THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

Report by – Wendy Graham - 2011 Churchill Fellow

To study the effectiveness of disaster assistance programs in promoting individual and community resilience in recovery from disasters

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Signed:                     Dated:
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1. Introduction

I have been involved in the state wide coordination and delivery of disaster assistance programs to individuals and households in NSW in response to a large number of disasters over many years. During this time I began to observe particularly in some communities that experienced frequent disaster events, that rather than becoming more resilient to future disasters, community expectations about what the government ‘should do’ and the financial assistance that it ‘should provide’ appeared to be a growing focus of community attention and tension.

In February 2011, the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience was endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). It provides a whole-of-nation resilience-based approach to disaster management and recognises that disaster resilience is a shared responsibility for individuals, households, businesses and communities, as well as for governments. I embarked on this Fellowship interested in exploring how similar national strategies were being implemented in other countries and how they were influencing government and community thinking and actions in relation to planning for, responding to and recovering from disasters.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust for the opportunity to travel to the United Kingdom, United States, Canada and New Zealand to research this challenging and important topic. Receiving the Churchill Fellowship gave me a wonderful opportunity to meet with more than fifty individuals and organisations and I thank them for their generosity in sharing their time and wealth of expertise. It was a privilege meet with so many people who bring so much passion, knowledge and commitment to the emergency management sector. The strong network of contacts that have been established will enable ongoing exchange of information between our countries.

I would like to acknowledge and thank Kate Alexander and Sally MacKay who were my referees during the application process and provided me with so much support and encouragement. I am also indebted to the NSW Ministry for Police and Emergency Services for supporting my pursuit of knowledge in this area.

Lastly and importantly I would like to thank my family for their support and patience and helping to create the space for me to undertake such an exciting venture.
2. Executive Summary

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Project Description: To study the effectiveness of disaster assistance programs in promoting individual and community resilience in recovery from disasters.

The severity, frequency and scale of natural disasters has been increasing over recent years. This fact along with the escalating immediate and long term costs of disasters, made even more poignant in an environment of global financial crisis has captured the attention of central governments around the world. There is a realisation that government alone cannot sufficiently respond and provide for disaster affected communities and that a government centric, top down approach to emergency management is one that is unsustainable and ultimately destined to fail. However, it is not just an economic driver that has precipitated this shift in strategic focus but importantly, recognition of the wealth of resource and expertise present in local communities and a desire to recognise and harness this capability within the emergency management environment.

There were many highlights throughout my Fellowship but most significantly was the opportunity to meet and share with individuals working in and supporting their local communities in planning for, responding to and recovering from disasters. In particular my visits to Cumbria in the United Kingdom and the Schoharie County in New York State, where I met with people working in local councils and emergency management agencies, community and faith based organisations and volunteer groups. Their passion and commitment to their work and their communities was both extraordinary and inspiring.

A number of broad key themes have been identified that can contribute to the ongoing dialogue around building disaster resilient communities:

1. Recognising disaster resilience as a shared responsibility between the community and government requires an approach to emergency management that begins with identifying existing community strengths and networks and involves the whole community being engaged and empowered to make choices and take responsibility in planning for, responding to and recovering from disasters.

2. Top down, government centric approaches that provide strategic frameworks, guidance documents and templates set direction and provide a clear road map for action but do not engage communities or drive cultural change at the local level. A greater focus and investment in supporting bottom up, community led strategies is the key to effecting sustainable change.
3. Disaster assistance programs are effective in targeting unmet material and financial disaster related need in communities, however the provision of assistance by agencies to a community does not in and of itself enhance community wellbeing, deliver better recovery outcomes, or build resilience. The critical role of social capital in building disaster resilient communities requires greater attention and research.

4. Community engagement in preparing for, responding to and recovering from disasters extends beyond information and consultation. Engagement means local communities having a place around the emergency planning table, being listened to and empowered to influence and make decisions that affect them.

5. A greater investment in research and evaluation with regard what works well in communities that have been affected by disaster and how communities can best build resilience is required.
3. Programme

United Kingdom  19 – 30 March

- **Fiery Spirits Community of Practice CarnegieUK, Dunfermline**  
  Nick Wilding, Development Officer  
  Seminar presentation to community organisations  
  Exploring Community Resilience.

- **Cumbria County Council**  
  Mike Smyth, Assistant Director Public Protection  
  Sally Scales, Area Engagement Officer  
  Lynn Singleton, Neighbourhood Development Officer  
  David Sheard, Area Support Manager  
  Chris Briggs, Emergency Planning Officer  
  Lynne Davidson, Customer Support Development Manager  
  Nick Thomas, Snr Manager Head of Customer Support and Crisis Support  
  Ewan Hall, Emergency Planning Officer  
  Ben Cavenagh, Cumbria County Council

- **Cockermouth Flood Action Group**  
  Sue Cashmore, Chairwoman

- **Cumbria Community Foundation**  
  Debs Muscat, Grants Development Officer

- **Living Continuity**  
  Emily Thompson

- **British Red Cross**  
  Moya Wood-Heath, Civil Protection/Emergency Planning Advisor  
  Martin Annis, Senior Emergency Planning Officer

- **UK Cabinet Office, Civil Contingencies Secretariat**  
  Richard Cox, Community Resilience Policy Manager  
  Nick Brown, Recovery Policy Manager

United States  19 April – 2 May

- **Faith Leaders for Environmental Justice (New York)**  
  Seminar:  Sea level rise and disaster response

- **New York Disaster Interfaith Services**  
  Peter Gudaitis, President National Disaster Interfaiths Network  
  Ruth Yoder Wenger, Executive Vice-President of New York Disaster Interfaith Services
• Centre for Faith Based and Neighbourhood Partnerships U.S. Department of Homeland Security, FEMA
  Rev. David L. Meyers, Director

• CLG Consulting
  Anne Grunewald, Principal CLG Consulting
  Elizabeth Davies, EAD & Associates

• Federal Emergency Management Agency – New York State and Albany
  Ken Curtin, Voluntary Agency Liaison, Disaster Case Management, Joint State-Federal State Field Office
  Visit to Albany State Emergency Operations Centre and Joint Field Office

• Schoharie County Tour (New York State)
  Kimberley Kimble, Voluntary Agency Liaison Officer
  Schoharie Family and Children’s Services, Disaster Case Management Services
  CARE (Community Area Resource Efforts) for NYS (New York State) Donation Site
  Schoharie County Emergency Management Office, Colleen Fullford, Acting Director
  Hunterfield Christian Training Centre, Pastor Charles Gockel Executive Director

• Disaster Research Centre, University of Delaware
  Tricia Wachtendorf, PhD. Associate Director, Disaster Research Centre, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice
  James M. Kendra, Ph.D., CEM. Director, Disaster Research Centre, Associate Professor, School of Public Policy and Administration
  Pat Young, Resource Collections Coordinator

• ADRA Adventist Development and Relief Agency International
  Paul Muniz, Director for Agency Safety and Security
  Emanuel da Costa, Director, Emergency Management

• Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Washington
  Keith Turi, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of the Assistant Administrator
  Ben Curran, Voluntary Agency Liaison Unit Chief, Individual Assistance Programs, Voluntary Agency Coordination & Volunteer & Donations Management
  Ociel Nava, Senior Program Specialist, Planning, Exercise & Doctrine (PED) Branch, National Disaster Recovery Planning Division
  Angela Gladwell, Chief, Environmental Protection Unit
  David Kaufman, Director, Office of Policy and Program Analysis
• American Red Cross
  Omar Abou-Samra, Officer, Direct Services | Domestic Disaster Operations
  Kevin Kelley, Senior Director, Community Preparedness and Resilience
  Melissa Crews, Client Casework
  Sheila Thurmond, Cash Programming (International)
  Amy Mintz, Director, Disaster Government Operations
  Marilyn Biggerstaff, Recovery Planning
  Monica Montoya, Coordinated Assistance Network CAN
  Valerie Cole, Senior Associate Disaster Mental Health

