

Enhancing efficiency and effectiveness of Food Security Cluster Coordination

Lesson: Contingency planning, preparedness and capacity-building

Text-only version

In partnership with:



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Learning objectives

At the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- define preparedness and contingency planning;
- describe a Contingency Response Plan;
- explain the Emergency Response Preparedness (ERP) approach and its inter-related levels of action;
- describe ERP's three main components; and
- explain the capacity-building roles and responsibilities of the Food Security Cluster (FSC).

Introduction

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Principals have agreed on a list of six core functions for Clusters. These six functions are aimed at "refocusing Clusters on strategic and operational gaps analysis, planning, assessment and results".

(Recommendation 27, IASC, Transformative Agenda)

This lesson focuses on the first of the six core functions for Clusters at country level:

Build capacity in contingency planning and preparedness.



The six core functions

Support service delivery by:

- ✓ providing a platform that ensures service delivery and is driven by the Humanitarian Response Plan and strategic priorities;
- ✓ developing mechanisms to eliminate duplication of activities.

Inform the HC/HCT's strategic decision-making by:

- ✓ preparing needs assessments and analysis of gaps (across and within clusters, using information management tools as needed) to inform the setting of priorities;
- ✓ identifying and finding solutions for (emerging) gaps, obstacles, duplication and cross-cutting issues, including gender, age, disability/diversity, protection, HIV/AIDS and environment;
- ✓ formulating priorities on the basis of analysis.

Plan and implement cluster strategies by:

- ✓ developing sectoral plans, objectives and indicators that directly support realization of the overall response's strategic objectives;
- ✓ applying and adhering to common standards and guidelines;
- ✓ clarifying funding requirements, helping to set priorities, and agreeing cluster contributions to the HC's overall humanitarian funding proposals.

Monitor and evaluate performance by:

- ✓ monitoring and reporting on activities and needs;
- ✓ measuring progress against the cluster strategy and agreed results;
- ✓ recommending corrective action where necessary.

Support robust advocacy by:

- ✓ identifying concerns, and contributing key information and messages to HC and HCT messaging and action;
- ✓ undertaking advocacy on behalf of the cluster, cluster members, and affected people.

Build national capacity in preparedness and contingency planning:

Preparedness is a continuous process. Broadly defined, it includes any action, measure or capacity development that is introduced before an emergency to improve the overall effectiveness, efficiency and timeliness of a response and recovery.

For more information see: the **IASC reference module for Cluster Coordination at country**

level <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/coordination/clusters> in section 4 and

the **Transformative Agenda Protocol: Common framework for preparedness**

https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/common_framework_for_preparedness.pdf

"It is advisable to plan when it is not needed, rather than not to have planned when it was necessary!"

In disaster prone countries, **preparedness** measures should be put in place, in anticipation of an emergency that is likely to occur. Although plans will need to be revised when the event happens, preparedness makes it possible to respond in a **faster, more appropriate and efficient** way, and to make decisions on the basis of more reliable information.

Preparedness and contingency planning

What is preparedness and contingency planning?



Preparedness is a continuous process that includes any activity, measure or capacity-building initiative set in place before an emergency to build the readiness of an effective response.

