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EVALUATION OF THE SALVATION ARMY'S CYCLONE DEBBIE OPERATION: Understanding the Work and Impact Two Years after Cyclone Debbie



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Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
Background	9
Objective	10
Methodology	11
PART 1: THE WORK	12
THE FIRST FEW DAYS	14
Local Community as the First Responder to Disaster	14
ACTIVITY 1: RESPONSE	15
Deployment of Salvation Army Emergency Services (SAES)	15
ACTIVITY 2: RECOVERY	15
Spirituality and Emotional Support	15
Community Participation in Recovery Efforts	16
Collaboration	16
Circumstances of People affected by Cyclone Debbie	17
ACTIVITY 3: LONG-TERM RECOVERY AND REBUILD	19
WORK CHALLENGES	22
PART 2: THE OUTCOMES	25
OUTCOMES FROM SAES & RECOVERY ACTIVITIES	26
EXPERIENCES AND OUTCOMES FROM PEOPLE WHO RECEIVED REBUILD GRANTS	28
Respondent’s situation when Cyclone Debbie hit	28
Impact of Cyclone Debbie	28
Access to Assistance	29
Process of Getting Assistance	29
Sufficiency of Assistance	30
Outcomes	31
PART 3: REBUILDING LIVES, THE STORIES	35
CONCLUSION	39
Bibliography	42
APPENDIX A: TSA’S OUTCOME DOMAIN DEFINITIONS (as of 23 October 2019)	45
APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANTS’ INFORMATION & CONSENT FORM	46
APPENDIX C: Semi-structured Interview for beneficiaries of rebuild grant	48
APPENDIX D: Semi-structured interview with TSA worker	50
APPENDIX E: Semi-structured interview with external agencies	52

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In March 2019, The Salvation Army (TSA) marks its two-year journey of supporting people to recover from the devastating impact of Cyclone Debbie. This report seeks to summarise and evaluate the work and the impact of TSA Cyclone Debbie operation.

The report uses findings from outcome measurement study conducted in 2017 (Xu, 2018), which measured immediate and short-term outcomes of TSA Cyclone Debbie operation. As this report aims to provide a holistic view of the Cyclone Debbie journey, qualitative research was further conducted in 2019 to give deeper understanding of the work behind the operation, the interactions with other agencies; and to explore outcomes for people who received long-term recovery and rebuild grants.

This report includes findings from 34 emergency service workers and 489 beneficiaries from the past study (predominantly quantitative findings), and qualitative interviews with 3 beneficiaries of rebuild grant, 16 TSA workers and 6 external agencies.

The qualitative interview illustrates Cyclone Debbie's extensive destruction of people's homes, farms, and businesses that had left many to be financially incapacitated (page 28: 'Impact of Cyclone Debbie'). Beyond financial loss and physical damage, many community members had to endure trauma and stress that went years after the cyclone hit (page 31: 'Improve Mental Health').

The disaster recovery efforts became more complex and intensive for people who were in vulnerable situations or in areas of disadvantages. The first outcome measurement study in 2017 reported that around three-quarters of respondents had one or more indicators of being disadvantaged or vulnerable when Cyclone Debbie hit, with the most common issues being: in remote areas, lives alone, suffer from illness, having disability or mobility issues (Xu, 2018). Evident through the interview in 2019, a respondent in remote area reported slower and more complex recovery process, as their remoteness meant that it was difficult to access assistance and there were fewer available resources to support disaster recovery efforts in their area. Their far-off location with the city centres also meant that the provision of gift cards, while it was helpful, was also less effective as they could not use it in their local area (page 30, last paragraph).

TSA workers further commented that existing low socio-economic circumstances in some affected areas compounded the stress caused by the cyclone (page 17, paragraph 3), as low income households were more vulnerable to disasters. There was also an increase of mental health risks especially for those who were on government income support (University Centre for Rural Health, 2017).

The qualitative research also showed that TSA workers were not only assisting community members with the short-term needs, but also attuned to the fact that some community members were already vulnerable before Cyclone Debbie, and therefore required long-term assistance. This was evident through the supports that were provided by local TSA's Corps Officers, workers, and financial counsellors that went well into the months and years after Cyclone Debbie. TSA's external partners also recognised that the ability and willingness to provide long-term supports in the disaster affected area was one of TSA's strength (page 20, paragraph 2).

In delivering its services, TSA workers were seen as non-judgemental in their interaction with community members. In their assistance, community members reflected how their dignity was maintained throughout their interactions with TSA (page 29, last paragraph).

At all stages of the operation, partnership and collaboration with other organisations were important to the success of the disaster response (page 16-17: 'Collaboration'). Some of these partnerships were a result of long-term relationships between organisations, nurtured through meaningful and purposeful networks. In the outcome measurement study, Xu (2018) also reported that *'Government agency worker and community organisations who partnered with TSA generally spoke of the ease of communication between parties. TSA worker were noted to be approachable, helpful and eager to collaborate with other agencies in order to benefit a community member. The outcome measurement study in 2017 also revealed that the work of TSA has complemented other agencies' activities'*. Nevertheless, it was noted that in some instances, there was a lack of communication to other organisation about TSA's roles at the start of the Cyclone Debbie's response (page 22, point number 2).

While TSA's collaboration with other organisations was especially crucial in delivering successful recovery work, community participation was also evidently essential in the survival of disaster, especially in the first few days before help arrived (page 14: 'Local Community as the First Responders to Disaster'). Their involvements in assisting, directing and co-ordinating relief to others who have experienced disasters were important facilitators of recovery (Cronin & Jones, 2015). Therefore, community participation from beginning to end of disaster operation is found to be essential for an efficient and effective recovery after disasters (Krieken, Kulatunga, & Pathirage, 2017).

Many positive outcomes were reported by respondents from both 2017 and 2019 studies. Community members reported that the immediate and practical assistance had helped to restore some level of normalcy to people's lives, and had helped to alleviate the stress that ensued. The financial assistance helped respondents to get their businesses up and running, and helped to make their homes liveable again (Figure 3, page 27).

However, as mentioned earlier, the study also found that due to the magnitude of the damage and/or the pre-existing conditions of impacted people (remote areas, low socio-economic situation, vulnerable), the recovery work is often long-term in nature and supports were still needed beyond the two-year mark (page 33, last paragraph; page 34). The trauma still lingers years after Cyclone Debbie, and some recovery works were especially difficult and still on-going for those who lived in isolated areas. To this end, ensuring timely assistance, especially for those living in remote areas, was found to be especially challenging (page 22, point number 1).

Despite these challenges, the outcomes of the long-term recovery and rebuild phase were evident. Because of TSA's support during recovery phase, people found motivation to work towards their own recovery. On top of that, their mental health was restored or improved, their general wellbeing has improved, and it has increased their connectedness and participation with their community. (page 31-34: 'Outcomes')

While these findings were encouraging, not all impacted community members had fully recovered. For some, their resources were exhausted to cope with the loss; those living in remote areas still encounter difficulty in accessing assistance; some were still experiencing trauma from the experience. Recognising these, it is imperative that The Salvation Army, Government agencies and partners continue the work to support impacted communities in their long-term recovery and rebuilding journey after disasters.

Recommendations

Both literature review and the findings in this report suggested that collaboration between different agencies is crucial in the success of disaster recovery and rebuilding efforts. Harnessing these networks facilitated greater reach and distribution of TSA assistance and integration into the local disaster recovery, and it also accords to national guidelines on strategic and efficient practice in responding to disaster (QLD Fire and Emergency Services, 2017). Developing better communication process at all stages of the disaster operation is important to ensure the smoothness of the collaborative response.

This study indicated that one of the hardest groups to be assisted were those living in remote areas. An important component that could reduce the impact of disaster in remote areas lies in the planning and collaboration that should be in place prior to the disaster. Through better planning and preparation between community members, government bodies, and non-profit organisations at local, state and national levels, there is a higher chance for remote communities to effectively enter the post-disaster recovery phase (Kapucu & Rivera, 2013).

The qualitative findings also suggested that there was a need to increase awareness of TSA's presence and availability to help in these remote areas. A possible method is to increase frequencies and availability for remote site visitations through TSA Rural Chaplains, and TSA's attendance in rural/remote community events. Future efforts may also be directed to partner with local councils to identify, recruit and train local community volunteers in disaster preparedness; as well as to increase the funding for Rural Chaplains and resources to travel to remote areas (e.g. provision of suitable vehicles and caravans). TSA Headquarters may also consider the identification and/or recruitment of worker & volunteers who have the resilience to endure long travels to remote areas and to train them with specific skills required to support remote communities during and after disasters.

Procedures and protocols should also be continuously reviewed, updated and communicated to all parties involved, coupled with regular/refresher training for the new protocols, especially prior to the event. This is to equip workers to manage and mitigate chaos that may arise during the first few days of disaster and when there is little information available about local communities. The procedures and protocols could be improved with the inclusion of local stakeholders in the disaster-prone area (e.g. local Corps Officers, local workers and community services), for example during protocol's review and post-disaster debriefing, to allow them to give valuable input for community-focused disaster preparedness plans. Having at least one contact hub in the local disaster-prone areas may also be helpful to ensure TSA can quickly access background knowledge about local community services for more effective and efficient planning and assistance distribution.

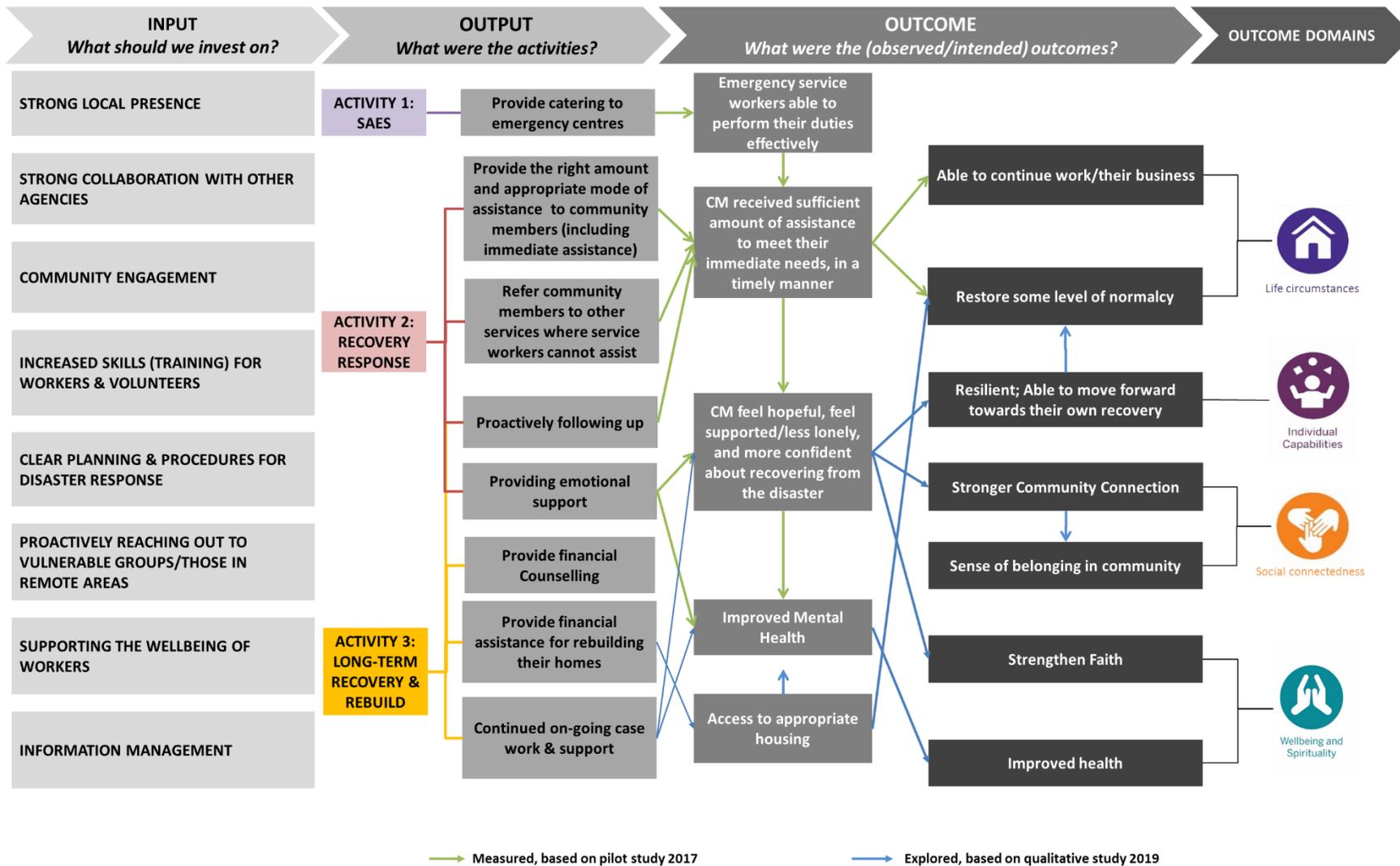
Recognising that mental health was one of the notably higher impact of a disaster, it is imperative that the provision of emotional and spiritual support was to be made available early and throughout the disaster recovery effort. Religious and emotional comforts have been recognised as a powerful source of strength and support for disaster survivors (Aten et al., 2014). As trauma and negative emotional impact could well linger into the years, there should also be increased follow-up efforts for impacted people, especially for those with complex needs, and increase in mental health service provision for impacted communities.

