

CITIES on the FRONTLINE



Monthly Manchester Briefing #39 – 16 November 2021

Cities for a Resilient Recovery:

International Lessons on Recovery from COVID-19

This month, we consider how to create more inclusive disaster strategies through recognising the needs of persons with disabilities and youths, increasing access to digital technology and skills, and considering cultural and demographic factors in public health response, in order to build community resilience in an equitable manner.

International Lessons

- Disability inclusive disaster preparedness and response strategies (USA; Nepal)
- Youth engagement and participation in disaster risk reduction (Ghana; Kenya; Ethiopia; Nepal)
- Neighbourhood Community Psychologists to enhance recovery and build resilience in communities (UK)
- Productive and inclusive digital economy (UK; USA)
- Nature-based solutions that build resilience (UK; Ghana; Global)
- Climate insurance to protect communities and build resilience (USA)
- Cultural and demographic factors that affect the impacts of public health crisis (USA; Global)

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS

Health and Wellbeing: Everyone living and working in the city has access to what they need to survive and thrive.

Consider re-evaluating disaster preparedness and response strategies to centralise the needs of persons with disabilities. Many local governments have begun to learn lessons from their COVID-19 response and amend strategies to improve emergency response plans for the future. Ensuring these plans are disability inclusive is critical. Persons with disabilities can often be more vulnerable to risk during normal times and even more so in the height of a crisis. A [recent paper](#) explored the social determinants of disabled people's vulnerability to COVID-19 and the impact of policy response strategies. The paper identifies **recovery and renewal strategies that focus on reducing the social, economic, and environmental conditions that create disproportionate and unequal impacts.** When re-evaluating local disaster preparedness and response, consider:

- Seek feedback from local people who live with a disability, and their carers, to understand how local response to COVID-19 met their needs or how their needs might be met more effectively in the future e.g. communications, access to services, community support mechanisms etc.
- Include strategies that **recognise social vulnerability**, as well as health related vulnerabilities, for example 'universal basic income' approaches to social security or 'housing first' approaches to tackling homelessness

- Identify the various forms of risk that persons with disabilities might be exposed to, taking geographical and locale-specific risks into consideration. Needs will differ in the case of a flood/fire and evacuation than when faced with a health crisis
- **Integrate the diverse and intersecting needs of persons with disabilities into preparedness and response plans.** Co-produce these plans with them and their carers
- **Identify the barriers that people with disabilities face in the community** – work to reduce these barriers through long-term renewal initiatives, and not just in the case of emergency (e.g. re-designing local infrastructure to increase accessibility)
- Incorporate training for volunteers on the rights and diverse needs of people living with disabilities to maintain their dignity, safeguard against discrimination, and prevent inequalities in care provision (see [UK guidance on supporting people with disabilities](#))

See: ‘[Disability and Health Emergency Preparedness](#)’ for guidance on identifying needs, tools and resources, and guidance for assessing preparedness and response programmes. See also: [TMB Issue 19](#) for a further case study on disability-inclusive recovery and renewal.

Sources:

<https://tinyurl.com/rs94xwfs>

<https://tinyurl.com/zujx24fe>

Consider ways to meaningfully engage young people in disaster risk reduction (DRR). [TMB 36](#) discussed the potential role of young people in reducing and responding to disaster risk. The lesson details meaningful, inclusive, and creative strategies for engaging young people in all stages of DRR such as youth-led/collaborative participation. A recent addition to the [Sendai Framework Voluntary Commitments](#) details The Africa Youth Advisory Board on DRR (AYAB DRR), a collective established to **encourage meaningful youth engagement and participation in DRR policy development, implementation and evaluation** across Africa. Consider:

- Connect with local youth-led/youth-focused organisations, invite these organisations to collaborate on all stages of DRR and connect their voices with local decision makers
- Support **young people as agents of change** by acting as a facilitator/brokerage to connect their groups and initiatives to resilience partners who can inform and coach/take inspiration from youth-led DRR initiatives. This activity could also support the development of local/regional networks between young people and resilience partners
- Use online platforms (websites, social media etc.) to **create open, accessible and inclusive knowledge sharing capacity** for youth-led DRR groups/organisations, or to showcase, celebrate and promote their work. For example:
 - The [Himalayan Risk Research Institute](#) is developing a platform for disaster risk reduction students, researchers and young professionals. The initiative aims to develop a “skill transfer mechanism” whereby training, field research and workshops can build the knowledge and skills of young scientists and professionals and in turn benefit local DRR activities
- Enable the mobilization of youth groups, by **increasing their access to local resources** (e.g. community spaces they could use) and support “physical and virtual capacity building” to improve their visibility, inclusion and active participation

Sources:

<https://tinyurl.com/jppnx2p9>

<https://tinyurl.com/afbp9ty6>

Consider embedding Neighbourhood Community Psychologists to enhance recovery and resilience building in communities. The pandemic has highlighted the multitude of ways that community action has supported resilience (see [TMB Issue 30](#)). The British Psychological Society (BPS) recognises that although this is very much the case, it is critical that we don’t overlook those

communities who have “long faced and struggled to overcome adversity”. As with many other impacts of the pandemic, the psychological impacts vary significantly in “scale and social distribution”. Those who have limited local/neighbourhood connections have been found to be more socially, economically and clinically vulnerable to psychological strain and distress. The BPS have provided guidance on the potential benefits and possibilities of appointing a Neighbourhood Community Psychologist which may be of use to local government teams, civil society organisations/other community workers. Consider embedding psychologists in local authorities to:

- Improve community engagement and prevent distress by co-creating with local communities, and to research and provide the **evidence base for preventative interventions to improve community health**
- Bring **distinct knowledge, skills, and capabilities**, such as:
 - Extensive theoretical and evidence-based knowledge and understanding with regards to behaviour and experiences in various contexts e.g. social, cultural, policy and politics
 - Understanding of important forms of capital (social, economic, cultural) and factors of place that affect people’s lives
 - Experience of directly working with individuals, groups and across organisational boundaries, with abilities to work with and balance power, conflict and diversity
 - Co-designing research that tackles complex societal challenges and places reflection and learning at the heart of practice

The guidance helpfully offers a job description which could be used in full to create a new post within a local authority or could be used in part to align with another role.

Case study example from the pandemic:

- MAC-UK, a group of community psychologists, have been working in communities with vulnerable young people during COVID-19. Some of their activities include:
 - Investigating the ‘underground economy’ where many excluded young people work to identify ways in which they can be supported in the event of income loss due to the economic impacts of the pandemic

Developing strategies on ‘what next’ in the aftermath of COVID by exploring the potential role of community psychologists in creating social change in communities

Economy and Society: The social & financial systems that enable urban populations to live peacefully, and act collectively.

Consider ways to drive a more productive and inclusive digital economy. Digital technology proved invaluable for much of society and the economy to adapt and cope with the effects of the pandemic. However, the pace of digital transformation has exposed much of the inequalities in accessing and benefiting from the digital economy. For example, during the pandemic, most SMEs adopted basic digital technologies, however, many lack the resources and infrastructure (compared to larger firms) to employ complex digital strategies that could increase growth and productivity. An uneven distribution of digital productivity advantages may accelerate a “K-shaped recovery”, which risks leaving people and places behind. Consider:

- **Increase access to digital technology** e.g. improve access to broadband and digital devices to provide the technical means for productivity to develop/advance. Where connectivity is “slow, expensive or non-existent”, local governments can address the digital divide and increase access by creating or investing in publicly or privately run local networks, e.g. libraries/public buildings. For example, Toronto city council, Canada:
 - launched the ConnectTo 2021 programme which increases access to affordable, high-speed internet across the city, targeted at underserved communities in the city and;

- in partnership with a private sector partner will establish a municipal broadband network; expand access to free public Wi-Fi and design a ‘Digital Equity Policy’ to tackle the growing digital divide and support the most vulnerable and marginalized communities in the city.
- Create **means by which people can increase their digital skills** – training, skills development workshops etc. in collaboration with local partners (local schools, colleges, businesses, voluntary organisations). Creating an eco-system of support to tackle digital inequalities can drive inclusive productivity growth and benefit the whole community

Implement new strategies for inclusive productivity that consider the advantages of digital technology on the local economy, productivity and community wellbeing. New strategies should be informed by evidence, taking multiple dimensions into consideration e.g. education, business innovation, housing, and infrastructure

Source:

<https://tinyurl.com/mhf39pc3>

<https://tinyurl.com/ym97hajd>

Infrastructure and Environment: The man-made and natural systems that provide critical services, and protect and connect urban assets, enabling the flow of foods, services, and knowledge.

Consider how nature-based solutions (NbS) can build resilience. COVID-19 has exacerbated what has already been described as a “triple emergency: climate change; nature loss; rising poverty and inequality”, while also presenting a rare opportunity to improve preparedness and mitigation through recovery and renewal. Effective NbS involve working closely with nature, people and the climate, realising the interdependent nature of these elements. NbS are a cost effective approach and have the potential to deliver multiple benefits simultaneously when implemented effectively. A recent report brings together examples of NbS for *climate, nature and people* from 13 local community case studies. Consider the following examples of holistic approaches that address the these interdependent threats:

- The Medmerry project, UK, embarked on a coastal managed realignment to build new sea defences inland from the coast allowing a new ‘intertidal’ area to develop. Cross benefits of this initiative include:
 - *Climate change:* The intertidal habitat serves as a blue carbon store, meaning the area can itself **adapt to the effect of climate change and mitigate future climate change impacts, making the area more resilient to sea level rise and storms**
 - *Nature:* Bird populations have thrived as a result of the site creation
 - *People:* The project has developed flood protection to homes, critical infrastructure and local services. The work of this project has increased the economic value of production in the area, boosted tourism and reduced the emotional stress faced by vulnerable communities
- Talensi, Ghana, implemented a farmer-led and community-based dryland restoration initiative to tackle the deteriorating soil fertility and local natural resources. The communities used ‘Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration’ to restore multipurpose trees to rural areas. Cross benefits of this initiative include:
 - *Climate change:* Increase in water retention and soil erosion reduction as a result of soil and tree restoration on farms
 - *Nature:* 718 hectares of degraded land was restored and the project resulted in the planning of 23,000 additional fruit trees in the area
 - *People:* A reduction in **annual household hunger** and an increase in **diverse household income sources (e.g. greater range of food crops) leading to increased levels of household resilience**

