

PRAIRIE WOMEN PREPARING FOR DISASTER

FACILITATOR NOTES

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

The Guide builds on an existing Canadian guide geared specifically to agencies working on gender violence issues. You'll find *It Can Happen to Your Agency!* Referenced often here--look for it on the website of Ending Violence Association of British Columbia: <http://www.endingviolence.org/node/382>. Tracy Porteous, who directs the coalition of women's services, grew concerned after reading about a major California earthquake and wondering how her own building and agency would survive. What could be done now to ensure to help plan for sustained assistance to their members if they were hit by a quake or similar event? Her story is fascinating (we include it in Appendix B) and led to a collaborative initiative involving members of the coalition, researchers, provincial emergency managers and provincial ministries. A new emergency planning guide was the result.

This Guide was also inspired by the author's research on emergency preparedness in Canadian and US domestic violence programs. It won't surprise you to learn that, while disaster-affected agencies were asked to do more, they had fewer resources than ever after major floods, hurricanes, quakes, and ice storms.

Knowing the critical role played by women's services across the country, the Prairie Women's Health Centre for Excellence strongly supported the need for additional tools and support in order to "jump start" emergency planning in agencies like yours, as did .regional authorities in public health. . . and the rest is history.

One thing trumps all others in emergency preparedness: It's the process of working together to plan for the unexpected that is critical, not the resulting plan of action. The crisis response plan is a roadmap to action that can be invaluable in a chaotic and fluid situation; but an inclusive and integrated emergency planning process ensures that key players understand what's happening and what their responsibilities are.

It takes sustained commitment to see emergency planning through from A to Z. But it's just as true that not everything is equally important, nor must everything be done at once. Sometimes getting started is the hardest part--and that's where this Guide for grassroots women's organizations comes in.

The Guide has three sections with three different intended outcomes:

- ▶ First, it helps raise awareness about gender as a dimension of disaster risk and thus about how your agency and the women and families you know best might be affected and respond in an emergency, disaster or catastrophe;
- ▶ Secondly, it provides information and tools (forms, templates, work sheets) that will help you determine your priorities in a crisis and prepare to meet these;
- ▶ Third, additional background materials that support these two goals.

TAILORING THE GUIDE

The main outlines of this Guide were developed in Manitoba with regional support from government and women's health experts--but no, it's not just for women of the prairies. All disasters are local....and all training Guides should reflect the local context to the degree possible. You'll want to tailor this to your region, your agency, and the specific hazards and risks that might endanger the safety and well-being of your community.

The CD version of this Guide includes a folder with Manitoba materials--use this as a sample for the kinds of information you can and should find locally, including

- ▶ **Look for local hazard and disaster information.** You'll find this on-line through the provincial emergency management agency if not already in hand. The strong "all hazard" approach to contemporary emergency management does not preclude careful attention to specific hazard contexts--place DOES matter.
- ▶ **Look for local sources of assistance** to supplement those in the Guide. National preparedness guides are very useful, but so are those produced locally, for example by your local Red Cross chapter or the municipal emergency planning committee or office. Local information is always essential.
- ▶ **Look for historical information** about how different groups of people prepared for, were impacted by, responded to and recovered from past disasters in your area--and what past disasters have occurred? You may find few gender data in post-disaster assessment reports but, through your own networks, a lot of women who remember.
- ▶ **Look for other community groups** that could or should be planning for emergencies and disasters. It's an excellent idea to liaise with other women's groups in your community as you work through the Guide.

- ▶ **Look for local emergency planning resources** from your municipal and provincial emergency management agencies. Local universities or colleges may also have different resources, along with regional health authorities and other planning bodies.

USING THE GUIDE

This resource can be used in many different ways:

- ▶ Self-study--assess your own disaster readiness and that of your family and agency
- ▶ Integrate these materials into on-going organizational planning cycles
- ▶ Seek external funding to support a more comprehensive program of emergency planning
- ▶ Ask key staff, volunteers and/or board members to review the Guide and recommend the best uses for your purposes
- ▶ Conduct in-service trainings built around the tasks described here, including volunteers, service users, the other organizations you partner with and others
- ▶ Coordinate a community-wide emergency planning network engaging all population groups whose everyday lives put them at increased risk in the event of an emergency or disaster
- ▶ Share the Guide with other women's networks in your community or region

If you are working in-house: Consider starting small but sticking with it. Work through the Guide piecemeal, for example over Wednesday lunch breaks. You might want to begin with casual conversation about these issues over lunch, or schedule an early-morning session or two. Put the topic on your board's agenda and on the agenda of the community networks you're involved with.

If you are working with other women's agencies: Consider a joint planning day--again, starting small. Seek out some of your agency partners, groups or organizations with mutual interdependencies to maximize the benefit of preparedness. If possible, plan a full half-day to introduce people to the concepts of the Guide and work through a sample of the planning templates. Making new connections between people and between issues is the primary goal of this planning day.

