Innovative Tools, Studies and Systems
Strengthening Emergency Response Capacity in the Americas - CERA

Introduction

The Centre for Institutional Disaster Preparedness (CREPD, by its Spanish acronym) aims to support the components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement by strengthening capacity building in disaster preparedness among National Societies. The aim is to develop methodologies, tools, learning techniques and harmonization processes considering the National Societies’ expertise and best practices and under the coordination of the IFRC Regional Office for the Americas.

CREPD contributes to strengthening capacity building in disaster preparedness among National Societies by implementing the following lines of work:

Within the framework of the “Strengthening Emergency Response Capacity in the Americas” project (CREA, by its Spanish Acronym) that is being implemented in five Latin American countries (Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua and Dominican Republic), with the financial support of the Canadian government and the Canadian Red Cross, CREPD has provided technical support within the lines of work mentioned above.

As the result of the joint work of National Societies’ technical staff and volunteers, the IFRC Secretariat, and the Canadian Red Cross, several innovative tools have been developed to contribute to strengthening local response systems and promoting organized institutional development.

LINES OF WORK

Training  Technical support
Instruments and tools  Knowledge building

Products

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Feasibility study to set up Emergency Operations Centres (EOCs)

The aim of the study is to assess the technical, organizational and infrastructure capacities of emergency response organizations, with the purpose of enhancing and improving the local response system, by identifying regional development poles in terms of emergency and disaster preparedness and management.

Purposes
- To determine the appropriateness of investing in strengthening the response mechanism (EOC).
- To identify opportunities for strengthening the disaster management system.
- To establish poles of development within the National Society.
- To identify priority areas for disaster management interventions.

Requirements
Staff:
Technical team: specialists in EOC standards, administration and finances, infrastructure and services.
Coordination team: consisting of the Reference Centre, the organization focal point, the cooperation partner, and the safety focal point.
Logistics team: staff and resources.

Timeline:
- 1 Month: Preparation
- 1 Month: Implementation
- 15 Days: Delivery

Processes:
- Revision and adaptation of assessment tools according to the National Society’s context.
- Mapping of capacities, resources and risks.
- Definition of the object/sample of study based on prior prioritization.
- Coordination with local academic, technical-scientific and civil protection agencies and organizations.
- Assessment implementation: field visits to priority areas.
- Preparation and presentation of the final report.
- Meeting to present results.

Tools:
Forms, surveys, interviews, direct observation.

Application
Step 1: Bibliographic research on risks within the context of the National Society.
Step 2: Adapt tools to the context.
Step 3: Organize work teams.
Step 4: Provide teams with training in the use of tools.
Step 5: Define human and material resources and organize field visits.
Step 6: Implement the study, assess and record outcomes on a daily basis.
Step 7: Meeting to assess and draft the final report.
Step 8: Sharing results, including an assessment workshop for stakeholders.

Outcomes
1. Assessment of the physical and structural conditions of buildings and facilities.
2. Assessment of the branches’ financial capacity and sustainability.
3. Assessment of the technical and regulatory aspects of an EOC.
4. Description of disaster risk scenarios identifying main threats, vulnerabilities and existing capacities.
5. Visualization of results using a dashboard for decision-making.
6. Results analysis workshop and delivery of final report.

Lessons Learnt
1. The political and strategic commitment of the organization is key to the success of the study and the strengthening of the local system.
2. It is essential to put together a good technical team for the timely identification and assessment of findings within the main lines of study.
3. It is important to clearly define the study sample, which will allow the team to organize field visits and make a better use of existing resources.
4. Preparing a plan of action after the delivery of the final report is essential for monitoring outcomes.
Virtualization of the DRCE tool

The Disaster Response Capacity Evaluation (DRCE) tool is intended to assess the disaster and crisis preparedness and response mechanism of emergency response organizations through a data collection system and real-time visualization of results.

