

## Helpdesk Research Report

# Humanitarian Capability: Definitions and Components

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## Question

*How is humanitarian capability defined and what are considered to be its constituent components? Humanitarian capability refers to people, institutions and systems. Based on literature from academia, practice and policy-making about the North or the South, please provide an annotated bibliography.*

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## 1. Overview

There is a **dearth of literature** on the concept of humanitarian capability as referring to people, institutions and systems. The notion of capability will often lead to references from the 1990s-2010s that focus on military or law enforcement capabilities in, or for, humanitarian contexts. Yet applying military frameworks to humanitarian considerations can be problematic. Among other reasons, military 'methodology becomes ineffective when the beginning premises differ': people in armed forces 'are trained to recognize and react to' disasters, civilians are not (Donahue et al. 2012: 13-14). Literature searches on capability also lead to references about particular humanitarian techniques (e.g. logistics) or technologies (e.g. mobile phones); about the capabilities of organisations and businesses in the face of disasters or emergencies; about capabilities to monitor human rights violations in peacekeeping missions; about applications of Amartya Sen's work on capabilities to emergency issues; and about resilience and the adaptive capabilities of populations or ecosystems (e.g. Norris et al. 2008).

References often use **capability and capacity interchangeably**. In particular, capability is partly addressed through capacity-building (e.g. Goncalves 2011; Paton & Jackson 2002; Smillie 2001). Some experts also pointed out that the concept of ‘humanitarian capability’ is unusual (expert comment) and that the notions of capability and capacity are interconnected and problematic to separate (expert comment). Even after adjusting the literature search accordingly, there was strikingly little literature on capability/capacity in humanitarianism, in contrast with development.

There are **almost no holistic, systematic or comparative reviews** of the notion of humanitarian capability. The few references that explicitly deal with it tend to focus on one level of analysis or one sector. Researching people, institutions and systems separately, or shifting to the notion of humanitarian performance, seemed to yield more results. Discussions of **humanitarian performance** show parallels with capability. For instance, Ramalingam et al. (2009) note the lack of a widely accepted definition of humanitarian performance. Their working definition ‘includes the collective effects of the interdependent humanitarian system of international, national and local agencies, working to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity during and in the aftermath of conflicts and disasters’. They remark that approaches to performance and quality are highly fragmented, conceptually and in practice (2009: 2). However, exploring the parallel between capability and performance is beyond the scope of this query<sup>1</sup>.

Furthermore, there is no agreement about how to **conceptualise humanitarian capability**. Different authors view the same element as constituting a component, an indicator, a factor, a process or an effect. Some elements are described as several things, e.g. both a component and a factor. Texts do not always present definitions and components, at all or in a clear way. Moreover, there are debates about what humanitarian capabilities are supposed to respond to. For example, some authors draw attention to the catastrophic and the unknown when thinking about capabilities (Donahue et al. 2012).

Authors’ conceptualisations always reveal underlying prescriptions of what humanitarianism and capability *should* be. A few references emphasize that these concepts reflect existing **power and interests**, including in North-South relations (Couldrey et al. 2007). Yet very few references address power and inequality such as class, gender or ethnicity in relation to humanitarian capability. One of the experts consulted stressed that actors must clarify what they mean by ‘humanitarianism’. In his view, concepts of capability will vary depending on whether humanitarianism is understood in its historical meaning or as relief. In its historical sense, humanitarianism is foremost an intention and framework of action, where actions are solely based on affected people’s needs. In relief, the approach is content-based rather than need-based, and allocation criteria can be political or territorial too.

Based on the references found for this report, **frequently mentioned elements of humanitarian capability** can be broadly summarised as follows:

- **Definition:** the individual and collective ability of humanitarian actors (local, national, regional and international) to perform effective humanitarian action that meets the needs of affected populations.
- **Components:**
  - The way work is carried out: organisation, procedures, policies, roles, institutionalised practices, exchanges, decisions, responsibilities and accountability.
  - How work is sustained: resources (money, materials, qualified people, skills, knowledge).
  - What aid is provided, materially (e.g. supplies) and immaterially (e.g. information).

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<sup>1</sup> On performance, see for example ALNAP: Glyn et al. (2012); Harvey et al. (2010); Ramalingam et al. (2009).

