

# DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT FOR COASTAL TOURISM DESTINATIONS RESPONDING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

## A Practical Guide for Decision Makers

### BACKGROUND

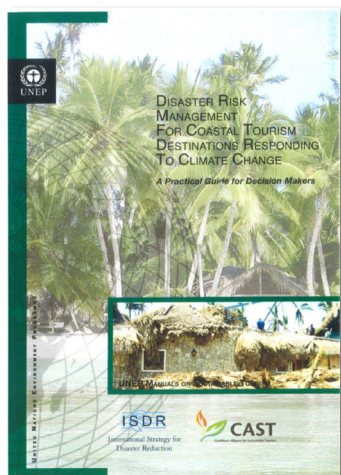
The sustainability of coastal tourism destinations depends partly on their ability to adapt planning and management practices to the impacts of climate change and also to increase their capacity to effectively manage natural disasters.

Scientific evidence suggests that climate change will exacerbate weather-related disasters that will be not only more frequent, but also more powerful and consequently will put coastal tourism destinations in an almost constant state of alert.

When sudden disasters strike, rescuers often have only a short time – sometimes no more than 24 hours – in which they can expect to find survivors. Disaster experts refer to these as “golden hours”, meaning the initial period when a rapid response capability is vital, and when preparedness (or lack of it) can make all the difference.

Experience has shown, time and time again, that it is local people who are best placed to save lives and to coordinate the return to normality. It is the degree to which people are prepared for disasters that determines how vulnerable or resilient their community will be.

### A HANDBOOK FOR DECISION MAKERS



Responding to this challenge, UNEP, in cooperation with the Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism (CAST) has developed a practical handbook to support coastal tourism destinations to prepare and respond to natural disasters. The handbook, which forms part of “UNEP Manuals on

Sustainable Tourism” publication series, has the following objectives:

- Increase the operational capacity of local communities in coastal tourism destinations to respond in emergencies caused by natural disasters
- Support the adaptation efforts of these communities to climate change
- Reduce the impacts of natural disasters to local communities in coastal tourism destinations

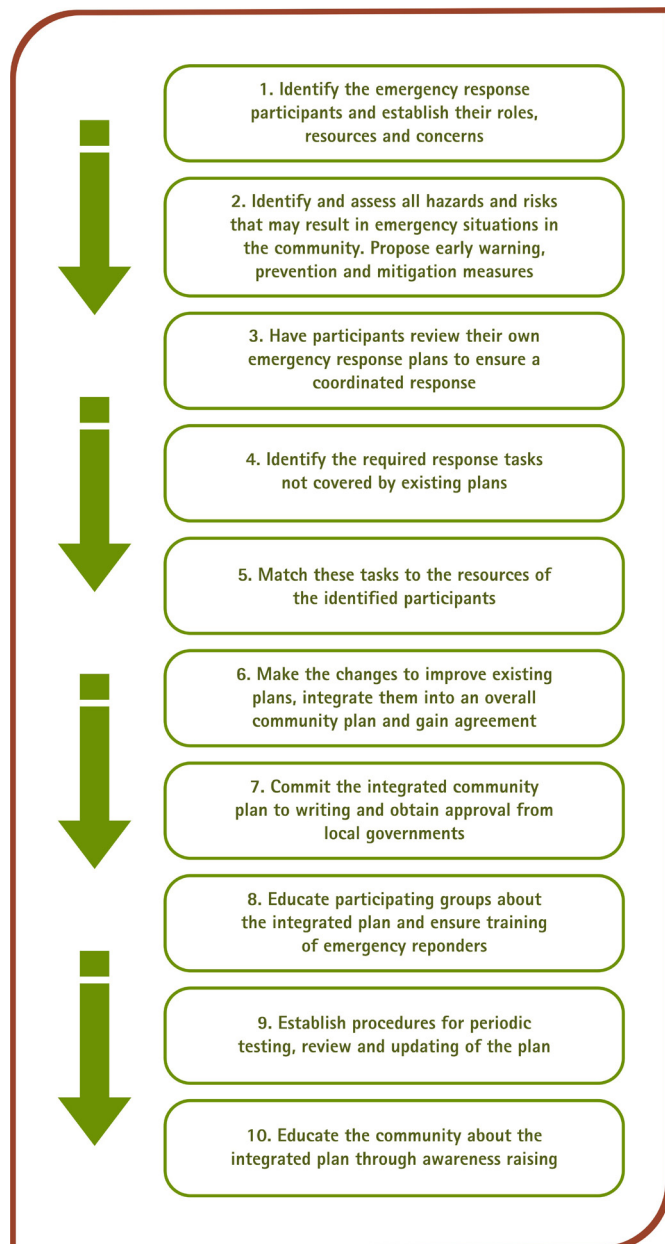
### A SUGGESTED 5-STEP PROCESS FOR PROMOTING DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Promotion of effective disaster preparedness in coastal tourism destinations is a governmental function; yet it requires the participation of all at the destinations. Disaster management is systematic in approach, promotes collaboration between public, private and community stakeholders and seeks proactive responses to perceived threats. It is a basic 5-step process which includes:

1. Identifying hazards and risks
2. Assessing community vulnerability to the risk
3. Developing a preparedness and mitigation plan
4. Implementing the plan
5. Monitoring, evaluating and revising the plan as conditions change

The Handbook provides practical information and guidance for implementing the steps for disaster managers, local, municipal and community planners, as well as other stakeholders in the tourism sector. By following the guidance, coastal tourism destinations will be better able to mainstream sustainability into their tourism planning and management processes and will be ready to better respond to disasters, thus creating safer tourism destinations for all.

## THE APELL APPROACH



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND THE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The Handbook is premised on the fact that the impacts of disasters can be substantially reduced if vulnerable communities are fully informed about possible hazards and have participated in the formulation of risk and crisis management plans. It adapts UNEP's Awareness and Preparedness for Emergencies at the Local Level (APELL) process, used since the late 1980s to prepare communities against technological disasters.

The Handbook also emphasises that policy makers are responsible for creating a responsive and well-resourced framework for action. Disaster response, however, is primarily a local level activity that requires devolution of authority and responsibility to the competent local government agencies and their associated network.



## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT

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