Recovery Basics:
working in recovery

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Within this resource, the term 'emergency' is used and can apply to any form of emergency incident or disaster. Where the term 'disaster' is used, this is interchangeable with 'emergency' and connotations of one term over the other should not be made.

1   Australian Red Cross, 2012, Community Recovery Information Series.

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Contents

Introduction

Recovery Basics is a series of three booklets for people or organisations living through or working in disaster recovery. Red Cross also offers Recovery Basics workshops, which draw on the content.

The series is targeted and practical, can be applied to any type of emergency in any geographical area and can be used in large or small emergencies. It covers the basics of recovery and the research that guides us. Although introductory, it provides references and resources for further reading.

Interest in disaster recovery has steadily increased over the past decade. There are a range of resources, research and training produced by different organisations. Therefore, this resource doesn't provide a comprehensive overview of disaster recovery, nor does it duplicate information found elsewhere. It is a concise, clear, accessible introduction to community recovery that can be used as both a stand-alone resource and a compliment to a Recovery Basics workshop.

The series comprises of three short booklets covering the following topics[2]:

1. Recovery Basics: the impact of disasters on communities and individuals
2. Recovery Basics: working in recovery
3. Looking after yourself during and after disasters

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This booklet *Recovery Basics: working in recovery* provides a summary overview of what to expect and best practice approaches which support effective community led recovery. It explains some of the complexities of working with communities after a disaster. It is an introduction only, and suggestions are made for where to go for a deeper understanding.

If you work in disaster recovery, we suggest you read this booklet alongside *Recovery Basics: the impact of disasters on individuals and communities* and *Looking after yourself during and after disasters*.

2   A fourth booklet *Recovery Basics: planning a Red Cross Recovery Basics workshop* is available to Red Cross people to support workshop planning and delivery.

Recovery in context

Disaster recovery is part of emergency management, which includes the broader components of prevention, preparedness, relief and response. The goal of emergency management is to contribute to the development and maintenance of a safe and sustainable community. Emergency management is a complex, whole of community process aimed at managing the threat and impacts of emergency situations to individuals, families, communities, infrastructure, the economy and the environment[3].

Prevention, preparedness (before), response (during) and recovery (after) are all closely intertwined. Each area influences the other. What happens before a disaster influences the outcomes during an event. Similarly, the activities and communications which occur during a disaster influence recovery and the way it plays out.

Figure 1, outlines the different components of emergency management and illustrates where recovery fits into the cycle. It also highlights the overlap between the four different emergency management components.

Recovery should start on day one, as soon as the emergency occurs. Recovery is different from immediate response as it is focused on the longer-term support and recovery of individuals, households and communities[4].

3   Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience, 2019, *Australian Emergency Management Arrangements Handbook*.
4   Australian Red Cross, 2022, *Communicating in Recovery*, version 2, p7.
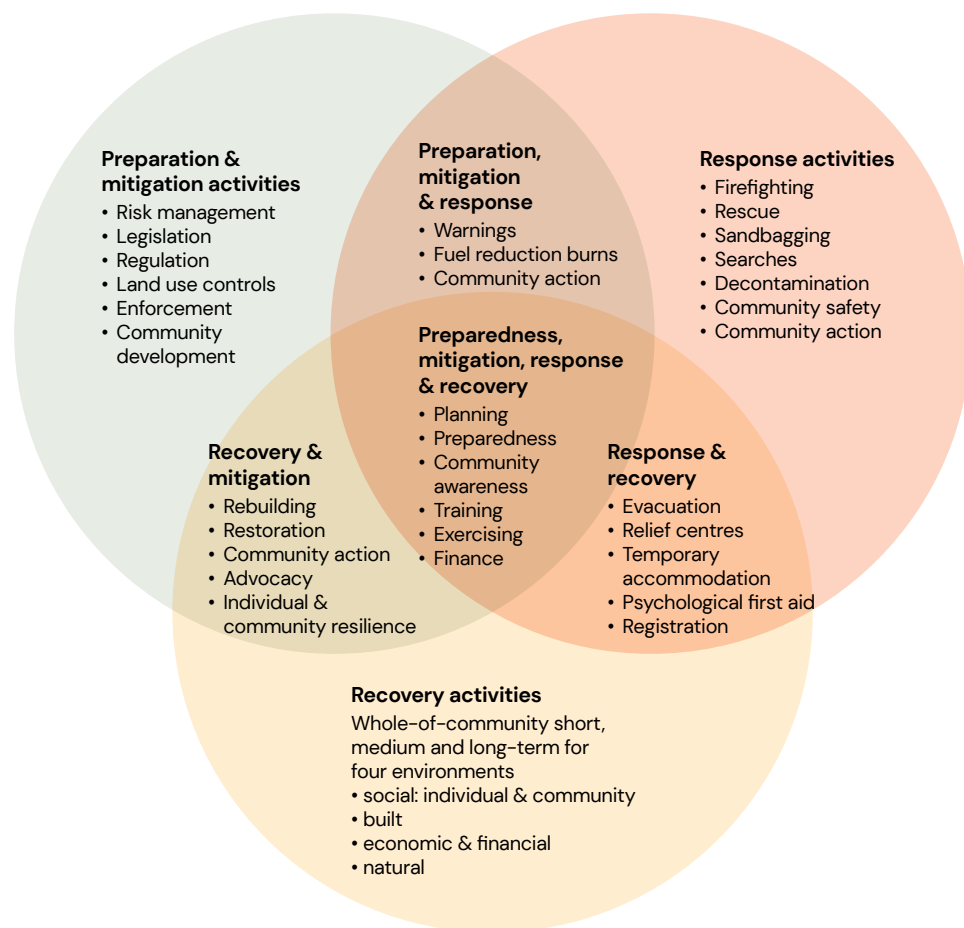
Figure 1 content:

Preparation & mitigation activities
• Risk management
• Legislation
• Regulation
• Land use controls
• Enforcement
• Community development

Preparation, mitigation & response
• Warnings
• Fuel reduction burns
• Community action

Response activities
• Firefighting
• Rescue
• Sandbagging
• Searches
• Decontamination
• Community safety
• Community action

Preparedness, mitigation, response & recovery
• Planning
• Preparedness
• Community awareness
• Training
• Exercising
• Finance

Recovery & mitigation
• Rebuilding
• Restoration
• Community action
• Advocacy
• Individual & community resilience

Response & recovery
• Evacuation
• Relief centres
• Temporary accommodation
• Psychological first aid
• Registration

Recovery activities
Whole-of-community short, medium and long-term for four environments
• social: individual & community
• built
• economic & financial
• natural

Figure 1: Programs and activities supporting disaster prevention, preparedness, response and recovery[5].

Recovery takes time

The complex nature of communities and the impacts of disasters on people, households and communities mean that communities do not 'bounce back' from disasters quickly, nor does life go 'back to normal'.

Figure 2, depicts how a disaster can entirely disrupt a community's ongoing work and the time it takes for a community to return to earlier community priorities[6]. It shows the relationships between pre-existing community development work, relief, early recovery and long-term recovery. The process of getting a community to a point where they can once again focus on ongoing community development not related to recovery, takes time.

Figure 2 labels:
- Level of activity (y-axis)
- Time (x-axis)
- Disaster event
- Response
- Ongoing community development work
- Relief
- Early recovery
- Long-term recovery
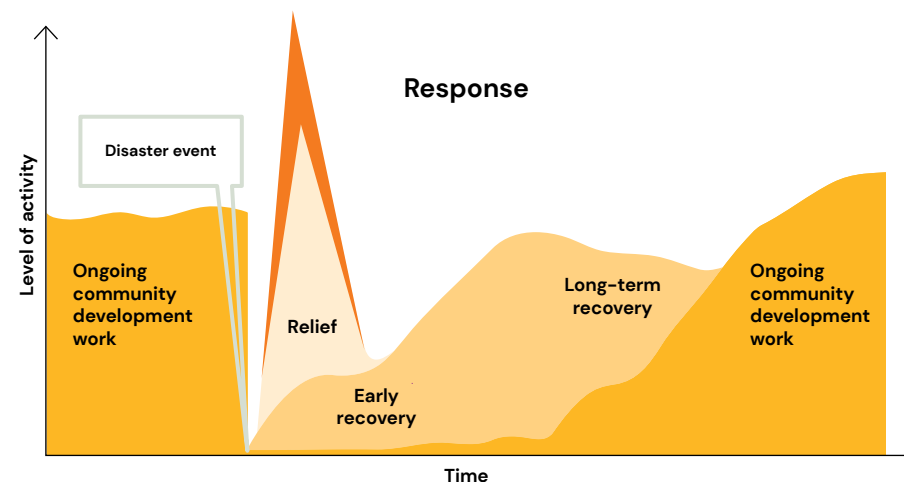- Ongoing community development work

Figure 2: Effect of disaster on ongoing community development and the interaction with relief and recovery[7].

5   ibid, p 9.

