



*Promoting good practice
in the management and
support of aid personnel*

Surge capacity in the humanitarian relief and development sector

*A review of surge capacity and
surge capacity mechanisms
within International NGOs*

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Research



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Abstract

This paper is based on research undertaken by People In Aid in 2007. It is intended to contribute to a deeper understanding of surge capacity and surge capacity mechanisms within humanitarian organisations.

The report offers:

- Definitions
- A conceptual framework for analysing surge capacity
- A review of the way in which surge capacity is resourced
- Detailed consideration of surge capacity mechanisms and the factors which enable effective rapid response (or 'surge')
- Learning and ways forward for INGOs that seek to strengthen or improve their surge capacity

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Table of Contents

Foreword	1
Executive Summary.....	1
Chapter 1: Introduction	4
Chapter Summary	4
Background to this research	4
Research objectives.....	5
Defining surge capacity and its context.....	5
What are the ‘triggers’ for surge?	7
Where and to whom does an agency surge, and why?.....	8
How much surge capacity is required ?	10
Developing surge capacity	11
Decision making capacity ?	12
Key Elements of Surge Capacity.....	12
Resourcing surge capacity	13
Surge capacity mechanisms	13
Enabling factors	14
Chapter 1 - Summary Points	15
Chapter 2: Resourcing surge capacity	16
Chapter Summary	16
People (staff capacity).....	16
Money [funding].....	21
Chapter 2 - Summary Points	26
Chapter 3: Surge capacity mechanisms	27
Chapter Summary	27
Planning mechanisms	28
Strategic workforce planning	28
Contingency Planning.....	30
‘Second Wave’ and Continuity Planning.....	31
Recruitment mechanisms.....	33
Internal mobilisation.....	34
External Recruitment	35
Challenges in external recruitment.....	36
Rosters and registers	39
Rosters and Registers Defined	41
Developing and managing rosters	43
(1) Whole-organisation Buy-in.....	43
(2) HR Management	46
(3) The IT Solution	49
Chapter 3 - Summary Points	51
Chapter 4: Enabling effective surge.....	52
Chapter Summary	52
Strategic vision and a supportive agency culture	52
The role of the HR function or department.....	55
Strong HR capacity can increase accountability and quality	56

HR Policies and practices	57
Rapid Deployment and Duty of Care	58
Induction and Orientation	59
Duty of Care.....	59
Learning through Training and Staff Development.....	61
The strength of local capacity	64
Key points.....	64
Strengthening in Practice: what does it look like?.....	65
Chapter 4 - Summary Points	70
Chapter 5: Conclusion	71
Summary: What have we learnt about surge capacity?.....	71
Strategic vision and strategic planning	74
Investment.....	75
Staff capacity	76
Advocacy	79
References and Bibliography	81
Appendices	83
Appendix 1: ECB Agencies' Surge Capacity Mechanisms	83
Appendix 2: A World Vision 'Lesson Learning Review':	96
Appendix 3: Research Methodology.....	99

Foreword

Executive Summary

Background

This review of surge capacity has been undertaken within the context of the Emergency Capacity Building project (www.ecbproject.org) and has been undertaken at the request of the Emergency Directors of the IWG agencies. The aim of this report is to stimulate debate and reflection primarily, but not exclusively, on how to resource rapid response.

The research was undertaken between February and May 2007, and draws on the experience and insights of a wide range of experienced humanitarian professionals working in the humanitarian relief and development sector.

Understanding surge capacity in the humanitarian relief and development sector

As the scale and complexity of emergencies grows this will clearly impact on those humanitarian and development agencies mandated to respond. It implies that, if these agencies are to continue to fulfil their mandates they will need to pay greater attention to their **capacities** to rapidly respond in times of increased need. This includes investing in these capacities between emergencies, as well as developing shared capacities between themselves – two critical issues highlighted, for example, in the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition's (TEC) recent Synthesis Report (Telford et al, 2006). These capacities are commonly referred to as **surge capacities**.

The purpose of this paper is to foster a deeper understanding of 'surge capacities' by : offering **definitions** and identifying the **triggers**, or drivers for surge (Chapter 1); exploring how surge capacity is **resourced** (Chapter 2); **enacted** (through surge capacity mechanisms (Chapter 3); and effectively **enabled** (Chapter 4). The paper concludes by drawing together the key findings and offering agencies further 'food for thought'.

What is surge capacity?

In the humanitarian context, surge capacity relates to the ability of an agency to scale-up quickly and effectively to meet increased demand to stabilise or alleviate suffering in any given population.

However, it refers to a much broader perspective than 'to just deploy people quickly', which is traditionally how it has been understood. Surge capacity is 'as much an attitude of mind as of procedure' and involves a 'changed way of thinking' and culture across organisations. Development of surge capacity is therefore best led from the top through the development of an overall strategic vision, as well as consensus on the objectives of rapid response.

This suggests the need for a whole-organisation approach to developing surge capacity, and reinforces the necessity for continuous, ongoing investment if agencies are to respond rapidly – and effectively – when required. A whole-organisation approach is also important because enabling surge to take place often compromises on existing ways of doing things.

Preparedness (at HQ, regional and national level) and flexibility are also at the heart of an agency's ability to rapidly respond. These are equally about agency culture as they are about

procedure. At a practical level, preparedness needs to be multi-dimensional if it is to respond to complex demands, and involves the development of the following:

People: developing a cadre of deployable people, sufficient in numbers and skills

Policies & procedures: to facilitate the rapid deployment of these people, and agreed among all the relevant organisational stakeholders

Resources: money, equipment, and operations management tools such as operations manuals; again to facilitate rapid deployment and rapid response.

Summary Points

Whatever an agency's approach, and whatever resources it has at its disposal, it is clear that the development of an effective surge capacity rests on an agency's ability to develop and prepare an entire system of policies, people, procedures and resources in a flexible yet comprehensive manner, with attention always focused on those it is intending to support. Framing this system is the agency's strategic vision. Developing an effective surge capacity therefore requires a whole organisation approach, and is as much about mandate, structure, culture and effective leadership as it is about concrete inputs and processes.

An agency's effectiveness in terms of responding to an emergency will be driven by its mandate and structure. While some surge capacity instruments might suit some agencies, they may not be feasible or appropriate for another. The research suggests that matching capacity to mandate is therefore essential. Emergency classification indicators and comprehensive preparedness plans help to identify the capacity that will be required – though this capacity must be sufficiently skilled to implement the plan.

While the emergency response units need to be able to work well with all departments in any given agency, the critical role of human resources (HR) formed a centre-piece of this research. One of the defining factors in terms of an agency's ability to effect rapid deployment is the strategic priority given to HR capacity, as well as the development of HR policies and practices to enable rapid deployment and agency buy-in to these policies and practices. Increased investment in HR will have a positive impact on the quality and accountability aspects of an agency's programming.

Research Conclusions

The first conclusion to be drawn by the report is that surge capacity represents an entire system of policies and procedures; it is as much about an organisation's philosophical approach as it is about any single instrument, such as a roster or register. It is therefore about much more than 'to rapidly deploy'.

The second conclusion is that developing this capacity is about bringing various component capacities 'to scale', simultaneously, within agencies. Based on the research, it is possible to define 10 critical lessons, or enabling factors, required to develop surge capacity.

The 10 critical enablers are:

1. Agencies need to adopt a whole-organisation approach to developing surge capacity. If this does not happen, their capacity to respond will be compromised.
2. Within the context of a wider strategic vision, capacity needs to be matched to mandate and structure. This has significant implications for the quality of an agency's programming as well as its ability to be accountable to affected populations.
3. Pre-positioning of funds is critical. Emergency units need to find ways to leverage greater amounts of unrestricted and other funds so that they can scale-up when

required, respond to less visible emergencies, as well as build, and maintain, capacity between emergencies.

4. There needs to be investment in HR as a strategic function and not just an administrative one. This is necessary not only at HQ but also at regional and / or country level.
5. Well-trained and experienced staff are critical. In particular, strong and competent leadership is a decisive factor in the success of any response. There needs to be long-term investment in staff development, including career development. Focusing on behavioural as well as technical competencies is important.
6. If emergency response is to be sustainable beyond the initial surge, recruitment for second-wave and longer term deployments needs to start at the beginning of an emergency. Counter-parting between international and national staff at this stage in a response is difficult, but vital to the longer term success of any response.
7. It is equally important to develop surge capacity at country and regional level as at HQ. Strategic integration of aspects of emergency and development programming will help, as will the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction across relief, recovery and development programmes.
8. Rosters (and registers) need better investment if they are going to remain the preferred model for rapid deployment. Agencies which use this capacity to augment their sizeable standing capacity also face challenges. If agencies opt to develop these tools, it is imperative they invest in adequate HR capacity in order to make these tools effective.
9. Agencies need to develop standard operating procedures that govern all aspects of an immediate response. This is especially important, as being able to rapidly deploy will inevitably compromise ordinary agency policies and procedures.
10. Agencies need to adopt more systematised learning practices, otherwise they are doomed to make the same mistakes year on year. This is not only bad practice but unethical, given agencies' quality and accountability commitments. Becoming better learning organisations is especially important in the current era, where agencies need to shift from being reactive to proactive in order to keep up with changes in their external policy and operating environment.

Given that these 10 critical enablers are all about 'more of', the third conclusion is that developing surge capacity is not just about bringing to scale, but it is also about leverage within organisations and collaboration, as a form of leverage, between organisations.

In summary

In summary, there is no one magic bullet for surge. What will make the creation of surge capacity robust is the parallel development of numerous capacities, as well as a shift in agency culture. Unless an agency is making progress on all fronts, it is unlikely to build an effective surge capacity.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter Summary

This chapter sets out the background to and objectives of this research. It defines the concept of surge capacity, and introduces some key questions related to this concept:

- What are the 'triggers' or 'drivers' for surge?
- Where and to whom do agencies surge, and why?
- How much surge capacity is required?

It then describes the basic elements of surge capacity that will form the framework for the rest of the analysis. These include:

- Resources required for surge capacity (chapter 3)
- Mechanisms that allow these resources to be accessed (chapter 4)
- Enablers that permit these mechanisms to function effectively (chapter 5)

Background to this research

In the coming 10 years it is likely that well over a million people will die and tens of millions will be displaced due to the increasing incidence of emergencies. While wars and conflicts take lives the real cost is predicted to come from the impact of disasters, in part due to climate change and emerging pandemics including HIV/AIDS which also pose a considerable threat. The effects of these disasters are often amplified because of the inadequately addressed vulnerabilities of the communities affected. When disasters occur in conflict-ridden societies, increasingly complex crises arise. And rapid urbanisation and changing market demands as a result of globalisation are having a growing impact on urban poverty, where the complex association of concentrated populations, social exclusion and poverty, compounded by physical vulnerability, manifestly increases risk (ISDR, 2005).

As the scale and complexity of emergencies grows this will clearly impact on those humanitarian and development agencies mandated to respond. It implies that, if these agencies are to continue to fulfil their mandates they will need to pay greater attention to their **capacities** to rapidly respond in times of increased need. This includes investing in these capacities between emergencies, as well as developing shared capacities between themselves – two critical issues highlighted, for example, in the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition's (TEC) recent *Synthesis Report* (Telford *et al*, 2006). These capacities are commonly referred to as **surge capacities**, and the purpose of this paper is to foster a deeper understanding of 'surge capacities' by offering definitions and exploring how surge capacity is enacted (surge capacity mechanisms) and or effectively enabled. The paper concludes by drawing together the key findings and offering agencies further 'food for thought'.

The research was undertaken between February and May 2007, and draws on the experience and insights of a wide range of experienced humanitarian professionals working in the humanitarian relief and development sector.

Research objectives

This review of surge capacity has been undertaken within the context of the Emergency Capacity Building project (www.ecbproject.org) and has been undertaken at the request of the Emergency Directors of the IWG agencies. The aim of this report is to stimulate debate and reflection primarily, but not exclusively, on how to resource rapid response.

The objectives of the review are fourfold:

1. To consolidate the various approaches, lessons and good practices in building effective surge capacity mechanisms by augmenting the learning that had already taken place during the first phase of the ECB initiative with in-depth interviews with ECB participants.
2. To explore other surge capacity mechanisms of non-ECB members to broaden this learning.
3. To provide agencies with a framework to inform senior management and programme departments about how surge capacity works.
4. To suggest examples of how ECB agencies might seek to work together to address common challenges posed by developing surge capacity.

Defining surge capacity and its context

In order to more fully understand 'surge capacity', we need a common starting point, or definition. So where does one begin? The Oxford English Dictionary definition of the term 'surge' includes: 'a sudden large temporary increase' and to 'increase suddenly and powerfully'. Given that 'capacity' is generally understood as an organisation's ability to do something – in the case of an aid agency, to work within, and deliver on, its mandate – then 'surge capacity' could be defined as

'the ability of an organisation to rapidly and effectively increase [the sum of] its available resources in a specific geographic location',

in order to meet increased demand to stabilise or alleviate suffering in any given population.

An important point to note is that 'surge capacity' is a relatively new term for the humanitarian relief and development sector, albeit one that is gaining currency due, in part, to its use in the UN's (2005) Humanitarian Response Review. However, not all agencies interviewed for this research use the terms 'surge' or 'surge capacity'; in part born out of a desire to avoid jargon, and perhaps also because of the term's militaristic connotations. Some agencies use the terms 'surge capacity' and 'rapid deployment' (or an equivalent) synonymously, for example the IFRC generally refers to 'rapid deployment'; Oxfam-GB uses the term 'scale-up' and MedAir talks about 'recruitment for emergency response'

Whatever word or phrase an agency adopts, the key implication of the definition presented above is that surge capacity refers to a much broader concept than 'to just deploy people quickly', which is traditionally how it has been understood. In the words of one interviewee, surge capacity is 'as much an attitude of mind as of procedure' and it involves a 'changed way of thinking' and 'a changed culture across organisations'.

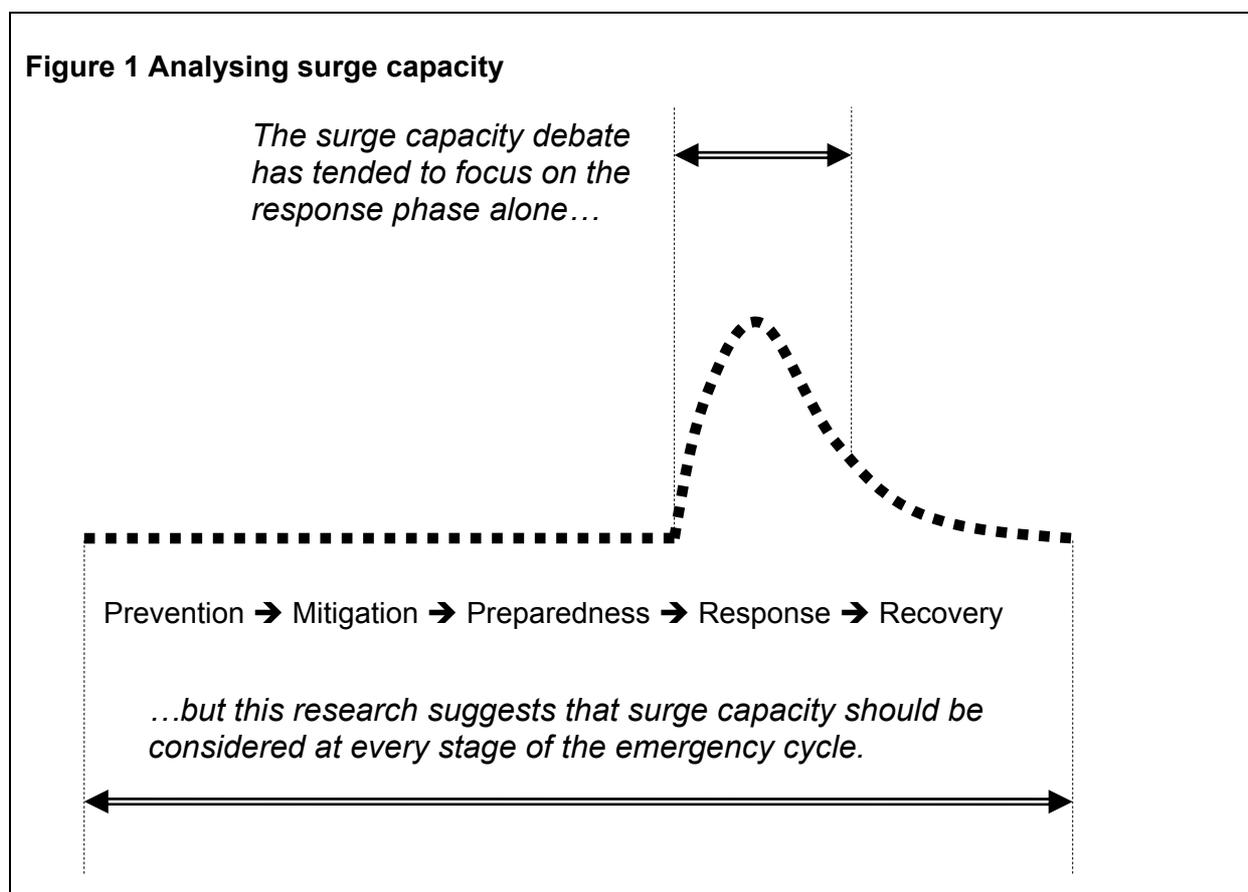
A whole organisation approach

The emphasis on a broader perspective is an important one; it suggests the need for a whole-organisation approach when developing surge capacity, and reinforces the necessity for continuous, ongoing investment if agencies are to respond rapidly – and effectively –

when required. This research demonstrates that preparedness and flexibility are at the heart of an agency's ability to rapidly respond; flexibility being critical because enabling surge to take place often compromises on existing ways of doing things.

Just as an agency's approach to emergency response is shaped by its mandate, structure and culture, so the different tools, policies, procedures and resource configurations that it adopts when responding to emergencies will be affected by the way in which an agency understands and defines surge capacity. From this, one could argue that a 'surge capacity mechanism', while typically used as a term to refer to a specific tool (for example a roster), actually represents a whole, complex system of different but inter-related components.

Development of surge capacity and surge capacity mechanisms is therefore best led from the top; success is dependent on a clear overall strategic vision and consensus on the objectives of rapid response. Adopting a 'whole organisation' approach will ensure both mandate and organisational structure are taken into account, and surge capacity includes what an agency does between emergencies (so that it is ready to respond immediately in times of increased need), as well as what it does afterwards, i.e. how it integrates emergency, recovery and development programming so that it can lessen the impact of any given crisis.



But no matter which lens one chooses to use in order to analyse surge capacity, it is clear that in practice it can be a complex matter, as the case study below from World Vision demonstrates.

Case Study 1: Surge Capacity in Practice

During the tsunami response, World Vision mobilised an additional 2000 staff across the affected region within a period of 12 weeks, 175 of whom were international staff. It also raised £350m during this time (to be spent in a 3-5 year timeframe). The 175 international staff consisted of: 30 from its Global Rapid Response Team; secondments from its Regional Rapid Response Team; associates from its support offices; staff from its feeder school; and some new recruits.

In order to overcome capacity problems with scale-up, the agency made sure to activate the finance, HR and administrative functions from its internal rosters – details about which can be found in Chapter 3 and Annex 1.

What are the ‘triggers’ for surge?

Understanding ‘why’ organisations surge, or what ‘triggers’ surge, informs our overall understanding of surge capacity.

The ‘trigger’ may be internal or external; internal triggers could typically include a strong push for an intervention by a particular programme, or internal advocate, for example a food security unit might push for a response in the early stages of famine. However, the reality is that an emergency response is almost always triggered by something external, and both politics and the media play a significant role in shaping the nature of any agency’s response. This might seem incongruous – indeed one of the fundamental principles of humanitarianism is that aid should be allocated according to need – but in practice few would deny aid is subject to both political influence and media response which, when combined, play a dominant role in shaping public sympathies. This has huge implications for where and how an agency responds and, implicitly, where it does not.

Interviewees for this study noted the difficulty of mounting responses to ‘forgotten’ and more media-invisible emergencies. This is related to the overall recognised lack of surge capacity in the humanitarian system which means that, if there is disproportionate attention to one emergency it is likely to undermine response elsewhere (ALNAP, 2006). This lack of capacity means that the majority of agencies experience difficulty in spreading surge across more than one major emergency, as evidenced during the Darfur and Tsunami responses in 2005.

Linked to this is the issue of proportionality / disproportionality in humanitarian funding. At a visible level this is evident, for example, in disproportionately high levels of funding that can sometimes result from media spotlight. This often creates pressures to spend fast and ‘through an operational style’ (ibid:37), which has a direct impact on the extent to which an agency attempts to strengthen local capacities, as well as on its ability to be accountable to affected populations. New ways of educating the media and the public need to be found beyond the simple mis-understanding, based on images, that ‘any aid is needed, and now’. Perhaps a lesser considered aspect of surge capacity therefore involves how the media and communications departments of agencies behave.

At a more invisible level, disproportionality is about ‘western political systems that link humanitarian aid to other political objectives’ (ibid:41). Donors therefore have a fundamental role to play by adhering to their principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) which theoretically places the issue of needs-based allocation at the heart of their practice.

The implications some of these factors are spelt out in the OSE’s (2006) *Propositions for Building Back Better*. ‘Proposition 9’ is titled: ‘Beneficiaries deserve the kind of agency partnerships that move beyond rivalry and unhealthy competition’, so often characteristic of

emergency response during which agencies individually court the media and compete for institutional funding. While the current funding system does little to encourage joint working, how well agencies work together in the immediate response phase has been shown to directly relate to the quality and outcomes of both relief and longer term recovery and development (see, eg, OSE, 2006; Telford *et al*, 2006).

Where and to whom does an agency surge, and why?

An agency's effectiveness in terms of responding to an emergency is driven by its mandate, structure and culture. While some surge capacity instruments might suit some agencies, they may not be feasible or appropriate for another. The research suggests that matching capacity to mandate is therefore essential. This is because poor performance in an emergency is not just about capacity constraints and, for example, poor understanding by relief managers of recovery needs, but also due to agencies' operating outside of their areas of expertise, not being fully aware of the capacity they have, or not using what capacity they do have properly.

In recent years, issues concerning quality and accountability in emergency response have come centre-stage as agencies have been shown to consistently fail to learn from their experiences (see, for example, various issues of ALNAP's annual *Review of Humanitarian Action*). This relates explicitly to an agency's ability to build an effective surge capacity on a number of levels, particularly with regard to ensuring that its surge capacity matches its mandate and structure. All too often agencies make promises they cannot keep either because they are not entirely sure of the capacity they have, because they don't use what capacity they have properly, or because they don't invest in that capacity. This affects both the quality of their programming and their ability to be accountable to affected populations.

In general, the larger aid agencies have established programmes in most of the vulnerable countries and work on the default of emergency response constituting a scale-up of existing programmes. Most of these larger agencies have a preference not to respond to emergencies in countries where they have no existing presence unless there is overwhelming need not met by other humanitarian agencies already in country. Conversely, many of the smaller agencies with established operations in fewer countries default to emergency response involving the establishment of a new country office.

Larger organisations with broader, dual mandates clearly require more capacity when responding to large, sudden-onset natural disasters in comparison to more specialist agencies. They will also require a different kind of capacity to more development-oriented organisations that concentrate on capacity strengthening at country level and which may mean, for example, that they choose to focus on building national staff capacity and / or increase the amount of disaster risk reduction work they do over augmenting their emergency units at HQ. Save the Children US (SC-US), CRS and Mercy Corps are more likely to work on this basis.

Agencies with a particular focus might develop more specialist staff pools (eg, Oxfam-GB, the IRC and the Save the Children agencies) as opposed to developing an overarching roster and register system that includes many different functions (eg, CARE and World Vision). Some agencies have also developed their capacity in response to different operational imperatives. For example, the size of Oxfam-GB's Humanitarian Support Personnel (HSP) pool is in direct response to the difficulty the agency had in deploying people to Chad and Darfur, as well as with staff burn-out. It was hard to recruit suitable staff into these complex deployments, but with a larger HSP pool it is possible for the agency to spread the load of deployments over a wider group of staff thus making staffing for programmes such as these more sustainable.

There is no rule of thumb when developing surge capacity, and each agency will need to consider the requirements of its particular focus and set up. The case study below considers some of the issues around surge capacity encountered by one of the smaller, more specialised ECB agencies, the IRC.

Case Study 2: Surge Capacity in the IRC

The IRC serves refugees and victims of armed conflict around the world. The agency both responds in locations where it has no prior presence as well as provides ongoing support to its country programmes where new emergencies occur. Recently it has increased its internal Emergency Response Team (ERT) from 6 members in 2005 to its current level of 17. This has been to ensure that the ERT possesses the skill sets covering all primary programmatic and operational areas that are most often required in emergencies.

The Emergency Preparedness and Response Unit (EPRU) sits within the IRC's International Programmes Department which oversees all IRC country programmes and HQ technical units. The ERT is under the EPRU. The EPRU works strategically with other departments, including HR, on emergency preparedness and response capacity, and this has been found to improve its capacity to respond to real needs. The ERT is designed to be partially sustained by the country programmes which utilise the services the unit offers as, unlike some of the larger dual mandate agencies, the IRC doesn't have access to large amounts of unrestricted funding. The IRC aims to cover 75% of the overall operating costs of the ERT through field deployments, with the balance covered through a number of private grants (see Chapter 3). The IRC senior management strongly and formally supports the EPRU and the ERT at both strategic and operational levels, and this has enabled the scale-up of the ERT to 17. Following the expansion of the ERT, there was an initial period when deployment requests were slow. The deployment request rate has, however, increased steadily over time. This is attributed to country programmes becoming more familiar with the services of the expanded ERT, and realisation of the added-value of ERT deployments. This was achieved through formal and informal EPRU communications with country programmes and word of mouth.

When the IRC considers responding to a new emergency in an existing country programme its emphasis is on what added-value it can offer by utilising its knowledge, expertise and resources, and how, where and when. Overall, quality over quantity is key – based on an important agency lesson about not over-capitalising in the initial deployment. Rather, the IRC's aim is to be strategic and efficient when responding to crises so that it can ultimately be more effective. While it doesn't always 'go in small', generally it has found that this approach is the most effective in ensuring an appropriate response based on quality needs assessments and clear strategy and planning.

The IRC also operates an internal emergency roster (IER) and an external emergency roster (EER). These additional response mechanisms allow the IRC to deploy up to five multi-sector teams at any given time in multiple emergencies. In reality this number could fluctuate given the size of the teams and the nature of the response. The IRC has used the IER less in the past year due the expansion of the ERT and a relatively slow year for emergencies. Regardless, it recognises the need to maintain a functioning ERT otherwise it maybe unable to respond when needed.

Another key consideration is that its in-country human resource capacity varies depending on the size and scope of the crisis and the local capacity. If the IRC is already operational in a country where it is responding, then the existing HR support function may require additional capacity building and technical support. Recruitment is a frequent challenge in any emergency, which is why human resource assessments are always part of the IRC's response process. Response planning is intended to correspond with IRC's mechanisms to rapidly deploy, as well as its capacity to externally recruit and deploy within an acceptable timeframe.

In comparison to the IRC, the CARE family of agencies faced a very different challenge when recently restructuring its emergency response capacity. Its history as a federated organisation meant that many of its surge approaches were reflective of a federation, with capacity being contained separately and mobilised via the different national members with

minimal coordination. This led to problems on the ground and compromised the agency's ability to respond effectively.

Case Study 3: CARE's Strategic Restructuring

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, a number of evaluations, particularly of Kosovo, highlighted that lack of coordination between national members meant that there wasn't efficient use of financial, human and material resources leading to a negative impact on CARE programmes. As result, and over the past six years, CARE has reflected on how it could collectively improve the effectiveness of its work in communities affected by disasters. It has subsequently gone through a process of strategic planning and restructuring, and has realigned its internal resources, policies and practices to enable a more coordinated approach which now consists of central coordination via the Central Emergencies Unit (CEG) in Geneva, collective use of resources (financial, material and human) and the more recent development of a regional capacity. These Regional Coordinators [at time of writing, two already employed and two more to be employed] engage in preparedness efforts, developing local and regional response teams, visiting Country Offices to help them work on various operational issues, and acting as a resource to be deployed when a disaster arises.

This changed approach to structure has enabled changes to the surge mechanisms CARE uses so it can better meet its mandate and improve the quality of its work. There is now one central coordinating mechanism that channels funding to Country Offices who now only have to deal with one source, thus freeing them up to concentrate programming. Additionally the CEG heads up the Crisis Coordination Group which classifies the emergency and establishes who will do what across the federation. This also increases the amount of time that the agency can focus on the work in hand at field level.

How much surge capacity is required ?

