


Migrant and refugee communities strengthening disaster resilience

Peer reviewed

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Introduction

Working with communities in the planning and implementation of community-focused projects is critical for effectiveness and sustainability (Ife 2016). This engagement becomes especially important when working with migrant and refugee communities, given their unique experiences and perspectives, which may include exposure to disasters and conflict, different cultural norms, communication styles and family structures as well as varying migration status (Crawford et al. 2021). As Hansen et al. (2013) note, with over a quarter of Australia’s population born overseas (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2023), the nation’s multicultural society is home to people from a plethora of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. As emergency preparedness messaging is commonly targeted at the majority English-speaking (able-bodied, adult) population, ensuring that everyone is adequately prepared has challenges, noting that other groups that do not fit within a normative persona are ‘marginalised’ (for example, see Bhopal 2018). This paper discusses the results, lessons learnt and recommendations from a project facilitated by the Australian Red Cross aimed at improving risk reduction and resilience in CALD communities in suburban areas of Adelaide/Tarndanya in South Australia.

In this paper, ‘community’ refers to both geographical and CALD communities (Ife 2016). Geographical communities are defined by specific physical regions, such as neighbourhoods or towns. CALD communities within these geographical areas consist of individuals from varied cultural and linguistic backgrounds, including migrants and refugees, who have unique needs, strengths and perspectives. This dual definition highlights the importance of tailoring preparedness and response to address both the locale and its cultural diversity to allow for inclusive community engagement.

Abstract

This paper presents insights from a community-led initiative in South Australia aimed at enhancing disaster resilience in culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) migrant and refugee communities. Anchored in the principles of community cohesion, empowerment and informed action, the project addresses socio-cultural dynamics and communication barriers. A series of workshops and forums, tailored to account for cultural sensitivity, showed strengthened community collaboration, skills development and increased awareness of the psychosocial effects of disasters, prompting proactive strategies that consider the unique vulnerabilities and strengths of CALD communities. Participant testimonials noted increased community spirit and practical application of acquired knowledge, including understanding local hazard risk profiles and trust-building with emergency services organisations. The findings demonstrate the importance of mitigating access challenges, integrating diverse community perspectives into resilience-building activities and ensuring the inclusivity of management policies. Highlighting the significance of strengths-based community-driven approaches in emergency and disaster management, particularly for marginalised groups, this initiative found that engaging communities as active contributors enables more resilient and self-efficacious populations that effectively bridge cultural and linguistic gaps in preparedness.

For clarity, ‘resilience’ refers to the capacity of individuals and communities to anticipate, prepare for, respond to, recover from and adapt to adverse events, particularly disasters (Paton and Johnston 2001). This encompasses the ability to withstand and recover from such events as well as the capability to learn from them and strengthen future preparedness. Resilience involves a combination of factors, including knowledge, security, wellbeing and community connection that collectively enhance the ability to manage and mitigate the effects of disasters (Newnham et al. 2023; Richardson 2014). Specifically, this paper emphasises the importance of integrating CALD perspectives into resilience-building efforts so that community members are equipped and empowered to navigate and overcome crises.

Disaster resilience varies between and within communities and hinges on factors like socio-cultural backgrounds, language proficiency and previous exposure to similar situations (Richardson 2014). CALD communities can sometimes find themselves at a disadvantage in these scenarios due to linguistic barriers, lack of knowledge about local emergency protocols, lack of local connections, cultural nuances that might affect their approach to crises, potential distrust of uniformed personnel and lack of service commitment to understanding and using these communities’ strengths (Chandonnet 2021; Teo et al. 2019).

Recognising this gap, the CALD Community Locally-Led Disasters and Risk Reduction Project was initiated by the Australian Red Cross in South Australia. The project was a dedicated effort to connect emergency management strategies that focus on the majority population and the needs of CALD migrant and refugee communities. Rooted in principles of inclusivity, collaboration and empowerment, the initiative used a multi-faceted and strengths-based approach to address gaps by connecting people within CALD communities to emergency services agencies, civil society organisations and local councils. This approach introduces the resilience, skills, knowledge and experiences of people within CALD communities that can inform local emergency management and disaster risk reduction planning (Chandonnet 2021).

