

Discussion Note for a Review Meeting on India Country Contingency Planning¹

1. Back Ground:

Contingency planning is crucial to reducing the time gap between the event of disaster and the response that follows. Oxfam identified contingency plan as a crucial step towards maximizing its global intervention capacity and the ground level energy of its partners for an effective response in emergency situations.

A brief analysis of Oxfam's contingency plan document gives understanding that contingency plans should help us identify possible humanitarian scenario, identify resources for response and agree on clearly delegated and coordinated actions. Oxfam also emphasizes that the contingency plans should provide us with the understanding of the available capacities for emergency response and identify appropriate actions to fill the capacity gaps. Oxfam desires that the contingency plans should serve as a working document-and a dynamic decision support instrument for effective emergency response. It also emphasizes on the importance of joint ownership of the document the need to give adequate attention to the process implicating all concerned parties in the right way **"In this sense the process of the contingency plan** is as important as the final product".

Oxfam recognizes the need to build capacities at various levels undertake contingency planning and create resources to undertake the contingency planning and lead humanitarian emergency responses and do constant assessment of readiness to respond.

The above framework of Oxfam gives us adequate direction for the end output. However, what process we adapt to achieve this holds the key. Identification of vulnerabilities, delegation of responsibilities and agreement for coordinated actions are important steps towards organized response. However they are not of much help in the absence of concrete capacities, resources and preparedness plans on the ground.

Therefore taking stock of the capacities, identify capacity needs and make commitment for gap form important steps to have a real and workable contingency strategy. This needs to be achieved keeping mind the viable and practical approaches suggested by Oxfam International contingency plan document. The workshop approach adapted by us in the previous occasions is a strong strategy to produce a participatory and coherent contingency plan. However, most of us do feel that workshop alone can't give us adequate output for contingency planning. The planning has to be a tool that identifies possible scenarios of humanitarian crises and need, and establishes priorities and identifies resources within the framework of our Regional Strategic Plans. These plans should also spell out operational strategies to be adopted or put in place in the respective lead areas. Which essentially means that the planning has to be done at various levels using both a common approach and more importantly an individual organizational analysis. The following approaches are being discussed among some of the affiliates:

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- Lead persons for India in all geographic regions (East, West, South and North) should be identified. We also will have a challenge to include the Andamans in any prospective plans. Fortunately lead affiliate concern with South India has agreed to lead the same for the Andamans as well. Oxfam GBs humanitarian focal points in the respective programme offices of East and North will be lead persons of those regions. South and West India regions are concerned OGB humanitarian focal points will work with respective affiliates lead person designated. This arrangement will help to garner all available knowledge and experience of the local situation, which appears to be very crucial for an appropriate response in case of an emergency.

The designate of lead organization along with the focal points will be responsible for (a) context and vulnerability analysis, (b) identifying key actors, governmental and non-governmental as well as existing co-coordinating initiatives, (c) analyze establish strength and gaps in our own OI readiness, both at partner and affiliate level. At this point of time this will essentially means to update and compare information that we have or we don't have in the current CP document.

- Experts can be involved who will sit with partners to (a) enable partners to prepare their own contingency plans and (b) in the process appraise their capacities, and give us recommendations to fill the capacity gaps. It may appear a lengthy process-but is important to ascertain that the partners whom we identify as potential for emergency response have adequate skills and capacities for effective response.
- Then the partner contingency plans should be drawn together, combine key elements from those plans. OI Contingency plan must provide links to that ground level response and readiness information to help us take appropriate and timely decision.

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