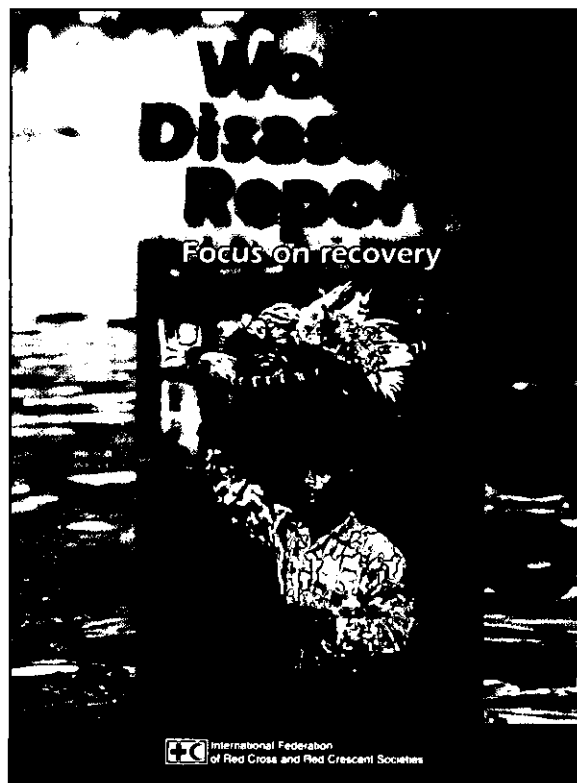


## World Disasters Report 2001

A failure to understand the economic and social realities facing disaster victims leads to poorly designed aid efforts which don't help protect people from the impact of future disasters, according to the latest *World Disasters Report* released by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (Federation).



'Too often, efforts at reconstruction after a major disaster don't lead to recovery. Instead they end up rebuilding the risk of danger in future disasters by ignoring economic realities,' says Mr Didier Cherpitel, Secretary General of the Federation.

Survivors of Venezuela's devastating mudslides in 1999 who'd been moved to safer, remote areas, were unable to earn a living there and have begun to return to the site of their former homes and are again at risk. Since Tajikistan gained independence, little investment has been made in developing its small scale rural economy. Despite extensive food aid for eight years, it is still unable to feed itself. Last year, its worst drought in 74 years left around two million people facing hunger and malnutrition while some of its available water was pumped into irrigating its cotton fields, Tajikistan's main cash crop.

Many donors and governments direct their aid efforts mainly towards rebuilding damaged infrastructure, not peoples' livelihoods. A survey cited in the *World Disasters Report* found 53 per cent of aid projects focussed on rebuilding infrastructure while only 10 per cent were on components of economic recovery. This then impacts on social recovery. In Somalia, ten years on from the 1991

conflict and more than US\$ 4 billion of aid later, one child in three still dies before reaching the age of five.

The report also looks at the widespread leakage of aid dollars from disaster stricken countries which further weakens chances of recovery. In Bangladesh for example, 60 per cent of the funds spent on the Flood Action Plan between 1990-1995, did not stay in the country but were used to pay foreign consultants. Other common approaches to aid and assistance which undermine local economies including tied aid and the funding gap between emergency, rehabilitation and development programmes, are also criticised by the *World Disasters Report*.

'Aid needs to be used to rebuild local economies and communities. To do that, donors need to understand the links between relief, rehabilitation and development and to involve local people more in determining the kind of help they need. So the way aid programmes are funded has to change,' explains Ms Astrid Heiberg, President of the Federation.

'The Red Cross and Red Crescent is investing more in community-based programmes to empower people so as to better prepare them against future disasters.'

This approach to aid has shown con-

crete results particularly if recovery programmes are geared to disaster preparedness and risk reduction and so lessening their impact on people's lives and livelihoods.

- In the Indian state of Orissa, the construction of 23 Red Cross cyclone shelters, combined with community education and disaster mitigation, saved 40,000 lives in one disaster alone.
- In one region in Vietnam where homes are destroyed annually by flooding, a Red Cross programme replaced lost homes with stronger, disaster-resistant ones. Local communities helped with the design and building of these homes and the following flood season, only one home out of the 2,450 was destroyed.

This year's *World Disasters Report* also looks at the cost of natural disasters which have swept away any developmental gains made in recent decades. The report contains chapters on the role of livelihoods, Venezuela, Somalia, Vietnam, Tajikistan and new data on disaster trends.

