

Disaster Interventions and Humanitarian Aid Guidelines, Toolkits and Manual



Lena Dominelli, Durham University

Email: Lena.Dominelli@durham.ac.uk

Shaped by the past, creating the future



Acknowledgements:

I thank the ESRC for funding the important *Internationalising Institutional and Professional Practices Project* (IIPP) for without its support, the Guidelines, Toolkits and Manual contained within these pages would not have been possible. Additionally, I wish to thank the people involved in this research during the lifetime of the project. First of all, I wish to thank the people of the villages in Sri Lanka for engaging with the research to enable us to learn from their experience and use their insights to benefit others; the local Sri Lankan NGOs and universities that supported this work; the local researchers, particularly Kanthi Perera, Professor Sunil Shantha and Mr Terney; the Project Advisory Board; the Co-Investigator, Professor Joy Palmer-Cooper; and the Research Associates, Dr Mark Powell and Dr Tom Vickers for compiling the data on which this is based. And, thanks are due to David Whiteley for his technical help and support.

Photos by courtesy of students involved in the IM (Institutional Model) and PPM (Professional Practice Model) and Lena Dominelli.

The Internationalising Institutional and Professional Practices Project is part of the *Durham Research Partnerships for Community Development*.

Table of Contents

Title	Page
Acknowledgements	
Table of Contents	
Introduction	1
Contextual Issues	3
- Defining disasters and working in disaster situations	5
Guidelines for Policymakers	9
- Timely, forward-looking and participative policies	10
Guidelines for Practitioners	14
- Principles to help practitioners deliver humanitarian aid responsibly	17
- Importance concepts in humanitarian aid: Vulnerability and resilience	20
- Engaging Communities	21
- Vulnerabilities and resilience	19
- Guidelines for engaging communities	22
- Guidelines for developing a community profile	23
- Information collection	23
- Compiling a community profile	25
- Preparing for data collection	25
- Structuring the data collection process	29
- Setting up, organising and running community facilities	34
- Communication resources	36
Guidelines for Researchers	42
Guidelines for Educators and Trainers	45
References	48
Charts	
- Empowering Just Practice During Disasters	6
- Continuum of (Dis)Empowering Humanitarian Interventions	7
- Policy Formation, Implementation and Evaluation	11
- Disaster Interventions Partnership Chart	14
- Cycle of Reflection, Action Reflection (RAR Cycle)	26
- Cycle of Interventions during Disasters	29

Introduction

The 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami devastated people, livelihoods and the biosphere in 12 countries and stands as one of the largest disasters in living memory. Goodwill, generosity, and humanitarian aid poured into the afflicted areas and became indispensable in enabling those affected to recover from the disaster. However, the processes whereby assistance was given were not always transparent. Yet, for recipients, the processes whereby aid is delivered are as important as the goods and services provided. The Economic and Social Sciences Research Council (ESRC) funded a three-year project that ran from 2009 to 2012 to explore how humanitarian aid delivered during the 2004 catastrophe was perceived by aid recipients in Sri Lanka (1), one of the countries seriously affected by the 2004 tsunami. It was called the *Internationalising Institutional and Professional Practices Project (IIPP)* and sought to determine whether there were approaches that disaster survivors in Sri Lanka found empowering and included the evaluation of two projects that claimed to operate on an empowering basis. One, we called the Institutional Model (IM) because it was initiated by and located primarily within a British university that was working in partnership with key Sri Lankan non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and involved university students from a range of disciplines as volunteers (2). The other was a professional practice model (PPM) that began under the auspices of an international civil society organisation (CSO) that undertook education, training and research activities in social work at the tertiary level.

This toolkit (3) draws on the findings of the IIPP research and literature to formulate principles that can lead to the delivery of humanitarian aid that local people experience as empowering. It provides principles, questions and guidelines that aim to assist:

- *policymakers* in understanding the concerns of aid recipients so that policies may be more relevant to those who receive humanitarian aid.
- *practitioners*, especially relief workers and social workers, in working with aid recipients in empowering ways as they seek to enhance capacity and promote resilience in coping with disasters.
- *researchers* in undertaking studies that involve local people in coproducing solutions to the problems that disaster survivors identify as being relevant for them.
- *educators* in creating materials that create a culturally relevant, locality specific curriculum for disaster interventions.

The toolkit is *not* prescriptive. Instead, it highlights principles and questions that policymakers, practitioners, researchers and educators can ask and then adapt to local situations, contexts and players whether in government, humanitarian aid organisations and/or the local community. It promotes the formation of *locality specific culturally relevant interventions* that engage with local people as *equal partners* in their formulation and implementation and is divided into four parts, one for each stakeholder group identified above.

Data Collection

The data collected through the IIPP research informs the guidelines contained within this document. These covered 386 transcripts of interviews and focus groups, 38 sets of field notes and 45 questionnaires from NGOs that replied to an on-line survey. The interviews and focus groups were digitally recorded and transcribed. Interviewees who agreed to do this were sent their transcripts to check for accuracy. The data was coded through NVivo software using a grounded approach to extract the themes identified by the participants themselves. The grounded process enabled the researchers to avoid imposing pre-conceived ideas on the data and allow the themes to emerge according to the priorities and concepts of the interviewees.



Contextual Issues

Humanitarian aid is a contentious issue. There are those including donors and the general public who support it as an altruistic activity aimed at helping others, although they may disagree about what constitutes effective and empowering humanitarian aid interventions. Others like John Hancock (1991) argue that humanitarian aid is an imperialistic enterprise conducted by the West for its own benefit. This analysis may shift as new geopolitical realities driven by globalisation and the power of counties with emerging markets take their place on the world stage. The theme of the exploitation of disaster survivors is developed further by Naomi Klein (2008) who argues that humanitarian aid is a lucrative global business that is exploited by multinational corporations that profit from the destruction and hardship that follow disasters. The IIPP research revealed that what humanitarian aid achieves depends on context, intentions of donors and recipients, cultural expectations, opportunities for local people to exercise agency and the resources and skills held by or are available to disaster survivors. This study also revealed that humanitarian aid workers themselves can be endangered through ordinary everyday routines (Dominelli 2012c) as well as have their lives threatened. This issue becomes crucial if they become caught in armed conflict situation as many have discovered, including the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Representative in Iraq, Sergio Vieira de Mello, murdered in Baghdad in 2003.

Humanitarian relief work involves aid workers including social workers, health professionals and volunteers making a rapid assessment of needs and then delivering appropriate services. Many of those involved have limited training for the work they undertake and this is problematic for public confidence in the support offered and the standard of services delivered. It is also unhelpful for the creation of a sustainable, well-regulated profession that has some control over those who aspire to help and can ensure that those involved in the aid process are credible, skilled (Walker, 2010) and checked for their capacity to support rather than oppress people who are especially vulnerable in disaster situations. The main activities of these workers, however called and wherever placed, are articulated around:

- Meeting basic needs, including for food, water, medicines, clothing and shelter.
- Finding missing family members, an activity that is time-consuming and emotionally excruciating.
- Communicating with others in disaster situations, a function requiring a range of diverse communication techniques to address diverse audiences effectively as well as linguistic skills appropriate for the specific culture and location.
- Coping with failing infrastructures including public utilities, power supplies, communication links, transportation networks, and sanitation systems.
- Accessing aid funds, including those that are not tied in particular ways by donors who may be unaware of local sensitivities.
- Being creative and persevering in engaging people and linking them up with needed and available resources.

- Acting as a broker that can bring different and often external resources, people in the affected communities and local, national and global organisations together.

I call these workers *humanitarian aid practitioners* and include relief workers, social workers and health practitioners amongst the professionals who respond to emergency situations initiated by disasters.

Fundraising to acquire the resources necessary at each stage can be a problem in delivering aid, as is gaining access to a particular location. Gaining permission to assist people can be particularly difficult in situations involving armed conflict. This was the case in Sri Lanka during the tsunami where national government permission was required to provide humanitarian aid behind conflict lines. Most relief workers were not allowed into the territories held by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE or Tamil Tigers) (Ruwanpura and Humphries, 2005). Concern for worker safety was an important reason for this refusal, but the situation was also highly political and the Sri Lankan government was reluctant to see large numbers of ‘foreigners’ engage with people in troubled and troubling areas.

Additionally, these areas were marked by cultural, religious and linguistic differences that relief workers would have to address if they were to find out what local people needed and provide meaningful support for them. Although difficult to uphold, not treading on political sensitivities is a reason why the Red Cross has traditionally maintained a neutral stance vis-à-vis political conflict (Slim, 2000). Behaving impartially and upholding ethical behaviour may be easier to enforce among large civil society organisations or INGOs like the Red Cross or Oxfam. Doing this in small agencies and controlling individual volunteers becomes more haphazard and limited by the lack of organisational capacity and personnel. In contrast, qualified social workers are professionally bound by their ethical code to support people in need regardless of their political, religious, cultural or other views, and there are sanctions that can be imposed on those who do not comply. Thus, having a professional infrastructure that can support and monitor workers in the field is important in delivering humanitarian aid.

Social workers are usually found offering practical assistance on the ground, rather than occupying the media spotlight. Their endeavours and contributions are rarely highlighted as social work interventions, and so the people social workers engage with specifically are usually the ones aware of their activities. Disasters are defined as shocking events that overwhelm the capacity of local systems and people to address on their own needs (Perez and Thompson, 1994). Generic social work skills are relevant and useful during disaster interventions in the:

- immediate response,
- recovery period, and
- reconstruction period.

Particularly important in this regard are the social work values and skills linked to:

- acting ethically;
- engaging people through their day-to-day routines;

- accessing resources; and
- coordinating a range of activities across a diverse range of players and organisations.

Social workers seek to affirm people's existence with due dignity and respect, relate to them in empowering and participative ways, listen to what they have experienced and consider how this can shape their expectations for their futures, and provide practical help and support. These characteristics will sound familiar to humanitarian aid practitioners. The similarities between diverse professional groups of helpers in humanitarian aid situations raises the question of whether it is necessary to create a new profession for humanitarian aid workers along with the accompanying infrastructures to deal with the issues raised by humanitarian aid, or whether an existing profession, with ready-made infrastructures that ensure professional accountability and control; provide known and tested professional standards and a value base; include known systems of accreditation and regulation; encompass a large body of practitioners; and have recognised training providers up to tertiary level in many parts of the world; is a better option. Social work as a profession and discipline already situated within universities has such structures and recognition. The question can be rephrased as follows: Is it appropriate to have humanitarian aid work as a specialism within social work, as one would any other specialism such as child protection, elder care, group work or community development? I would like to suggest that this is a thought worth considering. It has many advantages including having a recognised professional base and an existing infrastructure that can be adapted easily to include humanitarian aid work. It can also be implemented quickly. So far, social work has been out of most of the discussions in which humanitarian aid workers have been deliberating these issues, and it is time it came on board. Regardless of the reply to this question, the guidelines and questions asked in this toolkit are relevant for all those delivering humanitarian aid, unless otherwise specified.

