Contingency Planning

Learning Module

Prepared by the UNHCR eCentre in collaboration with InterWorks, LLC

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About this course

This course draws on current contingency planning guidance produced by the UN agencies and the IASC as well as NGO and other sources. Where tools and materials here have been drawn from various texts, on-line resources, and other training materials, due attribution is given to the original source wherever possible. Some training elements have withstood the test of time and have been retained from the original version of this course written by John Cosgrave and Jim Good for UNHCR in 1999. It also includes considerable direct advice from current UNHCR contingency planners in the field and recent evaluation data from the UN. In particular, Alessandra Morelli and Johann Siffointe of UNHCR gave considerable time and effort as well as their own personal insights into the contingency planning process from the field perspective. Anthony Craig provided valuable insights and contingency planning evaluation information from WFP.

The aim of this course is to introduce managers and planners of humanitarian and development programs to the concept of scenario-based contingency planning. It further explains many of the processes involved and provides direct practical tips for navigating through the often difficult task of interagency contingency planning.

The course is designed to be self-contained, allowing learners to proceed at their own pace. Questions for reflection are interspersed throughout the various chapters; we recommend taking time to answer these as it will encourage you to mentally apply the learning to your own experience. Each chapter ends with a short test, allowing for self-assessment of your understanding of the material.

About the author

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Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to this self-study learning module on Contingency Planning. It is designed for learners who have some experience with humanitarian field work and who want to learn more about scenario-based contingency planning in the field and at headquarters. While much of the guidance and tools presented in this course are based on United Nations and IASC contingency planning guidelines in particular, the advice presented is of a general nature and should be valuable for any humanitarian manager or planner considering contingency planning in their own office or duty station.

Learning Objectives for this Course

After successfully completing this learning module, you should be able to:

• Define contingency planning and advocate for it under the right circumstances, and give examples of its uses and limits.

• Describe contingency planning as a specific part of a larger framework of preparedness activities.

• Rationally prioritize potential hazards facing your office or community using the risk matrix and other tools, and select scenarios for which contingency planning is a useful preparedness measure.

• Understand, develop, and navigate through the process of interagency contingency planning including:
  – Initiating and maintaining the planning process
  – Selecting and working with planning partners
  – Developing scenarios and projecting needs
  – Assessing capacities and resources
  – Consolidating the plan into an integrated whole

• Choose the right format for your own contingency plan according to your situation.

• Evaluate your own and other contingency plans.

Organization of this Course

This course is divided into 10 chapters, each one focusing on a different aspect of contingency planning and the activities required to manage and complete it in the field. The text is designed to be read from beginning to end, and in most instances a reasonably good understanding of the material presented in any chapter is required to fully appreciate the next. For the casual reader who only wants to review those chapters of most interest, however, references to important points in previous (and, in some instances, future) chapters are included where required for full understanding.
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Chapter 1: What is Contingency Planning? – This chapter focuses on the definitions of contingency planning in use by different practitioners and explains its relationship to other preparedness activities. It also presents an overview of the IASC Cluster System to interagency contingency planning.

Chapter 2: Why and When to Plan? – This chapter provides advice on selecting scenarios suitable for contingency planning, and for deciding when such planning is actually needed.

Chapter 3: Who Are the Planners? – This chapter answers the question of who should be involved in your contingency planning process. It provides advice in choosing and working with planning partners and explains the basic partnerships and structures of the IASC cluster approach.

Chapter 4: How to Initiate and Maintain the Process – This chapter provides guidance in planning for and initiating the planning process itself. It also sets out some useful advice for making your planning meetings more efficient.

Chapter 5: How to Develop Scenarios and Project Needs – This chapter provides a step-by-step process for developing scenarios for contingency planning that you can use to add needed detail, project humanitarian needs, and test your planning assumptions.

Chapter 6: How to Assess Capacities and Resources – Real-world contingency planning is based on accurate understanding of strengths and weaknesses of your planning partners as well as availability of resources to meet projected needs. This chapter will show you how to conduct this analysis for better contingency planning.

Chapter 7: How to Identify Potential Response Gaps – This chapter explains the Gap ID matrix and its various uses in contingency planning. It also provides guidance in writing planning objectives and strategies based on analysis of potential response gaps.

Chapter 8: How to Establish and Support Working Groups – This chapter focuses on the group and organizational dynamics associated with conducting an interagency planning process. It sets out a model for working within the IASC Cluster System with a large number of organizations.

Chapter 9: How to Consolidate the Plan – It is often difficult to consolidate the final plan into a single coherent document when its parts are drafted by disparate groups and working committees. This chapter gives some advice on making the task of consolidation easier to manage. It also provides three example contingency plan outlines that serve as models for three different levels of contingency planning that you might encounter.

Chapter 10: What Next? Using the Plan and the Process – This final chapter explores the different ways that contingency plans are put into effect (or not) and gives you some advice for evaluating your own and other contingency plans.
How to Use this Course

Independent study is more demanding than traditional classroom instruction in that each learner has to provide her or his own framework for study instead of having it imposed by the course or workshop timetable. One of the problems with self-study courses is that people begin with great enthusiasm at a pace that they cannot sustain. The best way to undertake this learning module is to plan your own study schedule over a pre-set period by thinking ahead and making your own schedule for study.

The course is designed to take approximately 20 hours to complete. This includes the time for reading, reflecting, answering the questions in the text, completing the exercises provided and filling out the evaluation form at the end. This module is provided for professional and personal development. There is no final test, exam or academic accreditation of any kind.

Pre-test

The pre-test included at the beginning of this course allows you to test your general knowledge of contingency planning issues, terminology, and best practice. This test consists of 30 true/false questions. Taking this test before beginning the course should stimulate you to compare your own thoughts about contingency planning to those presented in the text.

Also, the pre-test allows you to determine quickly how much you already know about the ideas presented here and will help you to see which parts of the course you can move through more quickly and those on which you may need to spend more time. If you score very well on the pre-test it is likely that you do not need to take this course for the purpose of learning new information, although it may still be a useful review.

Instant Feedback: Self-Assessment Questions and Exercises

One drawback to a self-study text like this one is that instant feedback from the instructor or your colleagues is not possible. To address the need for feedback, each chapter has five true-false questions and five multiple-choice questions. The answers are provided at the end of each chapter. Other questions and exercises of a more reflective nature are found throughout the chapters to help you get the most from the materials. You are encouraged to take the time to actually write your answers out in the spaces provided as this will increase your mental engagement with the material and will aid in retention of new ideas presented. Each chapter concludes with a summary of key points as a review.
Pre-test
Contingency Planning

1. Contingency planning is the same thing as operational emergency response planning.
2. Contingency planning is related to and overlaps with many of the strategies employed to improve preparedness.
3. The IASC contingency planning model includes active implementation of preparedness activities as well as planning activities.
4. Contingency planning has been found to be beneficial to the planning partners, even when the planned-for event did not occur.
5. The risk matrix is used to plot a particular scenario’s likelihood and impact.
6. The scenario presenting the greatest risk to the affected community is the one that has the highest likelihood. The presumed level of damage is not important to this analysis.
7. Contingency planning is best done by very large groups—work groups of fewer than 24 people seldom function well.
8. Contingency planning should either be done by headquarters staff or by field staff, but not by both.
9. Plans produced through interagency partnerships are quicker to prepare, but often poorer in quality.
10. The use of a steering group or roundtable is designed to investigate the technical details of plan components.
11. Information needed in a meeting should be introduced at the meeting itself, rather than sent out beforehand, as most people never review pre-meeting documentation anyway.
12. Observers at planning meetings usually increase the efficiency of the meeting.
13. Brainstorming is an exercise which generates many ideas quickly, without judgment about the quality of the ideas.
14. The risk matrix can help you to prioritize possible scenarios when considering which ones to develop into contingency plans.
15. There are no standard planning figures for emergency needs, as every emergency situation is unique.
16. It is not necessary to prepare resource inventories as these will likely be wrong by the time the planned-for emergency actually happens.

17. It is best to collect as much data as possible during the planning phase since you never know what you may need once the emergency begins.

18. Documentary resource inventories are not used until well after the emergency scenario occurs.

19. An understanding of potential gaps in both physical and human resources in the field are important to the development of useful contingency plans.

20. Gap ID matrices help planners identify sectors where there will be a shortfall of resources to meet anticipated needs.

21. Gap ID matrices generally have a service, activity, or other resource listed on one axis and the organizations responsible for each of those items on the other axis.

22. The steering group is usually a large meeting designed to bring open review and participation from the wider humanitarian response community.

23. The CP working group is the primary engine of the contingency planning process.

24. The sectoral teams must base their sectoral plans on their own unique planning scenarios.

25. The ‘consolidation trap’ refers to the difficulty in putting together a consolidated plan from the different parts of the contingency plan prepared by sectoral planning teams.

26. The scenario planning assumptions may be augmented by the different planning teams as required for their sector, but the core planning scenario should be the same for all sectoral teams.

27. It is best to let sector planning teams develop most of their plans independently before sharing templates or other information to allow them maximum creativity in their planning processes.

28. Contingency plans that are actually used for operational response cannot be evaluated since they become operational plans rather than contingency plans.

29. In most instances the planned-for scenario usually does happen as the planners have predicted.

30. Contingency plans made for emergencies that do not occur are irrelevant.
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Pretest Answer Key

1. F 16. F
2. T 17. F
3. T 18. F
4. T 19. T
5. T 20. T
6. F 21. T
7. F 22. F
8. F 23. T
10. F 25. T
11. F 26. T
12. F 27. F
13. T 28. F
14. T 29. F
15. F 30. F
After lying dormant for 400 years, Mount Sinabung in North Sumatra, Indonesia, erupted on Sunday, August 29, 2010 at 12:08 am. The heavy black smoke and ash eruption reached a height of 1,500 meters and led to the immediate evacuation of some 12,000 residents. The volcano had previously been placed in category “B” (inactive), requiring only minimal monitoring. After the eruption, its classification was upgraded to “A” (active), requiring more frequent monitoring and contingency planning for future eruptions.

This chapter provides you with a basis and context for a better understanding of the meaning and uses of contingency planning for disaster and emergency preparedness. The primary learning points are:

- Definitions of contingency planning
- Distinguishing contingency planning from other types of planning
- The relationship of contingency planning to other preparedness activities
- The IASC model for contingency planning
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1.1 Definitions of Contingency Planning

“Plan for what is difficult while it is easy, do what is great while it is small. The difficult things in this world must be done while they are easy; the greatest things in the world must be done while they are still small. For this reason sages never do what is great, and this is why they achieve greatness.”

– Sun Tzu, Chinese General, The Art of War, 400 BC

As Sun Tzu said, planning is about deciding what to do before it becomes difficult, as in the chaos of an emergency. Contingency planning is a common management term today, and is general enough that it confers different ideas to different disaster managers and emergency personnel, depending on their circumstance and area of concern. Use the space below to define the term “contingency planning” in a meaningful way for your current job or area of concern.

What is ‘contingency planning’ as it applies to you and your experience?

While there are many definitions in use, they all include the idea of planning for some specific accident, failure, or emergency scenario. Some common uses and meanings include the following:

“Plan B” – Many managers use the term contingency planning to mean the plan that will be put into place if the current or default plan does not work. If “Plan A” fails, we will have to use our contingency plan – go to “Plan B”.

“Emergency Plan” – Planners who work in non-emergency fields often use the term to mean a specific plan for emergency situations outside of the normal operational plan, such as plans for evacuation of premises in case of fire or earthquake. In such cases, the plan is made for foreseeable, but rare, events that may happen at any time due to an accident or natural phenomenon.

“Specific Hazard Plan” – For disaster managers, the contingency plan is an emergency plan that is appropriate for specific hazards that may occur and is distinct from a general preparedness or “all-hazard” plan.

“Refugee Influx Plan” – For UNHCR emergency planners, the term generally means a preparedness plan for a potential refugee or internal displacement emergency for which there are warning signs that can be interpreted to indicate an increasing chance that a specific refugee or IDP crisis will occur.

As this course is designed for planners facing a wide range of disasters and emergencies, we will use the UN Inter Agency Standing Committee’s (IASC) definition for contingency planning which is limited to potential humanitarian crises, yet still quite general in nature. The IASC definition is:

Contingency planning is a management tool used to analyze the impact of potential crises so that adequate and appropriate arrangements are made in advance to respond in a timely, effective and appropriate way to the needs of affected populations. Contingency planning is a tool to anticipate and solve problems that typically arise during a humanitarian response. (IASC 2007)
Specifically, this distance learning course deals with scenario-based contingency planning. Due to the importance of the selection and definition of the planning scenario, other chapters are dedicated to helping you learn how to generate and prioritize them.

1.2 Distinguishing Contingency Planning from Other Types of Planning

Given the working definition of contingency planning provided above, what distinguishes contingency planning from other types of planning and preparedness activities you have been involved in? This will vary depending on your particular field, organization, and specialty.

What aspects of contingency planning set it apart from other types of planning being done in relation to humanitarian field work? List any important differences that occur to you in the spaces below.

The primary difference between contingency planning and emergency operations planning, for example, is the potential nature of the planned-for situation. Unlike emergency operations planning which is done in response to a known emergency situation, contingency planning is done before the event happens in a state of uncertainty. This means that much of the planning for the conditions, scale of the emergency, timing, etc., must be based on predictions and assumptions about the potential crisis, rather than real-time assessment. Due to this critical difference it follows that the value of contingency planning is largely dependent on the ability of planners to adequately predict scenarios that are likely to happen and to be able to correctly draw conclusions about what will be needed if such a scenario occurs.

The uncertainties of contingency planning also affect the planners in much more subtle ways. It is generally more difficult to motivate and organize yourself and others to do contingency planning than it is to begin planning for a currently breaking emergency. The lack of a sense of urgency, particularly when planners are already facing day-to-day planning difficulties for known problems, can slow, or even stop, contingency planning processes. General optimism that the “worst case scenario” won’t happen is another factor that comes between developing a general sense of worry and actually doing contingency planning.

An additional aspect of contingency planning raised in the IASC definition is the notion that potential problems in the resulting response are anticipated and solved. This means that potential problems are attended to once they are identified in the planning process whether or not the potential disaster actually occurs.
1.3 The Relationship of Contingency Planning to Other Preparedness Activities

The diagram below shows a range of preparedness activities or elements that can be put into place to reduce risk to potentially disaster-affected populations. This diagram and the specific elements are from a 2010 CADRI/OCHA training program and capture the breadth of different preparedness activities that can be done to reduce risk. While other elements might be added or definitions might be seen differently, these eight activities represent a general cross-section of strategies that a concerned community or government could undertake to improve preparedness.

Contingency planning is listed as a distinct element in this diagram, but is clearly connected to and informs many of the other elements in the framework. The diagram below is meant to express the range and different types of activities available to improve disaster preparedness. The diagram implies that all of these elements, to be effective, should be based on a holistic approach, and actually implemented through a legislative framework at the national level. Some laws which facilitate disaster preparedness and response include:

- Establishing national, state and district DM authorities with clear mandates
- Establishment of funding/budgets for emergency response and disaster risk reduction at the national, state and district levels
- Establishing rights of voluntary sector actors to be involved in disaster response
- Waiving of customs tax on humanitarian assistance coming in from international NGOs and UN

Coordination Mechanisms

Experience has shown that coordination is essential to ensure effective response, address gaps, and avoid confusion and overlap. Mechanisms and procedures which exist to coordinate, exchange information and to clarify roles and responsibilities of the various actors (national, provincial, local, regional and international) for disaster preparedness will improve response. Coordination saves lives. Contingency planners must understand the coordination mechanisms already in place before disaster strikes, and are encouraged to address coordination gaps illustrated by analysis of the contingency planning scenarios they foresee.
Capacity Analysis and Development

While the term capacity development can include almost anything that would increase ability, from skills training to better equipment and a bigger budget, this term generally refers to various training and public education measures that are designed to raise awareness of organizations, staff, volunteers and at-risk community members and to provide them with the knowledge and skills to prepare and respond effectively to disasters. As part of this element, it is also important to take stock of the existing preparedness/response capacities and the many capacity development efforts already occurring in the country—many of which may be done in an ad-hoc nature, without formal coordination by government, UN, NGOs, Red Cross/Red Crescent, or other entities. Contingency planners must be aware of the capacities of potential responders, as well as their vulnerabilities and the likely gaps between capacity and need, if their planned-for emergency arises.

Hazard Monitoring and Early Warning Systems

This refers to systems and mechanisms for monitoring and anticipating hazard events and communicating warnings to mobilize preparedness actions by response organizations and at-risk communities. These systems should be based on sound scientific information and risk understanding. Contingency plans generally include a trigger mechanism or link to a verifiable warning system that puts the contingency plan into operation. Where planners identify such existing systems, these are included in the plan. When contingency planners identify a lack of warning systems, they should advocate for improvement of these systems.

Information Management and Communications Systems

This refers to information management and communication systems for:

- collecting, compiling and disseminating relevant knowledge and information on a full range of hazards, vulnerabilities, and capacities at the local, national and regional levels
- facilitating two-way exchange of pertinent technical and management information between disaster preparedness and response actors at the national, local, regional and international levels
- communicating accurate, timely, and useful information and instructions to the public in both early warning and disaster response phases

As part of a contingency planning process, specific triggers are often identified to initiate public warning systems both within response organizations as well as to the general public.

Contingency Planning

Effective contingency planning should be a dynamic process that engages stakeholders in discussing response strategies and needs, coordination mechanisms and their respective responsibilities in addressing specific hazards—all within a finite period. The result of this planning process and discussion is a written contingency plan that documents the response trigger mechanisms, agreed response strategies, priority emergency services, coordination mechanisms and division-of-labor and responsibilities to be activated in responding to the specified hazard events.

Emergency Services and Stand-by (Response Mechanisms)

These refer to the emergency services and stand-by arrangements which will be activated in responding to an emergency or disaster. While the exact type of response and emergency services will depend on the nature and magnitude of the event, response services generally include: evacuation procedures, organization of search and rescue, immediate assessment, distribution of
Contingency Planning

relief items, etc. Contingency planning for specific scenarios must be shared with those on the organization’s emergency rosters and with first responders.

Incorporating Early Recovery into Preparedness Planning

This refers to measures taken before a disaster to ensure that early recovery is considered and planned for during contingency and other preparedness planning processes and integrated within a comprehensive disaster risk reduction strategy.

Resource Allocation and Funding

This element refers to the financial allocations, budgets and emergency funding mechanisms that exist to support effective preparedness, response and early recovery. It includes internal arrangements for the acquisition and disbursement of funds; policies and agreements for the use of public/private equipment and services; funds for training and public education and emergency funding strategies.

1.4 The IASC Model for Contingency Planning

The IASC has developed an interagency approach to contingency planning that has become a standard throughout the United Nations system. It is applicable to any sort of pre-disaster scenario-based planning and its wide scope is designed primarily for inter-agency, and national capacity-building approaches to contingency planning. The IASC approach is well supported with a handbook, training package, and other guidance that can be found on the internet at these sites:

www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/
www.humanitarianreform.org/humanitarianreform

The basic IASC approach conceptualizes the contingency planning process into four basic steps:

1) Preparation
2) Analysis
3) Response planning
4) Implementing preparedness

While the fourth step is not technically part of generating a contingency plan, its inclusion illustrates the pro-active nature of the IASC approach and highlights the need for planners to act on filling gaps in preparedness that are found through the contingency planning process.

This learning program will not reproduce the materials already developed under the ISAC model, and readers are encouraged to read their published material in full. The structure of this course does follow the same general approach (at least concerning the first 3 steps) and supports it further with several practical tools and strategies for accomplishing these steps and the supporting activities highlighted in the IASC model illustrated in the diagram below. Read through the steps shown on the diagram as well as the supporting activities included under each step. This course will provide you with some useful tools, tips and guidance for accomplishing these and other activities needed for successful contingency planning.
Comprehensive Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Workflow

Preparation
- Coordinate & prepare for the process
- Define the scope of participation
- Structure the process (agree on timeline, workplan & outputs)
- Ensure facilitation
- Take stock of current preparedness measures, systems & contingency plans

Analysis
- Context analysis, scenario building & planning assumptions
- Analyze hazards & risks
- Define scenarios, planning assumptions, and identify triggers and early warning indicators

Response
- Define objectives & strategies
- Define response objectives, strategies & guiding principles
- Define operational roles, functions, responsibility & accountability
- Define external coordination arrangements with government & donors
- Define individual (agency/organisation) and collective actions to meet sector/cluster objectives

Planning
- Define management & coordination arrangements
- Define sector/cluster specific principles, operational objectives
- Define external coordination arrangements with government & donors
- Define individual (agency/organisation) and collective actions to meet sector/cluster objectives

Implementing
- Develop response plans
- Define sector/cluster preparedness, assessment & response actions
- Consolidate & implement follow-up actions
- Consolidate preparedness, assessment & response actions and division of responsibility

Preparedness
- Review, test & update plan

Contingency planning is a term that can have different meanings for different users but, in general, it means planning for something that might go wrong.

The specific definition used in this distance learning course is the one adopted by the IASC, which describes it as “a management tool used to analyze the impact of potential crises so that adequate and appropriate arrangements are made in advance to respond in a timely, effective and appropriate way to the needs of affected populations. Contingency planning is a tool to anticipate and solve problems that typically arise during a humanitarian response.”

Contingency planning is different from many other types of emergency and response planning in that it is based on scenarios that may or may not happen, and therefore is often not done as other more urgent current matters tend to take priority over contingency planning.

Contingency planning is only one among many disaster preparedness activities which are all interrelated. A practical, but non-exhaustive, list of preparedness activities developed by the OCHA CADRI initiative includes the following:

- Coordination mechanisms
- Contingency planning
- Capacity analysis and development
- Hazard monitoring; early warning systems
- Information management and communications systems
- Emergency services and stand-by (response mechanisms)
- Incorporating early recovery into preparedness
- Resource allocation and funding

The IASC approach to contingency planning is well developed and supported by its own set of guidelines and training materials. In simplest terms, the IASC process is conceived of as four general steps:

1) Preparation
2) Analysis
3) Response planning
4) Implementing preparedness

The fourth step above, “Implementing preparedness”, is not included in this distance learning guide on contingency planning, but it is a good reminder that gaps in the capacity to respond to emergency scenarios identified by contingency planners should be addressed, whether or not the planned for scenario occurs.
Chapter 1

Self-Assessment Questions

Check T or F to indicate whether a statement is True or False

1. Contingency planning is the same thing as operational emergency response planning.
   
2. Contingency planning, while important, does not actually improve preparedness for disasters.
   
3. Contingency planning is related to and overlaps with many of the strategies employed to improve preparedness.
   
4. The IASC model of contingency planning is designed as an interagency process suitable for any type of emergency or scenario to be planned for.
   
5. The IASC model includes active implementation of preparedness activities as well as planning activities.

Multiple choice. Mark ALL correct statements—more than one may apply.

6. The IASC definition of contingency planning includes which of these phrases:
   
   A. “Contingency planning is a management tool…”
   
   B. “…adequate and appropriate arrangements are made in advance to respond in a timely, effective and appropriate way …”
   
   C. “…to ensure that the rights of the disaster affected are respected.”
   
   D. “…a tool to anticipate and solve problems that typically arise during a humanitarian response.”

7. Which of the following statements illustrate the differences between contingency planning and other types of planning?
   
   A. In contingency planning, you are sure of the magnitude of the event you are planning for.
   
   B. In contingency planning you are always working in a state of uncertainty.
   
   C. The planned for event may or may not happen.
   
   D. The planning is based on assumptions rather than emergency assessment data.
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Chapter 1
Self-Assessment Questions (continued)

8. Which of these are considered disaster preparedness measures?
   - Early warning mechanisms
   - Coordination arrangements
   - Contingency planning
   - Capacity analysis and development

9. Which of the following activities support Step 1 of the IASC contingency planning model – Preparation?
   - Coordinate and prepare for the process.
   - Define scenarios for planning.
   - Ensure facilitation.
   - Analyze hazards and risks.

10. Which of the following activities support Step 3 of the IASC contingency planning model – Response planning?
    - Define objectives and strategies.
    - Define management and coordination arrangements.
    - Review, test and update the plan.
    - Consolidate & review planning outputs.

Chapter 1
Answer Key

1. T
2. F
3. T
4. T
5. T
6. A, B, D
7. B, C, D
8. A, B, C, D
9. A, C
10. A, B, D
Violent clashes in Osh and other cities in southern Kyrgyzstan in June of 2010 sent an estimated 300,000 people fleeing to the countryside, and ultimately, another 100,000 across the border into Uzbekistan. Within 72 hours of the beginning of the crisis in Kyrgyzstan, the UN Refugee Agency sent cargo planes filled with humanitarian aid to Uzbekistan.

This chapter explains some of the key reasoning behind scenario-based contingency planning and provides some guidance and tools to help you determine when to undertake such planning. The primary learning points covered are:

- Practical reasons for undertaking contingency planning for specific scenarios
- Determining which scenarios should be planned for
- Use of the risk matrix tool for prioritizing contingency planning scenarios
- Linking the relative risk associated with planning scenarios to current levels of preparedness as guidance for determining when contingency planning is needed
2.1 Why Plan?

Planning requires the time of the participants, which may be in short supply. Could this time be better spent in other activities, such as emergency skills practice and training so that whenever there is a need to respond to a crisis, any crisis, the responders are more prepared? Since it is impossible to accurately predict the future, some will ask, isn’t planning for specific scenarios a waste of time?

What reasons can you think of to explain why contingency planning is a worthwhile preparedness activity? Write your answer in the space below.

Contingency planning for specific scenarios becomes extremely useful when the scenarios chosen are close to those that ultimately occur. The World Food Programme’s (WFP) internal evaluation of their own contingency planning between 2002 and 2008 found mixed results from their overall contingency planning efforts, but noted some specific instances in which contingency planning did make a “substantive contribution”.

“Notable examples exist where contingency planning did make a substantive contribution, but that contribution has not been consistent overall and the few practical outcomes observed were realized primarily when planning for well-defined, imminent threats.”


Clearly in cases where the planned-for scenario is close to the actual emergency situation, the planning assumptions and proposed responses will have higher fidelity to the ultimate reality. But what about those instances in which the planned-for crisis does not develop as foreseen? Even though it may seem that contingency planning is of little use in these cases, this was not the final conclusion of the report referenced above. While the plans produced were often found to be of minimal value for *operational planning*, the planning process itself was still found to have had a positive preparedness effect.

"Where there was broad participation in the process, contingency planning resulted in greater awareness of risk, anticipation of problems and improved understanding… Often emergencies turn out to be completely different from the plan. A contingency plan is too theoretical and gets into useless details. However, thanks to the contingency planning exercise, the office and partners have already an idea of what to do, even if the idea has to be readjusted.”

One other aspect to consider in deciding whether or not to conduct contingency planning is that of the relative value of time before and during emergency response. Time becomes more valuable once an emergency occurs since decisions must then be made quickly to avoid loss of life. Planning before the emergency when workloads may be more flexible is very important. One of the primary reasons for conducting contingency planning is because it will facilitate a *rapid and coordinated emergency response* by allowing planners, in advance of an emergency to:
• Consider the likely consequences of an emergency before it occurs
• Identify the key resources, both human and physical, which may be available to respond to the emergency
• Identify the critical areas for immediate action
• Build and train the emergency response team in advance
• Define the general policies and approach to the emergency in advance

All of these measures allow effective preparedness steps to be taken before an emergency, and more effective response measures immediately as the emergency unfolds. Team building developed through joint contingency planning is particularly useful, as the ability to act as a team may be critical to the success of the initial emergency response.

Another benefit to contingency planning is that, before an emergency, there is comparatively more time to consider all the aspects of problems that are likely to arise. Once the emergency has occurred, it may be very difficult to bring all of the players together. Agreement on policies in the contingency planning stage may help clarify applicability and resolve contradictions that may occur. **Rapid decision making** on operational issues after an emergency is important because delays may cost lives.

### 2.2 Why Plan for Specific Emergency Scenarios?

Why spend time planning for specific scenarios instead of general emergency preparedness activities that should be useful in any case? The answer is twofold:

1) Generating and discussing specific scenarios helps the planning team focus its analysis on the overall situation in order to consider which scenarios may be most likely to occur. This kind of creative thinking and discussion about possible contingencies helps bring energy to the planning process. In cases where planners are convinced that the scenarios are realistic and likely, they themselves are more likely to prioritize a contingency planning process over other day-to-day activities. Identifying specific and likely scenarios helps put the potential situation in the spotlight.

2) Generating and exploring specific scenarios often makes the planning more real to the planning team and helps to uncover gaps and difficulties more easily than when conducting generic preparedness planning. There is a distinct difference to the way a planning partner answers the question “are you prepared for an influx of refugees?” and “Are you prepared to provide food and clean water for 200,000 refugees arriving in the border region X within 48 hours?”

