



WEBINAR SUMMARY

Preparedness: What Can We Learn from the Nepal Response?

16 February 2016

Preparedness ensures that international, national, and local humanitarian and development actors are prepared, ready, and have everything in place for a quick and effective response, especially in the critical moments when emergency hits. The Transformative Agenda has two protocols on preparedness: The [Common Framework for Preparedness](#) supports the development of preparedness capacity of humanitarian responders by using a systematic country-level approach, in order to reduce impacts of emergencies on communities; The [Emergency Response Preparedness](#) focuses on identifying and acting upon early warning indicators, contingency plans, and other actions, to improve the coordination and readiness of inter-agency humanitarian responses. How does preparedness work? Did it work in Nepal? Are we doing it right? What can we do better? Panellists provided practical examples and concrete recommendations from their own application of the preparedness response during the Nepal Earthquake.

Panellists

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Co-Chair, IASC Task Team on Preparedness and Resilience and Senior Emergency Preparedness Adviser, World Food Programme (WFP)

Victoria Stodart

Senior Officer, Shelter and Settlements, International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC)

Jamie McGoldrick

Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Yemen

Dylan Winder

Head of Humanitarian Policy and Partnerships, UK Department for International Development (DfID)



Anthony Craig

Co-Chair, IASC Task Team on Preparedness and Resilience and Senior Emergency Preparedness Adviser, WFP

The IASC Task Team on Preparedness and Resilience (which is becoming a Reference Group on Early Warning and Preparedness) works to produce early warning reports with recommendations to the Emergency Directors Group with the aim of improving common understanding of risk, and to solidify the two protocols on preparedness (CFP and ERP) to support better preparedness response. These two protocols concern the IASC's own preparedness as well as the IASC's preparedness in supporting the readiness of others, notably of national and local responders during an emergency.

Main takeaways from the Nepal Response:

The Basics Matter

- The implementation of Minimum Preparedness Actions (MPAs) ensures that there is a minimum level of emergency preparedness within a country.
- While MPAs are crucial for ensuring effective and rapid response, there is no 'one-size-fits-all' measure that will guarantee the same efficiency in all contexts. What may be relevant in natural disasters such as in Nepal may not be relevant for preparedness during armed conflicts.

Savvy Investment

- Preparedness should be seen as an investment, not a cost. 'Smart' investment in preparedness can reduce the costs of response and lighten the financial burden that hits the humanitarian system every time an emergency strikes.
- Funding for preparedness activities must not be taken from other response mechanisms but be an additional, specifically allocated resource, with a focus on high-risk situations.
- Increased accountability of all actors—the IASC, donors, and responders—is necessary.

Coherence

- Instead of focusing on actions and measures during artificial phases such as ‘onset of crisis’, ‘immediate response’, and ‘recovery’, responders need to have a good overview of how phases overlap and be able to plan and act coherently across them.
- While clusters unquestionably contribute to national capacity due to their specific expertise, reliance on them must not be automatic and not override national and local response structures.
- Consistent structures, operational practices, and modalities must be promoted across clusters.



Victoria Stodart

Senior Officer, Shelter and Settlements, IFRC

What worked?

The Shelter Cluster has been active in Nepal since the Koshi floods in 2008, and this existing network meant that, during the response to the 2015 earthquake:

- The cluster approach and its practices were widely understood by governments and other national actors, as well as by other partner agencies.
- Responders and government representatives (national and local) were familiar and trusted each other.
- A contingency plan (including pre-distributed roles, agreed specifications, and predefined needs assessment questions) had been established, which facilitated the management and coordination of the cluster.
- A national coordinator with local knowledge and experience had already been identified, trained and officiated, which proved essential for navigating changing political and social processes.

What challenges remain to be addressed?

- Funding for training responders in preparedness needs to increase and to become more predictable, so as to allow for long-term planning of capacity building and its definitive integration into the preparedness response.
- Individuals who have been trained in preparedness need to be given the adequate incentives to stay in their positions. This would ensure cost-effectiveness of investments in capacity building.
- More needs to be done in terms of building relationships with the private sector, civil society and municipal/governmental actors.

Familiarity

- International personnel that will be surged in need to have experience in the situation on the ground. When international expertise is sought, it must not push aside existing local expertise, but rather complement it.
- Humanitarian responders must understand the local context well, but also show deep understanding of the Transformative Agenda and the IASC.
- Simulations can promote people working together before an emergency takes place.

What didn't work?

In Nepal, the failure to establish relationships and pre-agreements with the private sector resulted in:

- No mapping of suppliers and producers of main shelter items, which hindered effective discussions with private companies on the efficient provision of material and the quality of shelter goods;
- A lack of understanding of the activities that were already carried out by private sector and civil society actors, which resulted in a duplication of efforts in certain areas while others were not getting adequate goods and assistance.

Given the technical particularities of the Shelter cluster's work, the recent move from 'conditional' cash programmes towards 'unconditional'/multi-purpose cash transfers left a number of essential questions unaddressed:

- How can the cluster ensure that 'building back' is being done in a safe and sustainable manner?
- How can respect for quality specifications and safety procedures be ensured?
- Are environmental impacts being reduced?

The capacity of local responders is often understated, misunderstood, and underfinanced. Accordingly, there needs to be:

- A better understanding of individuals who are already active on the ground and who may already have established relationships with governments;
- An increase in donor and human resources support to train and build the capacity of local responders in preparedness, to ensure that they understand the structures and practices of the cluster.



Jamie McGoldrick

Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Yemen

Lessons learnt from the 2013 and 2014 annual floods were incorporated in preparedness exercises, originally in view of preparing for the 2015 monsoon season. These exercise helped the Humanitarian Country Teams be more effective in their response during the 2015 earthquake: Clusters were activated within 5 hours of the earthquake and the health cluster got going straight away. Several good practices and related challenges have been identified:

Investment

Investments into preparedness helped improve the response during the earthquake. There needs to be better ways to measure the impact of investment. More investment is needed to build the capacity of HCTs, to develop and support human resources to oversee guidance and leadership. Before cluster system is passed on to government there needs to be proper investment in making sure it works and that responsibilities are attributed.

Development

During the earthquake response, links between humanitarian actors and development institutions were made, with varied success rates. 4 years into a 20 year plan – a whole generation that had to be invested in. The economic case is well established, there is still reluctance to realise the implications of this, that development practice must change and be more aware of risk informed. Humanitarian activities cannot run for long-period like these, and responsibility must fall on core development institutions.

Governance

Community based initiatives to increase preparedness and build resilience had been put in place and proved crucial in the earthquake response. However, it was difficult to coordinate with actors beyond the community level. Previous risk assessments highlighted a governance problem, notably a lack of management of the rapidly urbanizing population and an outdated disaster management legislation. More efforts should be put in institutionalising preparedness within governance structure, especially at local/district level.



Dylan Winder

Head of Humanitarian Policy and Partnerships, DfID

Preparedness needs to be part of a bigger package of emergency response within country programmes, combined with anticipation, risk assessment, and resilience building. Contingency planning and programmes like these are useful to provide evidence of work to senior decision makers and donors, to encourage more investment in preparedness.

P2P Support Webinar Summary – Preparedness

This summary is a combination of presentations from the webinar and broader learning from the P2P Support team. To listen to the full webinar and to access recordings of past webinars, visit the website: <http://www.deliveraidbetter.org/>