



Foster the adoption of a culture of disaster prevention and resilience by informing and motivating citizens to take action

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Disasters can be substantially reduced when people are well informed and motivated to adopt a culture of disaster prevention and resilience. Using top-down approaches in disaster management, focused on technical and expert approaches driven by national civil protection authorities has proven to be less efficient than desired. Research has shown that a more efficient solution would be for governmental bodies to transfer some of the risk preparedness responsibilities from themselves to the individual. Understanding how and how much responsibility can be re-distributed is of fundamental importance for building societal resilience.

Applicable to:

Stakeholders: [Disaster Managers](#), [Citizens](#)

Disaster Phases: [Prevention](#), [Preparedness](#)

Types of Actors Concerned: [Non-active citizens](#), [Active citizens](#), [Local authorities](#), [National civil protection bodies](#), [Healthcare and emergency services](#), [Red Cross](#), [NGOs](#), [Entrepreneurs](#), [Law enforcement agencies](#)

Hazards: [Natural hazards](#), [Man-made non-intentional hazards or emergency situations](#), [Man-made intentional hazards](#)

Cultural Map Entries:

- [Contemporary societies, promoters of individual freedom](#)
- [Culturally constructed disaster related notions](#)
- [Personal involvement increases citizens' willingness to engage in activities aimed at preserving personal safety](#)
- [Natural disasters are followed by an increase in willingness to help other people](#)
- [Natural disasters encourage solidarity while technological disasters create a rigid community](#)
- [Adaptive patterns to risk are linked to cultural practices and location](#)
- [Social involvement makes local communities more proactive in developing risk management strategies](#)
- [Community participation, collective efficacy and empowerment are positively linked to earthquake preparedness](#)
- [Social capital is an asset in making communities more resilient](#)
- [Individual strategies for disaster preparation](#)
- [Importance of being physically fit as part of disaster preparation](#)
- [Lower impact of certain types of disasters on daily life](#)
- [Volunteering experiences in disaster situations](#)
- [Grassroots interventions in the recovery stage](#)
- [Barriers providing support in disaster situations](#)
- [Citizens support in relief efforts](#)
- [Citizens help in providing shelter for affected victims](#)
- [Having a sense of community as a strength in responding to a disaster](#)
- [Citizens consider disaster preparedness predominantly the responsibility of government](#)
- [Citizen suggestions for involvement in disaster preparedness](#)
- [Citizen lack of preparedness may be linked to perceived low probability to a disaster happening](#)
- [Citizen lack of preparedness may be linked to perceived cultural traits, such as resourcefulness](#)
- [Fatalism in Maltese culture and disaster preparedness](#)
- [Voluntary citizen support activities in the response phase of a disaster](#)
- [Shared responsibilities for preparedness measures amongst citizens and authorities](#)
- [Cultural traits and attitudes to disaster preparedness](#)
- [Local police not seen to hold an important role in disaster management](#)
- [Role of online communities in a disaster situation](#)
- [Importance of perceived personal qualities in informal leaders acting in disaster situations](#)
- [Group vs individual ideologies influencing attitudes towards training for disaster preparedness](#)