To improve disaster work in general, it is also recommended that TSA, other agencies and the government to focus on empowering the community and maximizing community's participation at the local level to take charge of its own recovery and rebuilding efforts. Tapping on community

resourcefulness is also required to ensure the success of disaster work (Rowlands, 2013). Having resilience and strong community are important indicators to a more sustainable community in managing future disasters, which is ultimately a desired outcome from disaster recovery work (Agryrous & Verlin, 2018). Whenever possible, the preparation of the disaster operation should include local communities at the planning table.

Lastly, for continued improvement of TSA's disaster work and for informing future evaluation, the feedback and findings in this report were used to re-construct Cyclone Debbie's program logic, which maps key elements that constitute the disaster recovery program and how they might contribute to the intended outcomes. It is important to note that the findings from the interviews with three beneficiaries of rebuild grants aims to explore, rather than to quantify, the long-term outcomes. The identified long-term outcomes were incorporated into the program logic (See Figure 1), which forms the foundation for future research and evaluation in disaster operation, including future quantitative study for confirmation of the outcomes across wider beneficiaries.

Figure 1. Program Logic developed for TSA's Cyclone Debbie Operation



BACKGROUND, OBJECTIVE, AND METHODOLOGY

Background

Cyclone Debbie hit Airlie Beach on Queensland's Whitsunday coast on Tuesday, 28th March 2017 (Bureau of Meteorology, 2017). Severe tropical Cyclone Debbie affected Queensland and Northern New South Wales. The impact of associated flooding, torrential rainfall and destructive wind was felt during March and early April 2017. Homes were destroyed, farms were flooded and the devastation caused by the cyclone was sustained in the months and years that followed.

The TSA Strategic Disaster Management Plan (2015) laid out four main stages of disaster operation:

- ❖ Response – to provide timely assistance and to assess the ongoing needs
- ❖ Disaster Recovery – to support affected individuals and communities in the restoration of the local community, economy, and environment
- ❖ Prevention & Mitigation – to reduce the level of risk or severity of damage in disaster/emergency situations.
- ❖ Preparedness – to develop TSA's capacity to work within a community before or following disaster/emergency situations

Based on the above strategic plan, TSA conducted three main activities during Cyclone Debbie operation, as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Three main activities during Cyclone Debbie operation

Name of Activity	What the activity entails	Duration	Disaster Cycle Stages
Activity 1: Salvation Army Emergency Services (SAES)	Provided catering of food and drink in emergency and evacuation centres	28 March 2017 – 7 April 2017	Response
Activity 2: Recovery Response	Provided practical assistance to people affected by disaster. The assistance could be in the form of material, financial or emotional support	29 April 2017 – March 2019*	Disaster Recovery, Prevention & Mitigation
Activity 3: Long-term Recovery and Rebuild	Provided rebuild grant for people affected by disaster who were on low income, uninsured or under-insured, and were unable to access sufficient funds to repair/rebuild dwellings to a safe and habitable state	23 July 2017 – March 2019*	Disaster Recovery, Prevention & Mitigation, Preparedness

**Some of the work of recovery and rebuilding continued beyond March 2019 due to the extensive damage.*

Objective

This report marks TSA's two-year journey in supporting and working with people and communities impacted by Cyclone Debbie. It seeks to capture the entirety of Cyclone Debbie experience, through the lens of people impacted and assisted by TSA, as well as TSA's workers (officers and paid employees) and agency partners.

The damages caused by Cyclone Debbie have significantly affected the lives of many individuals, families, and communities. This report serves to document the extent of the impact and to commemorate the work that went behind the operation.

More importantly, this report demonstrates TSA's commitment to continuously learn and improve its services to fulfil its mission to caring for people, creating faith pathways, building healthy communities and working for justice¹. It is structured in three main parts, where each seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Part 1: The Work
 - a. What were some of the experiences during the Cyclone Debbie operation, from the perspectives of both the impacted people and the workers?
 - b. What were some of the difficulties and challenges faced during the recovery? What could be improved?
 - c. What works well during the operation? What were some of the elements that were important in Cyclone Debbie's operation, to ensure the desired outcomes for impacted people were achieved?
2. Part 2: The Impact
 - a. Did the disaster work had achieved what was intended?
 - b. What were some of the outcomes achieved as a result of receiving supports from TSA?
 - c. What were the experiences, the extent of the hardship, and some of the outcomes achieved for people who received rebuild grants from TSA?
3. Part 3: Rebuilding Lives, The Stories

This part provides shortened narrative from the beneficiaries of rebuild grants, of their Cyclone Debbie journey.

¹ <https://www.salvationarmy.org.au/about-us/mission-and-vision/>

Methodology

A mixed method approach of quantitative and qualitative studies is used and reported here. The first outcome measurement study that was conducted in 2017 was predominantly quantitative and measured immediate and short-term outcomes of the disaster work. Thirty-four emergency service workers and 489 beneficiaries participated in this study².

Following this initial study, TSA seeks to further explore the work behind the disaster recovery and outcomes for recipients of rebuild grants in a more in-depth manner through semi-structured interviews. The study also included interviews with TSA workers involved in Cyclone Debbie's operation and partner agencies to further understand the work and collaboration behind the disaster recovery.

In this follow up study, participants (beneficiaries, TSA workers and external agencies) were recruited between February to March 2019. It was highly possible that many of rebuild grant beneficiaries were still traumatised by the cyclone and/or facing ongoing difficult recovery process. Therefore, the recruitment was done through referrals from frontline worker who would have the best knowledge and understanding of beneficiaries' readiness to retelling their stories. While the worker's referral method of recruitment was deemed best due to the exploratory and sensitivity nature of this study, it is important to note that given the method and the small number of interviewed beneficiaries, the findings from semi-structured interview might not represent typical situation of rebuilding grants beneficiaries. The beneficiary interviews conducted here emphasize discovery over confirmation (Holliday 2008, p.6) and explores possible longer-term outcomes of rebuild grants. Further study is required to confirm the outcomes identified in the interview.

This mixed method approach of quantitative and qualitative studies allowed for elaboration of complex issues and multi-dimensional nature that were inherent to disaster recovery work.

Upon expressing their interest to participate, rebuilding grants beneficiaries, TSA workers and partner agencies representatives were contacted by TSA research team and were provided with written information and consent form for the study (see Appendix B for Participants' Information & Consent Form). Three beneficiaries, 16 TSA workers and 6 external agencies agreed to participate in the interview.

Thirty-minutes phone interview was arranged for the workers and external agencies, and one-hour phone interview time was arranged for the beneficiaries of rebuild grants. For the beneficiaries, \$100 gift cards were provided as appreciation of their time and participation.

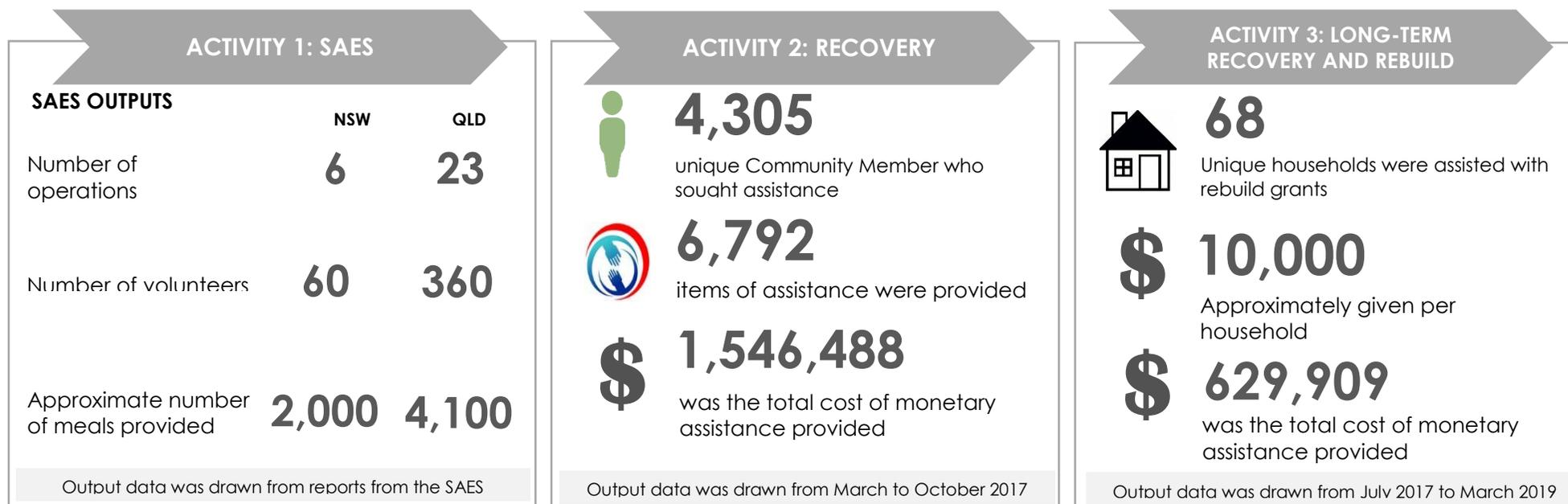
Interview was recorded with participant's consent, internally transcribed and de-identified. The recording was then deleted upon completion of transcription. Interview notes were taken for those who did not consent for interview recording, then de-identified prior to analysis. Thematic analysis was then performed, where common themes or patterns were categorised within the qualitative data. Responses and quotes were de-identified to protect the identity of participants (Kaiser, 2009).

