Youth
EMERGENCY
GUIDE

unicef
for every child

youth@
SAIIA

About this guide

The concept of the guide was borne out of learnings from the response to COVID-19 and other crises, such as civil unrest and flooding, which highlighted the need to further empower children, adolescents and youth to be better prepared for emergencies and to be advocates and agents of change.

UNICEF's implementing partner on this project was the Youth Programmes at the South African Institute of International Affairs (Youth@SAIIA).

The Youth Emergency Guide was created by children and young people from across South Africa. A series of virtual training workshops and remote youth-led drafting sessions were held with children and young people, aged 13-25 years, from across South Africa. Youth contributions and written submissions were used to inform the overall structure and content of the Youth Emergency Guide.

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Introduction

Let's be honest. Everywhere we look there's some kind of crisis.

We're seeing the impact of climate change across the world and experiencing it right here in South Africa too. More frequent and intense storms and floods are destroying people's homes and lives. Water restrictions are becoming a part of life, with people queuing for water during droughts, saving every drop to avoid 'day zero' as dams and reservoirs threaten to run dry. We see fires raging, destroying agriculture, homes and property. There's pollution in our rivers, oceans and waterways, and many of us don't have access to basic services such as clean drinking water.

Introduction

We're also still experiencing the devastating impacts and fallout of COVID-19. We've seen how unrest and regular protests over housing, services, and safety can rapidly spiral out of control. We know the stories of ongoing violence against women and children, and we see how high levels of inequality and unemployment, particularly among youth, are having a negative impact on society.

The threat of crises and of being in emergency situations is very real and that's why we need to be prepared.

By equipping ourselves with skills and knowledge, we can better prepare to protect ourselves and our community during times of disaster and emergency. We can also work towards preventing or reducing the impact of those disasters in the first place. We can be part of the solution.

When we feel empowered and have knowledge, we start to make better choices. We think more clearly, more strategically. We can problem-solve better, communicate more effectively, and help people to work together. All around the world young people are taking action to reduce disaster risks at school, home and in their communities. They are advocating for sustainable and resilient societies and are getting involved in decision-making as active citizens.

We need to build a network of committed, inspired, and informed young people, who are ready to take action in their own communities.

And that's exactly why we developed this guide.

This guide provides a foundation for how to respond better during emergency or disaster situations, and how to help build social resilience so your community is better at responding to crises. The guide is filled with information that you can read and think about, and there are also interactive activities you can complete.

It's important to note, this is not a guide for first responders. To be an emergency first responder, you need to have proper training and equipment. This guide is about emergency preparedness, building social resilience, helping you understand how to prepare for an emergency, how to stay safe, and how to help prevent or mitigate the impact of crises when they happen.

This guide was co-developed by youth participants (aged 13-25-years) from across South Africa through a series of workshops, expert sessions, and writing teams. We shared stories of how we've experienced different emergency situations, and did thorough research into emergency preparedness, so this guide is based on lived experiences and first-hand information.

So here we go!

We're really glad that you chose to come on this journey and that you are committed to becoming an emergency preparedness advocate in your own community. We hope that we can collectively work together to ensure a more resilient and prepared generation of young people.

02

Definitions + Concepts

It's important to start at the beginning and to understand what some of the key emergency terms, concepts and definitions mean.

Definitions

What is an emergency?

An emergency is a **serious, unexpected, and often dangerous situation** that poses a threat or risk to health, life, property, or the environment. Emergencies require immediate action to reduce and limit the impact of the threat or risk posed.

What types of emergencies are there?

Different kinds of threats that can result in emergencies. This guide will focus on:

- **Climate and environment:** Intense storms, flooding and drought, air, water and soil pollution.
- **Conflict and unrest:** Sparked by frustration and anger and/or more organised and planned.
- **Health crises:** Outbreak of infectious diseases and viruses.

All of these crises can be a danger to life, health and the environment. They can occur suddenly, following a single event, or emerge gradually over time, but the impacts of both can last for years.

What is the difference between an emergency and something bad that happens?

People can experience emergencies in different ways. You might have a personal emergency, such as a family member having a heart attack or being hit by a car. This is a shock, but it is more personal in nature - the people impacted are you, your family and others directly involved. Other emergencies are broader in nature, they affect more people at the same time or even an entire community or society, such as a severe drought or a flood. Both types of emergencies are difficult to cope with, but this guide is focused on the kind of emergencies that affect large groups of people at the same time.

What is a hazard?

A hazard is a **phenomenon or a process**, either natural or human-made, **that can endanger a group of people**, what they have, and their environment, if they do not take precautions. Some hazards are natural such as floods, droughts, and earthquakes, while others are caused by humans, such as industrial or technological hazards (e.g. explosions, fires, toxic chemical spillages). Wars and terrorism are also hazards caused by humans.

Definitions

What is a disaster?

A hazard becomes a disaster when it causes **widespread human, material, economic or environmental loss**. Disasters are serious disruptions to the functioning of a community or system and can be caused by natural or man-made hazards. People often talk about 'natural disasters', but there are only natural hazards that cause disasters within communities. Do you see the difference?

A disaster takes place when the following three conditions occur at the same time:

- A hazardous phenomenon occurs, natural or human-made.
- The phenomenon causes a lot of damage, especially where no preventive measures have been taken.
- The phenomenon has a more devastating impact on people who live in hazardous places.
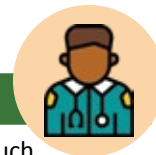
What is vulnerability?

Vulnerability is the **inability to resist a hazard or to respond when a disaster has occurred**. For instance, people who live on low lying areas are more vulnerable to floods than people who live higher up. Vulnerability depends on several factors, such as people's age and state of health, local environmental and sanitary conditions, as well as the quality and state of local buildings and their location with respect to any hazards. Families with less resources often live in higher-risk areas because they can't afford safer and often more expensive places. This is what we call **economic vulnerability**. Similarly, a wooden house is sometimes less likely to collapse in an earthquake, but it may be more vulnerable in the event of a fire or a severe storm. This is what we call **physical vulnerability**.

What is risk?

Risk is the **probability that a hazard will turn into a disaster**. Vulnerability and hazards are not dangerous when they are looked at on their own, but if they come together, they become a risk or, in other words, there is a higher probability that a disaster will happen. Risks can be reduced or managed. If we are careful about how we treat the environment, and if we are aware of our weaknesses and vulnerabilities to existing hazards, we can take measures to make sure that hazards do not turn into disasters. Assessing risks and vulnerabilities is an essential component of emergency preparedness work. We can anticipate how risks and vulnerabilities may combine so that we can adapt to and mitigate the potential impact of hazards.

What is emergency response?

Emergency response is the **systematic response to an unexpected or dangerous occurrence**. The goal of emergency response is to save lives and to mitigate or lessen the impact of the event on people or the environment. Emergency response is a critical component of safety and security and timing is important - the quicker people can respond, the less impact the disaster will have.

What is a first responder?

A first responder is a trained professional, such as a police officer, medical practitioner or firefighter, whose job it is to be the first person on the scene of an emergency. A first responder has specialised training that enables them to know what to do in different situations, which is often medical training.

What is social resilience?

Social resilience is the ability of an entire social system to cope with, tolerate, respond to and recover from disasters. Social resilience focuses on the conditions that help people absorb impacts when they occur, or to adapt to changes once something has happened. An important aspect of social resilience is making use of the social connections that exist within groups, communities and networks to withstand, manage and recover from emergency situations. Resilience can be thought of in three ways: 1) the ability to cope; 2) the ability to adapt; and 3) the ability to transform. A lot of the discussions about resilience involve building capacity, and that is what this guide is aimed at doing - building your capacity to respond during times of emergency.

IMPORTANT

This guide is NOT aimed at preparing you to be a first responder. Rather, this guide is aimed at helping you understand what you should do as a normal citizen when an emergency strikes.

Types of disasters

Droughts

Floods

Wildfires

Droughts occur when a region or area receives less precipitation than usual that can reduce stream flow, damage crops and affect water supply.

There are four kinds of drought:

a. **Meteorological drought -** when the amount of precipitation in a specific area is less than the average.
b. **Hydrological drought -** when reduced precipitation impacts water supplies.
c. **Agricultural drought -** when crops become affected by drought hazards.
d. **Socioeconomic drought –** when the demand for water outweighs the supply.

Over the last decade South Africa has experienced increased droughts, most notably in the Eastern and Western Cape regions.

EXAMPLE:

Cape Town Drought, 2015 - 2018

Following three years of below average rainfall, Cape Town experienced a severe drought that led to the drying of dams, affecting the City's water supply. Following water restrictions and intensified communication to save water, the City was able to avoid 'Day Zero' - the day when the taps would be shut off. Cape Town's drought was the result of climate change affecting weather patterns, as well as poor planning and the inability to act on evidence-based climate projections.