6   ibid, p 32.
7   Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience (AIDR), 2018, *Australian Disaster Resilience Community Recovery Handbook*, p 32.

10

Conceptualising Recovery

Recovery is an environment comprising many competing priorities and needs. Some aspects are very practical, whilst others are complex social problems. This requires a variety of skills and knowledge to manage effectively.

Different ways of thinking about recovery have been developed. These models can be helpful to frame recovery and ensure all community needs are considered.

Recovery environments model

The recovery environments model (see Figure 3) uses four environments to describe the different impacts of disaster on a community and the types of services needed to support recovery. The four environments are described separately, however, for a community to function effectively all areas must work together. The community should always be central to work undertaken in each environment.

The range of impacts of disasters can be broadly described using four environments:

- Social (or psychosocial)
- Built
- Economic
- Natural[8].

These four environments are interrelated with many cross overs between them[9]. Some state and local governments use these key areas to break down their recovery committee structures, however, community members affected by a disaster will not discern their needs in each of these areas as separate.

Figure 3: The four recovery environments[10].

Effective communication and coordination across all environments are vital to ensure communities have easy access to all aspects of recovery. They also aid in reducing duplication.

The centrality of community in this model is key. It highlights that the impacts in each environment are relevant because they impact on people and their ability to live their lives to the full.

8   AIDR, 2018, op. cit., p 54–55.
9   ibid. p 55–56.

10   ibid, p 54.

Recovery Capitals Framework

Communities are complex and disasters impact every facet of community. To aid understanding of this complexity a consortium of researchers developed a model of Recovery Capitals (ReCap). Like the recovery environments model, the recovery capitals are deeply interrelated. The use of 'capitals' encourages a strengths-based approach and permits a focus on how these facets of community change over time and can be developed and utilised in recovery[11].
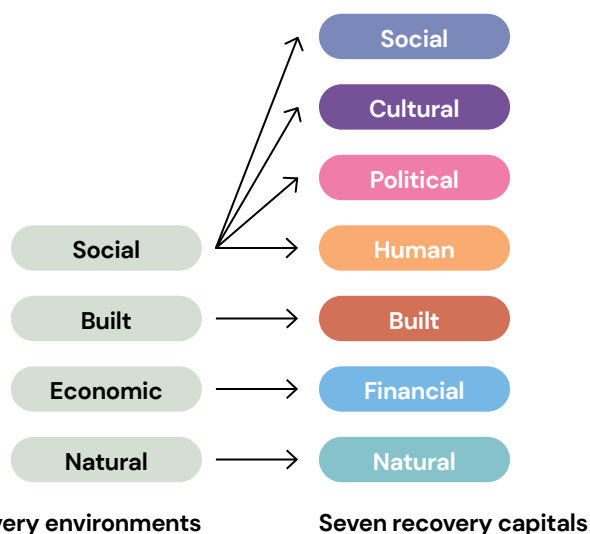

Four recovery environments   **Seven recovery capitals**

Figure 4: Illustrates the link between the four recovery environments and the Recovery Capitals[12].

The key enhancement of this model is the division of the social environment into social, cultural, political and human capitals, which encourages a greater understanding of these aspects of recovery.

11   Quinn, P., Gibbs, L., Blake, D., Campbell, E., Johnston, D., & Ireton, G. 2020. *Guide to Post-Disaster Recovery Capitals (ReCap).* Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre. Melbourne.
12   Phoenix Australia, 2022. Applying ReCap. Retrieved from https://www.phoenixaustralia.org/disaster-hub/resources/recovery-capitals/applying-recap/

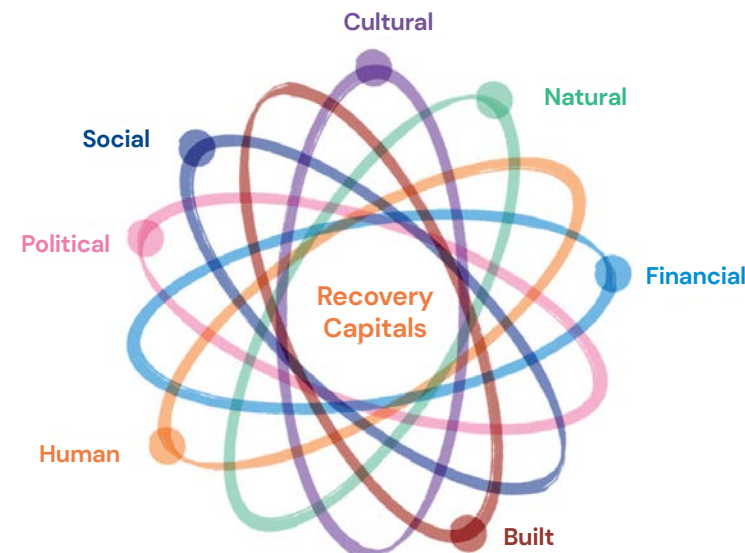*Figure 5: Recovery Capitals interact with each other and can impact post-disaster community wellbeing[13].*

The seven 'Recovery Capitals' are detailed below:

- *'Social capital'* refers to the connections, reciprocity and trust among people and groups. There are three types of social capital: bonding (strong ties between similar people, e.g. family and friends), bridging (looser ties between a broader range of people, often cutting across race, gender and class) and linking (ties connecting people with those in power, such as decision-makers).

- *Cultural capital'* refers to the way people understand and know the world, and how they act within it. It includes ethnicity, habits, language, stories, traditions, spirituality, heritage, symbols, mannerisms, preferences, attitudes, orientations, identities, norms, values, and the process and end products of cultural and artistic pursuits.

13   Gibbs, L., Johnston, D., Quinn, P., Blake, D., Campbell, E. & Coghlan, A. 2021. *Recovery Capitals (ReCap): Navigating the complexities of disaster recovery – final project report,* Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC, Melbourne.

- '*Political capital*' refers to the power to influence decision-making in relation to resource access and distribution, and the ability to engage external entities to achieve local goals. It includes agency, voice, justice, equity, inclusion, legislation, regulation, governance, leadership and policy. It applies within and between groups and exists both formally and informally.
- '*Human capital*' refers to people's skills and capabilities, including the ability to access resources and knowledge. It includes education, physical and mental health, physical ability, knowledge from lived experience and leadership capabilities.
- '*Built capital*' refers to the design, building and maintenance of physical infrastructure, including its functional and aesthetic value. This includes critical facilities and services, housing, vehicles, equipment, information technology, communications, water and energy infrastructure.
- '*Financial capital*' refers to the availability of and access to resources including savings, income, assets, investments, credit, insurance, grants, donations, loans, consumption and distribution of goods and services, employment and economic activity.
- '*Natural capital*' refers to natural resources and beauty, and the overall health of ecosystems. This includes air, land, soil, water, minerals, energy, weather, geographic location, flora, fauna and biodiversity.[14]

Using the Recovery Capitals as the basis for reporting and undertaking needs assessments provides a comprehensive understanding of community priorities. The importance of measuring the full range of human impacts that disaster has on individuals, families, communities and governments is being recognised[15].

Often, the more tangible, physical and more easily quantifiable aspects of recovery such as, agricultural equipment, buildings and contents, clean-up costs and emergency and relief arrangements, can become the focus of the media and government agencies. This can lead to a bias in the amount of focus on these areas.

Historically, ensuring the 'intangible' psychosocial aspects of recovery, such as health and wellbeing, community connection, employment and education, are measured and prioritised has been challenging. '*The economic cost of the social impact of natural disasters*', report by the Australian Business Roundtable for Disaster Resilience and Safer Communities[16] suggests that the long term economic cost of natural disasters may be underestimated by more than 50%. This illustrates the importance of a strong focus on psychosocial recovery for communities.

Additional reading or resources

Guide to Post-Disaster Recovery Capitals (ReCap)
Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre

The economic cost of the social impact of natural disasters
Australian Business Roundtable for Disaster Resilience and Safer Communities

Community Recovery Handbook
Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience

Understanding and using Recovery Capitals research
Lisa Gibbs

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14   Quinn, et al., op. cit.
15   Rogers, B.C., Werbeloff, L., Wilkinson, C., Jones, K., Archer, F., Martin, B., Bragge, P., Fisher, J. Wickes, R., Forbes-Mewitt, H., Johnston, D., Mandl, S., Clarence, C., Anseline, L., Malekpour, S., Satur, P., Spencer, C., and Lennox, A. 2021. *An Agenda for Change: Community-led Disaster Resilience. Fire to Flourish*. Melbourne, Australia.

16   Australian Business Roundtable for Disaster Resilience and Safer Communities, 2016, *The economic cost of the social impact of natural disasters*.

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National Principles of Disaster Recovery

Effectively supporting community recovery can be complex and challenging. Community focused recovery is essential. This requires genuine engagement with the community in order to recognise community capacity and build social capital. In this way, the community is able to support itself through recovery and will ultimately be less reliant on external agencies[17].