² A full report for the first Cyclone Debbie outcome measurement study (Xu, J., 2018) is available upon request

PART 1: THE WORK

This chapter describes the work that went behind The Salvation Army's Cyclone Debbie operation. It starts with an overview of the activities of the operation (Figure 2), and then it illustrates experiences from 16 TSA worker and 6 external agencies that have journeyed together with affected communities during and after Cyclone Debbie. Their experiences portray the extent of work and challenges that occurred during Cyclone Debbie recovery efforts.

Figure 2. Outputs for TSA's activities during Cyclone Debbie



THE FIRST FEW DAYS

When Category 4 Cyclone Debbie hit, TSA worker on the affected sites spoke about the ferocity of the event. Bunkering down in one room with her family and her neighbour, she recounted the fear:

'I'd never experienced anything like that before. It was just like a jet engine, just roaring the whole time. At chances we got to open the front door and the trees were just bending backwards and forwards and tossing. And rain all the time, really scary stuff.' (TSA worker)

While many people in the area had experienced floods and cyclones before, they were still taken aback by the ferocity and duration of Cyclone Debbie.

'There is the assumption that a cyclone lasts around six hours, but this one was 20 hours...a lot of people were saying that this time, they thought they were going to die' (External agency, quoted from Outcome Measurement Study 2017)

'I guess living there they would know, Category 2, that's not serious, [but] once it sorts of gets up into the 3, 4, 5... just how aggressive it was and how long it took. They had never seen, or at least for a very long time, that sort of [cyclone] that was so slow moving. Usually they are overnight and they are gone. But this was more than 20 hours and it was crazy.' (TSA worker)

Immediately following the hit, some people found themselves with no accommodation. Food and water were also scarce or difficult to access. Immediate response needed to be provided, through grants/donations for essentials such as food, water, and medication (NSW Disaster Assistance Guidelines, 2015).

Local Community as the First Responder to Disaster

Before help arrived, the people in the communities, local services, and TSA workers on sites had to rely on each other for survival. In some sites, the whole towns were cut off due to floods in the surrounding area. People were stranded at this locality due to the onset of flooding. There was also uncertainty as to whether there was enough food to assist people.

'We were basically just feeding and clothing them out of the welfare pantry. We kind of worried that we were going to run out of food.' (TSA worker)

In these situations, people put up their hands to help and donated groceries, which allowed TSA workers to assist until the situation eased.

'[The supplies] got to be a stretch...By the time the supermarkets started to run out of food, that was a bit, on my God. But whenever we walked into somewhere [people] were really helpful [and donated food]' (TSA worker)

TSA Corps Officers also organised the deployment of immediate assistance and relief.

'...and then as the requests for assistance came in, it was about trying to mobilize the right people, with the right equipment to the right places, to look after requests.' (TSA worker)

Deployment of disaster workers and volunteers also happened days before the Cyclone came in, to get a head start in preparation and disaster response.

'There was a bit of pre-deployment of people up into the region in the days before, and then it was a bit of 'hurry up and wait' until they were able to do anything. It was all about getting

the right people to the right places up there while preparing [other areas] for the weather event that was about to come through.’ (TSA worker)

However, getting people and resources into the affected areas was a challenge in itself. Some sites were cut off and hard to access. Further challenges arose when centres were short-staffed. Collaboration with the local community services, such as local fire brigade, was important to enable delivery of meals to these cut-off and hard-to-access sites.

Once the disaster areas were safe to access, numerous TSA worker and volunteers from all around Australia arrived to support the local sites.

ACTIVITY 1: RESPONSE

Deployment of Salvation Army Emergency Services (SAES)

At the affected sites, SAES team distributed meals and refreshments to emergency service workers. SAES complemented the activities of the emergency service worker. In the outcome measurement study, emergency service workers reported that they felt supported by the SAES, and they felt the SAES team helped them/their team performed their duties more effectively to at least some extent.

‘The fact that they were up very early in the morning to cook breakfast and they were there late to cook dinner. Always words of encouragement and happy smiles on their faces’ (Emergency service worker, quoted from Outcome measurement study 2017)

SAES also well-complemented emergency service work by giving them some peace of mind regarding food and drink assistance.

‘We did not need to worry about where to find food if you’re hungry. Know that we didn’t need to cook it. They were always there with a smile which after a hard day of devastation relieves pressure just a little bit more’ (Emergency service worker, quoted from Outcome measurement study 2017)

While SAES team catered food and drinks to evacuation and emergency centres, other TSA worker in the areas offered listening ears and comfort to many who were facing fear and uncertainty from the disaster.

‘There was a lot of fear. We just tried to get the meals out. We were milling around with people and speaking about their experiences.’ (TSA worker)

ACTIVITY 2: RECOVERY

To rapidly meet the large and diverse needs of the community, Recovery Centres/Hubs were established to gather multiple agencies with different but complementary roles. For example, there were Department of Communities’ caseworkers who provided government grants for immediate needs, Lifeline counsellors who provided emotional and counselling support, and Red Cross volunteers who helped community members get settled in the centre and provide education about the disaster recovery process (Xu, 2018). TSA personnel were there to help distribute monetary assistance and/or in-kind donations, as well as providing emotional supports to those in need.

Spirituality and Emotional Support

In some areas, the flash floods were unexpected and locals did not know how they were going to survive the floods. Because the impacts of this disaster were worse than expected, many people

needed someone to speak to make sense of their experiences (Xu, 2018). Knowing that TSA was an organisation with Christian values, many people were willing to open up to seek emotional and spiritual support.

'People knew that The Salvation Army, as well as providing material resources, was also a Church. That opened the door for people to talk about their fears.' (TSA worker)

For many that went through traumatic and harrowing experiences, the provision of supports at the Recovery Hubs showed them that someone cared about their life, family and community. Workers listened to community member's experiences, held spiritual discussions with community members or carried out their requests for prayers.

Community Participation in Recovery Efforts

Community participation was again evident during this phase. In some areas, where damage was significant, community came together to manage the recovery.

'It's a small town and I think the flood was worst. There were very significant issues, the levee bank broke and the water rushed through the town in a way that it had never done before. There was a whole lot of trauma and I think the communities come together in times like that and the churches also come together which was unprecedented, in terms of all the different denominations...All sorts of ways there was huge community collaboration.' (TSA worker)

'People were offering furniture, and other people were making spaces available for that furniture to be dropped off. So people had a place, and we were getting donations and gifts that we could then pass on and say, 'We can get it to here', or people rang up to say someone's hired a warehouse and people were able to drop things off as well as go in and pick things up. And that sort of community spirit, being very generous as well as local groups working together.' (TSA worker)

Collaboration

At the Recovery Hubs, partnership and collaboration facilitated greater reach and distribution of TSA assistance and integration into the local disaster recovery.

'We contacted the community centre, (at the Recovery Hub) since previously we had a good relationship with them. They provided an office space and they referred people to us. There was a rural counsellor who was working with the farmers, he referred people to us. So the flow started to happen and we made a few more connections. The community centre people were amazing they really made sure people knew we were there.' (TSA worker)

Partner organisations also identified the greater efficiency that was enabled through collaborations.

'One thing that we did find during Debbie was the strength with pre-existing relationships with [TSA] team... It was easier and faster to start working with them after the sudden event.' (External agency)

Communication between organisations was particularly important to deal with complicated cases.

'We consult with each other to make sure that the right people get the money and help.' (External agency, quoted from Outcome Measurement Study 2017)

Having an experienced disaster recovery worker from TSA at the recovery centre was also beneficial for workers from other organisations, particularly when some of them have no prior experience in working with disaster operations. For complicated cases, experienced TSA recovery workers were able to provide advice.

'If we have a tricky case where there is a hard decision to make, I would go to [TSA recovery worker] for advice' (External agency, quoted from Outcome Measurement Study 2017)

Circumstances of People affected by Cyclone Debbie

The 2017 study reported that around three-quarters of respondents had one or more indicators of being disadvantaged or vulnerable when the Cyclone hit, with the most common issues being: in remote areas or with little support network nearby, lives alone, suffer from illness, having disability or mobility issues. A little over half of all respondents (52%) indicated that they were required to care for someone who was vulnerable or disadvantaged. A third of these respondents reported that they had dependents who were under 18 years old (34%), while 17% reported that they cared for someone who had illness, a disability, or mobility issues. In most situations, these community members were more prone to trauma.

'A single mum, young, she had a baby in her arms, four kids, and she showed me the photos of what happened to her house...After I offered her The Salvation Army gift vouchers for assistance, I took her over to the Red Cross, so she could actually talk about the trauma...'
(TSA worker)

Low socio-economic households were also another group that was prominently affected during Cyclone Debbie. Their impoverished circumstances were compounded by the stress caused by the cyclone.

'They were already requiring other forms of assistance, so this was just added another level. They were already vulnerable.' (TSA worker)

'Most of [people in a local area] does come into the lower socio-economic area. These people couldn't really afford to move...I would say that there would be some that are still struggling. Because a lot of them were on Centerlink or Carers Allowance. They wouldn't have had a lot of money to start with, without this happening. . . There were elderly people, single mothers. . .It does take them a long time especially when they are not even working. Because anything extra that they've got to pay, even an extra \$10 a week, it really affects them. It is food out of their mouths.' (TSA worker)

People living in remote and rural areas presented added challenges for disaster work. Low population density often associated with remote areas also posed inadequate communication networks. The distance between households makes it difficult to notify and help other people in remote areas. In helping people in remote areas, TSA was mindful about the long travels that impacted people had to endure on top of managing the physical damage of the cyclone to their homes and infrastructures. Visitations and door knocking to these areas were problematic, as workers need to be resilience and skilful to endure the long distance travel in possibly fragmented road and community infrastructures and to engage with distressed and traumatised people at the sites.

'One particular area [of difficulty] was that people were not aware of what was in store for them, and they did find it exhausting having to travel and there were some long days.' (TSA worker)

TSA workers also encountered people who were reluctant to seek assistance. In many situations, their reluctance stemmed from the self-sufficient nature of the community, where they took pride in their ability to be resilient and withstand difficult situations. Some people also did not seek for assistance as they felt other people deserved it more than them.

'I think there are people that will never go to The Salvation Army for help as they were the people who contributed to us. I found that, they will know that we are there but they don't want to come they feel the assistance is for someone else who needs it more.' (TSA worker)

'[People] are very self-sufficient, like 'I am OK'. One thing that I noticed, it was helpful when someone they trusted said to them, look, you need to go and do such and such. I guess it was a sense of saying 'yes this is bad and you are allowed to get assistance. It's ok.' (TSA worker)

ACTIVITY 3: LONG-TERM RECOVERY AND REBUILD

'Rebuild Grants' were a lump sum assistance that was initiated by the government for Cyclone Debbie, and were granted to community members with little or no resources to rebuild severely damaged homes or businesses. In partnership with QLD government (Community Recovery), TSA began to offer these rebuild grants from July 2017. St Vincent De Paul also worked together with TSA to provide rebuild grants.

Beneficiaries who received these grants included people with no insurance (often due to inability to afford insurance premiums), those with problems with their insurance (technicality issues or existing shortfall between what the insurance paid and the extent of the damage), those who were ineligible for the government's Structural Assistance Grant (SAG) or had extensive damages exceeded SAG amount.