*The 2001 World Disasters Report is available from the Australian Red Cross National Office for \$65 (incl. postage and handling), PO Box 196, Carlton South, Victoria 3053.*

# Book Reviews

## Older People in disasters and humanitarian crises: Guidelines for best practice

Published by HelpAge International  
24 pages, ISBN 1 872590 02 0

Reviewed by Andrew Coghlan, National Training Consultant, Disaster Recovery.

Currently there is much interest and a number of publications being developed in the consideration of vulnerability to disaster. This booklet (25 pages) is a worthy addition to the literature, providing a practical approach to supporting a group often identified as vulnerable; older people in disaster.

Produced by HelpAge International, (an organisation with over 20 years of experience working with and for older people in development projects and emergencies) this booklet provides a succinct set of Guidelines for dealing with the vulnerabilities and needs of older people in crisis situations. Based on both practical experience and research in areas as diverse as Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas the basic aim of the Guidelines is "to meet the special needs of older people in emergencies."

Not only is the vulnerability of older persons considered, but also their potential contributions, special needs and self-supporting capacity. Features of the publication include;

- Key approaches and actions to reduce vulnerability associated with ageing
- Suggested means of enhancing the capacity and contribution of older people in emergencies.

In so doing, the emphasis of the Guidelines is very positive, outlining measures which will enhance older peoples ability to deal with disasters and encourage their contribution.

The document is divided into 4 sections, under the following headings:

- Guidelines for best practice
- The issues
- The research
- Applying the guidelines

### Guidelines for best practice

Acknowledging that older people are often identified as particularly vulnerable to disaster, this section identifies consultation, inclusion and empowerment as primary indicators of good practice. Best

practice guidelines are then neatly described under the headings of:

- Addressing older people's needs
- Meeting basic needs
- Mobility
- Equal access to essential services
- Social, psychosocial and family needs
- Recognise and support the contributions of older people

The information provided throughout this section provides the core of the guidelines; a brief discussion of each of the topics, together with a range of practical ways in which to address them. In this manner the document is a potentially very powerful tool in guiding service delivery for older persons in disasters.

### The issues

The second section provides an insight into the vulnerability of older persons to disaster. In addition to consideration of the capacities and contributions of older persons in disasters there is also a useful discussion of gender issues within this group.

## Older people in disasters and humanitarian crises:



**HelpAge**  
International

Leading global action on ageing

### The research

This section outlines the research program developed by HelpAge International which provided the basis for the development of the Guidelines. A significant finding identified is that, 'Many older people feel vulnerable and dependant on external support in the absence of resources to manage their changed circumstances' (brought about by the disaster). The Guidelines provide a useful tool to address this disempowerment.

### Applying the guidelines

The final section of the Guidelines provides sample checklists for assessing older persons vulnerability to disaster. Themes include:

- Family circumstances
- Social support
- Health
- Mobility
- Basic needs

The checklists are a very practical support to the information discussed throughout this very informative publication.

## Principles of Disaster Mitigation in Health Facilities

by Pan American Health Organisation  
and World Health Organisation, 2000,  
132 pp., ISBN 92 75 12304 7

Reviewed by Assoc Prof Geoff Boughton,  
Curtin University.

This book is easy to read, and gives a very broad overview of keeping hospitals operational during and after emergencies. The book focuses specifically on earthquakes, and is of use to the following groups:

- Planners of new hospitals — will benefit from an understanding of the vulnerability of various aspects of hospital facilities and operations. The book will help to prepare specifications that will lead to resilience in the capacity of the hospital to deal with emergencies.
- Designers of new hospitals — structural, architectural and functional designers will benefit from the tips in this book. The contents will assist in specifying details for performance that can be incorporated in the construction — the time when it the work is most cost-effective.
- Hospital operators — will see the benefits of continuing studies of vulnerability of hospital functions. Regular maintenance and improvement is required to ensure that operation will not be compromised when it is most important — after an emergency.

The book has been condensed from separate volumes dealing with structural, non-structural and operational aspects of vulnerability. It gives the overview of processes needed to ensure continued function rather than the detailed information required to perform vulnerability analyses. Architects, engineers and hospital administrators will appreciate different aspects of the book, but will need to fall back on other references to apply the principles given.

The information is complemented with illustrations — pictures, and case studies drawn primarily from Central and South America. Because of Australia's limited experience with major earthquakes, we must learn from the experience of others. The Newcastle earthquake of 1989 caused operational problems in the Newcastle Hospital which were not

dissimilar to the ones presented in this study.

