HAURAKI MĀORI

WEATHERING CYCLONE GABRIELLE

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TE WHĀRIKI MANAWĀHINE O HAURAKI

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Executive Summary

This research aimed to understand how Hauraki Māori mobilised to address the disaster response and recovery needs of whānau during Cyclone Gabrielle. The goal was to use these insights to improve local civil defence planning, enhance communication between Thames Coromandel District Council and Hauraki Māori, and inform more effective resource allocation for future extreme weather events.

Methodology

The study utilised Kaupapa Māori methodology, incorporating a pūrākau approach through semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Thirty participants from Hauraki Māori communities, as well as senior management and field personnel from the Thames Coromandel District Council, were involved. The Pū-Rā-Ka-Ū analysis framework and contrast thematic analysis were used to derive the findings.

Key Findings

The analysis of the Hauraki Māori responses during Cyclone Gabrielle highlights a significant disconnect between the ecological wisdom of Māori communities and the governance strategies of the Thames Coromandel District Council (TCDC). Māori central to this research possess a holistic understanding of their environment and intergenerational knowledge that is crucial for their identity as kaitiaki, yet this knowledge is too often overlooked by local authorities. Additionally, institutional racism and inadequate support from civil defence agencies forced Hauraki Māori communities to rely on their limited resources during the crisis. Economic disadvantages rooted in historical land dispossession further contributed to their vulnerability, complicating recovery efforts.

Moreover, bureaucratic barriers within the housing recovery process reveal deep-seated issues of mistrust stemming from continuing colonial practices. TCDC's failure to accommodate the collective living arrangements of Māori communities exacerbates these challenges, highlighting the need for more inclusive and culturally relevant disaster management strategies.

The call for recognition of Māori knowledge and support for well-resourced Māori community-based emergency centres emphasises the importance of integrating Māori insights into civil defence initiatives. This advocacy highlights their rights and capabilities amidst ongoing marginalisation and persistent disadvantage.

Conclusion

The responses of Hauraki Māori during CycloneGabrielle expose the failure of current disaster management frameworks to uphold Māori self-determination. Systemic barriers continue to exclude Māori governance, knowledge, and leadership, reinforcing institutional racism and weakening disaster preparedness.

This call to action demands a Matike Mai approach, where Hauraki Māori exercise rangatiratanga over emergency management. The following recommendations outline the necessary constitutional transformation, ensuring Māori-led governance, tikanga-based decision-making, and a redefined relationship with the Crown in disaster response and recovery.

Recommendations

This report outlines key recommendations to transform emergency management for Hauraki Māori by embedding a Te Tiriti-centred Matike Mai framework. Rather than reinforcing co-governance within existing Crown structures, these recommendations focus on constitutional transformation, where Māori exercise their rangatiratanga in disaster response and recovery, and the Crown's role is redefined within a relational sphere.

The following actions are critical to achieving a constitutionally just, tikanga-based emergency management system for Hauraki Māori. Detailed implementation strategies are provided in Chapter 7 – From Evidence to Action.

1. Establish and Strengthen the Rangatiratanga Sphere

- Create a Hapū and Iwi Emergency Response Assembly, where Huaraki Māori lead and make decisions for their people in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.
- Resource and formalise marae-based emergency management hubs as primary centres for disaster response, recognising them as critical infrastructure within the emergency management system.
- Develop and embed tikanga-based decision-making structures that prioritise Hauraki Māori values and worldviews in disaster response.

2. Reconfigure the Relational Sphere Between Māori and the Crown

- Establish an Emergency Management Tiriti Assembly, where Māori and the Crown engage as equals in emergency response coordination, based on whakapapa and tikanga values.
- Define clear jurisdictional boundaries between the rangatiratanga sphere (Māori-led governance) and the kāwanatanga sphere (Crown-led governance) to ensure Māori decision-making authority is respected.
- Shift the role of local councils and emergency agencies from unilateral decision-makers to supporting relational engagement with iwi and hapū, ensuring alignment with tikanga and Māori-led responses.

3. Recognise and Embed Tikanga Māori in Regulatory Frameworks

- Amend the Local Government Act 2002 and Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002 to formally recognise and uphold the rangatiratanga sphere in emergency management.
- Remove barriers in the Building Act 2004 and related legislation that prevent Māori from using whakapapa-based housing models, such as papakāinga, in post-disaster recovery.
- Review policies such as Te Ture Whenua Māori Act 1993 to ensure alignment with Māori aspirations for sustainable housing, land use, and emergency preparedness.

4. Invest in Whānau, Hapū, and Iwi-Led Resilience and Preparedness

- Establish a Māori Emergency Management Fund to ensure direct investment in whānau, hapū, and iwi-led response strategies.
- Fund tikanga-based disaster preparedness training to enhance Māori community resilience and ensure disaster response strategies align with local knowledge.
- Support kaupapa-driven initiatives such as the Blue Highway and tangata whenua services' innovative housing solutions, to improve disaster response, relocation, and recovery efforts.

5. Strengthen Whakapapa-Based Communication and Data Sovereignty

- Develop Hauraki Māori focused and accessible communication channels to ensure effective engagement with Hauraki communities before, during, and after disaster events.
- Establish a Māori-led emergency data network, ensuring that all disaster planning, decision-making, and resource allocation are informed by accurate, up-to-date information held by Māori, for Māori.
- Implement a Tiriti-based information-sharing framework, where data sovereignty remains with Hauraki Māori entities rather than being controlled by Crown agencies.

6. Advance Legislative and Policy Transformation

- Advocate for a constitutional review of emergency management laws to uphold the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and He Whakaputanga in disaster governance.
- Ensure that all new national and local emergency policies uphold Hauraki Māori self-determination, rather than requiring Māori to operate within Crown-imposed structures.
- Develop a long-term Tiriti-based strategy for emergency governance that reflects a shift from Crown-dominated responses to kaupapa Māori-led solutions.

7. Rebuild Trust and Strengthen Whakapapa-Based Relationships

- Implement whakapapa-based trust-building initiatives to address historical mistrust between Hauraki Māori and council authorities, shifting relationships from tokenistic engagement to whānau-led decision-making.
- Require local and regional councils to engage in tikanga-based governance training, ensuring decision-makers understand and respect Te Tiriti and the rangatiratanga sphere.
- Develop direct hapū-to-hapū and iwi-to-iwi collaboration mechanisms, ensuring Māori leadership and emergency planning remain connected at both regional and national levels.

Reframing the Path Forward

These recommendations move beyond co-governance and instead aligns with a Matike Mai consitutional model, ensuring that Māori exercise self-determination in emergency management.

Next, we present the overall contrasting review of the research, which serves as the basis for understanding and provides context for the recommendations.

Contrast Analysis

This analysis synthesises key findings from chapters PŪ, RĀ, KĀ, and Ū, providing a comprehensive overview of the Hauraki Māori response to Cyclone Gabrielle and the subsequent challenges in civil defence and housing initiatives.

In the context of Hauraki Māori mobilising to support whānau during Cyclone Gabrielle, a contrast analysis of perspectives from whānau participants (including whānau members and social service kaimahi) and Thames-Coromandel District Council (TCDC) senior management and field personnel reveals significant insights into civil defence preparedness and response dynamics in Hauraki. This analysis highlights the stark contrast between Māori ecological wisdom and regional governance strategies.

Hauraki Māori are deeply connected to their kāinga, their whānau hapori identity, whakapapa, and intergenerational responsibilities tied to the land and environment. They are kaitiaki of the whenua, with a profound, holistic understanding of their relationship to Papatūānuku and a duty to protect future generations. This relationship is embedded in their daily practices and responsibilities, reflecting a holistic approach to te taiao kaitiakitanga and Māori community wellbeing.

Additionally, the intergenerational transmission of traditional and environmental wisdom to mokopuna, such as weather patterns and ecological practices, is crucial to their identity as kaitiaki. In contrast, TCDC's governance and regional planning fails to give credence to these intergenerational ties and knowledge, resulting in environmental management approaches that exclude Māori ecological wisdom. This neglect perpetuates a disconnect between policy and practice, weakening the effectiveness of resource management and climate resilience efforts, as evidenced in the Koputauaki dam crisis.

The disconnect is further highlighted during crises like Cyclone Gabrielle, where Māori communities had to rely on their networks and often meagre resources due to no support at worst and inadequate support at best from civil defence and local authorities. This unreciprocated reliance on Māori mobilisation by whitestream bodies spotlights wider institutional racism, where Māori needs and capabilities are undervalued by local and regional government. This aligns with King, Goff, and Skipper's (2020) findings on the critical role of Māori environmental knowledge in understanding and responding to natural hazards in Aotearoa. Their research demonstrates that traditional ecological knowledge passed down through generations provides invaluable insights into local environmental patterns and potential risks.

However, our research shows that TCDC's current approach fails to integrate this wealth of Māori wisdom, resulting in strategies that do not address the specific needs of Hauraki Māori communities. As one whānau participant noted, "We've been reading these weather patterns for generations, but no one seems to listen when we warn about potential flooding." This disconnect signposts the need for a fundamental shift where Māori governance and knowledge systems are recognised as central, rather than supplementary, in disaster management strategies. A truly effective response requires more than collaboration, it demands a Tiriti-based framework where Māori exercise decision-making authority over disaster preparedness and response in their own communities.

The relocatable housing initiative in the research's solutions chapter exposes the economic disadvantages faced by Hauraki Māori communities, rooted in historical land alienation and economic marginalisation. Many whānau are "land-rich but cash-poor," a situation that complicates their ability to repair or replace homes without external assistance. This economic disadvantage is a direct consequence of historical injustices and systemic racism that have left Māori communities economically vulnerable. Interactions with TCDC during the housing recovery process revealed deeply entrenched issues, including Māori community frustration with bureaucratic obstacles and a lack of effective help. These issues are not merely administrative oversights but are symptomatic of a more profound issue: the historical trauma and mistrust between local whānau and the Council, stemming from generations of negative colonial experiences and discriminatory practices.

Navigating building regulations and compliance requirements reflects systemic racism, disproportionately impacting Māori communities, especially those with collective living arrangements in Papakāinga. These challenges highlight the need for structural change that moves beyond policy amendments and ensures Māori exercise governance over housing solutions within their own whenua, rather than being constrained by externally imposed regulatory barriers. The complexity and rigidity of these regulations often fail to account for Māori collective living and well-being needs, creating additional barriers for communities already facing significant challenges. Hauraki Māori communities must continually advocate for resources and navigate complex bureaucratic systems that provide no clear entry points and lack adequate support. Despite these systemic barriers, they demonstrate agility and innovation, mobilising to support their whānau on the smell of an oily rag.

The call for Civil Defence to fund and support community-based emergency centres is not just about disaster preparedness; it is a demand for recognition of Māori knowledge, capabilities, and the right to rangatiratanga. These centres, rooted in whānau, hapū, and iwi governance structures, provide an alternative to the Crown's centralised model, demonstrating the effectiveness of Māori-led solutions in disaster response and recovery. The current top-down approach of Civil Defence fails to recognise and integrate the valuable insights and capabilities of Māori communities, leading to a lack of culturally relevant and effective disaster management strategies.

To address these significant issues, it is pivotal for Civil Defence to shift from a Crown-led model to a Tiriti-based framework, where Māori governance structures are not just consulted but formally recognised as authorities in disaster response and recovery. This means moving beyond engagement and establishing distinct spheres of influence, where Māori decision-making authority is upheld alongside, but not subordinate to, Crown emergency management structures. This includes providing funding and resources to empower Māori community-led groups, actively engaging with Māori communities, establishing collaborative processes, improving communication channels, and offering training and capacity-building support. In doing so, a more resilient, community-led disaster management system can be developed, reflecting the unique needs and capabilities of Hauraki Māori communities.

The narrative of a Hauraki Māori response to Cyclone Gabrielle and subsequent recovery efforts is a powerful testament to community resilience and the ongoing impacts of colonisation and institutional racism. The narrative spotlights the need for a fundamental shift in how disaster preparedness and response are approached, advocating for a model that respects and integrates Hauraki Māori knowledge and practices. This shift is key to developing a disaster management system that is not only effective but also culturally relevant and equitable, ensuring the unique needs and capabilities of Hauraki Māori are upheld.

This contrast analysis presents the experiences and insights of Hauraki research participants, alongside key findings and analysis that highlight both the systemic failures of civil defence and the strength of Māori-led disaster response. The findings from chapters PŪ, RĀ, KĀ, and Ū clearly demonstrate that only a Māori-led, Tiriti-based model can ensure just and effective disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.

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Chapter 1

Setting the Scene: Context and Background

Looking back to move forward into the future - Kia whakatōmuri te haere whakamua.

"'I walk backwards into the future with my eyes fixed on my past'"

- (Rameka, 2016).

Introduction

Overview

The 'Hauraki Māori Weathering Cyclone Gabrielle' research project aims to understand and document the resilience and response of Hauraki Māori to one of Aotearoa -New Zealand's most severe weather events in recent history. Cyclone Gabrielle, which struck in February 2023, had a devastating impact on the Hauraki region. The cyclone caused significant damage to homes, businesses, and infrastructure, leaving many Māori communities isolated and without official support for extended periods. In some areas, communities were cut off for up to 15 days, forcing them to establish their own emergency centres and utilising their own scarce resources.
This research is crucial in the context of increasing climate change impacts and the rising frequency of extreme weather events. By capturing the experiences and strategies of Hauraki Māori during Cyclone Gabrielle, this project seeks to improve future disaster responses and build stronger, more enduring Hauraki Māori communities.

Report Layout

This research report foregrounds the pūrākau of Hauraki Māori in responding to Cyclone Gabrielle. The report begins with an executive summary that provides an overview of the research, and an overarching comparative discussion that informs the final recommendations. The core of the report is divided into four findings chapters:
PŪ, RĀ, KA, and Ū.

- PŪ (Origin): Focuses on the motivations for disaster preparedness and response, using cultural knowledge and traditional wisdom for resilience.
- RĀ (Enlightenment): Presents effective practices and positive outcomes in Hauraki Māori communities' responses to extreme weather, highlighting community strengths.
- KA (Past, Present, Future): Analyses past and present disaster experiences to improve future disaster management, identifying current challenges.
- Ū (Sustenance/From Within): Offers practical, sustainable disaster preparedness and response strategies, with recommendations for local civil defence improvements.

The framework operates cyclically, ensuring continuous learning and improvement by integrating the wisdom gained from the final phase back into the initial phase.

Each chapter provides a comparative discussion summary of the voices of Whānau participants with the perspectives of Thames Coromandel District Council (TCDC) personnel. To protect privacy, all participant names and community identifiers have been anonymised. The report concludes with the methodology, literature scan, and communications plan for equitable emergency management in Hauraki . This structure ensures that community-based knowledge and experiences are privileged and prioritised, rather than marginalised, providing a model for ethical, Kaupapa Māori community-led research and disaster response.

Background

Te Whāriki Manawāhine o Hauraki (Te Whāriki), a Tangata Whenua social support service, has been providing specialised mahi tūkino (physical and sexual violence) services for 40 years, supporting all communities within the Hauraki rohe. With 95% of its staff having Hauraki whakapapa, Te Whāriki remains deeply connected to local whānau, hapū, and iwi. Te Whāriki offers programs for wāhine, tāne, and tāmariki affected by mahi tūkino, including historical and intergenerational violence.

From 2018 to 2020, Te Whāriki engaged in conversations with Hauraki whānau to understand their needs and support them in dealing with the effects of mahi tūkino. This led to the creation of the 'Kāinga Kōrero,' a transformational programme aimed at empowering Hauraki whānau to heal and thrive.

Two closely connected strategic projects within this programme are He Whare, He Taonga and Hauraki Data Sovereignty. He Whare, He Taonga promotes the philosophy "Ma te pā he tamaiti hei whakatipu" (it takes a village to raise a child), emphasising and valuing community support in raising children. Hauraki Data Sovereignty (or story sovereignty), involves local research to develop and control Hauraki data, ensuring pūrākau and needs are accurately represented.

In 2023, the 'He Whare, He Taonga' research documented the significant connection between mahi tūkino and housing poverty among Hauraki Wāhine Māori and their whānau. This intersection compounds vulnerabilities, highlighting the urgent need for compassionate solutions that address both housing and safety issues within the community. The 'Hauraki Māori Weathering Cyclone Gabrielle' research project builds on these connections by exploring the intersecting issues and vulnerabilities that arise during crises. By examining the impact of natural disasters on already vulnerable populations, this project aims to identify solutions that can mitigate these challenges. Supported by Te Whāriki's strategic context of Kāinga Kōrero, the study seeks to improve civil defence responses and prioritise the needs of Hauraki Māori in disaster strategies.

Historical Context

Hauraki Māori continue to experience significant challenges due to historical drivers that include colonisation and land alienation. These lead to marginalisation and persistent socio-economic disadvantages such as reduced access to education and healthcare services (Waitangi Tribunal, 2006). Poverty makes it harder for Hauraki Māori to prepare for and recover from disasters. Historical and intergenerational violence, including family and sexual violence, are linked to poverty, further destabilising communities (Moyle et al., 2023).

Housing poverty and overcrowding experienced by Hauraki Māori, was made worse during the COVID-19 pandemic and Cyclone Gabrielle (Ramsey, 2024). Historical drivers significantly contribute to the current vulnerabilities experienced by Hauraki Māori communities. Their experiences with past natural disasters and ongoing disadvantages have not only highlighted the importance of disaster preparedness but also strengthened their resolve to building resilience strategies.

Research Need

The need for this research stems from the growing vulnerabilities faced by Hauraki Māori, such as houselessness and homes in chronic disrepair, especially after extreme weather events like Cyclone Gabrielle. These events have exposed significant gaps in civil defence responses and recovery efforts for marginalised and isolated communities (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2024).