- By which actors and partnerships action is carried out (from persons to systems).

## 2. Humanitarian capability by level

### International capability

Adinolfi et al. (2005) *Humanitarian Response Review. An independent report commissioned by the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator & Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)*. United Nations.

[http://www.unicef.org/emerg/files/ocha\\_hrr.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/emerg/files/ocha_hrr.pdf)

<b>Study</b> (p. 8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assesses the humanitarian response capabilities of the UN, NGOs, Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement and other key humanitarian actors including the IOM.</li> <li>▪ Focuses 'on the capabilities of the international response system and on aspects relevant to the initial period of a crisis' (from 4 weeks up to max. 18 months).</li> </ul>
<b>Definition</b> (p. 89)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Response capacity: 'The capability and means of a humanitarian entity or entities to individually or collectively deliver effective, timely, rapid and quality assistance to populations in need (Source: HRR team)'.</li> <li>▪ Preparedness capacity: 'the measures taken to prepare for and reduce the effects of emergencies; that is to predict and - where possible - prevent them, mitigate their impact on vulnerable population, and respond to and effectively cope with their consequences (Source: Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement)'.</li> </ul>
<b>Components</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Accountability &amp; performance on preparedness and country/context issues (20-26): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Effectiveness: access and coverage of populations in need; identification of responsibilities in delivery and coordination; mobilisation of resources, incl. funds.</li> <li>- Relevance: identification of relevant life-saving activities; protection where needed.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Preparedness and response capacity (28-43): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Preparedness and capacity (28-38): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ General: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• emergency systems and procedures of individual organisations, in relation to their overall objectives and 'realistic resource capabilities' (29).</li> <li>• availability and recruitment of trained and experienced staff (local and expatriate) to all geographic areas and types of emergencies.</li> <li>• integration of activities within and between organisations, through cooperative arrangements.</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Sectoral capacities: protection; health; WASH; logistics; camp management and shelter; food aid, nutrition and livelihoods; urban search and rescue.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Preparedness and surge capacity: deployment; personnel; stockpiles (39-42).</li> <li>- Effectiveness of humanitarian common services and pooled capacities (42-43).</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Systems and mechanisms for the coordination of humanitarian response (45-52): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- System: linkages in the existing system for productive collaboration; collective build-up of system-wide coordination inclusive of all stakeholders.</li> <li>- Specific mechanisms: lead organisations and clustering, inter-agency standing committee, emergency relief coordinator, humanitarian coordinators, OCHA, collaborative approach, tools for coordination, integrated missions.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Adequacy, timeliness and flexibility of emergency funding (54-62): recurrent funding; funding for immediate action; fundraising; central emergency revolving fund (CERF).</li> </ul>

Braun (2004) *Report on Emergency Capacity: Analysis for the Interagency Working Group (IWGEC) on Emergency Capacity*. Interagency Working Group (IWGEC) on Emergency Capacity.  
<http://www.ecbproject.org/resources/library/8-emergency-capacity-report>


