LOCAL HUMANITARIAN STRENGTHENING

INITIATIVE

THIRD CAPACITY STRENGTHENING WORKSHOP

06 May 2025



Local Humanitarian Strengthening Initiative: Capacity Strengthening Workshop Report

Meeting Details

- **Date:** 09 May 2025
- **Time:** 0900-1600
- **Location:** Monomutapa, Harare
- **Meeting Purpose:** Capacity Strengthening on Anticipatory Action Planning and Community-Based Psychosocial Support and Staff Care
- **Chairing:** Ngoni Muchenje (Methodist Development and Relief Agency-MeDRA)
- **Minutes and Workshop Report:** Privilege Murambadoro (MeDRA)

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1 Introduction

1.1 Welcome Remarks and Agenda Overview

Presenter: Pastor Sibongiwe Mabuwe (EGUDET)

The presenter began with a welcoming speech that established a collaborative atmosphere for local humanitarian organisations in Zimbabwe. The speaker emphasised the significance of networking and capacity building among local non-governmental organisations to effectively tackle humanitarian crises exacerbated by climate change. Additionally, the presenter outlined the day's objectives and topics, which included Community-Based Psychosocial Support, Staff Care, and Anticipatory Action Planning.

2 Community-Based Psychosocial Support and Staff Care

Presenter: Bongiwe Mabuwa (LDS)

2.1 Presentation Highlights

- **Staff Care in Humanitarian Response**: The organization focuses on supporting staff well-being to ensure their effective involvement in humanitarian responses. This involves implementing policies dedicated to staff care, which includes organizational strategies aimed at fostering staff development and well-being.
- **Understanding Well-being**: Well-being is a multifaceted concept that incorporates elements of health, happiness, prosperity, mental health, life satisfaction, and stress management. It reflects an equilibrium among various life dimensions—physical, mental, emotional, social, environmental, financial, spiritual, occupational, and intellectual.
- **Dimensions of Well-being**: These eight dimensions must be in balance for optimal well-being. Disruptions, such as loss of employment, health issues, and community fragmentation during disasters, can lead to a decline in well-being, triggering a range of emotional and psychological responses.
- **Consequences of Stress**: Stress serves as a natural response to challenges. While it can aid performance in moderate amounts, excessive stress can lead to deterioration of mental and physical health. Disaster-affected communities often experience heightened stress due to loss—of community, loved ones, property, hope, and dignity.
- **Manifestation of Stress**: Symptoms of stress can manifest in various forms—emotional (anxiety, irritability, anger), cognitive (difficulty concentrating), and physical (headaches, sleep disturbances). Chronic stress can exacerbate pre-existing health conditions, illustrating the need for supportive interventions.
- **Psychosocial Support (PSS)**: PSS refers to actions addressing emotional, social, mental, and spiritual needs of individuals. Effective psychosocial interventions can enhance resilience and overall well-being. These include activities such as therapy, community engagement, relaxation exercises, and support groups.
- **Community-Based Approaches**: A community-based psychosocial support system actively involves community participation in addressing social problems. This

empowerment ensures sustainability and reinforces the community's innate strengths. Notably, practitioners must not dictate interventions but rather facilitate community-driven initiatives.

- **Role of Community Networks**: Strong community networks serve as vital support structures, enabling local populations to recover and adapt after disasters. Leveraging local resources and capabilities can enhance the effectiveness of psychosocial support initiatives.
- **Tailored Interventions**: Interventions must be context-specific, relying on community characteristics to function correctly. Training community leaders in relevant skills to facilitate support roles enhances the sustainability of these initiatives.
- **Intervention Triangle**: The intervention triangle is a framework guiding targeted mental health and psychosocial support. It highlights that individuals and communities react to disasters diversely based on their unique resilience, necessitating differentiated support strategies.