The provision of rebuild grants was a complex process that took time and collaboration from multiple agencies. The local councils and/or local recovery groups had to proactively reach out to the community to see whether they needed further assistance such as the rebuild grants.

'[The council] were able to call the properties and talk to them about their issue and basically say we've noticed that you still have a tarp on your roof and how are things going. How can we assist? And from that I would do an assessment...' (External agency)

Once they identified those that needed the grants, councils or recovery groups had to coordinate further assessments and meetings to introduce them to rebuild grant and services.

'Reaching out to community organisations who would take the referral to go and do an assessment at the home and then they might see if they were eligible for the rebuild grant from The Salvation Army...I would help community organisations like George Street and The Salvation Army by helping them to be introduced to community members. I would take them to meetings...Or we would put on events where people would meet them and we would have flyers about their services. And that became an entry point for the organisation[s]' (External agency)

Council's role in disaster work was certainly appreciated by TSA workers. Local councils in affected areas had a good understanding of how the disaster management system works, and their ability to connect TSA with community member was especially important.

'...highlighted some good things in terms of our relationships with council in terms of their knowledge of how the disaster management system works and potentially what councils can do. They can say we would like you to provide assistance here, and we can say well we can't actually get in there, but we can provide this, people and essentials flow in, but you need to help us with that.' (TSA worker)

When a person or a family is approved for rebuild grants, the scale of the rebuild projects was often large and complex. It had to involve strong collaboration from multiple agencies to ensure that the rebuild could provide people with a safe and stable living condition.

'A particular example was a family where they had utilized the government grant where they could rebuild to a safer part of their property. The wife had mobility issues and the safety

concern for her was that she needed to be away from the flood affected part of the property. But they lived in a train carriage so the quote that came in was quite substantial. We worked with both [another community organisation] and TSA. The other community organisation first approached us with the project but we still had a shortfall and that's when I approached The Salvation Army....it takes multi-agency approach to get the desired effect... [TSA] joined in and assisted and provided substantial funding to finish off the project... [they] provided a living area and cyclone proofed the place. It was a great project. The clients were safe and were very grateful.' (External agency)

Strong connection and relationship with community and other organisations proved to be important for the rebuild project.

'...[community member] applied for a grant, his insurance had been knocked back. They were over a meter with flood, and the insurance had not covered because the water was from the dam...So he was referred to [another organisation, and was] then referred to me, and we approved him [a certain amount]. [However], his house was now quoted [a higher amount]. Now of course our grant didn't go that high, [but] we organised, which was really not part of my place, but I contacted [another organisation] and asked if he could contribute with us....I went and met to chat down and if they could contribute. So we did a rebuild [grant] for [an extra amount] So I think really positive, out of come of this, is that the community working together, the connection with other organisation at the site had just been awesome. And you know, there is no competition. It's all about community member.' (TSA worker)

Apart from assisting people in rebuilding their homes, the rebuild grants also allowed TSA workers to identify and work with people on their long-term issues. TSA were the only organisation that provided financial counselling on top of the rebuild grant. There were a substantial proportion of people that were struggling with a lot of other issues, on top of fixing the physical damage from Cyclone Debbie. Financial counsellors were able to identify the long-term issues and not only providing short-term solution.

'There were meetings, every two weeks where you'd have all the agencies, and a client would be discussed. TSA, Red Cross, GIVIT and there would be 10-15 in those meetings. Our funding was for financial counsellors, and we were the only one who provided financial counselling.' (TSA worker)

'I think because they didn't just provide financial assistance, they also provided more resilience building when they recognised people, who weren't only impacted by Cyclone Debbie, they had more long-term issues... With the program that Salvation Army offers, it's about asking the right questions to find out how they were impacted by Cyclone Debbie, if it is just financial assistance, or if they were already struggling and then in addition were impacted by Cyclone Debbie. If that was the case, then they would try and get them into a money management or budgeting program.' (External agency)

A lot of the recovery and rebuild work involves long-term engagement with community members. TSA workers recounted their experiences in journeying alongside people who required longer term assistance.

'We had a few people who were dealing with a few issues, for example we had one lady she already had a case with one of our worker. They had a conversation with her 4 -6 months after and she had water through her house and the insurance company weren't helping. We were able to work with her and that was financial assistance plus emotional assistance. She lived on her own and she had a lot of trauma around that time. So we worked on that, it was a long term working with her. Recently she has moved on and sold her house, so it was a long haul, but it was worth it.' (TSA worker)

Other agencies also witnessed the differences TSA made in assisting other community organisations and commented TSA's rebuild grant program has been the most successful household grant program she has seen.

'You would be talking to people on pensions who were saying my insurance company has turned me down, I can't repair the house, I have got no money, where am I going to go, will I be homeless now. They would say, we have got this situation and it is dire, is there anyone who can help? And [one of the Salvation Army Disaster Recovery Worker] would say, 'Yes we can! Let's talk about a rebuild grant. The relief! And you could see their whole demeanor change because someone had offered them a solution. It was do-able and easy and it was just phenomenal. It was really powerful. My hats off to The Salvation Army for doing all that fundraising and then doing it in the way that they did. In making it about grants to households, it just made such a phenomenal difference. A salute to the Salvos on that one!' (External agency)

WORK CHALLENGES

There were some challenges that were identified by TSA worker and external agencies during Cyclone Debbie operation:

1. Timeliness in reaching out to people in need

TSA worker on-site, including Corps Officers and Financial Counsellors, all expressed concerns about people who were only aware of TSA's assistance at a later stage after the disaster. This made it even more difficult for those living in remote areas. Where timeliness and sustained assistance is crucial during and post disaster (Adams, et. al., 2004), reaching people later in the year(s) often meant recovery efforts were significantly more challenging, where people would have trouble recognising if their present hardship stemmed from the disaster event.

'It had gone that far that they had forgotten about the cyclone, but when you tracked it back, that was when some of this started or became worse for them... It would have been a year after the cyclone. . .You are looking for some of those people, and they are often not recognizing it themselves either.' (TSA worker)

2. Communication about TSA's roles with other organisations from the onset of Cyclone Debbie response

Some of the recovery centre managers were not aware that TSA personnel were involved in the disaster recovery, nor of TSA's roles in the community's recovery efforts. Without knowing about TSA involvement, the manager of the recovery efforts indicated that some workers were anxious and uncertain about how they would work with TSA personnel.

The failure to inform external frontline workers about TSA involvement in the disaster could be attributed to the lack of communication process particularly at the beginning of disaster response. Previous study suggested that for an orderly and successful recovery efforts, organisations involved in disaster recovery should agree on a communication process early in their involvement that allow for timely update and frequent communication with multiple stakeholders (Medford-Davis & Kapur, 2014)

'You only found out [TSA's services and roles] if someone was in dire...And also to be clear about what was required to access to assistance.' (External agency)

'So if there is a way that the Salvos can promote those services like the Rebuild grant to the stakeholders who are doing the work in the communities so that we really know. It was sort of like we were learning and coming to know and understand about it, instead of at the beginning being told, here is what's on the table.' (External agency)

3. Local knowledge and understanding of procedures at the start of disaster response

Some TSA workers reported that they were unclear in the procedures and who to link with at the start of the disaster response

'if there was a sense of communication before that about who to link in with this team or if the [Salvos Assessment Line] was able to let us know what to do next. It's about getting systems in place beforehand to smooth over those stress points.' (TSA worker)

It is especially difficult to start assisting people without prior knowledge and relationship with the community. Workers who came to assist people in areas where there TSA was not present locally faced the challenge of connecting with the community.

'The challenge is, which is always the case, is that these things [disaster] don't happen regularly. But because they don't happen regularly, the challenge is always who do you talk to, where to start and how to get connected if you are not already involved' (TSA worker)

TSA workers suggested that communication needs to be well in place ahead of time.

'Some sort of pre-education, i.e. if you find yourself in a disaster this is what most likely to happen. So that we can anticipate and there could be a flyer which we can have on our wall about the SAL closing, and the disaster team taking over...We had no understanding of the disaster response, some kind of pre-communication of what we need to do after the evacuation stage, and these are the people you need to ring.' (TSA worker)

4. Providing financial assistance (reimbursement) in a timely manner

External agencies reported that the paperwork required to reimburse and to provide financial assistance often meant delays and further inconvenience to people in dire needs.

'Some of the paperwork that was required was a little frustrating. I understand why they request it but the reality is, in cases like this you just need to believe people. My clients are not the best receipt keepers.' (External agency)

Some had suggested that this could be mitigated if authorities to approve reimbursement and assistance could be done at a local level to reduce the delay of assistance delivery.

'The other organisations I had quite a lot of dealings with were Red Cross and GIVIT, and their officers had some authority to approve things pretty quickly, a day to 2 days. Whereas with TSA my understanding was that the Doorways Caseworker had to push things up, she had to present a case and it is an added level of bureaucracy.' (External agency)

5. Maintaining good quality of data

There were community members that needed to be followed-up, but fell through the gaps because their details were not recorded properly at their initial contact with disaster recovery team. Financial counsellors and case workers came at a later stage of disaster operation and were especially critical in assisting people with more complex and long-term issues. However, they reported some cases where they could not follow up/track people due to incorrect or incomplete contact details. A simple data collection process with minimum data entry requirement of client's basic contact details may be implemented to minimize this problem.

6. Training & preparing volunteers for disaster work

Some TSA worker and government agency worker mentioned volunteers could be better prepared for the role. SAMiS (Salvation Army's database) training was one of the activity that has been identified as important but in need of improvement. TSA workers also found training volunteers

in SAMiS in the middle of disaster response was particularly challenging and took their time from frontline work. It would be helpful if training for technical matters, such as how to use SAMiS database, is done before volunteers are deployed to the affected areas or centres to make the process smoother and to prevent delay.

'...they didn't know how to use SAMIS and then I had to teach them how to use SAMIS. They weren't ready to go. You need people who know how to log on to SAMIS, to know how to enter [information] into SAMIS. And they understand what their role is.' (TSA worker)

7. Looking after the wellbeing of the Workers

Living and working in a disaster zone affect person's emotional wellbeing. Duration and proximity of the disaster sometimes increase stress and anxiety to the frontline workers (Fullerton, et. al., 2004), with the potential for secondary trauma through exposure of working alongside disaster survivors (Ehring, Razik and Emmelkamp, 2011). Provision of formal and informal emotional support should be earmarked to occur according to the needs of local workers. In particular, delivering disaster recovery for a prolonged period was challenging for local TSA workers who lived in disaster-affected area and needed to support their own families in coping with the disaster. Financial counsellors found similar requirements for emotional support.

'For us we had just come through a season where I had been away for a couple of weeks, we drove in twelve hours before the levee bank broke. Drove into absolute pouring rain. And at that moment the evacuation siren began. So we didn't have time to connect with our [child], and suddenly we were organizing for the Corps people to be safe, we were arranging for those who didn't have wheels to be assisted with evacuation. And then everything just flowed from there.' (TSA worker)

PART 2: THE OUTCOMES

This section describes the outcomes that resulted from TSA Cyclone Debbie operation. It combines both quantitative and qualitative findings from the research studies in 2017 and 2019. The studies found the TSA's disaster recovery made differences on beneficiaries' life across all four of TSA's Stronger Communities outcome domains: wellbeing and spirituality, individual capability, life circumstances, and social connectedness (See Appendix A for definition of the outcome domains). From the QLD government national framework perspective, these outcomes were part of the socio and economic outcomes that formed sustainable and resilient communities.

