

# Emergency preparedness and response handbook

Saving lives and protecting rights

Thirteen-year-old Malik Aman practises using his loudspeaker to warn of floods as part of emergency preparedness training in Pakistan. PHOTO: ACTIONAID



## Section six: preparedness



[eprhandbook.actionaid.org/section6](http://eprhandbook.actionaid.org/section6)

Section  
06

## KEY POINTS

- Disaster preparedness is a process of increasing capacity to effectively anticipate, reduce potential damage, respond to, and recover from the impacts of likely, imminent or current hazard events or conditions.
- Disaster preparedness **is ensuring that information, skills and knowledge, infrastructure, materials, institutions, linkages, policy and funding** are available at LRP/partner, local government and organisational levels.
- Disaster preparedness is required at three levels – **institutional, national and community level.**
- Key elements of ActionAid’s preparedness planning process are:
  - **capacity-building** with staff members, local partners and communities
  - developing, institutionalising and putting into practice a **preparedness plan** at the community, regional and national level
  - **building strong links** with other actors on preparedness and response locally, regionally and globally
  - **monitoring and reviewing.**
- Disaster preparedness plans need to be **integrated with ActionAid’s regular planning and budgeting processes**, and should be reviewed on an annual basis.

## About this section

This section describes the key actions that should be taken before a disaster happens, to ensure that ActionAid, partners and, most importantly, the communities we work with, are ready.

## National and LRP level preparedness plans

People living in poverty and exclusion are constantly vulnerable to disasters, and poverty reduction efforts are incomplete without reducing this vulnerability. All ActionAid members in countries vulnerable to disasters (countries assessed in IHART's analysis as high risk in terms of likelihood and impact of natural disasters and/or conflict) are therefore expected to have disaster preparedness plans in place.

The purpose of a preparedness plan is to make sure that communities, partners and ActionAid can develop the necessary skills, resources, information, systems and structures to effectively prepare for disasters, to reduce their impact and respond more efficiently. It should guide the process of preparing for disasters and should also provide guidance on what the organisation will do when a disaster happens.

Preparedness is critical to ensuring a timely and efficient emergency response. ActionAid focuses on building preparedness at a range of different levels; from the household and community level, to the staff of ActionAid and our partners, and more widely as an institution. Local level preparedness is particularly important, given the fact that local people are usually the first responders in any emergency. In particular, women are often at the forefront of rescuing family members and assets.

### The emergency preparedness plan will include the following elements:


- ✓ Background and country/LRP contextual analysis, history of disasters, major hazards and impact. Hazard analysis.
- ✓ Vulnerability analysis.
- ✓ Stakeholder analysis (LRP and national level).
- ✓ Key interventions for preparedness, response, recovery and rehabilitation.
- ✓ Budget for identified interventions.
- ✓ Analysis of donor communities and fundraising matrix (LRP, national/regional and global level).
- ✓ Assessment of communications process and plan for emergencies.
- ✓ Capacity-building activities for staff, partners and communities.

## The preparedness plan should be:

- collective – created through engagement
- forward-looking and clear in setting actions
- integrated into national level and LRP planning and programming (vertically and horizontally)
- live and updated regularly – through review and simulation
- realistic, simple and user-friendly
- well communicated and accessible
- connected to all other aspects of emergency management
- decentralised, local co-ordination/management model
- concentrated on process and people rather than documentation
- linked with national and sub national response systems
- developed through active women's participation and leadership.



## The key elements of the ActionAid preparedness plan template are:

- **Contacts and leadership.** All key contacts in the member/country programme and partners, and key external stakeholders such as other humanitarian agencies, government, suppliers etc.
  - **Risk analysis and scenario building.** Map out hazards and risk – including the possible scale and nature of impact at national and LRP level, based on past events and anticipating climate induced events. Facilitate and limit challenges in the policy environment and operations.
  - **Information about communities at risk.** Recording the characteristics and number of people at risk in our working areas.
  - **Management process.** Decision-making process – assigning roles and responsibilities of staff, operations management, considering size of contingency funds, potential fundraising plan, preparing key donor information.
  - **Possible key interventions.** Possible intervention and costing of each. Advance procurement and logistic plan.
  - **Capacity mapping – limitations and support required.** Capacity of partners and ActionAid. A clear articulation of capacity gaps – and plans to meet the gaps, such as deployment and support. Analysis of fundraising and communication capacity.
-  **Preparing to communicate.** Ensuring your team and the ActionAid federation are prepared to communicate from the first hour of a humanitarian emergency, to ensure swift and impactful fundraising and influencing at the national, pan regional and global level. This should include:
    1. Feeding into ActionAid's country factbook profiles (profiled on the Hive) ahead of time with information such as: what's the population of the country? How many sponsored children do we have there? What's the agricultural or economic cycle? This will provide ActionAid with 80% of a holding statement issuable to media and digital channels in the first hour of an emergency.
    2. Ensuring your national press lists are up-to-date and that Country Directors and communications staff have active twitter accounts.
    3. Ensuring staff have read and understood ActionAid International's *Checklist for communications capacity* document and are aware of the communications capacity required to undertake national and international communications when a humanitarian disaster strikes.
    4. Ensuring the Country Director has received on-camera media training in preparation for being a spokesperson during a humanitarian emergency.