Floods are natural hazards caused by an overflow of large amounts of water on dry land as a result of heavy rainfall. There are three common types of floods:

a. **Flash floods** are caused by rapid and excessive rainfall in a short period of time (usually within 6 hours). Flash floods increase water levels in rivers, streams or channels.
b. **River floods** occur when heavy rains cause a river-bank to overflow.
c. **Coastal floods** are caused by sea level rise which results from high tides, storm surges or tsunamis.

Floods are the most frequently recorded hazard in Southern Africa. South Africa has experienced over 77 major floods between 1980 and 2010, as well as many more since.

EXAMPLE:

Hennops River, Tshwane Floods, 2019 and 2022

The Hennops River in Tshwane burst its bank due to heavy rains. This flooding affected the lives of the more than one million people who lived near the river. Both flood events led to large infrastructure and economic damages, when roads, buildings and homes were submerged.

KwaZulu-Natal Flood, 2022

In April 2022, extreme rainfall led to catastrophic floods in KwaZulu-Natal, causing the deaths of 448 people (including 57 school children), displaced over 40,000 people, and destroyed over 12,000 homes and 600 schools, leading to disruptions in water supply, transport and daily activities. While climate change resulting in intense rainfall is viewed as the primary cause, poor housing in informal settlements, aging infrastructure and limited knowledge on flood response among vulnerable communities made the impacts much worse.

Fires are caused by fuel, weather conditions or an ignition source such as lightning, lit cigarette butts, or arson. Fires can start in homes accidentally or as a result of human negligence, such as electrical faults with appliances, burning candles, heating equipment, burning oil on a stovetop, or unattended open braai fires.

Veld fires are a type of wildfire that occur because of natural causes, such as lightning, or due to human activity, such as camp-fires. These fires are common in very dry conditions, such as times of drought and during high wind seasons.

Wildfires are common in South Africa, causing damage to natural habitats, property, crops, and air quality which can cause respiratory problems and can also lead to loss of life.

EXAMPLE:

Table Mountain Fire, Cape Town, 2021

The April 2021 Table Mountain wildfire spread across parts of the National Park towards the University of Cape Town (UCT). This fire damaged the upper campus of UCT, where the Special Collections Library and the historic structures, such as Mostert's Mill, were destroyed. Students had to evacuate residences and university was suspended. While the cause of the fire was not confirmed, factors such as wind, dry vegetation, and extremely hot weather conditions were identified as contributors that helped spread the fire.

Types of disasters

Severe Storms

Severe storms, such as thunderstorms, are violent, short weather disturbances associated with lighting, thunder, dense clouds, heavy rain or hail, and strong winds.

Lighting from thunderstorms can start fires, damage electrical equipment and electrocute humans and livestock. Strong winds resulting from thunderstorms can destroy homes, overturn vehicles, uproot trees and blow away poles.

Southern Africa mostly experiences thunderstorms during the summer. These storms largely affect households in informal settlements, commonly built from low-cost materials in disaster prone areas.

EXAMPLE

Eastern Cape Storms, 2021

In December 2021, heavy thunderstorms hit Mthatha town, in the Eastern Cape province. Six people were killed, more than 27 people hospitalised and hundreds left homeless. Over 1,000 homes were damaged, and 8,810 people were affected. In addition to physical damage to homes and buildings, the thunderstorm affected health, water and sanitation, food security and livelihoods, leaving people to cope with the ripple effects including trauma, stress, limited hygiene materials and food insecurity.

Health Emergency

Health emergencies typically occur as a result of epidemics or pandemics.

Epidemics are contagious diseases that spread over a community, population or region, and can have serious health impacts. Examples of epidemics are cholera, measles and malaria.

Pandemics are diseases or illnesses that spread over a large group of people, often from one human to another across multiple countries or continents. Pandemics have the potential to kill millions of people, and disrupt societies and economies.

With increased global travel, urbanisation, changes in land use, and greater exploitation of the natural environment, health emergencies have increased and are spreading more widely.

EXAMPLE

Measles

In late 2022, a measles outbreak started in Limpopo province affecting mostly children between the ages of 5 and 9 years. By early 2023, measles had spread to five other provinces with more than 130 cases confirmed. The majority of the cases were from people who had not been vaccinated.

COVID-19 pandemic

South Africa was deeply impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020 – 2022. Nearly 300, 000 people died, several million were seriously ill, and about 1,4 million people lost their job. The 'lockdown' associated with the pandemic caused radical changes to social life and education, and severe pressure was put to health care services.

Civil Unrest

Civil unrest can occur at any time and is more likely when contributing factors such as poverty and unemployment lead to frustration and anger with authorities or other groups in society. Civil unrest can be peaceful, such as through a march, but can also be disruptive or violent, such as in demonstrations, strikes and protests.

These demonstrations can easily be manipulated by different groups and can cause disruptions in services, such as access to public transport and can result in death, vandalism, injury or arrests by police forces trying to control the unrest.

EXAMPLE

Civil Unrest, 2021

In July 2021, South Africa experienced a wave of violence that involved looting, food-riots, damage to property, and most tragically, the death of hundreds of people. The rapid deterioration of the situation highlighted how quickly the rule of law can break down. Contributing factors included poverty and unemployment that fuelled frustration, as well as an inability among security services to quickly manage the violence.

NOTE

It's important to understand that hazards often interact with and intensify one another. For example, a flood is primarily an environmental hazard, but it can result in the spread of waterborne diseases, leading to a health emergency. Similarly, air pollution, a chemical hazard, can harm respiratory tissue and cause anger within communities which might lead to civil unrest. Emergencies don't always happen independently of each other and can influence each other in different ways.

03

Emergency Preparedness

When we think about disasters, we often think about the actual event - being trapped in a flood or caught up in a riot - and not the events that led up to that point.

One of the best ways of dealing with disasters is 'emergency preparedness', which refers to the preventative measures you can take to reduce the effects of a disaster on your family, community, and life. Being prepared can help reduce anxiety, fear, confusion, and loss.

The goal of being prepared is to:

- Lessen the impact the disaster will have when it strikes,
- Have a clear understanding of what you should do during the disaster, and
- Develop a plan that makes the most of resources and time, reducing the amount of effort needed to keep you and your community safe.

All emergency preparedness needs to be specific to your own situation, and it needs to be personalised. Use this section of the guide to go through the steps of how to become more prepared.

3.1 Identifying risks

Assessing my risks

A critical component of being prepared for and managing a disaster is identifying your own risks and vulnerabilities ahead of time.

Risk identification deals with the factors that cause disasters, and the vulnerabilities that might be present that could make these disasters worse. Risk assessments identify, assess, and try to understand disaster risk, and are important to reducing it.

You may find that your area already has a specific risk assessment. Try contacting your local ward councillor to find out if they can direct you to an existing risk assessment, or if they may be able to convene a group of stakeholders to conduct one. Either way, it's always a good idea to get in touch with your local government representative to find out what has been done and what still needs to be done.

Not sure who your local ward councillor is? Check www.elections.org.za to find out.

You and other youth in your area might want to conduct your own basic risk assessment. You can try this at a school level too. When conducting a risk assessment, some of the most important things to think about and understand are:

- **Hazards:** the potential source of damage, such as a flood, storm, fire, or civil unrest
- **Exposure:** how you might be exposed to this hazard
- **Vulnerability:** how susceptible you or other people/things are to the potential hazard

GUIDING QUESTIONS	MY ANSWERS
HAZARDS	
What kind of a climate do you live in? Is it hot, dry, cold, rainy, or have any other climatic characteristics?	
What kind of an environment do you live in? Are there any areas that look like they are exposed to climate-related hazards, such as areas prone to floods, steep slopes that are prone to landslides, eroded areas.	
Are there any areas that look like they are not exposed to climate-related hazards, that could be safe havens?	
Are there any non-climate related hazards in the area, such as environmental pollution?	
Are there any areas prone to water stagnation or where water just sits?	
Has your community experienced any emergencies or disasters in the past? What were these, what happened, and how were people impacted?	

3.1 Identifying risks Assessing my risks

GUIDING QUESTIONS

MY ANSWERS

EXPOSURE

GUIDING QUESTIONS	MY ANSWERS
What kind of building are you examining? Is it a secure structure, what materials is it made from, how safe is the structure?	
What access do you have to 'lifeline utilities' such as:	Water supply
	Wastewater and sanitation
	Stormwater management
	Energy
	Solid waste management
	Transport
	Road networks
	Communications
How do people use the land around you? Is it more of a residential or urban environment with houses and shops, or is it more of a rural area with farm lands and open space?	
What kind of facilities do you have in your community, such as:	Education facilities
	Health facilities
	Local government buildings
	Religious buildings/community halls
	Evacuation centres
	Other social infrastructure or facilities
What kind of community networks exist or are you part of? Do you have a neighbourhood watch, a community policing group, a religious group, or other social or community institutions that you or others are part of?	