Red Cross approaches disaster resilience from a psychosocial angle that considers the psychological and social actions people can take to prepare themselves in addition to the more common focus on practical actions to survive the event (Richardson et al. 2023). While gaining traction, psychosocial elements of preparedness and recovery are often ignored in mainstream emergency management discussions that focus on rebuild and clean up (Richardson et al. 2023). The psychosocial element is particularly under-explored in relation to CALD communities (Mercer et al. 2012). Further, much of the research on CALD groups and emergency management has centred on barriers and challenges rather than harnessing strengths and gathering potential solutions

to barriers from these communities (Chandonnet 2021). Research on this topic outlines service gaps such as language barriers, cultural insensitivity, unfamiliarity with risk profiles, inaccessible information dissemination, lack of representation and trust deficits (Hansen et al. 2013; Marlowe et al. 2022). Many of these concerns were raised during this project. However, respondents accompanied explanation of these challenges with their recommendations about how emergency management organisations can and should proactively respond and address issues.

Noting the dearth of literature examining practical application of psychosocial disaster resilience for CALD communities, this article discusses the aims, methodologies and outcomes of this project, presenting insights and implications that could inspire similar initiatives worldwide. The lessons from this Australian project reinforce the importance of community-based approaches emphasising inclusivity.

Aim

This project had clear objectives. The primary goal was to understand and address the specific strengths, needs, and challenges faced by CALD communities in the context of disaster management and resilience-building and support practical community-led preparedness actions. The project drew from the organisation’s broader monitoring and evaluation framework, which helped determine relevant outcomes and indicators (Kelly et al. 2022a). Consistent with the community development approach, these outcomes refer to ways of working. For example, an outcome is that communities are driving their own agenda. Therefore, the role of Red Cross is to support communities to achieve their own aims. As part of this approach, an early workshop focused on communities defining their own intended outcomes for the project.

Literature review

Psychosocial preparedness

Disasters can deeply affect the lives of individuals and communities causing injury, loss of life and destruction of property. Beyond these immediate effects, disasters disrupt social networks, employment, education and places of personal and communal significance that undermines people’s sense of security and interrupts their goals and aspirations. Recognising the breadth of these effects underscores the importance of psychosocial preparedness—preparing individuals and communities psychologically and socially to withstand and recover from such events (Richardson et al. 2023).

Pre-emptive actions that strengthen resilience can mitigate the adverse psychosocial effects of disasters and

improve recovery outcomes (Randrianarisoa et al. 2021; Morrisey and Reser 2003). Such preparedness involves developing knowledge and capacities among governments, organisations and individuals to anticipate, respond to and recover from disasters (UNDRR 2020). As traditional preparedness and resilience programs have focused on surviving the initial aftermath of a disaster, they often overlook the longer-term psychosocial, financial and physical repercussions on affected populations (Gowan et al. 2015).

‘Psychosocial’ describes the interconnections between an individual’s psychological aspects—like emotions, thoughts and reactions—and their social environment, including relationships, cultural values and community ties (IFRC 2014). As such, psychosocial preparedness involves preparing for disasters through psychological and social measures. This includes understanding threats, enhancing self and communal care skills and building social networks.

The framework of psychosocial support detailed by Hobfoll et al. (2007) highlights 5 pillars of safety, calm, self-efficacy, social connection and hope. These pillars can guide preparedness actions that enhance the wellbeing of individuals, enabling them to feel secure, connected, capable and hopeful about recovery. This approach aligns with the Red Cross broader concept of psychosocial preparedness, which extends beyond individual psychological readiness to include building social capital through community relationships and connections (Richardson et al. 2023).

The Red Cross uses Putnam’s (2000) 3 types of social capital: bonding (horizontal intra-communal), bridging (horizontal inter-communal) and linking (vertical between communities and institutions/authorities). For example, developing personal support networks and deepening connections with neighbours are resilience-building activities that leverage bonding social capital, enabling emotional and physical support that has demonstrated benefits to recovery (Aldrich and Meyer 2015; Nagakawa and Shaw 2004). Understanding the risk posed by potential hazards and planning for business and income disruption use bridging and linking capitals by connecting individuals with community resources and institutional support, respectively (Every et al. 2019; Ulubasoglu and Beaini 2019).