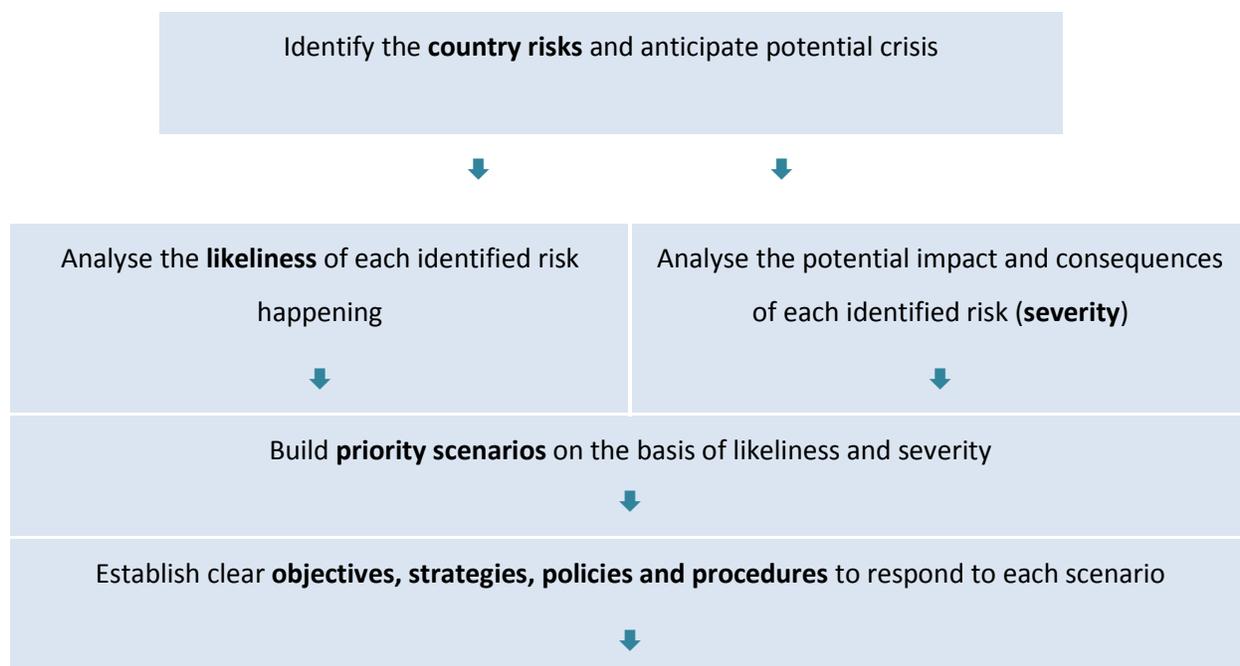
Contingency planning is a process to develop a plan to respond in anticipation of a new humanitarian crisis, or expected increase in the severity of an existing crisis.

Actors from the food security and other sectors should be ready to **respond to foreseeable crises in a coordinated manner**. The objective is to bring all relevant actors to an advanced level of preparedness, so as to respond to the effects of the specific risk identified.

Contingency planning is undertaken in "normal" times, and also during an ongoing humanitarian response operation (when the focus is on being ready to deal with future events that could further complicate the current situation).

Contingency planning and the Contingency Response Plan (CRP)

Contingency planning is a process that includes the following activities:



Define **roles** and **responsibilities** of actors and take necessary actions **to enhance preparedness**

A **Contingency Response Plan** is developed when **a risk is anticipated as imminent** due to apparent evidence, early warning alerts or recurrent events or **a sudden onset event can be identified** in terms of location and potential impact.



A Contingency Response Plan should be developed in such a way that:

- it can be rapidly and effectively **transformed into a Response Plan** when the emergency strikes; and
- it can **inform resource mobilization** to ensure an appropriate response.



Each sector should formulate its internal plan, which should then be harmonized with other sectors in an inter-Cluster plan.

Example: Pakistan Food Security Cluster Contingency Plan 2012

The FSC contingency plan was jointly developed in 2012 by FAO and WFP, in line with the inter-agency contingency planning process led by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). It was developed by national institutions in consultation with FSC partners, including national and international national humanitarian organizations.

FSC Pakistan Contingency plan 2012: <http://fscluster.org/pakistan/document/fsc-pakistan-contingency-plan-2012>

Pakistan is a hazard prone country, and the most frequent hazards are **floods and droughts**. Worst affected is the **agriculture sector**, in particular **poor smallholder farming** communities. Whenever a disaster strikes, a response is immediately provided, but there is also a need for prevention, mitigation and preparedness measures to reduce the impact of disasters.

To achieve this objective, disaster preparedness needs to be mainstreamed in the planning process of all important stakeholders in the food security sector. These include Provincial and District Directorates and Offices for Agriculture, Livestock, On-Farm Water Management, Fisheries and Planning and Development.

The ultimate **beneficiaries** of these interventions would be **impoverished farmers** involved in food and crop production, livestock rearing, fish farming, forestry and marine fisheries in disaster prone areas of Pakistan – especially those rural communities most severely affected by floods during the 2012 monsoon season.

