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## **ABSTRACT**

Recovery planning after a disaster is about people. Therefore public participation is an integral element of the recovery process. Participation and empowerment during the recovery process allows the community to make decisions about their future, and can contribute to holistic recovery. However, while participation and empowerment during recovery is important, in practice public participation generally takes the form of 'consultation' rather than being a true participatory process. In this report, a case study of a flood disaster in Ohura in 1998 is presented as an example of how public participation and consultation is carried out in recovery planning.

For recovery planning, it is essential that appropriate tools be used (e.g. workshops, in addition to meetings, submissions, etc) to truly empower communities and allow plans to be community-led, rather than institution-led. In addition, thought must be given to the timing of participation. Participation in recovery planning should occur prior to an event, as well as post-event. The social and cognitive disruption experienced during an event also should be taken into consideration when undertaking recovery planning post-event.

This work was undertaken primarily as a case study for Masters of Planning by Jessica Ward from the University of Auckland. Additional comment has been added by the two other authors.

## **KEYWORDS**

Participation, recovery, planning, community, participatory discourse, flooding, hazard, disaster, Ohura, New Zealand

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This research examines the purpose and limits of public participation and empowerment in recovery planning. The 1988 Ohura flood is used as a case study of recovery planning to explore the links between theory and practice. This case study is analysed within the context of participatory discourse, a recently recognised paradigm within planning practice.

The aim and objectives of this case study research are:

**Aim:** What are the purposes and limitations of public participation in recovery planning?

**Objective 1:** What methods of participation are used in practice in recovery planning?

**Objective 2:** Is recovery planning moving away from or toward community empowerment?

The first part of this report examines the broader context of governance, including the concepts of representative democracy and participatory democracy. The spectrum of public participation is also identified and linked with the concepts of empowerment and social capital. Finally, the evolving concept of recovery in the New Zealand context is explained.

In the second part of this report, the Ohura case study is introduced. For the case study, a review of government documentary evidence is used to explore recovery issues, including the role of social capital (i.e. networks, trust and reciprocity), public participation, and community empowerment.

As the 1998 Ohura floods occurred before the 2002 Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) Act came into being, the recovery process fell under the now superseded Civil Defence Act 1983. However, this report also makes reference to use of the 2002 CDEM Act, as it is under this legislation that recovery now operates.

## 2.0 CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

In order to place the 1998 Ohura flooding case study in perspective, this report first outlines key conceptual issues related to planning practice and community participation.

### 2.1 Participatory discourse

The original dominant, but narrow, approach to reasoning in policy analysis was one of foundationalism and scientific rationalism in solving problems (i.e. the idea that problems could be solved by rational thinking alone). However, more contemporary thinking suggests that the concept of communicative action is more relevant than that of instrumental rationality. This concept is influenced by the work of Habermas, the German philosopher and sociologist.

Habermas criticised the one-sided process of modernisation which paid more attention to rationalised decisions, than to including citizens in the debate about how communities should evolve. He also promoted intersubjective deliberation and the ideal speech situation (i.e. where people from both institutions and the general public can speak on an equal level about matters of public importance). The participation-based approach recommended by Habermas has resulted in new methods and processes for formulating policy (Parsons, 1995).

In both planning and political theory, and in practice itself, participation is now a dominating discourse. This is an argumentative, dialectic or communicative direction that theory has taken and which now, as a result, claims paradigm status. In practice, the aim of participatory discourse is to ensure planning practice is democratic and emphasis is placed on empowering all in society to be heard (Parsons, 1995).

## **2.2 Governance**

An understanding of governance is essential to provide the context in which public decisions are made. There are two dominant approaches to governance, these being representative democracy and participatory democracy. The diverging views of democracy result in contrasting views on the role of citizen participation in the democratic process.

Decision-making is based on two major groups of people, the 'effectors' and the 'effected' (Solitaire, 2005). 'Effectors', in the context of this project, are elected officials and appointed representatives from local, regional and central government. The 'effected' is the community consisting of local residents, business owners, and others who are recognised to be affected by decisions. Tension can arise over the power balance of decision-making between government and the public as the decision-making process is carried out (Solitaire, 2005).

*"Responsible governance and legitimate participation and their relationship they enjoy give rise to tensions"* (Hucker, 1998, p16).

### **2.2.1 Representative democracy**

Representative democracy is the governance system used in New Zealand and in other western democracies. The elitist viewpoint is that elected officials have a political mandate to make decisions on behalf of the people. The elitist viewpoint also believes this right is undermined by consultation, with the time taken for consultation seen as a barrier to effective and efficient government (Hucker, 1998).

