Emergency Response Preparedness approach (IASC)

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Key points

- The ERP is the IASC-endorsed framework for preparedness for IDP situations, natural disasters and other non-refugee emergencies. At country level, in support of the host Government, these preparedness efforts are led by the UN Resident Coordinator (RC) or the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC).

- Efforts to prepare for potential refugee emergencies (influxes) in support of the host Government, on the other hand, are always led by the UNHCR Representative, with the involvement of members of the UN Country Team (UNCT) or Humanitarian Country Team (HCT). In such case, the Preparedness Package for Refugee Emergencies (PPRE) provides the framework.

- ERP focuses on situations in which the scale of a potential emergency requires the concerted action of a number of agencies and organizations.

- Real-time and continuous risk analysis and early warning by HCTs are vital to emergency preparedness and trigger related preparedness actions.

1. Overview

Note. This Entry reflects the 'BETA version' of the Emergency Response Preparedness (ERP) approach, which the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Task Team on Preparedness and Resilience released for field testing in 2015. It does not necessarily reflect the final version that will be issued.

The aim of Emergency Response Preparedness (ERP) is to optimise the speed and volume of critical assistance delivered immediately after the onset of a humanitarian emergency. It provides practical guidance to assist inter-agency country teams (including UN agencies,

international organizations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs) when they collectively prepare to respond to potential emergencies with appropriate humanitarian assistance and protection.

ERP is primarily applicable to inter-agency preparedness for natural disasters and internal displacement (IDP) situations. In potential refugee crises (where the identified emergency risk specifically relates to the possibility of a refugee emergency), the Preparedness Package for Refugee Emergencies (PPRE), which uses the same approach as the ERP, should be used as a toolkit and for guidance.

ERP outlines how the international humanitarian community can organize itself to support and complement national Government action. The guidelines are premised on the understanding that Governments hold the primary responsibility for providing humanitarian assistance to women, girls, boys and men, and sub-groups of the population in need, in line with General Assembly Resolution 46/182, which affirms: 'Each State has the responsibility first and foremost to take care of the victims of natural disasters and other emergencies occurring on its territory. Hence, the affected State has the primary role in the initiation, organization, coordination, and implementation of humanitarian assistance within its territory'.

ERP is a tool:

- To develop a common understanding of risks and a system to monitor those risks, ensuring that early action is taken when required.
- To establish a minimum level of multi-hazard preparedness.
- To take additional action, including the development of a contingency plans for specific risks that can be used as the basis of a Preliminary Response Plan to meet the differentiated needs of an affected population in the first 3-4 weeks of a humanitarian emergency.

The IASC Task Team on Preparedness and Resilience has developed the ERP, with UNHCR involvement. It replaces the 'Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Guidelines for Humanitarian Assistance' that were prepared in 2001 and updated in 2007.
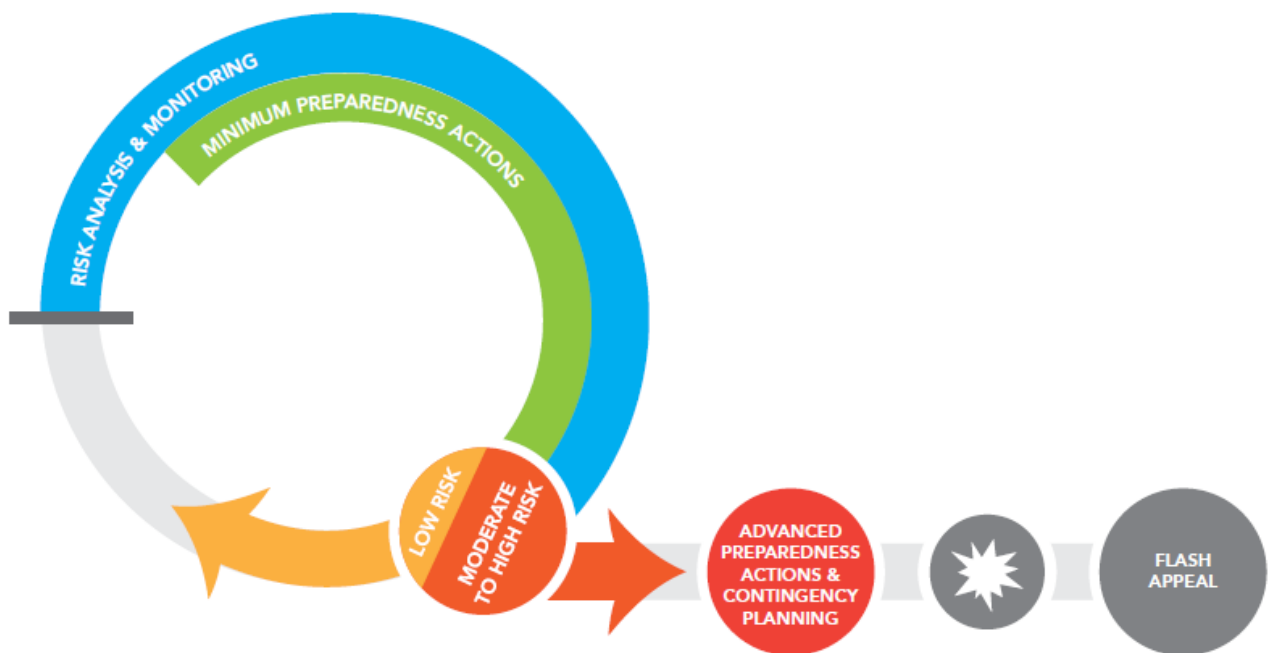
2. Relevance for emergency operations

