



**International Earthquake Response Exercise**

**SIMEX Guide, 2021**

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# abbreviations

EMT Emergency Medical Team

EMTCC Emergency Medical Team Coordination Cell

ERE International Earthquake Response Exercise

EXCON Exercise Control Team

HCT Humanitarian Country Team

HPC Humanitarian Programme Cycle

INSARAG International Search and Rescue Advisory Group

IASC Inter-Agency Standing Committee

LEMA Local Emergency Management Agency

NDMA National Emergency Management Agency

OCHA United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

OSOCC On-Site Operations and Coordination Centre

RDC Reception and Departure Centre

UNDAC United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination

UCC USAR Coordination Cell

USAR Urban Search and Rescue

V-OSOCC Virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Centre

# introduction and user guide

**INTRODUCTION**

This new 2021 edition of the International Earthquake Response Exercise package (“Version 2.0”) was developed through extensive consultations with representatives from national governments, disaster response organisations, OCHA, INSARAG Working Groups and practitioners, the World Health Organization, Emergency Medical Teams, UN Country Teams, and numerous other organisations and individual experts from different regions.

Endorsed by the INSARAG Steering Group, it can be viewed as an evolutionary step built on the foundation of the 2015 package (“Version 1.0”), consolidating the experiences of those central to running EREs in previous years as well as introducing relevant updates that will make the exercise continue to fit its purpose throughout the next implementation period.

The intended readers include all personnel with a role to play in the preparations, implementation and evaluation of an ERE event, including – but not limited to:

* Focal points of the country hosting the exercise;
* UN OCHA staff supporting and coordinating ERE events;
* INSARAG regional stakeholders supporting the running of an ERE event;
* Facilitators, speakers, EXCON staff and other organisers participating, leading or involved in the delivery of an Earthquake Response Exercise.[[1]](#footnote-2)

The three main folders within the new electronic package include:

* Folder 1 – This SIMEX Guide;
* Folder 2 – A set of Task/Inject Cards;
* Folder 3 – Supporting Resources.

Together, this documentation outlines the minimum quality standards that are applicable to every ERE event. The intent is to promote a practical and dynamic, rather than theoretical, approach to exercise delivery and place the inter-connectivity between operational networks at the very heart of the exercise experience. By applying the guidance on offer, exercise attendees will be given safe space to share and experience a blend of steps, tools, dilemmas, and concrete solutions in support of mutual learning and development.

Whilst consistency is important, it is also acknowledged regional and national variations will always be necessary to a greater or lesser extent. The collective mentality should, as far as possible, reflect the realities of the hosting country and a “train as we will operate” mode. This new edition of the package therefore includes a new section outlining the recommended steps for further customising the exercise documents to meet local needs.

It is also noteworthy that the review and consultations feeding into the 2021 ERE package took place during an unprecedented context when all ERE events were cancelled or postponed due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Much discussion focused on how far to reflect the “new normal” of a post-COVID landscape within the exercise design, and how much the implementation model might shift towards remote training methodologies rather than the face-to-face model traditionally preferred.

At the time of writing, the importance of these considerations is expected to continue fluctuating dramatically for the foreseeable future and it therefore seems prudent to provide a range of options for exercise planners to select from, according to both the operational environment in their region and any restrictions affecting training delivery. The package still leans firmly towards an on-site delivery mode, however to enable business continuity during future periods of lockdown, a section is also now included detailing how the exercise can be adapted for virtual delivery.

Finally, the INSARAG Secretariat would like to acknowledge all partners involved in this important endeavour and for the reader’s time and professionalism in reviewing the exercise documentation. Feedback is encouraged and users are welcome to share any comments through respective channels that might benefit future training delivery teams.

**USER GUIDE**

It is anticipated that different readers may wish to focus on different sections of the SIMEX Guide depending on their role. The hyperlinks in the Table of Contents (page 2) are designed to allow quick access to relevant information, and a brief description of each section is provided in the below table.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Section of SIMEX Guide** | **Description** |
| Concept Note Template | A concise overview of the rationale, objectives, selection criteria and general approach for the ERE. The Concept Note provides a summary output of the training needs analysis and may be useful as a communications tool before each implementation of the event, for liaison with event hosts, donors, participants, nominating organisations and partners, support trainers and external observers. |
| Overview of Event Programme | A table showing the major phases, activities and proposed timings in the exercise programme. This offers a model version based on a 5 day event, which is the minimum proposed duration. |
| Pre-Event Planning | This section contains a series of stand-alone checklists to help EXCON teams in the planning and coordination aspects of the exercise. It outlines the minimum personnel, facilities and equipment needed to practically implement the SIMEX package. |
| On-Site Preparation Sessions | Session plans giving broad guidance to facilitators and presenters who are assigned to deliver plenary or breakout sessions as part of the on-site preparations phase, prior to the exercise scenario.  These session plans should be read in tandem with other materials (template slide decks etc) at their corresponding sub-folders within the Supporting Resources e-folder. |
| Delivery of the Exercise Scenario Phase | This section clarifies the roles and responsibilities of different people involved in ERE planning, delivery and follow-up. It offers guidance on how to organise the participant group, as well as the tools by which the EXCON can manage team dynamics. This section also offers an explanation for how communications between different exercise groups can be managed, via the establishment of a central switchboard function. |
| Task Card Format | Task Cards are the heart of the ERE package, providing EXCON teams with expanded detail so that they can implement the Exercise Timeline in each of the Functional Areas. Information is organised in a predictable two-part format, as follows:   1. For sharing with participants prior to each task (coloured in blue):  * Relevant learning outcomes; * Task description; * Specified output(s).  1. For non-sharing with participants i.e. “EXCON eyes only” (coloured in red):  * Task category: either *Primary* (mandatory) or *Secondary* (optional); * Task delivery options; * Background reference documents; * Accompanying information injects; * Instructions for role-players / switchboard (where applicable); * Recommended facilitator debrief points.   A template illustrating this format is included in the SIMEX Guide, however due to length, each set of Task Cards is included in the recommended sequence within the Task Card folder. |
| Training Evaluation and Assessment Methods | Describes how data will be gathered about the relevance and effectiveness of the ERE and used as evidence for further improvements in the training design.  This section also specifies the recommended processes available whereby participants and EXCON staff may give and receive feedback on their contributions. |
| Remote Exercise Delivery Option | To ensure operational continuity in the face of COVID-19 restrictions and other unforeseen events, development of a remote exercise delivery model is necessary as a back-up and complement to the face-to-face model, but not as a complete replacement in the long-term.  Key considerations are specified here for those looking to adapt the package to a virtual delivery mode. |

