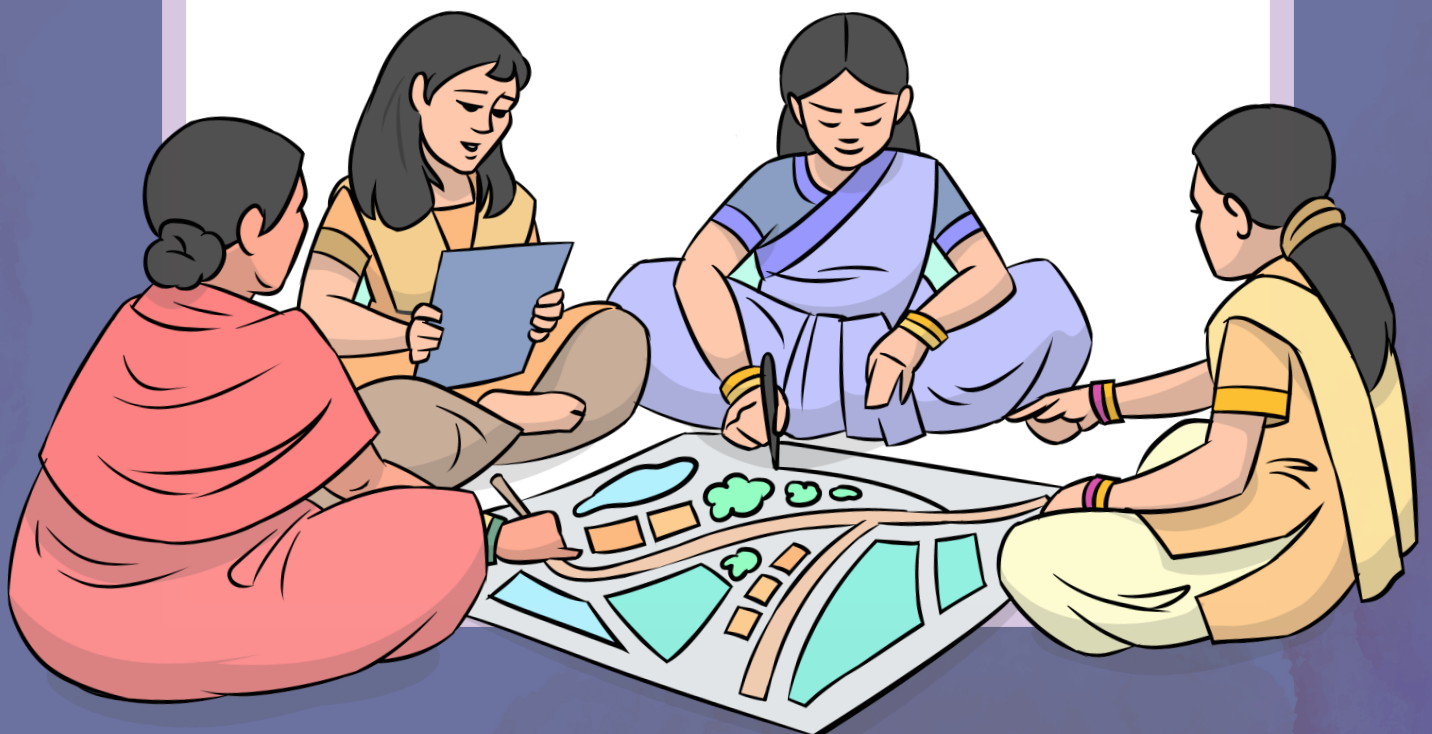




# FIRST RESPONDERS' FRAMEWORK





## Acknowledgement

The 'Emergency Response Framework for the First Responders' commissioned by W20, the official G20 engagement group focused on gender equity in Disaster Management process. Climate Change is one of the 5 Key Priorities of W20 India. Acknowledging the fact that women and girls are not only vulnerable to climate change but are also effective actors or agents of change in relation to both mitigation and adaptation, W20 is working towards achieving gender equity in the fight against climate change.

Empowering women as First Responders to Emergencies is crucial as they have a strong body of knowledge and expertise that can be used in disaster mitigation, reduction and adaptation strategies. W20's working group has come up with this framework which can be adopted by national and local governments, international agencies, and other stakeholders to engage women in every step of the emergencies and disaster response mechanisms as 'First Responders'.

This framework is developed and drafted by W20 Knowledge Partner Humara Bachpan Trust, a not for profit organization, advocating for safe and healthy living conditions with improved socio-economic status of communities living in poverty. Disaster Preparedness & Response being one of the core areas of intervention of Humara Bachpan, the organization's Disaster Preparedness and Response Strategy is based on and guided by four principles.

- Ensuring Community led response having women and girls in the center,
- Addressing the needs of vulnerable people including women, children, persons with disabilities and elderly people,
- Building resilience, and
- Protecting & promoting dignity.

This document is a product of literature reviews and consultations with several stakeholders. It has benefitted from reviews and inputs from humanitarian actors, gender experts and grassroots women groups.

Humara Bachpan Trust would like to thank W20 India for putting faith and assigning this task. The organization is expressing heartfelt gratitude to all those who have contributed immensely to develop this First Responders' Framework, keeping women in the core of the structure.

This guideline is a version to be released during W20 India Summit and will be updated with comments and contributions further.

## Purpose of First Responder's Framework

The purpose of this 'Emergency Response Framework for the First Responders' is to clarify their roles and responsibilities in emergency response and to provide a common approach for their work in emergencies. Recognizing that the principles of emergency management apply to all emergencies, this framework has been developed to describe the core commitments, critical functions, roles and responsibilities of the first responders for optimizing their response in all emergencies with special focus on women as first responders. The framework also highlights self-safety and security measures that the first responders must take care of during emergencies. In line with the national level disaster response framework, this document is intended as a practice-based, results-focused tool to assist local governments and partners in planning the engagement of community cadre as first responders.

Critical assumptions for successful implementation of the Framework

1. Sufficient risk reduction and preparedness capacities of the states adopting the framework;
2. The First Responders are trained and skilled to respond effectively to the emergencies
3. Sufficient and sustainable core funding for the above;
4. Access to the affected population.

The framework seeks to further define the step by step guide for application by local governments; ensuring disaster management planning and implementation is tailored to the local context and needs. This framework aims to strengthen capacity of local government to engage with the local actors as first responders, undertake assessments, and develop arrangements for implementation and financing.

The document enables local governments and other local actors to develop a process to assess the emergency context; to revise, update and consider future plans and interventions based on the available resources and institutional arrangements. This should be a progressive effort where all recovery actors support the local government and disaster-affected communities towards resilient recovery.

The language used in the framework is easy to read and understand. Information from the document can also be used by the trainer/participant to further develop IEC material, and training modules. It will help the first responders to understand how to better prepare for and respond to disaster situations through their own roles and responsibilities at work. The handbook can, therefore, be used as a reckoning guide even after the trainings for the first responders executing their responsibilities, especially during times of humanitarian emergencies.