Cyclone Gabrielle's Impact

Cyclone Gabrielle, which struck in February 2023, caused severe damage across the North Island, heavily impacting the Hauraki region. The impact of Gabrielle was intensified by Cyclone Hale, which hit at the end of January, just twelve days earlier, leaving communities already vulnerable before the second storm arrived. As outlined earlier, cyclone damage exacerbated existing socio-economic challenges, such as substandard housing and limited access to resources, which disproportionately impact Hauraki Māori.

Access to resources and resource allocation disparities were evident during and after the cyclone. A kaimahi recalled, *"Our marae needed a generator, but when we asked for one, there were none available. Yet earlier that day, we saw a helicopter fly over us with three generators for a more well-off community."*

Another kaimahi expressed concern for whānau living in tents and makeshift shelters by the mangroves. He shared, *"When they sought shelter, officials responded that they were not eligible because they were already sleeping rough. I understood this to mean that because they were already homeless, they were considered less deserving."*

These responses from officials perpetuate the disadvantage already experienced by the most vulnerable Hauraki whānau, compounding their hardship during crises. By documenting these experiences, the research seeks to develop whānau-centred insights that will inform local and regional civil defence policies, ensuring greater disaster response and recovery for Hauraki Māori.

Research Focus

This research aims to understand how Hauraki Māori resilience contributes to disaster response and recovery, especially in areas hardest hit by Cyclone Gabrielle where local tangata whenua had to mount their own response due to being overlooked by official civil defence efforts (New Zealand Herald, 2023).

The primary research question is: "How did Hauraki Māori mobilise to meet the disaster response and recovery needs of whānau during Cyclone Gabrielle?" Secondary questions include:

- What is the starting point for civil defence in Hauraki (PŪ)?
- What works well (RĀ)?
- What does not work well (KA)?
- What are the solutions (Ū)?

Objectives

1. Capture insights and evidence of Hauraki Māori understandings and practices associated with risk reduction, disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. (Conduct interviews to document traditional and contemporary perspectives and practices and analyse pūrākau for key themes).
2. Inform local civil defence long-term planning and disaster response efforts using the gathered evidence. (Share findings with authorities, collaborate to integrate Māori perspectives, and develop policy recommendations).
3. Improve disaster communications with Hauraki Māori for better risk reduction, preparedness, response, and recovery. (Create Hauraki Māori-focused materials and information, train civil defence personnel, and establish communication feedback mechanisms).
4. Support high trust contracting and appropriate mobilisation tools for Hauraki Māori responding to extreme weather events. (Engage community and support service leaders, develop guidelines for contracting, and ensure resources for rapid response).

Specific Examples of Māori Mobilisation in Disaster Response

Māori communities throughout Aotearoa have shown proactive and resilient responses in various disaster situations. Common themes include the use of traditional and ecological knowledge, strong community networks, and a deep sense of responsibility for whānau, whanaungatanga, and manaakitanga. These practices enable rapid, relevant and relational driven effective disaster response.

1. Cyclone Gabrielle (2023): Hauraki Māori communities mobilised quickly to set up emergency centres using local knowledge of safe locations across vulnerable communities .
2. Ōtautahi Earthquakes (2010-2011): Ngāi Tahu rallied to support affected whānau and other communities by establishing welfare centres, distributing food and water, and providing care and support (Kenney et al., 2015).
3. Flooding in Edgecumbe (2017): Māori communities in the Whakatāne District, including Te Whānau-ā-Apanui, provided shelter, food, and emotional support to flood-impacted whānau (Lambert & Scott, 2019).
4. Cyclone Bola (1988): Māori communities in Te Tairawhiti cleared roads, repaired homes, and provided food and shelter to affected whānau, using traditional knowledge to identify safe areas and resources (King et al., 2020).

Recognising and incorporating the strengths of Māori mobilisation can lead to more effective and inclusive disaster preparedness and response efforts.

Future Implications

The findings from this research will be used to advocate for improved disaster response strategies for Hauraki Māori and serve as a model for other Māori and Indigenous communities facing similar challenges. By documenting these experiences, Te Whāriki aims to influence current policy to ensure more equitable and effective disaster management. The insights gained from this research can, we propose, positively impact local, national, and international disaster response policies.

By integrating Māori ecological knowledge and culturally informed practices, policymakers can enhance the effectiveness and inclusivity of disaster preparedness and response efforts in Aotearoa New Zealand and globally.

Conclusion

By documenting the experiences of Hauraki Māori during Cyclone Gabrielle, this research aims to improve future collaboration between Te Whāriki and the Thames-Coromandel District Council. The goal is to develop whānau-centred insights that inform local and regional civil defence policies, ensuring a more effective disaster response and recovery for Hauraki Māori—one that realistically accounts for mahi tūkino within disaster response efforts.

This project shows the importance of community-led initiatives in disaster response. By focusing on the experiences and knowledge of Hauraki Māori, it improves local disaster management and sets an example for other Māori and Indigenous communities. The success of this approach highlights the value of culturally informed practices, leading to more effective disaster preparedness and response.

As a model, this project intends to inspire policy changes and influence broader disaster response strategies, ensuring that Māori and Indigenous voices are heard and respected in developing inclusive and effective disaster management policies.

Chapter 2

PŪ: A Starting Point

Introduction

The thematic area of PŪ serves as a starting point for the research in the sense that the theme is related to origins, foundations, or roots. Within the context of the research question, "How did Hauraki Māori mobilise to meet the disaster response and recovery needs of whānau during Cyclone Gabrielle?", PŪ captures the motivations of research participants in their disaster response efforts. To explore those motivations, we consider responses from Whānau participants, and participants from Thames Coromandel District Council (TCDC).

PŪ - Whānau Kōrero

PŪ is the starting point for capturing the motivations and key insights from Whānau participants and their connection to Hauraki, most of whom whakapapa to this region. For clarity, the term 'Whānau' in this context refers to research participants, including whānau members, key informants, and kaimahi from local tangata whenua support services. 'Kāinga' refers to the wider Hauraki region, encompassing all its cultural and environmental assets.

Whānau participants' relationships with whānau, hapū, iwi, marae, and their wider communities, and their connection and bonds with Te Whāriki research team are intrinsic parts of life in Hauraki. They are the people of the land, the kaitiaki of all that is Hauraki tangata whenua and, for their specific area, they are mana whenua.

The following Whānau kōrero is provided:

Connection to Kāinga

"It's a continuation of legacy, taonga tuku iho, passed down to us"

For Whānau participants, the starting point for them in disaster preparedness was their intergenerational connection and bond to Hauraki. For those Whānau that whakapapa to Hauraki, their bond and connections are deeply linked to the hopes, aspirations, responsibilities, and obligations passed down from their parents, grandparents, and tīpuna. This connection is grounded in the care and protection of Hauraki. Their kaitiaki role is an innate part of who they are, as is their connection to whānau, hapū, iwi, and marae across the Hauraki region (Thames Coromandel, Hauraki, and Matamata Piako District Council areas).

> *I'm very proud of my family and how they have nurtured us at whānau hapū level, and it eventually is an iwi connectivity. - Hue*

> *And this is our forever home here on our papakāinga. This is where, this is our whenua. This is my whenua, where my papa, you know, I was brought up here in the house, the other house down on the driveway at my nana and papa's place. And this is, oh, I can't go anywhere else. This is where I am. So even if the roof falls in, I'll put, you know, some tarps up, and that's me. I'll just make sure it gets fixed. – Mia & Wii*

> *It's a continuation of legacy as to taonga tuku iho on that which has been bequeathed, passed down to us. And I totally believe now in marae-based studies and going back to the old ways, turning our wānanga around and teaching our tamariki how to, you know, fish and where to identify their mana whenua, mana moana, mana tangata. - Hue*

"It starts from having lived and worked in Hauraki most of my life"

Many whānau have intergenerational knowledge about their whenua, the moana, and the greater Hauraki environment. Tīpuna connections to te taiao serve to remind us of the importance of innovations that rebuild and restore whānau connections to cultural, social, economic, and environmental wellbeing.

> *It starts from having lived and worked in Hauraki most of my life. It comes from a place of realising that a lot of innovations that we've done in Hauraki haven't been captured, haven't been documented, and stored for future reference. That our people can have access to, that our mokopuna can look at. – Pai*

There is considerable passion and drive to improve whānau access to tīpuna wisdom and practical skills. It starts with passing those skills, wisdom, and knowledge on to the next generation.

"Our knowledge, our mātauranga"

> *Yes, so my brother and I, a couple of years ago, we decided that we wanted to share what we have, our knowledge, our mātauranga, whakapapa, with our people. You see the difference and disparities, amongst our whānau. And yet, four or five generations prior, our tīpuna who came, we're very industrious. So, our tīpuna came up and they used to travel from Te Tairāwhiti to Auckland, trading. And they would take from Te Tairāwhiti wheat, corn, harakeke, into Auckland Harbour. And when there were southerlies, southwesterlies, they would dock in here for shelter. – Kai & Nga*

"While it's raining, you know what's happening, but the creeks are coming up"

Their intergenerational knowledge includes intimate knowledge about weather patterns and events and how those impact the Hauraki region. For many, especially those in isolated communities, whānau preparedness is key to managing the risks around flooding, slips, and lack of access to food and other supplies.

> *And so while it's raining, you know what's happening, but the creeks are coming up, you know, and slips are happening and are you going to be isolated? Can you get into [name of town]? Once you're in there, can you get home? And so that was a lot of the worry. And if you haven't got a four-wheel drive vehicle, you can't get anywhere. - Rua (Focus Group)*

> *So people who have lived in [name of community] for a number of years, have learnt to read the environment and know the differences in the types of rain that are falling, the heaviness of it, how long it goes, the impacts of the tide when it's high, when it's a king, when it's low, and what the potential impacts will be on the whenua, which then will isolate people. – Rea*

Intentions, Hopes, and Aspirations

"Proper housing would be a good start"

While sharing their experiences of Cyclones Hale and Gabrielle and other weather events that hit the Hauraki region during 2022 and 2023, some whānau spoke about their hopes, aspirations, and intentions to address the challenges they faced post-Gabrielle.

> *Not a lot of people, like, even like living in sheds and just proper housing would be, you know, that'd be a good start. – Mia & Wii*

They talked about their aspirations for homes - ‘proper’ homes for whānau, particularly for those who were living in sheds or who were house-less. Some also spoke about the positive impact that relocatable whare have had as part of the Cyclone Gabrielle recovery process. They aspired for more kāinga like that for Hauraki whānau.

> *That’s the way of the future, I reckon. And they just move it straight in there. There’s no mucking around. They just set it up and then plonk it straight on. And it’s an option, you know, so we know now if whānau wanting to come back, you know, they can rent them or something. – Wii & Mia*

“Well, just making it easier for Māori to live on their own land”

Whānau also talked about the need to make it easier to live on whenua Māori. They spoke about the need to address the many barriers that get in the way of being able to build on their whenua.

> *Well, just making it easier for Māori to live on their own land. You know, there’s so much red tape and so many obstacles that make it hard. Like, you should be able to just whakapapa and, fine, build a house. – Mia & Wii*

“Even just an emergency relief fund”

One person suggested making available an emergency relief fund for whānau to provide post-cyclone financial assistance to reduce the negative impact of road closures and not being able to get to their place of employment.

> *Even just an emergency relief fund, like when there’s a major cyclone, just so whānau get some financial assistance. Like, in Australia when we were over there, it was every year in January, they would give you $50 just for getting your kids ready for school. And even though it was just a little bit, it was always really welcomed to receive that when you try to get your kids sorted to go back to school. So, yeah, just something like that would have been good. – Mia & Wii*

“It’s also about the transfer of knowledge and action for our mokopuna”

Undertaking this research, capturing the issues and challenges through the weather events, was considered an important way of transferring knowledge, learnings, and experiences for the next generation.

> *So, it came from that place of wanting to capture that and record that and ensure that our people get the benefit from, from the knowledge and information that we’ve learned, and it’s all part of the knowledge building exercise. It’s also about the transfer of knowledge and action, as well as for the historical records for our mokopuna. It’s setting the record straight and saying, this is, essentially, this is why we did what we did. – Pai*

> *Our rangatahi; I’ve been talking about traditional housing concepts of how the kākaho and the binding, was used in the smaller house buildings of traditional times. Wouldn’t it be nice to teach them those techniques of how you can actually make your whare out of kākaho and bring back just the traditional aspects of learning that were passed down from one generation to the next. – Hue*

Whānau sharing their experiences and telling their version of an event such as a cyclone is necessary for the next generation to understand what happened and why particular decisions were made.

> *Yeah, it’s all in that context. It’s about ensuring that our knowledge, our information, our data, which is ours. And so then in the context of this data sovereignty and what that means for us as those exactly changes and improves and grows as well. – Pai*

It is all about passing down knowledge and actions to our mokopuna. In doing so, we ensure they are ready to face future weather event challenges with the wisdom of their tīpuna.

PŪ - Whānau Summary

Insights from Whānau pūrākau highlight that the starting point of emergency preparedness for them is whānau, whenua, and te taiao. It comes from their passion and drive to nurture and protect their kāinga and whānau. The nurturing and protection of these within a Hauraki Māori cultural, spiritual, social, economic, and environmental framework are fundamental to the values, innovations, and resourcefulness of whānau and tangata whenua services.

As tangata whenua and mana whenua, the whakapapa relationships between whānau, their hapū, and iwi, and marae across Hauraki and beyond are expressed through their interconnection with each other and with the whenua, te taiao, and through the role of kaitiakitanga.

Contributing to the rebuilding and restoring whānau connections to their whenua and to tīpuna wisdom and practical skills was an important kaupapa for Whānau participants. Passing their wisdom on to the next generation was equally important.

These intergenerational relationships and tīpuna-informed wisdom are the foundation from which most Hauraki whānau live their lives.

Emergency management for Whānau participants in this research is much more than merely addressing the current event; it is a long-term, intergenerational approach that involves holistic strategies for the wellbeing of Hauraki whānau and the environment they live in. Following the pūrākau shared by Whānau on the starting point for civil defence preparedness in Hauraki, we now turn to the key insights provided by TCDC participants.

PŪ – TCDC Insights

The thematic area of PŪ captures key insights on the starting point of civil defence efforts from the perspectives of five pseudonymised Thames-Coromandel District Council (TCDC) civil defence personnel. This includes their experiences and observations regarding various aspects of their roles in local civil defence management, as well as their aspirations, key learnings, and priorities. TCDC participants ranged from senior management to field personnel; some were new to their positions, while others had been in their role for several years.

Their key insights noted the starting point for them is
1. People’s safety and wellbeing,
2. Hauraki Māori, and
3. Communication.

Start From a Point of View of Safety

According to the TCDC participants we interviewed, the Council’s primary focus is on keeping people safe, especially those at immediate risk or whose homes are threatened. We heard that they prioritise helping whānau, children, and the elderly in isolated areas with limited resources. While they recognise that wealthier individuals with holiday homes have different concerns, their aim is to remain committed to helping those with the greatest needs first.

Safety and wellbeing

> *You start from a point of Council; you start from a point of view of safety. Are people at risk right now? Are they in danger right now; are their homes and their wellbeing? Are they under threat right now? That’s your starting point. That’s priority one. - Kit*

Community priorities

> *Your priority is not driven by somebody whose garage or basement and pool table is under threat of being flooded… you start with trying to manage the living environment that people have. So, if people have whānau, children, elderly people in a property that is isolated, they’ve got limited access to food, typically where they would start. - Kit*

Balancing concerns

> *Many of the people on the east coast are more wealthy. They’ve got holiday homes; they’re not there a lot of the time. They are people who have high levels of investment, and they have concerns which don’t necessarily reflect the same concerns of people on the west coast…At Council, we’ve always been very clear about what our priorities are. We’ll step in and help the people whose needs are greatest. – Kit*

We heard that the aim for TCDC is to remain committed to helping those with the greatest needs first, and that starting with Hauraki Māori is a priority for them.

Start with Hauraki Māori

TCDC participants told us, Hauraki Māori communities possess valuable knowledge and experience from past weather events, and starting with them will enhance an effective civil defence response in their communities.

Utilising Māori knowledge

> *The benefit for me is that I’d landed in a district that had had quite a lot of experience with storm and weather events before…Other communities around the country struggled because they hadn’t had that depth of experience and the structure was not there for them to be able to work their way through when events hit. - Kit*

Community manaakitanga

> *So, when I first started, we didn’t have as many [resilience hubs]. We still had some community groups, but they tended to be fire and police driven as in the main people. Whereas now it’s looking at what manaakitanga is in that community, and who is it that already looks after people? - Max*

We heard the experience of Cyclone Gabrielle in Hauraki has created opportunities for growth in disaster response and recovery. Building trust and relationships through collaboration is important for effective communication and problem-solving in disaster spaces. We also heard that marae serve as essential places of support during emergencies, with a longstanding tradition of supporting whānau in their communities

Marae supporting people

> *That’s where things start…In an emergency situation, when people are under threat or vulnerable, they go to the marae…But if it’s not the marae, it’s the hapu or the iwi representatives who stand in a place which can act as a marae… They’ve been doing this for hundreds of years. They know how to support people in need. - Kit*

Getting to know whānau

Having relationships with people, collaborating and sitting around the table, getting to know them. That's the start…Take it or leave it, it doesn't matter. But that's the kind of relationship I want… Gabrielle wasn't all doom and gloom. It has created so much opportunity. – Lou

Since Cyclone Gabrielle, there has been a shift from relying on emergency services to strengthening Hauraki communities that support whānau, with a focus on improving communication.

Start with Communication

TCDC participants noted that communication is important for identifying community needs and resources, especially during emergencies when the usual forms of communication may be disrupted.

It starts at ground level

The key learnings for me are that everything starts from community. Everything starts at ground level. It doesn't start in Wellington; it doesn't start in Hamilton. That's where you go for your resources. But how do you know what resources you need? You ask your people on the ground. Communication is absolutely vital…for example, if the phones are down and the power is down, how do you know? - Kit

We heard that starting with building relationships is key to successful communication in civil defence response and recovery efforts.

