



**BUILDING A BETTER RESPONSE**

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# NGO Capacity Strengthening for More Effective Emergency Response





The “Building a Better Response: Strengthening Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Capacity and Engagement in the International Humanitarian Architecture” project aims to enhance the capacity of national and international NGO workers and other humanitarian actors to engage with the international humanitarian system in a manner that improves overall coordination and responds to the needs of crisis-affected populations.

Spearheaded by International Medical Corps, in collaboration with Concern Worldwide and the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, the project is being implemented through a consortium that leverages a unique combination of operational and technical expertise. Through a consultative and multi-targeted approach, the program is producing capacity strengthening tools that increase the impact of emergency responders. These tools will be broadly disseminated through global networks, including international and national-level NGO consortia, in order to ensure maximum exposure and impact.

The multi-year Building a Better Response project is funded by USAID’s Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance. Through the development of practical tools to enhance the capacity of NGO staff, Building a Better Response aims to:

- Help NGOs better engage with the international humanitarian architecture, including the cluster system, humanitarian country leadership, and humanitarian funding mechanisms
- Enhance leadership roles of NGOs at the country level
- Fill knowledge gaps that limit effectiveness of NGO participation in the international humanitarian architecture
- Increase awareness of resources and guidance tools that are available
- Consolidate high-quality and relevant training programs in one central, easy-to-access place



**Key outcomes of the Building a Better Response project are:**

- Easily accessible and practical learning tools that can be used effectively in diverse contexts
- Enhanced knowledge about the international humanitarian architecture through certificate-based e-learning and training workshops
- Increased confidence and capacity of NGOs to effectively engage in the humanitarian system



## CONSULTATION

The Building a Better Response (BBR) project started with listening. In the initial phase of the project, International Medical Corps and Concern Worldwide consulted with more than 400 national and international NGO staff from all over the world and invited them to share their experiences with the international humanitarian architecture. NGOs were also given the opportunity to share their thoughts on the optimal role NGOs can play in the system, as well as their perceived learning needs in regards to the humanitarian architecture. The consultations confirmed the need to train humanitarian personnel on the humanitarian architecture through an e-learning course, and also identified a clear desire for in-person workshops.

To ensure wide geographical coverage, feedback was collected through consultation meetings, individual interviews, and an internet-based survey. NGO consultation meetings were held in 10 different locations worldwide, including the U.S., Europe, Africa, the Middle East, the Caribbean, and Asia. Additionally, individual interviews were conducted with NGO staff as well as other key humanitarian stakeholders, including various UN agencies and governments. The internet-based survey provided an opportunity for humanitarian professionals around the world to give input.

## LEARNING TOOLS

Based on the outcomes of the 2012 consultations, BBR partners started designing the various learning tools. This process was complemented by a review of existing learning materials and lessons learned published by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

**WORKSHOPS:** To respond to immediate training needs, BBR launched a series of workshops in April 2013. Pilot workshops were conducted in Uganda and Washington, DC. The outcomes of these two workshops informed development of the workshop curriculum to better fit the needs of humanitarian workers worldwide. An additional ten workshops have been conducted in Bangkok, Thailand; Manila, Philippines; Port-au-Prince, Haiti; Dubai, United Arab Emirates; Juba, South Sudan; N'Djamena, Chad; Dakar, Senegal; Nairobi, Kenya; and Washington DC. Several workshops were conducted in collaboration with local and national partner organizations, including Community and Family Services International (CFSI), Church World Service (through ACT Alliance), and OFADEC (L'Office Africain pour le Développement et la Coopération).

The goal of the workshops was to train humanitarian professionals on the cluster system, humanitarian leadership, and humanitarian financing. In addition, participants were provided with an opportunity to discuss how and when national and international NGOs can engage with the system. When possible, the BBR team worked closely with OCHA to arrange guest speakers to explain OCHA's role within the country-specific context.

The workshop curriculum developed for this project will be finalized and made available in 2014 so that NGOs will be able to adapt the materials to the needs of their organizations. Additional workshops in 2014 will focus on the Middle East/North Africa region, as well as other parts of Africa and Asia, to strengthen the existing capacity of humanitarian and charitable organizations from these regions. Consultations will be conducted in early 2014 to ensure that the training needs of these partners are being addressed, and that the workshop curriculum is adapted to accurately reflect the context within which these partners are working.



## LEARNING TOOLS

**E-LEARNING TOOLS:** E-learning tools are being designed to provide NGOs with an accessible online platform for understanding the structure and function of the international humanitarian architecture. The e-learning component is both practical and action-oriented and fills gaps in existing training for NGOs. The curriculum uses interactive scenarios and simulated coordination challenges to guide users through various aspects of the international humanitarian architecture. The course is being designed with a unifying fictional emergency scenario that runs throughout the entire curriculum. The course will provide background information on the humanitarian architecture, as well as detailed information on the various aspects of the architecture, including the cluster system, humanitarian finance mechanisms, and underlying standards and principles. The course will link users to existing trainings and tools for further study.

For added convenience, users will be able to take e-learning units individually based on their training needs. The e-learning platform will be built using open-source software, allowing organizations to incorporate the curriculum into their own training programs. A mobile format for the e-learning tool will also be developed to allow the training to serve as a quick reference guide during an emergency response.

A complementary series of workshops will be designed to enhance the knowledge gained through the e-learning tools and increase the knowledge base of NGO personnel on the basic aspects of the international humanitarian architecture and the value of coordination. These workshops will feature a “blended learning” methodology, whereby technological and in-person techniques will be used to have the biggest impact within the participant’s own context.



Beyond their role in informing the development of the BBR learning curriculum, national and international NGOs are playing a key part in continuously improving the learning tools. NGO personnel have been invited to test the tools in the field, review content, and provide feedback on how useful the tools are in their particular contexts.

The e-learning component will be publicly accessible online free of charge. Users who successfully complete the online course will be granted a certificate from the Humanitarian Academy at Harvard and the BBR project. The BBR e-learning will be available on USB drives, so that it can be accessed without an internet connection.

**TO ACCESS THE E-LEARNING, VISIT:**

<http://buildingabetterresponse.org>

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE BBR PROJECT, VISIT:**

[www.internationalmedicalcorps.org/bbr](http://www.internationalmedicalcorps.org/bbr)

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