

INTERNATIONAL
SYMPOSIUM

2015



SRI LANKA | DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Preparing for Disasters and Building Resilience

Each year across the globe, natural disasters wreak havoc, leaving a trail of devastation and changing lives forever. Rapid urbanization, population growth and the effect of changing climates exacerbate the vulnerability of the most at-risk communities, which all too frequently are unprepared and ill-equipped to withstand and recover from such catastrophes.

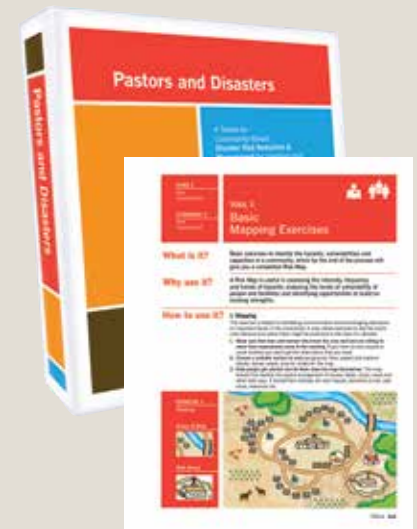
Inspired by the example of the biblical prophet Nehemiah, who challenged the community to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, and by the experience of Episcopal Relief & Development's partners around the world, a practical Toolkit for faith leaders and communities has been developed.

The *Pastors and Disasters Toolkit* helps local faith leaders and their communities to prepare for, mitigate and respond to disasters efficiently and effectively. The Toolkit builds on the concept that trained faith leaders and volunteers are essential to the community-based disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) process because they are permanent and respected members of the community. Only a few years into deploying the program, the Pastors and Disasters approach already has been widely adopted. To date, 174 partner staff members have been trained in disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) and 87,440 community members have participated in trainings globally.

Strengthening Faith-Based and Community Capacities

The Diocese of Colombo was just one of many Episcopal Relief & Development partners that participated in the Global Working Group established to develop the Toolkit. In 2009, more than 300,000 people were internally displaced at the end of the long-running conflict between the Sri Lankan state and the Tamil militant group, LTTE; the Diocese and its Board of Social Responsibility (BSR) played an active role in feeding people impacted by civil unrest. The subsequent 2010 major monsoon floods and the memories of the 2004 tsunami prompted their interest in proactive approaches to DRRM.

Pastors and Disasters Toolkit



Volunteers Trained

174

PARTNER STAFF TRAINED

87,440

PARTICIPATING COMMUNITY MEMBERS

<p>Mobilizing to Assess and Analyze Risk</p>	<p>1. Local Faith Communities Organize Themselves into Disaster Committees</p> <p>These committees use participatory workshops to build DRRM awareness and lead in designing, implementing and monitoring a disaster resilience work plan.</p> <hr/> <p>2. Committees Assess and Analyze Risk</p> <p>Committees use Episcopal Relief & Development's Asset Recognition and Reinforcement continuum to map risks, which helps customize work plans to prepare for and mitigate against disasters using the communities' own assets.</p>
<p>Implementing Disaster Risk Reduction Plans</p>	<p>3. Communities Take Action to Reduce Risk of Disaster in their Communities</p> <p>The Committee leads the process of implementing preparedness and mitigation activities targeting regional, community and household resilience. Local faith organizations and communities review and revise plans every 12 months.</p>
<p>Responding to Disasters</p>	<p>4. Short- and Long-term Community Needs Addressed in Disaster Response</p> <p>Communities plan for both short-term needs, such as food and water, and long-term needs such as restoring essential health services and water systems. All response activities include resilience-building so that communities can better withstand and recover from future disasters.</p>



As well as contributing to the development of the Toolkit, the Diocese of Colombo has been an early adopter of the approach. Between 2011-13, the BSR trained 21 trainers, who in turn trained 22 additional responders. The 43 trained individuals representing an ethnically diverse combination of clergy and lay people are equally distributed among the four archdeaconries (regions) in Sri Lanka. The trainers and responders have taken the initiative to provide disaster management training to other community members such as teachers, school children and youth groups.

Implementation of the Pastors and Disasters Toolkit training by the Diocese of Colombo has transformed the way that it prepares for and responds to disasters. Previously, the diocesan response centered on their priests, most of whom were already over-burdened with pastoral and community responsibilities. Now, thanks to the Toolkit and training and using the four-step framework (see above) communities are able to take a lead to organize themselves, assess and analyze risk, take action to reduce risk and respond.

In the last year, five communities in the diocese established disaster committees, completed Steps 1, 2 and 4 of the framework and have developed DRRM plans. Step 3, which requires engagement of the government and other community organizations, will begin in 2016.

In 2014, the Pastors and Disasters training was put to the test in 2014 following landslides in the Sri Lankan Hill Country. Diocesan responders deployed to the affected area and used the assessment skills they learned in training. They recognized that all the immediate relief needs were already being met by other groups and decided that the diocese should not duplicate relief support. However, four months after the landslides, the displaced still had not resettled – about 150 homes had been lost and they could not rebuild on the same land. The Diocese of Colombo developed advocacy campaigns with other organizations to identify new land where people could resettle and rebuild. The assessment and subsequent decision not to provide relief avoided duplication of effort and allowed the Diocese of Colombo to assist when help was needed most.

Impact and *Pastors and Disasters Toolkit* for the Future

While the Pastors and Disasters implementation is in its early stages in Sri Lanka and other countries, evidence already demonstrates that the approach greatly benefits communities. In Sri Lanka, the National Council of Churches (NCC), which represents 13 denominations, views this training as a valuable resource and invited the Diocese of Colombo to provide the training to its member churches. The Diocese of Colombo will use its existing 43 trained individuals to train other denominations and reinforce DRRM, focusing on the communities that are most at risk of disaster.

In the next phase of programming, the diocese will help parishes and their communities to better manage their own localized risk. As an example, one church located in a flood zone has mobilized their youth groups to develop a village map identifying the regular flood areas and possible evacuation routes. As part of the mapping, the youth groups also identify vulnerable populations (the elderly, families with many children) and then partner them with members of the youth groups so that in times of emergencies, all vulnerable populations have extra support. The parishioners also are matching church funds to build a small two-story community center, with a store-room supply of emergency relief items, that can also double as an evacuation shelter and relief center.

Going forward, the Diocese of Colombo will develop strategies for addressing the biggest DRRM challenges, including:

- How can the diocese expand engagement with communities to develop DRRM plans?
- How can the diocese and its trained volunteers continue to develop activities to empower and equip households to enhance their own resilience to disasters?
- How can the diocese's DRRM efforts integrate tools to evaluate and measure the impact of DRRM activities?

Community Impact Globally

80

COMMUNITIES PARTICIPATED IN PREPAREDNESS & PLANNING ACTIVITIES

33

COMMUNITY DISASTER COMMITTEES FORMED GLOBALLY

73%

HAVE DEVELOPED RESPONSE PLANS

63%

RESPONSE PLANS ACTIVATED IN 2015



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Episcopal Relief & Development works with more than 3 million people in nearly 40 countries worldwide to overcome poverty, hunger and disease through multi-sector programs. An independent 501(c)(3) organization, it works closely with Anglican Communion and ecumenical partners to help communities create long-term development strategies and rebuild after disasters. In 2015, the organization is celebrating 75 Years of Healing a Hurting World.