Communication is key

I'm only eight months in the role. Gabrielle was my first event response. I think a key learning was just communication is key. It's key, and those relationships that you establish. - Lee

We heard that educating communities about building compliance is preferable to punitive approaches, such as legal action against whānau who cannot afford the cost of meeting building compliance. Rather, the focus should be on positive engagement within communities.

Getting to the communities

Maybe if we start with education, I know for a fact Council would not be able to manage dealing with the non-compliance. The amount of non-compliant buildings in our district, there's only a couple of inspectors, so, especially coming into our communities…it would end up in court and it's like, they [whānau] don't have the appetite for that either…You know, let's get to communities. - Jay

We heard the need for communicating with and building resilience in Māori villages and easily isolated communities.

Start with building resilience

I was starting my role with the Council when the cyclone hit…I wanted to build resilience within my community…that's what I was hoping to achieve for our Māori communities and our easily isolated communities. - Jay

Start by involving rangatahi in planning

Get them to participate in the planning, the long-term plan...It's most important is to get our rangatahi voices heard around the issues. And hopefully, in some instances, maybe they will join committees around planning, where their voices can be really heard. And because they are quite intelligent young people, right? - Max

We also heard rangatahi had invaluable perspectives and should be encouraged to participate in civil defence planning and decision-making committees.

PŪ - TCDC Summary

The key insights for TCDC in PŪ focus on starting with local communities' safety and wellbeing in civil defence, addressing immediate risks over property concerns, and emphasising the needs of vulnerable and isolated communities first.

TCDC acknowledge that Hauraki Māori communities bring valuable knowledge from past weather events, enhancing disaster response capabilities. They also stressed that effective communication and building resilience, involving rangatahi in planning, and educating whānau about building compliance are key.

While TCDC aims to build preparedness in Māori and isolated communities for future civil defence emergencies, understanding why this has not been well achieved to date is important. This understanding is also key to answering the research question of how Hauraki Māori mobilised to support whānau during Cyclone Gabrielle.

To this end, the next section compares the perspectives of both Whānau participants and TCDC participants on what the starting point should be for Hauraki civil defence preparedness.

PŪ – CONTRAST ANALYSIS

The contrast analysis considers the perspectives of Whānau participants alongside those of TCDC participants in chapter PŪ. It is clear that while they share goals in civil defence preparedness for Māori communities, differences exist in their approaches to whānau wellbeing and the role of kaitiaki for their taiao. The analysis begins with a scenario highlighting a key issue that prompted our research.

The analysis also raises the issue of who makes resource allocation decisions and how those decisions are made.

SCENARIO – RESOURCE ALLOCATION DISPARITIES
The stated starting point for TCDC's civil defence strategy are those with the greatest needs first. While TCDC participants acknowledged the concerns of wealthier holiday homeowners, their focus remains on the most vulnerable. However, Whānau participants shared a different experience. They recounted a marae during Cyclone Gabrielle that urgently needed a generator for displaced whānau and essential services. Despite requesting one from TCDC, they were informed that none were available. Yet, earlier that day, social service kaimahi supporting the recovery of whānau observed a helicopter delivering generators to a wealthier, predominantly non-Māori community.

The resource allocation scenario suggests that power and systemic biases may influence emergency resource allocation. The decision to allocate generators to a wealthy community ahead of a marae caring for displaced whānau indicates that TCDC's on-the-ground employees' perspectives were ignored by TCDC senior management and councillors who made decisions about resource allocation.
The decision suggests that wealthy, non-Māori communities with more economic and social capital can influence Council and Civil Defence decision-makers about who gets preferential treatment and how inequities are perpetuated. The scenario also reveals systemic biases against Māori communities, eroding trust and reinforcing perceptions of racial bias and neglect. This is not an isolated incidence; it mirrors broader historical patterns of marginalisation and chronic under-resourcing of Hauraki Māori communities, signposting the need for TCDC and civil defence efforts to start with them.

THE STARTING POINT For Whānau participants, the starting point is whānau, hapū, and iwi identity, which is firmly rooted in whakapapa, intergenerational connections, and the responsibilities tied to their kāinga and whenua. They are the kaitiaki of their whenua and kāinga, emphasising their deep relationship with Papatuanuku and their duty to protect her for future generations.

In contrast, TCDC operates within a governance framework that, while acknowledging Hauraki tangata whenua, primarily prioritises broader development goals and regional planning. This structured, policy-driven approach often overlooks the depth of intergenerational ties and the traditional and environmental knowledge embodied by Māori communities. While TCDC advocates for sustainability, its strategies frequently fail to integrate the wealth of pūrākau and ecological wisdom that Hauraki whānau offer, resulting in a disconnect that weakens effective environmental management.

The engagement between TCDC and Hauraki Māori punctuates their differing worldviews and priorities. Māori focus on preserving and passing traditional knowledge to future generations, while TCDC prioritises immediate logistical concerns and development. Kenney et al. (2015) assert the significant role of Māori in caring for the whenua through community-led disaster management. They document how Ngāi Tahu, a South Island iwi, effectively mobilised cultural knowledge and community networks in response to the Christchurch earthquakes.

This included using traditional ecological knowledge to assess and mitigate risks, as well as developing community resilience through applying tikanga to the values of whakawhanaungatanga, manaakitanga, and kaitiakitanga. Seeing Papatuanuku as a living being that must be protected and nurtured not only helped in immediate disaster response but also in long-term recovery and sustainability efforts. By integrating Māori values, and traditional ecological wisdom into disaster management frameworks, Kenney et al, show that they ensure more effective and culturally appropriate responses to natural hazards, benefiting both Māori and wider communities.

In PŪ, both Whānau and TCDC participants are committed to Hauraki's future preparedness, but their views on tangata whenua wellbeing, kaitiakitanga, and community engagement differ significantly. TCDC's governance framework lacks the depth to engage with Māori intergenerational knowledge and lived experiences. TCDC must engage in a way that respects and incorporates local tangata whenua wisdom for sustainable development, reflecting the specific needs of Hauraki Māori communities.

In the next chapter, titled RĀ – (enlightenment) we present the perspectives of participants focusing on 'what works well' when mobilising support for Hauraki whānau experiencing extreme weather events.

Chapter 3

RĀ: What Works Well

Introduction

In the thematic area of RĀ, meaning enlightenment, the research is illuminated through participants shared lived experiences. This chapter explores insights from Whānau and TCDC narratives about Hauraki Māori mobilisation and what works well in local civil defence efforts, particularly during Cyclone Gabrielle.

RĀ - Whānau Kōrero

This section focuses on the pūrākau of Whānau of how they mobilised to support whānau during Cyclone Gabrielle, and what works well in civil defence preparedness. This includes the strengths, opportunities, and the key factors that made a difference in civil defence preparedness for Whānau.

Mobilising Through COVID Established Networks

Whānau, including tangata whenua services and kaimahi, mobilised to ensure community safety and wellbeing during COVID and again for Cyclones Hale and Gabrielle. These groups used the well-established community networks they developed during COVID-19 to access food and other resources for whānau. Since establishing their coordination groups, the network of Māori communities has been actively working to build community preparedness.

"It started in 2020 with COVID going international"

Hauraki whānau have long advocated for a voice to mitigate risks in their communities. Their lived experience of their community, which includes the intergenerational lived experience of their tīpuna, are an invaluable resource that has been excluded from decision-making locally, regionally, and nationally.

One of the major challenges Māori communities faced before and during Cyclone Gabrielle was the lack of effective support from Civil Defence. Drawing on past experiences of ineffective Civil Defence responses, tangata whenua worked with tangata whenua support services and established their own emergency networks to develop and coordinate safety responses.

> *Okay, so prior to Gabrielle, when did that start? It started in 2020 with COVID going international lockdown and things like that. And so we, created our own response to our own needs at the time, which was the birth of [name of ropu]. And during that process we had some key people who whakapapa to…or live in Hauraki. So, we utilise the networks that our people have from a [name of ropu] space. Those people to link into the different support services, resources that were available to try and get them in and keeping us managing it and keeping it safe. - Rea*

"We all took care of ourselves...people with all the resources couldn't get to where we were"

No matter the situation, whether it is a tangihanga, whānau in need, hui, or extreme weather events, whānau will come together to support each other. Local efforts made during COVID, and Cyclones Hale and Gabrielle helped whānau and communities develop strategies to ensure their safety and protection.

> *We all took care of ourselves because the people with all the resources couldn't get to where we were, but they could get to all of the rich, wealthy, known holiday areas…where all of the rich holiday homes are, but where the impoverished people live, they never came anywhere near us. – Pai*

"We've got eyes and ears on the ground"

Hauraki Māori communities are passionate about their own safety and protection, and that of the environment in which they live. They want their substantial local knowledge and experience of their community groups to drive decisions rather than having poorly informed officials making decisions on their behalf.

> *We've got eyes and ears on the ground. Essentially, we've got gumboots and raincoats on the ground, that can tell you what's going on. The point is, if they had of listened to the locals, they would have been able to do something about it prior to all of that happening. Like, those trees are not in the safe place. And guess what trees fell down. So, you get to a point where do you put your knowledge and information into those that make the decisions and stuff? – Pai*

> *The utmost belief is that we know our people, we know what happens on our whenua before everybody else does. So, we don't need people from external pushing a strategy. A one-size-fits all across everybody. - Rea*

Mobilising During Cyclone Gabrielle

As outlined in the previous chapter, relationships within whānau, hapū, iwi, Māori and the wider communities is a key part of how Hauraki whānau live. These relationships are intergenerational, strengthened by the level of involvement whānau have in their community. Whanaungatanga is expressed through manaakitanga, sharing kai, showing up to help at an event, the care of whānau members, participation, and involvement in whānau, hapū, iwi and community events, information sharing, and advocacy.

"Our whānau just come together, just pulled together"

Kaimahi from tangata whenua social support services have considerable experience and skills in supporting whānau, especially those in vulnerable situations. When Cyclone Gabrielle hit the region, they mobilised with whānau to set up an evacuation centre.

> *Our whanau just come together, just pulled together. Checking on each other, making sure everyone was okay. Clear help. Clear driveways. – Mia & Wii*

> *This is a mini marae [their home] – Toi*

> *Manaaki each other, eh? I mean, we, you know. – Wii & Mia*

"Just making them feel comfortable...warm"

The lived experiences of kaimahi whānau from local social services, in settings such as hui, tangihanga, and other events, combined with their professional whānau support skills, resulted in an evacuation centre at a local kura. The level of manaakitanga in this space was highlighted by Whānau participants. Many kaimahi in tangata whenua organisations, have extensive experience supporting whānau across their cultural, social, and economic wellbeing.

> *Supporting whānau, you know, just making them feel comfortable, make sure they were warm and, had a beautiful place where they were and feeding them, you know, it didn't matter who walked in the door. – Nga & Kae*

The kaimahi had accessed bedding and kai, set up a team to do the cooking and a revolving roster so that someone was always on hand, especially for those arriving in the night.

A room was set aside for pets, an important detail for those whose pets are family members. Extra support was provided for a whānau with a loved one in a wheelchair. An older couple was accommodated in a motel and food was delivered to them by the kai team.

> *So, we went down there. It was just me, my kids, and I took my cats. And they found that it was so amazing. They had this little old audio room that had been cleared out. So, the cats were in there. There was a window that we could see them. I could go in, have cuddles, feed them, they were fine. And they [kaimahi] set up all these different areas. So, there was rooms for families. And then there was rooms for single people. And then in the main hall, we had tables set up and there was the big screen. [Name of kaimahi] had movies and stuff playing, and then we were in the kitchen just cooking. So, some whanau just came down to have a kai because they had no power, they had no access to food. Others came down because they started to get flooding in their houses. – Nga & Kae*

"That's the purpose of the research; it's about knowledge building for ourselves"

Many kaimahi are skilled and trauma-informed professionals who already provide a range of tailored support to meet the specific needs of whānau. They actively advocate for systemic change, ensuring the voices of Hauraki whānau are heard at all levels of government. Kaimahi also recognise and address historical trauma, often experienced as institutional racism, which has created structural and systemic barriers for whānau. They ensure that this trauma is considered in emergency preparedness and planning, areas whereas Civil Defence had overlooked these important factors.

By doing so, kaimahi not only supported individual whānau but also drove broader systemic changes, nurturing a more inclusive and responsive approach to emergency planning and other essential services.

> *Well, that's the purpose of the research; it's about knowledge building for ourselves and to affirm our approaches to solving situations and having to deal with systemic and structural, racism at its best, and how that plays out on the ground. For example, Civil Defence coming in and going to take all our resources, all of that, to give to more deserving people who were in more dangerous situations. They were just up the road. – Pai*

"Quick fix measures are not going to be sustainable"

> *Policies and procedures from a white government…When actually most of our whanau fail, most of them don't meet the criteria of whatever that social development or whatever that wrap around service is…Yeah. Because they're doing quick fix measures that are not going to be sustainable. Nothing is sustainable when you're living like that. And then you have to deal with the elements, violence, no money, struggling to feed your kids. It's prevalent in rural places. – Tia*

Whānau participants noted how this research maintains what works well for them, as it documents and validates their efforts to address systemic challenges for whānau. The research also showed how those challenges manifest in unfair resource distribution and poorly designed government policies that disproportionately impact rural Māori communities.

> *"We do our own internal surveys, we scan the kāinga to identify how many people in your whare"*

Whānau participants noted the many ways local social services are supporting Māori communities to enhance their resilience and preparedness, as exemplified by the following initiative. In one community, one of the first tasks undertaken was developing a community profile – a scan of the kāinga, which included gathering information such as the number of people in each whare, their ages, and health issues.

Emergency plans with whānau have been developed. For example, if there is no power, what is the back up? What's their second back up? If there is a need to evacuate, do they need physical support, and do they give permission to share their information with support services.

> *One of the things that we started with [name of ropu], we continued it through the weather events, is we do our own internal surveys where we scan the kāinga to identify, how many people in your whare, ages, in the event there's no power, what's your next backup? What's your second backup? How? Preference to contact; health issues in the event, even around information, consent to share information or not, even in the situation, if there's evacuations needed, do you need physical support? All those sorts of things. – Rea*

"They do things like making sure they've got the basics"

The large number of weather events in Hauraki over the past few years, estimated to be at least 10, has wrought considerable damage to the homes and whenua of many whānau and the greater Hauraki landscape. While whānau have faced many challenges during and post the weather events, there has also been considerable learnings about preparedness strategies for mitigating the risks.

> *So, they do things like making sure that they've got the basics, like plenty of drinking water and water to flush the toilet if you don't have a long drop. That you have a gas bottle, if you don't have a generator, you have a gas bottle, you have torches, phones and a way to charge them and kai, as best as you can. – Rea*

Support for whānau living from week to week because of limited financial resources was raised as an issue to be addressed within the community support strategies.

Food security when slips had closed the road was also raised as an issue, especially for the smaller Māori communities, who did not have a supermarket. To address this, whānau within these isolated communities scaled up their community gardening initiatives to support themselves.

> *So, we're trying to encourage that to be a whanau thing rather than being reliant on a community kāinga thing. But we're still creating the kāinga thing just in case. And so next to the fire brigade, whenua has been given towards that. Going to put in some gardens and collectively everybody will be a part of looking after it, grow it. And then we were given a whole lot of fruit trees. – Rea*

Post-Cyclone Gabrielle: What Made a Difference

Funding Partnerships

Through their advocacy, relationships, and networking built by local tangata whenua services, resources were secured for whānau and Māori communities. Partnerships with Te Puni Kōkiri and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (MHUD) resulted in funding for emergency equipment, home repairs, and temporary transitional housing for whānau whose homes were severely damaged.

These emergency management resources, obtained after Cyclone Gabrielle, were bottom-line for local Māori communities to manage their own emergency responses.

> *So, through [name of organisation] advocating for access to resources. I mean, we didn't just work at a local level. We advocated at a local level, a regional level, and a national level. And we used our contacts and our networks nationally, particularly around housing, because of what was happening for our people in housing during the flood. – Pai*

> *Obviously, with all the funding that was made available from the government, we've been able to access a lot of those things. And the reason for doing that is to be able to build upon the resilience that already exists within our kāinga, from our own perspective. And so, we've been able to gain other resources, like the shipping containers, which we store all our stuff for [name of ropu], for crisis situations into there. So that's the kai, medical equipment, Starlink. – Rea*

"That's our ingenuity saying, hey, this is what we need"

With additional emergency management funding, each community identified their own priorities. Common items included industrial generators, Starlink internet connections, containers, and satellite phones. The industrial generators were set up at the marae, and community members undertook emergency management training.

So we've been able to get industrial generators for each of those communities so that when the power goes off, we don't have to watch a bloody industrial generator go across [fly] over to the well-to-do areas to keep all of their power going. We could then keep the power going through the marae. So, we've lobbied for all of those and we haven't stopped and we've been successful in getting that. We've been able to secure housing to a partnership arrangement with Ministry Housing and Urban Development, TPK, and a private partnership with [name of building company]. So, all of those things. But that's our ingenuity saying, hey, this is what we need. – Pai

And that generator will run the whole of the kitchens on gas, but everything else that requires electricity, the whole marae will operate with that, including all the heating and things like that. So, if people. If things got really severe, that people who live in the kāinga and needed to get out, then you've got a big facility that can cater for all those things. - Rea

"Some of the learnings for them, is that they don't have all the answers"

Whānau participants commented on some of the shifts they had observed in the Civil Defence approach after Cyclone Gabrielle. They attributed this subtle shift to their ongoing advocacy during all the weather events before and after Gabrielle. One notable change was being added to the key contact list for the Council.

One kaimahi pointed out the importance of Civil Defence being open to having "real relationships" with Māori communities and acknowledging that they do not have all the answers. The importance of collaborating with these communities and responding to their stated needs rather than what Civil Defence thought they needed, was highlighted.