Considering the Pakistan contingency plan the Food Cluster can play a role in a number of preparedness actions:

- ✓ Reviewing available assessment tools for food security and, if necessary, developing a common sectoral rapid assessment tool.
- ✓ Mapping by creating vulnerability and hazard maps, according to livelihood zones.
- ✓ Harmonizing operational procedures (preparation of guidelines, development and sharing of technical specification etc.).

Inter-Agency Emergency Response Preparedness (ERP)

Emergency Response Preparedness (ERP) is an action oriented approach to enhance readiness for humanitarian response at **country level**. The **aim** of the ERP approach is to increase the speed and volume of life-saving assistance delivered in the first weeks of an emergency.

The ultimate ERP objective is an effective response to an affected population.



The ERP process can be applied to any emergency humanitarian coordination mechanism.

Who is involved in ERP?

All organizations and individuals likely to take part in a response should participate in the ERP planning process. The ERP approach is:

- ✓ Led by a Resident or Humanitarian Coordinator.
- ✓ Managed by a UN Country Team or Humanitarian Country Team
- ✓ Supported by an Inter-Cluster coordination group and Clusters.

The primary responsibility for humanitarian response to emergencies lies with national governments.

The responsibility to be ready to respond to humanitarian emergencies rests primarily with national governments. ERP is intended to complement national preparedness efforts, and guide the work of humanitarian organizations to respond, if and when national capacity is not sufficient. National institutions, local organizations and women's groups should be included in the ERP process as much as possible. The ERP approach has three inter-related **levels of action**:

Inter-agency

This level builds the overarching **framework to guide the collective action of all potential humanitarian responders**, including sector/Cluster groups and individual agencies. Ideally, governments will lead the process. Where this is not feasible, the UN Country Team (UNCT)/Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) should ensure appropriate coordination between the different stakeholders, in particular between international and existing national coordination structures.

Sector/Cluster

This level of planning defines **how agencies will work together to achieve sector specific objectives**. It is used when more than one agency is likely to be involved in the humanitarian response in a specific sector. This situation is the norm, especially as far as international responders are concerned. Whenever possible, sector leads (the FSC coordination team and Cluster Lead Agencies) within the international response system should coordinate closely with corresponding government counterparts.



In order to avoid confusion and time wastage, it is advisable to use the same preparedness coordination structures for response, rather than creating duplication with separate structures.

Organization specific

This level describes **how the organization's response will be delivered**.

The ERP approach does not define the form of agency level planning and procedures. However, to increase coherence, agency planning should be aligned with sector/ Cluster and inter-agency planning.

ERP is a continuous process, with **three main components**:

1. Risk Analysis and Monitoring

A clear and common understanding of the risks that may trigger a crisis significant enough to require a coordinated humanitarian response is fundamental to the entire ERP process.

Analysis → informs the planning

Monitoring → ensures that the process is responsive to emerging risks

The risk analysis process **identifies the hazards** that could trigger a crisis and **ranks them by potential impact and likelihood**.

The risk ranking determines whether thresholds are low, medium or high. Development of a contingency plan is recommended when risk thresholds are determined to be medium or above.

In parallel, Country Teams should agree on indicators for the risks identified, and review them regularly. Monitoring provides early warning of emerging risks, which in turn allows for early action, such as tailoring the contingency plan and where possible, taking action that could mitigate the impact of the risk. To summarize, implementing Risk Analysis and Monitoring involves 4 steps:

- ④ Risk monitoring
- ③ Defining thresholds
- ② Risk ranking
- ① Hazard identification

2. Minimum Preparedness Actions (MPA)

Minimum Preparedness Actions are a set of activities that every Country Team must implement in order to establish a minimum level of emergency preparedness within the country. The MPAs are not risk or scenario specific, and do not usually require significant additional resources. Minimum Preparedness Actions include:

- risk monitoring;
- establishment of coordination and management arrangements;
- preparing for joint needs assessments;
- response monitoring;
- information management; and
- establishing operational capacity and arrangements to deliver critical relief assistance and protection.



Implementing MPAs will make a fundamental difference to eventual response, and will provide flexibility to respond to different types of emergencies.