2.2 Key Discussion Points and Conclusions

- **Holistic Approach to Well-being**: Ensuring holistic staff care and community well-being requires a balanced integration of various life dimensions, tailored interventions, and constant checks of stress levels within the population.
- **Stress Management is Essential**: Addressing the root causes of stress in both staff and disaster-affected individuals is vital for promoting mental health and facilitating efficient humanitarian work. Interventions must manage stress effectively to prevent chronic conditions.
- **Community Engagement is Critical**: Successful psychosocial support is inherently linked to community engagement. The sustained involvement of community members in designing and implementing support systems fosters resilience, ownership, and long-term recovery.
- **Prevention over Intervention**: By cultivating strong community networks and facilitating local initiatives, organizations can prevent potential psychosocial crises rather than solely addressing issues post-disaster.
- **Training and Capacity Building**: Developing local skills through training programs is fundamental for empowering communities. Ensuring that individuals possess the necessary skills to manage their psychosocial needs contributes significantly to overall well-being.
- **Customized Support Plans**: Different levels of need necessitate customized support plans. The intervention triangle model aids in accurately identifying appropriate levels of care, allowing for efficient resource allocation among community members based on their individual circumstances.

- **Understanding Resilience Variability**: Resilience is not uniform across communities or individuals; hence recognizing and addressing this variability will lead to more effective humanitarian responses, promoting greater psychological recovery.
- **Importance of Recognition**: Acknowledging the unique circumstances and history of communities provides a framework for implementing culturally appropriate and context-sensitive support mechanisms.
- **Cross-Sector Collaboration**: Collaborative efforts among various local and governmental organizations can amplify the impact of psychosocial support initiatives, capitalizing on diverse expertise and resources.
- **Continuous Assessment**: Ongoing evaluation of psychosocial support interventions is essential to adapt strategies as circumstances change, ensuring they remain relevant and effective.
- **Need for Staff Policies**: Policies should include time for rest, mental health support initiatives, and flexible hours, enhancing staff resilience and productivity amid their own stress.
- **Impact on Community Well-being during Disasters**: Historical disruptions to communities, like the effects of Cyclone Idai, provide critical insights into the ongoing threats to well-being and underscore the necessity for robust recovery strategies post-disaster.
- **Support Structures During Emergencies**: Building infrastructures for collective emotional expression and support among community members is imperative during crises. Activities could range from organized counseling sessions to community gatherings that reinforce social bonds.
- **Retention of Cultural Practices**: Maintaining cultural practices, such as traditional gatherings or religious rituals, can play an essential role in restoring community identity and dignity.
- **Diverse Tools for Psychosocial Support**: Utilizing varied interventions—including recreational activities, life skills training, and localized mental health services—enhances the adaptability of support frameworks to community-specific needs.
- **Feedback and Community Participation**: Active community feedback mechanisms can help refine intervention approaches and ensure that services cater directly to the expressed needs of the community.
- **Survivor-Centric Methods**: Programs aiming to support disaster survivors must consider personal narratives to accurately cater to individual experiences while fostering collective healing.
- **Development of Support Groups**: Establishing community support groups aimed at specific issues such as gender-based violence or trauma can strengthen social ties and enhance recovery efforts.

- **Integrating Environmental Considerations**: Ensuring that interventions consider environmental resilience can further bolster efforts towards sustainable community recovery post-disaster.
- **Building Psychological Resiliency**: Systematic approaches to enhance psychological resiliency—including empowering leadership within communities for local interventions—increase the likelihood of sustained well-being following traumatic events.

