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Protection Prevention Preparedness Response Resilience Recovery



RIP THEM UP AND START AGAIN?

Travel industry resilience | Covid-19 debate | Cybersecurity | Online tribalism & vigilantism | Frontline responder wellbeing | Karachi floods | Asteroids

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Gracie Broom

Cover story: Is it time to rip up our assumptions?

Cover image: Gracie Broom

comment

This edition of the CRJ is about challenging assumptions, unpicking the strands of the Covid-19 pandemic and its multiple cascading consequences, all the while being mindful of how they are conflating with other disasters and emergencies, such as the storms, other extreme weather and wildfires sweeping across the world.



Many cosy assumptions about emergency preparedness systems, society, security and international relations have clearly been misguided and, in part, this stems from a historical lack of emphasis on preparedness and mitigation in favour of post-crisis response. On p28 Eric McNulty notes: "The ever greater demands we place on responders are the result of design failures in our institutions and communities," asking, "How often have you seen ... honorifics bestowed on those who labour on mitigation, preparedness and recovery?"

This leads us to the status of the complex horizontal and vertical relationships between governments, emergency preparedness experts, responders and, most importantly, the public. Assumptions are all too often being made about public involvement in – and experience of – emergencies, as emphasised by David Wales on p16.

When systems are found wanting and citizens don't feel that their needs are being addressed or recognised by authorities, unrest and dissent can proliferate. Starting on p60, CRJ looks at some of the manifestations of such unrest, from lockdown tribalism to overzealous digital behaviour. These trends affect us all – business, emergency planners, responders, governments, communities and individuals – and Jennifer Hesterman provides a sobering reminder of what happens when online crime, terror and vigilantism spill over into the real world (p64). This is backed up by the heightened vulnerabilities highlighted by authors in our cyber feature (p40).

CRJ is not for tearing down systems that work, nor does it advocate the indiscriminate ripping up of assumptions. But failure to ask questions and debate the more difficult subjects that have been skirted around for many years, can only lead to crippling atrophy.

The Great Reset: p96


Anan Punyod | 123rf



Malaika

frontline

Empowerment through education

Model, philanthropist and founder of the grassroots non-profit organisation Malaika, Noella Coursaris is living proof that empowerment and success are achievable through education. She tells her story to **Claire Sanders**

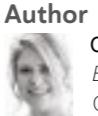
When her father passed away, five-year-old Noella Coursaris was sent to live with relatives in Europe. "My mother couldn't afford to keep me so she made the difficult decision," she says. Despite it being hard for her at the time, she had the opportunity to gain an education.

"When I returned to the Congo at the age of 18, I realised what a gift this was as I saw many children out of school, especially girls. From that moment I wanted to do something to help my country and the dream of Malaika was planted in my heart," she explains.

Coursaris returned to Europe and completed her business studies. At the same, her modelling career took off after she won a competition to be the face of Agent Provocateur, leading to work in New York and London. "I realised, through my modelling, that I had a platform to speak about the need for girls to access education and so in 2007, I launched Malaika."

While Coursaris is now based in the UK, Malaika's roots are in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where its mission is to empower communities through education and health programmes. She explains: "We have a primary and secondary school that provides a holistic curriculum to more than 346 girls. We provide their uniforms, two meals a day and annual health checks. There is also a community centre that provides sport for development programmes and education for more than 5,000 youths and adults."

In the wider community, the foundation has built and refurbished 20 wells that serve 35,000 people. It also has the use of agricultural tools that are used to teach organic farming and provide food for the school canteen. Coursaris tells me that



Author

CLAIRE SANDERS is Editorial Assistant with the Crisis Response Journal

the students and staff are currently supporting the community through the Covid-19 pandemic by making face shields with Malaika's STEM team, using 3D printers. "We have made over 800 to give to local hospitals and nurses," she says.

It is clear that she is also very proud of her team of Congolese staff and volunteers on the ground. "My role is to develop the programmes we have, support our incredible leaders, raise awareness, fundraise and advocate for the importance of education. Malaika is an ecosystem that can be duplicated in any context, globally," she enthuses.

Despite being an inspiration herself for many women, Coursaris finds that the girls in the Congo and their dreams for the future motivate her in turn: "Ester, who is 11 years old, wants to be a businesswoman so she can provide for her family and her country. Audience has been inspired by her own education to give the same opportunities to others and so wants to become a teacher."

Coursaris travels all over the world for modelling campaigns, speaking at events, working at Malaika and holding media interviews. She makes the time to look after her two children and still manages to fit in some exercise and time for herself.

When I ask her about the skills she needs to do her job, it's not surprising when she answers: "I need to be able to manage my time effectively and juggle various tasks. I also need people management, speaking and communication, and problem solving skills."

I ask her what the future holds for her project and her reply is ambitious, but certainly not unrealistic: "I want to see our programmes strengthened and developed further. I would also love to see the Malaika model produced in other contexts around the world."

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