

The inclusion of a wide range of stakeholders in a collaborative information management system is not only an issue of democracy. It also affects the response by bringing in new knowledge and improves trust in the disaster response within the affected community. How such participation is managed in a collaborative information management system and by whom, along with questions of inclusion/exclusion are key considerations. Deciding whose participation is relevant in a collaboration can be complex – as it depends on how one defines risk, responsibility and capacity for response – and it might change over time. Consequently, when establishing a collaboration, it is necessary to consider the mechanisms by which partners are identified and changed.

Guiding Questions

When setting up a collaborative platform, how can one ensure that all relevant stakeholders are invited to participate either right from the beginning or at a later stage?

Deciding whose participation is relevant might change over time. Are there any procedures in place for re-evaluating this along the way?

How will access be modulated to account for different information needs?

Further Information

While crisis management has been traditionally the field of first responders, we now know that there is a wide range of stakeholders other than core responders — such as NGOs, private companies, or digital humanitarians — who can, and do, play a vital role in crisis management. However, how and in what capacity different stakeholders participate varies depending on the situation and the country, but also how one defines disaster and risk and, consequently, what sort of solutions/responses might be set in motion. In response to this, one of the key principles in the United Nations Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030 states: ‘Disaster risk reduction requires an all-of-society engagement and partnership’ (UNISDR 2015). Without considering how publics form in relation to risks, it becomes difficult to protect and serve the public.

A study of 22 European countries as part of the [ANVIL](#) FP7 project found that the extent to which stakeholders such as public organisations, the private sector and individual citizens are involved in response efforts varied significantly between countries. These differences were based largely on cultural, historical and political traditions, such as whether there is a strong corporatist state tradition, or whether there is a libertarian heritage which favours more flexible arrangements, hence affecting the role that bodies such as volunteering organisations, private companies, or the military would play in crisis management.

Another key factor that affects the relevancy of collaboration is how risk is defined and how different incidents and hazards are characterised. For example, depending on whether an incident will be characterised as a 'major incident', 'a serious emergency' or 'a catastrophic emergency', the response might take a different shape and the collaborating stakeholders might change.

This means that when creating a collaborative information management system, it is important to see beyond the obvious first responders and consider what other stakeholders could play a key role in the management of the event. Similarly, a system should be set up in ways that support a variety of different direct users, beyond the core responders, at the discretion of the respective lead organisation, and support a tailoring of the kind of engagement the collaborative system facilitates for these actors and parties.

Examples

During the Prestige Oil Spill in Spain in 2003, the national government had not written plans in advance of the situation and the coastal communities could not manage the clean up on their own. This meant that the local businesses and international NGOs had to play a major role in the strategic planning, decision-making, and the physical response.

From the start of the crisis, NGOs (especially the WWF) gave advice to the government and helped to coordinate the clean-up. The WWF created a crisis group to oversee communication and conservation policy strategies that involved various national organizations, holding meetings with government officials, scientists, national and local NGOs, local fishermen's organizations, and the International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation (ITOPF). In other cases, NGOs like the International Fund for Animal Welfare sent in emergency relief teams for animal rehabilitation centres and to train regional authorities and volunteers to collect, rehabilitate and release wildlife.

Academics from regional universities also stepped up helping to pool their data resources used in their research and to design a system that brought together the various data and actors for decision-making and planning purposes.

Resources

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