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# INTRODUCTION

The past few decades indicate substantial increase in the frequency and impact of natural disasters worldwide. These unwelcome events have caused substantive human and material losses. Analyses of response to past disasters have highlighted the importance of reaching the victims within the initial crucial period during an emergency, as it is a major requirement in protecting people and assets. Though some time lag between the event and official response is unavoidable, yet majority of casualties occur during this time. Thus, there is need for such a mechanism to be in place, whereby, the immediate or the first response is ensured to the maximum extent possible. The objective of First Response is to build resilience in the affected communities, to respond with greater fortitude in the event of disasters, so as to resist losses before official help arrives.

However, First Response is complementary to official response. Disaster Response on the part of government is a long-term concern since it is dovetailed with development. Social and economic vulnerability greatly reduces the capacity of the poor to cope with adverse conditions. First Response, on their part, in disaster situations, is therefore greatly inhibited. As a prerequisite, their coping capacity has to be enhanced by improving their material situation. This could be possible only through combined effort on the part of the administration, non-government organisations active in the area of disaster management and more generically/generally, particularly in developing countries, in development concerns, such as poverty alleviation, uplift of weaker sections etc.

## **Rationale of First Response**

After a disaster, local authorities are frequently overwhelmed with shortages of resources, skills and leadership; often exacerbated by remoteness and a lack of available support. A combination of these, impact adversely upon the efficiency and effectiveness of response and recovery operations. Governments therefore need to work with other actors including the community leadership structures as the first responders.

Until now such effort on their part had been informal and unorganised. However, it is in the process of being recognised officially now, and brought in tandem with government response, since first responders' role has proven crucial in saving lives in the immediate aftermath of disasters experienced in the recent past.

This implies the engagement of the first responders in disaster response is crucial for better response effort. It has been observed that enlisting the services of volunteer first responders who come from a cross section of society, greatly economises response effort in terms of both time and money. Future scenario in this regard, therefore, is envisaged as, first responders functioning as extension service/additions to official agencies, offering immediate help to victims till the time professional help arrives. There are numerous examples of such intent on the part of governments globally, particularly on the part of those that have suffered disasters in recent years.

## **Who is the First Responder**

Local humanitarian actors are the first to respond when disasters strike and often have access to areas that authorities do not. Their presence within communities before, during, and after crises

means they are generally best placed to link immediate response efforts to longer term resilience-building, preparedness and recovery.

First Responders are typically the personnel working in the local community or staff of local government organisations tasked with emergency management or response. For example, local police, medical staff or fire-fighters, government workers (including civil protection) or members of volunteer organisations and community volunteers.

Localising humanitarian response is a process of recognising, respecting and strengthening the leadership by local authorities and the capacity of local civil society in humanitarian action and the community volunteers, in order to better address the needs of affected populations and to support national actors in the humanitarian responses.

**Definition:**

***A first responder is a person with specialized training who is among the first to arrive and provide assistance or incident resolution at the scene of an emergency, such as an accident, disaster, medical emergency, structure fire, crime, or terrorist attack.***<sup>1</sup>

First responders typically include law enforcement officers (commonly known as police officers), paramedics, emergency medical technicians, and fire fighters. In some jurisdictions, emergency department personnel, such as doctors and nurses, are also required to respond to disasters and critical situations, designating them first responders; in other jurisdictions, military and security forces may also be authorized to act as first responders.<sup>2</sup>

The use of the term “first responder” in the current sense is someone from the community with enthusiasm and acceptance in the same community to meet the needs of the affected population at the onset of the incident and emphasizing the role of women and girls as first responders. Thus, this framework defines the First Responder as below.

***“First responders are those members of the affected community who have survived, willing and capable to help others and trained to help the shocked, injured and trapped victims and are already near the scene of disaster. It is their timely help and services that can reduce the suffering and recovery period substantially.”***

This framework is applicable to the following people as First responders–

- Community frontline workers and other civil society or local collectives’ personnel who have desire to serve community at the time of any emergency and have enough time to participate in training programs on first aid, search and rescue, disaster management etc.
- These people may include but not limited to; Anganwadi workers, Anganwadi helpers, ASHA workers, ANM, NYK, Rotary club and Red Cross volunteers, Home guards, NGO outreach workers etc.
- Community volunteers such as youth club members, women group members, community leaders, PRI members and individuals.
- Women and girls will be in the forefront of the disaster management program.

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1 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First\\_responder](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_responder)

2 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blue\\_responder](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blue_responder)



## WOMEN AS FIRST RESPONDERS

Crises, including conflicts and disasters, affect different groups of society – women, girls, boys and men – differently. Due to pre-existing socioeconomic conditions, social norms and beliefs and traditional practices, women and girls are disproportionately affected by crises, and have different and uneven levels of resilience and capacities to recover.

At the same time, crises can also serve as an opportunity for shifts in gender roles that lead to new responsibilities and opportunities for women and men in economic decisions and activity, political engagement and community arbitration. Yet women's actual and potential contributions, including their leadership as first responders and their central role in community stability and resilience, continue to be largely untapped assets in crisis recovery.

When women are engaged as first responders, the unique skills and knowledge they bring to humanitarian action increases the effectiveness and impact of responses. Humanitarian action led by women first responders in crisis-affected areas, can be faster and more appropriate, saving more lives and alleviating the suffering of victims.

### Why Engaging Women as First Responders

**Early response and access:** Embedded within their communities, women first responders have the capacity to respond to the many small-scale crises that are under the threshold of community intervention. Women's local knowledge, social networks and capacity to mobilise the community are an invaluable resource during a humanitarian response.

**Acceptance:** In an increasing number of sensible areas, it has become challenging or impossible for expatriate or even national humanitarian workers to access people in need. As a result, authorities are increasingly resorting to women humanitarian responders to perform needs assessments, deliver aid and interact with local populations. In certain contexts, this can also improve the general acceptance for humanitarian aid from armed groups or local authorities.

**Links with development:** Direct support to a local humanitarian responder can increase national capacity and responsibility when it recognises and respects women leadership and decision-making.

**Understanding Better:** Women and women-led groups understand the unique needs of women and families in crisis situations and should be full and equal participants in all recovery and resilience efforts. When women are involved in the disaster assessment process, they ensure that the needs of women and the most marginalised and vulnerable in the community are met.

**Increasing accountability:** When aid is provided by women humanitarian responders who are well rooted in society, affected populations are often more vigilant, asking for better quality goods and services which can increase accountability. Women's leadership in humanitarian response enhances accountability to affected populations and the capacity of communities to lead response efforts, which results in more efficient and effective responses.

## International Commitments towards Engaging Women in First Response

The call for increasing support to women humanitarian responders is embedded in several different policy commitments, summarized below:

**Table-1**

The World Humanitarian Summit Agenda (2016)	Emphasizes on empowering women and girls as change agents and leaders in humanitarian action and ensuring gender responsive humanitarian programme
The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN 2015)	Several references to national and local levels in all 17 goals, such as the goal 16.7: Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision making at all levels
Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 (SFDRR)	The framework draws attention to the diverging ways in which women experience disasters, and highlights their increased vulnerability in certain disaster situations
Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2010	The framework called for a gender perspective to be integrated into all disaster risk management policies, plans and decision-making processes, including those related to risk assessment, early warning, information management and education and training
Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC 2015) Transformation Agenda	The agenda commits to empower affected people, including women, girls continuously and effectively shape humanitarian decision-making as first responders and acknowledge their collective responsibility and accountability as leaders of the international humanitarian system to deliver on this historic commitment.
United Nations Secretary General’s Agenda	Scale up training opportunities for local women leaders in emergency preparedness, early warning and response, and other priorities identified by women (e.g. functional literacy) that will facilitate their increased engagement and leadership in humanitarian action
World Reconstruction Conference 4 –Inclusion for Resilient Recovery (2019)	Recognizes to promote women’s leadership and shared good practices in the integration of gender dimensions in risk analysis and the design of effective disaster and conflict recovery and peace building interventions.

