World Health Organization

#Ready4Response

Tier 2: Ready4Response

Module 1: Response systems and structures

Policies, plans and procedures

Unit 1B

Photo: WHO / C. Black

INTRODUCTION

Policies, plans, protocols and procedures describe the way in which the response is carried out. You should ensure you understand and have been trained in the relevant policies, plans and procedures before working in a response.

#Ready4Response

Hello, it's **Gaya**!

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the role of policies, plans and procedures in the response;

- describe the two broad categories of policies, plans and procedures;

- describe a Concept of Operations; and

- explain policies, plans, procedures and protocols at the different levels of the response.

POLICIES, PLANS, PROTOCOLS AND PROCEDURES

" are reference documents that provide guidance to respond to specific threats. "
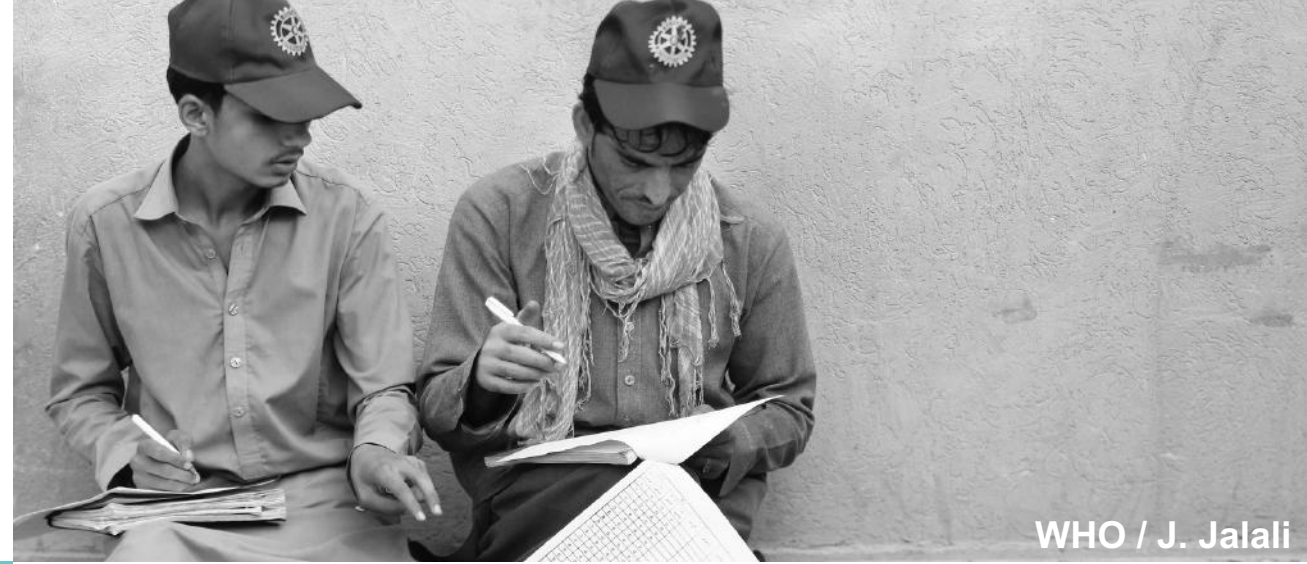
They:

- give responders the authority to do their job;

- provide a mandate so that response mechanisms can be established and funded;

- describe and explain the roles and responsibilities of the responding organizations;

- establish and explain the response coordination mechanisms; and

- provide high-level guidance on the manner in which the response should be conducted.

2 BROAD CATEGORIES

Policies, plans protocols and procedures can be divided roughly into 2 main domains:

Those that establish, set out and maintain the preparedness and response mechanisms. These tend to be government policy, legal mechanisms, and national and strategic-level guidance and plans.	Those that describe and explain how the response should be managed. These tend to be response or operational plans, hazard-specific plans, protocols and procedures.

Legal authority

provided by legislation or a government entity is required to give organizations and governments the mandate to respond to emergencies. This will give the organization the necessary authority to oversee the response, coordinate with other agencies and obtain funding for the response.