Consider both the costs and benefits. Focusing on the specific needs of overly narrow scenarios that may not happen could lead planners to focus on unusual details of such a scenario rather than on more general areas which would likely be needed in any emergency situation. Consider the short list of pros and cons concerning scenario-based contingency planning below and think about the types of scenarios you might be planning for, which arguments weigh more heavily in your case, the pros or the cons?

**The Pros** – Some arguments for specific scenario-based contingency planning:

• Some scenarios are so likely that it would be negligent not to prepare for them specifically.
• Some scenarios are different enough (entailing unique logistics or other needs, for example) from normal emergency response that a “general level of preparedness” is not enough.
• Scenario-based planning helps to make the situation real to planners who can then do operational planning more effectively.
Contingency Planning

The Cons – Some risks to consider about specific scenario-based contingency planning:

- The planned-for scenario may not occur exactly as foreseen.
- You may be accused of wasting your time if the scenario does not occur.
- It may be difficult for planners to agree on the scenario.

Using the pro and con arguments above, as well as your own ideas, consider the meaning of these arguments in your own decision-making process when deciding what types of scenarios require contingency planning.

**What types of scenarios would most justify the energy and time needed for contingency planning? Give a few examples or descriptive aspects of scenarios that you think would be most appropriate for contingency planning.**

2.3 Scenarios Suitable for Contingency Planning

Selection of scenarios for contingency planning will depend on the types of hazards that threaten your own area of concern: community, state, country, or region. The process generally starts with a threat or hazard assessment, which may require scientific, or other expert advice for natural phenomena (volcanologists and seismologists for example), and political or conflict expertise for assessing scenarios such as war, mass displacement and refugee emergencies.

Threats (or hazards) are potential dangers in your environment. They are normally expressed as events or scenarios: typhoon, earthquake or refugee influx, for example. Threats are sometimes classified into several categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Natural Hazards</th>
<th>Human Induced</th>
<th>Epidemiological</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Storm</td>
<td>War and conflict</td>
<td>Disease outbreak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flood</td>
<td>Pollution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earthquake</td>
<td>Fires (in many cases)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsunami</td>
<td>Industrial/Shipping accidents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drought</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since choosing the right type of scenario is important to the overall usefulness of the contingency plan, how do you go about selecting the right scenarios, or determining if the scenario you are considering merits taking the time and energy to conduct contingency planning? Whatever scenarios or aspects you chose to answer the question above, at least you should have considered the following aspects:

- The likelihood that the scenario will actually happen.
- The gravity or impact of the situation if it does occur.
- The unique aspects of the situation that would require specific planning above and beyond routine preparedness planning already in place.
Plainly, the *likelihood* of a specific scenario occurring is key. Emergency or disaster situations which are becoming more likely or which planners believe to be likely should be planned for. Failure to do so is a critical failure of management.

The *impact* of the scenario is equally important. Managers don’t need to make contingency plans for events that have little impact. However, if scenarios are foreseen that would have significant humanitarian consequences, these should be investigated, and if deemed to be of sufficient likelihood, they should be planned for.

Lastly, if scenarios arise which are relatively *unique* or are so far outside of day-to-day experience that routine preparedness plans will not adequately meet the resulting humanitarian needs, then these types of scenarios may also require specific planning.

### 2.4 Using the Risk Matrix for Selection of Scenarios

One useful tool for prioritizing potential threats or scenarios to determine the need to do contingency planning is called the risk matrix. It is a simple grid that allows the user to plot different possible emergency scenarios by ranking the scenario’s likelihood on one axis and the impact or significance of the event on the other.

These two aspects of potential scenarios, taken together, comprise *risk*. Those scenarios that are of higher likelihood and result in higher damage are by definition, higher risk. Consider the definitions below from the Conference Room Paper 3 of the United Nations Security Management System Network Steering Group, (Prepared by DSS), Geneva, Switzerland 12-14 November 2008.

*Risk*: The combination of the impact and likelihood for harm, loss or damage to the United Nations system from the exposure to threats. Risks are categorized in levels from Very Low to Very High for their prioritization.

While this definition was developed for use in assessing security threats in terms of relative risk to humanitarian field staff, the same process is valuable for disaster managers wanting to prioritize other sorts of hazards. For use in planning for disasters and other large scale emergencies, the following definitions are proposed in helping you place potential scenarios in their correct locations on the risk matrix.

#### DEFINITION of LIKELIHOOD

**Tools**

Terms for use in exercises in this course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rare</th>
<th>Unlikely</th>
<th>Possible</th>
<th>Likely</th>
<th>Very Likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very unusual event not expected to occur more frequently than once in 500 years (e.g., meteorite strike, massive tsunami in some areas)</td>
<td>Unusual event not expected to occur more frequently than once in 100 years (e.g., massive earthquake in some areas)</td>
<td>Occasional event expected to occur once in every 20 years (e.g., super cyclone)</td>
<td>Regular event expected to occur at least once in every 10 years (e.g., a named cyclone, flooding)</td>
<td>Scientifically predicted or expected to occur within 1-5 years (e.g., dam failure), within months (e.g., some landslides, volcanic eruption), or even days (e.g., named cyclone tracking warning)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DEFINITION of PROBABLE DAMAGE
Terms for use in exercises in this course

Related fields of risk analysis, job site accident risk analysis, field safety, and security threat analysis are commonly used today, and each have their own terminology and scales for describing the different levels to be considered. Even so, they all share the common elements of likelihood and probable impact of the events happening. The sample matrix below is one example that can be used for this type of analysis at the national level when considering natural and man-made hazards that might result in large-scale disasters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hazard</th>
<th>Risk Analysis Matrix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MINOR</td>
<td>MODERATE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No deaths</td>
<td>• Few deaths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Infrastructure not seriously affected</td>
<td>• Infrastructure slightly damaged resulting in loss of basic services for less than one week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Commerce and normal activities only slightly disrupted.</td>
<td>• Normal activities disrupted for less than one week</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tools

Contingency Planning

Likelihood of Event occurring in the country
Use of the Hazard Risk Analysis Matrix. Additional guidance and practical tips on using the risk matrix for generating contingency planning scenarios is provided in Chapter 5 of this course, “How to Develop Scenarios and Estimate Needs.” The following points are basic however, and should be understood before going further in the course.

- The risk matrix records both the degree of probability and likelihood of impact, for a more rational understanding of overall risk.
- After plotting the scenarios, you can now rank risks (from highest risk downwards). Remember that assessments may vary, even among experts. For those scenarios that are well studied scientifically, specific expertise should be sought to validate the estimates of likelihood, as well as damage in some cases.
- The goal of risk management is to push each possible hazard (scenario) down towards the left-hand corner of the matrix. Obviously for many natural hazards such as cyclones and earthquakes, likelihood cannot be changed (although it may become better understood) whereas expected damage can always be lessened by reducing vulnerability, strengthening communities, or reducing population in the most dangerous areas. You should actively look for ways and strategies to accomplish this, remembering that there may be other factors that will push threats up towards the top right hand corner; for example, poverty, lack of education about hazard risks, and the inability to respond efficiently.
- Regular revisiting of this matrix and updating with current information and analysis will help show trends in the overall vulnerability to hazards, as well as help you evaluate whether your risk reduction efforts, including contingency planning, are having an effect.

2.5 Deciding When to Plan for Specific Scenarios

While some humanitarian emergencies occur relatively infrequently, e.g., tsunamis or some types of volcanic eruptions, they are not entirely unpredictable. In some cases, warning signs build up over time and may be monitored through early warning systems supported by international and national agencies. In other cases, while the exact moment of occurrence cannot be known, the general periodicity or probability of happening is established through historical records and statistics. So, how long does one wait to start planning for a scenario that seems to be increasingly likely? Wouldn’t waiting for more information be the most efficient use of planners’ time?

“A good plan today is better than a perfect plan tomorrow.”

– Anonymous

Early warnings should be linked to contingency planning. As analysis of early warning information indicates that an emergency event is more and more likely, the resources devoted to contingency planning should increase. Waiting for more complete information may simply leave you unprepared when the emergency begins. Careful interpretation is required to verify the information and to analyze the implications in order to justify the initiation or implementation of a contingency plan. The following are some of the common indicators monitored by early warning systems and assistance agencies:

- **Population movements** – Observations may include the total number of people who have crossed or who are moving towards the border or the average rate of persons crossing a border.
- **Violence or security threats** – The outbreak of open fighting after a period of tension, or other violent incidents, may be a threshold for initiating contingency plans.
- **Resource constraints** – Contingency plans are often made in situations where essential resources are threatened, such as food and water resources in a refugee camp.
Contingency Planning

**Economic indicators** – Many economic indicators, such as the price of staple foods or livestock, may indicate impending food shortages.

**Disease incidences** – The development of a contingency plan may be warranted by the presence of a disease with epidemic potential.

**Natural disasters** – Contingency planning may cover droughts, storms, floods or other hazards that may kill, injure or cause population movements. Many of these events follow predictable patterns of recurrence even if the timeframes are quite long.

Ideally, thresholds or levels of alert should be established both for initiating a contingency plan and for putting the plan into action. Clear and unambiguous signals, however, are often difficult to find and agree upon as thresholds. A precise “threshold event” which initiates the plan does not always occur and decisions for action may be influenced by political or other factors. The level of alert varies and the type and extent of contingency planning should vary accordingly.

Ideally, contingency planning is done to bring the level of preparedness up to the level matching the severity and likelihood of the threat scenario determined through your risk matrix. The following categories are notional and may provide you with ideas for establishing readiness levels for hazards or scenarios that affect your community or country.

- **Unprepared** – No organized actions have been taken in regard to preparedness for future disaster or emergency events.
- **General preparedness** – Standby response arrangements are in place, staff members are trained for emergency response, and there is access to emergency funding. These arrangements are not necessarily scenario-specific.
- **Enhanced preparedness** – For areas of a particular country or region that are considered to be emergency prone or vulnerable to the effects of hazards/emergencies, dedicated effort has been focused for specific response in those areas. Often, contingency planning is undertaken which establishes general procedures for likely scenarios affecting the area, i.e., seasonal storms, flooding or cyclones in many coastal areas.
- **Immediate preparedness for response** – Specific standby arrangements are put in place and planned response mechanisms are activated and placed on active alert through funded and staffed monitoring and/or readiness activities, including scenario-specific and detailed contingency planning and immediate stock-taking exercises.

**PREPAREDNESS – Stock-Taking Exercise**

Consider the threats currently facing your own country, community or area. Draw up a list of possible scenarios and locate them on the risk matrix shown in Section 2.4. Do any of them fall into the “Extreme Risk” area of the matrix?

Are you prepared for these scenarios? What threat(s) in particular can you list that you think should be prepared for? Fill in the table below listing the threats that you feel require some level of preparedness. After each threat (or hazard) scenario, mark the space that indicates the current level of preparedness for that specific threat. After completing the table, draw an arrow from the current actual level of preparedness to the level that you feel could be achieved through a contingency planning process.
Knowing when to conduct contingency planning is important, but not easily quantified in specific terms. There is seldom a guarantee of success in either the prediction of a specific scenario, or in the ability to genuinely improve preparedness for an as-yet, unrealized event. The tools provided above will be useful to help you discuss the need for planning with colleagues and other partners, but in the end, the choice of whether or not to conduct contingency planning is subjective and weighed against other pressing demands on your time and energy. The reasoning, processes and tools in this chapter should help you decide whether and when to undertake contingency planning in a more logical and clearer way. Hopefully, this will be beneficial, not only for your own understanding, but also for explaining and facilitating the planning process with other stakeholders.
Summary

There are practical reasons why planners should undertake specific scenario-based contingency planning rather than, or in addition to, general preparedness planning measures:

- Some scenarios are so likely, it is irresponsible not to prepare for them specifically.
- Some scenarios are different enough (unique needs or logistics, for example) from normal emergency response that a “general level of preparedness” is not enough.
- Scenario-based planning helps to make the situation real to planners who can then do better, more practical planning.

Some types of scenarios are better suited to contingency planning than others. In general terms, such scenarios are:

- Very likely to occur (well-defined and imminent).
- Very damaging if they do occur.
- Relatively unique from other present hazards so that the specific actions to be done in such cases are not well understood by the responders.

One tool for prioritizing and selecting scenarios for contingency planning is the risk matrix. It provides a graphic way of visualizing two different aspects of potential scenarios—likelihood and impact—so that the relative risk of different scenarios can be determined.

Those threats or scenarios that planners locate in the upper-right corner of the matrix, in the zones labeled “Extreme Disaster Risk”, should be considered for contingency planning.

Contingency planning should be done when early warning information indicates that scenarios are becoming more likely, and certainly when the likelihood changes from “Likely” to “Imminent”.

Contingency planning should also be done early enough to allow time for needed changes in policy or response mechanisms. In other words, you can use contingency planning to increase preparedness to match the risk level of different planning scenarios.
Chapter 2
Self-Assessment Questions

Check T or F to indicate whether a statement is True or False

1. Contingency planning has been found to be beneficial to the planning partners, even when the planned-for event did not occur.

2. Contingency planning is most useful to support emergency operational planning when the planning scenario is imminent and well-defined.

3. The risk matrix is used to plot a particular scenario’s likelihood and impact.

4. The scenario presenting the greatest risk to the affected community is the one that has the highest likelihood. The presumed level of damage is not important to this analysis.

5. There are no tools designed to help clarify the relative risk of the different planning scenarios or to help decide when to conduct contingency planning for them.

Multiple choice. Mark ALL correct statements — more than one may apply.

Study this example risk matrix before answering the multiple choice questions below. NOTE: This is a specific example and does not apply to all situations everywhere.

6. Which scenario is most likely according to the risk matrix?
   A. H1N1 flu outbreak
   B. Refugee influx
   C. Volcanic eruption
   D. Food riots

Self Test
7. Which scenario would cause the greatest harm if it were to occur?
   - H1N1 flu outbreak
   - Refugee influx
   - Volcanic eruption
   - Food riots

8. The risk matrix was prepared in an interagency process with adequate expertise to give credibility to the placement of the scenarios that the team considered. If their analysis is correct, which scenarios present the greatest risk to the country?
   - H1N1 flu outbreak and tsunami
   - Refugee influx and volcanic eruption
   - Volcanic eruption and food riots in the capital
   - Refugee influx and food riots

9. The country has many volcanoes, and eruptions requiring evacuation and other emergency services occur almost every year in various locations. There is a dedicated emergency response unit assigned to volcanic events and funding is in place for monitoring and response on an ongoing basis. The preparedness level for volcanoes could best be described as:
   - Unprepared
   - General preparedness
   - Enhanced preparedness
   - Immediate preparedness for response

10. Food riots have occurred in the capital every few years. Response agencies have responded well to these incidents. However, the country has never experienced a large-scale refugee influx. Which of the following conclusions would you reasonably draw from this information and your own analysis of the risk matrix?
    - The H1N1 flu outbreak presents a greater risk to those involved than the food riot.
    - The refugee influx will present a worse humanitarian emergency than the food riots if it occurs.
    - The food riots are more likely to occur than the refugee influx.
    - There is probably greater value in preparing a contingency plan for the refugee influx rather than for the food riots since it is a more uncommon scenario in the country and responders may not know what to do.
Chapter 3

Who Are the Planners?

Planners meet in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea for a contingency planning workshop as part of a longer-term program supporting development of community-based contingency plans throughout the country. This contingency planning learning program was supported by UNHCR, OCHA, UNDP and the national disaster management authority. Each local inter-agency planning team completed scenario-based contingency plans for hazards threatening their own communities in 2010.

This chapter explores the need for including multiple stakeholders in the contingency planning process. In particular, the following questions will be answered:

- Which stakeholders should be involved?
- What are the benefits of developing partnerships in contingency planning?
- How do you choose the right partners and organize yourselves into efficient working groups?
- What is the IASC Cluster Approach and how does it relate to this process?
3.1 Who Should Be Involved in Contingency Planning?

Those who will respond should be the ones to plan. This means that the planners chosen to work on specific scenario-based plans should be those who will have a role to play should those specific events occur. Experience has shown that planning is good for the planners even when the plans are not ultimately used as operational plans.

“Those who plan do better than those who do not plan even though they rarely stick to their plans.”

– Winston Churchill

Who would you invite to a contingency planning initiative to address a threat or threats faced by your area of concern?

Churchill’s quote means that the planning exercise itself makes the planners better able to think and respond in any event, even when the prepared plans aren’t used. Following this logic alone, it would seem the best idea would be to involve as many people as possible in the contingency planning process — as it strengthens all of them. However, for the practical matter of preparing a contingency plan, this is not the case.

Too many people will slow down the planning process. The overall administration of an interagency planning process will become more tedious as the number of participants increases. If the result is a very slow process, planners may become frustrated and drop out of the process entirely. On the other hand, while a single planner may be the most efficient at completing a plan, without the inputs and buy-in from partners, the plan may not be accepted, or even considered by anyone other than the single author.

Obviously, there needs to be a balance between pursuing wide input to the process from many potential response partners and keeping the process itself manageable. Planners can optimize this balance by establishing an efficient structure of small groups of people who can meet and agree and make meaningful progress on the plan in their own area of expertise in a way that supports and encourages the whole planning team. This kind of organization is done both vertically within organizations (from headquarters managers to field workers, for example), or by specialty or sector (e.g., water and sanitation vs. protection or shelter).
Levels of Contingency Planning

Contingency plans may be made at a number of different levels. This course focuses on contingency planning at national or regional levels, which should be based on operational details developed locally. Field staff members have established relationships with the local community and local officials and are better able to determine whether or not operational plans are realistic. In addition, field offices can usually identify local resources more easily than centrally located offices.

Field-based planning, however, is not always enough, and may not be appropriate for policy planning. Centralized offices, such as branch offices or international headquarters, may have a better overview of the national and global situations and can judge the likely impact of decisions on other national or international programs. These offices, therefore, are usually in a better position to make policy decisions. To be effective, however, contingency planning systems must allow for support, advice and feedback between branch and field offices as indicated in the following diagram. Systems in which all policy decisions are made at the central level and all operational decisions at the field level do not work.

The relationship between policy planning and detailed operational planning

Planners should be invited who have a suitable knowledge of the area and level of concern and who also have the requisite authority or understanding of their organizations’ capabilities and limitations. This means, in many instances, that both field and headquarters input will be required. Furthermore, the organizational commitment to the plan will be better built and maintained if headquarters and field staff are involved, as evidenced by the quote from a UNHCR contingency planner, Alessandra Morelli.

“We started taking contingency planning seriously when the management at HQ, High Commissioner level, said we had to take this seriously. The Horn of Africa is a good example. Ownership of the plan has to include ownership from the field, as well as ownership from Headquarters.”

Alessandra Morelli, author/facilitator of several UNHCR contingency plans, past Emergency Coordinator for UNHCR in Geneva, and UNHCR Deputy Representative in Afghanistan as of 2010

3.2 Benefits of Partnerships in Planning

Planning in a vacuum, without input from others who have valuable information is an obvious mistake. Planning with a manageable number of informed partners, on the other hand, will likely yield several benefits.
Contingency Planning

What benefits do you foresee resulting from working with partners in developing contingency plans on an inter-agency basis?

Your answer will depend on the scope of your planning activity and the partners you envision working with. The benefits described below represent some of the benefits seen by those who have done this type of planning.

Better planning – A contingency plan should cover all sectors needed for response to the planning scenario. No person or organization can be an expert in every sector of the increasingly complex emergencies taking place today. Bringing more viewpoints, more specialist knowledge, and more years of experience into the planning process means that more factors are considered. Broad processes with more participants, while slower to implement, do reduce the chance of the plan being a failure and helps minimize the types of oversights or false assumptions that might result in needless deaths.

Higher levels of acceptance and commitment – When agencies are fully involved in the planning process, their views are taken into account. Through their agreement with the final plan, agencies should feel more committed to the outcome. It is less likely that agencies would choose to “go it alone” or reject a commonly developed plan when they have played a role in its development.

Improved Inter-Agency relationships – An emergency places enormous pressure on all the players involved. Relationships developed before an emergency may help to enhance communication and ease stresses during the emergency. In addition, an understanding of each agency’s strengths and weaknesses may assist in the implementation of plans. Finally, the personal relationships developed during the planning process may also make it easier to discuss sensitive topics.

Improved consensus and coordination – As contingency planning ties together all the information from different sectors and partners to give a final result that reflects all of their inputs, it builds a consensus on steps to be taken to address the emergency. Creating such a consensus before the emergency means that less time is lost in debate when the emergency happens. It also ensures that the same policies (such as for supplementary feeding, vaccination, treatment, water supply, food distribution etc.) are followed by all partner agencies.

The following list of best practices for efficient contingency planning is from the Summary Report of the Strategic Evaluation of WFP’s Contingency Planning (2002-2008). As you scan their list of points for effective planning, look for those aspects that result from working with partners.
Best practices drawn from reviews of the experiences of contingency planners suggest that contingency planning is effective when:

- It is recognized as being a management rather than a technical function and is led by, and has the strong commitment of, senior decision-makers.
- It is a participatory process that includes all those who will be required to work together in the event of an emergency, including finance, administration, human resources and information and communications technology (ICT) staff as well as program and other operational staff, and it deliberately seeks to enhance coordination among units and organizations.
- It starts with an assessment of humanitarian needs but also assesses response capacity, to identify and find ways of overcoming gaps.
- It is linked with national systems, whenever possible, and takes account of existing community-based disaster management practices, the current status of preparedness measures and systems and government plans.
- It is an ongoing process that includes regular reviews and updating.
- It is integrated into ongoing planning processes.
- It is linked with early warning and other information and decision-making systems.
- It is facilitated, but not carried out, by someone who has both good contingency planning experience and facilitation skills.
- Actual planning is undertaken by country office staff; the final plan is concise and easy to use; and separate elements can be used by different users – senior decision-makers, sector specialists and donors.
- Plans include only the detail required to inform the needed preparedness actions, assure response capacities and resolve anticipated problems, avoiding “over-planning” or the “consolidation trap”.
- Triggers are identified to determine when to take specific preparedness or response actions.
- Academic research emphasizes that emergency planning will be more effective if:
  - It is based on a problem-solving model.
  - It is directed towards mechanisms and techniques that promote inter-organizational coordination and common decision-making, rather than detailed definitions of what should be done in every contingency.
- The planning process is emphasized over production of a plan.

Partner agencies enrich the planning process as they bring needed information and expertise. While involving other agencies may make the process slower, there are many advantages that outweigh this disadvantage. These include a better quality of planning, enhanced acceptance and commitment to the plan, and building relationships among partner agencies and staff.
3.3 Choosing Partners and Forming Working Groups

While a contingency plan may be thought of as a single document outlining the activities needed in all sectors, this is only true of the highest level or the master plan. The contingency planning process will often reveal, and should build upon, sectoral or sub-sectoral plans that have been drawn up by agencies already working in those sectors. In the health sector, for example, a general contingency plan may be drawn up by the Ministry of Health and separate contingency plans drawn up by UNICEF and NGOs. Although these sub-sectoral plans may overlap, it is possible that, when combined, they may not even provide complete coverage of health sector needs.

Sectoral plans may have various levels of detail, some containing complex written or formal contingency plans and others which are broad and general or rely heavily on standard internal procedures. The contingency planning process should bring all of the sub-sectoral plans together into a common, harmonized plan for each sector. Plainly, sectoral specialists will be required to complete the plans relating to their area of expertise.

Some agencies keep their contingency plans confidential and unpublished for political or security reasons. Their existence may not be acknowledged and they are not formally available to the contingency planning team. The information contained in these confidential plans may impact the scenarios and actions planned for by others. Publishing or sharing plans may help to avoid problems that can occur when conflicting contingency plans are put into action.

Contingency plans prepared by the military, police, or state agencies, for example, might be confidential. Donors, NGOs, and other partners may also have internal contingency plans (for example, staff evacuation plans) that are confidential because of funding or political considerations. One way of accessing these plans is by including partners who are aware of their contents in the contingency planning process.

How many people should be invited to the meeting? In the space below, write the optimal number of people you would invite to a contingency planning meeting and think about who they would be.

Optimal number __________________________________________________________________________

Description of attendees __________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

Exercise
Social research and common experience of many planners, trainers, and facilitators has shown that there is an optimal range of participants who can efficiently and productively participate in a meeting without becoming bored, breaking into factions, or “coasting”—not becoming involved or committed to the process even though physically in the room. The number of planners may be:

Too Few – Two people quickly develop “group think” wherein each partner knows the other’s viewpoint and preferences so well that many questions are not asked and habit overrides open discussion. Three people tend to break quickly into “2 against 1”, damaging relationships and derailing discussions. Groups of 4 often simply divide into two pairs.

About Right – Groups of 5 to 7 are ideal for contributing in a variety of viewpoints and expertise, with a still manageable number of collaborators each of whom can speak and listen to others in the meeting without becoming bored.

Too Many – Groups above 8 or 9 members are generally better served and perform better when divided into smaller sub-groups whenever active input and discussion is required. Otherwise some members can easily coast through the meeting without participating and, in effect, become simply observers.

Which partners should be involved?

As a matter of principle, all potential responders should be involved in planning for their own future roles in emergency response. As explained above, however, as a practical matter it is often efficient to limit the number of planners in order to streamline the process. In determining who should be invited and at what level, the general range of stakeholders and relevant experts should be reviewed and those that are most likely to be of value to the process should be invited. You should assure that those excluded from this level of planning are still able to participate through sub-group meetings or other mechanisms that will be discussed later in this course.

An invitee to the planning process can contribute in several ways. Particularly valuable planning team members include those who can:

- Authoritatively help to establish the overall risk of the potential event.
- Officially represent an organization that will respond to the planning scenario in a significant way.
- Support the process and remain motivated to assist in this type of preparedness activity.
- Commit the required time to carrying out his or her share of the planning exercise.
- Speak for, and commit, his or her organization to the plan.
- Bring the perspective of the local potentially-affected community to the process.
- Bring previous experience to the process.

Finding the right people will depend on your own networks and ability to influence or convince them to participate. When deciding who to include, consider the following general groups of agencies or organizations that should probably be involved:

- Government
- Local population
- Donor representatives
- Outside experts
- UN and intergovernmental agencies
- Red Cross Movement organizations
- NGOs
Contingency Planning

**Government** – Governments play a key role in emergencies. Although United Nations agencies, NGOs and other governments may assist national governments with the coordination of crises, governments retain sovereignty and have the final word. If the government is not involved from the start of the process, the contingency plan will be based on many assumptions about government actions.

> “Each state has the responsibility first and foremost to take care of the victims of natural disasters and other emergencies occurring on its territory. Hence, the affected State has the primary role in the initiation, organization, coordination, and implementation of humanitarian assistance within its territory.”

— UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182

It is especially important that the relevant government ministry or ministries play a role in the formulation of policy in the planning process. In addition, the government should be involved in technical planning for operations as local officials have detailed knowledge about the availability of local resources and the problems inherent in their use. Government staff may also have access to indicators of a possible pending emergency that may not be available to other agencies.

**Local population** – It is essential to involve the local population in planning decisions that directly affect them, for example, in sharing water sources with those who may become displaced. Consultation beforehand is generally much easier to deal with than disputes afterwards. Such consultation should ideally be with the entire community or through community leaders. NGOs or local government agency staff members who are familiar with the local or potentially affected populations may act as advocates and can be valuable sources of information on cultural and social preferences.

**Donor representatives** – Involvement of donor representatives in contingency planning is appropriate when there is a need to establish contingency stocks or to fund other contingency preparations. Even when there is not likely to be a need for such funding, involving donor representatives during the contingency planning stage can speed the release of funds once the emergency happens. Though donor representatives do not need to be part of the entire contingency planning process unless they have a particular skill or expertise to offer, it is often useful to brief them on the process as an indicator of overall emergency preparedness.

**Outside experts** – Contingency plans are sometimes developed, written or facilitated by external experts. This approach may be required if offices are understaffed or in extreme cases of urgency. While outside expertise may be a useful addition to the planning process, the process should not depend on outsiders who may not be available for the longer term.

> “The most constructive planning processes are those which actively engage agencies/organizations, encourage real problem-solving and result in useful plans that are ‘owned’ by participants. The least useful planning is that undertaken by external consultants or individual staff members in isolated exercises with limited involvement of staff from agencies/organizations responsible for implementation. Facilitators should be used to help the planners manage the contingency planning process and provide technical support but should not do the planning or write the plan.”

— from the Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Guidelines for Humanitarian Assistance (November 2007)
UN and intergovernmental agencies – UN and intergovernmental agencies should be involved in contingency planning in proportion to their potential involvement in responding to an emergency. If agencies are likely to play a key role, they should play a full part in contingency planning. For example, the World Food Programme is likely to have its own sectoral contingency plan for food aid logistics; this should be incorporated into the overall plan. Some agencies may play a limited role in contingency planning. They may participate through interviews with the planning team, or through written comments made initially and on the draft plan.

