



**BETTER
PREPAREDNESS**

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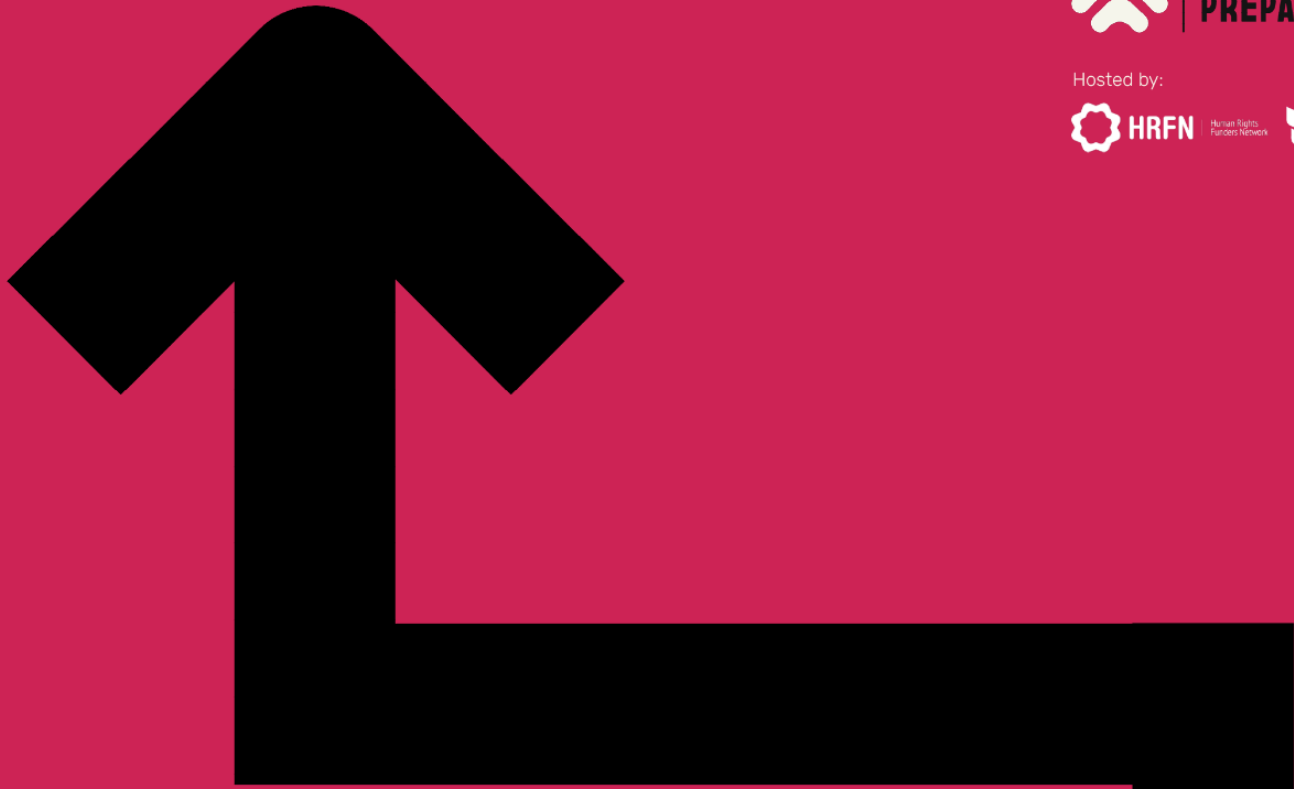
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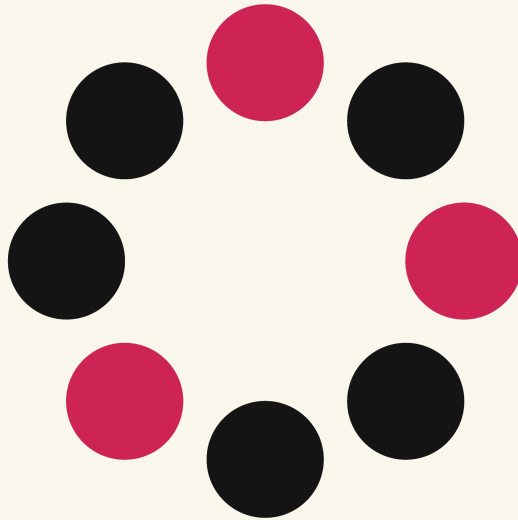
PEACE & SECURITY FUNDING GROUP



THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN BETTER PREPAREDNESS

2024

The Role of Civil Society in Better Preparedness



From 2023 to 2024, a coalition of philanthropic foundations, peace and security organizations, and human rights funders collaborated with civil society to co-design a strategy for improved funder coordination. This collaboration led to the launch of the Better Preparedness: Funding Resilience Initiative and the Crisis Coordination Playbook. The following outlines the principles, roles, and responsibilities for engaging effectively with civil society while utilizing this Playbook and consolidates key aspects of the Playbook.

