



GUIDE FOR COMMUNITIES

REDUCING THE RISK OF WILDFIRES

The guide seeks to encourage communities by leveraging their knowledge, experience and available resources to effectively prepare for the challenges they face. It outlines four key steps for communities looking to organize and reduce their wildfire risk.

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REDUCING THE RISK OF WILDFIRES

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This is part of the “Toolkit for Reducing Disaster Risk from Wildfires”. It was created by the implementation team of the pilot project “Dialogue and Action Against Wildfires: Empowering Communities for Resilience to Natural Disasters” with the support of the research program ACCTING (AdvanCing behavioural Change Through an INclusiveGreen deal): European Union’s Horizon 2020, No 101036504. For more information about the toolkit, go to the website <https://dock-sse.org/tool/disaster-risk-reduction/>



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This guide is designed for communities seeking to take proactive steps to reduce their wildfire risk. It emphasizes community empowerment and action, incorporating local knowledge, experience, available resources, and community structures.

The guide contains the methodology, tools and examples, enabling communities to design and implement solutions that meet their own needs and capabilities.

Its philosophy is rooted in the belief that communities can play a crucial role in prevention and preparedness, as they best understand their environment, people, and unique characteristics.

The goal of the guide is to be an empowerment tool, strengthening collective action in each community. Through the risk management process, communities can increase their resilience and create a safer future for all.

The guide was inspired by the implementation of the 12-month program “Dialogue and Action Against Wildfires”, and the experience gained through the four communities of Messina that participated: Ancient Messini, Manganiako, Trikorfo and Koromilia. During the implementation, the need for methodologies and tools that would help the communities organize, plan and act was highlighted, while it was found that the available tools and methodologies were not sufficient. The guide, methodology and worksheets were created through the cooperation and participation of the communities themselves, the partners as well as a number of people who supported this effort. They were designed, tested and improved through the following processes:

The collaboration with the four communities of the program, formed the basis for the creation of the guide. The tools were designed and developed based on the needs that emerged during the implementation of the collective processes and were continuously improved, based on observations and experience from their use.

The Forum “Dialogue and Action: Climate Crisis, Forest Fires, Resilient Places” took place on 2 and 3 November 2024 at the Messina Town Hall, where the methodology and the guide worksheets were presented and its usefulness was discussed with researchers, communities and stakeholders, including civil society organizations and SSE(Social Solidarity Economy) actors. The results were encouraging while some participating communities expressed interest in adopting the process in their own actions.

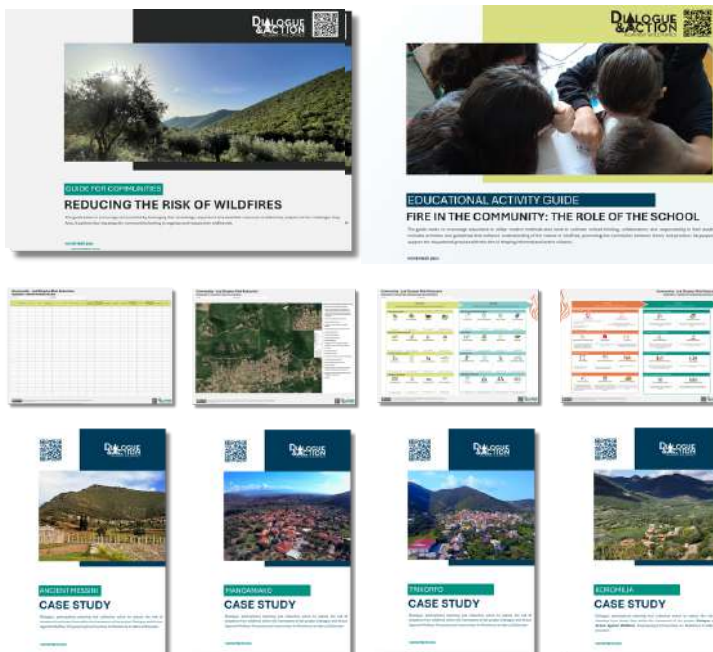
The action “Fire in the Community – the Role of the School” which took place in 14 schools in the Municipality of Messina, in collaboration with the Municipality of Messina and the Center for Environmental Education and Sustainability of Kalamata. The action included teacher training and workshops, where students proposed actions to reduce the risk of forest fires in their own communities. The results highlighted the ease of use, the enhancement of creative thinking and the activation of the participants.