The National Principles for Disaster Recovery in Australia provide a guide to responding to individual and community needs in a post disaster environment[18]. The principles were developed at a national (federal) level with contribution from the state and territory governments and are used to guide recovery policy and work for all states and territories. Endorsed in 2009 by the Community Services Minister's Advisory Council, they were further refined in 2018 by the Social Recovery Reference Group (Australia and New Zealand).

For people working in recovery the principles can be used as a test to determine if decisions, programs, or policies are appropriate for a particular community's recovery. Practical checklists have been developed to support this process[19 & 20].

The six principles represent a range of aspects that are considered central to successful recovery.

17   Dibley, G., Mitchell, L., Ireton, G., Gordon, R., Gordon, M. 2019. *Government's role in supporting community-led approaches to recovery*, Department of Health and Human Services, Victoria.
18   Social Recovery Reference Group, 2018, *National Principles for Disaster Recovery*.
19   Social Recovery Reference Group, 2018, *Planning for Recovery (pre-event): Applying the National Principles for Disaster Recovery*.
20   Social Recovery Reference Group, 2018, *Applying the National Principles for Disaster Recovery post-disaster*.

Understand the context

Successful recovery is based on understanding community context, with each community having its own history, values and dynamics

- Acknowledge existing strengths and capacity, including past experiences
- Appreciate the risks and stressors faced by the community;
- Be respectful of and sensitive to the culture and diversity of the community
- Support those who may be facing vulnerability
- Recognise the importance of the environment to people and to their recovery
- Acknowledge that the impact upon the community may extend beyond the geographical boundaries where the disaster occurred.

Recognise complexity

Successful recovery is responsive to the complex and dynamic nature of both emergencies and the community. Disasters lead to a range of effects and impacts that require a variety of approaches; they can also leave long-term legacies

- Individuals and the community have diverse needs and expectations
- Responsive and flexible action is crucial to address immediate needs
- Existing community knowledge and values may challenge the assumptions of those outside of the community
- Conflicting knowledge, values and priorities among individuals, the community and organisations may create tensions and
- Emergencies create stressful environments where grief or blame may also affect those involved.

Use community-led approaches

Successful recovery is community-centred, responsive and flexible, engaging with community and supporting them to move forward. Individuals, families and the community are enabled to actively participate in their own recovery

- Recognise that individuals and the community may need different levels of support at various times
- Be guided by the community's priorities
- Channel effort through pre-identified and existing community assets, including local knowledge, existing community strengths and resilience
- Build collaborative partnerships between the community and those involved in the recovery process
- Recognise that new community leaders often emerge during and after a disaster, who may not hold formal positions of authority and
- Recognise that different communities may choose different paths to recovery.

Coordinate all activities

Successful recovery requires a planned, coordinated and adaptive approach, between community and partner agencies, based on continuing assessment of impacts and needs. Clearly articulated and shared goals based on desired outcomes are needed

- Be flexible, taking into account changes in community needs or stakeholder expectations
- Be guided by those with experience and expertise, using skilled, authentic and capable community leadership
- Be at the pace desired by the community, and seek to collaborate and reconcile different interests and time frames
- Reflect well-developed community planning and information gathering

- Have clear decision-making and sound governance, which are transparent and accessible to the community
- Be part of an emergency management approach that integrates with response operations and contributes to future prevention and preparedness and
- Be inclusive, availing of and building upon relationships created before, during and after the emergency.

Communicate effectively

Successful recovery is built on effective communication between the affected community and other partners. Recognise that communication should be two-way, and that input and feedback should be encouraged

- Ensure that information is accessible to audiences in diverse situations, addresses a variety of communication needs, and is provided through a range of media and networks
- Establish mechanisms for coordinated and consistent communications between all service providers, organisations and individuals and the community
- Ensure that all communication is relevant, timely, clear, accurate, targeted, credible and consistent and
- Identify trusted sources of information and repeat key recovery messages to enable greater community confidence and receptivity.

Recognise and build capacity

Successful recovery recognises, supports, and builds on individual, community and organisational capacity and resilience. Assess capability and capacity requirements before, during and after a disaster

- Support the development of self-reliance, preparation and disaster mitigation
- Quickly identify and mobilise community skills, strengths and resources
- Develop networks and partnerships to strengthen capacity, capability and resilience
- Provide opportunities to share, transfer and develop knowledge, skills and training
- Recognise that resources can be provided by a range of partners and from community networks
- Understand that additional resources may only be available for a limited period, and that sustainability may need to be addressed
- Understand when and how to step back, while continuing to support individuals and the community as a whole to be more self-sufficient when they are ready.

Additional reading or resources

National Principles for Disaster Recovery
Social Recovery Reference Group

Planning for Recovery (pre-event): Applying the National Principles for Disaster Recovery
Social Recovery Reference Group

Applying the National Principles for Disaster Recovery post-disaster
Social Recovery Reference Group

Australian Disaster Resilience Handbook Collection: Community Recovery
Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience

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A psychosocial approach and psychosocial support

"Psychosocial support interventions maintain and promote resilience, dignity and self-agency"[21].

The term 'psychosocial' refers to the dynamic relationship between the psychological and social dimensions of a person, where the one influences the other. The psychological dimension includes; internal, emotional and thought processes, feelings and reactions. The social dimension includes; relationships, family and community networks, social values and cultural practices.

When considering how to support mental health and wellbeing of people, groups and communities after crisis we can apply both a psychosocial approach and provide psychosocial interventions.

A psychosocial approach aims to ensure that disaster relief and recovery is delivered in a compassionate manner that promotes dignity, enables self-efficacy through meaningful participation, respects the importance of religious and cultural practices, and strengthens the ability of people to support their children, families and neighbours. It contributes to overall wellbeing and quality of life. Psychosocial support refers to the actions or interventions that address both the psychological and social needs of individuals, families and communities.

21   Australian Red Cross, 2020, *Psychosocial Support in Emergencies: A humanitarian diplomacy and advocacy toolkit.*

Psychosocial support can be defined as a process of facilitating resilience within individuals, families and communities. This is done by implementing relevant and culturally appropriate activities that respect the independence, dignity and coping mechanisms of individuals and communities and enhance protection. In this way, psychosocial support promotes the restoration of social cohesion and infrastructure within communities that have lived through disasters or crisis situations[22].

In emergencies, people are affected in different ways and require different kinds of supports. Community-based psychosocial support is focussed on strengthening social capital of affected communities by improving the psychosocial wellbeing of individuals, households and communities.

Providing psychosocial support

In the early stages of recovery, it is recognised that survivors need to be supported in an appropriate way that doesn't make them more vulnerable. People will go through many reactions – many are normal. People should be supported to manage these responses rather than needing traditional diagnosis and clinical treatment. In the days and weeks after the emergency, what survivors need is to feel safe and have access to basic services such as food, water, power and shelter[23].

Psychosocial support should be available to all persons affected by a crisis. A key to organising mental health and psychosocial supports is to develop a layered system of complementary supports that meets the needs of different groups, are culturally sensitive, related to a local understanding of needs and support ways of coping[24].

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) guidelines and intervention pyramid (Figure 6) helps to plan, establish and coordinate responses to protect and improve people's mental health and psychosocial well-being during and after emergencies[25]. The intervention pyramid outlines the different types of psychosocial supports that are appropriate, based on the level of need. In Australia, there are existing organisations that provide services at each layer of the pyramid. However, due to the geographic size of Australia, many communities do not have access to appropriate supports. The IASC pyramid is a useful tool to determine any gaps which may exist.

Importantly, most people (the 80% that sit in levels 1 to 3 of the pyramid) will recover with time, support from family and friends, and the ability to participate meaningfully in community. The higher up in the pyramid, the more specialised the support required.

Different groups such as children, adults, men, women, older people and people with disabilities, have different reactions to crises. For this reason, psychosocial interventions are designed according to the particular needs and resources in a group or subpopulation[26].

The emphasis of interventions should always be on empowerment, drawing upon resilience and building strengths, capabilities and self-sufficiency, while at the same time making available appropriate mental health and other services that complement individual, family and community-based coping strategies[27].

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22   ibid. p 11.
23   Miller, J. 2012. *Psychosocial capacity building in response to disasters*. Columbia University Press.
24   AIDR, 2018, op. cit.