- [The impact of socio-economic status on a community's disaster response](#)
- [The influence of individual wealth on disaster recovery](#)
- [Religious beliefs may hinder first responders in a disaster situation](#)
- [Cultural attitudes towards authorities and the role of community leaders](#)
- [Children and teenagers as volunteers during a disaster](#)
- [Stereotypes of younger citizens being more critical towards authorities are often incorrect](#)
- [The potential of peer education in disaster preparedness](#)
- [Involving the elderly in disaster preparedness training can be an important contribution to socially-inclusive procedures](#)
- [Empowerment of social actors](#)
- [Individual and collective empowerment](#)
- [The Community Based Disaster Management approach](#)
- [Importance of female citizens for empowerment in disaster situations](#)
- [Importance of aged individuals in disaster situations](#)
- [Connecting individuals with collective structures](#)
- [The role of individual officials in empowerment processes](#)
- [Failure of public social promotion programs](#)
- [The feeling of "ownership" amongst local people](#)
- [Social/mutual trust inside communities](#)
- [National and local legislation concerning citizen participation](#)
- [Confidentiality as an obstacle for using ICT and social media](#)
- [Promoting Citizens Observatories in order to change citizens' roles](#)
- [Communities taking responsibility for their own resilience](#)
- [Active citizens in empowerment contexts](#)
- [The role of "institutionalised" local alliances in disaster management](#)
- [Citizens' trust in civil defence systems and local authorities](#)
- [Community aptitude for learning related to empowerment processes](#)
- [Empowerment activation influences related to people's awareness](#)
- [Communication factors in empowerment processes](#)
- [Diffusion of technological innovation among citizens](#)
- [Citizen empowerment through crowdsourcing](#)
- [Citizen empowerment through technologies focused on local traditions](#)
- [The role of the welfare crisis in empowerment processes](#)
- ["Green economy" enabling citizen empowerment](#)
- [Citizen actors in the recovery stage](#)
- [Collective empowerment as a decision-making process](#)
- [Empowerment emerging from relationships in particular places and organisations](#)
- [Culture as an empowering force in disasters](#)
- [Capacity building and training in DRR](#)
- [Community leaders as mediators between DMAs and citizens](#)
- [Urban safety and security in relation to local identities](#)
- [The role of social capital in disaster situations](#)
- [Foreigners as a vulnerable group in a disaster](#)
- [The role of advocacy/pressure groups in disaster response](#)
- [Relationships between Buddhism and disaster recovery](#)
- [Spirituality as a tool for victim recovery](#)
- [Spirituality affecting disaster recovery and facilitating empowerment](#)
- [Cultural adaptations of the environment](#)
- [Cultural context as a powerlessness factor](#)
- [Strengths of the CBDM approach](#)
- [Enhancing and cultivating local capacities as a component of empowering communities in India](#)
- [Empowering communities and individuals in planning, coordinating and re-building during disasters](#)
- [Turning citizens into critical stakeholders and community representatives](#)
- [Empowering local communities to take ownership of the disaster management process](#)
- [Using culture for empowering communities and individuals](#)
- [The role of whistle blowing, advocacy and pressure groups in creating bottom-up pressure on institutions](#)
- [Coping mechanisms through experience and collective memory](#)
- [Empowerment definitions](#)
- [Empowerment issues concerning the welfare state crisis](#)
- [Definition of empowerment according to the UN International Fund on Agricultural Development](#)
- [Specific empowerment strategies of the UN International Fund on Agricultural Development](#)
- [Legal empowerment](#)
- [Empowerment definitions according to scientific authors](#)
- [Different "types of power" within empowerment](#)
- [Empowerment and governance structure of opportunities](#)



- [Empowerment and governance linkage](#)
- [Empowerment-enhancing strategies](#)
- [Cultural influences on empowerment processes](#)
- [Relations between empowerment and culture](#)
- [Practical approaches in communication for empowerment](#)
- [Findings from the C4E Initiative](#)
- [C4E Initiative results](#)
- [The leadership Advance Online approach](#)
- [Citizen involvement experiments concerning the prevention and preparedness stage](#)
- [First steps of the participatory approach](#)
- [Community empowerment definition of the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre](#)
- [Processes in community strengthening](#)
- [Building disaster-resilient communities - the UNCRD perspective](#)
- [The Patanka New Life Plan Initiative](#)
- [The "Reducing Vulnerability of School Children to Earthquakes" project](#)
- [Community-based disaster management in central Vietnam](#)
- [Teaching communities to understand technologies in India](#)
- [Empowering local communities after the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake](#)
- [Adopting a proactive approach in taking decisions and action in Bangladesh](#)
- [Oxfam recommendations for empowerment strategies](#)
- [Citizen cooperation for developing software solutions](#)
- [The Citizens Observatories collection and utilization of citizen information](#)
- [Environmental monitoring campaigns with citizens and NGOs](#)
- [Media roles in empowering citizens in the Czech Republic](#)
- [The Urban Development Zone procedure](#)
- [Learning processes enhanced by natural disasters](#)
- [The participatory approach of coastal protection in Timmendorfer Strand - Germany](#)
- [Changing trust in authorities](#)
- [The EU-funded Citi-Sense project description](#)
- [Community empowerment strategies in Augustenborg](#)
- [The Broughton Trust support for residents in East Salford](#)
- [Heat wave planning in London](#)
- [Social and organisational empowerment processes in Cumbria](#)
- [Stakeholder engagement as a social and organisational empowerment process in Cumbria](#)
- [Cultural factors in volunteering actions](#)
- [Influence of education and location on volunteering behaviour](#)
- [Ethnicity as a risk for heat-related disasters](#)