The workshop “Co-creating Inclusive Solutions for Climate Change Adaptation” took place on 27 June 2024 in Valencia, as part of the European Urban Resilience Forum (EURESFO24). The workshop used the methodology and worksheets to allow participants from different countries, with no prior experience in risk management, to develop an action plan for a hypothetical small community. The results highlighted the usability and adaptability of the guide.

The guide is part of a wildfire risk reduction toolkit that includes a guide for communities, a guide for educators to implement a relevant workshop, worksheets and four case studies, so that communities can design and implement solutions that meet their own needs and capabilities.

The Wildfire Risk Reduction Toolkit is aimed at communities that wish to organize themselves to reduce the risk they face from wildfires.

It emphasizes community-driven action and initiative while taking into account knowledge, experience, available resources and the way in which communities are structured.



The toolkit is available online at:
dock-sse.org/tool/disaster-risk-reduction

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STEP 4: TURN THE PLAN INTO ACTION! 24

It focuses on the transition from design to implementation, with practical steps, role allocation and strengthening partnerships, so that ideas can be transformed into actions for the community.

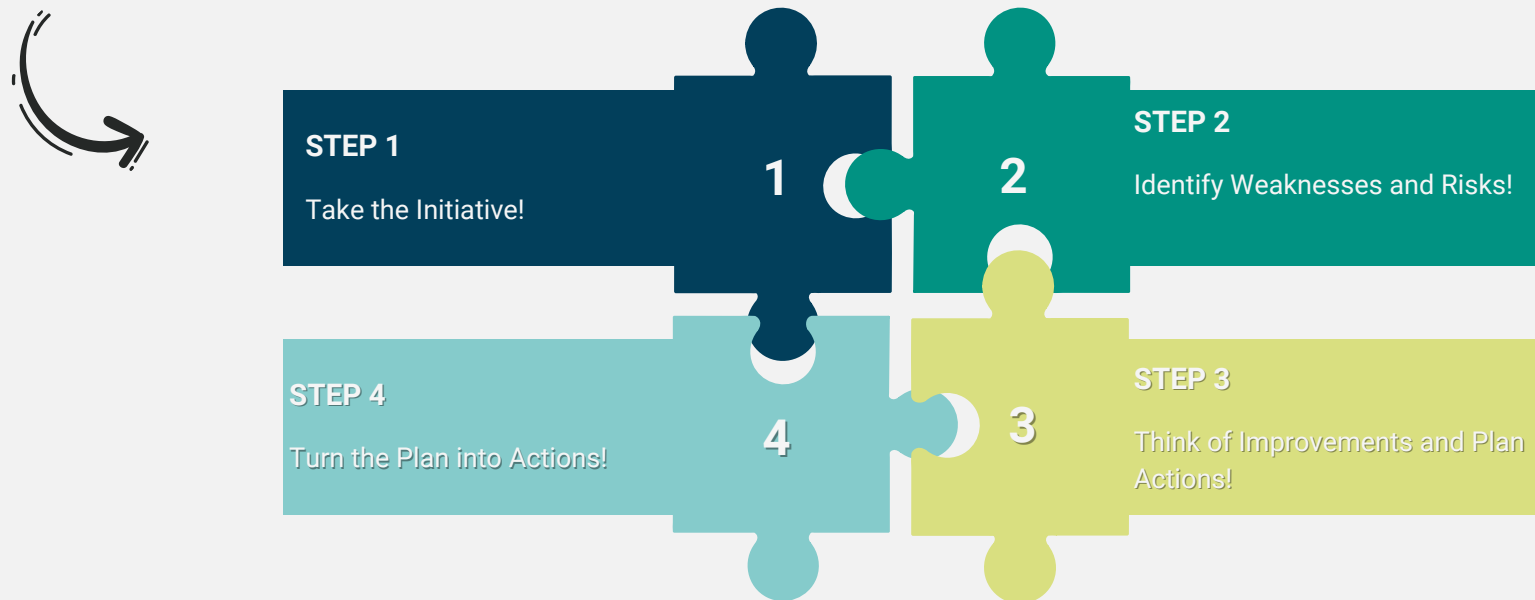
THE IMPORTANCE OF INTEGRATED DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT 28

The last section summarizes the importance of integrated fire risk management and the connection and cooperation with other bodies.