3.1 Identifying risks # Assessing my risks

VULNERABILITY REFLECTION

GUIDING QUESTIONS

MY ANSWERS

GUIDING QUESTIONS	MY ANSWERS
Do you think you are at risk of any disasters or emergencies? If so, what would these be? Use past experiences or historical knowledge to reflect on this.	
Do you have a strong support network? Are there people you could call, different groups you are part of?	
What is your ability to recover from any disasters? Are you able to easily replace what you need or is it difficult already?	
Are there elderly people, young children, or people with disabilities living in your household?	

Using the information you have gathered above, identify the following:

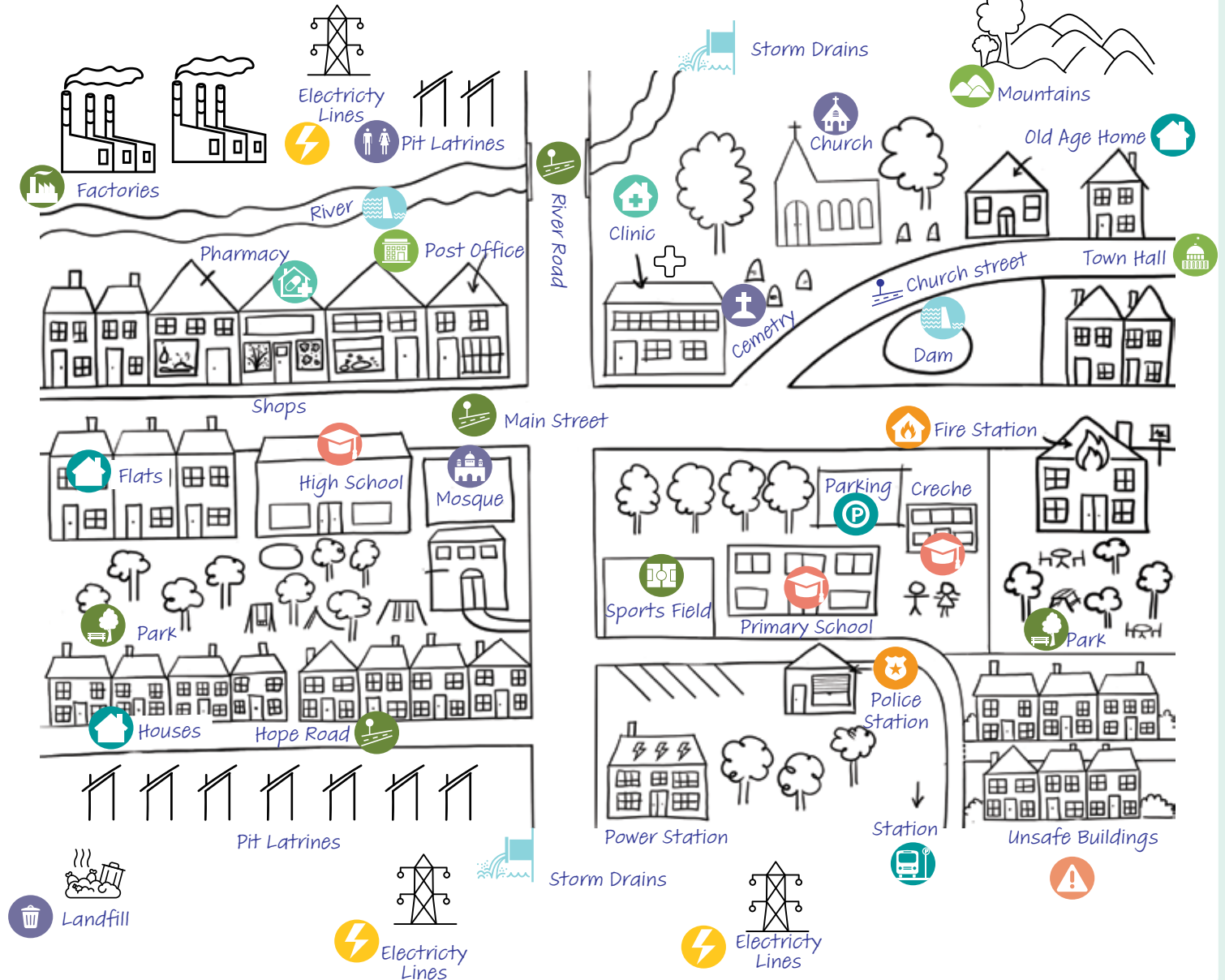|	
The main problems and issues in my community are:	
My main concerns about this are:	
To respond to this or be better prepared, I/we need to:	

Activity # Draw a risk map of your community

Once you have done some investigations into the risks that you potentially face, it is often helpful to turn this into a map.

STEP 1

Start by drawing the most important buildings: schools, hospital, fire station, police station and houses. Also draw buildings or structures that could be dangerous, such as factories, storm drains, pit latrines, dams, or electricity generating stations, as well as buildings that are in a weak state of repair. Draw a different symbol for each kind of building or structure. Identify all the roads, rivers, electricity lines, water supply and sewage systems and waste dumps. Use a different colour to show each of these areas.

Electricity Lines
Storm Drains
Mountains
Pit Latrines
Church
Old Age Home
Factories
River
Clinic
Pharmacy
Post Office
River Road
Town Hall
Cemetery
Church street
Dam
Shops
Main Street
Fire Station
Flats
High School
Parking
Creche
Mosque
Sports Field
Primary School
Park
Park
Houses
Hope Road
Police Station
Pit Latrines
Power Station
Station
Unsafe Buildings
Landfill
Electricty Lines
Storm Drains
Electricty Lines

Activity

Draw a risk map of your community

STEP 2

Once you have this basic map, use the information you gathered during your risk assessment to show how badly the buildings could be affected (a little, quite a lot, totally wiped out). Use a different symbol or colour depending on the level of risk and the type of risk, for instance flood areas or landslide areas.

STEP 3

Then identify where the people who will need the most help in the event of a disaster are, such as schools, homes of the elderly, hospitals and creches.

STEP 4

Share this and start a discussion with your classmates, teachers, and people in your neighbourhood. What measures could your community take to make people safer? Which people in your community could help you?

You may want to run a school event to find out more information. Invite community members to your school such as your ward councillor, representatives of local organisations, business leaders, police officers, fire fighters, doctors, first responders, social workers, and journalists. Talk to them about your risk map and start a discussion about how to prevent disasters from occurring, or how to reduce their impact if they occur.

NOTE

Whatever you find in your risk assessment shouldn't scare you. The first step in overcoming any challenge is to know and understand the environment around you, and then you can begin to plan and prepare.

Map labels: Storm Drains, Mountains, Church, Old Age Home, Factories, Pit Latrines, River, River Road, Pharmacy, Post, Clinic, Cemetery, Church street, Town Hall, Dam, Shops, Main Street, Flats, High School, Mosque, Fire Station, Parking, Creche, Sports Field, Primary School, Park, Park, Houses, Hope Road, Police Station, Power Station, Electricity Lines, Station, Unsafe Buildings, Storm Drains, Pit Latrines, Landfill, Electricity Lines

Legend: Floods, Landslides, People who need help, Lesser Risk, Greater Risk

3.2. Identifying early warning signs

Once you are aware of your own risks and vulnerabilities, you can do something really important: monitoring.

Most disasters don't just happen all of a sudden. There is usually some kind of build-up, where things slowly begin to change until they reach a tipping point. This is why we need to look out for early warning signs that a disaster might be on its way.

WHAT IS AN EARLY WARNING SIGN?

Early warning signs are the first signs and symptoms that suggest something isn't right. The best way to identify early warning signs is to be familiar with and knowledgeable about the environment around you.

Take an interest in your area, notice when the rains come, for how long and how heavy, where the plants grow, what the soil is like, and where the river flows. Start to be curious about how the natural world and society works, where people walk and go, what the drainage or waste systems are like. Having a good understanding of the area around you will help you to notice when things start to change – and this is key for emergency preparedness.

There are a lot of specific early warning signs for different kinds of hazards. For example, there are ways of measuring river levels to monitor for floods, or when it's dry for drought. Once you have done your risk assessment and identified what hazard is most relevant to your area, find out what the early warning signs for that hazard might be and start monitoring them within your community.

Be an enviro champ

Looking after your local environment can also reduce risk and vulnerability. Advocate to keep your community clean – rubbish can block drains and pollute rivers, worsening the impact of flooding.