Red Cross Movement organizations – Red Cross/Red Crescent national societies are often first responders even in emergencies of international magnitude. The national societies and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC) will be likely partners for most humanitarian emergencies, both natural and human-made. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) will most likely be involved in situations involving or following on from armed conflict.

NGOs – National or international NGOs likely to play key roles in the emergency should have key roles in contingency planning. Agencies with experienced staff and those with funding can provide significant resources to the planning process.


Some useful questions to ask when assessing participation in preparedness planning

- Are all relevant and mandated agencies represented including technical sectors?
- Are relevant local, regional and international organizations represented? Remember that local organizations have better information on local conditions (social, cultural, political), prevalent risks and present actors that can contribute to the implementation of the plan. At the international level, priority should be placed on those organizations with a more permanent presence in the country.
- Is the actual planning process organized in such a manner whereby all participants are able to attend planning sessions? The process must be well defined prior to initiation (e.g., monthly meetings, multi-day workshops, etc.)
- Have traditional social and community structures and cultural considerations been addressed in the planning and delivery of goods and services?
- Have the differing roles of men and women been considered in the planning process?
- How have community members been involved in decision-making, planning, implementation and evaluation of service provision and programs?
- Have the specific needs of vulnerable groups been assessed and accounted for?
- Are potential sources of tension between communities/sectors assessed and considered?
- Have local capacities been assessed including how community members can be encouraged to actively participate in disaster operation and recovery that is then linked to the local and national planning process?
### 3.4 Using the IASC Cluster Approach in Contingency Planning

In December 2005 the IASC Principals designated Global Cluster Leads (see below) for nine sectors or areas of activity which in the past either lacked predictable leadership in situations of humanitarian emergency, or where there was considered to be a need to strengthen leadership and partnership with other humanitarian actors. This complements those sectors and categories of population where leadership and accountability are already clear, e.g., agriculture (led by FAO), logistics (led by WFP), refugees (led by UNHCR) and education, led by UNICEF. In the case of education in emergencies, however, there may be some further modification to the existing arrangements.

#### GLOBAL CLUSTER LEADS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector or Area of Activity</th>
<th>Global Cluster Lead</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>FAO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Camp Coordination/Management: IDPs (from conflict) (Disaster situations)</td>
<td>UNHCR, IOM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Recovery</td>
<td>UNDP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>UNICEF, Save The Children – UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Shelter; IDPs (from conflict) (Disaster situations)</td>
<td>UNHCR, IFRC (Convener)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Telecommunications</td>
<td>OCHA/WFP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>WHO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Logistics</td>
<td>WFP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition</td>
<td>UNICEF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection: IDPs (from conflict) Disasters/civilians affected by conflict (other than IDPs)**</td>
<td>UNHCR, UNHCR/OHCHR/UNICEF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water, Sanitation and Hygiene</td>
<td>UNICEF</td>
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#### Cross-Cutting Issues

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<td>Age</td>
<td>Help Age International</td>
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<td>Environment</td>
<td>UNEP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>UNFPA / WHO</td>
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<tr>
<td>AIDS</td>
<td>UNAIDS</td>
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* IFRC has made a commitment to provide leadership to the broader humanitarian community in Emergency Shelter in disaster situations, to consolidate best practice, map capacity and gaps, and lead coordinated response. IFRC has committed to being a ‘convener’ rather than a ‘cluster lead’. In an MOU between IFRC and OCHA it was agreed that IFRC would not accept accountability obligations beyond those defined in its Constitutions and own policies and that its responsibilities would leave no room for open-ended or unlimited obligations. It has therefore not committed to being ‘provider of last resort’ nor is it accountable to any part of the UN system.

** UNHCR is the lead of the global Protection Cluster. However, at the country level in disaster situations or in complex emergencies without significant displacement, the three core protection-mandated agencies (UNHCR, UNICEF and OHCHR) will consult closely and, under the overall leadership of the HC/RC, agree which of the three will assume the role of Lead for protection.
Since the participating agencies listed above have clearly defined roles according to this cluster model, it is relatively easy to determine who should be involved in which aspects of the response and for what types of emergencies. Furthermore, since these agencies have formally committed to these areas of response they will naturally be motivated to be involved in contingency planning concerning their own areas of commitment. The system is now widely used as in this example.

“The cluster system was officially rolled-out in Timor-Leste on 31 March 2009 with the formation of 11 clusters, reflecting the global humanitarian structure and led by both non-governmental organizations as well as UN agencies. The clusters are particularly focusing on recovery activities in support of the National Recovery Strategy (link) and assisting the Government towards natural disaster preparedness, emergency response and contingency planning.”

— Excerpt from online informational post of UNMIT @ unmit.unmissions.org
Summary

The likely responders to the planned-for scenario should be involved in the contingency planning process; further, it is often useful to include participation from central management as well as field staff, to enhance both the quality of the plan as well as buy-in from the entire organization.

The planning groups should be wide enough to include valuable insights and key responders, but should be limited to primary stakeholders in order to streamline the overall planning process.

Including partnerships with other agencies in contingency planning offers several benefits:

- Better quality planning
- Higher levels of acceptance and commitment
- Improved inter-agency relationships
- Higher degree of consensus and coordination

Planning partners should be chosen for their expertise as well as their commitment or motivation to the planning cause.

In practical terms, working groups of 5-9 people are small enough to be efficient, and large enough to foster real discussion and variation in viewpoint.

Partners should be chosen from key stakeholders in the potential response, such as:

- Members of the potentially affected community—where possible
- UN agencies
- Government officials
- NGO partners
- Red Cross/Red Crescent planners
- Donor representatives

The IASC Cluster Approach is an organizing and coordination structure for the IASC members and is a ready-made system for identifying contingency planning partners in relation to a list of agreed emergency response sectors or tasks.
Chapter 3
Self-Assessment Questions

Check T or F to indicate whether a statement is True or False

1. Contingency planning is best done by very large groups—planning workgroups of less than 24 people seldom function well.

2. Contingency planning should either be done by headquarters staff or by field staff, but not by both.

3. Plans produced through interagency partnerships are quicker to prepare, but often poorer in quality.

4. Contingency plans for disaster response should be done by UN and NGO teams alone as governments have their own contingency plans.

5. The most constructive planning processes are those that actively engage different organizations.

Multiple choice. Mark ALL correct statements – more than one may apply.

6. According to the IASC Cluster Approach, which agencies would be responsible for education in emergencies or disaster response?
   A. UNHCR
   B. UNDP
   C. UNICEF
   D. Save the Children UK

7. According to the IASC Cluster Approach, which agencies would be responsible for shelter in emergencies or disaster response?
   A. UNHCR – for conflict situations
   B. UNDP – for development situations
   C. IFRC – for natural disaster situations
   D. UNICEF – for children’s shelters

8. According to the IASC Cluster Approach, which agencies would be responsible for the cross-cutting issue of gender in emergencies or disaster response?
   A. UNICEF
   B. UNFPA
   C. UNDP
   D. WHO
Chapter 3

Self-Assessment Questions (continued)

9. Which of the following are considered to be benefits of interagency partnerships in contingency planning?
   - [A] Better quality planning
   - [B] Higher levels of acceptance and commitment
   - [C] Improved inter-agency relationships
   - [D] Improved coordination

10. Which of the following attributes are desirable for members of a contingency planning group or team?
    - [A] Authority within their own organization
    - [B] Ability to bring the perspective of the affected community to the table
    - [C] Commitment to the process and ability to dedicate the required time
    - [D] Mandated or commitment to responding to the type of scenario you are planning for

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Chapter 3 Answer Key

- 5. F
- 9. F
- 4. F
- 3. F
- 8. D
- 2. F
- 7. A, C
- 6. C, D
- 1. F
Planners discuss water and sanitation planning issues at the 54th WASH Cluster meeting held in Peshawar, Pakistan on May 26, 2010. This water and sanitation cluster group was created as a practical mechanism of the IASC cluster approach at the local level. The aim of the cluster approach is to ensure coherent and effective response through the mobilization of government agencies, international organizations, UN agencies, programs and funds, and NGOs to respond in a strategic manner across all key clusters or areas of activity. Having been successfully initiated, staffed, and tasked, the meeting continues on a regular basis and was an important part of the planning for response to the 2010 Pakistan floods.

This chapter illustrates the need for carefully planning for and initiating your contingency planning exercise. Taking care to initiate the process with clear goals and the right partners will improve your chances of having a successful outcome. In particular this chapter provides insight into:

- Planning for and initiating the contingency planning process and structure
- Holding more efficient planning meetings
- Setting the scope and content of the plan
- Maintaining the planning process and the plan
4.1 Planning and Initiating the Process

Before beginning a new contingency planning process, conduct a review of existing plans and processes. It is generally better to use and improve upon existing processes than to sidetrack them or create parallel initiatives. While there are instances when a new initiative is required to avoid poor reputation or other bad feelings about a dysfunctional existing mechanism, this should not be assumed without investigation into the potential for working with existing mechanisms. In particular, short-term or newly arriving agencies should make a good faith effort to work with longer-term and more established mechanisms as a basic first step. Consider the findings from an evaluation of the Cluster Approach in Chad in 2010 below.

“In general, the implementation of the Cluster Approach was difficult in Chad for the following reasons:

- the multiplication of coordination mechanisms created confusion and led to a marked increase in the number of meetings;
- in such a politically complex and volatile context, concern about the increasing domination of the United Nations in humanitarian action led to a loss of respect for humanitarian principles.

Though these concerns and problems remain, with time there have been major improvements in terms of coordination. Current challenges concern creating links between the Clusters and national coordination mechanisms to improve the transition from relief to development and deciding how roles and responsibilities should be distributed between N’Djamena, Abéché and the field.

— from the IASC Cluster Approach Evaluation, 2ND Phase Country Study April 2010, Chad by François Grünewald and Bonaventure Sokpoh

Contingency planning is not a one-time exercise in most cases. Simply calling a single meeting will not get the job done. This ongoing process should be designed so that it can function with minimal inputs over a sustained period of time. This process must also be flexible enough to change as needed over that time. The initial threat you are planning for may pass, but a different threat may appear a year later. In other cases, the same threats being planned for may increase (or decrease) in likelihood or importance, or the concerned communities may become more or less vulnerable to their effects.

Whatever context you are working in, you will need to assess the situation and adapt your planning process accordingly. Contingency planning is usually initiated by the agency that intends to facilitate the ongoing planning process. Organizers should brief participants before the first meeting to promote a more considered response. The issues that may be dealt with at the first meeting include:

- Implementation of the contingency planning process itself
- General policies for the contingency planning process
- Scenarios which are to be planned for, specifying numbers or other details as closely as possible
- Overall objectives and standards to be met
- Timetable for the contingency planning process, including the next meeting
How long should it take to produce the first draft of the contingency plan? In the space below, write your answer in terms of your own situation and context.

The time required to adequately design a contingency plan is dependent on the size of the planning group, the urgency of the situation, and the political or organizational will to see the process through. It may be possible to produce an initial draft in less than a week (even a day for imminent situations), if many of the component elements and information are already available. Two weeks to two months, however, is probably a more realistic estimate for most situations.

Planning participants should be able to see the results of their investment in the contingency planning process. Participants may become frustrated if the process does not produce useful results within a reasonable time frame. Furthermore, the planning process itself should be part of a longer-term or sustainable process to develop agency capacities and interagency relationships. Careful attention to structuring the process in the beginning will lead to a more sustainable planning process.

Planning team processes and structures

Contingency planning may take place in many forms and forums, using simple or relatively complex planning teams and methods. Promoting creative combinations of people, agencies and ideas may help to address unique situations. Imposing limitations or tight structures on the planning process may be helpful in producing quick results for imminent situations, but may be counterproductive to the health of a longer ongoing process. All planning teams and processes, however, have to proceed in light of existing organizational structures, local norms and sensitive issues. Some possible ways to implement the planning process are discussed below.

Use of existing administrative structures and processes can result in excellent and sustainable plans. This approach should be handled with care, however, so that contingency planning does not become just another agenda item, or its importance reduced in light of other issues. Use of existing mechanisms, while ultimately more sustainable, can often be slower than creating special working groups. Creation of a special or temporary group and process highlights the purposes for planning especially if a new plan is being created, or in a situation of urgency.

“I have been involved with two types of contingency plans: Those which UNHCR led and developed ourselves (for refugees), and interagency plans when we were preparing for IDPs. The interagency ones are much harder to do.”

– Johann Siffonte
Emergency Preparedness and Response Officer
Contingency Planning

Plainly there are considerable challenges to undertaking an interagency contingency planning process. Proliferation of meetings, combined with divergences of operating methods or overall purpose can complicate this undertaking. Some possible supporting arrangements to help you organize the process more efficiently are:

- Steering groups
- Roundtables
- Contingency planning working groups
- Sectoral teams
- Informal core teams
- Secretariats

Each of these is described in more detail below. As you read through the descriptions, be aware that these or similar bodies or meetings may exist already in your situation and may be under different names or titles. These particular names are not endorsed or official in any way, but are used here as examples only, and are adhered to for consistency within this course. The key point for those managing the process is to be specific when calling a meeting as to what that meeting is about, and to avoid calling meetings that do not fit into a clear overall strategy for developing a plan.

Steering group – Establishing a steering group of senior decision makers can help to ensure a balance between participation and effective management, particularly in situations with a large number of humanitarian actors. This group will be responsible for providing overall strategic direction and guidance to the contingency planning process and ensuring that adequate resources are available to keep the process active. The steering group will approve the inter-agency contingency plan and monitor implementation of the preparedness actions identified. Existing coordination mechanisms such as Disaster Management Teams or Humanitarian Country Teams will typically perform these functions. (This definition for steering groups is reproduced from the 2007 IASC Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Guidelines for Humanitarian Assistance.)

Roundtable process – The concept of a contingency planning “roundtable” promotes exchange among the members of the wider stakeholder group at the overall consultative level for the purpose of inclusion and transparency in the process. The Roundtable may have broad representation and the number of participants may be too large to discuss the details of the planned response operation. The Roundtable is ideally suited to deal with some of the bigger policy issues, identify key working partners for the planning team, and may also review the first draft and oversee the whole process.

Contingency Planning Working Group – The Contingency Planning (CP) Working Group may consist of roundtable participants who are to be directly involved in the detailed planning process and possibly the informal core team (see below) as well. One function of the Working Group may be to ensure consistency between different sectoral plans, and to familiarize all sectors with the planning assumptions.

Technical/Sectoral teams – Sectoral teams develop relevant plans for each sector. Responsibility for organizing and managing the team may go to the agency that would have to execute specific sectoral operational tasks in an emergency. The IASC cluster system in the country you are working in would be a good place to initiate contingency planning within a specific sector, and to find planning partners with the right expertise and skills.

Emergency operations often falter because of small, seemingly insignificant details that may have been overlooked in planning. These details can be something as small as a syringe for vaccinations to larger equipment needed to offload humanitarian cargo from aircraft. For a core team managing the planning process in complex operations, it is virtually impossible to cover every detail. Therefore,
it is advisable for managers/planners to establish multi-sectoral teams that can ensure coordination with the proper specialists who are best suited to verify the detailed planning.

**Core team** – The informal core team members may mobilize the process and write the draft. The core team may have only two to five members, for example, with each member liaising with a number of sectors to ensure that the preparation of sector plans is on track. When a plan needs to be drafted or revised urgently, core team members should be released from other responsibilities so they can concentrate on the contingency planning process. A “process manager” may be appointed from the core team to take overall responsibility for managing the contingency planning process.

The diagram at right shows a highly developed organization for a multi-sectoral, interagency contingency planning team. While many arrangements are possible, this model shows all of the components likely to be needed for coordinating a fairly complex plan. The contingency planning structure is shown as concentric circles, with the core contingency planning team at the center. The addition of the sectoral teams makes up the Working Group. This Working Group is part of the still larger Roundtable at which all partners in the process are represented.

**Secretariat** – The contingency planning process may collect and generate a great deal of documentation that will also be important if the plan is revised, or if an emergency occurs which is different from the planned scenario. It may be necessary to appoint permanent administrative support person(s) as a secretariat for the contingency planning process. One of the tasks would be to index and archive all of the reference material used in preparing the contingency plan.

More advice on using these structures and supporting them is provided in Chapter 8 of this course.

### 4.2 Making Planning Meetings Efficient

The actions that you take before the first meeting will go a long way to help make the process efficient and sustainable. The first order of business is to be clear yourself about what you want to achieve in the meeting. If you can’t yet define this clearly and explain it to the other invitees, then you probably aren’t ready for the meeting. A sure way to kill a contingency planning process in its infancy is to start with a bad meeting.

*Think of a meeting you have attended that was poorly organized or managed. What made it a bad meeting? Use the space below to list the elements or aspects that needed improvement.*
Contingency Planning

There are many ways to have a bad meeting, but fortunately there are a few tips that will help you have a good one. Read through the advice below and compare it to your bad meeting memories. Would these actions have helped?

**Plan the meeting** – Efficient meetings lead to concrete results or outputs. Efficient meetings don’t happen by accident, they happen because they are planned that way. Think through the meeting basics first:

- Decide the goal of the meeting (what you hope to accomplish)
- Identify anyone else needed to help you plan the meeting
- Establish achievable goals for your meeting

These goals will lead the way to establishing the meeting agenda and determining the specific participants.

**Decide whether or not you need a meeting (yet)** – Once you’ve thought through your goals for the first steps of your contingency planning process, think about how best to meet them. In many organizations, meetings take up considerable resources: time, meeting room space, travel to the meetings, and other budgetary factors. So, before sending out email invitations to the contingency planning kick-off meeting, consider how much of your goal can be met before the meeting via email discussions, telephone, or one-on-one meetings before the group convenes. At a minimum, distributing and requesting information about the planning scenario(s), or even existing contingency plans, should be done before the first group meeting starts as explained below.

**Distribute and review pre-meeting information beforehand** – Make meetings more productive by limiting discussion and interactions to those things that are best done in a group. Individual preparation, background reading, sharing of data, etc., can and should be done before the meeting. Busy people will appreciate going to a well-prepared meeting.

Timing can be tricky for pre-meeting preparedness assignments; however, if agenda items or background material is sent too early, they may be forgotten or lost in the recipient’s in-basket. If the information is sent the day before, many people will not have time to fit it into their schedules. A few days to a week has proven to be a useful preparedness window for many planners—not too early (so not forgotten), and not too late (after schedules are already filled).

Documentation that may help you achieve the meeting goals can include reports; data and charts such as threat trend information, technical, scientific background, or political analysis, and existing preparedness plans—if any exist. Pre-meeting materials distributed within the right timeframe, with an explanation of the expectations for preparedness before the meeting, will lead to a better, more professional meeting.

**Appropriate level of participation at the meeting** – If a meeting is the appropriate means to accomplish your goals, and you are ready to move on to a face-to-face meeting with other planners, consider those who must attend for the meeting to succeed. Key participants must be available to attend the meeting. It is better to postpone a meeting rather than holding a meeting without key stakeholders that are critical to the process. If a critical partner cannot attend, and asks to send a delegate or observer, ask if the designated staff member has the authority to fully participate in the meeting and make decisions. If not, postpone the meeting. Meetings that consist of a high number of delegates and observers may be suitable for dissemination of already-agreed information, but they are not the best places for actually accomplishing contingency planning work.
Be professional – Lastly, simply following well-established good meeting practices, whether as a meeting organizer or a participant, will help. It is easy to complain about poor quality of a meeting but more challenging and constructive to consider ways that you can contribute to improving the process. You can learn more about meeting planning and management from another distance learning course in this series, Coordination.

“Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself.”

— Leo Tolstoy

Read through the good meeting checklist below and compare how many of these points were met in your last meeting.

**Good Meeting Checklist**

- Have meeting space, wall maps, flipcharts, markers, and a laptop computer ready before the meeting starts.
- Start on time.
- Call to order, definitively, in a loud voice.
- Announce the purpose of meeting.
- Set a deadline to adjourn.
- Appoint (or call for) a secretary to maintain records of the meeting’s actions or recommendations.
- Have all participants introduce themselves and their organizations.
- Encourage participation, by calling on attendees to present their perspectives—not simply giving them the opportunity to speak (or not).
- Set priorities and goals for the meeting.
- Identify what information is needed by whom and the key information that everyone needs. Call for information on each of these points from the attendees.
- Identify priority issues, actions, or agenda points and agree upon a prioritized agenda and a schedule for completion of each point.
- Do not leave any question or issue that is raised in the meeting unanswered or unattended. If it can’t be dealt with in the meeting, call for interested people to meet on it immediately after the meeting. If it can be scheduled for the next agenda, do that.
- Agree on the day, time, and location of the next meeting, if required.
- Adjourn on schedule.
4.3 Setting the Scope and Content of the Plan

The scope of your contingency plan will vary greatly depending on the threats you are planning for, the urgency, and the expertise you can marshal to assist on the planning team. Contingency plans vary from single page matrices to multi-chapter, comprehensive studies. While there is no exact answer to the question of scope and scale of the plan, there are a few tips that may help you in establishing this important aspect of the plan for yourself. Read through the short sections below and apply those that most closely relate to your own contingency planning situation.

**Short and simple** – When the planned-for threat is imminent (or seems so) and the situation is well defined, there may not be time to develop complex plans. In such cases a simple matrix is often enough. The scope of what is being planned for is clear in the minds of the planners and all that is required is a quick overview of who can do what when the event occurs, for example, tomorrow. A matrix of projected needs and current resources in hand can be prepared in a simple spreadsheet. This sort of document can be changed easily and is well understood by operational partners who have contributed information. This type of plan is only a few pages long, and is very appropriate for planning for contingencies in the midst of other ongoing operations. An example format, The Imminent Contingency Planning Matrix, is shown in Chapter 9.

**Variable scale** – When the planned for scenario cannot be made clear or agreed by the planning partners, it may be wise to plan for multiple variations of the threat (e.g., best case, likely case, and worst-case scenarios). This approach acknowledges the uncertainties of the planned for event, and will require more time to explore the multiple options. This is a very common approach.

**Multi-hazard** – In some situations, general preparedness plans are enhanced by specific contingency plans for different scenarios attached to the general plan as annexes. This multi-hazard approach still involves specific scenarios, however, and seeks to find common preparedness elements for the different types of threats foreseen. These types of plans are often considerably longer with more need to explain the planning reasoning to the readers.

**IASC format** – The IASC model presents users a simplified interagency plan that includes outputs from each of the model’s 4 steps. The IASC model emphasizes a common planning framework and does not require a high level of detail from each of the sector/cluster plans which can be compiled separately or included as annexes to the main plan. For an example, see The IASC Inter-Agency Format shown in Chapter 9.

**Regional plan** – In some cases, planners may be considering an emergency event that will affect several different countries at once. In this case, contingency planning is a complex affair, requiring understanding of multiple national situation assessments, variances in legislation, common practices, etc. However, due to the scale of such threats, contingency planning is often warranted. An example of a regional refugee outflow contingency plan, Regional Contingency Plan for a Refugee Emergency, is shown in Chapter 9.

4.4 Maintaining the Plan and the Process

How do you keep the process going as conditions change and the planned for scenario does not occur? This may be relatively easy if the common perception is that the threat is getting worse, but what if the threat is indeed passing and becoming less of a risk? Do you maintain the process, just for the sake of planning?

**Review meetings** – These are the most effective mechanisms for reviewing, maintaining or deciding that contingency plans are no longer needed. Review meetings promote the spirit of cooperation and open exchange. Review meetings should start immediately after the first draft of the plan is circulated. Although at this stage there may be very little to update, there will be points that need correction in the next draft. The review process should be similar to the one used to draft the plan.
As with the entire planning process, the schedule for review meetings varies with the urgency of the situation. In critical situations where events may radically alter the scenario, the contingency plan should be reviewed more frequently. A review meeting timetable should be established on a monthly, quarterly or annual basis.

**Encouraging continuing participation** – Contingency plans may initially be prepared in the context of a specific, threatened emergency. Under such a threat it may be relatively easy to mobilize partners to participate in the planning process. It may be more difficult to interest partners in future processes once the initial threat has passed.

*How can planners facilitate continuing participation in the contingency planning process after the initial exercise?*

There are several ways to facilitate continuing participation in the process:

- Promote flexible participation. Partners may only need to deal with the aspects in which they are interested. This can be achieved by considering sectors separately using the IASC Cluster Approach, for example.
- Promote listening and consideration of all comments.
- Integrate the contingency planning process with regular coordination meetings. This could be achieved by having a regular meeting with contingency planning as its only topic. This avoids the ‘not another meeting!’ complaint, or the need for participants to travel to several meetings. It can also be integrated by programming a special meeting to tie in with a regular program meeting.
- Provide resources—training, updates on manuals, etc.—to participants. Dedicated professionals often place great value on training and professional development opportunities.
- With their approval, credit all agencies for their contributions, for example, at the front of the contingency plan draft. Local offices may send copies of the plan to their headquarters, thereby increasing support for the contingency planning process.

**Maintaining the planning team** – Some of the ways to encourage participation are similar to the techniques for team building such as effective information sharing and feedback. Much of the contingency planning process is designed to build and maintain a team that can respond quickly in an emergency.

One of the problems in maintaining the planning team is the rate of turnover of key players. New members are constantly being introduced into the team and must learn its particular and evolving dynamic process as ‘old’ members move to new assignments. The process manager(s), core team, or focal point (the member of staff assigned to manage the contingency planning process) must ensure that details of such changes are kept up to date. It may also be useful to inform new arrivals in critical posts of the existence of the contingency plan and the date of the next planned review.
Summary

The process should start with a review of what has already been done or is currently being done elsewhere. Don’t “reinvent the wheel”.

Brief participants in the contingency planning process about the way the process will be handled, including a timetable for planning outputs.

Typical structures for more complex contingency plans can include steering groups, roundtables, working groups and specialized technical teams. All of these may be supported by a core team and secretariat.

Planning meetings conducted in the process of preparing a plan should themselves be planned to be as efficient as possible.

Meetings should be used sparingly, only when they are truly needed, and should be prepared for properly by:

• Distributing required material beforehand
• Choosing attendees with adequate level of authority
• Being professional in your actions during the meeting

Set the scope and general content of the plan in the initial meeting. Valuable contingency plans can range from concise to complex as follows:

• Short and simple response matrices
• Variable scale plans with modular components
• Multi-hazard plans that include multiple planning scenarios
• IASC format models (see Chapter 9)

Maintain the process and the plan by establishing maintenance mechanisms such as review meetings.

Encourage participation in the ongoing process by:

• Allowing flexibility in the way that various partners can contribute
• Actively listening to partners comments and concerns about the process
• Integrating the contingency planning process into other ongoing agendas
• Providing training or training materials to partners in the process
• Giving credit to those who do participate
• Managing “handover strategies” for replacements to planning partners as they rotate into the field
Chapter 4
Self-Assessment Questions

Check T or F to indicate whether a statement is True or False

1. Planners should consider existing planning processes before implementing new ones.
2. It will always be better to use existing planning rather than to spend the energy to develop new planning mechanisms or processes.
3. The use of a steering group or roundtable is designed to investigate the technical details of plan components.
4. Information needed in a meeting should be introduced at the meeting itself, rather than sent out beforehand, as most people never review pre-meeting documentation anyway.
5. Observers at planning meetings usually increase the efficiency of the meeting.

Multiple choice. Mark ALL correct statements – more than one may apply.

6. Which of the following points would help make your planning meetings more efficient?
   A. Start on time.
   B. Set a deadline to adjourn.
   C. Be flexible about time, people will come when they are ready, and planning takes as long as it takes.
   D. Avoid introductions as they waste time and set an overly formal tone to the meeting.

7. Good ways to deal with points that can’t be answered or addressed in a planning meeting include:
   A. Leave them unanswered.
   B. Call for interested parties to meet after the meeting to plan how to deal with them.
   C. Schedule the points as agenda issues for the next meeting.
   D. Downplay these as priorities and focus only on those questions that can be answered immediately.
Chapter 4
Self-Assessment Questions (continued)

8. Which of these are useful formats for a contingency plan?
   A] Multi-hazard
   B] Simplified matrix
   C] Variable scale
   D] IASC format

9. Which of these are good strategies for maintaining the contingency plan and process?
   A] Restrict access to the planning process to long-term partners only.
   B] Provide strict guidelines and requirements for planning partners regarding their role in the maintenance of the plan.
   C] Provide review meetings on a schedule that matches the urgency or rate of change of the situation being planned for.
   D] Give credit to those partners who contribute to the plan and the process.

