



CENTRE FOR
HUMANITARIAN
LEADERSHIP

Humanitarian & Disaster Management Capacity Development in the Pacific

Summary Report

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Snapshot of Capacity Analysis

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About the Centre of Humanitarian Leadership (CHL)

The CHL, hosted at Deakin University, offers genuine partnership and collaboration opportunities with organisations and individuals who have a passion to improve the practice of humanitarianism and willingness to share ideas and outcomes.

About this report

This report presents a snapshot of capacity development practices, needs, challenges and its relationship with humanitarian and disaster management organisations in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. The report draws on the work of NGOs, donors, governments and other humanitarian actors' interventions covering current capacity practices and approaches to capacity development. During the last 9 months, the Centre for Humanitarian Leadership (CHL) consulted with more than one hundred humanitarian and disaster management actors in the Pacific. This report is a summary of the research findings, analysis and recommendations.

Summary:

- Research identifies that training needs could be met if all stakeholders were strategically involved in designing and implementation of capacity development programmes to improve outcomes for participants.
- Training modality and delivery arrangements are not well documented. There is significant scope to improve training modalities covering training curriculum, duration, content and simulations. A shift from a focus on content delivery to practical simulation and exercises are the most favoured form of training, combined with credentialing in the disaster management sector.
- Gaps in various training courses have been identified. Training is experienced as separate, disconnected and ad-hoc with no identified pathways or coherence. Trainings were also perceived to be repetitive, with similar focus and content.
- Leadership, communication and coordination have been highlighted as significant challenges. Stakeholders identify strong leadership and effective communication and coordination as key areas to improve management practice and timely humanitarian response.
- Disconnection across research, practice and capacity building providers limits opportunities for partnership, sharing of resources and coordination of capacity building programmes

1 Challenges to capacity development in the Pacific

Despite investing more than a decade and millions of dollars in capacity building, governments and other humanitarian actors still face significant capacity challenges in order to effectively manage disasters and deliver humanitarian assistance. Currently, there are more than 100 training courses offered by a range of providers including a number of Pacific universities, NGOs, private sector and government organisations.

My project manager resigned two months ago and I am still struggling to replace him, but I cannot find a person with relevant qualification and skills in the sector. We are meeting our donor organisations every week and they are expecting us to demonstrate outputs and outcomes, but we can't do that with our current organisation capacity. As a director of the organisation, I cannot do everything and I need my staff to help me with reporting, designing concepts and analysis of humanitarian situation in order to meet stakeholders' expectations

Director of local NGO

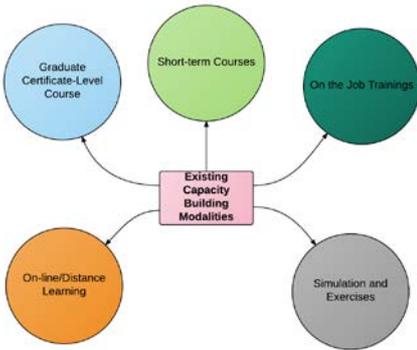
Key impediments to capacity development include the short-term, ad-hoc and disconnected nature of the training agenda, exacerbated by a lack of a systematic, sector wide, capacity needs assessment and strategic capability strategy and training/education framework.

The quality and concise nature of the current offerings (one month or less) make them a suitable and attractive option for working staff, however there are also challenges. Often many topics are covered in quick succession, with very succinct, theory focussed, training materials making it difficult for students to develop sufficient skills and interests. Hence, it is extremely difficult for the sector as a whole to integrate and link people who have undertaken brief short courses into practical projects where students can put theory into practice and develop the necessary skills.

In addition, the number of capacity development initiatives and the quality of services provide highlight a challenge of collaboration among training providers. The absence of a shared mechanism and results based capacity development framework limits the opportunities for career planning and overall sector capacity building to meet localisation requirements. A shared framework for training activities would enhance complementarity and effectiveness while minimising duplication. A significant change could be achieved through training providers focussing on modality and design, sharing the programme agenda with stakeholders, and engaging in capacity needs assessment across the sector, to inform effective learning opportunities and better identify development objectives.