However, representative democracy is pluralist in nature - there are many 'publics' and the task of elected officials is to establish harmony between them. Individuals, groups or communities endeavour to influence the balance of power and want their interests heard and meaningfully considered in the decision-making process. In this context, elected officials can be seen as arbitrators of diverse interests, and their judgement and conscience is used to make decisions. Elected representatives are viewed as trustees rather than delegates. Under representative democracy, participation is viewed as a means to an end with the purpose of ensuring effective and responsible governance (Hucker, 1998).

### **2.2.2 Participatory democracy**

Participatory democracy is also referred to as 'strong democracy'. Decision-making happens through the act of 'direct democracy' (Hucker, 1998).

Participatory democracy is populist in perspective, with the central tenet being direct citizen control of decision-making. If power is devolved, representative roles become an instrument of the general will to do what the public wants. Participation is seen as an end in itself, with the purpose of public participation being to achieve citizen control (Hucker, 1998).

### **2.2.3 Mutual ground**

Theorists have tried to bring representative democracy and participatory democracy closer together by working within the framework of representative democracy, while also drawing on the strengths of participatory democracy. Many decisions are made in processes that lie between these two extremes and include various iterations of public participation. The meaningfulness of public participation can be limited, depending on what processes are used to achieve public decisions.

It is argued that representative democracy is the preferable model to work within, but that institutions need to become more participatory and consultative. This is a move towards finding the middle ground between both views (i.e. holistic decision-making), rather than the dualistic “us versus them” scenario.

## **2.3 Public participation**

### **2.3.1 Classification of participation levels**

Attempts to define participation have identified a hierarchy of levels of public involvement in development processes. Sherry Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation to measure levels of participation is often referred to in planning literature. The typology consists of eight levels ranging from manipulation to citizen control. Arnstein equates citizen participation as citizen power. Hucker (1998) resolves that Arnstein's ladder is in the context of participatory democracy which is often not understood in the literature and therefore this typology is not useful in the representative democratic context. Hence, this research will use another classification system of public participation (the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum) that fits within the context of representative democracy.

### **2.3.2 Spectrum of public participation**

The International Association for Public Participation (IAPP) has developed the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum (Table 1). The IAPP is an international organization that works to improve processes of participation. It clearly outlines the different approaches to decision-making by classifying participation based on the decision-making role of participants. This spectrum identifies five levels: inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower. It identifies promises made to the public for the form of participation, determines the balance of power in the partnership, and identifies where and how the community is involved in the process.

**Table 1** IAPP spectrum of public participation ([www.iap2.org](http://www.iap2.org))

INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
<i>Public Participation Goal:</i>				
To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
<i>Promise to the Public:</i>				
We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide
<i>Example Techniques to Consider:</i>				
* Fact Sheets * Web Sites * Open houses	*Public comment *Focus groups * Survey *Pubic meetings	* Workshops *Deliberate Polling	* Citizen Advisory Committees *Consensus Building *Participatory decision-making	* Citizen juries * Ballots *Delegated decisions

### 2.3.3 Core values of public participation

IAPP core values for public participation practice are:

1. The public should have a say in decisions about actions that could affect their lives;
2. Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision;
3. Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers;
4. Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by, or interested in a decision;
5. Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate;
6. Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way; and
7. Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision ([www.iap2.org](http://www.iap2.org)).



#### **2.3.4 Where is New Zealand legislation at?**

In New Zealand there is increasing emphasis on consultation and public participation in policy initiatives and legislation. The Resource Management Act 1991, Local Government Act 2002 and Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002 provide greater opportunities for public input into policy initiatives (Hayward, 1997). However, clarification is required as there is still confusion over the terms 'consultation' and 'participation' and where government is in terms of the hierarchy of participation (Allen et al, 2002).

The Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector defines formal consultation as the following:

*“Formal consultation is a form of community participation in which an agency seeks the views and opinions of individuals and community groups on specific issues”* (www.goodpracticeparticipate.govt.nz).

New Zealand's Chief Justice Mr McGechan's ruling on a case involving The Resource Management Act 1991 defined three principles as the essential elements of public consultation:

- providing sufficient information to consulted parties;
- ensuring sufficient time for public consultation and subsequent deliberation on advice; and
- genuine consideration of advice given and open mind and willingness to change (Hayward, 1997).

#### **2.3.5 Community Empowerment**

Participatory discourse argues for moving decision-making more towards community empowerment. However, this is beyond the current level of consultation that is generally used in New Zealand. Within the representative democracy framework decision-making gets devolved to the public. This raises further issues about the empowerment of people to make decisions. Empowering people and their communities is an inclusive approach to policy making.