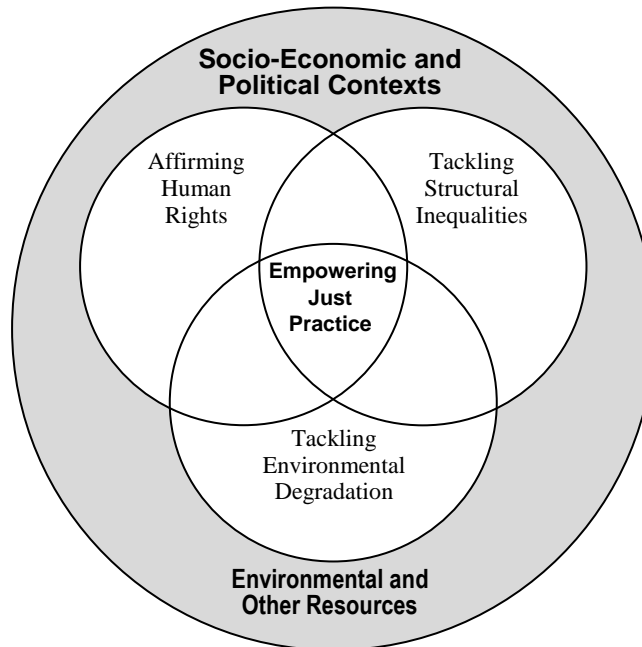
Whatever their title, humanitarian aid practitioners require clarity about the purpose of a disaster intervention and their role in it. Answering the following questions will enable them to understand what they are doing better:

- *Legitimacy*. What is the basis on which external actors can legitimately intervene in disaster situations?
- *Qualifications*. What qualifications, knowledge and skills are needed? Who decides what these standards are? How are these standards maintained and by whom? Who holds responsibility for ensuring that workers' qualifications are regularly updated? Is a system of registration needed? What should this be? Are there existing infrastructures used by professionals already involved in delivering aid and supporting communities after a disaster that are useful? What are these?
- *Beneficiaries*. Who will benefit from the intervention and how?
- *Accountability*. Who will hold those who help accountable? Who will train them, how will they be trained and where?
- *Assessments*. What hazards and risks have to be taken into account? Which groups will these affect? How can the impact of these be mitigated for each group?

- *Resourcing*. What resources should be used? Who will be able to access them and who cannot? Where and how will these be accessed? What local resources will be used by those helping and how can the impact of their use be kept to a minimum?
- How can community resilience and capacity be enhanced to enable local people to take control of events during the immediate aftermath of a disaster, the recovery period and reconstruction?

The chart below indicates the complexities and the important contexts that humanitarian aid practitioners in disaster situations are obliged to address if they are to act within a framework that affirms dignity, human rights and social justice while simultaneously taking account of the political dynamics and power relationships within which they work and the disaster survivors live.

Chart: Empowering Just Practice during Disasters



Source: Adapted from Dominelli, L (2013) 'Environmental Justice at the Heart of Social Work Practice: Greening the Profession' in the *International Journal of Social Welfare*.

Defining disasters and working in disaster situations.

Disaster interventions are 'natural' and '(hu)man made' phenomena that cause severe disruptions to daily life routines. They are usually so serious as to require external intervention or assistance (Perez and Thompson, 1994). The boundaries between the two types are becoming increasingly blurred because climate change will intensify the impact

of all types of disasters upon people, particularly those linked to extreme weather events (Oven et al., 2011). There are many different kinds of disasters covered by the two main categories. ‘Natural’ disasters include earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, droughts, landslides, floods. ‘(Hu)man-made’ disasters include: poverty; armed conflict; pollution; over-urbanization, especially that occurring in mega-cities lacking adequate public health infrastructures and utilities; industrial accidents such as occurred in Bhopal; environmental crises caused by the deforestation of tropical and temperate rainforests; and climate change.

Disasters are usually divided into stages, each of which requires a different response. These are:

- Pre-disaster preparation, mitigation and prevention.
- Disaster responses (immediate relief).
- Recovery and reconstruction.
- Future risk reduction and prevention (where possible).

Practitioner preparedness occurs along a continuum of interventions, and they need to take care of themselves and be prepared throughout each of these stages. The chart below indicates the key actors involved in a continuum of interventions which ranges from disempowering interventions to empowering ones. Some practitioners, especially the local ones may themselves be disaster survivors, and at times may occupy a double role of supporting others and being supported by them. This includes when they are working together to develop joint solutions to the problems they face, i.e., the coproduction of solutions.

Chart: Continuum of (Dis)Empowering Humanitarian Interventions



To perform well when delivering aid, practitioners require good preparation. Whether called humanitarian aid workers, relief workers, social workers or community development workers, practitioners working in disaster situations are advised to:

- *Prepare* themselves thoroughly before going into the field.
- *Create strong networks* on which they can draw for support (Email, SKYPE can supplement face-to-face support).
- *Identify peer support* and mentorship networks.
- *Obtain good supervision* for support and provide a safe space in which to discuss any moral, ethical and practice issues that might arise from this work.
- *Be flexible in their approach* to the work and constantly expect the unexpected.
- *Know yourself* – your value system, what causes you stress and how you can reduce sources of stress.
- *Listen to local people and learn from them.* Active listening is crucial in facilitating the active engagement of local communities.

Additionally, before going into the field, there are a range of other activities that are linked to the issue of preparedness. These include:

- *Preparing family and friends* for what may be a prolonged period of absence.
- *Identifying the location* of the disaster and its nature or type.
- *Understanding the local contexts, politics and culture* (in its widest sense to include religion).
- *Learning about any language* issues and evaluating whether or not you can learn some key phrases before going to the disaster affected area.
- *Having health and fitness checks* including dental health.
- *Informing employers* – whether you are in paid employment or voluntary work, about your proposed departure so that they can arrange cover, or even retain your post for your return.
- *Finding someone* who will care and maintain your home and pay the bills during your absence.
- *Obtaining insurance coverage*, including for health and travel.
- *Ensuring that your professional registration/licensing* will not lapse during your absence.

Other important considerations are linked to reducing one's impact or footprint on the local area. These include:

- *Limiting demand* on local resources, especially those required for local people by planning how you will meet your own personal needs beforehand.

Any gap between your standard of accommodation and conditions of life and those of the disaster survivors will be noticed and often remarked upon by local people. Being aware of the privilege of (usually) being able to leave the field and return to comfortable surroundings can help reduce some of the tensions that might arise in this regard.

Notes

1. The terminology used in humanitarian aid discourses is problematic, because talking about 'donors' and 'recipients' implies a particular sort of relationship

with power relations already embedded in it. The stance I take in this Toolkit is that recipients are agents with their own views and capacity to take actions that accord with their worldviews, understandings, knowledges and perceptions of situations. I refer to them as disaster survivors and not as disaster victims to acknowledge their agency and suggest they either have gone or are capable of going beyond victimhood.

2. The practitioners who deliver goods and services and the roles they play in disaster situations are many and varied, and include those of humanitarian aid workers, relief workers, social workers, community workers, and health workers. ‘Practitioners’ is a global term that encompasses them all. For the purposes of this toolkit, I use the term ‘practitioner(s)’ to suggest that questions, issues and/or principles apply across the range, otherwise I am more specific.
3. This toolkit is being written from the perspective of those who work with disaster survivors. Additionally, I am trying to argue that: social workers who are often left to pick up the pieces during a disaster and when everyone else has left should play a more active role in humanitarian aid discourses; and that those already working in this field who are unfamiliar with social work theories and practices can gain useful insights from the way they work with people on the ground on a day-to-day basis as well as the reverse. I also argue for multidisciplinary approaches for this work, so that the knowledge of the physical sciences in understanding physical risks and hazards can complement and supplement that of the social scientists and practitioners on the ground so that their work can be more firmly embedded in evidence about what can work in particular situations and what might not. To make effective use of these different domains of knowledge requires a willingness to engage in dialogue across differences; value locally generated knowledge; and the coproduction of solutions to problems.



Guidelines for Policymakers

Policies are procedural tools enable practitioners in humanitarian crises to intervene effectively. Good policies are integral to good practice, so being well-informed and taking care in developing them is essential. The respondents in the IIPP research highlighted the following values and principles as integral to formulating policies that responded to their need for assistance in the 2004 tsunami disaster:

Values that respondents were particularly keen to see policymakers implement included:

- *Dignity and worth.* Affirming the worth, dignity, skills and knowledges of local people.
- *Ethical interactions.* Ethical behaviour in all interactions with local people.
- *Equality and inclusivity.* Egalitarian and inclusive partnerships between those who came to help and those they were helping.
- *Active listening.* People were keen to be listened to because they felt many inefficiencies in aid delivery could be avoided, e.g., giving the same person too much of one type of aid and not enough to another.
- *A focus on strengths, reciprocity and solidarity.* Strengths-based approaches to the work because local people had much to offer those coming to help them and had ideas about the development process and what they wanted to happen in their communities. Collaboration between different groups was seen as more effective than competition and division.
- *Participative engagement.* Engaging local people in making decisions about matters affecting them.
- *Contextualised interventions.* Local people did not live in a vacuum devoid of existing relationships, power structures and resource availability. The disaster would have happened within those contexts, and even if the physical structures had collapsed, the social ones linked to expectations, codes of behaviour and culture would have remained as resources for disaster survivors to use.

IIPP respondents felt these values were often ignored in the rush to ensure safety, get aid delivered to people, and move on. While the above values were their preferred ones, these disaster survivors had no illusions about seeing these practised in aid giving processes, they wanted policymakers to assist in their realisation by ensuring that those who went to help them subscribed to a known code of behaviour and a complaints procedure that they could then ask them to enforce. At the same time, they applauded those NGOs and CSOs that did follow the rules of ethical conduct.

Timely, forward-looking and participative policymaking:

These interviewees also made specific suggestions for policymakers to improve existing policies, because they experienced inconsistencies between the rhetoric of aid provision and its delivery. These were:

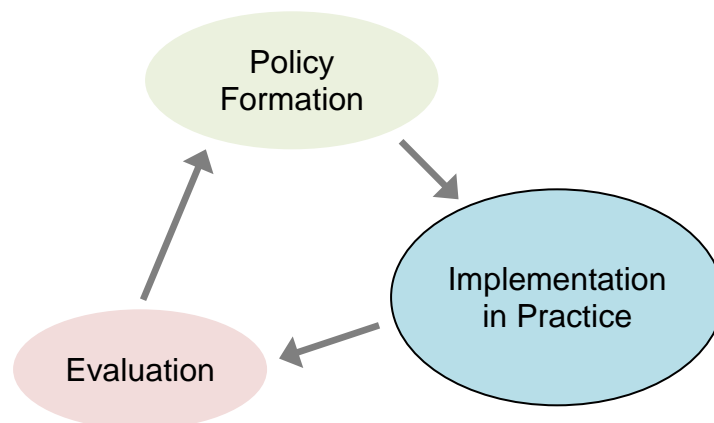
- Having clear policy goals.
- Having clear and easy to understand eligibility criteria for those receiving aid.