# TEMPLATE concept note

## Background

1. For many years INSARAG has held exercises in countries around the world, seeking to

strengthen a country’s response capacity to a major earthquake disaster and to enhance its ability to work with international partners and agencies during the initial humanitarian phase of any emergency.

2. As part of the implementation of the GA Resolution 57/150 on “Strengthening the effectiveness and coordination of urban search and rescue assistance”, INSARAG formalised these events into multi-stakeholder training exercises to, not only strengthen national response, but also to promote and practice coordination methodologies in common with other disaster response networks and partners.

## Training Proposal and Scenario

3. This proposal involves a 5-day training event which is to be called the *International Earthquake Response Exercise, [insert country and date].* It is an on-site ‘command-post’ exercise involving management and decision-making elements of both national disaster response actors and the international humanitarian community. It does not require field-based simulation activities such as using operational equipment or carrying out practical rescue procedures.

4. The exercise event is one important step in the hosting country’s roadmap of preparedness for large-scale sudden onset disasters that involve support from the international community. It is viewed as a direct continuation of other important activities and will itself lead to further follow-up actions that will help to reduce the country’s vulnerability.

5. The exercise scenario is focused on the initial ten days of a sudden-onset emergency, typically an earthquake, that results in collapsed structures and subsequent humanitarian consequences within an urban environment. The disaster is of a scale that overwhelms local and national response capacity, resulting in a request for – and deployment of – international assistance. Representatives of coordination entities, response teams and other relevant networks work together in support of national leadership to complete tasks in a chronological sequence that should align with the realities and response plans of the affected country. The scenario concludes following the acute live-saving phase and as on-site coordination arrangements transition to other humanitarian coordination mechanisms.

## Overall Goal and Training Objectives

6. The primary goal of the exercise is to practice and strengthen the emergency preparedness and response coordination between national and international actors in support of a disaster affected country.

7. This goal is met through the organisers achieving a number of training objectives; four of which are universal for all parties being exercised, and three of which are specific for national and international stakeholders respectively.

Universal Objectives:

* To apply effective and efficient coordination of life saving actions and decisions in response to a large-scale sudden onset disaster;
* To jointly explore the interfaces and synergies between national and international coordination mechanisms and response teams;
* To practice the coordination methodologies, tools and practices of INSARAG and other partnership networks, adapted to a national response context;
* To promote networking and mutual peer learning exchange between representatives of collaborating organisations.

Additional Objectives for National Stakeholders:

* To deepen the country’s capacity and vulnerability assessments as part of its ongoing preparedness for an overwhelming national emergency;
* To self-evaluate policies and procedures, with a view to updating respective SOPs and contingency plans, for deploying national response assets and for requesting, accepting and coordinating international humanitarian assistance;
* To train personnel on national coordination mechanisms and methodologies, and those used by international counterparts.

Additional Objectives for International Stakeholders:

* To adapt disaster response coordination methodologies to a specific country context to augment national capacity in the early phases of an emergency;
* To apply existing and new procedures for the alert, mobilization, arrival and field integration of international response teams in support of a disaster affected government;
* To engage relevant partners and networks from the broader humanitarian system during the life-saving phase of a disaster.

8. Beneath these overall objectives, individual participants within each stakeholder group (known as Functional Areas) are provided with a set of learning outcomes that drive the content of their exercise activities.

## Participation

9. In principle, the training audience will be inclusive of any relevant departments, operational partners and networks that are consistent with the realities of the hosting country during the first days of the earthquake response. In practice, the total number of participants is limited by the logistical constraints of the hosting entity as well as the size and capability of the exercise control (EXCON) team available. For this exercise, the total ideal target number of participants is XXX.

10. Request for participant nominations will be determined by the event planning team and categorised according to the following Functional Areas:

1. Group 1: National response coordination entities;
2. Group 2: National response teams / responders;
3. Group 3: International response coordination entities;
4. Group 4: International response teams / responders;
5. Group 5: Humanitarian partner coordination entities (both national and international).

