

communicating in recovery



Australian Red Cross

THE POWER OF HUMANITY

communicating in recovery

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First edition published by Australian Red Cross 2010

155 Pelham Street
Carlton, Victoria 3053

National Library of Australia

Cataloguing-in-publication data:

Title: Communicating in recovery
Edition: 1st ed.
ISBN: 978-0-9775199-9-6
Notes: Includes bibliography
Subjects: 1. Communication – Media and communication. 2. Emergency management

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The Red Cross Communicating in Recovery resources aim to increase the effectiveness of communications with recovery populations, thereby contributing to the timely and meaningful recovery of communities post emergency.

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 to 'emergency' and connotations of one term over the other should not be made.

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**This resource is proudly supported by the Community Enterprise Foundation,
an initiative of Bendigo Bank.**

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communicating in recovery

general information

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about this guide

who is this guide for?

This guide is for people or organisations working and managing information in a post emergency/disaster environment.

what period of emergency?

Recovery should begin as soon as an emergency occurs. Recovery is different from immediate response as it is focused on the longer-term support and recovery of individuals, households and communities. The advice in this guide is not designed for immediate relief services, but Red Cross welcomes organisations to adapt the material to their needs.

what type of geographic focus?

There is no geographic focus to this resource. However, it has been developed primarily to suit the conditions of recovery in Australia. Use of this guide for other areas would require modifications where appropriate.

who are you communicating with?

There are a number of different audiences in a post disaster environment, all of whom need information. Target audiences may include affected individuals, the affected community, the broader general public, community leaders, the private sector, the media, government representatives and agencies, non-government agencies and emergency services organisations.

what type and scale of emergency?

While emergencies vary greatly, the basic rules and methods of communication in recovery are similar. Affected people often require the same types of information, irrespective of the type of emergency. This resource takes an all-hazards approach with no geographic focus, and can be used in large or small emergencies.



Luke Gracie

what is recovery?

Recovery refers to those programs that go beyond immediate relief to assist affected people to rebuild their homes, lives and services and to strengthen their capacity to cope with future disasters.ⁱ

Recovery services support emergency-affected persons in the reconstruction of the physical infrastructure and restoration of emotional, social, economic and physical wellbeing.ⁱⁱ

Following a disaster, immediate needs are met first. The rapid provision of food, water, shelter and medical care is vital to prevent loss of life and alleviate suffering. However, practical experience, backed by research, supports the view that even at this stage, relief must be conducted with a thought to planning a transition to early recovery and meeting the affected community's longer-term needs. In addition, as people begin to get back on their feet and rebuild their lives, agencies need to help them to strengthen their resilience to future hazards.ⁱⁱⁱ

Recovery is a partnership between the affected community, the broader community, governments, non-government agencies and the private sector. States and territories have well developed and well rehearsed recovery plans. The Australian Government brings a range of resources and programs to support states and territories. Local governments are the level of government closest to the people affected and will best understand the dynamics and networks within the affected community.

Further information on recovery management can be found in the Australian Emergency Management Institute - Emergency Management Handbook Series (www.em.gov.au).

Australian Red Cross/Stephen McIlwenna



what are recovery communications?

‘Recovery communications’ refers to the practice of sending, gathering, managing and evaluating information in the recovery stage following an emergency. Well planned and well executed public information campaigns are vital to community recovery.

Communications in recovery 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.

Recovery communications require care and sensitivity and can often be impeded by significant physical, logistical and psychosocial limitations.^{iv}

Successful recovery is built on effective communication. Recovery should:

- ▶ recognise that communication with a community should be two-way, and that input and feedback should be sought and considered over an extended time
- ▶ 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 channels
- ▶ establish mechanisms for coordinated and consistent communication with all organisations and individuals
- ▶ repeat key recovery messages because information is more likely to reach community members when they are receptive^v

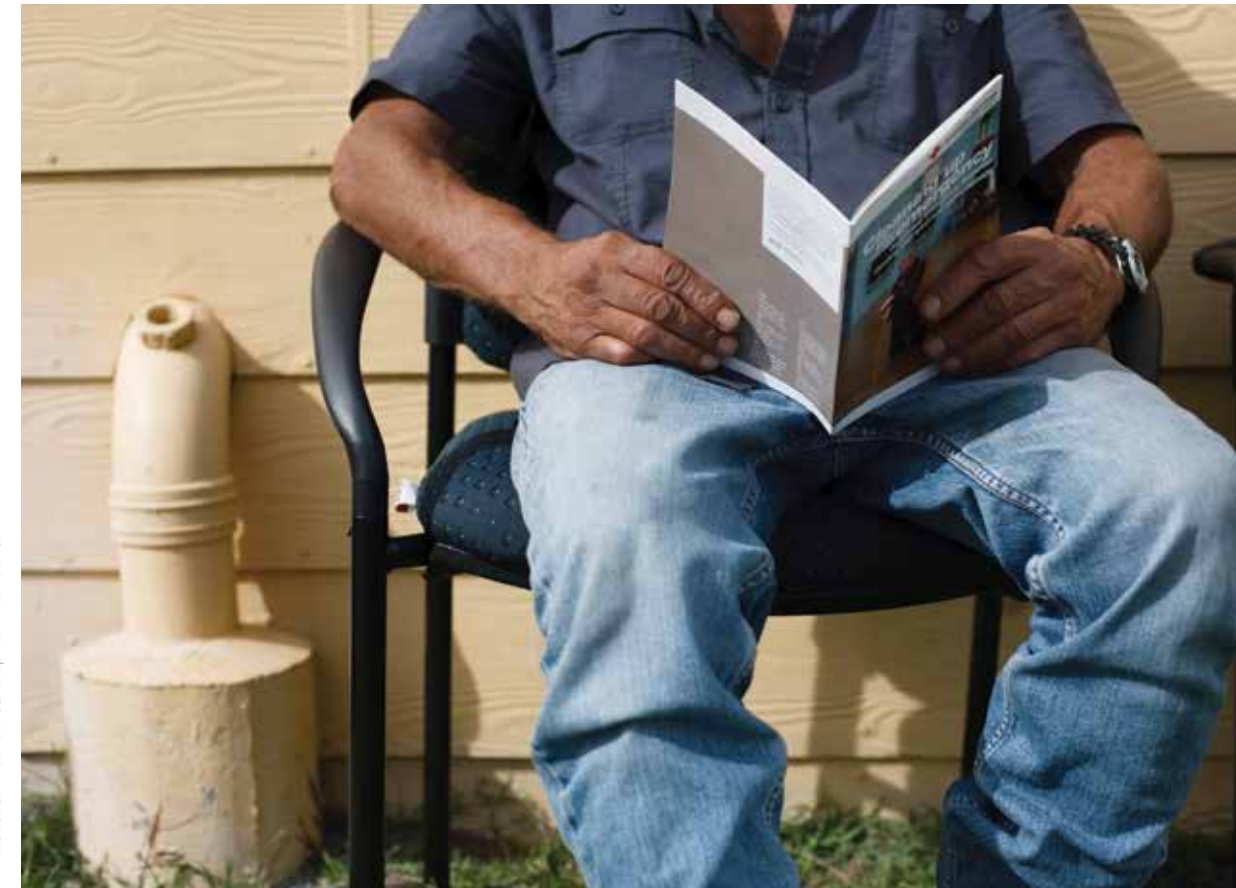
**information
should be:**

**relevant
clear
targeted**

why are they 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.^{vi}

Successful communications operate as a form of community development and capacity building. Information empowers the community and individuals to understand and influence their recovery, increases social cohesion and assists in rebuilding the social fabric of a group that has undergone significant dislocation. A well informed and connected community will recover sooner and become stronger than one without effective communications and guiding information.



Australian Red Cross/Stephen McIlvenna

three rules of recovery communications

before
communicating,
ask yourself
three questions:

1 ▶ is it relevant?

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

- ▶ what is happening with the recovery process
- ▶ 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 four broad categories, ask yourself: *does it actually need to be sent?* As communication is a two-way process, actually asking affected people what they need will help 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. When using text based communications, ensure the font and size of the text is readable.

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. For example, if you want to alert women in a small community about a maternal health clinic opening, placing posters in the local bakery may be more effective than updating your website with highly polished content.

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.^{vii}

The aim of all recovery communications should be to assist the community, not to promote an organisation.

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. For example, if a community already has a functioning and well respected community radio network, utilise it to inform the community rather than developing new, and potentially ineffective, communication channels.

Following ABCD principles means you are working with the community rather than merely working alongside them. ABCD empowers the community to participate in their own recovery.

respect people

When people are displaced or affected by an emergency, it is easy to only see their vulnerability. Communications should be respectful at all times. It is imperative that all communications recognise that affected people are rational beings able to make decisions for themselves. Materials that forget this principle can be viewed by the community as paternalistic and patronising.

the right to know

Put the community at the same status as your manager or funding source. They have a right to know about the recovery process, your services and other organisations' programs.^{ix}

acknowledge the impact

People affected by an emergency have potentially experienced a life shaping event. 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.

repeat information

After an emergency people often have trouble remembering information. People will be looking for information to assist their specific needs at that specific time, and ignoring everything else. What may be irrelevant to someone at week three may be the exact information they require at week five.

Information must be repeated and re-communicated periodically throughout the recovery process. An effective system of receiving and recording feedback from the community will help you know when to repeat your information.

remember the 'unaffected'

Be careful not to focus solely on those directly affected in an emergency (for example, people whose properties were burned or those relocated due to a flood). Those not directly affected can often experience significant stress following an emergency. Care should be taken not to alienate or differentiate between the 'affected' and 'unaffected' in an emergency.

no spin

People recovering from an emergency have specific requirements and want information solely to address their needs. Communications containing rhetoric or brand leveraging information is counterproductive, as it will damage your reputation and just add to the communications 'noise' in the community.

psychological challenges to communication and understanding information

An emergency usually generates a number of possible effects on those involved. These include shock, high arousal, narrowing of focus, disbelief and confusion about what has happened or is currently happening.

An emergency can impact on a person's ability to take in information, think about it and remember it.

An emergency can impact:

▶ concentration

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 for

▶ memory

for spoken, written and/or seen information

to recall simple or complex knowledge

to recall recent or past knowledge


▶ decision-making ability

weighing up possibilities and risks

dealing with complex ideas and outcomes

planning and prioritising actions

The length of time people experience these effects for varies greatly. They may impair people for just a few hours or up to several months or years depending on the person, the event and many other factors.



Early intervention of psychosocial support (psychological first aid) through helpful communication can dramatically reduce the chances of an affected person experiencing ongoing distress or mental health issues later on.

Luke Gracie

how can you overcome these barriers to communication?

When people are experiencing any of the effects just mentioned, face to face communication is most effective, backed up by other communications. Remember these key points:

- ▶ Only provide or send necessary, relevant information.
- ▶ Keep information consistent, accurate, short and sharp.
- ▶ Use clear language and uncomplicated sentences.
- ▶ Use positive or value-neutral language wherever possible, e.g. use 'survivor' or 'affected person' rather than 'victim'.
- ▶ Do not give too much new or complicated information if the person is not able to take it all in.
- ▶ Provide information in various formats, including printed material that people can read later.
- ▶ Repeat information frequently.
- ▶ Ask people if they want regular communication times (weekly email newsletters, daily town meetings, etc.).
- ▶ Should people want more information, provide a contact point (website, hotline, contact details) rather than providing too much information at the one time.

Normal reactions to an abnormal situation

It is important to help survivors recognise how normal their reactions are and that most people recover fully from even intense stress reactions within six to sixteen months.^x However, there are no rules for how long an individual or community will take to recover, and people will move through the recovery process at different paces.^{xi} Support should always be sought when concerned about oneself or other people in the short- term and over the longer-term (months and years into the future).

practical challenges in a post emergency situation

When planning your communications strategy for a disaster recovery situation, keep in mind that many barriers may exist, making your job difficult. It's important that you are flexible and able to quickly change your plans if needed.

Some practical challenges you may face include:

- ▶ no electricity
- ▶ no internet connection
- ▶ no printers
- ▶ no office or 'traditional' work place
- ▶ dispersed population (possibly for extended periods)
- ▶ road blocks
- ▶ spontaneous volunteers
- ▶ lack of mapping/population figures
- ▶ destruction of infrastructure
- ▶ public transport system disrupted
- ▶ decline in personal security
- ▶ local staff injured or unable to work
- ▶ high media interest
- ▶ remaining debris/destruction
- ▶ health risks associated with exposed remains (human or animal)
- ▶ possible leadership vacuum in community
- ▶ little or no physical infrastructure to house your operations
- ▶ potential crime or looting
- ▶ little or no food outlets in area
- ▶ no radio towers or people unable to access radio
- ▶ disruption to mail, or all mailboxes destroyed
- ▶ political interest.

Australian Red Cross/Stephen McIlvenna



utilising information ‘conduits’

After an emergency it can feel like a huge ‘tap’ of information has been turned on, as excessive amounts of flyers, brochures, newsletters and emails are poured onto a community and those working in the recovery. This resource aims to help you plan for the challenges associated with recovery communications and reduce the likelihood of this ‘tap effect’ occurring.

One way to try and reduce this chaos is to look for information ‘conduits’. These conduits are key people involved in the analysis, distribution and dissemination of information to and from the community.