Canada  2 – 5 May

• Canadian Red Cross Society
  Denis Dion, National Director Disaster Management
  Ange Sawh, Director Disaster Management Western Zone
  Lise Anne Pierce, Provincial Manager, British Columbia

• Public Safety Canada
  David Neville, Director, Disaster Financial Assistance and Preparedness Programs

New Zealand  13 – 19 May

• Ministry of Civil Defence
  Ljubica Manula-Seadon and Leonie Waayer, Sector Development
  Alan Walker, Manager, CDEM Development
  John Hamilton, Director, Ministry of Civil Defence

• Ministry of Social Development
  Anne Stevenson, National Manager Emergency Management

• Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority
  Michelle Mitchell, General Manager of Community Wellbeing
  Diane Turner, General Manager Strategy, Planning & Policy

• Red Cross
  Wendy Davie, Community Recovery Manager
4. Context

In 2011 the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience\(^1\) was adopted by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). The Strategy sets out a whole-of-nation, resilience based approach to disaster management and recognises that disaster resilience is a shared responsibility for individuals, households, businesses, community groups and government. The Strategy is a first step in a long-term, evolving process to deliver sustained behavioural change.

The themes of community engagement and shared responsibility represent a strategic policy shift from the traditional top down model of emergency management to a community centric, bottom up approach that focuses on strengthening what works well in communities on a daily basis, and offers a more effective path to building societal security and resilience.\(^2\) This is reflected in the central policy positions of national disaster resilience strategies in all of the countries that I visited as part of this Fellowship.\(^3\)

In the USA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has adopted a whole community approach to emergency management.\(^4\) “Whole Community is a means by which residents, emergency management practitioners, organisational and community leaders and government officials can collectively understand and assess the needs of their respective communities and determine the best ways to organise and strengthen their assets, capacities and interests.”\(^5\)

The UK National Framework succinctly defines community resilience as “Communities and individuals harnessing local resources and expertise to help themselves in an emergency, in a way that complements the response of emergency services.”\(^6\)

There are a plethora of theoretical definitions of resilience; however as John Hamilton, Director, Ministry of Civil Defence New Zealand simply put it “you know resilience when you see it.”\(^7\) Throughout my discussions with government and non government agencies, local community organisations, councils and community members the following themes were consistently highlighted.

Resilient communities are characterised by community members who:
- are connected to each other
- self organise and help themselves and others
- deal with adversity and gain strength from it
- adapt to difficulties, challenges and changes in their environments
- learn from experience and change.

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3. Countries visited: United Kingdom, United States, Canada, New Zealand.
7. Interview with John Hamilton 15/5/12.
A disaster resilient community is one in which community members and organisations:
- are informed about and understand the risks/hazards that may affect their community
- have personal preparedness plans in place
- harness their local resources and expertise
- are active partners working with emergency services, local councils and other community organisations
- influence and make decisions that affect them.

The concept of shared responsibility in disaster resilience has been widely embraced by developed nations. In order for responsibility to be ‘shared’, government must adopt an emergency management approach that has as its starting point existing community strengths and networks and involves the whole community being engaged and empowered to make choices and take responsibility in planning for, responding to and recovering from disasters.

The focus of my Fellowship was to contribute to the ongoing dialogue around building disaster resilient communities by exploring how central government policy positions translate into collective actions that effect change at a local level.

### 5. The Role of Central Government

Central governments have a lead role in supporting community disaster resilience through setting policy directions and frameworks. This top down approach sets out the government position and provides a clear roadmap, a common language and understanding about how resilience is understood at a national level.

Central governments also have an important role as a knowledge hub, coordinating and sharing best practice and tools. In the UK, the development of the Strategic National Framework on Community Resilience and associated products and tools was the result of extensive consultation across the country. The consultations focussed on what people, community groups, responders and voluntary sector agencies really needed to support them to build a disaster resilient community. Alongside the Framework sit a series of products and tools, including guidance documents, community emergency plan templates and case study examples of innovative practices. These products provide an effective resource for local government and community organisations. The UK Cabinet Office, Civil Contingencies Secretariat recognise that a purely top down approach of making resources available does not necessarily lead to uptake at a local level. The Cabinet Office has taken a facilitative policy approach, meeting in local communities and assisting them in writing guidance documents and supporting emergency planners in addressing local needs.

Frameworks and tools are an important component of the holistic approach to building disaster resilient communities and they provide a useful way of documenting, disseminating and sharing good practice. However a central theme of my discussions across government, non government and local community organisations was recognising that while frameworks

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and tools can provide guidance and practical support, in isolation, they do not engage or drive cultural change at the local level.

Central governments can recommend, encourage and template new strategies, however it is up to people at the local level to implement. This approach assumes and requires emergency managers, community organisations and individuals to be meeting together and to have the resources to act on and take the lead in local activities that build disaster resilience.

In my discussions with all governments, the current global economic circumstances loomed large and the absence of dedicated funding to implement local community resilience programs was a constant theme. In an environment of global economic downturn and increasingly finite resources at county, district and local council levels, while the policy of disaster resilience is widely supported, resources to implement top down initiatives at a local level are extremely limited.

In times of economic downturn and tightening budgets the first programs that are at risk of budget cuts are “top down” preparedness activities. They are the fastest and easiest program type to defund, a much more short term, politically palatable option than downsizing response agency capabilities such as fire fighters.

If building disaster resilient communities is to be a long term sustainable option, the primary focus and investment must not be on the development of top down government initiatives and resources but on supporting the long term, systematic cultural change in the way local government and emergency management agencies engage with existing community networks and support bottom up initiatives in preparing for, responding to and recovering from disasters.

**Key Considerations for Future Practice**

National policy positions play an important role in setting direction, creating a framework for action and a common language. However it has been difficult to translate these overarching national policy positions into practice. Continuing work must translate policy paradigms into concrete actions and behavioural change focusing on key questions such as:

- What do emergency managers, organisations and individuals need to do differently?
- What is required to generate the cultural shift at the local level?
6. A Different Approach to Emergency Management

Historically, the approach to emergency management planning has been set within a context of ‘professional’ emergency management organisations/planners and response agencies informing communities about what they could expect from authorities and on the things will be done for ‘victims’ of a disaster.

The traditional emergency management model resonates with the traditional medical model that identifies a disease, tells the patient the bad news and then provides a treatment. David Kaufman, Director Office of Policy and Program Analysis FEMA, highlighted the way in which the cultural shift to disaster resilient communities parallels with a public health model that focuses on what society needs to do to ensure that people stay healthy. Health preparedness measures promote healthy lifestyle and behaviour and what people can do to increase control over their health and improve it.

The business of emergency management planning has tended to be a fairly closed shop, primarily involving government and response agencies providing limited information about about local hazards and potential risks to the community. This reality was borne out in my discussions with a range of community agencies that attended the Fiery Spirits Exploring Resilience Seminar in Dunfermline. I was struck by their expertise, wealth of community resources and networks and the strong level of interest in contributing to disaster planning and preparedness, response and recovery. However, a key theme of those discussions was a lack of clarity for agencies in how they could begin to obtain information and participate in emergency planning in their local communities.

If the vision articulated in central government policies to build disaster resilient communities is to be realised, it requires a significant change in the way emergency management authorities interact with local communities. It requires the commitment of governments to promote and support individual and community participation in preparedness, response and recovery where the capabilities and knowledge of all sectors within the community are recognised and valued.