Many agencies use classification indicators and preparedness plans to identify how much surge capacity is required. Classification of levels of an emergency is a key indicator of what capacities an agency will require to scale-up, as:

[I]t's only possible to know what is required – at both HQ and country level – if an organisation has a clear understanding of what it does in any given emergency situation ... so it is all about doing a gap analysis and matching that to what an organisational mandate is for a particular emergency. Then the organisation can define what level of capacity is required (Ros McVean, CARE).

To this end, many of the agencies interviewed support their regional / country offices to develop emergency preparedness plans.¹ Another approach is the development of emergency management plans, as shown by Oxfam-GB in Case Study 4.

Case Study 4: Oxfam's Emergency Management Plan / EMP

Oxfam-GB's experience in major humanitarian crises is that the appointment of a suitably experienced leader is critical to success. For this reason it has developed an Emergency Management Plan that is 'not a preparedness plan; it's a plan for who is going to manage an emergency' (Nick Roseveare). This is because Oxfam-GB has found that the presence or absence of a preparedness plan is less critical to the eventual success of the programme than the competence of the management in running that programme. Its EMP is therefore designed to 'out' this difficult issue before a crisis hits and alert people in advance about who will run the response. It does this because it has found that its responses are most effective when it removes the 'most difficult discussions and emotionally loaded issues and decisions before [an emergency] occurs'. Notwithstanding, its intention is to grow the

¹ It is worth noting that if a particularly catastrophic disaster occurs, as with the tsunami, then even if a country or region is well-prepared to respond it will be essential not to ignore the daily requirements of the ongoing programmes, meaning that a large scale-up will still be required.

capacity of particular country staff to manage future emergency responses.

The EMP is updated twice yearly on a regional basis. It delineates who the 'designated humanitarian leads' (DHLs) are for each of its three categories of emergency response across its different regions as well as, for example, which national staff have been targeted for development with the associated competencies they are being supported to strengthen. It also provides an analysis of the qualities found to be essential for its DHLs to guide in their selection.

A new approach taken by World Vision involves the agency in identifying six specific contexts for emergency response. These range from high need, high instability contexts, through high need but more stable contexts, to low need and stable contexts. This has enabled the agency to work out what role it will need to have in each context, and to identify what capacity is needed to match each context. As a result World Vision has come to a new understanding of emergencies realising, for example, that major emergencies constitute not only rapid onset emergencies but also slow onset. It is anticipated that this will lead to a changed role for the agency's emergency teams in recognition of the new way in which the agency can contribute to different types of emergencies. It has also enabled the agency to elevate the idea of emergency response 'from being just about the "r" to including development, transition and rehabilitation' (Lars Gustavsson). This has allowed the agency to move to a more holistic understanding of what constitutes emergency response to encompass a focus on disaster risk reduction. Linked to this is the agency's desire to move from 'the country paradigm to the cluster paradigm', which will help it to build capacity by technical cluster rather than by region. This is seen as enabling a more flexible response.

Developing surge capacity

Obviously different federated organisations face different challenges, depending on their mandate, and the challenges that reach across these horizontal networks are again different to those agencies that have a more vertical structure. Agency size, of course, is also an important determining factor. However, one thing that unites all ECB agencies is that enabling an effective surge capacity takes a 'whole organisation approach' with support from senior management to effect cultural change across the entire organisation.

As noted in an earlier report for the IWG – the *Report on Emergency Capacity* by Spee Braun (2004) – all IWG agencies now have humanitarian action as a primary strategic direction and most have the accompanying goals and objectives. While having such strategic objectives do not, in themselves, guarantee that the appropriate surge capacity will be developed they do at least provide the framework within which efforts to build surge capacity can take place; efforts that need to be organisation-wide and supported at the highest levels. This is partly because, as Nick Roseveare of Oxfam-GB notes, the policies and procedures an organisation will need to follow in order to enable surge to take place will:

[A]lmost inevitably be procedures that compromise on established ways of doing things; that may not be very popular with internal audit; that may result in difficult decisions about who's in charge; that may mean certain organisational priorities have to be dropped; that may mean certain regions have to sacrifice staff. One of the things that has to precede the establishment of tools and procedures therefore – and at a very high level in the organisation – is a decision that the organisation will put itself through pain and do things differently to effect surge. Somebody has to work on cultural change. ... It is as much a *corporate* attitude of mind as procedure.

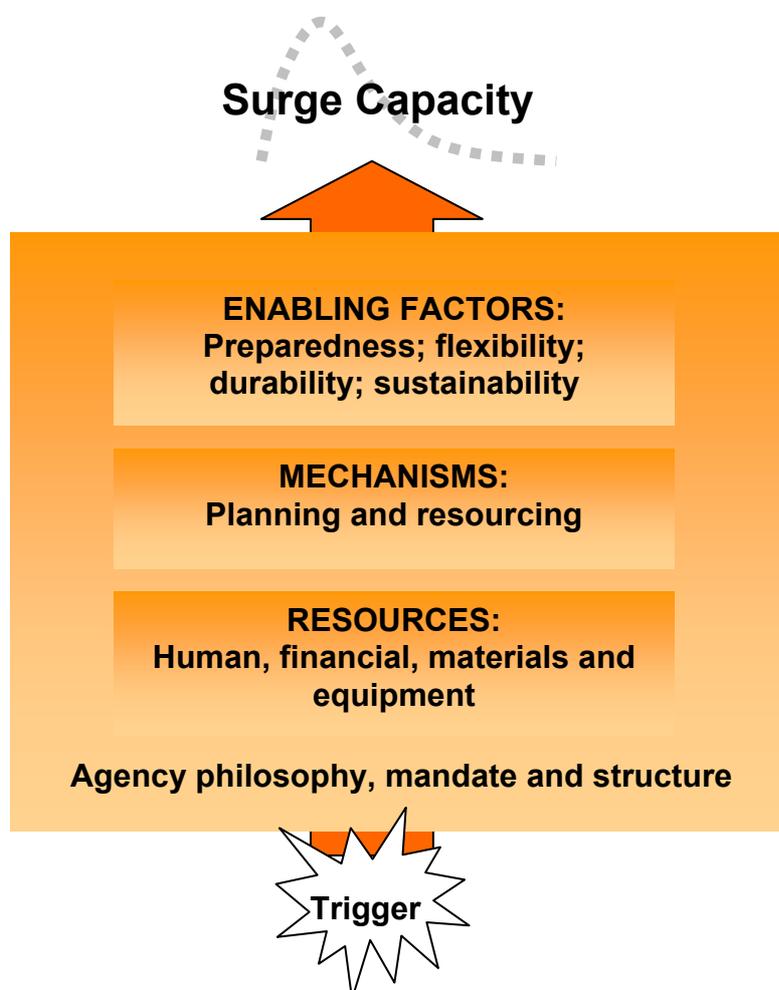
Decision making capacity ?

One point to emerge during the research was the need for clear and prompt decision making when it comes to emergency response. Organisations which have clearly apportioned decision making responsibilities and instigated decision making protocols are able to surge more consistently and more effectively. For others, a lack of clarity around decision making can mean (though not necessarily) a slower initial response, and can sometimes lead to confusion and issues with integration, transition or exit down the line.

Key Elements of Surge Capacity

Having arrived at a definition of surge capacity and discussed the importance of matching surge capacity to an agency's philosophy, mandate and structure, the rest of this chapter sets out a model for understanding surge capacity that will provide the framework for further analysis in the chapters that follow. This model is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2 – Understanding surge capacity



Resourcing surge capacity

Surge capacity requires access to resources: human, financial and other specialised forms of equipment and material. The latter lie outside the scope of this study, but the role of people and money are outlined below and discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

People [Staff capacity]

People available for deployment are the anchors of any rapid response to a disaster that outstrips local coping capacity. Central to developing a cadre of deployable people are *tools* such as rosters and registers, informal networks of contacts, as well as, of course, the emergency units of agencies themselves. But as Save the Children UK (SC-UK) notes, the 'receptiveness of existing programmes for external surge' is also crucial, and an agency's ability to respond quickly and effectively in times of increased need is therefore about meaningful national capacity building.

Preparing and retaining this cadre of people is of paramount importance, and agencies utilise a number of different *staff development tools* to do this, such as regular trainings and workshops for those deployed as well as, for example, simulation training and performance appraisal to facilitate career development. All of these help to build appropriate staff capacity, as do tools specifically designed to enhance organisational learning such as Real Time Evaluations and post-response review workshops. These efforts need to be properly targeted and resourced, otherwise they'll be of little value.²

Agencies interviewed also noted that certain behavioural and attitudinal competencies such as flexibility – of systems as well as people – are essential when it comes to enabling rapid response. This is reflected by the fact that a number of those interviewed said their best responses came when use of their different tools, procedures and practices worked smoothly in parallel, with the implicit need for staff to accept non-linearity in times of crisis.

Money [Funding]

Having the financial means with which to initiate a response is a critical component of surge capacity, whether that be 'money in the bank' or special relationships with key donors or something else.

All IWG agencies interviewed now have an emergency response fund of one kind or another which they use to support, to varying degrees, both their capacity development between emergencies as well as their ability to deploy rapidly when required. The extent to which they do this is based on the amounts available and the level of commitment of the organisation. These funding arrangements work in different ways, some of the details of which are considered in Chapter 2.

Surge capacity mechanisms

The second key component of surge capacity involves the mechanisms by which the resources described above can be mobilized and deployed. These mechanisms typically include systems, procedures and policies, particularly *enabling policies* concerning operating procedures for rapid response. ECB agencies' experience suggests that many of the problems encountered in their surge response can be addressed by having clear policies and procedures. These might include, for example, policies to support rapid recruitment or to pre-

² One respondent noted the tendency of agencies to under-invest and pay only lip service to staff development. This person commented: 'In that case it is probably better not to do anything because the money invested is almost as good as thrown out through the window.'

designate lines of authority during the immediate response phase – all agencies noted that leadership during rapid response is critical – as well as address issues such as retention, availability, backfilling, and continuity and succession planning. Policies and procedures are all very well on paper; central to their implementation is support from formal leadership, as well as a receptive mindset and culture of an organisation.

Policies concerning duty of care and staff wellness are also vital when staff are deploying to unstable and chaotic environments, as is the importance of developing trust between all those involved in a response. Developing a culture of trust in an organisation, particularly between national and international staff in times of crisis, is considered sufficiently critical to be studied on its own merit and is the subject of the ECB working group, 'Building Trust in Diverse Teams Working Group'. This is led by Oxfam-GB along with members from CARE, Mercy Corps, SC-US and World Vision.

Operations management tools are considered due to their overall place in the HR structures of an organisation. Preparedness in this area means the development and provision of, for example, emergency preparedness plans, generic job descriptions (JDs) and operations manuals. Such manuals may provide tips on quick assessment or on how to set up financial structures in-country that are appropriate for a changed level of activity. Standardised procedures across organisations are also key. For example, if every finance officer in an organisation uses the same finance package, this makes it easier to fill finance posts by drawing on existing staff. If the same procedures are used for new hires, this again makes it easier to rapidly build up a new or expanded office.

Surge capacity mechanisms are discussed in detail in Chapter 3

Enabling factors

At the heart of surge capacity are several important enabling factors, and these are explored in detail in Chapter 4. These factors, which include preparedness and flexibility, as well as durability and sustainability, are central to the development surge capacity. Preparedness and flexibility are equally about agency culture as they are about procedure, and are important at regional and national level as well as at HQ. This is linked to the need for greater strategic and programmatic integration between the traditionally separate humanitarian and development departments, with a more explicit focus on, eg, disaster risk reduction (DRR) and recovery interventions.

However, despite acknowledging that surge capacity is best considered as part of a wider context and debate, many of the humanitarian professionals interviewed considered it to be related primarily to the organisation's ability and capacity to respond

A number of factors could be said to enable effective surge and these include:

- Strategic vision and supportive agency culture
- The role of the HR function or department
- HR policies and practices
- The strength of local capacity

Overall, each of these emphasise the critical enabling role that HR plays regarding surge capacity, and chapter 5 deals with enabling factors in greater detail.

Chapter 1 - Summary Points

- Surge capacity is **‘the ability of an organisation to rapidly and effectively increase [the sum of] its available resources in a specific geographic location’**, in order to meet increased demand to stabilise or alleviate suffering in any given population.
- Surge capacity refers to a much broader perspective than ‘to just deploy people quickly’ which is traditionally how it has been understood
- Preparedness and flexibility are at the heart of an agency’s ability to rapidly respond

A ‘surge capacity mechanism’, while typically used as a term to refer to a specific tool (for example a roster), actually represents a whole, complex system of different but inter-related components

- The key elements of surge capacity include agency vision, philosophy and mandate; various mechanisms (planning or resourcing), policies and procedures; people and money. A number of enabling factors (for example preparedness and flexibility) dictate how effectively surge capacity can be deployed.
- The trigger for an emergency response (or ‘surge’) may be internal or external; both politics and the media play a significant role in shaping the nature of any intervention.
- The development of an effective surge capacity rests on an agency’s ability to develop and prepare an entire system of policies, people, procedures and resources in a flexible yet comprehensive manner; i.e. it requires a ‘whole organisation’ approach, that incorporates mandate, structure, culture and effective leadership as well as concrete inputs and processes.
- An agency’s effectiveness in terms of responding to an emergency will be driven by its mandate and structure.
- The role of HR departments and HR policies and practices play a critical role in developing and maintaining surge capacity.

Chapter 2: Resourcing surge capacity

Chapter Summary

This chapter explores the way in which surge capacity is resourced, and focuses on the two main aspects, namely people, and money. As chapter 1 has shown, there is a lot more to 'surge capacity' than merely people and money, but staff capacity and the funding context require specific consideration.

This chapter also contains:

- A description of agencies' staff capacity.
- Details of the financial resources used to support them.

People (staff capacity)

There are four sources of staff that agencies use for rapid response:

- Specialist emergency staff: known staff deployable from the central emergency unit and / or full-time standing teams, as well as from the virtual redeployment teams (ie, internal rosters and registers) as well as through a number of other approaches (eg, retainer schemes).
- General staff: known staff who are HQ/regional/country-office based and who can be re-tasked during an emergency; the growing tendency, however, is to provide these staff with at least some emergency training and / or to hire a greater number of staff who have emergency experience (viewed as particularly important for programme directors).
- External source, staff unknown to the agency, employed on short-term contracts.
- External source, staff known informally to the agency.

This chapter will give greater attention to the dedicated resources ie specialist emergency staff, while chapter 3 will address the mechanisms used for sourcing internally or externally.

Emergency response units

One of the main facilitating factors in recent years has been the development or significant expansion of the emergency departments containing specialised emergency staff in each of the seven IWG agencies in support of the strategic prioritisation of humanitarian response. These units mostly have a dual function: to both serve as part of the organisation's emergency response team as well as to provide capacity strengthening support to national offices and develop various standard operating procedures to guide emergency response, including surge response. These dualities can create tensions, and a number of agencies have recently been seeking to reduce these pressures.

For example, CRS has been working on the tensions created by having a dual-function emergency unit by separating the functions within this unit. It has done this as a result of recognising that capacity builders who are also emergency responders rarely get round to

doing capacity building, since there is almost always another more urgent operational demand. In comparison, World Vision has designed its emergency unit to be non-operational and to focus on developing standards, policies and deployment procedures. The agency recognised that staff who are to fulfil this type of capacity building function (even 'real time' capacity building during an emergency) require a different competency profile from those who are more directly operational, and has therefore modified its recruitment processes to select people with profiles more suited to these intended roles.

Another tension, as also found in Braun (ibid) and despite significant recent investment, is that many of these units are still over-stretched to varying degrees and cannot scale-up to the extent they both want and need. In 2007, as in 2004, they still seem to struggle in areas such as preparedness, accountability, and programme monitoring and evaluation. Agencies were particularly keenly aware of their ongoing problems with learning.

It seems that often there is no clear sense of what capacity is required, and different organisational stakeholders have, at different times, reported sufficient or insufficient capacity in different areas. Another complexity is that, when country programmes can cope emergency units struggle to justify their existence, but when they can't cope the emergency units are held responsible. Also, as the mandate of an emergency unit shifts so perceptions of its capacity change. These tensions reinforce the importance of developing a strategic vision for surge at the highest level.

The emergency response units need to be able to work well with all departments in their given agency, as they generally have to galvanise the whole organisation's response. An important lesson here is that leverage is as important as scale, and the emergency units need to coordinate and communicate better across all departments, especially during surge response. In practice this is often difficult as many of the emergency units, particularly in the dual mandate agencies, have been created and kept separate to allow for quick response times and faster decision models – all of which mean that they may have weaker social and structural links with other units in the organisation. Thus when a crisis does strike, the emergency units are off and running often without bringing in skills from other units.

Many agencies seek to off-set this tendency by creating cross-agency working groups when an emergency is called. Some of their 'priority relationships' are noted as constituting their development colleagues and programme line management at both HQ and in the field, HR, fundraising and communications, the technical units and ICT. Braun (2004) notes some of the defining characteristics and also some of the tensions with regard to these relationships. What was not comprehensively covered in that report is the crucial relationship with HR – one of the key themes to emerge in this study on surge capacity.

ECB agencies are, first and foremost, seeking to augment their specialist internal response capacity through the development of emergency units and, if they can afford it, through full-time standing teams. There are two main staffing models within the ECB group:

1. Those agencies that employ a large, full time, global / regional deployable capacity (Oxfam and World Vision) which means they can respond to at least two emergencies at the same time. Oxfam's capacity comes largely from its HSP pool; World Vision's primarily from its full-time global rapid response team (including the 'technical associates') but also from its regional emergency response offices. Oxfam's stated aim is to increase its capacity by 50% within three years; World Vision's is to be able to respond to four emergencies concurrently within five years' time.
2. Those agencies that operate at a smaller scale through employing sufficient capacity at HQ to undertake initial assessments, but then rely primarily on internal redeployments (mainly through a roster and / or register system but also through informal networks) for the actual response (SC-US; CARE; CRS).

The IRC sits somewhere between these two with its newly augmented emergency unit of 17 (one of the largest in the ECB group), while Mercy Corps notably relies on external hires more than the other ECB agencies.

Figure 3 provides an overview of the current configurations of the ECB emergency response units.

While an emergency unit or team could be considered a 'surge capacity mechanism', for the purpose of this research we will deal with it in this chapter as many organisations consider it to be a part of their standing capacity or operational infrastructure.

For example, CARE, CRS, Mercy Corps, SC-US, and World Vision all employ Regional Directors / Coordinators who are deployable in times of an emergency. Most of these staff are now based in the regions rather than at HQ, and manifest agencies' efforts to build their country-level capacity. CRS has recently developed a new position of Emergency Focal Point for each of its regions. These people:

- Report to the Regional Directors.
- Can be mobilised on a temporary basis.
- Assist with identifying people in-country for the internal roster and also encourage cross-training between offices.
- Focus on disaster mitigation issues which is seen strategically as part of surge.

The intention is that each focal point will build a response team in each region.

Figure 3: ECB Agency Emergency Units (as at April 2007)

Agency	Emergency Unit: Name and Size	Main Characteristics
CARE Intl	<p>Care Emergency Group (CEG). 9 people, spread between Geneva and the field</p> <p>Emergency response director Emergency human resources coordinator Team leader (assessment) (GRT; see below) Logistician (GRT; see below) Regional emergency coordinators (x2) Senior specialist on shelter and recon Senior specialist on watsan Senior specialist on logistics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formed in July 2004 • Coordinates and oversees CARE International's global humanitarian emergency responses, including coordinating staff for emergencies • Some deployable positions • Specialists (relatively new positions) to be used to help develop specialist functions in the 'new CERT' <p>Regional coordinators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 in post; 2 more positions to be created • To reinforce CERT and develop regional rosters complementary to CERT
CRS	<p>Emergency Response Team (ERT) 11 people: 4 in HQ and 7 in Nairobi</p> <p>Team Leader Deputy Team Leader Security & Telecommunications Logistics Health and Nutrition Shelter & Community Infrastructure Finance Management Protection (2) Specialist WATSAN</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since 1999 • 48-hour response; deployed for 4-6 weeks • Self funded: generally from deployments but can also use unrestricted funds • Regional and country directors work out deployment needs due to nature of the disaster
The IRC	<p>Emergency Preparedness Response Unit (which houses the Emergency Response Team [ERT]). ERT of 17 members (from 6 in 2005)</p> <p>Senior emergency coordinator Emergency M&E / grants coordinator ERT coordinator (x2) Emergency health coordinator (x2) Emergency operations coordinator Emergency environmental health coordinator (x2) Emergency finance controller Emergency gender based violence coordinator Emergency security coordinator Emergency protection coordinator Emergency human resources coordinator Emergency communications coordinator Emergency children and young people's development coordinator (x2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First formed in 2000 • Full-time, IRC staff; available within 72 hours • Support all IRC country offices when not on emergency assignments • Are based from home and are deployed to the field approximately 75% of the time • Are partnered with an HQ Technical Unit counterpart for collaboration, information sharing and technical support
Mercy Corps	<p>Global Emergency Operations (GEO) 7 ½ full-time employees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency director (doesn't deploy) • Director of emergency preparedness and DRR (doesn't deploy) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formed in 2000 • Purpose of GEO is to mobilise and coordinate the resources of the broader organisation behind an emergency response • Deployable GEO team budgeted for 25% cost recovery

Agency	Emergency Unit: Name and Size	Main Characteristics																		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme officer • 2 team leaders • Logistics manger • Watsan (split between GEO and health dept) 																			
Oxfam	<p>Humanitarian Department 72 staff, which includes 14 specialist technical staff PLUS 75 (currently recruiting to make 90) serving as globally roving Humanitarian Support Personnel – HSPs</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">Humanitarian Director</td> <td style="width: 50%;">Programme Managers (15)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>PA to Humanitarian Director</td> <td>Logistics Team (20)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Deputy Director (2)</td> <td>Pub Health Eng Team (22)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Senior Representative</td> <td>Pub Health Team (15)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Strategic Project Managers (3)</td> <td>Emergency Food Sec & Livelihoods Team (11)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Co-ordinator of HSPs</td> <td>Programme Finance Team (9)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Humanitarian Desk Officers (5)</td> <td>Human Resources Team (15)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Program Advisory Team (15)</td> <td>Systems & Resources Team (3)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Programme Representatives (5)</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Humanitarian Director	Programme Managers (15)	PA to Humanitarian Director	Logistics Team (20)	Deputy Director (2)	Pub Health Eng Team (22)	Senior Representative	Pub Health Team (15)	Strategic Project Managers (3)	Emergency Food Sec & Livelihoods Team (11)	Co-ordinator of HSPs	Programme Finance Team (9)	Humanitarian Desk Officers (5)	Human Resources Team (15)	Program Advisory Team (15)	Systems & Resources Team (3)	Programme Representatives (5)		<p>Full-time; HQ based. In place for more than a decade. Recently expanded by adding HSPs. Provide back-up to the HSPs while also having their own portfolio of work.</p> <p>About HSPs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanent contracts; on ‘stand-by’ • Rapid deployment for usually up to 90-day assignments • Underwritten by reserve funds • Budget for 25% of their time; get 75% salary funded by official donors. <p>Specialist technical staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior / leadership-oriented posts; immediate emergency start-up • Maintain a series of informal registers of key contacts: ‘little black books of external “most favoured” consultants’ • Want to develop these informal registers for project managers
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SC-US	<p>Emergencies and Protection Unit in the Children in Emergencies and Crisis (CEC) Department</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">Director</td> <td style="width: 50%;">Finance/Admin (2)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Emergency Advisor</td> <td>Supply Chain (2)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Emergency Preparedness Specialists (2)</td> <td>Management Support (2)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Logistician</td> <td>Emergency Health</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Emergency Education (2)</td> <td>Emergency Nutrition</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Emergency Protection (2)</td> <td>Livelihoods</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Emergency M&E</td> <td>Emergency Food Distribution</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Emergency Recruiter (1)</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Director	Finance/Admin (2)	Emergency Advisor	Supply Chain (2)	Emergency Preparedness Specialists (2)	Management Support (2)	Logistician	Emergency Health	Emergency Education (2)	Emergency Nutrition	Emergency Protection (2)	Livelihoods	Emergency M&E	Emergency Food Distribution	Emergency Recruiter (1)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CEC was created in 1992. • It is organised into a Technical Support Division [TSD] and Management Support Division [MSD]. • TSD includes Protection, Hunger and Malnutrition, Emergency Preparedness and Response teams. • MSD includes a Commodity Operations team, Operations team, HR recruitment specialist, communications specialist, Alliance Task Force Manager and DM&E specialist. 		
Director	Finance/Admin (2)																			
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World Vision Intl	<p>Humanitarian and Emergency Affairs Department (core team of 18)</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">Vice President</td> <td style="width: 50%;">Director, Accountability & Transparency</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Director, Humanitarian Planning</td> <td>Assoc Director, Logistics & Pre-positioning</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Director, Strategic Operations</td> <td>Director, Humanitarian Learning</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Director, Human Resources</td> <td>Support staff (6)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Director, Business and Finance</td> <td>Associate Director Capacity Building</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Director, Information Technology</td> <td>Associate Director Resources and Accountability</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Director, Resource Development</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Vice President	Director, Accountability & Transparency	Director, Humanitarian Planning	Assoc Director, Logistics & Pre-positioning	Director, Strategic Operations	Director, Humanitarian Learning	Director, Human Resources	Support staff (6)	Director, Business and Finance	Associate Director Capacity Building	Director, Information Technology	Associate Director Resources and Accountability	Director, Resource Development		<p>In order to overcome tension between deployability and coordination, World Vision has explicitly assigned some of its central emergency unit to focus on the coordination of deployment and standards. This allows for consistent attention to developing policy and standards and for maintaining a strategic overview, without being regularly forced to drop everything to deploy to an emergency.</p>				
Vice President	Director, Accountability & Transparency																			
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Money [funding]

All of the ECB agencies have some form of emergency fund which provides core capacity and enables rapid response. Yet despite this, all agencies mentioned funding as an ongoing issue that affects their ability to build appropriate capacity and, sometimes, to deploy. Throughout the sector there is no doubt that the smaller agencies as well as those agencies with access to less unrestricted funding find it harder to invest in the development of different aspects of their surge capacity, and to deploy where they want when they want. The research also suggests that reliance on investment in a few components of any surge capacity mechanism, such as a roster, doesn't completely meet the challenge of mounting an effective response, and can sometimes divert agencies into looking into the 'wrong' places for the solution.

Clearly every organisation has options with regard to where it focuses its efforts and money. As Cosgrave (2007) notes: 'One key part of humanitarian funding reform is the proportion of funds that agencies devote to developing disaster response capacity both within their own agencies and within communities and countries at high risk of disasters. Such investment has the potential to make interventions both more efficient and effective, and support all emergency needs, not just those of the crisis currently topping the news agenda.'

Emergency response funds

The exact configuration of emergency response funds depends on the agency's overall mission and strategy, resourcing mechanisms and budgeting processes. Regardless, pre-positioning of financial resources is critical in enabling rapid response, because this helps agencies to avoid having to write funding proposals prior to deployment. Moreover, agencies that don't have significant available funding for start-up operations (see, for example, Oxfam's 'catastrophe fund' in Figure 4) report significant constraints in this area, for example, CARE. This raises serious accountability issues: if agencies go into an area and undertake needs assessments but subsequently fail to get funding, they are likely to raise the hopes of the affected populations whom they subsequently fail to assist.

Typically a portion of an agency's funds will be expended each year (and usually topped up from unrestricted funds or surpluses from elsewhere in the organisation) while another portion is used on a 'revolving' basis with expenditure reimbursed through subsequent grant funding. The key challenge for most organisations is how to recover costs of maintaining capacity between emergencies and how to manage the risk that funds spent during emergency deployments will not be reimbursed. Flexible and effective financial management is one of the most fundamental surge capacity mechanisms.

Figure 4 shows each ECB agency's funding sources for rapid response.