Different international commitments articulate that “women and girls as first responders should be better supported, and all humanitarian actors, both national and international, should complement their coping and protection strategies wherever possible. The implementation of such a shift should be aided by analysis of the local operational capacities, a review of current roles and cooperation arrangements, and by the creation of more inclusive decision-making arrangements founded on the principles of partnership.”

## ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF FIRST RESPONDERS

A First Responder's primary responsibility is to render timely help and services that can reduce the suffering and recovery period substantially. For instance, if a person is bleeding a timely dressing can reduce blood loss, can make a lot of difference to the suffering, and reduce recovery period significantly. The frontline service providers or the first responders must be trained and imparted with skill set on the following to effectively deliver the quality services during onset of disaster or in emergency situations:

- Early Warning Information Dissemination,
- Support in Evacuation,
- Rescue (Tracing, light search & rescue),
- Shelter Home Management,
- First Aid,
- Psychosocial Support,
- Assessing the nature and scale of the damage,
- Requesting the appropriate resources required by affected communities, and
- Providing leadership to ensure proper distribution of relief materials.

### What is 'Must' in a First Responder

A first responder must –

- Understand and represent the community.
- Be attentive to the needs; especially at the time of emergency of her community always.
- Ready to help others, including those who require special attention.
- Be accessible to take responsibility in times of disaster or any other emergency.
- Be fully informed about the 'Do no harm' principles.
- Record and report their activities during an emergency.
- Communicate and cooperate with others working for/ in the same community.

### Key Principles to be adopted by the First Responders

- The first responders will be a link between the local authorities and community, primarily during disaster or any other emergency.
- As part of their local community team, first responders will carry out a quick assessment, develop community level planning for early warning and evacuation, ensure people's safety during an emergency, help in search and rescue and provide basic first aid services.
- The first responders should conduct the risk assessment considering the vulnerabilities of women, pregnant women, children, transgender, old age people and Persons with Disabilities and request for the support mechanism for them.

- First responders will always take care of each other's safety and uphold the community's wellbeing in the times of disaster.
- A first responder must help all in need without asking or discriminating on the grounds of caste, creed, religion, proximity, age, medical condition etc. and should avoid any kind of favoritisms.
- A first responder will support in light search and rescue and will not undertake a full-fledged search and rescue operation on their own as this framework does not offer the scope for a full operation.
- A first responder is not a replacement to a public health service worker, a paramedic or a trained and certified first aider. However, the first responders are expected to stabilize the patients in absence of trained and authorized personnel and bring them to safety under guidance of a trained service provider. A first aider must practice the principle of 'Do No Harm' at all times.
- The first responders will keep records of activities and report all their activities in this capacity with relevant local authorities.

## **Basic and Common Responsibilities**

### Role and responsibilities of First responders in a Disaster Response

- Always be prepared to respond to any incidence posing threat to life of people using first response skills.
- Do your best to preserve the life of individuals before the medical assistance has reached.
- Keep your knowledge updated.
- Participate in refresher courses and mock drills.
- Get familiar with the District/ Block Disaster Response/Contingency Plans.
- Ensure that your contact details are updated at a state/ central database.

### Capacity Building of the First Responders

- District Disaster Management Authorities and other concerned authorities, organizations may conduct refresher courses for First Responders periodically. First Responders should ensure that they participate in these trainings to refresh their knowledge.

### Communication

- In times of disasters information sharing is a challenge. The First Responders should gather information from all the available secondary sources about the occurrence of disaster / emergency and act immediately.
- The gathered information should be shared with the fellow First Responder through the available means as well as with the local government officials.
- First Responders should validate the information from reliable sources and then pass on to communities and relevant stakeholders.

## SELF SAFETY & PROTECTION OF FIRST RESPONDERS DURING EMERGENCIES

Being a first responder, it is utmost necessary that they must maintain good health and safety throughout. Many times, a first responder stretches its own limits and ends up being a liability to the team eventually. The following points must be remembered and always adhered to ensure maximum safety of self and uninterrupted operation at the ground.

Responding to crises is often, an emotionally and physically challenging experience for everyone involved, regardless of which area of response they are involved in. Women first responders when directly affected by the crisis or critical event may have experienced loss of loved ones and loss of assets and there is defined role as caregivers to manage the household situation in the aftermath of crises. On top of the structural and financial obstacles, women first responders also face numerous socio-cultural and economic barriers in their communities in exercising leadership in emergency preparedness, response, and resilience programming.

First responders may experience sleep deprivation, anxiety over whether the help they are giving is adequate, frustration over things not happening the way they hoped for, discouragement for not receiving family support, and sadness or emotional reactions for being away from family. It is important to ensure that First Responders are cared for and are offered the physical and psychosocial interventions.

Following aspects must always be taken care off by the first responders (Do's & Don'ts) to ensure their safety and wellbeing (Do's & Don'ts) –

### Preparedness

- a. First responders must be well trained.
- b. They must be prepared – keep the Go bag ready, keep the first aid kit well replenished, keep checking equipment etc. at least once a month.
- c. Adhere to the universal precautions and guidelines during an emergency.
- d. Make sure that the protective gears are up to date and not compromised.
- e. They must have a well-established channel of communication and reporting.
- f. Decide on a team leader from amongst the first responders in a community (this person should be the most experienced and most accessible).
- g. The situational assessment team should be decided in advance and this team should be able to take a decision on transfer of medical emergency cases and search and rescue cases. This group should involve the most experienced and mature persons from the group as decision taken by this group may put everybody in danger.

## **Physical well being**

- a. No heroics.
- b. If assessment shows an unknown risk – don't respond.
- c. If assessment shows a heightened level of risk – don't respond.
- d. If you do not feel up to the mark – don't respond.
- e. Check your gears and the clothing often – any breach in that may put you in danger.
- f. When handling injured patients strictly adhere to the universal precaution rules and ensure that you don't end up catching an infection.
- g. Beware of the sharp edges and object while rescuing or providing medical assistance to people.
- h. If you feel tired, inform the team leader and take rest.
- i. Don't forget to carry the essential tools and personal hygiene requirements and medicines for your protection.
- j. Don't avoid any medical condition.

## **Psychological well being**

- a. Do try to keep your life as normal as possible.
- b. Do let the beneficiaries talk about their emotions and express themselves in games and drawings.
- c. Do allow yourself to be part of a group of people who care.
- d. Don't bottle up feelings.
- e. Don't avoid talking about what happened with other responders.
- f. Don't expect the memories to go away – the feelings will stay with you for a long time to come.
- g. Don't wait to share your burn out status with the team leader.

