



DISASTER PREPAREDNESS IN MIGRANT COMMUNITIES: A Manual for First Responders

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Foreword

Dear Friend,

Thank you for your commitment to helping all Americans prepare for and overcome disasters.

The guide you have in your hand embodies lessons learned by Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) over the course of nearly 75 years of serving refugees and migrants in the United States.

LIRS was founded at a time when congregations saw the need to help Lutherans escape from Europe. Today, LIRS welcomes, protects, and informs immigrants and refugees from around the world. Each day, LIRS's staff tackles challenges that range from reuniting families to finding free legal services for detained torture survivors, from safeguarding migrant children to advocating for policy change.

Throughout its history, LIRS has helped to meet the needs of newcomer populations during and after disasters. What we've learned permits us to offer you the insights contained in this guide. We hope they are valuable, and we wish you success in your relief work!

Sincerely,

Linda Hartke
President and CEO

OVERVIEW

Newcomers – the collective term for immigrants, refugees, migrants, asylum seekers, and unaccompanied children – are in most ways like everyone else when disaster strikes a community. They need things like shelter and security, food and water, medical care, and an opportunity to quickly get back to earning a living. However, newcomers have unique issues during times of crisis. Some, if not addressed, can have disastrous results.

Most of these issues can be tackled much more easily with some planning and intentional outreach and inclusion. Disaster preparedness plans work best when relationships based on mutual understanding are built before an emergency strikes. Those relationships can be crucial to the newcomer's ability to survive the disaster, or, more frequently, to receive needed services quickly and share in recovery. Moreover, when disaster teams and responders ask newcomers to participate in disaster preparation, the newcomers feel more than welcomed into the community. They become full partners and engaged neighbors.

This manual shares the lessons Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) has learned in its rich history and provides communities, agencies, and congregations with tools to incorporate that learning into a new or existing disaster plan. Here's a quick overview of what you're going to find in the pages of this guide:

- *Observations* about the unique characteristics of newcomers in American communities, and how those relate to their ability to cope with disaster
- *Questions* for reflection on how you can best build ties with newcomer community leaders and plan for their inclusion in your disaster plan
- *Recommendations* for actions that position your team to lead the entire community – newcomers included – to a safe outcome
- *Tools* to round out your planning for all stages of coping with disasters, gleaned from many expert sources

The guide is organized as follows: We'll begin with a brief overview of disasters and how they're likely to affect longtime community residents and newcomers alike. Next, we'll take a look at how newcomers may be particularly vulnerable to disasters. Following that, we will zero in on the particular kinds of disaster-related situations that should trigger a community effort to stand with newcomers.

That will set the stage for a deeper look at three critical elements of inclusive disaster planning: developing *cultural competence*, overcoming *language barriers* and *building partnerships*. Lastly, we'll map out some immediate action items you may choose to pursue after reading this guide. As an afterword, we'll underscore the ways in which newcomers are already contributing to American communities in ways seen and

unseen, whether through paying taxes or by starting job-generating businesses.

It's important to note here that this guide is chiefly concerned with the first of six stages of community responses to disasters, that is, *awareness* of the need for and ways to think about newcomer communities in the context of disaster planning. You are probably already familiar with these steps: 1) *Initial assessment* of your community for disaster planning; 2) *Building bridges* with community leaders and groups; 3) *Engaging community leaders*; 4) *Creating partnerships* to welcome and integrate newcomers; 5) *Developing plans* for outreach during an emergency. You can find Additional Resources for these steps at the end of this guide.

We at LIRS are taking on the manual for this first stage because we feel it's where our particular expertise lies. For the other steps,

we gratefully acknowledge the strong leadership and knowledge that other organizations bring to bear, and we highlight tools from such groups in our Additional Resources section.

If your team is just starting to tackle the idea of creating a disaster plan, it is probably better to get grounded in the basics of that process before proceeding to the rest of this guide. Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR), www.ldr.org, a ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and World Relief and Human Care, www.lcms.org/worldrelief, a ministry of Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, have comprehensive programs that help Lutherans prepare for disasters, implement their plan, or jump into action when catastrophes strike. Other denominations, government agencies, and many nonprofit organizations also have resources for disaster planning or supporting newcomers. We have listed many of these resources in the Additional Resources on page 26.

We hope this manual is truly valuable to you, and we respect and honor your commitment to standing with new Americans as our communities face the best and worst of times.

Sincerely,

The Children's Services Team
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

I. Disasters, Newcomers, and Basics About Both

No discussion of disasters and newcomers can begin without context. Before we look at the details and specifics about inclusive preparedness, it's important to look at the big picture of how disasters affect everyone, and how newcomers generally share an experience of transition that shapes their worldview and ability to cope with disaster.

Disasters 101

Disasters strike everyone. A hurricane affects both the wealthy and those living in poverty. A tornado finds those whose ancestors arrived on the *Mayflower*, those who lived here and watched the Pilgrims build a settlement, plus the newcomers in the town. Earthquakes impact residents in well-constructed homes, in worn down tenement buildings, and those living on the street. Drought does not discriminate between a community leader, those just going about their business, or those trying very hard to blend in and not be noticed. The disaster's impact on each of these groups will vary, however, according to preparedness and access to resources.

People react differently to disasters. From first warning to many years after the fact, everyone impacted by a disaster travels their own path. Time and again we read about individuals who refused to evacuate when danger was imminent; sometimes they remained safe and other times they did not. We hear about those who lost everything and had no insurance, who are left really starting over. News stories highlight great acts of faith or feelings of resignation. Some residents remain in a disaster-prone area and others move away, often leaving behind generations of history. Occasional follow-up articles remind us of the disaster and share elements of hope and post-traumatic stress.

Disasters bring opportunities for service. Neighbors and strangers, those of like mind and those with differing views, work side by side for hours, even days, weeks, or months after a devastating event. Nonbelievers join people of faith to board up homes, fill sandbags, chop down trees, and clear debris. Individuals and organizations provide safe havens for those in need of emergency refuge. Folks from halfway around the globe may send funds or needed items. Professionals and volunteers help victims cope.

Preparation for disasters is critical. Readiness can mean the difference between life and death. It is crucial in laying the groundwork for relief, rebuilding, and recovery. The more people involved in the plan and trained to respond, the better and easier it will be for the community and its residents to handle the threat of a crisis, the disaster when it hits, and then its immediate and long-term effects.

Newcomers 101

Each newcomer has a story. For the last four centuries people have come to the United States for a variety of reasons and in a variety of ways. Those reasons and ways can determine how each newcomer is welcomed. Unfortunately, it is easy for the average citizen to use words like "undocumented" or "migrant" in conversation, mixing terms that have very different meanings. The political climate around the issue of immigration often creates a sense of "them," lumping newcomers into groups by ethnicity or place of origin. Even with a positive emphasis on diversity and millions of blended families throughout the country, our society, schools, businesses, and neighborhoods can generate an "us" vs. "them" mentality. So unless we are intentional, it is easy to forget the unique human beings behind the catchphrases and terms.

The number of newcomers is growing. The migrants and refugees arriving in the United States are diverse in terms of ethnicity, language, and religion. Political, social, or economic issues in their country uprooted them from their home. These newcomers are settling in to communities all around the country. A shifting political and economic climate in the United States as a whole, or in a particular region, can make a newcomer's arrival challenging, even without the added complication of a crisis.

The growing number of newcomers underscores the importance of having them involved in all aspects of community life, including disaster preparedness plans.

There are newcomers in your community. Some may be living next door, sitting in the same row in the theater or in church, or standing in front of you in the grocery store line. Others may be clumped together in shanties or in detention cells. They may be alone on the street or be neighbors filling an entire apartment building. Perhaps they are in your area for a limited and specific time each year as they follow seasonal work. In many cities, the assorted languages you hear as you ride the bus, walk the sidewalks, or shop in the stores remind you that "others" continue to come to the United States. Many, if not most, social service agencies now offer services in different languages. Some churches share space with newcomer congregations, while others have successfully blended cultures and peoples into one worshipping body.

Each newcomer faces challenges. Whether someone has fled a region for political or economic reasons, whether they are running from something or to a better life, there are challenges they face the moment they set foot on U.S. soil. Common challenges include language barriers, cultural differences, and separation from family and the familiar. Usually a newcomer is facing some type of trauma, either sudden or chronic, that triggered their journey. Newcomers study us for hints of welcome or prejudice.

Each newcomer is adjusting. Some newcomers want to quickly be absorbed by their new homeland. They adopt new ways and try to forget who they were or where they came from. Others look for a delicate balance between their previous way of life and their new community and its distinct norms. Still others seek to remain who they are, but simply in a new place. Finally, some newcomers want and feel the need not just to blend in, but also to become invisible. Their desire to hide in plain sight may come from a fear of deportation or acts of retribution against them or a family member. They may mistrust all officials, the government, or even private agencies based on years of oppression and unfulfilled expectations. They may have escaped from a life of exploitation, slavery, or trafficking and be experiencing their first taste of freedom. Hiding may be all they have ever known. Regardless of how they are adjusting to their new community, each newcomer needs time to figure out how things in this new place really work.

