

3.6 Core function #5: Building national capacity in preparedness and contingency planning

Preparedness

In 2015, the IASC defined “preparedness” as any action, measure, or capacity development that is introduced before an emergency to improve the overall effectiveness, efficiency and timeliness of response and recovery. The IASC has also noted that it is a “process that is continuous” so preparedness activities can take place in contexts where an emergency is already active. For example, preparedness activities may be initiated for drought-prone areas that are also armed conflict areas.

Humanitarian Country Teams initiate preparedness activities at the country level, moving through a series of defined steps to prescribe what activities must be implemented prior to the emergency to ensure the ability of the humanitarian community to respond. GBV sub-clusters may be asked to provide technical advice or input in the development of preparedness plans. However, a large part of the GBV coordinator’s work on preparedness is accomplished through capacity building of national and local partners and participating in contingency planning.

Capacity building as a GBV emergency preparedness intervention

Capacity building as an emergency preparedness intervention involves building on the strengths of GBV partners and communities to respond when a disaster strikes, or when there is a new spike in an ongoing crisis. Building capacity is not a top-down effort, in which coordination leaders determine needs and abilities of coordination members. Rather, it is a collaborative process in which the government, the affected population and local and international GBV responders develop coordination and GBV response skills for emergency preparedness. Investing in capacity building as soon as feasible as part of early recovery and preparedness, or even during the crisis in correlation with an expected new phase of the emergency, can magnify the effectiveness and impact of the GBV response over a longer period of time.



“In preparing for and responding to an emergency, international humanitarian actors are expected to cooperate with national authorities and support national capacity wherever it is feasible and appropriate to do so.”

— IASC Reference Model for Cluster Coordination at Country Level (IASC 2015)

Capacity building can be targeted at times, as when providing training (see text box below). However, it also occurs in more subtle ways, such as through modelling leadership and promoting accountability among individuals and agencies.

Capacity building involves:	What you can do:
Equipping people with skills and competencies, which they would not otherwise have	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure processes and procedures are explained and understood. • Share information and resources to enable knowledge transfer. • Translate key guidelines.
Realizing existing skills and developing potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct mapping of partners' capacity to identify skills. • Involve a range of skills and experience in a technical and/or working group to enable cross-learning. • Share responsibilities across coordination partners.
Increasing people's self-confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value individual contributions and respect individual differences. • Use active listening. • Give positive feedback.
Promoting people's ability to take responsibility for identifying and meeting their own, and other people's, needs and rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use coaching skills to encourage individual and agencies' responsibility. • Use participatory problem-solving techniques. • Delegate responsibility where appropriate.

Other specific methods for building capacity of GBV partners include:

- Encouraging partners to get involved in sub-cluster sub-groups on topics related to their individual or agency areas of interest (e.g. working with the media, advocacy, data collection, funding, drafting SOPs, etc.). GBV coordinators should try to identify leaders of the groups who can work with members to build their skills on the particular focus issue.
- Distributing targeted "talking points" or "guidance/information notes" to partners about key issues that require elaboration or emphasis.
- Working individually with partners on key issues, including having them "shadow" experts where learning opportunities exist (such as at media interviews, when speaking with donors and/or government officials, while conducting rapid assessments, etc.).

To identify the greatest training needs, it may be useful to distribute a list of potential training topics to partners at the outset of establishing a coordination group. From this list, GBV coordination partners can identify those within the GBV sub-cluster who have the skills to conduct specific training sessions. (See Annex for a list of training topics that can be used as the basis for a survey on training needs.)

Another approach is to review pre-existing contingency plans or lists of minimum preparedness actions (MPAs) or advanced preparedness actions (APAs) that the Humanitarian Country Team has identified as part of its emergency preparedness process. Capacity building plans can align with the MPAs/APAs. For example, "readiness to perform rapid assessments" is a minimum preparedness action, and the GBV sub-cluster then may choose to focus its capacity building efforts on providing training on GBV and assessments. Another common area is building the coordination skills for local government actors and GBV service providers in a disaster-prone area.