## **General well being, awareness and acceptance**

- a. Do take time out to sleep, rest, think and be with those important to you.
- b. Do drive more carefully.
- c. Do be more careful around the community.
- d. Do take every opportunity to review the experience.
- e. Don't expect the beneficiaries to understand you in the emergency situation.
- f. Don't judge people .
- g. Don't pass any remark or comment which are generic in nature.
- h. Don't sympathize with the community – they need your empathy and compassion.

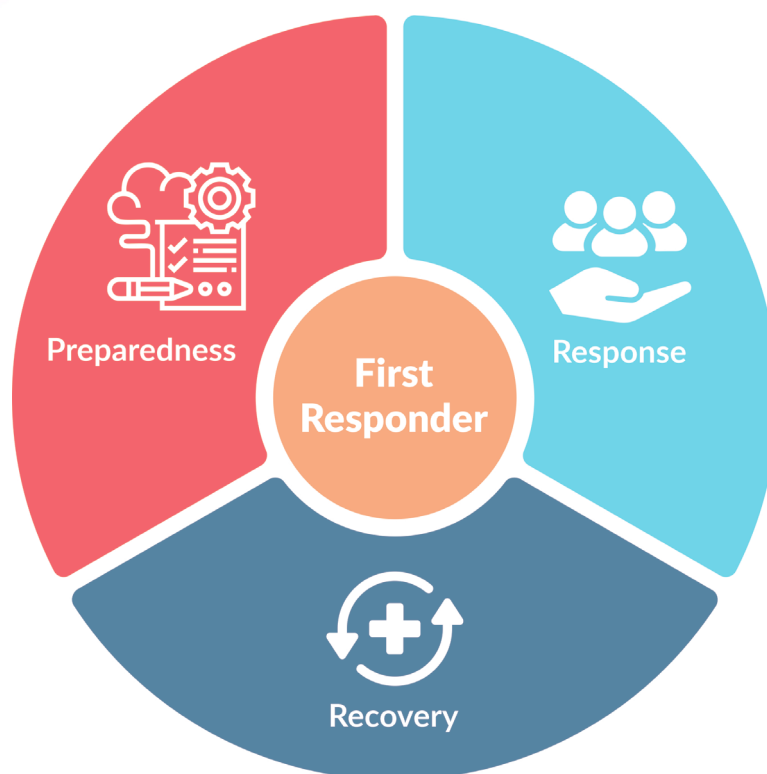
## ROLE OF FIRST RESPONDERS IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT CYCLE

A local area might be exposed to several disaster risks. It will be necessary for the first responders to understand the nature, and impact of these disasters and their roles and responsibilities through the disaster management cycle in order to better respond.

**Figure 1: First Responders in different phases of Disaster Management**

### Preparedness Phase:

In the preparatory phase, the major activities where the first responders should be involved are in community based early warning dissemination and evacuation process. The roles and responsibilities of first responders in preparedness phases are mentioned below.



- Understand the warning and forecast message properly and prepare an evacuation planning and help their respective communities or set of households, develop one.
- Undertake a vulnerability mapping in the locality and identify people with special needs during alert and/ or evacuation.
- Occasionally engage the community in mock drills to check the level of preparedness.
- Ensure that the Early Warning System is accurate and readable from a distance.
- Ensure the evacuation route(s) are marked and clear at all time.
- Keep checking the effectiveness of the alert mechanisms.

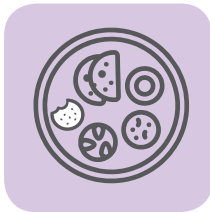
- Make sure that the first responders have the 'ready to go bag' is available with the requirements as per the checklist (Table-2).
- Taking care of the cultural nuances while making the evacuation plans. (Though these are not encouraging practices but first responders have to make sure that there is no confusion or bitterness about different caste and religions' people act together/ if it is not at all possible; they should ensure separate planning and execution – as they do not have time and energy to deal with these issues during an evacuation).
- Coordinate with other first responders, service providers and volunteers.
- Make sure there is a steady flow of information during an event of hazard.

**Table-2: Content of the 'ready to go bag':**



**Water**

Pack at least 1.5 liters of drinking water per person per day



**Food**

Pack some ready to eat food in your bag which may include some biscuit, Grams (Chana), Peanuts, ready ix, flat rice, Jaggery (Gur) etc



**Musk**

Optional but carry a Towel (Gamcha) or a piece of long cloth (Dupatta) to tieon your face and mouth when required



**Light**

A good torch is an essential component of your bag. Select an emergency torch with extra batteries



**Clothing**

Keep two sets of clothes. Select light and compact items as space is at a premium in your Go Bag.





### First Aid

Your first aid kits contents should reflect your training and ability and must include at the very least wound cleansing and dressing supplies, eyewash and burn treatment bandages.



### Hygiene Products

Menstrual Pad for women first responders in their ready to go bag is must



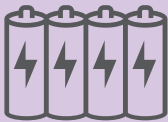
### Communication

Telephone networks, including mobile networks, may become disabled or overwhelmed locally during an emergency. Carry a whistle or a small drum in your bag.



### Radio

Information is crucial during any crisis. Tune in to emergency radio broadcasts via a portable AM/FM radio receiver. You don't need to carry this, if your mobile phone has FM radio enabled.



### Miscellaneous

Pack an emergency mobile phone charger (to connect when service resumes) and additional spare batteries for other tools.



### Documents

Pack copies of your IDs and other important documents, local maps, keys, prescriptions, some money and essential contact information that you may not have access to if you evacuate your home. Pack these items in a waterproof document pouch.



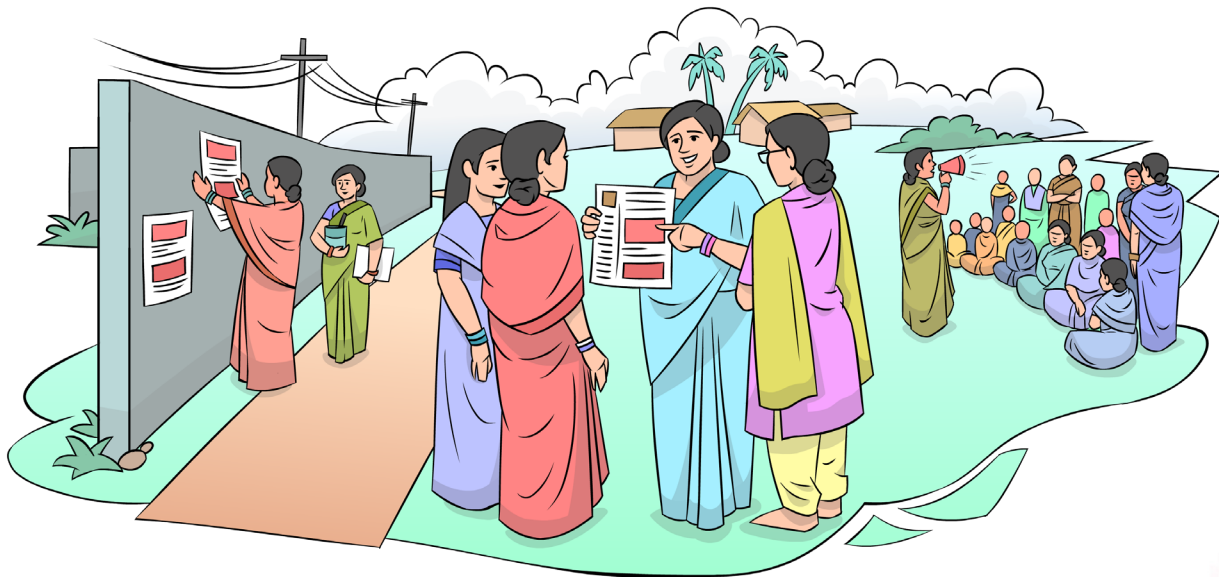
### The Bag

Choose a medium sized backpack that can hold all your survival gear. The bag needs to be waterproof, or you can line your backpack with a light-weight dry sack or plastic. You can make your bag easier to find in the dark by sticking photo-luminescent (glow in the dark) tape.