POLICIES

> are rules, guidelines and principles of action of an organization or government.

In a response, policies describe the broad principles used to guide the response. Some examples include:

- guidance on the approach to be taken to response by all responding agencies;
- the establishment of response apparatus at local, sub-national and national level;
- rules governing the sharing of information between responding organizations; and
- the establishment of funding for response efforts and rules governing the release of funding.

PLANS

"are documents that allocate roles, responsibilities and tasks to achieve a stated purpose and objectives."

The purpose of creating plans is to:

- maximize effectiveness;
- speed up response; and
- standardize routine activities to allow personnel to focus on key activities.

The planning process should be driven by a risk assessment of hazards and threats.

Some countries detail these risks in a national risk assessment. You may also find sub-national and local risk registers, particularly where areas have specific risks, such as areas prone to flooding or industrial areas where there is a risk of an industrial accident.

In any event, a risk assessment will be carried when an incident is detected (this is often referred to as a rapid risk assessment) to establish the exact nature of the threat.
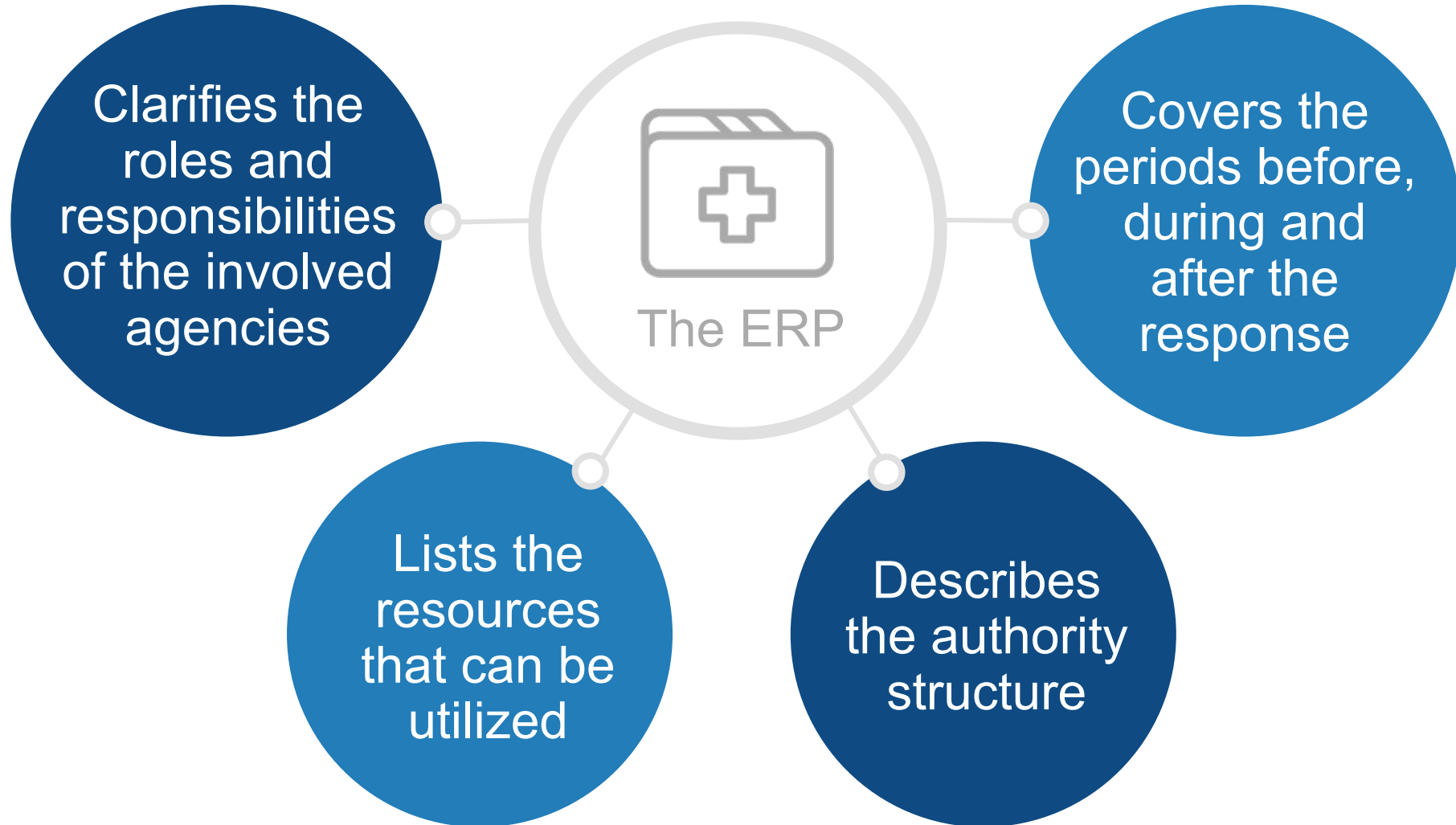
The Emergency Response Plan (ERP)