Engaging communities is not simply providing communities with information about a risk, a plan, or what they should do to prepare. Engagement means local communities having a place around the table, being listened to and empowered to influence and make decisions that affect them.

This means emergency management authorities engaging communities in transparent conversations about local risks, listening to and valuing local knowledge about community needs. It involves partnering with all sectors of the community, government, not for profit and faith based and the private sector to identify local resources and how they may be used to assist in disasters.

Rather than the traditional role of emergency management authorities as expert advisors, in this new paradigm the emergency planner begins by identifying with the community the existing resources, agencies and networks, builds on what the community knows and can

9 Interview with David Kaufman, Director, Office of Policy and Program Analysis 30/4/12
offer as a partner in emergencies and harnesses resources by incorporating into local planning arrangements.

Local governments and emergency managers are the key change agents in this process, however change does not happen just because a centralised policy position has been agreed, or case studies and templates disseminated. Engaging communities cannot be mechanically applied like a plan, but must be embedded within organisational culture. If local emergency management authorities are to champion this approach they need to see how engaging the community is an effective path to better outcomes and be equipped with the knowledge and skills to be able to effectively engage and partner with local community members and organisations.

Change will only occur by local authorities and community members driving change, sharing experiences and working in partnership at the local level. Communities mentoring communities is one practical strategy that can support change at the local level, where local communities come together to share experiences, learnings and new ways of working.

7. Disaster Assistance Programs

Communities in developed nations continue to have high expectations about what governments will do and deliver during and after a disaster and this is particularly true in relation to disaster assistance programs.

Disaster assistance programs are delivered by government and non-government agencies and range in nature and scope:

- government natural disaster relief schemes that specify the type/level and criteria for financial assistance through grants and loans
- ad hoc government disaster assistance loans
- existing government programs, eg housing and income support
- non government organisation emergency assistance, cash and in kind.
- appeal funds
- donated goods.

Both government and non-government agencies tend to focus on a top down approach of delivering tangible relief and recovery services to disaster affected communities, based on the premise that “moving more money, supplies and experts into affected areas will result in a faster recovery.”\textsuperscript{10} There is a tendency for disaster assistance programs to become the primary strategy and the major focus for political leaders, media and community members. The tangible nature of the programs provide an opportunity for organisations and politicians to easily quantify their assistance; the number of new programs established and amount of financial assistance directed towards the community.

However, the escalating costs of immediate relief and long term recovery programs have not translated into an indicator of effective recovery. Aldrich\(^{11}\) draws the distinction that a community’s ability to recover from a disaster is not dependent on the overall amount of aid received and points instead to social capital and resilient connected communities as the best indicator of long term recovery.

Disaster assistance programs play a critical role in targeting unmet material and financial need in disaster affected communities, however as external standalone measures of support do not empower people, enhance community connectedness or build resilience.

Engaging communities in recovery within a resilience framework requires government to focus on a bottom up approach, beginning with what already exists in the community and building on its inherent, organic strengths. This requires governments to actively invest resources in:

- leveraging community leadership
- harnessing community strengths and initiatives
- empowering communities to take those initiatives.

### 7.1. Government Natural Disaster Assistance Schemes

In the United States, Canada and Australia there are standard government Disaster Assistance Schemes that provide grants and loans to individuals, households and small business. Consideration of these schemes within a resilience framework highlights some key principles:

- providing a safety net of assistance to individuals in financial hardship
- contributing to individual/household recovery costs but not fully restoring households to pre disaster state.
- not acting as a disincentive to insurance.

The challenge for these governments has been a growing focus and community expectation on government financial assistance and the associated rising costs over recent years, in part due to the increasing frequency of disaster events.

In the United Kingdom and New Zealand where standard government disaster assistance schemes do not exist there is a stronger culture within communities that individuals are responsible for their own recovery from disasters and less expectation on government stepping in with financial assistance in the first instance. This approach is not without its challenges. In significant large scale events government may be required to implement additional measures of assistance at the time of the disaster, in the absence of a policy framework and in an environment where policy positions are more likely to be influenced by political pressure to drive action.

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Regardless of which approach governments take in relation to providing disaster financial assistance, the way in which organisational, political and media messages are pitched have a direct impact on strengthening or undermining community resilience. Public messages need to focus not only on what the government will do or provide to the community, but also recognise and affirm community actions that encourage self reliance, neighbours helping neighbours and communities working together.

7.2. Disaster Appeals

Significant disasters that result in large loss of life and/or property evoke a nation’s collective sense of horror and it has been argued that “disaster funds enable the public to express symbolically their sympathy and common feeling of grief.”

Within this context it is important to acknowledge that the desire for spontaneous giving by the public in response to a particular disaster event is as much about meeting the needs and wishes of donors as it is about meeting the needs of the affected community. Some disasters touch the human heart and raise significant funds, while other disasters may result in significant disaster related need within a community but do not capture the attention or generosity of the broader public.

Donor intent is not necessarily related to the size, scale or need generated by a disaster. Eyre\textsuperscript{12} has identified a number of factors that are more likely to lead to large sums of money being donated such as the death of children, proximity of the disaster to significant events such as Christmas, a clearly identifiable community and extensive media coverage.

Disaster appeals play an important and significant role in meeting unmet financial needs. They are able to be distributed quickly and have the potential to meet disaster related needs in creative and targeted ways. However, as with disaster assistance schemes it should be noted that the provision of money does not in and of itself build resilience and it does have the potential to distract or fragment a community through perceived or real inequity in the way financial assistance is distributed.

Any decision to activate a disaster appeal must consider the complexities surrounding donor intent, the potential disconnect between level of funds raised compared with the level of disaster related need (either too much or too little) and the capacity of the disaster appeal to address unmet disaster related needs within the affected community.

As experience and research into the area of disaster appeals continues to mature, organisations with responsibility for managing disaster appeals are now also focussing on grants within a resilience based paradigm. The New Zealand Red Cross Canterbury Earthquake Appeal has one of its stated criteria as “Funding needs to support resilience to

\textsuperscript{12} Eyre, A (2010). Disaster Funds Lessons & Guidance on the Management & Distribution of Disaster Funds. Disaster Action, p.8.

\textsuperscript{13} Eyre, A (2010). Disaster Funds Lessons & Guidance on the Management & Distribution of Disaster Funds. Disaster Action, p.9.
the effects of the earthquake"14 and the Winter Assistance Grant for the elderly (over 65) and children under five years. This grant is paid to households with elderly or young children where their homes had been significantly damaged by the earthquake with serious compromises to the insulation. Keeping people warm and safe contributes to keeping them healthy and able to continue to be self sufficient and care for themselves and others - it builds their resilience.

7.3. Cumbria Flood Recovery Fund 2009

Cumbria Community Foundation (the Foundation) is a well established Community Foundation that has been operating as a grant making charity in Cumbria for over ten years. Prior to the November 2009 floods it had managed three community focused disaster appeals; Cumbria Community Recovery Fund set up in response to the foot and mouth outbreak that devastated Cumbria in 2001, the Cumbria Flood Recovery Fund 2005 set up in response to the floods and storms that affected Carlisle and other areas of Cumbria during January 2005 and the Cumbria Community Memorial Fund set up in response to the tragic shootings of June 2010. Though its day to day grant making activities and involvement with previous disaster appeals the Foundation is known as a local organisation with a good reputation within the community and has established links with Cumbria County Council.

The Cumbria Flood Recovery Fund 2009 (The Fund) was established in November 2009 by the Cumbria Community Foundation at the request of the Cumbria County Council. The Fund was a charitable fund set up with the purpose of relieving hardship within Cumbria caused directly or indirectly by storm damage and flooding. Given the significant national and international media coverage of this disaster the public response to the Fund was very high. By mid February 2010 the trustees had announced the decision to stop actively fundraising due to the high level of response.

