

Contingency planning

Contingency planning is used to analyse the effects of potential crises and identify appropriate preparedness measures.

Contingency plans can be used in preparing for natural disasters, conflict or broader threats such as financial crises or political instability. They can be:

- undertaken individually or as part of a larger inter-agency process
- used in projects to explore potential problems e.g. access or supply constraints.

Risk analysis and contingency planning

Risk assessment and analysis is an on-going process involving staff, partners and beneficiaries.

- Keep high impact risks prominent through updates, posters on office walls etc
- Keep adding new risks as they arise and encourage broad staff and community participation
- Maintain a risk register or mitigation tool with responsibilities for review and management of risks communicated to all staff
- Regularly assess risks and assign a status e.g. using the traffic light approach (Red=High; Orange=Medium; Green=Low). If the risk has passed or been managed out then remove it

Key questions

- What could happen?
- What would be needed to alleviate the situation?
- How would action be taken?
- Who should be involved?
- What materials, supplies and staff would be needed?
- What preparation is necessary?
- How much will it cost?

Using contingency plans in the disaster cycle



Contingency plans:

- inform **needs assessments** through analysis of likely disaster impacts;
- save time and provide a basis for rigorous **response planning**;
- change over the course of an **emergency response**;
- identify risks to long term **recovery**;
- form part of emergency **preparedness and disaster mitigation**;
- inform and contribute to community or organisational **learning**.



Basic steps in contingency planning

1: Assess situation

Identify hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities of those at risk.

Develop scenarios that accommodate changes in context.

Define assumptions, triggers and potential disaster impact.

2: Plan what your response would be

Determine the actions needed in addressing each scenario.

Consider the resources needed.

Develop and test contingency plans through simulations or desk exercises.

3: Conduct preparedness

Specify the preparedness measures needed. Implement and monitor who will do what, how and when?

4: Review

Review the scenarios, contingency plans and follow up on completion of preparedness.

Additional resources on the All In Diary website

Contingency planning guide © IFRC 2012
Contingency Planning and Humanitarian Action: A Review of Practice. HPN Paper 59 © ODI 2007

Web links for further information

IFRC: <http://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/disaster-management/preparing-for-disaster/disaster-preparedness-tools/contingency-planning-and-disaster-response-planning/>