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Tabletop Role playing exercise - Disaster Risk Reduction 2024



SECURE
KIDS

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Introduction to the game

Audience: Children and youth from 10 to 18. About 15 participants.

Objective: To increase awareness of how to respond to and recover from a disaster or other type of crisis to better involve children and youth in crisis preparation.

Outcome: The outcomes of the exercise should involve children and youth in crisis preparation.

1. Duration: 1 to 3 Hours

2. Exercise Type: Table-top simulation, group discussion, and action planning

3. Phases: Phase 1: Preparation; Phase 2: Response; Phase 3: After the crisis

4. Coordination-Meetings: After each phase, there is a coordination meeting, where groups present their discussions and needs.

5. Optional Materials: Printed scenario cards, flood map of a fictional city, role cards (rescue service, family, youth volunteers, etc.), picture cards with whiteboard, markers

6. Groups:

1) A family in the city

2) The city council (consisting of the mayor, police, ambulances and firefighters), leads the coordination-meetings

3) Volunteer organisation (Red Cross, NGO, Boy- Girl Scouts or similar)

How is the game played?

The game runs over three 20-minute phases, and the participants are divided into one or more (up to four) groups. After each phase, all groups gather for a coordination meeting. For younger children, it is recommended to use only Phase 1 (preparation) and only one group (the family).

A slightly more advanced variation is to conduct Phase 1 (Preparation), the subsequent coordination meeting and then go directly to the evaluation.

In this pattern, the exercise gets more advanced the more groups and the more phases are used. In every group there should be a facilitator,

prompting questions and, if necessary, leading the discussion. Older children and youth can do group work without an adult facilitator and freely interact with other groups.

Note to the facilitator(s)

This exercise is a loose structure. You can adapt the situation, the groups and the times to fit your particular situation.

As described in “Exercise parameters” the exercise can be made more or less challenging by adjusting two variables: The number of groups and the number of phases. For example, if you work with a very young group of children, it is best to only discuss the first phase (“preparations”) and also to only use one group, that the children can identify with (“a family”).

If you conduct the exercise with youth or young adults, maybe a group which is already familiar with crisis and disaster preparedness, you can extend the number of phases (“preparations”, “coordination”, “response” and “recovery”) and the number of groups (“a family”, “the city council”, “a volunteer organization”).

The more advanced the game becomes, the more abstract it is. Keep in mind, that young children of perhaps 8-9 years of age need visual aids to understand the situation. Draw cards or print pictures and maps to visualize the scenarios. Use building bricks or other toys to possibly visualize a community threatened by a crisis.

For facilitators: Ensure that the game is realistic

The game coordinator must ensure that the game remains realistic. This is especially important for the City Council, ensuring that they operate within realistic constraints. For example, relocating the entire city and all its citizens using helicopters or spaceships to Mars would not be considered realistic.

A city council for a city of 100,000 people would typically have access to resources in a crisis, but they are like the usual resources available under normal circumstances. If medicine in pharmacies or food in supermarkets starts running low, the City Council cannot magically make it appear. If you feel the city council starts to make unrealistic decisions, you as a coordinator must take on an active role and steer them in a more realistic direction.

Before you start: Recommendations and descriptions

Note to facilitators

Below you will find a scenario and instructions for the groups. Be as visual as possible when introducing the exercise and describing the scenario. We recommend that you:

- Draw a map of the city
- Make a map by using toy-building blocks or other visual aid
- Print out pictures or sketches from the internet, using them to illustrate dangers, important buildings or the city as a whole

You may also add details to the instructions below, to make it more suitable for your local community or target group.

Remember: Use a simpler scenario and fewer groups for young children.

Who is playing the game? A short description of the participants

For all

You live in a town with 100.000 inhabitants, by the ocean. There are 5 schools in the city. There is an indoor stadium for sports clubs like football, basketball and tennis.

Most live in apartments but many live in houses with gardens.

There is a big park in the city centre with a playground and a skateboard ramp.

It is late summer, and school has just started after the summer holidays.

A family in the city

You are a family of 5 people: Two adults and three children 7, 10 and 12 years old. The oldest child has diabetes and needs regular shots of medicine (Insulin). You have enough medicine now to last for three days. You live in a house close to the beach, where a river flows into the ocean.

Your goal in the exercise is to stay safe and make preparations for the upcoming emergency.

City council

Your group is responsible for the city and the public safety. You are responsible for the schools, ambulances, firefighters and all help delivered to the people.

Your main task is to keep the people in your town safe. You are also responsible for communicating the risks to the people and advising on how to best prepare for the upcoming emergency.