OUTCOMES FROM SAES & RECOVERY ACTIVITIES

The first TSA Cyclone Debbie outcomes measurement study in 2017 for SAES and Recovery activities revealed that the overall outcomes were mostly positive.

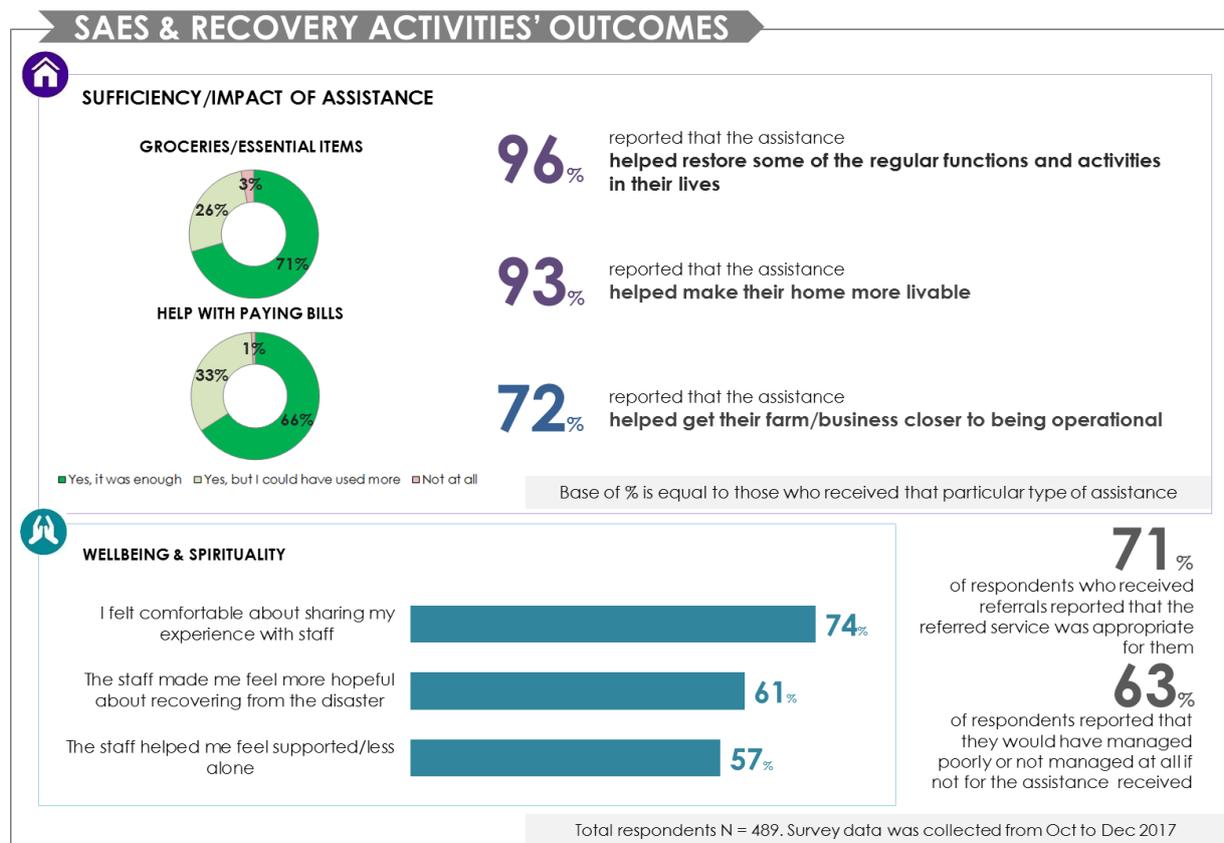
Immediately following Cyclone Debbie, food and water were scarce or difficult to access due to loss of electricity and/or infrastructure. Indeed, the study showed that the most common request for assistance was essential items (83%), which was significantly greater than other requests. Immediate response was needed to be provided, through grants/donations for essentials such as food, water, and medication (NSW Disaster Assistance Guidelines, 2015).

The deployment of SAES was intended to meet this urgent need, which was mainly to distribute food and drink to people and to cater to emergency service workers at the centres. The study showed that Emergency service workers who received catering from SAES reported they felt very much supported by SAES (89%) and that the catering helped them performed their duties more effectively (96%). Over half of all respondents indicated that they would have managed 'fairly poorly' or 'not have managed at all' if they had not received assistance from TSA worker.

During the recovery phase, the majority of respondents who received assistance for immediate needs indicated that their needs were met. Almost all respondents (96%) reported that the assistance has helped them restore some regular function to their lives to at least some extent. Respondents that received assistance for food, groceries or essential item felt that the assistance was sufficient to meet their immediate needs (71%), while a quarter felt that they could have used more. Around 66% of respondents felt that the assistance with paying bills was enough, while another 33% felt that they could have used more. For more complicated needs such as repairing/rebuilding homes, and help in getting their business/farm up and running again, majority indicated that the assistance helped at least to 'some extent' (93% and 72% respectively).

Majority of respondents felt comfortable sharing their experiences with TSA workers (74%), was more hopeful about their recovery (61%), and were less lonely or feel supported (57%). Looking at the open-ended responses, it appears that the assistance was largely appreciated as it provided some peace of mind and relief from stress for a number of respondents (see quotes from Box 1). Outcomes related to emotional wellbeing and support were more commonly reported in the later months (after April), and significantly more likely to be reported by those who received emotional/spiritual support from TSA worker.

Figure 3. Outcomes from SAES & Recovery Activities. Adapted from Outcome Measurement Study 2017/18 (Xu, 2018)



EXPERIENCES AND OUTCOMES FROM PEOPLE WHO RECEIVED REBUILD GRANTS

The interviews with the three respondents who received rebuild grants showed that they were very grateful with the financial and long-term assistance from TSA and other agencies. Respondents were especially grateful that someone had cared and continued to do so in months and years that followed.

'You are making a big difference. If it wasn't for all you people, we would feel totally neglected and left out and nobody cares.' (Respondent 3)

'I am very grateful for what The Salvation Army did for me. I am very grateful that I met a representative of The Salvation Army, when Rhona turned up. I would very much promote the face of The Salvation Army in people like Rhona who actually go out in the field and meet people face to face. To see a friendly face and have them call you a year or two down the track is an absolute bonus. It meant something to me.' (Respondent 1)

Respondent's situation when Cyclone Debbie hit

All respondents were especially in a vulnerable situation when Cyclone Debbie Hit. Old age, low income, and being in remote area were some of the situations that respondents were having.

'We were like really devastated and I couldn't see at 75, how could we recover from this, we couldn't go out and get a job. We were both on the age pension and that was our only income.' (Respondent 2)

'After [the cyclone hit], we were stuck, our vehicles were underwater. We couldn't go anywhere unless we walked. The closest town would be about 10-12 Km to get drinking water.' (Respondent 3)

Impact of Cyclone Debbie

The Cyclone Debbie significantly impacted the respondents physically and emotionally, where all of their material possessions, homes and farms were gone. Their trauma and distressed were worsened when the insurance company did not cover for the loss.

'The water came in over our heads, so basically everything in our house was destroyed...The shed about a foot and a half lower than the house, and everything in the shed went as well. There were tools, generators, quad bikes, motor bike, another car...There were horse equipment, collars and harness equipment. So all gone, waved goodbye to all of it...I think in our case, was that we had insurance but the insurance company refused to pay. They said they only pay on water damage coming down and not on water damage coming up from the river and they refused to pay on anything.' (Respondent 1)

'We had to relocate our dwelling from the front of our block to a patch up the back. The house itself was condemned...I just thought buy something with a roof over our head and put it up there and everything will be alright. But it wasn't. It wasn't. We ran out of money. We had to put in a septic system, which was \$12K and we had to get electricity up to the back which was \$13K and we had a limit of \$50,000 which was all of our savings and then we were stuck. We hadn't planned on all these other things and nothing could be used from our old house. The building materials or anything like that. I thought I can't do this, it's just too big.' (Respondent 2)

'In the beginning, we just had two meters of water go in here. It was night and we sat in the boat at night just the two of us huddled together. It was cold and it was wet. And we just had a small boat to sit it...we lost our drinking water, our tank floated off...We had a little bit of power left.... well we spent 5 weeks sleeping in the back of the van.' (Respondent 3)

For one respondent, the cyclone had badly affected her health condition.

'As far as the future, my health suffered severely after Cyclone Debbie, I didn't realize how badly at the time but I have now been diagnosed with a chronic lung condition from breathing in the fungus that was growing throughout the house had exacerbated it.' (Respondent 2)

The impact on mental health was notably higher. The devastation from Cyclone Debbie had resulted in serious trauma for the respondents, as one recounted the difficulty in coping with the loss and inability to do anything due to the trauma:

'What happens after that is, that you are struggling after that, that you get back in the house and there is still so many feet of water in it the next day. You can't find a piece of paper to write on, you have to turn on furniture. Things are going rotten, the flies move in and you don't think to yourself, "This is Tuesday, I should be going to work Tuesday". You forget all that. It just stumbles into day by day and you are dragging yourself around to try and clean up and make a path in the house again.' (Respondent 1)

Access to Assistance

Two of the respondents had been referred to TSA by friends or people in the community who came and helped them.

'I think it was a couple of ladies who were in a group who tried to coordinate care and they were visiting. Or it may have been a church member who said he was assisted by TSA...And he suggested TSA.' (Respondent 1)

For one of the respondent, seeking help directly from TSA or other organisation was a difficult thing to do, as there appears to be negative emotions associated with seeking help, such as feeling of embarrassment and helplessness.

'We had someone else talk to The Salvation Army to see if they were able to help, so we weren't put through the embarrassment, the feeling that we were totally useless and had to rely on a charity and we were spared that kind of emotion.' (Respondent 2)

One other respondent who lived in a remote area was only made aware of the assistance through the announcement in the radio.

'We had a little bit of power left. I heard on the radio, I think, I am not sure how I found out to ring up if you need assistance.' (Respondent 3)

Process of Getting Assistance

One respondent was grateful that the process was easy enough for them to get assistance. Most importantly, there was no feeling of being judged over the whole process.

'The Salvation Army didn't ask me for any collateral or any pay back. They just paid the money and we will be forever grateful...The way it was handled was absolutely perfect. I had no questions being asked, so I didn't feel like I hope you believe me or I hope you don't think I am

putting my hand out for money, and I don't really have a claim. They did not have any expectation from me.' (Respondent 2)

For another, the impact of Cyclone was overwhelming that they needed someone to closely guide them through the whole process.

'I remember he (the church member who referred TSA) seemed to have meetings with Rhona and he helped me to get assistance from The Salvation Army. Well other than that, we didn't really know what to do. You don't really know what you are doing at the time. You think you are going about it right, but half the time you are not even thinking straight. So he was very good in pushing us in the right direction.' (Respondent 1)

However, another respondent found that the process of getting assistance felt difficult and overwhelming, for example, there was too much paper work to fill in across multiple organisations.