Tapping into these ‘conduits’ can enable you to:

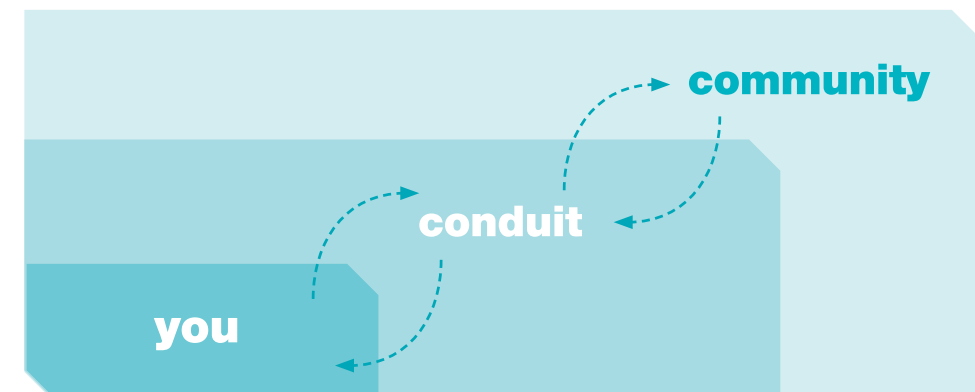
- ▶ bypass (some of) the informational noise occurring around you
- ▶ better target your communications
- ▶ have greater confidence that the information is reaching its target
- ▶ get better feedback about your communications
- ▶ have a better understanding of what information is needed at what time

some examples of ‘conduits’ may include:

- ▶ community leaders
- ▶ religious leaders
- ▶ case managers
- ▶ general store or post office owners
- ▶ local media
- ▶ school teachers
- ▶ sports coaches
- ▶ publicans
- ▶ hairdressers
- ▶ doctors/health care professionals
- ▶ police
- ▶ social workers.

some issues to consider when utilising ‘conduits’:

- ▶ Be clear about what you want the ‘conduit’ to do with the information.
- ▶ Remember that these people can, like the community itself, be overwhelmed with too much information.
- ▶ Clearly identify who the material is intended for, e.g. is it for the ‘conduit’, for other agencies, for the media, or for affected people?
- ▶ If the material is to be passed on to the community, have a small abstract outlining the content so the ‘conduit’ doesn’t have to read the whole document.
- ▶ If emailing, think about the size of the document. Are you expecting someone to forward on a 20MB brochure? The maximum recommended size of an email document is 2MB.
- ▶ Think about how you want the material disseminated. If you want the material physically handed out, don’t just send your ‘conduit’ a digital copy and expect them to print it out (this will also mean you give up control over how the material will look once printed). Similarly, if you want the material emailed, don’t give the ‘conduit’ a physical copy and expect them to scan it.
- ▶ With ‘conduits’, you are effectively using influential people to disseminate information on your behalf. Put yourself in their shoes and think about how you would like information to be given to you.



using images of affected people in your communications

Images are incredibly important for organisations working in emergency management and recovery. Photographs of affected people or recovery operations are used extensively in fundraising, media and public information campaigns.

Don't underestimate the influence an image can have. A successful photograph can empower an individual, and build resilience in a community. The right photograph can sum up the dignity, hard work and strength of a group of people. On the other hand, a bad photograph can exploit and objectify a community and present affected people as victims rather than rational human beings.

some principles to follow in your communications:

Avoid stereotypes

Photographs can either challenge or reinforce stereotypes. Images of children – or anyone else – holding out bowls for help reinforces the view of affected people as victims. Do all of your images of women have them holding children or cooking? Are the only non-Caucasian people in your images the recipients of assistance?

Show people in active roles

In an emergency, communities can be remarkably resourceful and resilient. Find images of people helping their own communities, responding to crisis in positive ways.

Not all emergency services workers are Caucasian males

Display the full diversity of Australian society in your imagery.

Did the person want to be in the picture?

Ask yourself: 'Would I want my picture, or my child's picture, to be used in this way?'

Don't change names or places

Don't make up children's names or use a picture from one country or ethnic group to represent another.

Avoid nudity

Pictures of naked people, particularly children, are rarely appropriate.

The above was taken and adapted from 'AlertNet TIPSHEET: How to Portray Famine Victims with Dignity' available at: <http://www.alertnet.org/thefacts/reliefresources/112669600053.htm>



Australian Red Cross/Stephen McIlverna

The key rule for all images of affected people post emergency is that any image should show and express a person's dignity. Don't reduce survivors to passive victims.

building a feedback loop

Most people think of communications as the sending of information. However, this is just half the equation. Any meaningful information campaign must build in a feedback loop – that is, a mechanism to receive feedback, views, suggestions or questions from the audience.

A feedback loop has a number of advantages, such as:

- ▶ allowing insights into the special needs and issues of the community
- ▶ enabling you to review and evaluate your communications and services allowing you to tailor your information to the community
- ▶ letting you find out if you are wasting your time – and if you are, enabling you to make your information more relevant in the future
- ▶ allowing you to obtain vital information about the community (status, needs, location, etc.)
- ▶ encouraging the recovery to be a community led exercise

Building a feedback loop into your communication strategies can be difficult and time consuming. However, receiving feedback and responses from your audience will always improve your service in the longer term.

Try to consider how you can ensure feedback is received throughout your program.

tips for receiving feedback:

- ▶ have contact details of a real person – not a prerecorded message – on all print communications
- ▶ take notes at all community meetings
- ▶ make sure feedback and evaluation systems are in place from an early date
- ▶ gather data during community meetings, outreach, or other face to face contact
- ▶ record data and feedback gathered at call centres (if applicable)
- ▶ recruit local people for recovery roles (if appropriate)
- ▶ debrief staff in the field regularly to ensure information and knowledge is retained
- ▶ don't wait for feedback to come to you – be proactive and ask for it!

communication needs assessment (CNA)

Prior to producing any materials, consider completing a communications needs assessment (CNA). A CNA is a simple way of organising the purpose, methods and issues of a public information campaign.

Completing a CNA is particularly useful when working with special needs groups. It is recommended that a CNA is completed prior to conducting public information campaigns with the special groups identified in this resource (see Part Three, 'Inclusive Communications', p 68).

This is not a formal questionnaire you should complete rigorously – it is more like a series of prompts and issues to think about. It shouldn't take more than fifteen minutes to complete.

Issue	Questions you should ask yourself
Contextual	What broader context are you trying to communicate in? How are people going, generally speaking? How is the recovery proceeding, generally speaking? Are there ongoing safety/security concerns?
Stakeholder	Who is it that you are trying to communicate with? What special needs do they have, if any? What assets can we build on to make communication more effective? What are the issues/problems the stakeholders have?
Objectives	What is it that you are trying to achieve by communicating? What actual information are you trying to communicate to the target audience?
Method	What method(s) is best suited to the issues identified above?
Feedback	How can we ensure that issues or views from the stakeholders are fed back to us during this information exercise?

an example CNA:

A severe cyclone has hit Cairns, killing 25 people and destroying hundreds of properties with thousands more damaged. It is three weeks after the incident; many people are still dispersed or in temporary accommodation and there is significant debris and dangerous material in the area.

Mia Wallace is a Community Development Officer in one of the seven local government areas affected by the emergency. She has been reallocated to support the council's recovery operations. Her role focuses on psychosocial support to the council's culturally diverse community.

This is a sample of a CNA she may write:

Issue	Notes
Contextual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – large amounts of debris and dangerous housing in area – approx 500 people still in temporary accommodation – response and early physical recovery proceeding without major problems – there was a lack of early psychosocial support interventions – community becoming increasingly agitated re: government financial support – electricity is fully connected in the area – free internet portals have been set up in the town centre, receiving very high usage by community
Stakeholder	<p>Trying to communicate with those of Chinese nationality and/or those of Chinese ethnic background:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – group spans all age and socio-economic categories – majority of population derives from mainland Chinese background, although some are from a Hong Kong background – significant number of older people have difficulty understanding spoken English, a higher amount have difficulty understanding written English – most speak Mandarin, some speak Cantonese only – high majority of younger (<40) people understand spoken and written English well – the Chinese community in the area is well organised with social groups, civic organisations etc., and is generally highly interconnected – a number of institutions serve the needs of group, including social and sporting groups, advocacy organisations, language centres – there is a state-wide Chinese language newspaper that has existing distribution channels in the area – several Chinese community leaders have significant influence – three of the deceased were of Chinese background

Australian Red Cross/Tim Page



part one

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Objective #1 of communication is to let the group know of the council's presence and that they should use us as a key contact for any issues they have. – Objective #2 of communication is to alert the group that free counseling services will be running at council offices daily for the next three months. – Objective #3 of communication is to develop a better relationship between the Chinese community and the council, as the community has tended to be self-reliant and insular in the past.
Method	<p>Potential methods include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – printed material translated into Mandarin/Cantonese and left at places visited by members of the Chinese community – advertisement in Chinese language newspaper – target community leaders – post Chinese language information on council website – run a town hall meeting specifically addressing the needs of people of Chinese background. <p><i>As the Chinese community in the LGA has existing formal and informal associations and inter-connections, communications should tap into these and build upon them rather than developing new streams of communication.</i></p>
Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – have translation services available at council offices/call centres – if possible, have a person fluent in Mandarin and/or Cantonese at all face to face activities – implement system to have regular updates from community leaders and 'conduits' to gauge views/issues of the community – have anonymous 'suggestions box' at community meetings – link all communications to website, council office, or hotline if they have feedback

2

communicating in recovery

methods of communication

part one

part two

part three

part four

community meetings

Community meetings are a vital part of communication and community recovery, no matter what phase of recovery you are in. Community meetings allow instant feedback from people, they can ask questions and you can spend time explaining issues rather than trying to condense information into written form.

Community meetings can also signal a turning point for people, from response to recovery. They represent an acknowledgement of what people have been through. They are an opportunity for people to reconnect and get information about one another. The informal chats and discussions before and after a meeting can be highly therapeutic and comforting for people who have been through an emergency.

Recovering from an emergency can be a very lonely and isolating process. Regular town meetings can provide a sense of social connection for people.

Strengths:

- ▶ face to face contact is consistently identified as the most effective, efficient and trusted form of communication
- ▶ meetings are highly effective in the early stages following a disaster
- ▶ chance for community to meet with recovery decision makers (and express their views)
- ▶ facilitates immediate feedback loop
- ▶ immediate answers can be given to questions
- ▶ actively builds social cohesion
- ▶ allows agencies to gain vital data and information about people's status and whereabouts
- ▶ can create a sense of continuity for community
- ▶ can give community a sense of ownership over the recovery process
- ▶ can act as the conduit for disseminating other communications (print material etc)
- ▶ high number of positive secondary effects (forms community meeting point, assists community bonding, allows individuals to converse with one another) can be done with low resource investment.

Limitations:

- ▶ speakers may not have all the answers or information people require
- ▶ possibility for highly emotional, aggressive or distraught views to be presented without mediation
- ▶ can potentially be traumatic for people if horror stories are told over and over again
- ▶ requires attendees to be aware of meeting, have transport and be physically able to attend
- ▶ generally presented in one dominant language, so discriminates against those who do not speak dominant language
- ▶ difficult to cater information to specific people's needs.

Community meetings are best for:

- ▶ establishing early contact and information provision
- ▶ broad information given to the community as a whole
- ▶ enabling feedback and Q&A time
- ▶ gathering information on the status, needs and locations of community members
- ▶ 'checking in' with the community at a later stage after the emergency.

Before the meeting:

- ▶ Consider using an impartial mediator or MC to host the meeting
- ▶ An independent person can introduce experts or agency spokespeople and help 'close' question time or difficult conversations with a greater sense of neutrality.
- ▶ Consider whether you require microphones, audio/visual facilities, food, or any other material aid
- ▶ Prepare a clear agenda and structure that is communicated at the beginning of the meeting, this can be projected on a screen (if available), written on a whiteboard or printed and distributed to meeting members
- ▶ Be realistic – don't try to get through too much in a single meeting
- ▶ Prepare a Q&A option or similar feedback facility
- ▶ Be prepared to listen.
- ▶ Record attendees' details, needs, location and issues.

During the meeting:

- ▶ Start by recapping issues and updates from last meeting.
- ▶ Save a set agenda, but leave time for other business at the end.
- ▶ Leave the door open. People are less likely to open a closed door if they are late.
- ▶ Be consistent in who is in charge of the meeting.
- ▶ Make sure all face to face communication is active (asking questions, listening, receiving feedback) as well as passive (giving information and informing the public about what is happening).
- ▶ If you do not have answers, admit this. Take people's details and organise a time you will have the correct answer. Don't make an answer up!
- ▶ Be prepared that some people may be highly charged and emotional.
- ▶ Where possible, assign a responsible person and a completion time to each action item.
- ▶ Take notes throughout the meeting, and if possible print these notes up and hand them out at the end of the meeting, or arrange to distribute as soon as possible after the meeting.
- ▶ Don't meet and eat at the same time, it's usually better to keep food until the end of a meeting to encourage finishing on time!

After the meeting:

- ▶ Have the contact details of all the speakers easily available.
- ▶ Make a list of all follow-ups committed to, and ensure they are followed up.
- ▶ Have rooms available for private discussion after the meeting (if possible).
- ▶ If needed, consider holding more specialised meetings for groups within the community, e.g. youth, women, people with a disability, businesses.

The frequency of meetings will inevitably drop off over time. Make sure this is communicated to the community clearly and well in advance of it actually happening, so people don't feel abandoned.

See the 'Issues in Recovery' record template attached to this resource for a simple method of recording the issues people raise in community meetings.

Taken and adapted from: 'Australian Council for International Development, Development Advocacy Toolkit.'
Available at: <http://dat.acfid.asn.au/advocacy-skills/running-effective-meetings>

face to face communication

When planning communications, it is easy to focus on channels and methods such as websites, newsletters and so on. With advances in technology allowing information to be transferred almost instantly, it can also be tempting to rely on modern mediums. However, it is important to remember the importance of face to face communication.

Face to face communication consistently ranks as the most influential form of getting information across to people. Benefits include:

- ▶ an immediate response
- ▶ reassurance
- ▶ perceived trustworthiness of information
- ▶ ability to tailor information to suit individuals' needs
- ▶ a sense of participation/ownership of the recovery by affected people.

some tips for interpersonal communication:

Words can have a powerful effect on situations. Carefully choose the terminology you use to describe people's needs. For example, describing people as 'traumatised' and 'victims' infers that they are helpless and will not recover on their own.

Choosing words such as 'affected person' and 'survivor' is far more likely to empower and help people to feel more able to help themselves.

All face to face communication should be active (asking questions, listening, receiving feedback) rather than passive (simply giving information and informing public about what is happening).