Emergency preparedness aims to ensure that the strategic direction and required building blocks for an eventual response are in place. Experience has shown that starting the delivery of emergency aid, especially at scale, takes significant lead time. By undertaking preparedness measures, operations front load preparatory actions before a crisis occurs. Preparedness includes: a context analysis, planning, gap identification, partnership development and coordination, and perhaps resource pre-positioning. Good emergency preparedness lays the foundation of an emergency response.

Some of the three main ERP components are triggered by specified levels of risk, as shown in the table below.

Component	When and Who?	Purpose
Risk analysis and monitoring (multi-hazard).	◦ All the time at regular intervals ◦ By UN Country Teams (UNCTs) or Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs), led by the Resident Coordinator (RC) or Humanitarian Coordinator (HC).	To identify potential hazards and monitor indicators related to those hazards

[**ERP Minimum Preparedness Actions** (MPAs).](#)	○ Ongoing all the time. ○ By UNCTs and/or HCTs, and by clusters, if in place.	To maintain standard minimum preparedness and lay the foundation for emergency readiness.
[**ERP Advanced Preparedness Actions** (APAs) and **ERP contingency planning**.](#)	○ In situations of medium and high risk (risk score higher than 8). ○ By UNCTs and/or HCTs, and by clusters if in place.	To increase the preparedness level to emergency readiness.

3. Main guidance

Underlying process – how does this work?

ERP is a continuous process, divided into three key elements:

- Risk analysis and monitoring.
- Minimum preparedness actions (MPAs).
- Advanced preparedness actions (APAs) and contingency planning.

The approach is:

- Led by a Resident Coordinator (RC) or Humanitarian Coordinator (HC).
- Managed by the UN Country Team (UNCT) or Humanitarian Country Team (HCT).
- Supported by an inter-cluster/sector coordination group and clusters/sectors, if clusters and sectors are in place.
- Inclusive of a broad range of actors, including at sub-national level.
- Supports national authorities, who have primary responsibility for affected people.

Context	Accountability

In countries where IASC humanitarian coordination structures are in place.	The HC, working with the HCT and country level clusters/sectors, should lead the ERP process, and ensure coherence in the HCT as well as with national structures. Coordination is led by UNHCR in refugee contexts (the Preparedness Package for Refugee Emergencies applies) and by WHO in public health emergencies.
In countries where IASC humanitarian coordination structures are not in place.	The RC should establish an inter-agency humanitarian country team, and work with this team and national authorities to implement the ERP. The RC should encourage the input and participation of NGOs, including women's organisations active in the country, to ensure that their humanitarian capacities and expertise are recognized, and that they can contribute fully. In-country coordination mechanisms may need to be expanded for this purpose.