<b>Report</b>	The Interagency Working Group on Emergency Capacity (IWG) is a consortium of NGOs undertaking collaborative capacity-building: CARE USA, Catholic Relief Services, the International Rescue Committee, Mercy Corps, Oxfam GB, Save the Children US, and World Vision International. The report presents a consultant’s detailed analysis of these organisations’ emergency capacity and of funding initiatives in support of it.
<b>Definition</b>	‘Organizational capacity is about money, people, systems, policies, and technical resources’ (3).
<b>Components</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Organisational capacity is built through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Actions that develop competencies.</li> <li>- Actions that mobilise resources.</li> <li>- Commitment, influence and negotiation that produce organisational change (3).</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Areas most critical to capacity for rapid and effective humanitarian action are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organisational commitment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Strategic prioritisation of emergency work.</li> <li>○ Investment in stronger emergency units.</li> <li>○ Investment in broader rapid response capacity.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Organisational structure and organisational change: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Leveraging organisational capacity (operational, technical and other).</li> <li>○ Creating organisational change.</li> <li>○ Making the most of the globalization of NGOs (alliances and confederations).</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Staff capacity (quality, quantity and mobility): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Staff capacity of emergency units.</li> <li>○ Rapid mobilization of qualified personnel.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Rapid mobilization of other resources (quality, quantity and mobility): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rapid funding.</li> <li>○ Rapid mobilization of materials.</li> <li>○ Information and communications technology.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Technical capacity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Early warning systems.</li> <li>○ Accountability to standards and measurement of impact.</li> <li>○ Capacity of country offices, partners and communities.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Coordination in emergency response: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Internal coordination.</li> <li>○ Inter-organisational collaboration.</li> <li>○ External coordination and collaboration in the field.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Among those elements, areas most critical to performance and ‘most likely to benefit from collective action’ are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increasing the pool of humanitarian workers, especially leaders with the required technical competencies and availability.</li> <li>- Accountability and impact measurement: improving organisational learning and accountability to standards, working toward a more consistent institutionalisation of Sphere standards in the field, and advancing impact measurement.</li> <li>- Improving NGO models for building local capacity: testing models that strengthen country offices, local partners and communities, in preparedness, mitigation, and response; creating standards and guidelines on community participation.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collectively providing rapid, reliable multimedia communication and information for action and learning, with the immediate priority of training field staff.</li> <li>▪ Additional initiatives could significantly enhance capacity, especially: structuring and staffing Emergency Units for optimal capacity-building; successfully driving organisational influence and change; making the most of NGO alliances; and researching early warning systems (with a focus on field level).</li> <li>▪ Other initiatives could address financial management and staffing in programmes, rapid procurement and transport, and internationalisation (less Western profiles).</li> </ul>
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People in Aid (2007) *Surge Capacity in the Humanitarian Relief and Development Sector. A Review of Surge Capacity and Surge Capacity Mechanisms within International NGOs*. People in Aid.

<http://www.peopleinaid.org/pool/files/pubs/surge-capacity-final.pdf>

<b>Report</b>	Review of surge capacity undertaken within the Emergency Capacity Building project, at the request of the Emergency Directors in the Interagency Working Group. Aim to stimulate debate and reflection on rapid response.
<b>Definition</b> (p. 10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Capacity: 'generally understood as an organisation's ability to do something – in the case of an aid agency, to work within, and deliver on, its mandate'</li> <li>▪ Surge capacity: 'the ability of an organisation to rapidly and effectively increase [the sum of] its available resources in a specific geographic location, in order to meet increased demand to stabilise or alleviate suffering in any given population'.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Components</b></p>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Key elements of surge capacity: see figure.</li> <li>▪ Resourcing surge capacity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- People (staff capacity), including in emergency units: specialist emergency staff, general staff, external or short-term staff.</li> <li>- Money (funding): emergency response funds, standing capacity, internal mobility of resources, rapid acquisition of resources, long-term funding.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Surge capacity mechanisms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Planning mechanisms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Strategic workforce planning: planning and preparing staff capacity (level and quality).</li> <li>○ Contingency planning.</li> <li>○ Second wave / continuity planning.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Recruitment mechanisms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Internal mobilisation.</li> <li>○ External recruitment (known and unknown staff).</li> <li>○ Rosters and registers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole-organisation buy-in.</li> <li>• Human resources management.</li> <li>• IT solution.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ The report also identifies four key enabling factors of surge capacity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strategic vision and supportive agency culture</li> <li>- The role of the human resources function or department</li> <li>- Human resources policies and practices</li> <li>- The strength of local capacity</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Conclusions: surge capacity ‘represents an entire system of policies and procedures’; it is as much about an organisation’s philosophy as about any instrument, such as a roster.</li> <li>▪ Developing this capacity is about: 1. bringing various component capacities to scale, simultaneously, within agencies; 2. leverage within organisations and between them (through collaboration); 3. implementing ten critical lessons, or enabling factors (7-8).</li> </ul>
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## Regional capability

ECOWAS Commission (2012) *ECOWAS Humanitarian Policy*. ECOWAS.