Introduction to the Guides's Approach

As local communities are the first line of defense against wildfires, their action is vital. This guide suggests the implementation of 4 simple steps and is based on the three-pronged approach of Systems Thinking Approach combined with the Disaster Risk Management Cycle and Community-led Disaster Risk Reduction.

The guide seeks to encourage communities to take initiatives by leveraging their knowledge, experience and available resources, in order to effectively prepare for the challenges they face and suggests the implementation of the following steps:



The 4 steps of the guide integrate the phases of the risk management cycle. The disaster risk management cycle is a systematic approach that describes the phases of prevention, preparedness, response and recovery in cases of natural disasters. All phases of the cycle are interconnected and equally important: from reducing risks before they occur to preparing for immediate response and managing the consequences after a crisis, while at the same time, it is a process of continuous improvement, as each experience and lesson contributes to improving future actions. Using the cycle can help communities organize their action in a structured way, maximizing the effectiveness of each intervention and strengthening their overall resilience.

It is the phase after the fire, where efforts are made to restore the area to its pre-disaster condition. It includes cleaning and protecting burned areas, flood control and soil erosion control projects, supporting affected residents, and assessing and restoring vegetation.

It concerns the actions taken during a fire to control and limit its spread. It includes notifying the Authorities, coordinating and implementing emergency steps, issues of mutual aid and solidarity, and firefighting.



This phase includes preventive measures and practices aimed at minimizing the likelihood of fire. It includes vegetation management, management of flammable materials, autonomy in basic services and public awareness.

In this phase, preparations are made to ensure a quick and effective response to potential fire outbreaks. It includes the assessment of infrastructure and equipment, fire detection, emergency planning, and the information and education of residents.

STEP 1 Take the Initiative!

A community initiative to reduce fire risks can start from any member of the community who is interested in protecting it. This could be the municipal councillor, a group of residents, a local business, or a local association. It can also start from a volunteer group, the school, a group of farmers, the village parish, or even people who frequently visit the area.



SUCCESS STARTS WITH PROPER PREPARATION



A) WHO WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE WORKING GROUP?

A team of 3-5 people can coordinate actions with flexibility and efficiency.

B) WHO WILL TAKE ON THE KEY ROLES?

Define roles that will help better organize the group, such as the coordinator and the motivator.

C) WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS AND WHAT IS THE TIMELINE?

Set clear goals with a specific timeline, such as having an information campaign planned by next May.

D) HOW WILL THE COMMUNITY BE INFORMED AND PARTICIPATE?

Define how the community will be informed of progress, ensuring community member participation and support.

COORDINATOR & MOTIVATOR ROLE

The coordinator organizes the actions and ensures their smooth implementation, while the motivator encourages community participation and ensures the continuous mobilization of residents. Their roles complement each other to achieve the goals.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

It is important that everyone has the opportunity to participate in the way and at the time that suits them best. Multiple approaches may be needed, such as events, questionnaires, informal discussions, interviews, etc.



Cultural Association

Puppet theater

KEY ROLES IN THE COMMUNITY

The local cultural association recognized the broader role it can play in the well-being of the community and took action in all aspects of the initiative, acting as a key pillar for information and collective mobilization. The elected President played a crucial role, offering his knowledge of the residents and infrastructure.

ENHANCING PARTICIPATION THROUGH SELECTED ACTIONS

Participation was strengthened through the annual Women's Day celebration during which relevant discussions took place. The local association undertook the task to conduct interviews with residents, thus ensuring a friendly and safe environment for expression. In addition, a children's experiential puppet theater was created and presented as part of the event, attracting children and parents.



Community Event

Informal Meeting

KEY ROLES IN THE COMMUNITY

The village President, the Municipal Councilor and the President of the association had decisive roles. The village President participated in the meetings, while the Municipal Councilor and the President of the association contributed to the mobilization and information of the residents. The participation, in some of the actions, of the Forester and firefighters who are members of the community was noteworthy.

ENHANCING PARTICIPATION THROUGH SELECTED ACTIONS

An open public debate was held for the first time in this community, which the residents assessed as something substantial. At the same time, a meeting was organized with the women of the community, who did not have the opportunity to speak at the main event. A member of the community volunteered to help with the interviews, enhancing participation.

