A CONSEQUENCE MANAGEMENT APPROACH
TO DISASTER MANAGEMENT: RESPONSE MANAGEMENT PART 4

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In this series of articles, a consequence management approach to the reactive elements of disaster management is discussed. The basic departure point of the authors is that consequences and the responsibilities for dealing with those consequences form a logical and useful point of departure and organising framework for dealing with disaster preparedness and response. Hazards and the progression of vulnerability combine to create hazard impacts, which in turn have both predictable and unpredictable consequences. The defined responsibilities of different role-players link them to the observable and known consequences of the impact and require action from them.

The first article in this series stated the case for the consequence management approach, which is being unpacked in this series of articles. The second article in the series explored the concept of preparedness, which is key to being ready to manage consequences. The third article discussed preparedness planning and the hierarchy of preparedness plans that enable jurisdictions to conduct effective consequence management. In the third article we pointed out that preparedness planning will establish an enabling state of readiness and effective knowledge and capacity to rapidly respond to any emergency that may be expected by a jurisdiction, whether that jurisdiction is

spatial or functional. Preparedness planning reflects responsibility and provides the space for line functions to express their role and functions in a disaster.

In this article and the next two articles, we focus on response management within the wider consequence management framework.

Response management
Response management is the heart of the consequence management concept because if response management cannot be implemented effectively and efficiently, there is little purpose in any preceding planning.

When a hazard translates into a disaster, every line function is supposed to know exactly what to do so that they can effectively implement their specific skills, knowledge and practical experience in the task they need to fulfil in disaster response. For example, when there is a safety and security incident, then all the safety and security role-players ie police, military, traffic, law enforcement will only focus on their specific areas of jurisdictions, such as evacuating people, instituting roadblocks, doing traffic control and stopping loitering.

The same principle will apply to the rescue of humans where the emergency services will work together to prevent further injury to human beings and

stopping fires, to rescue trapped people and to transport patients to medical facilities as quickly as possible. These activities will normally be dealt with by ambulance services, hospital trauma services, as well as fire brigade services.

Response refers to the actions implemented when a hazard impact has occurred or is imminent. Response typically involves emergency and essential services, security services and relief organisations. In major incidents and disasters, response management becomes a complex problem involving multiple organisations and resources working in difficult and dangerous conditions to as quickly as possible safeguard life, property, the environment and the interests of communities and households affected by a hazard are also responders, sometimes called first responders because they are the first to react to the impact. In an international context, though, first responders more typically refer to the emergency services that are first on the scene of incidents, these are normally ambulance services, fire and rescue services and law enforcement agencies for the area.

The response planning part of response management
The practical implementation of response planning typically occurs during response. While preparedness planning established what will in all likelihood be done, response planning can be seen as a more detailed action-oriented activity that responds and adapts to the real situation experienced during response. The goal of preparedness planning can be seen as establishing a situation where the relevant agencies are 'prepared to respond', while response planning will have to adapt to circumstances as they develop.

Although preparedness planning can be seen as a concept that encompasses response planning, the tactical and operational execution of emergency operations require on-the-ground planning and management, which is more response planning than preparedness planning. The totally rigid execution of preparedness plans would not always be possible or desirable in all situations as they develop in real life.

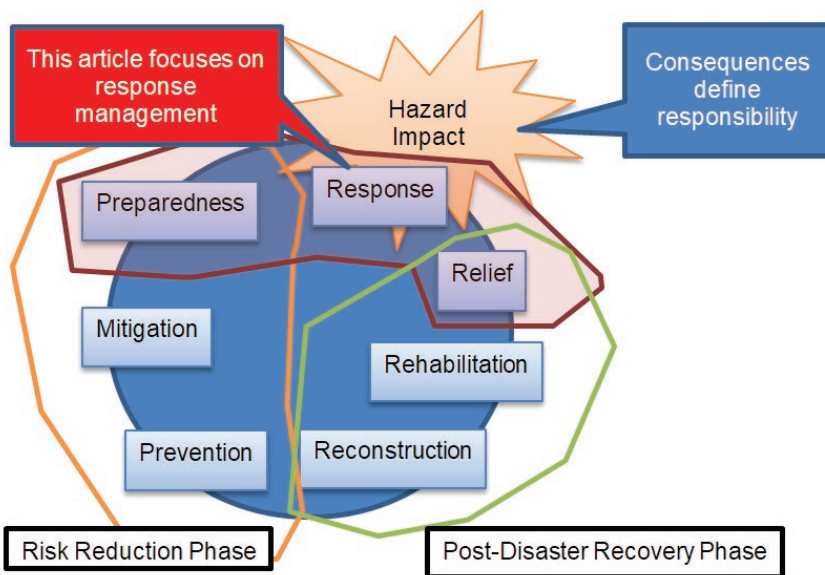Within preparedness planning and training, the individual who will be