Grants were targeted towards individuals or families whose homes had significant structural damage or flooding (hardship) and people who had lost work or income because of storm or flood. Grants were means tested in order to satisfy the Charity Commission’s requirements to evidence financial hardship and not available to people who were fully insured unless they had significant costs not covered by insurance.15

Three main types of grants were administered through the Fund: Individual Hardship Grants, Resilience and Resistance Grants and Grants to Organisations. Priority for assistance was targeted towards vulnerable people: low income, unemployed, uninsured, elderly, physical or learning disabilities, families with young children.

Individual Hardship grants were available for the following purposes:
- clean up
- emergency repairs
- clothing


The Resilience and Resistance Grant was an additional grant available to eligible households to put in place measures that would help prevent flooding and/or reduce the impact of flooding within their homes. Interviews from the Evaluation of the Cumbria Flood Recovery Fund 2009 revealed that the “grants undoubtedly acted as an incentive to people to implement the resistance and resilience work – 90% of respondents gave comments indicating that it stimulated them to do the work and allowed them to get on with it much more quickly than they would have been able to do if left to their own resources.”

Grants were also available to charitable organisations who were providing immediate relief to people affected by the floods and also organisations that were providing longer term community rebuilding projects. In addition, charitable organisations who had experienced significant structural and or flood damage were also eligible for assistance.

One of the strengths of the Cumbria Flood Recovery Fund 2009 was that the Cumbria Community Foundation is a trusted organisation within the community, experienced in managing donors money. The Foundation understood the local needs and was able to respond to what the community wanted.

Deb Muscat, Grants Development Officer Cumbria Community Foundation identified the critical role played by County Council Area Engagement and Neighbourhood Development Officers working with affected residents as an on the ground point of contact for people, providing advice about the grants and assisting in completing applications. This proactive and coordinated approach was a significant factor in ensuring that information and assistance about the grants was reaching those most in need.

Key Considerations for Future Practice

Within the context of a resilience framework it appeared that the Cumbria Flood Recovery Fund 2009 demonstrated three critical elements:

- The Fund met an identified unmet disaster need through provision of Hardship Grants. Unlike Australia the UK does not have standard government disaster assistance grant programs for household contents and structural repairs.
- Resistance and Resilience Grants enabled people to take responsibility and prepare their homes against future flooding.
- Grants to local charitable organisations strengthened local capacity by supporting direct service provision to affected residents.

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17 Interview with Deb Muscat, Grants Development Officer Cumbria Community Foundation 26/3/12
8. Building Resilience through Recovery

Typically large scale disasters that impact significantly on a community require a level of resource, financial support and whole of government and non government coordination that is beyond the capacity of local councils in the affected areas. In these circumstances a top down more centralised government approach is often required and attracts a high level of interest from politicians, media and the broader community. While this is an effective and necessary strategy in large scale disasters, getting the structure and the relationship right with affected local communities can be challenging.

The greater the investment made by central government in recovery following disasters, the greater the degree of interest and influence there will be at a central government and political level. This degree of authority and influence can be incredibly useful in helping to drive recovery plans and strategies, however also risks an unintended consequence of disempowering the local community. Therefore it is important that clear structures and processes are put in place that recognise the centrality of the community and allow its voice to continue to be heard and actioned.

8.1. Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority

The Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority (CERA) was established in response to the impact of the two major earthquakes that struck the Canterbury region in the South Island of New Zealand in September 2010 and February 2011. The earthquakes resulted in unprecedented damage to housing, business and infrastructure in the greater Christchurch area as well as significant loss of life (181 fatalities) in the February earthquake. After the February earthquake it was agreed that a timely and effective recovery from the destruction required a central government agency that could provide leadership, act quickly on urgent priorities and coordinate the recovery efforts of local authorities, business and the wider community. CERA reports directly to the Minister for Canterbury Earthquake Recovery and will remain in place until 2016.18

Given CERA’s centralised structure, it is very much a top down approach to the recovery of Christchurch and necessarily so given the catastrophic nature of the earthquakes. In recognition of this central government approach, CERA has a stated organisational focus and commitment on engagement, collaboration and partnership with the local communities.

Michelle Mitchell, CERA’s General Manager- Community Wellbeing Unit described the way in which the Wellbeing Unit is now leading community development strategies, actively working with earthquake affected communities to integrate and complement top down planning directions with bottom up community initiatives.19 The CERA Wellbeing Unit has facilitated numerous community workshops, resourced by Health, Ministry of Social Development and other social service agencies.

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19 Interview with Michelle Mitchell, General Manager of Community Wellbeing CERA 7/5/12
A Community Resilience Team has been established with Community Relationship Managers whose key focus is on community development. Community Relationship Managers have a background in community development, local government and public health and have undertaken training with the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2).

The responsibilities of Community Relationship Managers include:
- bringing community members and agencies to the table, engaging them and linking them with each other
- working with community agencies, agreeing roles and responsibilities and providing them with practice tools
- facilitating planning at a local level
- ensuring planning is happening at the community’s pace.

The Wellbeing Unit recognises that in early recovery, relief and disaster assistance programs were the focus of strategies needed to address the significant welfare needs faced by earthquake affected communities. As Christchurch moves into longer term recovery, the primary strategies are evolving to a community driven approach. This includes identifying community leaders and community strengths and engaging in partnerships with existing community organisations. This approach sets the direction for an effective exit strategy for CERA and also builds resilience by allowing people to participate and contribute to a common recovery goal and future disaster preparedness.

9. Community Awareness and Education
Community awareness and education play an important part in helping to build resilient and prepared communities.

An example of a successful public awareness campaign was the UK “Getting Ready For Winter” Campaign, led by the UK Cabinet Office and the Voluntary Sector Civil Protection Forum. The aim of this web based campaign was to introduce individual resilience concepts to the community in a meaningful and tangible way with messages of how to prepare for winter and keep warm and safe. The campaign focussed on people being aware of their own risks and helping neighbours, and built on the back of everyday activities and responsibilities that people were already engaged in. The messages focussed on normalising these activities rather than positioning them as an additional task that people needed to turn their already time poor attention to.

A significant strength of this campaign was the cross agency collaboration where government and non government agencies worked together and adopted similar messages on their website home pages with links to a central web site and used their existing networks to disseminate the message. For example, the Salvation Army sent the message and link to

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20 International Association for Public Participation is a not for profit organisation founded in the United States in 1990 to advance the practice of community engagement and promote the values and best practices associated with involving the public in decisions that affect their lives.
22 Interview with Nick Brown, Recovery Policy Manager UK Cabinet Office 30/3/12.
10,000 of its supporters, messages were disseminated through Meals on Wheels agencies and through ambulance first aid training.

9.1. Informed Prepared Together Project
The ‘Informed Prepared Together Project’\(^{23}\) is an initiative of the Red Cross/EU Office in Brussels, led by Moya Wood-Heath, Emergency Planning/Civil Protection Advisor British Red Cross Society and Red Cross European Union Office. This Project consolidated and built on a number of resilience projects that had previously been undertaken by the European Commission, to produce practical products and resources for statutory and non-statutory organisations that build and improve individual, community and national resilience.\(^{24}\)

Informed Prepared Together consists of products and resources such as:
- guidance documents for governments and organisations
- community based exercise guide with practical advice on organising an effective, participatory and interactive exercises at the local level.
- a website www.informedprepared.eu that gives access to an extensive range of existing tools, information and links
- easy to use products that can be used and disseminated through organisations such as children’s games, Top 10 Tips, and calendars with information on risks and hazards. These products are available for organisations to tailor to their own environment and add organisational logos.