Figure 4: Sources of Funding for Rapid Emergency Response (as at April 2007)

CARE* Emergency Response Fund	\$1 million, of which \$500,000 is revolving	Response to small emergencies, allocations of up to \$50,000 (to be reimbursed by user)
CERT Contingency Fund	\$500,000	Can access up to \$250,000 for an emergency response (very rarely used due to impracticality of decision-making system)
CRS Regional Operational Reserves	Varies	Regional Operational Reserves are available at the discretion of the Regional Director
Individual funds like the Africa Crisis Fund	Varies	Has some restrictions on what can fund
Overseas Operations Reserve	\$1 million / year varies annually	Overseas Operations Reserve Funding is utilised at the discretion of the Vice President of Overseas Operations
The IRC Whitehead Fund	\$2.5 million	Interest is used according to the priorities of the Emergency Response Unit; capital is for specific emergency responses with an effort made to replenish with private or grant funds.
Leo Cherne Fund	\$2 million	IRC aims to cover 75% of the operating costs of the ERT through field deployments of ERT members; the balance is covered through the grants from Stichting Vluchteling (which covers 9 positions), Wellspring Advisors (6 positions), the Bureau of Democracy, Rights, and Labor (1 position), and the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (1 position). All funding is subject to annual review and is requested through the submission of proposals to all but Whitehead and Cherne.
MERCY CORPS No formal funding mechanisms in place		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global Emergency Operations team and GRT training is funded through unrestricted core budget. • Rapid response fund supported by a private donor. • Unrestricted funds are released for start up of rapid onset response. • GRT team is funded by field offices when not deployed, by emergency sources when deployed.
Oxfam-GB Catastrophe Fund	£5 million in 2004 (varies annually)	For rapid response prior to receipt of other donor income for the emergency programme; effort made to replenish with private or grant funds.
Halaby-Murphy Revolving Emergency Fund Also preparedness fund and individual emergency funds.	\$7.5 million, revolving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial stage of emergency response only. • Revolving funds have a requirement that funds drawn down must be fully replaced through back charging or reclassification of costs to grants or contracts and through private fundraising (usually direct mail appeals).
World Vision Emergency Preparedness and Response Fund	\$6 million, partially revolving Annual allocation: \$1 million for each of 4 Regions, \$1 million for preparedness, \$1 million reserve	Mostly for initial stage of emergency response; can use up to 25% for preparedness. Regional Relief Directors may allocate up to \$100,000 without broader consultation. Effort made to repay with private or grant funds (goal is for 50% replenishment coming from grant/contract funds)

* The entire system for CARE's emergency response is currently under review, including of its funding mechanisms.

** Revolving funds have a requirement that funds drawn down must be fully replaced through back-charging or reclassification of costs to grants or contracts and through private fundraising (usually direct-mail appeals).

Standing capacity

The core element of surge capacity is standing capacity. As noted above, this consists of staff and material supplies that are permanently allocated for emergency response where staff are either part of the emergency unit of an agency and / or part of an agency's full-time, permanent standing team (ie, Oxfam's HSPs; those on World Vision's GRRT; and also SC-UK's 28-strong group of ERPs [emergency response personnel]).

In most cases an agency's emergency unit (unless, of course, the agency has a full-time standing team) has a small number of specialist managers whose primary role is to deploy quickly in an emergency. They will have access to a stock of essential equipment which can similarly be deployed in the first few hours or days of an emergency response. Often these resources are financed out of unrestricted funds, but this is not necessarily so. Two models exist:

Reimbursement model: When staff time and materials are expended on an emergency response they are normally recharged to the emergency programme, at cost. Sometimes this will require prior negotiation with the donor, but the practice is now fairly standard. This still leaves the question of how to budget for the costs of maintaining stock and staff between emergencies. Perhaps this will be agency's contribution, or that of a private donor.

Apportionment model: Less common is a reimbursement model which also incorporates recovery of costs associated with maintaining capacity between emergencies. For example, by including a portion of warehouse rental when recharging for replacement of pre-positioned materials sent to an emergency. For staff, a recharge cost might be established which includes the actual costs of having people on standby for the emergency.

If agencies are thinking about doing this it is possible to arrive at a daily cost by carrying out the following calculation: consider the total annual cost including salary, training, office space, administrative support etc, and divide that by the total number of days the person is deployed (eg, 100). It is important to be realistic about utilisation in order to avoid burnout. It will be necessary to demonstrate that the costs are reasonable and do not represent profiteering by the agency. Not all donors will accept this model, and agencies need to beware of double charging for overheads if they also assign a generous ICR.

Investment in standing capacity can be considered an insurance policy: although there might not be an emergency 'next year', most of the research indicates that the number of emergencies is increasing and historically it is rare for well-designed emergency capacity to be underutilised. One way to scope the size of standing capacity is to keep records of emergency deployments and track what resources are actually used. Typically there is a straightforward business case to fund a proportion of what has been used in the past, on the grounds that there is confidence it will also be needed in the future. Having adequate standing capacity improves the speed and quality of emergency response, and can itself increase the prospects of raising extra funds. In fact Willits & Darcy (2005) found that 'organisations that have invested in emergencies have grown in size and quality. Investment in emergency capacity provides a good rate of return in terms of funding attracted – as much as 20 times, in World Vision's experience'.

It is important to consider contingencies in case the capacity doesn't get used. How would your agency react if there were no emergencies in a year – is this a crisis for the organisation or something to be celebrated? Most of the agencies interviewed described the various ways in which staff in their emergency unit and also, where relevant, their standing teams, get involved in capacity building work with national offices, including emergency preparedness. They're also often involved in developing emergency standards and operations manuals. In

terms of stock, probably most of that already in warehouses can stay there (though rent still has to be paid). Some stock will need to be replaced – do these items get used for other purposes, in which case older stock could be rotated from time to time?

Case Study 5: Financing Staff Capacity

The best resourced agency in terms of overall emergency staffing is World Vision, which has 71 full-time emergency staff at regional and headquarters level (and 8 people at 50%). This figure comprises 18 staff centrally, focused on coordination, quality assurance and UN liaison; a Global Rapid Response Team (GRRT) of 22; 20 staff in regional relief offices, including the regional relief coordinators and country relief focal points; 6 involved in global pre-positioning; 5 from the GRRT 'trainee feeder school'; and 8 part-time people from World Vision's 'northern' offices (see Figure 3). The GRRT is paid for centrally, but can 'earn' extra funds if staff are seconded to country offices for longer periods than their initial deployment. World Vision has undertaken an analysis of the return on investment in its GRRT, which has established that each dollar invested gives a return of \$10–20 in funding generated by the GRRT's activities.

In the IRC, the EPRU covers 100% of the costs of ERT staff working on non-field deployment TORs. When deployed, country programs cover 100% of ERT costs (deployment costs, salary, benefits). On some occasions the EPRU has deployed ERT staff and not charged country programs. The EPRU Director and Senior Coordinator determine when this is justified and appropriate on a case by case basis. Examples include: to complete assessments for potential start-ups; to provide support to programme start-ups with no or limited resources; and to support existing programmes with limited resources. The EPRU is exploring ways to provide subsidies to smaller programmes that may not have the resources for ERT deployments, but would benefit from having the support and expertise.

Oxfam is among the best-resourced agencies in terms of deployable specialists, with funding in place to support 90 HSPs (75 are currently contracted and this is currently being increased) under contract full-time in a range of specialisations. These personnel are now much in demand from country offices, who are charged for the time deployed. The central unit recovers around 75% of the HSPs' costs, the rest being for periods of leave, training and downtime. This figure started out at around 50%, but the cost to Oxfam centrally has fallen over the last five years as demand for the HSPs has grown.

SC-UK employs 30 full-time emergency response personnel. The scheme currently costs about £900,000 in terms of real costs. As a proportion of the agency's total annual turnover this is about 0.6%, but it's a much higher proportion of its emergency budget, coming in at around 20%. SC-UK covers around 15% of the costs from its central budget and recovers 85% from receiving programmes.

Note: the case studies on World Vision and Oxfam-GB are taken from Willits-King and Darcy (2005).

Internal mobility of resources

The second tier of emergency capacity is well-rehearsed movement of resources (people and stock) within the organisation – in staff terms this means redeployment / secondment / TDYs. This requires knowledge of where staff and stock currently are, as well as an evaluation of the relative costs and benefits including possible negative impacts on the 'home' or sending country office. Various tools to facilitate internal mobility of resources, particularly of staff, are discussed elsewhere in this paper, yet none come free of charge. One of the key 'lessons learned' by mature emergency response organisations is that databases and other tools to manage internal staff redeployments require constant maintenance to keep them current and applicable, otherwise investments quickly depreciate and systems fall into disrepute.

Funding models for agile resources are broadly similar to those mentioned above. When deployed to an emergency, human and material resources can normally be recharged. This can be administratively complicated to process via inter-organisational transfers between country programmes, and some organisations have agreed standard internal recharge rates

to facilitate budgeting and reimbursements. If the internal recharge costs are a little higher than actual costs then this could in some way compensate the donating programme for some of the inconvenience incurred. It has been suggested that this would help to ensure better availability of staff and the money could be used, for example, to hire in cover or compensate existing staff who have to take on additional tasks when the deployable staff member is away.

Again the question remains how to fund the extra costs for administering and maintaining organisational agility. This is one of the biggest challenges for most organisations, and one that requires some ingenuity. Prerequisite costs include staff time to keep databases up to date as well as pre-deployment training for roster staff. There can be economies of scale and some of these functions are now managed across global federations rather than within individual agencies. Also standardisation reduces overheads and increases interoperability: if all offices use the same brand of computer and the same version of software, then support costs are much lower (similarly with specifications for vehicles, and even programming methods). Another approach is to sensitively combine activities, for example by training staff as emergency responders for their own country within an emergency preparedness plan, and having these same people available as surge capacity for other countries without extra costs.

Rapid acquisition of resources

Rapid recruitment and reactive procurement can appear to be the cheapest option, with associated costs delayed until budgets are allocated for the emergency response. This may be a false economy since insufficient preparation certainly impacts negatively on speed and quality of response (this is why World Vision has sought funding to pre-position stocks across the entire organisation, and why Oxfam-GB has developed such a large HSP pool). No organisation can reasonably maintain all of the staff that it might need nor stockpile all supplies, so every agency plans for some element of rapid acquisition during an emergency. Costs of preparedness include advance specification of supplies and identification of potential suppliers, together with development of generic job descriptions and identification of suitable recruitment pools (see Chapter 3). Normally the staff required to carry out this acquisition (procurement, recruitment) should not themselves be hired during an emergency, and ideally surge recruiters and surge logisticians should be identified and trained in advance, perhaps through one of the mechanisms described above.

Funding over the longer term

The research identified a few examples of where agencies have managed to target both private and institutional donors to support different elements of their long term surge capacity development. Examples include SC-UK's training scheme (provided as an earlier case study) and World Vision's private funding to enable it to pre-position stocks on a global scale. Another interesting example is SC-US' use of USAID food security funding, which saw the agency build preparedness programming into its development programmes as part of its overall efforts toward responding more effectively to emergencies.

The SC-US case is an important example because it demonstrates how an agency's understanding of a particular phenomenon – in this case what constitutes the key components of emergency response – enables it to use funding for its development programming 'along the continuum'. The agency was therefore able to grow its emergency response capacity on the success of its grant mechanisms before building capacity for emergency response was agreed at policy level within the organisation.

In the recent period donors have begun to more specifically fund disaster mitigation and risk reduction work, an example of which is the UK's Department for International Development

(DFID) policy to use one-tenth of its natural disasters budget for disaster preparedness and mitigation (though it has also been noted that DFID might also be failing to achieve this funding; Lord Chidgey, 2006). DFID is also currently supporting UNICEF's development of its surge capacity mechanism.

Funding is available, and perhaps agencies need to dedicate more resources in terms of their fundraising capacity to better target different opportunities for restricted funding. But they will equally need to match this with increased capacity to manage additional funding and resources, at both HQ and country level and in light of some of their lessons learnt about scale-up, especially from the tsunami response where absorption capacity was shown to be limited.

Another area of action around funding NGO surge capacity might be joint advocacy work to hold donors accountable to those aspects of the Good Humanitarian Donorship principles that directly relate to building emergency response capacity and to respond to emergencies according to need.

Chapter 2 - Summary Points

- The core element of surge capacity is staff capacity. In recent years, IWG member agencies have focused on augmenting their full-time rapid response staff capacity, largely through the development of emergency units or large, full-time global rapid response capacity.
- Pre-positioning of funds is critical in enabling rapid response, and all IWG member agencies now operate some kind of emergency response fund.
- There are two models of paying for staff capacity: central coverage from unrestricted funds or surpluses from elsewhere in the organisation; and use of funding on a 'revolving' basis with expenditure reimbursed through subsequent grant funding (also referred to as the 'charging out' model).
- Flexible and effective financial management is one of the most fundamental surge capacity mechanisms and systems to facilitate, for example, economies of scale, scale-up and absorption of additional funds, as well as the rapid acquisition of resources are essential.
- Taking a longer term view of emergency funding is also important, as this allows agencies to continue to invest in their emergency surge capacity between emergencies. Such a view also encourages agencies to focus other critical programming components, such as disaster risk reduction and preparedness planning.

Chapter 3: Surge capacity mechanisms

Chapter Summary

This chapter considers the most important surge capacity mechanisms currently in use by agencies, and to aid understanding, the various mechanisms, (which include systems, policies, procedures and tools), will be grouped in two categories:

- Planning mechanisms
- Recruitment mechanisms

Most of the surge capacity mechanisms identified are essentially human resource deployment tools or mechanisms, or the human resource-oriented policies and procedures required. The factors which enable effective surge are dealt with in chapter 4.

Planning mechanisms

- Strategic workforce planning
- Contingency planning
- Second wave / continuity planning

Recruitment mechanisms

- Internal mobilisation
- External recruitment (known/unknown staff)
- Rosters and registers
 - Definitions
 - Effective management
 - Buy in
 - HR aspects
 - IT systems
 - ?reflections

Planning mechanisms

Strategic workforce planning

Credible surge response is usually preceded by strategic workforce planning and anticipating staffing needs, both of which are best delivered through a productive partnership with the HR function. Agencies that have recognised the strategic importance of HR in emergencies, and consider HR to be a proactive partner, actively involved in planning and managing surge response, can consistently demonstrate the benefits of such a partnership.

Planning and Preparing Staff Capacity

Staff capacity entails two main components:

- the size of the pool of skilled and experienced people, or *levels of staff capacity*,
- the *quality of staff capacity*.

Both of these factors affect programme quality. Having clear policies and procedures that enhance staffing levels and skills – with the corresponding systems that allow the requisite staff capacity to be mobilised and managed in the required timeframe – is central to the success of surge response. The research identified a number of lessons and organisational enablers in these areas.

Levels of staff capacity

It is the practice of workforce planning that allows an agency to anticipate, in detail, emergency staffing needs, within the context of that agency's mandate and structure. If an agency's mandate is focused on rapid response then it will seek to significantly augment its staff capacity – at both national and international level.

At the national level, an important procedure involves pre-identifying, and strengthening the capacity of, national-level partners. This and other issues related to augmenting national level capacity are addressed in the next chapter.

At the international level, emergency units and rosters and registers are the most obvious manifestations of a rapid response strategy, and are viewed as key preparedness tools. This is because, once an emergency has been called that requires an international response, one of the most important lessons is to use people agencies already know for the first-wave of deployments; people who have been pre-screened for quality, who know the agency, and who are likely to have been trained – all of which means they can become operational with minimum delay. This allows agencies to commit to a response commonly within 48-72 hours.

A key component of workforce planning involves the development of various operations management tools, such as emergency preparedness plans (EPPs; or, for Oxfam, its emergency management plans). Among other things these enable agencies to anticipate and therefore plan for appropriate levels of staff capacity. It is also useful to undertake a more global, organisation-wide exercise that maps what the agency has done over the past few years and, based on some of the emerging trends – including, for example, which staff the agency might have found it most difficult to recruit for – extrapolate needs forward.

A related practice is that of identifying more than one person for each position category, as this increases the likelihood of finding someone with the appropriate skill set when required.

Should an agency anticipate requiring substantial additional capacity, then an effective technique is to write a clause for 'travel when required' into the job descriptions of other

agency staff over and above those in the emergency units, on the standing teams, or on rosters and registers.

Many of the agencies interviewed for this study talked about the importance of flexibility in international staff capacity – indicated by the different staff deployment tools they use as well as by the different policies and procedures they utilise for maintaining appropriate levels of capacity. Flexibility in this capacity can be particularly important at field level, as shown by Oxfam-GB in the case study below (case study 6).

Case Study 6: Oxfam-GB's 'Roving Staff' model

Oxfam-GB has identified that having flexible capacity is key to optimising its operational response. This is articulated in the concept of 'roving capacity' or 'flow capacity'. This means that if, for example, a needs assessment has identified the need for five logisticians or programme coordinators, the agency will employ six (some will be from its HSP pool). The sixth person then fulfils various functions. For example, in Sri Lanka during the tsunami response the sixth Programme Coordinator proved invaluable and was fully employed in filling vacant roles and critical 'gap areas' that arose unexpectedly. Also, extra finance and HR capacity visited the five field offices to conduct a rapid assessment of staff capacity and help to ensure the correct systems were in place to cope with the massive increase in funds and programming.

It is, however, difficult to provide this additional capacity when resources are tight; it's can also prove not as satisfying for the roving person because that person doesn't have his/her own project to manage. This position therefore needs particular flexibility.

Quality of staff capacity

Preparing staff is paramount to being able to mount an effective rapid response. Each staff person needs to have the skills required for their position and agencies need to make sufficient investment in this area.

Training is viewed as a key component of staff preparedness, and regular training courses need to be included in agency budgets as part of routine process. One of the reasons it is seen as important is due to the serious problem with sourcing good managers. Consequently agencies have learnt it is essential to include management training in their annual or bi-annual training for deployable staff, in addition to specialist skills training.³ All too often, 'People are given managerial responsibilities, but without the training necessary to cope with the additional tasks' (Loquercio *et al*, 2006).

Notwithstanding, these sorts of large, formal training events should form only part of an agency's overall efforts to develop its staff capacity; if an agency is strategically committed to staff development then it will also need to plan for, and develop, other policies and procedures that help to build the quality of its staff.

Another quality issue relates to staff competencies. Two types of competencies are important: the personal and the technical. In the past, humanitarian agencies have focussed on technical skills and previous experience in emergency situations. In fact agencies still tend to be influenced more by specialist skills sets and availability. More recently, a wider range of behavioural competencies have begun to be considered essential for humanitarian workers.⁴ These are linked to various characteristics and qualities to do with: pressure

³ This training should also, of course, include information on any new humanitarian-related policy and practice developments, in addition to any new organisational policies or practices, etc.

⁴ The importance of this issue is reflected in the People in Aid study: 'Behaviours that lead to effective performance in humanitarian response' (Sara Swords for People in Aid, 2007). The study links to other relevant and current initiatives in the humanitarian sector, so providing an overall picture of recent thinking on these sorts of competency issues.

tolerance; building and maintaining relationships within changing emergency teams; and operational decision-making in emergency situations.

The prospect of better trained and skilled field managers has enormous implications, not only in terms of their own personal welfare but also with regard to having a wider skill set that will allow them, for example, to properly coach national staff in the field and to provide higher quality programmes that are more accountable to affected populations. Oxfam-GB and SC-US emphasised the importance of re-classifying management as a technical discipline in order to facilitate the development of training in this area.

Contingency Planning

Many of the aforementioned capacities can be anticipated through contingency planning, which consists of (Choularton, 2007:25):

1. A response strategy (defines the objectives of the response, as well as the interventions developed to meet these objectives).
2. An implementation plan (defines exactly how the programmes or responses will be implemented).
3. An operational support plan (defines sufficient administration, financial, human resources, information and telecommunications, etc, support).
4. A preparedness plan (identifies actions to be taken before a crisis to facilitate an effective response once the crisis is under way).
5. A budget (this covers both the cost of the planned response as well as preparedness actions).

As the case study below demonstrates, simulation exercises are an important component of planning and preparedness, both from a training point of view as well as allowing contingency plans to be tested. As noted in Loquercio *et al* (2006:13) simulation exercises 'can be used to test the viability of different processes, so that ways of working develop [before an emergency] without putting the lives of staff or beneficiaries at risk.'

Case Study 7: Preparedness through Simulation

Both SC-US and SC-UK run regular simulation exercises.

SC-UK: One of the main lessons learnt by SC-UK is the need for preparedness – not just of deployable staff and country offices but also of staff at HQ who need to act swiftly when an emergency is called. As a result the humanitarian department holds regular simulation exercises, or 'dry runs', to enable all those involved when an emergency is called to practice the various procedures SC-UK has in place to determine how to get standing team members prepared and to the field at short-notice. The Red Cross and MSF also run these simulation exercises at HQ, and all agencies note that this leads to much smoother deployment in real time. These sorts of exercises are particularly important in the case that an emergency should occur over a weekend or public holiday.

SC-US: Although SC-US now has an integrated mandate, its historic development focus has led the agency to concentrate its efforts on preparing and managing its country offices as a priority backed up by specialist technical emergency capacity at HQ. It therefore puts a lot of resources into preparing its regional and country offices to respond, some of which money is spent on in-country simulations. With its regional REDI teams to hand, and usually with the involvement of local high-level district officials, the agency simulates full-scale disasters such as a recent cyclone simulation in Bangladesh. A full cyclone was simulated in a local football stadium involving over 15,000 people and a whole make-shift village collapsed. This not only allowed the agency to identify the strengths and weaknesses of its own internally systems but also how it worked with local officials. Another important element was an ability to educate the wider public about cyclone preparedness, as the simulation was televised.

The contingency planning process is itself helpful in terms of building staff capacity, as it encourages the formation of effective working relationships. Additionally, ongoing contingency planning helps emergency managers anticipate and prepare for different possibilities, including the need for different staff capacities.

Choularton (ibid:8) suggests that the contingency planning cycle is only complete when 'lessons from the response are incorporated back into the contingency planning process, and it is triggered again when early warning mechanisms indicate the onset of the next crisis. In this way ... contingency planning ... can support the management of humanitarian action at different stages of emergency response.'

'Second Wave' and Continuity Planning

Most of those interviewed think that they 'do rapid deployment well' but struggle with so-called second-wave deployment and / or continuity planning. Reasons suggested for this include: not advertising in the right place; not having the right recruiters; not having sufficient partnerships; and not having staff in national offices who understand properly emergency needs.

It is generally the larger agencies who conceive of surge capacity as relating to the ability of the agency to mount a second-wave response, for example, World Vision and Oxfam-GB. World Vision deploys its first-wave responders for up to three months but still sees its responsibility for building surge-type capacity for the second round of deployments. Oxfam-GB, on the other hand, typically has enough staff from its full-time HSP pool to deal with this challenging issue. All agencies, however, admitted to struggling at this juncture – whether they specifically recruit for second-wave surge or simply struggle more generally with issues related to continuity planning. And although Oxfam-GB perhaps has more flexibility due the deployment lengths of its HSPs (who sometimes deploy for up to nine months) it still struggles in this area.

This is one of the reasons why agencies need to become more creative about their sourcing strategies as well as create different strategies to train promising people in order to increase their pool of first-wave responders. On this latter point Susan Barber of World Vision notes:

[W]e don't always need a World Vision person [for this second wave response] but convincing managers of this is difficult. But really for second wave it's not as key if the induction [and orientation] processes are right.

On a related point a number of agencies shared the lesson that it is easier to take some technical specialists on the basis of their technical skills rather than their experience with the agency, though all those interviewed agreed that senior managers must always have had agency experience.

One of the more important lessons concerning continuity is to develop staffing plans for the ongoing response from the beginning once the initial assessment has been undertaken. This means having HR people in the field from the outset. They can then take into account local labour laws and develop a policy for NGO recruitment over the longer term. If HR personnel from international agencies deploy to the field at the same time there will be an opportunity for them to work together on these issues, contributing to overall sector capacity at the same time as enhancing their own individual agency response through the very act of collaboration and sharing of resources. They might consider designing HR policies that, for example, are non-competitive and designed not to outbid each other for staff so that salary ranges and benefits can be agreed upon across the NGO community.

Another important lesson is for emergency recruiters to begin to look for replacement staff right away or, depending on the agency's structure and approach to succession planning, for colleagues in the development departments to be alerted to recruitment needs right away so they too can begin planning for emergency staff replacement.

The compilation of 'hot lists', noted above, is another way of dealing with second-wave recruitment.

Some respondents brought up the issue of turnover in terms of how long staff are initially deployed to emergency situations. There appears to be tension between the view points that initial deployments cannot be in the field for more than 4-6 weeks due to burn out, in comparison to those who believe that these kind of short initial deployments don't make a difference unless the job descriptions of those being deployed include responsibility for shadowing or coaching and for helping to build, when necessary, institutional mechanisms appropriate for taking the response forward. This issue clearly affects programme quality, accountability and sustainability, and was considered so important by one respondent that, unless coaching or shadowing happens, 'agencies won't really learn the lessons they've been learning; ... it should be all about capacity at country level'.

The importance of coaching was also highlighted, in particular by the 'regional' interviewees. While coaching and shadowing can be challenging in emergency response due to the additional energy and patience required, it is considered essential. These, and other, interviewees also highlighted the importance of developing relationships of trust. There are 'swift trust factors and deeper trust factors' that enable these relationships, and these have been identified in the ECB study on Building Relationships between National and International Staff in times of crisis.

In order to address these sorts of problems, and based on lessons that the most effective response occurs when there is effective counter-parting, CRS tries to make sure that, when deployed, all those in its ERT are counter-parted with national staff. Mercy Corps operates a similar scheme whereby its Global Emergency Operations team at HQ mentors those on its Global Response Team, the agency's internal roster which is primarily composed of national staff. This is done during annual training and deployments.

Another technique for addressing continuity includes the release of staff from ongoing programmes into the emergency programme. This builds the capacity of the emergency programme as the individuals involved know the local communities as well as local programming priorities. This means they can contribute to more locally sensitive emergency planning as well as continue in post beyond the initial phase of deployment so contributing to overall programme sustainability. CARE further mentioned employing team leaders for the 'transition' phase for at least six months to facilitate programme sustainability.

Recruitment mechanisms

The foundation of most emergency response consists of pre-existent staff capacity at country level. This is recognised in agencies' disaster classification systems that only activate international response beyond a pre-designated critical level. In fact some agencies, for example CRS and SC-US, prefer to focus on building their country level capacity as a way of mitigating the need for large international surge response. Chapter 4 considers the issue of country-level capacity in more depth.

There are two ways of sourcing international staff capacity, and as the case study on Darfur below shows, often agencies will use a combination of approaches:

1. **Internal mobilisation**, through either:
 - employing people on permanent contract (so-called 'standing teams'; World Vision's GRRT and Oxfam's HSPs)
 - redeploying / seconding staff from HQ to the field, or from one field location to another (ie, generally those people named on internal rosters and registers)⁵
2. **External recruitment**:
 - pure external recruitment
 - 'keeping people warm' through informal networks of contacts, including registers

The IWG and other agencies interviewed for this study see recruitment as a set of policies and practices designed primarily to identify and attract quality employees. Mignon Mazique of Mercy Corps reflects that: 'Recruitment is one of the most important – in fact *the* most important – function in an agency. If you don't get the right people at the right time then the whole operation is compromised'. Given that an agency can only do so much to improve the quality of its personnel once in post, having tools and practices in place to source the 'right' internal staff as well as recruit the 'right' external staff is paramount. This section looks at sourcing staff for primarily internal rosters and registers and also via external recruitment.

Case Study 8: A Multi-pronged Approach in Darfur

World Vision's Director of Strategic Operations considers his agency's most successful response to have been in 2004 in Darfur. While some glitches in the response were experienced, overall it worked well because various components of rapid deployment worked in tandem. For example, the agency's Global Rapid Response Team (GRRT) was deployed as it should have been for 90 days, joined by a number of its Regional Rapid Response Team (RRRT), which has existed in Africa for seven years. A number of technical staff were seconded from within the agency, and the agency also mobilised staff out of other food aid programmes in the area that were ending at that time.

The Head of HR at MSF-UK also describes how rapid deployment 'never works on just one method'. When they responded in Sudan they found that informal networks played just as important a part as their register. When it was clear that the situation could deteriorate rapidly they began to: email people on the register asking if they might be available; email their operations offices to alert them to be on the look out for response staff; were able to use people from their own office; received many phone-calls from interested parties.

⁵ Agencies use different terminology to describe this technique: redeployment; secondment; and TDYs.

Internal mobilisation

Internal mobilisation is typically managed through the use of internal rosters or registers which are considered in more detail later in this chapter. Agencies employ a range of techniques when sourcing staff for their internal rosters and registers. Generally, HQ identifies ex-pats (including people who have previously worked for the agency) while regional / national offices nominate local staff.

The selection process commonly involves the following steps: most often a person will self-select / be identified by HQ, regional or national staff; submit their resume and / or application; have at least two years emergency experience (this time period differs depending on the size of the agency and therefore the pool of people it has to choose from); have their technical skills checked by a technical specialist; have to display a good selection of 'soft skills' (see the section on competencies below); have to have a face-to-face or telephone interview; have at least two references checked; confirm their availability in advance.

Some agencies do an additional 'quality assurance' check by assessing country-nominated candidates in the context of special trainings or workshops.

All agencies talked about difficulties in terms of attracting staff onto their rosters and registers and retaining them. (Retention in this context is more about maintaining the interest of people on these lists and databases when they are not often used, than it is about concerns with high staff turnover. Turnover in the rapid deployment context is more to do with the time that first responders spend in the field.) Chapter 4 deals with these issues in more detail, and provides some suggested solutions.