In preparation for the emergency, all supermarkets and pharmacies are open. But supermarkets will probably want to close once the situation gets serious and dangerous. That means people may not have enough food or – if they need it – medicine.

Volunteer-Organisation

You are a local volunteer organisation. Pick one from the list below or make up your own:

- Boy-/Girlscouts
- Red Cross Youth Organisation
- Youth Social Club

The children and youth in your organisation know each other well. You have all been part of the organisation for a long time. All in all 80 children and youth are members of your organisation.

You normally meet once or twice a week in a house that belongs to your organisation. There is a kitchen and several large group-rooms for activities there.

Your job in the exercise is to stay safe yourselves and also to support the city council and the families in any way you can.

The game begins

Phase 1. Individual preparations

Scenario:¹

- A weather warning is issued. Dangerously strong winds are expected in 2-3 days. It is not clear, how long the storm will last.
- The storm may cause flooding as the city is next to the sea and water is being pushed up over the beaches. The storm may also cause electricity and telephone centres to break down and cause electricity cuts and difficulty with internet access.

Objective

Discuss how your group can prepare for the coming crisis.

Family

- What preparations do you take in your home?
- What items you would pack in an emergency back-pack?²
- Discuss where the family will go if they need to leave their home

The city council

- What preparations can you take to protect the people who live in the city?
- What does it mean if the city is without electricity for several days?
- Where can you set up an evacuation centre, where people can live temporarily if their homes are threatened or damaged?

The volunteer organisation

- How can you protect yourselves from the crisis?
- How can you assist the city council?
- What help can you offer to help others prepare for the crisis?

Note to facilitators:

Time for discussion: 20 Minutes

When working with young children: Keep the group together and leave an adult facilitator in the room. Begin by discussing what a disaster or crisis is. Then let children answer the first two questions (preparations and emergency back-pack items). Use pictures of the items printed on cards.

¹ The exercise has been written so that it is – essentially - only necessary to change the “scenario”-block when adapting to a different type of natural disaster (drought, flood, storm, heatwave...).

² Items for an emergency backpack (water, radio, flashlight etc.) should be printed out on cards. Participants then choose several of them. See the Annex for a list of items.

First coordination meeting

Scenario:

The city council calls a coordination meeting for all groups to prepare. Each group attends the meeting, either the whole group or by sending one or two representatives.

Objective:

- The city coordinates its efforts and gets an understanding of the needs.
- Each group presents what they discussed before the coordination meeting
- Make a list of the three most important steps to take now.

Prompts for the next phase:

- City Council: During the coordination meeting, ask the volunteer organisation to prepare an emergency shelter for 100 people in the indoor stadium. They should prepare a list of things they need and present it to the city council.
- Family: Explain to the group that one of your children has diabetes and needs regular medicine. Ask if it is guaranteed that medicine is available.

Note to facilitators:

Time for discussion: 20 Minutes

Facilitators: Take notes during the discussion.

After the discussion, all groups go back to their spaces.

Phase 2. The response

Scenario:

- The storm causes water to rise along the coast. Some houses are flooded.
- Electricity is lost in some parts of the city
- The house of the affected family must unexpectedly be evacuated

Objective:

React to the disaster situation and try to keep everyone safe. Discuss the following questions:

Family:

- Are you prepared to leave your home?
- Should you stay and wait for help, or should you leave your home?
- Can you imagine why some people would not want to leave their homes?

City council.

- Go to the other two groups and find out what assistance they need
- Develop a plan to help the people living in the city
- People have bought a lot of food and supermarkets do not have much left. What could that lead to? Do you need to do anything?

The volunteer organisation

- Develop a plan for how to set up an emergency shelter for 100 people in the indoor stadium. What do you need in terms of food, beds, clothing? Try to think of everything.

Prompts:

- Family: You notice that supermarkets have less food than normal. People are fighting to get the last packages of pasta, and you feel scared being in the supermarket. Go to the city council group and explain what you have observed.

Note to facilitators:

Time for discussion and information gathering: 20 Minutes

20 minutes break

Second coordination meeting

Scenario:

The city council calls for a coordination meeting for all groups.

- Each group attends the meeting, either the whole group or by sending one or two representatives.

Objective:

The city coordinates its efforts and gets an understanding of the needs.

- Each group presents what they discussed before the coordination meeting
- Make a list of the three most important steps to take now.

Note to facilitators:

Time for discussion: 20 Minutes

Facilitators: Take notes during the discussion.

After the discussion, all groups go back to their spaces.