Key Considerations for Future Practice
- Products and resources that promote resilience are most effective in communities that are already motivated and engaged in building local resilience.
- Having a person or an organisation willing to take the lead and champion local resilience building is critical, resources and information in isolation do not drive community engagement or change.
- The most effective messages are relevant to all hazards and meaningful on a day to day basis, while also effective in an emergency.
- Statutory and non-statutory organisations can play a key role in working together to promote common simple key messages on their websites.
- Developing local community disaster resilience will take time and resources. Public awareness and education campaigns will only be effective if there is long term commitment to repeating the programs and messages and continually promoting resources, all of which require ongoing funding and a commitment of resources.

9.2. School Education Programs
School education programs that promote disaster awareness and preparedness are another effective strategy that recognises the long term approach required to support the cultural and

\(^{23}\) http://www.informedprepared.eu.
\(^{24}\) Interview with Moya Wood-Heath 29/3/12.
A behavioural shift towards more disaster resilient communities. These programs are based on the premise of the lasting benefits of instilling in children an awareness and acceptance of everyday disaster preparedness, along with the added benefit of children taking information home to parents, families and their wider communities. Three particularly successful preparedness education programs that I was made aware of during my fellowship were:

- “What’s the Plan Stan”\(^{25}\) implemented throughout New Zealand.
- Resilience Through Schools Project\(^{26}\) developed by the Emergency Planning Department at Essex County Council, now being rolled out more widely across the United Kingdom.

Educational preparedness programs are an important and effective strategy for building disaster resilient communities. However, as standalone programs they will always be at risk of funding cuts and competing educational and political priorities. If educating our children is understood as part of a longer term generational, systemic and cultural change, then disaster preparedness should be integrated and embedded into the existing core school curriculum, such as social sciences, geography, history, community and family studies and personal development health and physical education.

This concept can be further extended into how emergency management programs are structured within the tertiary education system. Complementary to a standalone emergency management courses, an approach of aligning and integrating relevant emergency management competencies within mainstream tertiary disciplines such as law, medicine, nursing, social work, psychology, town planning, environmental planning, engineering and architecture, builds on existing disciplines and supports the conceptual shift that emergency management is a whole of community responsibility.


The Australian National Strategy for Disaster Resilience identifies a key action as “empowering individuals and communities to exercise choice and take responsibility”\(^{28}\). Taking responsibility demands meaningful community participation in planning for emergencies.

New Zealand and the United Kingdom have developed Community Response (or Emergency) Plans to assist local communities in their planning. The basic premise for the development of these plans is the acknowledgement that in a disaster, more often than not, local community members are the first responders and communities may need to rely on their own resources, without external help, for a period of time until response agencies are able to attend.

\(^{25}\) www.whatsplanstan.govt.nz, 15/7/12
\(^{26}\) https://update.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/resource-library/community-resilience-case-study-library 15/7/12
\(^{27}\) www.nyc.gov/oem 15/7/12
\(^{28}\) National Strategy for Disaster Resilience, COAG 2011, p.10.
The New Zealand Community Response Plans are designed for the response phase of an emergency and set out how a local community will respond to an event with little or no outside assistance. Community members are engaged through community meetings, a wide range of representatives are encouraged to attend including business and accommodation providers, tourist industry, emergency service agencies, service clubs, local residents and ratepayers associations. The plans detail the local facilities and resources in the community and set out the roles and responsibilities of individuals and community groups.

The United Kingdom Community Emergency Plans are championed and coordinated by a Community Emergency Group with an appointed Community Emergency Coordinator. The aim of the Community Emergency Plan is to increase the readiness and resilience of local communities. The plan documents how a community would respond to an emergency situation while awaiting the assistance of emergency services, or in support of them. The UK Cabinet Office has undertaken significant work to support communities in the development of their emergency plans and has developed Community Emergency Plan Guidance and Toolkits.

Key Considerations For Future Practice

- Community Emergency/Response Plans have been most successfully implemented in small rural communities, where there is a strong sense of community connectedness.
- Communities that have a recently experienced a disaster are most receptive to engaging and participating in local disaster planning. Through the recovery process community leaders have already been identified and recovery committees can transition into local resilience forums and local emergency planning.
- Toolkits and templates are useful as a starting point however all communities are different and plans must be developed based on local needs and reflect local solutions.
- Planning has to be community driven, but equally communities need to know how they fit into broader emergency plans, working in partnership with support from local emergency planning authorities is essential.
- The key to local emergency planning is getting the right people together – plans do not respond to emergencies, people do.

11. Engaging Existing Networks and Building Local Capacity

Building disaster preparedness through engaging existing community networks, local groups and volunteers is the most effective way to ensure sustainability and local solutions to local issues.

Sporting clubs, rotary, neighbourhood watch, parent or student groups, libraries, faith communities, scouts, girl guides and professional organisations are all opportunities where disaster awareness and preparedness activities could be supported by individuals already active in their community and integrated into the existing activities of community groups.

11.1. Neighbourhood Emergency Response Teams

In my discussions at FEMA, the San Francisco Neighbourhood Emergency Response Teams (NERT),\(^{30}\) established by the San Francisco Fire Department was highlighted as a model which utilises existing community networks to build personal and community disaster preparedness.

NERT teams are formed through partnership with existing community groups such as a Neighbourhood Watch, Rotary Club, business groups, faith based groups and homeowners association. The NERT training program is for individuals, neighbourhood groups and community organisations. The training is based on a neighbour helping neighbour approach and includes personal preparedness and hands on disaster skills that equip members to respond to a personal emergency as well as being a part of a neighbourhood response team in a disaster.

While this strategy was originally driven by the need to prepare for earthquake in San Francisco it approaches resilience from a whole of community perspective and has been broadened to encourage the participation of stakeholder organisations across all policy areas such as environment, education, health, infrastructure, cultural, social and spiritual. The advantages of this approach are twofold, firstly it builds on existing networks and strengthens community connectedness with benefits far wider reaching than earthquake preparedness, while also ensuring that emergency planning is mainstreamed into everyday community awareness and planning.

11.2. American Red Cross Community Resilience Pilot Program

When meeting in Washington with the American Red Cross I was made aware of the American Red Cross Community Resilience Pilot Program.\(^{31}\)

The project was implemented in September 2011 in five sites across the US; New Orleans, South Mississippi, Miami, Denver and San Francisco. The project is led by local Red Cross Chapters, supported by a facilitator (funded by Red Cross) and seeks to bring together a broader group of stakeholders than are traditionally involved in disaster response and recovery. The aim of these groups is to assess community preparedness, identify barriers to being resilient and take community action to address the barriers before disaster strikes.

This approach reflects a cultural change from providing information to a community about what they need to do to prepare, to a focus on encouraging local organisations to consider community issues in disaster preparedness.

One example of greater connectedness between agencies at a local level can be seen in Miami Day Care Centres. The community group identified the key role that day care centres play in the community and the flow on negative impacts on a community should they be closed following a disaster. A closed day care centre means that parents must stay home.

\(^{30}\) http://resilientsf.org/
\(^{31}\) Interview with Kevin Kelley, Senior Director, Community Preparedness and Resilience 1/5/12
from work to care for their children, this affects family incomes and businesses and in turn directly impacts on the whole community’s recovery from disaster. In Miami, the solution was an agreed strategy of mutual aid between childcare centres, where if one (or more was closed) the remaining centres would work together to accommodate the extra children.

**Key Considerations for Future Practice**

- Build on existing community groups, the American Red Cross have a local community presence through their local chapters which allowed an entry point and an existing network on which the Community Resilience Pilot program could be built.
- Success is dependent on an individual stepping forward to lead/facilitate local community groups, it takes time, resources and skills. There are not long term funding resources for these activities, identifying community leaders and developing volunteer capacity is critical to long term sustainability of community resilience networks.