The extent of involvement of national and subnational authorities depends on the context. In all situations, ERP should be based on knowledge of the planning, capacities and systems of national and local authorities. This should be complemented with a knowledge of the underlying inequalities and vulnerabilities influencing the risk susceptibility and resilience of women, men and their communities in a given context, and guided by the principles of neutrality and impartiality.

The ERP approach has three inter-related levels of action:

Inter-agency	Sector/cluster	Organization-specific
Builds an over-arching framework to guide the collective action of all potential humanitarian responders.	Defines how agencies will work to achieve sector-specific objectives together.	Describes how the organization's response will be delivered **Note**. The ERP approach does not define the form of agency-level planning

Overview of the three main components of the ERP

(a) Risk analysis and monitoring (multi-hazard)
A clear, shared understanding of the risks that may trigger a crisis significant enough to require a

coordinated humanitarian response is fundamental to the entire ERP process. Analysis informs planning while monitoring ensures that the process is responsive to emerging risks. The risk analysis process identifies hazards that could trigger a crisis and ranks them by impact and likelihood. The risk ranking determines whether thresholds are low, medium, or high. Development of a contingency plan (see 'Advanced Preparedness Actions and contingency planning' below) is recommended when it is determined that risk thresholds are 'medium' or higher.

In parallel, risk monitoring should be undertaken, using indicators identified as part of the risk analysis process. Monitoring provides early warning of emerging risks that in turn makes it possible to take early action (adapting the contingency plan, for example, or where possible taking action that will mitigate the impact of an emerging risk).

(b) [ERP Minimum Preparedness Actions](#) (MPAs)
ERP MPAs are a set of activities that every UNCT must implement to establish a minimum level of emergency preparedness within a country. ERP MPAs are not risk or scenario-specific and usually do not require significant additional resources. They include risk monitoring, the establishment of coordination and management arrangements, preparation of joint needs assessments, monitoring, information management, and establishment of operational capacity and arrangements to deliver critical relief assistance and protection. Their implementation makes a fundamental difference to the quality of an eventual response and makes it possible to respond flexibly to different types of emergency.

(c) [ERP Advanced Preparedness Actions](#) (APAs) and [ERP contingency planning](#)
APAs and contingency planning are two sets of complementary activities that should be initiated together to plan for specific risks when risk analysis and monitoring indicate that the risk of an emergency occurring is 'medium' or higher.

ERP APAs are designed to increase the readiness of an HCT to respond to specific risks. Unlike ERP MPAs, ERP APAs are risk-specific. They build on ERP MPAs already in place. The ERP APA checklist (see Annex III) includes essential preparedness actions that complement and support the contingency planning process.

A contingency plan sets out the initial response strategy and operational plan for meeting humanitarian needs during the first three to four weeks of an emergency. A contingency plan sets out what might happen and what might be needed, actions that will need to be taken, resources that will be required, and gaps that will need to be filled.

UNHCR's role and accountabilities

As a member of the UNCT and HCT, UNHCR fully participates in ERP. With respect to preparedness for IDP situations and natural disasters, UNHCR contributes to preparedness efforts led by the RC and/or HC. As part of an overall preparedness plan, UNHCR leads the preparedness efforts of the three clusters which the agency leads (the [Protection cluster](#), the [Shelter cluster](#), and the [Camp Coordination and Camp Management cluster](#)). The extent of this engagement will depend on whether these cluster responses are a priority for preparedness, and whether clusters

have been formally activated in the country.

Considerations for UNHCR's engagement at country level

- The ERP should be practical. It should focus on needs, what is in place, and how to bridge the gaps; and how the country team can reach affected people to provide assistance. In other words, it is a process of asking and answering critical operational questions. Risk analysis and monitoring are the key to dynamic and responsive preparedness.
- The ERP should be flexible. Country teams should prioritise actions in light of capacity in the country to undertake preparedness.
- The ERP should be participatory. Planning is most effective when all those who will be required to work together are engaged in the process from the start.
- Strategic leadership by the RC or HC, and a commitment by agencies at country level to make staff and resources available to support the process, are vital to ERP success, which depends on each and every member of the country team.

Annexes

[Emergency Response Preparedness July 2015](#)

4. Links

[ReliefWeb Response](#)

5. Main contacts

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