10. Selection criteria are an important tool for establishing a minimum baseline of expertise and will be defined prior to the invitation and selection process. Qualifications and experience for nominated individuals are specified for each Functional Area and, in some cases, completion of preliminary training programmes, such as eLearning or national-level disaster response exercises.

## Exercise Structure and Methodology

11. The exercise involves a scalable and flexible structure, allowing it to be delivered in settings where resources and capacity may vary. Participants will, however, undergo the same following phases of activity:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Pre-exercise learning | Individual reading, familiarisation with basic operational mandates and other preparatory activities during the weeks leading up to the exercise event |
| On-site preparations phase | Awareness briefings and workshop-style sessions where participants engage in further familiarisation training prior to being inserted into the emergency response scenario |
| Exercise timeline phase | The main immersive scenario where participants work in teams, drawing on their collective knowledge and experiences to find effective solutions to set tasks, while coordinating their actions with other stakeholders |
| Final debrief | A post-scenario phase on the final day where participants review their overall learning, look ahead to next steps and complete feedback evaluation on the exercise event as a whole |

12. Content is primarily focused on joint activities *between* operational groups, rather than internal activities within each Functional Area. This should be introduced during the workshop sessions and continue as a central feature of the exercise itself. During the scenario phase, participant outputs will vary depending on the nature of the operational task. The following are included:

1. Role-plays and interpersonal meetings with actors;
2. Written or computer-based deliverables;
3. Other forms of communication between participant teams.

13. A *play and pause* model is proposed where participant teams will step out of the exercise timeline following key moments to take part in collective reflection and recap of core learning. Under the overall coordination of central EXCON, each participant team will be allocated its own facilitator whose primary role is to observe behaviours and decisions taken, not as a formal assessment process but as a basis for providing structured feedback. Debriefing will occur in the separate working locations. Where feasible, examples of good practice and other important considerations will be offered.

14. At set intervals during the exercise timeline, the scenario will jump forward in time so that different learning outcomes can be explored. Group facilitators will moderate this transition so that participants undergo a cohesive training experience and the integrity of the exercise as a whole is maintained under the overall coordination of EXCON.

# overview of eVENT Programme

It is recommended that the face-to-face components of the exercise event last a minimum of 5 days in total, with 2 days dedicated to the on-site preparations (workshop) phase. Event planners may wish to extend the time duration further due to local or regional requirements.

The below indicative schedule provides an outline agenda for the full event. Exact timings should be adapted in conjunction with the hosting organisation.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Set Up Day A** | | |
| EXCON meetings | | |
| **Set Up Day B** | | |
| EXCON meetings (continued) and arrival of participants | | |
| **Day 1** | | |
| 0900 – 1000 | Official opening, introductions and overview of the programme | |
| 1000 – 1230 | Presentations on national disaster response coordination arrangements and key mechanisms | |
| 1300 – 1645 | Workshop sessions – for each Functional Area | |
| 1645 – 1700 | Complete daily evaluations | |
| Evening | Official Dinner | |
| **Day 2** | | |
| 0900 – 1100 | Workshop sessions – for each Functional Area (continued) | |
| 1100 – 1230 | Workshop sessions – rotations around other Functional Areas | |
| 1330 – 1645 | Workshop sessions – rotations around other Functional Areas (continued) | |
| 1645 – 1700 | Complete daily evaluations | |
| 1700 – 1800 | Exercise scenario Start Ex briefing | |
| Participants enter insertion locations and Scenario Phase begins | | |
| **Real Time** | **Scenario Time** | **Key Cross-Cutting Activities** |
| 1800 – 2000 | 0-24 hrs after EQ | 1. Activities to be determined by Functional Area leads |
| Hot debrief in teams and complete daily evaluations |
| **Day 3** | | |
| **Real Time** | **Scenario Time** | **Key Cross-Cutting Activities** |
| 0900 – 1130 | 1 Day after EQ |  |
| Hot debrief in teams |
| 1130 – 1400 | 1.  2. |
| Hot debrief in teams |
| 1400 - 1700 |  |
| Hot debrief in teams and complete daily evaluations |
| **Day 4** | | |
| **Real Time** | **Scenario Time** | **Key Cross-Cutting Activities** |
| 0900 – 1130 | 3 Days after EQ | 1.  2. |
| Hot debrief in teams |
| 1130 – 1400 | 1.  2. |
| Hot debrief in teams |
| 1400 - 1700 | 1.  2. |
| Hot debrief in teams |
| 1800 – 2000 | 7 Days after EQ | 1.  2. |
| Hot debrief in teams and complete daily evaluations |
| **Day 5** | | |
| **Real Time** | **Scenario Time** | **Key Cross-Cutting Activities** |
| 0900 – 1100 | 7 Days after EQ | 1.  2. |
| Hot debrief in teams |
| 1100 – 1230 | 1.  2. |
| Hot debrief in teams and complete daily evaluations |
| Scenario Phase ends | | |
| 1330 – 1500 | Post-Exercise Final Team Debrief | |
| 1500 – 1530 | Complete daily evaluations and final (overall) evaluations of | |
| 1530 – 1600 | Clean team areas and return to plenary | |
| 1600 – 1700 | Graduation and closing ceremony | |

# pre-event Planning

**steps for customising the ERE package**

The ERE package is provided as a common starting point which each EXCON team must adapt in order to meet the unique operational, technical and cultural and governance climate for a particular group during implementation.