3 Anticipatory Action (AA) Planning

Presenter: Pepukai Svinurai

3.1 Key Presentation Highlights

- **Practical Implementation:** Tailored anticipatory actions were outlined, indicating a customised approach to local needs.
- **Emphasis on Resource Efficiency:** Anticipatory actions promise to save costs and ensure better aid allocation in crises.
- **Anticipatory Action as a Game-Changer:** By acting before an emergency occurs, communities can cushion the impact, reducing fatalities and resource loss significantly.
- **Integration of Funding Strategies:** The presentation highlighted ways to secure funding that ensures preparedness initiatives are not just theoretical but practically actionable.
- **Diversity of Hazards Requires Tailored Solutions:** The discourse around diverse hazards like droughts and floods reflects the necessity for tailored anticipatory measures.
- **Framework Development for Anticipatory Action:** The commitment to creating an Anticipatory Action Framework by organisations underscores the systemic changes needed for effective disaster preparedness.
- **Long-term Benefits of Anticipatory Action**: Emphasising anticipatory measures not only leads to immediate improvements in disaster response but also contributes to long-term community resilience.
- **Funding sources for AA:** eg Gvt, National Civil Protection, WFP, AA trust fund, Welthhunger, etc
- **AA is essential in Disaster Risk Reduction components** - (Anticipatory/early action, preparedness, mitigation, prevention, reconstruction, early recovery and response, and response, disaster)
- **AA 4 key pillars:** The AA pillars that guide the road map (coordinating framework, trigger methodologies, financial mechanism, Evidence-based advocacy and awareness raising)

3.2 Discussion Highlights

- Hazard may not cause disaster if there is planning; on the other hand, hazard can cause disaster if there is no planning
- AA Planning involves proactive measures taken before a crisis occurs to mitigate acute humanitarian impacts

- Decision making is centralised, the system is reactive, fragmented and inefficient, incentives and way of working are outdated.
- Data (both indigenous knowledge system and scientific knowledge) is important in anticipatory action
- Potential local humanitarian actors' challenges in implementing AA: limited funding and resources, data availability, capacity and training, coordination challenges, policy and institutional barriers, climate change uncertainties.
- Identify actions that are anticipatory for drought based on the Zimbabwean seasonal calendar
- Identify key areas that need to be addressed by individual partners to enhance readiness to implement AA
- Identify local humanitarian actors that need to do collectively to ensure readiness for AA.

4 LSHI Knowledge Management System Demo

Presenter: Farai Mushosho (FMG), Privilege Murambadoro (MeDRA)

4.1 Presentation Summary

During the LSHI Knowledge Management System (KMS) demonstration, participants were presented with a detailed walkthrough on how to navigate the platform for enhanced coordination and knowledge sharing among partners. The demo covered key functionalities including how to log in, upload documents, and access publicly available resources. The homepage interface includes sections such as Home, Knowledge Base, Resources, Partners, and FAQs for easy navigation. It was emphasized that all content uploads will undergo an approval process managed by dedicated focal persons assigned by each partner organization. The system integrates with OneDrive, enabling users to pull, store, and organize documents centrally. Additionally, document control features will ensure that access and edits are managed securely. Partners will have individual profiles within the platform capturing key details such as organizational information, qualifications, and work experience. A fundraising module, including potential GoFundMe integration, will also be incorporated to support resource mobilization efforts. The platform is now fully functional and accessible online, marking a significant milestone in improving collaborative knowledge sharing and operational efficiency within the initiative.

5 Action Points and Way Forward

Moderator: Lembani Francis (YMCA)

- Open call for inclusion of staff care in our project proposal
- Fostering institutional-level wellness, individual-level wellness and family-level wellness
- Call for supervisors/HR managers/Directors to include practical and recreational strategies to promote mental health for staff
- Confidentiality- a title does not translate to competence, Risk management analysis on operations
- Discuss how best to bring strategic people, policy formulation and implementation
- Finalisation of the localisation charter and share with the partner by 11 May 2025

- Workshop Presentations to be shared
- FMG to create a bug platform for feedback and where partners can make requests on some of the features you want to appear on the platform
- Organisation without logos on the platform to submit to Privilede as well as the website link to be included in the partner profile
- Fill in the missing information (logo and link) on the knowledge system by 9 May 2025

The meeting enhanced learning and continued collaboration among humanitarian actors, identified key gaps in response, and outlined practical steps for future actions.