A significant proportion of training in disaster response has been undertaken across the Pacific Island region however very few are accredited or result in a recognised and transportable qualification or certification. The research highlights the overall quality of the current offerings however the effectiveness is limited through the lack of coordination across agencies and providers. A regional capacity development framework aligned with national frameworks to meet contextual challenges is identified as a means of improving the overall workforce capability of the sector and will lead directly to a greater capacity for meeting localisation requirements for disaster management.

2 Capacity development modality

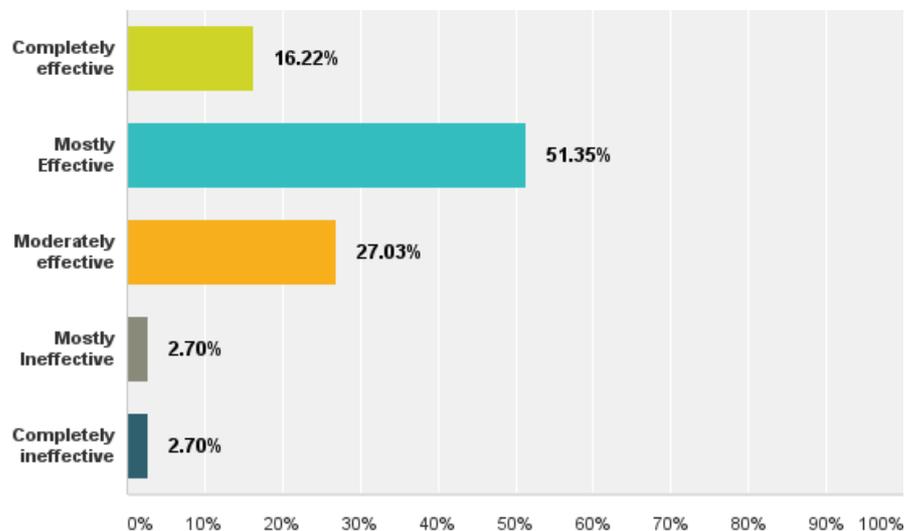


Capacity development courses have been classified into five core training and development modalities including accredited certificate; short-term courses; on the job training; online distance training courses and; simulation and exercises provided by a large number of stakeholders in the region and the Pacific.

The need to focus on training modality is most clearly indicated by the current abundance of short-term training courses and training providers in disaster preparedness and response. Training providers have tended to focus on strategies relating to risk reduction or the immediate response after humanitarian catastrophe. While the short-term focus may have been positive on the overall emergency situation, there are also limitations. Firstly, the short-term focus of training courses has made it difficult to conduct the feasibility, needs assessment and exploration studies of existing and previous training courses. Secondly, potential participants are not included in curriculum and materials development leading to potentially ineffective programmes that do not meet the contextual requirements of participants.

A significant pitfall of the large number training courses is that there is no logical coherence, structures and steps that one course can build on others to maximise impact. Learning and development agendas need to be coordinated among stakeholders both during design and delivery. The use of simulation, coaching and practical work needs to be integrated, to reinforce the impact of theoretical knowledge for participants.

More than half of participants (51.35%) indicated previous training modalities were mostly effective; some (16.22%) considered them completely effective; (27%) highlighted moderately effective, while only 2.70% indicated mostly ineffective and completely ineffective.



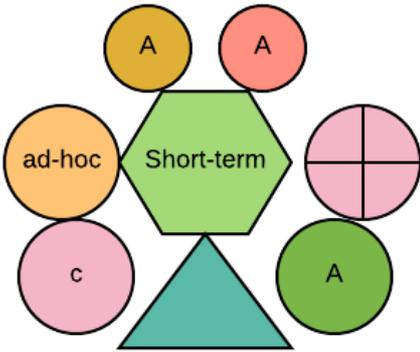
Participants' selection for training is not based on role and relevance to the job, while mostly on relationship and status of representing the organisation. Most trainings are attended by few individuals while opportunities are not passed to others.

Government Official

There are a lot of scholarships offered by donors, but only those who have relationship with higher government authority can get the scholarship, not the ordinary people.