Programmatic actions range from facilitated strengths-based community sessions to helping establish community-led working groups. Programs and projects educating around psychosocial preparedness include awareness raising around local risk profiles, connecting with emergency services, undertaking localised risk reduction initiatives, planning, practicing calming strategies and learning about the psychosocial effects of disasters. Each action reduces the disaster’s effects. This holistic approach, recognising the intertwining of psychological and social dimensions, positions psychosocial preparedness as an integral aspect of disaster readiness and recovery.

CALD communities and disasters

Recent scholarship reaffirms decades of research that shows the disproportionate effects disasters have on marginalised groups, which includes CALD communities and amplifies existing inequalities and oppression (Marlowe et al. 2022). Vulnerability and risk extends beyond physical geography and structural factors such as poverty and unemployment to include diversity aspects like gender, age, education, language proficiency and duration of residency in a new country (Marlowe et al. 2022; Teo et al. 2019). This broader understanding is essential for effective and inclusive disaster resilience strategies.

Marlowe et al. (2022) observed that while migrant and refugee communities may possess strong internal bonds (bonding capital), they often lack connections with society and support organisations (bridging and linking capital), which are crucial during and after disasters (Aldrich and Meyer 2015). This observation is supported by Osman et al. (2012), who found similar challenges among refugee communities affected by the Canterbury earthquakes in New Zealand, highlighting their limited relationships with external agencies and the wider society.

Socio-cultural factors also play a role in the vulnerability of certain CALD subgroups to specific hazards, such as Australia’s extreme heat. Hansen et al. (2013) pointed out that older migrants, new arrivals and migrants on low-incomes with limited English proficiency are particularly at risk. These vulnerabilities are compounded by socioeconomic disadvantages, linguistic barriers, poor housing quality and cultural differences. This leads to unmet needs in understanding and implementing harm minimisation strategies during disasters.

Engaging with migrants and refugees for disaster resilience

Effective engagement with CALD communities is imperative for inclusive disaster resilience, especially as previous research has demonstrated trust and rapport deficits between CALD groups and emergency management organisations (Ogie et al. 2018; Osman et al. 2012). A conceptual framework proposed by Marlowe et al. (2018, 2022) emphasised the essential elements of reach, relevance, receptiveness and the establishment of trust-based relationships to facilitate the uptake of messages within diverse communities, with sensitivity to cultural and linguistic nuances. This framework clarifies the connection between community characteristics, diversity and hazard risk contexts.

In their exploration of engagement strategies with resettled refugees, Marlowe et al. (2022) and Ogie et al. (2012) articulated the importance of recognising the distinct backgrounds and needs of refugee groups, establishing preferred modes of communication and building trust

through collaboration with credible entities. They affirm that engagement should be strengths-based and respect the everyday experiences of participants. This approach is foundational to tailor engagement efforts that resonate with the target communities' experiences and expectations (Howard et al. 2017) and has demonstrated efficacy in terms of increased preparedness (Chandonnet 2021).

Hansen et al. (2013) argued for equitable access to resources as a critical factor in climate change adaptation and the mitigation of health disparities linked to disasters. This includes access to culturally informed communication and education that is relevant and builds on cultural knowledge (McEntire et al. 2012; Pfefferbaum et al. 2018). To facilitate this, Hansen et al. (2013) proposed a multifaceted communication approach that includes bi-cultural community engagement and the use of multilingual media to cater to a diversity of cultures, languages and religions.

To bring these inclusivity-focused strategies into action, CALD considerations should be incorporated into state and territory and national disaster risk reduction and management policies, plans and procedures. Meaningful incorporation requires that emergency management personnel at all levels have a competent understanding of cultural diversity. Additionally, meaningful adoption necessitates a paradigm shift in perception—from viewing CALD communities as inherently vulnerable to recognising their potential as valuable assets in resilience-building (Cheung 2014; Chandonnet 2021).

Theoretical framework

The project was grounded in a theoretical framework that amalgamated 3 concepts: community engagement, disaster management and cultural competency. Each of these concepts supported project personnel to build on strengths and address the challenges faced by CALD communities.

