

How to Develop a National Emergency Roster¹

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What is surge? Surge capacity is our ability to get the right people at the right time doing the right things to support crisis-affected communities.

What is CARE's commitment on surge? CARE has committed for our responses to be 'as local as possible and as international as necessary'. Local capacity can be supplemented as required by regional and international capacity for short periods.

What is a roster (or register)?

- In CARE what we call a 'roster' is a tool for tracking individuals who can support an emergency response, typically for short periods on short notice. (What we really have globally is a register, so the two terms are used interchangeably.)
- Allows for rapid scale-up when existing capacity gets overwhelmed.
- The roster can be for internal staff, external specialists, or both.

What is our experience with rosters in CARE?

- Historically there have been some challenges at regional level to make these fully effective
- You can find a short lessons learned summary [HERE](#) on page 45 of the Surge Review report

What are some typical challenges in implementing a roster?

- Focal point and leadership (champion/worker)
- Accelerating to high speed in mobilizing emergency response staff
- Keeping the roster up to date
- Right-sizing the roster for your needs
- Changing needs/scenarios
- Having a backup plan in place for current staff

What steps can we take to develop a roster?

- Who will be responsible for leading the roster effort? Make sure this role is in their job description with sufficient % time allotted to carry out the necessary duties.
- Consider your EPP scenarios – what will likely be needed to supplement your ERT? What strengths do we already have? Where are the gaps that we will need to fill? (See Annex 5 of the EPP [HERE](#)).
- Name all positions likely to be required (useful docs [HERE](#) and [HERE](#)) and see how we might fill those right now.
- Don't forget that program support will need to scale up along with program/technical positions so key program support positions should be identified!
- Think about diversity requirements in your roster to fit the communities you serve: gender, language and ethnicities.
- Remember to consider including staff with different levels of experience to fill senior, middle and junior level roles.
- When identifying current staff members, it is crucial to plan how you will provide backup for their normal duties and consider including those roles on the roster
- Keep track of former staff who might be interested and available to join an emergency response in future. Retain their cv, key data and references so you can rehire them quickly. (Tips [HERE](#))
- Consider how you will work with partners – what capacity do they have, and which roles will they play? Can you agree in advance what areas they will cover? Consider identifying roles that you may need to support partners with and include those on the roster.
- Look at your network of experts (consultants or short-term workers) who are external to CARE. Can they play a key role in an emergency response? Consider adding them to your roster as well.
- What level of detail/information do you want in your roster? Consider: contacts, cv, biodata, job profile, sub-skills, languages, references, performance feedback, availability, trainings and certifications, etc.
- How will you keep track of the information? Who needs to have access? Are some details confidential?

¹ This is #4 in a series of short surge capacity guidance notes. The others can be found [HERE](#).

Your roster could be small and simple, or more detailed and advanced, depending on your needs. For example:

	SIMPLE/BASIC	AUGMENTED	SOPHISTICATED
WHO are we tracking?	• ERT members • Identified staff • Only 5 key job profiles	• ERT members and other staff • Local partner organizations • 5-10 job profiles	• ERT members and other staff • Local partner staff • External specialists • 10-25 job profiles
WHAT are we tracking?	• Basic biodata • Skill sets, languages	• Basic biodata • Skill sets, languages • Full curriculum	• Biodata, skills, languages • Curriculum • Updated availability • Performance feedback
HOW are we tracking?	• Excel spreadsheet • Maintained by HR Manager • Checked quarterly by Emergency Lead	• Small database with files • Maintained by HR team • Reviewed and updated monthly by Emergency lead	• Sharing with global database • HR team working with international surge lead • Continuous review and improvement to system

Other things to consider:

Screening and suitability: Not everyone is the right fit for fast-paced, high-stress emergency response teamwork. How will you ensure that you select the right individuals to make your response effective? What questions can you ask to screen for readiness? How will you support these responders during this challenging time? Are you including questions about sexual exploitation and abuse?

Maintaining your roster (regular check-ins and updates): People change jobs frequently, and this affects their interest and availability. What is your capacity to keep track of candidates? What is a reasonable number of people to maintain on your database? How often should you check in with them for updates? Consider these points when deciding what kind of roster you want to have (as per the table above).

When you can't find the expertise you need: you can always ask for short-term international surge support. International experts can cover the immediate demands (especially at assessment and strategy phase), set the strategy going forward, develop clear roles and responsibilities and help you with the search for in-country specialists to carry the work forward.

Recruitment process fit for purpose: Ensure that you have a process in place that will enable you to hire people from the roster quickly, including having appropriate contracts, pay scale and benefits in place that will ensure CARE will be an attractive employer. Also be sure to know the short-cuts that are possible during an emergency response, those are detailed [HERE](#).