Set up a school or community-based club that can support rubbish collection, recycling and monitor drainage systems in schools.

Get a **'mini-SASS'** kit where you can monitor the health of your local streams and rivers. Involve your community, school, or family and friends and feed vital information back to the mini-SASS map and local authorities to advocate for action.

See more here: https://minisass.org/en/

3.3. Developing your emergency plan

To deal with a disaster, it's important to develop an emergency plan, outlining the key steps and actions you should take when faced with a disaster.

Once you understand the principles of emergency planning, you can start to develop your own emergency plan.

STEP 1

Start with your family

The best starting point for any emergency plan is by organising with your own family, so think about where you live and who you live with.

Look around you. What are the hazards nearest your home? Could improvements be made to your house to make it safer? Are there places in your house or in your community that might be safer in the event of a hazard? Where are the nearest people and institutions that could help you, such as a school, fire station, place of worship, police station, hospital/health centre or local organisation? Use the information from your risk assessment and risk map to help guide you.

STEP 2

Identify your safe space

The most important thing is to stay safe and to do this you need to identify a 'safe space' you can go to during a time of need.

What is a safe space? A safe space is place you can go where you trust you will not face further harm. It's also where you have access to basic resources such as shelter, food, water, electricity or communications. Know where your safe spaces are - they might be at home, at a friend or family member's home, at a school, or within a community institution.

It's important to talk to the people who own that place and let them know it's a safe space for you. Share your emergency plan - if people know what you need, and are aware of what your situation is, it helps them to be better prepared to help you if the time ever comes.

Once you have identified your safe space, know how to get there from different places (home, school, etc.), and map out alternative routes in case one is blocked. You can also save these locations on your mobile device's mapping services.

Here are some principles to think about:

Emergency planning principles

1. Emergency planning is risk informed. Your plan should be based on your risk assessment.
2. Emergency planning reduces unknowns. Planning increases your understanding of risks, vulnerabilities, and response options across the social, built, economic, and natural environments.
3. Emergency planning is collaborative and inclusive. Planning involves consultation and engagement with anyone affected by the plan.
4. Emergency planning is strategic. Planning develops strategic objectives, relationships, and networks.
5. Emergency planning is solutions oriented. Planning helps to develop approaches that better manage risks and consequences.
6. Emergency planning is a process. Learning from each step will help you to inform the next steps.
7. Emergency planning enables the ability to be able to adjust or change where needed. Planning develops frameworks that provide a base on which to build flexible and adaptive solutions.
8. Emergency planning is a shared responsibility. All emergency plans work better when you have more people involved.
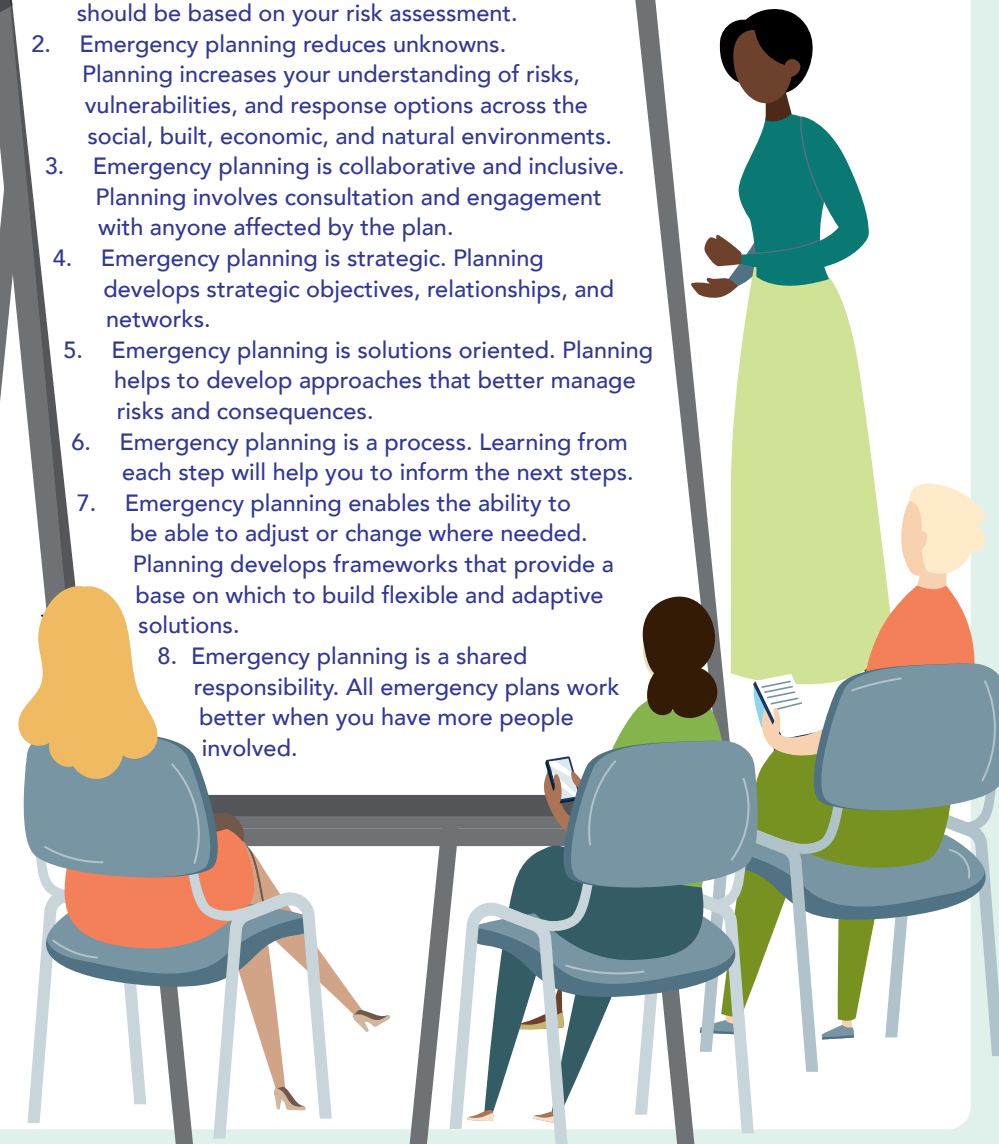
3.3. Developing your emergency plan

STEP 3 — Create your emergency contact list

Remember, you are not a first responder, so if an emergency strikes you need to be able to call someone to either get help for yourself and find a safe space, or to warn, protect, or help other people if you are safe. You need to know who to be in contact with and it's very important that you have phone numbers and contact information handy.

If you are in an emergency situation, let someone know – call your parents or guardians! Make sure you know their numbers by heart, and don't assume you will be able to look up any numbers on your phone. Put together a basic list of emergency contacts, and memorise these numbers in case your phone isn't working.

There are also important national numbers you need to know. Depending on the type of emergency, you will need to contact different people, so think about the risks and who you might need to contact.

In South Africa, our local fire stations play a very important role in emergency response and they are a strong resource within our communities. Reach out to the fire department in your area and ask them for advice – they may be able to help with important contact information, different services, or even different types of training. It's important to build up a relationship with the responders in your area, so introduce yourself, find out what services are available, and let them know that you're interested in being more disaster prepared.

Many communities in South Africa have social media groups that share information about important local numbers. Try to join these groups to ensure you have all the updated local contact information. Do some research about what services are available in your area, and use this list to help you get started.

NATIONAL EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS

Service	Contact Number
Nationwide emergency response	**10111**
Ambulance	**10177**
Cell phone emergency — Call 112 from any mobile phone in South Africa to be routed to your network provider's emergency call centre. The operator then puts you through to the relevant emergency service (police, ambulance, fire, traffic police, sea rescue).	**112**
National Disaster Management Centre	**012 848 4602**

My personal contact list

SERVICE	CONTACT NUMBER
National Helplines	
Nationwide emergency response	10111
Ambulance	10177
Cell phone emergency	112
My Community	
Ambulance/hospital/doctor	
Police	
Fire Department	
Water and Sanitation Services	
Neighbourhood Watch/Community Group	
Family Contact Information	
Contact 1: Name	Contact 2: Name
Phone:	Phone:
Address:	Address:
Out of Town Emergency Contact	
Contact 1: Name	Contact 1: Name
Phone:	Phone:
Address:	Address:

3.3. Developing your emergency plan

Think about your own environment and make sure you develop a list that is relevant to you. You may want to include the number of a district office, an environmental department, a harbour management officer, a pharmacy, or a veterinarian.

Save these numbers onto your phone and print or write out two copies. Hang one copy in your house, like in the kitchen, and make sure it's easily accessible. It's a good idea to share this information with your family members and friends. You can also do this exercise as a class, club, or school group.