It is strongly recommended that event organisers and planners utilise the months prior to exercise delivery to move through a systematic series of steps in fine-tuning the materials, as follows.

**Step 1 – Conduct a Detailed Training Needs Analysis**

The aim of training needs analysis is to identify what exercise learning will lift a group of people from their current status to a point where they can fulfil the requirements of the response community and – ultimately – the potential affected population within the host country.

Before making changes to the SIMEX materials (or opting to keep them unchanged) it is crucial that event planners develop an in-depth understanding of two levels of needs in particular: those of the stakeholder organisations involved, and those of the individual participants.

**Organisational level analysis** involves developing a comprehensive list of actors and coordination mechanisms who would be involved in responding to a large-scale earthquake in the affected country, and then defining what their likely role would be. Such information might be readily available in national disaster response or contingency plans, however the process of actively creating an actor map can be extremely valuable in terms of updating the relationships and hierarchies between various stakeholders, clarifying roles, identifying gaps in capacity or information, and sharing perceptions of reality across different members of the exercise planning team.

The actor mapping process is ideally led by the hosting organization (e.g. NEMA/LEMA focal point), however can be supported and/or facilitated by the OCHA Regional Focal Point. One useful output is a simplified diagram or other visual tool that summarises the response landscape and can be used to educate other members of the EXCON team who join the planning process at a later stage.

Traditionally, organisations/departments within the following categories would be considered (as a minimum):

* Affected communities;
* Local responders;
* Host government authorities;
* National response teams;
* International response teams (e.g. USAR, EMT);
* International response teams (e.g. USAR, EMT);
* Bi-lateral government support (civil);
* Bi-lateral government support (military);
* United Nations agencies (e.g. OCHA, WHO, Humanitarian Country Team).
* International NGOs;
* Humanitarian clusters;
* Donors;
* Regional organisations;
* Private sector;
* Media.

Through building the list of stakeholders, it will become apparent to event planners which should be prioritised in terms of inviting them to nominate exercise attendees. Stakeholder involvement should, as far as possible, reflect the reality of the national response landscape. Event planners can therefore adopt an “accordion” approach, generally inclusive of any relevant departments, operational partners and networks that are consistent with the realities of the affected country during the first days of a response.

In practice, the total number of participants will be limited by the logistical constraints of the hosting entity as well as the size and capability of the EXCON team. A total number of participants will need to be agreed, as well as the number of seats to be made available to each stakeholder organisation.

**Participant level analysis** is the practice of understanding the likely strengths and competencies of nominated personnel, their areas of technical expertise, levels of experience, as well as identifying any language, cultural or religious needs that might affect the exercise. These factors will almost always vary from one stakeholder organization to another.

While it is unlikely that exercise planners will develop a precise understanding until the final lead up weeks prior to an exercise, it should nevertheless be possible to make some general observations about the participant pool. Such information will inform subsequent steps in the customization process and help to tailor the exercise objectives and materials more closely to the actual participant learning needs.

Some useful tools for participant level analysis include:

* Targeted discussions with representatives from relevant stakeholder organisations regarding their cohort of potential participants;
* Observing likely participants in other trainings or exercises e.g. at a national-level SIMEX that acts as a precursor to the International ERE;
* Asking a sample of possible participants to complete self-assessment surveys or knowledge tests.

As an output to this analysis, the event planners should arrive at a clear description of the target training audience, including the selection criteria for participants within each sub-group of Functional Area. Such information will be carried through to the next step, adjusting the Concept Note.

**Step 2 – Write an Adjusted Concept Note**

A commonly used tool which helps to capture information gathered from planning discussions is the Concept Note. The Concept Note also plays a crucial role in communicating the rationale and overview of the simulation to all stakeholders – including new EXCON members and the participants themselves.

For an ERE event, it is recommended to keep the Concept Note relatively brief (i.e. 3-4 pages maximum) and leave the fine detail for other documents. It can be can be adapted from the [generic template](#_TEMPLATE_concept_note) in this SIMEX Guide, drawing on information from the earlier training needs analysis and making alterations to tailor information accordingly.

One or two paragraphs can be included for each of the following suggested headings:

1. Background;
2. Current status;
3. Training event proposal;
4. Overall aims and objectives of the exercise;
5. Participant selection process and criteria;
6. Exercise control team and resources;
7. Planning timeframe and division of labour;
8. Hosting location, dates and arrangements.

**Step 3 – Review the Suggested Event Programme**

Following agreement on the Concept Note, and as the pre-exercise preparations provide increasingly more information about the participants’ needs, the next major step is to review the event programme with the aim of refining it to suit the local context and needs.

While flexibility is important, event planners must strive to find a balance between sensitivity to cultural requirements of the hosting nation and ensuring the training objectives are achieved in a broadly consistent manner.

In the past, challenges were encountered when last minute requests were made to accommodate social functions, public relations activities or extra presentations that, while of interest to some stakeholders, were not directly relevant to the event programme or interrupted the flow of the exercise. Another common challenge involves the scheduling of collective meal breaks midway through the scenario phase, which can reduce the intensity of the exercise immersion experience for participants if team groupings are not kept separate.

