government's awareness of the impact of natural disasters, and putting in place appropriate disaster management, they have acknowledged the need to reduce the impact of disasters on people with vulnerabilities, or people who may become vulnerable. As a result, in August 2016, the Queensland Government released: *People with vulnerabilities in disasters – A framework for an effective local response* (the Framework)

The Framework was developed after wide consultation with state and local government agencies as well as community groups.

Vulnerability in disasters and emergencies

The Framework acknowledges that disasters potentially affect all individuals and communities, however, people who experience impaired mobility or diminished sensory awareness, chronic health conditions and or other social, and economic limitations are of far greater risk of loss, injury, illness or death during disasters.

Similarly support systems for vulnerable people are disrupted during and after disasters, further adding to the disaster impact.

In addition, tourists and seasonal workers were identified as vulnerable due largely to inexperience regarding local hazards, language, and communication barriers.

In other words, a person's level of vulnerability to a disaster impact is not determined by a single indicator. A number of factors, including protective factors, must be taken into consideration before determining the vulnerability of a person in relation to the disaster rather than being a vulnerable person within society. (The Framework 2016:3)

Building resilience

The Framework identifies the need to have a person-centred approach with a focus on preparedness, risk reduction strategies, and practices that are inclusive and accessible. The integral element is to build resilience in households and communities.

The shift of focus from recovery to preparedness and planning for people with vulnerabilities is one of the most effective ways to improve resilience. The ability of the Queensland Government, local governments, communities and business to actively identify and engage with people with vulnerabilities is the foundation of this resilience building. (The Framework 2016:30)

The Framework identifies positive risk management – as opposed to crisis management – and stresses the importance of communities, including local governments, having access to skills and resources.

A key element for a positive risk culture and resilient communities is collaborative planning across sectors and preparedness to ensure the agencies that provide services or support to these cohorts have disaster plans in place for people with vulnerabilities (the Framework 2016:4)

The following three guiding principles for considering people with vulnerabilities in disasters can be found in the Framework:

1. Individuals and communities are able to take up their responsibilities for planning to reduce disaster related risks for their vulnerable community members.
2. Local communities have the capability to assist people with vulnerabilities to reduce their risk and build resilience.
3. Local communities know best how to build resilience, particularly with regard to people with vulnerabilities (2016:4).

LOCAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT GROUPS AND THE HUMAN AND SOCIAL RECOVERY GROUP

Local Disaster Management Groups (LDMGs) are the bodies that coordinate disaster management at the Local Government Area (LGA) level. Under the Disaster Management Act 2003, each LGA in the state must prepare and endorse a Local Disaster Management Plan (LDMP), which is to be publicly accessible free of charge.

This diagram shows the organising committees, and relationships established in the Disaster Management Act 2003.