[http://www.westafricagateway.org/files/Common%20Humanitarian%20Policy\\_0.pdf](http://www.westafricagateway.org/files/Common%20Humanitarian%20Policy_0.pdf)

<p><b>Document</b></p>	<p>Presents humanitarian issues in West Africa; vision, mission, policy statement and scope; strategic objectives; humanitarian principles and code of conduct; humanitarian action, actors and stakeholders; procurement centres; funding; policy review.</p>
<p><b>Definition</b> (p. 17)</p>	<p>Capacity for effective humanitarian action: within the ECOWAS policy, ‘a combination of all the strengths and resources available within a community, society or organization that</p>

	<p>can be deployed to reduce the level of risk or the effect of a disaster’.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Capacity-building: the reinforcement and development of skilled personnel, leadership and management. It includes the ‘upgrading of institutional, financial, political, technological and other resources at different levels and sectors of the society’.</li> </ul>
<b>Components</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strengths and resources include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- physical, institutional, economic or social means.</li> <li>- skilled personnel and leadership or management.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Mission statement: ‘To establish a framework through which capacities can be enhanced at the regional, national, sub national and local levels for the alleviation of human suffering during and immediately after emergencies’ (15). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Policy: to standardize humanitarian action in Member States ‘by fostering a balanced linkage between Humanitarian Action, Human Security and Human Development’ throughout ECOWAS, based on regional solidarity (15). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Seven strategic objectives (each with priority measures for implementation) (17): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• appropriate legal and policy frameworks on prevention and response.</li> <li>• institutions for managing emergencies and responding to challenges.</li> <li>• social actors’ capacities to respond to humanitarian issues.</li> <li>• compliance with international humanitarian law by Member States and citizens, to prevent or mitigate conflict-related impacts on civilians.</li> <li>• special protection of vulnerable persons, especially women, children and ‘physically challenged persons’, during emergencies.</li> <li>• media and communication, to highlight issues and to use in emergencies.</li> <li>• national and regional capacities to respond to humanitarian problems</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Ansell et al. (2010) Managing Transboundary Crises: Identifying the Building Blocks of an Effective Response System. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, 18(4), 195–207.  
<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1468-5973.2010.00620.x/abstract>

<b>Study</b>	Explores the transboundary dimensions of crises and disasters and investigates what political-administrative capabilities are needed (abstract).
<b>Definition</b>	None given
<b>Components</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prevalent political-administrative crisis response challenges are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coping with uncertainty, about the source of the problem, its evolution and possible solutions.</li> <li>- Providing surge capacity.</li> <li>- Organising an effective response, with coordinated collaborations to ‘identify, allocate, transport and deliver (or apply) resources’ (198). Two crucial components: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mobilising people, money and goods.</li> <li>○ Coordinating these efforts.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Communicating with the public (meaning-making).</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Need for ‘boundary-spanning capacities’, through four mechanisms (200-204): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Distributed sense-making, to arrive at a common operating picture (‘shared cognition’ or ‘situational awareness’). Institutions required include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Detection and surveillance systems.</li> <li>○ Analytical capacity.</li> <li>○ Real-time communications.</li> <li>○ Decision support systems.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Surge capacity for rapid, sustainable and properly scaled deployment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Professional first responders.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Supply chain management.</li> <li>○ Fast track procedures.</li> <li>○ An integrated command centre.</li> <li>- Networked coordination, with organizational adaptability.</li> <li>- Formal scaling procedures, with a transboundary authority structure.</li> </ul>
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## National capability

IFRC (2001) *Capacity Assessment and Performance Indicators (CAPI) for National Societies*. IFRC.