So, it's worked better since. And I think some of the learnings for them there is that they recognise that they don't have all the answers. They have to have real relationships with people to be able to respond appropriately. – Pai

So, we've been more vocal about that…I mean, there's always room for improvement, but they've responded in better ways. What we need, not just what we want. There's no use sending us all that when we don't need it. Yeah, go to somebody else. – Rea

It was acknowledged that communication pathways with Māori communities had improved post-Gabrielle. Providing resources requested by the community ensured that they received what they needed, not what they did not need.

RĀ - Whānau Summary

From the pūrākau of Whānau participants, we learned about several key factors that contribute to effective disaster preparedness and mobilisation. Whānau emphasised the importance of community networks established during the COVID-19 pandemic, which had been instrumental in securing essential resources like kai during subsequent crises, including Cyclones Hale and Gabrielle.

Participants pointed out the success of community-led responses that arose from needs identified during COVID. This initiative displays the ingenuity, autonomy and situational wisdom of Whānau in addressing their own challenges. A strong culture of collective support was also noted, with Whānau coming together in times of need for tangihanga, community support, or extreme weather events, demonstrating a deep commitment to manaaki one another.

Local knowledge and advocacy were compelling themes, with Hauraki Whānau stressing the importance of their perspectives in civil defence decision-making processes. They advocated for the inclusion of local insights over those of external officials who often lacked cultural and contextual understanding. Proactive safety measures were another key point, with Whānau setting up evacuation centres and quickly mobilising resources, utilising the skills of kaimahi to assist vulnerable whānau, and whānau made vulnerable, during emergencies like Cyclone Gabrielle.

Despite facing resource gaps and a lack of civil defence support, Whānau participants expressed how they relied on their own networks and resources to address the gaps, showcasing their resilience and resourcefulness. The intergenerational knowledge and lived experiences of Whānau were presented as key in effective mobilisation, highlighting the value of this rich understanding of their community and environment.

These insights in RĀ from Whānau participants revealed how they have navigated crises through established networks, local knowledge, and a strong community spirit. Now, we turn to the insights shared by TCDC participants on 'what works well' in mobilising civil defence support for whānau in need.

RĀ – TCDC Insights

In terms of 'what works well,' key insights from TCDC participants in the thematic area of RĀ highlights the importance of, supporting local communities, promoting community-driven initiatives, and building resilience in response and recovery efforts. This includes utilising resources such as hubs, kai packs, and community gardens.

Supporting Local Communities

We learned from TCDC participants that the civil defence aims to support local communities to take charge of their own safety and preparedness. This happens through, getting people to take self-responsibility, growing community engagement, and by way of the valuable efforts of (local living) Māori colleagues.

We noted a view that whānau reliance on local authorities and civil defence is not sustainable, and there is a need for them to take self-responsibility for their own emergency preparedness, including personal accountability for their own lives and decisions.

Forcing self-responsibility

We have to remove some of the reliance on us [Council] because we are such a small portion of humans that need to help everybody, and civil defence is not us, it is everybody. We have to push back and force people to take some self-responsibility. You have to be responsible for your own life. You have to be responsible for decisions you make. - Lou

We also heard, instead of forced compliance, supporting existing community initiatives would be more beneficial and respectful of Māori autonomy whilst addressing real needs during crises.

Getting buy-in

Once I get the community to drive these things, that's when the rest of the community comes in. If it's me, us [Council], standing there, lonesome, it's really difficult to get the buy-in. - Lou

We heard of a collaborative approach, where whānau were engaged in civil defence response and recovery initiatives, leading to greater participation and support from the wider community. Additionally, effective relationships and communication are more important for collaboration during emergencies than formal written plans.

Helping each other

I don't care if you have a plan. It's just words on paper. Who's going to pull that out in an event? All I care about is building relationships. That's it. If I know who you are, you know who I am, and if there's communication in the event, we can help each other. – Lou

Established relationships

The learnings were, how important it was to have the kai pre-deployed, and how valuable it was to have our communication networks, and those established relationships. - Max

We heard the importance of having resources ready in advance, and the value of effective communication networks and relationships for effective emergency response. We also heard of TCDC securing funding to support local communities, as well as the need for community leaders to effectively establish response groups in their communities.

Resourcing communities

To be honest, when we started the process, people would say, "oh, is there any funding for a generator?" And I'd go, "well no, we've got no money". But a couple of the groups I'd helped with funding applications to a pub charity. So that has been such a blessing for me that we're able to finally resource up these amazing groups of people. There are some areas we'd love to have a community response group, but there's no natural leader. You need a champion in that community. – Max

We heard about the important roles Māori TCDC personnel play in communicating between TCDC and Māori communities when those communities distrust the Council and authorities.

Instrumental Māori colleagues

Further north, [Jay]. She actually lives there. So, she was instrumental in helping us communicate our message, and creating calm, and helping the community get out and trying to convince people that, just, you can come back…I believe, like every community, there's division within the community. There's also distrust with Council and authority. There is fear. – Lou

Community-Driven Initiatives

We learned from TCDC participants that relationships within communities improved after Cyclone Gabrielle due to recovery plans, collaboration, and whānau getting to know one another.

Better relationships post-Cyclone Gabrielle

And Cyclone Gabrielle, it only made those relationships better because of our recovery plan and how we're working more and more with them. - Max

The extreme weather events, rather than have anything negative to say, it brought us together. There are people in this community we didn't even know were there. And a whanau-ship has grown from that. So, there was positive stories coming out of those places and spaces. – Jay

TCDC participants noted the effectiveness of collaboration among various agencies and community groups, which can strengthen responses to extreme weather events. This also maintains the importance of community input in deciding on civil defence response and resilience resources.

Increased collaboration

[Name of person] from [name of tangata whenua service] did an amazing job pulling us all together [during Cyclone Gabrielle] …And when [name] got the funding and we were able to buy some emergency, recovery or resilience resources, I then texted out to whānau, 'what do you think we should get? What do we need here?' – Jay

Resourcing whare

And of course, [name of tangata whenua service] and the trucking in of the cabins has been a reason for whānau to celebrate being in those communities. Somebody cares enough about us to actually help us put a roof over our heads. – Jay

We heard that the delivery of cabins by a tangata whenua social service to vulnerable whānau was significant for them and showed those whānau they were valued and supported.

Resourcing Resilience

We noted TCDC's focus on building community resilience, with efforts made to prepare communities for significant future weather events. Building resilience included the provision of essential resources that help communities have the tools they need during civil defence emergencies.

Resilience Hubs

TCDC participants spoke about community resilience hubs across Hauraki being either marae or fire stations designed to support the ability of communities to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies and disasters. These resilience hubs emerged post-Cyclone Gabrielle as spaces for community engagement, resource distribution, and support for isolated whānau and communities during crises.

We heard that partnering with iwi and Māori communities is key to building emergency and capability resilience.

Partnering with Māori

That, I think, is one of the key things in terms of resilience, is partnership with existing community groups. When I say community groups, there's also our partnership with marae, iwi Māori communities, which I think is invaluable because I just see them as a cornerstone for response in future events because you've already got the community, manaakitanga. And looking after people is just something those communities do. So, let's do it in partnership with all. - Max

Resource Distribution

So subsequent to Cyclone Gabrielle, we have applied for and received and scavenged as many funds as we could to resource those community resilience hubs. In all, at the moment, we've got 22 resourced, and there's another 11. So, at the end of it, there'll be 35 resourced hubs. - Max

Hubs for Recovery

Community Resilience Hubs have come out of Cyclone Gabrielle's response and recovery. For Cyclone Gabrielle, we'd already had the Auckland anniversary event, and we know our roads get compromised easy. - Max

Whare with Utilities

We purchased two water tanks, 2x 25 thousand litre water tanks…We've been trucking in big cabins, hooking them up to the water, sewerage, and decking them. And that came out of Cyclone Gabrielle. - Jay

Emergency Supplies

These kits are tailored to the specific needs of the community. In there, [container] is the Starlink, generators, a gas bottle, shelving, just a small gas bottle. Yeah, and some blankets. And so, we've just put all our resilience type stuff in that container. - Jay

We heard that emergency kits tailored to community needs and the Council's initiative to supply these kits were appreciated.

Kits enhance resilience

That's definitely, a big tick for the Council is putting those resilience kits into these communities, you know, because although they asked us what we wanted, the community told Council what they wanted, is Council funded. - Jay

Kai Packs

TCDC participants talked about kai packs that support community resilience and self-sufficiency. They are a critical resource for ensuring food security in communities made vulnerable, during emergencies and disasters.

We heard, pre-deploying kai packs to marae before Cyclone Gabrielle was an effective initiative that provided high priority support when roads were closed and isolated communities.

Pre-Deployed Kai Packs

So, pre-Cyclone Gabrielle, we pre-deployed kai packs into the marae's…That was a good initiative, and I think it really saved a lot of grief for a lot of people, the fact that that was already there. So, when the roads closed, we already have the kai packs in place. But coming out of that, and then during the event, of course the marae's activated. - Max

We heard that while some isolated communities received army ration food packs, most communities felt that food supply was not a major issue for them.

Long-Life Ration Food Packs

So, some communities, where there's no store, there's no other source of food, have got the buckets of 25-year long life army ration food packs, and they've got a supply of those. Most communities say, oh no, we probably don't need that. Kai wasn't a real big issue for our community. - Max

We heard that the initiative to create a community garden and freezer was intended to ensure a consistent year-round food supply for whānau.

Kai All Year Round

There's another initiative going off that, which is the community garden…We're resourcing and setting up a community garden and a freezer. And the kai is more all year round and can be used for their people. – Max

Community Gardens

We learned from participants that community gardens are not just about growing food security but also growing a sense of community. They create opportunities for people to come together and build relationships, even among whānau who may not have talked to one another for a long time.

Whānau Cultivating Food Forests

I'm working on a community garden project with some of our communities; we're doing a food forest…We didn't want to go big to start with, so we're just gonna work with three communities… and then spread some funding throughout the rest of the district with growing fruit trees. – Jay

We heard that food security projects will gradually expand to grow fruit trees and the harvest will be shared with other whānau across the district.

Gardens Bring Whānau Together

The traditional community garden, where it's one place and everybody comes… So there's five whanau, doing seven beds, and they're each doing a crop. All the crops are done and they share it out to the whānau. They're doing the traditional kind of community garden where everybody will come in and, it's just so cool that we're similar in the demographics, but we have different needs. - Jay

We heard that community gardens help whānau promote community, resource sharing, and supports the community's resilience to civil defence emergencies.

Gardens Bring Council Together with Community

> *I said to my cousin the night before, hey, they're just going to do a little video. And she was like, I'm not going to do a video. And I was like, oh, do it for me…She goes, oh all right. They come down and the guy goes, oh, can I just video you? She goes, nah just take a photo. Take a video of my garden. And we left. And, you know, everybody was all good and nice. – Jay*

We heard of the importance of community identity and meaningful collaboration between TCDC personnel and whānau Māori.

Growing the Next Generation

> *I don't want it to be onerous on our next generations. You know, it will be set up already… Council will help fund the startup of that and this year's crop, but then not next year's. So then, you know, you're going to have to either raise seeds or seedlings or, if you don't do that, you're going to have to then buy some more soil. – Jay*

We heard the need for sustainable community gardening practices that prepare future generations to manage resources, food security, and the community's ability to respond to civil defence emergencies

RĀ - TCDC Summary

In terms of 'what works well' in civil defence for the TCDC participants, they asserted the importance of whānau self-responsibility. They stressed that whānau must take personal accountability for their emergency preparedness and reduce reliance on local authorities. Although the concept of forcing self-responsibility in emergency preparedness is problematic, and the aim might be to empower whānau, nonetheless, it risks deepening inequalities and ignoring systemic barriers faced by resource-poor communities.

Establishing proactive networks, including pre-deployed resources and strong communication channels, allowed for an effective emergency response. However, this perspective did not account for the persistent disadvantages impacting whānau, which limit their access to resources and support, making it "near impossible" for them to achieve self-sufficiency and resilience in emergencies.

We noted a view that 'natural' leaders who are well-connected with their communities are important when forming response groups and securing funding to support these initiatives is essential. Although it raises questions about who determines who is a natural leader, if you are not connected to that community, then how would you know? Also, Māori personnel in TCDC play a key role in effectively communicating with their communities, especially in contexts where there is distrust towards authorities. Increased collaboration among agencies and community groups has improved emergency responses and resource allocation, developing better relationships within the community post-Cyclone Gabrielle and creating a stronger sense of whānau.

We also heard that community resilience hubs, established after Cyclone Gabrielle, serve as focal points for support and resource distribution. Resilience kits tailored to community needs enhance preparedness and strengthen relationships among whānau. Pre-deployed kai packs to marae ensure food security during emergencies. Additionally, community gardens not only promote food security but also contribute to relationship and resilience building. We also noted a recognised need for sustainable gardening practices to prepare future generations for effective resource management and emergency response.

This section summarises the key insights shared by TCDC participants on effective local civil defence efforts. The next section will compare these insights with those from Whānau participants to better understand their differing or contradicting perspectives and experiences. This comparison aims to inform and improve civil defence strategies across Hauraki.

RĀ – COMPARATIVE DISCUSSION

When comparing the experiences and perspectives of Whānau participants and TCDC participants shared in RĀ, we can identify what works well in local civil defence efforts, particularly in resilience and preparedness for natural disasters. This comparison aims to inform and enhance civil defence strategies across Hauraki.

Our findings in RĀ are supported by Yumagulova's et al. (2021) research, which asserts the critical role of disaster volunteering in Indigenous communities that possess invaluable knowledge of extreme weather preparedness. As highlighted in chapter PŪ, Māori communities place a strong emphasis on drawing from local environmental knowledge and tīpuna wisdom, which they see as crucial for making effective decisions about their safety and wellbeing. Whānau believe their lived experiences provide invaluable mātauranga often overlooked by TCDC, which relies on external data and generalised approaches that fail to capture the unique lived realities of Hauraki whānau Māori.

While Whānau and Māori communities demonstrate their ability to quickly mobilise in the disaster space, taking active steps like creating community profiles, developing emergency plans, and establishing community gardens to secure food—they also know well the significant barriers they face, such as limited financial resources, especially in isolated villages. During Cyclone Gabrielle, Hauraki was not the only rohe that moved rapidly to support whanau, as documented by Lakhina et al. (2023). Many other tangata whenua social services around Aotearoa, demonstrated their ability to mobilise resources and volunteers, a testament to the effectiveness of grassroots organisations in the disaster space. This stands in contrast to TCDC, whose broader strategies might cover the region but often miss the mark when it comes to the specific and nuanced needs of smaller, mainly Māori communities.

The insights in RĀ highlight two distinct yet interconnected approaches to community resilience and recovery: the culturally rich knowledge and practices of Māori communities and TCDC's broader and less tailored strategies. Both perspectives spotlight the need for greater collaboration and understanding to develop effective, culturally relevant frameworks for support and disaster preparedness in Hauraki communities. Lambert and Scott (2019) advocate for collaborative disaster management strategies that include Indigenous perspectives, reinforcing our call to integrate Hauraki Māori knowledge systems into official strategies. This collaborative approach would not only address the specific needs of Hauraki Māori communities but also contribute to the overall effectiveness of disaster management in Aotearoa-New Zealand.

In this chapter, Whānau participants and TCDC participants identified what works in mobilising to support whānau and in civil defence efforts. Next, in Chapter KA, they share their experiences and perspectives on what does not work well.

Chapter 4

KA: What Does Not Work Well

Introduction

The thematic area of KA invites us to stand in the present moment, looking back to our tīpuna and forward to our mokopuna. In this chapter, the focus for our participants is on identifying what has not worked well when mobilising support for whānau in need, and how this understanding can guide our current civil defence actions and future decisions.

KA – Whānau Kōrero

This section of KA presents pūrākau from Whānau participants about 'what did not work well' in local civil defence management, including barriers, issues, gaps, needs, and opportunities that arose from Cyclone Gabrielle and previous weather events.

Media Release

To set the context, this section begins with excerpts from a media release from the 18th of February 2023, by Te Ao Māori news. The media release "Isolated Māori communities at risk of being forgotten in cyclone response" provides an overview, a contextual scene setter, for the challenges faced by whānau in Hauraki. This media release was informed by Hauraki tangata whenua services leadership.

Excerpt

> *The aftermath of Cyclone Gabrielle has left many rural communities in a dire situation, with a significant number of whānau Māori struggling to find safe and secure shelter in the wake of destroyed homes, says Māori housing advocate, Te Matapihi.*
>
> *"Māori housing and social service providers have told the group that Māori communities in rural areas severely affected by Cyclone Gabrielle are being left without adequate resources to meet their basic needs, Te Matapihi said in a statement Friday evening." ["Isolated Māori communities at risk of being forgotten in cyclone ..."]*
>
> *Communities throughout Te Tai Tokerau, Harataunga, Hauraki and beyond are reporting devastation.*
>
> *Denise Messiter, from Manaaki he Kainga o Taramainuku, a network of rural Māori communities on the Coromandel Peninsula, said the town remains completely cut off from Te Rerenga and some whānau have been without power for ten days.*
>
> *"Right now, there is no power, minimal road access, and no internet, with little to no communication from authorities regarding the situation," Messiter said in the statement.*
>
> *"We've got landslides, erosion and trees down on power poles. We've got kāinga that have been without power for ten days, and we can't get them kai or check in on their wellbeing.*
>
> *"We need to know that our rural Māori communities in all the areas impacted are at the forefront of the response because we know from long experience that they will bear the brunt of it now and when the State of Emergency is over."*
>
> *Tammy Dehar, the CEO of Te Korowai Hauora ō Hauraki, said that many Iwi, Māori organisations, and Māori community groups from within rural communities have a strong, well-tested approach and that the funding and emergency response plans should take this expertise into account, the Te Matapihi statement said.*
>
> *"We know how to look after each other; the support relationships are already here. But they need the funding to match the work they're doing."*
>
> *"These rural Māori community groups, and the networks they belong to, need to be recognised for their commitment, impact and agility in supporting the wellbeing of their people and their kāinga during natural disasters. Such as the demonstrated response to Cyclone Gabrielle and prior. Connectedness to the people, the iwi, the whenua, the rivers, moana and marae brings invaluable expertise to emergency response decision-making of the now and future."*
>
> *In Harataunga, communications remain cut off and power is intermittent.*
>
> (Te Ao Māori News, 2023, February 18)

As pointed out earlier, whānau were dealing with blocked roads due to landslides as well as loss of power. Many rural and rurally isolated communities had been without power for at least 10 days. Most of the people in these isolated communities were whānau Māori.