10. Which of these topics should be included in the first meeting of the contingency planning team for an interagency planning process?
    A] Implementation issues about the process itself
    B] General policies to be proposed and followed by the planning team
    C] Overall objectives and standards to be met
    D] Timetable for the overall process including scheduling of the next meeting

Chapter 4
Answer Key

1. T
2. F
3. F
4. F
5. T
6. A, B
7. B, C
8. A, B, C, D
9. C, D
10. A, B, C, D

48
At the UNHCR warehouse in Quetta, Pakistan, trucks are loaded with tents, jerry cans, buckets, kitchen sets and plastic sheets for distribution to survivors of the 2010 floods. In such an emergency, needs are based on emergency assessment reports, but how can contingency planners estimate needed materials when the emergency scenario has not yet happened?

This chapter explains:

- How to generate scenarios for contingency planning
- How to further develop these scenarios so that detailed estimates of response resources can be made
- Some of the common types of planning assumptions that must be made in order to do this type of planning effectively
- How to project specific sectoral needs based on the planning scenarios
- Some methods for testing your planning assumptions and projected needs
5.1 Generating Scenarios for Contingency Planning

“Logic will get you from A to B. Imagination will take you everywhere.”
– Albert Einstein

Contingency planners should heed Einstein’s advice and use their imaginations to illustrate as complete a picture as possible of their planning scenarios. This naturally comes more easily to some planners than others, but in all cases, planners are encouraged to think creatively to dramatize and “see” the realities of a scenario which has not yet happened. Failure to creatively imagine the context and resulting needs of a planning scenario can result in contingency plans that are limited in their usefulness and which may fail to account for the real needs and constraints that accompany the planning scenario when it occurs.

The best way to generate planning scenarios will depend on the situation and the planning resources available. For imminent crises where there is little disagreement about the planning scenario, planners can go directly to the projection on needs and other issues as described in this and upcoming chapters. For those situations where there is still considerable discussion about the need for contingency planning, or which scenarios, planners need some techniques to move the process along. Techniques that generate several scenarios and then provide a framework for prioritization of these are the most useful. The two techniques suggested below work best in small- (6-10 person) to medium-size (10-15 person) groups. Larger groups such as roundtables or larger working groups can use the same techniques if they break into smaller sub-groups.

TIPS FOR CONDUCTING BRAINSTORMING EXERCISES

The idea behind brainstorming for the purpose of contingency planning is to quickly list as many threat or hazard scenarios as you can think of that could lead to a disaster of such a scale that humanitarian assistance would be warranted. The exercise is done with a group. The brainstorming process is open and unrestrictive and should support the idea that everyone in the group can contribute openly without being judged on the value of his or her answer. The following four simple rules should be followed:

1. Any idea is allowed – without judgment
   The point of this rule is to hear everyone and encourage as many ideas as possible. In many cases the idea of a less-experienced colleague or an idea that at first seems foolish later proves to be the best idea of all. Don’t worry about prioritizing the ideas at this point—that will be done later. Another way of describing the goal is to maximize “quantity” of ideas, not “quality” of ideas, at least at this point in the process.

2. Encourage participation
   Some people are naturally shy or simply do not like the brainstorming process; however, they may hold valuable information needed by your group. Someone in the group should take the opportunity to actively encourage each member to contribute to the process.

3. Watch the clock
   Some time pressure actually helps in a brainstorming session. You must finish within the time set. Begin immediately—don’t lose time discussing the merits of ideas, just start listing them.
4. Record your ideas

All your good ideas are wasted if they are not recorded methodically and legibly. Use flip charts, whiteboards, post-it notes, or whatever you can to quickly (but legibly) record your group’s ideas. A large map or other graphic technique to relate hazards to different areas of the country may be very useful.

**Brainstorming** is a technique in which a group generates several ideas without concern for criticism or negative feedback. In the first stage of the process, all ideas are written down without any restrictions. The uninhibited flow of ideas helps to generate creative scenarios. In the second stage of the process, the scenarios are refined and selected through group discussion. Brainstorming is appropriate where there is great uncertainty about future events. Careful leadership is required in brainstorming sessions to keep the group focused on creative scenario building rather than being critical about ideas generated. It is difficult to use brainstorming effectively in groups of more than six or seven people.

While brainstorming helps promote creative ideas, a more structured approach is sometimes required. The **nominal group technique** focuses on individual generation of ideas. In this technique each participant has time to write down his or her ideas about the likely scenario. Each person then describes these ideas to the plenary. The advantage of this approach is that the ideas are written down before the group interchange and therefore are not influenced by ‘group think.’ The nominal group approach is probably the best method of generating quality scenarios. It can be used effectively in larger groups than brainstorming, but is better if limited to 10 or 15 people. The quality of the input will be improved if participants are informed beforehand that they will be asked to contribute scenarios.

No matter which method is used to develop the contingency planning scenario, it is quite common to end up with a number of different scenarios. These should then be prioritized. Plan for the scenario(s) found to have the highest risk within your mandate that have the most to be gained from planning.

*What if all of the scenarios generated by brainstorming seem equally likely? How do you prioritize which one(s) to act on?*

Review the risk matrix presented in Chapter 3. This tool is more than an academic model of risk. It is a useful planning tool for facilitating discussion of risk and for prioritizing threats for contingency planning with a group. This lets you record both the degree of probability and likelihood of impact, for a more rational understanding of overall risk of different scenarios.

It is very helpful to use a large wall- or flipchart-sized matrix and physically place the threats on it. This simple graphic and “hands-on” method has several advantages, particularly when done with a clear purpose and method as described below.
Contingency Planning

1) Plot the various scenarios that may occur in the country (or planning area of concern) on the matrix in order to discuss and understand the relative risk of various events that may occur. Remember that this tool and its use are subjective, so it is best done by groups in order to get group consensus if possible.

2) After plotting several hazards (or scenarios) on the matrix, try to determine a line or threshold of acceptable risk (again this will be a very subjective line!).

3) Note that after plotting the scenarios, you can now rank risks (from highest risk downwards). Remember that the results may vary, even among experts in their own fields. Perceptions about risk will vary even more among generalists, planners and local administrators. For those hazards that are well studied scientifically, specific expertise should be sought to validate the estimates of likelihood, as well as damage in some cases.

4) Once the risk matrix is complete and consensus is reached, choose the scenario(s) from the most upper-right area of the matrix for prioritization. If it is agreed that the scenario merits contingency planning, follow the steps below to further develop your planning scenario.

Consider the example risk matrix below. Assuming the possible threats for this fictional country are correctly placed on the matrix, which one would you select for contingency planning?

Why did you choose your scenario from the others shown on the matrix?
Most planners would choose the refugee influx in this case because it is the farthest to the upper-right of the matrix, and it is highly likely that plans made in preparedness for such an event would save lives and prevent avoidable suffering. However, a case can be made for each of the listed scenarios. The general logic for each would probably be similar to the following arguments:

- **Plan for the refugee influx** – it is plainly the highest risk as analyzed in this case. Also, as it is estimated to be imminent, not to plan would be a failure of duty or due diligence on the part of managers.

- **Plan for the food riots in the capital** – While not as damaging as the other events on the matrix, it is more likely than most and major assets could be protected without undue expense if planned for. (*Note:* if this is a regular event, standard protocols may already be in place, thereby reducing the need for a scenario-specific plan.)

- **Plan for the volcanic eruption** – In most countries these events are rare enough that existing protocols may not adequately prepare local responders for immediate action upon warning or actual eruption. Since the location of the event, if it happens, is clear, maps for evacuation routes and other concrete planning activities can make a major difference in the emergency response that will follow an actual eruption.

- **Plan for the H1N1 flu outbreak** – Precisely because this is quite rare and expected to have wide reaching and potentially disastrous humanitarian results, existing local protocols and plans are likely to be inadequate. Moreover, response measures are likely to be highly crisis-specific and, therefore, not otherwise addressed. In fact many countries have completed contingency plans for exactly this threat, even though it is unlikely to occur.

- **Plan for the tsunami** – The logic is the same as for the flu outbreak. Particularly in countries where a tsunami has recently happened, local planners will feel intense political pressure to plan for these extremely rare events. The other consideration is the relatively low cost of contingency planning as compared to other structural and technology-related preparedness measures.

The reality is that in most countries all of these scenarios may have contingency plans; however, they are likely developed by different agencies or organizations in those countries, for example:

- UNHCR, together with operational partners, would likely develop the plan for the refugee influx.

- City police, army units and other city and state administrative bodies would likely develop contingency plans for the food riots in the capital, as well as individual organizations who may fear for their own security and operations in such instances.

- National rescue services and national disaster management organizations would most likely develop plans for the volcanic eruption as well as the tsunami event.

- Ministry of Health, together with other national response bodies, would likely develop the H1N1 Flu plan—possibly in conjunction with WHO or other expert bodies.

**The key point** is that choosing the scenario, or scenarios, to plan for depends on the risk analysis (look at the upper right-hand corner) and who has the mandate, authority, and responsibility to plan for such events.
Contingency Planning

5.2 Developing Planning Assumptions

Once you have chosen a particular threat or scenario for contingency planning, based on risk analysis and your own mandate, you will need to develop it into a planning scenario that can be used to begin practical contingency planning. The steps below provide guidance on getting started. The example templates and checklists are tools you can use to facilitate this process.

The first step is to describe your possible contingency planning scenario(s) more fully through “scenario building”. The idea is that many people have different ideas of threats while using the same words or language to describe them. For example, the term “cyclone” includes several levels of intensity. It is a good idea to further clarify your threats, by thinking through the magnitude of the event you have in mind. Use a *Scenario Magnitude Chart* like the one below to further discuss and describe your scenario(s) by considering different levels, magnitudes, or particular vulnerabilities that might cause the same event to have greater or lesser humanitarian impacts on the community. It is possible that in this process you may decide to re-prioritize your choices based on the more in-depth discussion. It has been noted in many after-action reports and evaluations of contingency plans that one of the greatest errors planners make is to neglect to consider the worst case scenario.

**SCENARIO MAGNITUDE CHART**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCENARIOS</th>
<th>BAD</th>
<th>WORSE</th>
<th>WORST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Event description</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on human life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on housing etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on infrastructure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response capacity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next step is to select the scenario(s) or variation(s) from the chart above that you think would be most effectively mitigated through contingency planning and develop it further. In particular, clarify your planning assumptions. This can best be done by exploring and explaining your assumptions in different ways. Contingency planners are advised to develop selected scenarios further by taking the following steps:

1) Prepare a location map and indicate the event (or its effects) on the map.
2) Identify important landmarks.
3) Describe the planning scenario in a short narrative but add enough detail to make it “real”.
4) Explain any assumptions made about root causes (particularly for politically or conflict-induced displacements), or scientific analytical reasons for expectations of natural phenomena such as floods, storms, earthquakes, tsunami, etc.
5) Identify possible triggers where appropriate, i.e., declaration of war (or ceasefires), important political dates, seasonal patterns of drought, conflict, etc.
6) Identify any likely early warning signs of this event whether political or natural (see detailed information below).
Chapter 5

The development and consolidation of your contingency planning scenario should include consensus on the key assumptions about the scenario as well as the operational response environment and context that is foreseen. Use the **Overview of Planning Assumptions** (based on the UN Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Guidelines for Humanitarian Assistance) to review and develop an overview of your scenario(s).

### Overview of Planning Assumptions

1. **Outline of the scenario — Main planning assumptions**
   - **Main elements/factors**
     For a refugee influx for instance, who will arrive, where, when, and why?
   - **Constraining factors**
     What will influence the actions of the affected communities and the actions of responders?

2. **Main actors**
   - **Governmental institutional capacity to respond**
     Who clears and authorizes, who acts, who is liaison to non-governmental actors?
   - **Other types of relief assistance immediately available**
     Who else may be involved—NGOs, UN, religious organizations, donors, others?

3. **Description of the main humanitarian consequences**
   - **Consequences on the population and on basic services**
     What will be needed, when?
   - **Coping mechanisms of the population**
     How can people best be supported to help themselves?

4. **Planning Early Warning indicators and monitoring arrangements**
   - **Early warning indications and likely triggers**
     What events might trigger the scenario?
   - **Monitoring arrangements**
     Who is responsible to watch and warn? How is regular monitoring carried out and how is information shared?

5. **Gaps and constraints**
   - **Major gaps in the provision of vital humanitarian assistance**
     How much assistance or what type will be needed?
   - **Major obstacles to the provision of humanitarian assistance**
     What will be the difficulties in obtaining this assistance?

The **Scenario Working Template** that follows can now be used by your planning team to help fill in the gaps in your scenario. While this tool is not exhaustive for all planning scenarios, it provides a good template for thinking through, and recording, your planning assumptions.
Contingency Planning

Scenario Working Template 1 — MAIN CASELOAD ASSUMPTIONS

Planners should identify all main elements/factors —
Who will be affected, where, when, why?

### Caseload Assumptions – Potential Affected Populations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>WHO</strong></th>
<th><strong>Affected populations.</strong> Describe the displaced, disaster- or conflict-affected people who will require assistance.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of displaced?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical household size (if known)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language(s)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic group(s)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific subgroup(s)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerable subgroups?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>WHERE</strong></th>
<th><strong>Hazard locations.</strong> Describe expected hazard locations (and or areas of dislocation, as in the case of IDPs or refugees).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expected means of travel – where populations are forced to move?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected reception/hosting area(s)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **WHEN**    | **Timeframe.**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When would be the most likely time for this event? Why?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal factors?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Known political events or flashpoints (for conflict)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human-made, natural warning signs or other trigger mechanisms?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**How detailed should the scenario be?**

Contingency planning scenarios should be as detailed as possible relative to the likelihood of the event. The more detailed the scenario, the more detailed the contingency plan can be. Detailed scenarios force the examination of many assumptions and reveal linkages that might otherwise be overlooked. On the other hand, greater detail makes plans more situation-specific and less adaptable. Detailed scenarios are appropriate as the likelihood of a specific emergency event increases. Remember that thinking through a detailed scenario should not necessarily result in an overly detailed or “heavy” contingency plan document. Most practitioners agree that a simple plan, based on a well-developed and analyzed scenario is ideal. A complex, text-heavy plan based on the same analysis is probably less useful as it may not be read at all.

“In the Horn of Africa, for the Somalia situation, we had to get down to the details in the CP. But if you write all of this detail down, no one will read it. The trick is to use graphics. Tell your story with some narrative, then map it out or draw it. It all came down to a little picture with a truck and a warehouse. It worked.”

— Alessandra Morelli
5.3 Projecting Needs

Using the planning assumptions that you have made and recorded using the templates provided above, it is a relatively straightforward exercise to estimate and quantify the expected resulting humanitarian needs. The first step is to imagine the scenario widely (in all relevant sectors of response) so that the likely needs can realistically be foreseen in “the bigger picture” or overall context of the scenario. You can use the Working Template 2 or a similar tool. The second step is to use agreed planning figures for quantification of the identified needs.

Scenario Working Template 2 — HUMANITARIAN CONSEQUENCES

Describe the consequences on the population and on basic services—What will be needed, when? Then describe the foreseen coping mechanisms of those affected—How can people best be supported to help themselves?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Humanitarian Consequences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sector (area or service)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(counseling support and education)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use standard planning figures for estimating humanitarian needs

The use of standardized planning figures is essential in any interagency process to harmonize the overall approach and planning for expected needs. If internationally agreed norms and standards are used for this purpose, plans will be compatible with other international assistance measures and these same figures can be used as targets for assistance levels in the response part of the plan. Two good references for this kind of information are the UNHCR Emergency Handbook and the Sphere Guidelines for Disaster Response. A simplified table of some of the key planning figures from both sources is reproduced below. The figures in bold can be used directly for estimation of humanitarian relief needs based on the total population figure for your planning scenario.
## COMPARATIVE GUIDELINES BY SECTOR

### Standards and Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tools</th>
<th>Reference/Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standards and Indicators</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tools</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contingency Planning</strong></td>
<td><strong>Indicators</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>by Sector</strong></td>
<td><strong>by Sector</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality</strong></td>
<td><strong>Quantity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 0 fecal coliforms</td>
<td>• 15 l/p/d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 0.5 mg/l residual free Cl</td>
<td>• 7 l/p/d (survival)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• turbidity &lt; 5 NTU</td>
<td>• 15–20 l/p/d (sustained)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Access</strong></td>
<td><strong>Personal storage</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Less than 500m walk</td>
<td>• 2 (10-15 l) containers/family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Queuing time less than 15min.</td>
<td>• Narrow necks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Energy</strong></td>
<td><strong>Latrine type</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 2,100 kcal/person/day</td>
<td>Comfortable, hygienic, and safe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mix of energy sources</strong></td>
<td><strong>Latrine quantity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 10-12% from protein</td>
<td>• MAX 20 people/unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 17% from fat</td>
<td>• 1/family...then MAX 20 people/unit then MAX 100 p/unit or defecation field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nutrients</strong></td>
<td><strong>Access/distance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Adequate micronutrient intake</td>
<td>• MAX 50m distance from dwelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Includes essential vitamins and minerals</td>
<td><strong>Soap</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Appropriate and acceptable”</td>
<td>• 250g/person/month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Familiar foodstuffs...traditional food habits”</td>
<td><strong>Shelter space</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SHELTER SPACE</strong></td>
<td>• 3.5m²/person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Site area</strong></td>
<td><strong>Thermal quality</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(tent camp)</td>
<td>• Provide comfort &amp; ventilation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 45m²/person</td>
<td>• Temperature: variable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Site slope</strong></td>
<td>• 15°-19° C internal temperature can be maintained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(tent camp)</td>
<td>• 5-10% acceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Surveillance</strong></td>
<td><strong>Clinics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Routinely collect relevant data on demographics, mortality, morbidity, and health services”</td>
<td>• 500 patients/clinician/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 1 clinic/10,000 p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vaccination</strong></td>
<td><strong>CMR</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• EPI (esp. measles–95% coverage children 6 months to 15 years)</td>
<td>• Less than twice “baseline” rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Less than 1 death/10,000 people/day if unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Reference/Source

- SPHERE (2004 edition)
- UNHCR Emergency Handbook (3rd ed)

### Snippet

- **WATER**
  - **Tools**
  - **Indicators**
  - **Reference/Source**
  - **Quality**
    - • 0 fecal coliforms
    - • 0.5 mg/l residual free Cl
    - • turbidity < 5 NTU
  - **Quantity**
    - • 15 l/p/d
  - **Access**
    - • Less than 500m walk
    - • Queuing time less than 15min.
  - **Personal storage**
    - • 2 (10-15 l) containers/family
    - • Narrow necks

- **NUTRITION**
  - **Energy**
    - • 2,100 kcal/person/day
  - **Mix of energy sources**
    - • 10-12% from protein
    - • 17% from fat
  - **Nutrients**
    - • Adequate micronutrient intake
    - • Includes essential vitamins and minerals

- **SANITATION**
  - **Latrine type**
    - Comfortable, hygienic, and safe
  - **Latrine quantity**
    - • MAX 20 people/unit
  - **Access/distance**
    - • MAX 50m distance from dwelling
  - **Soap**
    - • 250g/person/month

- **SHELTER SPACE**
  - **Shelter space**
    - • 3.5m²/person
  - **Thermal quality**
    - • Provide comfort & ventilation
    - • Temperature: variable
  - **Site area**
    - • 45m²/person
  - **Site slope**
    - • 1%-6% slope

- **HEALTH**
  - **Surveillance**
    - • “Routinely collect relevant data on demographics, mortality, morbidity, and health services”
  - **Clinics**
    - • 500 patients/clinician/day
  - **Vaccination**
    - • EPI (esp. measles–95% coverage children 6 months to 15 years)
  - **CMR**
    - • Less than twice “baseline” rate
    - • Less than 1 death/10,000 people/day if unknown

---

**58**
ESTIMATING NEEDS

After reading the short planning scenario below fill in the shaded spaces in the chart using the standardized planning figures provided above.

**Scenario** – 10,000 refugees from Country A are expected to cross into a rural and undeveloped part of Country B. The planning assumptions are that these people will be uprooted quickly, in a single mass movement, without time for personal preparation. They will arrive in country B with virtually no supplies or resources. The typical household (family) size is five. The National Government of Country B will allow them refuge, but will most likely need support in hosting this population. All major sectors (or clusters) are likely to be affected. The simplified estimated needs table below is designed to show the expected needs for this population for a one-month period.

The correct answers are provided at the end of this chapter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>Amount per person per day</th>
<th>Calculation required</th>
<th>Estimate for 10,000 people for 1 month</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shelter</td>
<td>1 tent/household @ 3.5 m²/person</td>
<td>1 tent/each household so 10,000 ÷ 5 people/household</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>One time delivery only.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site area</td>
<td>45 m²/person</td>
<td></td>
<td>=</td>
<td>Allows space for small gardening plots.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>2,100 kcal/person/day = 550g/person/day</td>
<td>× 30 days × 10,000 people × 550 g/d/p</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>2,100 kcal typically amounts to 550g of dry food rations (including oil)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>15 l/p/day</td>
<td></td>
<td>=</td>
<td>This population expected to be here for some time, so sustained amount of 15l/p/d used. How to provide this water depends on the site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerry cans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>=</td>
<td>Planners agreed to supply two 10-liter containers per household.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latrines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>=</td>
<td>For first month, planners assume family latrines can’t be built immediately, so the camp will rely on communal latrines for the first month.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking sets</td>
<td>1 per household</td>
<td></td>
<td>=</td>
<td>Sets are designed for a family of 5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health clinics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>=</td>
<td>Both Sphere and UNHCR guidelines agree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soap</td>
<td>250g/p/month</td>
<td></td>
<td>=</td>
<td>The Sphere guideline is used.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4 Testing the Assumptions

One useful technique for testing your planning assumptions is to share the plan (and planning) with other informed partners who may bring additional information or analysis to bear on your scenario. One of the values of using an interagency approach and involving a diverse range of perspectives in the planning process is the inherent testing of assumptions that happens when such a group meets and discusses the scenario.

When testing your assumptions beyond your own planning team, be aware that many scenarios may be politically sensitive and may not be suitable for wide distribution. In many countries and cultures, planning for a neighbor’s (or one’s own) misfortune is not culturally or politically acceptable. Contingency plans to deal with refugee influxes resulting from problems in a neighboring country may also have political implications. Plans that identify weaknesses in the ability of authorities to protect citizens may affect relations with the host government. It may even be feared that such planning may trigger population movements.

Test your assumptions through conversations with key informants. These are basically the people who should be in a position to know how many people are likely to be displaced, or otherwise affected by the emergency or disaster situation. For example:

- **Mayors, governors, and other administrative officials** will have records of populations down to the district level. For mass refugee influxes where whole towns may flee, these records will be in the country of origin rather than the country of refuge.

- **Traditional leaders** from local communities are generally available, but may not be the best informed or most impartial information providers. Due to the usual presence of distinct subgroups and longstanding “outsider” residents who live in the community but who are not counted by the leaders or administration, traditional leaders’ estimates may not include these, often sizable, populations.

- **Religious leaders** often have very good records about their community including those members with particular vulnerabilities; however, they may not include those community members not belonging to their church, mosque or temple.

- **Other likely responders** on the scene who may have already collected this information for their own planning—for example, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Society—are often on the scene long before international assistance arrives. They may already have established the number of people likely to be affected by emergency scenarios they have considered, or dealt with in past emergencies.
TESTING APPROACHES

All the types of key informants listed above would be considered “experts” for the two “testing” approaches described here.

1) The Snowball Method

This common-sense approach to gathering “expert” information relies on the knowledge and acquaintances of your first contacts to refer you on to other people who might also have good information. To do this, you simply ask each key informant to give you the information you need (in this case, the likely size of the affected population or magnitude of expected threat, for example), and then ask them to also give you the names of others who may have information in this regard. By this means, you will quickly build up a network of key informants that grows increasingly in size like a snowball rolling down a snow-covered hill.

Pro – Even if you have only a very limited number of contacts you can build up a significant network of expert informants in a short time.

Con – If your first contacts are strongly biased, or are limited to a highly segregated group of contacts, your results will be misrepresentative and inaccurate.

2) The Delphi Method

This method is a systematic way of gathering and reviewing information from a group of experts in order to come to a conclusion or to test your assumptions—in this case the number of people likely to be affected by disaster, displaced, or living in a displacement camp or area. It is based on the idea that analysis by a structured group of experts is likely to be more accurate than analysis from an unstructured group or from individuals.

In the most formal use of the method, the experts answer questionnaires (or review your scenario) multiple times. The facilitator of this process provides a summary of the experts’ answers from the previous questionnaire as well as the reasons they provided for their answers or predictions. These experts are asked to revise their earlier findings in light of the replies of other experts. Finally, the process is stopped after a set number of rounds or once the answers are “stable” and no longer change with additional rounds. The methodology was developed in the 1960s by the Rand Corporation as a way to achieve a valid consensus on predictions for military planning. While this term is commonly applied to many emergency assessment reports today, the original rigor of the approach is generally reduced (i.e., a formal “panel of experts” is not formed, but rather those people questioned are the de-facto panel). For use as a testing ground for your assumptions, the number of experts involved, and the number of rounds of the process will likely be few in number.
Summary

Where there is disagreement about which scenarios (if any) to plan for, brainstorming, in conjunction with developing a risk matrix provides a constructive way to agree on contingency planning scenarios.

While ranking of scenarios using the risk matrix is an important tool for prioritizing them for planning, the planners’ mandate, authority, and capacity are also important considerations in selecting contingency planning scenarios.

Planning assumptions are added to the scenario through “scenario building” to make them more realistic and to help planners explore the context and associated issues that may become important in the actual response.

Scenario development typically includes:

- Preparation of location maps and landmarks
- Writing of a short narrative description of the scenario
- Explanation of root causes where appropriate
- Identification of possible triggers
- Identification of any early warning signs or systems to provide alert
- Identification of gaps and constraints in responding to the scenario

These elements can be prepared using simple templates and checklists provided in this chapter.

Needs projections are made using agreed-on planning figures and doing simple calculations that are based, most importantly, on the total population expected to be affected.

The UNHCR Handbook for Emergencies and the Sphere guide, among other references, give useful guidance on which standards and planning figures to use.

Planning assumptions should be tested to mitigate against your own organizational or individual biases. This is basically done through sharing your assumptions with experts or key informants. Two simple systematic ways to approach key informants for development or verification of planning assumptions are:

- The Snowball Method – each informant provides contacts for other informants to build up a network of experts to consult.
- The Delphi Method – each member of a group of experts first responds to a questionnaire and then are shown the findings. Based on these results they are asked to revise their own conclusions, if they wish, based on the larger group’s findings. This is done in multiple rounds until there is no further change in the individual conclusions.
Chapter 5
Self-Assessment Questions

Check T or F to indicate whether a statement is True or False

1. Brainstorming is an exercise which generates many ideas quickly, without judgment about the quality of the ideas.
2. The risk matrix can help you to prioritize possible scenarios when considering which ones to develop into contingency plans.
3. Of all of the aspects of your planning scenario, the population size of the affected group is the least important.
4. There are no standard planning figures for emergency needs, as every emergency situation is unique.
5. Key informants should not be consulted when testing your planning assumptions as their biases will likely be different than your own.

Multiple choice. Mark ALL correct statements – more than one may apply.

6. Which of these are useful tips to consider when doing a brainstorming exercise?
   - Allow only the best ideas in order to maintain a manageable list.
   - Encourage participation.
   - Keep to the time frame agreed upon.
   - Record the ideas generated.

7. Which of these are important planning assumptions to be developed in your scenario-building process?
   - Main actors in the potential response
   - Description of humanitarian consequences resulting from the scenario
   - Any possible early warning indicators
   - Expected gaps and constraints in responding to the scenario

8. Which of these are correct planning figures for projecting humanitarian needs resulting from a planning scenario involving an emergency camp for 20,000 displaced people?
   - People should have access to 15 kcal food/person/day
   - People should have access to 2,100 kcal food/person/day
   - Site area for an emergency camp should be 45m$^2$/person
   - Site area for an emergency camp should be 3.5 m$^2$/person
Contingency Planning

Chapter 5
Self-Assessment Questions (continued)

9. The 20,000 people above would be expected to need about how many liters of water per person per day in the first year of their residence in this camp?

A) 15
B) 150
C) 70
D) 7 – but only for immediate survival purposes and not as a sustained amount over the year.

10. Which of these methods would be suitable for testing your assumptions about your planning scenario?

A) Consult with key informants.
B) Use the Delphi method.
C) Share your assumptions with partners.
D) Conduct the planning and generation of these assumptions with a diverse planning team.

Answer for exercise on page 59.
Chapter 6

How to Assess Capacities and Resources

Thousands of survivors of Cyclone Aila found themselves marooned at the end of March 2010 when the earthen embankments meant to protect them gave way to rising river water levels. Many of these survivors also served as search and rescue teams for their communities. How can contingency planners assess capacities, and vulnerabilities, of the affected communities and other partners in the emergency responses they plan for?