It is incumbent on all event planners to discuss such issues as early as possible during the design phase and collectively find ways to minimize disruptions to learning.

**Step 4 – Develop the Outline Operational Scenario and Exercise Timeline**

Another key activity is for the lead national agency to propose and develop a more detailed outline of the operational scenario consistent with its response plan for a major earthquake. The scenario needs to be based in fact and therefore historical events are a good source of information, statistics and images for a potential scenario. Although there is no generic scenario included in the package for adaptation, the OCHA Regional Focal Point will be able to guide this process and provide other country examples that have been used for past ERE events.

In many cases, the framework and documentation for this may be readily available, however it should be thoroughly reviewed and – where necessary – broadened out to include protocols and standard operating procedures for integrating international response actors and support mechanisms. The lead domestic agency will need to actively reach out and consult other departments and stakeholders (e.g. Ministry of Health, Customs and Immigration) at an early stage to ensure the scenario is applicable for all Functional Areas and technical disciplines. Translation of existing plans, or elements therein, may also be needed to cater for the international participant group.

Key elements to be included in the outline operational scenario are described in the below table.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| The basic EQ event details | The essential characteristics of the EQ event:   * The date and time (in local and UTC) of the event, the location of the epicentre and the duration and magnitude; * Who detected the event and how was this information relayed; * The geography and affected population of:   + The epicentre;   + The wider area surrounding the epicentre. * Any major secondary effects, such as tsunami, landslides or disease outbreak. * Any specific hazards or issues that will form part of the scenario such as nuclear plants, damns and chemical factories. |
| Scope and scale | The earthquake (EQ) disaster should be sufficiently challenging to overwhelm local and national response capacity, resulting in a request made by the affected country for external support resources, expertise and/or other forms of international assistance. A densely populated urban area suffers collapsed structures, damaged infrastructure and a high number of deaths and casualties, leading to large-scale humanitarian consequences. |
| Urgency and duration | The exercise scenario is focused on the first 8-10 days of the response timeframe. Potential broad phases of operation may include:   * 0-24 hours after EQ – Impact assessment, coordination of national lifesaving operations and activation of international assistance; * 1 day after EQ – Arrival of international responders; * 3 days after EQ – Ongoing coordination and response efforts; * 7 days after EQ – Search and rescue operations demobilise and transfer of coordination mechanisms may occur; * 14 days after EQ (optional extra phase for some Functional Areas) – EMTs begin to transition out. |
| Coordination complexity | Coordination arrangements extend beyond a simple command and control structure. Multilateral on-site coordination mechanisms for both national and international responders are established. Response activities focus on points of interface between actors / networks, rather than inward-looking operations..  Issues surrounding COVID-19 should be included in the operational scenario to the extent that it reflects the realities of the hosting country at the time of the ERE event. COVID-19 should be part of the operational landscape without overriding the disaster response and may be played out through the inclusion of specific tasks/injects. |

Further detailed information and exercise data (e.g. mapping, spreadsheets) supporting each phase of the scenario will need to be added closer to the scheduled date of delivery when the participants can be better assessed. The extent of the disaster impact should be made to fit the group, and not the other way round. It is a mistake to invest in a hugely complex scenario and find the participants completely overwhelmed; equally the learning opportunities of the ERE will not be realised if the scenario is too simple and not sufficiently complex for the number and capability of participants.

**Step 5 – Review and Customise the Functional Area Task Cards**

Finally, the EXCON team, and particularly the lead person(s) responsible for each Functional Area, should spend considerable time in reviewing the Task Cards to fit the learning needs of the selected participants, the event programme and the local realities of the outline operational scenario.

Each Task Card is based on suggested learning outcomes and outputs which may need to be adapted to local response coordination arrangements in the affected country or adjusted in terms of depth and/or breadth of content. For example, if a participant group appears to be particularly experienced in one of the content topics, or has a much lower level of skill or knowledge in another area, then it may be appropriate to redistribute the timing and emphasis for associated activities respectively.

Changes to the Task/Inject Cards will need to be discussed and aligned across all Functional Areas, bringing in technical expertise where necessary.

## planning the participant groupings

Prior to the participants’ arrival at the ERE event, EXCON planners should divide them into smaller exercise groups.

Each exercise group should be categorized according to the functions involved in the response, rather than the institutions that staff them. This will allow for flexible expansion and contraction of the training audience according to the national context, without requiring significant overhaul of the exercise structure if different actors are involved.

The following Functional Areas are recommended, however these may need to be adapted as befits the operational realities of the hosting country:

* Group 1: National response coordination entities;
* Group 2: National response teams / responders;
* Group 3: International response coordination entities;
* Group 4: International response teams / responders;
* Group 5: Humanitarian partner coordination entities (national and international).

The group size for each Functional Area will ultimately depend on the total number of participants and the capacity of EXCON to manage their learning needs; however, it is recommended to keep each team size between 5 and 20 people.

Ideally, each exercise group will include a balanced mix of the following factors, however in practice this may be difficult to predict prior to the event:

* Organisation/department;
* Experience levels;
* Technical profiles;
* Known personality characteristics;
* Country/regional background;
* Gender.

Deciding on the team composition is an important task, but also far from an exact science, so some guesswork may be needed. It is also noted that the EXCON team will have opportunities midway through the exercise timeline to modify the team composition (see Managing Team Dynamics section below).