- Being transparent in how these criteria were applied in practice.
- Ensuring that all those entitled to receive aid did so.
- Delivering aid on an equitable basis to all potential beneficiaries.
- Delivering aid in an efficient and timely manner.
- Adjusting the aid that was delivered to the needs of disaster survivors as these changed over time as they went from the immediate relief period to recovery and long-term reconstruction.
- Holding local leaders accountable for the ways in which they oversaw the aid delivery process and their attempts to reach all members of the community that required assistance.
- Constantly monitoring and evaluating the delivery of aid.
- Involving local people in evaluating and monitoring aid.
- Responding to what was happening on the ground in the distribution of aid.

Timely, forward looking and participative policies

Policy cannot be limited solely to a practical orientation. It also has to provide strategic direction and this dimension is also important in policies formulated to reduce future risk and foster post-disaster reconstruction. Thus, policy-making processes have to be *timely, forward-looking and participative*. Local villagers were adamant that if those making policies consulted with them, they would not have received goods that were surplus to requirements while major needs, particularly for housing and restoring livelihoods, went unmet. The chart below reveals a constantly moving cycle of formation, implementation and evaluation that has to occur to ensure the effective delivery of aid.

Chart: Policy Formation, Implementation and Evaluation



Dialogue between policymakers and local populations can be facilitated by practitioners especially those already skilled in engaging communities, as social workers are. This

includes finding appropriate venues for this dialogue and considering the best methods for communication between local residents, experts and policymakers. This dialogue would involve the:

- Identification of policymakers and populations to be involved in the dialogue, where and how.
- Identification of needs that absolutely have to be met and those that it is desirable to meet, while recognising doing so depends on the resources and time available.
- Identification of existing resources ready for use and others that have to be found.
- Assessing existing community resilience and creating strategies for developing this further.
- Supporting the development of risk reduction strategies to prepare the population better for future catastrophic events, including those caused by poorly constructed dwellings, inadequate drainage systems and extreme weather events such as flooding and drought.
- Developing the infrastructures needed to create and implement effective risk mitigation and adaptation initiatives.
- Agreeing the policies to be suggested to the appropriate decision-making bodies.
- Monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of policies in practice.
- Supporting physical and social scientists in identifying and mapping hazards and risk; improving preventative measures aimed at reducing casualties, e.g., building flood-proof housing, providing earthquake proof buildings; developing effective early warning systems and creating places of safety located within the community and not several miles away from population centres, however small; and making available the resources to facilitate this work.



Policymakers keen to engage local populations in discussions about disaster reduction policies and strategies have to be well-informed and use research to provide them with the technical information they require as well as engaging local residents and looking for ways to combine the bringing together of expert advice with local knowledge to create the action plans that will help mitigate future risk and promote preventative adaptation in the built infrastructure and physical environments as well as resilience among people and

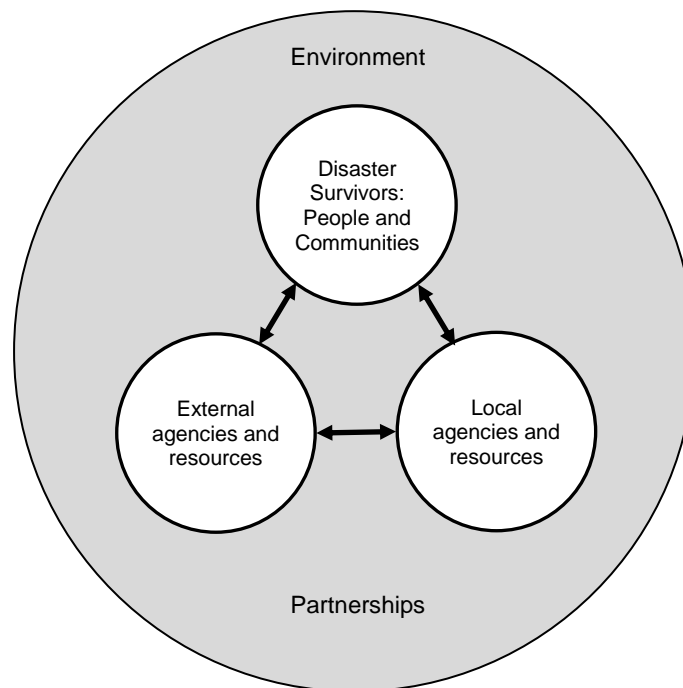
communities living in disaster prone areas. Practitioners, especially community social workers can assist in the processes of communities dialoguing with policymakers.

Guidelines for Practitioners

Practitioners have central roles to play in delivering aid and assisting disaster survivors in returning to a daily routine that has meaning for them and in planning for the longer-term regeneration of their communities. Factors that practitioners may take into account when considering how to shape their interventions and develop inclusive and empowering local partnerships in disaster situations include:

- Type of disaster.
- Resources available.
- State of the economy nationally and locally.
- Political structures including decision-making bodies and governance mechanisms in the local and national arenas.
- Cultural traditions at the local level, including the diversity inherent in culture(s).
- Power relations at the interpersonal and societal levels.
- Ethnicities and cultures including local religions and languages.
- Gender, class, age, disability and other social divisions and factors that may be relevant to the specific locality.

Chart: Disaster Intervention Partnership Chart



Source: Adapted from Dominelli, L (2013) 'Environmental Justice at the Heart of Social Work Practice: Greening the Profession' in *International Journal of Social Welfare*.

The chart above highlights the importance of forming empowering partnerships that engage with disaster survivors through facilitative local partnerships that create action plans to promote future development that are ‘owned’ by local people. Mutuality in engagement between local and external players and interdependent partnerships in which local autonomy in decision-making is respected are crucial features in these.

Many tasks undertaken in disaster situations are those claimed by the social work profession. These include:

- Assessing need.
- Co-ordinating and delivering goods and services.
- Assisting in family reunification.
- Safeguarding children, older people disabled people and sick people.
- Supporting individuals and communities in rebuilding their lives, developing resilience and building capacity to minimise risks and develop adaptation strategies regarding potential disasters in future.
- Providing psychosocial care, counselling and other forms of individual and family support.
- Advocating, lobbying and mobilising for change aimed at preventing disasters in future.
- Acting holistically and ensuring no disaster survivor is excluded from receiving available services.
- Improving existing services and ensuring that those entitled to receive them do so.
- Working to create new services when unmet needs are identified.
- Maintaining confidentiality except when evidence of past harm or potential future harm to people, lives and livelihoods is revealed.

Asking questions is an important part of a practitioner’s interventions. Social workers can ask awkward questions when doing their work. Crucial questions for practitioners to ask are those that focus on defining the problem and seeking solutions. These include:

- What is the problem?
- Who defines the problem?
- For whom is it a problem?
 - Extent of the problem.
 - Origins of the problem.
 - Dynamics and power relations inherent in the problem.
- What action should be taken to address or resolve the problem?
- How can knowledge and solutions be co-produced with local residents?
- Is (Are) the action(s) proposed feasible?
- How can resilience be enhanced in both the short and long terms?
- How can local partners and agencies for joint working be identified?
- Who is vulnerable in the affected populations and how can they be protected?

Finding the resources necessary for addressing these points can be a complicated, drawn out affair and can rely on coordinating activities that require bringing disputing groups

around the table and finding compromises that will enable action to be taken. Social workers have coordination, mediation and communication skills that they can utilise to make progress in such situations. However, the outcome is never guaranteed.

Appointing the right person to do the job is essential to protecting the vulnerable people that humanitarian aid practitioners will encounter during the course of their work. Their values and ethics are as important as their qualifications, capacity to make professional judgments, knowledge and skills in safeguarding such people. If they are not qualified social workers, those employing relief workers should check out these factors during the recruitment process. Sometimes, practitioners supporting others in disasters are victim-survivors themselves and this has to be taken into account during supervision sessions and in arranging support services for them.

Questions to ask when recruiting practitioners include:

- What motivates you to do this work? Why do you want to be involved?
- What qualifications do you hold for doing this work?
- What agency will you work for? Who will you work with?
- What aid (goods and services) will you deliver?
- How will you assess need? Have you done needs assessments before?
-

Questions for those being considered for deployment include:

- What criteria will be used to determine which goods and/or services will be made available for disaster survivors? Who will decide this?
- What criteria will be utilised to determine who (individuals and groups) will receive these goods and services? Who will make this decision?
- How will these goods and services be delivered?
- How will you ensure that all those entitled to receive goods and services receive these?
- How will you record who receives aid and who does not and when?
- How will you ensure that local people will benefit from your interventions?
- What links does your employing agency have with local agencies?
- What links does your employing agency have with the relevant levels of government in the locality, including at the national level?
- Who determines the policies under which you will operate? Do you know how to pass information on if the policies are not working on the ground?
- To whom are you accountable for your actions?
- What do you understand by ‘practising in an empowering way’? What is the role of local residents in this definition and the methods of working you plan to use?
- Who might become your ally(allies) in getting the work done?
- Do you appreciate and understand the multidimensional, fluid and holistic contexts in which you will be working?
- How prepared are you for working in cultural, socio-economic and political contexts that are different from your own?
- How will you look after yourself and your own needs so that you do not become a drain on local people and local resources?

- Have you prepared yourself and those close to you at home for your period away under what might be extremely difficult conditions?

Principles to Help Practitioners Deliver Humanitarian Aid Responsibly:

Acting ethically. Are you behaving according to the code of professional ethics that applies to you and any additional ones that are relevant to the specific locality?

Causing no harm. Are you harming any person or the environment?

Maintaining confidentiality. What are the limits to confidentiality? Have you explained these to the people you are working with? Confidentiality is important to maintain, and the limits to which this confidentiality exists should be clarified at the outset of an intervention. This makes it *contingent* confidentiality. You will have to report a threat of harm to oneself or others. Thus, it is crucial that you know to whom you should refer such individuals if this situation were to arise.

Actively listening. Do you become drawn into hearing endlessly repeated and detailed minutiae of a particular survivor's experience? When does rehearsing this over and over again reach the point at which repetition can become unhelpful to the recovery process? How can you control such a situation without causing the person to feel hurt or rejected?

Defining those affected as survivors not victims. Do you consider people as survivors, not victims? Can you help them to look for their strengths and reflect upon how they can use local resources to help themselves? Self-help and community resilience are particularly important after you leave.

Using strengths-based approaches. Can you focus on strengths-based approaches that begin by considering the certainties that people already have in the midst of uncertainty and hardship? Can you help build up their confidence from that basis?

Accountability. To whom are you accountable? Who do you tell when things go wrong?