'We went there and spoke to all the people there, there was Red Cross, Salvos, Lifeline and there was a whole heap of people and they all ask questions, the same questions. Fill out the form, I think the overall of what the recovery people had done was fantastic and I don't want to complain. [But] There were a lot of legal forms, just sign here and sign there, a lot of government stuff. I wasn't really sure if I was meant to be signing this or not. But it was OK.' (Respondent 3)

Sufficiency of Assistance

For two of the respondents, the financial assistance from TSA was enough, especially in helping them clearing up the debt, lifting the financial and emotional burdens that enabled them to move forward.

'But how The Salvation Army helped me was not just the money...the assistance really cleared up a lot of our debt in trying to get back on our feet. When The Salvation Army paid, they said they would match whatever the government decided. So The Salvation Army matched that, and what happened is that it allowed us to let go. Because at the time you are upset with your loss' (Respondent 1)

'When I say, The Salvation Army gave us back our life, I mean it literally. We were so low, that we were counting the days.' (Respondent 2)

However, for one respondent, while the financial assistance helped to ease some of the loss, there were still a lot of work to rebuild their live. Living in remote areas also made it hard for this respondent to access assistance. For example, the provision of gift card was less effective because the respondent had to travel far to the city centres to spend their gift card; therefore, spending extra travel time and cost in fuel to access assistance. Moreover, it was also difficult for the respondent to access help in rebuilding their properties as most tradesman was not able to travel into their area.

'Well I think the Salvation [Army] paid for the generator, that was really nice. That was so helpful all of our machinery went under water...'[At the centre] everybody gives you this little gift cards...It's alright if you are used to those gift cards, but we weren't. Well see if you live in the town that's got these shops like Kmart and BigW that's alright. But we don't have anything like that. By the time we get into town we are already stressed out, we have got to buy groceries or clothes or whatever we have got to do. But the gift cards were sort of out of sight,

out of mind. Then it's hard to get your balance afterwards.... Because we are in an isolated area, you can't get the tradesman to come in. It's not worth it for them.' (Respondent 3)

Outcomes

Improve Mental Health

Early identification and timely intervention are important for helping people to recover from traumatic and stressful situations after unexpected events like Cyclone Debbie. One respondent recounted that TSA worker was able to identify their mental health situation early, which had helped to prevent their mental health from deteriorating.

'The Salvation Army came in and then realised how badly I was sinking into depression because they talked to me about Lifeline and St Vincents De Paul and what I could do with a counsellor. It was because of what The Salvation Army did that I was able to get out of that dark place...It seemed so easy to die and The Salvation Army came in.' (Respondent 2)

The rebuild grant certainly helped to reduce stress and anxiety, as one respondent recounted:

'I said to my husband, "We can just let go. Let's just let go." So the debt, the unhappiness with the situation, the bitterness, the disappointment, the depression of it all. You just think, "let go". The money, I know the assistance comes in a financial form, but it does other bizarre emotional things that allow you to move forward. We are OK now, just let go.' (Respondent 1)

However, for some, the trauma lingers well into years after the disaster.

'We have had our sleep severely affected since. We still don't sleep as well as we used to before the flood. We often get up at 2 am in the morning and need to have a cuppa and a chat. I am constantly going out at 10 o'clock at night just to make sure the chooks are OK. It's a little bit frustrating but we will get over that too' (Respondent 1)

"Even now two years later, I will pick something up and it will be covered with mud and I say to my husband, 'Throw it all out'. I don't want to see it; I can't deal with it - This is 2 years later." (Respondent 2)

This highlights the extent of negative impact disasters can have on community members' mental health and wellbeing, and the urgent need to identify and support impacted community in their long-term mental health recovery.

Positive Outlook

Respondents reported that the assistance made them more hopeful about the future, and that they were given a second chance in their life.

'I mean we are not wealthy, we are not rich, I still need to upgrade my car and get another tractor. There are a few things that went through the flood that I would like to replace. But the overall big picture is that the glass is half full not the glass is half empty.' (Respondent 1)

'At that stage I just thought I was useless. I thought that I was useless to everybody including myself. And it was that gift from The Salvation Army when it came through I said I don't deserve this and they said you deserve all the help you can get.... [The community's support]

made us feel that we weren't worthless, that we weren't so badly damaged that we were beyond repair.' (Respondent 2)

TSA's assistance came at a time when the respondents needed it the most. This had positively changed one respondent's future outlook and were able to feel content and appreciative with their life – despite their loss.

"When I say, The Salvation Army gave us back our life, I mean it literally. We were so low, that we were counting the days. What was the point, I was old, how much time do you have anyway, you might as well bow out now? You might as well die and then nobody else has to do anything. It was the worst thing of our entire lives. But now we sit on our deck and we sit out there and think how beautiful life is, and the scenery that we got from the back of the paddock... Everybody my husband goes out, he picks up a hammer, or a chisel or welder or a mower, he is very much back to his old self. And he loves the house. When we come home he says, it looks so nice doesn't it." (Respondent 2)

Strengthen Faith

One respondent felt that their faith was strengthened through the assistance. The fact that The Salvation Army applied Christian principles in its work helped to further strengthen their faith.

'While I was at The Salvation Army store, I noticed they had a bible and I went to pay for it and the man at The Salvation Army store said "Oh we don't charge for those". I was happy, it's not that they were free, it's that they weren't charging for something that was God's Word. I lost a couple of bibles in the flood and I told my husband when I came home, because The Salvation Army was founded on the principles of the Bible, with love for the fellow man and to take care of him.' (Respondent 1)

This respondent was also able to have a positive outlook at their whole experience.

'Now I think, God allows these things to happen and not that we will always be protected from them but we will be saved in the middle of them. So it has changed my view...We are here for a reason, so we better stop mucking around and stop thinking about ourselves all the time.' (Respondent 1)

Resilience

The collaboration between agencies and the community spirit in the disaster recovery work had helped to lift respondents' determination to recover and be more resilient. The assistance motivated them to keep going and work towards their own recovery.

'And it was that gift from The Salvation Army when it came through - I said, hang on! Somebody up there think you are still worth something down here. Now you can't give up! Now you owe these groups of people. You owe them now to get back on your feet and be strong.' (Respondent 2)

'Well [to have someone to contact us after a long period of time] is good, because there is a continuation of the story. My story didn't end because of Cyclone Debbie, it continued. I am happy to say that I am still alive and we are still here...So we are still going, we are still kicking. It might have felt like we were dead for a little while, but we are not.' (Respondent 1)

Stronger Community Connection

One respondent reflected the immense gratitude for the help that was received from the community.

'Several people wanted to come and donate their time, the local store came and bought me some hay for the horses, the lady up the road bought me some clothes, and another friend offered to go shopping for me. So little things made a big difference then. And another lady donated me a bag of chook feed - Now that might not sound like much but the fact that someone would care for my animals. These are the little things you tend to appreciate so much.' (Respondent 1)

The overwhelming help from the community and organisations brought out positive change in their connection to people.

'[The whole experience] made me love people more, in most ways and forced myself to take care of myself and my friends. It has made me give things away more, to just let go. Just give it away. If somebody needs something and you have got a spare just give it to them. Don't worry about the money.' (Respondent 1)

'At least now I am taking enjoyment in the people I met during the flood relief who were dropping in donations after the flood...Well now we've formed a friendship but she was a total stranger.' (Respondent 2)

For the respondents, this also meant that they were motivated to give back to the community.

'I'm in a position now, where I went to an auction and I bought a box of kitchen items and nobody was buying the other items so they threw them all in. So instead of me coming home with one box I came home with 11! I am now in position where I took some stuff to The Salvation Army in a little country town close to where I live. And I can give them things! When I went to The Salvation Army store I said to them, "Did you know that The Salvation Army was the charity that came and helped us financially after Cyclone Debbie?" I just had to say it!...It would take me a long time to donate to The Salvation Army what they have given me. But it is not about that. It is about me having an opportunity to give something, even if it is a little thing.' (Respondent 1)

"We had nothing, but the people that came and sat with us, they got so much from helping us. And once we got back on our feet now I am giving back." (Respondent 2)

Restore Normalcy

Through the assistance, one respondent was able to get back on their feet and almost fully recovered.

'We are pretty much back on our feet. We are back to doing the same things we used to do... I am going back to the library, I haven't replaced my small scooter yet so I haven't got to the movies yet, but we are getting there. It's good now.' (Respondent 2)

But it was not as easy for the other two respondents. The financial loss, trauma and emotional impact still affect one of them.

'We sold that property and we lost a lot of money on it, but we didn't think that if it rained at night, that we would be able to sleep. We have had our sleep severely affected since. We still don't sleep as well as we used to before the flood...My husband got very depressed, and he

was just down about everything and he lost a lot in the flood financially and materially.'
(Respondent 1)

For another, being a remote area makes the recovery process difficult.

'Honestly, we haven't recovered properly. We are trying to start a farm, growing fruits and vegetables and all that had come to a stop, we have been set back a couple of years. And we are not getting any younger. Everything is fine, we are very appreciative... I would prefer if it was all finished, there's still a lot to do. Because we are in an isolated area, you can't get a tradesman to come in. It's not worth it for them.' (Respondent 3)

PART 3: REBUILDING LIVES, THE STORIES

Three beneficiaries of rebuild grants have generously shared their stories with The Salvation Army. To protect their identity, no names were used. Their stories reflected the devastation that was caused by Cyclone Debbie, their resilience, and how the support from TSA and the community had helped to restore their faith and hope, and motivated them to give back to the community. For these beneficiaries, and for many impacted communities, their recovery journey has not ended.

'You gave us back our life'

'We had two meters of water in through the house. The foundations had washed away, the floors had cracked and were separating from each other. The walls were two meters under water so we had black mould starting up already. The septic tank had overflowed so everything that was in the house was contaminated. We couldn't save our clothes or our bedcovers. We lost everything we had.

We went to the bank to see if we could get a loan and we couldn't because we had lost everything in the flood and we didn't have any collateral. We were really devastated and I couldn't see at this age, how could we recover from this, we couldn't go out and get a job, we were both on the age pension and that was our only income.

It was amazing, the things that you don't think about. You hear about it on the news every time there is a fire or a cyclone. This happened suddenly we were sitting there watching the water raising up and thinking that is the farthest the water has ever got before, suddenly the next thing it was in the house with us. We didn't have a chance to save passports and citizenship papers or nothing. Nothing.

That was when The Salvation Army came in and they provided us with help at a time when I had given up. We had lost everything, and for me that meant everything. It meant my faith, my belief and my strength.

The way it was handled was absolutely perfect. I had no questions being asked, so I didn't feel like I hope you believe me or I hope you don't think I'm putting my hand out for money and I don't really have a claim. They did not have any expectation from me.

The Salvation Army didn't ask me for any collateral or any pay back they just paid the money and we will be forever grateful. I know it sounds dramatic, but I can't think of any other way to say it. You gave us back our life. Particularly for me, I was ready to end it, I am only waiting for death to catch up to me.

We are pretty much back on our feet. We are back doing the same things that we used to do. It's surprising because at that time when I was such in a dark place I couldn't even think of the things that I used to do for pleasure.

So we just put up a roof and some uprights and that gave us a bit more space. We put in a deck and we sit out there. We think how beautiful life is and the scenery that we have got from the back of the paddock.'