STEP 4

Develop Your emergency kit

It can be a good idea to put together an Emergency Kit or 'Go-Bag'. During an emergency it's likely that you will need some basic supplies, you might need to protect some key items or belongings, and you might need to access these in a hurry. A go-bag is exactly for this.

NOTE

Make sure you always keep your important ID documents in a safe place, and that you can access them quickly. You might want to keep a certified copy of your ID in your go-bag.

You should be prepared to be self-sufficient for at least 72 hours and keep your go-bag in an easily accessible place. Here are some things you might want to include:

- Water – at least 2 litres per person per day
- Food that won't spoil, such as canned food, energy bars and dried foods
- Manual can opener
- Crank or battery-powered torch (and extra batteries) and/or solar light
- Battery bank and phone charger and cable
- First aid kit
- Extra keys (vehicle and home)
- Cash in smaller bills
- A copy of your emergency contact list
- Prescription medication and equipment for people with disabilities

MEDICINE

FOOD

EQUIPMENT

DOCUMENTS

3.4. connecting with relevant groups and creating early warning systems

It's important to have your own personalised emergency plan, but it's important to remember that you are part of a community and there are other people who will be affected by an emergency situation too.

It is a good idea to find out what kind of local social structures, groups, or institutions are involved in emergency preparedness and response.

There are many different kinds of community networks, but they might include:

- Social clubs or youth groups
- Neighbourhood groups
- Faith based organisations
- NGOs or community groups
- Relief organisations

Do some research about the community you live in, find out what groups are active, what they do and how they work. You might find something that really interests you and this could be another way to get involved in social and community work. Being connected with different groups and networks is an important way of building early warning systems to help people communicate about, prepare for and respond to different emergencies.

WHAT IS AN EARLY WARNING SYSTEM?

An early warning system is a way of providing people with relevant, timely and accurate information, in a systematic way, that enables them to make informed decisions and take action.

There are four basic elements to creating an early warning system:

Risk knowledge

Building people's understanding about risks, hazards and vulnerabilities

Monitoring

Keeping track of those risks and checking how they change through time

Response capacity

Helping people reduce risks when they see they might be a potential problem

Warning communication

Communicating with people during times of an emergency, providing them with actionable messages about how to respond

There may be community groups, emergency groups, security groups, or other relevant groups that already have an early warning system in place. These often operate on social media platforms and are especially useful during times of emergency. Do some research and find out what systems exist in your community and what groups or networks you can join.

If there are no early warning systems in your area, you can help to set this up. Here are some things you need to do:

- Identify a group of people who might be interested in or benefit from being part of an early warning system.
- Find out what communication platform is the most effective for them (WhatsApp, Facebook, email, etc).
- Establish the group and invite people to join.
- Share information (see section about validating information) to help people become more aware of their risks and vulnerabilities.
- Encourage people to communicate on the group and share their observations, particularly around any changes they may see or experience in their environment. Keep the group focused and only provide or promote information that is accurate, reliable, and can be verified.
- Establish your group as a trusted source of information.
- Share information, including location-specific guidance, such as a community gathering point or a disaster route.

3.5. Finding reliable and accurate information platforms

It is very important to have reliable information about what is going on and as part of your preparation, you need to find out what those reliable information streams are.

Anyone can share information on social media, and at times it's difficult to know what is true or not. This is particularly problematic during an emergency when mis-information can be dangerous - it can heighten emotions, cause fear and panic, mislead people or create confusion, and even lead to physical harm.

We've all heard the term fake news, but what does it mean? Fake news is when information is intentionally fabricated, altered or manipulated with no verifiable facts or sources. If you believe fake news, it may cause you to respond or behave in a particular way and this might influence the way other people respond and behave too. Fake news can contain elements of truth and it's often hard to know if something is real or not, especially during times of an emergency when emotions are high.

It is very important that you follow *reliable* news, social media, and information platforms and that you pay close attention to both the content you are reading, and the content you are sharing.

Our words and thoughts have an impact on those around us and we want to build unity and understanding at all times. Take a moment and **THINK** before you share!

T IS IT TRUTHFUL?

H DOES IT HELP?

I DOES IT INSPIRE?

N IS IT NECESSARY?

K IS IT KIND?

How do you know if information is reliable or not?

Consider the source

Where did this information come from? A local blog or someone's Facebook post may not be as accurate as a news source. What does the source stand for? What objectives may they have?

Find supporting sources

Don't rely on a single piece of information before you believe something or take action. What are other people saying about the situation? The more you read from various sources, the more you will be able to fully understand the situation.

Check the date

Make sure the information is relevant and timely. People may post pictures from different places and times, so you need to make sure the information presented is truthful.

Check your biases

Be objective. Could your own biases affect the way you interpret an article? Challenge yourself to read sources that you would not normally read to make sure you are getting the full picture.

Check the facts

Reliable news sources often include data and statistics. Think about how the information is being presented and what is being included.

Check the quality

Reliable news sources often use formal, unbiased language, present the facts and provide information in a structured manner with few, if any, spelling errors. Check the quality of the information.

Check that images are authentic

Images can influence how we behave and respond but it's easy to edit or manipulate images. Possible signs for if something has been manipulated include warping (where straight lines appear wavy), as well as strange shadows, jagged edges, or scenes that look 'too perfect'. The image itself might be real, but it might be taken from somewhere else. You can use tools such as Google's Reverse Image Search to check where an image has come from and whether it has been altered.

Check video

Think about how reliable the video account is and where the information comes from. Don't forget that social media websites use algorithms to feed us content. Once you click on one post or video you will see that you start getting recommendations for more content that is similar. Many of us don't question where the content comes from or if it is even legitimate. Be careful what you watch, critically engage and in some cases, just turn it off.

Repost carefully

Think twice before posting and make sure you have checked the validity of your information before you share it with others.

Getting into the habit of reading and sharing reliable information is a good way of being prepared for an emergency - not only will you be better informed about what the reality of the situation is, you will also be a more trusted and reliable source of information for others.

To build relationships, you can use the **THINK** approach to sharing content. Encourage people to find solutions, to take action, to find positive and inclusive responses to the challenges being faced.

3.6. Developing leadership and response skills

Everything we've said about how to prepare for emergencies revolves around you demonstrating leadership – you have to take the initiative to do a risk assessment, contact different stakeholders, start monitoring different hazards, or to get other people involved. This is about you becoming an ambassador for emergency preparedness in your community.

This may feel overwhelming but here are a few things to keep in mind:

Find your entry point

In emergency preparedness, no one can do everything, but everyone can do something. You may be interested in risk assessments, or monitoring, or communications, or working with people, but no matter what it is, it's important that you find your entry point. Once you have, use your skills and abilities to connect with others and take positive action.

Be a builder not a distracter

The most important ingredient to building social resilience is working together. Good leaders help people work together. They build on what already exists, whether they are programmes or institutions, and they help people contribute to a greater vision for positive change. We need to identify what organisations or emergency teams are already doing, so we don't replicate or distract from this work, and take away precious time and resources from important work and activities already being done.

Take initiative

Being prepared requires you to take action, to take the initiative to either get something started or to build on what already exists. If you notice that rubbish or pollution is creating a hazard at your school, take the initiative to gather your peers and, with the permission and support of educators, to respond. Small, individual acts make a massive difference so the next time you see a problem, don't wait to be called on. Raise your hand, connect to others, and act.

Crabs in the House

Flooding in Durban

By Esamie Lydia Msabala

" *Imagine you and your family find yourselves swimming with crabs inside the house.*

It all began on Monday 13 June 2022. I was at school and the thunderstorms were so big and there was so much rain that the principal sent us home. I had to walk – taxis weren't working because the roads were so flooded. When I arrived we started to block all the parts of the house where water might come in, like putting towels under the doors and around the windows. The evening continued without any problems and we went to sleep. But we couldn't really sleep. We kept hearing the sound of the storm, the rain beating down, until we couldn't ignore it anymore. At 2am the sound of the water was so loud that we knew we had to do something and we spent the night trying to protect the house against the floods.

Soon rain started coming in through the roof and at the corners of the walls. Then there was water coming in through the door. Before we knew it, there were crabs and other small creatures floating around the house. The water was coming in fast and I watched as the TV, microwave, and fridge got washed away. Everyone was shocked and panicking – we didn't even have a first aid kit and no-one knew what would happen. We knew we had to leave. We tried to go but it was dark and hard to see and the fence from next door had washed into our yard so it was difficult to get out. We managed to grab the small children, our ID and our cell phones, and we ran.

I honestly thought that was going to be our last day on Earth. My mother contacted her older brother to come and rescue us because we needed shelter and had nowhere to go. The following day there was no running water in the whole area because the pipes were all blocked. It took weeks for the water to work again, and we had to contact our local councillor to get assistance. We also had to rebuild parts of our house, cleaning out the mud and water, trying to find what had been lost and seeing what we had to rebuild. Our community and neighbours were really helpful. There was no support from government so we worked together instead, helping each other to rebuild. We tried to use stronger materials, with good quality, so that this wouldn't happen again.