## PERSONNEL requirements to deliver the event

The event planners will need to determine the size and composition of the EXCON team based on the physical venue facilities, the number of participant groups in play, and the availability of technical expertise to ensure sufficient coverage. The *minimum* personnel requirements are:

1. 1 x exercise director;
2. 2 x overall exercise coordinators;
3. 2 x group facilitators per exercise group (Functional Area);\*
4. 4 x information management support staff;\*\*
5. 4 x administration and event logistics staff;\*\*\*
6. 1 x translator per exercise group (Functional Area), where the language needs require it;
7. 20 x role-players;\*\*\*\*
8. 2 x members of the media/communications experts.

Notes:

* \*The minimum requirements and criteria for group facilitators should be discussed and decided by the event planners to ensure an appropriate degree of experience and technical expertise is made available;
* \*\*Supplementary EXCON personnel can be involved in shadowing roles to provide experience to new facilitators and widen the pool of available trainers. Invariably, the ERE event is a valuable learning opportunity for all EXCON members and can also be used as a refresher for previous participants as part of their continued engagement;
* \*\*\*The ERE is a large and complex event and hosting organisations will need to assign appropriate individuals to manage aspects of the organization, including:
  + Travel arrangements including ground transportation for all participants;
  + Accommodation for both national and international participants;
  + Venues and training sites;
  + Facilities such as catering, event photography/videography and office services;
  + Equipment;
  + Social events, as well as the opening and closing ceremonies.
* \*\*\*\*The number of role-players will depend on the degree of realism preferred and the budget/resources available. The greater the number of role-players, the greater the fidelity but also the complexity of logistical planning required. Note that, while several of the specified team outputs within the Task Cards lend themselves well to face-to-face interactions, they might also take the form of planning and discussion activities, with some adjustment.

## planning milestones, checklists and templates

The below table specifies the most important planning milestones during the lead up to each ERE event. Confirmation of this planning timeline should be established at the outset, with adjustments made clear to all parties involved.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Indicative Timeframe** | **Planning Milestone** |
| 18 months prior | Host country indicates interest to INSARAG regional Focal Point in running the ERE event |
| 16 months prior | Host organization confirms funding plan is in place |
| 12 months prior | Written agreement between the host organisation and the INSARAG Secretariat, detailing the date of the exercise and its general location |
| 12 months prior | Planning team formed and project timeline confirmed |
| 11 months prior | First planning webinar between international and national exercise organisers, focusing on:   * Mutual sharing of expectations; * Steps for customisation of the exercise package; * Detailed capacity assessment of local / national response capability. |
| 10 months prior | Host nation focal point(s) attends other ERE event |
| 8 months prior | First reconnaissance mission, with a minimum of three international EXCON representatives to attend |
| 8 months prior | Initial venue and facility bookings made |
| 6 months prior | Save the Date message circulated to exercise stakeholders, including identification of EXCON delivery team |
| 3 months prior | Review of progress |
| 3 months prior | Invitations and Concept Note for the ERE event shared to exercise stakeholders |
| 2 months prior | Event programme confirmed |
| 2 months prior | Logistics support plan confirmed |
| 1 month prior | Outline operational scenario, exercise timeline and Task Cards adjusted |
| 1 month prior | Participant selection process completed |
| 1 month prior | Information note sent to selected participants and exercise staff |

Detailed **checklists** are included in the Supporting Resources e-folder to support event planners in the following areas:

* Checklist A: Overall generic event checklist;
* Checklist B: Facility/equipment requirements to host the event;
* Checklist C: General administration checklist;
* Checklist D: Set-up checklist for each exercise area;
* Checklist E: Safety plan checklist;
* Checklist F: Sample Agenda for initial reconnaissance visit ;
* Checklist G: Sample Agenda for Initial EXCON Set-Up Meeting;
* Checklist H: Sample Agenda for Daily EXCON Meeting.

The following **templates** may be useful in the pre-event phase and should be utilised by the event planning team. Copies are provided in the Supporting Resources e-folder:

* Template A: Letter of invitation requesting participant nominations;
* Template B: Participant registration form;
* Template C: Information note for selected participants;
* Template D: Daily feedback survey for participants;
* Template E: Final feedback survey for participants;
* Template F: Feedback survey for EXCON;
* Template G: Post Exercise Report.

# on-site Preparation SESSIONs

The following session plans give broad guidance to facilitators and presenters who are assigned to deliver plenary or breakout sessions as part of the on-site preparations phase.

## Official opening, introductions and overview of the agenda

**Session Learning Outcomes:**

SESSION LENGTH

1 hour



* Outline the aims and objectives of the International ERE
* Commit to the training methodologies being used
* Identify peer networks and learning support resources available
* Identify ground rules and safety measures in place

**Session Overview:**

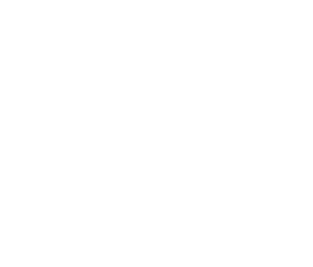
SUPPORT DOCUMENTS

None required



MATERIAL & EQUIPMENT

Audio-visual screen projector



|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Topic | Method | Time |
| 1 | Opening address | Presentation | 20 min |
| 2 | Objectives, Event Programme and Support Materials | Presentation | 15 min |
| 3 | Daily Routine and Housekeeping | Presentation | 5 min |
| 4 | Safety and Security Brief | Presentation | 5 min |
| 5 | Introductions and ground Rules | Mentimeter exercise | 15 min |

**Session Purpose**:

After the welcome remarks, this plenary session presents the first opportunity to orient participants to the exercise organization, content and flow. It is also a chance to explain and demonstrate the interactive methodology that will be used, involving the participants from the outset by gathering their individual expectations, needs and ideas for how they will work together as a collective.