Working in partnerships with local agencies and people. Who will you work with in the locality? Empowering practice in disaster affected communities is translated into effective working in partnership with local agencies and people. If chosen well, these partners and their contacts will facilitate community engagement, promote the development of trust in the relevance of the work, and enhance the external agency's capacity to address cultural and linguistic issues more readily. The external partner will also be able to bring in expertise and access to resources that the local community might not have otherwise been aware of. Maintaining mutuality in the interactions between local and external players facilitates the formation of empowering working relationships.

Devising locality specific, culturally relevant and appropriate responses. Do you have a thorough grounding in and understanding of the local culture, including the religion(s) and language(s) of the people in the locality in which you are situated? Do you understand the local governance structures and the people who carry responsibilities within them? Note that the population is likely to be differentiated according to gender, age, ethnicity, religion, class/caste, social status, ability, and other social divisions that are relevant to that locality. This is likely to have implications for what work you can undertake and how you can carry it out.

Identifying relevant issues. There are a number of issues that need to be addressed. These include understanding the locality, the key actors in the area, the relationships between the diverse members that compose the community and the power relations between them and the resources that are available. Are you aware of these? Have you make contact with the relevant national and local players? Who has been included and who has been left out? Their inclusion or exclusion could become important later and impact upon the work you can do. Action and inaction both carry consequences, some of which will not always be easily foreseen.

Ensuring safety. Disaster survivors will feel vulnerable, unsafe, and uncertain. Are you able to deal with people experiencing these emotions? How can you encourage people to consider the elements which enable them to feel safe? Can you help them feel safe by addressing the issue one step at a time? Safety is a key issue for women and children, including those in camps or making their way to one because they are subjected to sexual harassment and assaults. In some situations, rape and sexually motivated murders become weapons to gain advantage in conflicts. Such attacks are devastating not only for those directly involved, but also for their families and communities that have to deal with the ensuing stigma and shame that follows. Social workers have to address both elements – the physical safety of people including their own; and enabling individuals, families and communities to deal with the hurt, shame and loss of face that accompanies these. Sometimes, the effects of such attacks can last for years and require both individual and collective attention.

Accessing resources. What resources are needed? Do you know what resources are available locally? What resources have to be brought in from outside the locality? Who will help obtain these? Who will receive them? Who will distribute them?

Caring for Oneself. Do you have a support network that you can use to ‘debrief’ yourself either in your locality or in your home-base? Do you have access to good supervision?

Important Concepts in Humanitarian Aid Work: Vulnerability and Resilience

Vulnerability at the interpersonal level is defined as the failure of an individual to respond effectively to events that threaten the stability of their environment (Blaikie et al., 1994). This is a conservative framing of the concept because it:

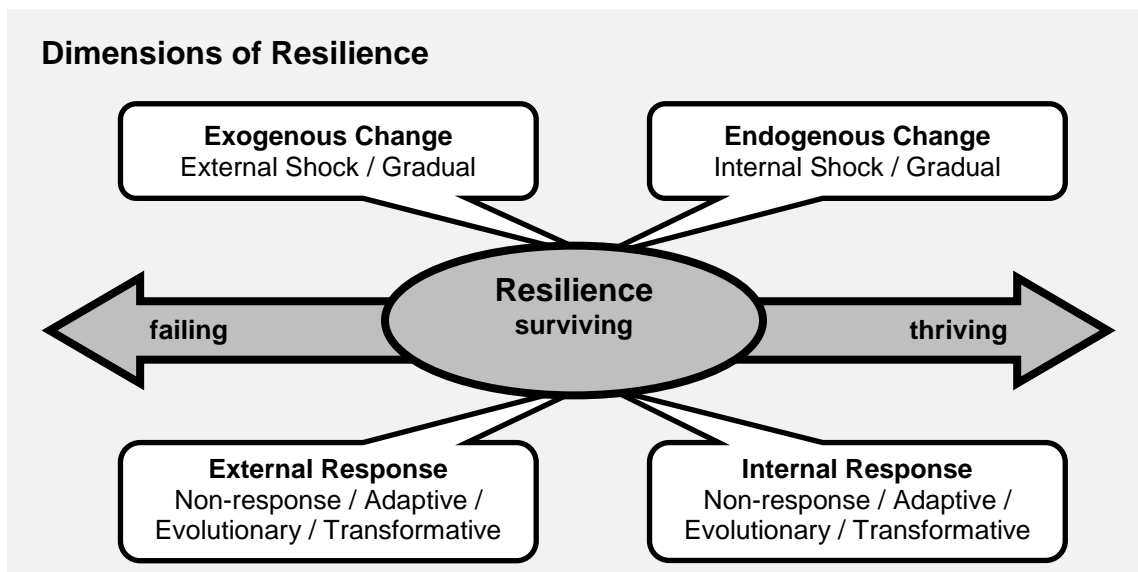
- Assumes social and ecological equilibrium.
- Assumes failure and pathology as prevailing conditions among those to be helped.
- Focuses on the individual’s coping strategies (defined as the ability to adapt to circumstances) without including the contexts in which they live.
- Ignores the significance of structural barriers in responding to challenging environments and their impact on individual vulnerability and capacity to develop resilience.
- Ignores the potential of collective action to address individual, group and community vulnerabilities. Receiving external resources – the appropriate resources, under the appropriate conditions and delivering these to the appropriate people can be crucial to survival during disaster-driven crises.

Resilience is the flip side of vulnerability. The British Cabinet Office defines resilience: ‘as the capacity to reduce the risk from emergencies so that people can go about their business freely and with confidence’.

This definition links resilience to vulnerability and risk without acknowledging structural barriers that can impede its development and ignores existing strengths among those affected. In disaster situations, practitioners delivering aid have to address both personal and structural vulnerabilities if sustainable long-term regeneration is to occur.

Resilience as a concept was imported into community initiatives through social policy. Resilience models developed by experts, particularly those dealing with emergency and disaster responses, often fail to consult with local residents in the affected communities. This approach perpetuates an ‘expert-led’, top-down approach and neglects local knowledges and the significant contributions these can make to understanding disasters and their local impact; developing strategies for resilience; preparing for future disaster eventualities; and evaluating existing mechanisms for engagement, adaptive capacities and action plans. Resilience can be used to shed light on people’s behaviour in specific circumstances, but traditional views of resilience treat people as passive respondents, rather than as active participants in a process to which they can contribute valuable insights, knowledge and skills. Thus, traditional approaches to building resilience promote subject (expert) to object (passive recipient) relationships.

Resilience can be viewed the capacity of systems including people to influence both the environment and their social standing in adapting to changing situations or taking action to improve their condition/status in life. Such capacities can be found all along the resilience spectrum that ranges from failing to thriving, with most people’s capacities focused on surviving. Moreover, resilience is not static, but fluid, operates on multiple dimensions and can change over time so that capacity can be lost as well as enhanced. The chart below attempts to capture some of this complexity (Dominelli, 2012f).



Source: Dominelli (2012) 'Social Work in Times of Disaster' in. M. Kearnes, F. Klauser, and S. Lane (eds), *Critical Risk Research: Practices, Politics and Ethics*. Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 197-218.

Capacity Building

Capacity building is an important element in resilience enhancing strategies because it can help to minimise risk and tackle disasters including transcending poverty. Capacity building is the process of equipping people with the knowledge and skills required to make decisions about their lives, access the resources they need and take action in improving their current position. This may engage them in a process of personal and structural change including lobbying key policymakers, networking and, campaigning to meet their needs, especially if those holding resources do not respond appropriately to these. However, disaster survivors in the IIPP also indicated that moving into direct action can be difficult, especially if they are not already located within existing power structures and networks that are conducive to local or popular challenge; or they want 'Things to return the way they were'. Moreover, in certain cultures, local residents prefer to approach people directly through dialogue rather than through direct action as might be more relevant in other locations. Others might want to join villages that are initially involved in such dialogue later. Additionally, capacity and resilience building strategies can be individual and/or collective.

Capacity building contributes to:

- Improving the quality of life.
- Developing individuals and communities through:
 - skills training,
 - organisational and systems development,
 - participation in decision-making and
 - engaging with powerful others.

Capacity building initiatives are experienced differentially, according to an individual's or a group's social position.



Resilience, locally defined in Sri Lanka

Building resilience capacity can be contested and fraught. To have a greater chance of success in meeting the objective of enhancing resilience, it helps if those responsible:

- Value local people and engage them in identifying the problems and finding the solutions.
- Hold egalitarian values that highlight participation in decision-making so that those affected can 'own' the solutions and become involved in achieving them.

- Have the skills to mobilise communities and engage all members, thereby avoiding people feeling excluded.
- Understand community dynamics and players and the relationships between them, including the power relations expressed through their behaviours.
- Have the skills to form egalitarian partnerships and build alliances that promote egalitarian social justice and environmental sustainability.

Responding to disasters is usually nested in a framework of national, regional and local policies and practices that can enable or hinder communities in adapting to changing circumstances. Their capacity to adapt varies according to:

- Who is defining the problem(s) and the solutions to it (them)?
- What issues are being raised, who is raising them, and who is going to address them and how? Concerns about the social exclusion of particular groups and individuals, and of the power relations between different groups are relevant here.
- What resources are available locally and which need to be brought in from outside the area.

Robust resilience and adaptations are those that highlight both individual and structural strengths and address the barriers that exist at both levels. The capacity to respond to these concerns requires synergy between collective action at the level of the community and political will. Enabling these diverse elements to come together is a task that can be facilitated by practitioners that have community development and social work skills. Understanding the contexts in which practitioners are working and communities are located is crucial to successfully negotiating between those players who hold resources and those who require them.

Engaging Communities

Engaging effectively with people in their communities requires sensitivity, skills, knowledge and becoming accepted by those in a particular locality. Acceptance by and engagement with disaster survivors in community dialogues about the calamities that impact upon their lives is central to the empowering approaches that local aid recipients ask for.

The term community is contested, with the following being typical approaches to it.

- Politicians define community as neighbourliness involving helpful relationships and tend to present it as an idealistic entity that emphasises homogeneity or sameness in identity, language and culture, while downplaying the presence of conflict in communities, often based on differences in identity.
- Academics tend to visualise communities as entities formed on the basis of:
 - Interests;
 - Geography or spatial location; and
 - Identity.

However, in their daily lives, people belong to multiple communities and often see the boundaries between them as fluid even when they identify most strongly with geographic

location or space, particularly if this has traditionally been associated with them and they derive their sense of belonging from it. In the IIPP area, people voiced the view that those who had not been rehoused in their original plot of land would lose touch with their roots, especially if they had children born outside of the area, as would occur with the passage of time. Some IIPP respondents claimed not to have been rehoused at the time of the study - years after the 2004 tsunami.

Empowerment, or building a community's capacity to take its own action is a key ingredient in successfully engaging communities (Dominelli, 2012d). Achieving this requires a lot of hard work and creative thinking. Community empowerment can be facilitated by utilising existing social capital or embarking on its development on the basis of:

- Trust and empathy.
- Reciprocity and mutuality.
- Accountability.
- Solidarity.
- Collective action.
- Power-sharing.
- Resource finding and sharing.
- Linking personal concerns to structural considerations (and the reverse).

