



# **Vulnerable Communities Response Plan**

**Read in conjunction with the Overstrand Disaster Management Plan.**

**2025/2026**

## Defining Vulnerable Communities

Vulnerability refers to the susceptibility of individuals or groups to harm, loss, or negative outcomes due to a combination of factors such as social, economic, environmental, or physical conditions. It highlights the inability or limited capacity to cope with or recover from adverse situations, such as natural disasters, economic instability, or discrimination. Vulnerability can be influenced by various elements, including poverty, lack of access to resources, or social exclusion, and often increases the risk of marginalization or exploitation.

People living in informal dwelling communities in South Africa often face harsh living conditions, with limited access to basic amenities like clean water, electricity, sanitation, and healthcare. These communities are typically found in urban areas, where rapid population growth and migration have led to overcrowded settlements. Many of the residents live in makeshift structures made from materials such as corrugated iron, wood, and plastic. These dwellings are highly vulnerable to weather-related disasters like floods and fires, which are common in such areas. Furthermore, residents often struggle with unemployment, poverty, and a lack of infrastructure, which exacerbates their social and economic challenges.

Despite these difficulties, informal settlements are also spaces of resilience, with government, community-driven initiatives and local organizations working to improve living conditions and advocate for the rights of those affected.

### Purpose

- Ensure safety and well-being: Protect at-risk populations during emergencies or service disruptions.
- Provide structured response: Outline clear actions to safeguard vulnerable communities, including those with socioeconomic challenges, disabilities, or other risk factors.
- Ensure access to critical resources: Facilitate access to essential services, such as food, water, healthcare, and shelter, during emergencies.
- Minimize impact: Reduce the adverse effects of natural or man-made disasters on vulnerable individuals and communities.
- Support recovery: Promote swift recovery and return to stability for affected communities.
- Enhance resilience: Strengthen the capacity of vulnerable communities to withstand and recover from emergencies.

### Disaster Risk Reduction Efforts

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) aims to safeguard the lives and livelihoods of communities and individuals most vulnerable to disasters or emergencies. Disasters can be caused by both natural and human-induced factors, or a combination of the two.

The primary focus of DRR is to mitigate risks and reduce the impact on vulnerable communities. This is achieved by addressing key dimensions within these communities, with a concentrated effort to enhance resilience and preparedness.

The following key factors are essential tools used in minimizing or preventing new risks, as well as reducing existing risks and enhancing overall resilience:

- Exposure to Hazards
- Vulnerability and Capacity
- Characteristics of Each Hazard

By addressing these elements, it is possible to mitigate the impact of potential disasters, ensuring that communities are better equipped to handle future challenges while strengthening their overall resilience.

### **Three critical phases of disaster management in vulnerable communities include:**

- **Preparedness:** This phase focuses on planning, training, and equipping communities to effectively respond to potential disasters. It involves the development of early warning systems, community education, and risk assessments to ensure that individuals and local authorities are ready when disaster strikes.
- **Response:** This phase involves the immediate actions taken during and after a disaster to save lives, reduce harm, and provide essential services. It includes emergency relief efforts such as medical assistance, food, shelter, and ensuring that affected communities receive the support they need to survive the immediate aftermath.
- **Recovery:** The recovery phase involves the long-term efforts to restore and rebuild communities, ensuring they can return to normalcy or improve resilience for future disasters. This phase includes rehabilitation, reconstruction, and the implementation of strategies that reduce vulnerability to future risks, fostering sustainable development in the affected areas.

### **Relief assistance comprises the following:**

- Bedding (mattresses, blankets, pillows)
- Sanitation supplies
- Emergency Shelter
- Building Starter Kits
- Assistance from NGO's
- Assistance from Business Sectors

The Overstrand Municipality's disaster management perspective is centred around a proactive and collaborative approach that prioritizes the needs of vulnerable communities. Through continuous improvement of our contingency plans, the Overstrand Municipality is committed to building resilience and ensuring the safety of its citizens. By fostering partnerships with stakeholders, leveraging technology, and adhering to relevant legislation, the Overstrand Municipality aims to minimize the impact of disasters and provide effective support to those affected.

Through conducting disaster risk reduction initiatives and risk assessments of specific hazards affecting our vulnerable communities, we continuously enhance our understanding of the level of vulnerability our communities are faced with and how to effectively prepare,

respond and recover from threats. Our efforts to regularly enhance our disaster management strategies will undoubtedly contribute to a safer and more resilient future for all residents.

The following areas have been identified as our Vulnerable Communities in the Overstrand :