<https://www-secure.ifrc.org/dmis/toolbox/CBF/tools/english/capi.pdf>

<b>Study</b> (p. 3)	Intended to support analysis and diagnosis by Red Cross/Red Crescent National Societies of their capacity to deliver services and programmes.
<b>Definition</b>	A well-functioning National Society with the capacity to deliver services and programmes is characterised by performance, capacity and foundation.
<b>Components</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Performance: impact – what the organisation does and with what results. Components: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ planning: set of activities is well selected, planned and evaluated.</li> <li>○ development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● set of core programmes implemented in line with regional requirements.</li> <li>● activities consistent with mission and desired public image.</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ implementation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● preparedness to take prompt and effective action, and active assistance, in disasters and conflicts; strengthening of vulnerable communities’ capacities.</li> <li>● active dissemination of humanitarian law and principles; co-operation with government to ensure respect for these; neutrality together with sensitivity to situations ‘that adversely affect the most vulnerable’.</li> <li>● adherence to relevant Federation policies.</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ monitoring of activities, processes, costs and results.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- relevance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ focus on vulnerable people, ‘enhancing their capacity to help themselves’.</li> <li>○ beneficiary involvement in membership, decision-making and coverage of costs.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- effectiveness: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ evaluation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● continuous monitoring of effects and results, prompt corrective action, feeding results back into planning.</li> <li>● regular assessment of quality and impact, with adjustments where needed.</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ external environment understood (social, technological, ecological, economic, political).</li> <li>○ stakeholders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● enjoying a good reputation amongst opinion leaders and the public; keeping the press informed about activities.</li> <li>● preparing regular information about activities, finances and achievements.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Capacity: what an organisation is capable of doing – what resources it has, what the people can do, and how they are organised to do the work. Components are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- leadership: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ vision.</li> <li>○ up-to-date strategy (mission, objectives, programmes, financing).</li> <li>○ communication.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ decision-making: widely shared, with wide access, consultation and pluralism.</li> <li>○ roles: clarity of role in leadership.</li> <li>○ skills: leaders' commitment to organisation, with necessary background and skills; regular succession of leaders.</li> <li>○ leadership training and opportunities at all levels, especially for women and youth.</li> <li>- human resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ staffing: sufficient number of properly qualified persons (staff and volunteers), professional advice and expertise sought beyond own membership.</li> <li>○ rewards policies.</li> <li>○ recruitment policies; among others recruitment of volunteers from all sections of society, including from vulnerable groups.</li> <li>○ learning.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- financial resources: financial planning, systems, accountability, efficiency, resources.</li> <li>- material resources: availability ('right equipment, buildings, materials and access to transport', resourcefulness) and sustainability in operation and maintenance.</li> <li>- effective organisation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ structure with proper differentiation and integration; flexibility; preparedness.</li> <li>○ systems &amp; procedures (standardised ways of working or obtaining information).</li> <li>○ roles &amp; responsibilities, with leadership and support from headquarters.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Foundation: the basis for the organisation's existence. Components: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- mission: mission statement; fundamental principles; relationships (autonomy and independence together with partnerships, co-operation, coordination and sharing of resources, information and expertise); membership; values and innovation.</li> <li>- legal base: statutes, emblem, governing bodies, accountability.</li> <li>- constituency: location and territorial reach, representativeness of the general population, clear definition of membership, involvement of youth, positive image.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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European Commission – ECHO (2010). *Strengthening Humanitarian Responses through 'Enhanced Response Capacity' Funding (formerly Global Capacity Building and Grant Facility). DG ECHO Guidelines.* European Commission.

[http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/funding/grants/Enhanced\\_Response\\_Capacity\\_guidelines\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/funding/grants/Enhanced_Response_Capacity_guidelines_en.pdf)

<b>Document</b>	Indications about past funding for humanitarian capacity-building by ECHO and new 'policy directions' with indications about their implementation.
<b>Definition</b>	Enhanced response capacity: 'a process whereby people, organisations and the international humanitarian community as a whole unleash, strengthen, create and maintain capacity to identify and meet humanitarian needs in a timely, efficient and effective manner' (p. 5, based on OECD DAC 2006).
<b>Components</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Enhanced response capacity involves different levels (5): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Individuals: individuals' ability to learn and to gain knowledge and skills.</li> <li>- Organisations, with two sub-levels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ local organisations (including local authorities).</li> <li>○ international organisations (UN, Red Cross/Red Crescent), European NGOs.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Systems: systems of organisation beyond individual and organisational levels, their interfaces and the institutions guiding them.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Main global humanitarian response needs identified for an enhanced capacity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ human resources (particularly to avoid high staff turnover).</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ other resources, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● knowledge management.</li> <li>● leadership skills.</li> <li>● surge capacity, especially technical and logistical knowledge capacity.</li> <li>● humanitarian funding (more long-term, predictable and flexible funding).</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Effective coordination and roll out of the cluster approach.</li> <li>- (Rapid) needs assessment and related methodologies.</li> <li>- Emergency preparedness, disaster risk reduction, early warning.</li> <li>- Local capacity building.</li> <li>- Quality, accountability and respect of humanitarian principles and laws.</li> <li>- Sectoral and cross-cutting gaps, such as gender, protection, security and logistics.</li> </ul>
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## Local capability

Kusumasari et al. (2010) Resource capability for local government in managing disaster. *Disaster Prevention and Management*, 19(4), 438–451.