Tips that help practitioners working in humanitarian aid areas - although these are particularly important if they are community workers or social workers, include:

- Working holistically.
- Knowing what tasks you are expected to undertake.
- Developing co-ordinated agency responses.
- Learning how your employing agency is organised, who its personnel are, what they do and the nature of their relationship to you and your work.
- Regularly checking out what you are doing, how well you are doing it and what else you need to do. Include service users and local residents in such evaluations.
- Taking time to listen, speak clearly and calmly.
- Addressing issues as they arise.
- Constantly questioning who is benefitting from the aid or resources being (re)distributed.
- Asking for help when you need it.
- Taking care of yourself to avoid burnout.

In their relationship with a local community, humanitarian aid practitioners should also:

- Acknowledge and build on community and individual strengths.
- Give people space to do what is important to them, including celebrations and festivities that draw on local rituals. These are important in coping with grief and loss.

Guidelines for Engaging Communities

There ought to be no limits to their involvement other than those that they define provided that the principle of causing no harm to themselves or others is upheld. Some of the areas that they have identified as those to explore together are:

- Considering existing scientific knowledge about particular disasters with them.

- Exploring preventative strategies and mechanisms for minimising hazards and risks around both primary and secondary hazards (avoiding secondary hazards are often more important to their daily functioning).
- Engaging local residents through participative methodologies.
- Facilitating community ownership of emergency plans and responses.
- Identifying lessons to be learnt from community responses to disasters, both local and overseas.
- Working with a range of actors – local, national and international.
- Examining the impact of delivering humanitarian aid on local communities, including the creation of refugees who come to camps that distribute aid.
- Coproducing solutions to the problems that local residents identify.

Linking up with local agencies already involved in a locality is crucial to delivering aid that meets local needs and has legitimacy amongst local people. Establishing links between local (or internal) organisations and external (or overseas) ones is not easy and requires sensitive handling. The following questions can help you in the process of identifying the relevant ones:

- What local agency/ies operate in the locality?
- What does each agency do?
- How is each agency formally structured?
- Who are the leaders in each agency? How can you meet them? Can you work with them?
- What resources does each agency have?
- What activities/services does each agency provide?
- What reputation does each agency have in the community? Are local people willing to work with each of them?
- What is the source of each agency's legitimacy?
- What are the future plans of each agency?

Besides identifying those agencies that you think it is appropriate to work with, assess how these bodies might be involved in other initiatives that you might organise, especially if they are aimed at enhancing community well-being and will remain in the locality for the longer-term goal of post-disaster reconstruction. Alongside these considerations, also evaluate an organisation's involvement with the community generally, including finding out what motivates its involvement and how local residents perceive it and feel about its interventions or presence in their community.

Guidance for Developing and Using a Community Profile

Research is needed to collect the information necessary to develop a community profile. However, information can be obtained formally and informally from local residents, through participative methodologies including ethnographic methods like participative mapping that involves a process whereby residents are enabled to add their information to maps that experts provide to produce a combination of expert-led and local data.

Collecting information can be formal e.g., a survey, or informal, e.g., impressionistic hunches. This information has to be collected, stored, disseminated, and used to plan action. It also has to be updated regularly and be user-friendly. This can mean having different outputs for different audiences depending on their literacy levels and skills in using the new information technologies and other media for communication.

Information Collection

Information may be collected in a variety of ways and can include the following:

Impressionistic Enquiry

This is most useful for those intervening in communities if they want to easily and quickly obtain a general impression of the community. It is the cheapest method of information collection and draws on local people's, especially women's, capacities to network and connect with others through their everyday routines. This method is ethnographic and largely informal. It relies on practitioners talking to, listening to and observing community residents, groups or organisations with which they interact. At this point, those seeking to engage communities are 'sussing out' the community, getting to know it and trying to establish a relationship of trust with residents. The community is simultaneously becoming informed about them. This interaction, if effective, becomes a way of the humanitarian aid practitioner becoming embedded in a community, and is relationship based. *Relationship building* is a key element in interventions that aim to build resilience. The main drawbacks of this method are:

- If the practitioner is not from the area, i.e., an 'outsider', the worker is dependent on information that people will reveal to an 'outsider'.
- If the practitioner is an 'insider', people may assume that the worker knows all there is to know about the community and so leave information out, making asking probing questions respectfully a useful skill to have in these circumstances.
- The practitioner's skills and powers of observation are essential in obtaining information and avoiding the introduction of bias by ignoring important subtleties in the data collected.

Formal Sources of Information

Formal sources of information are extremely important in checking out hypotheses gained impressionistically and acquiring data that will withstand scrutiny. Having accurate, up-to-date information about a community is essential in formulating action plans that aim to develop resilience that enhances existing strengths in individuals and communities and promotes their well-being. Some formal sources may require technical knowledge or research skills to utilise them effectively, e.g., understanding and using official databases collected for other purposes, e.g., a census; collecting primary data and knowing which research methods are best suited to answering particular questions. If engaging a community in a non-tokenistic manner to collect and process information, it is useful to engage them in designing the research questions, collecting and analysing data, and disseminating data. Engaging local residents in such activities is part of the coproduction of knowledge process and may require the practitioners either to know

research methods or engage researchers who do so that those residents who are interested can be taught the relevant skills that would enable them to participate meaningfully in collecting and using research data.

Local Sources

- Libraries, including archives
- Key informants
- Local groups and organisations, including faith-based bodies and civil society organisations.
- Local newspapers

National Sources

- National statistical agencies and government reports including census data
- Company reports
- Town plans

Others

- Internet
- Company websites
- Community websites

Information that is collected can then be used throughout the cycle of interventions that occur in disaster situations.

COMPILING A COMMUNITY PROFILE

A community profile provides baseline data for action to enhance the well-being of all people living in a community through the compilation of a *comprehensive* picture of that community. These data also allow those working in a community to reflect upon its make-up, strengths and weaknesses. Once the data are collected, the ensuing community profile may be presented in paper or audio-visual format, e.g., a map, project website (Dominelli, 2006). Having a detailed community profile can facilitate community engagement. A community profile aims to:

- Identify community needs, resources and actors (including organisations and institutional structures).
- Enable people to move from ‘despair to hope’.
- Identify and assess a community’s capacities and social networks.

Preparing for data collection

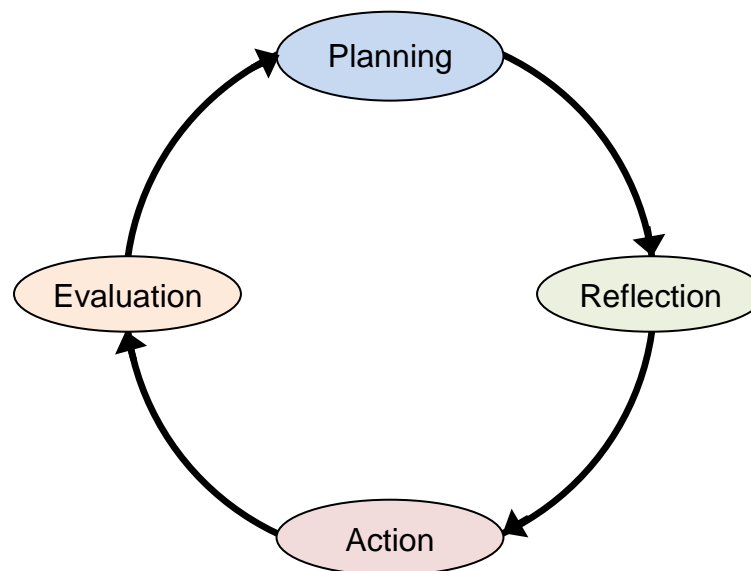
In collecting data, it helps to adopt a *Cycle of Reflection, Action, Reflection (RAR Cycle)*; and asking questions constantly. The RAR Cycle is depicted in the chart below. Some important ones include:

- Does one transition lead to another transition when the world of disaster survivors is dynamic and constantly changing, especially after a catastrophe?

- Is transitioning always unfinished business, especially for particularly vulnerable groups or individuals?

The RAR Cycle is useful for those working in communities and wishing to engage people in determining their futures in a non-tokenistic way. Having a detailed, well-informed profile of a community, however defined, is critical to the RAR process.

Chart: Cycle of Reflection, Action and Reflection in Disaster Situations



A comprehensive community profile is structured around the following key areas:

- Description of the locality, its people, power structures and resources.
- Aims and objectives of the residents and other community players that are working together.
- Organisations undertaking activities in the community:
 - Who is involved and what activities does each organisation pursue?
 - What are the strengths and limitations of each organisation (preliminary and later analyses)?
- What else could be done to support community activities?
 - Locally, nationally and internationally?
- What theories are useful in analysing the disaster situation and in building a ‘snapshot’ of the community? How can you ensure that you do not ignore the complex relationships in a community when taking a ‘snapshot’?
- What future action(s) are being proposed?
- Evaluation – as a constant process, not a one-off event.

Questions that can help compile a community profile include:

- Where is the specific community in question physically located?
- What general description would you give this locale (include the ‘feel’ of an area, general appearance and environment)?
- What groups/categories of people live there and how many are there in each group/category?
- Who are the major players (institutions, agencies, people) there?
- What formal and informal networks function in the area?
- What industries, enterprises, factories, offices, workplaces are there and where are they located?
- What shopping facilities exist and where are these located?
- What recreational or leisure facilities are there and where are they located?
- How is land used (include recreational land)?
- What major roads and natural barriers divide the area?
- Where are the public utilities located and what state are they in?
- Are there any early warning systems and emergency shelters in place? Where are they located? Are the shelters easily accessible by disaster survivors?
- What economic and other resources are available?
- What primary and secondary hazards do local people identify? How well-prepared are they to address these (resilience capacity)? Who helps them in their preparation? What do they expect to happen were an emergency situation to arise? How well do they think that their community or themselves personally could cope on their own if such a situation were to occur? For how long could they look after themselves? What would they do? What else would they need?
- Do they already have links to people and organisations outside the area that they could call upon for help? If they do, who are they? Where are they located? Would it be easy to contact them during a disaster and when or at what point? How would they contact these sources of potential support? Would they still be able to call for assistance if the power lines and communication systems are cut?
- What alliances and networks do the disaster survivors have already? How could these be strengthened? If they have none, what ideas do they have for how they might begin to form these and who could help them achieve this goal?

A community profile, therefore, comprises of a holistic picture of a community that provides baseline data for action that enhances individual and community well-being and highlights:

- key relationships in a community, who is involved in them and their reach.
- assessing community needs, including all groups in the identification and assessment process to ensure that the community as a whole owns a particular action plan, will carry it out and benefits from it.
- organisational, material, human and other resources in the community that are available or missing formally and informally to meet identified needs.
- potential allies.
- data for use in action that enhances the well-being of children, women and men and their physical environments.