A reasonable size for this workshop is five to ten if you would like to work through a sample of the planning templates. If your workshop is informational in nature, think about a larger group of ten to fifteen.

PLANNING NOTES FOR AN EMERGENCY PLANNING WORKSHOP

Read the Guide

What parts are most relevant to your work or your region? What do you want to emphasize in a half-day workshop and what can be postponed or completed as follow-up activities? This is the time to answer the questions that come up for you. If you are unsure, or anticipate “frequently asked questions” that you may not be able to answer, do your homework now by consulting local emergency management officials.

Circulate background materials

Successful workshops take preparation. In Appendix B of the Guide, you will find “On Line Resources on Women and Disaster.” These are well-worth your time to review, as some may be very useful background material, among them recommendations from past women and disaster conferences conducted in Canada. You’ll also find first-hand accounts from women and men who have been caught up in Canadian disasters (and for international accounts, search for “Stories Women Tell” on the website of the Gender and Disaster Network: www.gdnonline.org).

It can be very useful to send attachments to prospective participants, or simply to those who have registered for the workshop. The *On Line Resources* are designed for that purpose but you will want to choose carefully, bearing in mind the characteristics of the group.

Ask local experts

Ask some of the women who use your services to talk about what it would mean to them if you closed for a week--or six weeks. If you know women who experience a heat wave, ice storm, wildfire, explosion, or train derailment and toxic spill, see if they would come kick off the workshop with some personal history.

The city or provincial emergency management office may also be able to come in to make a short presentation about the emergency management system as a whole in your area. Arranging this is an excellent way to begin to build important personal bridges between your agency and theirs. They’re short-staffed so do plan ahead.

Use pictures to tell the story--disaster films

Bring a favorite disaster movie (“Volcano” is a good one on gender) and begin the workshop by considering some gender stereotypes about women and men in crisis, or search uTube for current narratives by, for and about women’s disaster experiences in Canada and in other countries.

Another approach is to focus on actual events through documentaries. Use these to frame discussion of how the media depict gender relations. If women are absent, for example, or disproportionately affected, why is this? Are men shown only in stereotypically courageous, stoic, or dominant roles? First, consult your provincial EMO or related groups for local videos on past events that may be available. You can also check the websites of provincial and national environmental management, climate change, or sustainable development organizations for suitable videos and use clips from these to frame the discussion.

- ▶ Also search CBC archives (short podcasts):
http://archives.cbc.ca/environment/extreme_weather/topics/349/
- ▶ Also search CFB archives (search “disaster” and particular hazards and events)
<http://www.nfb.ca/>

If time and budget permit, a number of women and disaster videos are also available. Visit the Gender and Disaster Sourcebook website and search “Communications” <http://www.gdnonline.org/sourcebook/index.htm>. You’ll find information on several good videos useful for this workshop. Most are short and inexpensive but may take time to arrive so plan ahead if you plan on ordering one. More recent materials can be found, too. For example, the hour-long video *Still Waiting: Life After Katrina* profiles an extended African American family displaced after the catastrophe and how they coped, highlighting the role of women’s networks and cultural foods and meals in disaster recovery. You can order it here: <http://www.stillwaiting.colostate.edu/>

Preparation

Ask participants to bring along their Policy and Practice Guides, if feasible. If working in-house, ask participants to bring along their own work plans for this year and next. As facilitator, you should bring or be able to access all critical information (preview the templates you’ll be using) as well as other planning documents, funding proposals, interim budget reports or other documents that will help you answer these questions: What is needed? How can we do this? Who will do this and when?

Prepare copies of any background materials you find particularly useful--especially those you located while tailoring the Guide to your context. Examples include:

- ▶ Hazard map (where in your region are tornadoes most likely, for example, or wildfires?)

- ▶ Basic emergency contact information (who should be called in what kind of emergency? Consolidate numbers for law enforcement, poison, fire, etc. in one place)
- ▶ External emergency management resource information (updating the contact sheet provided in Appendix A by contacting local emergency management offices about their services and contact information)
- ▶ Your disaster resilience planning policy (if already written) or some other statement expressing your commitment to emergency planning.
- ▶ Sample MOUs which representatives of the agencies attending might want to focus on.
- ▶ Copies of the Guide's evaluation form, or your own

In addition to extra copies of the planning templates that you intend to concentrate on, you might order the preparedness CD available through Public Safety Canada. It contains the following:

- ▶ Your emergency preparedness guide (PDF)
- ▶ Brochure: Earthquakes – What to do? (PDF)
- ▶ Brochure: Floods – What to do? (PDF)
- ▶ Brochure: Power Outages – What to do? (PDF)
- ▶ Get Prepared poster (PDF)
- ▶ Natural Hazards Affect Us poster (PDF)
- ▶ *Emergency Preparedness 101 Presentation (PowerPoint) with presenters notes*

Preview a copy and order copies for all participants if you think it helpful. They are free and available in French and English and can be ordered on-line: info@getprepared.ca

Facilitate inclusive discussion

You are experienced workshop facilitators and presenters, and will bring your interpersonal skills as well to the workshop. Do encourage people to talk across barriers--in an emergency, everyone's ideas and energies are needed, and needed now too.