[http://ww4.emeraldinsight.com/bibliographic\\_databases.htm?id=1885371](http://ww4.emeraldinsight.com/bibliographic_databases.htm?id=1885371)

<b>Study</b>	This theoretical article examines local governments’ resource capability in managing disaster in developing countries, an issue under-explored in literature on disasters.
<b>Definition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Article reviews 12 definitions of the capability of individual organisations from the literature on management, organisations and firms; and 2 from literature on disasters.</li> <li>▪ In relation to disasters, definitions must identify the demands of the disaster response environment and the management capabilities required.</li> <li>▪ Cigler (2007) defines capability as capacity, in terms of ‘the financial, technical, effective policy, institutional, leadership, and human resource capacities that local government bodies must have in order to perform activities in all stages of routine emergencies’ (cited and depicted in the figure below, p. 440). Such capability ‘relates to delegation, communication, decision making, and inter-agency coordination’ (Paton and Jackson 2002: 441).</li> </ul>
<b>Components</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Capability is ‘a function of institutional resources, human resources, policy for effective implementation, financial, and technical resources and leadership’. The operation of such capabilities constitutes the key success factor. Key functional factors are (441): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Institutional: clear structure, roles, responsibilities and relationships between all</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



	<p>levels of government.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Human resources: sufficient personnel, proper task delegation, division of labour.</li> <li>- Policy for effective implementation: appropriate policies, rules and regulations for making decisions, mobilising resources and engaging public or private organisations.</li> <li>- Financial: sufficient funding for activities in all stages of disaster management.</li> <li>- Technical: 'effective logistic management system, sufficient technology information system, and communication network between organizations, communities, and media representatives'.</li> <li>- Leadership: 'Building local level leadership to make quick and appropriate decision'.</li> </ul> <p>▪ The authors summarise the capability requirements, processes, purposes, outputs and key actors at distinct stages (445-448). The capabilities required are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mitigation: evaluation; monitoring; dissemination.</li> <li>- Preparedness: planning (on-site and off-site emergency planning); exercise; training; logistic management expertise.</li> <li>- Response: needs assessment coordination; information exchange; logistical expertise.</li> <li>- Recovery: damage assessment; debris removal; disaster assistance skill.</li> </ul>
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The framework above was then tested and validated in a **case in Indonesia**:

Kusumasari et al. (2012) Bridging the gaps: the role of local government capability and the management of a natural disaster in Bantul, Indonesia. *Natural Hazards*, 60(2), 761–779.

<http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11069-011-0016-1>.

▪ The authors explain that capability is not so much about the resources owned but about **the organisation's capacity to use, develop and combine resources**. Collaborative local leaders can combine limited resources and deploy them 'to establish positions of sustainable competitive advantage and benefit for the community'. This involves what Salaman and Asch (2003) call 'bundles of skills', consisting of simple skills that are quite easily obtained but also of combinations of such skills. The relationship between skills and skill-holders matter too, such as patterns of cooperation and mutual support (778).

### 3. Humanitarian capability in the health sector

McCarthy et al. (2013) Consensus and Tools Needed to Measure Health Care Emergency Management Capabilities. *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness*, 3(S1), S45–S51.

[http://www.dmph.org/cgi/content/full/3/Supplement\\_1/S45](http://www.dmph.org/cgi/content/full/3/Supplement_1/S45)

<b>Study</b> (p. S45)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No 'widely accepted, validated framework of health care emergency management capabilities' in the USA.</li> <li>▪ Reviews the health care emergency management capabilities and evaluation methods used by the Veterans Health Administration, the Joint Commission, the Institute of Medicine Metropolitan Medical Response System committee, the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Health and Human Services.</li> <li>▪ Despite different conceptualizations, considerable overlap. Most differences relate to whether an element is a major capability or capability-specific. All agencies use multiple indicators and data sources. Few performance-based tools exist, none are fully tested.</li> </ul>
<b>Definition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Capability: 'the ability to perform an action or generate an outcome' (S45).</li> <li>▪ Health care emergency management capabilities: what health care organisations should be able to 'prepare for, mitigate against, respond to, and recover from' in cases of emergencies and disasters (S45).</li> </ul>