Collecting information about communities can also serve other purposes that are important to for community activists or external professionals concerned with engaging communities. These include:

- Becoming accepted by a community and being able to work as an organiser within it. Developing relationships of trust are important in acquiring this status and is not easy to achieve.
- Understanding a community and how it perceives its place within the nation-state and the wider world.
- Becoming involved in organising a community and mobilising its resources when such assistance is required.
- Engaging in action in a community alongside trusted community activists.

To summarise, a community profile is used to:

- provide information about a community, including its resource base.
- organise people to change their community so that it better meets their needs.
- redistribute power and resources in more egalitarian directions.
- develop action plan(s).
- identify and find allies.
- change people's collective situation.

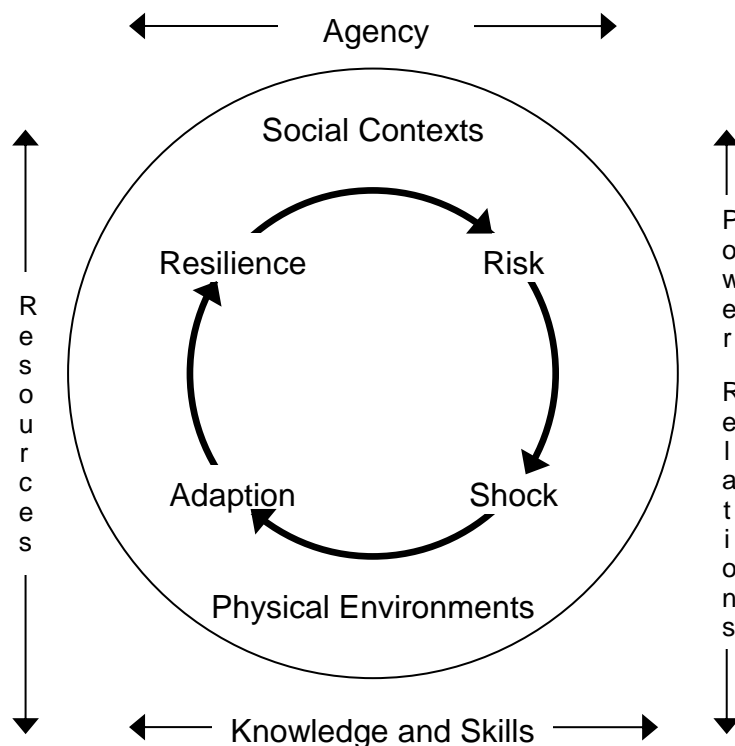
Finding allies

Forming alliances can be important in securing support and/or facilitating action that cannot be undertaken by local residents for safety or other reasons. Alliances could be made within a village or nearby city, region; and internationally through international civil society organisations or NGOs, e.g., the Red Cross, Oxfam, Save the Children. Some large NGOs have local branches as well as overseas ones. For social workers, the IASSW (International Association of Schools of Social Work), IFSW (International Federation of Social Workers), and ICSW (International Council for Social Welfare) can help through their disaster intervention committees which have been formed recently and have now become part of their *Global Agenda*. For example, it might be worth creating partnerships between people in non-affected areas and areas likely to be affected by disasters prior to the event occurring as suggested by RIPL (Reconstructing Peoples' Lives after Disasters) initiated by IASSW (Dominelli, 2013). In situations where safety matters in obtaining sensitive information, an external organisation could more easily find out the name of a multinational company that is causing harm to the environment or vulnerable populations; disrupting community arrangements, especially if it involves land purchases that are against the wishes of local residents; making profits by undermining the health of local residents; and subjecting them to rates of pay that are insufficient to raise families at a decent standard of living. Developing action plans can be facilitated by using research and theories that are appropriate for the task. Theories that are relevant to community engagement are: group work; community development; psychological theories; human development; empowerment theories; theories about power relations; theories of globalisation; environmental theories; social constructionism; alternative theories for longer term engagement; and structural social development theories.

Structuring the Data Collection Process

The data to be collected is to be used to inform interventions and assist local communities and the humanitarian aid practitioners to make evidence-based decisions that will develop resilience and strengthen communities. Interventions during a disaster tend to follow a cycle of reflection and action that is contextualised and responsive to particular risks and shocks. This process is depicted in the chart below:

Chart: Cycle of Interventions during Disasters



Source: Adapted from Dominelli, L (2013) 'Environmental Justice at the Heart of Social Work Practice: Greening the Profession' in the *International Journal of Social Welfare*.

Questions to be asked in collecting the relevant data include:

Physical and Environmental Description of the Area

- Where is the community physically located?
- How many people live there?

- What general description would you give it (include the ‘feel’ of an area, general appearance and environment including the presence of shanty towns or slums)?
- What industries, enterprises, factories, offices, workplaces are there and where are they located?
- What shopping facilities are there and where are they located?
- What recreational or leisure facilities are there and where are they located?
- How is land used (include recreational land)?
- What major roads and natural barriers divide the area, e.g., rivers, major roads,?
- Are there empty properties in the area?
 - Where are these located?
 - Who owns them?
 - Are there people living in allegedly empty properties?
 - If yes, who are they?
 - How many people are in them?
- What types of housing are there?
 - According to tenure
 - Social housing tenant
 - Housing association
 - Private tenant
 - Owner occupier
 - Homeless
- What is the distribution of housing according to social divisions?
 - Class
 - ‘Race’
 - Ethnicity
 - Gender
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Sexual orientation (if appropriate)
- What type of housing construction is there?
 - House with gardens
 - Detached houses
 - Semi-detached houses
 - Terraced houses
 - Town houses
 - Maisonettes
 - Huts
 - Houses without gardens
 - Detached houses
 - Semi-detached houses
 - Terraced houses
 - Maisonettes
 - Huts
 - Low rise flats
 - Tower blocks
 - Communal living arrangements

Sheltered housing
Temporary housing
Slums or shanty towns
None

- Where is each type of housing located?
- What amenities do the different types of houses have? Who else accesses them?
- Is there overcrowding in these houses? If yes, which ones and where are they located?
- What community halls, churches, mosques, temples, social clubs and other social buildings are there?
- What statutory services are found in the area and where are they located?
 - Government offices
 - Health services
 - Education facilities
 - Personal social services
 - Housing
 - Police
- Are there shelters to go to during emergencies? Where are they located? How easy are they to access? What can you take with you should you need to go there? Who will help you get there? Who will be running the shelter? How can you prepare yourself beforehand for a stay there?
- What transportation networks (sea, land, rail, air) are there?
 - What is the frequency of these services?
 - How much do these services cost?
 - What is the quality of these services?
 - Who uses these services?
- What public utilities, power supplies and communication networks exist in the area?
 - Where are they located?
 - Who owns them?
- What (current and future) plans does the local authority have for the area?
 - Zoning changes
 - New developments, especially in housing, road and other infrastructural construction including airports and telecommunications, and commercial ventures including business parks

Demographic Description of the area

- What is the gender distribution of the population and what roles does each gender play in the area's social, political, economic and community existence?
- What is its ethnic distribution and what roles does each ethnic grouping play in the area's social, political, economic and community existence?
- What is its age distribution?
- What is the income distribution of residents (include inheritances, income support, pensions, unemployment benefits, disability allowances, wages)?
- What occupations do its residents follow?
- How many multi-family household/single parent household dwellings are there?

- What religious practices/faiths are observed by its residents?
- Where are faith-based facilities located?
- What are the ‘travel-to-work journey distances (local working or commuting)?
- How do people use their leisure time? What hobbies do they have? What facilities can they access?
- What social networks do individuals and families have (include family, neighbours and others in networks locally, within the country and overseas)?



Economic Description

- Who are the employers in the area?
 - Where do they live?
 - Where are their company headquarters located?
 - What life-styles do they have?
- How many people are self-employed and/or employed by others?
 - If self-employed, what type of businesses do they have, e.g., agricultural, handicraft, retail and catering?
- If they employ others, how many employees does each employer have?
 - Are the employees organised in faith organisations, trade unions, company associations, or unorganised?
 - What are the employers’ attitudes to the organisations that are present?
- Are the employers making a profit?
- What plans do the employers have for remaining in the area?
 - What attracted them to the area in the first instance (e.g., land of their ancestors, subsidies, available labour, cheap land, cheap premises, unprotected and deregulated labour, government subsidies)?
- What future plans for developing the local economy are there in the public or state, commercial, self-employed, voluntary and domestic sectors?
- Are new employers coming into the area?
 - Which ones?
 - Where?
 - How many jobs do they offer and how many are taken up by local people?

- Where do these employers come from (they often disinvest in other deprived areas to go to one which offers more profit-making incentives including public subsidies and cheap labour, especially if unorganised)?
- What do local representatives, government officers and local residents think of these developments?
- Can local government and the central state take a more interventionist role in promoting the community's future well-being including its employment prospects?
 - At what points?
 - For what purposes?
 - How?
 - Who will it involve in these activities? Who will it include/exclude and why?

Political Description

- Which political parties/organisations are involved in the community?
 - Who are members of these bodies and how many of them are there?
 - How does each of these parties' involvement in this community compare to their involvement in other parts of the village/city/country?
 - What have they done (not done) for the community, when and why?
 - What else should be done for the community? Who should do it and why?
- What resources do these political parties and organisations have?
- What is the relationship between these organisations and residents like (include their power base and number of supporters they have)?
 - Do they have links to the military, the police or other state organs?
 - How can you gain their support for your group's activities?
- Which NGOs, civil society organisations, faith organisations, business associations and trade unions are active in the area, how does each of these involve the community and engage with it?
 - What resources do they have at their disposal?
 - Are these available to the community?
 - How can you gain their support for your group's activities?
- Which community groups and organisations are there?
 - How many people does each of these contain?
 - What policies does each of them have?
 - What campaigns have they had?
 - Who leads them or organises their activities?
 - What resources do they hold? Are these sufficient? Can they get more? Where?
 - How can you gain their support for your group's activities?
- Which organisations, campaigns and networks can you identify that are particularly concerned with supporting women and families?
 - What resources do they have available?
 - Are there any specific services earmarked for women?
 - How can you gain their support for your group's activities?

Informal Resources

- Who is looked up to for advice/opinion formation?
- What is their power base and its extent (it may be formal or informal)?

- What views do they hold strongly?
- Who is the neighbourhood ‘gossip’ and why?
- Who is the neighbourhood ‘scapegoat’ and why?
- What voluntary agencies are there, e.g., churches, mosques, temples, charities?
- What specialist groups are there, e.g., groups for elders, single parents, disabled people, and unemployed people?
 - Who runs these groups?
 - What resources do they have?
 - What activities do they support?
 - Who are their supporters?
 - What views or opinions do they endorse?
 - How easy is it for new members to join these groups?
 - How can you gain their support for your group’s activities?
- What informal helping networks exist, e.g., older people, sick people, children?
 - Are these individually-run or group-run networks?
 - Who does the helping?
 - Who runs the groups?
 - Which groups of residents do they help?
 - How do they help these groups?
 - Where to the helpers and the people they help live?
 - What occupations do they follow?
 - What are their demographic characteristics, e.g., age, gender, ethnicity?
- What formal structures and forms of caring services are there in these networks?