Major hospitals generally contain large numbers of people many of whom have reduced mobility and cannot respond quickly to calls for evacuation. The level of life protection that they need to provide is high. They also have a vital role in normal response and recovery functions following an emergency, so it is important that not only do they survive the event, but they have a functionality afterwards. This has implication for:

- the structural response of the building - it needs to perform significantly better than normal structures;
- the behaviour of non-structural items such as services and equipment, finishes and cladding, which must enable the normal vital functions of the hospital to continue; and
- the organisational functions of the hospital. Staff, patients and supplies need to flow in an efficient manner in spite of the changed circumstances. This requires meticulous attention to detail in the planning for such events.

The book is divided into major sections that cover structural, non-structural and organisational aspects of hospitals. It is quite unique in the way it brings these

## Principles of Disaster Mitigation in Health Facilities



Pan American Health Organization  
Regional Office of the  
World Health Organization

seemingly very different areas together.

Available from:

PAHO Online Bookstore:  
<http://publications.paho.org> (a secure  
ordering site) or through the PAHO  
Distribution Center: [paho@pmds.com](mailto:paho@pmds.com);  
Fax: 301 206 9789; PO Box 27, Annapolis  
Junction, MD 20701-0027, USA  
Cost and order code is: US \$22.00.  
Order code: OP 133  
[http://publications.paho.org/english/  
moreinfo.cfm?Product\\_ID=583](http://publications.paho.org/english/moreinfo.cfm?Product_ID=583)

Geoff Boughton is an adjunct Associate Professor at Curtin University of Technology. He has a structural engineering background and has been involved with damage surveys following natural events for over twenty years. His work includes consultancies for the United Nations in Emergency Management and Disaster Mitigation. He actively participates in Recovery Management courses in association with the AEMI, and he runs a consultancy practice from Perth WA.

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# Volunteers' national peak body mooted by Summit

Emergency management and services volunteers are planning to form a National Peak Body following a three-day Summit meeting in Canberra in mid-October.

The volunteers acknowledged their need for a National Peak Body, which can represent volunteer emergency related organisations and give effect to the major recommendations from the Summit.

More than 400 emergency management volunteers and representatives of volunteer organisations met in Canberra on October 10, 11 and 12, to tackle some of the issues facing emergency management volunteers in Australia.

The Summit was officially opened by the Governor-General, Dr Peter Hollingworth AC OBE.

In the emergency management sector, the volunteers are the people who rescue victims from car crashes and marine accidents, fight fires, protect property, evacuate people in floods and provide first aid and medical help at mass gathering such as sporting events, rallies and protests. They are the people who play a critical role in helping the community recover from disasters like floods and storms, building collapses and rail and bus accidents.

The 400 people in Canberra last week represented the half a million volunteers in the emergency management sector — from State Emergency Services, St John Ambulance Australia, church-based groups such as Anglicare and Adracare, Red Cross, Salvation Army and surf life saving, search and rescue dog associations, coastal patrols, marine rescue and fire authorities in every State and Territory.

The Summit was organised by Emergency Management Australia with the support of the Department of Family and Community Services as part of the International Year of Volunteers. With the theme: 'value your volunteers or lose them', it focussed on the ways to develop a stronger volunteer sector. Through workshops and plenary sessions, it tackled problems across a range of areas from training to funding and recognition to legal liability.

The Director General of Emergency Management Australia and Chair of the Summit Organising Committee, Mr David Templeman, said that the volunteers at the Summit had concluded that the sector is 'simply not well enough recognised' by all levels of government, the community, media and industry, particularly the insurance industry.

## Recognition

Examining the evidence on the expression of national recognition, the volunteers concluded that legal protection was not comprehensive, funding was deficient and training was not consistently applied across Australia.

They recognised that while support was available from the Commonwealth through

EMA to tackle these problems, essentially the action lies with the volunteer organisations themselves and with the proposed National Peak Body.

The volunteers agreed that the solution to this lack of recognition lies not only with all levels of government and the media, but also with the volunteer organisations themselves.

Volunteer organisations needed to develop partnerships with each other, with the media and particularly with local government, so they can take their messages to the community in a more consistent, frequent and informative manner.

## Legal/Protection

The Summit recognised that the level



Director General of EMA, David Templeman, chairs the final session of the Summit at the National Convention Centre in Canberra.

of protection for volunteers is uneven, and in some cases, deficient.