Avoid saying 'I know how you feel', because you don't!

tips for listening to someone affected by an emergency:

- ▶ pay attention when people are speaking
- ▶ don't fidget, look away, or appear distracted
- ▶ use appropriate eye contact (take your cues from the other person), be mindful of cultural considerations
- ▶ respond clearly, at an appropriate volume (not whispering, not shouting)
- ▶ use words people can understand (avoid jargon)
- ▶ reflect back to people what they have been saying "so when you left the house and turned left..."
- ▶ don't assume that the other person knows exactly what you are talking about
- ▶ don't talk over the other person or finish their sentences
- ▶ don't act as if you are doing someone a favour by talking to them
- ▶ don't tell your story to an affected person – this isn't about you, it's about them.

if you encounter a highly distressed person:

- ▶ observe safe practices by being mindful of your own safety first
- ▶ remain calm and appear relaxed, confident and non-threatening
- ▶ keep the situation stable until people have time and resources to regain their normal composure (slow breathing, quiet voice)
- ▶ don't get angry or agitated, you will just escalate the situation
- ▶ refer on to a more qualified person the moment you feel out of your depth or unable to assist.

The above was adapted from: 'Australian Red Cross, Personal Support Training Workbook.' 2007



Australian Red Cross/Rodney Dekker

word of mouth

People are going to discuss their recovery with their family, friends and neighbours. This will happen regardless of how well you communicate information through other channels.

Word of mouth is one of the strongest and most trusted forms of communication but it is impossible to control. However, a well orchestrated communications plan can at least influence word of mouth communication. What you need to try and do is give people clear messages they can pass on to others easily, reducing the likelihood that the message is distorted.

strengths:

- ▶ no cost
- ▶ dispersed quickly and effectively through social networks
- ▶ people tell their family and friends of good experiences and quality services
- ▶ trusted form of communication.

limitations:

- ▶ people tell their family and friends of negative experiences
- ▶ messages and information easily get distorted along word of mouth 'chain'
- ▶ potentially high risks to reputation
- ▶ you may have to develop new communications to combat myths or incorrect rumours that spread through word of mouth.

word of mouth is best for:

- ▶ simple messages
- ▶ events
- ▶ calls to action.

tips for using/influencing word of mouth:

- ▶ If done correctly, community members can become agents for your communications, disseminating them through their networks.

- ▶ Clear, consistent messaging across your communications will reduce the likelihood of messages being distorted.
- ▶ Complementing face to face and community meetings with printed material enables people to pass on materials to their friends or family.
- ▶ Have a single point of entry where people who hear about your service can contact you, e.g. a single phone number that is given out, or regular times your organisation will be at the relief centre, or a website address.
- ▶ Target community leaders and those with large networks to be champions of your messages, e.g. key business people, religious leaders, hairdressers, etc.
- ▶ Have information available if people want to confirm what they've heard from their friends/family.
- ▶ Simply asking people to tell their friends about something can be a very effective method of spreading information through a community.



Australian Red Cross/Rodney Dekker

pamphlets/flyers/brochures/fact sheets

strengths:

- ▶ people are familiar with format
- ▶ easy to produce and use
- ▶ physical copy can be retained for later use
- ▶ can be produced relatively quickly
- ▶ can be produced in preparation phase (assuming information is still relevant)
- ▶ information can be discreetly and privately given to recipients
- ▶ people can read information in privacy, at a time of their choosing
- ▶ effective for directing people elsewhere (e.g. website, phone number, recovery centre, community meeting)
- ▶ can be localised for specific issues, themes or geographic areas
- ▶ can be dropped in letterboxes or slid under doors
- ▶ can be made available on websites
- ▶ can be dropped in strategic locations in the community
- ▶ people can pass them on to others.

limitations:

- ▶ time delay in production if producing them post-emergency
- ▶ content is set once printed
- ▶ requires literacy
- ▶ requires access to printing facilities if being produced post-emergency
- ▶ there can be a large amount of other flyers, meaning yours is lost in 'noise'
- ▶ depending on design and printing, can be costly
- ▶ can be easily lost
- ▶ limited space on a page to convey information
- ▶ requires distribution plan and channels.

pamphlets/flyers/brochures/fact sheets are best for:

- ▶ significant, single-issue messages.
- ▶ information that will retain accuracy over time.
- ▶ information that needs to be delivered/kept in private.
- ▶ information that is difficult to communicate verbally.

tips for using or updating pamphlets/flyers/brochures/fact sheets:

- ▶ Tie materials in with your existing key messages and design to strengthen overall communications.
- ▶ Use short, sharp bursts of text rather than dense information.
- ▶ Direct readers to other more detailed resources, rather than providing all information in the pamphlet itself.
- ▶ Use visuals to break up text and guide the reader's eye.
- ▶ Have a clear and simple front cover to catch a person's attention.
- ▶ If information is sensitive (e.g. domestic violence relief centre information), consider producing small documents that can fit in to a person's wallet or purse.
- ▶ Have clear follow-up contact details of people in your organisation.
- ▶ Consider putting material within other resources such as newspapers or local magazines.
- ▶ Consider using different coloured paper for different versions of materials.

print newsletters

strengths:

- ▶ relatively cheap
- ▶ can provide affected groups with regular contact and a sense of social inclusion
- ▶ people are familiar with the format
- ▶ can signify end of response and start of recovery for affected people
- ▶ collates disparate information in one central location
- ▶ ability to localise issues and information
- ▶ physical copy can be retained for later date and can be read in private
- ▶ people not on an email list or without access to email can obtain copy
- ▶ can be passed on from person to person.

limitations:

- ▶ requires literacy
- ▶ requires printing
- ▶ requires physical distribution
- ▶ content is set once printed.

print newsletters are best for:

- ▶ collating various pieces of information rather than a single topic or story
- ▶ specific audiences (whether they be geographic or thematic)
- ▶ information that will remain correct for the life of the edition
- ▶ delivering information over a long period of time in a consistent format.

tips for using/influencing word of mouth:

- ▶ Clearly identify the audience and purpose of the newsletter.
- ▶ Clearly date stamp all newsletters.
- ▶ Provide a basic table of contents at the top each edition.
- ▶ Use visuals to supplement text. Remember that design and layout can be as important as the text contained within.

- ▶ Use simple, sharp, direct language.
- ▶ Have one person coordinating the newsletter, for overall consistency.
- ▶ Do not cut and paste information. Rewrite specifically for the newsletter, it should have a clear 'voice'.
- ▶ Supplement serious information with 'feel-good' stories and community anecdotes if appropriate.
- ▶ Have a plan for feedback.
- ▶ Consider allowing community members to write and contribute to the newsletter.
- ▶ Plan an archive of information.
- ▶ Always provide contact details for a real person.
- ▶ Distribute newsletters from the same place at regular times.
- ▶ Provide a calendar of events in the newsletter.
- ▶ Position regular pieces and features in the same place in each edition.
- ▶ Consider printing on a different colour paper (use pastel colours, otherwise it may be too hard to read) for each edition, so people can recall the edition by colour.



Reuters/Tamizy Harva, courtesy www.alertnet.org

email newsletters

strengths:

- ▶ relatively cheap
- ▶ can be easily targeted to a specific audience
- ▶ a simple and unobtrusive method of communication
- ▶ can provide affected people with regular contact and a sense of social inclusion
- ▶ assists in developing sense of community outside of physical constraints
- ▶ can signify the end of response and start of recovery for some affected people
- ▶ ability to hyperlink to other information within the email
- ▶ collates disparate information in one central location
- ▶ effective for accessing people who have left the area
- ▶ can link to other sites or information
- ▶ easily distributed through existing community networks or mailing lists.

limitations:

- ▶ requires literacy and/or computer literacy
- ▶ difficulty in obtaining contact details
- ▶ requires computer access, internet access and electricity supply
- ▶ significant time investment
- ▶ software compatibility issues
- ▶ people need to know about the newsletter in advance to opt-in to its distribution
- ▶ people receive many emails, so there is a risk of newsletter being perceived as 'spam'.

email newsletters are best for:

- ▶ collating various pieces of information rather than a single topic or story
- ▶ specific audiences (whether they be geographic or thematic)
- ▶ information that will remain correct for the life of the edition
- ▶ overcoming distance and geographical barriers when communicating with dispersed communities.

tips for using/updating an email newsletter:

- ▶ Always include table of contents at top of newsletter. Ideally this is hyperlinked to the text for easy navigation.
- ▶ It is better to have the newsletter in the body of the email rather than as an attachment.
- ▶ Clearly identify the audience and purpose of the newsletter.
- ▶ Use visuals to supplement text. Remember that design and layout is as important as the text itself.
- ▶ Use simple, sharp, direct language.
- ▶ Have one person coordinating newsletter for overall consistency.
- ▶ Do not cut and paste information. Rewrite specifically for the e-newsletter, it should have a 'voice'.
- ▶ Have an opt-out option for subscribers.
- ▶ Supplement serious information with 'feel-good' stories and community anecdotes if appropriate.
- ▶ Have a plan for feedback and contributing writers.
- ▶ Ensure size is under 2MB for emails.
- ▶ Images should be less than 12KB.
- ▶ PDF and provide an Adobe Reader link rather than providing Microsoft Word doc attachments.
- ▶ Archive all your past editions.
- ▶ Always provide contact details for a real person.
- ▶ Needs to be regular, with consistent timing so people know when to expect it.
- ▶ Use a consistent subject line and sender.
- ▶ Recipients should be blind copied (bcc'd) so people can't see the other recipients' names
- ▶ When sending to a group: some email accounts reject emails that have been sent to more than 50 people (as an anti-spam measure), so consider having several 49-member groups if you need to.
- ▶ Unusual email addresses may be caught up in spam filters.
- ▶ Don't mark every email as 'urgent', as this diminishes the impact of your emails that actually are urgent.

notice boards

As a very traditional form of communication, and one that may not be particularly innovative or exciting, recovery coordinators can forget how important notice boards are. Notice boards rely on very little technology, require no electricity and can provide a public (and anonymous) voice to the community. Most recovery operations should have a notice board of some description in a public and prominent position. Where possible, utilise existing or popular notice boards.

strengths:

- ▶ simple
- ▶ low cost
- ▶ can be used by a community long after the recovery process
- ▶ may already exist in the area and if not, can be set up quickly after an emergency
- ▶ can facilitate a local meeting place or area
- ▶ can either be locked or open to all
- ▶ allows community members to update
- ▶ allows anonymous contributions
- ▶ community members can advertise their services or businesses
- ▶ 24-hour information provision.

limitations:

- ▶ physically permanent
- ▶ difficult to target information
- ▶ can be vandalised/graffitied
- ▶ no privacy
- ▶ can quickly become covered in unnecessary information if not regulated
- ▶ can be damaged if not made with weather resistant materials
- ▶ no control over, or knowledge of, who receives or does not receive the information.

notice boards are best for:

- ▶ localised information
- ▶ broad, general information
- ▶ gaining feedback and information from the community
- ▶ directing people to other points/information sources.

tips for using a notice board:

- ▶ Spend some time discussing the best location with the community.
- ▶ Determine how you want the notice board to operate (can anyone post notes on it or can only organisations put up notices? Who is responsible for the upkeep?).
- ▶ Consider not branding the board to increase a sense of community ownership over the board.
- ▶ Have an anonymous 'suggestions box' attached to the board.
- ▶ Have a system in place to ensure the information is updated regularly and kept up to date.



Luke Gracie

posters/billboards

strengths:

- ▶ prominent
- ▶ able to be established quickly and easily in early stages after emergency
- ▶ low-tech
- ▶ can reach a large audience
- ▶ stands out amongst noise of information
- ▶ 24-hour information provision (except when dark/unlit).

limitations:

- ▶ limited information can be contained on the surface
- ▶ content is set once produced
- ▶ often requires local council or government approval for a billboard
- ▶ possibility that you will need to dismantle or relocate them
- ▶ design and building can be very expensive

posters/billboards are best for:

- ▶ simple information that is unlikely to change over time (e.g. counselling hotline phone number)
- ▶ the early phase following an emergency
- ▶ simple, unambiguous information
- ▶ information that suits a very broad group of people
- ▶ advertising events and meeting points
- ▶ information that needs to be communicated over a long time and/or long after the emergency.

tips for using or updating a poster/billboard:

- ▶ Ensure your message is actually important.
- ▶ Select a central, prominent location.
- ▶ Assess literacy levels in community, consider using visuals if appropriate.
- ▶ Use posters and/or billboards as launching pads to other information rather than more thorough information which may be better suited to a flyer or booklet or website.
- ▶ Remember people may be driving, so information must be quick to view and easy to remember.
- ▶ Don't use images or information that is potentially stressful or confrontational.
- ▶ Posters and billboards use and exploit public space and the social environment as tools to convey information, so don't overdo ambient communication.



Luke Gracie

local newspapers

Newspapers can provide a vital method of getting information to an affected group following an emergency.

strengths:

- ▶ Existing distribution network already set up.
- ▶ People usually already have a regular way to obtain the paper (either through delivery or regular pick-up).
- ▶ Existing level of trust and respect within the community – potentially seen as a key source of information. It is worth investigating community perceptions of the paper prior to using it as a communication channel though.

limitations:

- ▶ requires local paper to still be in business following an emergency
- ▶ requires printing facilities to still be operational
- ▶ limited use for reaching people who have relocated from area
- ▶ requires literacy
- ▶ delivery systems of the paper may have been damaged in the emergency
- ▶ some papers can be biased towards one group or political view
- ▶ unless purchasing advertising space, you may not have control over what is printed.

tips for working with local newspapers:

- ▶ When arriving in a location, investigate the local media, its role, how it has been affected by the disaster, and what its plans are for the future.
- ▶ Local newspapers may be open to giving you regular space each week. It can't hurt to ask, and having a good working relationship with the paper will assist your chances.

there are three key ways that information about your services, and the recovery more generally, can be communicated through local newspapers

1 ▶

news:

Newspapers have deadlines and space to fill on a page, so many reporters will meet their deadlines with whatever information they are able to obtain. It is very possible they will report on your services. This can occur with or without direct contact with you or your organisation's media officer.

Developing relationships with the local media will assist in minimising risks. Ensuring that correct information about the recovery or your services is provided to the local media will also reduce the likelihood of incorrect information finding its way to print. Regular media releases can assist this process (see 'How to write a media release' on p115).

Remember however, you have little to no control over what will finally be printed. See further information on 'Dealing with the media' on p108.