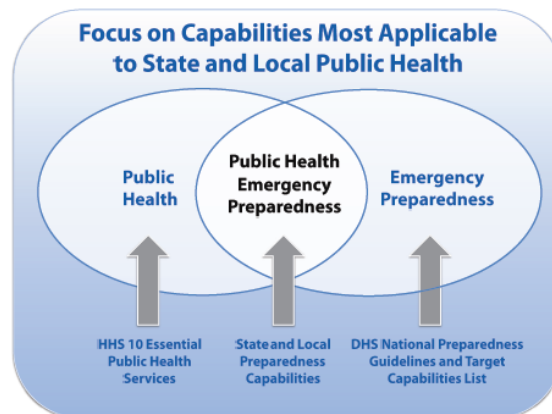
<b>Components</b>	<p>Target emergency management capabilities identified by leading agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Occupant safety and security: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Environmental health.</li> <li>- Isolation and quarantine.</li> <li>- Hazardous materials response / decontamination.</li> <li>- Diagnosis and agent identification.</li> <li>- Personal protective equipment.</li> <li>- Evacuation and transportation of victims.</li> <li>- Crowd and traffic control.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Continuity of operations.</li> <li>▪ Communication: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emergency public information and warning.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Management of volunteers.</li> <li>▪ Management of resources and assets.</li> <li>▪ Medical surge: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Patient management.</li> <li>- Pharmaceutical caches.</li> <li>- Fatality management.</li> <li>- Emergency triage and pre-hospital treatment.</li> <li>- Mental health services.</li> <li>- Meeting the needs of at-risk populations.</li> <li>- Follow-up study of health outcomes.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Integration and support of external entities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mass care (e.g. sheltering, feeding).</li> <li>- Mass prophylaxis.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Incident management: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emergency operations centre management.</li> <li>- Management of staff.</li> <li>- Emergency public information and warning.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Emergency management planning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Evaluation of emergency planning activities.</li> <li>- Emergency operations plan.</li> <li>- Emergency management programme.</li> <li>- Evaluation of emergency operations plan.</li> <li>- Training.</li> <li>- Hazard assessment.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2011) *Public Health Preparedness Capabilities: National Standards for State and Local Planning*. [http://www.cdc.gov/phpr/capabilities/DSLRL\\_capabilities\\_July.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/phpr/capabilities/DSLRL_capabilities_July.pdf)

<b>Document</b>	The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) created standards for capability-based planning in public health preparedness, to assist state and local planners (2).
<b>Definition</b>	No definition of 'capability', but a definition for each of the components.
<b>Components</b>	<p>CDC identified 15 public health preparedness capabilities as the basis for preparedness. Each includes a definition of the capability and a list of associated functions, performance measures, tasks, and resources (planning, skills and training, equipment and technology).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Biosurveillance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public health laboratory testing.</li> <li>- Public health surveillance and epidemiological investigation.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

- Community resilience:
  - Community preparedness.
  - Community recovery.
- Countermeasures and mitigation:
  - Medical countermeasure dispensing.
  - Medical materiel management and distribution.
  - Non-pharmaceutical interventions.
  - Responder safety and health.
- Incident management:
  - Emergency operations coordination.
- Information management:
  - Emergency public information and warning.
  - Information sharing.
- Surge management:
  - Fatality management.
  - Mass care.
  - Medical surge.
  - Volunteer management.

Recommended priorities are biosurveillance, community resilience, countermeasures and mitigation, incident management and information management (3).



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[http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=JYqK7tD8eVcC&source=gbs\\_navlinks\\_s](http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=JYqK7tD8eVcC&source=gbs_navlinks_s)

## Key websites

- ALNAP: <http://www.alnap.org/>
- Ashdown, Paddy (chair) (2011) *Humanitarian Emergency Response Review*. UK Government.  
<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications1/HERR.pdf>
- Emergency Capacity Building Project: <http://www.ecbproject.org/>
- Joint Standards Initiative – Humanitarian Standards for Aid Workers:  
<http://www.jointstandards.org/> (including Sphere standards: <http://www.spherehandbook.org/>)
- People in Aid: <http://www.peopleinaid.org/>

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## About this report

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