A number of agencies operate 'retention rosters' and fellowship and training schemes, most typically to encourage the retention and development of senior managers but also to attract and train promising new talent. For examples, see Case Study 13. The ECB project on National Staff Development is developing a Foundation Module designed to increase the number of agency staff at national level capable of leading and managing emergency programmes.

Efforts to increase the deployable staff pool is also why some agencies look to deploy less emergency-experienced staff in their second-wave response, and / or to provide such staff with both training and opportunities for exposure in less acute emergency settings. This builds their skills so that they can eventually be used in the five-wave response.

Finally, as noted in Chapter 2, some of the smaller agencies rely on the development of external rosters and registers to boost their rapid deployment capacity. The most common method of sourcing staff for these lists is to ask ex-employees and favoured consultants if they would like to join the lists.

Rapid Deployment from Internal Sources

A key aspect of enabling rapid deployment from internal sources is to ensure staff have been pre-screened, trained and inducted. This allows them to become operational with minimum delay. Another component of preparedness is to carry out simulations. Additional enablers include:

- The operation of a 'watch system' (also known as 'on call'). UNDP does this for its internal roster; SC-UK for its standing team. This means that people work on a rota and are available at certain points during the year. When 'on watch' they are noted as being

more psychologically prepared to deploy, which is recognised as helping to speed up the process. It also means that they know when they will have the time to concentrate more on family and other work / life issues, and so becomes an important approach to staff care.

- A technique for those not operating a watch system but who do employ full-time rapid response teams is to closely manage the work programmes of each individual standing team member between emergencies, so that when they're needed they're ready to go. Part of this management should concern the need to balance down-time with deployment. World Vision, for instance, 'Have had to learn to say "no" to requests for other deployments' for their GRRT-ers. This has led them to institutionalise central management for deployment from this global tool.
- Some emergency units in HQ actively organise visas, all travel arrangements and insurance for all their deployable staff rather than leaving this responsibility to these staff. Agencies who don't do this at least send out regular communications to their deployable staff reminding them, for example, to keep visas and vaccinations up-to-date.
- Another technique is to have more than one person per identified position. This increases the likelihood of finding someone with the skill sets required. The IRC has five people identified against each of its positions.
- Another extremely important component of enabling rapid surge is the pre-identification and capacity strengthening of national-level partners. This is considered in Chapter 4.

External Recruitment

If agencies need to use external recruitment during the first phase of an emergency, it is important that this process happens quickly. It is therefore necessary to develop a set of policies and practices that by-pass or truncate normal recruitment practices (see Case Study 15). While these processes can be identified individually in each agency, all noted the importance of *never* cutting corners on core minimum essential practices and procedures, mostly related to quality control.

One of the most important lessons concerns the need to develop generic job descriptions that can be adapted to a particular country and programme context. A large number of agencies interviewed now have these for each of their main position areas. Development of generic ToRs and scopes of work are similarly noted as important, and can be adapted to give people specific information about their deployment.

Developing partnerships can also help with rapid recruitment. For example, Mercy Corps reports working with technical staff in local universities which means that, in the event of a large-scale emergency, it has access to a pool of technically skilled people, including through the student body.

Another strategy for meeting surge in demand is for HR to set up telephone hot-lines for external people who call in to enquire about deployments, such as those operated by the British Red Cross in times of emergency.

Case Study 9: Truncating procedures in times of crisis

MSF-UK: MSF deploys to some countries that require police checks as well as visas for entry. Generally, MSF sorts these out ahead of time to enable rapid deployment when needed. The policy is that no-one will go the field without an acceptable police check. In a huge emergency this is balanced by sending someone to the field if they have two satisfactory references – especially as most of those involved in emergencies have gone through the whole process before.

Mercy Corps: Mercy Corps' regular recruitment practices involve a number of procedures that can be truncated in emergencies, such as speeding up the benefit payments protocol and filling in any missing information on a person's 'action form', whereas HR would normally send this back so holding up recruitment. Mercy Corps is planning to publish a 'recruiting during emergencies' set of guidelines to help its work in this area.

Challenges in external recruitment

Much has been written about the 'pressing problem' of recruitment, including, for example, in the People In Aid Handbook *Enhancing Quality in HR Management in the Humanitarian Sector* as well as in Glazebrook (2006). Recruiting new staff is especially challenging during new emergencies, as most seem to agree that the pool of suitably qualified and experienced staff is a finite one given competition and natural attrition.

All interviewees expressed particular concern about recruiting experienced senior managers as well as those with certain sets of specialist technical skills, such as people who work with youth in emergencies, good shelter coordinators, people with operational accountability experience, and positions requiring specific language skills. Notwithstanding, some have observed that the 'lack of qualified staff is countered by other comments proposing that the labour market is cyclical and therefore predictably unpredictable. This would indicate that the difficulties organisations perceive themselves to be facing are not necessarily as a result of external but [also] internal management issues' (eg, Glazebrook, 2006).

Reflective of this issue, one respondent commented that 'we are very conservative as a sector and perpetuate the same way of thinking and of doing things; we need to take some calculated risks before the loop of quality is narrowed'. This is perhaps why a number of the agencies interviewed talk about the need to be creative and 'look in unlikely places' by introducing additional techniques and tools to increase their pool of potentially suitable candidates. This requires considerable cultivation of relationships across different professional sectors, and will only be possible through adequate investment in HR capacity.

Agencies respond in two ways to the challenge of recruiting new staff. First, they emphasise their own 'brand' in order to attract staff they think will be suitable. Second, they try to develop exclusive pools of staff as well as look in 'new' places.

For example, Oxfam-GB and Mercy Corps seek to increase their external recruitment pool by operating 'hot-lists': lists of candidates who've performed well but who came in second; through mutual agreement these agencies keep these candidates' resumes on file and also keep track of them. The NRC has created an 'information network' of returned employees who are paid expenses to give talks about their experiences to different audiences, to encourage them to think about a career in the humanitarian sector. Also, Oxfam-GB has developed some agreements for short-term loans with technical experts from relevant technical organisations outside of the humanitarian sector. Use of external consultants is, however, expensive. And although these people might know the agency, it is always a challenge to keep them up-to-date with agency policy and practice developments.

If agencies are more developmental they often find it important to hire the ‘right kind of development staff’ and train them in terms of emergency response. Mercy Corps does this as the agency believes it is easier to train development staff in emergency skills than vice versa. Induction into Mercy Corps as well as more broadly into emergency standards and ethics is therefore essential, and Mercy Corps ensures that all staff ‘go via Portland’ before they are deployed. The agency is comfortable with this even if it means it may take slightly longer to deploy.

In terms of sourcing new staff, places agencies might go to, or think about going to depending on their mandate; are: specialist recruitment networks or agencies, both internationally or in-country; countries that don’t have emergencies but that do have good programme staff; job centres; volunteer agencies; portal websites (such as AlertNet and ReliefWeb); register agencies (eg, RedR); different national and local press; local community centres in-country; private companies; the armed forces; regional or local NGO networks; and different interest groups.

Case Study 10: Increasing the Pool of Potential Staff

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) uses a variety of different mechanisms in order to reach a broad base of potential new candidates. Although costly and time-consuming, the NRC occasionally pursues large-scale advertising rounds in a particular region via national and local press and ReliefWeb. While this is a heavy procedure it is effective for attracting new staff that might not necessarily have extensive emergency experience but nevertheless are technically qualified and show promise. The agency undertakes these sorts of more intensive recruitments in areas where it may have less roster staff. It uses these new recruits in lower intensity crises, counter-parted with qualified staff, before deploying them in the first wave.

MSF-UK seeks to fill 30% of each mission with ‘fresh eyes’, usually in the second wave response. This is because the agency focuses on more than just medical relief, and is also involved in lobbying and advocacy around wider health issues such as better access to new drugs. It believes that maintaining an intake of newer recruits will maintain levels of critical analysis and passion and therefore a willingness to get involved in advocacy work around these wider issues.

The IFRC operates JobNet, an e-recruitment tool that it bought from outside the agency. This has been used to advertise positions to attract interest from people outside of the RC Movement. It is a multiple search database so that, for example, a Spanish-speaking, watsan engineer can be located. It took considerable time to set up and two HR offices were initially required to manage it. Now it is just a small part of their work.

CRS and World Vision also operate retainer schemes, and World Vision augments this with its Senior Associate Humanitarian Programmes Reserve pool. These tools are designed to allow each agency to have greater and guaranteed access to well-qualified programme managers. Annex 1 provides information on a number of other ‘people tools’ used by the ECB agencies. Notable for their absence are M & E and learning and accountability specialists.

Case Study 11: Examples of Retention Rosters and Training Schemes

World Vision International

- **Senior Associate Humanitarian Programmes Reserve Pool:** This new mechanism is designed to augment the agency's senior management surge capacity. This allows staff in the agency to 'act' when they meet a good senior manager and bring that person into the agency. Bridging funding from the core budget is used to support these new staff members, who initially work on short-term assignments until they are deployed. The intention is that these staff will augment the GRRT as one of these five or six individuals will go in as the senior manager of the response so enabling the GRRT manager to leave when required for a new emergency (previously they were getting locked into positions).
- **Retention scheme:** This is used to maintain the involvement of more senior, semi-retired staff. These staff members receive a stipend if they commit to six months a year deployment, during which time they go on full salary.
- **Feeder schools:** World Vision also uses the feeder school model to augment its emergency response. The HEA Feeder School is a practical professional development programme to serve organisational HEA objectives through the recruitment of staff with exceptional potential to develop their technical, management and leadership abilities through intensive support of 12 months, with the intent of 'feeding' graduates into employment in an HEA role with an international management focus.
Capacity building is provided through a variety of significant experiences such as mentoring, formal and informal training, specific action learning programme, exposure and practice in the full range of job tasks and roles, and strategic deployment. Performance is formally assessed against agreed sectoral standards and organisational requirements.
- **The Associate programme** involves staff in six support offices who have strong technical expertise and augmenting their existing skills as well as filling some of the sector gaps on the current GRRT.

SC-UK

- **Save-UK** is in the process of accrediting, through the Open University in the UK, a post-graduate certificate in humanitarian response. This is designed for entry level staff who will become leaders of the future. The training module will include, for example, leadership and management practices; simulation training; advanced field training in hostile environments; and foundation theory covering issues to do with humanitarian principles, systems and standards etc.
- The agency has also been running a child protection scheme since 2005. This is designed to train people specifically in the area of child protection, and is a one-year programme consisting of two six-month placements with a mentor in each different country programme. Save-UK is currently seeking other agencies to take staff on these training placements.

Rosters and registers

Summary

The increasing scale and complexity of emergencies places real demands on aid agencies. Many of these agencies have sought to respond by expanding and improving their staff capacity. While some agencies can afford to employ full-time standing teams – a factor they consider to be critical to the success of their first-wave response – most don't have access to the levels of unrestricted funding that these larger agencies enjoy. Their chosen route for substantially increasing staff capacity therefore continues to be through the development of what most people refer to as internal rosters as well as, sometimes, external rosters and registers.

Despite this, those interviewed for this study acknowledged the real difficulties their agency has had, or is currently having, with these systems. Challenges cited are numerous and are related not just to their technical functioning, but also to wider management issues to do with the support and availability of a group of rapidly deployable staff. For an extremely useful overview of the advantages, potential pitfalls and best practice considerations of running an internal roster, readers are directed to People In Aid's (2004a) *Information Note on Emergency Response Rosters*.

This section addresses these challenges in some detail. It starts by clarifying the issue of terminology with regard to rosters and registers. Following this it addresses the critical elements of roster management. It finishes by proposing a way forward for ECB agencies.

As indicated earlier, ECB agencies' preference for first phase response is to develop a cadre of permanently employed, specialist rapid response staff. This is due to historic difficulties experienced with roster deployment, including maintaining up-to-date information and real availability. This capacity allows HR time to activate the various roster and register systems operated by agencies which are important 'for providing the follow-on capacity in terms of rotating staff in and increasing capacity if required ... [despite the] limit to how much capacity can be provided from within Country Offices due to problems of availability, skill sets and the knock-on effect on ongoing programmes' (Willits-King & Darcy, 2005).

In contrast the IFRC, one of the comparison case study agencies, is able to rely on its internal rosters for its immediate response. This is due to the IFRC's primary mandate for emergency preparedness and response. Smaller agencies, such as MedAir, only have resources to develop an external roster system due to their limited internal capacity.

The table below provides an overview of the roster and register systems operated by ECB agencies. All of these tools reflect agencies' preferences for deploying known personnel during the first-wave response.

Figure 5: ECB Agency Rosters and Registers (as at April 2007)

Agency	Primary Internal Roster / Register	Second Internal Roster / External Roster / Registers / Informal Networks
The IRC	<p>Internal Emergency Roster (IER)</p> <p>Between 45-60 at any one time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondment roster; IER members hold regular positions in IRC country programmes • Goal is to have five people identified in every sector. • Commitment to a 72-hour response. • Available for 4-6 weeks. • Use excel spreadsheet to manage. 	<p>External Emergency Roster (EER)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third available tool after the emergency unit and the IER. Used less now the emergency unit has been expanded. • Ready to deploy within one week's notice • Not current IRC employees, but many have worked for the IRC in the past. • Goal is to have five people identified in every sector.
Mercy Corps	<p>Global Response Team (GRT) (incl OSTs; see below)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created in 2005; not yet used extensively. • One week of mandatory training / year. • 72-hour commitment; up to 3 months deployment. • Mostly national staff; cannot be used for non-emergency purposes • 100% cost-recovery when deployed. • Excel spreadsheet to manage. <p>This initiative is being replicated at regional level, (so-far a 'mini-GRT' in Indonesia).</p> <p>Operational Support Team (OST):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management & technical specialists (8-9 people) • Assigned to GRT by department heads at HQ; serve in management, representational or oversight roles • One week of mandatory training / year • 72-hour commitment; only for 3-6 weeks • Set up systems and train people to take over 	
Oxfam-GB		<p>Oxfam-GB operates a number of informal specialist registers.</p> <p>Oxfam International is looking to develop one overall register for the Oxfam family of agencies.</p>
SC-US	<p>Regional REDI Teams (Responding to Emergencies and Disasters Internationally)</p> <p>5 teams by region: Asia; Middle East/Eurasia; Africa; Latin America/Caribbean; United States.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees, but also from Save the Children Alliance • Managed by Emergency Department and Area Directors • Minimum of three people for each REDI position, across 17 functions • The US REDI team was created after the agency faced difficulties with visas when trying to pull in staff from the other REDI teams • Each REDI member has an approved backfill plan, which is a requirement for participation • Heavy reliance on this mechanism for first surge response; due to issues concerning availability the agency is considering developing a roster of a few full-time responders based in their home countries 	

Agency	Primary Internal Roster / Register	Second Internal Roster / External Roster / Registers / Informal Networks
World Vision	<p>Global Rapid Response Team (GRRT)</p> <p>c22 people deployable up to 50% of their time; min 5 years humanitarian response experience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 48-72 hours deployable, for up to 3 months and up to 50% of their time. • The GRRT and associates are enough to respond, simultaneously, to 2 large-scale emergencies. • Daily rate charged to programme is \$300/day • Half team = management; other half = technical • Essential positions: finance; HR; procurement / logistics, health, IT, protection, Programming and program mgt then based on assessment with regard to what else is required. • Overall management by Emergency Operations Associate Director <p>Trainee Feed Schools (for GRRT). 5 people across: health, protection, finance, logistics, IT.</p> <p>Associates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 people deployable up to 50% of time. Mainly technical people who work in northern offices. 	<p>Regional Rapid Response Team (RRRT)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second internal secondment tool. • Started in Africa seven years ago. • See Chapter 3 case study for details. <p>Global Register</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal; capacity for deployment for up to 6 weeks per year. • Register is managed by the staffing solutions function of WVI. • Fee sent to sending offices from receiving offices for local hires to backfill when the staff member is deployed. • Release agreements in place (in theory) and payments go back into the sending office so they can recruit and backfill (currently case-by-case negotiation; trying to develop protocols for this that will also involve staff person being released for regular training). <p>Plus 20 in regional relief offices and 6 working on pre-positioning.</p>
CARE Intl	<p>Care Emergency Response Team (CERT) – though this is noted as not working well at the moment, and CARE US has developed an Action Plan to make it operational it again.</p> <p>Each CARE operational agency (Australia, Canada, the US) is currently developing its own Emergency Response Team (ERT).</p>	<p>CARE International notes great use of informal networks to staff its emergency response – in part due to the fact that the CERT is not working well.</p>
CRS	<p>Emergency Corps – also noted as not working well at the moment.</p>	

Rosters and Registers Defined

Rosters are, at their most basic, tools such as spreadsheets or databases to manage information concerning deployable staff. People often refer to these tools as ‘mechanisms’ which implicitly widens their scope to include some kind of process – in this case, the process to rapidly deploy. This is in line with dictionary definitions of the term mechanism which talk about processes by which something takes place, or is brought about, and hence why this section addresses matters concerning the maintenance of these tools to enable deployment.

The terms roster and register are often used synonymously, though interviewees tended toward using the term ‘roster’ as a catch-all. Also, US-based interviewees were more likely to use the term roster, whereas European agencies were inclined to talk about rapid deployment tools and, sometimes, registers. This differentiation was not consistent, however, and a useful distinction to emerge from the research concerns the issue of availability: rosters provide information on available dates, in the way that say a ‘rota’ might. Registers don’t, and are rather a tool to collect, store and make people’s details easily available for the roster. This reflects dictionary definitions of the term register which talk about lists or records of information which, when used electronically, enable quick access.

For example, World Vision sees its rosters as being part of a larger Global Register system which is used for identifying internal skilled people (though it also provides an opportunity for external individuals). The Global Relief Register captures all the names, skills, competencies and provides the ‘background’ information for its roster (referred to as a ‘calendar’). SC-UK

operates its 'REACT list' or 'rapid deployment mechanism' (note its use of terms), a virtual mobilisation technique based on a watch system for its core deployable staff. This staff constitutes its full-time emergency response personnel (or ERPs), its core team, and also its Alliance partners. As with World Vision, details about these staff are contained on a larger global register that sits 'behind' the REACT list (which is an availability spreadsheet). In comparison, Oxfam-GB uses a 'capacity spreadsheet' to track the availability of its HSPs.

It is notable that the three agencies that displayed a more nuanced understanding of these different deployment mechanisms all employ full-time standing teams. This perhaps makes it easier for them to utilise a 'rota'-type system. Agencies that rely on internal redeployments naturally struggle much more with the issue of availability.

The difference between rosters and registers noted above could be a useful conceptual distinction. It might help agencies reflect on the information management processes they will need to manage information about their deployable staff, and therefore how they might want to design their databases or spreadsheets.

In line with most of the agencies interviewed for this study, this report uses the term roster to refer to agencies' rapid deployments tools, unless specifically stated otherwise. Implicit in the use of this term is a tool that contains information both about a person (ie, their qualifications and skills) as well as their availability.

Case study 12: Why HSPs rather than Registers?

While Oxfam-GB is fortunate in the level of unrestricted funding it has to support its HSPs, the agency used to operate 'extensive external registers ... but realised the management cost of maintaining them was too high; it was also too difficult to do well'. Oxfam-GB therefore chose to reduce the administrative and transaction costs of employing lots of people on short-term contracts and instead decided to increase the number of HSPs it employs. This was seen as preferable to constantly recruiting, inducting and training people (a cost-intensive activity) particularly because the agency can now more effectively invest in the longer term capacity of its staff who will take their ongoing learning and experience into new deployments and advance their careers inside Oxfam if they wish (many HSPs have gone on to hold more senior posts in the UK or at regional or country level in wider programme roles in addition to purely humanitarian ones). In addition to these HSPs, Oxfam-GB also operates a series of decentralised, specialist registers and Oxfam International is currently investigating the development of an Oxfam-wide register.

Commonly, agencies interviewed for this study operate internal rosters that involve current employees either at HQ, from the field, and / or those who have returned from the field and might be available for further assignments. They also sometimes have external or second-level 'rosters': these constitute *lists* of favoured consultants, ex-employees and, by mutual consent, strong candidates who have applied to the agency and been short-listed but not appointed. The issue of recorded availability is not at the heart of the information provided about these people, and to address this issue more than one person is identified for each position category (as is also the case with the internal mechanisms). Other agencies, for example, Oxfam-GB, use the term register to describe informal lists of favoured consultants.

It is notable that two of the smaller agencies interviewed for this study have had to concentrate on building their external lists (referred to by these agencies as 'rosters'; MedAir and Care Australia) due to their lack of internal capacity, while some agencies have both an internal as well as an external 'roster' (eg, the IRC). These external 'rosters' or lists are particularly sensitive to smaller, less publicised emergencies because members find it harder to get time off work for responding to these crises - although their availability is not guaranteed, people on MedAir's and CARE Australia's lists do sign pre-release agreements

with their employers. This is an important disabler when it comes to mounting a response in, say, a chronic emergency that becomes temporarily acute.

Depending on their needs and current configurations, different agencies will therefore face different challenges with regard to the operation and maintenance of their rosters and / or registers.

Once a roster is well-populated with suitable candidates, it offers obvious benefits as a rapid deployment tool. These include speed, transparency, and accessibility. Rosters are also noted to encourage merit-based selection since the easiest way of filtering candidates is to search for relevant qualifications and experience without using names (UNDPKO, 2006). However, these benefits will only accrue if agencies are willing to support the development of roster systems at management level, as well as invest the money needed to develop a reliable system from an IT perspective, as well as invest the staff required to manage such a tool. UNDPKO (2006:15) notes that OCHA's roster system ultimately failed due to a number of reasons: 'Senior managers often bypass[ed] the roster mechanism, staff [were] reluctant to subscribe to it (often as a result of perceived lack of credibility) and there [were] recurrent problems with staff being released for deployment despite prior agreement.'

Notably CARE and CRS brought up many of these issues when talking about their respective rosters. CARE in particular reflected that, as a result, the agency has been forced to make greater use of informal networks – with all the attendant costs of contracting consultants and compromising the quality of its response through employing people who know the agency less well.

Developing and managing rosters

Overall, developing and managing rosters comprises four key elements:

1. Whole-organisation buy-in, led by the senior leadership
2. An HR management solution
3. A technical IT solution
4. Money to finance 2 & 3 above

The rest of this section addresses lessons with regard to 1, 2 and 3 above.

(1) Whole-organisation Buy-in

Whatever their mandate and structure, the first and foremost lesson is that a broad range of agency staff – from senior management, to those responsible for populating the roster and those responsible for recruitment, to field-level personnel – need to buy-in to the roster concept *as an integrated effective emergency response tool* if it is to work. This suggests that any roster system must be properly institutionalised.⁶

Gaining buy-in is not straightforward, and interviewees highlighted two challenges associated with this which impact on efforts to identify good staff in sufficient numbers:

1. Regional and country directors are not always forthcoming when identifying staff for agency rosters. HR and roster coordinators have often found the need to actively 'push' these people to nominate their staff (a process referred to as a 'constant battle' by some respondents).

⁶ According to UNDP, if there is corporate commitment to enabling swift emergency response then being on the roster 'means you're already released', as the commitment to surge capacity is corporately driven. However, this is unlikely to be the case in smaller, less resource-rich NGOs.

2. Staff do not always see their involvement on these rosters as part of their career development.

Agencies also need to ensure adequate policies and plans are in place to support the operation of these rosters (for example, strategies for backfilling), the development of which are not always prioritised and the implementation of which are not always followed. This is why senior-level support is required which, in an ideal scenario, will introduce functioning accountability into the operation of the roster.

Many of these challenges are inter-linked: country directors will, for example, be more sympathetic to nominating staff if they can see that backfilling policies are in place and actually work or if, for example, they receive payment for releasing their staff member. This has considerable financial implications for an agency that has access to less unrestricted funding.

With regard to 2 above, it was mostly the more development-oriented agencies that mentioned this challenge. In comparison, the bigger dual mandate agencies with a longer history of emergency work reported that being associated with the humanitarian department is seen as bringing kudos (this might also be because two of these organisations, Oxfam-GB and World Vision, employ full-time standing teams). The variety of the work portfolio was also reported as an incentive, both for those on full-time, standing teams as well as those on some of the deployment rosters – eg, in the IRC.

Agencies most commonly mentioned three lessons with regard to overcoming the issue of buy-in and sourcing staff for their internal rosters:

- Make sure staff from the emergency units attend regional and national workshops to talk about emergency work and the role of roster members. Mercy Corps found this especially useful: as primarily a development organisation, it provides workshops and training at regional events on, for example, the ECB-developed 'Good Enough Guide' on accountability and impact assessment as well as on disaster risk reduction. This increases the likelihood that regional and country offices will feel that they're 'getting something from the humanitarian sector that is useful to them'.
- Build effective relationships between the emergency unit at HQ and the regional and country directors by, for example, giving 'positive PR' to the regional director / releasing office in public intra-agency events and also, for example, in newsletters. The IRC, Mercy Corps and CRS stressed this in particular. This can be an incentive in itself, but perhaps more powerful is when a country director sees her or his staff member return more motivated and with increased skills, which can be put to good use if an emergency occurs locally.
- Identify people in emergency preparedness plans with the skills that could be utilised in times of an emergency. This is often done by full-time staff who deploy to help a country office prepare these plans. Another approach is to have those on the rosters develop their own preparedness plans in the context of training workshops, and then to return with these to their country offices with something concrete for their manager to see. The development and use of these plans needs to be kept 'live' and monitored on an ongoing basis.

Buy-in for availability: the importance of trust and accountability

Building trust and accountability is also crucial to gaining buy-in and helping to ensure availability. Some lessons drawn here include:

- Honour pre-release agreements – in other words, do not violate the agreed assignment period. This will increase trust in the mechanism by the country directors.

Similarly, try not to allow the released staff member to apply for other jobs while away (though some agencies noted that if staff do this, this can act as an incentive for others to join as they see the deployed person actively developing their career track).

- Build accountability into the mechanisms for adhering to agreements on release. This will be helped by, for example, ensuring adequate backfilling arrangements are in place (see the Mercy Corps example below). Backfilling plans are particularly helpful when sending offices need to identify who to either recruit or which remaining staff will cover the essential elements of the post being temporarily vacated. Also, programmes find it easier to release staff if they have a strong team, reinforcing the importance of national level capacity building. (A suggested backfilling solution, apparently not yet tried, is to cross-train among country programmes as a backfilling strategy.)
- Another way of building trust, but also important for helping with availability, is to provide some kind of bridge funding to the sending offices in lieu of project money being made available.

Mitigating lack of availability

- To mitigate lack of availability, the IFRC operates a 'call model' for its roster system. This means that the agency puts, for example, five people on call for each of the identified required positions. All information about these people is contained on a website and when an emergency is called, this site generates full text messages and emails to these people who then select in. This website is hosted in Finland and sponsored by the Finnish Red Cross.
- MedAir has found that building in flexibility is the best way to address availability, particularly as it operates an external 'roster'. The agency has three deployable categories: people who leave within 48 hours for 1-2 weeks; those who leave within 2 weeks for 1-2 months; and those who leave within a month for 3 months. (This is made easier because the agency is less concerned with continuity due to the predominantly medical nature of its rapid deployments.) The agency has also found it effective to ask people if they'd like to be on its roster before they leave MedAir assignments. This is because they have found that the best time to negotiate potential absence with future employers is when negotiating the terms of a new job.

Promising practice: Mercy Corps' Global Response Team Guidelines

An evaluation of Mercy Corps' GEO led the agency to conclude that it was not adequately structured as a first responder. As a result, in 2005 the agency established its Global Response Team (GRT) and, in drawing up the guidelines for the operation of this team, incorporated lessons learned about different aspects of surge capacity. Some of these relate to staff availability and backfilling. (Mercy Corps has used the GRT on only limited occasion since its establishment due to the lower number of responses requiring its input. It has therefore not yet fully 'tested' this mechanism.) For example:

Letter of Understanding: Upon completion of the selection process, the Country Director, the GRT member and the Director of GEO agree to a Letter of Understanding. The letter reiterates the conditions for deployment detailed in these guidelines. The letter also reinforces GEO commitment to return GRT staff to their posts within the maximum period, a commitment that has been a critical measure of success with other roster systems. Every six months, GRT members and Country Directors confirm their continued participation by responding to a GEO e-mail/phone call. If the GRT member or Country Director is not able to recommit, then that position is made vacant for the next round of applications.

Deployment: There is no guarantee that once a candidate is accepted onto the GRT and goes through the training that s/he will be deployed to an emergency. Many emergencies are handled entirely by the regular Mercy Corps staff in a country where the crisis occurs.