2 ▶

features:

A feature is an in-depth report on an issue. It is possible to 'pitch' a feature to a reporter (see tips for pitching stories on p109), but it is more common for a reporter to approach you. As features are more detailed than news stories, with journalists conducting more intensive interviews, there is less likelihood of incorrect or damaging information being reported.

However, you still have little to no control over the final piece. It is also possible that the information you would like to convey to the public (for example, the extension of free counselling services) may not be the information the newspaper is interested in printing.

3 ▶

paid advertisements:

Paid advertisements offer one of the simplest and most effective methods of getting information to a wide group of people. Also, the market of the newspaper (e.g. geographically based, or specific thematic/ethnic group) will allow you to target your messages.

Importantly, buying advertising space gives you total control over the content (within the paper's guidelines and standards). Prices vary for advertising space, but when compared to other costs, such as designing, printing and distributing flyers, it can be a relatively cheap communication method. Also investigate the possibility of getting discounts for your ads.

Visit www.newspapers.com.au for a full list of every newspaper in Australia.

radio

strengths:

- ▶ well-known resource
- ▶ communities often have pre-existing local radio stations
- ▶ cheap
- ▶ relatively low tech
- ▶ there are often stations or shows catering to specific groups (e.g. language, religion etc.)
- ▶ messages travel long distance (depending on transmitter strength)
- ▶ able to take time explaining things on a radio show
- ▶ enables public participation and conversation between host, guests and audience
- ▶ can also be accessed through websites and podcasts.

limitations:

- ▶ requires station to be in working order following the emergency
- ▶ relies on electricity to transmit
- ▶ people need radios and electricity or batteries to access
- ▶ ineffective for people with impaired hearing
- ▶ almost no ability to know who has heard the information
- ▶ radio shows or interviews are usually only presented once, meaning there is only one opportunity for people to hear the information (unless podcasted)
- ▶ challenging for those who don't understand the language messages are transmitted in.

radio is best for:

- ▶ disseminating information early after an emergency
- ▶ having in-depth discussions or Q&A sessions on a topic
- ▶ overcoming distance and spatial barriers
- ▶ casting a wide net where you want people to register with you (for example when communicating with dispersed people).

tips for using radio:

- ▶ Forge relationships with presenters on radio shows to gain access to airtime through interviews.
- ▶ See if you can obtain or purchase space on a radio channel.
- ▶ Is there a community station on which you could design your own weekly radio show?
- ▶ If running your own show, promote it through your other communications.
- ▶ Consider broadcasting events like the community meeting via local radio (ensure you tell the people in the audience though).
- ▶ Can you afford to buy and hand out radios in the community?

'I can't see, so when my radio was destroyed in the cyclone, I felt very isolated. Now that I have a radio, I feel like I can see!'^{xii}

- a blind monk in Burma who received a radio after Cyclone Nargis.



Luke Gracie

SMS mailouts

strengths:

- ▶ high mobile phone usage in Australia
- ▶ direct access to people everywhere (assuming network connectivity)
- ▶ information can be saved for later
- ▶ private
- ▶ young people highly familiar with the channel
- ▶ effective for reaching people who have left the area
- ▶ can tailor information for specific groups.

limitations:

- ▶ requires electricity and phone reception
- ▶ may not suit older people, non-English speakers and cognitive/learning impaired people
- ▶ people will often forget phone chargers if they had to leave the house quickly
- ▶ difficulty getting people's phone numbers
- ▶ you can't be sure that people have received messages
- ▶ there may be privacy legislation or issues regarding contacting people in your state or area
- ▶ can be expensive, depending on the technology you are using, and the number of messages you are sending.

SMS mailouts are best for:

- ▶ notifying people of events/meetings
- ▶ 'launching pad' information
- ▶ directing people to more detailed sources of information (e.g. websites).

tips for using an SMS mailout:

- ▶ Keep the character count under 140 for people using older phones.
- ▶ Use an opt-in system.
- ▶ Don't bombard people with constant messages.
- ▶ Don't assume all people have smart phones.
- ▶ Only send messages when it is important.
- ▶ Have a very clear, simple message.
- ▶ Include in the message a suggestion to pass the information on to others. E.g. 'please share'.

websites

strengths:

- ▶ often viewed as a basic requirement of credibility by the general public
- ▶ can be accessed on mobile devices
- ▶ increasingly people view websites as a primary method of obtaining information
- ▶ young people in particular have high web literacy and view the web as a primary source of information
- ▶ can effectively deliver information to the broad general public
- ▶ easily updated with the most current information
- ▶ cheap to update (when existing infrastructure and software is in place)
- ▶ can categorise and section off large amounts of information and data for ease of reading
- ▶ information can be archived, which can then be searched for
- ▶ forums can allow people to connect with others in a real-time environment.

limitations:

- ▶ can be difficult to relay and retain quality information from the field
- ▶ requires web and reading literacy. May not be appropriate for the visually impaired, people with a cognitive disability, or those who are injured or LOTE speakers
- ▶ requires extensive infrastructure to be in place: computers, electricity, phone line/mobile broadband
- ▶ layout and web structure can be difficult to navigate for affected people
- ▶ information is not private
- ▶ expectations that web is real-time or regularly updated
- ▶ can be expensive to develop
- ▶ high upkeep/moderating requirements.

“Websites are great for giving information, but not good at receiving feedback unless you build it in and take it seriously”

- *Public relations and communications academic*

websites are best for:

- ▶ almost all communications
- ▶ the detailed information people are looking for after receiving ‘launching pad’ communications (SMS, billboards, etc)
- ▶ broad information that is relevant to a broad group of stakeholders
- ▶ information that requires frequent updating
- ▶ information that requires linking to other organisations or sources.

tips for using or updating a website:

- ▶ If you can’t update it frequently, ensure the information is relevant and unlikely to change.
- ▶ Date stamp all information where relevant so people know which information is newest.
- ▶ Ensure navigation throughout website is clear and simple.
- ▶ Use images to break up large amounts of text.
- ▶ Establish a feedback option for community members to send through any questions, queries or issues they have.
- ▶ Keep a record of the issues that are being raised via the website feedback option; this can inform how well your information campaign is going.
- ▶ Remember people view websites at any time, so don’t say ‘in three days time’, but rather state the relevant days/dates.
- ▶ Ensure simple, easy to read messages are used and that the colours used help readability.
- ▶ Promote the website through your other means of communication.
- ▶ Time and resources permitting, consider having a ‘draft site’ produced pre-disaster which is ready to rollout once an emergency occurs.
- ▶ Don’t have detailed information on the front page, just have titles and people can click to see the detailed information they require.
- ▶ Ensure the website address is easy to remember and searchable in search engines.

blogs

what is a blog?

A blog (short for web-log) is a simple website that is easily updated with information. Blogs are often used by individuals or organisations as simple methods of getting their views into the public domain. Updates are posted on the blog in a time based hierarchy, meaning it is very easy to see the latest updates to a blog.

Another reason blogs are so popular is that they are free to set up. With a computer, internet connection and just a basic level of computer literacy, you can be posting information accessible to the whole world in under 30 minutes!

strengths:

- ▶ cheap to establish (assuming existing infrastructure, equipment and expertise is in place)
- ▶ can give a personal 'face' to an organisation. For example, a CEO or recovery official can discuss things in an informal manner more easily than through official communications.
- ▶ a community owned and driven blog can develop community resilience and provide a simple outlet for issues to be aired
- ▶ you can choose your own web address
- ▶ can link to other organisations and information
- ▶ blogs provide a simpler and more digestible format than most organisations' official websites
- ▶ counters allow you to see how many people are visiting your blog.

limitations:

- ▶ may not be viewed as professional or trustworthy compared to an organisation's official website
- ▶ some blogs are difficult to find through search engines.

tips for using or updating a blog:

- ▶ Have clear and simple entry titles so people can search for them later.
- ▶ Keep your entries short, sharp and to the point. Long, rambling entries will turn people off very quickly.
- ▶ Don't fall into self-indulgence.
- ▶ Avoid the 'soap-box' effect where people use blogs to pontificate their views about this, that and everything. Stick to the original purpose of the blog and avoid going off track.
- ▶ Keep a simple layout.
- ▶ Have regular updates, but don't go over the top.
- ▶ Use images to break up the text.
- ▶ Have an archive of previous entries that people can view.
- ▶ Have a simple and clear title and address for the blog.
- ▶ Choose a tone for the blog and stick to it. Is it humorous and lighthearted, or serious?

Further information about setting up a blog is available on p119.

video

(via websites, blogs, YouTube, DVD)

strengths:

- ▶ video and imagery can tell a complex story in a short amount of time
- ▶ images, talking or music can be used to convey points and emotion
- ▶ relatively low cost digital cameras allow people to record high quality videos
- ▶ allows your message to stand out from the crowd
- ▶ YouTube (or other streaming services) can be viewed by anyone with an internet connection
- ▶ can be embedded in emails and websites.

limitations:

- ▶ recording, editing and computer infrastructure required to produce video
- ▶ potentially high cost of video production if done professionally
- ▶ bandwidth issues associated with viewing/downloading videos
- ▶ not overly conducive to two-way communication
- ▶ need web facilities and computer literacy to view video
- ▶ bad or boring videos can turn people off.

video is best for:

- ▶ those with mobility issues
- ▶ information that you are comfortable being viewed by a large number of people
- ▶ instructional information or other times visual displays are important
- ▶ allowing people to tell their own stories.

tips for using video:

- ▶ Keep videos short and sharp.
- ▶ The information contained in the video is the key; don't overly rely on slick editing or graphics.
- ▶ Investigate web connections and speeds in the area to make sure the community can access any videos you produce.
- ▶ Have clear menus and links.
- ▶ Only use footage if it actually improves the communication of information, don't use it simply because you can.
- ▶ Real or 'human' stories can be highly affective. Be sensitive and respectful of peoples experiences when capturing their experiences on video.

social media

Much is made of social media as the future of public information campaigns. Remember, however, that for every effective social media campaign there have been dozens of failed attempts to harness the technology. Thoughtfully consider whether social media is the best method of communication for your program.

Using social media channels to communicate important information (for example, counselling services, or the distribution of free water purifiers) is very different from social media communications for PR/branding/fundraising purposes. Do not combine the two.

visit www.redcross.org.au/communicatinginrecovery for tips and case studies about social media

Some social media channels:

facebook – www.facebook.com

YouTube – www.youtube.com

flickr – www.flickr.com

Twitter – www.twitter.com

MySpace – www.myspace.com

bebo – www.bebo.com

strengths:

- ▶ anecdotally, it is effective for targeting and engaging younger people
- ▶ good for quick updates, e.g. Twitter
- ▶ provides a forum for users to give opinions and raise issues
- ▶ allows users to interact with others experiencing similar issues
- ▶ can be accessed and used in private, and anonymously
- ▶ enables those with a physical disability and those who are socially isolated to connect with others
- ▶ relatively cheap to create online profiles for your organisation
- ▶ effective for alerting people to events
- ▶ good way of getting quick responses and thoughts from the community
- ▶ ‘smart phones’ enable people to access social media platforms remotely (assuming phone and wireless reception).

limitations:

- ▶ relatively untested as a form of recovery communications
- ▶ requires electricity, computer access, internet access and computer/reading literacy
- ▶ varying control over comments that are posted or views expressed, which may be derogatory, or stressful for people
- ▶ requires significant oversight and administration
- ▶ requires frequent updating, as people won’t follow pages that aren’t updated regularly
- ▶ not conducive to conveying large amounts of dense information
- ▶ may not be conducive to organisational communication guidelines (e.g. if high-level signoff is required for all external communications, this will slow the process down to unacceptable speeds).

social media is best for:

- ▶ supplementary information (not as the sole method of communication)
- ▶ clearly identified targets, not just because it is an available option
- ▶ events or other calls to action
- ▶ specific, important information that can be communicated simply and easily.

tips for using social media:

- ▶ Have a clear purpose and target audience in mind for the communication.
- ▶ Ensure those designing and managing the communication have a thorough understanding of the medium, its strengths, limitations and user audience.
- ▶ Consider how to use social media as a feedback loop (see p28)
- ▶ Try to develop a real presence and build a sense of 'community'. There's more to it than just creating a profile!
- ▶ Be careful not to think of social media as a cure for all communications issues. It is still a very new and untested medium.
- ▶ Don't be upset if it doesn't work the first (or second or third) time!

'Think about what you are actually getting by having a social media presence. What actual benefits do you or the recovering community achieve by having people 'like' your Facebook page? Do these benefits outweigh the investments and risks associated with having a social media presence?'