Empowerment can mean the redistribution of power to the people. However a broader definition is:

*“increasing the skills of individuals, groups and communities to make better decisions for themselves; and involves redesigning processes in which public, private and civil society agencies become partners – in effect, capacity building”* (Allen et al, 2002, p14).

#### **2.3.6 Social capital**

When considering participation, it is important to understand the social context of the community. The concept of social capital helps understand the fabric of the community and relationships within it. The social process depends on the existing social capital when a disaster occurs.

*“The basic idea of social capital is that a person’s family, friends, and associates constitute an important asset, one that can be called on in a crisis, enjoyed for its own sake, and leveraged for material gain. What is true for individuals, moreover, also holds for groups. Those communities endowed with a diverse stock of social networks and civic associations are in a stronger position to confront poverty and vulnerability, resolve disputes, and take advantage of new opportunities” (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000, p.226)*

The basic premise for social capital involves networks of bonding and bridging associations. Bonding networks occur between interests with a common purpose, whereas bridging networks transcend social divides and connect people in the same demography. These networks can occur both vertically and horizontally. Vertical linkages often occur between formal institutions or levels of government and the community and individuals. Horizontal linkages occur across agencies and sectors. For empowerment to occur, a network with these horizontal and vertical linkages is required to facilitate the process (Miraftab, 2004).

Trust and reciprocity are important for establishing linkages and relationships. As Paton (2007, p.371) states:

*“When dealing with natural hazard issues, people rely on sources (e.g. emergency planners) with whom they have a general relationship (e.g. their being officers of local councils or other civic agencies) that extends beyond natural hazard issues. Hence, the quality of trust developed in general contexts (e.g. in relation to people’s experience of council/civic services, their dealings with council officers) may influence trusting in the context of risk communication about infrequent natural hazard events”.*

Developing trust can be achieved through a general community engagement process, with any issues arising (including hazard concerns) discussed at established community forums. Discussions should empower community members to identify issues affecting them and to find solutions to deal with those issues (Paton, 2007).

### **3.0 ROLE OF RECOVERY IN NEW ZEALAND**

#### **3.1 Concept of recovery planning**

The concept of recovery planning has evolved over the last century from returning to a recovered past, to shifting to a designed future. In the early twentieth century, recovery came about by means of loose arrangements and it was generally a gamble for survival. Recovery then became a managed activity with the purpose of ensuring community continuity and returning to the status quo. The goal of recovery then progressed to an opportunity seeking process to ‘built back better’, rather than simply return to the status quo. The approach to recovery policy today is that of holistic disaster recovery (Mitchell, 2004).

#### **3.2 New Zealand context**

New Zealand emergency management policy embraces the holistic approach. In 2002, the Civil Defence Act 1983 was repealed and replaced by the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002. The Crown vision for the new act is:

*“Resilient New Zealand, strong communities, understanding and managing their hazards”* (Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management, 2008).

The current focus is a change in philosophy from an operational and infrastructural focus on response to disasters, to a holistic approach to civil defence emergency management (CDEM) advocating the four R's of readiness, response, recovery and reduction. The new focus is about the integrated management of hazards and encompasses an all hazards approach (including natural and technological hazards).

A key requirement of the CDEM Act is to plan for recovery. The Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management (2005, p.5) define recovery as:

*“The coordinated efforts and processes to effect the immediate, medium and long term holistic rehabilitation of a community following a disaster.”*

The Act requires councils and CDEM groups consisting of regional and local government, lifeline utilities, emergency services and volunteer and business agencies to carry out all civil defence emergency management activities, including recovery, in their region, and empowers them to do this. The Act is not a 'best practice guide'. Rather, it enables flexibility in the recovery process to best suit local needs (Norman, 2004).

Self-determination is a key theme of the new legislation and related documentation. Individuals and the community are expected to take some personal responsibility for resilience. This includes the perspective of community development where policy is best made at the local level from the bottom-up.

The fabric of society and the relationships within communities are dependant on an efficient and effective recovery process. New Zealand's holistic approach to recovery has identified the range of psychosocial, community, economic, infrastructure and environmental components that must be considered. The Crown places a high value on New Zealanders helping one another in adverse times whilst encouraging responsible choice making by individuals and communities (Norman, 2004).

*“It [recovery] is a complex social process and best achieved when affected communities exercise a high degree of self determination”* (Norman, 2004, p.36).

Participation and community support for the recovery process is also recognised as part of the new direction (Norman, 2004).

### **3.3 Participation in recovery**

*“Research shows that local people will assist each other [after a disaster]. Not recognising the inevitability of local action and not planning for it is denying demonstrable social behaviour”* (Coles, 2004, p.101).