## First Responders in Dissemination of Early Warning Message

After the dissemination of Early Warning from the State to the District level, the first responders may do the followings.

- Utilize their networks to disseminate the warning further to the last person standing.
- Spread the word and ensure that evacuation to safe shelters is under process.
- Identify vulnerable persons in the community (women, children, elderly, persons with disabilities) and prepare for their evacuation.
- For people with disability; the first responders need to be aware about the complexities. For instance, the same form of communication will not work for a visually impaired, a deaf and mentally disable person. Therefore, the message must be communicated in a manner that is understood or relayed to all.



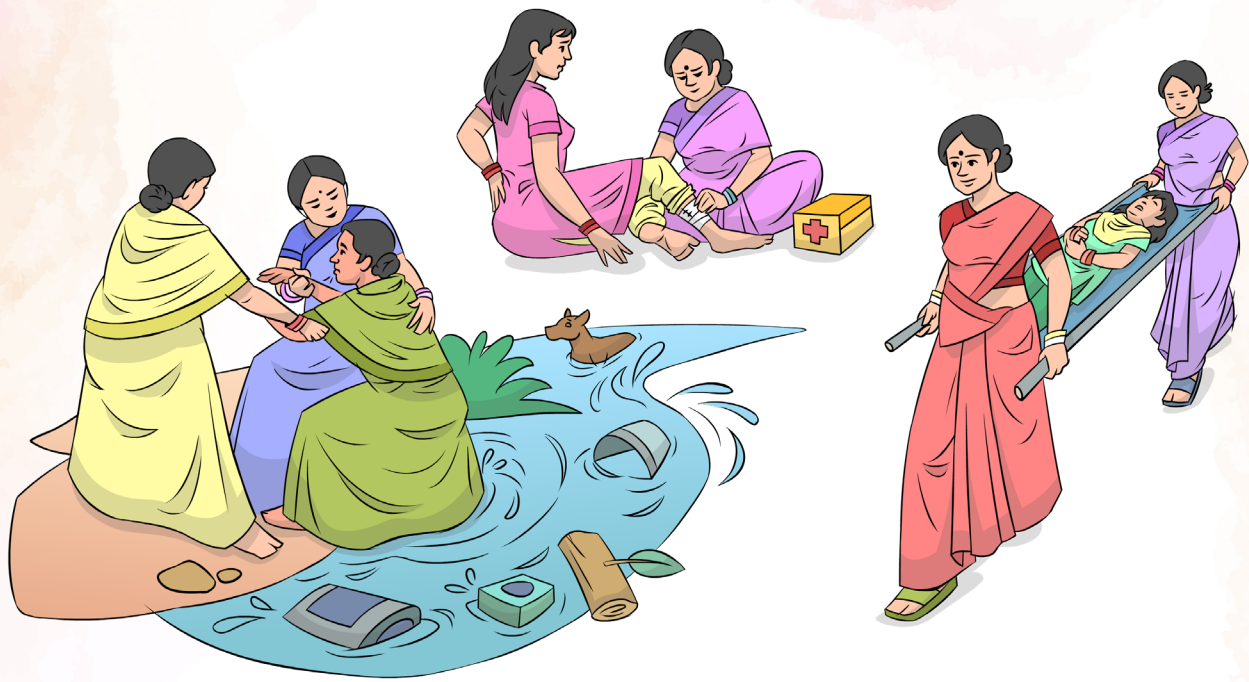
## Early Warning Dissemination Methods

### Evacuation Preparedness

The first responder's role in evacuation process is crucial leading to greater safety and least loss in any community. The role of first responders in this stage of preparedness can be as below.

- The hamlets or cluster of households, coordinated by a first responder must have a plan with an alternate route drawn on it.
- The evacuation plan must be visibly hung in a public place so that everybody in the community can see it and know about it.
- The evacuation routes to be marked on the map in bright colors and the dangerous path must be marked in RED color. In reality the same color codes may be used as signage to mark the evacuation route and the assembly point.

The first responder should ensure that the evacuation plan includes specific arrangements for shifting of vulnerable population; pregnant women, children, senior citizens and persons with disabilities.



Light Search & Rescue Methods

### Response Phase:

With the familiarity about local context and resources, community first responders play effective role during disaster response phase which includes activities such as First aid, psychosocial support, shelter management and relief activities (WASH & Food & Nutrition Management).

### Emergency First Aid

First aid sometimes referred to as 'EMERGENCY AID,' is the first skilled assistance given to a victim (sick or injured) on the occurrence of accident or sudden illness to preserve life, prevent further injury and relive suffering until qualified medical care is available. The scope of first aid is to apply a consistent set of standards, and treatment, in a logical order. Victim assessment by a first aider is to identify injuries, treat, and transport victims.

The aims of First Aid are to:

- Preserve life,
- Prevent the worsening of the casualty's medical condition,
- Promote recovery, and
- Provide safe transportation to the nearest health care facility.

The set of rules that the first responders are to follow in providing first aid in emergency is as follows.

- Do the first thing first; this includes assessing the situation for any immediate danger, quickly and methodically without panicking, giving priority to the most urgent situation / condition.
- Remove the victim from the cause of injury or the cause of injury from the victim.
- Resuscitate the victim, if necessary and carry out general treatment of unconsciousness.

- Loosen all tight clothing or materials around the victim's neck waist, wrist, etc.
- Arrest bleeding, cover all wounds, burns or scalds and immobilize all fractures.
- Do not allow people to crowd a victim and do not move a victim unless you really have to (dangerous environment, risk of falling debris, explosion etc).
- Reassure the victim and get help at the earliest.
- Improvise all necessary materials which are not readily available.
- Guide against or treat for shock.
- Dispose/transport the victim properly.

### Important Points to be remembered by First Responders as First-Aiders

1. First-Aiders must always remain calm and assess the situation first before rushing to help the victim.
2. First Aiders must ensure to remove any dangers from the casualty, or remove the casualty from dangers, and prevent the crowding of casualties by bystanders.
3. It is important that the First-Aiders call for appropriate help as per the assessment of the situation.
4. As most first aid treatment does involve touching the victim, it is very important that the First-Aider gains their permission, so as to avoid causing offence or distress.
5. It is important to understand that first aid has its limitations and does not take the place of professional medical treatment.
6. First Aiders should also take care to listen to any remarks or requests a casualty makes.
7. The First Aider's responsibility ends when the casualty is handed over to the care of a competent health provider.



First Aid Procedure in Emergencies

When faced with a casualty, the first responders must quickly determine the most appropriate course of action. They must assess the casualty and the area to gather all relevant information based on the history of the event leading to the injuries and the casualty's signs and symptoms.