Each newcomer adjusts at his or her own pace. We have all experienced major transitions in our lives and understand that there is a process involved that gets us successfully from the old state of things to the new. Newcomers who are children may adjust more quickly than parents or grandparents, causing intergenerational conflict. Elders may have the most difficult time and take the longest to find a new sense of normal.

Each newcomer is adjusting to both loss and gain. Imagine leaving most things, if not everything, behind. Imagine leaving family, friends, and your support system. Even when what you left was awful, it was familiar. Many come to the United States believing there will be work, but they find none or what they find is not consistent with their education. Their relief at stepping on U.S. shores may quickly dissipate as the image of what they had expected shatters. Some may become disillusioned, angry, and fearful as their dreams evaporate. Often, as newcomers struggle with the challenges of day-to-day living, they have no time or energy to also face the mental and emotional issues that accompany major transitions, loss, and disappointments. Many people never completely adjust to their new life, and may come to resent the loss of the old. Most, however, do find hope and a better life.

Opportunities for reflection and action

There are truths, givens, and some very basics about disasters and about each newcomer who arrives in the United States. When those are combined, it is both logical and imperative to ensure that immigrants and refugees are present at the table when plans for emergencies are being developed. Newcomers' unique needs and challenges should be addressed in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery plans. Their experiences and skills will make such a plan more comprehensive and effective. If newcomers have established and trusted relationships with local leaders and organizations before a disaster, the response and recovery process will be easier for both responders and newcomers.

If you are just beginning to develop a plan, then make sure that all members of your community are included in your disaster preparation. Finally, if your organization is one that provides responders to other areas in times of emergencies, then engage newcomers in your own community to help you understand what newcomers face in times of disaster.

Fast facts on America's newcomers:

One in five children in the United States is the child of immigrants, and it is projected that by 2030 one in three children will fit this description.

Approximately 600,000 children travel with their migrant parents pursuing seasonal work throughout the United States each year.

In 2009, the United States received nearly 40,000 asylum applications. The United States has resettled over 2.6 million refugees since 1975.

In 2005, approximately one in five American households spoke a language other than English at home, and 18.4 million foreign-born immigrants over age five spoke English "less than very well."

Thousands of children worldwide migrate to the United States each year without parents or other caregivers. Many come seeking family reunification.

The United States has an estimated 5,100 U.S.-born children within foster care because their parents have been deported.

Reflections:

- Where is the “table” at which my community’s disaster planning takes place?
- Who sits at that table, and are newcomers included?
- Do the people at that table have a deep grasp of my community’s newcomers?
- Does anyone at that table have the relationships in place to invite newcomers?

Actions:

- Treat every newcomer as an individual.
- Behave towards every newcomer the way you’d like to be treated if you yourself were adjusting to a new everyday life, to gains and losses.
- Find the newcomers in your community.
- Include newcomers in disaster planning.

II. Why Newcomers are Vulnerable in an Emergency

Challenges face you and the newcomers you stand with, whether it's overcoming language barriers or gaining mutual understanding through cultural competence. But before we dig deeper into some of those specific issues, it's important to map out the range of factors that may make newcomers vulnerable in times of crisis. Planners and responders need to be aware of and sensitive to these things in dealing with newcomers in times of disaster.

The list of considerations that follows is not intended to be comprehensive; rather, it should serve as a solid basis for your inquiries into the exact nature of your own community. It is based on LIRS's "lessons learned" in over 75 years of serving newcomers.

As you read this list, it's worth keeping some questions in mind: *What item surprised you the most? The least? Have you personally experienced any of the issues listed here? Seen any of them in action?*

Also, after each point on this list, please glance at the specific reflections and actions offered. Again, these are places to start, rather than all-encompassing lists. You may have good questions and ideas based on your own experience.

Previous trauma. Many if not most newcomers have experienced some sort of traumatic event in their lives, not least having to leave their land of birth. This can set the context for how they respond to a disaster. Planners should be aware that:

- A new crisis can trigger old fears, reactions, and behaviors. For example, refugees who have spent a traumatic period in a tent city following a disaster in their home country may resist being moved to temporary shelter during an emergency in the United States.
- A newcomer may be surprised or even frightened when invited to participate in planning for emergencies and disasters. They may believe that because they made it safely to the United States, they are now safe from all bad things.
- Many migrants and refugees are already suffering from undiagnosed or untreated Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
 - o Trauma Reactions look different during the various stages of development¹
 - School-age and young children may exhibit developmental regression, irritability (i.e. jumpy, agitated), aggression (i.e. conduct problems), poor concentration, sleep problems, somatic complaints, fear of events occurring again, phobias, and bad memories. Adolescents may exhibit aggression (anger and/or wish for revenge), withdrawal/isolation, nightmares/flashbacks, feelings of guilt and shame, depression, lack of motivation and energy and disillusionment with adults or authority.
 - o Window of Tolerance: All of us have a "window of tolerance" of arousal or feelings we can tolerate or manage. Above this window of tolerance is hyperarousal (often associated with body's danger response) and below the window is hypoarousal (numbness, deadness, etc.). Traumatized children have narrow windows of tolerance and quickly go out of the window, sometimes roller coasting between hyper and hypoarousal.

Reflections:

- How can I learn the signs that I'm dealing with someone with PTSD, and the right way to be sensitive to that injury?
- What could I share about myself that might make a person with PTSD more at ease?
- Do I know my community's resources for people coping with trauma?
- What does this look like in my population?
- What organizational and staff behaviors/policies and thoughts/beliefs/values affect, facilitate and/or constrain assessing and addressing traumatic stress?
- How do you attend to the window of tolerance shifts depending on the session, purpose, phase of treatment.
 - o During intake, the goal is to stay within the window of tolerance.
 - o For therapy, the goal is to expand the window of tolerance.

Actions:

- Learn more about how previous trauma may shape people's beliefs and behaviors.
- Include psychological services in any directory attached to a disaster plan.

Transition process. All of us have experienced times of massive upheaval in our lives. Newcomers are already in a transition, adjusting to their new life here in the United States. An emergency forces them to make other critical adjustments, often on the spot. Planners need to know that:

- How far along a person is in their own transition process may determine how they respond to a disaster.
- Even when someone is adjusting well to their new life, it is common for them to revert to familiar behaviors and norms during a crisis as a coping mechanism.

Reflections:

- What transitions have I lived through, and how did they affect my ability to deal with people?

Actions:

- Think about how a transition to your community might be especially rough for people coming from a particular part of the world, and prepare to ease that difficulty as it relates to disasters. For example, might people from a particularly cold country be especially in need of a particular kind of help with coping with deadly heat?

Family. Most newcomers have left family behind, or have family members scattered around the world. This separation is already a major transition that leaves many refugees struggling emotionally with grief and loss. Planners have these dynamics to consider:

- The impact of trauma may vary by generation. Newcomers who fled their country as an adult tend to have stronger connections to their homeland than children, so a crisis in their country of origin may upset them much more than it upsets their children.
- Children often blame themselves for trauma or disaster, and this dynamic may be reinforced by the transition and previous trauma.
- Children who are separated from their parents as a result of a crisis may be skilled at hiding their depression, anxiety, fear, and uncertainty.
- The legal status of family members may vary. They may do whatever it takes in order to stay together. For example, if an emergency announcement directs people to pass through an official checkpoint, newcomer families may skirt that checkpoint.
- The most recent arrivals in a particular newcomer family will probably need the most guidance and support.
- Depending on their culture, some family members may put themselves at risk for the sake of others.

Reflections:

- How am I used to seeing critical decisions made at a family level, and how might that be different than the traditions of newcomers in my community?
- What is the likely legal status of the newcomers I come to know, and how might it affect their behavior if disaster strikes?

Actions:

- Familiarize yourself with what “family” means to the newcomers in your community. You can do this by reading up, and by simply observing how family members treat each other in whatever spaces, public or private, you share.

Language. Language skills can have a heavy impact on how people cope with emergencies, so much so that we’ll examine this in detail in the section “A Deeper Look at Language: Creating Understanding, Overcoming Barriers” on page 18.

For now, the most important things for planners to remember are that:

- Announcements made before, during, and after a crisis are often not available in languages appropriate for newcomers.
- Responders may find it difficult or impossible to communicate with newcomers face-to-face or on the phone.

- The language gap may affect fundamentals, for example, having a common understanding of what an emergency is and why actions are needed.

For related reflections and actions, please see the detailed section on language mentioned above.

Access to information. Even if information is available in appropriate languages, migrants may still lack the means or knowledge needed to access that information. Planners should be aware that:

- The Internet may be inaccessible to newcomer populations and in rural areas.
- While some parts of U.S. society commonly use social media networks to disseminate information immediately before, during, and after an emergency, those networks may be out of reach or unknown to many newcomers.
- In the absence of access to typical sources of information, some immigrant groups rely on their informal and internal networks such as family and friends to learn about what is going on and what they should be doing.