Implementation steps:

Recommendations on fostering a more active and efficient citizen engagement in disaster management activities

A. To implement community-based disaster management initiatives one must first carry out a capacity assessment to reveal useful skills and knowledge among the local community. Disaster managers should seek to identify local citizens, who are interested in engaging with them and assist them in acquiring the skills, knowledge and behavioural change required by community-based disaster management initiatives. Encourage citizens through information campaigns and/or training activities to reflect on and build upon personal skills they already possess and that could prove useful in a disaster, e.g. technical skills, organising talent or detailed local knowledge and also develop new skills, such as carrying out risk assessments. It is also important to identify individuals who are natural leaders and who are therefore more likely to be proactive in carrying out disaster management-related tasks and can “champions” these initiatives. Related cultural factors: [Local knowledge](#), [Social networks](#)

B. Encourage individuals to move from the role of a common/passive citizen to that of an actor/active



citizen. Active citizens are those individuals who participate directly in and take ownership of the entire disaster management process. Also consider ways of overcoming the negative attitudes of some individual officials in local authorities or disaster managers towards the active participation of citizens in disaster management.

C. Create inclusive mechanisms and safe public spaces, which facilitate and support citizens' participation and accountability in local governance and decision-making. An example of this is including members of the community in the preparation of vulnerability and risk maps. Given that these plans are directly connected with people's daily lives and livelihoods, it gives them an extra incentive to engage with disaster managers. Related cultural factors: [Local knowledge](#), [Livelihoods](#)

D. Included people are more willing to take the time and would like to contribute with their knowledge and personal experience in order to prevent future hazards. Civil volunteers need to be incorporated into future planning for disaster management. Related cultural factors: [Social networks](#)

E. To encourage citizens' engagement in disaster management processes, one can use different methods, such as re-enacting roles adopted in previous disasters, drawing on collective memories and ensuring that each stage of the disaster management process is "participatory" – involving or being led by the local community. Capitalization on collective memories can be done through community workshops where the participants build, or re-build, a collective memory of local disaster risks using historical artefacts and pictures, to encourage citizens via these collective exercises to take up responsibility and action through a shared cultural identity. Elderly people can play an important role in these workshops as they represent a living "memory" of previous disasters in their area of residence and can contribute positively to the empowerment of citizens in the same area. Other similar useful activities in this regard are community gatherings to share information about customs and traditions and collective identification of support networks. Related cultural factors: [Individual/collective memory](#), [Age-related roles](#)

F. Citizen empowerment action should be included in all stages of disaster management.

G. To improve personal preparedness, promote the setup of personal emergency plans by encouraging family discussions about emergency contacts, meeting points, means of communication etc., and provide simple reminder "templates" that can be filled and kept (e.g., as a picture on the mobile phone, a note in the handbag, or a magnet stuck on the fridge). Related cultural factors: [Social networks](#)

H. To improve citizens' quick and appropriate response in case of a disaster, develop information campaigns, which focus specifically on the identification of "safe spots" or "safe zones" in their homes, their workplaces, and their local area, categorised by (locally relevant) type of disaster.

I. Involve active citizens and citizens' associations to represent people's needs and expectations and act as a bridge between them and local/national authorities, thus accelerating development at the local level. Related cultural factors: [Social networks](#)



Recommendations on tools and techniques for empowering communities in disaster situations

J. Valorise and improve through empowerment processes the contribution that each actor can bring to disaster management in all its stages and in each specific and cultural context where the hazard occurs.

K. Community empowerment (in the disaster management frame) is not a panacea. A disaster management plan should be the result of the integration of top-down and bottom-up approaches.