Figure 1: A representation of the much used (and admittedly much criticised) Disaster Management Continuum, indicating the focus of this article

responding to situations should be empowered and equipped to adapt a generic preparedness plan for a situation into a real life response plan that adapts to conditions on the ground.

An introduction to response coordination

The need for cooperation between parties responding to emergencies and disasters is self-evident when one observes the number of agencies, personnel and equipment that can get involved in such responses. If observed closely, even minor incidents display complexity in the assignment and acceptance of responsibility for different aspects of the response. Those responding to incidents may include emergency, lifeline utility and normal operational services and disciplines from various spheres of the government, from private sector entities and also from community-based, national or international NGOs. A wide variety of possible equipment and resources may be in use by full-time, part-time and volunteer personnel who have different social and professional backgrounds, different levels and specialisations of training and who are used to different organisational cultures and management systems and protocols. With so much complexity, coordination is clearly needed to ensure that those that need help are assisted as quickly and efficiently as possible and that impact on life, property, the environment and socio-economic activity is limited.

Coordination is also required between primary and supporting role-players. The role-players who have responsibilities in responding to emergencies and disasters can be divided into primary and supporting role-players due to their levels of responsibility and involvement. In responding to a fire, for example, one would imagine that a fire brigade would have primary responsibility but that other agencies may be supporting the fire brigade during response, say for example traffic police to deal with traffic around the site of the fire and the water department of a jurisdiction that ensures water supply to fire hydrants or water tankers.

Some of the most prominent responses to the need for coordination is embodied in firstly the Unified Command (UC) and Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC) components of the well-known Incident Command System (ICS) originating in the United States, secondly the London Emergency Services Liaison Panel's Major Incident Procedure Manual, thirdly the Major Incident Medical Management and Support system known as MIMMS and fourthly the cluster approach used by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN/OCHA). The

Cluster	Lead Agency
Protection	UNHCR
Food Security	FAO and WFP
Emergency Telecommunication	WFP
Early Recovery	UNDP
Education	UNICEF and Save the Children
Sanitation, Water and Hygiene	UNICEF
Logistics	WFP
Nutrition	UNICEF
Emergency Shelter	UNHCR and IFRC
Camp Management and Coordination	UNHCR and IOM
Health	WHO
Information Management	Humanitarian and Emergency Relief Coordinator (OCHA)

Table 1: Structured coordination of humanitarian operations through the use of clusters. Source: OCHA Pakistan

Figure 2: UN approach to clustering. Source: OCHA Pakistan

table below indicates the clusters used in the structured coordination by UN/OCHA of United Nations humanitarian operations.

Another example of a clustering approach to promote coordination is that provided in a disaster preparedness, response and relief plan developed for the Western Cape Government in South Africa, the six clusters used in the plan are as follows:

- Infrastructure, transport and essential services;
- Environment, agriculture and water;
- Community support services;
- Emergency services, safety and security;
- Support services, information and communication; and

- Hazard specialist and representation of those effected.

By clustering role-players with other similar role-players that they most often cooperate with or who shares responsibility with them, improved coordination is achieved. By grouping certain role-players, communication is optimised and complexity is reduced.

Conclusion

This concludes the discussion of response management and the elements of response planning and response coordination that support effective response. We have only really introduced response coordination in this article and will expand more on response coordination in the next article. 🌐