Local organisation staff member

3 What are the capacity gaps?

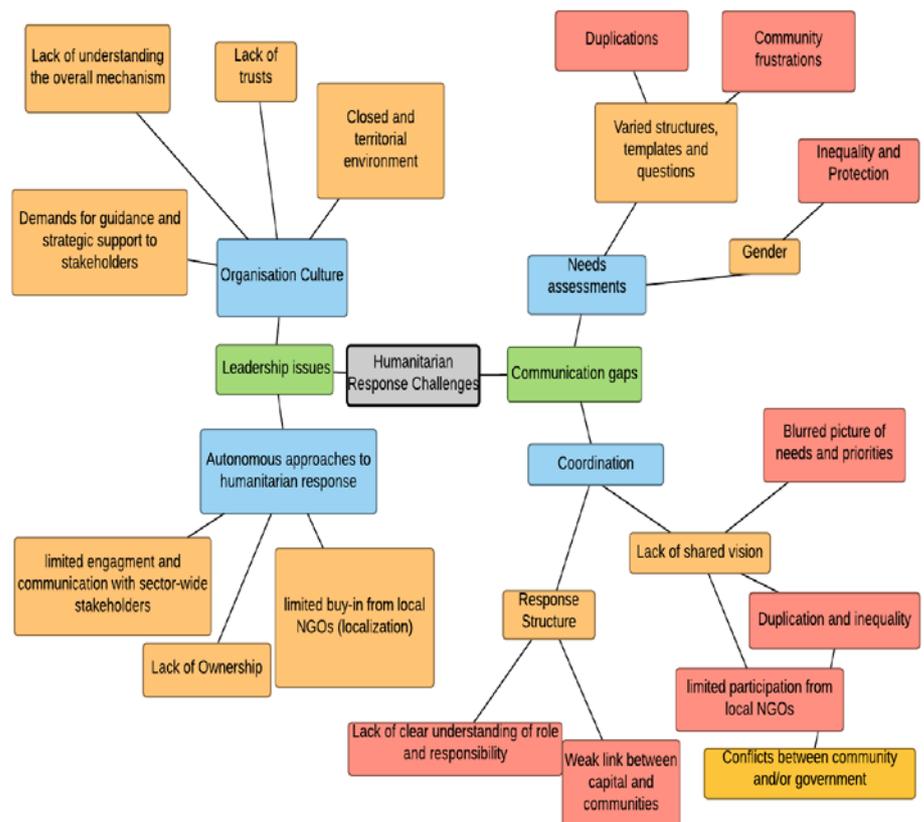


Looking back to previous disasters, we have serious problems with identifying the most vulnerable populations, prioritizing and allocating resources effectively. We were not able to distinguish who is affected more and in which area, who is less affected and who needs the most urgent assistance. Finally we ended up sending the assistance to a wrong area (less affected community) and the most vulnerable were left out. We need skills, tools and system to explore the situation and make thorough decision in order to prioritise the most vulnerable and allocate urgent humanitarian assistance as quickly as possible.

Government disaster management practitioner

The analysis of the humanitarian and disaster management sector reveals leadership and communication as areas that impact effectiveness when looking at the cluster system. Coordination and needs assessment were identified as broad organisational gaps, strongly influenced by organisational culture and lack of participatory approaches. This results in a lack of trust, conflict, duplication and several other negative impacts highlighted in the figure below.

Over half of informants reported that humanitarian responses were being held back by the leadership talent characterised by organisation culture and autonomous approaches to response mechanism and decision-making. Resulting in limited communication with other stakeholders. Willingness to share challenges, needs and priorities would help to guide a coordinated response, establish trust and relationships and support more effective capacity utilisation. Communication is a key aspect of the disaster response challenge and a precursor for effective coordination to occur. Two causes of communication gaps are needs assessment and lack of coordination. Assessments are challenged by a plethora of structures and templates, resulting in a murky picture of needs and priorities, making the response initiative difficult to coordinate and potentially exacerbating inequity and protection issues.



4 Humanitarian response functional capacity

The government did not understand what the UN assistance entails, the UNDAC technical needs assessment team was called for assistance, but the government didn't want to conduct the needs assessment

Staff member from humanitarian organisation

If issues are identified, we should make decisions to see who is responsible and who is taking responsibility about it, which is often not clear. Sometimes information comes on time but not passed to the next level or no action is taken about it.