**Session Activities In Detail:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Topic | Method | Notes for delivery |
| Opening address  (20 min) | Presentation | Opening words from the host entity.  Exercise Director thanks hosting organization, participants and facilitators, welcoming all. |
| Objectives, Event Programme and Support Materials  (15 min) | Presentation | Explains the vision for how the ERE contributes to capability across the country and wider region. Briefly cover the history / background to the ERE event and what other preparedness activities have been ongoing during the lead-up months in relation to earthquake response coordination.  Introduce the training objectives, content, methods and overview of the five-day programme.  Explain the support materials available. |
| Daily Routine and Housekeeping  (5 min) | Presentation | Explain the key daily timings.  Cover: feeding arrangements, administration, facilities, currency exchange, onward travel, etc.  Refer to on-site preparation checklists for additional points. |
| Safety and Security Brief  (5 min) | Presentation | Provide an update on the local security context and outline any collective measures in place (including the fire plan for the training facility), emergency communication procedures, and advice for reducing criminal risks during social hours. |
| Introductions and Ground Rules  (15 min) | Mentimeter exercise | Ask participants to log on to a live online survey tool (e.g. [www.mentimeter.com](http://www.mentimeter.com)) using a mobile platform and complete a series of scoping questions designed to show the overall shape of the group. The facilitator should show the results on screen and provide commentary throughout. Questions should be either multiple choice or ranking so that the number of inputs is manageable within the timeframe.  Note: There will be more time set aside during the workshop phase for more detailed introductions within each Functional Area.  Live survey questions might include, but are not limited to, the following:  • Are you a national or international responder?   * Type of response organization to which you belong? (provide choice categories) * How many years involved spent working in earthquake response roles? (provide choice categories) * How much time have you spent preparing for this exercise doing research and pre-reading? (provide choice categories) * What do see as the biggest challenges for your learning experience here? (provide choice options, such as language, COVID restrictions)   • What are your individual objectives for the event? (provide choice categories for ranking based on overall ERE objectives)  Note: a follow-up activity to this question would be to ask participants to turn to the person next to them in the auditorium and discuss in more detail for several minutes what he/she is personally looking to get from the learning experience, and what he/she will do to actively overcome challenges identified. Research indicates that encouraging trainees to clarify their individual expectations at the start of a training event can improve their engagement levels and create learning benefits.  Additional ranking questions may then be added to involve participants in establishing ground rules for the event, around the following types of behaviour:  a) What elements of the physical learning environment are most important for you to have a productive learning experience (provide choice examples such as setting mobile phones to silent during sessions, not checking laptops or other devices whilst teaching is ongoing, adherence to timings etc);  b) What are the elements about group interactions that you are hoping for? (provide choice examples such as respect for different viewpoints);  c) What is the most important thing you would ask from the training team responsible for delivering this event? (provide choice options)  The facilitator can then reinforce desirable group behaviours and add any additional ground rules that EXCON would like to introduce, such as out of bounds areas or in/out rules during live scenario play. |

## national disaster response coordination arrangements and key mechanisms

**Session Learning Outcomes:**

SESSION LENGTH

2.5 hours (including a break) mins



* Recall key elements of national earthquake response coordination arrangements and mechanisms by which the international community can provide support to the hosting country
* Outline recent developments at the regional and global levels in terms of guidance available

**Session Overview:**

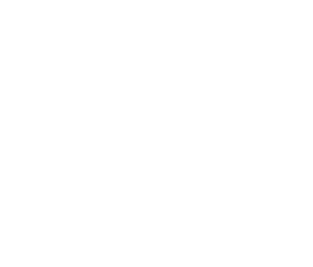
SUPPORT DOCUMENTS

It is important that pre-reading and other activities (e.g. explanatory videos) should be shared with participants prior to arrival



MATERIAL & EQUIPMENT

audio-visual screen projector



|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Topic | Method | Time |
| 1 | National EQ coordination arrangements | Presentation | 60 mins |
| 2 | Break (including group photo) | | 30 mins |
| 3 | International support mechanisms | Presentation | 60 mins |

**Session Purpose**:

This session should build on pre-event preparations to provide updates on the national and international response coordination arrangement relevant to the country’s earthquake preparedness. Key concepts are underlined, however detail should be left for the subsequent workshop sessions.

