

TRANSFORMING **SURGE CAPACITY** | **CASE STUDY**



THE COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAMS COMMUNITY-LED RESPONSE PILOT

The Transforming Surge Capacity project is led by ActionAid and backed by 11 partners from national, regional and international level. The project aims to make surge capacity more effective and efficient across the whole humanitarian sector by promoting collaboration and coordination. It's about getting everyone to work together to improve, and finding new ways to enhance the role of local agencies and external stakeholders.

INTRODUCTION

Individual members of local communities are both the first to be affected by and the first to respond to disasters. This is why training communities as first responders is an emerging norm in disaster preparedness programmes across the world. In a country like Pakistan, where government systems and procedures are often rigid and bureaucratic, communities can play a critical role in ensuring efficient disaster response.

The Transforming Surge Capacity project (TSC) in Pakistan has established Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) in the 15 most at-risk Union Councils in flood-prone Layyah District. The CERTs are made up 460 members (310 male, 150 female), all of whom are working towards increasing the response capacity of communities. So far, the CERTs have held 43 meetings at the community level, received eight trainings in Community Action for Disaster Response, and 744 people, including 460 CERT members, government officials and civil society staff, have been trained in basic lifesaving skills by search and rescue experts from Rescue 1122, the official district emergency services. The training covered first aid, fire control, camp management, using emergency equipment, and identifying hazards.

HOW ARE THE CERTS INCREASING RESPONSE CAPACITY AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL?

Developing contingency plans in collaboration with emergency services:

137 government officials and 47 leaders from all 15 CERTs participated in 15 consultations at the district level to determine the levels of preparedness within their communities in the face of monsoon floods, and the role of the district government in this situation. This resulted in Rescue 1122 and the CERTs collaboratively developing contingency plans in all 15 councils that aim to mitigate the effects of flooding during monsoon season.

Increasing life-saving skills of individuals:

The establishment of CERTs as first level responders has proved helpful in responding to floods, traffic accidents and fires, providing first

FOCUS

SCALING UP THE CERT MODEL

The formation and initial success of CERTs in Layyah has influenced stakeholders, including the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), to scale up this model throughout Punjab Province. CERTs are also participating in advocacy efforts to ensure greater cooperation at district level. Not only will the PDMA register CERTs with the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), but in collaborating with district officials, CERT members have already created joint action plans, assigning roles and responsibilities to CERTs and to Rescue 1122 in emergencies.

This constitutes a remarkable breakthrough in empowering communities to respond to disasters themselves rather than depending on Rescue 1122, which itself has been vulnerable to crisis. It is expected that in the onset of a disaster, CERTs will play a major role in rescue, recovery and rehabilitation.



CERT training – members practice carrying patient on a stretcher.

aid, and securing the transfer of casualties to hospitals. CERT members have shown a very high level of involvement in the trainings, and several have used their skills to respond to real-life emergencies. Muhammad Sabir, a member of a CERT in Sumra Nashaib Union Council, describes how the life-saving training he received from Rescue 1122 enabled him to save his 10-month old son's life, when he found him choking on a Banta (marble):

"Immediately I took my child and held him down

“At the third push the Banta went out from his throat and he started breathing normally.”

on my left arm, holding his jaw lightly open to keep his mouth in the proper position. Then I started the pushes on his back, I did it carefully and lifted him back in the normal position to protect his backbone. At the third push the Banta went out from his throat and he started breathing normally.”



Muhammad Sabir with his son Muhammad Umar, 10 months old

Atifa Hayyat, also having been trained by Rescue 1122, explains how she used her skills to coordinate community members to put out a fire:

“Women and children including an elderly man were being gathered to deal with the fire[...] Every person was trying to control the fire, and they were also crying because they didn’t know how to deal with the emergency as they did not have the appropriate skills.

“Please listen carefully to what I say then act accordingly, we can get control over it within few minutes by joint and organized effort.”

After watching the scenario I got the attention of everyone and I told them that I am a trained female rescuer; trained from Rescue 1122, and that I know how to get control of the fire quickly. ‘Please listen carefully to what I say then act accordingly, [...] we can get control over it within few minutes by joint and organized effort. [...]’ I told some people to stand in a line that started from the water source to the fire, I also told another group of people to arrange pots for water shifting and two people to stand near the hand pump.



Adopted line method to transfer water to the fire quickly

After a few moments we all were in action followed by quick planning. I was guiding the entire group and was monitoring the situation [...]. We finished all process within five minutes and succeed to control the fire. Again, thank God. All the people thanked me, especially Ms. Zuhra Bibi who is the elder women of her family. She said that ‘we might have lost many things if we did it in our own way, but now we are very much thankful to you, we learnt this skill and we shall act accordingly in this type of situation and we also share it with others’.”

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WOMEN-LED EMERGENCY RESPONSE

In Layyah, as in many parts of the world, women and girls are considered to be the most vulnerable group in emergencies. CERTs aim to challenge this perception by investing in training women as first responders. Almost 40% of the CERT members are women and they have dealt with half of the emergencies the CERTs have responded to.

Atifa Hayyat, 24, has been elected as the coordinator of her CERT in Union Council Lohanch Nashaib, due to her leadership skills. Her role is not only to chair CERT meetings, but to coordinate and establish partnerships with government officials, Rescue 1122, and community members. Atifa says that “being a member of a CERT has improved her confidence and feels much stronger economically and socially. Having completed life-saving training, she is now committed to sharing her knowledge and skills with her family members and with other women in the community.”

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED FROM ESTABLISHING THE CERTS?

The power of collaboration:

The CERT pilot is an example of successful collaboration between international and national NGOs, local communities and the district government. Each partner added something of value: INGOs funded the initiative, Rescue 1122 provided the training, NGOs facilitated the mobilisation of local communities, and individual members worked together to achieve a common goal. In addition, partnering with Rescue 1122 not only increased government ownership in the model, but also led to reduced costs, as the organisation could use its own staff and equipment to deliver the training.

Partner with governments to ensure sustainability:

It is clear that the CERT model currently depends on the technical and financial support of INGOs that are part of the TSCP consortium, however, the project itself is soon coming to a close. The District Government Social Welfare Department has expressed interest in adopting the CERTs as a resource it can use in emergencies, which would

ensure sustainability of the model, yet until an agreement is reached, funding must be secured to bridge this gap. However, during the monsoon season, the district government engaged members from all 15 CERTs in early warning actions, resulting in these members being added to the list of volunteer rescuers with the Rescue Services of the respective districts.

Continuing to invest in advocacy is key:

Whilst the model has been recognised and implemented by Rescue 1122 and government in Layyah district, rolling it out to other provinces requires continued investment in advocacy as well as increased efforts to secure partnerships with governments in the hope of obtaining funding for the model.



CERT training on Basic Life-saving skills

The Disasters and Emergencies Preparedness Programme (DEPP), is a multi-year £30m portfolio of 14 projects working in 10 countries funded by the UK Government. The DEPP uses the collective leverage of the Start Network and the CDAC Network to improve the quality of preparedness and efficiency of humanitarian responses in countries most at risk of natural and conflict-related emergencies.

For more on the Transforming Surge Capacity project, visit:
www.startnetwork.org/start-engage/transforming-surge-capacity

To access more learning from the Transforming Surge Capacity project, visit:
www.disasterpreparedness.ngo