



Urban Collaboration Platform

Urban Skill set for
Red Cross Red Crescent
National Societies

Virtual Workshop Report
17 December 2020



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Introduction

As the world is urbanizing fast, cities are sprawling and causing more and more people exposed to wide range of hazards, including pandemic and impacts of climate change. In this context, strengthening the competencies and skill set of Red Cross Red Crescent (RCRC) National Societies (NSs) in understanding risks and vulnerabilities, implementing impactful preparedness programs, responding to and recovering from disasters more effectively in urban areas have become imperative.

The RCRC Urban Collaboration Platform ([UCP](#)) has organized annual workshops for the National Societies since 2016 to expand the knowledge and operational capabilities of NSs and share experiences. Due to COVID-19, the fifth UCP workshop was organized virtually on 17 December 2020 with around 45 participants from more than 20 National Societies, RCRC reference centers and IFRC secretariat and regional offices.

The overall aim of the “Urban Skill-Set for Humanitarians” workshop was to ensure that **RCRC staff and volunteers are knowledgeable about the urban context and able to respond to urban disasters effectively and efficiently**. This requires an assessment of what capacities are needed to encounter urban disasters, what already exists to meet these needs, and what is to be done to match requirements for specific capacities for future use.

The expected outputs of the workshop are defined as discussing and identifying:

- Skill set requirements for Red Cross Red Crescent staff and volunteers in urban context.
- Gaps in existing IFRC tools to meet the needs identified under Output 1.

Opening remarks and Keynote speech

The agenda of the virtual meeting consisted of presentations, break-out sessions with virtual groups working on defined sub-themes and plenary sessions summarizing results. The break-out groups organized in digital “World Café” format, allowing participants freely choosing which group to join. Each working group was given a Google Document prepared for guiding through the group discussion and recording the group results.

Aynur Kadihasanoglu, Senior Urban Advisor, IFRC, as the host welcomed the participants and gave an overview of UCP, updates on IFRC's urban work and the objective and the agenda for the meeting. As the keynote speaker, Prof. David Sanderson, from the University of New South Wales in Australia, gave an overview of humanitarian action in urban context. Professor Sanderson's key messages included respecting the dignity of people in need of help, supporting them in the best way through listening, engaging, and using the most appropriate tools.

Challenges in urban response and recovery operations was presented by the IFRC shelter team via a [video](#) recording.

Stories from the field:

During the workshop practitioners from the RCRC movement shared their stories of what kind of challenges and opportunities they face in recruiting and working with volunteers and staff with the right skills to work in in urban context. Marco Albertini, Water and Habitat Unit - Knowledge and Partnerships Manager (ICRC) mentioned that the skills required in humanitarian field have changed significantly in the last years as a reflection of global changes due to digitalization and communication technologies.

Hamza Oun from the ICRC team in Libya presented how he had to learn programming languages to develop an app that solved the problem of calculating the mixing ratio for chlorine-based disinfection solutions as part of the ICRC disinfection campaign for IDPs collective shelters, PHC, municipalities, and national society in Tripoli.

Farah Rifae from the Syrian Red Crescent Society highlighted the challenges they are facing as humanitarian workers in the field of WASH at an urban context. These included lack of technical skills and equipment to detect leaks in the water network, documenting what is destroyed and to prepare maps to support the future urban planning of the country. Lack of computer skills and software application in Syria due to sanctions and knowledge and more practices in the field of hydraulic power and micro hydro power generation were mentioned.

Moe Thida Win, Deputy Director, Disaster Management of Myanmar Red Cross Society summarized the challenges they face when working in urban context as: complexities in coordinating with government departments at city level; unreliable demographic data due to high rate of rural to urban migration. She highlighted importance of engaging private sector to participate in humanitarian assistance especially on disaster preparedness.

Overall, the presenters emphasized that, besides the traditional skills such as professionalism and expertise urban context demands new competencies and skills such as:

- Collaboration (be part of networks, understand social context)
- Tenacity (persistence and realistic optimism)

- Reasoning (problem solving attitude)
- Flexibility, and
- Spirit of innovation

Presentations

These stories from practice were followed by Hisham Khogali and Jean McCluskey, freelance consultants, presenting initial findings of their ongoing study on “Covid-19 response in urban areas”. The researchers shared learnings from previous and current response to epidemics and pandemics in urban settings. The results captured the inter-relations between the pathogen and the impacts on urban governance systems, local economies, society, and people’s health.

Harriette Purchas, also a freelance consultant, presented the “Urban Competency Framework” developed by the Global Alliance for Urban Crises ([GAUC](#)). The framework aims to support and facilitate the strengthening of local capacity through deployment, remote support, and trainings through the identified competency domains.