25   Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2008, *IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings: Checklist for field use*.
26   International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies Psychosocial Centre, 2010, *Psychosocial Interventions: A Handbook*.
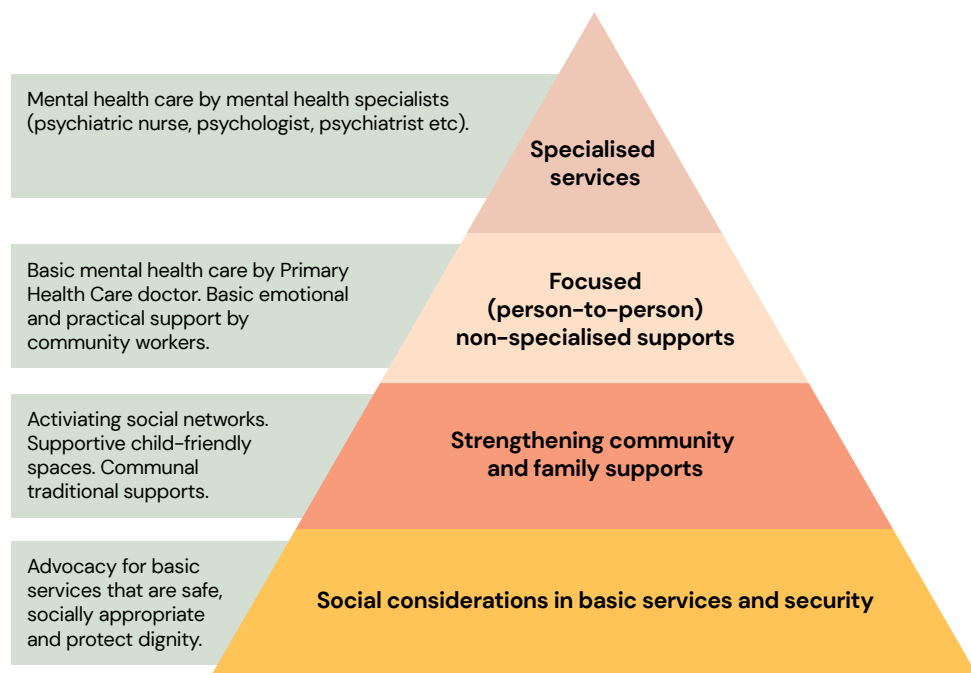27   Miller, J., op. cit.

Mental health care by mental health specialists (psychiatric nurse, psychologist, psychiatrist etc).

Specialised services

Basic mental health care by Primary Health Care doctor. Basic emotional and practical support by community workers.

Focused (person–to–person) non–specialised supports

Activiating social networks. Supportive child-friendly spaces. Communal traditional supports.

Strengthening community and family supports

Advocacy for basic services that are safe, socially appropriate and protect dignity.

Social considerations in basic services and security

Figure 6: Inter–Agency Standing Committee intervention pyramid for mental health and psychosocial support in emergencies.

Principles of psychosocial support

An international literature review of early to mid–term recovery efforts identified five key, empirically supported, elements of psychosocial interventions which minimize distress and contribute to good recovery[28]. The five principles are:

1. Promotion of safety

This refers to physical, psychological, cultural and perceived safety. Negative reactions persist while people feel under threat. When safety is reintroduced these reactions show a gradual reduction over time. A perception, or continued thought process, that the world continues to be a dangerous place is linked to the development of post–traumatic stress disorder.

Bad news, rumors and other interpersonal factors may serve to increase threat perception and therefore the provision of accurate information is key to promoting a sense of safety.

28 Hobfoll, SE, Watson, P, Bell, CC, Bryant, RA, Brymer, MJ, Friedman, MJ et al. 2007, 'Five essential elements of immediate and midterm mass trauma intervention: Empirical evidence', *Psychiatry*, vol. 70, pp. 283–315.

In addition, allowing people to rebuild a sense of confidence in themselves, the system and others acts as a 'protective shield' in both adults and children.

A sense of safety can be promoted by:

- Providing an environment where people feel that their physical safety is no longer threatened
- Providing space to talk about experiences and be listened to without judgement
- Providing accurate information, including the normalisation of stress reactions
- Encouraging individuals to limit intake of news media that cause distress
- Providing information about preparedness and encouraging planning for future disasters when the timing is right.

2. Promotion of calming

Some anxiety is a normal response following a traumatic event. Prolonged states of stress have physical and emotional consequences and therefore we want to minimize people's exposure to stressful situations and promote positive methods of coping and managing stress.

A sense of calm can be promoted through:

- Demonstrating calm through our own responses and demeanour
- Providing timely, accurate and honest information
- Involving people in activities that help solving immediate practical needs and concerns
- Normalising typical reactions and providing information about possible reactions and self help
- Linking people with loved ones and social supports
- Ensuring people are aware of the supports available.

3. Promotion of self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is the belief that an individual can cope with the situation, use their existing skills to make decisions and that their actions are likely to lead to positive outcomes. Recovery is best achieved when individuals can exercise a high degree of self-determination and agency. Reminding people that they have spent their whole lives navigating other types of stress and challenges is useful. They have strengths, resourcefulness and solutions they have practiced throughout their lives.

Self-efficacy can be promoted through:

- Messages relating to personal responsibility and helping people feel as though they can manage a situation
- Encouraging people to draw upon their existing skills during and after an emergency
- 'Walking alongside' impacted individuals, households and communities, rather 'doing for' them
- Creating opportunities for people to problem solve, both individually and collectively
- Promoting individuals and community as experts and supporting activities which can be implemented by the community itself[29]
- Providing information about preparedness and encouraging planning for future disasters when the timing is right.

4. Promotion of connectedness

Social support to and from loved ones, social groups and the broader community, combats stress and can provide a sense of shared experience and understanding. Bringing people together is part of the process of regenerating social networks that were disconnected because of a disaster. This strengthens social capital[30].

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29 International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies Psychosocial Centre, 2010, op. cit.
30 Miller, J., op. cit.

Research shows that people with strong social networks do better in the longer term. These supports includes membership of local community organisations or groups[31].

Often participating in activities and connecting with others is more difficult after a disaster. Community members maybe displaced due to property loss, regular meeting places may no longer be available, people may be fatigued or busy prioritising the practical aspects of rebuilding. Promoting connectedness is often about thinking creatively about removing barriers to participation and making it easy for people to take part.

Connectedness can be promoted through:

- Encouraging people to prioritise connecting with loved ones, despite the fatigue brought on by managing the practical aspects of recovery and secondary stressors
- Organising community events and providing opportunities for people to connect within and outside existing groups. These do not need to be large scale events, rather a variety of small, low key events which appeal to different cohorts are preferable
- Encouraging people to participate in regular routines e.g. sporting activities, book clubs, walks with friends
- Supporting the capacity and capability of local community groups and promoting their involvement in community activities
- Advocating for prioritising the restoration of places central to community connection (this may include; schools, community centres/halls, sports and arts facilities and thriving local businesses).

5. Instilling hope

Those who remain optimistic are likely to experience more favorable outcomes following trauma, because they can retain a reasonable degree of hope for their future. Instilling hope is critical in collective trauma events because they are outside people's usual experience and are often accompanied by a "shattered worldview" which gives people the perception that the experience is beyond their personal coping strategies and capacity[32].

A sense of hope can be promoted through:

- Communicating clearly about timelines for support or assistance
- Sharing stories of recovery from other disasters
- Highlighting progress, positive moments and connections
- Supporting people to imagine 'a life they value living' and help them identify ways to get there
- Encouraging 'fact based' thinking rather than 'catastrophising' – focussing on accurate risk assessment, positive goals and building on the strengths of both individuals and communities.

Ensuring these five principles are reflected in recovery planning and programming will increase the likelihood of effective recovery, and ensure that recovery activities do no harm.

31   Gibbs, L., Molyneaux, R., Harms, L., Gallagher, H. C., Block, K., Richardson, J., Brandenburg, V., O'Donnell, M., Kellett, C., Quinn, P., Kosta, L., Brady, K., Ireton, G., MacDougall, C., Bryant, R. 2021. *10 Years Beyond Bushfires Report*. University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia.