Both the community and government should engage in disaster management as neither can do it alone (Coles, 2004). Local people usually respond first to their own needs in an event until help from outside the community arrives. It is acknowledged that government resources are limited and reliance upon skills, resources, capacities and knowledge of local people is essential to meet the individual needs in the community (Coles, 2004).

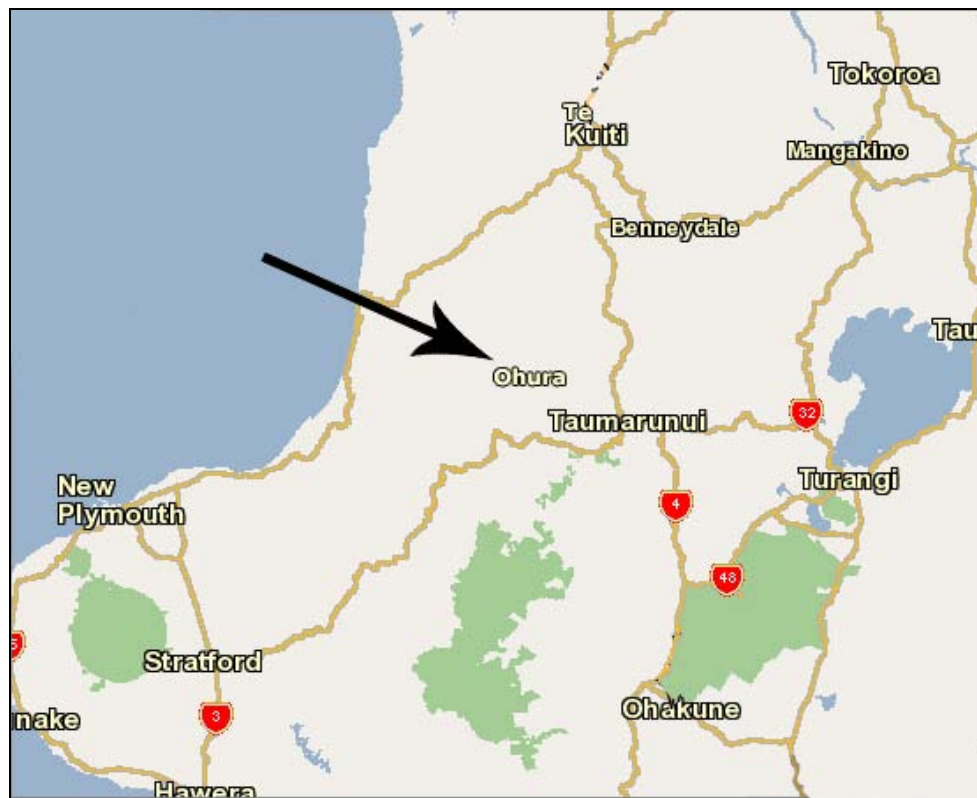
*“At no time is the opportunity for public involvement in decision-making greater than when a community is faced with the practical problems of recovering from a disaster” (Holistic Disaster Recovery, 2001, p.3-1).*

A central theme of recovery planning is for local decision-making and self help, and capability and collaboration. It should be noted however, that although public participation should be given consideration in recovery planning, it does not guarantee a successful outcome.

#### **4.0 OHURA FLOOD EVENT, OCTOBER 1998**

##### **4.1 Community context**

Ohura is located 50 km north-west of Taumarunui (Figure 1). The town serves as a social and service centre for the surrounding farmland and prison. Ohura has approximately 350 residents and a declining population. The township was originally built on swampland, with twelve significant floods occurring in the last 41 years.



**Figure 1** Map of Ohura

([www.zoomin.co.nz](http://www.zoomin.co.nz))



**Figure 2** Map of Ohura township

[www.zoomin.co.nz](http://www.zoomin.co.nz)

## 4.2 Flood impact

On the evening of October 28, 1998, Ohura experienced severe flooding. A 30 year rainfall event occurred during a period of 48 hours with the effect of this flood magnified due to a three-year rainfall event occurring one week prior. The township (Figure 2) and surrounding hill country was severely impacted with extensive damage to roads, bridges and infrastructure, and State Highways 40 and 43 (the two major access roads into Ohura) being severely damaged. The access roads were closed and Ohura became isolated. In the township, 18 houses were evacuated with flood waters and silt entering 35 houses, some up to a height of 1.2 m. Four commercial properties were also flooded, as were the schools (Figures 3 to 6). Up to 43 families in the surrounding rural area were isolated for up to three weeks.