Setting up, Organising and Running Community Facilities or Groups

Collecting data in a community profile enables the practitioner to become familiar with various players in the community and to be known by them. This facilitates moving to the action stage of jointly formulating action plans and could revolve around setting up facilities and/or groups that local residents want. The major questions to be asked are similar whether establishing a group or a facility:

- What kind of facility/group is needed?
- What are the aims of the facility/group?
 - What do practitioners hope to achieve?
 - What do users want to achieve?
 - Developing confidence and self-esteem.
 - Promoting assertive skills amongst marginalised groups including women and affirming their capacity to uphold their rights.
 - Developing services to meet the needs of diverse groups of people, especially women, e.g., minority ethnic women, older women, disabled women, mentally ill women.
 - What does the group running a facility hope to achieve in its interaction with others?
 - What methods can it use to get its messages across?
 - Can it use consciousness-raising, political education and animation techniques to bring about change in attitudes and behaviour towards

marginalised groups including women whether as aid workers or aid recipients, so that their dignity and worth are upheld?

- How will the group or facility be run? How will roles be allocated within the group and when and how will these change, e.g., having a rotating chair so that all group members can learn the skills of running a group or facility.
- Who will make decisions in the group or facility and how will these be made?
 - Distinguish between collective and individual ways of making decisions.
 - Develop ways of addressing hierarchies and promoting equality.
 - Endorse democratic decision-making and consensus building.
 - Adopt policies that do not discriminate against marginalised groups, especially women, e.g., black women, lesbian women, older women, disabled women, mentally ill women
- Keep records of the facility's activities, resources, funds, expenditures.
- What facilities, if any, will be available and are any aimed specifically at women? This is likely to be more important in some cultures and amongst some populations than others.
- Where will these facilities be located? Is the location safe, especially for women and children?
- Who will have access to the facility?
 - Consider access by service users, workers and those they invite including family, friends and neighbours.
 - Ensure the safety and protection of the service users and workers (very important if the facility is a refuge). In a women-only refuge, the issue of access (or not) by men has to be considered carefully.
 - If it is a women's refuge, what attitudes and policies will the facility adopt towards male visitors? For example, excluding violent partners from refuges may be necessary to protect women from further assaults, but it may conflict with women's wish to develop future relationships with them, or enable their children to do so.
 - Ensure that the facility is accessible to women with disabilities, that it meets fire, building, health, safety and other regulations.
 - Ensure that those using the facilities relate to other service users in empowering, respectful ways.
- Who will be the users of the facility?
 - How will they find out about the facility?
 - Will they self-refer or be referred by others?
 - How will they be involved in running the facility?
- What skills sharing workshops, formal advice services, professional services, and educative functions will the facility offer users?
 - What support services will the facility offer women?
 - Consider child-minding provisions, recreational services, meeting rooms, and privacy within the facility.
 - What training facilities, housing, employment and other services will women without financial or other material resources require that may have to be provided by others outside the facility?
 - What resources are needed for these training facilities?

Who will provide these?

How will these be accessed?

Who will pay for the training and services users to enrol and attend?

- How will the facility be funded, repaired and maintained?
- What relationships will the facility develop with other agencies in the voluntary, state and commercial sectors?
- What supports does the group expect from the public?
 - What target groups does your group intend to reach?
 - Can you identify women and men who are sympathetic to your cause?
 - What political organisations and parties will support your group's activities?
Make sure that you include women's sections, women's groups, feminist and non-feminist community groups, labour organisations, environmental groups.
Women can share the experiences of the group in setting up the facility with other groups and allies.
- Can you ensure that relationships with supporters do not endanger egalitarian group processes and dynamics in the facility by not ceding control of the action to those interested in subverting its aims?
- What methods will you use to reach the public, e.g., leafleting, commercial, newspapers, public meetings, video, established media coverage (television, radio), articles, lectures, the internet, demonstrations, lobbying, squatting and occupations?
- How will you maintain group morale? This has to be considered over both the short and the medium terms.



Communication Resources:

Leaflets

These can be an inexpensive way of communicating with community groups and residents. Guidelines include:

- *Being informative.* Decide on the issue to be addressed, what the group wants to say about it and to whom it should be said. Leaflets should provide people with the following information:

- What is happening?
- Who is doing it?
- Where is it happening?
- Why is it happening?
- When is it happening?
- *Getting the 'facts' right.* Accuracy in the information released is essential if the group is not to lose credibility.
- *Making the leaflet interesting.* The leaflet should attract readers through its presentation as well as by what it says on specific issues. It should use several techniques in its layout to provide variety. It should be easily recognisable as standing for the group. An attractive symbol, memorable abbreviation or catchy name can imprint its particular message in readers' minds. Headings can highlight key points or signal transitions between one message or activity and others. Cartoons and pictures can present the group's message more graphically. In disaster situations, the message should not alarm people, even if encouraging them to take action.
- *Producing the leaflet.* Make a mock-up of the leaflet. This gives the group the opportunity to see how it looks and reads. It can also help spot errors before printing. Commercial printing can be an expensive process. Choose a method which is appropriate to the group's budget. Offset litho may look very professional, but can the group handle the costs? If a computer is available, can the leaflet be published on that? Photocopying is cheaper, but equipment for good copy may be expensive. Investigate the different options available for printing before committing to a particular method. This is highly relevant in a context of desktop publishing and computerised technologies that make previously complex and expensive printing functions available to small groups that have access to computers and desktop publishing software (CWIT, 2005).
- *Distributing the leaflet.* Distributing leaflets can be expensive unless done by volunteers. The group needs to decide who is to receive them and whether there will be a charge. Women's and low-income people's limited access to financial resources could be decisive in this decision. Considerations will be affected by the audience, its relationship to the group, and group's resources. People distributing the leaflet should be familiar with its contents and be prepared to answer questions about its contents.
- *Having a contact person.* The leaflet should have the name, address and phone number of someone who is available to answer questions about the group and its position on a given matter. In some countries, e.g., Britain, the name and address of the person(s) or organisation(s) printing and publishing the leaflet is also a legal requirement.
- *Taking heed of libel and copyright laws.* The laws against slandering individuals apply to leaflets as to any other medium of communication. Make sure that these are not infringed. Getting the facts about any issue correct is invaluable in keeping the group out of the courts and maintaining its credibility. Ensure that you also have access to legal advice should you require it. This can be to guide you in what to avoid as well as to support you in case of litigation.

Community Newspaper/Bulletin

A community newspaper is an effective medium of communicating with people who have time to read and the skills for doing so. It may be necessary to think of other verbal and visual means of communication so that you cater for all groups in the population.

Important questions to consider include:

- Who will read the community newspaper/bulletin?
- Who will produce the newspaper and what role will each participant play?
- How will the newspaper be produced?
 - Collectively or hierarchically under an editor?
- On what basis will the contents of the paper be decided?
- How often will the paper be printed?
- How will the paper be financed?
- Will there be a charge for the paper? If yes, how much (think of the implications of charging for accessibility for women and others on low incomes)?
- How will the newspaper be distributed? By whom (paid or unpaid workers)?
- How will women's involvement in producing the newspaper be encouraged and maintained?
- Technical decisions
 - What format will it have?
 - How will headings be used?
 - How will the front page be laid out?
 - What layout will be used?
 - What size of paper will be used?
 - How many pages will the newspaper have?
 - Will the paper contain photographs?
 - Will the paper use cartoons?
 - How will the paper be produced (offset litho, photocopying, desktop publishing, other options)?
- How will tasks be allocated?
- What premises will be required to produce the paper?
- Provide the publisher's and printer's address on the newspaper.
- Beware of:
 - Libellous statements
 - Inaccurate facts
 - Copyright regulations

Handling the Media

Learning how to interact with the media is an important communication skill. Doing so effectively requires training, preparation and practice. Practice can be undertaken within the group through role-play or videoing a mock version of the media session/interview.

Points to cover include:

- What is considered 'newsworthy'?
 - Conflict.
 - Hardship and danger to the community.
 - Public scandal.
 - Unusualness.

- Individualism.

Disasters are newsworthy and can involve survivors in giving interviews which are distasteful to them, and they may need your support in telling the media that will assemble and demand a story to leave them alone.

- How does ‘newsworthiness’ affect the media’s response to your cause?
 - Does it assist in conveying the group’s message or hinder it?
- Press Officer to handle publicity:
 - Rotate the role to enable all those involved to acquire the skills of the post.
 - Has the press officer been given clear guidelines on what to say about a particular campaign or action?
 - How does the group decide on its spokesperson for each occasion?
- Preparation (before interview/appearing on radio or TV):
 - Collect and verify all the information needed and that which has been used.
 - Role-playing the interview with group members.
 - Is the timing of the interview suitable?
 - How will the group’s or spokesperson’s arrival at the interview be handled?
 - Make a note of the main points the group wishes to discuss.
 - Assess whether or not the reporter or interviewer will be sympathetic and how his/her hostility might be handled.
 - Ways of handling a reporter’s hostility:
 - Refusing the interview (the group loses a chance to present its case).
 - Putting conditions on the interview and on how the information is going to be released (this keeps the initiative with the group).
 - Looking for other publicity (finding a sympathetic source).
- During the interview, consider the following points:
 - How do you maintain the initiative or control the direction of the interview?
 - Define which questions you are not prepared to answer beforehand and have your reasons for doing so available for presentation, e.g., protecting a vulnerable person’s identity; secrecy (relevant in protecting the group’s action); accountability to your group (you are responsible to it for both your views and your behaviour); and bad taste (something being offensive or degrading).
 - Consider how the information you give might be used. Explain why you will not comment if this is the case. Be positive in your approach and statements. Be professionally friendly when refusing to comment (this may be difficult).
 - Beware of long questions which ‘summarise’ your position and require only a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer. These are likely to distort your group’s position.
 - Don’t be pushed into giving answers to impromptu questions, particularly on the phone, unless you are certain of the answer.
 - Ask the reporter to call back later if necessary. Otherwise, you may reveal more information than your group intended you to give.
- Comments given ‘Off the Record’:
 - Such comments make reporters suspicious about what it is you are trying to hide, or may be taken out of context and misquoted, so avoid making them.
- If after giving an interview, you remember something else you want to say, go back to the reporter and tell him/her about it.

- Make a note of the main points of your conversation with the reporter afterwards. You may need it to check the article before/when it appears. Ask for a copy of the interview and for the right to amend it (it may not be given to you).
- Follow up after the interview:
 - Check what the reporter says about your case.
 - Ask for the right to reply if you feel your case is wrongly presented (Agree this before the interview takes place).
 - Check out the reactions of readers/supporters of the article(s) if possible.
- Don't go for publicity just for the sake of it. Use publicity to promote your case, not to detract from it.
- Ways of attracting publicity:
 - Press release.
 - Letters to the editor.
 - Feature articles.
 - Taking action.