32   Hobfoll, et al, op. cit.

Additional reading or resources

Five essential elements of immediate and midterm mass trauma intervention
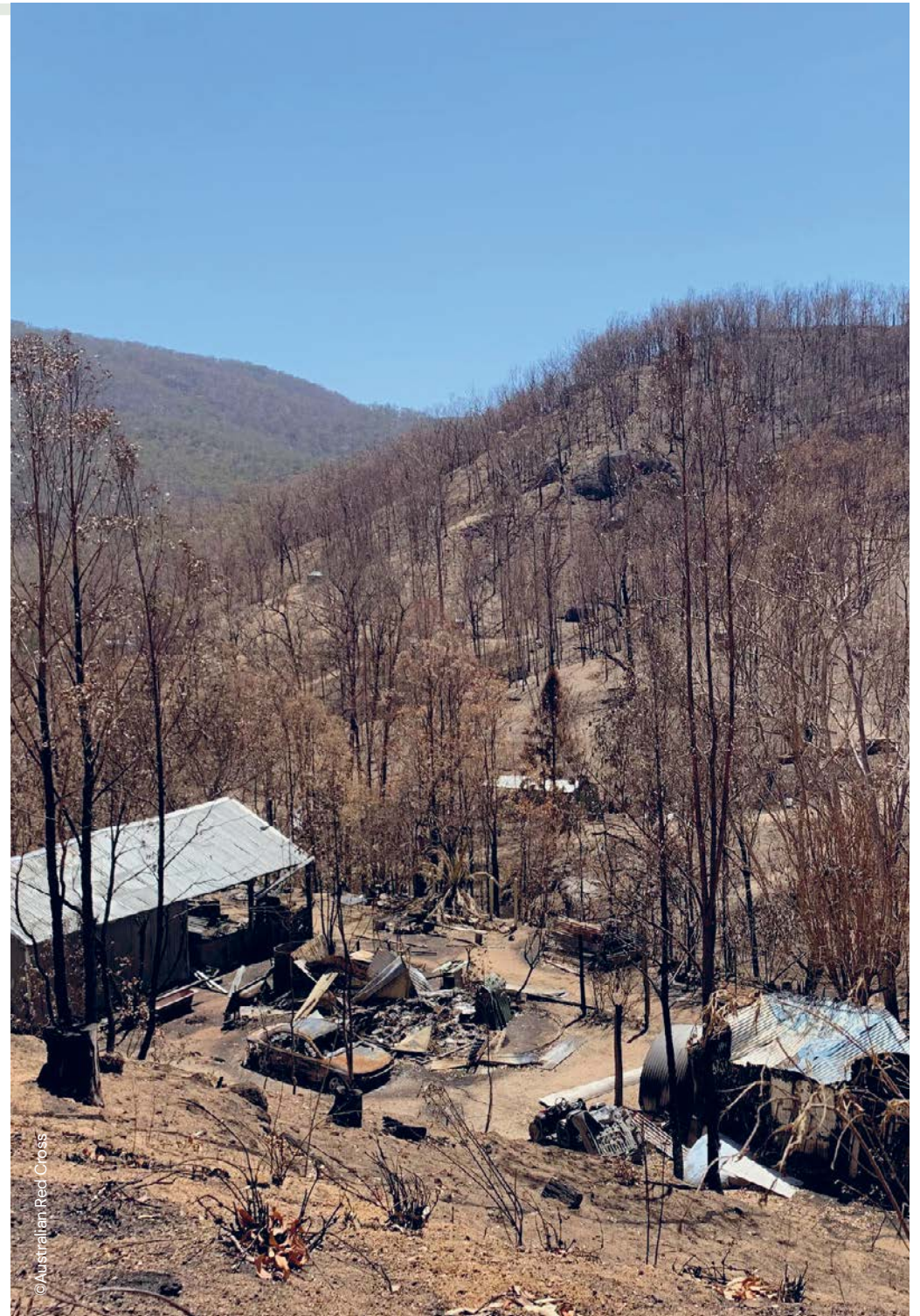*Hobfoll, SE, Watson, P, Bell, CC, Bryant, RA, Brymer, MJ, Friedman, MJ et al.*

IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings: Checklist for field use
Inter–Agency Standing Committee

Psychosocial capacity building in response to disasters.
Miller, J

Psychosocial Intervention in Complex Emergencies
The Psychosocial Working Group

National Disaster Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework
National Mental Health Commission

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Community led recovery

"It is best if the community is involved from the very beginning in identifying problems, discussing solutions and deciding on what concrete activities to carry out. Using the community's knowledge, values and practices, psychosocial responses are more likely to be meaningful and effective. A greater level of accountability and ownership may also be achieved. Ownership gives people a stronger feeling of self-worth, importance and influence"[33].

"It is not a question of who gets to speak on behalf of the community, but rather, who has the skill, patience, empathy and courage to restore to the community its own voice"[34].

Community context

Communities are complex social systems which have varying capacities, capabilities and ways of working prior to an emergency. These attributes do not disappear because they have been impacted by an emergency. The emergency results in rapid changes which may affect the community's ability to function effectively, particularly in the short term, but this does not mean that they do not have capacity to identify their priorities and influence the decisions and supports which are needed[35].

Communities are not homogenous, rather they comprise individuals, groups and organisations with differing needs and priorities. This is equally true after emergencies. There will be different levels of impact.

Some people will be directly affected through death, injury, loss of property, possessions, pets, livelihoods and so on. Others will have secondary impacts which affect their loved ones, social connections and beyond. The broader community will also have a connection to the event and require a different response again. This requires an approach to recovery that is led by diverse community priorities.

Disaster affected individuals, households and communities are best placed to determine their own needs and priorities. The goal of community led recovery is allow communities to shape their collective narrative, make sense of their experience, draw upon their capacity and capability and design a way forward for their future[36].

Assessing needs

Needs assessments should be undertaken throughout all stages of recovery to ensure community needs are identified and addressed in a timely fashion. This process can be formal and informal. The seven 'recovery capitals' can be a useful lens through which to view needs assessment data.

Every community outreach program, recovery activity or one on one conversation is an engagement opportunity and can be used to assess and capture needs. Undertaking needs assessments regularly will ensure recovery programs are meeting the needs of recovering communities in a timely, proactive way. They will also allow for changes in community capacity, when they occur.

It is important to consider coordinating more formal needs assessments with other organisations and groups working in recovery. This can help to ensure that the community is not over burdened by participating in assessments.

33 International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support, 2009 *Community-based Psychosocial Support Participant's book.*
34 Leadbeater, A., 2013, Community leadership in disaster recovery: a case study. *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, 28, 3, pp. 41–47.
35 Dibley et al. op. cit.

36 Chamlee-Wright, E & Storr VH, 2011, Social capital as collective narratives and post-disaster community recovery, *The Sociological Review*, 59:2.

Community engagement

A participatory 'bottom up' approach to community recovery requires those working in recovery to recognise and genuinely engage with community strength and capacities. Encouraging community input from the start ensures the community feel as though their voices are heard from the outset[37]. It should be considered beyond doubt that community capacity exists. Communities recover quicker if their recovery is community led[38] [39]. A variety of engagement approaches which encourage the community to actively participate in their own recovery and gain feedback from diverse groups is helpful. Pre-existing networks, groups and methods are good places to start.

This process should establish a shared vision of a sustainable and resilient community that is understood by the community[40]. It is important to listen to the diversity of views, and to ensure that those who are vulnerable or underrepresented, have a voice[41]. Affected people have a right to information and to make their own choices because they understand their needs better than any agencies supporting recovery efforts.

37   Community Recovery Committees of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires, 2011, *Lessons Learned by Community Recovery Committees of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires: Advice We Offer to Communities Impacted by Disaster*.
38   ibid, p 7.
39   Alesch, D., Arendt, L. & Holly, J. 2009. *Managing for Long Term Recovery in the aftermath of Disaster*, Public Entity Risk Institute, Fairfax, VA.
40   Argyrous, G., 2018, *A Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Disaster Recovery Programs*.
41   Owen, C., 2018. How can governments enable and support community-led disaster recovery? *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*,33, 1, pp 66–69.

Recovery governance structures

Recovery governance structures and activities should allow the community to influence and fully participate in decision making. Adopting flexible approaches will allow recovery services to pivot to meet changing community priorities. Community members will vary in their need for support at different times during recovery and this may also impact their ability to participate in recovery processes and activities.

Recovery coordination and planning mechanisms should enable community participation in formal recovery structures. Recovery Committees, are one example of more formal structures which have been utilised. These vary across jurisdictions and local government areas[42], some are managed by community[43], while others are multi-agency groups (including community representatives) facilitated by local or state government. For the latter, local recovery plans outline likely membership of these groups, however, it is likely this will change based on the disaster impacts and groups which emerge as a result of the disaster.

Facilitating genuine community participation requires an understanding of the local context, patterns of community interaction and potential areas of conflict, working with different sub-groups and avoiding the privileging of particular groups[44]. It can be a challenge to ensure inclusive community participation, particularly for community members who are underrepresented through usual community engagement practices.

Building capacity and capability

Adopting a strengths-based approach when working with communities and providing help in a way that does not undermine existing support systems is a key consideration. Empowering communities to create their own solutions can improve overall social cohesion. This is critical to sustainable recovery outcomes[45]. Psychosocial capacity building helps people cope with the aftermath of an emergency by supporting their existing sources of resilience[46]. Capacity building should ensure those directly affected by the emergency, as well as local workers and volunteers, are trained to understand psychosocial reactions and how to support themselves and others.

Ideally, recovery programs should partner with local groups and agencies from the outset, providing support when required. Developing local assets should be the goal of outside agency support practices and ensure sustainability, so that these local resources can continue the work when external recovery resources inevitably withdraw.

Additional reading or resources

Recovery Matters: Community-led recovery webinar
Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience

Recovery Matters: Social Networks and Disaster Resilience
Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience

Strengths and Needs Assessment Operational Guide
Australian Red Cross

National Recovery Needs Assessment Guidelines
National Recovery and Resilience Agency

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42 Dibley et al, op.cit.
43 Community Recovery Committees of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires, 2011, *op. cit.*
44 International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies Reference Centre for Psychosocial support, 2019, *Psychosocial support in emergencies delegate manual: Mental health and psychosocial support in emergencies, the psychosocial support component of the health emergency response unit.*

45 AIDR, 2018, op. cit., p 55.
46 Miller, J., op. cit.

Communicating in recovery

"Good communication is a crucial foundation of recovery. There is much evidence to demonstrate that where communication is strong, recovery goes well. Conversely, there are also many examples of where poor communications have hampered recovery"[47].