### 11.3. Transition Towns

At the Exploring Community Resilience Seminar that I attended in Dunfermline Scotland, a number of participants spoke about the Transition Towns Movement established in the UK and further abroad including New Zealand and Australia.

Transition Towns is a global, grassroots movement driven by the twin challenges of climate change and peak oil. The underlying philosophy is to build local community resilience by supporting local responses at any level and from anyone, with the aim of weaving them together into a coordinated action plan for change towards a lower energy lifestyle.

Transition Towns demonstrates practical initiatives that create community networks and build local resilience and offers valuable insights and resources that can contribute to the current discussions about building disaster resilient communities.

### 11.4. Lyttelton Community Earthquake Response

Project Lyttelton is part of the Transition Towns movement in New Zealand and was identified by the Ministry of Civil Defence as an example of a grass roots community organisation using its knowledge, networks, skills and resources in times of disaster.

The port town of Lyttelton is linked to Christchurch via the Lyttelton road tunnel, which is 1.9 km long and carries over 10,000 vehicles a day. The devastating earthquake on February 22, 2011 resulted in significant damage to public and private properties and infrastructure including damage to the Lyttelton Road Tunnel, forcing its closure for a number of days. This meant that emergency services and voluntary agencies such as Red Cross and the Salvation Army were unable to send resources and support to Lyttelton in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake.

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32 Fiery Spirits Community of Practice, CarnegieUK
One of the initiatives that had been established for a number of years under Project Lyttelton was the Lyttelton Time Bank. Time Banking is a way of trading skills in a community that uses time, rather than money, as the measurement tool. Members of a Time Bank share their skills with other members and are given time credits for the work they do. With the credits they gain, each member can ‘buy’ someone else's time, and get the service they need.

In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake the Time Bank Coordinator used the established networks and contacts to quickly put people together who needed help. This included coordinating volunteers, finding local accommodation for people, coordinating food and clean up assistance, checking on older people and directing trades people. The community was connected, people knew their neighbours and there was an established culture of helping each other. In the weeks and months following the earthquake the time bank continued to provide an essential community link providing regular updates through email and information bulletins.

The Time Bank initiative and Project Lyttelton, demonstrated an example of an empowered and connected community that has resilience and capacity to respond to community needs in a way that is fast and effective. Margaret Jefferies, Chair, Project Lyttelton described highlights of a Time Bank that exist in normal times but are significant in times of disaster:

- “you know what skills you have available in the community
- you have rapid ways of accessing them
- people are already practised in using such a connecting system – it kicks in fast
- there is a strong human element, it builds a sense of community
- it allows all people to be involved.”

**Key Considerations for Future Practice**

The reality that people do have an innate and spontaneous desire to respond in a disaster, that they will play a role and that they are a valuable resource in planning, response and recovery leads to some important considerations both for emergency management authorities and community organisations.

- Existing community leaders, individuals and organisations that develop and understand local community networks are well placed to utilise existing community structures and resources before, during and after disaster.
- The Transition Town movement is an example of a grass roots community network that provides an existing structure on which emergency planning can integrate, harness local resources and build on.
- Engaging with local community groups about how they can contribute and work in partnership with emergency management authorities should be part of pre disaster planning. A failure to do this will lead to well intentioned but uncoordinated community responses and activities.

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34 http://ccmag.net/lyttelton-timebank 12/6/12.
11.5. Huntersfield Christian Training Centre, Prattsville New York State

Another example of a local community organisation responding to community need in disaster was the Huntersfield Christian Training Centre at Prattsville in the Catskill Mountains New York State. I had the opportunity of visiting this small town of about 650 people that was severely impacted by flooding resulting from Hurricane Irene in August 2011.35 The town was flooded when a local creek rose over 15 feet in under 12 hours, the rainwater spilling off the Catskills mountains sending a volume of water that was greater than Niagara Falls through Prattsville. Over 130 homes were washed away or damaged irreparably, including the entire main street along with all its businesses and several trailer parks.

FEMA has well established relationships and plans with the American Red Cross for shelter management and the Salvation Army for feeding disaster impacted communities. However when the flood disaster hit Prattsville sweeping away roads and bridges and effectively cutting off the small community, these agencies were unable to deploy volunteers to assist in the immediate aftermath.

The Huntersfield Christian Training Centre located high in the Catskill mountains about six miles from Prattsville’s town centre has been part of the Prattsville community for over forty years. The Centre became the main evacuation/shelter for the town when the floods hit. It’s conference facilities with generator power was well placed to sleep and feed over 100 Prattsville residents that were forced to flee from their homes. The Centre was also involved in initially setting up a feeding program in town, until such time that the Salvation Army was able to deploy mobile kitchens and partner with the Centre to continue the feeding program.

Though the Red Cross were soon logistically able to deploy shelter resources, in this event it was the community’s preference and most appropriate for the Huntersfield Christian Training Centre to continue in this role as a local community organisation caring for its community members. The role of Red Cross and emergency management authorities became one of supporting the Centre in this task.

Following the initial weeks of providing shelter for affected families the Executive Director of Huntersfield Christian Training Centre, Pastor Charles Gockel, a former building project manager with experience in community home rebuilding programs after disasters offered the services of the Centre to coordinate a case management and home rebuilding project in Prattsville. The model is based on church volunteer groups coming to Prattsville from across the US, accommodated by the Hunterfield Christian Centre for periods of one to two weeks. They bring a combination of skilled and semi skilled labour, which is coordinated and project managed by the Huntersfield building project team of qualified construction managers. Building materials are paid for by the home owner, usually with the financial assistance that has been provided through FEMA grants, however all construction/labour costs are provided free.

The project has become one of the central strategies in the rebuilding of Prattsville. The FEMA Voluntary Liaison Officer played a critical role in connecting local agencies, providing

35 Schoharie County Tour organised by Ken Curtin and Kimberley Kimble, FEMA Voluntary Liaison Officers 23/4/12.
assistance in developing a road map for recovery and ensuring that the Centre had information about FEMA grants that may be available to the Centre or the affected residents of Prattsville.

**Key Considerations for Future Practice**

Government plays a key role in supporting local community initiatives that empower local leadership. In practice this means that authorities have to:

- trust local initiatives
- respect the skills and capacity of local people
- involve local community groups in planning before, during and after disasters.

There are many organisational and political elements that challenge governments to incorporate community leadership in this way, however 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.

**12. Empowering Community Leadership**

A community leader is an individual within a community that steps forward to take an initiative with the support of local people. They may be part of organisations already active in the community, who know their community networks and can continue to provide the services of the organisation within the new context of disaster recovery. Alternatively, community leaders may be individuals who emerge within the context of an event, usually in response to an unmet need or gap in services that gathers community support.

**12.1. September 11 UK Families Support Group**

A powerful example of a leader emerging from a community of circumstance and driving a bottom up community initiative is Jelena Watkin’s work through the September 11 UK Families Support Group. Jelena’s brother was killed in the World Trade Centre on September 11 2001 and her early experiences of trying to negotiate government systems and seek information and assistance led her to becoming a founder member of the September 11 UK Families Support Group.

In the early period following the terrorist attack, there was a stark contrast between the level of support that was being provided in New York to family members who were American citizens and family members who resided in other countries. The tyranny of distance from New York as the central hub of assistance in an age where fast speed internet and portable handheld devises had not yet become an unquestioned way of life, greatly hindered access to information, support services and financial assistance. Initially it did not appear that similar accessible points of assistance were being established in the UK for family members, or that there was recognition of the complex and global nature of family relationships and how these impacted on a family’s ability to seek information and assistance.