'I felt proud to be the person who donate to The Salvation Army'

'All our possessions were gone. What happens after that is that you are struggling. You get back in the house and there is still so much water in it the next day. You can't find a piece of paper to write on. Things are going rotten and the flies move in. You don't think to yourself, 'This is Tuesday. I should be going to work on Tuesday'. You forget all that. It just stumbles into day by day and you are dragging yourself around to try and clean up and make a path in the house again

At the time that the flood happened, I think a lot of us would lose track of time. So I certainly had no recollection of what day, what time. I think everything was just a blur and you just blindly get up in the morning and you are busy fixing, repairing and surviving.

Several people wanted to come and donate their time, the local store came and bought me some hay for the horses, the lady up the road brought me some clothes, and another friend offered to go shopping for me. These are the little things that you tend to appreciate very much.

But how The Salvation Army helped me was not just the money, because we couldn't rely on the insurance. So their assistance really cleared up a lot of our debt in trying to get back on our feet. When The Salvation Army paid, what happened is that it allowed us to let go. Because at the time you are upset with your loss and you say, look at what we've lost and you are stressed and you are looking at the financial side of things. You are still focusing on loss.

And when the money came through I said to my husband, 'We can just let go. Let's just let go.' So the debt, the unhappiness with the situation, the bitterness, the disappointment, the depression of it all: you just think, 'let go.' The money, I know the assistance comes in a financial form, but it does other bizarre emotional things that allow you to move forward. We are ok now, just let go.

It has made me love people more, in most ways and forced myself to take care of myself and my friends. It has made me to give things away more, to just let go. Just give it away. If somebody needs something and you have got a spare just give it to them. Don't worry about the money.

I'm now in a position where I took some stuff to The Salvation Army store in a little country town close to where I live. And I can give them things! When I went to that Salvation Army store I said to them, 'Did you know that The Salvation Army was the charity that came and helped us financially after Cyclone Debbie?' I just had to say it! I felt proud being the person to donate them. It would take me a long time to donate back to The Salvation Army what they have given me. But it is not about that. It is about me having an opportunity to give something, even if it is a little thing.

To see a friendly face and have them call you a year or two down the track is an absolute bonus. It meant something to me. It's good because there is a continuation of the story. My story didn't end because of Cyclone Debbie, it continued. I am happy to say that I am still alive and we are still here. When it comes time to speak to people like the TSA Disaster Relief Worker then I can say, 'Yes the rest of the story is that we are ok. And Thank You!

'There's still a lot to do'

'It was night and we sat in the boat, just the two of us huddled together. It was cold and it was wet. And we just had a small boat to sit in. Afterwards we were stuck, our vehicles were underwater. We couldn't go anywhere unless we walked. The closest town would be about 10-12 kilometers away to get drinking water.

We didn't drown, we could have. We could have been washed away. If we didn't have that little boat, we would be suffering from hypothermia, we would have been cold. It was the dark. And there was lightning and wind and all that stuff. And the boat was leaking, we couldn't row it, it didn't have the motor. We were so glad the next day when the water receded. We did not know how long the water would stay up We were so glad when it receded. The next day, we couldn't walk. We were all aching, our muscles. We were laughing because it hurt! We couldn't stand up! I don't know if it was from the trauma or just from sitting there all night. I was aching, and a friend of ours, him and his wife took us back to their place and we stayed at their place for a couple of nights. And it was really good.

The Salvation Army paid for the generator, that was really nice. That was so helpful as all our machinery went under water. We had nothing left.

It was a bit difficult, but we got through it. It was nice to have someone to talk to at the recovery centre. It wasn't just that, there were lots of people, just the whole, everybody was so nice. We had so many people visiting and so many forms to fill out. After a little while we got a little bit bamboozled as to who was who.

Everybody gives you these little gift cards. It's alright if you used to those gift cards, but we weren't. Well see, if you live in the town that has got these shops like Kmart and BigW that's alright. But we don't have anything like that. By the time we get into town we were already stressed out, we have got to buy groceries or clothes or whatever we have got to do. But the gift cards were sort of out of sight, out of mind. Then it's hard to get your balance afterwards. But it was very nice, all the people gave us these gift cards so it was good.

We had piles of junk. Honestly, we haven't recovered properly. We are trying to start up business and all that had to come to a stop, we have been set back a couple of years. And we are not getting younger.

[TSA worker] sought us out. By this time, we had enough of everything, we were just trying to get on with it. She would send us little invitations to things, BBQ or Christmas event. We never went to any of it, because honestly we didn't want to meet up all the people and answer questions. It was just get on with it and get back to recovery.

Well you have to look on the bright side. I would prefer it if it was all finished, there's still a lot to do. Because we are in an isolated area, you can't get a tradesman to come in. It's not worth it for them. So we had to get all the building materials, most of it is finished but we still have a lot of tidying up to do. We are not finished but we are getting there. We are trying to keep on the positive side. If you let these things get you down, they will... You are making a big difference, if it wasn't for all you people, we would feel totally neglected and left out and nobody cares.'

CONCLUSION

Cyclone Debbie hit in March 2017. The devastating impact from the associated flooding, torrential rainfall and destructive wind was felt by many communities in Queensland and Northern New South Wales. To support these communities, TSA deployed its personnel and volunteers into affected area, raised fund for disaster relief and recovery, increased resources to local Salvation Army sites and worked with Governments and partner agencies to deliver integrated supports. This report aims to capture the experiences of community members and workers during and after Cyclone Debbie, and to explore outcomes of TSA supports to affected communities.

This study and the earlier outcomes measurement study (Xu, 2018) demonstrated that there were many positive outcomes resulted from TSA Cyclone Debbie operation. The immediate and practical assistance had helped to restore some level of normalcy to community members' lives, and had helped to alleviate the stress that ensued. The financial assistance helped people to get their businesses up and running, and to make their homes liveable again. Respondents who received long-term recovery and rebuild assistance found their hope and faith were strengthened and restored, and found motivation and encouragement to work towards their own recovery. Their mental health and general wellbeing were also improved. TSA's assistance, as well as supports from other community organisations and local community members, had also increased respondents' community connectedness and participation.

Additionally, the experiences shared by TSA workers and partner agencies highlighted key components of Cyclone Debbie operation. Partnership and collaboration were identified as important components to ensuring the success of the disaster response and recovery efforts. Community participation was also an essential component in the survival of disaster, especially in the first few days before help arrived, and in ensuring efficient and effective recovery efforts throughout all stages. Hence, it is important for any disaster operation to focus on strengthening local community resources, networks and capacity to prepare for and recover from disaster events, and to be delivered as part of collaborative efforts with community stakeholders and government agencies.

There were challenges and suggestions expressed by TSA workers and partner agencies. Local TSA workers stated the needs for additional emotional, pastoral and possibly peer supports for local workers, as they and their family might still be dealing with trauma and stress after disaster, on top of supporting disaster work in their local community. Workers and partner agencies also raised the challenge of reaching out to affected people in timely manner, especially those living in remote areas and those that were reluctant to receive assistance due to stigma and perception of community assistance. Further, for areas where TSA did not normally have local sites or presence, some workers and volunteers expressed more difficulties in accessing knowledge about available services and local community, particularly at the beginning of disaster operation. There were also other administration challenges, such as provision of reimbursement in timely manner due to lengthy administration and approval process, data entry training for volunteers, and incomplete data collection that hinder follow-up process. All of these challenges needed to be addressed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of future disaster operations. TSA workers also emphasised the importance of training for volunteers and personnel before deployment to disaster area.

Whilst the study generally found strong relationship and ease of communications between TSA and partner organisations, there were lack of communication and clarity of TSA's role at the early stage of disaster response. This made some workers from partner agencies uncertain how they could work together with TSA to attend to the sudden influx of community needs.

The finding of this study also suggested the importance of early and continual identification of community needs and supports throughout different stages of disaster recovery to prevent the deterioration of community members' situation and wellbeing, and to sustain community's own capacity to recover. Whilst financial and material assistance were important to support community recover, early identification of mental health problems and long-term support were as crucial to promote sustainable recovery. Research shown that post-disaster mental health problem tends to be under recognised and could persist weeks following the traumatic event, resulting in heightened risk of longer term mental illness that may hinder or prevent the recovery process (The Royal Australian & New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, 2017).

There were also certain groups of people that were identified as more vulnerable and at higher risks during and after a disaster event, such as low income earners, those living in remote areas, single mothers, those caring for others (including caring for children), those who live alone, and older people (Queensland Government, 2017). Disaster preparedness strategy and implementation should intentionally identify, include, target and reach vulnerable groups to reduce the effects of disasters to vulnerable population, and increase the capacity and likelihood of this population to better respond and cope with the consequences of disasters.

Perhaps the most notable key take-away from Cyclone Debbie journey is the awareness that positive outcomes from disaster recovery was achieved through the work **with** the community rather than **for** the community. Therefore, it is imperative for TSA to continue to adopt the community-focussed recovery principles³ and to engage with the community as a whole, and as early as possible, to allow the community to take charge of their long-term recovery journey. This way, TSA strategic disaster management team will remain effective in achieving its mission and vision to ***caring for people, creating faith pathways, building healthy communities and working for justice to transform Australia one life at a time, with the love of Jesus***⁴.

³ <https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/national-principles-disaster-recovery/>

⁴ <https://www.salvationarmy.org.au/about-us/mission-and-vision/>

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APPENDIX A: TSA'S OUTCOME DOMAIN DEFINITIONS (as of 23 October 2019)

 <p>Wellbeing and Spirituality</p>	<p>Wellbeing means in a state of being well, feeling satisfied and contented. Wellbeing and spirituality domain is multidimensional and holistic in nature, encapsulating many different aspects of life such as physical and mental health and wellbeing, spiritual wellbeing, life satisfaction, sense of meaning or purpose, happiness, and flourishing in life.</p>
 <p>Life circumstances</p>	<p>Living Situation, or Life Circumstances (updated term) are the circumstances and environments in which people live, which impact directly on their health and wellbeing and their ability to mitigate stressful events and hardships. These circumstances include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living conditions e.g. housing, locality. • Economic resources e.g. ability to meet basic needs, safety nets • Income and employment e.g. secure employment, living wage • Education • Safety • Transportation
 <p>Individual Capabilities</p>	<p>Individual capability are personal attributes, attitudes, competency and behaviours that help people to function reasonably well in life and act constructively when dealing with stressful events or hardships, which enable them to achieve or maintain greater independence and wellbeing for themselves and their family. This domain includes but not limited to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills, knowledge and competency • coping strategies, resilience, • personal traits, attitudes, outlook in life and mindsets • social functioning skills and life skills, • self-advocacy • self-efficacy • positive behaviours.
 <p>Social Connectedness</p>	<p>Social Cohesion, or Social connectedness (updated term) is the degree and quality of connections and interactions between a person with their significant others, family, friends and their community that contribute towards the person's wellbeing and enable them and the society to function effectively, including during times of hardships. Healthy social connections at individual and community levels provide people with emotional and material supports in time of needs, and opportunity to share knowledge and information, in order to flourish in life and to reduce, or rebuild from, the impact of stressful events and hardships.</p>

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANTS' INFORMATION & CONSENT FORM

Day, Date

Re: Participant's Information & Consent Form

Dear [first name],

You are receiving this invitation because you have received Cyclone Debbie assistance from The Salvation Army.

The Salvation Army Australia (TSA) is preparing a report on Cyclone Debbie evaluation to mark its two-year journey in assisting community members affected by the cyclone. The aim of this report is to evaluate our responses, so The Salvation Army can learn how we can strengthen our service delivery, advocacy and response to natural disasters in Australia.