Principles for Civil Society Engagement, Included in the Better Preparedness Community Principles

- **Do No Harm:** A fundamental principle in crisis response is ensuring that interventions do not exacerbate existing tensions or create new problems. Engagement with civil society must prioritize non-extractive practices, recognizing power dynamics and actively working to shift power towards movements and rights holders.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** It is essential to involve a diverse range of civil society groups, including those led by grassroots and feminist organizations. This ensures that the perspectives of vulnerable communities are included and that intersectionality is considered in all decision-making processes.
- **Compensation and Avoiding Overburdening:** Civil society organizations (CSOs) should be compensated for their time and expertise in crisis coordination efforts. Additionally, alternative engagement strategies should be explored to avoid overburdening civil society colleagues with excessive demands.

- **Non-Extractive, Early, and Frequent Engagement:** The Playbook's engagement strategy emphasizes early and frequent involvement of civil society, particularly during times of crisis. Engagement should be non-extractive, ensuring that civil society's input is valued and that they are not merely used as sources of information without receiving support or benefits in return.
- **Collective Learning and Adaptability:** The success of the Better Preparedness Community depends on the collective learning of all stakeholders, including CSOs. By cultivating a culture of honesty and openness, the community can adapt to changing circumstances and improve over time.

Roles of Civil Society in Better Preparedness

- **Articulating Needs and Contexts:** CSOs are best positioned to articulate the needs and contexts of the communities they serve. Their involvement ensures that funding decisions are informed by lived experiences and that responses are tailored to the specific needs of those affected by crises.
- **Providing Strategic Guidance:** CSOs can offer strategic guidance on crisis coordination, helping to refine and test blueprints for action. Their input is invaluable in ensuring that coordination strategies are effective and responsive to the realities on the ground.
- **Advocacy and Accountability:** CSOs play a crucial role in holding funders accountable for their actions. Involving them in decision-making processes ensures that funding is directed where it is most needed and that there are mechanisms for complaint and redress if necessary.

Criteria for Selecting Civil Society Organizations to Engage

- **Relevance and Impact:** CSOs should be selected based on their relevance to the crisis at hand and their potential impact. Organizations that have played a prominent role in responding to similar crises, or that have deep ties to affected communities, should be prioritized.
- **Capacity and Expertise:** The capacity of CSOs to contribute meaningfully to crisis coordination should be considered. This includes their understanding of resourcing and philanthropy, whether as grant recipients, re-grantors, or advocates.
- **Commitment to Intersectionality and Inclusion:** Organizations that demonstrate a commitment to intersectional approaches and inclusivity should be prioritized. This ensures that all voices are heard and that responses are comprehensive and equitable.

Structured Engagement for Crisis Assessment

- **Formation of Civil Society Groups:** At the outset of a crisis, it is critical to establish a focused group of civil society representatives. Typically, this group should consist of 4-6 national representatives who are well-positioned to assess the crisis's impact on civil society and articulate the needs of affected communities.

- **Use of Tools for Crisis Mapping:** During the initial assessment, participants will employ the Crisis Analysis tool. This tool, along with other resources available in the Suite of Tools, will help map out the crisis's impacts and identify the specific needs of civil society. This structured approach ensures that the assessment is comprehensive and informed by the best available methodologies.
- **Secure and Inclusive Communication:** The group's discussions should be conducted in a secure environment, typically through a 120-minute group call hosted by a designated convener or facilitator. Security is paramount to protect sensitive information and ensure that all participants can speak freely without fear of reprisal.
- **Selection of Representatives:** The convener, in collaboration with foundation colleagues, will carefully select civil society representatives. The selection process should prioritize the inclusion of vulnerable groups and ensure that diverse civil society networks are represented. This is crucial to capture a wide range of perspectives and ensure that the most vulnerable voices are heard.

Integration with Broader Coordination Efforts

- **Feedback Loops and Continuous Engagement:** The insights gained from the initial assessment should be integrated into the broader crisis coordination efforts. Establishing feedback loops between civil society groups and foundation colleagues ensures that the needs identified are continuously addressed as the crisis evolves.
- **Formalization of Advisory Groups:** Depending on the crisis's duration and complexity, the convener may formalize the national civil society group into a long-term Civil Society Advisory Group. This group would then play an ongoing role in guiding crisis coordination, ensuring that civil society perspectives are consistently represented in decision-making processes.
- **Balanced Engagement for Specific Crises:** To effectively address specific country crises, the Blueprint envisages a balanced approach to engagement. This includes a mix of shared spaces where civil society and foundation representatives collaborate, as well as dedicated foundation-only spaces to discuss strategic decisions. This balance ensures that civil society's input is integrated into planning and that sensitive issues can be addressed appropriately.
- **Transition from Consultative to Collective Coordination:** If the engagement model transitions from short-term Consultative Coordination—which involves bilateral discussions and small group interactions between foundations and civil society partners—to long-term Collective Coordination, Civil Society Advisory Groups will play a crucial role, ensuring continuous input and oversight from civil society as the crisis response evolves.