**Figure 3** School flooded  
Source: TV3 News Archives



**Figure 4** House flooded  
Source: TV3 News Archives



**Figure 5** Garage flooded  
Source: TV3 News archives



**Figure 6** Sweeping out garage  
Source: TV3 News Archives

#### 4.2.1 Timeline – Response to recovery

Table 2 shows a timeline of the Ohura Flood event from the occurrence of the initial response through to the immediate recovery period.

**Table 2** Timeline of the 1998 Ohura flood event (response to recovery)

21-23 October	3 year rainfall event.
28-30 October	Flooding, heavy rain. A 30 year rainfall event occurred over the 48 hours of 27-28 October.
30 October	12.30 pm – A declaration of Civil Defence Emergency was made by the Ruapehu District Council (RDC) Mayor – Mr Weston Kirton. This was based on the threat to public safety and potential health risks to residents with the primary focus being disaster recovery. This was controlled by Chris Ryan, (RDC Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Civil Defence Controller) and assisted by Assistant Civil Defence Commissioner Kelvin McMinn. A communications base was set up and a public meeting held to determine priorities and short term actions. A welfare centre was established at the Ohura Foodmarket and was later transferred to the Ohura Memorial Hall. The New Zealand Army and Ohura prison work gangs aided in the clean up. Building and health inspectors commenced property inspections.
1 November	Mayor of RDC requested assistance from Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management.
2 November	The Minister appointed Jenny Rowan as Civil Defence Recovery Co-ordinator to RDC until 20 November.  The Army withdrew at 7.00 am.
3 November	A public meeting was held – to get feedback, set up local infrastructure for the recovery project and long term solutions. Two committees were established; the Rural Disaster Recovery Group and Welfare Committee.
4 November	The State of Emergency was lifted at 9.00 am by the RDC Mayor. The reasons being: water had receded; no lives were at risk; and procedures for recovery were in place. From this time onwards any remaining aspects of emergency response were to be moved to full disaster recovery. The urgent priority was to relocate people from uninhabitable houses.
5 November	Welfare support issues: there was a need to establish community trust, announce a Mayoral Fund, and appeal for donations. A public community meeting held and 102 residents attended. Approximately 27 houses, Kiwi St, were identified at risk. Eighteen families required a definite relocation. Approximately 20% of houses were uninsured.
13 November	The Recovery Co-ordinator returned to Wellington. The recovery process was left under the direction of the Ministry of Civil Defence Assistant Commissioner, Denzil Duncan.
19 November	A public meeting was held to update community on the progress of the recovery plan.

### **4.3 Recovery – Post impact**

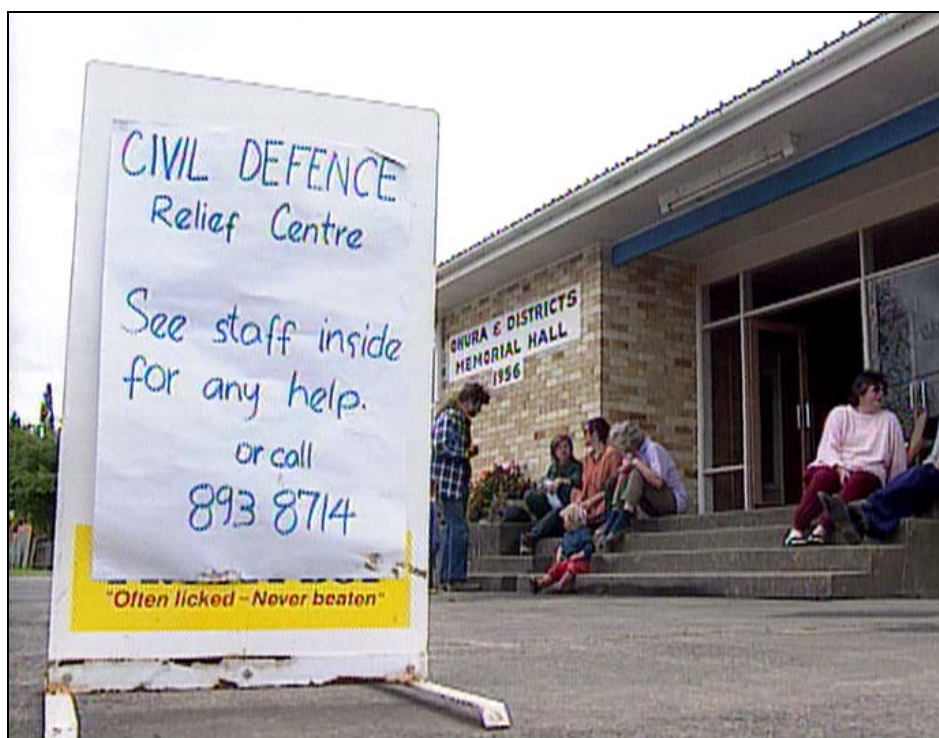
Social networks, reciprocity and trust - all components of social capital - are important in the response/immediate recovery phase. For the Ohura disaster, these aspects provided the foundation of relationships from which the recovery mitigation plan would be developed. Minutes from the meeting on 3 November 1998 provided information for the following sections of this report.

