Co-learning disaster resilience for caring, equitable, and just outcomes

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Wonder Labs

OUTLINE

Context   Bringing intentionality to entry points, partnerships, and desired outcomes

Methodology   Adopting a person-centered approach for co-learning with CARE

Outcomes   Converging for equity and justice outcomes

CONTEXT

Illawarra Local Government Areas: Wollongong, Shellharbour, Kiama

CONTEXT

Funded by Australian Research Council and NSW Office of Emergency Management's 2017 Community Resilience Innovation Program grant.

Advised by Wollongong City Council, NSW Rural Fire Service, Illawarra Multicultural Services, Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra, the Strategic Community Assistance to Refugee Families (SCARF), and two community representatives.

Research observers included the NSW State Emergency Service, Multicultural NSW, Shellharbour City Council, Kiama Municipal Council, Masjid As-Salaam in Berkeley, Australian Red Cross, and the International Organization for Migration.

Co-learning disaster resilience with CARE

Working with Illawarra refugees to build disaster resilience

PhD research aims to help refugees prepare for natural hazards

Available here:
https://www.uow.edu.au/media/2017/working-with-illawarra-refugees-to-build-disaster-resilience.php

AUSTRALIA: ENGAGING REFUGEES FOR A DISASTER RESILIENT ILLAWARRA

Wollongong City Council today marks the International Day for Disaster Reduction 2017 theme 'Home Safe Home' with a commitment to inform, engage and partner with refugee households for a disaster-resilient Illawarra.

This commitment follows a recent partnership with the University of Wollongong's Australian Centre for Cultural Environmental Research, other local city councils, emergency management services, multicultural services, and diverse refugee communities in the Illawarra.

Funded by a NSW Office of Emergency Management 2017 Community Resilience Innovation Program grant, the University of Wollongong managed doctoral research project – 'Resilient Together', aims to provide insights into how refugee households learn about local natural hazards such as bushfire, storm surge and flash flooding, and what they do to feel safe and secure.

Based on in-depth interviews with 26 refugee households and 12 local organisations across the Illawarra, the research findings show that information on local hazards can be particularly important for refugees, even pre-arrival.

Within the first year of living in the Illawarra, refugees can experience the impacts of bushfire, storm, flooding, heatwave and sea-related hazards.