- *communications consultant who specialises in non-profit organisations*

Find more information about social media at: Our World. Your Move. 2009 Campaign social media toolkit. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, available at:<http://redcrossyouth.files.wordpress.com/2009/08/social20media20toolkit-en.pdf>



Reuters/Darren Whiteside/Beawiharta, courtesy www.alerthet.org

3

communicating in recovery

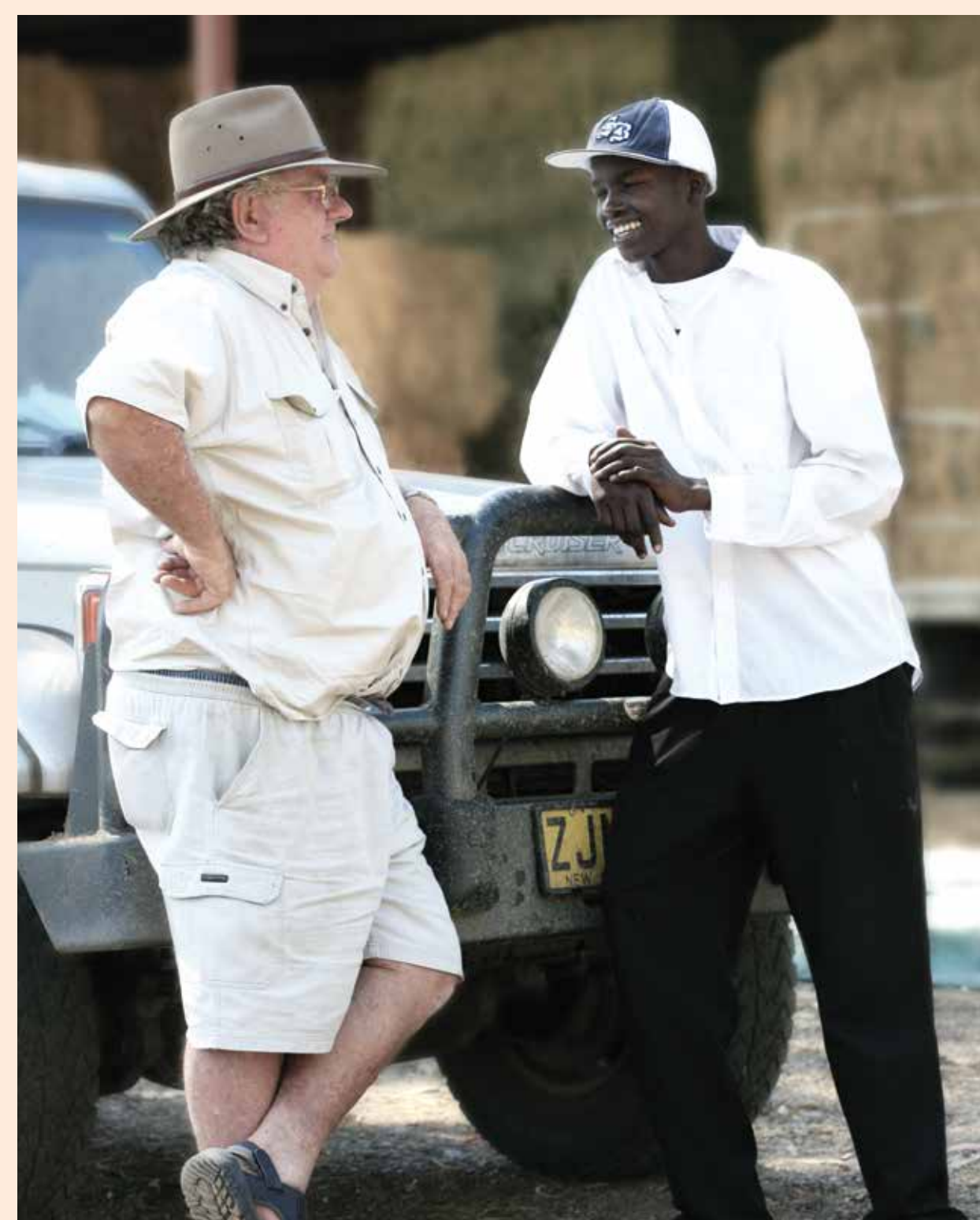
inclusive communications: getting the message across

part one

part two

part three

part four



Australian Red Cross/Marlon Dalton

The three rules of recovery communications on p16 ask whether your communications are targeted. To make the most of your public information campaigns in recovery, you need to know and understand your target audience.

You will send information differently if you are communicating with an entire town compared with just a few families. The same applies to the differences in circumstances and the special needs of people you are communicating with. Think about their issues and the environment they are operating in.

Those with special needs can be severely affected by an emergency. For example, over 40 percent of the people who died in the 2009 Victorian bushfires were classed as 'vulnerable' because they were aged less than 12 years or more than 70 years, or because they were suffering from an acute or chronic illness or disability.^{xiii}

To identify a collection of people as a 'group' in the following pages is not to suggest members of this 'group' are necessarily more vulnerable or less resilient to emergencies. The purpose of the following pages is to identify that different sections of society have differing needs and characteristics that should influence how you communicate with them.

It is also important to remember that people are not defined by what 'group' they belong to. The groups identified in the following pages are cross-cutting and can include all members of society.

access to information is vital at all stages of emergency management, and that information must be accessible to all in the community

gender in recovery

Gender awareness has not historically influenced emergency and recovery services in Australia. While Australia may not have gender inequalities as conspicuous as in other parts of the world, gender should still play a role in emergency management planning and recovery operations.

In the context of this resource, understanding ‘gender’ refers to understanding how men, women, boys, girls, and transgendered people respond to emergencies differently and all carry differing levels of vulnerability.^{xiv}

Be mindful that gender roles have shifted over successive generations, with more women in the workforce, and more recently men beginning to take more of the primary care roles for families. Single-person households are also increasing.

Levels of gender vulnerability are greatly influenced by the specific circumstances of a disaster (location, social norms, etc.).^{xvi} However, some general points are worth considering.

issues to consider in recovery:

women

- ▶ Generally speaking, women have higher levels of pre emergency disadvantage, which can be compounded following an emergency.^{xvi} Examples include: less financial independence, and a greater likelihood of having experienced sexual violence.
- ▶ Women can often have the role as the primary caregiver – of children, and potentially of older parents/family.
- ▶ There is a higher risk of women experiencing sexual and domestic violence post disaster, particularly in a shelter or temporary housing situation.^{xvii}
- ▶ If men are required to leave the area for work, women may take on the burden of additional work in the home.^{xviii}
- ▶ Women are more likely to be in or near their homes in an emergency, increasing the likelihood of being affected.^{xix}
- ▶ Women may have increased health vulnerabilities during emergencies when normal health services may be limited.^{xx}
- ▶ Women are more likely to be single parents than men.
- ▶ Women may not have prior experience as community leaders or at expressing opinions through formal networks.

men

- ▶ Men are often expected to play leadership roles within their families and communities which can impact psychological wellbeing.
- ▶ Men are more likely to be out of the affected area during work hours, possibly causing problems with re-entering the area, having a lack of information about the event and feeling guilt about not being there.^{xxi}
- ▶ Men are more likely to leave home for work due to a lack of jobs in the local area after a disaster.
- ▶ Men are more likely to be involved in local emergency services volunteer groups, which can lead to physical injury, exhaustion or psychological trauma.^{xxii}
- ▶ Men are less likely to have prior experience dealing with support agencies and counselling services, and can also fear being viewed as weak for ‘asking for help.’
- ▶ As relief efforts generally tend to target vulnerable women and children, groups of vulnerable men may be overlooked.
- ▶ Men are more likely to ignore stress and repress mental health concerns, leading to greater mental and physical health issues.

tips for thinking about gender in your services and communications:

- ▶ Take time to research and understand the gender dynamics of the community.
- ▶ In face to face communications, consider consulting men and women separately as they may not speak freely in front of one another.
- ▶ Think about the visuals or images that you use. Avoid playing to stereotypes and portraying women as victims and men as stoic and strong.
- ▶ Consider whether it’s appropriate to have single gender communications, e.g. a men’s newsletter.
- ▶ Where necessary, use distribution channels based on gender. For example, the local hardware store or football club may be an effective place to distribute male-targeted materials.

- ▶ What child care facilities are available for carers? Include this information in your communications.
- ▶ Consider the gender sensitivities in your communications. For example, information about services for those affected by family violence should be small enough to fit in a purse or wallet for privacy.
- ▶ Be mindful of religious and cultural considerations.
- ▶ Ensure both men and women are represented on assessment teams, recovery committees, and all face to face communications.
- ▶ Ensure that feedback is broken down by gender during collection and analysis to improve targeting of services.

when conducting a CNA, consider:

- ▶ What are the specific needs of men and women?
- ▶ What are the different coping mechanisms of men and women?
- ▶ What were the conditions of vulnerability for men and women *prior to the emergency*?
- ▶ What impact has the disaster had on the economic status of men and women?
- ▶ What are the roles taken on by men and women after the emergency? Are any of these non-traditional?
- ▶ Are planning and consultation activities reaching men and women equally?
- ▶ What are the employment and work patterns of men and women, their work skills and organisational networks?
- ▶ Is there a potential for partnering with gender-based organisations such as women's groups, mothers' associations or men's sporting clubs?
- ▶ Are there any cultural practices which may adversely affect one group?



Australian Red Cross/Rodney Dekker

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

Emergencies and disasters occur across Australia, but they can often have a greater impact in communities with existing burdens of vulnerability. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples experience disproportionately high levels of vulnerability across most social, economic and health indicators. It is therefore necessary to implement disaster recovery plans addressing the unique needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in urban, regional, rural and remote areas.

This resource is not an authority on the needs and issues affecting the diverse groups that make up the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Within Australia, Aboriginal groups are highly varied and a 'one size fits all' approach is not appropriate. It is advised that organisations consult with experts and the community, identifying the issues specific to your location.

However, there are some general considerations to follow when conducting public information campaigns with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities.

issues to consider in recovery:

- ▶ Existing levels of vulnerability and disadvantage (social infrastructure, health services, unemployment) which may be exacerbated by an emergency
- ▶ Some individuals in remote areas may have low levels of English
- ▶ Potentially low literacy rates
- ▶ Challenges associated with working in remote areas (long travel times, limited supplies, lack of internet access, etc.)
- ▶ Potential mistrust of government and welfare services.

language issues:

- ▶ The term 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' should be used instead of the frequently used generic term 'Indigenous' (e.g. 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' rather than 'Indigenous peoples'). This is based on a community preference for use of the full term and the fact that Torres Strait Islander peoples are a culturally distinct group from Australian Aboriginal peoples.
- ▶ Abbreviations such as ATSI, TI, and TSI should not be used.
- ▶ The first letters of 'Aboriginal' and 'Torres Strait Islander' are capital case in the same way that other cultural groups are recognised.



Australian red Cross/Wayne Quilliam

- ▶ The preference is also to use the term 'peoples' rather than 'people', as it has a particular meaning in international law and relates to the right of self-determination as defined by the United National Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- ▶ Investigate the language(s) used in the community. Also be aware that Aboriginal English can often contain pronunciation, grammatical and slang differences from Australian English that can make it difficult to understand when first encountered.

tips for working or communicating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities:

- ▶ Earning the respect of the community is highly important. Elders and community leaders should be approached prior to any service delivery. They should be treated with respect (equivalent to a dignitary in non-Aboriginal society).
- ▶ Generally avoid displaying images or saying the name of deceased Aboriginal people. If it is necessary to do so, ensure you have permission from the person's family and include a warning/disclaimer in your material.
- ▶ Use and display Aboriginal imagery and visual material where possible.
- ▶ Consider using examples of disasters from Dreamtime stories in your communications.
- ▶ Only use art material, images and traditional stories if you have the permission of the community.
- ▶ Aboriginal people have resilience to adversity and disaster. Build this into your communications.
- ▶ Plan what you will need logistically, as it may be hard to resupply in remote areas.
- ▶ Plan and invest in getting feedback from the community.
- ▶ Use clear, uncomplicated language. Do not use jargon.
- ▶ Word of mouth is very important in Aboriginal culture. Taking your time to understand the community and earning people's respect will mean the community trusts your opinion.
- ▶ Where possible, employ local people in your services.
- ▶ Recognise that Aboriginal communities may not follow a nuclear family structure. Investigate the role and influence of grandparents and 'aunties' and consider targeting them in your communications.
- ▶ Pictures, maps, diagrams can be useful where English is not the first language.

The above was taken and adapted from: Working with Aboriginal People and Communities: A Practical Resource, NSW Department of Community Services, 2009.

children (infant, preschool and primary school)

When children and young people are caught up in an emergency, they, like adults, can become very confused and frightened. This may last beyond the actual event. To help them start to settle and eventually recover, children need to understand what is going on around them and understand what is happening to themselves and their families, both now and into the future.

The anxiety and stress which comes from being uninformed and 'in the dark' not only undermines the child or young person's immediate recovery from the experience, but it may also prolong the distress and increase the likelihood of problems later on.

issues to consider in children's recovery: children:

- ▶ have limited life experience dealing with stressful situations, therefore they have less coping experience
- ▶ are influenced by their parents or carers moods, communication style and how well their parents or carers are coping in the recovery
- ▶ have varying verbal, reading and literacy levels
- ▶ have varying levels of independence depending on their age and the impact of their circumstances
- ▶ may have some understanding of the issues, but be unable to communicate their feelings verbally
- ▶ have limited ability to identify resources they need and to access them independently
- ▶ are reliant on family member networks to access information and resources
- ▶ almost all information requests or delivery will go through a child's parents or carers
- ▶ may live in separated households, with parents/carers having different parenting or communication styles.

Each child has their own way of processing information. This will depend on a number of factors:

- ▶ the age of the child and the communication patterns of that stage
- ▶ their personal style (for example they may be quiet, physical, chatty etc).
- ▶ their own particular preferences, such as conversation, play, drawing etc.
- ▶ the impact of the emergency on their functioning (shocked and numbed, hyper-aroused and hyperactive, tense, withdrawn, distrustful etc).

tips for working or communicating with children:

- ▶ Don't wait for information to be requested, be proactive.
- ▶ Information about children should be tailored to parents or carers; information for children should be tailored to the children themselves.
- ▶ Create a dialogue with children, it is important that they have opportunities to ask questions and take part in conversations and play which enable them to express their thoughts, feelings and concerns.
- ▶ Giving children non-factual information or fictional stories about what is happening won't help them in the long term.
- ▶ Children communicate in many ways other than language. Using animation and images in communications is a useful way of transferring information to children, particularly to preschool and early primary age.
- ▶ Information and visuals should be non-threatening, calming, reassuring and factual.
- ▶ Use play situations or games to get information across.
- ▶ Boys and girls may have different styles of connecting to, absorbing and interpreting information. Consider this if you are developing unisex communication materials.

when conducting a CNA, consider:

- ▶ Did the event happen during school hours?
- ▶ How have children's lives changed since the emergency?
- ▶ What are the age and gender groups of the children you're communicating with?
- ▶ How are parents or carers coping? What supports do they need to assist them to communicate with their children?

Because children have a limited understanding of the 'big picture' of events, it is important that they are protected from adult conversations which might be one-sided (telephone), complex (services and agencies), or confusing (friends and family). In these situations it is easy for children and adolescents to pick up incorrect information or get a distorted understanding about what is happening. As a result, the situation as they see it can quickly become a lot worse than it really is.

When the twin towers collapsed on 11 September, 2001, Jonny, aged 6, thought it was the Rialto Building in Melbourne, and his uncle, who worked in the building, had died. Lack of clear, factual information meant that Jonny became angry and tearful but could not find words to express himself.