Central to any initiative that aims to make a tangible difference at the grassroots level, community engagement is about involving the stakeholders – in this case, the CALD communities – in the decision-making, planning and execution processes (Crawford et al. 2021; Ife 2016). By fostering an environment where these communities felt heard, valued and empowered, the project facilitated relevant, effective and sustainable processes. Authentic engagement involved enabling an ongoing 2-way dialogue between the community and emergency services.

CALD communities can benefit from tailored emergency management planning that considers their linguistic needs, cultural belief, and prior experiences (Teo et al. 2019). By intertwining disaster management with the other elements of the framework, the project ensured that the protocols designed were theoretically sound, culturally sensitive and community-driven.

Cultural competency is the capability of institutions and individuals to recognise, understand and respect the diverse cultural factors that influence people's beliefs, values and practices. It is about avoiding generalisations or stereotypes and instead appreciating the nuances of different cultural groups and individuals. In the context of emergency management, cultural competency enabled programming that was efficient, empathetic, understanding and respectful of the distinct identities of participants.

Overview of the CALD Community Locally-Led Disasters and Risk Reduction Project

The rapidly changing demographic landscape in Australia, marked by an influx of people from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds, presents both opportunities and challenges for emergency management. Recognising the importance of integrating CALD communities into readiness plans and resilience-building, Red Cross took a psychosocial preparedness approach to its work with CALD communities in 3 South Australian communities on Kurna Country in suburban Adelaide/Tarndanya. These communities were chosen due to their multicultural composition (with a mix of newly arrived and established CALD groups) and Red Cross's positive relationship with the local council. A local CALD community development worker was hired to work the community members and facilitate the sessions. Starting with desktop research to identify demographics and existing cultural groups and organisations, the worker then began talking with community leaders about what was required and to seek their input to develop the project. The first 3 months of the 18-month project was spent out in the community and talking with as many people as possible. This was vital for the project's development and to identify community leaders who were representative of the region's multicultural demographic and who were interested in being part of the project.

The project centred on the delivery of 9 disaster-preparedness workshops across the 3 communities, with 27 community leaders from multicultural backgrounds participating in each of the workshops relevant to them. The workshops combined the different communities, thus supporting bridging capital between various cultural groups. These workshops focused on topics such as localised hazard-risk mapping, identifying strengths and barriers, creating and implementing action plans and developing sustainability and governance mechanisms. These workshops were designed in conjunction with participants who identified local needs, interests and desired areas of focus. Participants had ethnic backgrounds from Ethiopia (Tigray), Cote d'Ivoire, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Papua New Guinea, Afghanistan, Tanzania, Kenya, Pakistan, Mexico and Syria.



Community leaders represented multicultural organisations in workshops about risk identification and making action plans.
Image: Australian Red Cross

The project aimed to deepen connections with and between CALD communities and encourage them to adopt active roles in preparedness, noting their inherent strengths and resources. Acknowledging requests from CALD community leaders about the need for upskilling, the project provided tailored training sessions, workshops and resources. The goal was to equip community leaders with the knowledge and skills needed to help them and their communities effectively prepare, respond and recover from disasters.

Participating community leaders and Red Cross personnel noted the need to enhance social capital between each CALD community and other communities in their region as well as vertically between communities and government and civil society agencies. Thus, the project aspired to establish and strengthen collaborative networks between CALD communities, emergency services organisations, civil society organisations and local councils. Events like the community-led Multicultural Unity Week Family Sports Day helped facilitate this, serving as a platform for various stakeholders to interact, share insights and work collectively. Links were also forged through these agencies serving as guest facilitators, advisors and enablers through their provision of information, review of community-led outputs/activities and resourcing.

Ensuring that the voices of CALD community members were heard and acted on was a key part of the Red Cross approach. The project had mechanisms for consistent feedback from the community, thereby allowing for adaptations in strategies and interventions. As well as

improving the project and providing information for other uses, feedback supported community empowerment and rapport.

Recognising the transient nature of many community initiatives, the project aimed for longevity. Participants committed to establish a governing council. Having this platform supports sustainability and members pledged to fulfill community-led and prioritised initiatives. While all members are volunteers, they intend to seek funding to finance initiatives and have stayed connected with Red Cross and their local council who provide them with links, resources and grant opportunities. By the end of the project, the communities and their governing council were leading their preparedness activities.