This was a scary day, but I learned that it is essential to be prepared for a disaster, such as having a First Aid Kit or the contact numbers of people who deal with these types of emergencies. Now I am better prepared and I know what to do if a flood were to come again.

04
Emergency Response

No matter how prepared you are and how much prevention you have done, when an emergency hits, it's often a time of crisis, when things as you know it are turned upside down. You can play an important role in helping your community or group to respond better.

4.1. Reacting in an emergency

No matter what emergency you are facing, there are a few things you need to do.

STEP 1 — Stay calm

Being in an emergency situation can be a frightening and stressful time. One of the most important things to remember is: do not panic! Panic can create fear and confusion and it often makes a situation much worse. No matter what situation you are in, try to stay as calm as possible.

- Take deep breaths and try to remain calm.
- Start to think clearly. Try to block out noise or other distractions and feel in control.
- Remember that you are prepared and fully capable of dealing with this situation.
- Think critically about the situation you are in and prepare yourself to take action.
  - *Observe the situation around you and assess what you need to do.*
  - *What is happening?*
  - *What is the best way to respond?*
  - *What do you need to be aware of?*

STEP 2 — Protect yourself

The most important thing you can do is try to protect yourself and those around you from harm. **Remember:** you are not a first responder. Do not try to be a hero.

- Find a place where you are out of immediate danger.
- Depending on what kind of emergency you are facing, do the basic things to get yourself out of harm's way.
  - *Are you able to get to your safe space?*
  - *Do you need your go-bag?*

STEP 3 — Contact emergency services

Once you know that you are safe, contact emergency services as soon as possible. Use the list of emergency contacts you prepared and make sure that people who can help are aware of the situation.

If the emergency is about to happen or has just happened:

- Contact the relevant emergency response people to inform them about what is going on.
  Send a message through your established early warning systems or networks and let other people know what is happening.

- Provide clear, accurate information that helps people to take action and find solutions. Important information can include:
  - *Your exact location*
  - *What is happening*
  - *How many people are affected*
  - *How people are responding and what you need*

Draw on all the preparation you have done and use this to sensibly, calmly, and critically think about what the best response should be. First and foremost, you need to stay safe so make sure you remove yourself from a dangerous situation as quickly as possible.

fbead0

4.2. Specific emergency response

For each kind of disaster there are specific actions you need to take. Become familiar with these actions ahead of time so during an emergency, you already know what to do. Use this table as a reference and make sure you have a good understanding of what action you might need to take but also do additional research that is relevant to the disaster you may face.

FLOODING

IF FLOODING IS IMMINENT:

- Unplug appliances and electronics.
- Shut off electricity only if flooding has not yet begun and area around electrical panel is dry.
- Move furniture and important belongings above ground level.
- Shut off toilet connections.
- If flooding has already begun:
  - *If you have not already shut off electricity, do not attempt to do so once water has entered your home.*
  - *Do not enter a flooded area that may contain live wires or appliances.*

AFTER A FLOOD:

- Do not return home until authorities advise it is safe.
- If the main power switch was not turned off prior to flooding, do not re-enter your home until a qualified electrician has determined it is safe.
- Use extreme caution when returning to your home after a flood.

HEALTH PANDEMIC

- Listen to the official information from relevant and reputable health authorities and take the relevant precautions for the specific health challenge you are facing. Reputable sources can include guidelines from the WHO and the Department of Health.
- Make sure you have safe food and water sources – you may need to boil water or wash food carefully to stop the transmission of disease.
- Practice good sanitation, washing your hands regularly and keeping clean.
- Be aware of your own symptoms. Cover your mouth and nose when you cough.
- If you are not feeling well, seek medical advice.

THUNDER AND LIGHTENING STORMS

IF YOU ARE INSIDE:

- Turn off and unplug radios, TVs, and appliances. Use a battery-operated or wind-up radio to listen for weather warnings and instructions from authorities.
- Stay away from items that conduct electricity.
- If there is hail, stay away from windows, glass doors, and skylights.

IF YOU ARE OUTSIDE:

- Find safe shelter immediately, preferably in a building with plumbing and wiring.
- If you are driving, stop your vehicle away from trees or power lines.
- If you are on the water, head for the shore immediately and find safe shelter.

4.2. Specific emergency response

CIVIL UNREST

- Stay inside and away from doors and windows.
- Secure your area (doors, personal belongings and important documents).
- Be vigilant and aware of unfolding events.
- Do not engage in verbal or physical confrontations. If you are personally confronted, remain calm and try not to raise your voice or escalate the situation.

SEVERE STORMS

- If possible, take shelter in a building and stay indoors.
- Monitor radio, television and online for weather warnings and instructions from authorities.
- If you have time, secure items that might be blown around or torn loose, such as outside furniture.
- Stay away from windows, doors, and fireplaces.
- If you are driving, stop your car away from trees or power lines.

DROUGHT/WATER CRISIS

- Pay attention to any water restrictions and follow the guidelines provided by relevant authorities.
- Practice water conservation both inside and outside your house.
- Fix broken or leaking taps.
- Avoid flushing the toilet unnecessarily.
- Take short showers instead of baths.
- Collect the water from your shower (grey water) and use this to water plants or flush the toilet.
- Avoid letting the water run when you are brushing your teeth or washing your face.

WILDFIRES

- Be prepared to evacuate at any time. If told to evacuate, take your emergency kit or go-bag with you.
- Monitor radio, television or online for up-to-date information on the fire, possible road closures and instructions from authorities.

IF YOU HAVE TIME:

- Close all windows and doors.
- Move combustible materials such as light curtains and furniture away from windows.
- Turn on lights in and outside the house to aid visibility.
- Turn off propane or natural gas.
- Move all combustibles outside away from the house, including firewood, propane, braais or garden furniture.
- Cover vents, windows, and other openings of the house with duct tape and/or pieces of plywood.
- Park your vehicle positioned forward out of the driveway. Keep windows closed and pack valuables and your emergency kit in the vehicle.

EVACUATION ORDER

- If ordered to evacuate:
- Follow instructions from authorities.
- Take your emergency kit, plan, medications, wallet, identification, and cell phone.
- Shut off water, electricity and gas if instructed to do so.
- Notify your out-of-town contact and leave a note inside indicating when you left and where you are going (if time permits).
- Lock your home.
- Use specified routes and pay attention to information on road closures. Stay off any identified "disaster response routes" which are for emergency responders only.
- Do not cross a flooded area by foot or in a vehicle. If your vehicle stalls in fast-rising waters, abandon it.
- Register with a local reception centre in person or by phone.
- Do not return home until authorities advise it is safe.

4.2. Specific emergency response

SUPPORTING FIRST RESPONDERS

One of the most important things you can do during an emergency is to support the first responders working in your area by providing local knowledge. There are several ways you can do this, such as:

- Directing or guiding first responders to areas: In some communities, it may be difficult to navigate the streets and you can help by guiding first responders to where they need to go. By staying in touch with response teams, you may be able to support them in different ways. This is why it is important to establish relationships with your local response teams, such as fire stations, so you become a trusted and valued young leader within the community.

- Providing clear and accurate information: Providing details about damage to homes, people harmed, or in need of help from an emergency situation could be useful for supporting the first responder and reducing impacts to communities experiencing hazards.

Remember: The first rule is to keep yourself safe. If you ever feel threatened, uncomfortable, or are asked to do something you don't think is right, contact your local authorities and tell them about what is happening. As a young person, you have the right to be treated fairly during an emergency so it's important for you to stand up and say something if you think something is wrong.

4.3. Assisting others

Once you know you are safe, you can begin to help those around you in several ways.

Share information

- Use your early warning systems and community networks to share accurate and helpful information.
- Remember to share information that builds cooperation and understanding and does not incite or aggravate the situation.
- Help direct people to important contacts or other information they may need.
- Volunteer with social groups.
- People often try to help through providing food and water to first responders or impacted people, setting up registration tables, or distributing clothes and food.
- Contact your social groups or community institutions and offer to volunteer - people will need your help and volunteering can be a wonderful service to your community.

Have empathy and create unity

- Many people will be scared and frightened and not as prepared as you, might not have the same kind of support networks, or may have lost their belongings or loved ones.
- You may not be able to solve people's problems, but you can play an important role in showing compassion, empathy, and understanding.
- How we treat people is often more important than what we are doing, so it is important to practice kindness, to be helpful, and to show care.
- You can help to unite people and encourage others to do the same.