To be effective at any form of true first aid, the first responders need to obtain some training or skill. First aid is an application of skills and techniques, in a logical and prioritized sequence. First responders need to learn first aid; otherwise they will not be able to guess the priorities. We can say 'first aid is just common sense', but it is so much more.

### **Psychosocial First Aid and Referrals**

Psychosocial First Aid is the process of facilitating resilience within an individual to enable her/him to bounce back from the impact of a crisis and help her/him to deal with the event/crisis while respecting her/his independence, dignity and coping mechanism. In the past, first aid has mostly focused on providing physical first aid to someone who is injured or suddenly ill by someone present in that moment. Traumatic events and sickness may stress people. They may feel worried, overwhelmed or confused. Some people may show little or no signs, others may have a more severe reaction.

Physical and Psychosocial First Aid go hand in hand and must be given simultaneously. During emergency situations, first responders can play a crucial role in connecting affected people with mental healthcare needs to health professionals that are able to provide them. The role of first responders is mainly in three areas—

- Identification of individuals in needs of mental healthcare,
- Psychosocial First Aid, and
- Referrals to mental healthcare professions.

### **Techniques to be followed to provide Psychosocial care to the disaster survivors**

There are seven basic techniques of providing psychosocial care to the disaster survivors which the first responders can adopt.<sup>3</sup>

**Ventilation:** First responders need to talk to disaster survivors about what they have experienced and share their feelings and emotions. This process acts as a safety-valve and has long-term buffering impact on the mental health of survivors.

1. **Empathy:** First responders need to be empathetic while listening to survivors so that they can better understand the survivors' internal emotional turmoil and give appropriate responses to them.
2. **Active listening:** First responders must actively listen to survivors of disasters and facilitate ventilation and develop empathy— this in turn facilitates the whole process of providing emotional support.
3. **Social support:** Social support networks are extremely important for feeling comfortable and secure. In a disaster situation all the support systems get disrupted and need to rebuild and restored.

3. <https://nidm.gov.in/PDF/modules/psychosocial.pdf>

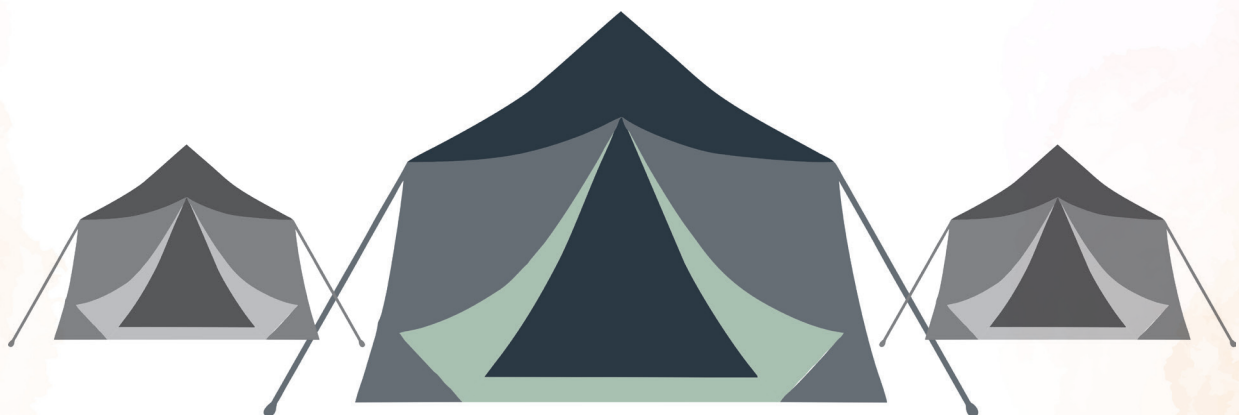
4. **Externalization of Interests:** Engaging survivors in small but productive activity/work (keeping age, gender, physical status, skills and interest as considerations) helps them in imbibing positive thinking and feelings. This also provides survivors with a channel to ventilate/express some of their repressed emotions and feelings. In addition, this technique has a positive impact on their self-esteem and self-concept.
5. **The Value of Relaxation:** Introducing relaxation activities for children (for instance some games, songs, dancing, painting, colouring and other things) and adults involving physical movement has proved to be very beneficial in helping survivors recover from their trauma and pain. These activities will help to channelize their energy and control some stress producing hormone. Simple relaxation techniques can be taught to them to bring relief from the painful memories or emotions.
6. **Turning towards Religion and Spirituality:** Making survivors engage in practicing their religious beliefs or belief in a higher power gives great relief and support during critical periods of their lives.

#### **When to use referral services?**

Referring a person to a specialist requires tact and sensitivity as there is much social stigma attached to mental health issues. Individuals may also not readily accept help in this form even if it is available and accessible. However, a first responder needs to be trained to understand the symptoms when they need to refer the survivors for professional support.

#### **Shelter Management**

An Emergency Shelter is a place “for people to live TEMPORARILY when they cannot live in their previous residence,” (Wikipedia.org) and a person utilizing an emergency shelter can be referred to as a “shelteree”. Following early warning and evacuation the next part of immediate disaster relief is the management of shelters (usually temporary). Multipurpose Cyclone Shelters (MCS) and Multipurpose Flood Shelters (MFS) and other temporary shelters arranged to withstand the damages caused by disasters can be managed well by first responders. Women SHGs play an important role in the smooth functioning of these shelters across the country.



**Temporary Shelter Management**

Shelter Management consists of providing assistance and protection to displaced populations living in shelters, according to the legal protection framework and minimum humanitarian standards, thus ensuring that affected populations participate in shelter daily activities. The Shelter Management process requires a holistic approach, and a cross-cutting sector response which aims to

- Provide assistance and protection to displaced population living in shelters
- Communicate and coordinate with range of actors
- Ensure the basic facilities available to all the shelter population including people requiring special care and needs

The roles and responsibilities of first responders in shelter management process include the followings.

- ✓ Identification and inspection of shelters
- ✓ Completing or reviewing the Emergency Shelter Operations Plan
- ✓ Maintenance and equipping of physical shelter and surroundings
- ✓ Heightening community awareness on disasters, use of emergency shelters etc
- ✓ Alerting and mobilizing shelter team and vulnerable persons in the community
- ✓ Cleaning, inspecting and preparing the emergency shelter to receive shelterees
- ✓ Testing equipment, checking supplies and administrative tools, testing power / utility systems
- ✓ Admittance and registration of shelterees
- ✓ Administration of shelter services such as clinic, relief packages, meals, hygiene supplies, psycho social support etc
- ✓ Orientation of shelterees to the rules, services, programs of the shelter
- ✓ Identification of shelterees' needs, interests, skills and enabling their meaningful participation in shelter operations
- ✓ Ensuring safety & security of women and girls to prevent incidences of sexual exploitation and abuse
- ✓ Facilitating shelterees in deriving durable solutions in order that they may vacate the shelter and regain independent living
- ✓ Maintaining a healthy and secure environment and addressing protection needs promptly
- ✓ Maintaining a hygienic and functional space
- ✓ Monitor and share protection and other issues affecting shelterees with competent authorities and service providers on a regular basis so they can plan, finance and mobilize resources for affected people

The roles of first responders will vary depending on the phase of the shelter management cycle and it is extremely crucial that the first responders do not operate emergency shelters all by themselves. The successful management of emergency shelters requires a team effort.