If an emergency occurs and Mercy Corps' President invokes the emergency response protocol, a decision may be made to send a GEO team to respond. The Team Leader/Country Director leading the response will work with the GEO to decide which positions need to be filled and which GRT members' skills are needed. GEO will contact the GRT members' Country Directors to confirm their availability for deployment. Should the GRT member refuse a deployment without the prior establishment of a "blackout date," s/he risks being removed for consideration for future deployments.

Blackout Dates: GRT candidates and their Country Directors can establish "blackout dates" which are dates when the GRT members are absolutely not available for deployment. This can be done on the application form at the time of application, during the semi-annual renewal process, or at other times during the year.

The Backstopping plan: It is extremely important that all Country Directors realise that the GRT members will be out for as long as 12 weeks. Country Directors are responsible for making sure that the GRT members' regular responsibilities are covered during the time when members are deployed. The CD approves a "backstopping plan" for the GRT member outlining how his/her work will be covered while s/he is deployed. The plans constitute a one or more page document outlining how the GRT member's regular duties/responsibilities will be covered during a deployment. This should include names of staff persons who will be assisting during this time, and must be signed by the country director.

(2) HR Management

The second most important lesson with regard to roster management is to make sure there is adequate HR capacity to manage the tool – both in terms of time required to properly screen and clear candidates, as well as manage relationships with those on the mechanism. Agencies that rely on rosters for rapid response under-invest in this capacity at their peril.

Rodolfo Siles of CARE US reflects:

The critical element is not the tool but the design of the processes and the governance to effectively manage the information. Once that is defined, agreed and people given responsibilities for it, the technology becomes an enabler that facilitates the execution of the process.

As with any other initiative it needs strong sponsorship that will ensure the tool will support roster management processes within each agency and not the other way around. If those processes are not in place or at least defined, the tool will be useless. The development of any such project should be process driven rather than technology driven, and that means identifying ownership for the tool and staff responsible for managing it to ensure the data is current, relevant and correct. Finding the technology then is much easier.

HR management in this context of this chapter also refers to a series of policies and practices to support roster staff, including comprehensive incentive packages as well as many of the issues addressed in Chapter 4, such as duty of care and staff development.

Some lessons learnt

Make proper time for information gathering

- Since a key lesson for rapid deployment is to deploy pre-screened personnel, time must be made to properly check applications and ensure minimum quality requirements. This can be a challenge if those involved in the interview process work remotely, and proper planning and coordination is required. Nevertheless, it is important to involve technical experts as well as those most familiar with national contexts and standards in the screening of candidates.

- It is imperative that rosters are constantly updated if the utility of the roster is to be maintained. Moreover, in order to maintain their flexibility new members need to be continually sought.
- In addition, if agencies develop a simple matrix of fields of expertise and levels of professional competence when thinking about how best to gather, and use, information, this will help them to classify their candidates and so respond more
- quickly to position requests.

Focus on relationships and maintain engagement

- Know your staff and know them well: rosters (and registers) are considered most successful when their manager/s have personal relationships with those on their lists, and know their particular skills sets. This is also important for full-time standing teams: if not enough effort is put into their support, development and line-management, they too will 'disappear'.
- It is also important to provide sufficient information and clarity with regard to staff assignments: where they're going; for how long; the parameters of their engagement.
- The above will help to build trust, which is viewed as particularly important for external 'rosters' when members will be required to 'put their lives on hold, get time off their regular job, and get on the plane as soon as possible'.
- Develop an active strategy to maintain engagement with roster members. For example, some agencies put in annual or bi-annual calls to their deployable staff, as well as, for example, send out quarterly newsletters. CARE Australia, which operates an external 'roster', draws on its ERT members between emergencies by taking them on training programmes or using them to backfill in the CARE Australia office or overseas. As this can be organised in advance it is easier for the staff to get time off work. Staff in Oxfam-GB's humanitarian department speak to their assigned HSPs once a month.
- Oxfam-GB operates a system of specialist registers in addition to its HSPs. For the two largest registers in the Public Health division, they have hired an additional 'recruitment executive' whose role is to keep people on the register 'warm'; keep their details up to date; and investigate innovative ways to populate the registers.

Given the importance of managing individual expectations and availability, some agencies, such as MSF, are now beginning to consider issues of quality vs quantity when building their rosters. Rosters (and registers) that aren't updated regularly and are not sufficiently supported by staff in terms of regular individual contact, are considered 'useless'.

Build in a strong, professional capacity development component

- Training is essential, and helps with both preparedness and staff retention.
- Training can be augmented by having each roster member 'counter-parted' with someone in HQ, for example, in the technical units. The IRC encourage team members and technical unit staff to set aside time to work together on joint projects and sets money aside in its annual budget for this, though obviously needs to work within annual targets to cover the % time that people need to be deployed.
- It is also useful to facilitate regular 'learning forums'. In Oxfam, the HSPs are brought together once a year, in addition to their technical and management training, with the objective of helping them to reflect and improve upon their work.

- Set up, for example sharepoint (CRS) or yahoo groups (the IRC) to encourage communities of practice among team members and between team members and technical specialists in the wider organisation.

Ensure clarity of purpose and parameters around deployment

- Provide clear information on how involvement in the roster can lead to career development, and make sure to provide adequate assignment feedback and performance appraisal to this end. Clear Terms of Reference should be provided for all deployments.
- Make sure not to disrupt the deployed staff member's existing salary structure but rather incentivise appropriately through, for example, additional hardship allowances; augmented salaries to put the deployed staff member on a par with other internationals; adequate R & R and other 'duty of care' responsibilities such as counselling.
- Agencies have also found it helpful to assign a maximum deployment time for these personnel each year given the issue of burn-out. For those in full-time positions outside of their roster commitments, this will be another way of building trust with their sending offices.

A coordinated response

- Federated agencies in particular should try to ensure a coordinated response so that the country office is not swamped with offers for additional personnel from numerous HR sources. A focal point needs to be nominated for this communication.

Case study 13: World Vision's Regional Response Team

World Vision's Regional Response Team (RRT) was first set up in Africa seven years ago. Its objective is to be the first line of response in category 2 emergencies – ie, emergencies that can be contained within the region.

The RRT targets national and regional staff and, since its foundation, has involved over 58 people. All those on the team are members of regional or national offices. The initial group of 20 staff were identified through a series of visits to all the national offices in Africa as well as through a series of regional workshops. These visits also focused on relationship building and helping people see the value of the RRT. Those selected were chosen on the basis of 'right attitude rather than right skills': at the time the relief group in World Vision had developed a somewhat negative image as 'cowboys' which led the agency to the focus on the sorts of behavioural competencies already mentioned.

Staff involved in the RRT undergo 10 days training every nine months. This includes training in their technical areas; humanitarian standards and principles; and physical simulations, among other things. Training as a team was found to encourage cohesiveness, which helped when members of the group were either deployed together or in sub-groups into emergencies. (Save-UK believes that 'unless you have created teams it doesn't work', noting that team cohesiveness makes an 'unbelievable difference'.)

Many RRT staff have gone on to senior positions within World Vision, which views this mechanism as a leadership feeder school and a way of building future relief managers. Staff have to have been deployed numerous times before being promoted. Old members of the team move into an 'alumni' and are invited to coach and mentor new members. Some alumni therefore always attend the annual training workshops.

To begin with World Vision had variable success ensuring members' availability. However, once the national directors realised that having RRT members in their offices actually built their own capacity to respond and meant they could avoid 'calling in the cavalry' this became less of a problem. In fact

another challenge was created: RRT members were given more and more responsibility in their own teams, meaning that they became more difficult to pull out for reasons of increased seniority. Hence the decision to keep this particular roster system flexible by moving people into alumni positions and recruiting new members on a regular basis.

World Vision regularly synthesises learning about key aspects of its emergency response, and this includes a set of learnings around the RRT. These lessons, along with their suggested solutions, can be found in Annex 2.

Based on an interview with Eleanor Monbiot

(3) The IT Solution

IT tools to manage rosters and registers don't need to be built from scratch and web applications, such as recruitment systems, can provide functionality over the web to allow organisations to 'rent' a tool without the need to install it in-house. All the tool does is collect data from staff and provide the ability to search the database for specific criteria and select staff members that best fit need. The success of roster management is not defined by the tool but by the relevance, timelines and accuracy of the information held by each agency.

A number of different companies offer this type of service. The suggestions provided below are not an endorsement of any one of them, but agencies might find it useful to look at what they offer, including functionality, to get an idea of what is possible and what is available:

- www.taleo.com
- www.icims.com
- www.kenexa.com
- www.silkroadtech.com
- www.virtualedge.com

Of the seven ECB agencies interviewed, only World Vision currently operates a web-based register and roster system, though other agencies have web-based recruitment databases. Information on the World Vision system can be found in Case Study 14 below.

Case study 14: The World Vision Register and Roster System

World Vision's register, of which the roster is a part, is accessible through WVI's Navigator system, and is made up of a database and a Web interface which is fully integrated with the database itself. The objective of the register is to develop a pool of competent and skilled human resources that could be deployed to any large-scale humanitarian crisis anywhere in the world for a short period of time in all major sectors (finance, HR, IT, etc). The register, through its roster, then compliments other response teams in WVI (ie, GRRT and RRT, etc).

Technical functionality

The Web interface provides general information about the register, its purposes and how it functions, explaining the processes involved, as well as a navigation menu, with various relevant links, including a link to a quarterly report of available staff for deployment. The intent of the quarterly report is to allow offices to view a calendar (ROSTER) of available candidates with their technical sectors. The advantage with this is that the requesting manager is knowledgeable of people available at the time of a crisis so as to engage with respective stakeholders.

It is within the web interface that all candidate nominations are done. Once a nomination of a candidate is done either by self or management or other nominating party within World Vision, the process of candidates is fully automated. The candidate's manager, as well as sector valuers, must approve all nominations before the candidate is activated on the register and subsequently the ROSTER.

The Database

The Lotus Notes database is where all data resides. It is distinctly separate from the Web interface, yet still fully interfaced with. For example, all documents and edits are done in the database and then are reflected on the web interface. This is a manual operation as with any DB management and within the scope of the register coordinator.

The database itself is accessible only to a limited number of people; such as the Global Relief Register (GRR) Coordinator, the International Staffing Solutions Operations Manager, the HEA HR director, and the IMG Lotus Notes administrator (who of necessity has to have universal access to all WV systems). However, the GRR Coordinator maintains access rights to the Web interface of the Register where there is absolutely no compromise of private or professional candidate information.

Nomination onto the register

The steps of the nomination process are as follows:

1. A nomination is made through this facility - by manager of nominee, nominee him/herself, or anyone else within World Vision on the web.
2. The manager of nominee approves nomination of staff member - the manager's approval form is automatically delivered to the manager by the system.
3. The nominee creates his/her profile directly - the form is automatically delivered to nominee by the system.
4. The GRR Coordinator pre-screens a nominee's profile against the core competencies and the general requirements for that sector, before allowing the validators to assess the technical competencies.
5. The sector validator is then asked to confirm or assess the suitability of a nominee for a response based on information in the profile against the technical guidelines for that sector. A form will be automatically delivered to the validator by the system to capture their assessment comments on a nominee.
6. After the validation process, the nominee is either finally accepted (or disqualified) into the Global Relief Register. The GRR Coordinator will notify nominees of their status in relation to the registration process.

People management

The GRR has a full-time Coordinator who has a background in HR and passion in IT. The major responsibilities of this position are:

- i) Marketing the Register to increase knowledge and registration of candidates.
- ii) Management of the register database in terms of the coordination of all registration processes from nominees to validators.
- iii) Generating emails to candidates who have / haven't been accepted.
- iv) Sending out orientation materials to accepted members.
- v) Periodically making contact with GRR members including those initially rejected but who might have upgraded their skills.
- vi) In times of emergency, negotiating with GRR members their release with their supervisors for deployment.
- vii) Working with the receiving offices, TORs and deployment agreements for candidates, including the coordination of travel logistics, pre-boarding and onsite orientation.
- viii) Carrying out, with the GRRT member and the HR person in the field, exit interviews; this is fed back to the sending office.

Areas identified for improvement include:

Enhancing the technical functionality to allow people to access the web from any location and also allowing external candidates to nominate themselves by capturing their own information on the web.

Chapter 3 - Summary Points

- Surge capacity mechanisms typically comprise planning mechanisms, and recruitment mechanisms. Recruitment mechanisms might be internal or external and rosters or registers are used to plan for and ensure adequate staffing levels.
- Quality is ensured by a focus on staff development plans, including training and, for example, mentoring.
- Sourcing staff for internal rosters and registers requires special attention. External recruitment is equally challenging, and the humanitarian sector needs to ensure that it is sufficiently creative in its external recruitment in order not narrow the loop of quality of humanitarian personnel. Agencies address this issue through a number of means, including operating 'hot lists'; seeking imaginative methods of attracting new staff; and deploying promising staff into non-acute emergency settings where they can gain experience for future deployments as 'first-wave' responders. A number of agencies also operate 'retention rosters' and fellowship and training schemes, most typically to encourage the retention and development of senior managers but also to attract and train promising new talent
- To facilitate rapid deployment, agencies do well when they focus on developing policies, procedures and tools that assist with smooth, fast deployment. For example, to do with rapid recruitment, as well as rapid induction and orientation; by operating a 'watch system' for their full-time standing teams; by closely managing the work programmes of all of their deployable staff; and by practically supporting their deployable staff, including with appropriate incentives packages
- 'Second-wave' and continuity planning have been shown to impact on programme quality, accountability and sustainability. All agencies struggle in this area, and have sought to address this difficult issue through a number of practices including the development of staffing plans for the ongoing response right from the beginning of a new emergency, and attempting to regularly counter-part international emergency and country-level staff.

Chapter 4: Enabling effective surge

Chapter Summary

This chapter identifies the ‘enablers’ of surge capacity, i.e. the factors, or practices, or policies or approaches which determine whether an organisation successfully surges or not.

Key to an effective surge is undoubtedly a high degree of organisational agility and a strategic contribution from the HR function.

In addition, we have seen highlighted the importance of preparedness, flexibility, durability and sustainability. Strengthening capacity at a local level is one way of achieving this and this chapter gives some attention to current approaches.

To provide some structure for our consideration of what enables effective surge, let us group the key enablers into four categories:

- Strategic vision and supportive agency culture
- The role of the HR function or department
- HR policies and practices
- The strength of local capacity

The cross cutting nature of the role of HR is a recurrent theme and we will return to this. Research has shown that agencies often struggle in the area of human resource capacity for surge response. This is backed up by a number of commentators including the authors of the HRR (2005:9) who observe:

The major gap identified is the low level of preparedness of humanitarian organizations in terms of human resources[.] In the area of human resources, major shortcomings in managerial capacities are acknowledged. Recruitment policies, in particular during emergencies, fail to provide, in a timely fashion, the number and quality of required staff. Training within organizations, in general, is limited in scope and number of dedicated hours.

Strategic vision and a supportive agency culture

Surge capacity represents a particular way of thinking and of doing things. Rudy von Bernuth of SC-US notes that developing an effective, sustainable surge capacity involves having a comprehensive, cross-departmental vision, and is about effecting a changed way of thinking across an organisation as much as it is having the physical, material and cash resources in place to enable surge. This means that agencies will need to move from reacting to emergencies to anticipating them, as well as take into account the preparedness demands that this will place on the organisation.

“First and foremost, an agency needs to have a comprehensive strategic vision that frames its emergency response, including its surge response.”

First and foremost, therefore, an agency needs to have a comprehensive strategic vision that frames its emergency response, including its surge response. Developing an associated array of aims and objectives will help to ‘set the tone for discussions of the relative priority of emergency and development work, and the responsibilities of programme staff for preparing for, and responding to, emergencies’ (Willits-King & Darcy, 2005). Equally important is that an agency reach agreement and support the development of each of the component parts of its surge capacity, including understanding how each of the components relates to, and supports, each other, as well as how they best serve the structure and mandate of the organisation and, ultimately, the affected populations themselves.

Case Study 15: Enabling Factors in SC-US

Half of SC-US’s resources are linked to its ability to mount emergency response. However, given its historic development focus it has decided to focus on preparing and managing its country offices as a priority, and is now focusing on regionalising its roster system. It has focused on putting resources into preparing its COs to respond, backed up by specialist technical capacity at HQ. Responses are managed at country level in all but the most extraordinary of circumstances, and even then the agency tries not to ‘step-aside’ the development hierarchy, particularly as it ‘doesn’t make sense’ to have separate accounting, logistics and HR systems. Unless a country office is therefore unwilling to respond or really clearly doesn’t have the capacity to take the lead, line management will stay *within* the development side and within the development department at HQ.

This approach is facilitated by SC-US having an ‘integrated mandate’ rather than a ‘dual mandate’. The distinction is that managers are no longer either development or relief, but must be capable of leading programme delivery across the spectrum.

Another critical factor for SC-US has been to develop two major capacities in its emergency response unit: a management support division as well as the technical support division. This has enabled the agency to clearly define and develop management as a critical element in emergency response; an issue that NGOs have not always perhaps historically recognised.

A small number of the agencies interviewed also introduced the idea of ‘durability’ and the need to respond not just with first-wave deployments but also with second-wave deployment, and to start planning for this right away. This is related to ideas about stability – for some achieved by having first-wave responders ‘counterpart’ with national staff so that continuity is built into the surge process. It is also related to sustainability and the extent to which an agency may be involved in disaster mitigation and risk reduction work, as well as the extent to which the emergency units in dual mandate agencies work with their development colleagues.

Finally, part of building emergency surge capacity lies in an agency’s commitment to learning from its experience. The arguments for agencies to become ‘learning organisations’ are well-known and include, for example, the need to identify ways to increase quality and accountability of emergency surge response. Equally important is the need for agencies to shift from being reactive to being more proactive. This implies a requirement to invest heavily in learning to enable this shift to take place. Operations units need to be able to experiment, including in inter- and intra-agency collaboration, and any new ways of working will only be useful if the agency is committed to feedback, knowledge management and learning.

Case Study 16: World Vision's Strategic Approach

World Vision's stated objective is to be able to respond to emergencies anywhere in the world, including two major ones simultaneously. This was agreed among all members of the World Vision partnership as the starting point for building its emergency capacity. Agreement on a shared vision took several months to achieve, and was followed by an ongoing process of policy development. Within a family or partnership structure, having an agreed policy is vital to a common and integrated approach. The following elements have been developed to strengthen World Vision's capacity (see earlier and Annex 1 for more information on these elements):

1. An agreed relief policy among the partnership, with the objective of being able to respond to all emergencies, including two large emergencies at any one time, within 24-72 hours.
2. A dedicated 22-strong Global Rapid Response Team.
3. Regional relief directors and response teams.
4. Development of detailed standards, policies and procedures.
5. Liaison teams in New York, Geneva and Brussels.
6. A central non-operational humanitarian unit focusing on standards, policies, deployment capacity and interaction with UN agencies.
7. Bi-annual meetings of relief directors.
8. Initial disaster preparedness plans for all programme countries.
9. Stockpiled relief supplies in four warehouses, to a value of \$6 million.
10. A dedicated \$6 million emergency preparedness and response fund.

Taken from Willits-King and Darcy (2005)

Clear communication protocols

- An overarching requirement is to have clear lines of communication. Oxfam-GB has developed a tool to assist in this process. This constitutes a 'ways of working in an emergency agreement' that clarifies roles and communication lines of all HR personnel involved, and thus improves their ability to affect a coordinated and effective response.

Leadership

- Leadership is viewed as critical to the success of emergency operations, especially for countries with an existing agency presence. Of great importance, therefore, are policies that pre-designate lines of authority so that, once the level of emergency has been called it is clear who will take responsibility. Oxfam-GB has adopted a 'step-aside' policy that it can call on if required and which is effectively embedded in the emergency management plan tool. In comparison, SC-US emergency programmes stay within the management of the agency's country directors.
- Related to this, particularly for alliance or federated agencies, is the need to pre-designate an agency lead in order to clarify decision-making and communication pathways at field level.

Case Study 17: World Vision's Lesson with Defining Leadership Roles

Pre-designating lines of authority can prove particularly challenging in federated agencies, as experienced by World Vision. The national directors in World Vision have a lot of autonomy and power which often means that the level of responsibility of those from the emergency unit or the rapid response teams is not matched with similar authority. During the tsunami response the boards and directors from two of the affected-countries were reported to feel threatened by World Vision International's rapid scale-up and desire to deploy and re-deploy many staff to the affected region. Critical time was lost in negotiating with these offices about who would lead the response; a situation not uncommon across most of the agencies interviewed. (It was noted by a number of agencies, and legitimately so, that national offices often feel threatened by humanitarian 'cowboys' – a fear born out by many of the TEC studies which found that international actors have a tendency to 'brush aside' local capacity during the tsunami response; a finding also reflected for a number of years in ALNAP's annual *Review of Humanitarian Action*.)

The response of World Vision to this challenge has been to meet with the boards of their national offices to talk about emergency response, addressing such issues as why international staff can help in times of large-scale crisis and also introducing ideas about quality and accountability in emergency response. A response of the sector as a whole has been to introduce a clearer set of more behavioural-oriented competencies to avoid the deployment of technicians who don't always have well-developed inter-personal skills. Obviously in times of large-scale crisis there are still going to be pressures for quantity over quality, but at least the sector is beginning to recognise that 'soft skills' are as important as 'hard', which will hopefully lead to more holistic change over time.

The role of the HR function or department

"Probably the most critical **lesson** concerns the need to strategically elevate HR so that it is recognised as more than just an administrative function."

All of those interviewed noted that one of the defining factors in terms of an agency's ability to effect rapid deployment is the priority given to, and the location of, HR capacity, as well as the development of HR policies and practices to better enable rapid deployment. Specific HR issues are covered in more detail in this chapter, and information about the placement of the HR department is also addressed here in recognition of its strategic importance.

The role of HR in emergency and surge recruitment has had a 'painful past', especially with regard to the relationship between HR and the emergency units. As a result, all IWG agencies now have at a minimum either a specific HR manager who sits in HR (and who gives anywhere between 50-100% to this task), or an HR manager who sits in the emergency unit – though a couple of people reflected that these staff members are likely to be optimally effective if they sit in the emergency unit.

Additionally, some agencies deploy HR specialists to the field during emergencies from their emergency teams, while others deploy people from their HR department. In all these models these individuals are seen as vital bridges between the HR function and the emergency unit; they also sit in the midst of tensions between HR functions and emergency programming. As a result, all agencies noted the importance of clear, regular and transparent communication between the two. (Mercy Corps has a different set up; see the case study below).

Case Study 18: Mercy Corp's Leadership and Organisational Effectiveness Division

The importance of HR, particularly with regard to the function of recruitment – which, after all, is the basis of the quality of any agency's operation – is perhaps best captured by Mignon Mazique of Mercy Corps: 'if you don't get the right people at the right time then the whole operation is compromised'. Of all those agencies interviewed, Mercy Corps has a unique approach to HR because it has recognised that separate mechanisms are required for surge. Thus responsibility for recruitment and staff development lies in the Leadership and Organisational Effectiveness Division in the Executive Office of the agency, while HR functions related to compliance – such as firing, compensation and payroll – sit in the HR department. This division in HR functions has come about because of the recognition that:

[R]ecruitment is a future-oriented function that needs to be responsive to the demands, and vicissitudes, of the external world. This makes it a strategic business function, while the HR compliance functions support the agency's 'people agenda' by maintaining best HR practices in areas that could put the agency at risk. However, Mercy Corps didn't want recruitment held back by the necessarily more risk-averse compliance and maintenance mentality.

Nevertheless, the importance of good inter-departmental and personal relationships between HR and the Executive Office – as between all other departments with responsibility for surge – is central to creating a holistic HR and surge capacity.

Probably the most critical lesson concerns the need to strategically elevate HR so that it is recognised as more than just an administrative function, as shown in the Mercy Corps case study. Interestingly, Nigel Bruce of CARE Australia suggests that the effectiveness of HR is less about where it is placed in an organisation in comparison to the extent to which an organisation 'buys-in' to good HR practice. This is, perhaps, of particular importance if the HR emergency person sits in HR rather than the emergencies unit. He reflects:

There needs to be greater recognition that HR cannot be the sole domain of the HR department. For example, if we have a high turnover rate when HR asks managers why that is the response can sometimes be 'It's a heavy workload, that person just couldn't hack it.' When we ask the person who's leaving why they made that decision, sometimes the response is related to bad management skills. There's a serious disconnect there if managers only think they are managing a programme and the programme's outcomes rather than also thinking about their staff who are working and delivering that programme.

This critical issue was recognised in numerous CARE evaluations that suggested HR must not get boxed into an 'HR vs programming' situation but rather should work in tandem with the Country and Emergency Directors every step of the way. This is linked to an agency's responsibility for quality and accountability: HR needs to be there to tell programmes what is achievable with the capacity the agency has, and what is beyond its capacity; what is needed in core start-up teams and who could do what based on knowledge of who is available. This might have the beneficial effect that senior management is then able to advocate for increased surge capacity if it becomes clear that programme aims and objectives are not possible from an HR capacity point of view.

Strong HR capacity can increase accountability and quality

Agencies will also increase their ability to be more accountable if they invest in a strong HR capacity at both HQ and regional / country level. Such investment will enable them to better select, prepare and brief international personnel as well as handle issues as they arise on the ground in times of crisis.

In summary, whatever model an agency adopts it is essential to 'get HR right'. Overall, interviews suggest that there are still some 'pain points' concerning the role of HR and the emergency units, irrespective of the model employed. And while there is much that emergency units could do to understand better the importance of 'people rather than programmes first', certainly HR could be more responsive to changing programme staffing needs. As one respondent noted: 'HR teams are not business responsive enough; they often say "that's outside of HR procedures". They need to be more business focused and less procedural'.

HR Policies and practices

HR lessons for sourcing and recruiting staff

There are a number of cross-cutting lessons related to the role of HR in terms of sourcing and recruiting staff. These include the following:

- There needs to be sufficient investment in HR systems to enable effective sourcing and recruiting. Should insufficient HR systems be in place, then the seniority and experience of the HR person employed becomes all the more important. On this point, Mercy Corps notes the need to have the 'right number of recruiters' on board so that, among other things, they can do the appropriate 'behaviour checking' ahead of time to make sure deployment can happen rapidly in the case of an emergency.
- This is related to the lesson that the choice of the actual recruiter is key, and can affect the success of the recruitment process. This is covered extensively in the literature (as discussed, for example, in Glazebrook, 2006, and Loquercio *et al*, 2006). UNICEF notes that any emergency recruiter should have an understanding of both HR practices as well as emergency issues, including understanding programme content so that he/she can provide advice on which profiles an emergency manager might want. In the IFRC, the emergency recruiter is emergency trained and, among other things, supports all training for deployable staff.
- As noted earlier, hiring people with recognised behavioural competencies is becoming more important. Having a competency framework in place helps an organisation – especially its recruiters – to apply a more structured approach to selection and to thinking through the behaviours that a job entails, with a view to delivering better programming. Competency frameworks 'allow an organisation to recognise valid transferable skills and to expand the pool of potential candidates' (Loquercio *et al*, 2006), an important contribution in a sector that perceives its pool of potential employees as shrinking.⁷ They also increase the likelihood of ensuring that the staff hired are well-suited to the post to which they are appointed, so that both employer and employee are more likely to enjoy a long and productive relationship. This is also a critical factor in facilitating staff retention.
- Another critical lesson related to the quality of those hired is to ensure that no recruitment is handled by a single person. Having a thorough review of each individual also helps with regard to working against favouritism and reward, something that can happen when national staff are nominated onto rosters. Minimally, an HR and an emergency response specialist should be involved in any sourcing or recruitment process.

⁷ It is interesting to note from elsewhere in the literature (eg, Glazebrook 2006) 'recruiters believe that the [ongoing] primary reason behind prioritising technical qualifications – the reduction of risk – [is because] organisations do not have enough confidence in their selection procedures to choose staff based on other criteria.' Given the importance of behavioural competencies for programme quality and, for instance, greater accountability to affected populations, this becomes another reason for agencies to invest sufficiently in HR staff and in strategically elevating the role of HR more generally.

Rapid Deployment and Duty of Care⁸

Evaluations of emergency response often raise the subject of timeliness of response, and ECB agencies' efforts to increase the size of their rapid deployment tools are a direct response to this issue. This section provides lessons about the rapid deployment of staff from these internal mobilisation tools, as well as how to speed up external recruitment in times of an emergency.

Operations management tools used to support this process are numerous and include:

- Management toolkits that encourage the use of standard procedures that can be reproduced from one context to another. For example, Oxfam-GB uses its 'Minimum Requirements for the First Phase of an Emergency', a set of standards designed to enable greater speed and effectiveness in the agency's humanitarian response. These cover logistics and supply; human resources; legality and office management; and programme and overall management. They apply to the first 2-3 months of all emergencies. Mercy Corps has developed an 'Office in a Box', a set of flexible tools to enable rapid response and programme start up (see Case Study below).
- EPPs (within the context of the wider contingency plans).
- Generic job descriptions, lists of core positions and organograms.
- Rapid induction and orientation procedures, such as those developed by World Vision that are designed to help the agency hire and deploy new staff in an emergency.