Reflections:

- Where would I get information in a crisis? Where would I turn if that access was cut off?

Actions:

- Diversify your disaster plan to include media that reach newcomers, e.g., the ethnic press, radio, or cable TV.

Access to services. Planners should be aware that newcomers' access to services is limited, and that their attitude towards accepting them may vary widely. It's important to know that:

- Some newcomers lack the proper legal status to be eligible for services.
- Even if they are eligible for services, newcomers can find the application process daunting and confusing, and some communities have limited or no resources in this respect.
- People from many cultures do not understand or accept the need for mental or emotional health services, even when they can access them.

Reflections:

- What bureaucratic processes do I find most intimidating, and what if I had to go through them in another country/ language?

Actions:

- Compile a list of services available to a variety of newcomers in your community, and break them out by what kinds of newcomers can access them.

Fear and mistrust. Years of exposure to propaganda in their country of origin may make newcomers mistrust anything official. Moreover, previous traumatic experiences that involved government or other authorities may make them distrustful of anyone holding power. Planners need to take into account that:

- A mistrust of information sources they're not familiar with may reinforce the tendency of some immigrant groups to rely on their informal and internal networks, such as family and friends, to learn about a disaster and how to respond.
- Many newcomers arrive from a country where they developed a strong mistrust of all government entities, which can include medical facilities.

- Many immigrants want reassurance from the network of helpers they already know, so they may be wary of new staff sent into disaster zones by government agencies and private groups.
- Newcomers may be aware of negative press coverage of their community in the past, leading them to shy away from media coverage and anything that would increase public scrutiny of their lives.
- It takes time to build trust in the community, not least with newcomers, and in an emergency such time does not exist.
- Certain visual triggers, e.g., people in uniform, may make it hard for some survivors to deal with people in authority. Another example would be how environment affects people who have been traumatized previously, e.g., a torture survivor may have terrible memories of an all-white room with bright lights.

Reflections:

- Who do I trust for information in times of disaster? Who do I distrust?

Actions:

- Begin building up a track record of trust with newcomers by establishing relationships as soon as possible. See what information you can provide them, so that they begin to see you as a reliable source.

Prejudice. Cultural competence—the knowledge and interpersonal skills that help people better understand, appreciate and work with individuals from cultures other than their own—is a fairly new concept to many Americans, newcomers or not. Because of its importance, we’ll take a closer look at cultural competence in the section “A Deeper Look at Cultural Competence” on page 15. For now, planners should be aware that:

- Some responders may not be sensitive to cultural issues, such as who to defer to within a family, or may show open or “beneath the surface” racial prejudices.
- Some community members want to follow a “help our own first” philosophy. They may even oppose offering any services to newcomers, lumping them together as “undocumented” and therefore “undeserving.”
- As the political climate heats up, this aspect of prejudice becomes more divisive.

For actions and reflections on prejudice, please see the section mentioned above.

Human trafficking and smuggling. Women and children are at particular risk of being trafficked, that is, moved across borders against their will. But trafficking and smuggling can contribute to the vulnerability of any and all newcomers in different ways:

- Family members in desperate situations are susceptible to human traffickers and smugglers who purport to offer safe access to freedom.
- Children who are separated from family members are at risk of being abducted or scammed by traffickers.
- A parent may sell a child to traffickers in order to secure needed resources, or put them to work in a situation that increases their vulnerability to trafficking.

Reflections:

- Have there been any reports of human trafficking in my community? Who was trafficked?

Actions:

- Familiarize yourself with your community’s law enforcement activity as it relates to human trafficking. You can even meet with a representative of concerned authorities.

Loss of limited financial resources. Many newcomers, no matter how financially successful they may have been in their country of origin, arrive in America with very little to their name. Some remain poor, and when disaster hits, they may lose what little they had. Planners should take into account that:

- Many newcomers deal with banks rarely or never, using cash to get by and relying on pay-day check cashing or other high-fee services.
- Newcomers who were better off in their countries of origin may have had workers taking care of their day-to-day needs. They may still be learning practical skills that become all the more critical during a disaster.
- Some newcomers will lose even more property than other disaster victims, because fear or a lack of information hinders their efforts to react and guard their wealth.
- Desperate financial situations can, as mentioned above, lead some parents to send children to work in situations that involve human smuggling or trafficking.

Reflections:

- Who would I turn to if I ran out of money?
- Does that opportunity exist for newcomers?

Actions:

- Include lenders, whether public or private, local or national, in your thinking about disaster planning and the final document.

Low ranking on authorities' list of priorities. The officials of many communities have a “take care of our own first” mentality that leads them to deprioritize caring for newcomers in times of crisis. This lack of prioritization may be connected to newcomers' own efforts to remain inconspicuous and not “make waves.” These factors, joined with responders who are sometimes completely overwhelmed, may combine to leave newcomers low on the list for receiving help. Planners can consider that:

- Newcomer populations may be “hidden” through their own efforts and the tendency of the mainstream to overlook them, leaving them “last in line” for services.
- Huge disasters may strain services even to those at the top of the list. Without deliberate efforts to fairly allocate resources, the bottom of the list may be cut out.
- Newcomer communities are sometimes outside of city limits, making them ineligible for essential services or reliant on such things as a volunteer fire department.

Reflections:

- How does letting some people sit at the “bottom of the list” square with my church's mission?
- What decision-makers would have to be in the loop in order to set the expectation that resources will be prioritized justly in the event of a disaster?

Actions:

- Identify the organizations (and decision-makers within them) who control vital resources and persuade them to commit to fair distribution to newcomers.

Legal obstacles. The physical and mental challenges facing newcomers in times of disaster may be compounded by legal frameworks that imperil their well-being or even survival. Legal status makes people eligible for services, but there may be other barriers to access such as geographic location or language.

- During disasters, laws or practices may be suspended or changed, particularly when vast migration stresses systems and services. In this situation, newcomers can find themselves more vulnerable to detention or deportation, and a fear of that may force individuals or families into hiding.

- Disasters tend to separate family members, and many areas lack legal structures to enable them to be easily reunited.
- Cultural differences may complicate legal cases. America's system asks lawyers to build a case in a linear manner and deals with "facts in evidence." A newcomer's culture may not dictate ordering a story in a linear manner. Or his or her culture may hold that the explanation "God came to me in a dream and told me to leave the country in a boat" is as factual and relevant as the actual trip abroad by ship.¹ Cultural differences may even make some people reluctant to accept services (see section on "Fear and Mistrust").

Reflections:

- If my loved one's life depended on having certain paperwork during a crisis, what would I be prepared to do to ensure their well-being?

Actions:

- Investigate, for possible inclusion in your disaster planning, state or local measures that could ease legal issues that might threaten a newcomer's well-being during a disaster.

Beyond particular vulnerabilities, the next important consideration in standing with newcomers is often knowing when to act. For that reason, the next section will examine the triggers that may guide your disaster response work with and alongside newcomers.

¹ Five Habits for Cross-Cultural Lawyering, Sue Bryant and Jean Koh Peters, 1999

III. When Do Newcomers Need Our Preparedness and Help?

To be most effective, our outreach to visible and hidden immigrant and refugee populations needs to be regular, proactive, and precede emergencies. Involving newcomers in developing plans for these times will make the disaster response and recovery much easier and more successful. Beyond this forward-looking engagement, outreach usually needs to be stepped up and accompanied by action in the following situations:

When disaster strikes where newcomers have moved to

In 2010 there were 247 natural disasters in the United States.² Seven hundred people died in weather-related disasters in 2011 and the monetary toll was more than \$50 billion.³

It doesn't matter where in the United States a newcomer settles, because disasters can erupt anywhere. From blizzards to hurricanes to drought, each area of the country has its challenges. Disasters can also be human caused; they include such things as the economic downturn or an upswing in violence.

Newcomer populations have many of the same needs as the general population when there is a disaster. In that sense, it doesn't matter whether they have been in this country for years or are newly arrived, whether they have fully integrated into local society or are hidden. They need shelter and security, food and water, medical care, supplies, and an opportunity to quickly get back to earning a living. And, like all involved, they need to feel embraced and included within the community, part of what is happening to and around them.

Cases like the one to the right, on the Gulf Coast, are invariably repeated with every disaster around the county. In times of crisis, those living in tight communities such as these rely on each other, not outsiders. Their lack of solid relationships with businesses, leaders, and organizations in the wider society around them can leave them in much more dire straits following a disaster.

When disaster strikes where newcomers have moved from

Newcomer populations have special needs when there is an emergency in their place of origin. It's common for a parent to come to the United States with plans to send for the family once they're settled in and earning enough money. The first thing these parents will want to do, upon hearing news of the disaster, is find out the fate of their loved ones.

When they learn what has happened, they may need to make difficult choices. The disaster may mean they need to make arrangements to move their children or elders to safety. The best solution they can figure out in a precarious situation may be to arrange to smuggle their children across a border. However, they may only have the funds to get only one family member to safety. They may struggle to get funds into reliable hands to help those who are still alive. Often they are grieving as they hear the news reports and talk with loved ones. Moreover, a disaster in a newcomer's homeland often triggers increased or re-traumatization.

Case Study: The Gulf Coast Immigrants and Hurricanes

Here is a story of newcomers who found limited success here in the United States, lost nearly everything and now, seven years after Hurricane Katrina, are still struggling to recover.

Hundreds of immigrants from Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam settled in the Gulf of Mexico starting in the early 1980s, because the climate and conditions were similar to their homelands. They built communities that were fairly insular and businesses that employed their own people. Shrimp, oysters, and crab provide hard seasonal work and families work long hours; children help after school. Benefits are not part of the job.

Early in the summer of 2005 when Hurricane Dennis was approaching the area, these communities followed the government's directions and evacuated the area. Their businesses lost money. Later that summer when Hurricane Katrina was announced, they did not leave until the last minute. The communities lost most homes and businesses. While no one died, most people lost their livelihood.

Today these communities continue to struggle to recover from those storms and the subsequent BP oil spill.

Case Study: The Haitian-American Community, Pt I

An estimated 786,000 Haitians were living in the United States in January 2010 when an earthquake devastated their country of birth.

The 59,000 Haitians living in Florida's Palm Beach County were, like the rest of the country, already struggling in an economic recession. An unseasonably cold winter was severely impacting the few agricultural jobs traditionally available to them. After the earthquake hit, most in the Haitian-American community had new hardships to cope with, including the loss of family members and friends.

Even as their hope for opportunities and their own security in the United States was decreasing, they were burdened with the responsibility of sending more money and resources to those left living in Haiti, or seeking mechanisms for family reunification.

² U.S. Natural Catastrophe Update: Natural Disasters 1980-2010

³ The Weather Channel

Newcomers may also know that if their homeland was already in conflict, unstable, or war-torn, an emergency can be more than an additional source of stress for those family members still there. It can trigger greater political, social, or economic unrest on top of whatever damage the disaster has caused.

When disaster brings a large influx of newcomers into a community

Many calamities force a sudden migration of displaced people. A crisis situation complicates the normal tasks of processing and integrating newcomers into an area. An unexpected influx of a large number of newcomers anywhere stresses communities, systems, and agencies.

These circumstances can put a spotlight on an entire ethnic group locally, regionally, or even nationally. This can be an added complication for those struggling to remain unnoticed. That spotlight can be positive in the sense of drawing more attention to the plight of the newcomers. But it can also be negative in the sense of spurring other newcomers and longtime area residents to meet the latest arrivals with distrust and discrimination.

People can flee the same country for different reasons. An influx of newcomers from the same region most likely represents different socioeconomic groups, and each group can have its own set of norms and culture and challenges in their new community.

When disaster, whether here or in the newcomers' homeland, is old news

As a world community, we have a short attention span. Tragedies fade from the headlines. The media may cover chronic situations on an anniversary of a particularly terrible event. But without constant reminders, the general population forgets that the flood, the tornado, the tsunami, the political coup d'état affects many people forever.

Today, years after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, many people still suffer from survivor guilt and are in need of help.

When newcomers were a hidden population at the time of the disaster

Those immigrants who lived under the radar before the disaster remain under the radar afterwards as well. In fact, they may burrow deeper for fear of discovery, even when they are in dire need of essential supplies and services. Or, if they are ready to reach out for support, they do not know who to trust or where to go for help.

While it is now more than a decade since 9/11, here is a story mostly known only by those involved or those who work in disaster response. On that dreadful day, as every day for years, scores of immigrant Fujianese, an ethnic group from China, were serving meals from their food trucks that surrounded the Twin Towers. Workers, tourists, and local residents ate the food these vendors prepared as they worked hard to support their families.

Most of the vendors died in the terrorist attack, and their families grieved. On top of the loss of their loved ones, they now faced a devastating loss of income and the knowledge that their relatives would most likely not be included in any official count of the dead, thus leaving them ineligible for benefits extended to the family members of other victims. In 2002, one church in New York City created a ministry of outreach and service to this under-the-radar community.

Case Study: *The Haitian-American Community, Pt II*

Following the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, thousands fled to the United States. In this tragedy, thousands of children lost one or both parents. Many other survivors saw them as a shared burden. Without immediate family members to protect them, they became especially vulnerable to human trafficking. They did not know who to turn to or trust.

With each wave of newcomers from Haiti, some immediately went to family already here. While welcomed, the survivors' presence brought additional economic and emotional and hardships and frustrations. Even as they grieved together, each fragile household now had more people to feed, clothe, and tend to in cramped spaces. Some Haitian newcomers went underground, seeking out their invisible countrymen. All wanted and needed to send money and supplies to the survivors.

Opportunities for reflection and action

Reflections:

- How would I know if a crisis were affecting the place where my community's newcomers came from?
- Has my community handled past influxes of newcomers after disasters, and how?

Actions:

- Set up a system by which your community's disaster planners and responders can become aware of disasters in newcomers' countries of origin.
- Be intentional about outreach to neighbors who are newcomers when there is an emergency in the place they've moved from.
- Be mindful of how quickly the evening news can drop one story in favor of another, and continue to support newcomer communities even when they're no longer on the front page.
- Include newcomers in your planning from the start.

Now that we have taken a look at the breadth of issues confronting disaster planners who want to stand with newcomers, in the sections that follow we'll analyze more deeply three especially critical points: language, cultural competence, and partnerships.

IV. A Deeper Look at Cultural Competence

Newcomers represent rich and diverse cultures that are often much older than that of the United States. Each newcomer experiences a transition process to feel at home in this new culture. Each community experiences a transition as it welcomes newcomers. During these transitions, which affect newcomers and longtime residents alike, the potential exists for both culture clashes and mutual growth. A critical factor in these creating positive outcomes for these transitions, as well as for disaster planning, is cultural competence.

What is cultural competence?

Cultural competence consists of the knowledge and interpersonal skills that help people better understand, appreciate, and work with people from cultures other than their own. Culture does not just refer to nationality. It can refer to ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, and many other factors. As individuals with varying experiences, we all have different levels of competence when it comes to effectively communicating with and understanding people who represent other cultures.

Four things are needed for developing cultural competence:

1. **Awareness**—Being aware of your personal reactions to those who are different from you.
2. **Attitude**—Being aware of your cultural bias and beliefs while also closely examining your beliefs and values about cultural differences.
3. **Knowledge**—Learning about various cultural practices and learning to identify where personal behaviors are inconsistent with personal values and beliefs about equality.
4. **Skills**—Practicing behaviors, attitudes, and values that allow effective communication in multicultural settings. The top skills include listening for understanding and asking questions to learn an individual's story.

Cultural competence is always a process. We are all at various levels of awareness, knowledge, and skills, and no individual or organization has attained perfect understanding of other cultures. But as we think intentionally about these issues, everyone benefits as we stretch ourselves and grow in our ability to relate to one another.

Cultural competence is a critical component of any disaster plan that includes newcomers in your community.

Where to begin developing cultural competence

While there will probably always be a debate about if and how much newcomers should adapt to the norms and culture of their adopted country, it is important for those wishing to have a relationship with a newcomer to understand his or her background and culture. There are items in the Additional Resources that may be appropriate to understanding the newcomer populations in your area.

Here are three elements of any culture that provide some basics for you to begin assessment of your own cultural competence and that are critical to understand when working with newcomers in an emergency.

Concept of family

One common element of all cultures is the concept of family – family of origin, blended families, extended families, etc. As you work with people from a different culture, find out about their view of family. Who will speak for and make decisions for the family? How is the family defined? What is the structure? In the case of an evacuation, who would they evacuate first?

In some countries/cultures:

- Extended family includes the whole village or distant blood relations
- Women are the head of the family, while in others it is the men
- Order of birth determines financial obligations; for example, the oldest son may be responsible for the education of all his siblings
- Elders and the deceased are revered
- Different families may have different roles within a tribe

Members of newcomer families are or have been separated from other important relatives.. It is helpful for disaster planners and responders to understand this and to know that family reunification can be a lengthy process that does not always run smoothly. A typical story is that one parent has been in the United States for a couple of years. During that time, as they established a new lifestyle for themselves here, their children became used to their absence. They grew from children into pre-adolescents or teenagers. It is normal for them to resent having been left behind, often to be cared for by an older relative, or to think that it was their fault that their parent had to leave in the first place. Even with much easier means for communication today over a decade ago, frequent telephone conversations or emails do not replace living under the same roof. Where a family is in the separation and reunification process can impact their reaction during an emergency.

Intergenerational issues can also be important to understand. First generation migrants have a stronger tie to their homeland. Second generation newcomers experience a high pressure to succeed. Children and teenagers want to fit in with their peers, whose behavior may seem disrespectful to the family elders. These are stressful experiences that may already be present in a home prior to and during an emergency.

Behaviors

Another critical element to explore is behavior—that is, actions you can see or words you can hear. What is acceptable in one culture may be an insult in another. What follows are three examples from a vast range of behaviors that need to be understood and discussed. You can find related information listed in the Additional Resources.

Eye contact

In some cultures, such as here in the United States, direct eye contact is expected in casual, business, and formal settings. In some Asian cultures however, direct eye contact is a form of disrespect. In some Latin cultures, winking is a romantic or sexual invitation, while in Nigeria, Yorubas may wink at their children if they want them to leave the room.

Touch

Touch can mean anything from a handshake to a hug. Throughout the Middle East, it is common to reserve the left hand for bodily hygiene, so one should never offer to shake the left hand. A Western women should not initiate a handshake with a man in India. Many cultures have strict rules on gender, touching, and on the concept of personal space.

Expressing emotions

This aspect of norms can include how a culture deals with grief or joy or what normal day-to-day conversations might sound and look like to a casual observer. Some cultures foster stoic reserve while others express emotions freely.

Elements of faith

The final common element we touch on here is faith. Cultures and even governments can be influenced by religions and folklore. It may be easy to assume that a particular ethnic group or an individual from a certain region or with a certain surname will be of a certain faith or act in a certain way; however, just as there are different denominations under the umbrella of “Protestant,” there are distinctions within the Muslim, Hindu, and other faiths.

People trust and may seek out religious leaders in times of crisis. Actions may be guided by differing interpretations of the same commandments and religious law, or by traditions very foreign to the Judeo-Christian mores historically present in the United States. Some newcomers, Christians among them, may have a fatalistic outlook such as, “God made this happen,” and so believe there is nothing they can or even should do in response to a disaster.

One way to increase our cultural competence is to read the history of a newcomer’s country of origin. For example, when you meet someone from Cambodia, you know that the person’s life was impacted by the Khmer Rouge. Similarly, a person of color from South Africa would have experience with apartheid. Depending on their age, it might be something that they experienced personally, or were impacted by as a result of their parents’ experiences. While it’s not appropriate to pry into such experiences, your awareness of the role they might play in a newcomer’s life could help you appreciate what they’ve overcome and accomplished.

Cultural competence helps us see the relationship between our expectations and those of other people. Cultural competence skills allow us to learn, appreciate, and understand the cultural differences we bring into any interaction with another person. As we grow in cultural competence, we gain a clearer understanding of our own worldviews, attitudes, beliefs, and opinions. We also expand our knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews and develop cross-cultural skills that allow us to effectively interact with people from other cultures.

Cultural competence is not just about tolerance; cultural competence skills help shape our behaviors so that we can work effectively and respectfully with others.

Opportunities for ⁴reflection and action

Understanding a country's history, learning about different cultures and norms, seeing each newcomer as an individual – all this helps us gain insight into how we view the world and come to terms with our own prejudices and assumptions. We become aware and open to the fact that “we know that we don't know.” We can develop skills at listening and asking the right questions to start a dialogue that can lead not only to an effective disaster preparedness plan but also to increased awareness of how each of our newcomer neighbors has a rich and diverse background.

Reflections:

- What behaviors have I noticed that are different from our local norms?
- What have been my reactions to them?
- What ethnic or regional cultural norms are present in our community?
- How can I find out what the cultural norms are of the newcomers in our area?
- How would I open a dialogue on the subject with a newcomer? For example, “Would you be willing to tell me about how your culture defines a family?” or “I'll bet we do some things very differently from what you were used to. What's one of the biggest differences you notice?”
- How would I rate my own cultural competency regarding the newcomers in our area?

Actions:

- Check out the list of resources about cultural competence in the Additional Resources.

Part of cultural competence is learning to recognize the importance of language.

⁴ Much of this material was adapted from Be Not Afraid, a project of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

V. A Deeper Look at Language: Creating Understanding, Overcoming Barriers

Delivering information in an understandable language

Newcomers are often not aware of approaching danger because emergency announcements and directions are not delivered in their native language. The same is true of publications and announcements that direct residents on how and where to receive aid or be part of the recovery efforts following the disaster.

This can be one of the easiest fixes, and many communities have taken steps to do so. But speaking the same language is much more than being able to hear or read something.

Speaking the same language – understanding context

We need to take a step back and talk about the definition of the words “emergency,” “disaster,” and “crisis.” What does each signify in a newcomer’s native tongue? Does their vocabulary even include such a word or concept? You may be thinking of one word, and it may evoke to them an entirely different meaning or word.

Then there is the issue of cultural norms, discussed in more detail shortly, but important here in the sense of needing to understand language in context. For example, in some cultures, the first-born male child is treated with a great deal of deference and attention. A person who has witnessed, heard of, or experienced such things either in their homeland or here will not share or understand this as anything out of the ordinary, for to them it is the norm. As such, disaster instructions – even in their native tongue – that treat all children in the same way may be greeted with a response that reflects the listener’s cultural context, rather than the instructor’s intent.

A third element of context is to understand what disasters are common to a newcomer’s homeland and what traditions or rules or behaviors they were taught to follow. For example, in some areas of the world the appropriate response to an earthquake is to run outside. In other countries, there are regular wet and dry seasons that come with almost expected losses of life and property. Some people are used to circumstances that to others would be unbearable—times of heat or cold, times of plenty and times of extreme want. Too hot? Go sleep outside. Too cold? Start a fire. Ask someone from Vietnam and someone along the Mississippi about the word “flood” and you might get different responses and need to discuss totally different action plans. People living along parts of the Mekong in Vietnam anticipate floods at a particular time of year, and take certain precautions such as building houses off the ground. Along the Mississippi, floods may not be expected on the same regular cycle, at the same level of threat to human beings.

In such cases, the newcomer’s response to a particular word describing a disaster may evoke a very specific response, or even lack thereof. Therefore it may be important to be aware that newcomers may not be aware of geographical designations, for example the names of rivers that are flooding or the county names that are under a tornado warning. Knowing about how the newcomer’s behaviors are triggered by particular language can help with planning and responses on the spot.

Introducing ‘new’ disasters

Language must be used carefully when helping newcomers understand disasters that they are nearly or completely unfamiliar with.

Consider how to explain to a newcomer about the disasters to which your area is prone. If you are in California and someone has moved there from an area of the world with no earthquakes, how do you explain the sensations or the science? The list goes on and on, depending on where you are in the country and where the newcomer arrived from. An immigrant who lived in a desert may need to learn what “hurricane” or “tornado” means, or about the terms “white out” and “blizzard.” Knowing these words and the severity or the problems associated with them could mean the difference between life and death.

Sensitivity to word choice in representing newcomers

Here in the United States we work very hard to see everyone as equal. We have all seen the pain, maybe even felt the exclusion that being labeled as “different” can bring. Or we may have enjoyed the warmth of inclusion due to being part of an “in” group.

From childhood on we may have learned how words can hurt. As our culture has become more diverse, we’ve become aware of the correctness and incorrectness of terms.

Many people, even those who are well-intentioned, use words without thinking. They may, for example, use “immigrant” interchangeably with “migrant” or “refugee.” In reality, these words mean very different things, particularly to the people involved.

As another example, terms such as “Latino,” “Hispanic,” or “African American” may not be preferred by everyone we think they apply to, and may not even be accurate. We have become accustomed to hearing words such as “undocumented” and “illegal” in news reports about newcomers and give no thought to each individual being highlighted.

Our systems – legal, educational, government – may need to care about a newcomer’s “status,” and those who work within those infrastructures may need to know. We, as volunteers, generally do not. However, we do need to understand that in certain circumstances labels are critical and they are of great importance to the individual. For example status or labels may be the how individuals are defined for eligibility for services such as TANF, Medicare etc.

A Deeper Look at Language: Creating Understanding, Overcoming Barriers

Opportunities for reflection and action

While not speaking a language is a barrier to communication when meeting a newcomer in every day circumstances, it is not the main, or even the only challenge when interacting with newcomers in a time of disaster. But understanding, and indeed appreciating the language differences, will make both newcomers and established residents more able, and more competent, to create a plan that will be effective if and when an emergency occurs.

Reflections:

- Have I ever dealt with a language barrier, and how?
- How do people in my community approach the idea of different languages being spoken, and how might that affect disaster preparedness?
- What weather-related or natural disasters are common to the country of origin of newcomers in my community?
- What disasters or emergencies are most likely to strike my community?
- How would I explain them, and how to respond to them, to a newcomer?
- Reading the list of words related to immigrants and refugees in the Additional Resources at the end of this guide, do I find words I’ve been using/misusing when thinking of newcomers?

Actions:

- Determine what “disaster” means in a newcomer’s country of birth.
- Talk to expert translators to learn some specific words and phrases that would be crucial in communicating with your community’s newcomers after a disaster.
- Include strategies in your disaster plan for rapidly translating critical information.

After smoothing out language barriers, it’s important to think carefully about how we build partnerships with the people with whom we’re trying so hard to communicate. The next section covers this partnership-building.

Legal Status:

Words matter to newcomers

As we develop our sensitivity to the meanings and nuances behind each word, it is important to remember that:

- Behind each word is a person. This manual is for people – a man, a woman, a child, a family – not groups of “them.” When working with vast populations, when facing difficult issues dealing with equity, norms, and even laws, it can be easy to lose sight of the individual.
- Legal issues require the use of the appropriate term, but volunteers dealing with newcomers in disaster situations rarely need to focus on these issues. It is seldom that you will need to ask a person’s status, and in fact, doing so may destroy any trust you have built.
- One cannot and should not make any assumptions when meeting a newcomer.
- It is probable that there are people of different migrant or refugee status within most families.
- People of different migrant and refugee status exist in most newcomer community groups.
- Fear of separation from or deportation of family members and neighbors is one reason why this population becomes more vulnerable in an emergency.

VI. A Deeper Look at Partnerships: A Crucial Bond

Countless factors come into play when newcomers face a disaster. Many of these factors become obvious as disaster planners develop their cultural competence. Other factors are discovered through dialogue and experience. Such dialogue and experience can come through building strategic partnerships, not only with the newcomer populations themselves, but with others within the community who need to be part of any disaster plan.

One thing LIRS realized early in its ministry was that partnerships and leveraging resources are necessary in order to truly provide the best welcome to newcomers. Two of our most significant relationships are with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and Lutheran Church Missouri-Synod (LCMS). Both denominations have a history of welcoming newcomers and advocating for social justice for all. Both also have experience at being newcomers. Following World War II, one out of every six Lutherans in the world was a refugee or displaced person. With the participation of 6,000 congregations, Lutherans resettled 57,000 refugees in the United States.⁵

Partnership in action

One lesson on partnerships is that the broader community of faith and others of good will share a common mission in welcoming and assisting newcomers and working together in allocating resources in emergencies whenever possible. An example of a recent joint initiative was the Haiti Earthquake Disaster Response Project. With funding from the ELCA, the LCMS and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, LIRS was able to engage in expanded relief efforts in Belle Glade, Florida. One key result from that project was the realization of the need for this guide. The complete project report is listed as a resource for this manual and is available at www.lirs.org.

Listed below are some key elements of partnerships LIRS noted in the Haiti Earthquake Disaster Response Project.

- **No organization can or should manage an emergency alone.** Private and public agencies are needed in planning for a disaster, reacting to an emergency, and focusing on recovery.
- **Each agency brings particular skill sets to the plan and resources for action.** LIRS identified and surveyed 14 service agencies for areas of expertise, built partnerships, and developed a plan of action maximizing their resources.
- **Advocacy – for resources, protection, legislation, etc. – is an important element of disaster planning and response.** The more voices, the better. LIRS mobilized nearly 1,000 constituents to write advocacy letters that resulted in helping 30,000 people become eligible for work authorization and a path to self-sufficiency.
- **Local connections empower local problem-solving.** LIRS connected the Salem Haitian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lake Worth, FL with St. Paul Catholic Church's Central Processing Unit ministry, in the same state. St. Paul's donated 20 laptops and 20 desktops for a new computer lab. As a result, hundreds of Haitians were able to apply for jobs, maintain contact with friends and family, increase their levels of computer literacy, and create resumes for employment searches.

Finding partners: Asset Mapping

One of the most effective ways to find partners to help create a disaster preparedness plan is asset mapping. Asset mapping is a process whereby members of a "community" identify the strengths of individuals, leaders, and organizations within the community or available to the community and how to mobilize those strengths to meet a certain need. By listing, grouping, and then laying out assets on an actual map, the team can quickly see not only community's assets but also what and where assets are missing. The process itself builds or bolsters a team and can generate a great deal of community participation and therefore ownership of the plan.

Opportunities for reflection and action

It takes a village to raise a child, and it takes everyone in the village to keep all residents safe during a crisis. That includes developing partnerships to meet not only today's needs, but also to serve as a foundation for meeting the needs of all during a crisis.

⁵ "A Message on Immigration." ELCA, 1998, p. 2

Reflections:

- What partnerships are already in place to connect us with newcomers in our community?
- What partnerships do we need to establish?
- Has our organization been part of asset mapping or are we ready to lead such an initiative?

Actions:

- Check out the asset mapping materials in the Additional Resources and the resources listed.
- Review the sheet in the Additional Resources on meeting the five universal needs of foreign-born children in the United States for best practices and how critical effective partnerships are in meeting those basic needs.

Thanks for bearing with us so far. Now that we've examined the big picture of newcomer vulnerabilities, and taken deeper looks into the critical factors of language, cultural competence, and partnerships, we're ready to list our next steps. The next section will present action items for moving ahead with your new knowledge.

VII. Take Action Now — Next Steps for Inclusive Disaster Planning

So far, this manual has given you the broad-strokes view of disasters and how they can affect longtime community residents and newcomers alike. We also looked at how newcomers may be particularly vulnerable to disasters, and honed in on the particular kinds of disaster-related situations for newcomers that should trigger community responses. We also analyzed overcoming *language barriers*, developing *cultural competence*, and *building partnerships*. We hope you're comfortable with what you've learned.

If you've got a handle on the preceding sections, you're ready to tackle next steps—meaning action!

But first, it's good to reflect a bit. No one course of action is going to make sense for every community, and with that in mind:

- Does your community – your church, agency, organization, neighborhood, village or region – have a need and a desire to pursue any next steps? You are in the best position to determine what that step might be.
- Do you have a disaster plan in place? What revisions are required? Would the plan benefit from an asset-mapping project, and, if so, who would you invite to participate?
- Are you ready to start thinking of a disaster plan? Who would help move that idea forward?
- Are you ready for any type of action?

Once you feel comfortable with your own answers to the questions above, you may consider:

Actions:

- Review the “Outline for an Action Plan” in the Additional Resources.
- Check out the resources for creating a disaster plan listed in the Additional Resources.
- Check with your state voluntary agencies.
- Let LIRS know how you used this manual by sending an e-mail to childrenservices@lirs.org.

Afterword: Newcomers are Already Engaged in Your Community

You've now completed a large part of the task at hand by learning about newcomers' particular vulnerabilities in times of disaster, as well as needs they share with longtime community residents. We're grateful for your commitment to helping others, your spirit of welcome, and your love for your community!

As a final word, we'd like to offer up the idea that there are many myths and misunderstandings about newcomers and how and why they come to the United States. Understanding the critical roles they play and having accurate information may help shift perceptions and build bridges to your newcomer populations, so that actions can be taken to upgrade or create a disaster plan.

As you look at your community and identify the newcomers there, it may help to have this broader foundation on what newcomers contribute to the U.S. economy and our society. Also, this manual would be incomplete without demonstrating how these neighbors have, in fact, contributed funds that have gone into the creation of services that they are often either unaware of or unable to access following a disaster.

Newcomers pay taxes

- Immigrants pay sales, property, and income taxes. The Social Security Administration also estimates that 75% of the 11 million undocumented immigrants pay payroll taxes.⁶
- The average immigrant pays \$1,800 more in taxes annually than they receive in public benefits, according to a landmark study by the National Research Council and National Academy of Sciences. Over their lifetimes, the average immigrant and her immediate descendants contribute \$80,000 more in taxes than they receive in benefits.⁷
- The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office states that “over the past two decades, most efforts to estimate the fiscal impact of immigration in the United States have concluded that, in aggregate and over the long term, tax revenues of all types generated by immigrants—both legal and unauthorized—exceed the costs of the services they use.” However, the federal government does not always share this tax revenue with state and local governments in proportion to the services immigrants use.⁸
- Undocumented immigrants contribute \$7 billion a year in Social Security taxes even though they cannot claim benefits from this program. ⁹At current immigration levels, new immigrants entering the U.S. will provide an estimated net benefit of \$407 billion to the Social Security system over the next 50 years.¹⁰

Newcomers fill important roles in society and the workplace

- One in every four doctors in the United States is foreign born, as well as one in three computer software engineers and more than 42 percent of medical scientists.¹¹
- Immigrants helped to submit a quarter of the U.S. patent applications in 2006.¹²
- In the Chicago metropolitan area alone, undocumented immigrants spend \$2.89 billion on goods and services, creating an additional 31,908 jobs in the local economy.¹³
- As of 2010, more than one in six small business owners in the United States were immigrants, and in New York City, nearly half of all entrepreneurs were born in foreign countries. By contrast, immigrants account for 13% of the U.S. population and 36% of New York City's population. As of 2007, immigrant-owned businesses employed 4.7 million people nationwide.¹⁴

⁶ Eduardo Porter, “Illegal Immigrants are Bolstering Social Security with Billions,” *New York Times*, April 5, 2005. <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/05/business/05immigration.html>

⁷ James P. Smith & Barry Edmonston, Editors, *The New Americans: Economic, Demographic, and Fiscal Effects of Immigration*. Washington, DC: National Research Council, National Academy of Sciences Press (1997) p 349, p 351.

⁸ “The Impact of Unauthorized Immigrants on the Budgets of State and Local Governments,” Congressional Budget Office (2007). <http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/87xx/doc8711/12-6-Immigration.pdf>

⁹ Randolph Capps and Michael E. Fix, “Undocumented Immigrants: Myths and Reality,” *The Urban Institute* (2005). <http://www.urban.org/publications/900898.html>

¹⁰ Stuart Anderson, “The Contribution of Legal Immigration to the Social Security System,” *National Foundation for American Policy*, (2005): p8, <http://www.nfap.net/researchactivities/studies/SocialSecurityStudy2005Revised.pdf>

¹¹ Jeanne Batalova and Michael Fix, “College-Educated Immigrant Workers in the United States,” *Migration Policy Institute* (2008). <http://www.migrationinformation.org/USfocus/display.cfm?id=702>

¹² Vivek Wadhwa et. al., “Intellectual Property, the Immigration Backlog, and a Reverse Brain-Drain: America's New Immigrant Entrepreneurs, Part III,” *Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation* (2007). http://www.kauffman.org/uploadedFiles/reverse_brain_drain_101807.pdf

¹³ Chirag Mehta et. al., “Chicago's Undocumented Immigrants: An Analysis of Wages, Working Conditions, And Economic Contributions,” *Center for Urban Economic Development, University of Illinois at Chicago* (2002). http://www.uic.edu/cuppa/uicued/npublications/recent/undoc_full.pdf

¹⁴ Fiscal Policy Institute, 2012

Opportunities for reflection and action

Here are some things for you to think about and consider acting on in connection with newcomers' contributions and your disaster planning:

Reflections:

- Does my community recognize the contributions made by newcomers, and if not, how might that be accomplished?
- Acknowledged or not, where are the contributions of newcomers visible to everyone?

Actions:

- Find and share widely some local data that help explain how newcomers contribute to your community.
- Map out and try to engage newcomer businesses and organizations in creating your disaster plan.

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Definitions and Terms

Use this reference as a reminder that understanding the nuances of terms associated with immigration are very important; however, remember that it is rarely appropriate to ask a newcomer his or her status.

- ▶ **Immigrants**: foreign-born individuals who are living or intending to live permanently in the United States. (This includes lawful permanent residents or naturalized citizens.)
 - **Lawful Permanent Residents (LPR)**: non-citizens who have received authorization to live permanently in the United States with a “green card.”
 - **Naturalized citizen**: A person who was born a noncitizen and was granted U.S. citizenship through the naturalization process.

- ▶ **Refugees**: persons who have “a well-founded fear of being persecuted on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion” and who are temporarily residing in another country with hope of eventually being resettled in a third country.

- ▶ **Asylum seekers**: persons who have fled persecution in his or her home country and who have come directly to the United States to ask for protection. Like refugees, asylum-seekers must prove a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion in order to obtain asylum in the United States.

- ▶ **Migrant**: foreign-born individual who is living temporarily or permanently in the United States.
 - **Persons without legal status**: Individuals who have entered the United States without being properly inspected at the port of entry (i.e. land border, ship port, or airport). Because they do not have a valid visa or other paperwork, they are often called “undocumented.” Those who entered with a valid visa but have remained in the country after their temporary visa has expired are generally referred to as being “out of status.”
 - **Non-immigrant**: An individual who seeks temporary entry to the United States for a specific purpose and intends to return to his/her country of origin. Many non-immigrants come to the United States for short periods of work or study.
 - **Immigrant**: An individual who moves to the United States with the intention of staying in the United States. People with immigrant status have been given permission to reside permanently and, thus, most immigrants in the United States are Lawful Permanent Residents, also known as “green card holders.” After a few years of established residence, Lawful Permanent Residents may apply to become citizens of the United States.

- ▶ **Visa**: A document that gives permission for a non-immigrant to enter a country and stay for a specific period of time for a specific purpose

- ▶ **Unaccompanied minor**: a child who has not attained 18 years of age; and with respect to whom there is no parent or legal guardian in the United States; or no parent or legal guardian in the United States is available to provide care and physical custody. (Homeland Security Act of 2002).

- ▶ **Deportation**: the forced removal of a non-U.S. citizen from the United States.

Cultural Competence and Working with Foreign Born Populations Resources

Following are just a sampling of the many resources available on the internet.

National organizations

- American Immigration Lawyers Association (www.aila.org)
- Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services (<http://www.brycs.org>)
- Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights (www.heartlandalliance.org)
- Immigrant Legal Resource Center (<http://www.ilrc.org>)
- National Center for Cultural Competence (www.nccc.georgetown.edu)
- National Center for Immigrant and Refugee Children (<http://www.refugees.org/our-work/child-migrants/about-ncric.html>)
- National Immigration Forum (www.immigrationforum.org)
- National Immigration Justice Center (www.immigrantjustice.org)
- National Multicultural Institute (www.nmci.org)
- The Center for Victims of Torture (www.cvt.org)
- National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth (<http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov>)

A 2010 study detailing how different cultures approach a variety of communication issues:

- Communication Patterns and Assumptions of Differing Cultural Groups in the United States: www.awesomelibrary.org/multicultural

The health care field has published extensively on relating to different cultures:

- Guide to Quality & Culture in Health Care: www.msh.org
- University of Washington Medical Center's Patient and Family Education Culture Clues Tip Sheets: <http://depts.washington.edu/pfes/CultureClues.htm>
- *Handbook of Intercultural Trainings* by R. M. Paige, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. *Lecture 2: The Bennett Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity.* <http://www.agriculture.purdue.edu/oap/AGR101/documents/InterculturalModels.pdf>
- Resources for Cross Cultural Health Care and the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation to promote cultural and linguistic competent health care, Sponsored by the National Conference of State Legislatures: <http://www.diversityrx.org/>
- *Getting the Word Out: Effective Health Outreach to Cultural Communities.* The Medtronic Foundation: http://www.medtronic.com/downloadablefiles/outreach_brochure.pdf

Government resources:

- Office of Minority Health, Think Cultural Health: <http://www.thinkculturalhealth.org>
- Office of Minority Health: National Standards on Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS): <http://www.omhrc.gov/templates/browse.aspx?lvl=2&lvlID=15>

- U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
<http://www.refugees.org>
- U.S. Immigration Service
www.uscis.gov
- Department for Health and Human Services, Administration of Children and Families, Office of Refugee Resettlement
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/>

University/Academic Resources:

- Georgetown University, National Center for Cultural Competence:
<http://www11.georgetown.edu/research/gucchd/nccc/>
- A Guide for Providers: Engaging Immigrant Seniors in community Service and Employment Programs, Senior Service America and the Center for Applied Linguistics:
http://www.seniorserviceamerica.org/news/cal_guide.html

Child Welfare within Natural Disaster:

- Annie E Casey Foundation: Disaster Preparedness for Child Welfare Agencies
(<http://www.aecf.org/-/media/Pubs/Topics/Child%20Welfare%20Permanence/Other/DisasterPreparednessResource-GuideforChildWelf/DisasterPrep.pdf>)
- Anne E Casey Foundation: Emergency Preparedness Guide: A Resources for Families
(<http://www.aecf.org/-/media/Pubs/Topics/Community%20Change/Other/EmergencyPreparednessGuideAResourcefor-Familie/Resource%208A.pdf>)
- Mental Health America: Living your Life During Challenging Times
<http://www.nmha.org/go/information/get-info/coping-with-disaster/living-your-life-during-challenging-times>
- Children's Voice Article, Vol. 4, #4, Children and Disasters: What Caring Adults Can Do
<http://www.cwla.org/articles/cv0109caring.htm>¹

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Asset Mapping Overview

What is asset mapping?

Asset mapping is a process whereby members of a “community” identify the strengths of individuals, leaders, and organizations within the community or available to the community and how to mobilize those strengths to meet a certain need. By listing, grouping, and then laying out assets on an actual map, the team can quickly see not only community’s assets but also what and where assets are missing. The process itself builds or bolsters a team and can generate a lot of community participation and therefore ownership.

This process can be very helpful if you are considering a Disaster Preparedness Plan for your community, agency, or congregation.

What is an asset?

- Infrastructure and community design, e.g. open spaces
- Physical structures – remember the library, senior centers, hospitals, schools, etc.
- Businesses, particularly those engaged in the community
- Government systems
- State Voluntary Agencies, or State Refugee Coordinator
- People:

Organized groups, e.g. church congregations, PTA, VFW

Community leaders, including the leaders within any newcomer population

Civic servants and volunteers

The skill sets of citizens and those listed above plus intangible assets of the people and groups. If a community leader is highly respected, they she/he may be able to build a coalition. If another speaks well to the media, she/he may be the best recruiter.

