**Training package: Using social science for emergency preparedness and response**

**Background and objectives**

Social and behavioural factors are critical determinants for preparedness and response actions in humanitarian and public health emergencies. Communities and individuals often interpret, accept and adhere to recommendations based in part on their understanding and perception of the threat, their level of trust in public institutions, existing socio-cultural norms and traditions, their historical past and their physical, financial and social capacity to act. Both qualitative and quantitative social science research can help communication practitioners to strengthen community awareness, preparedness and response by understanding the context, and tailoring strategies and approaches to people’s needs, capacities, and (existing) resilience mechanisms. However, several limitations hinder the effective application of socio-behavioural evidence in community engagement and communication strategies (e.g. there are gaps in terms of knowledge and capacity of practitioners to produce and use operational social science). In relation to this need, the Competency Framework for Social Science for Community Engagement was collaboratively developed by health emergency and humanitarian response actors in early 2021 to systematically assess the gaps and enhance knowledge, skills and attitudes that practitioners require in order to operationalise social science in humanitarian and public health emergency settings.

The training package has the following objectives:

1. To equip those persons working in community engagement and/or communications related fields with the knowledge to commission and/or design and implement operational social science research which can generate robust, rigorous and context relevant socio-behavioural evidence.
2. To provide persons with the capacity to access, assess and make sense of, evaluate, and synthesise existing socio-behavioural evidence relevant to their work.
3. To strengthen the abilities of persons to use socio-behavioural evidence to inform and adapt activities and other broader decision-making during humanitarian crises (e.g. for other response pillars).

**Training modules**

The training package consists of ***7 modules and 27 sessions which cover the full spectrum of operationalising social sciences during an emergency or as part of preparedness activities*** – from understanding the need for this approach, to systematic (mixed-methods) data collection activities and knowledge translation, to tracking the uptake of socio-behavioural evidence. This training package aims to reduce gaps by providing practical guidance and training materials to be adapted and used at the local level. Each session of this training package currently consists of a Facilitator Guide and associated Facilitator PowerPoint geared towards assisting skilled facilitator(s) to deliver training content in a group setting (on or offline). Most sessions contain additional Handouts, ‘dummy data’ for practicing data collection and analysis skills, and other materials relevant to the session. Due to the breadth of training content, it is envisioned that taking forward the totality of the training package would be a ***preparedness strategy*** to ensure a trained cadre of practitioners equipped with needed research skills are available to be activated/deployed as needed. However, selected modules and sessions of the training package may be adapted into short, concise and targeted (bespoke) sessions in relation to an emergency event (i.e. ***surge capacity***). Please see the below Table 1 (below) for a brief overview of the competency framework, 7 modules (based on 7 key competency domains) and their associated sessions.

All training content is available to download via the [Collective Service website](https://www.rcce-collective.net/training/social-science-training/). Content is currently available in English, but anticipated to soon be available in French, Arabic, Spanish & Portuguese. Please reach out the Social Scientist Team Lead & Research Specialist for the Collective Service, Ginger Johnson ([gijohnson@unicef.org](mailto:gijohnson@unicef.org)) for more information.

**Table 1: 7 modules on using social science for emergency preparedness and response**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Module** | **Session** |
| **1. Social science in humanitarian action and health emergencies** | 1.1: Introduction to social science: Definition, approaches and role in humanitarian action |
| 1.2: Operational social science research in the humanitarian/emergency response cycle |
| 1.3: Advocating for the inclusion of social science in emergency response activities that engage communities |
| **2. Context analysis and behavioural drivers and barriers** | 2.1: ­Understanding context, vulnerability and inequality in public health and humanitarian emergencies |
| 2.2: Understanding behaviour in humanitarian/emergency response: Models and theories |
| 2.3: Rapid strategies to understand the political, sociocultural, and economic factors that increase vulnerability |
| 2.4: Understanding the importance of language in social science research |
| **3. Ethics in operational research** | 3.1: Ethical principles and approvals for social science research in a humanitarian/emergency context |
| 3.2: Promoting the meaningful translation and application of ethical principles |
| **4. Implementation of social science research approaches** | 4.1: Localised research: Designing operational social science research that is responsive to communities |
| 4.2: Quantitative and qualitative approaches to generate data in operational social science research |
| 4.3: Quantitative data collection methods: Rapid needs assessment (RNA) surveys, and knowledge, attitude and practice/perception (KAP) surveys |
| 4.4: Qualitative data collection methods: In-depths interviews, observations, and focus group discussions |
| 4.5: Quantitative data analysis in operational social science research |
| 4.6: Qualitative data analysis in operational social science research |
| 4.7: Mixing different methods to produce quality evidence to inform action |
| 4.8: Triangulation of data: Why is it important and how does it work? |
| 4.9: Community feedback mechanism: Design and data collection |
| 4.10: Community feedback mechanism: Consolidation and analysis |
| **5. Evidence synthesis, interpretation and dissemination** | 5.1: Evidence synthesis for social and behavioural data |
| 5.2: How to transform social science data and evidence into actionable findings |
| 5.3: How to communicate and present research to different audiences |
| 5.4: Feeding back to communities and using findings to support community-level solutions and actions |
| **6. Translating knowledge to action** | 6.1: Translating social science research into action |
| 6.2: Enabling environments for the uptake of social science evidence in emergency response |
| **7. Tracking the uptake of socio-behavioural evidence** | 7.1: Tracking the use or ‘application’ of integrated operational social science outputs: Integrated outbreak analytics and monitoring |
| 7.2: Using community feedback to take action and ‘close the loop’ |