Methods

This study took a mixed-methods approach incorporating interviews, quantitative surveys and observation with participants and stakeholders such as local emergency services and council personnel. The interviews and surveys were administered by Red Cross personnel who had not been involved with the project. Surveys and interviews sought to gather information regarding how and whether participants had changed their level of understanding, feelings of control and empowerment and the degree of social connection during the project. Building on stakeholder self-reported feedback, participant observations were conducted and recorded to triangulate the evidence collected through other methods. For



Tailored training sessions, workshops and resources help community leaders help their communities effectively prepare, respond and recover from emergency events.

Image: Australian Red Cross

instance, when participants noted in interviews and surveys that their level of social connection had risen during the project, observation data could corroborate that through providing anecdotes and examples of increasing interactions.

Responsibility for adherence to ethical protocols was accepted by the Red Cross, which works within a safeguarding framework that includes trauma-informed practice and codes of conduct to provide protection of participants. Enacting those principles included working closely with Red Cross migrant support programs and hiring the local CALD community development worker to work in a trauma-informed and culturally safe manner.

Red Cross adopted an asset-based community development stance throughout this project that recognised and honoured the inherent strengths, knowledge, skills and cultural resources of the community members (Ife 2016). Instead of viewing participants as passive beneficiaries, they were acknowledged as active contributors to the project. Engagement tools included meetings, workshops and individualised support as well as significant collaboration with community leaders in the project's design and implementation. The participatory nature of this project lent itself to an embedded internal 'everyday evaluation' approach where data was regularly collected, analysed and reinvested into the project (Kelly 2019, 2021), highlighting the oft overlooked and

underused value of monitoring (Kelly and Reid 2021). In addition to the findings reported here, this approach offers a novel methodology for monitoring and evaluating other community-based projects (Kelly and Rogers 2022; Wadsworth 2011).

Needs and capacity assessments for the 3 communities provided baseline data that was used to review post-project progress. Surveys were administered to participants before and after the events and workshops. These surveys gauged participant self-reported changes in social connectedness, knowledge of resilience and psychosocial effects of disasters, confidence in coping with disasters and intention to share resilience-related information with their networks. The team also collected a wealth of qualitative data, including in-depth interviews with participants at project end. While these interviews were conducted by Red Cross personnel from outside of the project, and participants were encouraged to provide honest feedback to aid project improvement. The internal nature of this data collection does pose some limitations.

Throughout the project, the team engaged in multiple conversations, meetings and workshops with community leaders and members. These interactions built trust and rapport and provided rich qualitative data that fed into programming. This information was collected using a digital form in an online open-source software (KoboToolbox), which was designed to correspond with the outcomes and indicators in the broader programmatic monitoring and evaluation framework (Kelly et al. 2022b). Additionally, personnel gathered their observations regarding group dynamics, especially when it came to task allocations and group interactions and stored them using the same software platform. This informal data collection extended beyond engagement with community members and included collaborations with other emergency services agencies, community support organisations and council staff. This promoted a holistic understanding of the ecosystem surrounding CALD community resilience-building.

Consistent collection of data from various stakeholders provided valuable insights that allowed for real-time project improvements. The findings were synthesised and discussed regularly by the team through formal and informal reflective sessions where personnel would consider the data, deliberate on whether and how to action suggestions and initiate plans to implement changes. As well as this formative analysis, the data collected throughout the life of the project was collated and analysed for a summative internal evaluation. At this point, personnel identified key themes in the data using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006) and the findings were categorised into what worked well and areas of improvement for future projects. While the ensuing report from this final analysis provided an overarching evaluation of the project, ongoing feedback and updates from

collaborative governing councils that formed across the 3 communities as a result of the project provide Red Cross and the communities with a mechanism to grow influence and monitor sustainability.

