Selecting scenarios

A good way to make a start with scenario development is by brainstorming for possible emergency scenarios that could require humanitarian assistance. The brainstorming process should allow for contributions from all participants. The brainstorming facilitator should ask questions like ‘Where?’, ‘What exactly?’, How bad would it be?’, ‘When and how likely?’ to help contributors add specificity and clarity to their scenario ideas.

After developing a list of possible emergency scenarios, the group will need to select the scenarios that merit being developed. This selection should be based on the likelihood that the scenario actually will happen and its potential impact.

**Likelihood:** emergency situations that are becoming more likely or which planners believe to be likely should be planned for.

**Likelihood classification**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Rare** | **Unlikely** | **Possible** | **Likely** | **Imminent** |
| *Very unusual event not expected to occur more frequently than once in 500 years (e.g. meteorite strike or massive tsunami in some areas)* | *Unusual event not expected to occur more frequently than once in 100 years (e.g. massive earthquake in some areas)* | *Occasional event expected to occur once every 20 years (e.g. super cyclone)* | *Regular event expected to occur at least once every 10 years (e.g. named cyclone, flooding)* | *Scientifically predicted or expected to occur within 1- 5 years, (e.g. dam failure) months (e.g. some landslides, volcanic eruption) or even days (e.g. named cyclone tracking warning)* |

**Impact:** emergency situations that could have significant humanitarian consequences and are deemed to be of sufficient likelihood should be planned for.

**Impact classification**

| **Minor** | **Moderate** | **Severe** | **Critical** | **Catastrophy** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *No deathsInfrastructure not affected seriouslyCommerce and normal activities only slightly disrupted* | *Few deathsInfrastructure slightly damaged resulting in loss of basic services for less than a weekNormal activities disrupted for less than a week.* | *Several deathsDamaged infrastructure requiring significant assistance for repairLoss of some services for up to a month* | *Deaths in the hundredsSeverely damaged infrastructure and housingMajor disruption of basic services for up to 6 monthsBusinesses, government and community activities seriously disrupted causing massive displacement of population* | *Deaths in the thousandsWidespread destruction of housing, infrastructure, government and private business systems and servicesLoss or disruption of basic services may be lasting more than one year, leading to massive displacement or even abandonment of ffected areas* |

The scenario analysis matrix below can help you select the scenarios to be developed, based on their likelihood and impact. The matrix consists of a simple grid to plot different possible emergency scenarios by ranking its likelihood on one axis and its impact on the other. The scenarios that are of higher likelihood and result in higher impact are, by definition, of higher risk, and should, therefore, be planned for. After plotting all the possible scenarios, you should rank them and select those of higher risk.

The use of the matrix is subjective, so it is best undertaken in groups, in order to bring together different points of view and achieve consensus.

**SCENARIO ANALYSIS MATRIX**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **PROBABLE IMPACT (RESULTING FROM THE SCENARIO)** | **CATASTROPHE** |  |  |  |  | EXTREME RISK |
| **CRITICAL** |  |  |  | **HIGHRISK** |  |
| **SEVERE** |  |  | **SOMERISK** |  |  |
| **MODERATE** |  | **LOWRISK** |  |  |  |
| **MINOR** | **VERYLOW RISK** |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | **RARE** | **UNLIKELY** | **POSSIBLE** | **LIKELY** | **IMMINENT** |
|  |  | **LIKELIHOOD (THAT THE SCENARIO WILL OCCUR)** |