Previous TMBs discuss additional NbS strategies: [Issue 20](#), [Issue 30](#) and [Issue 33](#)

Source:

<https://tinyurl.com/9rcjt8n4>

Consider climate insurance as a risk transfer process to protect communities and build resilience.

COVID-19 has shown that existing planning and programmes are much more accustomed to respond to immediate, tangible local risks, and consistently struggle to anticipate and respond to global risks such as climate risks. A recent report examines how financial tools, namely insurance, could make vulnerable communities more resilient in the face of escalating climate impacts. Consider that climate insurance could:

- Mitigate impacts and increase preparedness for climate emergencies
- Generate **incentives for climate adaption** initiatives e.g. protect homes through more affordable and effective insurance for renters, homeowners, businesses, and communities or reduce risk in communities through better land-use and planning strategies
- Buffer future impacts and **reduce the pressure on local resources** in the event of an emergency
- Provide funding for future recovery in the event of climate related emergencies

When planning the design and pricing of climate insurance, consider:

- Conducting a risk assessment to develop a robust and evidence-based understanding of risk and the strategies that are required to mitigate and prepare for risk
- If evolving hazards have been taken into account – e.g. risk assessments should look forward and assess how risks are evolving in light of climate change

If risk communications are effective e.g. are individuals fully informed so they can make informed decisions about insurance?

Source:

<https://tinyurl.com/ptkmt9n2>

<https://tinyurl.com/s7r2x4pk>

Leadership and Strategy: The processes that promote effective leadership, inclusive decision-making, empowered stakeholders, and integrated planning.

Consider how socio-economic and socio-cultural variables can affect the impacts of public health crises. Research has found that additional statistical modelling based on cultural and demographic factors can help to predict how disease outbreaks such as COVID-19 can accelerate and progress.

The aim of this ongoing research is to project the spread of future pandemics by utilising the predictive power of cultural and demographic data. Effectiveness of response interventions should consider cultural values among people in communities. Consider:

- A data driven approach to modelling **disease outbreak prevalence based on cultural and demographic factors** such as:
 - Population size
 - Population density
 - Public transport
 - Health (e.g. obesity)
 - Culture (e.g. voting patterns – research has shown that societies/communities with low trust in institutions tended to have higher COVID-19 death rates)

This paper offers a predictive model of COVID-19 prevalence – finding that the above 5 risk factors can predict between 47% and 60% of variation in COVID-19 prevalence in US counties. A second paper explores how cultural values can support the prediction of how outbreaks could progress and also what population groups may be most vulnerable.

Source:

<https://tinyurl.com/24rrrxwu>

USEFUL WEBINARS

Key past and upcoming webinars on how cities are building resilience in the face of the pandemic and other shocks & stresses.

Date	Webinar Title (Click to register or to access materials)
Previous (October)	
13 October	Alliance Manchester Business School – Launch of National Consortium for Societal Resilience [UK+] (NCSR+)
14 October	Resilient Cities Network and World Bank – Cities on the Frontline: Mainstreaming Resilience Thinking Into Recovery Packages
28 October	Resilient Cities Network and World Bank – Cities on the Frontline: SMEs and Resilient Recovery
Upcoming (November)	
31 October – 11 November	Resilient Cities Network – R-Cities at COP26, Advancing our resilient future
11 November	Resilient Cities Network and World Bank – Cities on the Frontline: Migration and Resilience, the MOVE book
24 – 26 November	UNDRR – European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction

Produced by The University of Manchester, UK (Professor Duncan Shaw, Róisín Jordan) in partnership with the Resilient Cities Network (Gladys Tan)

What is the weekly briefing on Cities for a Resilient Recovery?

Every fortnight the [University of Manchester](#) brings together relevant international practices and examples on recovery from COVID-19. The bi-weekly briefing is curated by the [Resilient Cities Network](#) to bring key lessons and examples targeted for resilience officers, emergency planners and other city practitioners. The structure of the briefing follows the [City Resilience Framework](#) – specifically the four drivers that cities have been identified as mattering the most when a city faces chronic stresses or sudden shocks – Health & Wellbeing, Economy & Society; Infrastructure & Environment; and Leadership & Strategy.

For more international examples please register @ ambs.ac.uk/covidrecovery

Join the Coalition of Cities for a Resilient Recovery [here](#)

If you would be willing to contribute your knowledge to this briefing series (via a 30-minute interview) please contact Duncan.Shaw-2@manchester.ac.uk