Training, while important, should be considered only one step in a longer process of capacity building. Once partners have participated in basic training (or if partners have already had training on various GBV-related topics), it may be useful to arrange training-of-trainers (ToT) so that a broader base of individuals/agencies can develop the skills necessary to lead training programmes.

Training-of-trainers is especially important when developing strategies for building capacity at the “deep field” level. Support coordination partners working in crisis-affected countries to lead training in their particular settings, wherever feasible, in order to avoid all events originating at the national level. Consider how to support travel costs if travel is required for local actors in sub-national locations to access capacity building initiatives. Adapt training curriculum into local languages and accessible formats for community-level training.

Affected communities should not be left out of the process of capacity building for emergency preparedness. When designing training programmes, ask each participating partner to commit to implementing a set of key actions that will share their knowledge with the affected communities. The GBV sub-cluster may also seek out partners or funding to design community-based capacity building projects for emergency preparedness as part of their programmatic interventions.



See Annex 18: GBV training topics menu



Promising practice

In the Philippines in 2015, UNFPA and USAID collaborated on an emergency preparedness capacity building initiative to further develop the skills of actors who responded to Typhoon Haiyan. At the request of the Government's Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the project trained a Rapid Response Team (RRT) in every region, which could be deployed in disaster-stricken areas within 24 to 48 hours to address GBV in emergencies. At the same time the project trained members of inter-agency protection mechanisms and NGOs and the Women and Children Protection Unit (WCPU) at the Level 2 regional medical centre in a disaster prone area. In total the project trained 723 government and NGO personnel (589 women; 134 men) on the Government's Comprehensive Intervention Against Gender-Based Violence (CIAGV) guidelines and GBV in emergencies. The result was a cohort of national actors who could be utilized in future disaster response.

This 2015 project has recently been expanded into a more intensive programme for government and NGO actors that refreshes skills and trains a new cohort on GBV in emergencies. This training is conducted in collaboration with a university. As part of the curriculum each participant must make an Action Plan to prepare their organizations and others colleagues in their local areas for disaster response. The implementation of the Action Plan must be completed before the participants receive a certificate from the university, which verifies their emergency response credentials.

Contingency planning

Contingency plans describe an initial response strategy and create operational plans that can be implemented at the onset of an emergency. GBV sub-clusters play a significant role at the operational level to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for immediate provision of GBV services, and that risk mitigation measures are in place across other sectors of humanitarian response. Contingency planning is also an opportunity for GBV coordination bodies to draft templates or pre-proposals for their response, which could be made part of the humanitarian

Flash Appeal for critical humanitarian needs during the first month of an emergency. In one humanitarian setting there may be more than one type of contingency plan, because a plan is usually devised for each set of risks; for example, there may be separate contingency plans for Earthquake Response, Flooding Response and Conflict Response. Although guidance should come from a contingency plan at the national level, contingency planning will also occur at sub-national levels.

Key issues to consider when conducting contingency planning:

- **Preparatory mapping of GBV response structures and capacities in the disaster prone areas:** This may include mapping of mobile response and static response capabilities.
- **Pre-positioning of life-saving commodities:** Provide dignity kits and post-rape kits with the Health Cluster, and emergency fuel supplies or cooking stoves with Food Security or Shelter/ Non-Food Items (NFI) clusters.
- **Pre-positioning of personnel:** Identify which staff are available and trained in disaster-prone areas, broken down by skills and gender. This may be done through a “roster” or rapid response team mechanism maintained by the cluster or one of its organizational partners. Make “first responder” contingency agreements with organizations, so that everyone knows which organizations will be called to move first to particular response sites.
- **Pre-positioning of IEC materials to promote access to services:** Provide referral cards with life-saving messages and hotline numbers. Or, provide cards with or fill- in- the- blank spaces where humanitarian actors can write- in numbers or names of partners available on site when the emergency occurs.
- **Training of responders in GBV or another sector:** The most critical training needed for the emergency response should be part of contingency planning. For example, the most critical training could be for enumerators for rapid response assessments or training for female nurses in GBV basics. Training should focus on those actors who are most likely to respond in the first 48 hours to two weeks of a crisis. In some cases, coaching or mentoring may be more effective for preparing responders than one-off trainings.
- **Preparing operational guidance/procedures for key areas of GBV prevention or risk mitigation:** The GBV sub-cluster may collaborate with other clusters to create risk mitigation procedures in the immediate stages of a crisis. For example, they may prepare a one-page briefing on actions for field-level actors to implement in the first 72 hours of a crisis for GBV risk mitigation during food distribution or in transit areas for internally displaced persons and refugees.

Like other strategic exercises, contingency planning is usually done in conjunction with the Protection Cluster and other clusters through the Inter-cluster Coordination Group (ICCG). Once the parameters of the country-level contingency planning exercise have been explained to the GBV coordinator(s), the process can be discussed and inputs prepared in a collaborative manner with cluster members. The inputs of national cluster members are crucial, since they most often have the historical memory and local knowledge of what types of actions were successful in getting services on the ground and to beneficiaries during a crisis. In most cases, they are also the first responders, and therefore should play a prioritized role in developing plans for the first actions.



Promising practice

The GBV sub-cluster conducted contingency planning in Burundi in 2015, as part of preparedness for anticipated violence associated with elections. With the support of the Regional Emergency GBV Advisors (REGA), they held a workshop reviewing all the components of preparedness and made a plan. Next, they successfully applied for internal emergency preparedness funds to implement the key components of their plan.

Implementing their contingency plan required pre-positioning of critical supplies, training and recruiting and pre-positioning surge staff before the elections began. Although they received some funding, it was not sufficient to cover all preparedness costs. To fill gaps, they borrowed commodities for pre-positioning from neighbouring countries that had surplus (including tents and dignity kits) with agreements to return them if unused within a particular time frame. They also pre-negotiated contracts with commodity suppliers in Burundi, so that if an emergency occurred procurement arrangements were already in place to produce locally. Similarly, the lead agency (UNFPA) negotiated stand-by agreements with implementing partners, so that service provider arrangements were in place and there would be predictability about who and where GBV services would be put into place. Using regional networks, the GBV sub-cluster received support from the Red Cross in Kenya to train potential front-line service providers and the group Translators without Borders in Tanzania translated standard IEC materials into local languages for free. Contingency planning in Burundi stands out as an example of resourcefulness and active engagement; the effort went beyond the formulation of a simple planning document and made preparedness a reality.



Information management

One of the most important preparedness steps a GBV sub-cluster can take is making a plan for communications between GBV sub-cluster members in the first week of the emergency. In most crisis situations, communications systems will not be operational, including telephone or Internet. Yet, it is the most important time for GBV actors to contact one another to know where services are needed and who can deliver them. Further, security conditions related to the political situation may require limited communications by phone or email during early stages of an emergency to ensure no harm is done to service providers, survivors or witnesses. The GBV sub-cluster will need to have multiple ways to communicate with one another in these circumstances.

As a preparedness step, gather and compile information from GBV partners to find out what communication methods/tools they have ready for emergency in which locations. Which GBV partners/contacts have SAT phones? Which have Internet and phone capacity? Compile multiple contact methods for each partner organization so in an emergency SAT phone communication, WhatsApp or Skype groups can be quickly activated. The communication focal points should also be people who are designated to stay in a country during crisis. Partners can be assigned "buddies" so that in a crisis they know whom to contact first, nearest to their physical location in case coordination will be activated at site level. By the end of the exercise, cluster members should have a method for predictable communications in the early stages of a crisis.