Case Study 19: Office in a Box (Mercy Corps)

(Taken from ECB's Staff Capacity Initiative Review, February 2006) / <http://www.peopleinaid.org/resources/casestudies.aspx>

Mercy Corps' 'Office in a Box' contains a set of field-tested guidelines and manuals, and the following tools:

- New office start-up checklist
- Field asset manual
- Field warehouse manual
- Field administration manual
- Field procurement manual
- Field security manual
- Field fleet manual
- Field finance manual
- Tricks of the trade

Office in a Box combines best practices of Mercy Corps field offices with donor regulations to create consistent documents and templates needed for effective and compliant field operations management. This collection of tools and manual provides significant benefits:

- Less time spent on re-inventing the wheel while setting up an office, freeing up more time for programming.
- Quicker and better responses in emergencies thanks to strengthened systems that improve design and help prevent mistakes.
- More efficient use of organisational learning.
- More consistent approach in implementing agency's policies.
- Increased accountability.

Mercy Corps has allocated resources to train staff to use Office in a Box, and to keep the materials up-to-date.

⁸ Contingency planning should address all of the procedures in this area.

Induction and Orientation

Good induction and orientation are key components of rapid deployment. Oxfam-GB found in its feedback from deployed staff that the lack of good induction and orientation was detrimental to their ability to ‘hit the ground running’.

Broadly speaking, induction is the learning process by which an organisation receives and familiarises new employees with the organisation.⁹ Orientation, on the other hand, generally tends to be more country and programme-specific and takes place at field level.¹⁰ During rapid deployment, agencies sometimes combine these processes and World Vision, for example, has developed a number of rapid operations management tools including a Rapid Induction Orientation tool.

Some of the main lessons learnt regarding induction and orientation include:

- Do both. Induction for those who are internally redeployed is, of course, less important, but it’s absolutely essential for any new staff deployed during emergencies.
- Although guidelines often exist on paper these are often not followed in the heat of an emergency. It is therefore important for agencies to develop rapid induction and orientation policies and practices, with scope for them to be customised by HR staff at country-level. This will mean that key, minimum information is at least provided to deployed staff; staff plans should subsequently include opportunities for ongoing orientation once in the field. MedAir, which operates an external roster, has reduced its usual 3-day briefing to half-a-day in emergencies, and will even meet people at airports to do the briefing there.
- Both induction (for new staff) and orientation (for all) gets better each time HR is involved earlier in the response.
- Particularly in federated agencies, induction and orientation processes can be different, sometimes leading to a lack of coherence on the ground. This can affect programme quality and needs to be addressed as a priority.
- As agencies seek to increase their pool of deployable staff and build the capacity of promising candidates, they may not always deploy staff that know the agency in a second wave response. This makes induction all the more important. It was noted that World Vision’s development of a rapid induction tool is anticipated to help convince programme managers that ‘new comers’ are OK to recruit into the second wave.

Duty of Care

Ensuring policies and practices are in place to properly support staff wellness not only during but also after deployment is another important aspect of developing surge capacity. As previously noted by one respondent: ‘There’s a serious disconnect if managers only think they are managing a programme and the programme’s outcomes rather than also thinking about their staff who are working and delivering that programme’.

⁹ This information most often consists of information concerning its structure, function, norms, rules and procedures as well as, these days, information relating to humanitarian principles and standards. Inductions normally take place at the site of recruitment or at a regional or central hub.

¹⁰ Orientation involves a country-level ‘briefing’ as well as clarifying the scope of work for the individual, which is essential before somebody is deployed. It also includes, for example, briefing on the security situation and sensitive social or political issues. One of those interviewed from the region noted that it is better *not* to provide information on the local context if this information is out-of-date or incomplete in any way, as this could lead to faulty decision-making.

Duty of care covers issues to do with security and safety; health care insurance; and staff wellness. Dan Kelly of World Vision identifies the support of staff wellness as one of his agency's key lessons. The organisation has invested heavily in providing staff support through contracting an external team. Though this is 'very expensive', a recent staff-care survey showed that staff satisfaction levels were some of the highest in the agency and wellness support has led to increased retention.

Other organisations also provide support. For example, the IRC is creating a cadre of stress counsellors and guidelines on stress management; Mercy Corps provides a 'life balance' counselling service; World Vision is looking to additionally develop the support it provides by guaranteeing a minimum level of material support to affected-country staff, as well as looking to source local counsellors who know local languages; and CARE Australia operates a 24/7 Employee Assistance Programme that provides counselling services to all employees and their families. This service is contracted out and accessed through CARE Canada's counselling services.

Of course all agencies have policies concerning R & R, sickness pay and leave entitlements which contribute toward overall staff care packages, as do increased salaries for all international staff, further financial increments for particularly difficult deployments, and one-off, no-questions-asked payments for, for instance, child care responsibilities back home (UNDP provides \$5,000 for this). Agencies should also have sufficient stocks of, for example, 'start-up house kits' crated up and ready to fly, including camp-beds, so that staff have adequate sleeping arrangements in the first few days while housing can be found. Other approaches an agency might adopt are included in the ECB's Staff Capacity Initiative Review done in February 2006.

Case Study 20: UNDP's Incentives Package for Surge Staff

An incentive package is being developed for all surge staff deployed by UNDP. It is envisaged that this package will provide a flexible range of initiatives that recognise that surge advisors will be asked to deploy to difficult and insecure locations with minimum notice. It is likely that in these situations that some additional personal expenses will be incurred and that there should be time for family reunion upon return. The package will not represent automatic entitlements and benefits but a menu of choices to be considered on a case-by-case basis, depending on the special circumstances of each assignment and the surge advisor's personal situation. It is also noted that the challenging experiences gained as a surge advisor will have positive implications for a staff member's career prospects and should be appropriately acknowledged through UNDP's Recognition and Rewards Scheme.

HR lessons for deployment

There are a number of cross-cutting lessons related to the role of HR with regard to rapid deployment:

- Deployment has been shown to be more rapid if those involved in HR focus on pre-positioning staff in times of emergency. CRS reflects: 'it's about lining people up regardless of what's happening; be anticipatory of emergency needs, don't always wait for assessments ... it sounds elementary but it matters'. This is particularly relevant if the emergency units don't house special emergency recruiters – though even if these positions sit within the emergency unit they need to work on the basis of anticipating need, for example, by alerting staff on stand-by that they might have to deploy while the agency decides what category of response to call.
- A pivotal lesson, mentioned by all agencies, is the need to have an HR person on the ground at the beginning of any rapid response. In MSF-UK, the deployed HR person

helps with entry visits and work permits, issues concerning healthcare, accommodation, as well as employment issues in the local context. He/she will also welcome people and spend time going to the airport to pick up new staff as well as organising internal flights.

- Additionally, federated agencies have found it important to decentralise HR so that any central coordinating HR function has an emergency HR focal point in each of the main member agencies. It is also important to identify regional HR focal points.
- Lack of the right number of HR staff at HQ and similarly lack of capacity in the HR team in the country office has also been found to strongly influence the ability of an agency to respond. This is because it directly correlates to the amount of time that senior management and the technical specialists have to focus on the programme response as opposed to getting caught up, for example, in issues concerning accommodation when first in a country.
- If an agency does need to employ less experienced people in times of a large-scale response, then it is important to short-list and interview as many people as possible away from the field manager so that his or her time is not distracted from the ongoing emergency.
- An overarching requirement is to have clear lines of communication. If a number of different people and departments are involved in identifying and preparing staff for deployment they should arrange to teleconference to ensure that they are all working with the same information. Similarly, people working in HQ should be clear who their HR contacts are in the field, and vice versa. As noted earlier, Oxfam-GB has developed two tools to assist in these processes.

Finally, many agencies mentioned the importance of conducting some form of learning review after each emergency deployment; it was also noted that this is not systematically done. World Vision's humanitarian learning project represents the only substantial investment in learning across the seven ECB agencies. It conducts lesson learning reviews after each emergency response, including an assessment of the role of HR. An example of one of the documents from these reviews can be found in Annex 2.

Learning through Training and Staff Development

Earlier sections in this chapter identified skills development as contributing to the maintenance of staff quality as well as staff retention – two issues of importance in terms of an agency's ability to both continue to deliver its programming, as well as improve on the quality of its current practice. Although training and staff development activities, including career development, might be time-consuming and expensive, not providing such learning opportunities for staff and managers is undoubtedly more expensive. This is because it can lead to 'loss of staff, the costs associated with recruiting new staff, especially managers, and the costs associated with poor programme implementation' (People In Aid, 2004), all of which will have a detrimental impact on the affected populations. Providing learning opportunities is therefore also important from an accountability point of view.

Recently a number of independent studies, including the TEC Synthesis Report (Telford *et al*, 2006) and the Clinton NGO Impact Initiative (OSE, 2006) have commented on the lack of professionalism that predominates in the humanitarian sector, and the negative effect this has on programme quality. Both reports call for greater regulation in the aid sector and professionalism of aid workers, both national and international, to 'ensure a predictably high quality of international disaster response' (Telford *et al*, 2006). This creates a dilemma: how do agencies continue to deliver in real time within the context of increasing demands for professionalism and all this implies in terms of increased financial input as well as diverting staff into training and other career development activities?

Improving on quality also implies the need to plan comprehensive learning strategies, predicated on a variety of different tools. As noted by Mark Janz of World Vision:

The issue of quality (and impact) takes us into a whole new area with regard to ... evaluation and M&E. Where do NGOs get resources for this, especially as [the sector] is output oriented? To do a more professional job and not just be functional will require [planning] a very comprehensive and strategic model around analysis, monitoring, research and evaluation. If we are going to do all this in a more professional manner, different kinds of resources are going to be needed.

The People In Aid Handbook, *Enhancing Quality in HR Management in the Humanitarian Sector*, devotes a chapter to the importance of training and career development. It notes the need for agencies to have a strategic organisational commitment to this, and usefully introduces a training and development model to manage these processes. Below is a summary of some lessons and promising practices as shared by the agencies involved in this research.

Invest at the organisational level

Gareth Owen of SC-UK reflects that only a real 'step-change' in agency management and culture will enable sufficient investment in training and career development. Yet both the HRR (2005) and, for instance, UN-DPKO (2006) note that yearly training is barely sufficient to deliver the kind of increase in quality that is required.

Senior leadership in organisations needs not only to understand this so that they assign appropriate resources to training, but also so that they can collaboratively lobby donors at the highest level. Again, Gareth Owen: 'It's the training; then coaching; then providing continual support; the biggest lesson is "it's the people stupid"'. Costs are only prohibitive if they haven't been planned for. Senior staff can make money available; they can bring it in.'

To create this sort of genuine, quality capacity will cost tens of thousands of pounds. As alluded to by a number of agencies, corporations are interested in assisting NGOs in this way and understand the needs of training and coaching. By opening up and engaging with those towards which it has traditionally had antipathy, the sector might gain the benefit of expertise and, potentially, impact on the practices of these entities themselves.

Exploring different types of learning

Training must not be the primary focus. The ALNAP *Review of Humanitarian Action* (2004) explored the preferred learning methods of field level staff, and these were found to involve learning by doing in the context of their daily jobs rather than being taken out of their daily contexts for training at HQ or even regional level. Respondents to this research also drew this as an important lesson. Many agencies approach this by, for example, pairing staff for the purposes of coaching and mentoring. One respondent suggested it would be preferable to use training money to put people into emergency situations so they have 'real-life engagement' with emergencies, making the distinction between 'practice' and 'training'.

Some agencies have set up sharepoint or yahoo groups to encourage communities of practice among those on their rosters and registers and between these members and technical specialists in the wider organisation. CRS has started a new sharepoint initiative, and the IRC pairs its ERT members with technical unit staff and encourages them to set aside time to work together on joint projects, setting money aside in its annual budget for this. Oxfam-GB HSPs take part in regular, formalised learning forums in their specialist technical areas, and are also involved in three web-groups, depending on their discipline: food security, engineering, or public health.

Providing comprehensive career development support

Another lesson for many agencies is to have good career development policies and practices in place. In particular, performance reviews are important. These support staff development by linking to a competency framework. Regular appraisals are part of a well-developed performance review system. These are used to acknowledge good performance, identify weaknesses and plan for future training to augment gaps in the staff person's skills.

For example, World Vision's experience is that, if end-of-deployment appraisals are based on the deployed person's ToR then this provides a framework for discussion and has been found to be very motivational. This is because it not only becomes task-specific and so has a useful quantitative component, but it is also based on core competencies and so involves discussion about *how* the person performed in the job – thus touching upon the 'softer' behavioural competencies mentioned earlier.

Adequate de-briefing and in-country feedback also contributes an important quality control mechanism, because otherwise there is no basis on which to take remedial action should there only be informal feedback on a receiving office's experience with the deployed person.

A suggested solution, apparently not yet tried, is to cross-train staff between country programmes. This could also act as a backfilling strategy.

The strength of local capacity

Key points

Crises happen when communities run out of capacity to adjust. Given the changing, and increasing, nature of humanitarian need; the unpredictability of emergencies; and the overall low, as well as disproportionate, levels of international funding, strengthening capacities at regional and country level is imperative. In particular, the current funding environment means that maintaining staff capacity between emergencies cannot be guaranteed, which reinforces the need to strengthen country capacity.

More important, however, is the recognition that the most appropriate and sustainable responses occur when led by local and national-level capacities. Surge and other mechanisms can only ever be 'palliative solutions' (European Commission, 2004).

It is not surprising, therefore, that an ECB Learning Event in Washington DC (12-13 April 2007) identified country capacity strengthening as perhaps the most important component of future emergency response. This is recognised in a number of different studies which continue to point to the failure of the humanitarian and wider development communities to strengthen local and national capacities, with the attendant familiar results concerning lack of accountability and sustainability and, in the worst instances, destruction of country capacity (see, eg, Scheper *et al*, 2006).

A number of commentators have noted that efforts to strengthen these capacities will only happen 'within the context of a longer term perspective, with longer-term funding, partnerships and engagement in processes bridging the divide between humanitarian and development programming' (ALNAP, 2005). The TEC Synthesis Report (Telford *et al*, 2006), on the other hand, argues strongly that strengthening local capacity in particular will not happen to any significant degree unless there is a fundamental reorientation of the humanitarian sector, with international aid actors becoming facilitators of communities' own response and working in a more demand-led way. This is reflected in Peter Walker's call for humanitarian organisations to become 'adaptation facilitators' (ECB Learning Event, Washington DC, 2007).

Moreover, development of national and local capacity is integral to poverty reduction and therefore the achievement of the millennium development goals. Capacity constraints mitigate sustainable development. Agencies interviewed for this study increasingly recognise that developing country-level capacity for emergency response involves efforts across whole organisations, including better integration of efforts between humanitarian, recovery and development programming – both at an intra- and inter-agency level.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide an analysis of the full range of challenges and tensions associated with building and strengthening country level capacity. For this, readers are directed to 'Institutional Capacity Building amid Humanitarian Action' in ALNAP 2005. Rather, what is presented here are a number of examples and lessons learnt with regard to ECB, and other, agencies' efforts to at least attempt to help their regional and national offices respond more effectively in emergencies. It has not been easy to obtain a clear picture of the outcomes of these efforts because of the paucity of evaluations and reviews related to agencies' investment in capacity strengthening in this area.

Strengthening in Practice: what does it look like?

Strengthening country capacity for emergency surge response is manifested in the practice of emergency classification, whereby all agencies stipulate that only the largest emergencies will require the assistance of international personnel and be managed solely from HQ. Otherwise all emergencies are to be handled first by the country office; then with the support of the regional office; and sometimes through a combination of the regional office and emergency unit at HQ, depending on the severity of the crisis and the particular country office's capacity. It is the stated intention of most agencies to strengthen national and regional capacity with the intention that, over time, these offices will require less and less international human resource assistance because they will be prepared to respond independently. That said, many commentators continue to observe, year on year, that there nonetheless seems to be a tendency for aid agencies to try to 'catch up' through capacity building *during* and after emergencies (Scheper *et al*, 2006).

At a practical level, ECB agencies are doing a number of things to strengthen their regional and national offices to be better prepared and to respond with greater autonomy. They are doing in three main ways: through preparedness of personnel and of associated rapid deployment tools; through partnership; and through programming.

Preparedness of personnel and rapid deployment tools

Willits-King & Darcy (2005) note that the IFRC probably has the strongest commitment to investing in preparedness in terms of international good practice. The agency identified disaster preparedness as one of its four core areas under 'Strategy 2010' that it adopted in 1999. It has a disaster preparedness policy (<http://www.ifrc.org/who/policy/dppolicy.asp>) and has developed a diagnostic tool to identify risks, national capacities to mitigate and respond, and gaps in national society capacity. It also has a comprehensive training package on disaster preparedness for country offices.

Emergency preparedness plans: Earlier it was noted that emergency preparedness plans are critical in terms of planning sufficient staff capacity. Depending on the agency, these plans play a particular role in preparing country offices for rapid response. They:

- Designate who will take responsibility for activating the plan once the emergency has been called (for example, World Vision's country offices are mandated to activate this locally when an emergency happens).
- Include an analysis of different emergency threats and scenarios of what will happen in each country, and subsequently identify staff who can take different roles in different types of response.
- Are used to develop career development plans for country level staff, specifically related to emergency response.
- Have specific HR components in place to assist with the identification of key issues related to staffing in times of emergency. This can include identification of, eg, recruitment companies in-country, as well as organisations who might be able to identify volunteers. SC-US does this.
- Can also include protocols to assist country offices to scale-up systems in order to better receive international response.

It is common for emergency unit staff, those on the full-time standing teams and sometimes those on agency rosters and registers to work with regional and country offices to help develop their emergency preparedness plans. Good practice is to review and update these plans every six months.

Notwithstanding, one respondent commented that emergency preparedness plans are not worth anything unless the agency has involved all staff in their meaningful development and tested the plan. Interviews also indicated that agencies haven't evaluated whether these plans make them more effective at responding to emergencies. This is probably because agencies reported that they still struggle with systematic monitoring, evaluation and learning. It is also probably because it is still less likely for monitoring and evaluation to be process and outcomes oriented.

An alternative to the model of the emergency preparedness plan is Oxfam's Emergency Management Plan approach. This was considered in Chapter 1, and resulted because the agency found that 'it doesn't matter whether or not there's a preparedness plan in place because if there isn't competent management in place for who will implement the preparedness plan then it won't work'. An important component of this plan is the identification of national staff who can be 'grown into' emergency management positions.

SC-US focuses on building leadership capacity by making sure that gaining emergency experience becomes part of the career development plan of all their country directors who currently lack this particular capacity. To this end, World Vision sends in senior managers to work alongside national director who lack experience during emergencies. Among other things this person also helps the national director understand expectations from the wider federation level.

Case Study 21: Emergency Preparedness Planning Process And How it Supports Local Capacity For Emergency Response: The Case of CARE

CARE's EPP process addresses at its heart the challenge of how to simultaneously increase a country programme's ability to respond to small and medium-sized emergencies, as well as improve its ability to accommodate extra help when needed.

As part of the EPP exercise, country programme staff (development programme managers, support functions and emergency specialists) identify some of the emergency scenarios that they may be faced with in the future. In each case they consider what their response would be and what staffing would be required. They then conduct a gap analysis, looking at what extra resources might be required and where they could be obtained. In some cases they will look first to local sources, for example former staff or partner organisations. In other cases they will look outside of the country, for example to the CARE Emergency Response Team (CERT).

In some cases the team might realise that other agencies already in-country probably have better capacity to respond to certain types of emergency. In other cases the team will identify current staff who are willing to become multi-skilled alongside their existing responsibilities. This way a point person is identified for each of the core functions: someone who will lead the needs assessment; someone who will undertake rapid recruitment; someone who will be responsible for procurement; and someone who will process payments, etc. CARE has identified 6-10 core roles in an emergency response team for a country.

Members of the country programme's Emergency Response Team receive coaching and support from the organisation's global emergency response specialists. The EPP process (which normally lasts seven days) helps the emergency response team to agree on their role and responsibilities during and between emergencies. Normally each team member makes a commitment to maintain a certain level of preparedness. Members of the country programme Emergency Response Team are invited to regional training events from time to time. This provides them with an opportunity to meet other emergency responders from neighboring countries and from the global team. In Central America, members of the emergency response teams in respective countries have met and worked on shared emergency protocols for the Central America region that define the systems and processes for emergency response, as well as how the team will work together to share resources with each other in the event of an emergency. Some members of the country office emergency response teams also serve in CARE's global emergency response roster.

CARE has learned that building local emergency preparedness within its country offices is vital for success in emergency response.

Regionalisation of rosters: An important component of surge capacity strengthening at country level is the regionalisation of a number of surge capacity instruments, in particular through the development of regional rosters. World Vision's RRT and SC-US' regional REDI teams are perhaps the best examples of this (see Case Study 18), while CRS' new Emergency Focal Points (EFP) represent promising practice. Details about these different instruments is contained in Chapter 2, but it is interesting to note that the CRS EFPs remit is to focus on disaster mitigation issues which is seen strategically as part of surge. The intention is also for each focal point to build a team in each region and therefore to assist with identifying people in-country, as well as encourage cross-training between offices within the region. This person can also be deployed, so augmenting capacity at country level.

Training: Skills development and training is as important at country level as it is at international level. Any capacity building training that is provided to country offices must link with those offices' own plans for emergency response and how they are going to staff it; agencies are learning that training should not be delivered for the sake of an agency being able to say it has done it – an approach all too common in the past with the over-riding sector focus on outputs.

Moreover, ALNAP (2005) notes: 'There is a tendency to respond to criticism with calls for more training inputs, rather than through critical analysis of what capacities were built through past training, how these capacities were utilised and sustained, and, above all, what impact these capacities have had on humanitarian performance as well as community adaptation to local realities and sustained preparedness for future emergencies.' The message? Training is important, but needs to be properly evaluated and, as noted above, greater efforts are required to focus on on-site training, mentoring, shadowing and coaching, as these correspond best to field workers' preferred ways of learning.

Research for this study identified that UNICEF has found the combination of training, simulation and contingency planning the best way to prepare its country offices for emergencies.

Protecting national staff: Finally, an issue not specifically included in the research but that needs to be taken into account when addressing the strengthening of national capacity is the issue of the well-being and security of national staff. Dan Kelly of World Vision notes that one of the key challenges going forward is to develop the same standard of care packages for national staff as for internationally deployed staff. Moreover, while national level staff might themselves be included in, for example, security training, partner agencies generally aren't. One observer has noted that 'local staff are first-tier targets to whom we only give second-class protection' (Barrs, 2004). This is an area where further research is needed, as most agencies pay very little explicit attention to the special situation of national staff (People In Aid, 2005; Van Brabant, 2001) and even less to their responsibilities to local partner organisations.

Case Study 22: Building Staff Capacity at National Level

(Taken from ECB's Staff Capacity Initiative Review, February 2006)

<http://www.peopleinaid.org/resources/casestudies.aspx>

SC-US believes that local staff can respond to emergencies far more quickly than people who are brought in from other locations. These people already know the local organisation, its culture and way of doing things; they have relationships with communities and local partners; and they speak local languages. Recognising this, SC-US has focused efforts on building the capacity of local staff to respond to emergencies, including through the development Regional REDI Teams.

The objectives of its efforts are to: increase the speed of response; ensure the appropriateness of response through better use of local knowledge; increase the pool of staff to draw on in the next emergency; increase interest in emergency preparedness planning.

- Regional REDI teams function as SC-US' second line of defence in humanitarian emergency response and support local staff when field offices need additional capacity for small- to medium-sized emergencies.
- Each field office selects a point person who undergoes formal emergency response training, and an emergency point person, who is not necessarily the same person who participates in the trainings.
- Regional Preparedness Advisors work with field offices to develop emergency preparedness plans and with the area offices to launch the regional REDI teams.
- Temporary Duty Assignments allow less experienced staff or those in countries where emergencies occur less frequently to work in an emergency with more experienced staff to build their skills.
- Employees attend formal training programmes outside the organisation specific to their area of expertise, eg, health training for emergencies.
- Apprenticeships / mentoring opportunities are a way to learn alongside someone with more experience.
- Simulation exercises are also used as an effective way to learn.

Preparedness comes from partnership

Good relationships between local and international actors are a fundamental component of surge response. 'Outside' organisations with long-standing, established relationships with local partners, or even a national sister agency, are invariably better equipped to make good use of local knowledge, skills, and personnel, and thus respond more quickly and effectively. Establishing such partnerships is very difficult during an emergency situation, and should be part of an agency's effort to develop its surge capacity in between emergencies.

Oxfam-GB notes that it launched a relatively successful response in Java and Pakistan due to its prior identification of partners (and also of suppliers and laying-in of contingency stocks). Notwithstanding it was noted that the agency still tends to treat its partner organisations as sub-contractors rather than 'real partners'. The agency has drawn a number of important lessons from this, including the need to pre-assess a partner's capacity, identifying where its strengths lie but also where its weaknesses are and therefore where it will require support.

Good relationships with partner organisations and with staff in national offices are predicated on trust. Interviewees for this study highlighted trust as a vital factor in determining the effectiveness of emergency response. As noted in earlier, trust is the subject of the ECB working group, 'Building Trust in Diverse Teams'. A 'scoping study' done for this group identifies 'swift' approaches to building trust as well as how to develop 'deeper' trust over time, and readers are referred to this study for more information.

Programming

Interviewees did not discuss programming approaches in any depth. This is probably because programming is not often considered to constitute part of surge capacity building. It is also perhaps because programming in areas that could be considered to build surge capacity – disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness – is not sufficiently well developed and has not been extensively evaluated (some commentators note a ‘structural deficit’ in this area; Stoddard, 2004). Therefore, the very *identification* of disaster risk reduction and preparedness programming as contributing to surge capacity by some respondents is an important step forward.

It is worth noting that capacity in this context also includes the capacity of communities to reduce risk and / or the effects of a disaster, as well as local governmental and non-governmental organisations, and the national offices of international agencies.

Disaster risk reduction: Better management of risk indicates better preparedness, and perhaps the most promising approach to building and strengthening regional, national and local capacities to respond is to do with the meaningful rolling out of disaster risk reduction policies and activities. The Hyogo Framework For Action provides a framework for policies and activities in this area.

The ECB workstream on disaster risk reduction has been running nine pilot projects in disaster risk reduction in Ethiopia (4), Guatemala (4), and Indonesia (1). It has drawn some useful lessons and promising practices from these pilots. Nevertheless, a recent ECB ‘semi-annual report’ identified real difficulties in this workstream because:

- DRR is not a high priority for most IWG agencies.
- There is no systematic way to identify and evaluate DRR components within integrated or other sector project reports.
- Staff turnover is high, both in HQs and country offices.
- There are no designated staff to gather, analyse and interpret information.

Case Study 23: World Conference on Disaster Reduction: a new form of commitment?

The World Conference on Disaster Reduction, held in Kobe, Japan in January 2005, exemplifies the challenges and opportunities of galvanising a commitment to building capacities in preparation for the next disaster. If the plans for early warning systems in the Indian Ocean region are to be effective, enormous efforts will be needed to ensure that local organisations have the capacity to alert communities and take appropriate action. Past experience has shown that building such capacities is not easy, and sustaining them is even harder, especially where disasters are infrequent.

The next question will be how to maintain these commitments. Critics have criticised the lack of concrete targets that came out of the Conference. One observer describes the outcomes as a ‘vague framework and a wish-list’ (Ben Wisner, cited in Radford, 2005). It may prove to be a challenge jointly to the development and humanitarian communities to keep these vague commitments alive. The ‘moral imperative’ (Jan Egeland, cited in Bisiaux et al, 2005) in investment in capacities for disaster risk reduction is in many respects a humanitarian imperative, though it might not be the humanitarian community that will ultimately provide the cash.

Source: ALNAP (2005).

Recovery programming: In interviews for this study, SC-US in particular introduced the difficulties encountered with recovery programming. This is supported in the literature (see, eg, Christoplos, 2006; ISDR/World Bank, 2005). All too often recovery programming is under-funded and ‘missed’ by both relief and development programming, an issue reflected by respondents’ concerns about continuity and succession planning. Moreover, disaster risk

reduction also needs to be mainstreamed not only into development programming but also into recovery programming.

These two programming issues are another reminder of the importance of the 'whole organisation approach' when developing surge capacity. This is because of the linkages they imply between relief, recovery and development programming as well as, for example, the fundraising departments of agencies. More than this, though, they are a recognition of the importance of, first and foremost, building communities' and other local capacities to respond to emergencies, as local people and local organisations will always be first on the ground.

