



## Use local knowledge, collective memory and shared cultural values to improve disaster preparedness, response and recovery

CARISMAND

A community-based approach to disaster management should be adopted. This requires collaborating with community leaders and both active and “regular” citizens as an effective way to tap into their local knowledge and/or collective memories of local events. Such collaboration and consultation should also make use of the respective communities’ shared cultural values, in order to improve their collective problem-solving capacities in disaster response and recovery as well as their collective resilience (Deliverable 4.2, Deliverable 7.3).

### Applicable to:

Stakeholders: [Policy Makers](#), [Disaster Managers](#)

Disaster Phases: [Preparedness](#), [Response](#), [Recovery](#)

Types of Actors Concerned: [Local authorities](#), [Non-active citizens](#), [Active citizens](#), [National civil protection bodies](#), [Healthcare and emergency services](#)

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

### Cultural Map Entries:

- [Disaster events lower levels of optimism but after a period of time, perceptions of risk decrease](#)
- [Previous experience with natural disasters is linked to a greater willingness to be better prepared and cooperate with local authorities](#)
- [Long-term disaster effects in the perception of threats](#)
- [Personal experience guides behaviour more than received information](#)
- [Experience with violent life events influences future perception of risk](#)
- [Prior negative experiences influence perceptions of future risks depending on the severity of personal consequences of the former](#)
- [When powerlessness is negatively associated with mitigation intentions, victims become reluctant to engage in risk mitigation activities](#)
- [Independence and interdependence are culturally interrelated in risk event assessment](#)
- [The ways in which people are used to dealing with risk in everyday life is based on societal values \(culture\)](#)
- [Adaptive patterns to risk are linked to cultural practices and location](#)
- [A community's local knowledge has value in dealing with disasters](#)
- [Capacities of local communities and their culture is important in defining their level of preparedness, response and recovery from a disaster](#)
- [In some cases, local knowledge is essential in providing reliable information about the area of intervention](#)
- [Experts should consider local knowledge a legitimate type of learning, and incorporate it into strategies and policies](#)
- [Alternative knowledge strategies and local risk cultures are important in policy and decision-making processes, both for experts and non-experts](#)
- [Popular explanations of threats and disasters are important to the cultures in question](#)
- [For natural hazards linked to geographical location, risk perception tends to decrease as distance from the risk source increases](#)
- [Comparison of risk perception levels and its correlates among communities affected by natural disasters](#)
- [Living in risk areas highlights higher levels of risk acceptance](#)
- [Individual previous experience with disaster and the link with risk perception and risk related behaviour](#)
- [Communicating risks and individual preparedness](#)
- [How disaster experiences shape citizens' initial responses](#)
- [Importance of local experience In dealing with disasters](#)



- [Impact of frequency of disasters on risk perception](#)
- [Perception of risk in relation unrelated with previous experience](#)
- [Prior positive experiences with authorities increase trust levels in a disaster](#)
- [Authorities' effectiveness in dealing with past events enhances feelings of security amongst citizens](#)
- [Citizen perception of risk linked to perceived frequency of disaster occurrences](#)
- [Cultural attitudes towards authorities and the role of community leaders](#)
- [The role of "cultural leaders" as identifiable reference points in the prevention and preparedness phases](#)
- [Importance of aged individuals in disaster situations](#)
- [The role of pupils and children in empowerment processes](#)
- [Foreigners as a vulnerable group in a disaster](#)
- [Usefulness of intangible cultural knowledge in disasters](#)
- [The role of disaster experience in disaster response](#)
- [The value of sharing inter-generational knowledge](#)
- [Disaster experience as a factor in the decision to evacuate](#)
- [Strengthening local practices by assessing local knowledge](#)
- [Cultural knowledge of employees of disaster management authorities as a resource](#)
- [Popular knowledge definition](#)
- [Learning processes enhanced by natural disasters](#)

**General association with cultural factors:** [Norms/values](#), [Customs/traditions/rituals](#), [Social networks](#)

## Recommendations:

### Recommendation A

Elements of local knowledge and practices used to contribute to disaster risk reduction should be listened to and reviewed by disaster managers. These include, for example, citizens' local environmental knowledge and community memories carried on in stories of dangers and past events.

Related cultural factors: [Individual/collective memory](#), [Languages](#)



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### Recommendation B

To integrate local knowledge into disaster management, both scientific and citizens' local knowledge should be combined for hazard mapping and other disaster risk assessments, including the consultation of affected citizens regarding safe locations.

Related cultural factors: [Individual/collective memory](#), [Languages](#)



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### Recommendation C

To aid the process of (re-)constructing a shared sense of place that can both improve disaster preparedness and foster recovery after a disaster has struck, the following should be encouraged: (a)



community gatherings to share information about customs and traditions; (b) local events where older community members share stories with the younger generation to help preserve communities' cultural and social identity; and/or (c) collective identification of local support networks.

Related cultural factors: [Customs/traditions/rituals](#), [Local knowledge](#), [Gender roles](#), [Social networks](#)



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### **Recommendation D**

Individuals should be encouraged to move from the role of a “common”/passive citizen to that of actor/active citizens in the disaster management process. This can be achieved by drawing on collective memories and re-enacting roles adopted in previous disasters, e.g. in community-based disaster simulations (both physical and virtual).

Related cultural factors: [Individual/collective memory](#), [Local knowledge](#)



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### **Recommendation E**

Town planners should respect pre-disaster local identities when re-designing and re-building disaster-struck localities. Reconstructing a “place” to its prior state can help survivors reconstruct their own sense of it and mitigate or avoid a loss of cultural identity. Preservation of the urban landscape can, thus, be a form of resilience.



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### **Recommendation F**

Individuals with a strong attachment to place, who may also be more willing to become proactive, should be identified and involved in the recovery process, since their sentiment is likely to foster greater efforts in community revitalisation, general altruism and higher community spirit.



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### **Recommendation G**

Family values, skills and qualities, e.g. open communication, clear roles and boundaries, the ability to express and respond to feelings and emotions, and collective problem-solving capacities should be



called upon and used as a resource to empower individuals and communities in disaster situations.



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## Recommendation H

Re-building community integrity after a disaster is strongly dependent on the sustainable recovery of families, especially in cultures, where the family unit is as important as the individual.

Related cultural factors: [Norms/values](#), [Customs/traditions/rituals](#)



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## Further reading:

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<https://toolkit.carismand.eu/a/recommendation-local-knowledge>