• **Preparing to fundraise.** Ensuring your team and the ActionAid federation are prepared to fundraise from the first hour of a humanitarian emergency, to capitalise on rapid response funds made available by institutional donors, trusts and major donors. This should include:

1. In advance of a disaster, ensuring ActionAid staff:
  - a) have a solid understanding of key emergency donors (ECHO, DEC/AGIRE, DFID, AusAID, etc) at the country/ international level, and of the level of information/data required for high-quality proposals, and b) are familiar with donor proposal formats.
2. Ensuring that ActionAid staff have a strong understanding of the UN system, cluster level co-ordination mechanisms and opportunities for accessing funding through the UN.
3. In advance of a disaster, ensuring that ActionAid has invested time and effort in building in-country relations with key emergency donors (ECHO and DFID in particular) so that they are familiar with our work and aware of our capacity to respond to disasters.
4. Ensuring that you have skilled human resources (staff) available at ActionAid and partner level to
  - a) gather data and information on the emergency situation (through rapid and detailed needs assessments) and b) generate high quality proposals (narrative and budgets) that meet donor requirements.

## Development and management of preparedness plan process

Countries are expected to do the following preparedness processes:

1. capacity-building for staff and partners
2. development and institutionalisation of preparedness plans
3. rollout and operationalise preparedness plans (integrated into LRP and national plans)
4. build links with other actors locally, regionally and globally on preparedness and response
5. monitor and review the process and plans regularly, build knowledge in the sector.

### 1. Capacity-building for staff and partners

The main objective is to equip ActionAid and partner staff with the knowledge and skills needed to engage in emergency response and preparedness work. This is done through a five to seven day training curriculum using approaches developed and tested by IHART. It is expected that the country programme will form a core team, which will be mandated to co-ordinate the whole preparedness process. This team will also be mandated to be the emergency response action team in case of an emergency within the country.

## 2. Development and institutionalisation of preparedness plans

1. Staff and partners would develop their preparedness plans at LRP, sub-national (depending on the country programme) and national levels. It is expected that members/country programmes will take leadership and ownership in the development of the plans (with support from IHART preparedness advisors). See preparedness plan template at: <http://goo.gl/asTkFk>
2. ActionAid and partners facilitate Participatory Vulnerability Analysis at LRP level to identify and prioritise hazards and risks at the community level.
3. The draft preparedness plan is submitted to IHART for review and input from relevant units from the International Secretariat.
4. The member/country programme finalises the preparedness plan and presents it in a workshop with their senior management team for approval.
5. Plan is signed off by member/country programme senior management team, Country Director, Head of IHART and National Board/Country Co-ordination.
6. Approved plan to be sent to IHART and Country Co-ordination Directorate Cluster Lead.
7. The organisation will institutionalise the preparedness plans by developing appropriate policies, procedures, standard operating procedures and systems, run simulation exercises and create space within the organisational structure.
8. Composition of multi-disciplinary team to respond, with clear roles and responsibilities and delegated authorities, linked to the various teams and functions of the organisations.



### 3. Roll out and operationalise preparedness plans

To ensure effective roll out and operationalisation, preparedness plans must be integrated and form part of the country strategy paper and the annual/LRP plans and budgets, and be made available for the whole federation. In practical terms this implies ensuring that activities around imparting information, knowledge and skills, development of infrastructure, materials required, institutions and linkages, policy and funding are all part of the normal activities in annual plans and budgets. It is important to emphasise that preparedness is best done during normal times in readiness for any disasters.



