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Title of the Session: The anatomy of a crisis – the big picture for a big program

Date: 06/07/2015 to 12/07/2015

Summary

When disaster strikes is not the time to be reaching for the manual. True crisis preparedness is something that those with the responsibilities for response and recovery should move towards, with vigor and determination.

Concurrent tasks of response and recovery need to be mobilised. The former will deal with the present situation and the hour by hour rolling response needs. At the same time a team needs to be focusing on and planning the medium to longer term recovery strategy. Too often these are seen as sequential tasks, resulting in a prolonged recovery that has a much higher a human and financial cost.

Context

Leadership is the cornerstone of organisational effectiveness across the spectrum of activity, including crisis. The requirement in a crisis situation is very different from in a time of normal conditions. The organizational operating models that provide the baseline for a smooth-running enterprise during normal times evaporate during a crisis, throwing the leadership into a morass of uncertainty and chaos. But the chaos can be managed successfully if the team is prepared

Leadership

- Leadership during disasters is very different to routine leadership
- There is a need to grasp the big picture, distill the limited and rapidly evolving information, and then make effective decisions
- Build confidence in the community and persist despite the challenges
- Understand that the disaster is not over when the storm clouds part and the dust clears

Institutional Arrangements

- Establishing the institutional arrangements should be part of the preparedness activities taken by governments and the private sector
- The need for authority, budget and associated governance arrangements must all be considered, however delays and superficial arrangements can lead to prolonged and ineffectual recovery programs

Partnerships

- Governments, donor agencies, civil society and the private sector all have a role in the recovery after a disaster
- It is vital that functional partnerships are established that harnesses the private sector capability to effectively be a key element of the recovery program

Reporting and Monitoring

- Reporting and project delivery is important in ensuring the recovery program is on track and all participants are playing their part in the program
- Reporting is also an effective way to identify weaknesses in the systems of delivery, allowing targeted expertise and capability to bolster existing capacity
- Effective reporting and tracking provides the cornerstone of the governance for expenditure and audit processes
- Tracking delivery of programs of works and community initiatives allows cost benchmarking and identification of weak points that are impacted by multiple disasters, allowing targeted investment in upgrades