**Community Kitchen in Temporary Shelter**

### **Food & Nutrition Management**

Food and Nutrition is one of the most critical concerns of any disaster emergency. The availability of nutritious food and safe drinking water are two of the most universal needs of life. The displacement of a considerable population and its management in temporary shelters means therefore that food rations or hot cooked meals need to be arranged in the form of relief for those affected populations.

First responders are very effective channel through which relief can be organized and disseminated in the community. Especially with respect to hot cooked meals, women SHGs have been involved in the running of community kitchens as they have the human resources to do so during disaster situations.



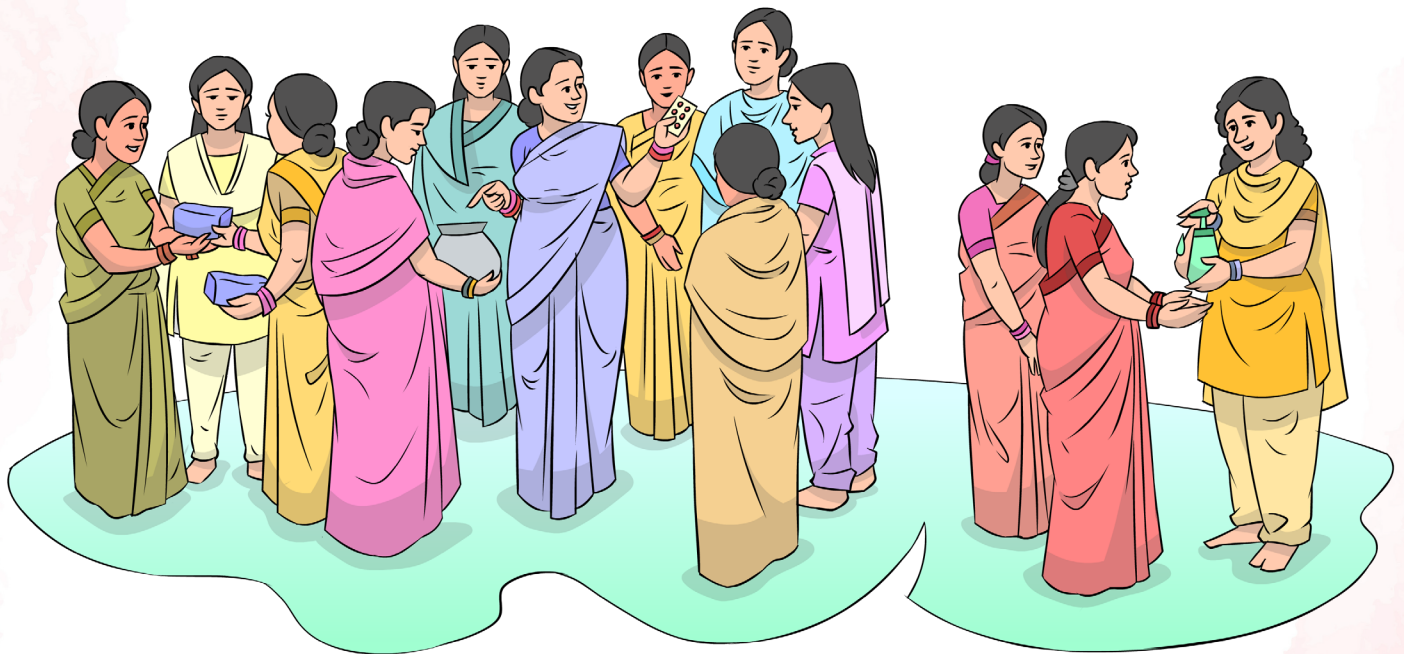
**Monitoring Emergency Supply & Distribution**



As members of the Cyclone/Flood Shelter Maintenance and Management Committees, first responders can also contribute in the coordination of food supply chains while supporting the village sarpanch in relief. They can also contribute to the distribution of food items (both perishable and dry) to those affected by the disaster.

The guiding outlines for first responders in food and nutrition management are as below.

- ✓ Help the local bodies in food supply and distribution.
- ✓ Effectively run and maintain free kitchens
- ✓ Ensure food-related conditions
- ✓ Ensure that food ration is adequate to address the nutritional needs of all sub-groups of the population
- ✓ Ensure making available relief materials for the affected people.
- ✓ Running awareness programme regarding food supplies, diseases which may spread out, and healthy practices
- ✓ Provide information of evacuees sheltered in different locations for the food supply.



**Spreading Awareness on Water, Sanitation & Hygiene**

### **Spreading Awareness on Water, Sanitation & Hygiene during Disasters**

One of the most crucial Safe Drinking Water is one of the most important requirements especially during disasters. The absence of safe drinking water can lead to various health issues and illnesses. The chances of contamination of drinking water resources during disasters is very high and hence the water needs to be treated to ensure availability of safe drinking water for everybody.

To ensure availability of safe drinking water identified steps needs to be followed by the first responders:

1. Awareness Generation on use of safe water for drinking and cooking purposes
2. Ensure availability of safe drinking water during and post disaster
3. Checking of drinking water sources for contamination by use of H<sub>2</sub>S Vials
4. Disinfection of water sources using various methods:
  - a) Boiling
  - b) Filtering
  - c) Use of Halogen Tablets for Chlorination
  - d) Use of Bleaching powder for Disinfecting Wells
  - e) Safe storage and personal hygiene to ensure water does not get contaminated again

First responders must disseminate information about hygiene, sanitation and disinfection of drinking water in the community. They are to play a prominent role in disseminating information and giving demonstrations on safe drinking water, hand washing and for maintaining Menstrual Hygiene Practices among adolescent girls and women especially during the time of disasters. This will prevent the outbreak of diseases and epidemics in disaster affected communities and save lives.

To ensure improved sanitation in disaster affected areas first responders have to adopt continuous and immediate measures.

#### **Continuous Measures**

1. Awareness generation on proper use of sanitation facilities
2. Ensuring there are toilets available in the villages and people use them
3. Personal hygiene and proper use of toilets like wearing slippers while using toilets

#### **Immediate Measures**

1. Immediately after disaster, a quick stock-taking on functional and usable toilets
2. Identify defecation areas/ fields
3. Defecation areas and fields should be away from water sources like rivers, streams, ponds and lakes
4. Defecation areas and fields should be away from agricultural lands
5. Different areas for women/ girls and men and boys for safety and dignity
6. Shallow trenches to be dug in the field where people defecate and cover the excreta with mud
7. Defecation fields cannot be managed long term
8. First responders have to build strategy for awareness generation on usage of toilets, garbage disposal in camp situations and temporary shelters and to avoid open defecation.