1. Verification sources
2. Data collection forms
3. Dashboard

5 Areas 19 Criteria 260 Indicators

Purposes
• To prepare integrated plans of action.
• To create a scale for measuring the progress of disaster preparedness and the development of the organization.
• To provide a mapping of the National Society’s capacities and resources at a regional level.
• To measure the impact of the investment carried out by strategic partners.

Requirements
Staff:
Multidisciplinary technical team: specialists with wide field work experience in different areas of risk management.
Coordination team: consisting of the Reference Centre, the organization focal point, the cooperation partner, and the safety focal point.
Logistics team: staff and resources, including data collection processing and visualization software and mobile devices.

Timeline:
1 Month Preparation
1 Week Implementation
15 Days Delivery

Processes:
• Definition of the object/sample of study based on prior prioritization.
• Coordination with local academic, technical-scientific and civil protection agencies and organizations.
• Assessment implementation: field visits to priority areas.
• Preparation and presentation of final report.
• Meeting to present results.

Tools:
Forms, surveys, interviews, direct observation, dashboard, and record of verification sources.

Application
Step 1: Awareness raising and acceptance within the National Society.
Step 2: Definition of the assessment methodology: simulation, simulation/drill, real-time.
Step 3: Preparations and logistics, budgeting, preparation of simulation scripts, implementation agenda.
Step 4: Implementation. Arrival of the assessment team and deployment to the various branches, interviews with internal and external actors, recording and assessment of results.
Step 5: Analysis. Conclusions, drafting of recommendations, revision and interpretation of graphics in the dashboard.
Step 6: Preliminary report. Initial presentation of results.

Step 7: Final report. Document revised, and delivered to the National Society.

Outcomes
1. Real-time analysis of results.
2. Definition of a baseline, middle line or endline.
3. A historical record of the assessment results.
4. Visualization of results for improved data interpretation and analysis.
5. Comparative graphics for intermediate or final assessment.

Lessons Learnt
1. It will be essential to develop a plan of action prioritizing the recommendations made in the final report for short, medium and long term implementations, appointing people responsible and allocating the budget.
2. The plan of action should be linked with other activities carried out by the organization.
3. The assessment team should consist of specialists in different areas (considering that the overall response mechanism is being assessed), including: political-strategic areas, and support, technical and response areas.
4. The team should have internal IT support for database management, and programming the visualization dashboard and the various forms.
Information management diagnostic tool

Assessment of the technical, organizational and infrastructure capacities of emergency response organizations, with the purpose of enhancing and improving the local response system, by identifying regional development poles in terms of emergency and disaster preparedness and management.

Purposes
- To create a scale for measuring the progress of information management.
- To provide a mapping of information management tools and their functions.
- To measure how information is being managed among the different departments within the organization.
- To determine the appropriateness of investing in tools for strengthening information management.
- To identify opportunities for strengthening the information management system.

Requirements

Staff:
Technical team: specialists in information management, in addition to the staff in charge of the organization’s units and departments that will be objects of study.
Coordination team: consisting of the Reference Centre, the organization focal point, and the cooperation partner.
Logistics team: staff and resources.

Timeline:

Processes:
- Design of the exercise.
- Definition of the study sample (branches, headquarters, and other organizations).
- Coordination with local technical-scientific and civil protection agencies and organizations, and with the beneficiaries of interventions.
- Assessment implementation: simulation or real-time implementation.
- Analysis of results.
- Preparation and presentation of initial report.
- Meeting to present results.

Tools:
Forms included in the information management diagnostic tool, interviews, direct observation, documentary research.

Application
Step 1: Awareness raising and acceptance within the National Society.
Step 2: Share the tool with coordinators and key actors.
Step 3: Preparations and logistics. Organize the support team, prepare the implementation agenda, and issue a call for stakeholders.
Step 4: Implementation. Initial presentation of the tool’s objectives and functioning at a plenary meeting, interviewing with department coordinators, assessment workshop for work teams at each department, and recording and analysis of results.
Step 5: Analysis. Conclusions, graphics’ generation, revision and interpretation, drafting of recommendations based on results vs. prioritization and relevance.
Step 6: Initial presentation of results to involved actors and top management.
Step 7: Final presentation. Document revised, and delivered to the National Society.

