

Notes on Disaster Resilience

WHAT IS DISASTER RESILIENCE?

Your community will prove resilient in the event of a severe emergency or disaster when members of the population are connected to one another and work together, so that they are able to:

- function and sustain critical systems, even under stress;
- adapt to changes in the physical, social or economic environment;
- be self-reliant if external resources are limited or cut off; and
- learn from experience to improve over time.

Resilience: The ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate to and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions. (UN)

Resilience is a process, not an outcome.

The phrase, “Without compromising long term prospects’, distinguishes resilience as not just survival, or even a return to stability or a previous state, but rather, an ability to ‘bounce forward’, adapt to a changed reality and capitalise on the opportunities offered by a new environment.’ (Paton & Johnston, 2006)

Disaster: A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society, causing widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses, which exceed the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources.

Capacity: The combination of all strengths and resources available which can reduce the level of risk or effects of a disaster.

The ability of individuals, communities, or countries exposed to disasters, crises and underlying vulnerabilities to:

- Anticipate
- Reduce the impact of
- Cope with
- Recover from the effects of adversity without compromising their long-term prospects.

Ability: the capacity or capability based on different human, psychological, social, financial, physical, natural or political assets.

The **All-Hazards approach** assumes that the functions and activities used to manage one event are likely to be application to a range of events, whether natural or caused by human activity.

Disaster resilience is a **shared responsibility** for individuals, households, businesses and communities, as well as for governments.

Groups must collaborate, consult, communicate and ensure interoperability with key stakeholders (Community members or groups, essential service providers, agencies, key tourism and transport operators, and NGOs).

A disaster resilient community is one where:

- people understand the risks that may affect them and others in their community. They understand the risks assessed around Australia, particularly those in their local area. They have **comprehensive local information about hazards and risks**, including **who is exposed and who is most vulnerable**. They take action to prepare for disasters and are adaptive and flexible to respond appropriately during emergencies
- people have taken steps to anticipate disasters and to protect themselves their assets and their livelihoods, including their homes and possessions, cultural heritage and economic capital, therefore minimising physical, economic and social losses. They have committed the necessary resources and are capable of organising themselves before, during and after disasters which helps to restore social, institutional and economic activity
- people **work together with local leaders** using their knowledge and resources to prepare for and deal with disasters. They use **personal and community strengths**, and existing **community networks and structures**; a resilient community is enabled by strong social networks that offer support to individuals and families in a time of crisis
- people work in partnership with **emergency services, their local authorities and other** relevant organisations before, during and after emergencies. These relationships ensure community resilience activities are informed by local knowledge, can be undertaken safely, and complement the work of emergency service agencies
- **emergency management plans** are resilience-based, to build disaster resilience within communities over time. Communities, governments and other organisations take resilience outcomes into account when considering and developing core services, products and policies. They are adaptive and flexible to respond appropriately in disasters
- the emergency management **volunteer** sector is strong
- businesses and other service providers undertake wide-reaching **business continuity planning** that links with their security and emergency management arrangements
- **land use planning systems** and **building control** arrangements reduce, as far as is practicable, community exposure to unreasonable risks from known hazards, and suitable arrangements are implemented to protect life and property, and
- following a disaster, a satisfactory range of **functioning is restored quickly**. People understand the mechanisms and processes through which **recovery assistance** may be made available and they appreciate that support is designed to be offered, in the first instance, to the most vulnerable community members.
 - Disasters happen, are increasing in frequency and intensity, and have wide-reaching impacts. These can be categorized into:
 - People
 - Built
 - Economic
 - Environment

- When individuals and local organisations come together to respond from the bottom up, they are more likely to be in touch with on-ground timely information, and to be there immediately. They know and have social capital, networks, skills, resources at hand – to obtain information about the challenges and to coordinate with others.
- People turn to and mobilise their own bottom-up recovery efforts because they know and trust their neighbors and community and are able to utilise the organisations, resources, and skills that they have on hand, just as they often do during mundane times.

Bibliography

Information in these notes came from various sources, including Red Cross-[Round Table Report](#), NCOSS, Torrens Resilience Institute, Qld Disaster Management Guidelines.

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Paton, D., & Johnston, D. (2006). *Disaster resilience: an integrated approach*. Charles C Thomas Pub Ltd.

Red Cross – [Working with communities](#)

Red Cross - [Facilitator Guide](#)

Australian Business Roundtable – [Roles and Responsibilities](#) in Disaster Management

Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience – [Building Adaptive Capacities](#)

Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience – [Knowledge Hub](#)

Qld Disaster Management [Guideline](#)

NCOSS – [Guide](#) and [Worksheets](#) - Planning and preparing for community-led disaster recovery

NSW - Community Resilience, Wellbeing and Recovery Project [Resources](#)

USA FEMA – [Tools for Practitioners](#) Interesting to use and compare resources from USA

USA [AARP Disaster Resilience Toolkit](#)

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