Soap & water



Palm to Palm



Between Fingers



Back of Hands



Thumbs



Back of Fingers



Fingernails



Wrists

### Handwashing Procedure

**Table-3 Monitoring WASH Interventions during Emergencies: A Snapshot<sup>4</sup>**

SI No	Core Indicators	Specific Indicators
1	Safe Drinking Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amount of water used per person per day</li> <li>• Chlorination of all communal stored water</li> <li>• Water sources are protected from faecal contamination</li> <li>• Point-of-use water treatment availability (at source and home)</li> <li>• Storage of water in clean, covered containers</li> <li>• Water testing at source and household level</li> </ul>
2	Sanitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to toilets</li> <li>• Use &amp; maintenance of toilets</li> <li>• Hand washing with soap and water at critical points like before cooking/ handling food, before and after eating/, after using toilet, after cleaning child's bottom, before Feeding the child, before and after feeding an animal or handling it</li> <li>• Disposal of children's and babies' faeces in toilets (or burial)</li> <li>• Exploratory walks to look for signs of open defecation</li> <li>• Vector and rodent control</li> <li>• Disposal of household and communal garbage</li> <li>• Removal of stagnant water around houses or water points</li> </ul>

4. Training Handbook for Women Self Help Groups (WSHG)- ODISHA STATE DISASTER MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

3	Hygienic practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability of soap for hand washing in all households</li> <li>• Access to appropriate sanitary materials for all women and girls</li> </ul>
4	Community Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All sections of the community, including vulnerable groups are consulted</li> </ul>

## Recovery Phase

First responders' major responsibilities have been articulated in preparedness and response phase of emergencies. In recovery phase of Disaster Management Cycle, first responders have two key things to contribute in.

1. Conducting Damage Assessment Survey
2. Participation in Disaster Rehabilitation Plan preparation

### First Responders' Role in Damage Assessment Survey

Damage assessment is an important tool for retrospective and prospective analysis of disasters to assimilate the extent of impact of a disaster. While detail assessment be conducted by authorities and agencies, it is essential to have a quick assessment for determining: what happened, what the effects were, which areas were hardest hit, what situations must be given priority and what types of assistance are needed, wherein first responders do play important role.

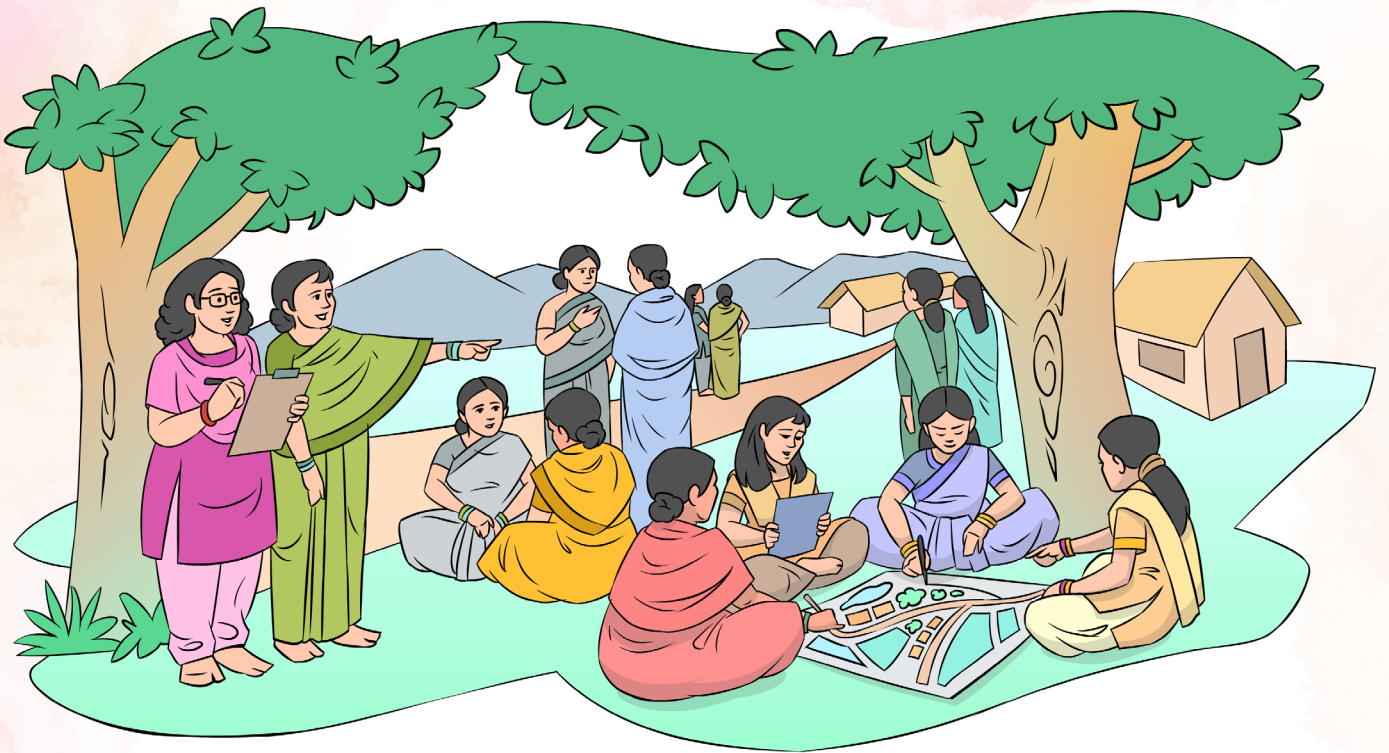
First responders should conduct the damage assessment survey following three key principles:

- a. Look: Make a thorough visual inspection of the damage-affected area;
- b. Listen to all sources of information - the community, government records, and media reports;
- c. Understand the gravity of the dangers and the suffering of victims as well as the capacity to respond.

First responders will be involved in the damage assessment process to gather estimates on

- Number of persons displaced and in need of housing
- Number of persons in shelters
- Number of persons need essential support
- Number of persons require healthcare support
- Number of persons injured
- Number of verified fatalities
- Number, degree of structural loss, and financial cost of private property damage
- Number of community assets damaged with details of damage
- Number of people lost livelihood (damage to crops in hectares and estimated loss of produce in quintals, livestock loss)

The information collected is to be shared with the administration which will help planning best approach of recovery.



**First Responders' involvement during Rehabilitation Phase**

### **First Responders' Role in Disaster Rehabilitation Plan**

Post-disaster recovery processes need to ensure people's ability to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable the institutions that affect their lives during the recovery process. Participation of first responders can enhance the effectiveness and results of post-disaster recovery from the hand on experience they have gathered with their engagement in preparedness and response phase. Engaging them will improve the delivery and quality of the recovery programme, enhance social inclusion, and bring greater transparency and accountability.

The disaster recovery plan preparation may be initiated by government agencies, authorities, line departments or civil society organizations. The first responders can build the mechanism to ensure community participation in the planning process.

Informing, consulting, involving, collaborating and empowering communities are the core building blocks of participation. First responders will work with the agency preparing the rehabilitation plan to address these building blocks.

**Table-4: First Responders to Ensure Community Participation**

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
To facilitate agency provide affected communities with balanced information and to assist them in understanding recovery alternatives, opportunities and/ or solution	To support in obtaining community feedback on needs analysis, prioritize recovery alternatives and to influence decisions	To work with the communities throughout the recovery process to ensure that their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	To obtain community response in each aspect of decision-making process including recovery planning, implementation and monitoring.	To ensure that the final decision-making in the hands of communities.

First responders' involvement in community rehabilitation plan helps building as Bottom-up and people-centered approach which also brings in more culturally appropriate needs and priorities of affected communities.



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