Tangata whenua services and groups were concerned that there was little ability to check on the wellbeing of these communities or to get necessary food, essential medications, and life-saving equipment to them. The dire situation of these communities was invisible to those coordinating the emergency response for the region.

These communities were left to find their own emergency responses and as shown above, withstood the worst of these catastrophic weather events that had happened before Cyclone Hale and Cyclone Gabrielle. Whānau experiences are provided next.

Māori Communities Left to Fend for Themselves

"It began because they did nothing"

Frustrated with the lack of support from the civil defence and left to deal with the issues and challenges from the weather events over the past year culminating in the arrival of Cyclone Gabrielle, whānau and tangata whenua services mobilised to develop their own emergency responses and support initiatives.

> *It began because they did nothing. I mean, seriously, absolutely nothing. We did our own emergency management planning. - Pai*

Mobilisation happened quickly, especially in the isolated communities where they had already set up coordination groups to support their communities during COVID-19. With the support of the tangata whenua services, these isolated communities reinstated their coordination groups.

> *So, there were things that were put in place and then when the Gabrielle was coming, -it was in about 2022, we sort of didn't close off [name of group], but it sort of went left while we all carried on with everything else within our lives. Because that was established when we knew Cyclone Gabrielle was coming, we just woke it up and we had the resources that we had there so we could get things in place quickly. - Rea*

"We had to coordinate our own safety responses"

Whānau and tangata whenua services came together to plan and coordinate their own safety responses. One of the tangata whenua services took on the coordination role across the network of communities in the isolated parts of the region, which included sourcing kai and other necessary items, and emergency equipment.

In one small village, two coordination centres were needed as the North end was cut off from the South when the river flooded, which was made worse if the tide was in. This road was also the main road in and out of the area.

Some of the concerns, particularly at the time of Cyclone Gabrielle, included whānau who needed to dialyse and others needing vital medication. Also of grave concern was a community that had been cut off for 10 days because of a two-to-three-kilometre slip. Whānau had been hiking across the slip with supplies when contact with a community member was finally made.

> *Oh, it's serious. And it was us, they organised us in the role of [name of organisation], we took a coordinating role for what we call the [name of group]. We had to coordinate our own safety responses. So, we did it our way, we got food to people, we got emergency equipment and stuff for people. Because Council, apparently, couldn't do it. It wasn't safe. - Pai*

> *The river will rise and then it'll go across the roads. So across the road, predominantly on the north side of [name of community] gets cut first and on the state highway. - Rea*

> *We even helped stand up emergency, what they call coordinating centres in those areas. And [name of community] had two, one at the marae, one at the fire station. - Pai*

Lack of Emergency Resources and Equipment

Emergency resources and equipment for these communities were a priority. Building relationships with key stakeholders, including civil defence groups, local, regional, and national was considered key to securing support for emergency equipment and resources.

A request for emergency equipment and supplies for the Māori community network was made two or three years before Cyclone Gabrielle, prompted by the lessons learned from implementing safety and wellbeing initiatives during COVID-19. There was no response to this request.

> *They actually had that information, and we had provided it to them over a range of things, and some of that came out of COVID. So, we did all of that. They still didn't do it. Came to Cyclone Hale, and Gabrielle, they said, well, what do you need? Of course, everyone asked you the question. I said, "we sent you a list three years ago, here's the thing." Oh, yes. Well, we've been trying to organise to do that. I said, "so you've been organising to get us these things for three years...and we've just ordered them, and it's taken us a week? - Pai*

Tangata Whenua Kaimahi Evacuation Centre

In one of the main centres, an evacuation centre (the centre) was set up by Whānau participants for those having to leave their homes due to flooding. This was because there was nothing provided by civil defence. Whānau participants were also concerned about those living in tents and makeshift shelter by the "mangroves" and others in the area in similar situations needing accommodation.

> *So, I think where we kind of come in was when we pretty well took over the [name of local school] and had that as a civil defence. There was beds available there. We had the kitchen up and running. We were able to source extra bedding. When I say bedding, I mean literally just mattresses and some pillows from the high school. Which were reluctant, I have to say, to let us borrow because the army was there. - Lee*

> *For me, it was just get on and do it, you know, because that's what I usually do. And, yeah, if you sit back and think about it, you don't do it. Hey, you know, just go and do it! And also, because [name of area] had set up the evacuation centre there, it was going and getting food and bring it back and then, you know, making sure people were okay once they got there. And did they need this? Did they need that? – Kip (focus group)*

Lack of Support for Vulnerable Communities

"It hasn't got any better, it got harder"

For Whānau participants, the fact that the needs of their communities were invisible in the civil defence decision making processes, showed how poorly informed they were about the challenges and issues Hauraki Māori communities face and the burden of risk they carry.

Many whānau faced severe housing poverty which was compounded by various environmental risks such as flooding, landslides, and falling trees that threatened both their lives and homes. Additionally, roadblocks often obstructed their ability to commute to work, exacerbating financial hardships. These challenges added to the already significant issues they were dealing with. Some whānau were also dealing with significant health and well-being issues.

> *Yeah, in one place there's a cow shed that's being made into a whare. There are several garages that have been made into whare. So, when it's extreme weather events, they're the people that are hurt the most. And my experience with having dealt with housing for many years is from, you know, I worked for Housing New Zealand or Kainga Ora. I worked for them for a long time, and I worked for [name of organisation]. And now here, what I've seen through the course of the years is that it just didn't get any better. It hasn't got any better, it got harder. - Tia*

> *We had to clear our driveway, things like that. But [name of person] couldn't, he had a job during that time, he couldn't get to it. We just couldn't get to it because their roads were closed for weeks. So that put us back in terms of our income loss. – Mia & Wii*

> *So, then dad got sick and then he passed away. And then it was many years after that. I understand tragedy like, we had COVID. And then we had a fire that burnt our whanau homestead. Took everything, and then a few years later we had Cyclone Gabrielle. So, the dominant forces of nature are so unpredictable, they determine our future. - Hue*

> *He fixed up the fireplace because it was during winter. And guess what? She just had a heart attack. - Toi*

> *Washing in the creek, which is beautiful, but not so much when it's winter, and you just, you 'know. – Hue*

According to kaimahi, for those already struggling with poverty including housing poverty, severe weather events just made life tougher and the challenges lasted longer.

"At a time like this everyone is deserving"

Continuing with the challenges for whānau and other low socio-economic communities, Whānau participants raised concerns about the treatment of people at their most vulnerable - living in extreme housing poverty, including those rough sleeping in tents and makeshift shelters.

When these vulnerable people presented at the civil defence drop-in centre, they were not welcomed.

> *I think these are basic human 'fucking' rights. You know, roof over your head, food in your belly, warm water, power, you know. Just blows my mind how some humans treat other humans. - Lee*

> *Our guys, they fed back to me when they went to the civic centre because all of the homeless ones who wherever they are in this community. The mangroves. Yeah, they all got washed out of their homes, you know, so they came to the civic centre and the council people who were there, didn't want to have a bar of them. - Rua*

> *These are the things that we need to capture in order to challenge that, at a time like this, everybody is deserving. – Lee*

TCDC's neglect of those people highlighted humanity's profound failure and the urgent need for change.

Alleviating Stress and Anxiety for Communities

Whānau participants stressed the importance of being proactive and reaching out to people to see if they needed help, especially food and water, help lifting furniture, and other safety and protection actions.

Given Māori communities across the region had no or little contact with civil defence, again it was left to Whānau participants to reach out to people to provide support. A kaimahi experienced in emergency events pointed out that some people will not ask for help, even in critical times such as rising water.

> *Usually the lower social people that a lot of people don't know how to ask for things. Because they are shy and the older people, they seem to, they seem to sit back and wait for somebody to do something rather than ask. Because I don't want to be a nuisance, moko and all that sort of thing. - Kip (focus group)*

> *But you're just alone and in shock. Yeah, you just don't know what's going to happen to you. And a lot of the elderly, they've got animals and so they just won't leave their homes if they've got animals, and so. - Rua (focus group)*

> *And, like, you're going around and you're saying, do you want me to lift your furniture up? And, you know, and. Because the water's coming up around their houses and that. So, yeah, we did have a few people that were going around and helping lift up washing machines and they shared other stuff and that freezes. A lot of freezers got ruined in that. - Kip (focus group)*

Tangata whenua service strategies and approaches for alleviating stress and anxiety was fundamental to the support for people and communities living in low socio-economic circumstances.

What Got in the Way - Barriers and Issues

"Did they ask us what we thought might work, no!"

Whānau participants have consistently prioritised the needs and challenges of whānau across Hauraki by ensuring these are communicated to local, regional, and national government civil defence decision-making forums. Whānau and kaimahi wanted to be able to represent the needs of their communities – to have a voice at the decision-making table.

Kaimahi expressed concerns about being excluded from decision-making fora. Despite their constant advocacy, they were also excluded from post-Gabrielle review meetings.

> *So, through [name of organisation] advocating for access to resources. I mean, we advocated at a local level, a regional level, and a national level. And we used our contacts and our networks nationally, particularly around housing, because of what was happening for our people in housing during the flood and stuff like that. – Pai*

"Their decisions are out of real-time sync with what's occurring in communities"

> *Two or three months down the track, they have all of these meetings. They've already made some plans. Hello? Did they talk to us? No. Did they ask us what we thought might work? Even after we said, where are we in this picture? You're coming at it the wrong way. You're still looking at it as if people in Wellington know how to make decisions, but their decisions are out of real-time sync with what's occurring in communities. - Pai*

Concern was also raised about local and regional civil defence groups still looking to Wellington for decisions. A kaimahi believed that the decision-making process was operating the wrong way. Instead of a top-down approach, they wanted to see communities informing local, regional, and national emergency management groups and agencies.

In addition, there was concern that civil defence groups were making decisions about what resources to provide and when, without adequately considering the needs of Hauraki communities, particularly those in isolated areas. As a result, there was a mismatch between when resources were needed and when they were delivered, with some crisis response supplies arriving as late as a month after the emergency had passed.

> *Those decisions that you're talking about, the resources that you're talking about, need to be available in each of those communities for those communities to make the decision. Those communities can be responsible, whether you like it or not, for their own welfare and wellbeing, which they are. And they have been so far. - Pai*

"And power still picking and choosing who gets what"

Whānau also talked about the civil defence believing that they "know" what is needed across the region rather than giving communities a voice to inform them of the realities on the ground.

An extreme example of this was when civil defence showed up at the evacuation centre set up by Whānau participants to commandeer the food and other resources they had obtained themselves to give to other people, who the civil defence deemed to be more worthy.

> *And power still picking and choosing who gets what. That's it. Who deserves. – Lee*

"It reeks of 21st century well-tuned institutional racism"

The lack of support from civil defence for Māori communities, particularly the isolated communities, was a common theme for many Whānau participants. The invisibility of Māori communities was because of the misperception that Māori as Te Tiriti o Waitangi partners are in a privileged position and have the resources to fend for themselves.

> *So, this pervasive view that we're [Māori] privileged and this ongoing myth that gets perpetuated by people in government… We've got a treaty, so we're privileged. A really warped view.– Pai*

> *We provided the food. We used our own networks to get food down there, so then it could be staffed. We used our own staff, community resources, the school pitched in, everybody pitched in. And then civil defence arrives and it's going to take all of the equipment to give to other people. It just it reeks of 21st century, well-tuned, well-willed institutional racism. - Pai*

"He talks about the persistent disadvantage"

A kaimahi raised the connection between the lack of responsiveness by local and central government decision-makers and people living in persistent disadvantage, as experienced by Hauraki Māori communities. One of the key concerns for this person is that government agencies, local, regional, and national, do not understand that their poorly informed decision-making contributes to perpetuating persistent disadvantage.

As this kaimahi pointed out, this is a key finding of the Productivity Commission in their Inquiry report 'A fair chance for all: Breaking the cycle of persistent disadvantage (2023).'

> *How did that happen?...I'm not suggesting whether it's people in the bureaucracy managing the decision-making processes or processing the decisions that are actually the holder. But when I look at the report from the Productivity Commission, that was released last year, he talks about the persistent disadvantage that our people and other marginalised communities experience. He's attributed part of the persistent disadvantage being perpetuated by people in local government and national government administration. - Pai*

Opportunities

Whānau participants provided a range of suggestions for improving the approach to Māori and other vulnerable communities.

"We were proactive in putting our whakaaro across"

According to a kaimahi, in previous times, the community ran the civil defence. That is, different community organisations all contributed to coordinating parts of the emergency management process.

While it is acknowledged that this situation was quite a few years ago, it spotlights the valuable underutilised resources in the region. Given that the civil defence struggled to meet the needs of vulnerable and isolated Māori communities, Whānau participants pointed out the importance of a more community-led approach.

The premise of this approach is that local communities, utilising the strengths of whānau in their communities, are provided with the resources to develop and implement local responses. This approach was advocated for strongly by Whānau participants.

And so, we utilise the networks that our people have from a [name of group] space, utilising those people to link into the different support services, resources that were available to try and get them in, and keeping us managing it and keeping it safe. So, during that time, a lot of those contacts were probably utilised more during that time and strengthened. So, when we get to Gabrielle, we knew different people, but we were proactive in putting our whakaaro across. - Rea

"We need to be prepared because it could happen tomorrow"

Kaimahi stressed the importance of increased training for emergency preparedness. When the TCDC initially took over civil defence coordination, their workers were trained, but many of these trained individuals have since left. This has led to a less experienced civil defence team, highlighting the critical need for ongoing preparedness training, including running emergency management scenarios.

We need to be prepared because it could happen tomorrow. See, the last floods and things that we had here before were nearly 20 years ago. The TCDC had trained when they took over, they trained all their workers into what to do. And over those 20 years, all those workers have left and gone all that training was out the door. And when we said something, they'd say, oh, it's not in the manual, you know, it's not in the manual. - Rua (focus group)

Other kaimahi provided an example foregrounding the need for better planning and practice of emergency procedures. One kaimahi noted that during an emergency, sandbags were stored in one location while the sand was on the other side of town, wasting valuable time. Another mentioned that the gates were locked when they needed to access the sandbags. In response, whānau participants stepped up to support the community. They filled sandbags for the elderly and disabled, and one service used their van to deliver the filled sandbags to whānau without transportation.

Yeah. So I think we spent an afternoon at the sandpile with many sandbags just filling. And we had a crew of youngins who came in support of [colleague] to help fill these bags. And we just filled every single bag that was there and left them for whanau, you know, and they were filling cars for people, for older people that were coming. - Lee

The importance of educating whānau to set up their own preparedness kit was also pointed out.

And I think that's around you know, having a resource kit whether it's a great big bucket with a lid on, that's got some canned foods and a tin opener, a portable radio with batteries all in a torch. Survival. Basic things and water so that if something does happen at least, you know, you can just grab that bin or bucket or whatever it is and because to be honest you really need to be able to look after yourself for a good week. - Rua (focus group)

One of the opportunities highlighted in terms of greater preparedness, was the return to using the 'blue highway' during emergencies.

Blue highways are boats on the water. Yeah, on the water. I love that term—blue highways. I should write a song about that. - Rea

Blue highways are a metaphorical term describing these water-based routes and their role in local emergency response strategies.

KA – Whānau Summary

During Cyclone Gabrielle and prior weather events, Māori communities faced significant challenges due to a lack of support from civil defence teams. Left to fend for themselves, whānau and tangata whenua services and groups, including volunteers, mobilised quickly to ensure the safety and wellbeing of their communities. This rapid response was possible because a network was already in place, set up to support their communities during COVID-19.

Despite repeated requests for emergency management equipment, these communities received no support from their local civil defence team. In response to the urgent need and civil defence's failure, whānau and kaimahi took action and set up an evacuation centre. They sought kai and necessary items, with whānau mobilising to cook and share kai. The organisational and operational skills of kaimahi were exceptional, and their support networks extensive.

This section asserts the significant negative impact of systemic and structural barriers experienced by whānau. Harmful government policies and approaches keep people locked in 'persistent disadvantage', as discussed earlier in this report. Policy and service responses are strongly skewed toward those with political, social, or economic power, perpetuating power imbalances and entrenching the cycle of persistent disadvantage.

The lack of support from civil defence groups at local, regional, and national levels highlighted their ignorance regarding the challenges faced by Māori and isolated communities. These challenges include severe housing deprivation, environmental risks such as flooding, landslides, and fallen trees, prolonged road closures, extended power outages, and significant health issues requiring access to medication and medical care.

Finally, the failure to provide for people needing to evacuate from their homes, including those living in tents and makeshift shelters, showcased government officials' blindness to the precariousness of the circumstances people around them are living in.

KA – TCDC Insights

In this section, Thames-Coromandel District Council (TCDC) participants reflected on the challenges faced in civil defence management, particularly in the aftermath of Cyclone Gabrielle. Their insights next, revealed three key areas of concern: the impact of historical trauma, inadequate communication and preparedness, and critical lessons learned from the Koputauaki dam crisis.

Historical Trauma and Mistrust

We learned that Hauraki Māori communities have historical trauma and mistrust towards councils, that this matters and is key to understanding 'what does not work well' in civil defence efforts.

Historical trauma matters

I think a lot of like, small Māori communities especially, have historical trauma when it comes to dealing with councils, which has, in effect, made them less resilient and engaging. And therefore, their communities suffer. - Jay

We heard that historical actions, recognised as trauma, significantly impacted some Māori communities. This included the inability to afford building compliance costs, which has led to court actions. One view suggested that the excessive cost of building consents prioritised revenue building over resilience building.

