



World Health
Organization

#Ready4Response

Tier 2: Ready4Response

Module 2: Incident Management System functions

Operations

Unit 2B

Photo: WHO / C. Black



IMS CORE FUNCTIONS

- Incident Management
- **Operations function**
- Planning function
- Logistics function
- Finance and Administration function

#Ready₄Response



Hello, it's **Gaya!**

INTRODUCTION

Understanding the roles and responsibilities of the different response functions will enable you to know how you can best support them and how they can support you if needed.

The Operations function is responsible for delivering response on the ground. To do this, it needs direction, guidance and support from the other functions.

Note: For the purposes of this course, the WHO sub-functions have been listed as they provide a good template of the types of teams that may be needed in an all-hazards response.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- define the role of the Operations function;
- explain why the sub-functions within the Operations function may vary; and
- describe the key roles undertaken by the Operations function sub-functions.

THE OPERATIONS FUNCTION



“informs, coordinates and enables daily response activities on the ground.”

The Operations function directs tactics and resources to achieve incident response objectives on the ground.

At the strategic level, it coordinates decision-making for all response operations.

At the operational and tactical levels, it directs response activities.

The Operations function works with partners to:

- develop and promote policy options, recommendations and guidance;
- engage with communities and stakeholders to develop targeted health advice;
- deliver essential health services and health interventions;
- provide technical expertise to inform the response;
- train local and international health staff; and
- coordinate, support and implement priority research.



The size and composition of the Operations function will be determined by:

- the **type of event** – which hazard (pathogen-causing outbreak, natural disaster or man-made, such as conflict), protracted or acute, complex or not;
- **how severe and** widespread the event is;
- the recommended **prevention and control** measures;
- the political, social and economic **context** (e.g. capacity of national governments, as well as partners, access issues, specific vulnerabilities); and
- the **distribution of responsibilities amongst partners**.



Operations sub-functions are often grouped as follows:



Prevention
and control
measures



Risk
communication
and community
engagement



Health
services
delivery
and health
interventions



Technical
expertise,
science and
research



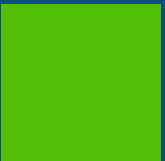
Training
response staff
about knowledge
and skills specific
to the response

2-MINUTE REFLECTION

The structure of the Operations function will be determined by the type of response needed.



Think about the last response you worked in or are aware of. Which Operations sub-functions were required or active in that response?



PREVENTION & CONTROL MEASURES sub-function

identifies and develops clear recommendations, disseminates guidance and provides technical assistance to the Ministry of Health and partners on the most relevant actions to prevent and/or control public health risks.

Measures taken to prevent and control public health risks include:

- enhanced surveillance
- specimen transport
- vaccination campaigns
- point-of-care laboratory services
- specialized laboratory tests
- mass prophylaxis
- clinical management
- infection prevention and control
- vector control
- enhanced water sanitation and hygiene
- food safety and nutritional services
- prepositioning of drugs and medical supplies.



What are RISK COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (RCCE)?

Risk communication is the real-time exchange of information, advice and opinions between experts or officials and people who face a threat (hazard) to their survival, health, or economic or social well-being.

Community engagement is a process of developing relationships to help stakeholders work together to address health-related issues and promote well-being to achieve positive health impact and outcomes.



Effective RCCE allows:

- the people most at risk to understand and adopt protective behaviours;
- authorities and experts to listen to and address people's concerns and needs so they can provide information that is relevant, trusted and acceptable;
- misinformation to be identified and addressed quickly and effectively; and
- engagement of affected populations and communities to develop culturally acceptable and community-owned interventions to bring an emergency under control.



The RCCE sub-function works with affected population and stakeholders to identify their concerns and requirements and:

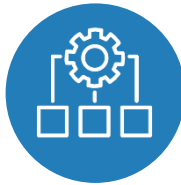
- transform science and technical advice into appropriate health advice and messages;
- coordinate risk communication and community engagement amongst partners to ensure consistency of messages, coordination of interventions; and
- lead and coordinate the social science research for the response by:
 - articulating knowledge gaps;
 - coordinating and mapping field research and surveys; and
 - integrating this research into the response.
- RCCE must work closely with the public information sub-function to ensure consistency of messages.



The HEALTH SERVICE DELIVERY sub-function

works with partners to define and deliver an essential package of health to cover community, primary and referral health services by ensuring that:

health facilities have the appropriate:



infrastructure



equipment



drugs and medical supplies.

health facility staff are:



informed on updated risks and needs



(re)trained on the related best preventive, diagnostic, control and curative knowledge, practices and standards, including those which ensure their own safety.





The HEALTH SERVICE DELIVERY sub-function will:

- provide support and resources to health facilities;
- identify and allocate surge capacity staff;
- ensure training needs for current and surge staff are met;
- distribute medical supplies and drugs;
- deploy vaccines; and
- provide clinical care and management of patients.

The **TECHNICAL EXPERTISE, SCIENCE AND RESEARCH** sub-function

ensures that health operations are informed by the best available scientific advice and technical guidance, and adhere to recognized standards and best practice.

This sub-function is key to the response because:

- scientific advice and evidence is required for all aspects of operations;
- in outbreaks, it is particularly important for the identification and management of pathogens; and
- WHO adheres to evidence-based decision-making and interventions.



THE TECHNICAL EXPERTISE, SCIENCE AND RESEARCH SUB-FUNCTION WILL:

Identify gaps in knowledge around the control of risks and management of excess morbidity and mortality



Advise on key research, knowledge and product development issues



Engage with donors, academics, research institutions, the private sector and operational partners to advise on and coordinate research

The **TRAINING RESPONSE** sub-function

coordinates the provision of training where necessary to ensure that emergency response and health staff, including local and international personnel, are brought up to date with the measures needed to work safely and deliver the response.

This training is often related to the sub-functions outlined in the previous slides and will be dictated by the needs of the response.



Some common examples of training topics include:

- the hazard and particular risks associated with it;
- the correct use of personal protective equipment;
- ways of working, specialist equipment and procedures associated with the response; and
- induction for surge staff who have been mobilized as part of the response.

At a minimum, WHO ensures that relevant knowledge regarding the hazard or threat is made available and accessible to decision-makers and all response personnel via its online learning platform and app [OpenWHO.org](https://openwho.org).



To ensure training needs are met, the **TRAINING** sub-function will:

- provide overall coordination for function-specific training;
- ensure the latest evidence-based guidance is used for training;
- convene partners and networks to develop training;
- support the training of volunteers and field personnel by ensuring technical standards in partner trainings; and
- evaluate the impact of training.





SUMMARY

- The Operations function coordinates delivery of the response on the ground.
- The Operations sub-functions will vary depending on the nature of the response.
- Common Operations sub-functions are:
 - prevention and control
 - risk communication and community engagement
 - health services delivery and interventions
 - technical expertise, science and research
 - training.

“ Like all elements of the IMS, the size and structure of the health Operations function will vary according to the response. ”



FOLLOW-UP TASK

1. Consider an emergency you have worked in or are aware of. Imagine you were the health Operations function lead.
1. In your journal, write down the health Operations sub-functions you would use in your chosen response. Which sub-function would you consider most relevant and which the least. Why?

Additional resources

- Social science, risk communication and community engagement resources
<https://www.who.int/risk-communication/en/>
- WHO community engagement framework for quality, people-centred and resilient health services
<https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/259280/WHO-HIS-SDS-2017.15-eng.pdf>
- Communicating risk in public health emergencies
<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/259807>