Australian Red Cross/Stephen McIlvenna

young people (12-25 years)

issues to consider in recovery:

young people:

- ▶ have varying verbal and written literacy levels
- ▶ may be hesitant about letting people know they are struggling
- ▶ may lack life experience in dealing with emotions and social upheaval
- ▶ may have a reduced ability to access resources such as transport and independent finances
- ▶ may have few formal social networks, especially if they have left school
- ▶ are heavily reliant on family and peer networks for information
- ▶ receive large amounts of information electronically, so the disruption to electricity and equipment will impact young people even more severely
- ▶ generally find puberty and teenage years challenging. An emergency can compound this.

remember to:

- ▶ be proactive! Don't wait for young people to identify or present with issues.
- ▶ be honest, straightforward and understanding.
- ▶ consider using communication formats that can be shared, such as printed or online material. Peer-to-peer communication is very important for young people, so published material will reduce the chances of incorrect information being shared.
- ▶ consult with your audience! Communications driven by young people will have a greater likelihood of reaching its target and being effective.

don't:

- ▶ be patronising or paternalistic in your messaging, this will cause young people to turn off.
- ▶ talk 'down' to young people or attempt to 'talk young'; slang, falsely colloquial language or 'kidz speak' will not make your communication any more effective.
- ▶ assume that all the information you give to parents will be passed on to young people.



Australian Red Cross/Rodney Dekker

older people

The role of older people within the Australian community is generally not well understood or engaged with. With people living longer and women living longer than men, and the shift to helping people stay in their own homes longer, there are significant numbers of single-person households over the age of 70. Families tend to be more widely dispersed, reducing networks and support. As health issues increase and mobility declines, isolation can occur. The community networks for older people also weaken as friends and siblings pass on. Also, with the age of parenting increasing (particularly for men), the development of a wider supporting family is less likely.

People often assume older people are highly vulnerable. In some ways they are – but they can also be highly resilient as life experience has developed strong coping skills, particularly dealing with disruption or shortages. They may also have experience dealing with disasters.

issues to consider in recovery:

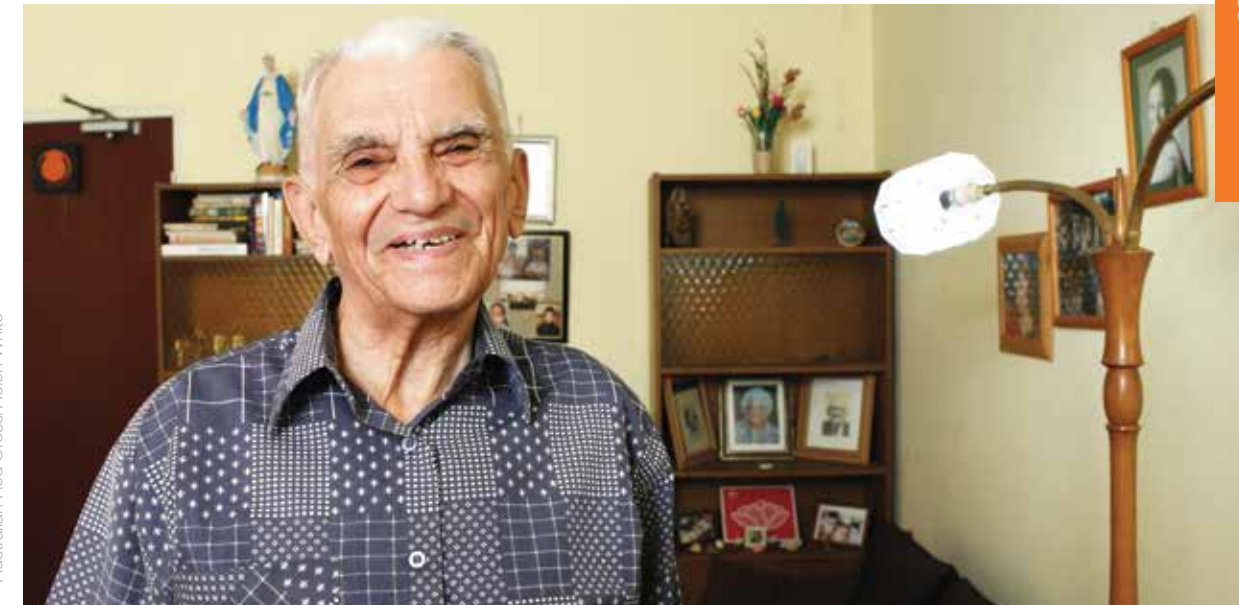
- ▶ In many cultures respect for elders is paramount, e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or Pacific Islander communities. These people are the key conduits into the community.
- ▶ Mobility can be an issue for older people.
- ▶ Those on a pension may have low economic freedom.
- ▶ Older people often require daily medication and other aids, which an emergency may interrupt.
- ▶ The energy required to manage the recovery may be overwhelming for some older people.
- ▶ Some older people have full time carers, so consider the carer's involvement in information dissemination.
- ▶ Bereavement for older adults can also be a challenge. The loss of a life partner can be particularly distressing, as may the loss of adult children or grandchildren, where the individual didn't expect their children or grandchildren to die before them.

tips for working or communicating with older people:

- ▶ Older people may need transport to and from community meetings and services.
- ▶ First Aid may be needed on occasion at community meetings.
- ▶ Where possible, use large print and Easy English in print communications.
- ▶ Multimodal approaches are best for targeting the elderly.
- ▶ Tap into local health services and other organisations older people may be involved with (RSL, golf club, etc).
- ▶ Generally speaking, traditional modes of technology (print, radio) are more appropriate than modern modes (web, social media). However, older people are increasingly literate in web communications and mobile devices.
- ▶ Tapping into community figures and leaders they respect (e.g. doctors) may be effective in getting information to them.

when conducting a CNA, consider:

- ▶ Do the people you are communicating with come from non-English speaking backgrounds?
- ▶ What transport options are available in the community?
- ▶ What technology is appropriate for the group?



Australian Red Cross/Helen White

those with a physical impairment (can extend to verbal/non-verbal communication, hearing, vision, mobility issues)

People with physical impairments can be particularly vulnerable during and after an emergency. A physical impairment can be pre-existing or caused by the emergency.

issues to consider in recovery:

- ▶ Lack of mobility can mean emergency evacuation was disrupted and people with disability witnessed events which may heighten levels of anxiety.
- ▶ The social networks that support people with a disability can be disrupted in an emergency.
- ▶ It is important to recognise and respect the resilience of physically impaired people. Those with a disability are often highly independent and have overcome personal obstacles before a disaster. This should be remembered and utilised to work with them in recovery.
- ▶ If electricity or gas is off for extended periods, this may prove particularly difficult for physically impaired people.
- ▶ 'Physical impairment' is not a defining characteristic of people. Rather, it is a cross-cutting issue that can affect any member of a community.
- ▶ Resources suitable for an elderly female blind person may not be appropriate for a 17-year-old male blind person. Don't fall into a 'one size fits all' trap.
- ▶ Items that grant significant independence to physically impaired people pre disaster (motorised wheelchair, converted car, etc) may have been damaged or destroyed, reducing the ability to recover to pre disaster levels of independence.
- ▶ Special disability access routes may have been damaged or destroyed in the emergency.
- ▶ There is a general lack of emergency services information in Braille available in Australia.
- ▶ Statistically, people with disability have a lower income than people without a disability, so their financial capacity to recover may be compromised.
- ▶ A disability is recognised as a cross-cutting issue that should inform all areas of disaster management planning by *The Sphere Handbook* (2004 Revised Edition).

tips for working or communicating with physically impaired people:

- ▶ Work through existing carer or advocacy groups for physically impaired people and tap into their communications channels.
- ▶ Include information about disability access in your communications (e.g. wheelchair access).
- ▶ Recognise that some people with a disability have carers, investigate how carers can be utilised in your communication.
- ▶ Identify any Auslan interpreters in the community, or organise an interpreter agency in advance if required.
- ▶ When preparing written communications, have Easy English versions, large print, and audio versions prepared if possible.
- ▶ It's important to use people who have a disability as a resource, because they are aware of the issues and can provide help during emergency situations.
- ▶ Laptops are useful for communicating with non-verbal people if they have lost their own communication device. The SMS option on a mobile phone can also be used in this fashion.
- ▶ Working with physically impaired people illustrates the importance of using multiple mediums in communications. For example, radio advertisements are not suitable for a person who is deaf, but printed materials dropped in mailboxes are not appropriate for a person who is blind.
- ▶ Think outside the box, e.g. can you broadcast the community meeting on local radio, or podcast the meeting online?
- ▶ What physical aids will you require at community meetings? For example, crutches, wheelchairs, Auslan interpreters, etc.
- ▶ Picture cards are useful for people who cannot communicate verbally. Purchase some in advance or even just produce your own.

when conducting a CNA, consider:

- ▶ How were physically impaired people affected by the emergency?
- ▶ What services and support was available before the emergency?
- ▶ What other organisations are working with physically impaired people?
- ▶ Are there any community groups representing physically impaired people in the area?
- ▶ What physical disabilities do the people you're working with have?
- ▶ Are there any other cross-cutting issues?

State Parties shall take, in accordance with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters.

– Article 11, United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities



Australian Red Cross/Rodney Dekker

cognitive and learning difficulties

including intellectual disability, acquired brain injury, mental illness (emotional and behavioural issues) and autism spectrum disorder (Asperger's syndrome)

Those with cognitive and/or learning difficulties are particularly vulnerable during an emergency, so it is imperative that recovery operations work with them to recover.

Communication with people with cognitive and learning difficulties may be hampered by significant restraints and challenges. The key to effective communication with people with cognitive and learning difficulties is to identify their concerns and be flexible enough to deliver messages in ways that suit their needs.

issues to consider in recovery:

- ▶ Unlike many physical disabilities, cognitive functions are not apparent or easy to recognise.
- ▶ There can be a connection between physical and cognitive disabilities; a person experiencing cognitive or learning difficulties may also have a physical disability.
- ▶ Mental illness issues can develop long after an emergency or be triggered by seemingly unrelated issues or events. Recognise that people's mental health can fluctuate over time.
- ▶ There is a broad spectrum of cognitive and learning difficulties, so a 'one size fits all' approach will not be effective.
- ▶ Remember that 'access' is not only physical access. It could also include making written, tactile, or audio materials accessible to people with cognitive disabilities.
- ▶ Being around crowds and hectic situations can be traumatic and increase levels of anxiety for a person with a cognitive disability. Community meetings may be frightening or overwhelming for someone with a cognitive disability.

tips for working or communicating with cognitively impaired people:

- ▶ Work with specialist organisations where you can.
- ▶ Develop Easy English resources where possible.
- ▶ Tap into local health services, groups and networks that people with learning and cognitive difficulties interact with.
- ▶ Cognitively impaired people can be reliant on those around them. Consider targeting social networks, family and carers.
- ▶ People experiencing cognitive and learning difficulties might not be able to read.
- ▶ Information may need to be provided verbally. This will need to be clear and simple, using short sentences.

- ▶ Overload of information can be confusing for an individual experiencing cognitive difficulties.
- ▶ Use pictures or colours to help with communication.
- ▶ It is important to find out if people with cognitive and learning difficulties have support workers. Support workers are aware of the specific needs and can inform you about what will work for the person.
- ▶ Make sure that your verbal and non-verbal communications are consistent.
- ▶ People with a disability are not just their conditions or diseases. Rather than saying 'he is an epileptic', say 'he is a person with epilepsy'.

when conducting a CNA, consider:

- ▶ What level of impairment and what level of independence do people you are communicating with have?
- ▶ What level of social connectedness does your audience have?
- ▶ Was the impairment caused by the disaster?
- ▶ How has the person's situation changed as a result of the emergency?



Australian Red Cross/Rodney Dekker

people who are grieving and/or bereaved

Death within disasters presents a number of challenges for the people who are bereaved. Within disaster, death can be sudden and traumatic; it may also be witnessed by family, friends or bystanders. When deaths occur within an emergency, this also increases the media scrutiny, which can be unwelcome and intrusive.

The cause and meaning of an emergency can have a strong impact on the bereaved. Traditionally, there was a perception that natural disasters were 'acts of god' and could not be prevented; therefore the losses that occurred were seen as a product of fate. While some hazards may be a product of nature, there can be a real or perceived failing in systems to warn or manage the consequences of a 'natural' disaster.

Technological disasters such as structural collapses or transport accidents often are likely to be attributable to a cause. Malevolent disasters such as shootings or terrorist acts also bring the attribution of meaning and intention into play, with the bereaved person asking why the event happened. This can be followed by intense feelings towards the perpetrators.

reactions to death:

The initial period of shock, numbness or disbelief usually gives way to intense separation distress or anxiety.

There is also likely to be a sense of anger, protest and abandonment. This can include anger towards the deceased for being among those who died and not being there now. This anger may be recognised by the bereaved person as irrational, but it is nevertheless a valid feeling. Anger is also directed towards those who may be seen as having caused the death, or been associated with the death. These reactions progressively abate and give way to a mourning period where the bereaved person is focused more on the psychological bonds with the dead person. This can include memories of the relationship and painful reminders of the absence of the person. The bereaved person will progressively accept the death, although with ongoing feelings of sadness or loss.

These latter reactions are more likely to appear during the recovery phase as the bereaved person adapts to life without the person who has died. These complex emotions of anxiety, protest, distress, sadness and anger are usually referred to as grief.

The acute distress phase usually settles in a few weeks or months after the loss, but emotions and preoccupations may occur over the first year or years that follow.

issues to consider in recovery:

- ▶ People can be affected by both the traumatic stress of the emergency and by bereavement. It is important to acknowledge the experience of the individuals through public statements and demonstrations of support.
- ▶ Communities as a whole may also be affected, particularly where there are deaths of prominent individuals or young people.
- ▶ While there may be a primary contact for each person who has died, you cannot rely on them to pass on all information to family and friends. Communications should be designed to ensure that as many people as possible in the person's circle of family and friends are reached.
- ▶ Information needs to be simple, and should be repeated on a regular basis.
- ▶ Different ethnic, cultural and religious groups have different ways of recognising, commemorating, and processing the deaths of loved ones.
- ▶ Relatives of those who have died in traumatic circumstances may not have been present, and as a result, feelings of guilt may add to and heighten the relatives' traumatic grief reactions.
- ▶ When a disaster causes a significant number of deaths, often a distinct bereaved 'community' forms. This is where people draw strength from each other's experience, and communicate with individuals that they share their experience with. This group will also develop strong communication links.
- ▶ In geographically based disasters such as fires and cyclones, recovery efforts are often focused upon those areas, whereas people who are bereaved may live outside the geographic area. Communication plans will need to take this into account.
- ▶ People who are bereaved may have also suffered other losses, e.g. loss of pets, homes, memories or employment.
- ▶ The type of disaster may also impact upon people's reaction to the loss of a family member or friend. Natural, technological or malevolent disasters can all affect individuals in different ways.