MAGGANIAKO



Telling Memories



Laboratory

KEY ROLES IN THE COMMUNITY

The Village President showed keen interest, which evolved into active involvement in matters within his responsibilities, while the cultural association played a crucial role in communicating and promoting the first event. The members of the local Social Cooperative Enterprise, among the most active in the community, played a crucial role, taking action in all aspects of the initiative.

ENHANCING PARTICIPATION THROUGH SELECTED ACTIONS

With previous experience in participatory processes, this community had a prior trust in the process, which was evident in all the actions. In fact, from the beginning, they requested that a thematic workshop be included, which was done. The elderly, as expected, were happy with the opportunity to participate in both interviews and informal discussions.

KOROMILIA



Community Meeting



Voting

KEY ROLES IN THE COMMUNITY

The very small community was surrounded by the wider community of relatives and friends who are interested in the village and live in a nearby city. The President of the village, beyond the limits of his institutional role, actively participated in all the processes. The former president, now retired, also played a decisive role, he actively and continuously supported the initiative at all stages.

ENHANCING PARTICIPATION THROUGH SELECTED ACTIONS

It is noteworthy the way the community functions as a collective body, with a strong sense of individual and collective responsibility, participating actively in all processes. On the occasion of the European elections day, a resolution was created on the community's priorities regarding wildfires, while home interviews were also conducted with elderly community members.

STEP 2 Identify Weaknesses and Risks!

To effectively prepare a community for wildfires, it is important to first understand the current situation. Mapping resources, infrastructure and experiences from past incidents helps to highlight any weaknesses and risks. This analysis is a key element in designing actions that respond to the real needs of the community, ensuring that it is better prepared in the future.





REALITY IS THE BASIS FOR ALL CHANGE.

A) WHAT ARE THE EXPERIENCES FROM PREVIOUS INCIDENTS?

Document the community's lessons and experiences from past crises, such as wildfires or other natural disasters

C) WHAT IS THE CONDITION OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE AND EQUIPMENT?

Assess the condition of infrastructure and equipment to determine if they are functional and suitable for use

B) WHAT ARE THE AVAILABLE RESOURCES AND INFRASTRUCTURE?

Identify human resources and physical infrastructure that can be used in the event of a crisis.

D) WHAT ARE THE WEAKNESSES AND RISKS?

Identify community vulnerabilities and key risks that need to be addressed to improve readiness and safety

WORKSHEETS

To organize and assess the situation, four worksheets have been created, which are presented on the following pages:

- **Resident Information Table:** Gathers basic data about residents
- **Community Map with Markers:** Depicts critical infrastructure on a map
- **Prevention and Preparedness Measurements:** Recording prevention and preparedness actions
- **Guidelines for Response and Recovery:** Guidelines for crises and recovery

Download the worksheets at:

dock-sse.org/tool/disaster-risk-reduction



PREVENTION AND READINESS MEASUREMENTS

The prevention and readiness sheet aims to record prevention and readiness actions. This sheet consists of 2 tables, one for prevention and one for readiness. Each table has 4 categories containing 4 subcategories. The purpose of the prevention and readiness sheet is twofold: on the one hand, it can be used to record the existing situation, while on the other hand, it can be used for communities to organize and plan the measures they want to take for improvement.



GUIDELINES FOR RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

The response and recovery sheet aims to inform the community in the event of wildfires. It consists of two tables, one for response and one for recovery, which are divided into 4 categories. The tables contain instructions for the event of a fire and for recovery.





Community Event



Infrastructure Autopsy

STRENGTHS

The community has strong knowledge and expertise of the localities, while the existence of volunteer groups and critical water points is a significant advantage. The willingness to take action and the willingness to improve the organization, with the President of the community playing a central role, provide the basis for a more effective response to fire risks.

WEAK POINTS

There are challenges such as lack of coordination with local authorities, limited infrastructure and resources, as well as the absence of systematic training. In addition, the need for maintenance of equipment (pipes, motors) was identified, while the nozzles need to be improved for better compatibility with fire trucks. Finally, the water intake points have low pressure.