Risk map, Assam, India. What are the key features of the village? Where are the hazards?  
PHOTO: SILVA FERRETTI/ACTIONAID

The following steps should be taken by the member/country programme over a one to two year period:

1. ActionAid partners should develop their own preparedness plans, which link into the ActionAid national and LRP plans
2. capacity-building of ActionAid staff and partners
3. community level training on emergency preparedness and response, and development of local level plans
4. building community level institutions and linking these to local and national disaster management structures
5. fundraising to support preparedness activities from community level upwards
6. integrating preparedness activities with ongoing ActionAid programmes.



#### 4. Building networks

Member/country programme preparedness plans are developed in the context of existing plans from governments and other actors. A synergistic approach should be developed to implement preparedness plans at all levels by networking and collaborating with government, UN systems and other civil society actors, and establishing/strengthening co-ordination mechanisms. Some of the activities could be:

1. Establish links with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and participate in Inter-agency co-ordination meetings at the national and sub-national level.
2. Build/promote/strengthen working groups/forums/ common platforms to facilitate enhanced planning.
3. Develop links with the local/sub-national and national preparedness planning process.



#### 5. Monitoring and evaluation

1. Preparedness plans and their implementation should be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis, and updated to integrate emerging trends and needs.
2. Any learning should be shared with other actors and within the ActionAid federation to contribute to knowledge creation.

## All ActionAid preparedness activities should:

- **Build on existing capacity**, and be informed by Participatory Vulnerability Analysis and principles.
- **Prioritise the role of the communities we work with.** Women and excluded people play a central role and leadership in defining and managing preparedness planning, and should be actively engaged at all stages of the process.
- **Be integrated and connected.** Preparedness plans must be interlinked with relevant internal strategies, plans and processes and well as the plans of external stakeholders. For example, preparedness plans at community level should be integrated with preparedness plans at LRP level, which should link with our strategy in-country and our broader federation-wide strategy. ActionAid preparedness plans should also be connected to local government planning as well as other preparedness initiatives being undertaken by government and other actors.

## Below is specific guidance on implementing preparedness activities at different levels.

### Prioritising preparedness in country level plans:

1. Ensure community preparedness is included as a component of your country strategy paper and allocate sufficient budget to preparedness planning activities.
2. Develop locally appropriate process guidelines for addressing household and community preparedness.
3. Invest in the capacity of staff, LRP, partners and community facilitators to lead and manage preparedness activities.



A map of Gollapota village, India, drawn by villagers as part of a disaster risk reduction project.  
PHOTO: SILVA FERRETTI/ACTIONAID

### Household and community level preparedness planning:

4. Use participatory tools and methodologies to ensure that people have relevant information about the hazards they might face, and are able to understand the causes (including climate change) and impact of disasters. Work with the community to develop an action plan to address the underlying causes of their vulnerability to hazards, including policy-advocacy activities (social actions, support movements) as relevant to hold duty bearers to account.
5. Understand the institutions that exist at local level, led by both men and women. What role can they play during and after a disaster?
6. Examine what capacity already exists in the community. Support people to identify capacity gaps and plan how to fill these from within existing resources (e.g. through training).
7. Facilitate development of preparedness plans at individual household level. Develop and share a brief checklist that households can use to draw up preparedness plans. Develop and share simple messages (e.g. through information, education and communication materials) about actions people can take at household level to ensure they are prepared for emergencies, e.g. what people should do before, during and after a disaster, how people can protect themselves and their property/ assets during disasters, etc.
8. Ensure communities have access to information about current and future disaster risks.

## Preparedness planning at partner level

9. Consider collaborating with donors of existing partners to facilitate a joint preparedness planning.
10. Support partners to include disaster risk assessment in their analysis and programming processes and include disaster risk management in their policy, strategy and planning process.
11. Follow ActionAid preparedness planning guidelines – see: <http://goo.gl/asTkFk>

## Basic Emergency Response Training – facilitation pack

IHART has developed a facilitation pack for a five-day Basic Emergency Response Training. The aim of the training is to provide staff with the essential skills and knowledge to undertake emergency response with speed, efficiency and effectiveness. Since 2010 IHART has conducted seven trainings to build the capacity of over 175 EFAST and country programme staff members. The course received high ratings from attendees' training feedback, and also from participants after an emergency in terms of how they were able to apply the training in practice. This facilitation pack has now been created so that regional hubs and country programmes are also able to deliver this training to their relevant teams in future.

The pack can be accessed here: <http://goo.gl/cR353c>



### FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

Preparedness plan template: <http://goo.gl/asTkFk>

Summary of the preparedness process: <http://goo.gl/B0J8Xo>

Basic Emergency Response Training facilitation pack: <http://goo.gl/cR353c>