Even within a specific group, people can process grief in very different ways. For example, within one family there can be three different grieving styles:

- 1 ▶ **Proactive** looking for answers, receptive to counselling, feels responsibility for holding family unit together.
- 2 ▶ **Practical** 'I will survive as long as I keep busy and focus on rebuilding the house.'
- 3 ▶ **Denial** 'If I don't talk about it, if I hide inside, eventually the pain will go away.'

tips for working or communicating with those who are grieving and/or bereaved:

- ▶ Use a range of methods, and repeat your information at regular intervals.
- ▶ Be mindful that communications products may trigger reactions.
- ▶ Consult with the bereaved community about communication strategies they would prefer.
- ▶ Acknowledge people's experiences through public demonstrations of support.
- ▶ Ensure communication is broadly inclusive.
- ▶ Provide support to affected people in managing media requests.
- ▶ Understanding the reactions that people experience will help you plan your communications.

when conducting a CNA, consider:

- ▶ What was the cause of death?
 - natural disaster
 - human error or action
 - preventable death, due to other circumstances
- ▶ Were there a large number of deaths due to the emergency?
- ▶ How dispersed is the group you're communicating with?
- ▶ what are the funeral, coroners or commemorative arrangements and how do these processes affect people in the community?



Luke Gracie

those with literacy issues

As noted throughout this resource, having access to appropriate and timely information is essential for community and individual recovery. Those unable to read printed material are severely disadvantaged. With so much information produced in written form, those with low literacy skills can be unaware of basic information.

As an advanced economy, literacy is often not seen as a significant issue in Australia. However, illiteracy rates are far higher than may be expected. Reports from the Australian Bureau of Statistics have shown that 'almost half of all Australians aged 15 to 74 had literacy skills below the minimum level required to meet the complex demands of a knowledge society'.^{xxiii}

Literacy should also be considered as a factor because of the effects of an emergency on people's cognitive abilities. For those that have difficulties reading and writing before an emergency, these difficulties will be considerably worse in the high arousal state following a disaster. Low English literacy levels can also be present when working with groups with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

issues to consider in recovery:

- ▶ There is large range in the level of illiteracy people experience.
- ▶ Reading and writing difficulties are far more prevalent in Australian society than many expect.
- ▶ Literacy issues are not confined solely to recently arrived migrants or CALD groups. Do not assume that a person can read or write simply because they were educated in Australia.
- ▶ Those with literacy issues may be embarrassed and unwilling to admit it.
- ▶ Lack of literacy skills may be a sign of other determinants of vulnerability. Explore what, if any, other cross-cutting vulnerabilities are present.
- ▶ Organisations can overly rely on printed material in disaster preparedness education. As a result, there is the possibility those with low literacy skills were less prepared for the emergency.
- ▶ Organisations can also overly rely on written material in recovery. This means there is a higher chance that those with low literacy skills have a lack of information and haven't accessed other supports in recovery.

- ▶ An illiterate person may have increased resilience and independence through their experience of navigating society pre disaster.
- ▶ Those with literacy issues may rely on second-hand information and word of mouth communication.

tips for working or communicating with people with low literacy skills:

- ▶ Provide information in Easy English where possible.
- ▶ Use face to face communication where possible.
- ▶ Use visuals where possible.
- ▶ Use audio channels such as radio where possible.
- ▶ If appropriate, consider if information could be printed and someone else could read it for them.
- ▶ Privacy may be an issue if people can't read or must speak out their personal details. Have private spaces, offices or rooms at meeting points and offer private meetings after community meetings.
- ▶ YouTube is a relatively simple and easy method of transferring information across distance for those with a basic literacy level to access the web.

when conducting a CNA, consider:

- ▶ Are your target audience native English speakers? If not, do you need to make any cultural considerations in your communications?
- ▶ Are there any existing services available for those with low literacy skills?
- ▶ How have employment prospects changed since the disaster?
- ▶ For feedback and inquires, are non-written options available? For example, is there a phone number they can ring, or a physical place they can visit?
- ▶ What other factors and cross-cutting issues are at play?

existing disadvantage

The effects of an emergency vary greatly across all events, communities and individuals. However, it is generally accepted that the pre disaster vulnerabilities of a community are more exposed after a disaster. Individuals or communities that hold existing burdens of disadvantage are particularly vulnerable after an emergency and require special consideration.

This is not to say that those living in an area with a high burden of disadvantage are less resilient. However, it is important to recognise that the issues and effects of an emergency in a disadvantaged area may be different from areas without existing vulnerability. Interestingly, wealthy people can sometimes be disadvantaged by their wealth, as service providers may assume they have the means to recover, while in reality their problems may have nothing to do with financial resources.

examples of existing disadvantage can include:

- ▶ low socioeconomic levels in the community
- ▶ high unemployment
- ▶ large disparities between rich and poor
- ▶ prior exposure to traumatising events or emergencies
- ▶ above average levels of family violence
- ▶ high levels of substance abuse
- ▶ lack of infrastructure and services
- ▶ lack of community connectedness.

questions to consider when working in an area of existing disadvantage:

- ▶ Were any of these factors present in the community prior to the emergency?
- ▶ Are any of these issues symptoms of a deeper, more systemic disadvantage?
- ▶ What services or organisations were operating in the area prior to the emergency? Have any of these been forced to leave due to the emergency?
- ▶ What experience do people have in dealing with government agencies and charities?
- ▶ Do any vulnerabilities prevent people from accessing your communications?

- ▶ Does the language or images you're using reinforce stereotypes? (avoid this)
- ▶ Do any of your communications channels discriminate against people on a low income? For example, do they require a computer or car?



Luke Gracie

religious groups

In the context of this resource, 'religious groups' refers to groups in the community where the shared trait is religious practice and affiliation. This affiliation cuts across all age, socioeconomic and cultural delineations. Someone's religious affiliation does not affect their resilience to disaster, but care should be taken to appreciate and navigate religious customs and practices.

issues to consider in recovery:

- ▶ Don't make assumptions: not all people from India are Hindu, not all people from Ireland are Catholic, etc.
- ▶ Gender relations and norms concerning interactions between men and women may be different from your own. There may also be rules and practices concerning physical contact between the opposite sexes.
- ▶ Some religions prohibit certain foods being eaten, either all the time or at certain times of the year.
- ▶ Particular times of the day or year may be important and/or holy, potentially impacting community meetings or group activities.
- ▶ A group may have customs relating to grief and bereavement different from your own.
- ▶ There may be rules or practices relating to dress standards and codes, for both male and female.
- ▶ Don't be afraid to ask questions and enlist the help of religious associations or peak bodies.
- ▶ For some people, religious faith can be a great support following an emergency. For others, emergencies may cause them to question their faith, potentially increasing the psychological stress they are experiencing during recovery.

tips for working or communicating with religious groups:

- ▶ Religious groups will often have formal or informal networks in the community, often with communications methods already established (newsletters, radio shows, email lists). Try to build on these where possible.
- ▶ If there are special food requirements, are there caterers in the area that can address these special needs?

- ▶ Do any communication channels specially designed for this group already exist? (For example, The Australian Jewish News newspaper, or radio shows designed for Muslim listeners).
- ▶ Don't be overly anxious about making an honest mistake regarding someone's customs.
- ▶ Recognise the importance of religious leaders. Investigate the possibility and appropriateness of including religious leaders in your communications.
- ▶ Investigate whether a prayer room is required for any meetings or events.
- ▶ Some members of the group may not understand English, so investigate the use of translators.

when conducting a CNA, consider:

- ▶ What religion are the people you're working with?
- ▶ Were any members of the group killed or seriously harmed in the disaster?
- ▶ Does the group have any specific grieving or bereavement practices?
- ▶ Are there any community leaders you can tap into and use as 'conduits' of information?
- ▶ What pre-existing communications channels are there catering specifically to the group?
- ▶ Are there any peak bodies, associations or advocacy groups you can work with (e.g. the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils)?

people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds

issues to consider in recovery:

- ▶ Ability to speak and understand English is likely to be an issue for some members of the group.
- ▶ Refugee and asylum seeker groups may have experience with emergencies and/or conflict. This may increase resilience, but may also increase stress as the current emergency could revive memories of a past event.
- ▶ CALD groups may feel removed or separated from 'mainstream' society pre-emergency.
- ▶ Government services, including police and armed services, could operate very differently in their home country, complicating the recovery effort.
- ▶ Refugee and asylum seeker groups consistently rank as some of the most vulnerable people in the community across all indicators; this disadvantage could be compounded following an emergency.

tips for working or communicating with CALD background groups:

- ▶ Don't make assumptions based on someone's appearance.
- ▶ Don't assume religion based on nationality/ethnicity. For example, not all Lebanese people are Muslim.
- ▶ Will you require translations services? If so, what translation services are available in the area? It may be possible to use a member of the group who speaks English as a translator.
- ▶ Cultural groups may have formal or informal networks in the community, often with communications methods already established (e.g. newsletters, radio shows, email lists). Try to build on these where possible.
- ▶ Investigate whether there are any special considerations (food, gender, etc.) you must keep in mind.
- ▶ Information is often available through census data, which can help inform planning.

when conducting a CNA, consider:

- ▶ What culture and ethnic background does the group come from?
- ▶ What, if any, cultural or religious practices should you consider in communications?
- ▶ How can you include members of the CALD group in your planning team?



Australian Red Cross/Rodney Dekker

displaced people

Getting information to and from displaced people is notoriously difficult. If people have been forced from their homes to a central location, such as a relief shelter or temporary housing village, you can send information through group mail drops or doorknock services. The key difficulty, though, is reaching those people who have left the area in a non-coordinated fashion.

The 2009 Victorian bushfires caused thousands of people to be dispersed for varying times after the emergency. Communicating with this dispersed and displaced population was tremendously difficult, requiring great resource investment by governments, agencies and other organisations.

In addition, affected people may not reside within the area damaged or destroyed. When the emergency occurs among a dispersed population (for example a transport accident), it may be difficult to define the target population.

issues to consider in recovery:

- ▶ People are displaced for a reason, so the emergency has obviously impacted them.
- ▶ Unless there is an overarching coordinating body that has kept solid records of where people have relocated to (and is willing and able to share that information), locating people who have left the area will be extremely difficult.
- ▶ Problems such as overcrowding, violence and public health issues can break out in relief shelters and/or temporary housing villages.

tips for working or communicating with displaced people:

Targeting people specifically is extremely difficult. The best process to follow is to cast a wide net through generalist communications for people to contact and register with you, then you can target information to their needs. This is by no means a perfect method, however, as it ignores those who don't have the capacity to register with you.

- ▶ Plan for mail and information drops at targeted locations.
- ▶ Websites are useful for casting a wide net, but still require people to proactively access the site.
- ▶ Investigate if you can obtain people's new addresses from other organisations or networks, although you will need to investigate privacy legislation issues.



Australian Red Cross/Tim Lofthouse

- ▶ Consider social media, especially pre-existing Facebook pages or Twitter accounts/hashtags you may utilise.
- ▶ Broad campaigns such as radio, TV or billboards can alert people to register their details with you.
- ▶ Once you obtain people's mobile phone numbers, SMS can overcome issues of distance.
- ▶ Word of mouth can be very useful, as people will keep in contact with their friends and family who have left the area. Proactively ask people to pass on information to others, but keep the key messages simple to avoid misinformation being spread.

when conducting a CNA, consider:

- ▶ Why did people leave their homes?
- ▶ Are there other affected people in the area the displaced people are now in?
- ▶ What other services have they accessed since the disaster?
- ▶ How long have they been displaced?
- ▶ What sort of housing are they living in now?

4

communicating in recovery

**additional
resources**

part one

part two

part three

part four

dealing with the media

Dealing with the media can be a stressful experience. However, try to remember that journalists have a job to do and provide an important service. Forging relationships and working with the media in recovery can be a beneficial exercise for you and the community.

An emergency will always elicit media interest; however, the size and intensity of this interest will vary.

When dealing with the media, an important point to remember is that all journalists have deadlines and space to fill on a page or TV report. The way you handle the media can greatly influence how positive or negative a report is. How well prepared you are will affect your media experience.

general tips:

- ▶ Be prepared. Develop media plans and train staff.
- ▶ Create organisational rules about who will speak to the media. Reinforce these rules in meetings to ensure everybody understands them.
- ▶ Be aware of media arrangements under emergency management plans.
- ▶ To avoid confusion in the public, limit your comment to what your agency is doing. Allow the relevant agency to comment on the overall recovery effort.
- ▶ People are interested in people, so is the media. Involve community members in your media activities.
- ▶ Local, state and national media all operate on the same basis. It is only their focus that changes, be it local affairs, or broader 'big picture' issues.
- ▶ When in doubt, use the principle of 'colour and movement' to your advantage. Media will respond best when a story offers visuals, an 'angle' or 'hook', and some sort of action that can be captured.
- ▶ Be proactive in contacting the media and forging relationships with them.
- ▶ Keep a log or archive of all media releases and responses given to the media.
- ▶ Record all the inquiries you are receiving from the media, as this will allow you to track what they are interested in.

For tips on developing a media release see p115

'Feed it or it will bite.'