On-Site Autopsy



Residents' Table

STRENGTHS

The strong solidarity and experience of residents emerge as a valuable basis for strengthening fire prevention and response measures. However, this willingness to participate in local initiatives must be reinforced with appropriate institutional support, both in terms of cooperation with the Authorities and by ensuring adequate resources and infrastructure.

WEAK POINTS

The inability to implement the legal framework and the insufficient cooperation with the Authorities make it necessary to better coordinate with the local authorities. At the same time, the replacement of the main tank connection, cleaning and maintenance of the fire hydrant, as well as the utilization of the private swimming pool for pumping water in cases of emergency are required.

ANCIENT MESSINI



Recording on a Map



Autopsy in a waterTank

STRENGTHS

The community is distinguished by its experience in many fire incidents, which is a valuable foundation for improving prevention and readiness. At the same time, the presence of organizations such as the cultural association demonstrates the willingness of many community members to take action, despite limited mobilization capabilities.

WEAK POINTS

The community is called upon to bridge the gaps between neighboring settlements and between different age groups, while dependence on external agencies for basic infrastructure limits its autonomy. Issues were identified in the water infrastructure, e.g. fire hydrants with insufficient pressure or others that were found covered by vegetation. In addition, water supplies need better signage and accessibility.

MANGANIAKO



Search on Map



Autopsy at the pumping station

STRENGTHS

The community of Manganiako presents strengths such as the immediate mobilization of residents, community solidarity and the multidimensional perception of fires as a socio-economic and environmental issue. The residents demonstrate organization and commitment, elements that enable them to respond effectively in cases of danger.

WEAK POINTS

Lack of coordination with local authorities, limited infrastructure and lack of systematic training remain challenges. In addition, damaged valves, incompatibility of components and vegetation obstructions limit the utilization of infrastructure. Maintenance of paths to critical water points was also considered necessary.

STEP 3 Think of Improvements and Plan Actions!

An effective plan to address challenges can only emerge through collaboration and participation of community members. Participatory planning not only ensures that different perspectives and experiences are taken into account, but also creates a sense of collective responsibility. Through collaboration, actions become more applicable, respond to real needs, and substantially strengthen community resilience.





CHALLENGES ARE OVERCOME WITH A CLEAR PLAN

A) WHAT IS THE CATEGORY YOU WILL FOCUS ON?

Choose one category from the analysis you do in Worksheet 3 in the previous step that can get immediate attention.

B) WHAT ACTIONS CAN IMPROVE A WEAK POINT?

Suggest realistic actions you can implement to reduce weaknesses or address the challenges identified.

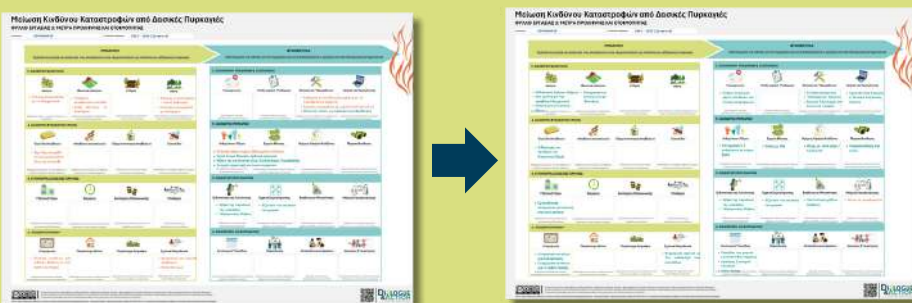
C) HOW CAN YOU REINFORCE AN EXISTING GOOD PRACTICE?

Suggest ways to strengthen or evolve a practice that is already working effectively in your community.

D) WHAT ACTION CAN COVER SOMETHING THAT HAS NOT YET BEEN EXAMINED?

Think of an action that could respond to issues or opportunities that have not been highlighted in the previous stage.

TRANSITION FROM “SCENARIO 0” TO THE IMPROVED “SCENARIO B”



The completed Worksheet 3 from the previous step captures the current situation (Scenario 0). With the ideas and actions from Step 3, a new Worksheet is created, which forms Scenario B. This includes suggestions for improving weaknesses, reinforcing good practices and filling gaps, contributing to strengthening resilience.



SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The maintenance of paths to critical water points, the collection of bulky waste at a specific point, and the provision of basic equipment for the community. It was considered important to make a plan for the community tank while at the same time, it was proposed to inform via Viber group about fire and dangerous days, as well as the use of the cafe and the square for relevant announcements.

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

The residents of Manganiako emphasize prevention, with initiatives such as clearing forest areas and maintaining infrastructure, while at the same time recognizing the importance of immediate mobilization and cooperation for the effective response to fires.



SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Cleaning and maintaining paths, continuation of the "Save Your Hood" action, information actions in central points of the village (leaflets, posters, QR Code) and supply of necessary equipment such as a fire truck and an additional tank at the tap. In addition, the creation of a volunteer group in collaboration with other communities was proposed.

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

The community focused on readiness issues oriented towards proposals for equipment, coordination and training. They believe that equipment and immediate response will be more effective in a fire than prevention, without this meaning that there were no proposals related to vegetation management.

KOROMILIA



SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

New study for opening a road to the Manganiako, recording and communicating with owners for the cleaning of plots, and installation of the existing generator at the pumping station. Informing residents about recycling, the action plan and the fire season through the village president (verbally) and the president of the association (Facebook and Viber group). At the same time, supplying basic equipment for the community.

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Koromilia is clearly oriented towards fire prevention, recognizing that extinguishing a fire once it has started is very difficult. They believe that early action and prevention can prevent disasters, recognizing the role of readiness, especially around issues that can easily and quickly improve existing infrastructure.

TRICORFO



SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Personal communication with owners of unclean plots and support for those facing financial difficulties to clean them. Request for open bins for bulky items in 1-2 locations and informing the community about the necessary actions. Also, a proposal to install another large tank with natural flow under the square.

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

The interest of residents in Trikorfo was more focused on prevention, with an emphasis on infrastructure, clean-ups, and preparation to avoid disasters. Readiness was considered complementary, in order to reduce the reaction time in case of an emergency.

STEP 4 Turn the plan into action

The transition from planning to action is the most critical stage in making the plan a reality. In this step, the community is called upon to initiate the first actions, organize the timeline and project team, and seek synergies that will enhance implementation. Through proper preparation and collaboration, ideas become reality.



A PLAN WITHOUT ACTION IS JUST AN IDEA.



A) WHAT ACTION WILL YOU START FIRST?

Define the first priority and implement it. It is recommended that it be an easy and quick action that will motivate the team to continue.

B) WHAT WILL BE THE TIMETABLE?

Determine when each action will start, when it will be completed, and whether intermediate stages are required to monitor progress.

C) WHO WILL TAKE ON EACH ROLE?

Create a project team, define key roles and assign responsibilities for implementing actions.

D) WHO CAN HELP?

Consider opportunities for collaboration and networking with other communities, local agencies, or groups that can strengthen your effort.

THE POWER OF SMALL SCALE

Small, meaningful steps can provide momentum and build confidence. Choose actions that are easy to implement and show immediate results to mobilize the community and lay the foundation for more complex initiatives down the road.

CERTIFIED VOLUNTEER GROUP

If you see that your actions are progressing and having an impact, consider certifying your community as a volunteer group. This will provide you with credibility, training, new collaboration opportunities, access to resources, and greater recognition, enhancing the effectiveness of your actions.

KOROMILIA



Prioritization of Actions



Implementation Planning

LEARNING FROM KOROMILIA

The process in Koromilia highlighted how collective action, community cohesion and the use of local knowledge enhance the resilience of a community. The community responded immediately to the autopsy work and organized monitoring on high-risk days, demonstrating that with guidance and knowledge, it can significantly increase its resilience to natural disasters.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The community of Koromilia plans to mobilize for the completion of the opening of the road connecting to the Manganiako. It is proposed to annually update the information board and the community map, conduct on-site inspections of the infrastructure, strengthen education and information for residents, as well as improve cooperation with the competent authorities.

MANGANIAKO



Educational Activity



Prioritization of Actions

LEARNING FROM MANGANIAKO

Manganiako is a role model, showing that small communities can manage crises effectively. Local knowledge, organized action, and community solidarity create a model that strengthens resilience. Residents reported feeling more prepared to respond to incidents during the summer.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

In Manganiako, it is proposed to immediately address the findings of the autopsy related to basic infrastructure. It is also proposed to annually update the information board and the community map, as well as an annual on-site inspection to assess the condition of tanks, hydrants and rural roads.