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36 Interview with Jelena Watkins 29/3/12.
The Sept 11 UK Families Support Group was a community united by common circumstance. The founding members of the group brought a wealth of professional skills, such as accountancy and finance, legal, and company directorship and these skills were quickly and effectively utilised to form the necessary functions of the Group and constitute it as an Unincorporated Association. Formalising the Group in this way gave it a platform and authority to advise, negotiate and advocate on behalf of its members with government.

This Group has achieved many outcomes for its members over the years since 9/11 and has evolved in nature and focus as the needs of the group have changed over time. The Group’s achievements have included:

- connecting families from across the UK who had lost a family member
- establishing a support group and helpline for the bereaved
- accessing counselling services for the bereaved
- obtaining financial assistance for the support group and members through appeal funds
- being an advisory body to government, representing the needs and priorities of family members
- influencing and participating in planning for memorial services and the memorial garden in Grosvenor Square Garden, London.

**Key Considerations for Future Practice**

Bottom up community initiatives rely on the goodwill of people who are passionate and willing to give up their own time and contribute their own resources to meet community need and achieve outcomes.

The role of government is to engage and empower emerging community leaders by working in partnership to support community initiatives. This includes:

- identifying community leaders who can work in partnership with government
- facilitating good communication processes and information flows between government and community groups, including regular meetings and information sessions
- listening to community groups as they identify their needs and working with them to develop solutions
- providing practical resources and support to community groups
- being an active partner in the community led initiative.

**12.2. Cockermouth Flood Action Group**

Cumbria, a rural area in the north west lakes district of England has been no stranger to disasters over the last 10 years:

- Foot and Mouth Disease 2001
- Carlisle floods 2005
- Hull floods 2007
- Cumbria Floods 2009
The focus of my discussions with the County Council and community groups in Cumbria was the flooding event in November 2009, when over sixty communities across Cumbria experienced devastating flooding. Over 2000 properties and 200 farms were affected and there was significant infrastructure damage to bridges, roads and ports. Over 3000 businesses were affected, including 80% of businesses in the town of Cockermouth.

The Cockermouth Flood Action Group is a particularly effective example of a grass roots bottom up community led initiative by local residents working with local government and the Environment Agency resulting in real outcomes and benefits that have contributed to a more resilient community.

The Flood Action Group was set up in response to the 2005 floods by affected residents and grew in strength after the 2008 floods. Following the devastating floods of 2009 (the third flood in four years) the importance of the Group was recognised by the broader community and the local MP. Membership grew to include residents that had, as well as had not been flooded, representatives from the business and farming community and retired and non retired professionals, including project managers, engineers and magistrates. The combination of a passionate and active Chairwoman and members with expertise, resources and energy for action provided a powerful base that led to formal recognition and significant achievements for this group.

The purpose of the Group was to give residents a voice, influence and a formal mechanism to work with government agencies responsible for flood prevention, to achieve reductions to the flood risk in the area. “All members share the same vision and that is to ensure a speedy recovery not only of Cockermouth but also the wider community of the county and to establish if a similar future catastrophe can be prevented.”

The Cockermouth Flood Action Group has worked closely with the Environment Agency to lobby for improved flood defences in the town. The work of the Flood Action Group demonstrates the importance of local knowledge, local people understood how the area flooded and the Group was able to provide advice and work with the Environment Agency and authorities to develop a plan that would meet the needs of the community. The Chairwoman of the Flood Action Group has given presentations to agencies to help staff understand the resident’s experience of being flooded. The agencies and authorities were willing to engage with the Flood Action Group and listen to and value local knowledge.

The success of this strategy has been demonstrated with planning consent and funding support for the building of significant flood defences in Cockermouth that will significantly reduce future risk of flooding to the town.

37 Lone gunman shot dead twelve people in Whitehaven, Cumbria.
38 Port of Workington.
39 http://www.cockermouthfloodactiongroup.org.uk/ as at 14/6/12.
Another example of the Cockermouth Flood Action Group building community resilience is through the Community Flood Wardens Scheme. This Scheme identifies community volunteers who can take a lead role in planning for an effective flood response through encouraging residents to complete Household Emergency Plans and prepare their properties for flooding. Vulnerable residents who may need assistance in an emergency situation are identified and there is a community focus on neighbours helping neighbours.

The Flood Wardens Scheme is recognised by local authorities as part of local emergency arrangements is being incorporated into local response plans. When there is a flood alert in the community the response agencies will provide early and detailed information to the Flood Wardens, who in turn will provide early warning to local residents and advise them to activate their household emergency plan.

The communication networks established between the Flood Warden Scheme and the local response agencies have resulted in a much greater degree of personal preparedness within the town and empowered residents to make decisions based on information about flood risks.

A growing number of communities across the UK are establishing Flood Action and Flood Warden groups and there is a recognition that the Flood Warden Scheme has the potential to extend beyond a single flood hazard and be incorporated a wider all hazards approach.

**Key Considerations for Future Action**

Politically active and connected communities can more efficiently mobilize to demand and extract resources from authorities. Factors that led to the success of the Cockermouth Flood Action Group included:

- a small stable population and connected community with a culture of neighbour helping neighbour, in other words high social capital
- a series of recent and significant disaster events which increased community connectedness, focus and motivation to prepare for disasters
- a community leader who was a skilled activist, the Chairwoman of the Flood Action Group
- members of the Flood Action Group who were professionally well resourced
- government agencies willing to work in partnership with local residents, listen and effectively utilize local knowledge.

**13. Partnering with Non Government Voluntary Organisations**

National disaster resilience strategies are increasingly recognising the instrumental and interdependent role that non government voluntary and community organisations have with government in disaster response and recovery and increasingly, building community resilience. This is reflected in the growing number of formal agreements with governments that articulate and define agreed agency roles and responsibilities.

The voluntary and community sector is a vital part of society, not only for the services delivered during disasters but it's important role in building social capital. While specific
arrangements vary between countries, non government voluntary agencies provide a wide range of response and recovery services including:

- mass care/evacuation Centres, sheltering, feeding, material aid and personal support
- accommodation services
- clean up / Mud out, Muck out programs
- debris removal
- personal support
- disaster case management
- rebuilding services
- donations management
- volunteer management.

Government funding for non government voluntary agencies disaster services varies between countries. In most countries (as in Australia) agencies with a formal role are able to recoup direct operational expenses. In the United States, non government organisations fully fund the services they provide to the community in most cases. In part this is due to the longstanding history in the United States of NGO’s playing a very significant and independent role in disaster operations which is part of the core mission of those agencies.

While funding support to non government voluntary agencies is extremely limited and given the current global economic circumstances unlikely to change, governments recognise the need to support, connect and build capacity of voluntary agencies within this sector. This is achieved in part by formalised structures that enhance communication and coordination between voluntary agencies and with government.

13.1. Voluntary Organisations Active in Disaster (VOAD) – United States

Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD)\textsuperscript{40} is the network formally recognised and supported by the US Government that brings together a wide range of voluntary organisations to share knowledge, information and resources, to work cooperatively with government and other agencies in fostering effective services for disaster survivors and their communities.

VOAD operates at national, state and local chapter levels and through its collaborative efforts helps build civil society through volunteer promotion, organisational capacity building, training, self-reliance, community disaster preparedness and prevention. VOADs provide a central point for organisations wanting to offer resources and become involved in emergencies, where they can be educated about the context of emergencies and connected with other organisations so that resources can be effectively targeted and coordinated. The range of organisations includes those with formal agreements with government defining their role in emergencies such as the Red Cross or Salvation Army, as well as other voluntary organisations that may not have had a traditional role in emergencies. These efforts help strengthen the overall ability of the non-profit sector to partner effectively with government.

