Roles of Place-based NGOs in Disaster Management

This diagram illustrates some of the roles place-based social service non-government organisations (NGOs) may play in the disaster management cycle.

Understanding their role can help NGOs plan, prepare and contribute – and is an important aspect of disaster risk reduction.

Emergency services and Government agencies responsible for disaster management can use this information to better understand the role that NGOs can and do play in disasters. This can inform better engagement, collaboration and communication between NGOs and Government.

The emergency management cycle is typically divided into 4 stages: Preparedness & Planning, Response, Recovery and Prevention & Mitigation.

- Each stage of the cycle is related to the others.
- The stages can occur concurrently, e.g. responding to a disaster while working on recovery from another.
- NGOs do not have to be involved in all, or any, of the stages. NGO disaster management activities are currently based on the NGO's capacity and mission, funding and resources, type of services provided and impact of the disaster on service delivery.

Preparedness & Planning

Katungul ACRH&CS/Eden Community Access Centre, May 2024

- Awareness raising, particularly targeting local communities vulnerable to the impacts of disasters
- Bringing vulnerability 'lens' to planning and preparedness - deep local knowledge and networks
- Preparedness support - Individual, family and small group disaster preparedness activities with specific cohorts (e.g. people with a disability; older people, people in social housing) aimed at:
  - o Building individual and community resilience and connections to support communities to withstand and recover more quickly from disasters and
  - o Enabling access to resources and networks, which can help people prepare, respond and recover
- Building community connectedness and social cohesion
- Organisational preparedness/capability mapping; business continuity planning
- Whole-of-community preparedness planning and engagement
- Contributing to formal local disaster planning.

Response

- Emotional and cultural support and reassurance
- Providing material and financial relief
- Keeping people informed, connected and safe
- A trusted source for communicating emergency messages to communities
- Providing safe spaces, including culturally safe spaces
- Supporting evacuation, coordinating community efforts
- Access to IT/internet for residents
- Referral to disaster assistance
- Advocating for impacted communities' needs
- Using existing service relationships to support vulnerable community members
- Maintaining service delivery, if possible, to ensure access to essential services.

Recovery

Elise Derwin/Resilient Lismore, March 2024

- Trusted, local, trauma-informed support
- Client advocacy, referral and case coordination, including delivering government funded programs such as NSW Recovery Support Services
- Community activities for connection and healing
- Centering the voice of community in the design and planning of recovery initiatives
- Identifying issues created or exacerbated by disaster and advocating their resolution
- Delivering new services or boosting service capacity to meet increased demand created by disaster
- Supporting and 'scaffolding' community groups and grassroots organisations engaged in recovery
- Hosting visiting recovery services; providing facilities for recovery hubs
- Advocating for alignment of disaster and ongoing social support service delivery
- Building trusted relationships as an intermediary between 'outsiders' (e.g. Emergency Management agencies, larger charities, donors) and local communities.

Prevention & Mitigation

Peppercorn Services, March 2024

Note: These social service NGO roles in Mitigation and Prevention currently occur in an ad hoc way, often relying on government and emergency management agencies seeking input.

Prevention

- Providing input into new housing developments and prevention measures such as roads and levees that will protect communities.

Mitigation

- Providing contextualised guidance to government and emergency services on vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, the impacts of disaster on these groups and actions that can be taken by the NGO sector, government and other stakeholders to reduce the impact of disasters on these groups.
- Building individual and community resilience and connections to support communities to withstand and recover more quickly from disasters.
- Building community and neighbourhood connections and access to resources and networks, which can help people prepare, respond and recover.
- Advocating and engaging with local emergency management sub-committees or community engagement forums to improve coordination and align plans to community needs and strengths.