Phase 3. Reflection after the crisis

Scenario

- The storm is over, but many houses are destroyed and people still live in emergency shelters
- Many roads are damaged and can't be used
- There is a lack of food in the supermarkets since trucks cannot deliver food. There will be a boat delivery in a few days.

Objective

Family

- What assistance do you need after the crisis?
- How can a family, especially children and youth, prepare for crises and emergencies?

City Council

- What concrete steps can you take to help the community to recover?
- How long can people live in emergency shelters?
- What can a city council/people with decision-making powers do to prepare for crises and emergencies?

Volunteer Organisation

- How can an organization like yours prepare for future crises?
- What role could volunteer organisations have in times of crisis and emergency to help the community?

Note to facilitators:

Time for discussion: 20 Minutes

Final Coordination Meeting: Conclusions and lessons learned

Scenario

No addition. The exercise is now over.

Objective

Discuss with the whole group:

- Present your discussions from the previous phase to the group
- What were the most challenging decisions you had to make?
- What steps should you take to be prepared for an emergency?

END OF EXERCISE

Appendix 1 - Media

When working with older children, aged 15 and older, you may add a fourth group to the game:

Media, reporting freely on what happens in the three groups and posting this on a blackboard or in a WhatsApp group. This group has access to the other groups and can freely gather information from them and report to all.

Using this group will illustrate the importance of communication in times of crisis. If used right, it will be a great help and support but there is also a risk of false information or misunderstandings if the news is incorrect.

Appendix 2 - Checklist

Checklist for a Disaster Preparedness Backpack as published in the CBSS “Strategic Guidance for Inclusive Crisis Communication with Children”

Water and Food

- Bottled water (You drink more than you think - up to 3 liters per day)
- Food that lasts (canned food, dried fruit, energy bars)
- Food for pets Can opener

Clothing and Sleeping

- Warm clothes (knit-cap, gloves, socks, long underwear)
- Good shoes
- Rain gear
- Blanket or sleeping bag

Health and Hygiene

- First aid kit
- Personal hygiene items (toothbrush, toothpaste, soap and other hygiene products)
- Medicine (Insulin-shots if you are diabetic, for example.)
- Diapers or baby items for small children

Tools

- Multi-tool or Swiss army knife
- Flashlight (with extra batteries)
- Battery-powered or hand-crank radio
- Extra batteries
- Whistle (to signal for help)
- Waterproof matches or lighter
- Maps (Your phone may not work.)

Documents and Money

- Copies of important documents (ID, passports, insurance policies, medical records)
- Cash (small bills) and coins
- Emergency contact information (phone numbers to family or community center)

Nice Extras

- A book
- Your favourite game, playing cards

Appendix 3 - Flood

Phase 1

- A weather warning has been issued. It will continue to be heavy rainfall. It has been raining incessantly for a week. Tomorrow's forecast predicts 200mm of rain between 09:00 and 10:00, which is expected to cause severe flooding.
- The flooding may also lead to power outages, telecommunications issues, and difficulties with internet connection.

Phase 2

- The water level is rising, and some houses are flooded.
- Cars are floating on the streets
- Some parts of the city are without electricity
- The family must unexpectedly evacuate their home.
- The City Council must declare an emergency and gather all resources available.
- The volunteer organisation's building might be damaged by the flood.

Phase 3

- The flood is over, but many houses are destroyed, and people still live in emergency shelters.
- Most roads are damaged and can't be used
- There is a lack of food in the supermarkets since trucks cannot deliver food. There will be a boat delivery in a few days.

Appendix 4 - Heatwave

Phase 1

- - The State Metrological Centre informs that a heat wave is approaching. It is predicted that the air temperature will reach +35°C.
- The heat wave can be dangerous, especially for elderly people, infants, and animals. It can also cause natural disasters.
- Experts warn that there might be a forest fire
- The forest owned by the family is in a fire hazard zone, which can ignite if exposed to fire.

Phase 2

- There are several forest fires raging nearby. Several small fires had broken out in nearby forests. They have been extinguished, but due to the drought, there is a risk that the fires could flare up again.
- The forest fire has worsened the air quality, causing many people to be sick. Several pets have been taken to animal shelters because no one can take care of them.
- Due to the forrest fires, the family has to unexpectedly evacuate their home.

Phase 3

- The forest fires have subsided, but many houses are destroyed and people are still living in temporary shelters. - There is a shortage of food in grocery stores because trucks cannot deliver. A food delivery by boat will arrive in a few days. - There is a risk that the fires could flare up again.



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