

The IASC Emergency Response Preparedness Approach – At a Glance

July 2016

Being prepared is a precondition for responding quickly and effectively to a humanitarian crisis. Recognizing this, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) has developed the Emergency Response Preparedness (ERP) approach, which was adopted for field testing in August 2015. The approach is based on a review of relief operations over the past decade and enables the humanitarian community to proactively prepare for crises requiring a coordinated international response. The aim is to increase the speed and volume of life-saving assistance delivered in the first four to six weeks of an emergency.

The ERP approach provides tools for UN Country Teams and/or Humanitarian Country Teams to:

- Understand risks and establish a system to monitor them;
- Establish a minimum level of preparedness; and
- Take additional action, including developing contingency plans, to ensure readiness to respond to identified risks.

“The networks that were created through the ERP put us in a very good position when the earthquake struck.”

*Jamie McGoldrick,
former HC in Nepal*

Risk analysis and monitoring – and prioritizing action

Implementing the ERP should start with a thorough risk analysis, as far as possible drawing on a wide range of expertise from aid agencies, national institutions and organizations, and independent experts. To be able to monitor risks – and take corresponding early action – Country Teams should agree on indicators for the risks identified, and regularly review them. Risks should be evaluated based on their likelihood and potential impact.

Based on the risk analysis, Country Teams are expected to review the preparedness measures suggested in the ERP guidance package, and prioritize actions that 1) are relevant to the context they are operating in and 2) can be implemented with the available capacity and resources. The ERP approach recognizes that Country Teams have varying levels of resources at their disposal. Any actions that Country Teams consider to be important for preparedness but cannot implement should be flagged to the regional or global level for follow-up support.

Establishing a minimum level of preparedness

To help Country Teams establish a minimum level of response preparedness the ERP approach provides a set of Minimum Preparedness Actions (MPAs). These actions serve as the basic building blocks of emergency preparedness. They are relevant for all country contexts and usually do not require significant additional resources to implement. MPAs include:

- risk monitoring;
- establishment of coordination and management arrangements;
- preparations for joint needs assessment;
- information management; and
- establishment of operational capacity to increase readiness to deliver critical relief assistance and protection.

Wherever possible, these actions should be implemented at the same time as strategies to mitigate risk and prevent an escalation of needs. However, when crisis does strike, having the MPAs in place will make a fundamental difference in an eventual response to a range of different types of emergencies.

The ERP approach should be:

- **Practical.** It should focus on needs and operational capacity; what we have, how to bridge gaps, and to reach people with assistance.
- **Flexible.** Country teams should prioritize preparedness actions in light of the risks they face and the capacity and resources available to them.
- **Participatory.** Planning is most effective when all those who will be required to work together are engaged from the start.

The aim of the ERP approach is to increase the speed and volume of life-saving assistance delivered in the first weeks of an emergency.

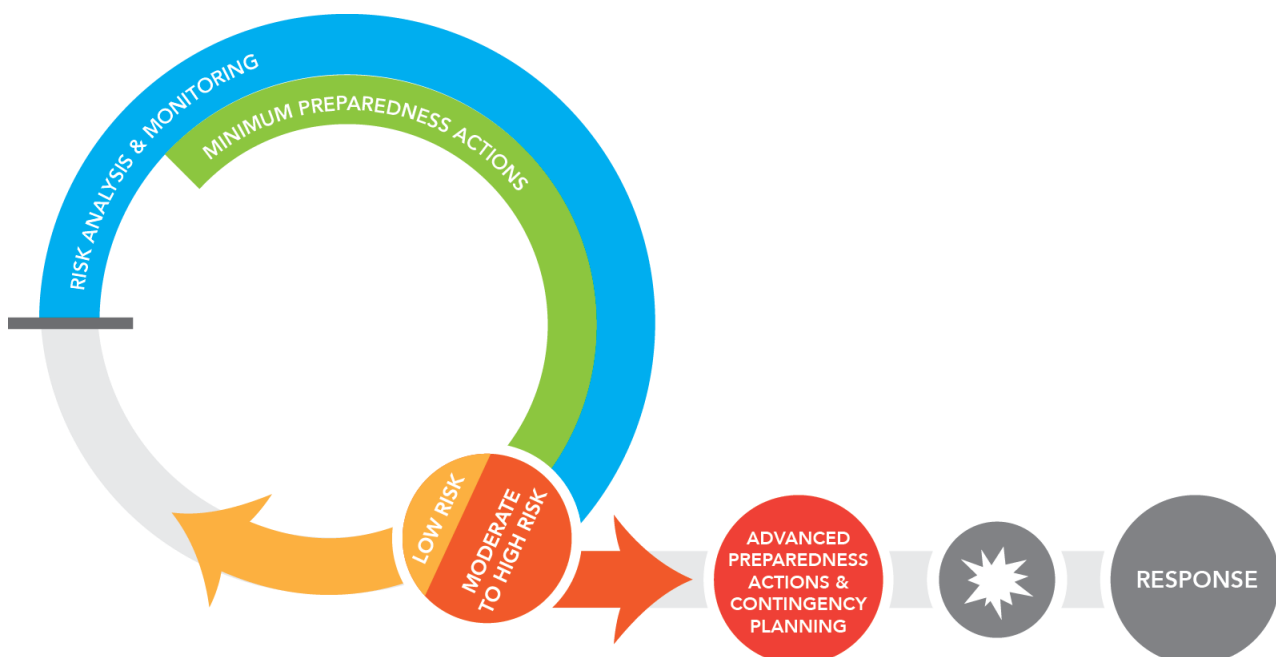
Moving from 'preparedness' to 'readiness' to respond

The ERP approach also provides a group of Advanced Preparedness Actions (APAs) to help Country Teams increase preparedness once they identify a specific moderate or high risk. These actions take the humanitarian community to a state of readiness to respond, and build on the MPAs already in place. They include:

- Reaching out to national counterparts, local partners, communities to coordinate preparedness plans and assess response capacity;
- Deploying appropriate coordination, information management, needs assessments and response monitoring systems and developing a sourcing strategy for priority relief items;
- Organizing simulation exercises to increase readiness to respond; and
- Contingency planning

A contingency plan sets out the initial response strategy and operational plan to meet urgent needs during the first three to four weeks of an emergency. It addresses what might happen and what might be needed; actions to take and additional resources required and gaps to be bridged.

Sequencing of ERP components: risk analysis and monitoring, minimum preparedness, and advance preparedness actions



Roles, responsibilities and tools for implementation

Being ready to respond to an emergency is a core responsibility of all humanitarian organizations. All organizations and individuals likely to take part in a response should participate in the planning process. The ERP approach is:

- Led by a Resident or Humanitarian Coordinator
- Managed by a UN Country Team or Humanitarian Country Team
- Supported by an inter-cluster/sector coordination group and clusters/sectors.

For an effective response, preparedness is needed at the inter-agency level, at the cluster/sector level, and within each responding organization. The ERP focuses on the first two of these levels.

Detailed guidance on each of the ERP components, including MPA and APA checklists and lists of suggested risk indicators, is available on <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/coordination/preparedness>. An online tool tracking implementation of the ERP is being developed, along with a guidance and training package. OCHA's regional and country offices are available to facilitate technical support to Country Teams, including inter-agency support from ERP focal points in UN agencies and NGOs.

For questions or requests for support on the ERP approach, please contact OCHA's Emergency Preparedness and Environment Section on epes@un.org.

This product has been developed in collaboration with members of the IASC Reference Group on Risk, Early Warning and Preparedness.