TRIKORFO



Dialogue



Prioritization of Actions

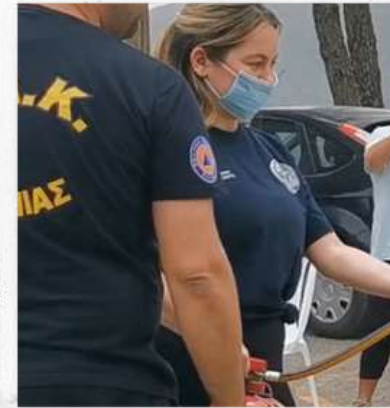
LEARNING FROM TRIKORFO

In Trikorfo, the experience, local knowledge and organization of the community are combined with a commitment to the protection of both the specific settlement and the wider area. Their timely response to fires in neighboring villages highlights the recognition of the interdependence of local communities and the shared responsibility for the preservation of the entire ecosystem.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

In Trikorfo, it is proposed to create a residents' information board and to immediately address the findings of the autopsy related to basic infrastructure. It is also proposed to annually update the community map, as well as an annual on-site inspection to assess the condition of tanks, hydrants and rural roads.

ANCIENT MESSINI



Educational Activity



Prioritization of Actions

LEARNING FROM ANCIENT MESSINI

Ancient Messini demonstrates that even through challenges, such as unfamiliarity with collective actions in a community, opportunities can emerge. The process showed that leveraging local knowledge, networking with neighboring communities, and the gradual activation of actors such as cultural associations can create a dynamic that enhances resilience, regardless of the initial level of organization.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

In Ancient Messini, it is proposed to immediately address the autopsy findings related to basic infrastructure. The local association could incorporate informative actions into its operation. It is also proposed to annually update the information board and the community map, as well as an annual on-site inspection to assess the condition of the infrastructure.

The Importance of Integrated Management

Community resilience can begin with the capacity of its own residents to take action and leverage their knowledge and resources. However, there are limits to what can be achieved autonomously. Collaboration with other actors and networking on a larger scale is critical to adopting comprehensive solutions that can meet the needs of the community and strengthen it in the long term.



INDIVIDUAL / FAMILY

Taking responsibility for people, space and property: Readiness and prevention



COMMUNITY

Collective organization and cooperation for the implementation of actions



PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

Coordination and responsibility for wildfires



Managing wildfires requires a holistic approach that combines prevention, readiness, response and recovery. This approach integrates social, environmental and economic factors, taking into account both the needs and capabilities of each community. Active community participation, combined with its interconnection with public agencies, research institutions and other groups, is a key element in creating sustainable solutions that respond to the real challenges of wildfires. Through this process, communities can create solutions that are sustainable, targeted and adapted to real needs, strengthening their resilience and cohesion.

STRENGTHENING INCLUSION

Ensure that all social groups participate in the processes, taking into account different needs, perspectives and skills. Empower community members to feel that their contribution matters, building a culture of collaboration that will enhance cohesion and effectiveness.

COOPERATION WITH PUBLIC BODIES

Contact your local Municipality, Fire Department and Forestry Department, as they are the ones most responsible for wildfire management. Consider whether there are already plans in place, such as "IOLAOS II", and join forces with them to create a more coordinated and effective approach.

COLLABORATION WITH EXPERTS

Seek collaboration with specialized organizations, such as the National Observatory of Athens or ELGO Dimitra, as well as with Universities that have expertise and research experience in the field. Their contribution can provide scientific data and solutions that enhance the sustainability of your actions.

CREATION OF COLLABORATION NETWORKS

Connect with volunteer groups, other communities, and non-profit or environmental organizations. These networks can offer support, knowledge sharing, and resources that will enhance the effectiveness of your efforts.

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The 12-month Dialogue and Action Against Wildfires project was implemented between 01/12/2023 - 01/12/2024 and is a pilot project of ACCTING (AdvanCing behavioural Change Through an INclusive Green deal), which is an EU-funded project (European Union's Horizon 2020, No 101036504) that analyzes the impact of Green Deal policies on vulnerable groups and generates knowledge and innovations to promote behavioural change at an individual and collective level. Partners of the Dialogue and Action Against Wildfires Project are:

