



# Disaster Research 1

A review of the activities and interests of the Disaster Research Unit.

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## FORMATION

The Disaster Research Unit was formed in December 1973 as a research group within the Project Planning Centre for Developing Countries at the University of Bradford. It is currently supported by the initiating sponsorship of the Leverhulme Trust, to which the University of Bradford added a generous matching grant, and the Ministry of Overseas Development.

The motive for the formation of the Unit was in the awareness of the need for pre-disaster planning and for the study of precautions which could be taken against the probability of disaster events. It was furthermore realised that to be successfully implemented precautions had to be seen as far as possible as part of an overall strategy within an existing economic framework and administrative infrastructure.

Disaster is regarded as being principally the effect on communities of natural phenomena, a continuing risk which may have resulted in hazard situations. We are concerned with the manifestations of hazard by attempting to form methodologies of response as a way of mitigating the effect of events when and where they occur as earthquakes, hurricanes, typhoons, floods, volcanoes, tornadoes, tsunamis, drought, fire, epidemic and plague.

The Unit at present is a team of three who are:

James Lewis ARIBA, Leverhulme Senior Research Fellow who is leader of the Unit.

Philip O'Keefe B.A. (Hons), Research Fellow.

Kenneth Westgate B.SC. (Hons), Research Student.

James Lewis is an architect trained at the University of Manchester and has fifteen years of experience in England, USA and Hong Kong, principally with the firm of Robert Matthew, Johnson-Marshall & Partners as Resident Architect on the University of Bath and the Hong Kong Cross Harbour Tunnel. He also taught at the University of Bristol School of Architecture and continued an architectural practice which became more of a vehicle for the development of ideas in pre-disaster planning.

Philip O'Keefe graduated from the University of Newcastle in geography and then went to the School of Oriental and African Studies in London University. He completed his research in Kenya and

Tanzania before returning to lecture in London University. During 1973 he lectured in Khartoum University before returning to join the Disaster Research Unit. His interests are orientated towards rural development in underdeveloped countries, particularly in terms of flood and drought.

Kenneth Westgate graduated from the University of Bradford in geography and economics, during which time he completed a dissertation on human adjustment to earthquakes with particular reference to the European seismic zone. Subsequently he gained a Social Science Research Council Award to work in the field of the human element in disaster and gained an ex officio invitation to the Transport and General Workers Union enquiry on the Flixborough Chemical Plant explosion which led to a detailed analysis of the human response to this explosion.

#### ADVISORY COMMITTEE

An Advisory Committee has been formed representing not only the present three sources of support, but other interested persons each highly regarded in their fields and who, as a body, are a valuable source of inspiration and guidance in the work of the Unit. The Committee consists currently of

Dr. David Edwards, Assistant Director for Research, Project Planning Centre, (Chairman).

Dr. T. Emmerson, representing the Leverhulme Trust.

Dr. Basil Cracknell, representing the ODM.

Professor Otto Koenigsberger, Environmental Planning Unit, UCL.

Professor M. Mylroi, Professor of Control Engineering, University of Bradford.

#### RESEARCH MOTIVE

Very much emphasis has been placed on making contact with other research organisations and individuals, intergovernmental and governmental organisations, voluntary organisations principally in England and the rest of Europe, and in Canada and the United States, but also in many other countries throughout the world. James Lewis has visited many of these sources of disaster related activity during the past year and the Unit is in correspondence with many more. Whilst disaster relief has been the principle interest of many of those visited, there has been a unanimous warmth of welcome and expression of interest in the proposed activities of the Unit and an eagerness to see results. Primarily, however, the initial value was to the Unit in making contact with so many people active in related views and in confirming the areas of greatest activity and then those of least activity which had been recognised as the Unit's main concern.

It is worth noting that the interests of the Unit have not excluded man-made technological disasters, the areas of similarity between the natural and the man-made being close with similar results that exclusion of the one appears impractical and of no detriment to the other.

The Unit has produced a manual of pre-disaster planning in an outline skeletal form, which is currently undergoing testing and will shortly be ready for publication. It is based on the elemental thesis that indigenous resources of a domestic, community and regional value exist to some degree in whatever location and that for want of an appropriate awareness and effective coordination these may form the first steps in national pre-disaster planning. The short term results may only apply to the strategic stockpiling of relief resources or a study of methods of distributing external relief but medium term pre-planning may affect methods of construction of dwellings, their form and siting and the longer term aspects of the acknowledgement within development plans of the possible effects of, and the effect of them, on disaster situations forms one of the most intriguing areas of the Unit's work.

We are well equipped with expertise to explore precautions in considerable detail and to examine the impact of disaster on an economy and on development. We continue to seek, either as a long term appointment or perhaps as short term arrangements, interested applicants with statistical and computer skills to carry out specific studies in risk analysis and probability in particular disaster types or in particular parts of the world. We also have a continuing need for applications from prospective Research Assistants and Students.

#### PILOT STUDY

The Unit were given an opportunity to test some of their ideas 'in the field' when the League of Red Cross Societies in Geneva suggested the Bahama Islands as a location which might be appropriate for a pilot study in pre-disaster planning. As a disperse island group with extremes of population, activity and income, the Bahamas promised considerable challenge with special attention to be paid to its close proximity to Florida and the USA and its topicality on the fringe of the Caribbean.

All members of the Unit spent from four to six weeks on the assignment during November and December last year applying a process of analysis to explore the 'everyday' situation with special attention to the 'disaster context' which included not only the principle natural disaster, hurricane, but also the possible man-made events of technological explosion, aviation accident and epidemic for example. Our analysis included discussions with high level government representatives from whom we received a very warm and interested welcome, an exploration of future development plans and ideas and a social questionnaire to inquire into attitudes towards hurricanes by Bahamians. The preparation of our reports is continuing. On conclusion of his part in the Bahamas Pilot Study, Phil O'Keefe went on to Honduras to examine the effects of Hurricane Fifi and to study the

efficacy of pre-disaster planning there. These studies are the basis of current testing for a manual of pre-disaster planning.

#### OCCASIONAL PAPERS

The Unit has commenced publication of its own series of Occasional Papers which are the results so far both of work commenced before the formation of the Unit and of work undertaken since. The current index is attached and copies are available on application. Ken Westgate's bibliography is seen as a further contribution of bibliographic material on disaster related subjects and an important working document for the Unit and classification of its own collected material. His analysis of the response of those afflicted by the explosion at Flixborough is an important contribution by the Unit to the study of technological disaster. Phil O'Keefe expresses views in his two papers of how natural disaster can be exacerbated by the affairs of man and may not in fact be 'natural' any more. James Lewis has reviewed world activity in 'Disaster Management' as he saw it in 1974 and rewritten a paper on a working method of simple pre-disaster planning which was an early result of his work before the Unit's formation. The mission to Fiji has been written by Dr. Michael Gane, who was until recently Director of the Project Planning Centre of the University of Bradford and a founder of the Disaster Research Unit.

The publication of papers is not restricted to Unit members, although a strong affinity with the Unit's motive and interests is required.

We will be happy to receive submission of papers for publication and also news of current research and disaster-related activity as we already do from many sources throughout the world. We look forward to a second issue of Disaster Research as soon as we have items of interest to report.

UNIVERSITY OF BRADFORD  
DISASTER RESEARCH UNIT

Occasional Papers Price Index

	Including domestic or overseas surface postage		Including airmail overseas postage		Student rate	
	£	₡	£	₡	domestic/ surface	airmail
1. Bibliography of Disaster Reference Material.	0.75	1.75	1.25	2.50	£0.50 (\$1.25)	£0.75 (\$1.75)
2. Disaster Management with Special Reference to Pre-disaster Planning.	0.50	1.25	0.75	1.75	£0.40 (\$1.00)	£0.50 (\$1.25)
3. Proposals for a Working Method of Indigenous Resource Co-ordination as a Part of a Pre-disaster Plan.	0.50	1.25	0.75	1.75	£0.40 (\$1.00)	£0.50 (\$1.25)
4. Definitions of Disaster	Not Yet Available					
5. A Philosophy of Planning	Not Yet Available					
6. Gakarara - A Study in the Development of Underdevelopment.	0.50	1.25	0.75	1.75	£0.40 (\$1.00)	£0.50 (\$1.25)
7. Flixborough - the Human Response.	0.50	1.25	0.75	1.75	£0.40 (\$1.00)	£0.50 (\$1.25)
8. African Drought - A Review.	0.50	1.25	0.75	1.75	£0.40 (\$1.00)	£0.50 (\$1.25)
9. Report of Mission to Assess the Hurricane Factor for Planning Purposes in Fiji.	0.50	1.25	0.75	1.75	£0.40 (\$1.00)	£0.50 (\$1.25)

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March 1975.