What are recovery communications?

'Recovery communications' refers to the practice of sending, gathering, managing and evaluating information in the period following an emergency and throughout disruptive long–term events. Well planned and well executed public information campaigns are vital to community recovery and long–term resilience building.

Communications in recovery and throughout community support operations should go beyond merely sending information, to actually forming a dialogue with the community. Effective communications provide a basis for important social processes such as bonding between individuals, groups and communities[48].

Why is communicating in recovery so important?

An emergency or disaster is usually a highly disruptive and stressful event for affected people. Access to quality information before, during and after an emergency can have a profound effect on the resilience and recovery of individuals and the community. Information empowers the individuals and community to understand and influence their own recovery and increases social cohesion. A well informed and connected community will recover sooner than one without effective communications and information.

Recovery communications should begin as early as possible in an emergency. With the instant nature of information on available social media platforms community members expect timely information. If there are gaps or delays in information there is the likelihood that this gap will be filled with rumour or speculation[49].

Psychological challenges to communication and understanding information

An emergency affects people in a variety of ways, these include; shock, high arousal, narrowing of focus, disbelief and confusion. These effects can impact a person's ability to take in information, think about it and remember it.

An emergency can impact:

Concentration	Memory	Decision–making
• the amount of new information that can be taken in and understood • the amount and complexity of detail that can be absorbed • the length of time a person can focus	• ability to recall spoken, written and/ or visual information • ability to recall simple or complex knowledge • ability to recall recent or past knowledge/ memories	• weighing up possibilities and risks • dealing with complex ideas and outcomes • planning and prioritising actions

Recovery communications require care and sensitivity, and can often be impeded by significant physical, logistical and psychosocial limitations. Use trusted sources to share information and repeat important information to enable opportunity for community members to understand despite these possible communication impediments[50].

47 AIDR, 2018, op. cit., p 47.
48 Australian Red Cross, 2022, *Communicating in Recovery Guide.*

49 AIDR, 2018, op. cit., p 45.
50 Australian Red Cross, op.cit.

Inclusive communications: getting the message across

Access to information is vital at all stages of emergency management, and that information must be accessible to all in the community. To reach diverse audiences a variety of approaches, channels and networks will be needed. Some of the different 'groups' that may need to be considered in recovery communications are:

- Gender
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- Children (infant, preschool and primary school aged)
- Young people (12–25 years)
- Older people
- Those with a physical impairment (hearing, vision, mobility issues)
- Cognitive and learning difficulties, including intellectual disability, acquired brain injury, mental illness (emotional and behavioural issues) and autism spectrum disorder
- People who are grieving and/or bereaved
- Those with literacy issues
- Existing disadvantage
- People from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds
- Displaced people.

The rules of recovery communications

Before communicating, ask yourself 3 questions:

1. Is it relevant?

People affected by disaster are often overwhelmed by huge amounts of information, particularly in early recovery. Following an emergency, people want to know:

- What is happening with the recovery process
- How they can participate in the decision making
- What support is available
- What they need to do to qualify for support
- What they can do if they have questions, concerns or complaints.

If material does not address one of these broad categories, ask yourself: does it actually need to be sent? As communication is a two-way process, asking affected people what they need will help to ensure your communications are relevant.

2. Is it clear?

After an emergency, people often have trouble remembering or understanding information. It is not appropriate to use jargon, overly complicated or technical language.

- Short, sharp amounts of relevant and practical information is best
- Ensure there is a clear call to action in the communication – what does the person actually have to do?
- Ensure that there are formats available for people with a sensory impairment, and/ or people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, and/ or people with low literacy.

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3. Is it targeted?

The method of communication you use should fit the audience. Know your audience and the best way to reach them. Just because you can send information or use a certain communication channel doesn't necessarily mean you should.

Principles for recovery communications

Public information, not public relations:

Broadly speaking, the aim of public relations (PR) is to promote an organisation; the aim of public information is to channel information to the relevant audiences and assist the community.

Respect people:

When people are displaced or affected by an emergency, it is easy to only see their vulnerability. Communications should be respectful and recognise that affected people are able to make decisions for themselves.

Build on local assets – Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD):

ABCD refers to the practice of utilising and building upon existing local networks and strengths in the community. ABCD can also influence communications practices. Simply put, don't reinvent the wheel.

The right to know: The community have a right to know what is happening, about the support processes in place, your services and other organisations' programs.

Acknowledge the impact:

People affected by an emergency have potentially experienced a life-shaping event or may face on-going trauma. They have a need to have their story told, to acknowledge and validate their experience.

Ask the community how they want to receive information:
Consulting with the community and actually asking them how they want to receive information will increase the effectiveness of your communications and increase community participation in the recovery and support process.

Repeat Information:
People will be looking for information to assist their specific needs at that specific time, and ignore everything else. What may be irrelevant to someone early in the emergency may be the exact information they require a few weeks later. An effective system of receiving and recording feedback from the community will help you know when, what and how to repeat your information.

Remember the 'unaffected':
Be careful not to focus solely on those directly affected in an emergency. Those not directly affected can often experience significant stress and should be considered in your communications strategy.

No spin:
People recovering from an emergency or living through a protracted event have specific requirements and require information solely to address their needs. Communications containing rhetoric or brand leveraging information just adds to the communications 'noise'.

Additional reading or resources

Communicating in Recovery Guide
Australian Red Cross

Communication during Disaster Recovery
Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery

Harnessing goodwill and volunteering

"Australian communities have always rallied to respond to threats and help each other in times of disaster and emergency... Local communities and ordinary people who are not necessarily trained by, or affiliated with, formal emergency management organisations are often the first to respond to a disaster or hazard event. People within the local community, are also often the ones who stay to support each other with the long–term physical, social, psychological and economic impacts of a disaster long after formal disaster recovery arrangements have ended"[51].

Goodwill in recovery

When a disaster occurs, people offer their assistance to support those affected. Broadly, this assistance can be donations of money or goods, loans of equipment, and donations of time and labour. These actions can be broken down into three areas: volunteers, goods, and money.

It is important to recognise that the effective management of goodwill requires significant effort. A coordinated approach must be adopted, which focusses on equity and transparency. Offers of help from the wider community need to be relevant to the needs of disaster affected people and to be channelled in a way that does not have a negative impact on the response or the recovery from an event.

51   Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience (AIDR), 2017, *Handbook 12 Communities Responding to Disasters: Planning for Spontaneous Volunteers.*

Motivations for goodwill

The public is strongly impacted by news stories about disasters. The media is powerful in invoking profound feelings and connections to people impacted by disaster. It has been suggested this may be to the stage that viewers/listeners begin to feel like survivors themselves[52]. The intensity of this experience pushes people into wanting to do something, often donating goods, time or money.

Positive effects of goodwill

The uplifting effect of the knowledge that people are thinking about disaster affected communities and trying to help is a positive side to goodwill which cannot be underestimated. Recipients have strongly expressed gratitude for the support and caring of the public in assisting them after their trauma, particularly when goodwill is expressed through providing helpful items and services[53]. From a practical sense, for goodwill to have a positive effect, it needs to:

- Meet the needs of affected people
- Have recipients, rather than donors, as the paramount consideration
- Support the resilience and self–efficacy of emergency affected people
- Be timely
- Not be "done to", forced or imposed on people affected by emergencies
- Fill a gap produced when goods or services have become inaccessible due to the impacts of the emergency
- Be managed in a transparent and equitable manner.

52   Alesch, D., Arendt, L. & Holly J. op. cit.
53   Attorney–General's Department and State Recovery Office, South Australia, 2011, *National Guidelines for managing donated goods.*

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Negative effects of goodwill

It's ok to say no to donated goods and services if they are not relevant or may have a negative impact on the economic or psychosocial wellbeing of the affected community. Examples of when a community or leader might say no to offers of goodwill include:

- When the offer does not meet the needs of the people affected by the emergency
- When the offer is not timely
- When there is no (or limited) capacity to manage the offer
- When the donor needs are overwhelming, unreasonable or incompatible with the needs of those affected by the emergency
- When goods or services may have a negative impact on the local economy/business
- When goodwill may result in unrealistic expectations and/or dependency in some emergency affected people.

Volunteers

The nature of volunteering is changing. While many people are still content to follow the traditional path of joining an organisation, there is a trend towards shorter term commitment[54].

Post emergency, the desire to volunteer usually comes in the first week of the event, which coincides with the peak media coverage of emergencies[55]. People are commonly motivated to help for a mix of reasons. This need can be stronger for people who feel a connection to the impacted community, have friends or family who were impacted, or they may feel empathy through having directly experienced a disaster themselves in the past. Volunteering is also an important part of people making sense of the disaster, coping

with its psychological impacts themselves, and regaining a sense of control that they may feel had been lost[56].