In addition, existing arrangements are not well understood by the volunteers themselves. The problems faced by the volunteers are not well understood by local government or by State and Territory Governments.

The Summit urged all organisations to review the legal risks that their volunteers face and identify deficiencies - both legal and financial. This information should be shared both within and between States and Territories, and legislative amendments and policy developed collectively should be put forward to better support volunteers.

'We need to educate volunteers about their responsibilities and the protection to which they are entitled,' the Summit concluded.

### Training

The volunteers agreed that to comply with Commonwealth and State and Territory policy, all organisations must accept the National Training Framework.

All organisations must educate their staff and volunteers to reinforce the need to implement the National Training Framework.

Volunteers concluded:

- that the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) through the Public Safety Industry Training Advisory Board (PSITAB) should consider the provision of marketing and communication strategies
- The Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs and State Departments of Education could broaden the definition of 'trainee'
- volunteer organisations should work with the PSITAB to develop partnerships that support non-registered training organisations
- agencies should be encouraged to build 'bureaucratic shields' that minimise administrative overload.

### Funding

A proposal to form a National Peak Body that would develop strategies for better funding was strongly supported by the Summit.

The volunteers agreed there was a need to develop a methodology to determine the funding requirements of the organisations and their value to the community.

The Summit also agreed that:



Some of the hard work at the Summit was in combining the discussions in each breakout group into a consolidated set of recommendation presented at the plenary session. The eight facilitators and the four topic presenters (Michael Stringer, Peter Smith, Rick Stone and John Gledhill) formulated the final outcomes in terms of the problems identified and the action required. The Funding facilitators are pictured here with Hori Howard (standing left) coming to grips with the issues.



The Governor-General, Dr Peter Hollingworth meets Ms Rocky O'Brien, Territory Officer with St. John Ambulance Australia, ACT

- adequate funding for protective clothing and safety equipment was fundamental to the safety and well being of the volunteers and sufficient funding must be found
- volunteers should not be financially disadvantaged for volunteering but the volunteers opposed direct payment
- the National Peak Body should examine volunteer employer support programs.

## Volunteers praised by Parliamentary Secretary

The National Summit for volunteer leaders and managers from Australia's emergency management and emergency service organisations began with an enthusiastic opening address from Dr Brendan Nelson MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence.

Speaking to more than 450 volunteers and official guests from across Australia, he officially welcomed the volunteers and formally recognised their commitment and work to various emergency service organisations.

Dr Nelson said 'without Australia's dedicated emergency management volunteers who number more than half a million, communities would be unable to deal with disasters like fires, storms, floods and cyclones'.

'It is both appropriate and timely this year, in the International Year of Volunteers, that we should define the way ahead for volunteers so they will continue to be committed, enthusiastic and available', Dr Nelson said.

Dr Nelson's speech emphasised this year's Summit theme of 'Value Your Volunteers - Or Lose Them'.

'Would we in any sense be a community without those who give up their time and resources in the service of others? Imagine Australia without men and women who selflessly serve us in not only times of natural and technological disasters but in preventing them and cleaning up afterwards', Dr Nelson said.

'I think you have recognised that in a management sense, good intentions and volunteer labour is not enough. I am sure that while most Australians look at emergency services volunteers and breathe a great sigh of relief that you are there... they are probably quite oblivious to many of the issues that you are raising at this summit. Many Australians probably don't realise that you are volunteers.'

'I am thinking here of issues about funding, about legal liability, training and about recognition and rewards. All those have been raised in some detail in the discussion papers issued in advance of this Summit.'

'There are some very good ideas and solutions which you will, no doubt, debate at the Summit. There are ideas about Government tax regimes; about nationally accredited training schemes; about funding; and about audits of legal risk.'