This chapter explores ways to incorporate capacity analysis of potential responders into the contingency plan. One of the best practices listed in the WFP 2009 evaluation report on contingency planning is that it “starts with an assessment of humanitarian needs but also assesses response capacity, to identify and find ways of overcoming gaps.” This part of the contingency planning exercise is no longer a hypothetical exercise, but rather a direct assessment of potential responders’ strengths, weakness, and overall ability to respond to the chosen planning scenario. In particular, this chapter will provide you with guidance in:

- Conducting SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threat) analysis with potential responders
- Preparing resource inventories
- Preparing sectoral checklists
- Understanding the relationship and the difference between an organization’s mandate and its capacity

Photo credit: IRIN
Contingency Planning

6.1 Identifying Strengths and Weaknesses of Planning Partners

One of the primary reasons to do contingency planning is to raise awareness of potential threats that will likely exceed the local capacity of the community to respond effectively. One of the first steps in this process is to identify planning partners and consider their relative strengths and weaknesses, so that their strengths can be used to their fullest extent and so that any weaknesses can be reinforced (or at a minimum, be well understood) before the emergency strikes. Start this step of the contingency planning process by surveying and listing the likely responders to your planning scenario. The following form provides a template for listing organizations, their likely roles and key contact information.

This section of your plan should describe institutional capacity to respond (who clears and authorizes, who acts, and who is liaison between governmental and non-governmental actors).

### INVENTORY OF PRIMARY RESPONDERS

*Institutional capacity to respond*

**Primary responders to this planning scenario** *(add additional rows as needed)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANIZATION</th>
<th>Expected role(s) in response</th>
<th>Specific contact details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1) __________________________</td>
<td>________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) __________________________</td>
<td>________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) __________________________</td>
<td>________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANIZATION</th>
<th>Expected role(s) in response</th>
<th>Specific contact details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1) __________________________</td>
<td>________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) __________________________</td>
<td>________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) __________________________</td>
<td>________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANIZATION</th>
<th>Expected role(s) in response</th>
<th>Specific contact details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1) __________________________</td>
<td>________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) __________________________</td>
<td>________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) __________________________</td>
<td>________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANIZATION</th>
<th>Expected role(s) in response</th>
<th>Specific contact details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1) __________________________</td>
<td>________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) __________________________</td>
<td>________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) __________________________</td>
<td>________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note that if your planning group has identified likely primary responders that are not participants in your contingency planning process, you should probably seek to include them in the process. It is much more beneficial to plan with partners than for them. Once the likely responders are listed, consider the analysis below to better understand their relative strengths and weaknesses. Where possible, participants should do this analysis for their own organizations. In the event that likely primary responders are not participating in the process, this analysis can still be used to help assess capacities as realistically as possible. In all cases, understanding partners requires knowing more about them than simply their names and contact points. Knowing what each can actually do, and what limitations they have is also important.

**SWOT analysis** is a strategic planning tool used to evaluate the **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats** to organizations involved in any kind of undertaking. It involves specifying the objectives or tasks to be done and then identifying the internal and external factors that are favorable or unfavorable to carry out the task. SWOT analysis is credited to Albert Humphrey, who began using this approach at Stanford University in the 1960s using data from Fortune 500 companies. Today it is widely used for many different purposes, including achieving a better understanding of contingency planning partners’ strengths and weaknesses.

### SWOT Analysis

**What is it?** You can use a SWOT analysis to identify and analyze the **Strengths** and **Weaknesses** of your team, group, organization, or coordination body as well as the **Opportunities** and **Threats** for your organization based on the local context and relationships with other organizations.

**Who uses it?** Coordinators, contingency planners, strategic planners

**Why use it?** To help you develop a contingency plan that takes into consideration many different internal and external factors and maximizes the potential of the strengths and opportunities for your coordinated response operation while minimizing (or at least recognizing) the impact of organizational weaknesses and external threats.

**When to use it?** As a contingency planning group, use this tool after the group has been established and after you have analyzed the overall planning context; for example, the planning scenario(s), main planning assumptions, and other likely responders to be involved.

This tool is best used individually by each organization to help each determine its own role in the coordinated response. The results should be shared among the planning team.

**How to use it.**

**Step 1: Internal analysis** Examine the capabilities of your group, unit or organization. This can be done by analyzing your group’s current strengths and weaknesses that relate to your possible response to the agreed planning scenario.

**Step 2: External analysis** Look at the main points of the planning scenario that are beyond your own control, or external to your group or organization, and identify those that present opportunities for your organization (i.e., access to emergency funds, heightened public visibility in the response, and the opportunity to render needed service). Next, look at the scenario again and try to imagine any threats or obstacles to your performance (i.e., overextension, failure to meet expectations, and resulting poor media coverage, etc.).

**Presentation:** Put the information collected in Steps 1 and 2 into a table as shown below.
Contingency Planning

This information is then used to help develop a strategy that uses each organization's strengths and opportunities to reduce weaknesses and threats, and to achieve overall response planning objectives. Note that use of this type of analysis with the local community members and leaders can set the basis for genuine community-based risk management. While this is encouraged for local community preparedness for earthquakes, flooding, storms and other natural events, it is usually not possible to conduct this sort of analysis with potential refugee or other conflict-displaced communities (why not?).

Note: “Strengths” and “Weaknesses” are your current and internal attributes. “Opportunities” and “Threats,” on the other hand, are external to the organization, and are future-oriented.

6.2 Preparing Resource Inventories

A weakness that often arises in SWOT analyses is lack of resources to meet the potential needs resulting from a planning scenario. In these cases it is useful to review what resources are in fact available should the scenario occur. A true interagency survey of resources will prove even more valuable, as any system-wide shortfalls can be identified beforehand. Once an overall assessment of resources is completed, this can then be compared with the projection of needs (explained in Chapter 5) to identify potential gaps in the response.

Resource inventories are an essential part of any contingency plan. These lists of resources can be accessed and used in an emergency. There are three types of resource inventories to consider:

1) **Physical** resource inventories consist of physical items, equipment, funds, and infrastructure.
2) **Human** resource inventories list people, together with the skills which different agencies can offer in an emergency.
3) **Documentary** or reference resources include guidelines, emergency handbooks, national laws, or other written guides that provide direction in determining which activities to undertake, and to what degree or level. Most emergency-related websites and web-based support and management systems are included in this resource inventory as well.

*Why take the time to prepare resource inventories, when they tend to change quickly, and may not be accurate at the time of the emergency?*
During the emergency response, there will be an immediate need for both resources and information on their availability. While some of the information will change, such as current stock levels of relief items, much of the resource information will remain the same over long periods. Examples of this include port handling capacity, road networks, and local warehouse capacities. Secondly, finding and cataloging these resources during the relative calm of a contingency planning period will make the same exercise during the chaos of the unfolding emergency much easier as contacts have already been made and planners know how to find the needed information. The cataloguing process is similar for both physical and human resources and is an essential part of building a database of information that will be necessary in an emergency.

To develop resource inventories, participants must be willing to discuss the resources that they have. Sharing resource information is an important part of the relationship building that is fostered through the contingency planning process, and another reason for undertaking contingency planning on an interagency basis.

**Physical resource inventories**

The simplest way to prepare a physical resource inventory is to make a table or matrix showing the total present stocks of each item. Such matrices can range from a globally scaled internet-based database system to a basic Excel spreadsheet of what you have at hand in your own office or town. While each agency's system will be different, there may be coordinated systems already established in countries with ongoing or chronic emergencies. The critical factor in preparing such lists is the ability to update them or to be able to access routinely updated stock lists in an actual emergency. This may be broken down by region and include stocks expected to arrive in the next month.

To facilitate data collection, the format used should be easy to process. For physical resources, a form might be prepared showing types of items likely to be needed and requesting partner agencies to fill in quantities available. The format below is presented only as an example. Specific materials, appropriate in your location, may not be the same as those shown. The same kind of template can be designed for each sector or cluster. In simplified plans, the resource list may not need to be as specific as this one and will need to include an overview of all sectors. All of the data collected regarding the potential physical resources will constitute an important informational resource in its own right, since information that resources exist can be as important as the resources themselves.

**CONTINGENCY PLAN**

**Example**

**Water Supply Resource Inventory**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LAKE KIVU PUMP STATION</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ave. Comiche</td>
<td>ODA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pumps</td>
<td>Each</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WATER TANKERS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational (Date)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American tankers</td>
<td>$23m^3$</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ave. Comiche</td>
<td>ODA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAF</td>
<td>$7m^3$</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ODA ERF</td>
<td>$19m^3$</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR Mercedes</td>
<td>$12m^3$</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF Volvo</td>
<td>$13m^3$</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*** (A. Selemani)</td>
<td>$55m^3$</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*** (A. Selemani)</td>
<td>$30m^3$</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under repair</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American tankers</td>
<td>$23m^3$</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued next page)
The **two golden rules for building a resource inventory** are:

- Collect only the data that you really need.
- Document the source of all data, because during the emergency knowing how to get updated information may be even more valuable than the ever-changing data itself.

Most of the information you will need may already be available. Investigate your own organization's computer-based systems first. You may have a better inventory in place than you know.
“The UN Joint Logistics Center (UNJLC), chaired by OCHA, has been promoted and implemented by WFP to provide an overview on the provision of specific humanitarian supplies worldwide. The UNJLC system is now well-recognized not only by UN agencies, but also by the Red Cross and principal international humanitarian NGOs. The UNJLC has been able to gather data from a wide variety of agencies who previously had not shared this type of information so openly. The internet-based system has been successfully used in a number of countries, most particularly in the context of the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan and Iraq…. It is also a transparency tool, as it assists the coordinating institution in compiling data from all agencies willing to participate as well as report to the international community on what has physically reached the field reception site. OCHA has endorsed the SUMA system, and it takes part of the OCHA/UNDAC team training.

In the last few years, agencies running the UNJLC and SUMA systems, together with large institutions such as IFRC, UNHCR and WFP who have been implementing newly developed tracking systems designed for their internal use, have gained significant insight into issues related to logistics support. In this context, UN agencies (WHO, WFP, OCHA, UNICEF, UNHCR, and PAHO) have agreed to join forces in order to consolidate the experience gained by both UNJLC and SUMA into a single Logistics Support System (LSS). The system will improve coordination at national or international levels among all interested humanitarian partners, and will develop local capacity as well. LSS is being constructed based on the experience of a large number of institutions and it aims to facilitate the exchange of information among humanitarian agencies. It will complement agency-specific commodity tracking systems that are increasingly being developed by larger humanitarian entities”

— Background information provided by www.lssweb.net

Investigate whether or not your own organization and partners are using internet-supported or other database supply management systems such as SUMA (a PAHO product, mainly in the Americas, and together with a new supporting function called LSS is being promoted as a global system), AidMatrix, or Helios, among others. The following sites (not an exhaustive list) may help you find out which, if any, of these automated systems are already in use in your area of operation:

www.Aidmatrix.org
www.fritzinstitute.org
www.humanitarianlogistics.org
www.lssweb.net
www.Reliefweb.int

Some tips for building a current resource inventory where none exists:

- For stable or long-term resources such as ports, roads, warehouses, etc:
  - **Search for internal data sources**—previous drafts of contingency plans or mission reports—may have the information that you need.
  - **Use sources that are publicly available**—it is unnecessary to hire a cartographer to produce maps if there are suitable maps at the Surveyor General’s office.
  - **Look for reports held by partners**—sectoral studies, development plans, and consultants’ reports will be useful. Working or sectoral groups may also be able to locate internal documents.

- For rapidly changing information such as current stock levels of food, medicines, etc:
  - **Ask, investigate and build your database as you go**—(the snowball method of assessment). If looking for stocks of large generators in-country, for example, start investigating. Ask each contact how many generators they have and also who else might have them.
Contingency Planning

- **Define a flexible category system** with fields that relate to the specific needs related to your planning scenario. For instance, for a major earthquake scenario, you might set up categories for aircraft, emergency resource vehicles, heavy construction equipment, etc.
- **Verify that the information is correct** (to the extent possible)—this applies whether the information is from published or private sources.
- **Keep a record of useful contacts** and those that could provide up-to-date information quickly. These will be the ones you will contact once the emergency occurs.
- **Design an automated system** for updating resource inventories (to the extent possible) if the plan is to be maintained. The goal is to have a ready list that will be usable once the emergency occurs.

### Human resource inventories

Human resources include people, agencies, organizations and teams. Specialized human resources often take longer to develop and are harder to secure than physical resources. It can be extremely difficult to find a person or organization with the required skills, and even when available, people will need time to develop into an effective team and achieve optimal capacity.

Although the process that cluster/sector teams follow for developing human resource inventories is similar to the process for physical resources, the chief constraints in cataloguing human resources are sensitivity, staff turnover, and the lack of standardization. In cataloguing human resources, judgements are often made about the effectiveness of individuals, organizations, and teams. Agencies will be sensitive to these judgements, especially if they are negative.

According to the IASC cluster approach, one agency should assume responsibility for leadership within a sector. Other agencies may play various roles within the cluster. Ideally strengths of different organizations should complement each other; for example, an international agency with strong logistics skills may be paired with a national agency with local knowledge so that the strengths of each are fully used, and the relative weaknesses are mitigated.

**Staff turnover** is often high in relief agencies, and especially among international staff. Contracts of three or six months are not uncommon and rarely exceed two years in hardship duty stations. This turnover rate means that the "personality" of an organization can change quickly, and with it the agency’s competency or willingness to carry out particular tasks. This poses a problem for contingency planners, as plans ultimately may be carried out by personnel with little commitment to, or even knowledge of, previous plans.

### Documentary resources

These are quite important as guides for action once an emergency occurs. Many humanitarian relief operations become chaotic or even come to a halt when key guidelines or minimum standards are introduced too late, or changed during the operation. Agreement on which of these guides, standards or indicators to follow is critical for contingency planners as selecting and using them will dictate strategies and even amounts of relief items needed. They inform the plan and should be consulted as a required part of the contingency planning process itself.

1) A list of all the reference documents collected and consulted in preparing the plan. This is similar to a list of references for any report.

2) A list of the key resources or guide documents for each sector. This would often specify the procedures to be used, such as “food distribution will be made in accordance with UNHCR’s *Commodity Distribution: A practical guide for field staff*” or “medical screening in accordance with a medical agency’s *Guide to Rapid Health Screening.*”
A SECTOR/CLUSTER RESOURCE LIST

Prepare a list—by sector or cluster—of some of the key documentary resources that would be useful for each cluster. Try to identify at least two documentary resources per sector (apart from the UNHCR Handbook for Emergencies and the Sphere guidelines) that would provide useful guidance for response in your planning scenario.

### DOCUMENTARY RESOURCES FOR GLOBAL CLUSTERS (according to IASC guidelines)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector or Area of Activity</th>
<th>Documentary Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
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<td>2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camp Coordination/Management</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Recovery</td>
<td>1)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Shelter</td>
<td>1)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emergency Telecommunications</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health</td>
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<td>2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Logistics</td>
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<td>2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nutrition</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protection</td>
<td>1)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Water, Sanitation and Hygiene</td>
<td>1)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2)</td>
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</table>

### Cross-cutting issues

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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>1)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While not an exhaustive compilation, a representative list of some example documentary resources for these clusters is provided at the end of this chapter.
6.3 Preparing Sectoral Lists

Each cluster team or sector working group should develop a list of both physical and human resources required for its own sector as they know best which information is relevant for their area of concern. Agencies should be listed under the sectors where their mandate and capacities are relevant. The following list—which is only a starting point—indicates some of the basic information about resources that should be presented for each sector.

- **Food** – Local and regional stocks by type, food pipeline situation, sources of high-energy foods, projections of national stocks over the emergency period.
- **Transport/Logistics** (total and available) – Port, road, and rail capacity. Airport and airlift capacity nationally and regionally. Details of road network, average journey times (by season). Warehousing capacity along the likely logistics chain.
- **Domestic needs/Household support** – Current in-country stocks of relief items. Availability of regional stockpiles. Details of local manufacturers and their capacity.
- **Water supply** – Likely water sources (surface, spring, shallow wells or deep boreholes) in the project area (from regional water plan). Stocks of emergency water equipment in country. Drilling equipment.
- **Sanitation** – Stocks of sanitation materials, tools etc. Sources of latrine platforms and sanitation tools and materials.
- **Health/Nutrition** – Stocks of medicines and medical equipment. Referral hospitals. Feeding kits, cooking sets, and special food stocks.
- **Shelter/Other infrastructure** – Possible sites, stocks of shelter materials, availability/condition status of heavy construction equipment.
- **Community services** – Registration cards. Clothing and other resources for unaccompanied minors and other vulnerable groups.
- **Legal assistance/Protection** – Stocks of registration forms, registration cards, and registration materials.
- **Agency operational support** – Vehicles, radios, handsets, PACTORs, computers, field kits, staff housing.
- **Education** – Sources of textbooks and school materials.
- **Crop production** – Seed stocks, agricultural tools.
- **Livestock/Animal husbandry** – Stocks of veterinary medicines.
- **Fisheries** – Nets, fishing lines, etc.
- **Forestry** – Stocks of seedling poly-pots, seedlings, tree seeds.
- **Income generation** – Tools and equipment.

Imagine that you are considering an airlift operation (as part of your contingency plan working group on logistics for reaching a remote area) as a means of transporting items that would urgently be needed in the event of an emergency. You will probably need to list:

- The location of the airstrip—name, code, GPS grid reference, and altitude.
- Details on the types of planes that could land (runway surface and condition, runway length and width, accessibility in different weather conditions, navigation aids, fuel availability).
- Details on cargo handling capacity and what is currently available (apron capacity, cargo handling equipment, warehousing on site, customs clearance rules, access to road network).
- Procedures and rules (flight and landing clearance requirements, landing and other fees).
The search for information does not necessarily start by ringing the airport and asking them questions. This can lead to partial or misleading answers. Unless you are an expert yourself, you will not know all of the questions to ask. Start by moving through your information sources: internal, published, partners, and surveys. Always finish by verifying the data you have collected. For the airport list the search might include:

- Search for internal data sources and any information already prepared by UNILC operations if they are present and working in your area. Previous drafts of contingency plans, logistics operations plans, or consultants’ reports may have the information that you need.

- Check publicly available sources if you cannot find the information internally. This is often difficult in developing countries, but airport information is often available from standard manuals.

- If you still do not have the needed information, look for reports held by partners. UNDP, the World Bank, or the concerned Ministry may hold sectoral studies or consultant’s reports covering the airports.

- If you still do not have the information needed, contact the airport or the Transport Ministry and ask them for the outstanding information. Specific queries are more likely to be answered than very general ones.

- In some cases you may have to visit the airstrip, count the operational cargo dollies or even measure the local runway yourself.

Finally, you need to verify the information you have collected by cross-checking it. Ask the airport if the figures given in the three-year old sectoral study are correct, for example. Ask regular users of the airport what the problems are etc. Preparation for sectoral information for any working group or cluster follows the same basic approach.

Sector-specific human resources should be listed in two ways:

- A list of the resources for each sector, mentioning the lead implementing partner for whole sectors or parts of sectors. See the IASC Cluster Leads Table, for example, as a starting point.

- A list of players, contact details, and human resources available. This list should include implementing partners, commercial organizations, etc. and even individual experts as appropriate.
6.4 Understanding the Difference between Mandate and Capacity

When conducting resource inventories, it is easy to be misled by organizational websites and other promotional materials. Usually these can be trusted to explain the organization's mandate clearly, but for assessing actual resources and capacities on the ground, promotional materials may not be reliable resources. Even organizational Annual Reports and Quarterly Reporting Statements are often written to highlight the organization's accomplishments and downplay weaknesses.

Remember that it is of no value to record resources of well-supplied companies or organizations that have no interest or intent to make those resources available in an emergency. One contingency plan for emergency shelter in the Caribbean included the excess capacity of cruise ships which might be used to shelter the homeless. As it turned out, as the planned-for hurricane approached the expected landfall area, all of the cruise ships immediately left, and did not return until well after the emergency shelter phase was past.

Obviously, what is needed is to identify those organizations with both mandate for response (or interest) and capacity to respond quickly to an emergency. The following questions may provide a useful measure of capacity when working with partner agencies or organizations that you do not already know well. It may also provide a useful review of your own organization's capacity to respond to your planning scenario. You should ask:

- How many staff members are currently employed on a full time basis? Part time? Volunteer roster?
- In the most recent emergency response, what specific tasks did staff perform in the response?
- What was the value of all material and services provided in the last (or perhaps ongoing) emergency response?
- Does the organization maintain its own internal emergency funds or is all emergency response dependent on raising funds after the emergency response begins?
- What special resources, skills or access does the organization have that makes it an efficient partner in emergency response?
- Has the organization played a support role in other coordination bodies or structures such as the IASC Cluster System or other interagency body?
- Does the organization have expertise or support capacity for the planning exercise itself? (In some cases, skilled facilitators or planners may be asked to join the planning process even though they have little capacity to actually respond in the emergency.)
Summary

Planning partners should be chosen from those who are also likely to respond to your planning scenario. Once a list of these partners is established it is useful to analyze each organization to determine their capacity to respond.

One tool for analyzing relative capacities of planning partners and potential responders is the SWOT technique, which considers an organization’s Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, should they respond to the planned-for scenario.

Resource inventories can be useful tools as they help contingency planners identify what will be available for the anticipated response. When compared against the needs projected (as explained in the last chapter), gaps in the humanitarian response can be seen and addressed.

It is useful to divide resource inventories into three sub-categories:

- Physical resources
- Human resources
- Documentary or informational resources

Physical resources needed in the response should be surveyed and entered into a systematic inventory that is divided into two subcategories:

- Stable resources (such as infrastructure)
- Rapidly changing or variable resources (such as immediately available food stocks)

Several online and computer-supported inventory systems are in use by humanitarian agencies. If available, these should be used and supported rather than inventing multiple parallel systems.

Human resource inventories are useful, but much harder to quantify and to maintain, particularly due to staff turnover, funding fluctuations, and sensitivities about reporting capacities of individual staff members.

continued
Contingency Planning

Summary (continued)

Documentary resource inventories are useful and should be reviewed in the planning process as many useful points may also affect the strategies or planning figures used in your contingency plan.

While it is useful to include a wide selection of planning partners in an interagency process, it is important to distinguish between an agency’s mandate and its capacity. In essence, key planning partners should be those with both the mandate and capacity for response in the event that your planning scenario occurs.

Chapter 6
Self-Assessment Questions

Check T or F to indicate whether a statement is True or False

1. SWOT analysis is a technique that can be used for analyzing the response capacity of potential responders.
2. It is not necessary to prepare resource inventories as they may be wrong by the time the planned-for emergency actually occurs.
3. It is best to collect as much data as possible during the planning phase since you never know what you may need once the emergency begins.
4. Documentary resource inventories are not used until well after the emergency scenario occurs.
5. All locally available response materials or resources which can be used in the emergency scenario should be included in the physical resource inventory regardless of the owner’s agreement or intent.

Multiple choice. Mark ALL correct statements – more than one may apply.

6. According to the SWOT analysis approach, which of the following aspects of an organization are included in the analysis?
   - A. Strength
   - B. Wealth
   - C. Organization
   - D. Teamwork
7. Which of the following are reasonable to include in your resource inventory when considering readiness for your contingency planning scenario?

A. Human resources such as response experts, team leaders, etc.
B. Physical resources such as emergency food and warehouses.
C. Informational systems resources such as the UNILC or a HIC, if available.
D. Documentary resources such as the UNHCR Emergency Handbook, Sphere, or other technical guidance sources.

8. Why take the time to prepare such inventories, when they will likely be wrong or out-of-date when the emergency occurs?

A. Because these things really don’t change very much, despite our perception that they do.
B. Because preparing them requires planners to assess their current knowledge about who to ask for such information or where to find it.
C. Because some resources, particularly infrastructure, may not actually change very quickly.
D. Because this assessment of available resources will make it possible to analyze gaps in the needed response.

9. Which of the following are useful tips for developing a resource inventory?

A. Search internal data sources first, you may already have some of this done for you.
B. Collect only the information you really need.
C. Document the source of the data you include in the list.
D. Design it to be easily updated.

10. Which of the following attributes are desirable for members of a contingency planning group or team?

A. Correct mandate, but no capacity.
B. High capacity to respond, but no mandate or interest.
C. Correct mandate, and some useful capacity to respond.
D. Correct mandate and capacity to support efficient planning.
Possible answers for the exercise on page 73.

### DOCUMENTARY RESOURCES FOR GLOBAL CLUSTERS (according to IASC guidelines)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector/Area of activity</th>
<th>Documentary resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Agriculture             | 1) Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS)  
                          | 2008–Rapid Agricultural Disaster Assessment Routine (RADA) |
| Camp Coordination/      | 1) Camp Management Toolkit–Norwegian Refugee Council, May 2008  
Camp Management          | 2) CCCM CLUSTER CAMP PLANNING GUIDELINES |
| Early Recovery          | 1) Guidance Note on Early Recovery (UNDP CWGER & UNDG-ECHA Working Group on Transition)  
                          | April 2008  
                          | 2) Integrated Livelihoods Assessment System |
| Education               | 1) INEE Standards in Emergency Education  
                          | 2) Guidelines for Education in Situations of Emergency and Crisis – UNESCO |
| Emergency Shelter       | 1) Transitional Shelter Guidelines – ShelterCentre.org  
                          | 2) Camp Planning Guidelines – ShelterCentre.org |
| Emergency Telecommunications | 1) Tampere Convention  
                                  | 2) International Telecommunication Union (ITU) resolutions and recommendations on telecommunications for disaster relief |
| Health                  | 1) WHO/PAHO: Humanitarian Assistance in Disaster Situations – A Guide for Effective Aid  
                          | 2) Practical Guidelines for Infection Control in Health Care Facilities |
                          | 2) Who Has What Where? Emergency Stockpiles of Disaster Relief Items (as of April 2008) – WFP |
| Protection              | 1) UNHCR Guidelines on Protection of Refugees  
                          | 2) UNHCR Handbook for Emergencies 3rd edition |
| Water, Sanitation and   | 1) Water Distribution Manual – OXFAM  
Hygiene                  | 2) Water Treatment Guidelines – OXFAM |

### Cross-cutting issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Documentary resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
<pre><code>                      | 2) UNHCR Policy for Older Refugees (2001) |
</code></pre>
| Environment           | 1) Guidelines for the Development of a National Environmental Contingency Plan – UNEP/OCHA  
                          | 2) Guidelines for Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment in Disasters – 2005 |
| Gender                | 1) IASC Gender Handbook  
                          | 2) GBV Guidelines |
| HIV / AIDS            | 1) Mainstreaming HIV into Camp Coordination/Camp Management (CCCM)  
                          & Shelter in Humanitarian Emergencies – IOM  
How to Identify Potential Response Gaps

Balakot, Pakistan, 2005. Earthquake victims dig through donated clothing items dumped at the roadside. Although clothing was plentiful in this response, shelter, food and medical facilities were in short supply. How can such gaps in meeting some needs and wasteful duplication in meeting others be avoided? How do contingency planners predict which items will be abundant, and those that will be in short supply?

This chapter provides some tools for predicting and addressing anticipated gaps in needed humanitarian assistance in your contingency plan. This exercise is critical to the contingency planning process and may serve as the core of your contingency plan. The process for estimating these gaps also provides planners with insights that will guide the overall response strategy and help define clear objectives for the planned response. In particular, this chapter will show you how to:

- Identify potential gaps between needs and response for the anticipated humanitarian response
- Prepare Gap ID matrices, to show gaps and duplications of activities among the potential responders in an inter-agency process
- Analyze Gap ID matrices to better understand the response context of your planning scenario and to develop appropriate strategies for response
- Write realistic objectives and strategies for efficient response based on your understanding of the Gap ID matrix
7.1 Identifying Potential Gaps

In the previous chapters, you learned how to project needs based on chosen scenarios and prepare basic resource inventories. In this chapter, these two activities are merged to identify potentially critical gaps. Gaps arise when there is a difference between anticipated needs and the resources available.

Contingency planners need to identify these potential gaps in order to:

- Highlight over-optimism or inconsistencies in the planning.
- Consider the effect of changing policies to prevent potential gaps from developing.
- Take action (e.g., training or stockpiling) in time to reduce the likelihood of the gap occurring.
- Allow potential responders time to consider alternate strategies for dealing with the most critical areas in the emergency through prior knowledge of where the gaps will occur.

For determining gaps in physical resources available for the possible emergency, compare your projected needs with your resource inventory. Gaps can occur in both human and physical resources. Often it is assumed that if the physical resource gap is filled, the human resource gap will be filled simultaneously, but this is not necessarily the case.

Can you give an example of filling a physical gap without filling the associated human gap in a humanitarian response?