NDMO consultant

The response mechanism and structure of humanitarian assistance is challenged by the lack of a coherent program management approach and a lack of expertise in the sector. Individuals and organisations are struggling to logically operationalize needs assessment, ensure coherence and coordinate response with international, regional and local actors. Staff members at the management and leadership level lack sufficient understanding of the humanitarian architecture, response structures, roles and responsibilities of humanitarian stakeholders. In addition program management, planning, and design of humanitarian responses are poorly understood at various organisation levels. Similarly, governments and local counterparts need further clarity around the role of the UN, its technical assistance, the importance of data to make a potential case for humanitarian assistance and the technical dimension of monitoring and evaluation to demonstrate accountability and assurance.

There is also an identified need to effectively engage stakeholders, highlight challenges and collaborate at the management and leadership level to identify areas for engagement and coordination. When this is not the case, experience shows that this results in inadequate information and limited awareness about the priority areas, vulnerable populations and needs in the affected communities. These functions underpin a variety of skills needed to design and manage a humanitarian program covering project design, stakeholder engagement, project management, communication, monitoring and evaluation skills that would fill the gap in order to effectively design and deliver more effective responses.

In addition, local organisations lack capacity to prepare a bankable humanitarian project and proposal in order to participate at the OCHA flash appeal level. Similarly, local organisations are not appropriately informed or aware of donor and INGO arrangements and requirements at the national level. Local organisations may lack understanding of policies and guidelines including limited understanding of National Disaster Management Plans, relevant legislation and disaster specific regulations.

5 Communication and coordination

There is very limited communication inside of the NDMO – mostly staff members are either on field mission or trainings. Since my joining, it has been 8 months and there has been no meeting at all. We often get informed through our external stakeholders about our programs. There is no communication mechanism internally and externally that we can get involved, prepare or monitor the status of projects.

Disaster management consultant

When the big country (donors) fund NGOs, they should provide some assurance to ensure that these organisation are working with local government. For example, some relief items were expired but distributed to community and where we have already distributed relief items, some organisations distributed again in those areas.

Government official

When a disaster strikes, key coordinating bodies were often not prepared to mobilize and deploy the appropriate organisations and resources to affected areas. For example, in the case of Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu, it took a long time to operationalize disaster response structure, mobilize and deploy resources and stakeholders. Another challenge is when coordinating humanitarian and disaster management actors have limited understanding of the available resources, capacity and reach of humanitarian actors in the sector. Furthermore, stakeholders were not clear how the arrangements put in place by the National Disaster Management Plan work in order to quickly mobilize disaster response. The different and fragmented needs assessment tools deployed by different NGOs and government stakeholders make it difficult to communicate needs and coordinate priorities, further exacerbating the challenge. There is a clear need to develop good communication at all levels, within government departments, between these departments and organisations, as well as with the wider community based organisations.

Research participants revealed that structures, policies and plans have been developed that articulate mandates, roles and responsibility of humanitarian actors and government institutions, providing sufficient guidance and information during humanitarian response. However, staff members lack understanding of these plan, policies and SOPs. Therefore, awareness needs to be built regarding the response structure, SOPs, cluster mechanism and arrangements for coordinating and managing humanitarian response more effectively.

The link between the roles of clusters and the roles afforded to provinces has been articulated on paper but do not function in reality. Firstly, there are limited human resources at the provincial and district level in all three countries involved in the research. The outlined plan for the cluster structure present in the country's capital did not take into consideration geographical constraints and capacity gaps, therefore severely limiting functionality at the provincial level. In addition, this challenge is exacerbated by a lack of understanding of roles and responsibilities, lack of available human resources, structure, geography and communication infrastructure in times of disaster at district and community levels. These issues hinder the speed of immediate relief and response, as well as slowing down initial assessments of the situation on the ground.

6 Leadership behaviour and approaches

The word cloud from participant interviews demonstrates the leadership challenge. Government and non-government actors would benefit from promoting participatory leadership behaviour by focusing on holistic vision, result-oriented approaches, understanding the motives, values and principles of humanitarian organisations, and openness to share and discuss disaster management challenges with the sector. Stakeholders can be effectively engaged by providing information and guidance, to enable a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities within the complex humanitarian structure. Additionally, stakeholders require strategic guidance and support regarding the existing response arrangements, communicating needs and priorities and clearly articulating what should be done where and when.