Figure 1: Reporting and Funding Arrangements for Queensland Disaster Management Bodies
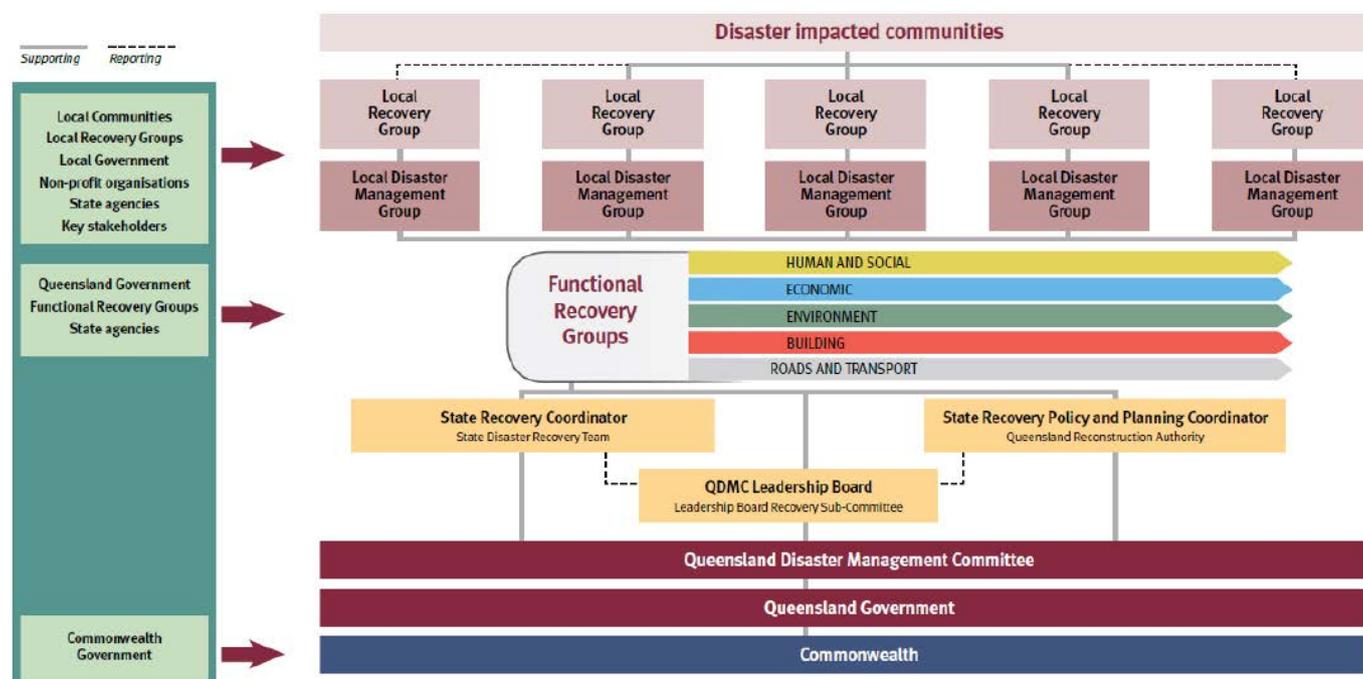
Source: Queensland State Recovery Plan 2017-2019, Operation Queensland Recovery, 2017:23

LDMGs are made up of members of the LGA's council, and it is common for the mayor of the council to be the chairperson.

LDMGs also invite representatives of other organisations to join their group – or a sub-committee – to provide advice on the management of recovery activities following a disaster.

These organisations most often include State emergency services, and other key State Government departments.

In some instances, community-based organisations (CBOs) and community groups may already be included in the LDMG.

There is also a Human and Social Recovery Group linked to the LDMG. This can be an important group to join regarding specific efforts to support the recovery of people and communities.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL CAPITAL: CAPACITY THROUGH CONNECTION

ABOUT COMMUNITY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community development[1] is a way of working that seeks to bring people together around issues, challenges and opportunities they share in common.

It involves a method of working that strives to understand concerns and interests, first through dialogue, and then by drawing people together in relationships with each other to share their concerns and interests.

Through this process, people can start to explore how they might work together on those things that matter the most. This way of working goes beyond individual responses to challenges, and explores instead how people use their strengths, resources and capacities to make changes to situations that affect them in common.

Community development is often concerned with geographical communities as a basis for working together.

While it can also be about communities of interest, it is a way of working that has been used extensively to develop relationships within localities so people feel connections to each other and a sense of belonging to a place. This sense of belonging manifests in many ways including being familiar and secure within specific places, and being connected to people

Many communities offer people a broader and deeper sense of home than an individual dwelling.

In disasters, people's actual home or dwelling may be seriously impacted. In some situations, people are also displaced from a locality that offers a broader, deeper and more collective sense of home. In one or both scenarios, the impacts on wellbeing can be devastating.

Community development concerns itself with helping people connect to each other and attach to a place.

This definition highlights many themes relevant to disaster planning, management and recovery, such as:

• bringing people together
• working on problems and needs
• identifying resources and strengthening leadership.

[1] This approach to community development draws on the work of Anthony Kelly (2007).

"Community development is a process, a way of doing things. It can:
- bring people together
- help people to identify the problems and needs which they share, and then respond to them
- help people to discover the resources that they already have
- promote knowledge, skills, confidence and the capacity to act together
- strengthen organisation and leadership within communities
- strengthen contacts between communities.

Once people are working together it can help them to:
- take action to address inequalities
- deal directly with issues they think are important
- change the relationships between communities and public or private organisations
- help public organisations to work in more open and inclusive ways
- promote increased local democracy, participation and involvement in public affairs."