L. Empowerment is conditioned by the cultural context both at the cognitive level (perceptions etc.) and at the operational one, since local communities are not homogenous. Therefore, it is vital for enhancing empowerment to be as open as possible, so that different points of view, sensibilities and problems can be considered, as well as the features of the different actors. Related cultural factors: [Norms/values](#), [Customs/traditions/rituals](#), [Worldviews](#), [Open-mindedness](#), [Individual/collective memory](#), [Local knowledge](#), [Languages](#), [Communication](#), [Livelihoods](#), [Rule of law](#), [Power relations](#), [Attitudes toward authorities](#), [Attitudes toward the media](#), [Attitudes toward environmental issues](#), [Gender roles](#), [Age-related roles](#), [Ethnicity](#), [Educational system](#), [Density of active citizenship](#), [Social networks](#), [Social control](#), [Social exclusion](#), [Access and use of infrastructure/services](#)

M. Engage with and promote the role of women as drivers for community-based disaster management as women are often more aware of issues related to the community in which they live than men and have a greater agency for solving problems, especially when these problems can affect their family. Enable women to be actor citizens in the planning process of disasters. Related cultural factors: [Gender roles](#)

N. Foster a proactive strategy of consultation with the various cultural stakeholders and/or communities during the planning and execution of relevant disaster management activities. Related cultural factors: [Social networks](#)

O. Seek to better understand and support informal networks that appear inside the community when a disaster strikes. Such networks can be particularly useful in conflict situations, both in surviving immediate threats and in rebuilding communities after the conflict ends. Related cultural factors: [Social networks](#)

P. Facilitate empowerment actions via the development of tourism and the presence of tourism operators because these operators can be very interested in a high-participatory approach in disaster management, for the best possible safeguarding (and development) of tourism.

Q. Facilitate the empowerment of local communities through the recognition and the valorisation of safer technologies (e.g. traditional building technologies) focused on local tradition and culture (and/or on local knowledge), thus encouraging citizens to take ownership of that approach. Related cultural factors: [Customs/traditions/rituals](#), [Local knowledge](#)

R. Create Citizens Observatories as they provide an opportunity for citizens to engage with experts and practitioners working across a range of citizen science initiatives and policymaking bodies. This practice should be adopted more broadly for enhancing disaster management. Related cultural factors: [Social networks](#)

S. Work together with the community to identify shared problems and solve during the prevention and preparation stages therefore strengthening the motivations and incentives to collaborate.

T. Support citizens to identify their own localized vulnerabilities, capacities, risks and solutions in disaster situations.

U. Assist communities in implementing mechanism enabling them to learn from previous disasters,



such as information sharing activities (e.g. discussing previous events, including the community's response to them, victims of disasters sharing their experiences). Communities feel better prepared with each future similar event (e.g. in the case of recurring events such as floods) and it helps them embrace a “shared responsibility” approach. Related cultural factors: [Individual/collective memory](#), [Local knowledge](#)

V. Invest in the better understanding and support in the relief networks that are born in the community after a disaster. Related cultural factors: [Social networks](#)

W. Provide emotional support to those who require it, both members of the public and emergency responders.

X. Implement “community resilience” policies in territorial planning, by introducing risk-mitigation measures in urban planning and designing strategic actions which require the cooperation of local actors in the private sector and the community in resilience-building processes.

Y. Involve property owners in construction and reconstruction of the built environment before and after disasters.

Z. After man-made disasters people tend to suffer for a longer time, therefore the recovery phase should be treated with special attention and victim care must be prolonged.

AA. Cultural factors should be considered in the design and implementation of empowerment activities.

Sources:



[Deliverable 4.2: Report on “risk cultures” in the context of disasters](#) - CARISMAND
(pdf, 1.8 MB)



[Deliverable 5.4: Report on Citizens' Reactions and Opinions: Citizen Summit 2 \(Malta\)](#) - CARISMAND
(pdf, 2.4 MB)



[Deliverable 6.1: Report on European fundamental rights in disaster situations](#) - CARISMAND
(pdf, 2.2 MB)



[Deliverable 6.2: Report on fundamental rights in disaster situations in selected national legislations](#) - CARISMAND
(pdf, 3.6 MB)



[Deliverable 7.1: Report on literature review](#) - CARISMAND
(pdf, 2.5 MB)



[Deliverable 7.2: Report on linkages between empowerment practices and specific socio-economic and environmental contexts](#) - CARISMAND
(pdf, 1.7 MB)



[Deliverable 7.3: Report on cultural factors and citizen empowerment](#) - CARISMAND
(pdf, 2.4 MB)



[Deliverable 8.1: Report on risk communication models and best-practices in disaster management](#) -
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Further reading:

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<https://toolkit.carismand.eu/a/recommendation-adoption-of-culture-of-disaster-prevention>