#### **4.3.1 Social networks**

The Welfare Centre which opened in the Ohura Foodmarket on Friday 30 October 1998 at 11:00 am, and then shifted to the Ohura Memorial Hall (Figure 7), was a base for welfare activities during the emergency. The Welfare Centre brought a range of community services together in one place. This was a form of 'bridging' of networks from a diverse range of organizations and sectors of society and included a mix of vertical and horizontal associations. The Welfare Centre linked various groups of unequal hierarchical relationships at the local, regional and central government levels. The groups which were part of the Centre included:

- Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ)
- Fire Service
- Manawatu-Wanganui Regional Council
- New Zealand Army
- Victim Support
- Ruapehu District Council
- Ministry of Education
- Telecom
- Police
- Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
- Federated Farmers.





**Figure 7** Civil defence relief centre

(Source: TV3 News archives)

#### 4.3.2 Reciprocity

Road closures meant that the community had to be self reliant after the flood event as it took time for outside help to arrive. Reciprocity within the community was shown in a number of ways, some of which are outlined below.

- The school was badly flooded, and many people directly involved in the running of school could not get to the school grounds due to road closures. Many local farmers helped with the clean-up even though they had no direct connections with the school and had suffered flood damage themselves. A school camp was organised to take the pressure off parents as concern was expressed about children being idle with the school closure.
- The fire service was brought in to help clean up the town on Sunday 1 November. All but one of the staff were community volunteers and many had suffered personal flood damage during the event. Local prison inmates were also involved in the clean-up.
- Rural areas were hit hard. Approximately 60 families were isolated for up to three weeks as residents could not get out of their homes and farms because of road blockages. An informal rural phone line link was established by eight local women to aid communication and to liaise with the affected families. Daily contact was maintained and when phone lines were down, neighbours made contact with those affected, and passed messages on.

These examples demonstrate the types of reciprocity and mutual understanding that occurred at Ohura immediately post-disaster.

### **4.3.3 Trust**

Many trust issues arose from the interactions between the community and external agencies that were involved in the flood response and recovery (e.g. government). Some of these are highlighted below.

- There was miscommunication surrounding a flyer that was given out on 3 November. The flyer stated that RDC had not authorised the removal of flood damaged goods, yet RDC had in fact removed a lot of damaged goods. Clarification was also necessary in terms of reference to “property” meaning “contents” not “buildings”, as confusion reigned over exactly what the flyer meant when it talked about “property” being condemned.
- Rumours had begun about the condemning of flood affected houses. As the houses in Ohura are not numbered, after doing a building inspection, orange stickers were placed on letterboxes for the building inspectors’ reference, unfortunately, residents thought that an orange sticker meant their house would be condemned, when this was not the case.
- Adding to this stress, were media reports about the number of houses being condemned. Local people felt they should be informed first.
- Locals also felt let-down by the army arriving too late and leaving too soon. This affected the morale of tired and weary people.

Gordon (2008) highlights the potential for rumour and emotional communications in the immediate post-disaster impact period. This experience has been seen in other disasters for example the 2004 Manawatu-Wanganui floods and the 2005 Matata debris flow (Gordon, 2008; Spee, 2008).

## **4.4 Recovery – Flood mitigation project**

### **4.4.1 Decision-making process**

On 18 November, the three hierarchical authorities of government, Ruapehu District Council, Manawatu-Wanganui Regional Council, and the Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management agreed to work together on a submission for the identification and evaluation of options for long term mitigation of the flood hazard in the Ohura township.

The mitigation project included community consultation which took the form of ‘typical’ consultation as per the IAP2. Fifty people attended a public meeting on 19 November 1998, which outlined the proposed project (as identified by the various government agencies), explained a suggested timeline, and identified the project guiding principles.

Consistency with the proposed new legislation to replace the Civil Defence Act 1983, was an objective of the guiding principles for evaluating the Ohura Mitigation Project Options. Principles included; community continuity, long term sustainability, risk management, future disaster reduction, cooperation and coordination.