Outcomes
1. Analysis of results regarding information management.
2. Definition of a baseline, middle line or endline to measure progress or development.
3. Catalogue of tools and technological systems that facilitate and improve information management.
4. Visualization of results through graphics for improved data interpretation and analysis.
5. Prioritization of needs.

Lessons learnt
1. It is essential to prioritize needs and prepare a plan for monitoring recommendations.
2. Sharing the aim of the diagnostic tool is key to prevent resistance to the implementation.
3. Participants must be committed to honestly complete and deliver the forms in order to guarantee reliable results.
Radio broadcasting network study

A study on the infrastructure and functioning of the organization’s radio broadcasting networks and systems, identifying vulnerabilities and prioritizing recommendations for corrective actions to strengthen the existing systems.

**Purposes**
- To prioritize short, medium and long term investment in the radio broadcasting network.
- To broaden the catalogue of service providers.
- To establish a gradual process of equipment standardisation and migrate from analogue to digital systems according to the country’s regulations.
- To perform a mapping of resources identifying the best sites for installing equipment to reorganize the organization’s network.

**Requirements**

**Staff:**
- **Technical team:** telecommunication specialists with experience in disaster management.
- **Coordination team:** consisting of the Reference Centre, the National Society focal point, the service provider, the cooperation partner, and the safety focal point.
- **Logistics team:** activity coordinator, budget coordinator, drivers, vehicles, entry permits, diagnostic equipment.

**Timeline:**
- Preparation: 1 Month
- Implementation: 1 Month
- Delivery: 15 Days

**Processes:**
- Development of assessment tool.
- Identification of assessment areas based on prior prioritization.
- Coordination with local service providers, owners of radio repeaters, coordination within the organization.
- Implementation of the diagnosis: field visits.
- Meeting to analyse results.
- Meeting to present results.
- Preparation and presentation of final report.

**Tools:**
- Checklist, surveys, interviews, laboratory and diagnostic equipment, direct observation.

**Application**

**Step 1:** Documentary research: country’s legal framework, revision of providers’ contracts, identification of potential providers, revision of other relevant reports, and mapping of equipment and resources.

**Step 2:** Organize work teams.

**Step 3:** Define human and material resources and organize field visits.

**Step 4:** Diagnosis implementation: existing and potential repeaters sites, service providers, road tests, base equipment, mobile devices and laptops.

**Step 5:** Meeting to analyse and draft the report.

**Step 6:** Presentation of results.

**Outcomes**
1. Diagnosis of the radio broadcasting system status, coverage and quality.
2. Condition assessment of infrastructure, system management, equipment, and radio repeaters at all levels.
3. Plan for improving the radio broadcasting system’s coverage and quality in the short, medium and long term, including strategic alliances with partners and/or private organizations.

**Lessons learnt**
1. Knowing the country’s telecommunication regulations is essential for preparing and implementing the study. This will allow the team to identify relevant requirements and recommendations for improvement.
2. The expected outcomes need to be identified prior to developing the study and based on the organization’s vision.
3. The organization must have a unit or department with technical experts to interpret, guide and implement the results of the diagnostic study.
Budgeting for response and contingency plans

The budget for response and contingency plans is conceived as the first available funds to tackle disasters or crisis. It aims to provide organizations with the financial capacity to respond to disaster or crisis situations while other funds (internal or external cooperation) are activated.

**Purposes**

- To identify and implement fundraising strategies and establish an organization's emergency fund.
- To implement operational planning as a fundraising tool.
- To consider other administrative expenses related with emergency response.
- To link action plans or emergency appeals to institutional preparations.
- To be able to implement an emergency operation in the immediate aftermath of an adverse event.