(Community Development Alliance of Scotland, 2008:3)

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Community development concerns itself with building relationships among people as a way of increasing capacity and resilience.

Within this fabric of relationships, leadership plays a critical role.

There may be leaders in a community that have formal and legitimised roles, yet it is very often the informal leaders that can reach beyond the usual levels of engagement to support more people, including those people with barriers to access.

These informal leaders are people who know many other people in the community, know community history and strengths, can identify resources, and make connections. They are often the people who others will come to with questions. Often by instinct, they connect people and resources together at all times, but especially in times of disaster.

In some isolated and very disadvantaged communities, informal leaders play an especially critical role. Where communications are limited or cut-off, and where needs are high, informal community leaders are often the first – together with other residents – to reach out and start identifying needs and ways of responding.

This layer of informal leadership needs recognition and legitimisation. It also needs resourcing and development, including via practical mechanisms for cost recovery and the provision of basic communication tools.

Disaster management systems need to include a formal role for community development by CBOs and community centres that have legitimised links to formal governance arrangements (such as the Human and Social Recovery Group and the Local Disaster Management Group).

A ROLE FOR COMMUNITY CENTRES AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community centres have an important role to play in building this layer of leadership so that it is better supported and resourced. This sort of capacity is at the core of what community centres do, despite the challenges they face in terms of resources.

The historically low levels of resources available to community centres is well identified. Yet they can – and do – play a vital role in disaster planning, management and recovery.

These roles are recognised:

 "The research shows that neighbourhood centres form a key element of the social infrastructure of disadvantaged communities. The infrastructure provided by the centres can be quickly mobilised, expanded or readjusted to respond to local needs, emerging issues or opportunities."

(Izmir et al, 2009)

This was also reflected in a report following the 2011 floods in Queensland, based on the experience of some Brisbane community centres:

"We were able to access local resources and relationships. We could move quickly and get people involved. We helped to increase the total level of volunteering and donations. We played a breadth of roles and we were often repositioning our role in a responsive way. Responsive repositioning is what we did, depending on needs and opportunities, and it changed every day."

(Community Centre Coordinator, West End Community House, 2011.)

Community centres often share similar roles and functions, but by the same token, respond uniquely to specific geographical communities.

They are decentralised bases from which services and resources can be collected and distributed, and can be the base for service delivery that is responsive to the needs of vulnerable people. There is inevitably a strong need for community centres to play a formal, connected and legitimised role in the future of disaster planning, management, and recovery.

BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLANNING AND COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANISATIONS

To respond effectively to community needs, community-based organisations (CBOs) need to focus on business continuity planning.

"Business continuity and disaster management planning are about effectively planning and responding to potential (or actual) events and disasters that put organisations and people at risk. Business continuity and disaster management planning involves:

- *assessing capacity to provide services to people and operate effectively during events and emergencies*
- *identifying alternative strategies to be able to continue to provide services to residents during events and emergencies".*

(Policy Innovation Hub, Griffith University, 2017)

Business continuity planning is not something that can be done for an organisation.

It requires the involvement of key people, and it needs to be based on the knowledge, experience and practices already at play.

An approach that is participatory, and built on existing foundations, ensures that the resulting plan is practical, purposeful and feasible.

Business continuity planning will consider:

- real scenarios that have occurred where there has been learning about the CBOs strengths and capabilities
- past and current learning about what could be better and where more strength is needed
- the service delivery model and the CBOs purpose and reach within the community
- the capacity for making contact with people who are assisted by the CBO, and for knowing what their needs and vulnerabilities are
- existing plans, policies and procedures that guide practice and quality.

Business continuity plans are not static. They are dynamic and are revisited regularly to ensure currency and relevance. They grow and develop based on continuous learning, business growth, and development.

THE TOOLKIT

This research was developed to support the creation of the Disaster Recovery and Management Toolkit and Planning Template which you can find on the CSIA website www.csialtd.com.au/disastermanagement

The toolkit contains practical scenarios, activities and templates to help community-based organisations to prepare for disasters recovery and management.

If your organisation requires support in preparing for future disasters, why don't you reach out to us for help at info@csialtd.com.au.

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