– professional media liaison manager

in a recovery environment, there are two general ways you will be dealing with the media:

- 1- reacting to questions or inquiries from the media
- 2- pitching a story to the media

tips for dealing with inquiries:

- ▶ Have rules in place about who can, and who can't, speak to the media.
- ▶ Ensure all staff know the media guidelines and know who to direct media enquires to.
- ▶ Develop key messages and Q&As that are disseminated to all staff. This will ensure you are not caught off-guard.
- ▶ Pre-identify stories with images and a 'hook' that can be given to media in response to negative questions.
- ▶ Know the 'numbers' involved in your services. It is important to give these to the media, e.g. '1,200 psychosocial support house visits have been conducted'.

tips for pitching a story to the media:

In a recovery situation, particularly in the long term, there may be situations where you want media coverage and need to pitch your story. Pitching a story is a great way to get a positive piece in the media. Getting stories in the media can also be a way of reminding the public of a 'forgotten emergency' (see p112 on 'how to advocate for forgotten emergencies').

- ▶ Think about what you will actually achieve by having your story in the media, and what you will risk. Is it worth it?
- ▶ Don't be afraid to pitch any story to the media. Reporters can often be struggling to fill space in a page or news report, so they may be happy to receive an interesting story.
- ▶ Pre-established relationships will be very useful in pitching a story. However, there is nothing wrong with contacting a reporter you have never met to pitch a story. Have a well prepared piece, with contacts and potential images, ready to give to the media.

- ▶ Understand the nuances of the specific media you are contacting, e.g. focus on local issues and people for a local newspaper, ensure interesting visuals are available for a television pitch.
- ▶ Learn the timelines and deadlines journalists are under.
- ▶ Consider pitching an op-ed (opinion/editorial) piece.

Visit www.newspapers.com.au for a full list of every newspaper in Australia.



Luke Gracie

having key messages is integral to any media and communications plan

Characteristics of a strong message ^{xxiv}

new information

If it's not new, it's not news. A reporter won't be interested in a story someone else has already told.

clear and unambiguous

Spokespeople only have a few seconds to get the message across, so make it count.

numbers matter

The media loves numbers in a news piece: how many people assisted in a program, how many people have visited recovery centres, how many financial grants have been given, etc.

passionate/compassionate

The message must have feeling and not sound like it comes from a cold detached robot. This is true not only in the development of messages, but also for delivery in an interview. Make sure you have chosen the right person to be your spokesperson.

people focused

People care about people, not things or organisations. Use words like 'people', 'families', 'mothers' etc. as often as possible, instead of more bureaucratic sounding labels like 'beneficiaries' or 'households'. Also, do not use abbreviations or acronyms as they can alienate audiences and make documents read like technical reports.

how to advocate for forgotten emergencies

Crises that aren't new can still make news, as long as you can find a 'new angle'. Agencies can do a lot to boost the media visibility of long-term, complex emergencies through creative communications.

what are the advantages of getting exposure for 'your' disaster?

funding: this is the most obvious reason to search for greater exposure. The greater the public interest, the more likely it will attract financial support.

political pressure: greater interest and public concern can exert pressure on political figures and policy.

community impact: when emergencies are 'forgotten' by the public, it can leave the community feeling ignored and alone in their grief. A greater public profile can allow affected people to feel accepted by the broader community, and increase the public's understanding of what affected people are going through. Media interest can also help in practical ways such as promoting tourist attractions.

preparedness: greater exposure about the long term impacts of emergencies may encourage others to be better prepared.

tips for getting exposure:

keep up a dialogue with the media

Most journalists are not specialists in humanitarian issues. Agencies can help by taking on a quasi-educational role, entering into constructive dialogue about emergencies. The time to do this is not 15 minutes before deadline, however, it's a long-term, ongoing process.

Journalists are hungry for background material, such as profiles and fact sheets, to help them get a grip on complex emergencies. Provide this information on your website, along with up-to-date contact details of experts for interviews.

put a number on it

Darfur hit the headlines when the United Nations put the number of people affected at one million. The Democratic Republic of Congo made the news in 2005 when the International Rescue Committee released a mortality study with the jaw-dropping figure of 3.8 million dead since 1998. It may seem a cynical way to drum up

attention, but such numbers give journalists pegs to hang their stories on. They also answer the question that so often haunts long-term emergencies: 'Why write about this today?' They also capture the public imagination, going some way towards quantifying the otherwise unimaginable.

A well crafted superlative can do the same. United Nations relief coordinator Jan Egeland gave reporters something to write about in March 2005 by saying the toll in the Democratic Republic of Congo over the past six years amounted to 'one tsunami every six months'. While events occurring in Australia will inevitably have smaller numbers, the same principle applies. Giving reporters a hook to report on will substantially increase the likelihood that your story is picked up.

invest in media relations

If organisations want greater coverage of forgotten emergencies, they need to invest in communications training and expertise, down to the local level. Big organisations have formidable communications teams, and it shows in their media exposure.

It's not only an issue for global aid agencies though. Smaller organisations can follow the same principles by forming relationships with key media contacts and spending time developing strong media plans.

be creative and proactive

Tell the bigger story through the eyes of individuals. Follow the news agenda closely and find ways to fit what you're doing into it. If you're dealing with local press, look for local angles. A key barrier to crisis coverage is the cost and logistical difficulty of sending journalists to crisis zones. If your budget allows, consider organising trips for reporters.

make it visual

Nothing sells a story like a good picture. No matter how important an issue is, strong visuals will always increase the chances it is reported on. When pitching a story, try to ensure there is 'colour and movement' that can be photographed or filmed. The visuals don't necessarily have to be spectacular; smaller, more community focused stories will similarly benefit from having 'colour and movement'.

Examples could include: children playing in a rebuilt park, or an owner reunited with a dog that was treated by a free veterinary service. The stories don't need to be groundbreaking to gain media interest.

bring in the big names

It's controversial, but enlisting the help of celebrities can work. Be careful you don't pick the wrong celebrity though, as a scandal in their private life can overshadow or damage the reputation of your services.

ask for help

In some instances, organisations or bodies that cannot provide financial assistance may be open to providing in-kind support. If your organisation lacks communications or media capacity, consider negotiating with larger organisations or government bodies to provide you with in-kind organisational capacity assistance.

finally, never give up

Persistence really does pay off!

'The fact is that news is about things that are new. People dying in Africa is not new, but people being swept out to sea, killed in five minutes from a big wave that came up the beach, that is new.'

*– Andrew Gilligan,
British journalist*

how to write a media release

writing the headline:

It should be brief, clear and to the point: an ultra-compact version of the press release's key point.

writing the media release body copy:

- ▶ The press release should be written as you would want it to appear in a news story.
- ▶ The lead, or first sentence, in any media release should reflect the lead in a news story in a newspaper. It needs to grab the reader and say concisely what is happening.
- ▶ The lead should be one sentence, less than 35 words in length, use only active verbs, and include the four Ws: 'who', 'what', 'where' and 'when' the one H, 'how' and the fifth W, 'why', is what makes up the rest of the release the next one to two sentences then expand on the lead. This first paragraph (two to three sentences) must sum up the media release and the further content must elaborate on it. Journalists won't read the entire media release if the start of the article is boring.
- ▶ Journalists write news stories in an 'inverted pyramid' structure – the most important 'newsworthy' information is the 'base' at the top of the story, and less important and background information follows in order of importance or newsworthiness. You need to do the same with your media release.
- ▶ The media release body copy should be compact. Avoid using long sentences and paragraphs. Avoid repetition and using jargon, make the story simple to understand.
- ▶ Deal with actual facts – events, products, services, people, targets, goals, plans, projects. Try to provide maximum use of concrete facts.
- ▶ Include information about the availability of images or diagrams that may accompany your story.



Rodney Dekker

The above was taken and adapted from: Large, T., "Tricks of the Trade: how to 'sell' forgotten emergencies" in the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies World Disasters Report 2005, p. 134. Also available at: <http://www.alertnet.org/thefacts/reliefresources/112849858584.htm>

a simple method for writing an effective press release is to make a list of following things:

- ▶ Who is affected?
- ▶ What happened; what is the actual news?
- ▶ When did this happen?
- ▶ Where did this happen?
- ▶ How did this happen?
- ▶ Why is this news?
- ▶ The people, products, items, dates and other things related with the news.
- ▶ The purpose behind the news.
- ▶ Your project – the source of this news.

tie it together:

Provide some extra information (e.g. weblinks) that supports your press release.

add contact information:

If your press release is really newsworthy, journalists will want more information or will want to interview key people associated with it. Make sure they can contact key people by mobile phone and email.

monitoring and evaluating your communications

Evaluation of *all* community services is vital, otherwise you simply don't know if your services are working effectively or not. It is also important to evaluate your communications to see if they are reaching the target audience and meeting the needs of the community.

Evaluating communications can seem daunting because it appears hard to measure the impact of a brochure or flyer. However, there are ways to measure your communications. Throughout this resource there are references to ensuring that feedback processes are factored into planning. If this is done correctly, evaluating the success of your communications is far easier.

tips for evaluating communications:

- ▶ Don't try and measure unrealistic goals; one public information campaign by one organisation won't fix all the issues in recovery!
- ▶ If appropriate (and if you have the budget) consider engaging an external consultant or agency to review your communications and distribution methods.
- ▶ Keep a record of the amount of materials distributed for quantitative review.
- ▶ If there is a call to action on the communication (e.g. if alerting people to an event or counselling service) measure any increases in attendance.
- ▶ If you're unable to ask the affected people receiving your communications for their responses directly (quite likely), consider asking other people (such as the 'conduits' identified on p24) to review the quality and impact of your communications campaigns.
- ▶ When posting evaluations, include a stamped, self-addressed envelope.
- ▶ Provide a realistic deadline for stakeholders to return evaluations.
- ▶ If a full evaluation is not possible, some is always better than none.
- ▶ Surveys don't have to be conducted in person – phone or mail surveys are fine. Also, volunteers can survey one another.
- ▶ There are existing survey options on the internet, such as Survey Monkey.
- ▶ Be realistic about what you want the evaluation to achieve and how you will measure the program's effectiveness.
- ▶ Don't be scared of negative responses, these are normal outcomes of an evaluation.

- ▶ Use channels such as facebook pages or community recovery committees to gauge the impact of your communications.
- ▶ Have a process in place to implement service improvements, otherwise the evaluation will have been wasted and you will lose currency with volunteers, clients and partner organisations.

See examples of communications programs evaluated at: <http://www.comminit.com/>



Australian Red Cross/Stephen McIlwenna

where to find further information

how do I set up a blog?

Blogs are really simple to set up, you just sign up and then follow the prompts to design your blog. A few of the main platforms are listed below

- ▶ www.blogger.com
- ▶ www.livejournal.com
- ▶ www.posterous.com
- ▶ www.tumblr.com
- ▶ www.wordpress.com

Alternatively, type 'create blog' into your search engine for a list of options and advice.

how do I create a PDF document?

There is a lot of software available online that will allow you to create PDF documents. Simply type 'PDF creator' into your search engine and you should be able to find the software that suits your needs.

Some PDF creators are free while others have more functions and are purchasable. Decide which will work best for you.

Apple computers can convert a file to PDF through the 'Print' function.

how do I open a PDF document?

You need certain software to open a PDF document on a PC computer. There are many different types, but the most common (and free) software for PDFs is Adobe Reader. You can download the software at:

<http://get.adobe.com/reader/>

Apple computers should be able to open PDF documents automatically.

how do I send bulk SMS messages?

There are many ways to send bulk SMS messages, ranging from technical hardware devices to simple websites. Type 'bulk SMS' into your search engine and see which product suits your needs best.

useful websites

communications

AlertNet
www.alertnet.org

Australian Council for International Development's
Development Advocacy Toolkit
<http://dat.acfid.asn.au/>

The Communication Initiative Network
www.comminet.com

Emergency Information Service
www.trust.org/services/eis/

International Federation of Red Cross' flickr account
www.flickr.com/ifrc

United Nations Information Centres
<http://unic.un.org>

emergency management

Emergency Management Australia
www.em.gov.au/

Australian Red Cross 'after the emergency' youth services
www.redcross.org.au/aftertheemergency

Disaster Recovery Working Group (Federal Emergency
Management Agency, US)
<http://disasterrecoveryworkinggroup.gov>

International Federation of Red Cross, Disaster Management
www.ifrc.org/what/disasters

Sphere Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in
Disaster Response
www.sphereproject.org

mental health

Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health
www.apcmh.unimelb.edu.au

NSW Institute of Psychiatry
www.nswiop.nsw.edu.au

Disaster Mental Health trauma resources
www.trauma-pages.com/disaster.php

other useful websites

Asset-Based Community Development Institute:
www.abcdinstitute.org

Australian Council for International Development
www.acfid.asn.au

Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement
www.grief.org.au

Department of Families, Housing Community Services
and Indigenous Affairs
www.fahcsia.gov.au

Australian Red Cross
www.redcross.org.au

International Federation of Red Cross and Red
Crescent Societies (IFRC)
www.ifrc.org

Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
publications and resources list:
www.norad.no/en/Tools+and+publications

useful resources from other organisations

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issues in recovery record



issues in recovery record

person	issue details	location	notes
		responsibility?	
		referred to?	
person	issue details	location	notes
		responsibility?	
		referred to?	
person	issue details	location	notes
		responsibility?	
		referred to?	
person	issue details	location	notes
		responsibility?	
		referred to?	
person	issue details	location	notes
		responsibility?	
		referred to?	

The Seven Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement



The Red Cross Communicating in Recovery resources aim to increase the effectiveness of communications with recovery populations, thereby contributing to the timely and meaningful recovery of communities post emergency.

Red Cross kindly thanks all those involved in the consultation, planning, development and review of this resource. Particular thanks goes to Dr. Susan Nicholls, Ruth Wraith, Lara Hook, Alicia Jennings, Rhonda Abotomey, Jason Collins, Sarah Halls, Carol Matthews, Jill Scherman, Colin Charles (Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement), Jude Czerenkowski (Victorian Department of Human Services), Anne Leadbeater (Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner, Victorian Department of Justice), Lachlan Quick (Victorian State Emergency Service), Joanne Tomkinson (Reuters/AlertNet), Fleur Leary (Emergency Management Australia, The Australian Government Attorney-General's Department), Joanne Llewellyn (Dept of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs), and Giovanna Amato and Susan Stork-Finlay (Disability Emergency Management Advocacy). Luke Gracie is the principal author of this resource.

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1 ▶

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.

2 ▶

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.

3 ▶

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.

4 ▶

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.

5 ▶

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

6 ▶

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.

7 ▶

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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