Compliance is about revenue-building

So, I had to put in a new fireplace. And in order for me to do that, I have to get a building consent that costs $500 to replace, like for like…It's absolutely about revenue building. I'm not giving them $500 to put in a new fireplace. I'm not. - Kit

Mistrust is historical

That pushing someone to court kind of thing or removing them from their home four times, it doesn't really engender very good relationships. - Jay

Historical actions like court action and repeatedly evacuating people from their homes unnecessarily, have created mistrust in TCDC. We heard this mistrust complicates effective communication and collaboration with Māori communities, resulting in diminished engagement, resilience, and preparedness in civil defence emergencies.

There is a real mistrust

I understand it now, but I didn't before, like that mistrust is historical stuff. You know, my cousin who let the council car in her gate, before I started working at Council, she'd be like, no, they're all shit…They come here [to our homes], they'll do what they want, but then they won't do what we ask them to do, then they'll take off and they don't come back…There is real mistrust. - Jay

Addressing the root causes of historical trauma and mistrust is key to building improved relationships between TCDC and Māori communities.

Relationships and communication

The way that the system is set up with Council is it's all, most of its contracted. So, you know, the job comes in, Council will say, we want this done, the contractor will go in, just do that and do nothing else…That's how they operate. - Jay

We learned that the TCDC's approach to communities is often process-driven and one-way instead of people-driven and involved with the community's wider needs. This approach strongly suggests a lack of collaboration and mutual engagement. Effective relationships should involve more two-way communication and responsiveness.

Fear and mistrust

I'm also very fearful that I'm going to mess up a relationship because of my lack of knowledge or how I can be perceived. Because not only am I that, but I'm also a council worker. I've really tiptoed and been very cautious, and I'm not so much anymore. It takes time because I have to learn about your culture and feel more comfortable stepping into your zone and not standing on any toes…I used to get really quite hurt because I would go to meetings and I would be really passionate about helping them build their marae plan, or how can we help. - Lou

We heard the critical need for TCDC personnel to learn about Hauraki Māori tikanga, history and way of life, and to better engage with them and their civil defence preparedness.

Need for relationship building

> *It's the number one thing that we're hearing… is the need for relationship building. You know, the give and take, not just you do, but actually coming to where they [whānau] are [live]…But that's what I don't understand with non-Māori, it doesn't matter whether you're Māori or not. If you, you find it easier to be with around someone if you know them, like, just get to know someone. - Jay*

Building relationships before crises occur

> *The relationship that has to help you through a bad emergency event, has to happen well before the event happens. - Kit*

There is a need for TCDC to connect with whānau 'where they are' at home, not just expect them to come to in to the Council. This view is echoed in the importance of establishing effective relationships well before any crisis occurs, whether dealing with Māori or non-Māori communities, the emphasis is on getting to know people and building trust early.

Lack of Communication and Preparedness

According to TCDC participants there is a lack of a comprehensive strategy and cohesive communication between TCDC and Māori communities. While communities may have their own response plan and some resources, there is a need for greater coordination to effectively address local needs.

No overall plan and connectivity

> *I guess the community has our own small community response plan, but as Council, I don't think we really have our finger on the pulse still. Like, okay, we've got the resources, and that's a huge help... But it still doesn't feel like there's an overall... connectivity. - Jay*

Ad-hoc coordination

> *It did seem a little bit ad hoc when it was coming from civil defence…It was kind of like, do they know or don't they know, who's going into these communities, where they're coming from and going to…it seemed a little bit not well coordinated. - Jay*

We heard that community support should not depend solely on iwi leaders, marae, or Council emergency services. Instead, it should focus on grassroots efforts, with Māori communities being resourced to manaaki their own whānau.

It can't be reliant on a council response

> *We're not reliant on the iwi chairs or the marae, the kaumatua. We're talking and working with the ones that look after the people on the ground, operational…it can't be reliant on a council emergency service response. It has to be community looking after community. - Max*

We heard that civil defence is a support system, not a 'white knight', and whānau should not be overly dependent on civil defence for assistance. Rather, whānau need to take personal responsibility and not expect to be rescued.

People need to be less reliant on civil defence

> *I always say this to people when I have meetings, and some might not like it, but it's me just being me quite direct, is there's such a reliance on people to be helped, to 'save me.' Civil defence in the past, I don't know what people used to think they were. Was it people on white horses with jackets and shields and they're going to come and save you? That's not who we are. - Lou*

We heard that there is no formal emergency response plan submitted to the Council and the need for greater civil defence preparedness for Māori communities in Hauraki.

Being more prepared is the way to go

> *Probably because we don't have an emergency response plan that, you know, we've put through to Council, so, you know, civil defence hold all those…I can only talk for my experience with [name of community] and I guess, you know, having the resilience kits in there now, I just think probably being more prepared is a better way for us to go. - Jay*

We heard the negative impact that filtered funding had when it is allocated through a third party. That process can result in lengthy delays and not reach the intended recipients effectively.

Filtered funding rather than direct

> *This is always a challenge because the first thing that happens when you go to the government for funding, is that they want to put a structure in place as to how they channel that funding. And the default position, if you like, is to either feed it in through a Wellington government department or look at something that is more Waikato regional based…Filtered rather than high trust and direct. - Kit*

Funding direct to the community

> *We put funding into those community hubs so that we can maintain communication in the worst of circumstances, because you just can't, realistically, get there in these situations. - Kit*

We heard that a high-trust funding model where local organisations manage the funds directly for whānau in need is more effective. These organisations understand their communities' needs better and can respond more urgently in emergencies.

Koputauaki Dam Crisis

Based upon what we heard from each of the TCDC participants, the following is a summary of events surrounding the Koputauaki debris dam crisis.

What They Say Happened

The crisis began when a landslide on a farm blocked a gully, leading to the formation of a debris dam above the village. This situation raised significant concerns within the community due to the risk of potential flooding. As the threat escalated, the community was put on high alert, which resulted in multiple evacuations. Initially, there was confusion regarding whether the dam would be intentionally detonated to mitigate flooding risks. Despite several attempts to blow up the dam, these efforts were unsuccessful, further complicating the evacuation process.

"It would have taken out quite a few houses"

> *We had to really call in the experts... it was a massive buildup of water, if the banks of this built dam was going to release... it would have come straight down the valley and taken out quite a few houses. - Kit*

The Impact on Whānau

We learned the evacuations had a significant impact on whānau in the community. Many were reluctant to leave their homes, which posed challenges in ensuring everyone's safety. The repeated calls for evacuation created anxiety and uncertainty as whānau faced the possibility of losing their homes and belongings.

"None of us could sleep"

> *So then the whānau went home after one night. Nothing happened. Went home because it was still raining…And then, you know, we couldn't sleep. None of us could sleep because of our whānau had gone back home. The risk was still up there. So I asked Council, look, if whānau are going back to their homes, they're not going to be evacuated now. You don't know what's going on up there? We don't know what's going on up there. - Jay*

We heard anxiety and frustration due to the lack of clear communication from the TCDC during a period of potential danger and uncertainty. Despite returning home, the ongoing risk kept whānau sleepless and worried.

What Went Wrong

We heard the confusion was caused by inconsistent messages from civil defence and local authorities.

> *We were isolated for about a week due to slips north and south of the bay from the aftermath of Cyclone Gabrielle. On the day I was able to get escorted through the slip to collect some kai parcels for all the whānau living in the bay I was contacted by Council to be informed a dam had formed up the back of our awa. For a further two weeks, on four occasions some of our whānau were asked to evacuate, twice unnecessarily. - Jay*

We heard that the community was isolated for a week due to landslides from Cyclone Gabrielle. They were informed about a new dam and told to evacuate without clear reasons or understanding of the actual risk, leading to frustration and distrust.

Lack of Preparedness

There appeared to be no effective plan in place for managing the dam situation. Concern was expressed that the authorities did not have a clear strategy, contributing to the community's anxiety and uncertainty.

> *So we were working strongly with the community in trying to evacuate the people that were most at risk but also try and get some understanding of what the risk was and communicate that. At the time, the roads north and south of that community were closed. So luckily, we had cell phone reception. So [Jay]…was our community contact. The one we were linked in with and talking right the way through that process. - Max*
>
> *When you see the footage of the helicopter dropping monsoon buckets on the dam to part, it was like a spit in the ocean. It was not doing anything. It was huge. Yeah. And it was what got me interested in this job because I was like, what's your guy's plan? And it didn't seem there was a plan. - Jay*

We heard that while efforts were made to evacuate at-risk whānau and to understand and communicate risks, challenges arose due to closed roads and reliance on cell phone communication. The ineffective measures, such as helicopter water drops, indicated a lack of an overall emergency response plan.

Community Response

The repeated evacuations led to a "boy who cried wolf" [Jay] syndrome, where residents became desensitised to evacuation orders.

> *So for the first week that went on, whānau were evacuated four times and twice unnecessarily by miscommunication, poor communication, no communication with the crew on the ground. - Jay*

Ineffective Measures

Attempts to release water and blow up the dam to relieve pressure were unsuccessful which further complicated the situation. This failure added to the community's frustration and uncertainty regarding TCDC's civil defence capabilities.

> *To release water slowly. So we were learning about all of this as we were going along, and they managed to do it. There was a chance that if it failed, if the bank failed, obviously, it would be... But we had already evacuated the community to, I think it was [name] campground. Some wanted to go. It was really difficult to get others to leave, and we totally understand that, but it was a huge operation. – Lou*

We heard that TCDC gained insights and understanding of the dam situation in real-time, reflecting a trial-and-error process where decisions were informed by immediate experiences rather than pre-existing plans. Inconsistent communication and confusion about the risks led to frustration among whānau, making them increasingly reluctant to trust evacuation orders and TCDC's capabilities.

KA – TCDC Summary

TCDC participants shared several key insights regarding civil defence management. They pointed to the historical trauma and mistrust that Hauraki Māori communities have towards Councils, which significantly impacts their resilience and engagement. This mistrust is rooted in past actions, such as costly building compliance requirements and court actions, perceived as prioritising revenue over community resilience. TCDC maintained the need for two-way relationships and a better understanding of Hauraki Māori culture and history to build trust and improve engagement.

TCDC also noted the lack of a comprehensive strategy and cohesive communication between TCDC and Māori communities. Current efforts were described as uncoordinated, ad-hoc, and as you go, with insufficient overall planning and connectivity. The importance of direct funding to communities was highlighted, as filtered funding through third parties often led to delays and inefficiencies. Direct funding to local organisations was seen as more effective in addressing community needs. Additionally, participants stressed the importance of preparedness, and advocating for well-communicated emergency response plans.

These perspectives from TCDC participants form part of the comparative discussion next.

KA - COMPARATIVE DISCUSSION

In Chapter KA, we compare the pūrākau kōrero of Whānau participants and TCDC participants, focusing on how Māori mobilised to support whānau during Cyclone Gabrielle and 'what does not work well' in civil defence responses. This comparison is necessary for understanding the gaps and challenges in emergency management from community and institutional perspectives. Several key similarities, differences, and contradictions emerge, pointing out areas for potential improvement in civil defence strategies and community engagement.

In the aftermath of Cyclone Gabrielle, both Whānau and TCDC shared a common recognition of the severe impact on their communities. Both groups acknowledged the destruction of infrastructure, homes, and whenua, as well as the general instability and uncertainty faced by rural areas. Additionally, both expressed concerns over the emergency response efforts, drawing attention to delays in aid and support and the inadequacy of the response to the urgent needs of isolated communities. The importance of local expertise was also a shared response, with Whānau participants emphasising the role of significant local knowledge and tangata whenua networks, and TCDC participants recognising the value of these insights for future emergency planning.

However, there were notable differences in their experiences and perspectives. Whānau felt a strong sense of abandonment by civil authorities, reporting that they had to mobilise their emergency responses due to the lack of action and apparent incapability of civil defence. In stark contrast, TCDC framed the issues around resource constraints and the challenges of coordinating responses across various agencies. Access to resources was another point of difference. Whānau pointed out significant barriers to accessing necessities and resources with many cut off from essential services for extended periods. TCDC, while aware of the shortages, spoke more about logistical challenges in distributing supplies, conveying a near-contradictory level of desperation.

The mobilisation and initiative taken by Whānau was also a point of difference. They described their rapid grassroots efforts to respond to the crisis and utilising existing community networks developed during previous emergencies. This indicates a long-standing pattern of being overlooked by civil defence efforts. TCDC focused more on the need for coordinated efforts between governmental agencies, suggesting improvements rather than highlighting community-driven initiatives.

Lambert and Scott (2019) discuss how disaster risk reduction strategies often marginalise Indigenous communities, which aligns with our findings regarding the systemic undervaluation of tangata whenua capabilities. Similarly, King, Goff, and Skipper (2020) document the invaluable insights from traditional ecological knowledge passed down through generations. Lambert and Scott (2019) also highlight the importance of integrating this knowledge into disaster management practices. Our study reveals that TCDC's current approach frequently overlooks this wealth of local wisdom, leading to strategies that do not adequately address the unique needs of Hauraki Māori communities. As one whānau participant noted, *"We've been reading these weather patterns for generations, but no one seems to listen when we warn about potential flooding."*

Efforts toward visibility highlighted that Whānau felt compelled to take action and form their own emergency plans due to inaction from authorities. However, TCDC maintained that they were actively trying to assist and coordinate help, indicating a clear disconnect between perceived action and grassroots reality. While TCDC may have been implementing strategies, the Whānau experience of feeling unsupported points to a serious lack of visibility of those efforts and a failure to address immediate community needs.

The visibility of need was another area of contradiction. Whānau expressed that their struggles were invisible to those coordinating the emergency response, indicating neglect and a lack of understanding of, or willingness to understand the severity of the situation. Conversely, TCDC claimed to be aware of the needs and challenges but stated they were constrained by bureaucratic processes and resource limitations. Here the disconnect presents again; while TCDC believed they were monitoring and addressing issues, the reality for Whānau was one of invisibility and inadequate support.

The interpretation of communication breakdowns also differed. Whānau reported severe communication issues with authorities, feeling that their voices were excluded from conversations. These breakdowns were critical for Whānau, who felt unheard and overlooked during Cyclones Hale and Gabrielle. TCDC acknowledged communication as a significant challenge but described it as one of reconciling multiple and diverse channels and logistics rather than a failure to engage. Whānau reported that while communication efforts may exist on paper (plans), their effectiveness is undermined by a lack of genuine community engagement and that these breakdowns restricted their ability to articulate their needs. This analysis aligns with the findings of Lakhina et al. (2023) that document the importance of people-centred early warning systems (EWS) in disaster risk reduction. Their research highlights the need for community participation, effective risk communication, and local capacity building, which are crucial for addressing the unique needs and strengths of Māori communities in disaster preparedness and response.

Finally, the approaches to mobilisation versus coordination revealed deeper tensions. Whānau valued autonomy and self-organising principles based on local relationships and traditional knowledge. They described their rapid grassroots mobilisation as essential due to the inaction they experienced from governing bodies. TCDC, however, focused on the necessity of coordinated government efforts to streamline support, implying a belief in top-down organisation during crises. This reveals seriously differing worldviews on crisis management and support for communities in crisis, with Whānau groups emphasising local initiative and TCDC advocating for centralised control.

The thematic area of KA invited us to stand in the present moment, looking back to our tīpuna and forward to our mokopuna. From a chapter focused on identifying 'what has not worked well' in Hauraki civil defence responses, we move to Chapter Ū, where we explore a real-time, living solution that documents the existing ways local Māori mobilise to support whānau during extreme weather events.

Chapter 5

Ū: Living Solutions

Introduction

In this chapter, we present a comprehensive narrative of a Hauraki living solution story. Ū refers to the continuous sustenance of Papatuanuku, embodying the essence of her care and protection for her whānau. This narrative weaves together key insights from previous chapters and comparative discussions in PŪ (the starting point), RĀ (what works well), and KA (what does not work well) on how Hauraki Māori mobilised to support whānau during Cyclone Gabrielle.

The purpose of the living solution story in this chapter is to showcase an example of a tangata whenua social service being proactive in adversity, mobilising support for whānau in need.

The Hauraki Relocatable Housing Project: A Living Solution Story

Beacon of Hope

From an award-winning tangata whenua social service in Hauraki, the concept of relocatable housing emerged as a beacon of hope across land-rich but cash-poor Hauraki Māori communities. The initiative aimed to provide affordable, flexible living solutions for whānau Māori in need. The story began in the aftermath of Cyclone Gabrielle, which had left many whānau homes across Hauraki in considerable disrepair. As one resident explained:

> *The housing repair project came through that, and initially the cabins were for whānau that were going to be out of their homes while they were being repaired. Because they were major, major repairs… We can't wait around for bureaucracy to stroke their white egos, whānau are in trouble so our work ethic is "just get on and do the job."*

Funding and Bureaucratic Challenges

Funding for the relocatable housing cabins came from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (MHUD). However, navigating TCDC's bureaucratic assault course of outdated housing data and rigid processes clashed with the realities on the ground. *"In the beginning, no, they weren't helpful. We had pre-planned, had strategic meetings, and so to be fair, no, they were not helpful at all,"* a resident shared.

Complicated Land Ownership

Māori communities had been dealing with often complicated land ownership and trust structures. They had been meeting with TCDC for years to address compliance regulations and set up their collective living arrangements. However, the constantly changing laws and costly consent requirements proved to be a significant barrier for whānau. Careful negotiations with landowners, trustees, and whānau were necessary to ensure the relocatable cabins could be placed and occupied.

High Hopes

The project began with high hopes. *"We saw it as an opportunity to create a community that was resilient and adaptable,"* a kaimahi shared. One resident, reflecting on the early days of the project, recalled: *"It was a chance to start anew, to build something that could adapt to our changing needs. The idea of having a home that could move with us was both exciting and daunting."*

Collective Purpose

Services, key stakeholders, kaimahi, and whānau came together, sharing ideas and resources, eager to see the project succeed. *"There was a real buzz in the air. Everyone was pitching in, from the youngest to the oldest,"* a resident recalled. However, as the project progressed, the reality of relocatable housing began to set in. *"There were days when it felt like we were constantly battling against the elements,"* one kaimahi admitted. The practicalities of maintaining and moving the cabins proved to be more complex than anticipated. *"We faced issues with the infrastructure—plumbing, electricity, you name it. It was a steep learning curve,"* another added.