**Requeriments**

**Staff:**

- **Technical team:** specialists in administration and finances, risk management and resource mobilization.
- **Coordination team:** consisting of the Reference Centre and the organization focal point.
- **Logistics team:** staff and resources.

**Timeline:**

- Preparation: 1 month
- Implementation: 1 week
- Delivery: 15 days

**Processes:**

- Organization of technical team.
- Revision of the organization’s response plans (scenarios and previous operational costs).
- Workshop: 7 steps for setting up a budget. Checklist of actions for resource mobilization.
- Revision and approval of budgets.
- Budget monitoring carried out by the responsible department.

**Tools:**

- Step-by-step guide for setting up a budget, and budget forms.

**Application**

**Step 1:** Organize work teams.

**Step 2:** Documentary research: analysis of response plans and previous operations.

**Step 3:** Implement workshop, prepare the agenda, and create budgets.

**Step 4:** Presentation and approval of the budget.

**Step 5:** Delivery of final report.

**Step 6:** Presentation to cooperation partners.

**Outcomes**

1. Budget tool related with budget forms used at a regional level.
2. Implementation guide and Budget Tool User Guide.

**Lessons learnt**

1. The commitment of the organization’s top management is essential to transform disaster planning into a useful fundraising tool.
2. The assessment team should consist of specialists in finances, resource mobilization and technical emergency response. The team needs to be able to consider various approaches to the cost estimation of emergency operations.
3. It is essential to know the economic implications of an emergency operation. This allows organizations to reflect on the coverage of the services that will be provided during the emergency planning process.
4. The various disaster scenarios are the main input for estimating costs and setting up budgets for emergency response operations.
Competency-based curriculum design

It consists of designing curricular contents according to the staff training needs, guiding the learning experience towards the achievement of competences through a participatory and dynamic process.

**Purposes**
- To organize the organization’s curriculum.
- To provide guidelines for implementing the curriculum.
- To establish a learning path for students.

**Requirements**

**Staff:**
- **Technical team:** Education specialists with research experience, and specialists in the technical areas to be developed.
- **Coordination team:** consisting of the Reference Centre, the organization focal point, the cooperation partner and the head of the training centre.
- **Logistics team:** staff and resources.

**Timeline:**
- Preparation: 1 Month
- Implementation: 2 Months
- Delivery: 1 Month

**Processes:**
- Diagnostic research.
- Pedagogical justification.
- Definition of alumni profiles.
- Selection and organization of competences.
- Selection and organization of curricular contents.
- Definition of the methodology.
- Definition of the evaluation system.

**Tools:**
- Surveys, interviews, focal groups, technical meetings, implementation workshop

**Application**

**Step 1:** Documentary research on the context of the organization.
**Step 2:** Consultation process with the organization’s head of training.
**Step 3:** Organize work teams in the areas of specialization considered in the curriculum design.
**Step 4:** Prepare a guiding document for the curriculum design.
**Step 5:** Provide the organization’s staff with information about the curriculum implementation.
**Step 6:** Share results with the organization’s top management.

**Outcomes**
1. General training plan for the organization.
2. Curriculum based on specialties.
3. Pedagogical recommendations for the curriculum implementation.
4. Introductory workshop on curriculum design.

**Lessons learnt**
1. The organization’s staff in charge of the training must get involved in the process to ensure its optimal development.
2. It is essential to put together a team of specialists.
3. It is important to define communication channels to share relevant information and follow clear guidelines.
4. It is essential to carry out a participatory and dynamic process involving all sectors within the organization.
5. An appropriate timeline for the preparation, design and implementation of the curriculum is essential to guarantee the quality of the process.
Humanity  The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

Impartiality  It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

Neutrality  In order to continue to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

Independence  The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

Voluntary service  It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

Unity  There can be only one Red Cross or one Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

Universality  The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all Societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.

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