Who should be involved?

To create an effective and complete map of the assets of your community invite leaders and individuals from all of the organizations listed above PLUS members of local newcomer groups. The process will help build the bridges that will be needed if and when a disaster occurs.

Suggestions for brainstorming community assets

- Start with a definition of the community. What are the boundaries?
- Download a map of the neighborhoods
- Gather lists of businesses; use the local yellow pages, check with the Chamber of Commerce
- What partnerships already exist?
- For the purposes of disaster response, which agencies, businesses, etc. might already have a preparedness plan?
- If no one has a strong bridge to the newcomers, who is the best person to reach out to invite them to the table?

Assessing local resources

Replicate the table on the next page of all the entities listed below and other helpful agencies or individuals:

- Local Authorities and Civic Leaders, including those in newcomer communities
- Social Service Providers
- Legal Service Providers and Low-Cost Attorneys
- Food Pantries
- Shelters
- Schools
- Churches
- Medical support
- Transportation Assistance
- Local Media Sources

Resources for next steps

There are several models on the process and many good resources available online.

- Policy Link: Lifting up what works: Quick Reference Guide with Community Mapping Examples:
http://www.policylink.org/site/c.lkIXLbMNJrE/b.8022519/k.AB84/Community_Mapping/apps/nl/newsletter2.asp
- For a manual that covers the entire asset mapping process, see University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and USDA NRCS: [“Building on Assets and Mobilizing for Collective Action, Community Guide.”](#)
- Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS):
<http://www.blueprintforchangeonline.net/pages/resources/asset-mapping.php>
- University of New Hampshire, Assessment tool guides:
www.extension.unh.edu/CommDev/ToolBox/CNATools.ppt
- Youth Community Asset Mapping Initiative Report *Environmental Youth Alliance*:
www.mycalconnect.org/merced/download.aspx?id=10130
- Kansas University Work Group on Health Promotion and Community Development: Developing a Plan for Identifying Local Needs and Resources. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas:
http://ctb.ku.edu/en/solveproblem/Troubleshooting_Guide_1.aspx
- US Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Multifamily Housing Programs, Connecting to Success Neighborhood Networks Asset Mapping Guide:
<http://www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/mfh/nnw/resourcesforcenters/assetmapping.pdf>

- UCLA Center for Health Policy Research Health DATA Program – Data, Advocacy and Technical Assistance: http://www.healthpolicy.ucla.edu/healthdata/ttt_prog21.pdf
- For details on asset mapping approaches and techniques and their benefits and disadvantages, see Carter, Keith A., and Lionel J. Beaulieu, “[Conducting a Community Needs Assessment: Primary Data Collection Techniques.](#)”

Asset mapping resources in print

- *Collaboration Handbook: Creating, Sustaining, and Enjoying the Journey*, by Michael Wine and Karen Ray (St. Paul: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 2000).
- *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*, by John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight (Chicago: Institute of Policy of Research, 1993).

Example: Asset Mapping of Local Resources

Name of Individual or Organization	Best Phone #	Email	Address	Services/Role
Interviewer/Researcher: Date:				

Notes:

Outline for Drafting a Disaster Preparedness Action Plan with and for Newcomers

Step 1: Awareness – gained by reading *Disaster Preparedness in Migrant Communities*

- ✓ Why are migrants and refugees often hidden populations?
- ✓ Why does a community need to be intentional about outreach to migrants and refugees when there is a disaster?
- ✓ Are migrants and refugees being represented in other disaster plans within “special populations”?
- ✓ What types of crisis does this address?
- ✓ Why and how are newcomers more vulnerable during a crisis?
- ✓ What barriers exist to providing support to migrants and refugees in a crisis?

Step 2: Initial assessment – taking a look around

- ✓ Are there hidden populations in our community?
- ✓ Does our organization and community have a history of welcoming newcomers?
- ✓ Do we have a relationship with or a connection to newcomer individuals, families or groups?
- ✓ What organizations in our community might have a strong relationship with local newcomers?
- ✓ Who are community leaders that represent different newcomer groups?

Step 3: Building bridges – starting to connect

- ✓ If there are organizations that have a strong relationship with local newcomers, how can we reach out to those organizations and/or how can we reach out to local newcomers community leaders ourselves?
- ✓ Who needs to be at the table?
- ✓ How can we ensure a distinction between *Disaster Preparedness in Migrant Communities* and immigration enforcement?
- ✓ What kinds of cultural education programs would benefit the community?

Step 4: Engage community leaders – finding partners

- ✓ Review Best Practices
- ✓ Conduct needs analysis
- ✓ Facilitate asset mapping
- ✓ Develop a culture of openness
- ✓ Recruit volunteers

Step 5: Build partnerships to welcome and integrate newcomers into the community – fostering a welcoming community

- ✓ Review current programs
- ✓ Endorse, expand or enhance current programs
- ✓ Create new partnerships or initiatives to meet identified needs

Step 6: Develop plans for outreach during an emergency – putting *Disaster Preparedness in Migrant Communities* into action

- ✓ Add section to in-place disaster preparedness plan
- ✓ If no plan exists, research and evaluate disaster relief programs available (State and Local Emergency Management, Red Cross Chapters, Voluntary Agencies)
- ✓ Modify with help from resources provided in this manual, community leaders and additional materials

Resources On Disaster Preparedness

Most of the organizations listed here have excellent manuals on disaster preparedness and disaster response.

Some Faith-based Sources

- African Methodist Episcopal Church (www.ame-church.com)
- Catholic Charities USA (www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/disaster)
- Episcopal Relief and Development (www.er-d.org)
- Jewish Disaster Response Corps (www.jdrcorps.org)
- Lutheran
 - Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (www.elca.org)
 - Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (www.lcms.org)
 - Lutheran Disaster Response (www.ldr.org)
 - Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (www.lirs.org)
- Presbyterian (www.pcusa.org/ministries/compassion-peace-justice)
- Church Disaster Mental Health Project (www.churchdisasterhelp.org)
- United Methodist Committee on Relief (www.umcor.org)
- Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (<http://www.uusc.org>)

National agencies

- The American Red Cross (www.redcross.org)
- Community Emergency Response Team (www.citizencorps.gov)
- Disaster Relief Agencies and Nongovernment Organizations: This site lists dozens of organizations for disaster response and relief (www.disastercenter.com)
- National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (www.nvoad.org)

Government Resources on Disaster Preparedness

- USA.gov: Disasters and Emergencies, Resources and information concerning natural disasters.
<http://www.usa.gov/Citizen/Topics/PublicSafety/Disasters.shtml>

Resources Used in the Development of *Disaster Preparedness in Migrant Communities: A Manual for First Responders*

Articles

A Message on Immigration, Division for Church in Society, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1998

Working with Refugee and Immigrant Children: Issues of Culture, Law & Development, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, 1998

Meeting the Five Universal Needs of Foreign Born Children in the U.S., Adapted by LIRS from CWLA, *Making Children a National Priority*, 2003

Afterword: Understanding and Serving the Children of Immigrants, Carola Suárez-Orozco, Harvard Educational Brief, Vol. 71, No.3 Fall 2001

Beyond the Family: Contexts of Immigrant Children's Development, Carola Suárez-Orozco and Avary Carhill, *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, no. 121, Fall 2008

Vulnerable Children in the Aftermath of Haiti's Earthquake of 2010: A Call for Sound Policy and Processes to Prevent International Child Sales and Theft, Karen Smith Rotabi and Kathleen Ja Sook Bergquist, *Journal of Global Social Work Practice*, Volume 3, Number 1 May/June 2010

Torn Apart: Years of Separation Take Their Toll on Immigrant Children and their Families, Maria Angélica Foreno, April 2004

After arrival full of hope, many Haitians despair in U.S., Maria Sacchetti, *Globe Staff*, January 12, 2011

Making Up for Lost Time: The Experience of Separation and Reunification Among Immigrant Families, Carola Suárez-Orozco, Irina L.S. Todorova, and Josephine Louie, *Family Process*, Vol 41, No. 4, 2002

Manuals/Reports

Preparing to Meet the Challenge: Congregation Preparedness & Volunteer Training: A Ministry of LCMS World Relief and Human Care, 2009

Developing Lutheran Early Response Teams, LCMS World Relief and Human Care

Coordinators Training Manual & Handbook, Lutheran Disaster Response, 2001

Prepared to Care: A Booklet for Pastors to Use in the Aftermath of a HUMAN-caused Disaster, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2004

Equipping Leaders for Disaster Response, Office of International Mission, The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod

Be Not Afraid: A Project of Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Service, LIRS

Haiti Disaster Response Project Report, Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Service, 2011

Effective Child Welfare Practice with Latino Families, LIRS

Books

Faith in the Eye of the Storm: Katrina Stories in Four Voices: Belief at Work During Natural Disasters, Janyce Jorgensen & Debra Anderson, 2011

The Cross at Ground Zero: Lutheran reflections and sermons in response to 9/11, edited by H. Gaylon Barker