Outputs of the Workshop

Output 1: Identifying required knowledge, skills, and attitudes for humanitarian assistance in urban context.

The participants in four groups discussed the following questions:

1. What knowledge, skills, and attitudes for humanitarian assistance in urban context are required?
2. What are existing capacities to build upon?
3. What is missing in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes which need to be developed?

A compilation of the results of the group work are summarized below:

What is required ?	Existing capacities	What is missing ?
Contextual analysis and needs assessment		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · multi-sectoral understanding · analytical and systems thinking · risk modelling and analysis · ability to tap into existing urban capacities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Use of digital tools for GIS mapping and data collection · existing institutional partnerships · existing programs (can 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Industrial engineers (need more) · Academics (need more + and multi-sector) · negotiation skills · creating trust

<p>/knowledge/skills (universities can offer M&E, develop frameworks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Empathy, flexibility, sensitivity 	<p>combine Volunteers on Wheels with OSM mapping to ground truth for context analysis)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · formats for privacy, safety and security
<p>Disaster response operations</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · data & mapping (urban zones, severity level). · Developing alternative scenarios/modelling · market assessment · crowdsourcing information · tracking volunteers · understanding where vulnerabilities are · understanding population movements and fluidity of the context. · holistic approach and flexibility · knowing how to do more with less. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · information resources; sources; primary data (government, academia, army); secondary (literature review) · neighbourhood maps · existing communication/ information channels to be mobilized for response. · pre-disaster information (from partners, stakeholders) · interagency coordination mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · flexibility in procedures when working with communities. · understanding coping capacities (the invisible part of the iceberg) · data literacy and IT skills · flexibility in trainings and using tools (e.g. youth volunteers, GIS, multisectoral needs assessment, training on the spot) · counterparts' capacities (for better needs assessments) · building local partners' capacities · coordination with private sector · understanding better what can be done on a daily base (without having the big appeals).
<p>Disaster/pandemic preparedness and risk reduction programming</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · understanding urban systems and applying systems thinking · understanding planning cycle of municipal government (knowing when advocacy with municipal government will be most effective). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · VCA reports · people centered approach. · New IFRC tools for urban context. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · An open attitude to work outside and beyond traditional partners and ways of working to reach more community groups within the urban context.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · skillset to support women's groups on specific challenges. · need to listen better: urban communities know what they want. · ability to cooperate and coordinate well with local governments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Networking, we might use /utilize networks from others/ learn from them. · Skillset amongst the volunteers (recruit volunteers with specific expertise) · how to on-board volunteers with specific expertise
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Climate Change Adaptation

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · knowledge of practical low-cost initiatives. · ability to understand information that is being generated e.g. climate data, early warning forecast · ability to pass this information on to the most vulnerable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Commitment of the IFRC to do more on climate change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Buy in of the people: sometimes it can be overwhelming, they don't know what to do and don't feel it is influencing their life. We need to link the affects to their daily lives. · Showing impact of practical actions (what can the individual do?) · There is no measurement to account for our contributions.
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Pandemic Preparedness

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Speaking through stories to better communicate strategies. · going outside our comfort zone; need to reach out to beyond the traditional volunteers. · Understanding livelihood impacts in different phases. · Knowledge of health protocols. · Being a facilitator for self-organizing groups. · influencing government policies and social protection programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Integration into existing social protection systems of government · Using GIS for epidemiological surveillance, mapping of facilities, different communities, marginal groups · platforms that can get to the whole community - multiple media and different languages.
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Output 2: Gaps in existing IFRC tools to meet the needs identified in Output 1.

In the second round of group work, the discussions focused identifying strengths and weaknesses of IFRC tools and training programs in terms of their suitability for urban context. Overall, the participants made the following points:

- The need may not always be developing a new tool but more add-on components that help with the implementation of these tools in the urban context (and conflict context).
- The tools and training programs should allow more time to build relations and trust.
- The biggest gap is the institutional capacity to absorb and analyze the existing data. It is not only about collecting data; IT systems must be set up to process the data effectively at all levels.
- The tools should nurture facilitation skills and integrate local capacities/actors.
- Tools should better use of labs, hubs, (social) innovation forums, and makers spaces.
- We should target professional associations for recruiting urban volunteers with technical skills in advance of an emergency.
- We should know tools of external partners and their capacities (abilities) to complement the gaps.
- Improve our skills in using digital platforms more effectively to attract youth and skilled urban professionals. One of the good examples is the [PASSA Youth](#).
- The PASSA Youth is relatively new, yet to be rolled out but it:
 - Is comprehensive, participatory, community driven, intuitive.
 - integrates technology, attractive to youth, and lets users to use it beyond RCRC projects and develop their own ideas and solutions.
 - builds on the energy of the youth which can be channeled for humanitarian work especially in conflict zones.