4.4. Communicating during an emergency

Being able to communicate with family, friends and emergency responders during an emergency is critical

Keep in mind that everyday communication devices may not work properly during an emergency, so here are some important tips for communicating during this time:

- If possible, use non-voice channels like text messaging, email, or social media as these use less bandwidth than voice communications and may work even when phone service has been disrupted.
- If you must use a phone, keep your conversation brief and convey only vital information. Keeping your calls short also saves the battery life of your mobile phone.
- If you are unable to complete a call, wait 10 seconds before redialling to help reduce network congestion.
- Keep extra batteries, a charger, and things like a power bank for your mobile device in your emergency kit. Consider getting a solar-powered, crank, or vehicle phone charger in your kit.
- Keep your contacts up to date on your phone, email and other channels. Remember to save the emergency numbers so you always have them ready.

Additional tips for smartphones

- Save your safe meeting location(s) on your phone's mapping application.

- Conserve your battery by reducing the screen's brightness and closing apps you are not using.

- To reduce network congestion immediately after an emergency, avoid using your mobile device to stream videos, download entertainment, or play video games.

Living through civil unrest in Rustenburg

By Keaoleboga Motlhankane

" *I am a resident in the town of Rustenburg, a small mining town in the North West province. My house is in Meriting, a township just outside of Rustenburg and about five minutes away from the Impala Platinum Mine. A lot of people in Meriting work at the mine and in February 2014 there was a strike because the miners wanted an increase in their wages.*

At first, it started as a go-slow and everything was pretty calm, but this didn't last long. People got angrier and angrier, and they started putting pressure on others to join the strike, even if they didn't want to. Soon people started protesting, often violently, and this continued for the next five months. Lives were lost and many people were beaten up and injured. The strike led to turmoil and trauma for many people.

Both my parents were employed by Impala Platinum Mine and because they could not go to work during the strike, our source of income was limited. My mother had also just given birth to my little sister when the strike began. To cope with their loss of income, my parents dipped into my college savings. We were lucky because we had savings but most of the miners are either middle class or living below the poverty line. The strike caused a lot of people to go into debt and more than 30,000 people were affected. The strike also affected children in ways we didn't expect. There were children in my class who could not come to school because their parents couldn't afford stationery, taxi fares, and school uniforms or shoes. It was really hard for everyone.

During this difficult time, our number one source of communication was social media. Every day we were checking in on different groups, finding out what the situation was like on the day, how safe the area was, and what we should know about. It was really important to communicate this way because it kept us informed and it kept us connected. We also used news sources to keep up to date, finding out what the status of the situation was in terms of resolving the strike, which is eventually what happened.

I learned a lot during this experience. I began to understand how deeply civil unrest can impact our community, even for the people who aren't directly involved. I learned how to protect myself, using social networks to find out information and to stay safe on difficult days. I also learned about the importance of policy and how important it is for people to know their rights and responsibilities. I hadn't really thought about this before, how the laws in our country impact operations on the ground, but now I know differently. In order to prevent this kind of unrest, we really need to address the service delivery issues within our community, which I think would help prevent this unrest from happening in the first place.
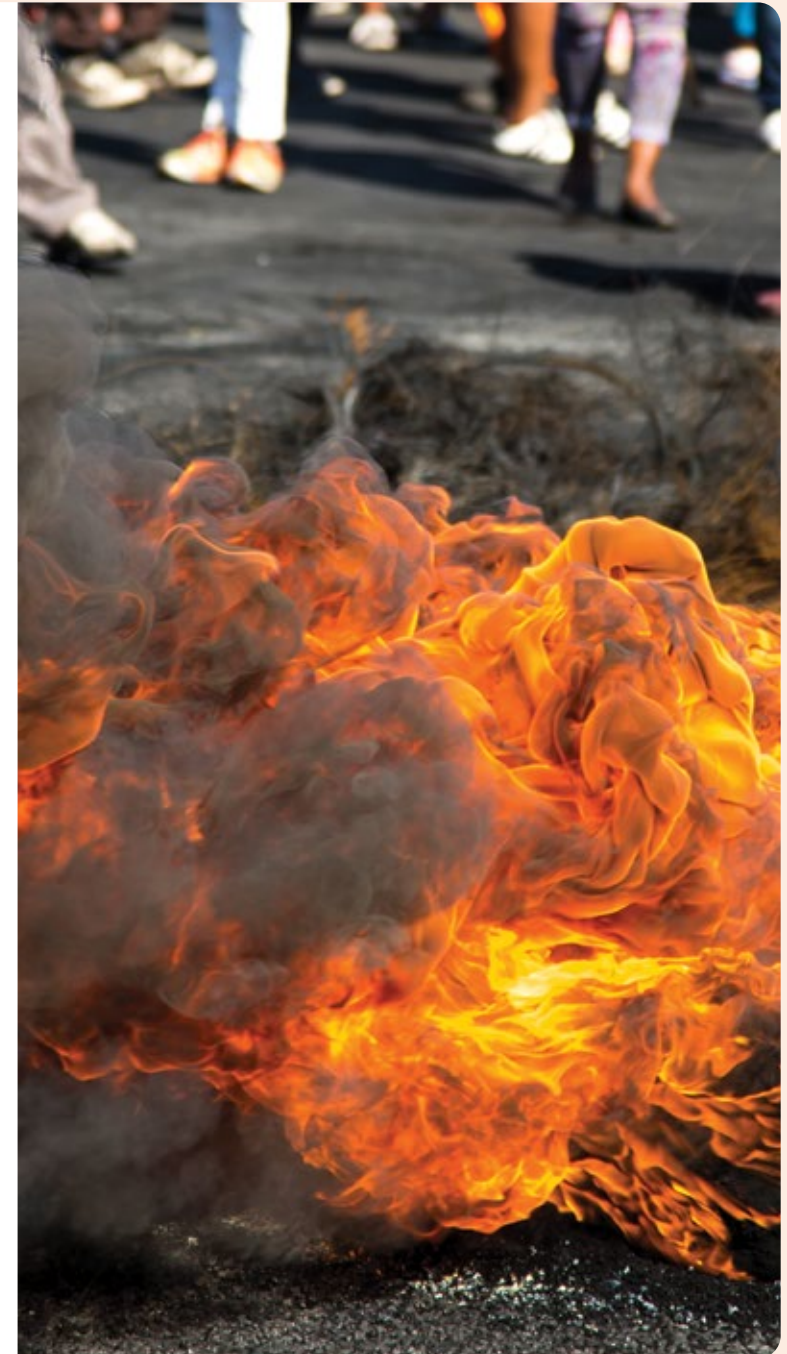
05

Emergency Recovery and Prevention

5.1. Emergency recovery

Going through an emergency of any kind can be devastating and the lingering effects are different for everyone.

Knowing how to start the recovery process can make a big difference in how quickly you are able to rebuild your life and return to some kind of normalcy.

01 Recovery is a process

It's important to remember that recovering from a disaster is usually a gradual process. Your first concern should be your family's health and safety. You need to consider possible safety issues and monitor your family's health and well-being. The process to repair and restore your life after an emergency or disaster is not easy and takes time, flexibility and patience.

Examples of recovery include:

Removing waste and debris

Contacting your local officials or insurance company

Replacing lost or destroyed documentation

Finding a new home

Getting mental health support

IMPORTANT

Find out where your community will post information on support and recovery after an emergency.

02 Safety issues

No matter what kind of disaster you have faced, you need to be particularly aware of any safety issues created by the disaster. These are some things you should pay attention to:

- Watch for washed out roads, contaminated buildings, contaminated water, gas leaks, broken glass, damaged electrical wiring and slippery floors.
- Walk carefully around the outside of buildings and check for loose power lines, gas leaks and structural damage. If you have any doubts about safety, contact a community representative or an inspector.
- Watch out for animals, especially poisonous snakes. Use a stick to poke through debris.

If you see any potential hazards, such as chemical spills, downed power lines, washed out roads, smouldering debris, or dead animals, inform the local authorities about this immediately.

03 Re-entering your home or property

If you had to evacuate your home or property, you cannot return until you know it's safe to do so. Sometimes you may need to wait for the authorities to let you know it is safe, such as in the case of a fire or flood, and other times you may need to check with other community members, such as during a riot. No matter what your situation, use extreme caution at all times.

04 Do not enter your home or property if:

- Any part of the structure has collapsed
- The structure is off its foundation
- Flood waters are still in the building
- The main power switch was not turned off prior to flooding

Returning home can be both physically and mentally challenging. Act with caution and be careful. You may be anxious to see your home or property, but do not return home before local officials say it is safe to do so.

Depending on where you live and what your situation is, it may also be important to report any damages. Let your local officials know of any damages you may have, and what immediate assistance you may need. Local organisations are usually the best options for immediate needs such as food and shelter, so connect with your community networks and institutions for support.