Press Release

A press release is determined by the group - what it contains, who it will be distributed to, what it intends to achieve and when it will go out are under the group's control.

- *Purpose.* What is the purpose of your press release?
 - Background information.
 - Notice of event.
 - Report of meeting/event.
 - Details for an interview.
 - Basis for an interview.
- *Newsworthiness.* Is what you have to say 'newsworthy'?
- *Style.* Is your style suitable for the task?
 - Use short, simple sentences.
 - Concentrate on facts.
 - Use quotes from individuals involved in the campaign or work.
- *Essential information.* Your information should cover the following questions:
 - What is happening?
 - Who is doing it?
 - Where is it happening?
 - When is it happening?
 - Why is it happening?
- *Length.* Presentation and impact are affected by the length of the press release:
 - Try to stick to one sheet of paper.
 - If possible, use headed paper. Have the organisation's name on top of the page.
 - Give prominence to important aspects of what you are trying to say.
- *Release.* Give the *date* of release clearly.
- *Embargo.* Give the *date* that the story can be published if you wish the information to be held back until a particular date and time:
 - Avoid having an embargo wherever possible. It is preferable for you to release the information later instead.

- *Headlines.* Use headlines in presenting your information; keep them short and simple.
- *First Paragraph.* The first paragraph of your press release is crucial. It should:
 - attract the reader's attention.
 - keep the reader's attention and interest in what the group is saying.
 - set the tone of the release and be differentiated from the paragraphs that follow.
- *Typing.* Press releases should be typed wherever possible. It makes for easier reading and is more likely to be read.
- *End of the Press Release.* The end of the press release should be clearly marked, 'ENDS'.
- *Contact person.* The name, address, phone and fax number and email address of the contact person should be provided at the end of the press release.
- *Photographs.* Give details of whether or not photographs are available and if they can be used by the press.

Website

A website is a good medium for communication and it can have a global reach. To have a high impact, it needs to look attractive, be clear and easy to use. A website has to be maintained and regularly updated and can be costly. Questions to consider are:

- What do you want to communicate?
- Who is your audience?
- What facilities and information will you want on your website?
- How can you make your website user-friendly?
- How will your website be regularly updated and maintained? Who will do this work? How much will it cost? How will you acquire the necessary resources?
- What guidelines will you have for users to follow so that they can be ethical about what goes on the website? How will this be monitored and by whom?

This section is adapted from Dominelli, L (2006) *Women and Community Action*. Bristol: Policy Press. Second Edition; and ESRC funded Project, Internationalising Institutional and Professional Practices.



Guidelines for Researchers

Research is an important part of the policy-making process and improving practice. However, research does not occur ‘out there’ in a vacuum, but within socio-economic, political and cultural contexts. These must be understood and their implications for the conduct of the research considered carefully. The researcher’s values are an important part of the research design in that these will guide the conduct of the research and also the researcher’s relationships with local residents, policy-makers and practitioners. The following values are important in empowering research:

- Human dignity.
- Grassroots determined action plan(s).
- Community empowerment.
- Social justice and human rights.
- Respect for local people, their autonomy and cultures.
- Being open to having one’s assumptions challenged, but also reflecting critically on what others have said and done.
- Acknowledging and building on strengths, especially amongst marginalised groups.
- Giving people space to do what is important to them, including celebrations and festivities that draw on local rituals that enable them to cope with grief and loss.



Policy and practice should draw on research findings to ensure that they are more robust and relevant to the needs identified by local people. To collect the best possible data, research should be seen as an on-going process of reflection, data collection, analysis and evaluation of the actions undertaken and ensuing outcomes, as suggested in the RAR Cycle. Researchers should, wherever possible, engage with policymakers, practitioners and local residents and involve them in shaping the research questions, designing the research, collecting and analysing the data, and disseminating the findings. Inclusivity in research gives powerful data and empowers local residents in collecting their own information and linking what they know to the actions they wish to take and whom they want to influence. They may need training to engage in participative research methodologies such as action research and the researchers should provide this.

Researchers are responsible for ensuring that:

- an appropriate method is chosen (the methods used should be appropriate for the research questions being asked).
- the strengths and weaknesses of the data collection method chosen are clear.
- data collection is systematic and rigorous.
- user-friendly systems are used to record, compile, store and retrieve data.

- community contexts and power dynamics are understood.
- local community/service users are involved in collecting data that evaluates the impact of policies on their lives and how they may effect change, especially that which will improve their communities and enhance their resilience.
- community residents participate in policy formulation forums and practice discussions and that their contributions are based on evidence that has been tested against both research findings and their own experiences.

Research topics can be formulated by the researchers, policymakers, practitioners or local residents or any permutation of these groups. Research involving local residents is more likely to gain their support and achieve longer-lasting results in creating services, improving the quality of their lives. The topics that can be chosen are legion. A few that can be considered relevant in disaster-prone areas that have to be tailored to specific locales, the people residing in them and cultural relevance are:

- *Resilience*. How is this defined by the different players in community relationships and the dynamics these encompass? Is resilience more than the ability to cope or adapt to change in responding to disasters and enhancing the quality of their lives? How important is enhancing resilience to effective responses by humanitarian aid practitioners including social workers in disaster situations? What research methods can best answer such questions?
- *Working with people's existing strengths*. Does working from a strengths-based perspective enhance people's coping capacities in the immediate aftermath of a disaster and in the longer-term, especially in creating employment opportunities for those that want them and in rebuilding the built infrastructures in low income communities? What research methods are suited for answering these questions? What links need to be established between the physical and social scientists for these questions to be answered effectively?
- *Capacity building*. Does capacity building enhance existing resilience in a community? How can community-based research involving local residents identify strengths to enhance resilience and mitigate weaknesses? What barriers would have to be tackled to ensure that the research is coproduced?

Research Process

Having an empowering research process is crucial to engaging community members in non-tokenistic ways. Achieving this requires paying careful attention to the following:

- Choosing research methods that encourage participation amongst local residents.
- Involving local residents throughout the research process, from the defining of the research questions to disseminating the findings, wherever possible.
- Using participatory research methods that are suitable for the research questions that are being asked.
- Contacting local people, working with them on the basis of 'causing no harm' and helping them to become empowered throughout the research process and use the findings to enable them to take control of their lives.
- Ensuring cultural appropriateness and responding to language issues.
- Translating scientific knowledge into knowledge that can be used by lay audiences.

- Developing local knowledge and influencing physical science questions with local peoples' involvement and concerns and drawing upon their experiential and historical knowledge.
- Recruiting, training, supporting, managing and supervising the local research associate(s).
- Ensuring the optimal use of resources.
- Obtaining support of high level officials and decision-makers at all levels in obtaining permission to do the research and facilitate access to it, if needed.
- Contacting local practitioners including social workers, teachers, health professionals, local policymakers and local academics and encouraging them to become involved in the research.
- Contacting local and regional level officials and elected representatives of the local and regional populations in the ruling and other political parties relevant to the locality and including them as research participants. You may need to have different engagement strategies for policymakers, practitioners and local residents. Their interests do not always converge and should not be assumed.
- Linking local policies and national policies to their impact on local communities. This could become a source of tension, especially if the research highlights deficiencies in these.
- Promoting capacity building and resilience enhancement through evidence-based research.



Guidelines for Educators and Trainers

Most training of humanitarian aid workers is done through in-house training provided by voluntary agencies that employ them as either paid staff or volunteers in the field. Some countries have a considerable amount of training provided through specific agencies that are often funded by the state, e.g., the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in the USA. Some universities in various countries provide disaster management training which is relevant to this field. However, this is seldom linked to recognised professional qualifications that are associated with an established regulatory regime that protects the interests of people who become vulnerable through disaster events. Thus, the training of humanitarian aid or relief workers needs to be regularised and those involved in responding to people surviving disasters should have the appropriate qualifications and regulation of their activities.



In disaster situations, humanitarian aid workers perform a number of roles. Those that have been used by social workers, including those active in the Professional Practice Model (PPM) for the 2004 tsunami related interventions included the following roles:

- Facilitator.
- Coordinator.
- Community mobiliser (of people and systems).
- Mobiliser of resources.
- Negotiator or broker between communities and different levels of government.
- Mediator between conflicting interests and groups, including those based on gender relations.
- Consultant to government and other agencies.
- Advocate for people's rights and entitlements.
- Educator, giving out information about how to access relief aid and avoid diseases that can erupt following a disaster.
- Trainer, particularly in how to respond effectively in mobilising local resources when disaster strikes.
- Cultural interpreter.

- Interdisciplinary translator, especially between the physical and social sciences and the social or helping professions.
- Therapist helping people deal with the emotional consequences of disaster (Dominelli, 2009, 2012).

Training can also contain a capacity building element that becomes crucial in the reconstruction phase of disaster interventions. This can become particularly important in localities where particular types of professionals are in short supply or if the local universities do not have the capacity to provide the training that could guarantee sufficient numbers of much needed professionals, especially those that can provide humanitarian aid during emergencies.

For example, in Sri Lanka, there is a dearth of social workers and community development workers, and the capacity of the country to train these is limited. Meeting this particular gap may require further fund-raising capacity and other initiatives that rely upon obtaining external resources, as occurred in Sri Lanka with regards to the National Institute for Social Development (NISD), the body that has been responsible for providing social work training under the aegis of the Ministry of Social Welfare since the 1950s, for example. The tsunami enabled them to get external resources to develop an undergraduate degree programme and a Masters level programme. Today, there are additional initiatives aimed at developing social work education and training in the university sector and this arose out of the realisation that Sri Lanka needed thousands more trained and qualified social workers and community development workers to deal with national emergencies and routine needs. Some emergencies are linked to extreme weather events which are increasing in frequency include flooding during the monsoon season and droughts in particular locations. Humanitarian aid practitioners including social and community development workers are needed to deal with these as well as other exceptional national emergencies like the 2004 tsunami, should these occur. Several empowering partnerships that stemmed out of this particular disaster have been assisting these capacity building developments and were explored extensively in the IIPP research. Having sufficient numbers of Sri Lankan nationals involved in such work, especially in the leading roles will make it easier for local cultures and traditions to be maintained in future crises generated by disasters whether natural or (hu)man-made.

Social workers are active but invisible players in relief work. They are on the ground offering individuals and communities support during difficult circumstances by acting in a variety of roles which their generic training prepares them for. Despite their existing skills, I would suggest that they receive additional specialist training in the humanitarian aid area. I do this because their training should reflect the multidisciplinary nature of the knowledge that is required to intervene in disaster situations, including that provided by the physical sciences, arts and humanities; and to understand the complex specifics of a humanitarian aid industry that that calls for external assistance and support and employs a considerable number of people globally, although they act locally in specific contexts and catastrophes and whose actions carry local repercussions. Social workers have a relevant qualification and this could be used for humanitarian aid workers as a whole because social work has a global reach as a profession and has the infrastructure for training,

assessing, regulating, registering and sanctioning individuals who work with people in vulnerable situations.



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