The list of possible examples is endless. Your examples might include:

- Importing relief goods before there is agreement on duty free import, or an agreed intake system for documenting relief aid as it arrives.
- Dispatching non-food items to a site without anyone to receive or distribute them.
- Importing a vehicle fleet before it is clear that there is anyone to operate it.
- Flying in vaccines without a partner to manage the cold chain.

Real emergencies are dynamic, chaotic events, unlike planning exercises. Emergency managers do sometimes have to take risks. One risk is that resources will not always be very efficiently used. If there is good contingency planning beforehand, there will be fewer human resource gaps. In an emergency, it may be acceptable for an emergency manager to fill the physical resource gap when the human resource gap is still unfilled, and then rush to find the people. However, the time spent in finding the human resource often negates the high cost and energy required to move goods quickly to the disaster scene, only to have them sit on the sidelines waiting for distribution. Thinking through these kinds of situations in the contingency planning stage will save precious time when the emergency occurs.
"It’s all about finding the gaps between what you will need and what you have. The contingency plan should lay out a response based on the analysis of these gaps, and then you must take steps to address those gaps."

– Alessandra Morelli

### 7.2 Preparing Response Gap Identification Sheets

Gap Identification (or Gap ID) matrices are used to identify sectors where there is a shortfall of resources to meet expected needs. They may be constructed to show gaps in organizations providing different services or activities, gaps in critical physical resources available to meet needs, gaps in geographical coverage, or any combination of these. The overall Response Gap ID sheet or matrix is a useful tool for matching organizations to tasks and resources that are needed as part of the overall humanitarian response. For assessment of task distribution based on your contingency planning scenario, list the organizations to be involved in the response along one axis of the grid and list the activities or actions to be done as part of the response along the other. Mark the boxes showing which organizations will perform which tasks. Analysis of the resulting pattern can explain who will do what, who may be overburdened, and who may be able to provide additional assistance. The simplified example below is typical.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector Responsibility by Organization</th>
<th>Provincial Affairs</th>
<th>Dept. of Works</th>
<th>Dept. of Health</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>World Doctors</th>
<th>Red Cross</th>
<th>UNHCR</th>
<th>InterPeace</th>
<th>WFP</th>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>Operational Support</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Contingency Planning

This is very useful for highlighting sectors where no one is planning to respond at the overall operational level. Its shortfall is in the lack of specificity about what is actually required for each of these sectors. The same approach can be done at the more technical level of the clusters in cluster working groups. While the best type of analysis will depend on your scenario and context, the simplified examples that follow illustrate some of the different ways and levels that this type of Gap ID matrix can be used.

**GAP ID MATRIX – Geographic Coverage**

This example Gap ID matrix is based on a refugee influx scenario that predicts the needs for a border reception area and two emergency camps. The matrix highlights areas with no agency coverage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Reception Center</th>
<th>Camp A</th>
<th>Camp B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Food</td>
<td>WFP/NGO 1</td>
<td>WFP/NGO 2</td>
<td>WFP/NGO 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Domestic Needs</td>
<td>UNHCR/NGO 1</td>
<td>UNHCR/NGO 2</td>
<td>UNHCR/NGO 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Water</td>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>NGO 2</td>
<td>NGO 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Sanitation</td>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>??</td>
<td>NGO 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Health</td>
<td>NGO 4</td>
<td>NGO 4</td>
<td>NGO 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that in this example, there is no implementing partner for the sanitation sector in Camp A. This is a very simple example and might be used at the initial planning stage. Gap identification sheets that indicate responsible implementing partners against specific tasks are more useful than those covering whole sectors.

**GAP ID MATRIX – Sectoral Activity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D. Sanitation</th>
<th>UNICEF</th>
<th>??</th>
<th>NGO 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Build public latrines</td>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>NGO 2</td>
<td>NGO 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support family latrines</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>??</td>
<td>NGO 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubbish collection</td>
<td>NGO 1</td>
<td>??</td>
<td>??</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanitation technician</td>
<td>??</td>
<td>Ministry of Health</td>
<td>Ministry of Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health education</td>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>Ministry of Health</td>
<td>Ministry of Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical waste</td>
<td>NGO 4</td>
<td>NGO 4</td>
<td>NGO 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This Gap ID sheet represents the more specific contingency plan for the sanitation sector for the scenario already described. It identifies specific tasks related to this cluster that still require an implementing agency. The level of detail shown means that agencies actually see and understand the level of commitment they are making in terms on funds, physical and human resources. Sectoral groups working within the cluster approach would normally develop this level of detail.

In this example, no implementing partner has yet been found to establish family latrines in Camp A. Gap ID matrices are useful in indicating a lack of a service across all sites. It might lead to changes in response strategy so that the sector is no longer so critical, or a special effort may be made to locate a partner who can fill the gaps. Gap identification can also be applied to physical resources such as food or domestic items.
During the contingency planning process in the example above, it was decided that one piece of plastic sheeting and two jerry cans would be issued at the reception center to each arriving family. The scenario projects that 4,000 families are likely to arrive in Reception Center A. In the planning process, the stocks held by various agencies were recorded in this gap identification sheet.

This gap identification sheet prepared during the planning process might lead to:
- A decision to issue only one jerry can per family in the initial distribution.
- A request for a larger contingency stock of jerry cans.

One flaw in this example is that it indicates relief supplies without clearly specifying the human resources or responsibilities. The sheet above can be improved as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>NEED</th>
<th>UNHCR</th>
<th>ICRC</th>
<th>NGO 1</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>GAP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plastic sheeting</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerry cans</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This gap identification sheet clearly identifies who will be responsible for the supply, delivery, and distribution of plastic sheeting. Apply this approach to all sectors to identify shortfalls in advance. As indicated, it is important to consider agency capacity and commitments for the tasks listed on the sheet. To be sure they are available, plastic sheeting and jerry cans should be cross-checked with other sites.

The Gap ID matrix is ideally used in group planning processes where the players involved can think through the actions required per the plan and their own capacity to implement those activities. If possible, meet with colleagues from these agencies to practice using this tool. Explain your contingency planning scenario and discuss the actions needed to respond if it should happen. The steps that need to be taken are listed under the heading “Expected Activities”. After listing these, enter the organizations, agencies, or ministries present in the columns at the top of the matrix.

Organizational representatives involved must have sufficient knowledge and authority within their organizations to make such commitments. This kind of matrix lends itself to computer applications such as Excel spreadsheets. Despite these handy applications, it is often useful to do this exercise with planning partners using large paper, sticky notes, or other more graphic tools so that everyone can see the results as the matrix is being constructed.
Contingency Planning

In an interagency meeting, avoid having the matrix created by a single individual with a laptop computer. It is better if the planning group actually sees the matrix as it is being constructed so they can make decisions and modify them on the spot. One option is to use Excel or another graphic computer program along with a data projector, so that everyone can see the information as it is entered. If a projection system is not available, use a large whiteboard or multiple sheets of flipchart paper taped to a wall to create a matrix that is accessible to all. Very often discussions will arise during the process and can be resolved quickly in order to finalize the matrix.

“Cluster meetings, capacity matrices, and who-does-what-where exercises within clusters were effective tools for avoiding duplications. In some instances organizations, for example, World Vision, diverted their activities to other areas from recognizing duplications during cluster meetings.”


Once agreed to, the matrix can be quickly drawn up (or redone) using convenient software for inclusion in the report or for easy updating. Flipcharts developed with the consensus of the planning group can be photographed and set up as Word or Excel tables after the meeting and emailed to other planning partners for verification and approval, as needed.

7.3 Analyzing Gap Identification Sheets

Any of the Gap ID matrices described—once drawn up with input from various responders—can be analyzed to forecast gaps, areas of duplication, coordination issues, and even overall strategies. The Overall Operational Gap ID Matrix on page 83 shows a gap in the sanitation sector since no organization has agreed to respond should an emergency occur. If no one is willing to accept this responsibility, planners should take time to address the reasons for the gap. The Gap ID matrix can also help planners foresee potential problem areas in the planned-for response. Look at the matrix on the next page. Focus on the shaded row and column before answering the following questions.

What might it mean for an operational partner who has many activities in their column, as does UNHCR in this example?

What does it mean for the response plan if one activity or row is heavily populated by many different organizations, such as shelter in this example?
**OVERALL OPERATIONAL GAP ID SHEET – Refugee Influx Emergency**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector Responsibility by Organization</th>
<th>Prov. Affairs</th>
<th>Dept. of Works</th>
<th>Dept. of Health</th>
<th>World Doctors</th>
<th>Police</th>
<th>Church</th>
<th>Red Cross</th>
<th>UNHCR</th>
<th>InterPeace</th>
<th>WFP</th>
<th>UNICEF</th>
<th>OCHA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coordination</td>
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</table>

While other interpretations are possible, there are two common conclusions usually made by planners when one organization has many tasks in its own column in the matrix. First of all, this organization may be over-committed. Do they actually have the capacity—regardless of mandate—to do all of these activities? Secondly, if the organization does have the mandate and capacity to adequately carry out all the tasks, it may be well positioned to be the coordinator for response in that sector.

When a particular task/sector or activity in the Gap ID matrix has many organizations identified as participating, such as the shelter response above, there may be a potential management problem of coordination in that sector or activity. One answer to this is to add additional detail to the level of commitment for each activity or sector, to better distinguish those organizations that have capacity to large response operational tasks and those that have very limited capacities. In some instances a responsible organization (cluster lead) may be named for each sector as outlined in the IASC cluster approach, and this may also be done within the working group level, for more technical sectoral Gap ID matrices.
Contingency Planning

One option is to use a coding system to represent each organization’s role in relation to the task. For example, an organization designated to be the Leader for a particular sector or task may be designated as an L in the matrix. Organizations that Monitor activity in the sector might be designated by an M, for example. This helps to give a better overview of the workload and the means for coordinating these tasks. A Primary responder in the task may be designated by a P, and Smaller supporting organizations indicated with an S. Using this system, the overall operational Gap ID chart shown earlier would now look like the one below, and illustrates who is doing what in a much clearer way. You may set any code or system that works for your situation; this is only one example among many possibilities.

OVERALL OPERATIONAL GAP ID SHEET – Refugee Influx Emergency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector Responsibility by Organization</th>
<th>Coordination</th>
<th>Protection</th>
<th>Reception</th>
<th>Registration</th>
<th>Community Services</th>
<th>Logistics/Transport</th>
<th>Infrastructure</th>
<th>Site Planning</th>
<th>Shelter</th>
<th>Domestic Needs</th>
<th>Water</th>
<th>Sanitation</th>
<th>Health</th>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Security</th>
<th>Telecommunications</th>
<th>Operational Support</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prov. Affairs</td>
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</table>
7.4 Writing Realistic Objectives and Strategies for Response

In this step of the planning process, smaller and more focused working groups explore the sectoral tasks listed in the Gap ID matrix. Which working groups you join will be based on the IASC Cluster System, as applicable, and your own knowledge, skills and interest. For your specific working groups or “task forces”, you should answer the following questions:

- What is your specific sectoral area or task?
- What are the main planning assumptions you must make in order to plan for a response in this specific sector or task?
- What are the specific objectives to be achieved in this area of the operational response?
- What guidelines or working norms do you propose to be followed in the accomplishment of these objectives?

You can use the following sample worksheet as a checklist. It is a good format for ensuring that you have explored all of these questions.

**PLANNING WORKSHEET FOR CLUSTER/SECTORAL WORKING GROUPS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working Group Worksheet</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sectoral area or task:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members of working group:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1)</td>
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<td>3)</td>
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<td>4)</td>
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<td>5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Key planning assumptions for this specific sector or task:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2)</td>
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<td>4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specific objectives to be achieved in this sector or task:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proposed guidelines or working norms for those operating in this sector:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3)</td>
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<td>4)</td>
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</table>
Contingency Planning

Most planners will already know the SMART approach to writing planning objectives. As a simple mnemonic device, SMART reminds planners to write objectives that are:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic
- Timely

Contingency planners who have developed clear Gap ID matrices for the overall response and for cluster/sectoral working groups will have a tremendous advantage in this regard. By reviewing and analyzing the Gap ID matrices already developed (at any level, overall or sectoral), planners will be able to be quite specific in their objectives. The resource inventories prepared earlier will provide you with the tools to make your objectives quantitatively measurable, in line with the projected humanitarian needs and international standards. Strategic thinking on how to fill or work around service gaps identified in the matrices will help you write objectives that are more achievable and realistic, given your assessed resources. Finally, the act of preparing a contingency plan itself will help you increase the odds that your response will be timely, due to increased understanding of the situation and improved teamwork and coordination among the potential responders.
One of the most important aspects of scenario-based contingency planning is the ability to predict gaps in needed materials and services before the emergency breaks. This allows time to either find creative ways to meet these gaps beforehand, or understand the need so that reaction time after the event occurs will be shorter. This information can also be used to design response strategies that make the most out of what is available and rely less on resources that are known to be in short supply.

Physical as well as human resources should be considered when analyzing potential gaps in the humanitarian response.

Gap ID matrices are useful tools for identifying gaps in response planning. These matrices can be designed to compare:

- Potential responders with planned response activities
- Potential responders/suppliers with needed materials
- Potential responders with geographic regions
- Any combination of these as required to best suit your own planning situation and scenario

Analysis of the resulting patterns in these types of Gap ID charts can show gaps in the overall response plan, possible over-commitment of some organizations, and the need for targeted coordination in sectors or tasks to which many organizations have subscribed.

Coding of the level or character of participation in various sectors or tasks improves the usefulness of the Gap ID tool.

Use of the Gap ID matrix will provide planners with a sound basis for making suitable strategic choices in response plans and will lead to designing more SMART response objectives in their contingency plans.
Chapter 7
Self-Assessment Questions

Check T or F to indicate whether a statement is True or False

1. An understanding of potential gaps in both physical and human resources in the field are important to the development of useful contingency plans.

2. Gap ID matrices help planners identify sectors where there will be a shortfall of resources to meet anticipated needs.

3. Gap ID matrices generally have a service, activity, or other resource listed on one axis and the organizations responsible for each of those items on the other axis.

4. A lack of responders in any row of a Gap ID matrix indicates that the specific item or action referenced does not require any response.

5. An abundance of responders in any row of the Gap ID matrix indicates that there are no real management concerns for that sector or activity.

Multiple choice. Mark ALL correct statements – more than one may apply.

Study this Gap ID Matrix before answering the questions that follow.

Note: This is a specific example only and does not apply to all situations everywhere.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shelter Group Activity Matrix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For establishment of an emergency disaster-displaced person’s camp</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nat’l Emergency Response Office</th>
<th>Red Cross</th>
<th>NGO 1</th>
<th>NGO 2</th>
<th>UN Agency 1</th>
<th>UN Agency 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Identify camp site</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Provide tents</td>
<td></td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Provide plastic sheeting</td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Provide site planning and survey services</td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Provide road and site work and equipment on-site</td>
<td></td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>L</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Provide rope, tools, stakes</td>
<td></td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Symbols:  L = Leader,  P = Primary responder,  S = Supporting responder,  M = Monitor
Chapter 7
Self-Assessment Questions (continued)

6. Which task above represents a planning gap to be filled?
   
   [A] Identify camp site.
   [B] Provide tents.
   [C] Provide plastic sheeting.
   [D] Provide site planning and survey services.

7. Which activity will likely present a serious coordination challenge to the responders?
   
   [A] Provide tents.
   [B] Provide plastic sheeting.
   [C] Provide site planning and survey services.
   [D] Provide rope, tools, stakes.

8. Based on the analysis of this Gap ID matrix alone, which organization should be designated the leader or coordinator for this sector?
   
   [A] National Emergency Response Office
   [B] Red Cross
   [C] NGO 2
   [D] UN Agency 1

9. According to the SMART approach to writing planning objectives, which of the following are useful attributes?
   
   [A] Specific actions or activities are described.
   [B] Objectives are proposed in a way that success in meeting them can be objectively measured.
   [C] Objectives are achievable and realistic in the field, considering the context in which they will be attempted.
   [D] Objectives are time bound and timely, acknowledging the emergency aspect of the planned response.
10. To support the ongoing group planning process, which of the following techniques or tools would be appropriate for preparing Gap ID matrices?

A. Using large wall-sized paper and markers or “sticky notes” to create a transparent process in an initial group planning session.

B. Designating one person to enter and review information on a laptop at the initial meeting to facilitate and speed up the process.

C. Using a computer-based program in conjunction with a data projector so participants can see the results and comment as information is placed on the matrix.

D. Sending out emails after the initial meeting with files of the matrices so they can be approved and analyzed for gaps in the needed response.
Chapter 8

How to Establish and Support Working Groups

Health Cluster meeting at an OCHA tent after the earthquake in Haiti in January 2010. In the initial phases of an emergency, cluster or sectoral focus groups like this quickly form and contribute their expertise to joint approaches to the overall response. How can this be done in a contingency planning exercise where the intense pressure to act quickly is not yet part of the day-to-day reality of the planning partners?

In this chapter you will learn some ideas for beginning and managing working groups in an interagency planning context. In particular, this chapter provides advice on how to:

- Organize a structure for overall plan ownership and a more efficient hands-on contingency plan working group
- Work efficiently within the IASC cluster approach
- Divide the overall planning task into manageable sectoral pieces under the leadership of a contingency plan working group
- Organize and facilitate the work of sectoral working groups
8.1 Divide and Conquer

As described briefly in Chapter 4, an interagency approach is preferred for those situations where the scale or complexity of the scenario calls for a multi-sectoral response. To avoid an unnecessary proliferation of meetings and seemingly endless planning process, planners must design an overall strategy and structure for the needed meetings to be held. This is generally best done by making each meeting specific in its focus so that participants can contribute efficiently at their own level and area of expertise. In short, “divide and conquer.” There is little use for technical specialists to debate major funding issues or regional politics in the contingency planning process. Likewise senior managers generally have little to contribute to detailed technical planning.

It is even better if this kind of division and focus can be done within an existing structure. If workable systems exist—use them. If existing systems are only partially functional, work with them so that the new features do not completely supplant or otherwise threaten them.

How would you divide and structure the various tasks of contingency planning in order to have fewer and better focused meetings?

As explained in Chapter 4, there are a number of different types of meetings, groups, or processes that might make sense for your interagency contingency planning exercise. While your situation might not require all of them, each one serves a useful function that may be needed to move your process along. The short list below is a review of some of the possible structures or meetings you might need. Think through these short descriptions in relation to your answer above to test whether or not you have met the various needs that may arise in the contingency planning process.

**Steering Group** – A small group of senior decision makers meet for resolving higher level policy decisions and for providing authority (and in some cases legitimacy) to the overall process.

**Roundtable Process** – A large group of stakeholders with wide participation serves as a “listening forum” and mechanism for identifying partners for the working groups and technical teams. These forums also offer information about the contingency planning process to the wider community so that planning results do not come as a surprise.
Defining Management and Coordination Arrangements for Humanitarian Response

Establishing clear mechanisms for accountability and coordination is critical to effective humanitarian response. A number of key decisions taken at the beginning of the planning process will shape the basic coordination and management arrangements:

Under the leadership of the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator, the Humanitarian Country Team has overall responsibility for mounting a coordinated humanitarian response. Typically the Humanitarian Country Team or Disaster Management Team will agree on overarching policy issues and management structures. They are also responsible to ensure that cross cutting issues (e.g. gender, age, diversity, the environment, HIV/AIDS, and human rights) are adequately addressed.

CP Working Group – This group is the main contingency planning body that facilitates the coordination of information and the overall process. This should be a relatively small inter-agency team.

Core Team – This is an informal group composed of a few key members of the CP Working Group who drive the process with their own personal energy. Generally these people are not named, or nominated, but simply appear to fill the leadership gap at the working level.

Technical/Sectoral Teams – These teams should be initiated by and confer with the CP Working Group. More detail on sector team meetings and expected outputs is provided in this chapter.

Secretariat – For larger planning exercises, this important function needs to be carried out by a dedicated coordinating body, such as OCHA or a national disaster management body.

8.2 Working with the IASC Cluster Approach

One of the mechanisms you may find already established is the IASC Cluster System. This system is designed to operate at two different levels.

1) At the global level it intends to strengthen system-wide preparedness and technical capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies through designation of global Cluster Leads.

2) At the country level, the intent is to mobilize groups of agencies, organizations and NGOs to respond in a more coordinated and strategic manner across all key sectors or areas of activity, with each sector having a clearly designated lead, as agreed by the Humanitarian Coordinator and the Humanitarian Country Team.

The Humanitarian Coordinator, with the support of OCHA, has the mandate for “ensuring the adequacy, coherence and effectiveness of the overall humanitarian response and is accountable to the Emergency Relief Coordinator. Sector/Cluster Leads at the country level are accountable to the Humanitarian Coordinator for facilitating a process at the sectoral level.”

The sections below are excerpted directly from the IASC Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Guidelines for Humanitarian Assistance, dated November 2007. As you read through them, consider whether these steps have already been taken in your country or area of responsibility.
Defining Management and Coordination Arrangements for Humanitarian Response (continued)

Decide which sector/cluster groups to establish. This decision should be based on an analysis of the context, the planning assumptions and the potential needs for coordination.

Decide on who will participate in each sector/cluster group and which organizations will lead them. Discussion and agreement on who will participate in specific sector/cluster groups and on which organizations will take on leadership roles is critical. In most cases the Sector/Cluster Lead in-country will be the same organization(s) leading the cluster at the global level. However, the designation of these lead roles should be based on the capacity of the organization to take on the accountabilities as spelled out in the Terms of Reference for Sector/Cluster Leads at the country level. This may mean that in some cases sector/cluster lead arrangements at the country level are not the same as those at the global level. Consulting with global Cluster Leads during this process will help to clarify what technical or operational support could be provided to assist in the process of planning or preparedness.

Agree on cross sector/cluster coordination mechanisms. Throughout the planning and response phase, a dynamic interaction between sector/cluster groups and agencies/organizations is required. In the response phase a cross sector/cluster group will be responsible to ensure the alignment of the activities of each sector/cluster and ensure that cross-sector/cluster issues are identified and acted upon. This group should include sector/cluster lead agencies/organizations.

Decide which common service areas are likely to be needed. Key services required to support the inter-agency humanitarian response should be considered, as well as whether specific sector/cluster working groups are required to coordinate this support (through the establishment of a logistics or emergency telecoms sector/cluster, for example). The specific needs for these services will become evident as response plans are developed.

Establish appropriate coordination or liaison mechanisms with government and other actors. One of the accountabilities of the Sector/Cluster Leads at Country level is to establish and/or maintain appropriate linkages with government counterparts in the specific sector. Mechanisms to liaise with civil society, the media and national and foreign militaries should also be articulated.

Agree on arrangements for coordinating resource mobilization. This could include agreements on the mechanisms for developing joint appeals, as well as strategies for mobilizing support from donors in-country and externally.
Plainly, if the Cluster System is operational in your country or area, use it to its best advantage. Investigate whether or not the actions listed have been taken. If they have, and the process is working, use it to structure your overall process. The Cluster System is specifically mandated to enhance preparedness activities, including contingency planning. Read the Terms of Reference prepared by the IASC to guide contingency planning working groups. As you read it, verify whether or not this structure is currently in place and working in your country. If you do not know, ask.

**Terms of Reference for an Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Working Group**

Under the guidance of the Resident Coordinator or Humanitarian Coordinator, the Humanitarian Country Team is responsible for the effective and efficient implementation of inter-agency contingency planning activities in the country. In order to fulfill this task, an Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Working Group has been formed. The membership of this group includes:

- Representative of UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator (Chair)
- Relevant UN Agencies
- Representative of NGOs active in humanitarian response
- The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

**Note:** This is a sample membership for an Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Working Group. Actual composition will depend on the key actors involved in humanitarian response. Care should be taken to ensure that the group is small enough to be able to operate at a working level. Information sharing meetings can be organized on a regular basis with all actors to ensure their participation. The Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Working Group will perform the following main tasks:

- Coordinate inter-agency contingency planning activities, including:
  - Prepare for the inter-agency contingency planning process
  - Analyze hazards and risks, building scenarios and developing planning assumptions
  - Define objectives and strategies
  - Define management and coordination arrangements
  - Develop response plans
  - Consolidate the planning process
  - Implement preparedness actions
  - Organize the necessary technical support and assessments required in support of contingency planning activities

- Coordinate with government and partners on any relevant action and measures required to enhance preparedness and capacity to respond.

- Explore ways to further enhance preparedness by establishing viable networks at the national and regional level.

- Facilitate coordination at the sub-regional basis, if required by the country context and planning process.

- Facilitate the mainstreaming of contingency planning within development and disaster mitigation programming activities across the Humanitarian Country Team; consolidate outputs of the planning process, review contingency plans on a regular basis and present to the Humanitarian Country Team issues requiring specific decision-making or action.

- Act as a repository of knowledge and experience, as well as a transparent accountability mechanism, by ensuring that all relevant contingency planning materials and by-products emerging from the process are recorded and accessible to all partners.
8.3 Functions of the CP Working Group

Of the various types of planning groups and structures described above and in Chapter 4, the most important for the ongoing guidance of the contingency planning process will usually be the CP Working Group. These are the people who are concerned about the planning process as well as the plan and who will guide the overall process—below the level of senior decision-makers, and above the technical sector experts who will design their own parts of the plan.

The Working Group is the engine of the contingency planning process. The Working Group and the sectoral teams handle the details after the Roundtable has dealt with the broader and, in some cases, more political issues about inclusion in the planning process. The functions of the Working Group are to:

- Develop the detailed scenario.
- Initiate and facilitate the sector teams (in line with the IASC Cluster System if already established, or with other existing and functioning coordination bodies).
- Review the sectoral plans and coordinate their synthesis into the overall contingency plan.
- Review the final draft and undertake regular reviews.

How can you help your CP Working Group to grapple with these various tasks in an organized and efficient way – right from the beginning of the process?

This can be a large task, and the CP Working Group may have little time to execute it. Like any other group, the performance of the CP Working Group can be improved through training and facilitation. The training required need not be a one week workshop, but rather a training session or a day to ensure that all of the working group members have a common understanding of the task at hand and are empowered to act as partners in the process.

Example topics for a short hands-on training in contingency planning for CP Working Group members:

- Contingency planning—An overview of the process so that participants understand the basic philosophy and their part in the overall process. Clarification of both the structure and the timetable—could include use of this course.
- Scenarios—Uses and limits of scenarios, thresholds, and levels of preparedness.
- IASC cluster approach terminology and sectors.
- Overview of tools for planning, needs projection, resource assessment and gap identification.
- Use of Gap ID matrices, layout of the contingency plan, standard format for resource assessments and activity plans.
The CP Working Group’s introductory working sessions will often place many different ideas on the table which are then discussed by the group. In some situations the discussion may go all the way back to the initial reasons for starting a contingency planning process. In this case review the steps described in Chapter 3. If the Working Group already has a clear planning scenario in hand, they should start with a review of the key points and tools for scenario generation and development in Chapter 5. In both instances groups will usually get more out of the process if they are managed by a skilled facilitator. This person may be from within or from outside the planning team, but must be a neutral partner or a “fair broker” to the group.

Many contingency planning teams encounter problems with developing the detailed scenario due to concern about political sensitivity relating to the situation. For a refugee influx, for example, it may be agreed that the scenario will refer to arrivals from the neighboring country using the phrase “for planning purposes only” without specifying the reason why they might flee. If this problem is so great that it actually stymies the process, it should be referred to the Steering Group for resolution, so that the CP Working Group can proceed.

**CP Working Group review meetings**

One of the best ways to maintain focus and avoid staff turnover problems during the contingency planning process is to do it as quickly as possible while still maintaining a quality process and output. Working group members must be aggressive in setting timetables and sticking to them.

One of the key tasks of the Working Group is to provide guidance to the sector teams and then review their plans. An estimated timetable for the overall process should be presented at the beginning of the process. While timelines will vary according to the situation at hand and the presumed immediacy of the threat you are planning for, the following two-week timeline should be an achievable example in most instances.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roundtable meeting and nomination of working group members</td>
<td>Day 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial progress review meeting (and sectoral integration) after 3 days</td>
<td>Day 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft quality and integration reviews twice during the next 4 days</td>
<td>Day 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final quality and integration review of sector drafts two days later</td>
<td>Day 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of consolidated plan with Roundtable after another four days</td>
<td>Day 14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, the steering group might decide to initiate this process the week before this timeline starts and may be called to meet during this timeframe if needed. Also, the CP Working Group would need to meet to discuss any major changes, if needed, after review by the Roundtable. At this time a schedule for maintenance or updating the plan should be undertaken and shared with the various sectoral groups.

**Initial progress review meeting** – This meeting should focus on questions about the scenario and the integration of different sectors in the plan. Open the meeting with reports by each of the sector teams on progress made and problems encountered.