05 Build community

One of the most important parts of recovering from disasters is building community. Everyone has gone through a shock, some people may have experienced loss or injury, and you can play an important role in helping people to feel like they belong, that they are not alone.

Having a sense of community and people you can lean on is an important part of recovery. Reach out to your neighbours and friends to find out how you can support each other. Volunteer with your local community group, faith-based organisation, or disaster response team, and see how you can lend a helping hand. This might also be something you can do through your school or university clubs or societies. Research shows that communities with strong relationships recover faster, so help to build the kind of community you want to be part of.

06 Mental health

Disasters are traumatic experiences and can affect people in many ways. Sometimes we have emotional responses right away and sometimes they show up days, weeks, months, or even years later. Feelings of stress, anxiety and sadness are normal, but some people can experience more severe distress and might need help.

Monitor yourself and your loved ones for signs of distress, which could include:

Difficulty sleeping   Emotional outbursts   Anxiety   Depression or unexplained physical issues

If any of these signs appear, make sure to talk about them and seek advice from a professional. Many community institutions, NGOs, faith-based organisations, and university campuses offer some kind of counselling services, so if you need help, reach out. Remember that you're not alone in this difficult time and people are there to support you.

Here is a list of some services that may be useful to you:

Support Networks

INSTITUTION	PHONE	WEBSITE
National Crisis Line (LifeLine)	0861 435 722	https://www.aasouthafrica.org.za/
South African Depression and Anxiety Group	0800 456 789	www.sadag.org
Childline	0800 05 55 55	
Child emergency line	0800 123 321	

5.2 Emergency prevention

Assessing my emergency response plan

You can also play an important role in helping to prevent disasters, learning from crises you may have lived through or by taking preventative steps.

Assess your emergency response plan

After an emergency, take some time to assess your personal response plan. The more you can reflect on what happened, and how it went, the more you will be prepared for the next disaster. This might be something you want to do with your family, school or a club or social organisation you're part of. Here are some of the questions you can ask yourself or your group:

REFLECTING

Reflecting is an important way of improving our overall disaster response systems, so take the time to really think about your experience. You might also find it useful to write down your experience. Telling stories is a good way of processing information and this can help you to work through what you experienced, and help you to build a stronger plan for next time.

QUESTIONS	ANSWERS	REFLECTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT
Did your plan work overall?		
Were you able to find a safe space? Did this safe space work for you?		
Was your go-bag useful? Was there anything you needed or learned?		
Were you able to contact the relevant authorities? What was your experience like and what might you change or improve?		
Were you able to contact your personal emergency contacts? Were these contacts supportive, was there anything you would change?		
Were there any elements of your plan that worked really well?		
Were there any elements of your plan that did not work well?		
Are there any new hazards or vulnerabilities that you now need to be aware of? How will you incorporate these into your new plan?		
Is there any follow up action you could take to improve the overall safety of your home, school or community?		

5.2 Emergency prevention   # Inform decision-makers and get involved in policy change

After a disaster, it may become apparent to you that there are bigger changes that need to take place in your community to help them become more disaster prepared. If you were involved in a flood or storm, for example, you may realise that you need improved sanitation or drainage systems. If you were involved in a fire, you might need more water points or access to services. If you were involved in a riot, you might need more social infrastructure or support programmes.

Identifying these kinds of changes is what we call *systemic change*, and you can play an important role in advocating for these changes by getting involved in policy and decision-making processes. Positive and effective change can happen when we address our behaviours, cultural or societal norms, and our policies, laws and plans. Many of us find it easier trying to influence people to change their behaviours, like using less water in a drought, or to change our cultural norms, like developing an appreciation for water, but we might not think we can actually change laws or policies, like advocating for upgrading infrastructure to avoid water leaks or pipes bursting. No matter your age, your voice matters. Being part of our democracy is more than just voting, and you and your school, club or organisation can explore ways to be part of public participation processes.

Here are some ways you can get involved in decision-making processes and increase the voices of young people in your area:

- **Find out about and participate in decision-making processes.** Many communities now have social media accounts or messaging groups that discuss community issues and let you know when local municipal meetings are taking place. You can join these groups, build your networks, and have your voice heard by attending local meetings with your ward councillor and other leaders and residents. It might not seem exciting but community, ward or municipal meetings often result in important decisions being made for your area. Gather your friends, school or organisation and go prepared to raise issues that might be impacting you and other young people in the area.

- **Look at policy documents.** Start with municipal Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) or national documents like the South African Disaster Management Act or the National Disaster Management Framework. It can feel overwhelming but start with the executive summary or do a key word search to look at areas or topics you are most interested in. Policies are incredibly important for planning at the city or municipal level, and they are the often the basis for discussions at local meetings. Think about reading a policy document like you do homework – the more you read and attend stakeholder meetings, the more you will understand. It's helpful to work in groups, so get your friends, classmates or group members together to see what documents are relevant to you.

- **Comment on existing or new policies.** Have your say on policies that government is working on. You and your school or organisation can comment on policies to ensure your voice is heard. You can give general comment, specific comments on key sections, or even provide additions or changes to specific sentences or parts of a document.

Most policymakers are keen to hear from young people, so don't be afraid to enter the space and take your seat at the table. For more information about how you can get involved in policy writing and advocacy for change, check out the UNICEF Youth Advocacy Guide.

5.2 Emergency prevention

Build resilience within your community

One thing you can do is to help improve the long-term resilience of your community to better respond to disasters. This is a long process but it's important to get started.

01

Help others develop emergency response plans

You can help your family, friends, or classmates to develop their own plans, using this guide to help them go through the process.

02

Run awareness sessions to improve understanding of disasters

There is a lot you can do to share information and help to build awareness within your community. You can start a school or campus initiative where you talk about disasters and develop response ideas, or hold a workshop in your community to talk about the importance of having emergency plans or coordinated action. You can develop materials to distribute within your community that help build understanding and awareness, or write articles about your experience, or talk on the radio. Look at the different ways you can help to inform your community about disasters, what they can do to prevent them, and what they need to do during times of emergency.

03

Get involved in disaster risk monitoring

Monitor the environmental conditions around your community and pay close attention to early warning signs. You can set up a school or campus activity to monitor different areas of your community, school grounds or university campus, set up a social media group to share information about potential hazards, or get involved in official disaster management programmes to help monitor different aspects.

04

Improve early warning systems

You should now be aware of what early warning systems are available and you might have identified different ways that these could be improved. Alternatively, you may not have any early warning systems and now understand why these are important. Think of the different ways you could help to make these systems more accessible, relevant and effective.

05

Improve your own skills and abilities

One of the best ways of building resilience is to improve your own skills and abilities and you should seek out different opportunities to do this. If you've experienced a disaster, reflect on your experience - was there something you wish you knew how to do or were there any skills you wish you had? If being a first responder is of interest to you, there is formal training that you can do, so check out Rescue South Africa to see what might be available, or ask at your local fire station for what short courses may be available in your community.

06

Volunteer with local community groups or institutions

Volunteering is a great way of building support and resilience within a community. Volunteer with a local NGO or a faith-based organisation and see how your unique skills can be of service to others.

06

Conclusion

This guide is jam packed with things you need to think about and do. It's easy to feel overwhelmed with everything that needs to be done but remember two important things.

01 **First, you are not alone.** You don't have to tackle all of these issues on your own or all at once. You are part of a vast and diverse social network and people are here to support you. Your most important job is to start having these discussions by speaking to your friends, family, and people in your networks, and realising the importance of being prepared for and ready to respond to different emergencies.

02 **Second, this is just the beginning.** Becoming emergency or disaster prepared is a process and it takes time. We hope that you can use the information in this guide to start that process, to help yourself and your community think differently about disasters and what you can do to be better prepared.

At the end of the day, **what we're really trying to achieve is the creation of strong and resilient societies, who have the ability to respond and adapt to whatever situation they find themselves in.** This requires knowledge, skills and information and we hope this is what this guide has given you.

We hope that you use this guide to become an emergency preparedness advocate in your own community and join us on the journey of creating a more resilient and prepared generation of young people.

Acknowledgements

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About UNICEF

UNICEF works in some of the world's toughest places, to reach the world's most disadvantaged children. Across more than 190 countries and territories, we work for every child, everywhere, to build a better world for everyone.

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About Youth@SAIIA

The South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) is an independent public policy think tank advancing a well-governed, peaceful, sustainable and globally engaged Africa. Through the Youth@SAIIA programmes the Institute seeks to give young people a platform to engage with major issues that confront youth today. For over a decade, Youth@ SAIIA has been working to mobilise and capacitate children and youth (13-25 years) across South Africa and the region to become more active citizens and effectively participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives.

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