*“Encourage communities, businesses and individuals to choose the acceptable levels of costs and accept responsibility for managing their risks for both planning and meeting costs where they can. It is a self help, self protection principle where possible” (Ohura Flood mitigation report, 1999, p.20).*

*“Encourage the co-operation and co-ordination between central government, local governments, emergency services, lifeline utilities and voluntary agencies and the community. It means planning, preparing, responding and recovering together for mutual support and use of expertise and resources” (Ohura Flood mitigation report, 1999, p.20).*

On 17 December 1998, a second public meeting was held with an attendance of around 80 people. A draft report was presented with the identification and evaluation of mitigation options. Five mitigation options were examined in detail and included:

- Option 1: Do nothing
- Option 2: Buy all 80 houses
- Option 3: Construct full stopbanks
- Option 4: Construct partial stopbanks
- Option 5: No stopbanks. Shift, raise, demolish, critically affected houses.

Option 4 was identified as a practical and cost effective way to mitigate flooding in Ohura in the short term. This option was for the construction of a stopbank around most of the township. Under this option the flooding of Kiwi Street and Tongaporutu Road would continue, but the intent would be to move these houses. This was envisaged as a short term, practical, and cost effective solution to protect the township. It was proposed that costs would be split between three parties (the district, regional and central government). The Mayoral Relief Fund would be used to support those in the Kiwi Street area who would not be protected by the partial stopbank option.

Oral and written submissions on the proposed option (draft report) were requested from the community by 22 January 1999. Of the 37 written submissions received, the partial stopbank option was equally supported and opposed. Those opposing the preferred option generally had concerns about the exacerbation of flooding caused by the stopbank above and below Ohura. After receiving comments from the community, recommendations were made to the councils and government to give effect to the desired outcomes. It was felt that the concerns of those opposed would be addressed by the regional council.

On 3 February 1999 a third public meeting was held and was attended by 80 people with recommendations to RDC to pursue the partial stopbank option.

#### 4.4.2 Recovery assistance

Some recovery funding assistance was available from the government to cover these three areas:

- Infrastructure funding
- Flood mitigation project
- Mayoral relief fund

The philosophy of self-help was reflected in the fact that recovery funding was available for certain aspects only. The RDC proposal to the government explained the reasons the funding was needed. They stated that the threat of flooding would be removed from Ohura by the proposed partial stopbank, and that this would enable further building and development of the community. In addition, residents would benefit by suffering reduced property losses.

*“The community will not have to rely on RDC, government and civil defence to provide relief from flooding”* (RDC Ohura Flood Mitigation Claim, 1999).

Government policy is that it is the responsibility of the local community to deal with the aftermath of an emergency. However, when the community is overwhelmed the government will help restore the community capacity for self help. Policy with respect to civil defence emergency expenditure for recovery outlined in the National Civil Defence Emergency Management Plan (2005, p.68) (NCDEMP) discusses community capacity for self help.

*“The aim of any government assistance is to provide the minimum level of assistance required to restore to the community the capacity for self-help and to provide solutions that are the most appropriate long-term solutions”.*

Central government contributed over one million dollars to the Ohura recovery. This included funding for the Recovery Co-ordinator, Mayoral Relief Fund, Department of Education and Transfund. In addition, special case policy funding assistance of \$87,600 was provided by government to ensure the wellbeing and safety of citizens through an effective long-term solution being put in place. The regional council and local council were expected to contribute an additional \$87,600 each.

#### 4.5 Recovery mitigation plan – What went wrong?

Once the plan had been agreed upon and the funding secured, resource consent was applied for flood works as per the agreed Ohura Mitigation Plan. By this time a new Council had been elected, and it was decided not to proceed with the flood mitigation project.

On 3 December 2001 the RDC sent a letter to the Department of Internal Affairs advising that RDC would not be proceeding with the stop-banking option. It stated that the council did not now consider this project to be supported by the majority of the Ohura community, and that the council now believed other methods for flood mitigation would provide long term solutions that were appropriate and acceptable to the community. The ‘other methods’ could involve raising the flood prone dwellings, and river channel management. The money was refunded to central government.

Without further investigation it is not known why the community changed its mind. Possible scenarios include a change in balance of power on the council, the capacity of the community to make an empowered decision, and whether the government stayed involved in the long term recovery process. To understand the exact influences at work further investigation should be undertaken.

A disaster is very disruptive on the normal cognitive functioning of people and it alters social processes (Gordon, 2008). As a result, recovery planning and decision-making may be affected. Certain decisions may be made that are not considered appropriate or viable under 'normal' circumstances and it is possible that this may have occurred after the Ohura flooding. After the flood impact, decisions may have been made about flood mitigation based on altered cognitive processes and made in a highly emotionally charge environment. Once 'normal' functioning returned, these decisions may have been deemed inappropriate, and thus reversed.