Typically, sectoral teams will propose or seek clarification on scenario detail, as well as information from other sector planning teams with whom they need to integrate. For example, the sector team planning for the Health/Nutrition sector may want to check with the Food and Logistics/Transport sectors on the availability of supplementary foodstuffs and the vehicles to transport them. Many of the questions raised will have no single correct answer and will be put to the CP Working Group for a decision. In this way the group builds up the planning scenario detail by working from smaller practical details.
**Contingency Planning**

**Quality and integration reviews** – These reviews focus on individual sectoral plans. The quality component is meant to ensure that sectoral plans are of an adequate quality and that they adhere to the agreed scenario. The integration component is intended to ensure that all of the sectors fit together and have complementary assumptions.

Quality and integration reviews need to be carefully managed if they are to work. The review takes place during the second meeting rather than the first to allow the sector teams more time to work together. In the review, ask each sector team to briefly present their draft plan to the whole group. Ask other members of the working group to critique the sector plan and:

- **Make constructive suggestions for improvement** – The fact that each of the sector teams knows that their own work will be subject to the same scrutiny tends to control negative comments. When it does not, the process manager or focal point must intervene to remind reviewers that they should only make constructive suggestions.

- **Identify any assumptions that conflict with assumptions made by other sector teams** – For example, if the Water sector team assumes that existing trucks will be available for fitting with water tanks, and the Logistics/Transport sector also assumes that all trucks will be available for transporting non-food items, this overlap in the plan needs to be resolved.

The informal core group should keep a careful record of the participants and the comments they make. After all the sectors have been reviewed, the sector teams are given an opportunity to discuss the comments that have been made about the quality of their plans and integration with other sectors. They then have an opportunity to respond, accepting the comments in whole or in part, or rejecting them. The commentators are asked if they accept the response. If they do not, the issue is referred to the wider CP Working Group for a decision.

The CP Working Group meets again to **review the consolidated draft** after the core team has grouped the various sector plans together and added the chapter on coordination and the total budget. Some aspects of the sectoral plans may have been changed because of unresolved integration issues. There may be other outstanding issues, such as the need to rework sectors to reduce the overall budget. After all these issues have been dealt with, the CP Working Group is asked to approve the presentation of the draft plan to the Roundtable.

The CP Working Group will not meet again unless the Roundtable calls for major revisions to the plan. If this is the case, the CP Working Group will decide the best way to deal with the revisions, whether to refer them to sector teams or whether to have the core team prepare the revision and present it.

The CP Working Group should also meet periodically (every three months, for example) for maintenance of the plan if required. These meetings are intended to:

- Maintain the CP Working Group and sector teams. Due to staff changes, some members of the sector teams may no longer be available. One of the tasks of the CP Working Group is to enlist new members to replace those who have left in order to maintain the sector teams.

- Allow the CP Working Group to discuss the validity of the scenario as time progresses.

- Allow each of the sector teams to briefly review its sector plan (considering recent developments in the sector and any suggested scenario changes) before reporting back to the CP Working Group.

If the scenario needs to be changed, the CP Working Group must decide whether the change is so great as to justify calling a new roundtable meeting, or whether the plan can be changed within the present general scenario. Similarly, the CP Working Group will decide whether any changes in the level of detail required are so extensive that the revised plan should be submitted to the Roundtable.
Dealing with data not published in the plan

Much of the data collected during the process will not get published in the actual contingency plan but will need to be filed away by the planning secretariat or the CP Working Group after presentation at the review meetings. It is important, however, for all of the information collected to be available to the CP Working Group for discussion. It will help form their outlook and reach viable conclusions for the plan. Even though all the data does not need to be included in the plan itself, its collection is not a waste of resources.

For example, it is impossible to predict whether gaps will arise without carrying out a needs projection. The presentation of gap identification sheets at the review meetings allows the whole working group to determine what is critical and what is not. Non-critical gaps should not be described in detail in the contingency plan. However, all the information collected will be on record and available if an influx is imminent and more detailed planning becomes necessary.

8.4 Functions of the Sector Teams

Contingency planning can only work at the detailed sectoral level if team members are interested in, and have knowledge of, the sector plans on which they are working. Many may want to participate, but large planning group teams are unwieldy and will greatly slow the process. How can this best be managed?

Approaches you can take include:

- Use the Roundtable as a sounding board for vetting sector team members and design additional sectoral groups or side meetings in which smaller sector contingency planning teams can inform the wider sectoral group of their findings and progress.
- Set a maximum size for each sector team and let the working group members sort themselves out.
- Appoint sector team leaders and let them pick the teams they wish to work with.
- Follow the IASC Cluster System and place your contingency planning activities within their already established groups (if they exist). If a Cluster System is in place, emphasize that a subgroup dedicated to this contingency planning is needed, not a duplication of the entire cluster group.
- If you are the focal point or process manager, assign members to the sector teams. If the working group members all know each other, the first approach is workable. The second process needs to be handled in a sensitive manner. The last approach may only be required if there are many partners who do not know each other or the overall situation is chaotic.

Sector team outputs – Sector teams work on one or more sectors to develop their sector plans. These are then coordinated into the overall contingency plan. The sector teams build on the foundation of the detailed scenario to carry out the following tasks for their designated sectors:

- Specification of sectoral sub-objectives and standards
- Specific sectoral scenarios
- Needs projection
- Resource assessment
- Gap identification within the sector
- Recommended coordination mechanism for sectors
- Task allocation and recommended actions for each sector
Contingency Planning

Additional planning assumptions critical to the sector – The individual sectoral team must be working on the same scenario. This must be facilitated by the CP Working Group; however, each sector has considerations which are sector specific and of little interest to the other sectors. For example, the question of which hospital is used for referral of surgery cases is usually of interest only to the Health/Nutrition sector team (unless there is a protection issue). The sector review meetings ensure that the sector scenarios are in line with the agreed working group scenario and resolve issues in the areas where sectors interact.

Amending a sectoral plan is easier if the governing assumptions specific to that sector are part of the sector plan. It is much more difficult to amend a sector plan if any changes in the sector-specific assumptions call for an amendment of the working group’s scenario.

Where a number of different sector scenarios share a common element, this element is no longer sector specific and should be moved from the sector scenarios to the working group scenario. If the sector plan was revised by changing an element that is not sector specific, this would make the plan internally inconsistent. When a sector-scenario element is a critical factor for that sector, it may be promoted to the working group scenario.

Sectoral resource inventory – Resource assessment is one of the key contributions that the sector teams can make to the contingency planning database. The assessment begins with human resources because the sector teams may use these in the preparation of the plan.

Contact details are placed in the Appendix as the same resources may be useful for a number of sectors. Where possible, the contact list should include home numbers so that people can be contacted outside of normal working hours in an emergency.

Appendix: CONTACT DETAILS

Latrines for All, 31 Independence Avenue, PO Box 1324, Alpha, Ruritania.
Phone +333 1 74135, Fax +333 1 74135, eMail: lfa@ngonet.ru.
Jean Shida (Director) (Home tel: +333 1 62134)
Fred Moyo (Project Manager)
Kofi Malemba (Engineer)

The contact list may be one of the most useful parts of the contingency plan. This section will be useful no matter what sort of emergency occurs. If the contact list is detailed enough, it may even encourage recipients to keep the plan on their desk for the contact list alone.

“I believe in annexes! There should be a short narrative and a simple plan, and then the annexes. A contingency plan is like a security plan in a way. When you are preparing the plan, you know everything and you remember where everything is. Once a security incident occurs, your pulse and your brain are racing; you can’t even remember the telephone number of the police or whoever you need. You have to be able to go to the plan, look up the organigram of the local administration and call the contact number shown there. Numbers, contact information, locations of stocks, the nearest airfield that can accommodate a 747—it is good to have it all in the annexes. When the emergency happens, your heart is pumping so fast you won’t remember anything—except to look it up in the annex and start ticking the boxes.”

– Johann Siffointe, Emergency Preparedness and Response Officer – UNHCR

The contingency plan also presents a full list of physical resources identified during the planning. These are listed in an appendix at the back of the contingency plan. A number of key sectors will also show expected physical resources against the timeline in the sector plan.
Appendix: RESOURCE INVENTORY

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latrine Slab Molds</th>
<th>30</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Latrines for All</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GTZ Rural Artisans</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoCD</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: above are typical stock levels, not guaranteed stocks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ready-Made Latrine Slabs</th>
<th>300</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Latrines for All, Delta</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latrines for All, Foxtrot</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARE, Echo</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

50% held as reserve stocks for an emergency

Gap identification for the sector. Gap identification was also discussed in Chapter 7. Gap ID matrices are prepared for all the sectors’ aspects, but these only need to be presented in the contingency plan if gaps are felt to be critical. Otherwise, a brief mention is made of possible gaps in the sector plan text. The gaps section also identifies any special sensitivities in the sector.

Recommended coordination mechanism specifics for each sector. Coordination is the key to success in emergency operations. Every partner must be aware of the coordination mechanism currently in force. Using designated agencies, as in the IASC Cluster System, can reduce the need to coordinate details at a central level. Details can be left to designated agencies or coordinators to resolve with other agencies.

Task allocation and sector recommendations. The sector planners also allocate tasks within the sector and indicate if these tasks should be undertaken immediately or only upon implementation of the plan.

E: Sanitation — Tasks and recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who</th>
<th>When</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>Now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LFA</td>
<td>After event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoH</td>
<td>After event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LFA, MOH</td>
<td>Now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNCHR</td>
<td>Now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARE</td>
<td>Now</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples

Chapter 8
Summary

The task of drawing up a truly collaborative interagency contingency plan requires meetings. From a process management perspective, these should be divided into clearly tasked sub-meetings, each with a distinct clientele and purpose.

The structure of meetings, where possible, should fit into existing coordination mechanisms, such as national structures, the IASC Cluster System, or others that may already be in place.

The general scope of such meetings may include:
- Steering group
- Roundtable meetings
- CP Working Group meetings
- Core team meetings
- Technical /sector team meetings for sectoral specialist input
- Secretariat for supporting the overall process and assisting with production of and archiving of documents

Planners should understand and work with the IASC Cluster System which is mandated to work towards disaster and emergency preparedness globally.

The CP Working Group is the engine of the planning process and serves both a facilitation role for the sectoral groups as well as direct participation in the overall planning process. Some of this group's key tasks will be to:
- Conduct initial or kick-off meetings, which may also include short training sessions concerning contingency planning.
- Hold working group review meetings.
- Draft consolidated reports and hold consolidation meetings.
- Host roundtable meetings when required.

The sectoral team meetings should have guidelines to support and harmonize planning assumptions and avoid conflicts between scenarios of the various technical planning teams. The sector teams’ key outputs should include:
- Specific additional scenario considerations regarding the area of expertise.
- Resource survey, needs projection, and gap analysis within their sector.
- Specifics for any unique coordination requirements within the sector.
- Task allocation and recommendations for the sector’s response including specific objectives achieved in the response.
Chapter 8
Self-Assessment Questions

Check T or F to indicate whether a statement is True or False

1. Interagency contingency planning meetings will be more efficient if the audience and purpose of each meeting is made clear and each fits into a larger overall strategy for supporting the contingency planning process.

2. The steering group is usually a large meeting designed to bring open review and participation from the wider humanitarian response community.

3. The roundtable process as described in this chapter is about guaranteeing each planning partner an equal voice by means of the Roundtable, i.e., no hierarchy is implied by the seating arrangement.

4. The CP Working Group is the primary engine of the contingency planning process.

5. The sectoral teams must base their sectoral plans on their own unique scenarios.

Multiple choice. Mark ALL correct statements – more than one may apply.

6. Which of the following would be the right venue for senior level political input to the contingency planning process?
   - Core team
   - CP Working Group
   - Roundtable meeting
   - Steering group

7. Which of the following would be the right venue for community-wide comment and information sharing about the overall planning process?
   - Core team
   - CP Working Group
   - Roundtable meeting
   - Steering group

8. In a situation where a working national coordination structure for humanitarian response already exists, contingency planners are encouraged to:
   - Create a parallel structure for the contingency planning exercise.
   - Institute the IASC Cluster System.
   - Work within the existing structure.
   - Avoid working with any structure beyond their immediate focus.
Chapter 8
Self-Assessment Questions (continued)

9. Which of these are included in the IASC Terms of Reference for an Interagency Contingency Planning Working Group?
   A. Coordinate inter-agency contingency planning activities.
   B. Define objectives and strategies.
   C. Consolidate the planning process.
   D. Coordinate with government and partners.

10. The full set of all recorded data produced by the contingency planning process should be:
    A. Included in the plan.
    B. Included in the annexes.
    C. Archived, but not necessarily included in the plan.
    D. Deleted or destroyed once the final contingency plan is issued.

Chapter 8 Answer Key

10. C
9. T A, B, C, D
8. C
7. C
6. D
5. F
4. T
3. F
Defining scenarios, holding meetings, and establishing an overall structure for your contingency planning exercise is important, but there is still the issue of actually completing the plan. How can the managers of this exercise facilitate an efficient process among partners and avoid the typical problems associated with consolidating the outputs from the different sectoral teams and working groups into a simple, coherent, and agreed plan?

This chapter explains some of the management aspects of plan consolidation:

- How to achieve better coordination of the plan elements through standard setting
- How to achieve better coordination of the plan elements through template sharing
- How to integrate elements from the higher (steering group) level along with elements from the technical (sector teams) level
- A range of different contingency plan outlines that are appropriate in different situations
Contingency Planning

9.1 Management Aspects of Plan Consolidation

Management and coordination are key to a successful emergency response; they are also critical to the completion of your contingency plan. In many cases, management and coordination mechanisms already exist in some form. As explained in previous chapters, planners are encouraged to use these when practical. Whatever structure you use, one of the challenges is to work directly with planning partners, to motivate them, and to clarify the task from time to time. All of this should be done in ways that build relationships and trust among the planning partners throughout the exercise. Much of the research and evaluation findings on contingency planning focuses on the idea that the plans themselves are often not as important as the strengthening of the capacities and coordination of planning partners that happens as a by-product of this process.

“I realize that to be a contingency planning facilitator you have to deal with people first. It can be very personality-based and it is a full-time job. You have to find like-minded people, and you have to motivate them to move the process forward. I strongly believe that a contingency planning facilitator somehow carries the skills of a strategic planner with a clear vision of the end state. This person must be a motivator; a coordinator; a team builder; and a negotiator. The needed personal competencies are, in my view, strong leadership values and skills.”

– Alessandra Morelli

While motivating and negotiating are important skills to have in this process, some basic management systems will also help. Once subtasks are assigned to different planning groups, the challenge becomes one of reuniting the output of these groups back into a coordinated plan. The easiest way to achieve this is to provide clear guidance about the planning scenario, the standards being used by all groups, and a shared roadmap or template for the final plan document.

“As far as inter-agency planning goes, I’ve seldom seen these plans actually finalized. I’ve been to many meetings, I’ve talked to Cluster Leads, I’ve talked about the coordination, but still we meet, we agree on the scenario, and then it gets divided up to the different clusters, and it becomes a big monster.”

– Johann Siffointe, UNHCR Emergency Preparedness and Response Officer

Avoiding the Consolidation Trap

Inter-agency contingency planning often gets mired in ‘the consolidation trap’, where a large planning document is compiled with the inputs from multiple sectors/clusters and agencies/organizations. The result is a complex and dense document that is difficult to develop, update and use. This trap can be avoided by defining what documents will be useful and what is usefully consolidated.

Most often this means a set of different documents at inter-agency, sector/cluster and organizational level. For example, detailed sector/cluster contingency plans are not useful for senior decision makers or donors who need short focused documents that highlight the potential scenarios, response strategies, and resource needs. By contrast, water and sanitation programme managers definitely need the details.

Excerpt from the IASC Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Guidelines for Humanitarian Assistance, November 2007
The rest of this chapter is dedicated to helping you avoid the ‘consolidation trap’ with some specific techniques and advice for managing the overall process. In every case, however, it should be noted that all these approaches work best when instituted from the very beginning. It is far easier to set a clear course of action than it is to correct an initiative that is off-course. The points below should be considered before engaging the wider community of specialists, high- and low-capacity partners, and other stakeholders. These tools will help you avoid your process becoming ‘a big monster’.

9.2 Coordination through Standard-Setting

Drawing together all of the sectoral plans to make a single coherent contingency plan can be a huge task if you have not first established some standards to be followed both in the content as well as the format of the plan. Standardization is the key to minimizing the work of preparing the draft. If all of the sector drafts are in a shared standard format, it is much easier to integrate them. The core team can use a number of strategies as shown in the Plan Standardization Checklist below to ensure that plans are in a standard format.

**PLAN STANDARDIZATION CHECKLIST**

*Have you provided the following items to the planning teams — before they begin their work?*

- Analytical templates/tools for scenario development
- Sample documents
- List of standardized terms, names, or coding systems to use
- List of any agreed standard planning figures
- Plan component templates and standard forms
  - Needs projection worksheet
  - Standard Immediate Assessment Plan Template
  - Physical resource availability
  - Human and documentary resources
    - Contact details sheet
    - SWOT analysis template
    - List of key references, laws, or guides for response (Sphere, UNHCR Handbook for Emergencies, nationally-mandated standards, etc.)
- Technical Working group objectives and planning worksheets
- Gap ID matrix examples or templates
  - Editing support
  - Expectations of time required
  - Expected completion date for first draft
Providing samples of standard plan components is very useful. The core team or secretariat should distribute these electronically using the most common programs in local use (Word, Excel, Access, etc.). This will greatly reduce the amount of editing required to harmonize the quality and appearance of the sector plans. Distributing samples of the text for sector plans will help the sectoral teams produce the plan in the desired format. The samples should also reflect the level of detail that will be required for this contingency plan.

**Typical contents of sector/cluster plans**

- Sector objectives and strategy
- Standards/documentary guidelines to be followed, etc.
- Scenario additions or refinements particular to this sector
- Human and physical resources inventory
- Gaps for the sector
- Sector-specific coordination arrangements
- Task allocation and recommendations

Other issues for standardization include names of towns which may have alternate spellings, for example, and technical terms (such as 'severely malnourished') which may have different definitions at the international, national and local levels. While it is possible to draw up a standard set of names and terms, it may be simpler to resolve these issues as they arise. In situations where it is known or likely to be confused, it is best to draw up a standard use sheet for these issues before the planning groups meet. If data are to be combined into a Graphic Information System (GIS) for example, even coding of different place names and areas may be done ahead of time and will greatly facilitate the overall process. This is much more likely in working situations where the Cluster System is already in place, or where there is an established Humanitarian Information Center (HIC) or United Nations Joint Logistics Center (UNJLC) or other similar nationally established systems.

Preparing standard forms for recording data and conclusions is a good way to ensure that data is presented in a consistent way across different sectors. The CP working group (or its core team) should distribute electronic forms, and templates using the most common locally-used computer word processing, spreadsheet, and database programmes. Preparing standard forms in advance also means that time is saved as each group does not have to “re-invent the wheel” by devising their own forms or data layout.

Editing the plan for standard language, terminology and level of detail ensures internal consistency. Despite all of the efforts for standardization and integration, there will still be some errors and inconsistencies, which can be resolved with careful editing. Editing the draft is the responsibility of the CP Working Group, and this task often falls to its core team for implementation.

The consolidating and editing process can reveal, for example, situations where different sector plans are based on different assumptions. Consider, for example, the consequences if different groups use divergent assumptions about how long disaster-displaced people will spend in reception centers before being moved back to their homes or to a resettlement area. Imagine the contradictions in the plan if a sector team inadvertently changes the planning unit from families to individuals without altering their numbers (thus overstating the needs). However, even the best contingency plan will contain errors. Any errors found in the published plan should be reported to the CP Working Group or secretariat, if functioning, for correction in the next version or maintenance phase of the plan.
9.3 Coordination through Shared Templates

It is a relatively simple task to place a prepared template or plan component example on the internet, or to email it to diverse planning sub-groups so that the resulting documents are easier to consolidate. Templates are simply previously made plan components or plan outlines that are shared so that formatting, styles and key content areas are similar for the different components of the plan prepared by different groups. Word and Excel files can also be set as templates to facilitate fine-tuning and integration of document styles. There is no question that one of the most difficult tasks in an interagency process is stitching the component results back into an integral plan document. Use any tools that can help you with this process.

Are there any arguments against sharing plan format templates for planning purposes? Write any concerns you have or have heard below.

Sharing the electronic templates for plan components is an efficient way to encourage shared language, formats and scope of component parts of the contingency plan. However, care should be taken so that this useful support does not replace creative thinking or displace interest with a sense of bureaucratic form-filling. The trick is preparing guidance that is helpful in structuring and language, but still supportive of creative thinking and flexible enough to allow unique approaches that do not fit the template.

The resource inventory template, for example, is simply a tool for listing resources. Deciding which resources are critical for a sectoral component to a response should be left to the sectoral planning team. If the template is easy to use and accepts the information needed, it will be seen as a helpful facilitative support, rather than a limiting constraint. One of the common complaints about reporting templates is that the template does not match the organization’s already existing forms or practice. This usually occurs when planners are asked to put information they already have in another format into your format. There are two strategies for getting around this problem:

1) Get your template out early and show the positive results of using it as a community-wide tool.

2) Make sure the template is actually better, or at least more useful for contingency planning, than those that other organizations are using. If this is not the case, ask to use the best one you can find, or one which most other organizations are already using.

In some cases, organizations resist using templates ‘branded’ by other organizations. This can be particularly problematic when they are in direct competition with them for recognition, funding, or access to counterparts or areas of the country. In this case, the best option is to develop a specifically ‘open source’ and non-branded template, and offer it widely. In some instances, organizations may perceive the planning template as proprietary. You may have to actively work to dispel this notion.
9.4 Specific Components Prepared by the Core Team

The informal core team of the CP Working Group will likely be the ones to facilitate the overall process and provide direction and motivation to other team members and other planning groups. The core team should be familiar with, and in close agreement on their roles and tasks in this overall process. They will have to prioritize their tasks and understand that they cannot do everything themselves. They will need to focus on those tasks that best support the overall process.

What particular tasks should the core team of the CP Working Group involve themselves in?

While the answers to this question will vary according your situation and context, there are a few things that this small group will usually need to do. One of these is to act as a liaison between the steering group, the roundtable meetings, and the sectoral teams. This may be a full time job during the initial phase of preparing the plan. In general, for a larger, more complex plan, the busiest times will be at the beginning of the process and near the end when the various sub-groups will submit their reports and the CP Working Group begins to assemble and edit the draft contingency plan document.

In addition to assembling and editing the draft, the core team also prepares:

- The acknowledgements listing all the individuals and organizations that have contributed to the plan, including the names of the roundtable attendees.
- The basic planning scenario(s) in a concise and clear format.
- The management and coordination chapter (together with the wider working group).
- The overall scenario Gap ID chart or activity matrix, showing which agency has accepted which tasks in which sectors.
- The outline resource inventory and projected gaps from details supplied by the sector teams.
- The unified set of annexes for all sectors consolidated from lists supplied by the sector teams (such as the physical resources inventory and the contact list).

9.5 Example Contingency Plan Outlines

There are many different formats for contingency plans which may be appropriate in some situations but not in others. Major factors affecting which format, how much background information, and other details will depend on the intended use(s) of the plan. The following three examples are practical and appropriate for some situations, but not all. These examples are not exhaustive and their inclusion does not mean that other formats are not useful. However, these examples are recommended and represent three planning contexts you may encounter. A short description of best uses and tips for preparing the outline follows each example.
Example 1 – IMMINENT CONTINGENCY PLANNING MATRIX

This simple matrix-based plan format sets out the operational capacity of key partners on the ground as related to the scenario and type of assistance foreseen. It is intended to be a reference point for collective action and a method of coordinating, integrating, and synchronizing the possible imminent emergency response. The outline can be prepared easily in Word, Excel, or other basic computer programs. This example shows the typical level of detail—the intent of this plan is to be short and concise. The level of detail, amount of information shown, and the way it is presented is important to the nature of the plan itself.

Title: IMMINENT CONTINGENCY PLANNING MATRIX (for crisis/emergency situation)

Prepared by agencies: A,B,C,D

Date:

Location: (Country name, specific area descriptor)

General points: Brief description of current emergency response situation, followed by concise points concerning the contingency planning scenario—approx. three paragraphs that include:

• Location
• Current humanitarian caseload (population #s)
• Proposed contingency planning scenario and rationale
• Number of newly arriving (or affected) persons related to scenario, in terms of total population and estimated number of households
• Estimated timeframe for preparedness (how imminent is the threat estimated to be?)

Standards to be achieved: (Note: the following information is an illustrative example)

• Required emergency shelter and NFIs
  – 2000 canvas tents (based on 5 persons per unit).
  – An NFI package for each family of 5 that includes two semi-collapsible jerry cans, one multi-purpose stove, a kitchen set (type B), one kerosene lamp, hygiene kit, and .2 kg of soap per month. Each family member will receive one mattress, one blanket, and a mosquito net.

• Sanitation
  – 1000 pit latrines (1 per 20 persons) maximum 50m, minimum 6 m from housing
  – Refuse disposal: 1 communal pit (2m x 5m x 2m) per 500 persons
  – 1000 showers

• Water
  – Quantity: 200,000 litres per day / 20 litres per person per day
  – 100 users per tap, not more than 100 meters from housing

• Food
  – Minimum requirement of 2100 kcal per person per day
  – Cereal 400g
  – Pulses 50g
  – Oil (Vitamin A fortified) 30g
  – Fortified blended foods 45g
  – Sugar 25g
  – Iodized salt 5g

• Health
  – 1 medical center/10,000 persons with referral capacity to local hospital for treatment

• Protection
  – Registration of all arrivals to camp
  – Identification of persons with special needs and provisions made to address them
Contingency Planning

This plan in matrix format is preferred by many emergency responders when they are in an ongoing response operation and decide they need contingency planning to address specific scenarios that may develop. It works well in this situation for many reasons. Some benefits and risks are:

**Benefits**

- The players already know each other and relationships are established, so there is minimal need to prepare SWOT analysis or other time-consuming vetting steps for determining the planning partners.
- The situational context and logic for the scenario are likely understood and agreed on by the partners, so lengthy discussion and arguments are not needed for prioritization or motivational purposes.
- Managers and planners are already operating under emergency (or at least very busy) conditions, so they understand that anything much more detailed will not be read or used.
- In the dynamic situation of an ongoing operation, things change quickly and this format can be very easily updated.
- Lengthy annexes and contact points are not required as partners are likely using such contacts on a daily or regular basis.
- The operational standards and guide for planning figures to be used are presented so all partners will be accountable to the same level. Specific strategies are left out, as being too detailed, and may best be left to the implementing partners to work out on their own.

**Risks**

- This kind of short-hand approach to contingency planning is useful for those already involved in the response, but may sideline new or smaller agencies that may in fact have valuable insights, or potential roles to offer.

### RESPONSE CAPACITY MATRIX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Implementing Partner</th>
<th>Immediate Response Capacity</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Planned/ Pipeline</th>
<th>Comments/ Response Gaps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shelter and NFIs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>Org A</td>
<td>Capacity to distribute and erect 2000 tents; organise and manage distribution centers for NFIs</td>
<td>5 days</td>
<td>Delivery of emergency stocks is 72 hours from submission of budget</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WASH</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>Org B</td>
<td>250 latrines on site</td>
<td>Immediate–proposed camp design complete</td>
<td>750 planned through local procurement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>150 water taps</td>
<td>One week to submit proposal</td>
<td>Sufficient supply in country</td>
<td>Only 100 are required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WFP</td>
<td>Org C</td>
<td>Bread from local bakeries: first delivery of 330 metric tons for initial two months</td>
<td>Immediate</td>
<td>Next four-month stock is in pipeline</td>
<td>Funding for the next four months must be secured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protection</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>Org D</td>
<td>Registration and issuing of ration cards</td>
<td>Immediate readiness</td>
<td>Implement registration jointly with HCR. Partner to provide clerical staff.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Unless significant emphasis is given to this type of plan, it may become lost in the day-to-day shuffle of other urgent activities. It is easy enough to formulate so that one or two people can put it together fairly quickly with a few phone calls; however, if they are called away or shift focus, there is risk that a good plan may be lost in the system.

• The extremely concise nature of the plan leaves opportunities for conflicting strategies and misunderstandings that may be glossed over in this format, but which may erupt in the implementation.

“Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler.”

– Albert Einstein

Example 2 – IASC INTER-AGENCY FORMAT

Reproduced from the 2007 IASC Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Guidelines for Humanitarian Assistance, this plan outline represents a “mid-sized” plan in terms of interaction with a large number of partners and the IASC Cluster approach.