In the case of Cyclone Winston, while there are a great number of positive leadership aspects, such as locally engaged actors, enabling quick mobilization and response arrangements into the worst hit areas, there were issues with strict and close leadership style that affected the ability of humanitarian stakeholders to effectively contribute. For example, being aware of the motive, values and beliefs of humanitarian stakeholders would have helped to establish trust and relationships with external stakeholders. This would have effectively involved INGOs in planning and building a shared vision for the response. While no response will be perfect, the ability and experience of humanitarian stakeholders involved should have been engaged to more effectively navigate this highly complex response. Similarly, there is also a need for a paradigm shift from a centrally controlled approach to a decentralized structure, where stakeholders can effectively participate and contribute within the humanitarian architecture.

International actors and NGOs needs to make sure the sovereignty of the country regardless of whatever assistance and support they bring to us.

Government staff member

Government was leading and guiding the response and saying this is the only way of doing things - we distribute things to the community and if you want to help then give it to us.

INGO director

Government can encourage a more open and tolerant organisational structure to better engage the perspectives of external stakeholders, while at the same time leading a multifaceted sector where issues and challenges can be openly shared and controlled by utilizing resources more effectively.

The study demonstrates a range of barriers and gaps explicitly linked to individual and organisational leadership capacity. The assessment found a direct relationship between organisational leadership and performance in terms of humanitarian response and management. For example, where there was limited guidance, clarity and support from the lead organisations to the sector-wide stakeholders, the stakeholders were often confused about how to operationalize a task. However, establishing a causal link between leadership and each activity performance is not plausible given the multidisciplinary context where alternative explanation is always possible.

7 Localization of humanitarian support and key barriers



Local organisations have missed the opportunity to participate in the UN flash appeal given their mandates and capacity in the sector. Local organisations are focused on development and haven't got the capacity to prepare a bankable funding proposal and meet donors and INGOs requirements.

INGO Director

"Too many meetings but nothing happens and no follow-up from district authorities unless they are pushed by their central office".

INGO staff member

INGOs and regional stakeholders who typically lead and implement responses have been found to be directly impeding the ability of local organisations to engage. For example, the disaster management plan, respective legislative Acts and specific regulations have all been developed and reviewed by external consultants from time to time, but with limited support and buy-in from local counterparts and staff members. Local staff members are often busy with community-based program initiatives and do not have sufficient time to work with short-term consultants on disaster plans and policies.

Currently, there are six international short and long-term consultants in the Government of Vanuatu's NDMO in standalone positions, meaning they do not have local counterparts to work alongside. Policy, plans, frameworks and structures have been developed independently and when a disaster strikes, there is limited understanding of operationalization and implementation plans. Government organisations need to systematically track these interventions and develop strategies in order to absorb capacity from consultancy and technical assistance provided by donors and NGOs. If not, the capacity, structure and system established by external stakeholders will not be as effective as local authorities and organisations may not be able to sustain such a system without international support.

The level of understanding and capacity does not filter down from head offices in the larger cities to provincial and district level authorities. The link between provincial and central NDMO and the level of understanding at divisional and district level is a challenge.

Many local NGOs are invisible to larger INGOs and centralised government structures, therefore their ability to build capacity, networks and relationship has not been achieved, leading to limited participation in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. This in turn can lead to international organisations calling upon surge teams to support operations on the ground. Often surge team members have little to no contextual and cultural understanding.

As demonstrated, there is a big disconnect between the central government sitting in the capital city, and the local and provincial level of government. This is most apparent in terms of the overall systems, capacity, processes and human resources, and how this central government architecture trickles down to the district level. Additionally, the local and central government are not well connected to facilitate coordinated assessments to the decision makers as quickly as possible.

8 Protection, gender and inequality



We get calls from community that your staff members have sex with everyone in the community and then we need to tribute by pig. Cash programming in an emergency is often risky as we give a lot of money to our local staff member that is putting them at risk.