## **5.0 CONCLUSIONS**

### **5.1 A synthesis of key findings**

Participatory discourse promotes the concept of community participation and encourages communities to understand and address their own problems. National policy under the CDEM Act 2002 creates an enabling environment for recovery policy to be developed in a participatory way. It allows and encourages collaboration at a national, regional and local level and across diverse sectors of society. The Act devolves power to lower authorities and ensures flexibility in recovery planning to suit dynamic community needs.

As part of this report, issues relating to the immediate recovery period after the 1998 Ohura flood were highlighted in relation to social capital. Bonding relationships were evident within the community, and bridging relationships existed with respect to assistance from outside the community. When outside assistance arrived, issues of trust arose. It is important to understand the relationships that exist as part of the recovery process, as these are the foundations from which recovery plans are designed.

Recovery planning, both pre-and post event, provides a viable channel for public participation. In Ohura, elements of participation (including self help and empowerment) were present during the initial recovery planning after the floods, and in the setting up of the mitigation project. However, when referring to the IAPP framework, it is evident that true participatory planning did not take place - 'consultation' was in fact the primary form of engagement used with the community. This is not unusual as 'consultation' (in the form of public meetings and submissions) is the standard formal approach in New Zealand.

It can be argued that there is a gap between the promotion of community empowerment in legislation and supporting documents, and actual practice. This is supported by the Ohura case study, with 'consultation' being the method used to develop the mitigation project to address long term solutions. Authorities should try to move beyond consultation as a process and further towards involvement, collaboration and empowerment for the goal of public participation. This needs to involve the use of other tools in addition to public meetings and

submissions. For example, community workshops could be held to involve the community in a recovery plan that was community-led rather than institution-led.

However, some limitations to employing participatory discourse do exist and should be recognised and accounted for. For example, the timing of participation in recovery can be an issue. Authorities often need to work within statutory timeframes to get policy approved, which may cause issues with timing and/or delays. On the other hand, there is often pressure from a community to start recovery as soon as possible as in Ohura, where just three days after the disaster the community was asking, "Where to from here?" Given the social and cognitive disruption caused by disasters, timing should be given special consideration. While on-going engagement about recovery is important, there may be benefits in delaying community input into long-term solutions until a later date when normal cognitive and social processes have been re-established.

Another limitation is the pressure on communities and resources during times of disaster. The Ohura case study demonstrated that people were emotionally and socially disrupted immediately after the floods and this can result in difficulties with engaging people in a more participatory approach. Since Gordon (2008) notes that the best decisions are made under normal social structures, it is suggested that community participatory decision-making be commonplace before a disaster. This means that when it comes time to make decisions about recovery, communities are in a familiar space, and are comfortable engaging in a participatory way. It is evident in New Zealand that participatory planning is often not done well in times of quiescence. If we are unable to undertake this task well under normal circumstances, then we can not expect participatory planning to work as part of the recovery process. Focussing on getting this right before an event will go a long way to ensuring that participatory planning can work within the context of recovery processes.

Directly related to this, is the capacity of the community to engage. Community capacity for engagement and empowerment needs to be built up pre-disaster. In recovery planning, empowerment should not just be about the redistribution of power for people to make decisions; it must be about building the capacity of the community to make better decisions for themselves.

Part of the answer lies in making better use of the legislation we have currently available - primarily the CDEM Act, the Resource Management Act and the Local Government Act - to move towards more participatory forms of governance. The requirements under these pieces of legislation can be employed in a way that enhances participation, builds solid relationships, and incorporates aspects of holistic recovery into overall community development (Becker et al., 2006). Before a disaster, communities can participate and have input in to how they want their community to look in terms of development and resilience. Prior to an event, communities can also be involved in developing plans for how to proceed in terms of recovery (both in the short and long-term).

If civil defence emergency management legislation and policy is about self help and empowerment, then the recovery plan process and methods used should reflect this approach. Presently, authorities have not moved beyond consultation. The use of a wider range of techniques and tools could improve the focus and outcome for recovery, and assist in moving more toward the empowerment of communities.

## 5.2 Future considerations

This research has been undertaken from a review of documents. To gain a better understanding of the public participation process for the Ohura community, additional qualitative or quantitative research methods could be engaged. It would be interesting to investigate further why the implementation of the mitigation plan dissolved and why the community changed its mind. In particular, interviews could more fully investigate community perceptions of relationships between authorities and themselves, as well as their thoughts on moving from consultation to empowerment, and barriers they envisage in doing that.

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