Chapter 4 - Summary Points

- The key enablers can be grouped into four categories, and HR is a cross cutting theme:
 - Strategic vision and supportive agency culture
 - The role of the HR function or department
 - HR policies and practices
 - The strength of local capacity
- Strengthening country capacity is as much a part of building surge capacity as, say, creating a roster and register system, or developing a series of operations management tools to facilitate rapid deployment.
- Agencies pursue a number of activities to strengthen and prepare their national offices and partner organisations. These include developing emergency preparedness (or management) plans; regionalising their roster systems; and investing in training of national staff that is sensitive to their needs. On-site training, mentoring, shadowing and coaching are noted as especially relevant. Due to the paucity of evaluations of these efforts, however, it is hard to assess the outcomes of these activities.
- Preparedness is also achieved by building effective partnerships, based on trust, as well as, for example, through mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into both development and emergency programming, and by ensuring adequate funding of recovery programming.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The primary objective of this research was to consolidate the various approaches, lessons and good practices with regard to building effective surge capacity from across the IWG and other agencies. Using the lessons scattered throughout this report as a starting point, this final chapter makes a number of suggestions as to how the IWG and other agencies might strengthen their surge capacity, at both intra- and inter-agency level. These suggestions are necessarily broad as they address different agencies with different mandates and structures, as well as at different stages of development of their surge capacity.

Summary: What have we learnt about surge capacity?

The **first conclusion** to be drawn, as evidenced throughout this report, is that surge capacity represents an entire system of policies and procedures; it is as much about an organisation's philosophical approach as it is about any single instrument, such as a roster or register. It is therefore about much more than 'to rapidly deploy'.

Building a flexible and sustainable surge capacity involves many things. What will make this capacity robust is a comprehensive, strategic vision – including how to strategically elevate HR – of what surge capacity entails, along with a whole-organisation commitment to operationalising that vision and to learning from experience. This will be the case whether an agency chooses to focus its primary efforts on augmenting its standing capacity, its redeployment capacity, or strengthening its national capacity – all of which reinforces the need to match capacity to mandate and structure. Harmonising the mandate, structure and capacity of an agency also has significant implications for the quality and accountability of its humanitarian response.

Framed by its larger strategic vision, development of an effective surge capacity rests on an agency's ability to make progress, and be prepared, on many fronts. For example, building an effective surge capacity is not just about augmenting staff numbers, but it's about staff quality and the utilisation of competency frameworks and staff development plans. It's also about the strategic, flexible, pre-positioning of funds and equipment, as well as the development of operations management tools. And it is about strengthening capacity in countries and regions as well as identifying who will be the most useful partner organisations and targeting them for real development.

More than this, however, development of an effective surge capacity is about changing agency culture. A radical change in attitude and understanding is required for two reasons. First, to enable the development and implementation of changed policies and procedures that may compromise on existing ways of doing things, as well as increase the likelihood that some of the more difficult, surge-specific procedures, such as pre-release agreements, are adhered to. Second, to lubricate paradigm shifts within agencies toward, for example, viewing disaster risk reduction as contributing to the development of surge capacity at country level, and as needing to be mainstreamed within relief, recovery and development programming.

Ten critical lessons for surge capacity

Based on the research, it is possible to define 10 critical lessons, or enabling factors, required to develop surge capacity. The **second conclusion** is that developing this capacity is about bringing these various component capacities 'to scale', simultaneously, within agencies. The 10 critical enablers are:

1. Agencies need to adopt a whole-organisation approach to developing surge capacity. If this does not happen, their capacity to respond will be compromised.
2. Within the context of a wider strategic vision, capacity needs to be matched to mandate and structure. This has significant implications for the quality of an agency's programming as well as its ability to be accountable to affected populations.
3. Pre-positioning of funds is critical. Emergency units need to find ways to leverage greater amounts of unrestricted and other funds so that they can scale-up when required, respond to less visible emergencies, as well as build, and maintain, capacity between emergencies.
4. There needs to be investment in HR as a strategic function and not just an administrative one. This is necessary not only at HQ but also at regional and / or country level.
5. Well-trained and experienced staff are critical. In particular, strong and competent leadership is a decisive factor in the success of any response. There needs to be long-term investment in staff development, including in career development. Focusing on behavioural as well as technical competencies is important.
6. If emergency response is to be sustainable beyond the initial surge, recruitment for second-wave and longer term deployments needs to start at the beginning of an emergency. Counter-parting between international and national staff at this stage in a response is difficult but vital to the longer term success of any response.
7. It is equally important to develop surge capacity at country and regional level as at HQ. Strategic integration of aspects of emergency and development programming will help, as will the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction across relief, recovery and development programmes.
8. Rosters (and registers) need better investment if they are going to remain the preferred model for rapid deployment. Agencies which use this capacity to augment their sizeable standing capacity also face challenges. If agencies opt to develop these tools, it is imperative they invest in adequate HR capacity in order to make these tools effective.
9. Agencies need to develop standard operating procedures that govern all aspects of an immediate response. This is especially important as being able to rapidly deploy will inevitably compromise ordinary agency policies and procedures.
10. Agencies need to adopt more systematised learning practices, otherwise they are doomed to make the same mistakes year on year. This is not only bad practice but unethical, given agencies' quality and accountability commitments. Becoming better learning organisations is especially important in the current era, where agencies need to shift from being reactive to proactive in order to keep up with changes in their external policy and operating environment.

Given that these 10 critical enablers are all about 'more of', and that single agency, emergency unit scale will, at some point, become finite, the **third conclusion** is that developing surge capacity is not just about bringing to scale, but it is also about *leverage within* organisations – eg, of more effective partnerships – and *collaboration, as a form of leverage, between* organisations.

Collaboration is a multiplier. In working together, agencies are likely to achieve their goals more quickly and more effectively as evidenced, for example, in recent efforts between ECB agencies in Sumatra in early 2007 (see Case Study 24). There are also increasing external imperatives for collaboration. For example, donors are moving toward pooled funding

arrangements at country level, and policy makers and practitioners are increasingly calling for international agencies to work in partnership, as well as through common mechanisms such as consortia, in recognition of the quality and accountability benefits this is likely to bring. To this end the OSE (2006) notes:

Agencies — local and international — will be most effective when they are committed to effective partnerships. This may involve pooling resources, sharing a common strategy, looking for ways to divide work efficiently, and providing an integrated response to affected communities.

Moreover, it is predicted that the very scale of individual agencies' response capacities will in the future be dwarfed by the changing nature of risk. It is possible, therefore, that collaboration will not simply be an option but will need to become a mandate.

Case Study 24: Collaboration at Country Level: ECB Agencies in Sumatra

The ECB Learning Event in Washington DC in April 2007 provided an opportunity for agencies to share many of the positive experiences from this project. One example told how ECB agencies had collaborated following the earthquake in Sumatra in March 2007. This case study was provided by Mara Hardjoko, the Disaster Risk Reduction Coordinator for SC-US Indonesia.

One of the biggest benefits of ECB in the field has been the informal network and sense of teamwork and trust that has formed between staff in ECB agencies. So when an earthquake struck last month, we were able to respond in a quick and coordinator manner. This is what happened:

- In March 2007, two earthquakes measuring around 6 on the Richter scale struck West Sumatra, near Aceh, and displaced around 136,000 people. This affected the area of the ECB DRR pilot project.
- Within 48 hours of the earthquake, ECB agencies held a coordination meeting in both Jakarta and West Sumatra to discuss the situation and plan their response.
- Mercy Corps was the only ECB member with an office in the affected area and offered to share its office with other ECB members, as well as vehicles or support needs.
- ECB members shared rapid assessment tools with one another, and Mercy Corps, CARE and SC-US sent staff to be part of a joint assessment. Other ECB members conducted their own assessments but coordinated with this group. Mercy Corps had general staff on the ground and SC-US sent education, media and health staff while CARE sent an emergency response expert in WatSan.
- Many schools were heavily damaged so it was decided that a response should focus on support to the schools. Since that is SC-US's expertise, we contributed school tents which were pre-positioned in our warehouse nearby. Mercy Corps took the lead in the response and received funding from OFDA to cover the joint activities which included school kits, household and hygiene kits.
- Joint sitreps, case studies, and local press release were all issued from this ECB member team.

Some people questioned if the ECB agencies could really and truly cooperate in a time of crisis, but senior management in Indonesia was committed to making it work for the following reasons:

- While all ECB members now have experience in emergency response, because of the frequency of disasters all were stretched in recovering from the disaster the month before; the agencies therefore realised they would be more effective if they pooled resources and efforts.
- All ECB agencies had limited relief kits and staff near the disaster location which; pooling these created much greater capacity.

Lessons learnt:

- Coordination in emergency preparedness and response could and should be strengthened in Indonesia. This will require having more confidence to work with other INGOs and to recognise the comparative strength of each agency. This requires the right personalities and relationships on the ground.
- If ECB is the mechanism to support this kind of coordination, it should have a clearer management structure. Often the communication lines, authority lines and areas of assistance were unclear and sometimes confusing.
- There should be more funding allocated to supporting staff involved in collaboration. Even though the intention is to use existing country office resources in order for ECB work to be sustainable, current staff are overstretched in responding to emergencies and this leaves little time to focus on concrete joint preparedness activities.

Below are a number of **suggestions** about how best to bring the different components of surge capacity to scale, indicating where greater leverage and collaboration is needed. The five areas considered are:

- Strategic vision and strategic planning;
- Investment;
- Developing staff capacity,
- Including national capacity; and
- Advocacy.

Strategic vision and strategic planning

This report has introduced a comprehensive vision of what constitutes surge capacity, above and beyond the traditional concept of rapid deployment from agency rosters and / or registers. If this is considered useful, agencies might want to reflect on their approach and current capacities in light of the components introduced in Figure 2 (Chapter 1). The framework suggested is that of a ‘whole-organisation’ approach that reaches across departments, with the emergency unit as the driver supported by senior leadership. Having corporate leadership is essential, as this will help to steer any required change processes. It will also help to build accountability into the system which will in turn assist in addressing some of ‘pain points’ around surge, for example, the issue of staff release.

Agencies that haven’t already done so will need to seek political and organisational consensus on their strategic vision as it relates to rapid response. Defining what constitutes surge capacity will be helpful, as will the development of a strategy setting out a consensus definition of the agency’s surge capacity objectives. This will help when subsequently outlining the required components of surge capacity and how these work to support each other. It might be useful to undertake a SWOT analysis as part of this work.

Some of the issues agencies might want to consider include:

Configuring human capacity

Configuring human capacity is complex because it depends to a great extent on how an agency is mandated and structured. In this respect one question agencies will need to think about concerns the merits of developing specialist technical capacity vs being more generalist, founded on an honest assessment of capability. Another important consideration is how to maintain skilled capacity (see below).

If the objectives of an agency’s emergency response are focused on rapidly saving lives, then perhaps the ‘command and control’ model manifested in Oxfam-GB’s step-aside policy is an honest and appropriate way forward. Certainly the preferred approach for rapid response by those agencies which can afford it is to build standing capacity – both in terms of staffing up the emergency unit and / or employing large standing teams along the lines of Oxfam-GB’s HSPs, World Vision’s GRRT, or SC-UK’s ERPs. However, one of the strongest messages to emerge from this research is the need to focus greater efforts on building capacity at country level, including of communities’ own capacities to survive and recover. An approach in line with this would be to focus a greater proportion of surge capacity building efforts at country level, as SC-US and CRS have done. These agencies have invested, for example, in ensuring that the country directors of their programmes are sufficiently skilled and / or supported to manage an emergency response. In comparison, World Vision has focussed on strengthening capacity at both international and country level, as evidenced in Chapter 2.

Integrated programming and relationship building

Agencies will also need to grapple with how to better integrate aspects of their humanitarian and development programming, for example, around continuity planning and mainstreaming disaster risk reduction. This implies that internal leverage and cross-departmental relationship building will be critical – evidenced by agencies' numerous references to the importance of communication and building trusting relationships.

Harmonising systems

Another important aspect of strategic visioning will require federated agencies in particular to create policies and procedures aimed at harmonising systems across all levels within families of agencies.

Resourcing and investment

Finally, decisions will need to be taken around how to resource this work; developing a strategic vision and plan will be redundant if the money isn't there to operationalise the plan. Focusing on just a few components of surge capacity is unlikely to deliver real progress toward comprehensively achieving an agency's goals.

Investment

Financial resources

Flexible and effective financial management is one of *the* most fundamental components of any surge capacity mechanism. Systems to facilitate, for example, economies of scale, scale-up and absorption of additional funds, as well as the rapid acquisition of resources are essential. These processes will be helped by harmonising financial systems across organisations.

It is not possible for this report to provide agencies with a clear financial business case with regard to how to finance surge. This is because the information and analysis required to do this go beyond both the information provided by respondents and the time available for the research. Nevertheless, a number of broad statements can be made.

First, an agency's vision for surge capacity should be developed as part of a managed programme of investment and growth. Two points are important here. First, funding is more likely to be prohibitive if agencies don't properly plan; second, the development of such a plan requires appropriate internal capacity to carry out the plan. An example is Oxfam-GB's Humanitarian Investment Plan, initiated in spring 2005 and structured into separate projects. This constitutes a long term investment programme aimed at improving Oxfam-GB's emergency response capacity in terms of effectiveness and responsiveness over the next five years.

Although it is difficult to determine whether there is a correlation between size of investment and quality of capacity, this is an important factor to assess when agencies are considering how best to scale-up. Willitts-King and Darcy (2005:19) compared levels of staff capacity and associated staff costs (as a proxy for investment), given this latter input is usually the largest budget item in an emergency response. Their findings show that there is a basic minimum level of investment required to build an effective emergency capacity, relative to an agency's size. Investing less than this, they suggest, is a poor investment and resources will be spread too thinly. Based on a comparative analysis of SC-US and SC-UK, Oxfam-GB, CARE, MSF, the IRC, and WVI, they propose that around 40 full-time emergency staff is the 'entry-level' figure for effective emergency response. They also suggest that sectoral excellence would

require 3–4 specialists on staff, amounting to an annual investment per sector of perhaps \$200,000–\$250,000 (ibid:39). There are two models of paying for staff capacity: central coverage or ‘charging out’.

A lot depends on what an agency chooses to invest in and how it determines the quality of its capacity. There is a strong general sense that the real missing capacity is humanitarian leadership; investing to scale-up this will be a long term endeavour that will require a concerted focus on developing talent. This has substantial resource implications and efforts will need to be sustained over years, which will have to be planned into costs. Agencies will need to continually seek new talent, develop their existing potential, and create opportunities for people to put their skills into practice – all of which activities will be integral to any change management agenda. The returns, both tangible and intangible, are potentially very strong, not least in terms of staff recruitment, retention and motivation. SC-UK reflects: ‘If you get this right then it eventually becomes cost neutral as programmes factor into budgets and proposals the money needed to sustain the achieved capacity.’ Taking the longer view also encourages agencies to focus on other critical programming components, such as disaster risk reduction and preparedness.

Developing a business case for surge capacity will be an ongoing exercise. In the first instance it might be useful for agencies to analyse current capacity and expenditure and extrapolate that expenditure to the desired capacity levels. At the same time it would be instructive to undertake a comparative analysis of peer agencies’ resourcing strategies, asking such questions as whether there is a correlation between emergency capacity and unrestricted funding, and whether there is a correlation between the size of the investment and the quality of the capacity. The ECB might consider undertaking further research in this area.

Finally, a point worth re-emphasising here is that agencies that don’t have significant funding available for start-up operations report significant constraints, and this raises serious accountability issues. In comparison, those agencies that have scaled up their investment in emergency capacity have grown in size and quality, and are less likely to face such constraints.

Leverage through pooled funding

The increasing tendency toward pooled funding mechanisms was mentioned above. This clearly represents an area where ECB agencies could further develop the comparative advantage brought by their collaboration – particularly as some agencies don’t have the funding available for start-up operations and many have problems responding to lesser known emergencies. Moreover, pooled funding arrangements have been shown to reduce programmatic fragmentation and increase the quality of humanitarian response. Pooled funding might also enable a more rapid response as it could be used to facilitate, for example, the early mobilisation of joint assessment teams.

Leveraging material investment

Investing time and resources in building partnerships with a view to sharing material stockpiles could also be important, including with external suppliers. Leveraging relationships in this way would almost certainly lead to economies of scale. Agencies could begin by mapping and defining their deployment kits and developing MOUs to guide use of each other’s supplies.

Staff capacity

This research has been a strong reminder of many of the ongoing challenges to do with developing staff capacity. Below are some of the key issues to consider when going forward.

Overcoming HR constraints

The research identified ongoing challenges in, for example, sourcing and recruitment; retention; staff development and so on. In addressing these issues it is suggested that agencies need to face fundamental contradictions in their HR policies, particularly with regard to sourcing but also in terms of the strategic versus compliance agendas. Hiring an emergency HR manager or at the very least designating a focal point for HR and emergency operations has proved a crucial step forward for many of the agencies interviewed, as has the deployment of HR capacity in first-wave response. But practice could be further enhanced by separating the strategic and compliance functions of HR, as done by Mercy Corps. It could also be enhanced by focusing on gaining agency-wide buy-in to HR policies and procedures, which suggests the need to focus on enhancing the overall quality of the HR function within agencies. Among other things, agencies will need to scale-up so as to employ the right number of recruiters; provide emergency training to recruiters; and augment HR capacity at field level.

In terms of sourcing, implicit in the research are contradictions to do with internal versus external sourcing, issues to do with skill reliability versus variety, and cultural fit versus fresh ideas. Certainly a more proactive approach to sourcing is required in order to avoid narrowing the 'quality loop' and to reduce the negative impact of unpredictable global events, as well as the overall changing nature of humanitarian need.

If they haven't already done so, agencies could usefully develop an integrated emergency recruitment strategy and associated plan that grapples with these issues and has explicit links to organisational aims and objectives for surge. A central component of the plan would entail the development of rapid HR procedures to assist with rapid deployment. Agencies might also think about seeking new talent pools, with a focus on transferable skills; introducing M&E into sourcing and recruitment procedures to enable the evidence-based development of this function (recruitment needs to be measured against longer term organisational objectives as well as short-term need); decentralising recruitment to field offices who understand specific local needs; reviewing the breadth and depth of informal networks, including 'hot lists', to determine the extent of their usefulness before another emergency.

Staff preparedness

Another main message to emerge from the research is the need to build a sufficiently skilled response capacity so that agencies don't have to use too many external hires at the immediate onset of a new emergency.

Investment in staff development, at both national and international level, is an issue that requires serious attention. Scale is certainly important here and there needs to be a step-change in the resources and efforts assigned to these activities: too often interviewees mentioned it was difficult to afford the annual training for their deployable staff, as well as challenging to counter-part and shadow during rapid response – despite the fact that field staff find much more value from processes associated with mentoring, job shadowing and coaching. The quality of an agency's staff directly impacts on the quality of programmes an agency can deliver; and programme continuity, in part achieved through counter-parting, not only impacts on quality but will affect communities' ability to self-sustain over the longer term.

Preparing human capacity is also about making sure internal systems work, including rosters and registers and their associated HR protocols such as release protocols and incentive systems. It is about identifying appropriate partners to fill any specialist skills gaps, and buying in these skills if necessary. It is about developing supportive policies and procedures, for example, around staff wellness, and giving greater credence to behavioural competencies. And it is also about leveraging collaborative capacity for optimum response.

Agency collaboration

Beyond scaling-up at an individual agency level, agencies might seek to collaborate to address many of their challenging HR issues. For example, they might consider holding joint recruitment training seminars to share good practices between agencies and better explain recruitment needs to roster managers. They might also collaborate to produce minimum standards for staffing in emergency response, particularly for leadership positions. Another area for joint work might involve joint training on the many strategic issues that staff need to be aware of, including Sphere, gender, humanitarian law etc. This could involve not only developing joint training activities but also, eventually, training a cadre of trainers that IWG agencies could then use between themselves.

An obvious area for joint work concerns rosters and registers. The potential for partnership in this area was identified by a large number of respondents to this research, and Chapter 3 identified some concrete suggestions about how to take this work forward. There are two main options: collaboration on the development of a common staff roster management tool and collaboration around common staff pools in well-defined areas of activity. Joint assessment is an obvious one; continuing with joint M & E also seems sensible given the experience of the ECB workstream on impact assessment and accountability, as well as agencies' ongoing difficulties with learning.

The most important lesson concerning rosters and registers is the need for broad agency buy-in to the roster concept as an integrated effective emergency response tool if it is to work. As noted earlier, the most significant costs associated with rosters relate to their management. If agencies opt to develop these tools it is imperative they invest in sufficient HR capacity to make them work.

Implications of preparedness in practice

There are two important implications with regard to staff preparedness: how agencies can improve the quality of their response over and above greater investment in traditional staff development activities (eg, training); and the need for greater emphasis on national capacity building.

Quality and learning: There are currently widespread calls for increasing professionalisation of the humanitarian sector. This issue of quality, which is directly related to an agency's longer term impact, takes agencies into a whole new area with regard to monitoring, evaluation and learning. To do a more professional job and move beyond mere functionality will require agencies to develop a comprehensive and strategic model around programme analysis, monitoring, evaluation, research and learning. If this is going to be done in a more professional manner, different kinds of resources are going to be needed. Developing an effective surge capacity therefore must involve adequate investment in M & E and learning, and agencies need to ensure their emergency units have a staff position to manage the learning agenda. World Vision clearly has experience to share from its 'H-Learn' programme. Agencies could also consider mainstreaming these skills sets into a wider array of their emergency job descriptions.

The issue of quality also requires that agencies take more seriously their commitments to career development as well as methods of training associated with on-the-job learning, especially as this is the preferred method of learning for field-level staff. Agencies could consider a more strategic engagement with universities to help increase professionalisation. Efforts here might include identifying minimum requirements for humanitarian personnel. The ECB working group on national staff development has gained some useful experience in this area.

Ultimately all agencies will need to work toward a situation where they can make a virtue of people moving between organisations, as this will be the best short cut to collective learning. Having some common standards will help in this regard. Moreover, increased learning will ultimately lead to improved surge response. Agencies who struggle to learn will arguably continue to struggle to surge, as effective rapid development is as much about an agency's ability to learn and not make the same mistakes as it is anything else.

Preparedness at country level: Preparedness at country level will be achieved by focusing much greater efforts on the various national level capacity strengthening initiatives identified in this report. These efforts will need to be planned within agencies' strategic planning cycle and articulated through, for example, greater regionalisation of rosters, contingency plans, emergency preparedness and / or emergency management plans, and national staff development packages. The clear articulation of flexible policies and procedures to be followed in the event of a rapid response are particularly important.

Responses to this research indicated that much more investment is required at country level if agencies are to break the habit of falling back on external staff. To this end many agencies now locate their regional emergency directors in the relevant region, and some have begun to build teams around these people. These staff help country directors to develop their preparedness plans and also with identifying staff for training in emergency response. Reducing the use of staff outside of affected country/region contexts, unless in extreme crises and in some specialist technical areas, clearly needs to form a more central focus of emergency response. However, unless agencies develop and maintain an understanding of the links between preparedness and rapid response then this might be difficult to achieve.

National staff development is likely to be best approached within a framework of disaster risk reduction, which needs to be properly resourced and include good emergency preparedness and succession planning. Moreover, a DRR approach will lead to better prepared communities: agencies need to be working toward a scenario where, for example, community leaders are as an important component of developing national capacity as national staff. Communities are the first responders. If they are trained to do needs assessments, for example, then they will be better able to say what they want as well as more likely to be able to take 'ownership' of any response – both of which will result in more appropriate and sustainable recovery and longer term development.

Leverage at community level is crucial. When faced with an emergency people turn to everything around them to survive. This has implications for wider relationships that will be required which reinforces the need to develop diverse forms of partnership. Agencies need to look to develop more concrete relationships with, eg, local authorities, community groups and local businesses, all of which would facilitate a more rapid response. Their programming also needs to re-orient toward greater preparedness, risk reduction and more integrated recovery programming so that communities' relationships with their surrounding environment are strengthened. People's needs are rarely addressed by single interventions such as asset replacement initiatives or shelter reconstruction, and agencies need to look to better integrate interventions to assist in social and economic recovery.

The IWG agencies might consider undertaking further research into how national level organisations surge.

Advocacy

Finally, it is worth reflecting on the importance of advocacy when developing a way forward for surge capacity. Agencies are relatively weak in this area, particularly with regard to advocacy around funding. Yet this could make a considerable difference to their ability to develop and maintain not only the obvious staff components of surge capacity, but more

importantly the kind of comprehensive rapid response system as set out in this report. Acting together is likely to create the most leverage and have the strongest impact.

The Introduction to this report set out some of the challenges associated with humanitarian funding, including those related to lack of proportionality and political partialities and associated impacts on quality and accountability. The IWG and other agencies need to operate within these constraints, which not only impacts on their ability to mount rapid response in 'funded emergencies' but particularly in lesser known emergencies. Another discrepancy is that donors have consistently pushed agencies to develop standards on which funding is increasingly based when often they do not maintain their own standards by, for example, funding according to need (as set out in the GHD principles).

It is therefore suggested that IWG agencies seek to develop coordinated advocacy strategies with regard to developing and maintaining surge capacity – and at country level as much as international level. Such strategies will need to align with agencies' overall advocacy approaches. In adopting such a coordinated approach, agencies could also make a crucial contribution in helping to re-orient the humanitarian sector from its traditional service delivery focus to one more in line with a partnership approach which will directly impact on the quality and impact not only of emergency response but recovery and development over the longer term.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: ECB Agencies' Surge Capacity Mechanisms

CARE (International)

TOOL	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	MAIN CHARACTERISTICS
PEOPLE		
CARE International: Care Emergency Group (CEG)	<p>9 positions</p> <p>Emergency response director Emergency human resources coordinator Team leader (assessment) (GRT; see below) Logistician (GRT; see below) Regional emergency coordinators (x2) Senior specialist on shelter and recon Senior specialist on watsan Senior specialist on logistics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formed in July 2004 Includes an HR coordinator Coordinates and oversees CARE International's global humanitarian emergency responses, including coordinating staff for emergency response Some deployable positions Specialists to be used to help develop specialist functions in CERT once the CERT is operational again <p>Regional coordinators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 in post; 2 more positions to be created <p>To support the reinforcement of CERT and develop regional rosters complementary to CERT</p>
CARE International: Care Emergency Response Team (CERT)	<p>CERT</p> <p>(NB: CARE staff have noted that this tool is not working well and CARE US have developed an Action Plan to make it operational it again)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formed in 2002 Includes CARE staff and external consultants For those selected for assessment: deployment within 48-72 hours; for up to 4 weeks in-country For other positions: deploy within 3-5 days and on assignment between 1-3 months Skills and expertise across 24 functional areas
CARE International: Global Response Team (GRT)	Small standing team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 full-time, technical staff <p>One: TL / assessment / preparedness; the other: logistics</p>
FUNDING RESOURCES		
CARE* Emergency Response Fund	\$1 million, of which \$500,000 is revolving	Response to small emergencies, allocations of up to \$50,000 (to be reimbursed by user)
CERT Contingency Fund	\$500,000	Can access up to \$250,000 for an emergency response (very rarely used due to impracticality of decision-making system)

TOOL	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	MAIN CHARACTERISTICS
POLICIES, PROCEDURES & OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT TOOLS		
Personnel requisition form; generic JDs; min requirements for different technical areas; counselling support; rapid mobilisation protocol for CERT etc.		
CARE OPERATIONS OFFICES		
CARE USA: Emergency and Humanitarian Assistance Unit	9 staff, of which 2 are at 50% Director Deputy Director/Preparedness Sr. Adv. Commodity Mgmt & Logistics Sr. Adv. Assessment, Design, M&E Sr. Adv. Staff Development Programme Officer Iraq Programme Officer Programme Assistant/HOTSPOTS Executive Assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has been in place for more than a decade; reconfigured in 2002 • CARE USA also has a full time HR manager to support surge and emergency deployment as well as emergency capacity building, as well as one full time HR assistant for emergencies (only until June 2007).
CARE Australia	Has an external roster it can call on as well as, eg, JDs for other staff in the agency to be deployed if necessary.	One full time emergency HR position to support surge and emergency deployment.
CARE Canada	Humanitarian Assistance and Assistance Emergency Team (HAET). 4 people full time	Has outsourced HR, one of the HAET staff members is CARE's point person for emergency HR questions; this person then deals with the outsourced service provider.
CARE USA, Australia and Canada		All have well-developed counselling services. CARE USA through its own psycho-social service; CARE CANADA and Australia have a pooled service (Canada-based) for serious cases in the field.