Project outcomes

The evaluation process revealed several findings related to the efficacy of the project, its reception within the community and its long-term potential. Participants noted the rising collaborative spirit within their community, which they attributed to the project activities. This included strengthened linking capital between community members and civil society, disaster management and council personnel as well as enhanced bridging and bonding capital between and within various ethnic groups across the 3 communities. This comment from a participant highlighted their recognition of social connection as key to effective disaster preparedness and recovery:

The most important thing is social capital. It is so important in case of emergencies and now I will try to increase awareness in my local neighbourhood so (that) we know each other and know how to respond to emergencies. The local community is all migrants and some Aussies. It must be that we are connected in case of emergency. It's so important to know my own neighbourhood and I will go beyond my street and introduce myself, and we should exchange numbers too.
(Project participant)

Other participants noted that they appreciated the opportunity to know more people in their own and surrounding communities and across various ethnic and religious groups. They felt this increased connection was important for preparedness as well as for general wellbeing. This sentiment was reinforced by the post-project data, which showed that 91.6% of participants felt more connected to their local community after the project.

The willingness of community members to step up and contribute was evident. Many showcased a keen interest in participating in the safety and wellbeing of their community and were excited that the project outlined mechanisms, such as the governing councils, to allow them to take an active role. One participant said, 'I want to be an active member of the community, so to learn about the disasters and, if they happen, how to manage them is useful'.

Brainstorming during the workshops helped participants identify 48 community initiatives that they would like to implement over coming years. They prioritised these and completed 6 during the project with another 6 in progress by the end of the project. These initiatives included community events such as the multicultural sports day for 121 attendees, welcome dinners for new arrivals, free swimming lessons for Muslim women and locally developed resources in various languages such as the

Multi-Hazard Emergency Preparedness Kit and disaster preparedness training for young migrant families.

The disaster preparedness guidance was especially well-received and participants expressed an eagerness to learn and increase their skills. They saw the practical nature of the information and acknowledged that building their capacity around preparedness increased their self-efficacy and ability to help others. The pre- and post-survey data demonstrated positive shifts across all domains (Lejukole and Ramasundram 2022). Participants were asked to rate their knowledge of what they should do in a disaster between 0% to 100% (with zero being very low and 100 being very high). Results showed an improvement from 61.1% before the project to 86.7% after the project. Participant understanding of the psychosocial effects of disasters improved from 69.7% to 86.7%. Importantly, their confidence around their ability to cope with events grew from 71.7% to 92.2%. One participant said, 'I've learned something new about disaster risks and what I can do to prepare'.

The overall feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with many participants expressing a newfound sense of empowerment and camaraderie. One participant expressed their joy that the project gave them:

Realising how organisations can work to help really make a change and there are ways to put your ideas forward. If you want to do something about a problem, then you don't have to just hope it will come about and sit there wishing - you can actually do something yourself.
(Project participant)

Others noted that the project had helped reinforce their value that 'we all have a responsibility to take care of each other'.

Recommendations

The project provided lessons about emergency management in CALD settings. The approach of monitoring and evaluation, where qualitative and quantitative data were collected consistently and analysed through reflective practice sessions, enabled rich insights from participants. These insights can reshape our understanding and approach towards helping communities prepare and respond to crises.

The importance of trust between communities and authorities was raised throughout the project and within the literature (Marlowe et al. 2022). This emphasises the need for consistent engagement with CALD communities, not just during disasters, but as a regular endeavour. Workshop participants noted that this could include agencies providing training opportunities, events and culturally appropriate resources. Attendees at one of the community-led events recommended that authorities,

including civil society organisations and councils, need to be proactive about engagement. Attendees said it is not enough for these personnel to be present at community events and sit behind a stall; they need to come out and interact with people. Attendees raised that this is particularly beneficial for people who may have negative experiences with authority figures. This linking capital could be increased by emergency services agencies recruiting personnel from within the cultural community groups they are supporting and through co-design of resources and materials.

Participants' stated desires for closer collaboration between CALD community leaders and emergency services agencies points towards a policy implication where inter-agency collaboration is incentivised and facilitated at the state or national level. Further, the feedback about emergency services agencies being proactive in their outreach suggests a need for more culturally tailored approaches to disaster response and information dissemination. Policies that steer emergency services agencies should incorporate guidelines on cultural sensitivity, especially when dealing with communities that might be hesitant to approach figures of authority. Additionally, these guidelines should include support for maintaining neutrality and navigating the complexities of varied political, religious and socio-cultural nuances.