Logistical Nightmare

One of the significant challenges was the actual relocation process. *"Moving the houses was a logistical nightmare,"* a kaimahi explained. *"We had to coordinate with local authorities, ensure the roads were clear, and sometimes even deal with unexpected weather conditions."* Another kaimahi shared a particularly worrying experience: *"During one move, a sudden storm hit. We had to halt everything and secure the whare to prevent damage. It was nerve-wracking."*

Delivering and installing the relocatable cabins was a learning experience. *"Initially we put in the water tanks and the septic tanks before the cabins were delivered, and we learned from that, that wasn't a good idea,"* a kaimahi explained. Initial missteps were put right, and strategies were adapted, ensuring the foundations were in place before the cabins were lowered onto them, with precision by cranes.

Moments of Celebration

Despite these challenges, there were moments of celebration that reinforced by the project team's commitment to the initiative. *"I remember the first time we successfully relocated a house. It was a huge milestone,"* a kaimahi recounted with pride. *"Seeing that house in its new spot, knowing we did it together, was incredibly rewarding,"* their colleague added.

A Welcome Home

During the placing of this cabin, a kaimahi recounted a story of a wāhine who had been living in a shed with no plumbing and a bucket for a toilet, now overjoyed to have a warm, secure home.

> *She wailed. She wailed. And when she could see the truck coming from the corner, till they'd landed, she just wailed, so that there was huge calling, calling herself home, and all her nieces, who I believe they'd all fallen out for one reason or another, they all came there to tautoko her and they were wailing. And so, it was like, you're at a tangi. It was, it was a real welcome home. – Kaimahi*

Beyond Shelter

The project's impact extended beyond just providing shelter. *"It's completely changed her life. It's changed the person down on the beach who was one of our controversials,"* a kaimahi shared. Grateful for the role the project oversight provided, the wāhine who wailed, cried: *"Thank god for [name], thank god for leaders like her who show us we're valued, worth something."*

Transformative Symbolism

This account served as a powerful reminder of the transformative symbolism of the relocatable cabins, not just as physical structures, but as testaments of hope, change and belonging for whānau. Evident also in the wāhine making plans for her future, and a rent-to-buy model offered a pathway to home ownership. A dream that had once seemed so out of reach for many Hauraki whānau.

Evolving Strategies

As the months passed, the project evolved, learning from what did not work well, and finetuning what did. A kaimahi described this:

> *We became more efficient with each move. We developed better systems for coordinating the logistics and managing the infrastructure. We started to anticipate community problems before they happened, which made a huge difference.*

Community Support

The project also showed the importance of community support. *"We couldn't have done it without each other. The sense of whanaungatanga was incredible,"* one resident noted. This collective effort created a deeper sense of connection, belonging, and mutual respect among community members. *"We became more than just neighbours; we became a whanau,"* noted another resident.

Stress and Uncertainty

However, not all experiences were positive. *"There were times when the stress and uncertainty took a toll on us,"* a resident confessed. The emotional and physical demands of the project were significant, and not everyone was able to cope with the pressures. *"We lost a few along the way, people who just couldn't handle the instability,"* another shared. One kaimahi spoke about the personal challenges they faced: *"I had to juggle my job, my family, and this project. There were nights I barely slept, worrying about whether we could pull it off."* The same kaimahi shared, *"It was tough, really tough. But every time I saw the progress we made; it felt worth it."*

External Interest

The project also began to attract attention from outside the community. *"People from other towns came to see what we were doing,"* a resident shared. *"They were curious about how we made it work and wanted to learn from our experiences."* The success of the relocatable housing project not only drew external interest but also showcased the years of knowledge and relationships that Hauraki Māori communities have in the disaster space, including their response to Cyclone Gabrielle.

"We activated our network through previous disasters," a key informant explained. *"The community was up and running within 6 to 12 hours without external direction."* This example of kotahitanga was important, especially when external support was lacking. *"Civil defence did not provide necessary resources, leading us to rely on our own networks and advocacy,"* another key informant noted.

Challenges with Civil Defence

The challenges for Māori communities with civil defence have been significant. *"We had to advocate for resources like generators and safety kits, which were eventually provided but delayed,"* a resident shared. The lack of access to medication and power cuts were particularly problematic. *"We reported these issues to civil defence, but they were not addressed promptly,"* another resident added.

Lobbying for Resources

Communities used national networks to lobby for resources and support. Lessons learned from previous disasters, such as COVID-19, helped them prepare better for future emergencies. *"We maintained networks and relationships with key people in health and hygiene,"* a key informant explained. Emergency equipment and supplies were placed on site, thanks to funding from various organisations. *"We faced challenges with civil defence's response, leading to self-sufficient emergency centres. We did that, not them,"* the same key informant noted.

Resilience and Innovation

The story of the relocatable housing project is one of resilience, innovation, and the power of Hauraki tangata whenua unity and community. Through it all, the project team remained steadfast, drawing strength from one another and the transformative impact of the project. This project is a testament to the determination of those who refuse to be defined by the constraints of their circumstances. It serves as a call to action for policymakers to truly listen and respond to the needs of the people they serve. As the project team looks to the future, they are hopeful that the experiences gained, and the stories shared will pave the way for more equitable and effective housing solutions. Because at the end of the day, it's not just about bricks and mortar, it's about building the groundwork for Hauraki whānau to thrive.

Living Solution Summary

Living-solution initiatives in Hauraki highlight the resilience and innovation of Māori communities following Cyclone Gabrielle, revealing the disconnect between civil defence authorities and Māori communities, which left whānau to rely on their own networks and scarce resources.

A key initiative, the relocatable housing project, funded by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, addressed cyclone-damaged homes while exposing the significant economic disadvantages faced by land-rich, cash-poor Māori communities. Despite bureaucratic and logistical challenges, the project had a profound positive impact on whānau and Māori community well-being.

This narrative reinforces the urgent need for Māori-led emergency responses, calling for civil defence to support Māori-governed centres while addressing systemic racism in disaster support. It affirms Hauraki Māori resilience and autonomy, advocating for policies that embed Māori knowledge and leadership in disaster management.

Ū – SUMMARY

Chapter Ū, symbolising the sustaining life force of Papatūānuku, tells the story of a real-time Hauraki housing solution while drawing together the key insights from PŪ, RĀ, and KĀ. It reflects how Hauraki Māori mobilised to support whānau during Cyclone Gabrielle and highlights the interconnectedness of these findings, reinforcing the cyclical nature of the Pū-Rā-Kā-Ū model.

Just as kaumātua wisdom in Ū is passed forward to inform the mokopuna of PŪ, the findings in this chapter are not an endpoint but a continuation. This cyclical approach reinforces that endings are also new beginnings, ensuring insights gained from this research actively shape future action.

In keeping with this cycle, the full contrast analysis was placed in the executive summary to frame the recommendations with a strong evidential base. The key insights that follow further distil these findings, ensuring a seamless transition from analysis to action. By positioning the summary here, we reaffirm that the lessons drawn from past experiences must actively inform pathways forward, embedding Māori-led solutions at the heart of disaster response, housing recovery, and community resilience.

Key Insights from the Overall Contrast Analysis

This contrast analysis synthesises findings from chapters PŪ, RĀ, KĀ, and Ū, highlighting the disparities between Hauraki Māori responses to Cyclone Gabrielle and the approach taken by Thames-Coromandel District Council (TCDC) in civil defence and housing recovery. The findings affirm the need for Māori-led disaster response frameworks that reflect whānau realities, uphold whakapapa relationships, and centre mātauranga Māori in decision-making.

Māori Ecological Wisdom vs. Regional Governance

Hauraki Māori hold an intergenerational responsibility as kaitiaki, deeply attuned to their whenua, whakapapa, and the rhythms of te taiao. Their ecological wisdom is not separate from identity but an expression of collective responsibility and care, reflected in daily practices—reading weather patterns, observing environmental shifts, and ensuring the wellbeing of future generations.

Despite this knowledge, regional governance structures continue to exclude Māori perspectives. The Koputauaki dam crisis illustrates the consequences of this disconnect, where policy fails to integrate localised knowledge, weakening disaster preparedness and climate resilience. One whānau participant reflected, *"We've been reading these weather patterns for generations, but no one listens."* This dismissal of Māori expertise reflects broader systemic patterns where Indigenous ways of knowing are undervalued, despite their effectiveness in environmental and crisis response.

Systemic Failures in Disaster Response

The lack of institutional support for Māori communities during Cyclone Gabrielle exposes deep inequities in disaster management. Whānau relied on their own networks, often with minimal resources, while local and regional authorities either failed to respond or provided inadequate assistance. The expectation that Māori will step up, while receiving little recognition or resourcing, reinforces structural racism, where Māori contributions are drawn upon but never equitably supported.

A just and effective model requires shifting from a Crown-led disaster framework to one where Māori have mana whakahaere over disaster preparedness and response. This means moving beyond consultation towards a model where Māori governance structures are central to emergency management, ensuring culturally grounded, community-led responses aligned with whānau needs and strengths.

Economic Disadvantages and Housing Challenges

Housing recovery efforts following the cyclone further reveal economic marginalisation in Hauraki Māori communities. Many whānau are land-rich but cash-poor, a reality shaped by historical land alienation and economic exclusion. Without adequate resources, repairing or replacing homes is a major challenge, compounded by TCDC's bureaucratic obstacles and compliance systems that fail to accommodate Papakāinga and collective living arrangements.

These barriers are not just policy oversights, they reflect a deeper structural issue where Māori are continually forced to navigate systems never designed for them. The ongoing constraints placed on Māori housing solutions reaffirm the need for governance structures that enable Māori to exercise decision-making authority over their own whenua, free from externally imposed frameworks.

Call for Māori-Led Emergency Centres

The call for Civil Defence to fund and support Māori-led emergency centres reflects a broader push for recognition, not just of Māori expertise, but of the right to govern disaster response in a way that upholds whakapapa and collective wellbeing. These centres, rooted in whānau, hapū, and iwi governance, offer a proven alternative to the Crown's centralised, one-size-fits-all approach.

For Civil Defence to meaningfully support Māori communities, it must move beyond piecemeal engagement and commit to resourcing Māori-led solutions. This includes:

- Funding Māori-led disaster response initiatives.
- Recognising Māori governance structures as decision-making authorities.
- Establishing distinct spheres of influence, where Māori hold authority alongside, not beneath, Crown emergency agencies.

The Need for Structural Change

The resilience of Hauraki Māori during and after Cyclone Gabrielle is a testament to whānau, hapū, and iwi strength. However, resilience alone should not be the expectation, systemic change is needed. Whānau should not have to continually fight for recognition or navigate structures that continue to work against them.

A fundamental shift in disaster preparedness and response requires centring Māori knowledge, leadership, and governance as integral, not incidental. The findings from this analysis reinforce that only a Māori-led, Tiriti-based model can ensure just and effective disaster response and recovery for Hauraki Māori communities.

The following chapter explores the Pū-Rā-Kā-Ū model, demonstrating how it centres Māori perspectives and amplifies Hauraki whānau voices in disaster research. This approach ensures Indigenous knowledge informs effective, culturally responsive strategies, strengthening disaster preparedness, response, and recovery for Hauraki Māori communities.

Chapter 6

Designing the Study: Methodology in Action

Introduction

This chapter outlines the research design and methodology used in this study, building on the foundation of our previous research, ‘He Whare, He Taonga’. By employing similar methods, this project ensures consistency and enables findings to expand upon earlier work. The study examines the challenges driving persistent disadvantage for Hauraki whānau, with a specific focus on their mobilisation during Cyclone Gabrielle to meet disaster response and recovery needs. This section details the Pū-Rā-Ka-Ū approach, data collection methods, analysis techniques, and ethical considerations that guided the research.

Kaupapa Māori Methodology

This research utilised a Kaupapa Māori methodology to explore how Hauraki Māori experienced and responded to Cyclone Gabrielle. Kaupapa Māori is a ‘home grown’ form of critical theory that focuses on emancipation (Smith, 1999). It refers to a framework or methodology for thinking about and undertaking research by Māori, with Māori, for the benefit of Māori (Bishop, 1998; Smith 1999). It is a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know, and it affirms the right of Māori to be Māori (Pihama, Cram, & Walker, 2002). This approach challenges traditional Western research paradigms and aims to be transformative. The study used qualitative research techniques, including semi-structured interviews and focus groups, to gather data. Ethical principles and considerations as detailed in Moyle (2014, pg. 31) were followed throughout the research project.

Working with Thames Coromandel District Council

The research team collaborated with Thames Coromandel District Council (TCDC) personnel throughout the research process. Starting with proposal development, the Council provided feedback, leading to adjustments before final approval. Council personnel, including both senior management and field personnel, participated in the research following the same process of consent and participation as Whānau. This included the team presenting key findings and analysis to the Council before the final write-up, allowing for additional input.

Recruitment

Whanaungatanga was important for participant recruitment, employing a kānohi ki te kānohi approach (O’Carroll, 2013) and korero pūrākau techniques (Lee, 2009) to capture lived experiences. A snowball sampling method was used to interview up to 30 participants, including whānau, kaimahi, and Thames Coromandel District Council (TCDC) personnel. In some interviews at Whānau participants’ homes, additional members were present who could contribute their perspectives through those being interviewed.

Interviews

Interviews lasted between 40 and 90 minutes, with audio recording preferred. Participants’ privacy was safeguarded through anonymisation, pseudonyms, and secure data storage. As with participants, the names of Māori communities in this research have also been anonymised to protect the identities of those from these communities. Interviews and two focus groups were transcribed verbatim, with identifying information, including names of locations, removed during analysis.

Waha Pikitia

Waha Pikitia is an original data collection method using photography, infographics, computer-generated images, and other media to help marginalised groups visually communicate their pūrākau (Moyle et al., 2024). This method makes complex information more accessible and engaging. It incorporates Indigenous worldviews, Māori cultural values, and collective expression, allowing participants to go beyond traditional interviews. It also supports self-determination and decolonising research processes.

Analysis

Using contrast analysis (Leustek, 2017), researchers manually colour-coded transcripts into the thematic areas of Pū, Rā, Kā, and Ū. These themes were further refined through reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012) during online and in-person wānanga. The contrast between Whānau and Thames Coromandel District Council (TCDC) participants’ voices revealed stark differences in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery approaches.

This combined analysis highlighted detailed Whānau perspectives rooted in traditional knowledge and community connections, contrasting with TCDC’s structured, bureaucratic approach. It also provided deeper insights into gaps in communication, resource allocation, and cultural understanding.

Participants, at a sense-making hui confirmed identified themes before the final write-up of findings. Microsoft Copilot assisted with drafting and editing the write-up of the final report. A communications plan will share the research results and key messages through disaster resources like infographics, videos, and a webpage tailored for Hauraki Māori.

Pū-Rā-Ka-Ū Framework

The Pū-RĀ-Ka-Ū model is an analysis framework adapted from a previous research project (Moyle et al., 2024). The framework applies a Kaupapa Māori lens to understand the experiences of Hauraki Māori communities in disaster preparedness and response. This model prioritises the participants' pūrākau over the researchers' interpretations of their kōrero. The collective voices are organised in such a way that they tell their collaged collective story of their lived realities, rather than being interpreted by the researcher.

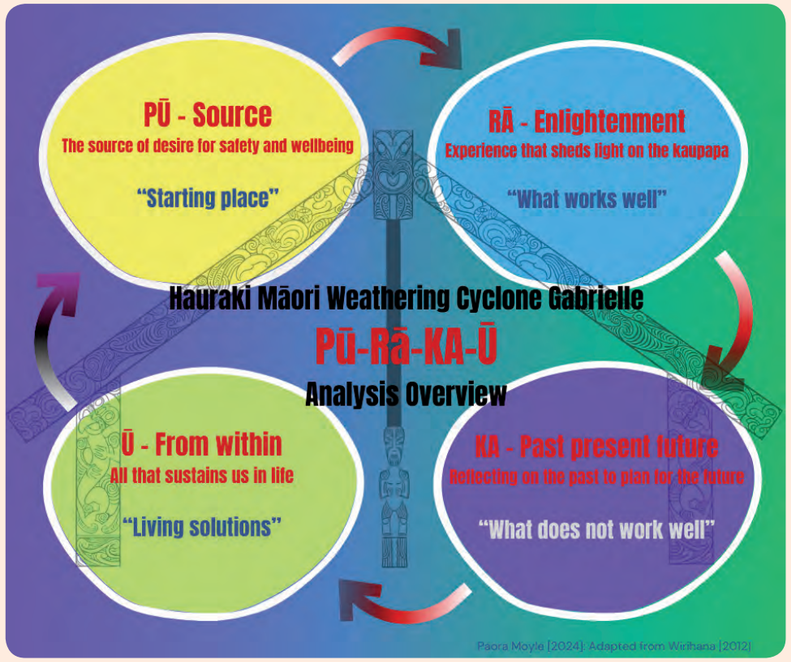
The model can function in either a linear or cyclical manner and consists of four interconnected thematic areas that guide the analysis of research data. It is explained in some detail next to allow others to apply it effectively in their own research.

PŪ (Origin)

The first theme represents the origins of knowledge and leadership, often rooted in nurturing and connections to whakapapa. It symbolises the tamariki of the model, the starting point of potential—the seed of an idea or the beginning of a journey, the possibilities that exist before anything has taken form or been realised. In this research, it examines the initial stages for participants in their approach to disaster preparedness and response. PŪ explores deeply rooted cultural knowledge, intergenerational connections, and traditional and environmental wisdom that underpin resilience strategies. This theme focuses on understanding the motivations that drive people to care for one another in the face of adversity, exploring the origins of their mobilisation efforts. From PŪ, we move to RĀ.