To summarize, implementing MPAs involves four steps:

Step 1 - **Context and gap analysis**

Step 2 - **Prioritization**

Step 3 - **Implementation**

Step 4 - **Recording actions taken**

3. Advanced Preparedness Actions (APA) and Contingency Planning (CP)

Advanced Preparedness Actions (APA) and Contingency Planning (CP) are two sets of complementary activities that should be initiated together to plan for specific risks, when risk analysis and monitoring indicates **moderate or high risk**. Advanced Preparedness Actions are designed to advance HCT readiness to respond to specific risks. Unlike MPAs, APAs are **risk specific**. They build on the MPAs already in place.

The APA checklist includes essential preparedness actions that complement and support the contingency planning process.

A contingency plan sets out the **initial response** strategy and operational plan to meet the humanitarian needs during the **first three to four weeks** of an emergency. A **contingency plan** addresses:

- what could happen and what might be needed;
- actions to take and resources required; and
- gaps to be bridged.

It lays the ground for a Flash Appeal, if required.

IASC guidance on ERP has replaced earlier guidance on contingency planning as the main toolkit for enhancing emergency preparedness. However, contingency planning remains one of the methods available to Country Teams looking to improve their readiness to respond to a specific risk.

Capacity-building roles and responsibilities for the FSC

The **Food Security Cluster Team** has the following tasks:

➔ Risk monitoring

The Food Security Cluster Team ensures that risk monitoring is undertaken regularly, and a watching brief is maintained on emerging or developing risks.

➔ Preparedness actions

The FSC team identifies preparedness actions that allow the Cluster to respond efficiently and effectively at the onset of an emergency, in line with its mandate. This includes **having clear and effective coordination structures** in place, as well as **procedures** to organize and host Cluster meetings.

➔ Needs assessment

The FSC team undertakes preparedness actions to ensure that food security related needs assessments are undertaken in a coherent, competent, systematic and coordinated manner. It also focuses on developing a common response monitoring strategy for the FSC. The strategy is to examine the possibilities for different food security response options, including food assistance, agriculture, fisheries and others. Social networks, power relationships, knowledge and skills, gender roles, health, wealth and location all affect risk and vulnerability to disasters, and the capacities to respond to them. For this reason, it is crucial to have inclusive approaches and representative participation and consultation with affected and vulnerable groups (gender and Accountability to affected populations) during the response preparedness planning process within the FSC, which is critical to effective preparedness, risk reduction and response.

➔ Operational capacity and arrangements

The FSC team identifies operational capacity and arrangements to ensure that food and other required inputs reach target populations in an emergency.

➔ Training and capacity building initiatives

The FSC team promotes training and capacity-building initiatives among its partners, and contributes to strengthening the capacities of national authorities and civil society, so as to ensure a timely and appropriate response to an emergency situation.

With regards to capacity-building and training in particular, the Cluster Coordination Team has the following tasks:

- ✓ Identifying and prioritizing the training needs of different FS stakeholders in relation to assessment, monitoring, response planning, and the delivery of key FS services and assistance.
- ✓ Disseminating key selected technical guidance materials.
- ✓ Working with FSC partners to coordinate training initiatives.
- ✓ Organizing short training workshops for particular FS stakeholders on topics relevant to the local context, including attention to priority cross-cutting issues and adherence to standards.

Summary

Actors from the food security and other sectors should be ready to respond to foreseeable crises in a coordinated manner.

Once a risk is anticipated as imminent due to apparent evidence, early warning alerts or recurrent events – or when a sudden onset event is identified in terms of location and potential impact – a Contingency Response Plan is developed.

The objective is to bring all relevant actors to an advanced level of preparedness, so as to respond to the effects of the specific risk identified. The plan should be regularly revised and updated.

Inter-Agency Emergency Response Preparedness (ERP) is an action oriented approach to enhance readiness for humanitarian response at country level. The ERP approach seeks to improve effectiveness by reducing both time and effort. It also aims to enhance predictability by establishing predefined roles, responsibilities and coordination mechanisms.

The ultimate objective is an effective response for the affected population. The ERP process can be applied to any emergency management/humanitarian coordination mechanism/structure.