Managing volunteers

Offers of assistance can be productive, but can also overwhelm response and recovery agencies. One of the most important tools is a clear and agreed communications strategy. Messages put out through the media play a key role in managing spontaneous volunteers[57].

Effective engagement, whilst enthusiasm is strong, can also result in better support during longer term recovery when it can be challenging to get the help required. It is particularly important to give consideration to engaging local community members. These volunteers may be community leaders or people with strong networks in the local community. From the outset, considering how locals might be utilised and their skills built upon is an important step toward 'community led' recovery and makes the most of community capacity and strengths.

Additional reading or resources

Communities Responding to Disasters: Planning for Spontaneous Volunteers
Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience

Spontaneous Volunteer Management Resource Kit
Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

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54 AIDR, 2018, op. cit.
55 Leadbeater, A.,2012, *Renewin' Strathewen: Exploring community leadership in disaster recovery.*

56 AIDR, 2017, op. cit.
57 AIDR, 2018, op. cit.

Collaborating in disaster recovery

"Empowering community organisations that exist to serve the community all of the time (not just in times of disaster) is the most effective sustainable platform for disaster resilient communities"[58].

Recovery context

Recovery programs are diverse and will differ for each event and context. Some will be designed to specifically support the recovery, whilst others will provide additional resources to build on existing services[59].

Collaboration is key in this ever changing, complex environment. The National Strategy for Disaster Resilience states "Working together and drawing on the expertise and capacity of various partners produces far greater results than do individual efforts alone. Partnerships across and within governments, businesses, the not-for-profit sector and the community, will create a well-informed, integrated and coordinated approach to increasing disaster resilience. The result will be a more resilient nation."[60] This is particularly true in the context of disaster recovery.

Variety of agencies

In the complex world of recovery, many services, agencies and groups are needed. Some will be required only in the short term, others in the long term. For larger scale, high profile events there may be a convergence of agencies, particularly in the short term. This results in an extremely challenging context for collaboration and coordination.

The variety of agencies and groups operating in the recovery space, include community service organisations, community groups, non-government organisations, emergency management agencies and different levels of government (local, state and federal). Each of these come with diverse capacities, objectives and viewpoints.

Community organisations and groups

Community Service Organisations and Non-Government Organisations have key functions in recovery because of their local knowledge, understanding of the community and connections with existing community networks within which they work. They also often adopt a multi-sectorial approach and have experience in creating innovative solutions to meet the complex needs of people in crisis, both of which are valuable assets in the recovery context[61].

Recovery activities should never undermine or reduce the capacity of local organisations and community groups. Where possible recovery agencies should work in partnership with these entities, whose local knowledge and trusted relationships with community, will prove invaluable[62]. Recovery agencies should play a supporting role and give communities the voice to decide their own priorities, rather than imposing initiatives. In this way psychosocial interventions are a form of collaboration[63].

58 Graham, W. 2011. *To study the effectiveness of disaster assistance programs in promoting individual and community resilience in recovery from disasters.* Winston Churchill Trust.
59 Argyrous, op. cit.
60 Council of Australian Governments (COAG), 2011, *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience.*

61 Graham, op. cit.
62 Dibley et al, op.cit.
63 Psychosocial Working Group, 2003, *Psychosocial Intervention in Complex Emergencies: A Framework for Practice.*

Diversity between organisations

A major benefit of multi-agency collaboration comes from the diversity the organisations bring to the partnerships; however, it is also a source of tension in the same relationships[64]. Organisations have different ways of working, cultures, funding mechanisms, communication methods and goals. Successful emergency management networks require strong management and facilitation, and inclusive leadership, to manage varying organisational cultures and potential conflicts.

Elements of successful collaborative relationships

Key elements of successful collaborative relationships have been identified[65 66 67 68]. These include;

- Building trust
- Regular face-to-face communication
- Ensuring inclusivity, equal participation and empowerment of individual members
- Clear rules and shared vision of context, plans and goals
- Transparency
- Joint decision-making
- Realistic expectations of each organisation's capacity and constraints.

These elements aid in the development and understanding of shared goals over time, improved learning, shared and efficient utilisation of resources, enhanced planning and the ability to solve complex problems.

Where possible, if arrangements can be put into place prior to an emergency occurring this can significantly improve the ability of agencies to respond quickly and work together effectively as well as building trusting relationships which are key to strong collaboration.

Barriers to good collaboration

Barriers to good collaboration in the emergency management sector include; resistance to change, silo'd thinking, lack of trust and a blame culture. Members of collaborative networks, who 'share responsibility', must also share accountability[69].

Clarifying and managing expectations of participants in collaborative structures is essential. Stakeholders lose enthusiasm for networks where their viewpoints are not valued or where they feel decision-making is just a matter of ticking a box or 'rubber stamping' decisions which have already been made[70].

Benefits of collaboration

Good collaboration takes place when there is extensive trust and strong links between organisations[71]. In emergency management, collaboration promotes efficient use of resources, effective communication and coordination, and flexible service delivery[72]. Key benefits of collaboration in a recovery context include reduction of duplication, improved assistance to diverse populations and an increased understanding between different service providers.

Additional reading or resources

Working Together in Disaster Recovery
Tasmanian Government Department of Premier and Cabinet

64 Saz-Carranza, A. & Ospina, S. 2010. The Behavioral Dimension of Governing Interorganizational Goal-Directed Networks—Managing the Unity-Diversity Tension. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 21, 327–365.
65 Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC), 2006. *Working Together: Involving Community and Stakeholders in Decision-Making*.
66 Ansell, C. & Gash, A. 2007. Collaborative Governance in Theory and Practice. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 18(4), 543–571.
67 Selves, M. & Waugh, W. 2007. Principles*, Practice, Philosophy and Doctrine of Emergency Management: Collaborative Emergency Management*.
68 Andrew, S. & Carr, J. 2013. Mitigating Uncertainty and Risk in Planning for Regional Preparedness: The Role of Bonding and Bridging Relationships. *Urban Studies Journal*, 50 (4), 709–724.

69 Waugh, W. & Streib, G. 2006. Collaboration and Leadership for Effective Emergency Management. *Public Administration Review*, 66, 131–140.
70 Hemmati, M. 2002. *Multi-stakeholder Processes for Governance and Sustainability: Beyond Deadlock and Conflict*. Earthscan Publications Ltd., London.
71 Keast, R. & Mandell, M. 2014. The collaborative push: moving beyond rhetoric and gaining evidence. *Journal of Management & Governance*, 18(1), 9–28.
72 Busch, N. & Givens, A. 2013. Achieving resilience in Disaster management: the role of public-private partnerships. *Journal of Strategic Security*, 6 (2), 1–19.

Recovery leadership

"Leadership in recovery is different. It is chaotic, where black and white become many shades of grey. It will require more from you as a leader than any other role you've had. It's a horrible opportunity.

You will think harder and faster. You will do more, feel more, learn more than before. It will require all the skills you have and all the skills you don't have yet. Recovery is not business as usual. It is challenging on every level and deserves superb leadership"[73].

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How is recovery leadership different?

Recovery leaders must sensitively balance many conflicting priorities, political pressures and media scrutiny[74]. They strive to provide their communities the time and space needed to reimagine aspects of their community and create a shared vision for the future, whilst retaining their history, culture and ways of functioning. Although an operational recovery plan is invaluable to provide a structure, vision and goals, which are measurable, it must be flexible enough to incorporate change and new ideas throughout recovery.

Challenges of recovery leadership

Recovery is a dynamic environment with many challenges for a leader. These include:

- Unpredictable and always changing environment and context
- Exposure to trauma and emotional situations
- Long days with high levels of stress, over a long period of time
- Internal and external pressures and time frames
- Extensive community engagement – balancing many views and opinions
- Complex environment requiring many levels of leadership
- Constantly changing priorities and the need to make time critical decisions.

This type of leadership may be required over many years[75].

Recovery leaders require a steadfastness, humility, and a strong sense of ethics to undertake the community engagement needed for inclusive recovery. It can be confronting! At times, there will be criticism, despite their huge workloads and dedication. Community emotions will run high and this can be difficult to not take personally. However, the converse will also be true, community engagement will also lead to inspiration, gratitude and encouragement.

73 McNaughton, E., Wills, J, & Lallemant, D. 2015. *Leading in Disaster Recovery: A companion through the chaos.*

74 Dibley et al, op.cit.
75 McNaughton, E. 2013. *Leadership, wisdom and the post disaster recovery process.* Churchill Fellowship.

Community leaders

All communities have individuals who play important roles in their community prior to the onset of a disaster, and these leaders have a vital role to play in recovery. They are often trusted people with strong connections, linked with a variety of local networks. They may hold official roles in the community, such as local government councillors, or they may have informal roles; their name just keeps coming up in different contexts. Taking the time to identify legitimate local influencers is critical and connecting with these key locals will be invaluable to community led recovery[76 & 77].

Community leaders may play an informal role, such as providing information, feedback and priorities from their networks (a great source of informal needs assessment data), or they may be able and willing to take on a formal role in recovery governance structures.

Be aware that their circumstances may change throughout the recovery and their level of involvement may change depending on capacity. As a result, it is beneficial to have a variety of people to fill these roles, rather than relying on one or two individuals. It will help to lessen the burden on individuals and have the added benefit of providing diversity in representation.

Emergent leaders

The nature of recovery results in new leaders coming to the fore – both from the community and amongst recovery workers. The nature of recovery work can allow the opportunity for people's natural leadership traits to emerge. If recognised and well supported, this can result in the development of new and effective leaders.

Changes wrought by emergencies alter the way communities' function and can require innovation and different approaches to be resolved. Although not known for their leadership prior to the emergency, emerging leaders are often invaluable in this process.

They may have a particular passion for one facet of recovery, or they may become involved because of their personal experiences. It is important to facilitate their inclusion. A breadth of leadership, at all levels, avoids reliance on one or two individuals, making recovery support more robust and resilient[78].

Traits of good recovery leaders

Researchers looked at recovery leaders from around the world and found that the individuals' traits and qualities matter more than the leader's position in the organisation prior to the emergency[79 80 81]. They found that the traits of strong leaders in recovery are:

- Self–awareness, humility, and empathy with a strong focus on the affected community and their priorities
- Strong sense of integrity and highly ethical
- High energy levels and enthusiasm
- Strategic, with an ability to see and communicate a vision of recovery
- Excellent communication, listening, mediation and negotiation skills
- Ability to manage strong emotions, including anger
- Transparency and the willingness to share information
- Ability to learn from others
- Innovation, ability to make quick decisions and adapt to changing circumstances and information.

Recovery leadership needs to be to be flexible and adaptable to change, whilst engaging in networking, communication and team building that brings out the leadership potential of others.

76   IAP2 & Leadbeater, A. 2015. *A guide to engaging in disaster recovery.*
77   Leadbeater, 2013, op. cit.

78   McNaughton, op. cit.
79   Community Recovery Committees of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires, 2011, *op. cit.*
80   Buchanan–Smith, M. & Scriven, K. 2011. *Leadership in Action: Leading effectively in humanitarian operations.*
81   McNaughton, Wills, & Lallemant, op. cit.

Supporting the Supporters

Be aware that community will naturally look to recovery leaders for support and information. This may result in possible personal, social or emotional costs[82]. People in these roles may be personally impacted by the emergency or know people who are. This may affect their capacity to help at times.

Working in recovery, no matter the role, is a challenging. Supporting leaders with the practical and emotional demands of leadership, including strategies for dealing with extreme emotions, is vital to protect their mental health and wellbeing[83].

Recovery leaders also have a responsibility to emulate good self-care practices for their teams. Wellbeing, self-care and fatigue management should be incorporated into ways of working from the outset of recovery.

Additional reading or resources

Leading in Disaster Recovery: A companion through the chaos
New Zealand Red Cross

Recovery Matters: Recovery leadership webinar
Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience

Supporting the Supporters in Disaster Recovery
Jolie Wills

Preparedness and recovery

"Communities need to develop collective skills to cope, adapt, learn and transform, helping them to be better prepared for the next disaster or other collective challenge. Effectively prosecuting a resilience agenda relies on (1) recognising that bushfire and other disaster impacts are experienced and responded to in highly local ways, and (2) improving the resilience capacities of individuals, communities and institutions"[84].

Preparedness is an important aspect of recovery. If done well, in a timely manner, it can build community resilience and confidence to manage future disasters and mitigate risk, promoting a sense of safety and contributing to self and community efficacy. Although many approaches to preparedness education focus primarily on physical risks; during recovery equal focus should be given to strengthening the community and economic resilience[85].

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82   Dibley et al, op.cit.
83   Gibbs, et al. op. cit.

84   Rogers, et al. op. cit.
85   AIDR, 2018, op. cit.

An opportunity

Recent exposure to a major emergency has been linked with an increased likelihood of people making changes to become better prepared[86].

There is often an appetite and interest in preparedness from the wider, not directly impacted community for a period after the emergency. The reality that emergencies can and do happen in their locale, provides the impetus for some to seek information and begin to plan for emergencies. The need for preparedness programming to be offered throughout high threat periods and when emergencies are impacting communities is an opportunity for those delivering preparedness information.

Timeliness is key

The timing of preparedness information provision is critical and should reflect community needs rather than agency priorities.

Preparedness is inextricably linked with recovery from the outset. Individuals, households, communities and organisations reflect on their experiences, before, during and after the event, analysing their responses and aspects of their behaviour and plans as well as how they contributed to both positive and negative outcomes.

Many community gatherings held in early recovery feature collective reflections on factors such as fuel loads, access routes, building standards, timeliness of communications and evacuations etc, which were perceived to either increase or decrease risk prior to and during the event. These issues can often become a strong focus for community members as they strive to make sense of their experience and improve their sense of safety. Preparedness information can help people deal with the blame process which may affect wellbeing[87].

Psychosocial preparedness approaches

Preparedness information, sensitively delivered, can be of enormous benefit to the directly impacted community, reducing anxiety, building social capital, social resources and empowering community to make their own decisions.

Four adaptive capacities have been identified which contribute to an individual's resilience. These are:

- Wellbeing: relates to a person's health and wellbeing status, including their coping ability[88]
- Connection: relates to the level of support people can draw upon to achieve goals or shared objectives. These supports can be family, friends, local groups etc[89]
- Knowledge: relates to having appropriate information and knowledge about local hazards and risks, and having shared strategies regarding how these may be mitigated
- Security: relates to having adequate shelter, personal safety and the capacity to maintain financial protection of assets and livelihoods.

Considering adaptive capacities and using strengths–based approaches, ensures that preparedness builds on the existing networks and resources of individuals, which in turn, contributes to community efficacy and resilience.

86   Emergency Management Queensland, 2012, *Queensland Regional Household Survey – May 2012 Household preparedness for Natural Disaster*.
87   Paton, D. 2013. *Preparing for Disaster: Building Household and Community Capacity*.

88   Richardson, J.F. 2014. *Beyond Vulnerability: Developing disaster resilience capacities to target household preparedness activities*.
89   Australian Red Cross, 2013, *Relationships Matters*: the application of social capital to disaster resilience.

Anticipating and managing stress

Usual methods of presenting preparedness information to disaster affected communities may also need to change to avoid possibly triggering stress reactions. A trauma-informed approach should be applied to preparedness activities in recovery contexts. This might include avoiding strong imagery and preparedness campaigns which utilise fear and strongly emotive footage and stories to elicit action. This is particularly true in the short term.

Incorporating psychological aspects[90] into preparedness activities can be particularly helpful in recovery contexts. By acknowledging and discussing possible stressors, people are able to anticipate them and manage their stress effectively[91]. Stressors will be different for different people but may include:

• Media coverage of the emergency and its aftermath
• Weather patterns similar to those experienced during the event
• Sounds and smells which people associate with their experiences
• Preparedness messaging, particularly when 'fear campaigns' are used.

Community led and co-designed approaches

Community led and co-designed approaches to preparedness which reflect community priorities, address local risks and utilise local networks can be effective in building local capacity and resilience. This is particularly true in the recovery context. Communities can make a powerful contribution to disaster risk mitigation, preparation, response and recovery, based on their knowledge of local people, places, culture and risks[92].

Sharing experiences through story telling is an opportunity in the post disaster setting. Many community members gain fulfilment from sharing their survival stories with others. They hope to prevent others from experiencing the same, making a positive from their losses. This can be a component of memorialising the event, with these stories captured in books, DVDs and other mediums. There have also been numerous examples of community led preparedness programs emerging from post-disaster contexts. One example developed a preparedness program co-designed by community, local government hazard management agencies and Australian Red Cross. This effectively incorporated well-connected fire affected individuals sharing stories of their fire experience [93].

Additional reading or resources

Understanding preparedness and recovery: A survey of people's preparedness and recovery experience for emergencies
Australian Red Cross

Ep 8, Before the Next One
After the Disaster podcast with Kate Brady, ABC Radio

Community Engagement and Assessment tool
Australian Red Cross

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90 Australian Red Cross, *Emergencies Happen: Protect what matters most, comprehensive guide.*
91 Paton, D. op. cit.

92 Rogers et al, op.cit.
93 State Emergency Management Committee, 2014, *Resilient Australia Awards*, https://semc.wa.gov.au/Pages/2014-Resilient-Australia-Awards.aspx

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Fundamental principles

In all activities, our volunteers, members and staff are guided by the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

Humanity

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, co-operation and lasting peace amongst all people.

Impartiality

It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

Neutrality

In order to continue to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

Independence

The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

Voluntary service

It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

Unity

There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

Universality

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all Societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.

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