RĀ (Enlightenment)

The second theme is enlightenment and the experiences that sustain and guide individuals, such as wairua. It is also the rangatahi phase, and where pūrākau kōrero sheds light on the current state of knowledge and successes within the kaupapa. This space is where knowledge spreads, ideas develop, and understanding broadens. In this research it explores effective practices, successful strategies, and positive outcomes in Hauraki Māori communities' responses to extreme weather events. RĀ highlights community strengths and capabilities, identifying successful approaches that can be built upon. From here, we turn to KA.



KA (Past, Present, Future)

The third theme reflects the influence of past and present experiences on future aspirations and roles within the community. It is the pakeke of the model, representing the tangible growth of knowledge. This space in the research examines the challenges and issues in current disaster management approaches, considering historical context, present-day problems, and future implications. RĀ identifies areas for improvement and shows how past experiences inform present actions and future planning, providing a comprehensive view of disaster management over time. From KA we move to Ū.

Ū (Sustenance/From Within)

The final theme represents the internal attributes and strengths nurtured within individuals, often passed down through generations via traditional narratives like pūrākau and whakataukī. It symbolises the kaumatua, the sustenance of Papatuanuku and the continuous pursuit of knowledge. This phase in the research presents practical, sustainable approaches to disaster preparedness and response that support Hauraki Māori communities. It offers recommendations for improving local civil defence and disaster management planning, ensuring more effective and culturally intelligent responses in future emergencies. Ū discusses key solutions proposed by participants for enhanced civil defence planning, focusing on actionable and sustainable strategies.

Cyclical Nature of Pū-Rā-Ka-Ū

In this research, the Pū-Rā-Ka-Ū model operates as a cyclical framework, where the wisdom gained from the Ū phase feeds back into the Pū phase, creating a continuous cycle of learning and improvement. This approach ensures that research findings are not merely academic but lead to practical, actionable grassroots solutions that can be implemented to improve disaster response and recovery efforts for Hauraki Māori communities. By aligning with Māori worldviews and knowledge systems, this model provides a nuanced understanding of the interconnected systemic barriers facing Hauraki Māori, while also identifying grassroots strengths, capabilities and solutions.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this research was gained from Te Whare Wananga O Awanuiārangi. Access to the raw data is restricted to the research team only and in line with the participants' ethical approval and informed consent. Every care has been taken to protect the anonymity of participants. Informed consent forms have been held separately from the data, and transcripts held in password-protected digital files. All data will be destroyed after seven years.

As the study focuses primarily on Hauraki Māori experiences it may be limited, in terms of not fully representing the diversity of experiences across all affected communities in the rohe.

Methodology Summary

This chapter outlined the research design and methodology used to explore how Hauraki Māori responded to Cyclone Gabrielle. Using the Pū-Rā-Ka-Ū framework, the study integrated Kaupapa Māori comparative thematic analysis with reflexive thematic analysis to theme and organise findings.

The qualitative data collection highlighted contrasts between Whānau and TCDC approaches to disaster management, revealing gaps in communication, resource allocation, and cultural understanding. The Pū-Rā-Ka-Ū model provided a nuanced comprehension of these issues while identifying strengths and solutions rooted in Hauraki Māori wisdom. Ethical considerations were followed to protect participant data and identities.
This methodology aims to inform more effective and culturally intelligent disaster management strategies for Hauraki Māori communities. The next chapter includes a literature scan on weather recovery, summarising key recent and relevant studies on Cyclone Gabrielle and disaster preparedness, response, and recovery in Aotearoa.

Chapter 7

Literature Scan and Affecting Policy Change

Introduction

A recent scan of emergency management reviews identified lessons from other areas affected by Cyclone Gabrielle, with a particular focus on Māori communities. Insights from whānau participants and TCDC participants involved in this research are essential for shaping the future of emergency management in Hauraki. The pathway forward must include appropriate and effective responses, as well as collaborative approaches to working with and supporting whānau and Māori communities in Hauraki.

The reviews examined are comprehensive. Below are key insights from three critical reports:

1. **Hawke's Bay Civil Defence and Emergency Management Group (2024):** *Independent External Review: Response to Cyclone Gabrielle.*
2. **Boshier, P. (2023):** *Insights and Observations: The Chief Ombudsman's Report on Extreme Weather Events.*
3. **Department of Internal Affairs (2024):** *Report of the Government Inquiry into the Response to the North Island Severe Weather.*

Independent External Review: Response to Cyclone Gabrielle (2024)

This review of the Hawke's Bay Civil Defence and Emergency Management (CDEM) Group's response to Cyclone Gabrielle provides valuable lessons for improving emergency management in the Hauraki region.

Key Findings

1. Structural Challenges:

- Emergency management in New Zealand is often handled by local council staff, who may lack consistent training in the Coordinated Incident Management System (CIMS) and operational experience.
- Māori agencies and marae demonstrated capacity for large-scale welfare services but were often hindered by bureaucratic decision-making.

2. Engagement with Māori:

- Engagement with iwi Māori and Māori communities was ad hoc rather than systematically integrated into emergency plans.

3. Operational Gaps:

- Overconfidence in readiness due to prior emergencies led to insufficient scenario planning and low multi-agency operational experience.
- Community resources, such as volunteers and businesses, were not well-utilised during the response.

4. Communications and Inclusion:

- Emergency communication strategies were overly reliant on social media and lacked inclusivity for vulnerable populations.
- Tailored support for migrant, remote, disabled, and vulnerable communities was inadequate.

Embedding Lessons Learned

To improve future responses, the report recommends:

- Changing system settings, culture, and policies.
- Investing in a future-proof emergency management system.
- Striking a balance between local planning, regional delivery, and national professionalism.
- Demonstrating honesty, courage, and leadership to implement systemic changes.

Priority Recommendations: The 4Rs

1. Reduction:

Develop a regional Disaster Reduction Plan, incorporating:

- Indigenous knowledge and Kaupapa Māori approaches.
- Risk reduction operations, such as river management and flood mitigation.
- Sub-plans targeting migrant, disabled, vulnerable, and remote communities.

2. Readiness, Response, and Recovery:

Prioritise collaboration with local iwi, communities, and volunteers to enhance preparedness and resilience.

Insights from the Chief Ombudsman's Report on Extreme Weather Events (2023)

The Chief Ombudsman's role includes ensuring fairness and equity in government responses.

His report highlights systemic shortcomings during the 2023 extreme weather events.

Key Findings

1. Infrastructure and Isolation:

- Lifeline infrastructure failures left communities isolated for weeks, hampering access to information, supplies, and support.
- Many iwi opened marae as emergency hubs, providing food, shelter, and internet access.

2. Disproportionate Impact on Tangata Whenua:

- Māori communities faced significant challenges, including exclusion from formal emergency management structures and uneven distribution of resources.
- Communication gaps affected disabled, non-English speaking, and older populations, increasing their vulnerability.

3. Community-Led Responses:

- Iwi-led efforts provided critical support during the crisis, often compensating for government shortcomings.

Recommendations

The Chief Ombudsman emphasises the importance of:

- Strengthening infrastructure to withstand disasters.
- Improving communication strategies to include all demographics.
- Recognising the leadership and contributions of iwi in disaster response.

Government Inquiry into the Response to North Island Severe Weather (2024)

This inquiry reviewed three major weather events in 2023 and identified systemic issues in New Zealand's emergency management system.

Key Findings

- Communication from Civil Defence was inconsistent.
- Māori were excluded from formal emergency management structures but played critical roles in crisis response.
- The system urgently needs reform to better integrate iwi Māori and community leadership.

Recommendations for Hauraki

1. Place people and communities at the heart of an integrated emergency management system.
2. Empower iwi Pare Hauraki to contribute effectively, leveraging their capacity and capability.
3. Utilise the wider government ecosystem to optimise emergency responses.

Key Insights from the Literature Scan

The following critical gaps and challenges were identified from the literature scan, with implications for emergency management in the Hauraki region:

1. Systemic Inequities:

- Māori communities were disproportionately affected by disaster events and excluded from formal emergency management structures.
- Resource allocation and decision-making processes lacked equity, leaving Māori communities under-supported during and after events.

2. Operational Challenges:

- Overconfidence and lack of scenario planning led to inadequate preparedness.
- Emergency communication strategies were ineffective, especially for vulnerable populations (e.g., elderly, disabled, non-English speaking communities).

3. Leadership and Resilience of Māori Communities:

- Despite systemic barriers, Māori communities displayed remarkable resilience and leadership, often stepping in to fill gaps left by formal structures.
- Marae functioned as emergency hubs, providing food, shelter, and internet access, showcasing the value of localised, culturally grounded responses.

4. Opportunities for Policy Alignment:

- Recommendations emphasised integrating Māori knowledge systems, improving communication channels, and fostering collaboration between iwi, local governments, and communities.

Aligning with these recommendations will ensure a more resilient and inclusive emergency management framework for the Hauraki region. Building on these insights, the following section explores how these lessons can be translated into actionable policy changes.

Cyclone Gabrielle: A Case Study in Leadership and Gaps

The response to Cyclone Gabrielle highlighted both the strengths and challenges of current emergency management systems in New Zealand. Key lessons include:

1. Strengths of Māori-Led Initiatives:

- Many marae across Hauraki were activated as emergency hubs, providing food, shelter, and internet access. These marae became critical centres of support, leveraging local leadership and cultural knowledge and practices to meet immediate needs.
- In Thames, a school operated as an evacuation centre for several days, stepping in to fill gaps left by formal agencies. Unlike the official centre, which closed at 5pm and offered minimal support, such as tea and biscuits, the school provided a space for sustained community care and recovery coordination.

- Key Tangata Whenua social services in Thames were pivotal in coordinating rescue and recovery efforts, often stepping in where formal systems failed. For instance, these services with local networks established in COVID-19 worked collaboratively to deliver essential supplies to isolated communities.

2. Challenges in the Formal Response:

- Civil Defence communications were inconsistent, leaving many communities uninformed and vulnerable.
- Vulnerable populations, including disabled and remote communities, faced significant delays in receiving aid.
- Historical mistrust between Māori communities and local authorities obstructs collaboration.

3. Policy Gaps in Action:

- Top-down decision-making limited the effectiveness of the response, sidelining Māori knowledge and leadership.
- The lack of localised disaster planning compounded the impact on vulnerable communities.

Implications for Policy Reform:

Cyclone Gabrielle highlights the need for systemic change, emphasising the integration of Māori leadership, culturally informed practices, and localised planning into the national emergency management framework.

Policy Pathways for Equitable Emergency Management in Hauraki

Challenges in Current Policy Frameworks

One of the most significant challenges in emergency management is the exclusion of Māori from decision-making processes that directly impact their communities. Rather than a Te Tiriti-based model, current frameworks assume a top-down approach where the Crown retains unilateral control, disregarding the rangatiratanga of and hapū and iwi.

This misalignment is evident in the Building Act 2004, which enforces rigid compliance models that ignore collective living arrangements central to Māori communities. Similarly, Civil Defence frameworks fail to integrate Māori knowledge and leadership, often undermining whānau-led responses. The presumption of Crown sovereignty in disaster response has deepened mistrust, making it difficult for Māori to engage in a system that does not reflect their constitutional authority under Te Tiriti o Waitangi and He Whakaputanga.

Opportunities for Policy Reform: A Matike Mai Approach

Rather than reinforcing Crown-centred models, emergency management in Hauraki must transition to a Te Tiriti-centred Matike Mai framework, which does not assume co-governance but instead recognises three distinct spheres of decision-making:

1. *The Rangatiratanga Sphere –* where Hauraki whānau, hapū and iwi make decisions for their people, ensuring Māori-led emergency response and recovery strategies.

2. *The Kāwanatanga Sphere –* where the Crown continues to administer its responsibilities while ensuring that its actions do not override or undermine rangatiratanga.

3. *The Relational Sphere –* where Māori and the Crown engage as equals in emergency response coordination, based on whakapapa and tikanga values rather than a majoritarian or adversarial model.

These spheres replace the inadequate co-governance model, which assumes a shared decision-making framework within a Crown-dominated system. Instead, a Hauraki Matike Mai approach, Hauraki Māori retain constitutional authority over tangata whenua-led responses, ensuring tino rangatiratanga in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.

Key Pathways to Constitutional Transformation in Emergency Management

1. Embedding a Rangatiratanga-Centred Approach in Legislation

- Amend the Local Government Act 2002 and Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002 to formally recognise the rangatiratanga sphere in emergency management.
- Remove barriers in the Building Act 2004 that prevent Māori from using whakapapa-based housing models, such as papakāinga, in post-disaster recovery.

2. Strengthening Māori-Led Decision-Making Structures

- Resource existing whānau, Hapū and Iwi Emergency Response Ohu and resource the establishment of these where they do not exist, to enable active Māori-led disaster governance in Hauraki.
- Resource and formalise marae-based and / or hapori Māori emergency management hubs, recognising their role as critical civil defence infrastructure.
- Resource Hauraki whānau, hapū and iwi to implement tikanga-based decision-making mechanisms to align with Māori-led disaster responses rather than Crown-imposed structures.

3. Developing a Relational Sphere for Equitable Decision-Making

- Establish a Hauraki Emergency Management Tiriti Assembly, where iwi/hapū leadership and the Crown make joint, values-based decisions rather than engaging in adversarial, majoritarian processes.
- Integrate constitutional tikanga principles, ensuring decision-making processes prioritise transparency, whakapapa obligations, and interdependence.

4. Resourcing Whānau-Led Emergency Preparedness and Response

- Establish a Māori Emergency Management Fund to ensure direct investment in whānau, hapū, and iwi-led response strategies.
- Implement targeted capacity-building programmes, providing training in disaster response, resilience planning, and tikanga-based emergency coordination.

Monitoring and Evaluating Policy Reforms

A robust monitoring system based on Matike Mai principles needs to be implemented to ensure that these policy shifts are meaningful and sustained.

1. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):

- The extent of Māori-led decision-making in emergency response.
- The recognition of tikanga-based governance models in emergency management policies.
- Increased investment in whānau, hapori and marae-led disaster preparedness.

2. Community-Led Feedback and Accountability Mechanisms:

- Establish Māori-led review panels to assess policy effectiveness.
- Ensure regular wānanga and hui to refine emergency strategies in response to whānau experiences.

3. Tikanga-Based Scenario Testing:

- Conduct whakapapa-centred disaster simulations, where whānau, marae, and iwi test and refine emergency response strategies.
- Establish a Marae and hapori Māori Emergency Resilience Network to facilitate localised crisis response planning.

Outcome: A Constitutionally Transformed Emergency Management System

By implementing a Matike Mai-based model, emergency management in Hauraki will shift from a Crown-controlled process to one where Māori exercise their constitutional authority over disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.

The system will be:

- Rangatiratanga-Centred – Māori lead emergency responses for their communities.
- Te Tiriti-Based – Decision-making reflects separate but interdependent spheres of influence.
- Whakapapa-Driven – Emergency strategies reflect whānau, hapū, and iwi relationships rather than generic, top-down policies.
- Responsive & Sustainable – Grounded in tikanga Māori, ensuring resilience for future generations.

Communications Plan Outline

Purpose

This Communications Plan ensures that the insights and lessons from the Cyclone Gabrielle research contribute to long-term, Te Tiriti-based transformation. It asserts the necessity of Māori exercising rangatiratanga over emergency preparedness, response, and recovery.

Objectives

- Assert rangatiratanga by promoting Māori-led emergency governance models.
- Challenge systemic injustice by communicating the constitutional failings of the current system.

- Mobilise action through whānau, hapū, and iwi engagement.
- Celebrate Māori resilience and successful community-led responses.

Target Audiences

Primary Audiences

- Whānau, hapū, and iwi of Hauraki
- Marae and kaupapa Māori organisations
- Emergency management agencies
- Local and regional government bodies

Secondary Audiences

- General public
- Media outlets
- Academic and research institutions
- Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)

Key Messages

- Māori communities must lead their emergency responses through constitutionally recognised decision-making.
- Te Tiriti-based governance is the foundation for an equitable emergency management system.
- The Crown must transition from control to a relational role, where iwi and hapū exercise tino rangatiratanga.
- The resilience and expertise of Hauraki Māori communities demonstrate the effectiveness of whakapapa-led responses.
- Systemic change is a constitutional obligation, ensuring Māori authority is embedded in emergency management law and practice.

Communication Channels

- Digital Platforms – Hauraki Māori Emergency Governance Hub, social media, email and WhatsApp groups.
- Traditional Media – Press statements, radio segments on iwi and mainstream stations.
- Community Engagement – Hui, wānanga, policy forums, and printed resources.

Evaluation

- Measure Māori-led policy uptake in emergency management.
- Track increases in Māori-led emergency governance structures.
- Use community surveys and direct feedback mechanisms to ensure accountability.

Concluding Call to Action

The lessons from Cyclone Gabrielle reveal an urgent need to move beyond colonial, top-down crisis management frameworks. Emergency management must be reconfigured in line with Te Tiriti and the constitutional aspirations of whānau, hapū and iwi ensuring Māori exercise their inherent rangatiratanga rather than being sidelined in times of crisis.

The current model, where the Crown assumes control and Māori are expected to merely participate, is no longer acceptable. A Matike Mai approach provides a pathway forward:

- A constitutionally transformed emergency management system where Hauraki Māori lead decision-making within the Rangatiratanga Sphere.
- A redefined Tiriti relationship where hapū, iwi, and the Crown engage as equals within the Relational Sphere.
- A rejection of adversarial models in favour of whakapapa-based governance.

Hauraki stands at a pivotal moment. By asserting tino rangatiratanga, embedding Māori-led emergency governance, and ensuring constitutional transformation, we can create an emergency management system that upholds Te Tiriti and sets a precedent for the nation. The time for action is now. Failure to act perpetuates injustice, while bold and principled transformation ensures a more substantial, safer, and just future for all.

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