The findings show that as the first and most familiar point of contact, humanitarian settlement services, local multicultural services and places of worship have an important and untapped role in providing systematic access to hazard information and preparedness training.
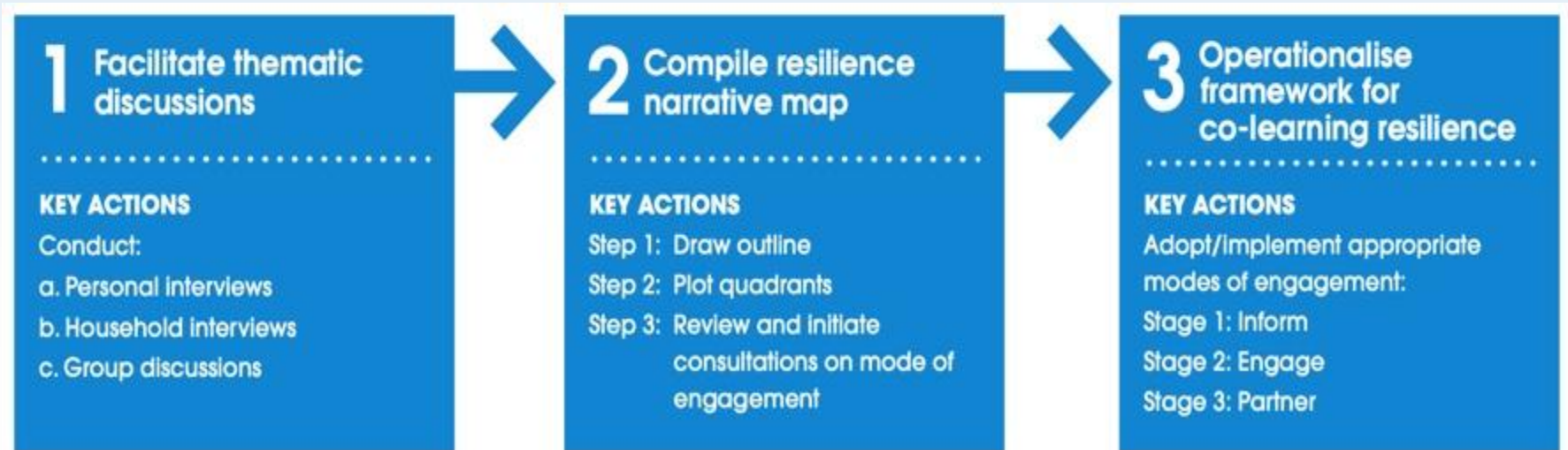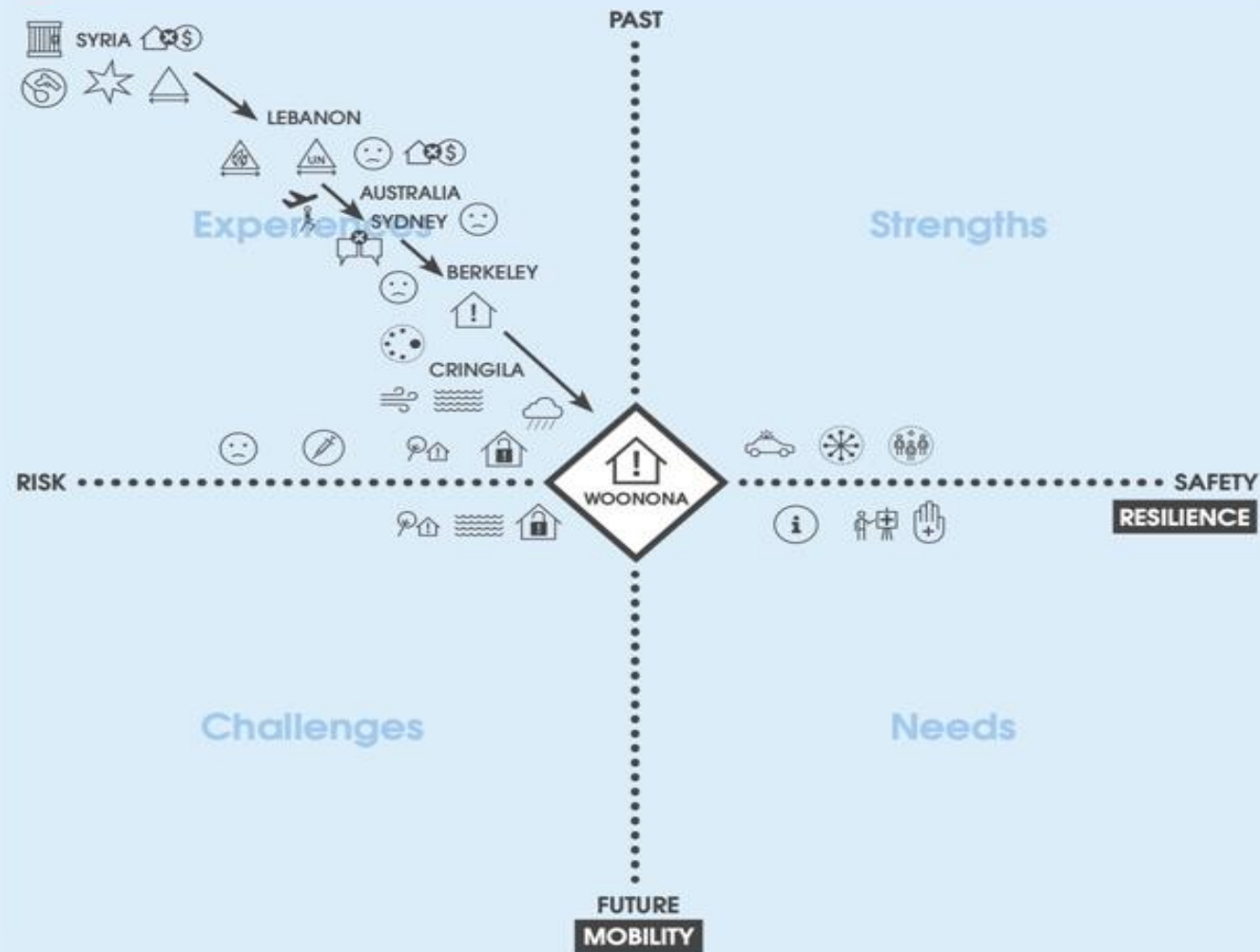
METHODOLOGY

METHODOLOGY

Figure 1: Co-learning disaster resilience: Process flow and key actions.

Lakhina, SJ (2018) Co-learning disaster resilience toolkit. University of Wollongong, Australia.

Figure 8. Resilience narrative map: Syria to Australia

Lakhina, S J (2018) Co-learning disaster resilience toolkit. University of Wollongong

OUTCOMES

Multicultural Community Liaison Unit, formed in 2017

Helping community: Dohaumang Gualnam, Francis Htjaru, Burhan Zangana, Innocent Baradogomwa, Nidaa Mostafa, Elizabeth Jowanie, Joshua McLaren and Kirsten Englert-Adnum. Picture: Greg Ellis.

OUTCOMES

"If I was not part of NSW SES, I don't think my community would know what to do in a flood or storm. I'm not sure that NSW SES previously reached out to people of Karenni, Karen, or Burmese backgrounds to interact in a culturally sensitive way. Through the Multicultural Community Liaison Unit, people from the community feel more empowered – they feel they have a voice and can bring their experiences to the attention of NSW SES."