\textsuperscript{40}. http://www.nvoad.org
FEMA recognises the VOAD network as a valuable partner in emergency management and the National VOAD is the point of contact for voluntary organisations in the National Response Coordination Centre (at FEMA headquarters). At the State level, a VOAD representative is present at the State Emergency Operations Centre during the response phase of a disaster. State emergency management and FEMA Voluntary Agency Liaison Officers are represented at the national and state levels of VOAD.

Some of the advantages and opportunities that are generated from the VOAD network include:

- a centralised contact point at the national and state levels where new organisations are encouraged to learn how to get involved in emergency management.
- the ability to be innovative, creative, flexible, and pro-active when government often cannot be.
- a vast base of volunteers and recognised national and regional networks and platforms that provide an excellent public information dissemination opportunity.
- State VOAD representatives in State Emergency Operations Centres can play key partnering roles for government through extensive networks and collective influence.

13.2. The Voluntary Agency Liaison Officer

The network of Voluntary Agency Liaison Officers (VAL) is another practical strategy that FEMA provides to support, coordinate and educate local communities with the aim of empowering them in local disaster preparedness, response and recovery activities.

The role of the VAL is to build and expand voluntary agency capabilities that support all phases of the emergency management. The VAL:

- connects community organisations under VOAD
- identifies, supports and advocates for local community leaders and agencies that are able to take up a formal role in the community’s recovery
- provides information about FEMA Individual Assistance Program and grants available to voluntary agencies
- assists the community in the development of long term recovery strategies
- encourages mitigation measures during the re-building process.

Key Considerations for Future Practice

A structured network such as VOAD creates a formal space for a wide range of voluntary organisations to participate and offer resources in disasters. VOAD also creates a space for emergency planners to engage with voluntary organisations, to have conversations and collaborate in planning, identify service gaps and coordinate how community services would be provided and by which agencies.

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41 Ben Curran http://training.fema.gov/.../edu/.../Curran%20-%20NVOAD%20ValuesPaper
14. Partnering with the Private Sector

One of the principles within a resilience based approach to emergency management is recognising the role that businesses have in communities, providing services, resources and local knowledge.

In the US there is an emerging practice where a business representative is invited into the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) as a Liaison Officer during a disaster event. The representative may be from a business association representing a range of businesses or companies, eg Target or Wallmart, or at a regional level it may be the small grocery outlet in the town. This allows emergency management staff in the EOC to work in a coordinated way, directing emergency supplies to areas where business is unable to open, or prioritising the restoration of utilities and facilitating the transportation of goods to ensure that stock is available so businesses can open for trade as soon as possible. These measures have a direct impact on the ability of individuals and the local community to provide for themselves following a disaster as well as kick starting the economy of local business within a community.

14.1. Waffle House Index

Another very practical and creative example of how FEMA is partnering with business to gather initial post disaster impact assessment information is through the ‘Waffle House Index’. The Waffle House is an iconic fast food chain with outlets across the US open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. FEMA has developed an unofficial colour coded index which helps assess the level of impact in a local area. If the restaurant is serving everything, it means there is water and electricity and that the index is green. If the menu has been scaled back, the index is yellow, which means there's water but no power. In the rare event a Waffle House is completely shut down, the index is red indicating that there has been significant damage in the community.

While this is obviously a less than scientific and calculated means of impact assessment it does demonstrate the opportunity for government to think outside the box in terms of how local private sector intelligence and resources can contribute effectively to emergency response and recovery.

Key Considerations For Future Practice

- Businesses have resources, knowledge and expertise that are local, easy to access and not available from other sources.
- Engaging business increases the likelihood of business continuity planning.
- Establishing meaningful roles for business creates opportunities for business to connect with communities.

15. Conclusions

National disaster resilience frameworks and strategies that focus on whole of community engagement, participation and shared responsibility represent a significant philosophical shift in how emergency management has traditionally been conducted.

Disasters happen to individuals in local communities, a bottom up approach to building resilience recognises individuals and communities as the starting point. What works best in communities is what is already there. At a practical level this means working in partnership with the community, building on existing networks, resources and strengths, identifying community leaders and empowering the community to exercise choice and take responsibility. This approach requires government decision makers to “recognise the critical role of social capital and social resources”\(^{43}\) as the foundation in building disaster resilient communities.

It is important to recognise that while this approach of public participation and empowerment is relatively new within the emergency management sector, it is the basis of community development work established within the social sciences over many decades and also aligns with the core principles of international aid. This should provide some encouragement for emergency planners, as research within the social science arena has well demonstrated the effectiveness of this approach in building resilient communities. It also suggests that emergency management policy makers and practitioners should look for opportunities to partner with the social sciences/community development sector to maximise learning opportunities and avoid duplication of effort.

Disaster assistance programs play a critical role in targeting unmet material and financial disaster related need in communities, however the provision of assistance by agencies to a community does not in and of itself enhance community connectedness or wellbeing, deliver better recovery outcomes, or build resilience. As Aldrich\(^{44}\) highlights, recovery “does not depend on the overall amount of aid received nor on the amount of damage done by the disaster; instead, social capital – the bonds which tie citizens together – functions as the main engine of long term recovery.” This is an important consideration for government and the not for profit sector in how communities are supported to recover from disasters. It suggests that as well as attention on the aid and resources being provided to a community, there needs to be a greater focus and investment in identifying and building on existing community strengths.

Building disaster resilient communities must be seen within the context of long term generational change, requiring a fundamental cultural shift by government and communities in responsibilities and expectations of how disasters are planned and prepared for, responded to and recovered from. Cultural and behavioural change is never easy, campaigns around wearing seat belts, wearing sunscreen and quitting smoking have all demonstrated this fact. Engaging individuals and communities in emergency preparedness


is equally as challenging. Disaster preparedness programs will feel remote and irrelevant to most individuals unless they have been directly or indirectly affected by disaster. A more sustainable approach is to integrate everyday preparedness measures that focus people on being aware of their own risks and caring for themselves, family, friends and neighbours. This approach aims to build individual resilience by preparing people for personal emergencies and equipping them in ways that will also be effective in coping with disaster events.

The long term nature of building disaster resilient communities means that it will rarely produce quick political wins. If this paradigm shift is to be successful it will require a long term commitment from government. Working with communities in changing expectations and responsibilities is a complex and evolving process that is done by people, not to people and will take time before demonstrated outcomes are evident.

This report summarises my observations, alongside the reading and analysis that were such an important part of my Fellowship. As I stated at the outset, the aim of my report was to contribute to the ongoing dialogue that is occurring within and between countries about how communities can become disaster resilient. Throughout the report I have identified key considerations for future practice and in support of these a number of broad themes have been identified which I hope will contribute to ongoing discussions in this area:

1. Recognising disaster resilience as a shared responsibility between the community and government requires an approach to emergency management that begins with identifying existing community strengths and networks and involves the whole community being engaged and empowered to make choices and take responsibility in planning for, responding to and recovering from disasters.

2. Top down, government centric approaches that provide strategic frameworks, guidance documents and templates set direction and provide a clear road map for action but do not engage communities or drive cultural change at the local level. A greater focus and investment in supporting bottom up, community led strategies is the key to effecting sustainable change.

3. Disaster assistance programs are effective in targeting unmet material and financial disaster related need in communities. However, the provision of assistance by agencies to a community does not in and of itself enhance community wellbeing, deliver better recovery outcomes, or build resilience. The critical role of social capital in building disaster resilient communities requires greater attention and research.

4. Community engagement in preparing for, responding to and recovering from disasters extends beyond information and consultation. Engagement means local communities having a place around the emergency planning table, being listened to and empowered to influence and make decisions that affect them.

5. A greater investment in research and evaluation with regard what works well in communities that have been affected by disaster and how communities can best build resilience is required.
References


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