CRS

TOOL	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	MAIN CHARACTERISTICS
PEOPLE		
Emergency Response Team (ERT)	11 people: 4 in HQ and 7 in Nairobi Team Leader Deputy Team Leader Security & Telecommunications Logistics Health and Nutrition Shelter & Community Infrastructure Finance Management Protection (2) Specialist WATSAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since 1999 • 48-hour response; deployed for 4-6 weeks • Self funded: generally from deployments but can also use unrestricted funds • Regional and country directors work out deployment needs due to nature of the disaster
Emergency Recruiter	Sits in HR	
Regional Directors and Emergency Focal Points (EFPs) (technical advisors)	Regional Director per defined region. One EFP per region.	Regional directors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make critical decisions For the EFPs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to the Regional Directors (in most cases) • Can be mobilised on a temporary basis • Assist with identifying people in-country and encourage cross-training between offices • Focus on disaster mitigation issues which is seen strategically as part of surge • Intention is for each focal point to build a team in each region
Retainer positions	2 (1 vacancy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General emergency focus
Emergency Corps	Conceived in 2001 but never fully realised. Agency is looking to reinvigorate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A secondment tool that, once operational, will be maintained by HR • The regional rosters that the agency is developing could be pooled to give CRS a global roster to utilise as needed
Training and staff development		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ERT and EFP members identify their own training needs • Basic training in SPHERE, simulations, and protection is required

TOOL	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	MAIN CHARACTERISTICS
FUNDING RESOURCES		
Regional Operational Reserves Individual funds like the Africa Crisis Fund	Varies Varies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Operational Reserves are available at the discretion of the Regional Director Has some restrictions on what can fund
Overseas Operations Reserve	\$1 million/year (varies (annual))	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overseas Operations Reserve Funding is utilised at the discretion of the Vice President of Overseas Operations
POLICIES, PROCEDURES & OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT TOOLS		
<p><i>Emergency response manuals covering:</i> assessment; shelter; security (planned for operations and financial mgmt); <i>cross-placement protocols</i> (to facilitate movement between different offices within the same region); <i>share point site</i> (being developed; will include all info about an emergency as well as induction information; maps; security situation etc; will be done on a case-by-case basis to retain flexibility); <i>full staff package:</i> R&R; danger pay; cost of living adjustments etc</p>		

The IRC

Tool	Brief description	Main characteristics
PEOPLE		
Emergency Preparedness Response Unit (which houses the Emergency Response Team; ERT)	<p>ERT of 17 members (from 6 in 2005)</p> <p>Senior emergency coordinator ERT coordinator (x2) Emergency operations coordinator Emergency finance controller Emergency security coordinator Emergency human resources coordinator Emergency communications coordinator Emergency M&E / grants coordinator Emergency health coordinator (x2) Emergency environmental health coordinator (x2) Emergency gender based violence coordinator Emergency children and young people's development coordinator (x2) Emergency protection coordinator</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ERT first formed in 2000 Full-time, IRC staff; available within 72 hours Support all IRC country offices when not on emergency assignments Are based from home and are deployed to the field approximately 75% of the time Are partnered with an HQ Technical Unit counterpart for collaboration, information sharing and technical support

Tool	Brief description	Main characteristics
Internal Emergency Roster (IER)	45 + is the target; members represent core programme and operation competencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondment roster • IER members hold regular positions in IRC country programs • Goal is to have five people identified in every sector • Commitment to a 72-hour response • Available for 4-6 weeks • Use excel spreadsheet to manage related data
External Emergency Roster (EER)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ready deploy within one week's notice • Not current IRC employees, but many have worked for the IRC in the past • Goal is to have five people identified in every sector
Conferences, training, mentoring, counter-parting.		Includes an annual workshop for ERT and IER members
FUNDING RESOURCES		
The IRC Whitehead Fund	\$2.5 million	Interest is used according to the priorities of the Emergency Response Unit; capital is for specific emergency responses with an effort made to replenish with private or grant funds.
Leo Cherne Fund	\$2 million	IRC aims to cover 75% of the operating costs of the ERT through field deployments of ERT members; the balance is covered through the grants from Stichting Vluchteling (which covers 9 positions), Wellspring Advisors (6 positions), the Bureau of Democracy, Rights, and Labor (1 position), and the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (1 position). All funding is subject to annual review and is requested through the submission of proposals to all but Whitehead and Cherne.
POLICIES, PROCEDURES & OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT TOOLS		
<i>ToRs for deployment</i> ; developing a <i>learning database</i> (currently being developed; will be used to strengthen management of staff development and training activities, and will include emergency response learning opportunities); <i>staffing plans</i> (HQ HR develops a staffing plan in each new emergency by working with the country director); <i>risk analysis</i> (for all country programmes), etc.		

MERCY CORPS

TOOL	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	MAIN CHARACTERISTICS
PEOPLE		
Global Emergency Operations (GEO) (the emergencies unit at HQ)	7 ½ full-time employees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency director (doesn't deploy) • Director of emergency preparedness and DRR (doesn't deploy) • Program officer (doesn't deploy) • 2 team leaders • Logistics manager • Watsan (split between GEO and health dept) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funded by core funds • Purpose of GEO is to mobilize and coordinate the resources of the broader organization behind an emergency response • Deployable GEO team budgeted for 25% cost recovery
Global Response Team (GRT)	Internal roster of c35 people (incl OSTs; see below)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created in 2005; not yet used extensively • Receive one week of mandatory training per year • 72-hour commitment; up to 3 months deployment • Mostly national staff; cannot be used for non-emergency purposes • 100% cost-recovery when deployed • Use excel spreadsheet to manage; different search fields for languages and expertise
Operational Support Team OST (a sub-set of the GRT)	Management and technical specialists; 8-9 people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigned to GRT by their department heads at HQ; serve in management, representational or oversight roles • Receive one week of mandatory training per year • 72-hour commitment • Only for 3-6 weeks • Set up systems and train people to take over
Regional Directors		All regional directors are now based in the field and are an additional resource for emergency deployment
Mini-GRT teams at regional level		This initiative has only started recently, and so far has developed in Indonesia only
GRT Training Programme		For technical skills building; humanitarian policy and standards development; to get to work together as a team; and to aid the GEO in the final selection of candidates

TOOL	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	MAIN CHARACTERISTICS
FUNDING RESOURCES		
MERCY CORPS No formal funding mechanisms in place		Global Emergency Operations team and GRT training is funded through unrestricted core budget. Rapid response fund supported by a private donor. Unrestricted funds are released for start up of rapid onset response. GRT team is funded by field offices when not deployed, by emergency sources when deployed.
POLICIES, PROCEDURES & OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT TOOLS		
Letter of understanding	Between Mercy Corps and country director; to get agreement that the GRT member has the opportunity to dedicate the majority of her / his 5% organisational learning time to emergency preparedness training as well as participate in training for up to 5 days a year.	
Backstopping plan	The CD approves a backstopping plan with the GRT member outlining how her / his work will be covered during deployment	
Blackout dates	Operate 'black out dates'. If person not available when they said they would be they might be dropped from the GRT.	
PLUS: <i>Digital library / online</i> (all training materials are made available in this way); <i>'Office in a Box'</i> (see Case Study 14 for details); <i>GEO project design checklist</i> ; <i>generic JDs & scopes of work</i> ; and a <i>variety of 'learning' tools</i> : reviews, M&E, post deployment review, after action review, after action 'survey monkey'		

Save the Children US

TOOL	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	MAIN CHARACTERISTICS
PEOPLE		
Emergency Department: Children in Emergencies and Crisis (CEC)	Children in Emergencies and Crisis (CEC) Department: Emergency Preparedness and Response Unit (5), Protection and Education Unit (6), Hunger and Malnutrition Unit (11), Commodity Operations (3), Operations (3), HR in Emergencies (1), Communications Specialist (1), DM&E Specialist (1), Alliance Task Force Manager (1) Programme Support (3), Senior Management (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CEC was created in 1992. It is organised into a Technical Support Division [TSD] and Management Support Division [MSD]. TSD includes Protection, Hunger and Malnutrition, Emergency Preparedness and Response teams. MSD includes a Commodity Operations team, Operations team, HR recruitment specialist, communications specialist, Alliance Task Force Manager and DM&E specialist.

TOOL	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	MAIN CHARACTERISTICS
Regional REDI Teams (Responding to Emergencies and Disasters Internationally)	5 teams by region: Asia; Middle East/Eurasia; Africa; Latin America/Caribbean; United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees, but also from Save the Children Alliance • Managed by Emergency Department and Area Directors • Minimum of three people for each REDI position, across 17 functions • The US REDI team was created after the agency faced difficulties with visas when trying to pull in staff from the other REDI teams • Each REDI member has an approved backfill plan, which is a requirement for participation • Heavy reliance on this mechanism for first surge response; due to issues concerning availability the agency is considering developing a roster of a few full-time responders based in their home countries
Area Directors		Country Offices and Project Offices are grouped into geographically categorised areas with an Area Director overseeing field programmes in their regions both programmatically and operationally. In close collaboration with their field directors, Area Directors set the overall long-term and short-term programmatic and fundraising strategies for their Area. Field directors, in turn, are responsible for insuring that their designated programs are managed soundly and effectively. They are also responsible for insuring compliance with SC-US's standard operational policies and procedures. In close collaboration with their supervisors, field directors set the long-term and short-term programmatic and fundraising strategy for their office.
Week long training for REDI members + technical trainings in specialist sectors		<p>The REDI Week long retreat covers the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paradigm Shift: from dual mandate to integrated approach; from Global REDI to Regional REDI • Alliance approach to emergencies • Wellbeing and Stress Management • Emergency Case Study • Media and Security training • Team Building • Lessons Forgotten • Deployment Time • Non-Deployment Time
Roster in Excel	Currently use Excel, but moving toward sharing a software package for roster management with Save-UK	A project manager works full-time on managing the roster
Volunteer database		Since Katrina, SC-US through its HR department has worked to line up both internal and external volunteers in the event of an emergency of such scale that surge capacity is required. Internal volunteers were drawn on for the Katrina response itself, and proved very successful.

TOOL	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	MAIN CHARACTERISTICS
FUNDING RESOURCES		
Halaby-Murphy Revolving Emergency Fund Also preparedness fund and individual emergency funds.	\$7.5 million, revolving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial stage of emergency response only. Revolving funds have a requirement that funds drawn down must be fully replaced through back charging or reclassification of costs to grants or contracts and through private fundraising (usually direct mail appeals).
POLICIES, PROCEDURES & OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT TOOLS		
Emergency Response Manual; Domestic Emergency Response Manual; Emergency Finance Manual; Guide for Accountability and Impact Measurement in Emergencies: Good Enough Guide; Emergency Assessment Toolkit; Minimum Operating Standards; Commodity Management and Programming Manual; Alliance Grants Handbook; Home Office Department Preparedness Plans; DAP/MYAP Guidelines; Country Office Preparedness Plans; Avian Flu Country Office Preparedness Plans; Business Continuity Procedures; Field Office Policies and Procedures Manual; Community Therapeutic Care Manual.		

OXFAM-GB

TOOL	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	MAIN CHARACTERISTICS
PEOPLE		
Humanitarian Department (Includes specialist technical staff)	<p>72 staff, which includes 14 specialist technical staff PLUS 75 (currently recruiting to make 90) serving as globally roving Humanitarian Support Personnel – HSPs</p> <p>Humanitarian Director PA to Humanitarian Director Deputy Director (2) Senior Representative Strategic Project Managers (3) Co-ordinator of HSPs Humanitarian Desk Officers (5) Programme Advisory Team (13) Programme Representatives (5) Programme Managers (15) Logistics Team (32) Public Health Engineering Team (22) Public Health Team (13) Emergency Food Security & Livelihoods Team (11) Programme Finance Team (9) Human Resources Team (18) Systems & Resources Team (3)</p>	<p>Full-time; HQ based. Provide back-up to the HSPs whilst also having their own portfolio of work.</p> <p>About HSPs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permanent contracts; on 'stand-by' Rapid deployment for up to 90 day assignments Underwritten by reserve funds Budget for 25% of their time; get 75% salary funded by official donors. The 25% of their time they 'own': their leave; their training time etc. <p>Specialist technical staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior / leadership oriented posts; immediate emergency start-up Maintain a series of informal registers of key contacts: 'little black books of externals; "most favoured consultants" Want to develop these for project managers, too.

Surge capacity in the humanitarian relief and development sector

TOOL	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	MAIN CHARACTERISTICS
Staff training programmes	Different for each of the different types of staff	
Local staff		The development of intra-regional registers of staff available for emergencies deployment is currently being scoped.
FUNDING RESOURCES		
Catastrophe fund	c£5 million	Available for funding responses to unpredictable, rapid-onset disasters and/or for underwriting emergency responses while external funding is secured. Used to leverage programmes of up to £25mn.
Corporate (general) funds	c£2.3 million	Money made available for costs of advisors and HSPs. For sustaining overall response capacity.
POLICIES, PROCEDURES & OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT TOOLS		
Humanitarian Investment Plan (HIP)	A plan (structured into separate projects) initiated in spring 2005 and constituting a long term investment programme aimed at improving Oxfam's emergency response capacity in terms of effectiveness and responsiveness.	
Procedures for calling and managing Oxfam's emergency response		
Minimum Requirements for 'First Phase' Humanitarian Response	Contains a set of minimum requirements for the first phase of an emergency (generally between 2-3 months) in logistics; human resources; finance; and programme/overall management	
Emergency Management Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working document that ongoingly identifies designated humanitarian leads for each of Oxfam's country offices depending on the category of response call. Also used to identify potential national level leadership and to design programmes to build that capacity Designed to 'out' difficult issue of who will be in charge of the response and contains a protocol to affect a step aside policy 	
Humanitarian Handbook (succeeded the Emergency Response Manual)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manual / systems overview; all templates necessary to run an emergency. This is also on the intranet and on CD, and also appears in 'pocket form'. Contains the minimum requirements 	
Plus, for example, generic JDs; capacity planning spreadsheets (which track availability); ways of working that delineate intra and inter departmental relationships; checklists for deployments etc.		
DEVELOPING PRACTICE		
Beginning to second national staff from one office to another. Beginning to work on Global international Oxfam register.		

World Vision

Tool	Brief description	Main characteristics
PEOPLE		
Five year goal: to be able to expand from being able to respond to two large-scale emergencies at once, to four.		
Humanitarian and Emergency Affairs Department	Core team of 18 Vice President Director, Accountability & Transparency Director, Humanitarian Planning Director, Strategic Operations Director, Humanitarian Learning Director, Human Resources Director, Information Technology Director, Resource Development Director, Business and Finance Associate Director Capacity Building Assoc Director, Logistics & Pre-positioning Associate Director, Resources and Accountability Support staff (6)	In order to overcome tension between deployability and coordination, World Vision has explicitly assigned some of its central emergency unit to focus on the coordination of deployment and standards. This allows for consistent attention to developing policy and standards and for maintaining a strategic overview, without being regularly forced to drop everything to deploy to an emergency.
Global Rapid Response Team (GRRT)	c22 people. This is the WV Global Standing Response team. They work on the Disaster Mgt cycle when not in emergency response.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 48-72 hours deployable, for up to 3 months and up to 50% of their time. • The GRRT and associates are enough to respond, simultaneously, to 2 large-scale emergencies • Daily rate charged to programme is \$300/day • Half team = management; other half = technical • Essential positions: finance; HR; procurement / logistics, health, IT, protection, Programming and program mgt then based on assessment with regard to what else is required. • Overall management by Emergency Operations Associate Director
Associates (For example: water and sanitation, protection, DME, health) are deployable with GRRT staff)	12 people deployable up to 50% of their time	Mainly technical people who work in another WV office. May or may not have a different reporting lines (than GRRT) during periods of non-deployment.
GRRT Feeder Schools	5 people covering health, IT, finance, protection and logistics	Developing management and technical capabilities in order to move into an international or a more senior role within the WV partnership.
Regional Rapid Response Team (RRRT)	Internal secondment tool	First started in Africa seven years ago; see Chapter 5 for more details
Regional Relief Directors & their teams	Part of their job description is for deployment	

Surge capacity in the humanitarian relief and development sector

Tool	Brief description	Main characteristics
Pre-crisis support team / Executive support team		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing senior humanitarian staff with extensive experience of emergencies and WV, and who have a high level of respect in the agency. Are deployed prior to a response (in slow onset emergencies) for 2-4 weeks to work along side the National Director and national board to provide support and capacity building on standards, policies, systems and expectations around preparing for and leading a response.
Global register	A register that is currently being populated (will have between 200-300 people)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal; capacity for deployment for up to 6 weeks per year. Register is managed by the staffing solutions function of WVI. Fee sent to sending offices from receiving offices for local hires to backfill when the staff member is deployed. Release agreements in place (in theory) and payments go back into the sending office so they can recruit and backfill (currently case-by-case negotiation; trying to develop protocols for this that will also involve staff person being released for regular training).
Global Pre-positioning Network	A team of 5 who oversee the pre-positioning of items for emergency response. Have integrated a network of other WV staff globally who are involved in the obtaining of goods and services.	<p>Major warehousing sites in Denver, Dubai and Hanover. Stocked with Non food items, communications equipment and vehicles which can be flown into a response at 24 hours notice. Four of the team are deployable in a supply chain function during emergency response.</p>
Senior Associate Humanitarian Programmes Reserve pool	4/5 key leaders who have been head hunted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have just started allocating money from the core budget to support this It will allow staff in World Vision to 'act' when they meet a senior manager; bridging funding is used to bring these people in and they work on short-term assignments until they are deployed Intention is that these staff will augment the GRRT as one of these individuals will go in as the senior manager of the response so enabling the GRRT member leave when required for a new emergency (previously they were getting locked into positions)
Retention Scheme	Currently one person in this scheme. Target is for 2-5.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receive a monthly stipend if they are committed to 6 months a year deployment, during which time they go on full salary. Generally management level.
FUNDING RESOURCES		
Emergency Preparedness and Response Fund	\$6 million, partially revolving Annual allocation: \$1 million for each of 4 Regions, \$1 million for preparedness, \$1 million reserve	Mostly for initial stage of emergency response; can use up to 25% for preparedness. Regional Relief Directors may allocate up to \$100,000 without broader consultation. Effort made to repay with private or grant funds (goal is for 50% replenishment coming from grant/contract funds)

Tool	Brief description	Main characteristics
POLICIES, PROCEDURES & OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT TOOLS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency preparedness plans • Standards and operational imperatives and tools around these • Capacity assessment tools • Generic JDs (for revision); end of deployment appraisals • Standardised secondment policies and remuneration • Rapid induction packages and processes (in progress) • Office in a box • Staff care items in a box (almost complete) • Streamlined HR processes (revision) • Efficient manpower projections – linked to sourcing and CB and skills audit • Recruitment Centre of Excellence • Tool kits 		

Appendix 2: A World Vision 'Lesson Learning Review':

CONSOLIDATED LESSONS FOR HUMAN RESOURCES (March 2006)

Below is a summary of significant learning related Human Resources. These lessons have been drawn from multiple country case studies of current or recently completed large-scale relief responses, and also include Expert Group feedback and perspectives on learning. In this document are NEW lessons and suggested solutions that have been captured in 2005, as well as previously captured continuing lessons.

LESSON	SUGGESTED SOLUTION
New Lessons	
Expectations of HR to be involved in sectors such as admin diverts attention from their focus from establishing HR policies/JD's/TORs etc.	Admin staff need to be made available/recruited early in the response so as to free up the available HR staff to focus on matters related to human resource management. Budget allocations should consider this a priority.
Burnout is experience in some of the first wave staff due to high demand of the role and the long hours worked.	Managers need to determine working hours and provide for adequate R&R. A balance between tasks, staff available and budget allocations need to be sought as much as possible throughout the response and clearly communicated to the executive team. Spiritual support systems are also essential here.
An attitude and organizational culture of learning and sharing needs to be more strongly cultivated. New staff in particular should be made aware of prior and current learning during their orientation and hand over procedures.	Ensure rapid orientation package is being used and that learning agreements are signed between all staff deployed and their national counterpart.
HR systems need flexibility to recognize staff who may not be certified, but are competent in core capabilities.	HR staff need to take the lead in encouraging staff to take part in the Humanitarian competency packages as well as making sure good staff are taken forward to the global relief register.
Non-HEA Senior staff moving out of national office (NO) and regional offices (RO) at the early warning stage or the beginning of an emergency severely effects the response i.e. finance managers, national directors (NDs) etc.	The executive support team along with the regional team needs to ensure that senior positions are not falling empty during the early warning on response stage of an emergency, even if this means staff being asked to delay their moves to new positions.
Staff coming into affected areas must have appropriate equipment to ensure their own comfort and health.	Staff flyaway kits are available from some Global pre-positioning units and must be included in the first relief flights to enter the countries. Ensure that the policy regarding purchase of appropriate clothing for staff going into a response area, that may have climatic and religious challenges, is clearly communicated and used. Money also needs to be made available to purchase appropriate clothing for local staff e.g. winter clothing.

LESSON	SUGGESTED SOLUTION
Clear Job Descriptions are needed for every position in the response/ JDs are often unclear or never done.	The standard JDs have helped this, but staff are still seconded from one job to another without clear expectations and understanding of the role. At the start of a response it is imperative all seconded staff have TORs and then JDs can be developed by the managers with support from HR.
Communications staff and managers who lack appropriate language skills can hinder the programme and create misunderstandings. Communicators/marketers must have a mix of skills, so as to avoid the need for too many comms staff in the field.	There is a need for more recruiters who speak French, Spanish and Portuguese and to advertise in these languages so more bilingual staff can be recruited. HR needs to work with the funding offices to ensure that communicators coming to the country are appropriate and can multi task. The new international recruitment model should also help with this.
Continuing Lessons	
Local staff lack emotional, physical, financial and spiritual support during responses.	<p>Ensure staff have access to Non food Items, Food parcels etc for them and their families.</p> <p>Give an exceptional payment to affected staff and ensure they have phone cards etc.</p> <p>Provide trauma counselling to staff within the first 2 weeks.</p> <p>Ensure staff understand the evolving organigram and that new/international staff coming in are not going to take their jobs away.</p> <p>Ensure time for prayer/devotions.</p>
There is a lack of senior staff and leaders to move quickly into response positions.	<p>Managers must be prepared to look outside of WV for senior staff.</p> <p>There needs to be an improved link with the capacity building teams to ensure that leaders are being developed.</p> <p>Large responses end up poaching leaders from other regions, which has long-term effects. Recruitment needs to be done in a holistic manner with the Partnerships best interest at the forefront.</p>
Staff should not be seconded to a response for less than 3 weeks.	TORs need to be clear that staff have to remain in country for at least 3 weeks and complete handover documents before they leave, to prevent unnecessary disruption to the programme.
Recruitment for full time/second wave staff has improved but for some position is still taking too long, resulting in a rapid continuous turn over of response staff and a loss of credibility with external stakeholders	<p>Start recruiting permanent staff from day one on 6-month contracts.</p> <p>Relief register needs to be supported and expanded.</p> <p>HR needs to look at creative options to find staff – e.g., outsourcing, and linkages with colleges or universities – to expand pool of candidates for responses.</p>
The National Office/emergency response requires good technical support personnel from the Partnership to assist in the response.	This has improved, but as WV expands its response, new sectors such as water/sanitation and child protection now need to be staffed. HR needs to engage more with proposal design to insure that staff are available for projects.

LESSON	SUGGESTED SOLUTION
A visitor liaison officer needs to be put in place from the outset, especially in rapid onset emergencies.	HR needs to ensure that this position is staffed and budgeted for, from the outset.
The response to slow onset emergencies can take some time to start and good people are lost in the meantime as recruitment is too slow.	Emergency Response fund money should be used to access good staff early on, if grants have not yet been approved.
HR needs to be more involved in proposal design to ensure appropriate resources are available for staffing.	HR staff need to work closely with programming and finance staff to ensure salaries and benefits are correctly calculated and that sectorial staff are available for planned projects.
A full time HR manager needs to be seconded/recruited immediately in a Cat III.	There is a need for the regions to become more engaged in providing HR support in Cat IIs and IIIs.
Field offices are slow in communicating with recruiters over TORs/JDs/CVs so good candidates are lost and are also unaware of HR systems and policies.	HR standards need to be more detailed about turn around time and NO/response teams need to understand the importance of rapid communications. Transmission of relevant HR policies must take place before implementation of the response begins. The policies also need to be translated into the language appropriate to that context e.g. French & Spanish
There must be a qualified finance manager with extensive grant experience in place, in each NO, from day one.	Every response has shown that when we just use existing finance structures in the NOs, we end up with enormous problems. Engage GRRT and RRRT on this ASAP. There is also a need to streamline international pay/compensation so that it is easier to follow/work with the grant matrix.
The roles and responsibility of the region in the response needs to be clearly defined.	MOUs need to be clearly define the support role of the region, especially in areas of HR.
Staff are being seconded/recruited from NOs without the NDs approval, which is affecting their programmes and causing tensions.	Protocols need to be reviewed regarding who is consulted when a staff member is offered a position.
New staff must have a security and cultural briefing within 48 hours of their arrival in country.	HR should ensure that briefing packs are developed within the first 72 hours of a response and rapid induction modules are used.
Experienced local staff are not considered for promotion in a response.	It is too often presumed that local staff do not have the response capacity and that international staff are always required. More effort needs to be taken to assess the capacity of local staff and offer them management roles if appropriate.

Appendix 3: Research Methodology

Research approach

The research approach adopted was qualitative and based on comparative case study analysis. Qualitative approaches are helpful because they allow for the identification of newly emerging themes, which is particularly important in under-researched areas such as that represented by surge capacity. The comparative aspect also enabled the researcher to identify commonalities and differences across the agencies studied which helped lead to an interpretation of the most pressing issues with regard to developing surge capacity.

The method of appreciative enquiry also influenced the approach of the research. Appreciative enquiry '[I]nvites people to discuss what is working in a system, to envision a future that builds on that success, to look at all the structures and procedures that would support such a future, and to develop a way forward' (<http://www.aileadership.com>).

Research process

The research began with a brief review of ECB documents relating to staff capacity. A smaller number of 'think pieces' on both surge and staff capacity were also consulted. Following this review, a semi-structured interview was developed and shared with a small peer review group. This had to be quite generic in order to allow it to be flexible enough to capture differences between agencies.

Following the development of the interview framework, 43 telephone interviews were carried out during a 12-day period in March 2007. Those interviewed comprised 33 individuals from the ECB agencies, 9 others from across seven additional case study agencies (MedAir; MSF-UK; UNICEF; UNDP; the IFRC; the NRC; and WFP) as well as four independent consultants.¹¹ Where possible, the researcher read documents provided by the agencies prior to each interview in order to inform the discussion. Information gathered during the interviews was supplemented by email exchanges with many of the respondents, who were extraordinarily generous with their time. It was also supplemented by numerous conversations with agency staff during the ECB Project Learning Event held in Washington DC on 12 and 13 April 2007.

Those interviewed in the ECB agencies ranged from emergency directors and emergency HR managers in HQ, to roster coordinators and a small number of regional personnel. As the review has mostly been informed by people at the strategic and corporate level within the humanitarian departments of agencies, further research into other perspectives, including those from development colleagues and also from field level staff, might also be of interest.

Limitations and constraints

The report is largely predicated on what information was shared and who was available for interview. It should be noted that some agencies were less well represented than others in terms of numbers of staff interviewed, while some agencies provided much more written information than others. As a result the majority of case study examples are mostly drawn from a smaller core group of agencies.

More specifically, there are two main limitations and constraints to this research:

1. Due to the ongoing nature of the work in this area, many policies and practices discussed were relatively new and have not yet been 'tested'. This meant that assessments of their efficacy were scarce. That said, the lessons that form the foundation of many of these different approaches shed important light on the current scope of work in this area.

¹¹ John Glazebrook, John Cosgrave, Jim Henry, and Sean Lowrie.

2. The compressed time in which the research had to be completed has also been a constraining factor.

Furthermore, as the researcher was trying to build a picture of whole organisations it wasn't always possible to ask everyone the same questions. This made some aspects of the comparative analysis more of a challenge, and also meant it was less easy to quantify some of the qualitative responses.

About People In Aid

People In Aid is a **global network** of development and humanitarian assistance agencies. We help organisations whose goal is the relief of poverty and suffering to enhance the impact they make through better management and support of staff and volunteers.

The impact and effectiveness of relief and development operations depend on the quality of staff and volunteers and the support an agency gives them. Our very practical output can help agencies enhance that quality.

We respond to the needs of members and the sector by acting as an information exchange on good human resources and people management practice, by facilitating networking, by providing resources, by undertaking research and by answering queries.

Established by agencies in the relief and development sector in 1995, we are a not-for-profit membership organisation governed by our members, whose experiences and HR practices shape our activities and have informed the cornerstone of our work, the 'People In Aid Code of Good Practice in the management and support of aid personnel'.



*Promoting good practice
in the management and
support of aid personnel*

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