The Salvation Army is inviting you to participate in a phone interview to help us understand your experience during Cyclone Debbie, and your journey so far after the cyclone. We understand that recalling Cyclone Debbie experience might be upsetting for you. As such, you don't have to participate if you don't want to. If you choose to participate, you can also refuse to answer any questions which you feel uncomfortable with, or you can stop the interview at any time. Participation is completely voluntary.

Your responses will be analysed by TSA Research Team and will be included in the Cyclone Debbie report. They may also be included in future TSA reports and/or publications, particularly publications that relates to natural disaster in Australia. We may also use quote your responses in the report and publications. You have the option to remain anonymous in the report or publications, and we will not include your identity in the report/publications without your consent, which will be asked in the next page.

We would appreciate maximum one hour of your time to speak with us over the phone to talk about your experiences related to Cyclone Debbie response. As a token of appreciation, upon completion of the phone interview, we would give you \$100 gift card that will be sent to your postal address.

By participating in the phone interview, you are consenting for your responses to be used by TSA for the purposes specified in this letter.

If you would like to participate, please complete and return the consent form (see next page) using the enclosed pre-paid envelope to:

The Salvation Army Australia
Policy, Research and Social Justice Department – Research Team
Level 3, 261-265 Chalmers St, Redfern, NSW, 2016

You may keep this participation information as future reference of the project. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kind regards,

Lerisca

Lerisca Lensun

Research and Outcomes Measurement team

Policy, Research and Social Justice Department

(Please see the next page for the consent form)

If you would like to participate in the phone interview, please complete and return the consent form below to The Salvation Army using the enclosed pre-paid envelope.

CONSENT FORM (Please complete all fields and select your options)

I, _____ (full name) would like to participate in the phone interview for The Salvation Army's Cyclone Debbie evaluation. I understand that The Salvation Army will contact me on this phone number: _____ to confirm the time and to conduct the interview. I understand that that my responses will be used in the Cyclone Debbie report and future publications by The Salvation Army. I can choose to remain anonymous or to be identified in the report/publications by choosing my preferred consent options below:

(Please tick only **one** option)

- I give consent for my name to be cited in the report or any publications** by The Salvation Army.
- I wish to remain anonymous in the report or any publications** by The Salvation Army. This means, I do not give consent for my name to be identified in The Salvation Army's reports or publications. I understand that by choosing this option, The Salvation Army will remove information that could be used to identify me from the report and publications but may still use my responses and quotes in report/publications using fictitious names to protect my identity.

Signature

 Name _____ of _____ above _____ signed:
 Date ____/____/20____

My preferred interview times:

(Please suggest at least one set of date & time no later than 22nd March 2019)

Date	Time (between 7:00am and 7:00pm only)

Please return the completed consent form using the enclosed pre-paid envelope to:

The Salvation Army Australia
 Public, Research and Social Justice Department – Research Team
 Level 3, 261-265 Chalmers St, Redfern, NSW, 2016

APPENDIX C: Semi-structured Interview for beneficiaries of rebuild grant

Introduction

Good morning/afternoon, [first name]. Firstly, thank you so much for your time speaking with us. I have here with me [Lerisca/Shivani] in the room. She will help me to take down notes and assist me with the interview.

Purpose of the Interview

As I have mentioned to you before, we seek to hear your experience of Cyclone Debbie and your journey so far after the Cyclone. We understand that recalling the experience may be upsetting to you, so please feel free to skip the questions or stop the interview altogether if you need to. As we have mentioned before, you are not obligated to do this and participation is completely voluntary.

Where is the information being used?

What you share with us today will be included in the report that we're putting together about Cyclone Debbie. The report is mainly to evaluate and summarise The Salvation Army response to the cyclone. We also might use the findings for advocacy.

We want to hear your story and to get your feedback about the support that Salvation Army has provided to the community impacted by Cyclone Debbie, so we can understand what has worked well and what could we improve for future disaster response

Re-confirming Consent

Prior to this, you have been sent a consent form to indicate that whether we have permission or not to use your name in the report. Are you okay for us to use your name?

[If yes/no] Thank you so much/That's absolutely fine. If you change your mind at the end of this interview, you can do so but please let us know as quickly as possible and fill in the consent form accordingly and send the consent form back to us for our keep.

Permission to use recording device

We also will be using audio record this conversation, just so that we're sure we don't miss anything. Are you okay with that?

[If yes] Thank you! Please let me know if at any point you want me to turn off the recorder or keep something you said off the record. The device is just to help us so that we don't miss anything from this interview.

[If no] No problem at all. I will only take notes of our conversation.

About the interview

*Our interview today will last maximum one hour. Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions? **[Discuss questions if there is any]***

If any questions (or other questions) arise at any point in this study, you can feel free to ask them at any time. I would be more than happy to answer your questions.

INTERVIEW

Experience of the Cyclone

1. Perhaps we can start off by you telling us about when Cyclone Debbie happened. Again, we'd like to remind you that if at any point you're not feeling comfortable answering the question, feel free to skip the question or even stop the interview altogether.

Could you describe to us what it was like when Cyclone Debbie happened?

- *How were you or your family affected by it?*
- *What was particularly difficult for you when it happened?*
- *How did you feel at that time?*

2. What were your first response to the Cyclone?

- *What did you have to do to survive?*
- *How did you manage the first few days of the Cyclone?*

3. Did help come quickly for you?

- *Did you have to reach out to seek help?*
- *Who were your first contact of help?*

Experience with TSA

4. What prompted you to get in touch with the Salvation Army?

- *What assistance were you looking for from The Salvation Army?*
- *How was the response from The Salvation Army?*
- *What help did you gain?*
- *What difference did it make?*
- *How would you have managed otherwise?*
- *How did you feel throughout the journey with The Salvation Army?*

5. In your view, what was the biggest achievement that TSA assisted you with?

Current Situation

6. How are you now? Are you back to your normal routines?

- *What has changed for you since then?*
- *Has the community changed?*
- *Do you feel that you're more connected to the community?*
- *How did this whole experience affect you as a person?*

Closing

That's all for the interview. Thank you so much for your time!

APPENDIX D: Semi-structured interview with TSA worker

Introduction

Good morning/afternoon [name]. Firstly, thank you so much for your time speaking with us. I have here with me [Lerisca/Shivani], who will help with taking down notes as we speak, and just to make sure that we don't miss anything, we also have a recording device – are you okay for us to use this? We won't use the recording for anything other than the report, and delete it once we're done with it.

[If not comfortable with the recording device] Not a problem at all. I won't use it.

We only have a few main questions for you and hoping that it wouldn't take too much of your time. We're aiming to wrap up maximum 30 minutes. Would that be okay with you?

Nature of role (very briefly – opening question)

1. So perhaps we start off with your role in The Salvation Army, can you tell us a little bit about it?

- How long have you been in this role?

TSA response for Cyclone Debbie (briefly – we can ask this to first few people we interview to get a better understanding of TSA response for the report, no need to ask for every interview)

2. Just briefly for our understanding, how did The Salvation Army assist people affected by the cyclone?

- What were the immediate response? What other assistance were given?

Personal role in Cyclone Debbie response (experience, people's situations affected by Cyclone Debbie)

3. About your role in Cyclone Debbie response: could you tell us some of things that you did to assist people during this time?

- When Cyclone Debbie happened, were you in the affected area?
 - o [If yes] What can you recall about the day? Did you receive a lot of calls on the day?

4. If you could recall back to the first few days TSA had to give assistance, what was it like? Could you describe the experience?

- Could you share with us the situations of some of the people that you helped?
- Did you come across any individuals that were particularly at risk during your work for Cyclone Debbie, for example single parents, elderly, people with illness? [If yes] Could you share with us your experience with them?
 - o Were there any challenges when assisting them? [If yes] What were the challenges, and how did you or The Salvation Army respond to these challenges?

Outcomes/Achievements

5. How do you think the assistance help the community members? What were some of the outcomes you've seen among the people that you've assisted? Could you share with us some examples?

- Would you say these people you have helped are back on their feet?
- Do some of them still stay in touch with you?

6. How has assisting community members here affect you as a person?

7. Did you see any other positive outcomes during the response? (Did it bring people together?)

Challenges

8. Did you find any particular challenges or lessons to be learnt during the Cyclone Debbie response? What were they?

9. How were these challenges handled?

10. Do you think there are ways in which Salvation Army could improve the assistance for people affected by natural disasters in the future?

Closing

That's all for the interview. Thank you so much for your time! Do you have any questions for us at all?

APPENDIX E: Semi-structured interview with external agencies

Introduction

Good morning/afternoon, [first name].

Firstly, thank you so much for your time speaking with us. I have here with me [Lerisca/Shivani] in the room. She will help me to take down notes and assist me with the interview. As I have mentioned to you before, The Salvation Army seeks to document the experiences of different people that has played an important role during Cyclone Debbie response. This interview will also help us to understand the amount of work that has been put into assisting people affected by Cyclone Debbie, and we understand this largely involves collaboration and partnership with different organisation, such as yours, to make it happen.

Our interview today will last maximum half an hour. During this interview, I will ask you to share with us about the collaboration between TSA and your organisation, how the partnership contribute to the work that you do, as well as challenges that you have faced so that we can learn from it and to further strengthen future collaboration.

Now prior to this, you completed a consent form indicating that I have your permission to audio record our conversation. [note: the consent form should also inform and seek consent from the interviewee for their name and quotes to be featured in the report – it is okay for them NOT to consent for their name, so only their quotes and organisation’s name] Are you still ok with me recording our conversation today?

[If yes] Thank you! Please let me know if at any point you want me to turn off the recorder or keep something you said off the record. The device is just to help us so that we don’t miss anything from this interview.

[If no] Thank you for letting me know. I will only take notes of our conversation.

Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions? [Discuss questions if there is any]

If any questions (or other questions) arise at any point in this study, you can feel free to ask them at any time. I would be more than happy to answer your questions.

Nature of role and partnership with TSA

- 1. What was your role in Cyclone Debbie?*
- 2. What assistance did your organisation provide during Cyclone Debbie?*
 - a. How large was your team, how many people were involved?*
- 3. What types of activities did you and The Salvation Army work on together, in response to Cyclone Debbie?*
 - a. What was the duration of your collaboration with TSA?*
- 4. How did your organisation and TSA complement each other in Cyclone Debbie response?*
 - a. What skills and expertise did your organisation contribute and what expertise did the Salvation Army contribute?*
 - b. How well did the partnership work, in your view?*
- 5. How would you describe working with the Salvation Army as a partner organisation in this phase of disaster relief?*

- i. communication between the two organisations,*
- ii. coordination of activities,*
- iii. building trust between agencies*
- iv. timeliness of TSA's response*

6. *What was the most important aspect of your relationship with the TSA during Cyclone Debbie?*

7. *Did the Salvation Army make a difference to the work that you do? [If yes] how so?*

Challenges

8. *Did you face anything challenging during the whole experience?*

9. *Is there any elements in your partnership with The Salvation Army that needs to be improved, in your view? [If yes] what are they?*

Achievements

10. *What would you describe as the most significant achievement in your agency's partnership with TSA?*

- i. Achievement for the community*
- ii. Achievement for your organisation*

Closing

That's all for the interview. Thank you so much for your time!