INGO staff member in Vanuatu

There are culture barriers in our community - when the humanitarian assistance come into operations, some of our staff members only think of their own tribal affiliations regardless of our focus and intent in the humanitarian context

INGO director

Inequality and protection are key issues within the humanitarian response mechanism. The Pacific countries have very diverse cultural, language, social, ethnic and religious landscapes that make gender, protection and inequality complex issues. Key informant interviews revealed that some households and communities did not receive assistance during the Cyclone Pam and Cyclone Winston responses. It is not clear whether this oversight is due to poor management and communication practices; such needs assessment, or a deliberate action by individuals or government representatives. These issues can also be attributed to the political and militarized approach of some stakeholders with limited authority or willingness to make participatory decisions.

Some stakeholders lack sufficient capacity to thoroughly integrate gender and protection issues into needs assessment, program implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. The capacity of both international and local stakeholders to highlight gender-based priorities must be well integrated covering participation and protection at all levels. Organisations need to build awareness and capacity of local staff members who are on the front line of relief items distribution. Skills and knowledge about humanitarian values and principles would help to facilitate assistance to targeted communities.

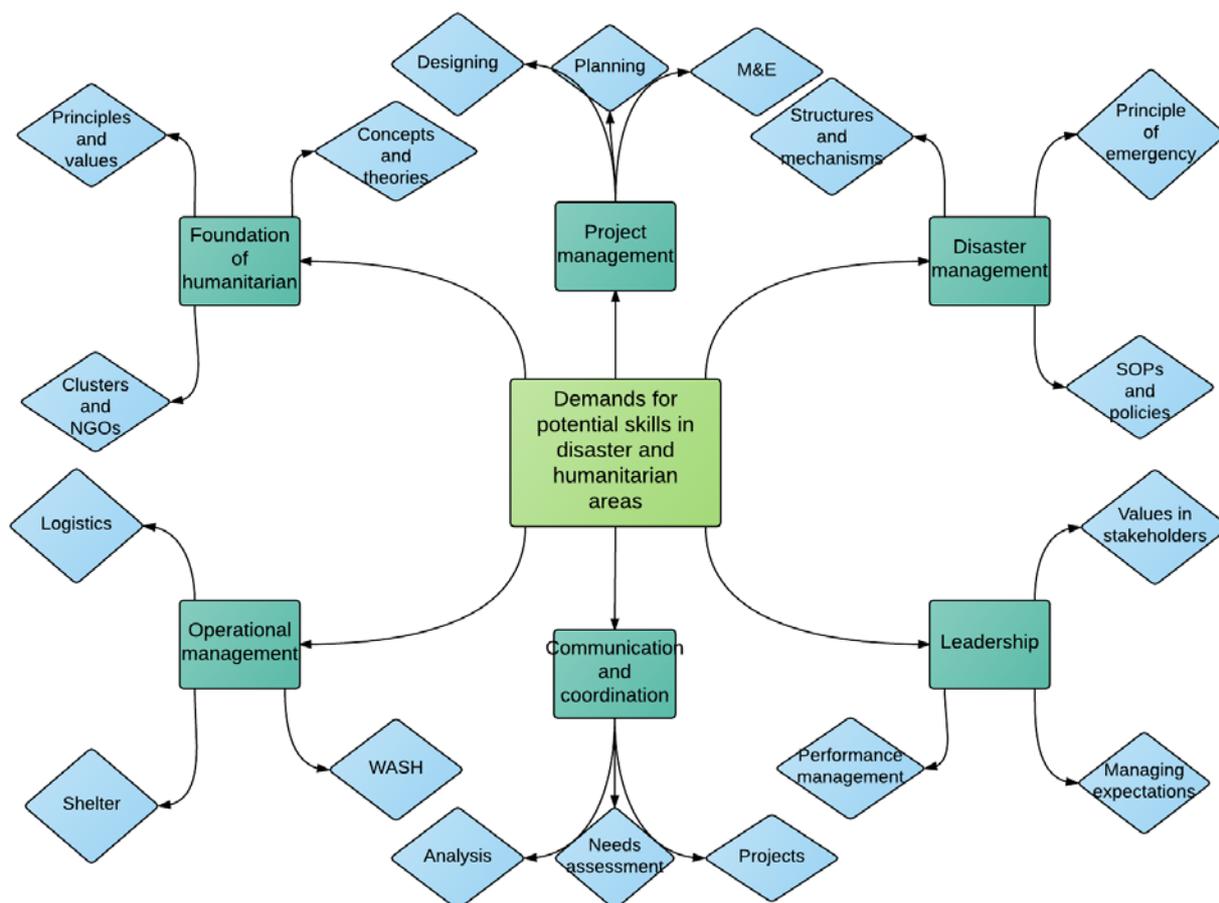
Key informant interviews stressed that the monitoring and evaluation aspect of the response can be strengthened. Providing richer and clearer information on demographics of consulted populations, who were the main distributors and recipients of assistance can help to ensure gender, protection and equality are taken into consideration. Data and information can be disaggregated using different means and methods to ensure equality and accountability. This is reinforced by the recent gender and protection assessment of the Cyclone Winston response, conducted by CARE, that recommends consultation with women and vulnerable groups to ensure special needs, disaggregation of data by gender, collecting data on special arrangements for people i.e. people living with HIV and access to safety and dignity.

9 Capacity development needs

Sharing data and information was a big challenge and we still don't have enough information to see where the gaps are and what the main challenges are. If the government understand the value of information and what that can bring to the community, then we have built a big capacity

UN official

Capacity development needs vary from individual to individual, country to country, organisation to organisation. In the multifaceted disaster management context of the Pacific, almost all participants from key informant and focus group discussions consistently requested long term capacity development programmes linked to certification or academic qualification. The majority of informants expressed their hope for a more in-depth understanding of humanitarian cluster system, project management, coordination, communication, assessment tools, and leadership skills that would help to quickly mobilize resources and coordinate humanitarian initiatives in times of disaster. Participants also expressed interest in developing analytical skills in terms of designing collaborative humanitarian programmes, data analysis, budgeting, conducting and prioritizing complex needs and designing humanitarian initiatives.



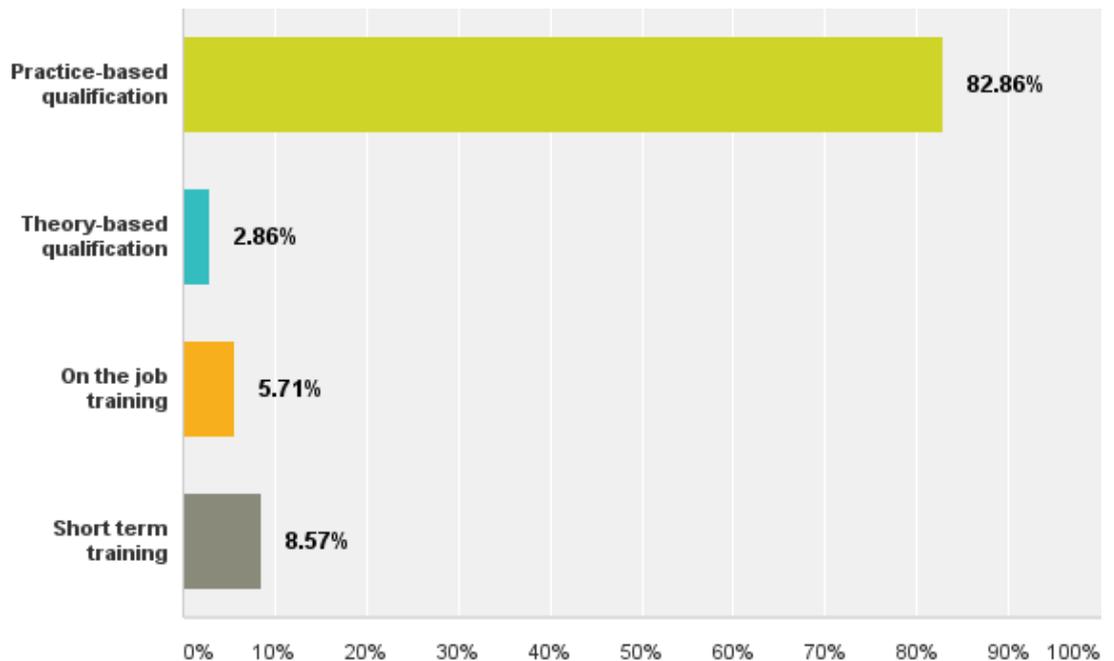
10 Demands for capacity modality

I believe academic qualification is very important for my organisation, most of us working here have been through many short training courses and have experienced a lot in disaster management. Hence, it is very important that our team here get the academic qualification now.

Government Official

The research shows that practical capacity development modalities are highly favoured by participants, while short-term training courses and theory-based learning and development modalities were rated lowest. Key informants indicated they value worked-based academic courses that provide formal certification and/or academic qualifications.

The bar chart highlights the significant preference for accredited qualifications in humanitarian and disaster management spheres. Ultimately, this means a whole new approach is needed, moving away from short term courses – the most common training form employed by the humanitarian sector – to long term courses geared towards practical learning, delivered by an accredited provider/institution. However, this means not just providing certified courses but also innovative learning approaches informed by empirical evidence and practice experience and promoting learning outcomes that are driven by needs and demands from within the participants and sector.



11 Recommendations and conclusions

To improve effectiveness and coordination of disaster response and humanitarian interventions, there is a fundamental need to address capacity constraints in regards to (i) streamlining needs assessment in terms of processes, structures, and reporting; (ii) institutionalise training and capacity development interventions and develop integrated regional and national framework (iii) clarify mandates, role and responsibility of organisations at different levels (iv) establish a long term capacity development programme focusing on capacity needs and priorities highlighted in the capacity needs diagram.

Review government disaster management structure, competencies and expertise and identify sectoral synergies and complementarities. This is partly addressed through the Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT) cluster approach activated in time of disaster with limited focus on preparedness, training and development. Thus, the PHT cluster approach reduces its coordination ability to engage the broader humanitarian stakeholders to deal with a coordinated training mechanism as part of disaster risk reduction.

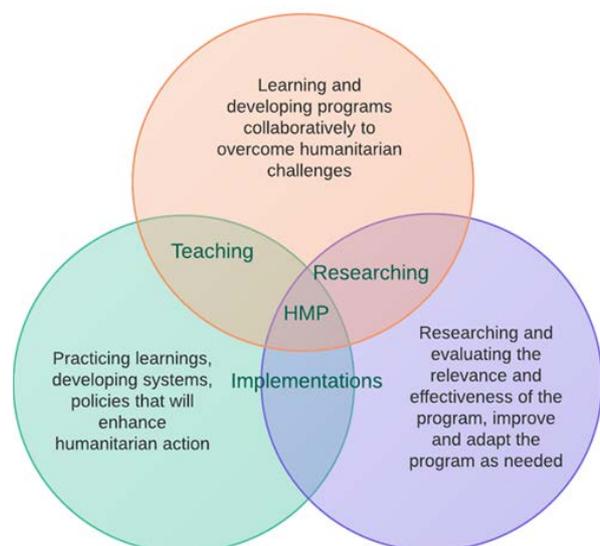
The major requirement is a coherent partnership mechanism to share and coordinate learning and development programmes between NGOs, academia/RTOs, private sector and the government. Training mechanisms need to be strengthened and move from separate, ad-hoc, disjointed and individual training programmes into a more coherent partnership based, coordinated, learning outcomes framework that provides continuing added value for individuals to build career pathways.

The research findings point to the need for such an initiative. The relationship among government, academia, NGOs and private sector is critical to develop a strategic partnership where resources and expertise can be utilised most effectively.

In response to the capacity building challenges, three elements must be brought into alignment that would help to build a coherent effective capacity building agenda. These elements are:

- A comprehensive partnership of stakeholders to understanding capacity needs and priority and design Programme modality that is relevant and suitable to the context and needs prioritised.
- Creating a more practical vision and programme plan that combines practice, theory and research
- Cascading the plan into relevant departments and individuals in the sector (organisations working in the sector to promote and support the programme through their organisations)

These three elements, if well aligned, offer a more sustainable and impactful approach to develop a clear institutional mandate based on strategic priorities and improving evidence based decision-making.



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