A potential hook for authorities to support CALD communities surrounds participant requests for training in areas like grant application writing, project management, event planning and risk assessment. The need for upskilling of community leaders underscores a gap in community resources. Local councils or government bodies might consider offering or expanding such programs. If emergency management agencies cannot teach skills requested by communities, connecting people with relevant training organisations provides pathways for ongoing capacity development. Agencies offering training should ensure that their pedagogy and learning resources cater to cultural sensitivities and individual capacities.

Participants noted that the heterogeneity within CALD communities necessitates diverse and customised approaches rather than a monolithic approach (Lejukole and Ramasundram 2022; Teo et al. 2019). This also applies when identifying the strengths and barriers of individuals and communities. Effective group management requires acknowledging the diverse skill sets and experiences within the group and ensuring equitable distribution of responsibilities (Rogers et al. 2021). The manager of this project noted that this requires skilful, neutral and observant facilitation, noting that it was often people who were more educated or fluent in English who took centre stage. Thus, it is important to encourage quieter and less confident participants to fully participate while respectfully requesting the more vocal and confident people to listen.

Collaboration with CALD community representatives in the design and implementation of emergency management processes helps ground activities in the realities and needs of the communities (Crawford et al. 2021). Similarly, enlisting community leaders and influencers can significantly enhance outreach and communication efforts due to their local understanding and ability to mobilise and motivate their community (Howard et al. 2017). This project prioritised authentic collaboration and resulted in participants who were excited by their preparedness plans and who felt empowered to enact them. This shows the value of this approach (Lejukole and Ramasundram 2022). Policymakers and program designers should consider promoting this engagement style in disaster resilience projects, recognising the value of community members as contributors.

Emerging CALD communities may face stressors related to their migration or refugee experiences that affect their levels of understanding and engagement. Financial stress, unemployment, language barriers, competing priorities and insecure visas are issues that can affect community participation. It is important to recognise people's situation and provide referrals or financial support to enable participation, such as allowances for transport, where possible. While these stressors are largely outside the remit of emergency management agencies, understanding these challenges are essential considerations for resilience programming.

Teo et al. (2019) found that English language skills are a significant predictor of preparedness among residents in CALD communities in Logan City, Queensland. However, participants in this project mentioned that the specific barrier is formal written documentation as, while migrants arriving on skilled visas are typically fluent in English, others, particularly women, older people and those entering the country on precarious visas may face illiteracy or low literacy. Participants suggested that providing resources in informal or spoken languages would be a solution. The project also brought to light subtle communication challenges, such as cultural nuances, which often go unnoticed and vary between individuals and groups. Training and collaboration with people from diverse populations would support emergency services personnel to identify and understand these exchanges.

Feedback mechanisms, predominantly designed for the majority populace, often fall short in addressing the needs and challenges of CALD communities. Feedback mechanisms should be dynamic, flexible and responsive. Critical review of monitoring and evaluation approaches, and co-design of appropriate methods with CALD groups, helps improve the appropriateness and utility of these mechanisms (Kelly and Rogers 2022).

Conclusion

Comprehensive, culturally sensitive and community-driven approaches to emergency management are vital to address resilience in Australia's multicultural population where disasters occur. This project offered insights into the intricacies of conducting a project using this approach and highlights the need for context-sensitive programming for different CALD communities.

At the core of the project's success was an asset-based community engagement model that recognised and capitalised on the inherent strengths and resources of community members. By viewing these individuals as active contributors and providing opportunities for them to collaborate with each other as well as with emergency services agencies, the project bridged the trust gap often observed between CALD communities and authority figures. This study demonstrated the potential within these communities. Positive participant feedback regarding the desire for collaboration, active volunteerism and upskilling emphasised the untapped reservoir of goodwill and capability.

Policy implications span across community engagement techniques, the necessity for broader inter-agency collaborations and the need for culturally tailored approaches throughout the preparedness, response and recovery cycle. These shifts are required to make emergency management more inclusive and effective. The recommendations are pragmatic but require emergency managers and other planners to commit to proactive engagement.

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