'I recognise that the resolution of these

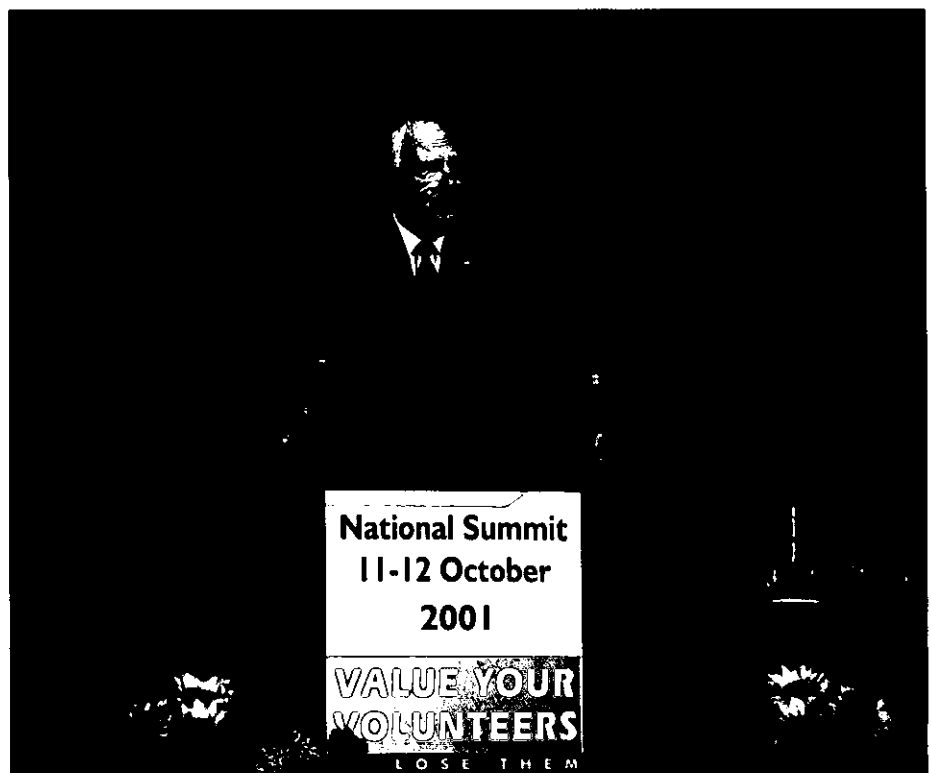
critical management issues will mean the continued development of volunteering in the emergency management sector.'

'Failure to resolve them could well mean a severe dint in volunteer framework that

supports emergency services across Australia. As you've said, probably better than I could, in the slogan title for this summit; Value your volunteers or lose them,' Dr Nelson said.



Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence, Dr Brendan Nelson MP, meets Joe Taylor from Gosnells SES in Western Australia.



The Governor-General, Dr Peter Hollingworth, officially opened the Summit in Canberra on Thursday 11 October.



At the Summit, David Templeman, Director General of EMA; Sue Adams, Captain of the Humpty Doo Volunteer Fire and Rescue Brigade in the Northern Territory and Chris Beer from the NT Fire and Rescue Brigade.



Glen Hall, WA SES; Jon Belmonte, Salvation Army Emergency Service and John Kelly from St Vincent de Paul Society.



From Anglicare NSW, Kay Graves, John Johnstone and Dawn Ferguson.

## DG looks ahead to results

In presenting the Summit outcomes, the Director General of Emergency Management Australia (EMA), David Templeman, posed the question: 'So where to from here?'

He continued: 'My intention would be to have a further Summit of this type in about two years, and to put some rigour in the process so that you can come back here and say, "Well what did you actually achieve; what was done; what did we achieve?"'

'I intend to keep the Summit Steering Committee going, but we may have to look at the composition to see if it needs to be broadened. I don't necessarily want to have a cast of thousands on the committee, but if we need to tweak it to ensure that we get all sectors covered, then we'll do that.'

'EMA is prepared to take strategic leadership. This will ensure that we share the outcomes of this Summit with the Australian Emergency Management Committee at State and Territory levels and so empower them to pass that information down to the community and the local government level.'

'I will be writing to inform Dr Brendan Nelson of the outcomes of the Summit and my suggestion to him will be that he writes to all his Parliamentary colleagues as he did to inform them about this Summit. In a caretaker situation like we're in at the moment, it will also be courtesy that he write to the Leader of the Opposition informing him of the outcomes of the Summit. I have since spoken with Dr Nelson and he is supportive of this approach.'

'So in some respects we have an opportunity to ensure in a truly bipartisan way that all Parliamentarians can actually be informed of the outcomes.' 'We have asked Hori Howard to pull together a major report with the draft expected in mid-November. That report will be then shared with all organisations that have had involvement in this Summit and others. So in a truly consultative, participative way, a final report should be ready in January in 2002.'

'Following the election on 10 November we would expect that the report will be put to Government for consideration.'

'I need your assistance in that process too. Once we have the report that we all jointly own, it needs to actually have your total buy-in and involvement and commitment to the process and the priorities that have been addressed. That will be fundamental to actual achieving the outcomes. In two years time we hope to see things have been done as a result of the recommendations.'