—Elizabeth Jowanie, Multicultural Community Liaison Unit, NSW State Emergency Service

"Bringing different people from different backgrounds together – like different ingredients – combines to create an incredible community service. Everyone in the community is satisfied. Everyone wants to take part and contribute. It's good to have different knowledge and skills. For example, speaking different languages. The Illawarra has a very diverse community and, in an emergency, if someone doesn't speak English well, someone in the Multicultural Liaison Unit can help."

—Elie Butoto, Multicultural Community Liaison Unit, NSW State Emergency Service

UOW collaboration with SCARF and SES receives high commendation in the Resilient Australia Awards

A project that demonstrated the value of including refugees in local disaster planning, to help them prepare by acknowledging their skills and experience, has been recognised for its contribution to community disaster resilience.

The **Resilient Australia Awards** is a national program, convened by the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience (AIDR), to promote and celebrate innovation and best practice disaster response.

The NSW Office of Emergency Management recently announced the award recipients, which included a University of Wollongong-led project called, 'Resilient Together: Engaging the Knowledge and Capacities of Refugees for a Disaster Resilient Illawarra'.

Resilient Together was a collaboration between local councils, emergency services, and refugee settlement programs.

It was Highly Commended in the Business Award Category, awarded recently by the Hon Troy Grant, Minister for Police and Emergency Services at the awards ceremony at Parliament House in Sydney.

The project set out to solve a critical gap in humanitarian programs, where refugees are not systematically given information about personal safety and home preparedness for a range of local and natural hazards.

Rather than simply create multilingual information packs, interviews with refugees from Africa, Southeast Asia and the Middle East who have lived in the Illawarra for up to 15 years provided understanding of how they learn about natural hazards and what they already do to feel safe and secure.

A crucial part of the research involved local settlement and multicultural services, often the first point of contact for new arrivals.

Through their connection to these communities they can help them understand and prepare for hazards, rather than making it the responsibility of emergency services.

Living with Fire Design Challenge

Reimagining Community Wildfire Protection Planning in Ventura County, California

The Kindling Equity team focuses on the meaningful inclusion of socially vulnerable communities in the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) in Ventura County's Wildland Urban Interface. In collaboration with the Ventura Regional Fire Safe Council, the team engages with vulnerable communities (e.g., low-income, non-English speaking, Indigenous, housing-insecure) to understand their needs and ensure inclusive fire planning practices. The team's Story Map presents ecological data and diverse community feedback, to visualize the "projected" and "reimagined" states of wildfire risk in Ventura County. This project aims to understand the intersection of inequity and wildfire risk, as well as provide a framework for other local governments to generate more inclusive CWPPs. Read the Kindling Equity team's final project report here.

Reimagining defensible space in Santa Barbara County, California

This project created science-informed recommendations on wildfire-centric plant maintenance, species selection, and placement. In collaboration with the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden (SBBG), the team conducted interviews to develop a list of native species for combustion testing. In addition, the team carried out combustion trials with plants from SBBG to understand the hydration-flammability response of various species when well-watered and drought-stressed. The results will be communicated with the public through signs and workshops at SBBG and published through UCANR to reach community stakeholders. This team hopes to scale up this work to the County level to inform policy decisions on plant selection and defensible space. Learn more from the team's story map here.

Reimagining community resilience in Gold Hill, Boulder County, Colorado

This project developed an innovative program for wildfire adapted forest ecosystems and communities using a 100-acre forest thinning/meadow restoration project in Gold Hill, CO. In collaboration with the Boulder Watershed Collective (BWC), this team conducted a community survey to gauge wildfire mitigation knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. The team held two nature walks to teach the public about the planned forest treatment area. In addition, the team held two community envisioning events to discuss "projected" and "reimagined" states of wildfire resilience based on multi-objective forest restoration projects. This project will inform BWC's efforts around wildfire mitigation practices and education with the Gold Hill community over the coming years. Lessons learned from this project can be used to inform other wildfire mitigation efforts in communities across the Front Range in Colorado. Learn more about the project methodology, findings, and outcomes here.

Inclusive evacuation planning for Marin County, California

This 6-week summer project augments Zonehaven AWARE by contributing to community-centered research and visual design for more inclusive evacuation planning. Specifically, the WEmap team examined the challenges and opportunities of inclusive evacuation planning for culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Marin County. In addition to developing a prototype for Zonehaven, the WEmap team applied intersectional, GIS, and design thinking methodologies to deliver open-source data that can contribute to just, inclusive, and equitable wildfire resilience outcomes. Learn about the team's project methodology, findings, and outcomes here.

CONCLUSIONS

Top-down communication ⟶ Co-learning

Inclusion and diversity ⟶ Equity and justice

Collaborative outputs ⟶ Convergent outcomes