Strive to include representatives from every part of your organization, for example house managers if you have residential facilities, student interns if they are often present, mothers or other family members who regularly visit or participate, or who

should know more about how you will protect their children in the event of a crisis. Build a collaborative and inclusive approach to making the decisions that are necessary for good emergency planning. Everyone will be affected and involved in responding, so engage everyone actively now.

Take time to anticipate and discuss a wide range of possible events--from an armed intruder or house fire to a destructive tornado or earthquake, attacks or explosions, and health crises

Plan ahead to respond to the inevitable barriers to planning--information overload, overtaxed resources, competing priorities, and resistance to unfunded mandates, among others. What keeps you at it? Share your feelings as well as your resources with others to the extent feasible.

As in any workshop, you'll want to establish some ground rules for discussion. For instance, will privacy concerns arise for some staff members or volunteers? How about sharing information with sister agencies--is anything off limits?

Managing the discussion is important in a short workshop. Consider distributing each person 3-5 "talking chits" each hour (or for each part of the agenda) and ask people to defer to others in the group once they have used these to speak. Use your external resource experts carefully, with respect for their time but also for yours.

Strong differences of opinion may develop. Encourage these! A lively discussion is always better than silence, but do manage the dialogue and intervene if differences are overly personal. Late arrivals and early departures are to be expected but you can emphasize the need for people to make and keep their commitment to the workshop. At a minimum, ensure that people's movements in and out are not disruptive.

Do your part by starting and ending on time. The time to adjust the agenda is at the beginning, not halfway through due to lack of time.

Sample agenda

There are many ways to use four short hours, and you know your group best. You might consider the following:

- ▶ 12: 00 - 12:30 Brown bag lunch and open discussion of a disaster video
- ▶ 12: 30 - 1: 00 Presentation by a local emergency manager or responder
- ▶ 1: 00 - 1: 30 Why plan for the unexpected? Brainstorm emergency preparedness

challenges for women's organizations

- ▶ 1: 30 - 2: 00 What women do in disasters. Read "Voices of women and men in Canadian disasters." Watch and discuss the short video: *From Chaos to Creativity* (or invite a local woman to speak on her own experience)
- ▶ 2: 00 - 2: 30 Break with small group discussion of an assigned section of the Guide
- ▶ 2: 30 - 3: 15 Hands on: getting started on emergency planning tasks
- ▶ 3: 15 - 3:45 Reports back to the whole and discussion: What tasks are most challenging and why? What is needed?
- ▶ 3:45 - 4:-00 Wrap up: What next? Task assignments and contact information.

Basic supplies and equipment

- ▶ A room large enough to accommodate the group, with moveable tables and chairs and room to spread out for small group work
- ▶ Ideally, a room that provides Internet
- ▶ Computer and projector
- ▶ DVD player if you plan on using any of the suggested audiovisuals
- ▶ Free-standing flip charts, papers, highlighting pens, chalk, push pins, and other supplies.
- ▶ One copy of the Guide for each registered participant
- ▶ Extra paper
- ▶ Sign in sheet for follow up

Don't forget to arrange for technical assistance if you think you may need it--the IT wizard in your office can help solve any problems with the Power Point slides or video, for example, and keep technical glitches from slowing things down.

Food and drink! You will want to keep participants healthy, happy and well-fed. Plan for breaks mid-way, but make it a priority to start and end on time. Keep it simple--don't break the budget.

This can be a low-cost or no-cost workshop. It may also be supported by a local social service consortium, interfaith council, women's network, health centre, or funding agency, private or public. Why not? More disaster resilient women's services help everyone.

Follow up

Sometimes the best part of a workshop comes after it is over. As the facilitator, you should ask participants to Sign In (if a large group) so that others can share the contact list if desired and acceptable to all. Encourage and facilitate informal networking, too, if you can. Circulate a contact information sheet to be forwarded to all participants and ask people to keep their information updated.

Equally important is structural follow up. Don't end the day without designating responsibilities and developing a clear timeframe for what comes next. What "next steps" in the emergency planning process make the most sense for your group and your community? You will know by the end of the workshop.

Keep notes on the workshop preparation you did, as well as your expenditures and all workshop materials so you can include these in the Workshop Report you should write to sponsors. It may be possible to circulate this electronically, post on a listserv, copy for a conference handout or in other ways share with a larger group.

Ideally, one workshop leads to others. As an experienced facilitator, you are now positioned to lead in this area and help promote gender mainstreaming in whatever organizational or geographic region is yours. Do let others know what you have learned, as they may want to do the same.

We build change together this way.