describes how the health Ministry will work alongside other Ministries and organizations.

It will be written to address large-scale public health emergency risks that are likely to require capability and capacity beyond those normally found in the health Ministry.

The Emergency Response Plan

Clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the involved agencies

The ERP

Covers the periods before, during and after the response

Lists the resources that can be utilized

Describes the authority structure

Examples of the contents of the Emergency Response Plan are:

- the responsibilities of the Incident Management and functions;

- procedures for coordinating support with partners;

- the establishment of the IMT;

- criteria for evaluating, categorizing and grading incidents;

- criteria for the activating, scaling up or down, and deactivating the response;

- the SITREP (situation report) preparation and sharing protocols;

- vertical and communication processes for any event;

- a continuity of operations or business continuity plan;

- hazard- and functional-specific annexes; and

- a Concept of Operations (CONOPS).

The Concept of Operations (CONOPS) is a part of the plan that describes how responding agencies will work together.

Because public health emergencies can involve multiple agencies and sectors, it is important to describe:

- the responsibilities of organizations at the strategic, operational and tactical levels of the response;

- the structure and organization of the overall response;

- how an event will be graded to determine the necessary levels of the response;

- the criteria for escalating or de-escalating the response; and

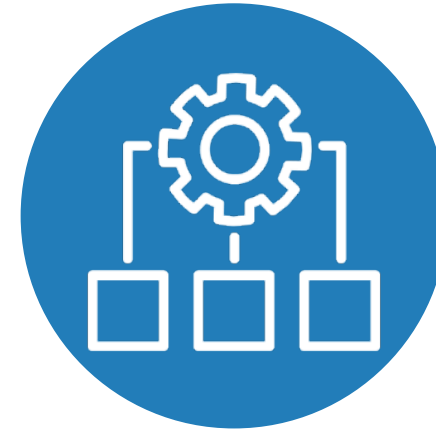- how the different elements of the response work together.

A PROCEDURE

"is a sequence of activities with defined start and end points to perform a specific task.

A procedure must be followed in the same order to perform the task correctly.

Procedures

The most common type of procedure used in response is a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) which is sometimes known as a Task or Action list. These are instructions that list the actions personnel should take to perform a specific task.

Examples of SOPs include:

- actions to conduct a rapid risk assessment;

- steps to be taken to initiate and scale up or draw down the response (known as grading);

- steps to be followed to issue money to a particular team in the response; and

- rules governing the sharing and storing of information.

SUMMARY

- Policies, plans and procedures are used to describe how the response should work.

- Plans are used to identify roles and responsibilities to respond to an incident.

- The ERP should contain a CONOPS that will explain the roles of responding partners and how they will work together.

> **The way in which response is managed will vary between countries and organizations.**

FOLLOW-UP TASK

1. Do some research into the legislation, policy, plans, protocols and procedures that govern response in your country or organization.

2. Make sure you are familiar with the key elements. Make a note of them in your journal.