Table of Contents for an Interagency Contingency Plan

1. Executive Summary
2. Hazard and Risk Analysis
   – Brief summary of the hazards and risks analyzed during the contingency planning process
3. Scenarios and Planning Assumptions
   – Brief summary of agreed scenarios and planning assumptions that define the parameters of the contingency plan
4. Objectives and Strategies
   – Concise statements of objectives, strategies and guiding principles
5. Overall Management and Coordination Arrangements
   – Clusters established and designated lead agencies/organizations
   – Diagram of coordination mechanisms
   – Arrangement for appeals and funding
   – Information management arrangements
   – Cross-cutting issues
6. Summary of Sector/Cluster Response Plans
   – Outline of participation in sectors
   – Objectives and response actions
   – Gap analysis
   – Standards guiding response
7. Preparedness Actions
   – Agreed priority preparedness actions
   – Preparedness actions by sector
8. Annexes
   – Summaries of sector plans
   – Detailed schedule for implementation of preparedness actions
   – Schedule for review and updates of contingency plan
   – Terms of Reference for sector/cluster groups
Contingency Planning

This type of plan is appropriate for an annually reviewed or ongoing contingency planning model in situations where the IASC Cluster System is already in place. It is useful where the purpose of the planning exercise is distinctly focused on capacity building and institutionalization of emergency preparedness or where a culture of planning and preparing for the specific scenario used in the plan exists. In many instances, these types of plans have several scenarios or a ‘multi-hazard’ approach built into them.

**Benefits**

- This is already a widely disseminated and accepted format for interagency contingency planning with approval of the IASC. It covers the basic elements needed for a clear understanding of the scenarios and proposed plan.
- It provides a more comprehensive background on the analysis and context of the situation, thereby presenting a useful document for general use by new as well as long-time partners.
- For those operations or countries already using the Cluster System, this is an excellent opportunity to improve and disseminate collective agreements on the structure and use of the system as it is foreseen to respond to the planning scenario(s) chosen.
- In situations where there is no functioning system for coordinating humanitarian preparedness planning and no current humanitarian emergency, this outline can help to establish a working structure for a nascent cluster system.
- Cross-cutting issues are clearly included as a point of consideration in the plan. While these are historically difficult to address in such plans (and operation), addressing this point in the outline serves as a useful reminder to work these issues into the plan from the beginning rather than as an afterthought.
- This outline leads clearly to preparedness actions to be taken in the immediate future, whether or not the planned-for scenario(s) occur.
- The format is flexible enough to cover a range of different approaches and levels of detail within its relatively simple structure.

**Risks**

- This format may lead to an extensive document that may be unsuitable for some users. This may be overcome by issuing different versions of the same plan for different users, for example, an overview document for policy makers, and individual sectoral chapters for use by cluster groups.
- Since this outline concludes with follow-up actions in its preparedness components, it may require a secretariat and perhaps a heavy investment of time—over a longer period—for monitoring of achievements and preparedness measures.
- This type of document may become highly formal and require high-level clearances by multiple agencies for its preparation, thereby leading to a slower overall process. However, if the process makes visible progress and is seen as supportive to the potential response community, there may be no harm done. However, if the process is slowed to the point that partners lose interest, or themselves change their operations or internal plans during an overly long process, the document may never catch up to the rate of change in the humanitarian response community itself.
Example 3 – REGIONAL CONTINGENCY PLAN FOR A REFUGEE EMERGENCY

This example was prepared by UNHCR to prepare for a major refugee outflow scenario that would likely affect several countries at once. It is therefore regional in scope and seeks to coordinate a harmonized humanitarian response across different countries with different national laws, capacities, and norms. Page numbers from the actual plan have been retained in this example to indicate the amount of detail in the plan while not reproducing the entire document.

Regional Refugee Emergency Contingency Plan

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   A. ARRIVALS SEEKING PROTECTION AS REFUGEES .......... 20
   B. REFUGEES/ASYLUM SEEKERS FROM THIRD COUNTRIES .... 20
   C. PERSONS ENJOYING PROTECTION ELSEWHERE ........... 21
   D. THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS .................................... 21
   E. REFUGEES SUR PLACE IN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES ....... 21
   F. STATELESS PERSONS ............................................ 22
VIII. REGISTRATION ............................................................. 24
This plan is a relatively complex document that requires a significant level of detail to accomplish its purpose—harmonizing response of a large event over several countries at the same time. It is robust in its scope and depth, yet is appropriate for an event that may threaten to destabilize an entire region and may, in fact, be quite likely or even imminent. Even so, the preparers have been concise wherever possible. A large amount of information was not included in the actual plan for the sake of brevity and clarity of focus on key issues, but the information has been archived for future use in case it is needed.
**Benefits**

- Multiple country offices have been consulted and have met together for the preparation of this plan, an exercise which should prepare them for a more coordinated response.
- The plan is specific enough to be of practical use if the emergency occurs. It includes key planning data, concise inventory resources, and other useful information.
- The plan is highly organized with much attention to detail so that no key areas of the response are overlooked.
- The level of detail is high enough for this document to be used both for immediate response planning and for advocacy to partners, governments, donors and others who are filling any gaps identified in the plan.
- As a UNHCR-led plan for a refugee emergency response, key protection elements are plainly included as they relate to this specific scenario. (Note that the same strategy will be useful for any type of contingency plan, i.e., planners should spell out any response mechanisms or aspects specific to their planning scenario, but not all scenarios, as this is the whole point of conducting scenario-based planning.)
- As a regional exercise this plan serves the useful purpose of raising awareness in offices which might not consider the threat as likely as the core team of planners did.

**Risks**

- Even though concise and quite sparing in its level of detail considering the complexity of the situation, this plan is still long and might have the feel of an academic exercise for some field practitioners.
- This plan requires considerable effort to coordinate and prepare. It also focuses squarely on the major scenario (although it does divide it into “likely” and “worst-case” situations). Because of these two factors, if the event does not happen or does not happen as soon as predicted, planners and other users may lose faith in the initiative or in the very idea of doing this type of planning.
- This type of plan may be quite politically sensitive due to the nature of the scenario in the region and the possible different national responses, laws, or norms in the countries involved. These types of plans may be considered confidential within the planning group and therefore not shared widely. This may mean that some inputs, even though potentially useful, will not be included.
Summary

The consolidation of the plan from multiple components requires negotiation and leadership skills, as well as the establishment of a clear system or structure for this process.

Standardization of key components of the plan will facilitate the process and help you avoid the ‘consolidation trap’.

A plan standardization checklist of key components along with prepared electronic templates can help planning groups work within the same format and facilitate the eventual consolidation of the plan.

Other specific points that require standardization are:

- Key terminology and definitions
- Spelling/coding of place names and locations for GIS or other shared database
- Key planning assumptions concerning the central planning scenario
- Level of detail and format for recording inventory surveys and key contact information

All this is facilitated by sharing templates. The earlier this occurs, the easier it is for planning partners to use and not get invested in their own systems.

The informal core team of the CP Working Group is often responsible for leading the overall process and for the following tasks and components:

- Basic planning scenario
- Acknowledgements
- Overall management/coordination structures for envisioned response
- Overall operational GAP ID matrix
- Consolidated resource inventory
- Unified set of sectoral annexes

Many contingency plan outlines are available, and appropriate, for use in different situations. Three examples are:

- **Emergency Contingency Response Matrix** – concise and directly operational; for use within an ongoing humanitarian operation.
- **IASC Textbook Format** – moderately detailed, appropriate for ongoing capacity-building and preparedness for potential identified emergencies.
- **Regional Level Scenario-Based Contingency Plan** – complex due to the regional nature of the scenario foreseen; specific to the scenario.

Hybrid plans may be useful and appropriate depending on the situation.
Chapter 9
Self-Assessment Questions

Check T or F to indicate whether a statement is True or False

1. The ‘consolidation trap’ refers to the difficulty in putting together a consolidated plan from the different parts of the contingency plan prepared by sectoral planning teams.

2. The different sectoral teams will need different planning templates for facilitating their work due to the differences in response strategies for each sector.

3. The scenario planning assumptions may be augmented by the different planning teams as required for their sector, but the core planning scenario should be the same for all sectoral teams.

4. It is best to let sector planning teams develop most of their plans independently before sharing templates or other information to allow them maximum creativity in their planning processes.

5. There are only three types of formats suitable for contingency planning. Basically these will cover all situations that may occur.

Multiple choice. Mark ALL correct statements – more than one may apply.

6. Which tasks are most likely to be done by the CP Working Group’s core team?

A. Preparation of the basic scenario for the plan.
B. Presentation of the overall response coordination section of the plan.
C. Sectoral objectives and strategies.
D. Consolidation of inventory resource lists into a unified set of annexes.

7. Which of these topics or components are recommended for a plan designed for contingency emergencies that may develop during an ongoing humanitarian operation?

A. Standards to be met or achieved in response to the contingency scenario.
B. Response capacity matrix of key operational partners.
C. Comprehensive explanation of the contingency scenario.
D. Detailed background information on overall context and analysis of current threats.
Contingency Planning

Chapter 9
Self-Assessment Questions (continued)

8. The IASC contingency format, when compared to the other examples illustrated, has a greater relative emphasis on . . .
   A. Immediate operational use in an imminent emergency
   B. Coordination of contingency planning exercises in multiple countries
   C. Brevity
   D. Implementation of preparedness and risk reduction as a key goal of the plan

9. The regional UNHCR contingency plan example presented in this chapter is:
   A. The shortest and most concise plan outline presented.
   B. The most oriented to long-term capacity building in the region.
   C. Designed to coordinate multiple national-level strategies for a shared emergency event.
   D. Appropriate for sharing with media outlets and other stakeholders for wide dissemination.

10. Which of the following components are to be included as typical parts of the standardized sector/cluster plans?
    A. Sector objectives and strategy.
    B. Scenario additions or refinements that affect the particular sector.
    C. Task allocation and recommendations for the sector response.
    D. Any critical gaps identified in the sector.

Chapter 9
Answer Key

10. A, B, C, D
   9. F
   8, D
   7. A, B
   6. A, B, D
   5. F
   4. F
   3. T
   2. F
   1. T
A satellite image of Tomas and Ului—two intense tropical cyclones—that formed in the South Pacific Ocean in mid-March 2010. Ului had maximum sustained winds of 240 km/hr with gusts up to 300 km/hr over the Solomon Islands. Tropical Cyclone Tomas had maximum sustained winds of 215 km/hr with gusts of up to 260 km/hr over Fiji. Tomas forced more than 5,000 people from their homes while the islands sustained damage to crops and buildings.

Ului was more compact and more powerful. A few hours before this satellite image was taken, the storm had been classified as an extremely dangerous Category 5 cyclone. In the final hours before landfall in the southern Solomon Islands, Ului degraded and only delivered a glancing blow. While some homes were damaged on the islands, no one was injured. Was contingency planning for the more severe storm that was predicted a waste of time?

This final chapter of the course explains:

- The relation of contingency planning to operational planning when the planned-for events do, in fact, occur
- How to maximize the efforts of your contingency planning process when emergencies other than your planning scenario occur
- How to use the plan for building preparedness, in general, even when no emergency occurs at all
- How to evaluate your contingency planning process and the plan itself
10.1 Putting the Plan into Action When the Planned-for Emergency Occurs

There is a direct relationship between early warning, contingency planning, and operational emergency response planning—particularly when the planned-for event actually happens. This straightforward model applies clearly when things go as planned. And this, in fact, is the model most commonly used when designing contingency plans and later, in evaluating them. This approach has been considered fundamental and has been well documented in other training programs and materials. The short explanation below, reprinted from a United Nations Disaster Management Training Programme (DMTP) document from 1996 (initially developed by UNHCR Division of Operations Support) explains this relationship.

“There is not a great deal of difference between contingency and operations planning. Both are planning activities as described above where objectives are set and a strategy to achieve these objectives delineated. The major difference between the two is that planning for contingencies is planning in a state of uncertainty. One must make assumptions and develop scenarios upon which planning is based. In operations planning, one observes a tangible situation and responds to it.

There are two kinds of associations between contingency planning and operations planning:

1) The continuum model where contingency planning is a stage before operations planning. In this model, the early warning signs prompt contingency planning and, should the event for which one planned, actually occur, the planning process simply changes gear and becomes operations planning. The assumptions made in the contingency planning stage are confirmed or adjusted, and then the operation planning continues, taking account of a real situation.

2) In many cases however, contingency planning takes place in the midst of a (sometimes complex) operation. For example, if one is planning for a renewed influx, a natural disaster affecting a camp or a sudden spontaneous repatriation, then contingency planning becomes one element of operations planning. Here there are elements of certainty and uncertainty mixed—the realities of the ongoing operation are well known but future developments for which one needs to be prepared are to be assumed.

…. the participants in the contingency and operations planning process (normally an inter-agency group) will often be the same in composition. This allows for continuity and consistency. For example, in model 1 it is an easy transition for a contingency planning group to adjust their modus operandi to operations planning.”

— Excerpt from “Contingency Planning a Practical Guide for Field Staff”
October 1996 – UN DMTP
Even though guidance in contingency planning follows the logic outlined above, most evaluations conclude that the actual plans produced are often not used as the response plans. Guidelines on contingency planning (including this one) tend to emphasize the planning process over the plan itself, based largely on this understanding. The essential point that should be understood is not that these plans are irrelevant once an emergency occurs, but rather that they are useful, but may still be insufficient for direct operational planning due to:

- Changes in the situation since the planning was done
- Changes among the humanitarian response community in the interim
- Changes in the international political and funding climate
- Ability (and need) for assessment data once the emergency occurs, to either verify that the planning scenario has occurred or to determine major differences, if any, between the actual event and the planned-for event

### 10.2 Using the Plan When a Different-than-Planned-for Emergency Occurs

“Prediction is very difficult, especially if it’s about the future.”

- Niels Bohr

This understatement by the physicist Niels Bohr explains why we often find that the emergency we get is not the emergency we planned for. There is no ‘crystal ball’ and planners will often fail to correctly identify the emergency that ultimately occurs. Knowing this, planners should work towards making their planning processes (and plans) be of practical use even when the emergency does not occur.

**Question**

How can the contingency plan designed for a specific scenario be of use when a different scenario actually occurs?

Planners should understand that the plans will be imperfect, but that the thinking and coordination effort that went into making them will make the eventual emergency response faster, more reasoned, and better coordinated. The key elements of the plan that relate to coordination in general should be called forward and the planners that were involved in the planning should be convened for the emergency response coordination meeting.
What parts of your contingency plan may be useful even in the event that a different-than-planned-for emergency occurs?

The answers to the question above naturally depend on the nature of the plan that has been prepared, and how different the situation that has occurred is from the original planning scenario. However, there are a few conclusions that can be drawn for most cases. Even though some parts of the plan may concern specific situations that have not occurred, there are several components that should be of value if the plan was prepared properly:

- Coordination mechanisms for humanitarian response
- Key resource lists, both physical and human, available for an emergency response
- Key annex information such as maps, important contact points, and key infrastructure data
- Ability to quickly form teams for responding to this new emergency, based on the experience of the planning exercise itself

In some cases, the emergence of a new threat or emergency leads the contingency planning team to make changes to their standing contingency plans. The example from Haiti below shows the evolution of a contingency planning process that has responded to ongoing changes in the field and an updated situation assessment. Changes over the year 2010 led the IASC Planning Mission to widen the scope of their planning to include new emergency scenarios not previously considered.

“The IASC contingency planning mission has rendered its final report and discussions are underway with the Government’s Directorate of Civil Protection (DPC) for joint immediate preparedness actions. The main priority according to the report is supporting an early warning system for floods and storms. The report strongly emphasized the need for planning at the local level between clusters and the Haitian authorities for short-term preparedness actions. Humanitarian partners are actively engaged in supporting the Government in setting up a harmonized contingency plan in preparation for the 2010 hurricane season. As opposed to last year’s plan, the 2010 contingency plan will include natural hazards such as earthquakes and landslides.”

— Excerpt of report from the Haiti Earthquake: Situation Update 24 March 2010 — UN News Service online
10.3 Using the Plan for Preparedness — Even If No Emergency Occurs

In many cases the planned-for emergency doesn’t occur. Is the planning time and energy spent a waste of time? Planners who have given time and effort to the process may begin to lose interest. How do you make the most of the plan while waiting for your scenario to occur?

What do you do with your plan and process if the planned-for scenario does not occur, or the event is becoming less likely?

It is important for participants in the planning process to realize that increased preparedness for response is of value, even if the planned-for event does not happen. The emergency may still occur tomorrow, and in any case, it is better to be prepared even when nothing happens, than it is to be unprepared when it does.

In order to make the most of the contingency planning process (and plan) in non-emergency periods, planners should work towards filling identified readiness gaps, and carrying out any preparedness measures identified by the plan. Subsequently, based on assessment of any such preparedness improvements (or lack thereof), the plan should be updated and corrected as required by the new situation at hand. Review the challenge to contingency planners in the IASC Contingency Planning Guidelines below. What can be done in your country or area of concern to better prepare the community for disasters and emergencies?

Throughout the contingency planning process, specific preparedness actions or issues requiring follow-up should be identified and recorded.

Preparedness actions identified during the planning process should be reviewed and prioritized, and responsibilities and timelines should be assigned. In order to ensure that a heightened level of preparedness is achieved, a minimum set of priority preparedness actions should be identified and agreed to by all agencies/organizations. At each review of the contingency plan, progress made in implementing priority preparedness actions should be assessed in the context of any change in the situation. Humanitarian Country Teams may also want to develop Standard Operating Procedures detailing the key actions that each agency/organization and sector/cluster will take at the onset of an emergency.

An important part of the contingency planning process is the establishment of systems for monitoring early warning indicators based on the triggers identified during the scenario building process. Each scenario should have a set of agreed indicators which would allow for more efficient monitoring and follow-up.

“Contingency Planning should not be a theoretical exercise; its main objective is to ensure that agencies/organizations develop a level of preparedness that is sufficient to respond to an anticipated emergency. Prioritizing and implementing preparedness actions and monitoring agreed early warning indicators for developments that would trigger a response convert intentions into action.
10.4 Evaluating the Plan and Process

How can managers assess whether the time spent in contingency planning was actually well spent? As explained above, the failure of the planned-for emergency to appear is not enough to evaluate whether or not the contingency planning process was a waste of time. At the same time, managers should not blindly accept that the contingency planning process has been done well and that preparedness is enhanced simply because a process has been implemented and a plan produced.

In situations where the planned-for emergency does happen, it will be possible to do a direct assessment of what parts of the plan or what activities of the process affected the emergency response. But what about the situations when the emergency is different from that planned for, or when no emergency occurs?

**How could you evaluate the contingency planning process and plan when the planned-for emergency does not occur?**

Evaluation of the contingency plan and process can be done by a straightforward evaluation survey or interviews designed to elicit the response of those involved in the plan. Particularly for those situations where you foresee an ongoing process of updating and revising the contingency plan and process, a survey-based evaluation report may be worthwhile. It is best to survey those who were involved in the planning directly as they will be able to provide direct insight into the process. A transparent evaluation exercise will also build support and faith in the ongoing contingency planning process. If you do an evaluation, make the results of your effort known to the planning partners and act on those areas that are shown to be in need of improvement. Some of the primary questions that might be asked of the planning participants in the evaluation are shown in the simple checklist below.
QUESTIONs FOR EVALUATION

Contingency Planning Process and Plan

Quantitative aspects
- How much time did you spend in developing the plan?
- Do you have any ongoing responsibilities for follow up, maintenance, or revision of your part of the plan?

Efficiency of the process
- Were planning meetings well-focused on the task at hand?
- Were planning partners informed of timelines and expected outputs?
- Were planning outputs well-documented and incorporated into the overall plan?
- Did your group or team complete your portion of the plan within the agreed timeline?

Qualitative aspects
- Were the right partners chosen to be involved in the process?
- Were standards and guidelines to be followed in the plan documented and explained?
- How would you rate the quality of the plan produced?
- How would you rate the quality of the meeting management and facilitation?

Values/Perception
- Do you feel that the process was worth your time?
- Do you feel that the plan produced was worth your time?
- Do you believe that the process has better prepared you and other potential responders for emergency response?
- Do you believe that the plan produced has better prepared you and other potential responders for emergency response?
- What improvements can you recommend for improving this process or this plan?

One other useful way of assessing the plan, while improving preparedness, is through exercises or drills based on the planning scenario. In other words, test the plan by conducting a simulated office-level, or even field-level emergency response using the actual plan. While large-scale exercises can be costly to mount, simpler, table-top and communications-based exercises can be done fairly inexpensively. It should be noted that such simulations do not validate or evaluate the accuracy of the planning scenario chosen, but only the usefulness and coordination of the planned response to the scenario.

The great value of these exercises is that they often reveal gaps in the plan that are not discovered until someone actually tries to do what has been set out in the plan. One of the other key uses of simulations is that they can practically test key elements of the plan such as resource inventories and key contact information through direct contact and stock-taking at the time of the exercise.

The Hyogo Framework for Action (a global initiative for disaster risk reduction with the primary goal to substantially reduce disaster losses by 2015—in lives as well as social, economic, and environmental assets) has noted specifically the value of both contingency planning and the exercise of such plans through simulation. A short section from the Framework’s “Disaster Preparedness for Effective Response Guidance and Indicator Package for Implementing Priority Five of the Hyogo Framework” follows.
Contingency Planning

A plan in and of itself is not enough. The plan needs to be tested and exercised by the people and organizations that will use it. Classroom or actual field simulation exercises, based on specific scenarios, are an effective means to determine how realistic the plan is and to assess the capacity of the different actors. Based on the results and lessons learned during such exercises, plans (procedures, responsibilities, etc.) can then be modified accordingly.

Simulation and response exercises can help to identify strengths and weaknesses, as well as what training is required so that all participants are able to meet their identified responsibilities. The use of simulation exercises also serve to maintain the plan ‘fresh’ in the minds of all the actors and to keep knowledge and skills up-to-date. The same holds true in the testing of the effectiveness of early warning and alert systems.

Conducting lessons-learned exercises from previous responses is also important. Simulation exercises can also be a good means of reviewing how well cross-cutting issues are reflected in the plan, and if vulnerable groups will be able to access extra support during a potential hazard response. Once the planning process has been completed, it is essential that its content be used to directly increase levels of readiness through activities such as upgrading early warning systems, pre-positioning resources within sectors likely to be impacted, or the provision of contingency budgets for associated government departments with central responsibilities for preparedness. It is also important that sufficient resources are allocated for the review and dissemination of the plan by all of those who are expected to play a role in its implementation. It is vital that all clearly understand the plan and their role and responsibilities.


Simple simulation exercises are indeed valuable in familiarizing those who will be involved in humanitarian response with the coordination and response mechanism envisaged in the plan. They also help to test planning assumptions and response systems. Simulations also may be used as a part of the regular schedule for review and updating of the contingency plan. The excerpt below is from a UNICEF-led WASH Cluster Contingency Plan for Earthquake Preparedness in Nepal.
This plan for the WASH Cluster Earthquake Contingency Plan has been developed based upon the earthquake scenario prepared by OCHA after agreement with the Nepal Country IASC. The rationalization for the plan is to ensure that the WASH Cluster is able to respond with maximum efficacy to water, sanitation and hygiene needs following a major earthquake in the Kathmandu Valley of magnitude 8.0 or greater.

Following the contingency planning process that took place in 2008, a multi-hazard risk contingency plan was developed for the WASH Cluster. A further workshop was held on 26-27th March 2008 to develop a more detailed contingency plan for the earthquake scenario. The workshop was attended by a range of WASH stakeholders including government, national and international NGOs, Red Cross, and UN agencies. At the workshop it was agreed among participants that the contingency planning process should be continuous and that it would be agreeable to meet regularly to further preparedness.

As two earthquake simulation exercises are being planned in April 2009, it was also decided that it would be a good opportunity to update plans before they are tested. In mid-April a cluster testing earthquake simulation is being planned through IASC. At the end of April a regional simulation is being planned through INSARAG with wide participation from government and other actors. In addition, a number of lessons learned have been incorporated into this new version of contingency plan, as the WASH Cluster approach was implemented for the response during the severe flooding that occurred in August 2008 in Sunsari and Saptari districts in Nepal (and in Bihar state, India) due to the breaching of the embankment of the Koshi River. Extended displacements occurred for thousands of affected families in Nepal alone.

This second version of the “WASH Cluster Earthquake Contingency Plan” represents a live document and will require further discussion and work with WASH actors as it becomes clearer which agencies will lead on which preparedness components.

– From the WASH Cluster Nepal Earthquake Contingency Plan
Version 2: April 2009
There is a close relationship and logical progression from early warning to contingency planning, and from contingency planning to emergency operations planning. However, this relationship is not always realized because in many instances the planned for emergency does not occur.

Contingency plans and the planning process can be of real value even when the planned-for event does not occur.

The following aspects of the plan and process will be useful even when a different emergency than the one planned for occurs:

- Coordination mechanisms for response
- Key available resource lists
- Annexes such as maps, infrastructure inventories, and important contact points
- Value of strengthened partnerships and interagency understanding built through the planning process.

When contingency planning processes are designed for longer term disaster risk reduction, the regular updating of the plan can also include modification of the planning scenario(s) as required by changes in the situation that occur over time.

The contingency plan can be evaluated directly if actually put into use as an operational plan when the planned-for emergency occurs.

When the scenario does not develop as planned for, the plan may still be evaluated through a direct evaluation survey/assessment of the planning partners involved in the planning process, and through simulations or drills based on the plan.
Chapter 10

Self-Assessment Questions

Check T or F to indicate whether a statement is True or False

1. Useful contingency planning can take place in anticipation of a potential emergency operational response as well as within an ongoing operation.
   \[ \text{T} \quad \text{F} \]

2. Contingency plans that are actually used for operational response cannot be evaluated since they become operational plans rather than contingency plans.
   \[ \text{T} \quad \text{F} \]

3. In most instances the planned-for scenario usually does happen as the planners have predicted.
   \[ \text{T} \quad \text{F} \]

4. Contingency plans made for emergencies that do not occur are irrelevant.
   \[ \text{T} \quad \text{F} \]

5. Contingency planning and longer-term emergency preparedness can be accomplished in the same process.
   \[ \text{T} \quad \text{F} \]

Multiple choice. Mark ALL correct statements – more than one may apply.

6. Which of these factors often cause even good contingency plans to be insufficient at the time the emergency occurs?
   \[ \text{A} \] Changes in the context or situation over time, between the planning and the emergency.
   \[ \text{B} \] Changes that occur within the humanitarian response community.
   \[ \text{C} \] Changes in national policy or funding priorities.
   \[ \text{D} \] The need to collect immediate emergency assessment data to verify the actual situation.

7. What elements of the contingency plan may be useful even when a different-than-planned-for emergency occurs?
   \[ \text{A} \] Coordination mechanisms for humanitarian response.
   \[ \text{B} \] Lists of available resources compiled as part of the plan.
   \[ \text{C} \] Lists of key contacts compiled as part of the plan.
   \[ \text{D} \] Key annex information such as maps and infrastructure details.

8. Which of the following preparedness actions are recommended in the IASC Contingency Planning Guidelines for Inter-agency Planning?
   \[ \text{A} \] Prioritize and implement preparedness actions as part of the plan.
   \[ \text{B} \] Regular review of progress on addressing preparedness measures.
   \[ \text{C} \] Establish systems for early warning as part of the overall contingency planning initiative.
   \[ \text{D} \] Regularly review and update the plans produced.
9. Which of these would be useful questions to raise in an evaluation of a contingency planning process?

A. Questions about the efficiency of meetings and overall process in producing the plan.
B. Questions about which partners were involved in the process.
C. Questions about the perceived level of change in preparedness for the planning scenario.
D. Open-ended questions about recommendations to improve the process.

10. Simulations are useful for testing and evaluating contingency plans because they . . .

A. Provide a way to test the plan even if the planned-for scenario does not occur.
B. Prove the validity of the planning scenario.
C. Test for inconsistencies in the plan that may only be better understood through practice action than through review of the document.
D. Provide a practical way to test the validity of resource inventories and contact lists.
UNHCR eCentre Learning Module Evaluation Form

Contingency Planning

Date you finished this module ___________________________________________________________

How much time do you estimate you spent completing the module (whether or not you did the exercises and answered the questions)?
___________________________________________________________________________________

Describe your previous experience with contingency planning.
___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________

How did you find the content level of this module?
☐ Too simple  ☐ Easy  ☐ About right  ☐ Complicated  ☐ Too difficult

How did you find the language and structure of the module?
☐ Too simple  ☐ Easy  ☐ About right  ☐ Complicated  ☐ Too difficult

How useful were the exercises and self assessment tests in the module?
___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________

How valuable do you feel this module will be for your own personal or professional development?
___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________

Do you believe that you will use any aspects of this module in your work in the next year?
___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________

Any additional comments:
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Please feel free to copy this form and mail it to: UNHCR eCentre, Wesley Center, 6-10-11 Minami Aoyama, Minato-ku, Tokyo 107-0062 Japan

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