**Session Activities In Detail:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Topic | Method | Notes for delivery |
| National EQ coordination arrangements  (60 mins) | Presentation | Short, focused presentations given by representatives of key departments involved in the national response plans and coordination mechanisms. Archived PPT slidedecks from previous ERE events may be referred to during preparations, however the content and level of each presentation should be customised to local context and tailored to meet the learning needs of the training audience at hand.  Presentation topics might include, but are not limited to, the following:   * Updates to the National disaster risk reduction or response plan * The role of the National Disaster Management Agency / LEMA, or equivalent coordination mechanism * The role of other key government departments * The role of other in-country organisations and networks * The country’s approach to requesting international assistance |
| International support mechanisms  (60 mins) | Presentation | Short, focused presentations given by representatives of key international support mechanisms. Archived PPT slidedecks from previous ERE events may be referred to during preparations, however the content and level of each presentation should be customised to local context and tailored to meet the learning needs of the training audience at hand.  Presentation topics might include, but are not limited to, the following roles:   * International humanitarian coordination * International USAR * International EMT * International civil-military coordination |

## workshop sessions for each functional area (INTERNAL)

**Session Learning Outcomes:**

SESSION LENGTH

4 hours + 2 hours (including breaks)



* Explain in detail the methodologies for how response actors and coordination entities within the relevant Functional Area can maximise their effectiveness in support of the country’s earthquake response
* Practice using the tools and resources available to support coordination of the country response

**Session Overview:**

SUPPORT DOCUMENTS

To be defined by the EXCON lead facilitator for each Functional Area

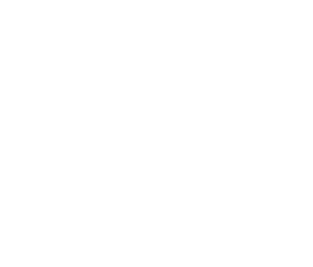


MATERIAL & EQUIPMENT

Breakout room for each Functional Area

Audio-visual screen projector

Flip charts, markers, coloured cards



|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Topic | Method | Time |
| 1 | Introductions within each Functional Area | Discussion | 10 mins |
| 2 | Overview of the workshop agenda | Presentation | 5 mins |
| 3 | Internal practices - to be defined by the EXCON lead facilitator for each Functional Area | Mix of focused presentations and small group activities | 3.5 hours mins |
| 4 | Complete daily evaluation | Online survey | 15 mins |
| 5 | Overnight break | | - |
| 6 | Interacting with other Functional Areas - to be defined by the EXCON lead facilitator for each Functional Area | Mix of focused presentations and small group activities | 2 hours |

**Session Purpose**:

During the first part of the workshop phase, an extended amount of time is provided for each Functional Area to review its internal practices and SOPs. It is an opportunity for national and international counterparts to fully understand the coordination methodologies and practice how to work alongside each other within the framework of the country’s earthquake response. EXCON should also provide updates on the recommended tools and technical resources available.

Attention is then dedicated towards how this Functional Area works with other networks involved in the response (i.e. other Functional Area groups). The focus is on joint activities in the acute phase of the response, including cooperation through to co-existence.

EXCON will need to look at the composition of the overall training audience and consider how best to organise the workshop groupings. Where possible, national and international counterparts should be kept together in the same breakout sessions for some or all of the workshop. For example, assuming the below organisation of Functional Areas, USAR team representatives from Groups 2 (national) and 4 (international) could be trained together. Likewise with national and international EMT representatives:

* Group 1: National response coordination entities;
* Group 2: National response teams / responders;
* Group 3: International response coordination entities;
* Group 4: International response teams / responders;
* Group 5: Humanitarian partner coordination entities (both national and international).

**Session Activities In Detail:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Topic | Method | Notes for delivery |
| Introductions within each Functional Area  (10 mins) | Discussion | EXCON and participants within each Functional Area group should have an opportunity to briefly introduce themselves:   * Preferred name * Organisation / role * Experience * Personal objective / expectation for the training |
| Overview of the workshop agenda  (5 mins) | Presentation | The lead facilitator for the Functional Area presents the learning outcomes and format for the workshop sessions ahead. |
| Internal practices - to be defined by the EXCON lead facilitator for each Functional Area  (3.5 hours) | Mix of focused presentations and small group activities | Content and training methodologies will vary for each Functional Area, however the emphasis should be on participatory groupwork complemented by targeted presentations on key elements.  This is an opportunity to review for participants to review practices and SOPs in relation to the functional role they will contribute towards. By the end of the sessions, national and international counterparts should understand the coordination methodologies and practice how to work alongside each other within the framework of the country’s earthquake response. EXCON should also take the chance to provide updates on the tools and technical resources available. |
| Complete daily evaluation  (15 mins) | Online survey | Dedicated time is provided for participants to complete the feedback survey on the entire day. The survey is completed within each Functional Area group so that aspects specific to each function can be reviewed. |
| Overnight break | - | |
| Interacting with other Functional Areas - to be defined by the EXCON lead facilitator for each Functional Area  (2 hours) | Mix of focused presentations and small group activities | An additional session is made available for participants to focus extensively on how they can work with and alongside other networks involved in the acute phase of the earthquake response (i.e. other Functional Area groups).  This will lead into the rotational part of the workshop that follows subsequently. |

## Workshop sessions for rotating functional areas (EXTERNAL)

**Session Learning Outcomes:**

SESSION LENGTH

4 hours 45 mins (includes breaks)



* Outline the methodologies for how response actors and coordination entities from different Functional Area can work together in support of the country’s earthquake response

**Session Overview:**

SUPPORT DOCUMENTS

To be defined by the EXCON lead facilitator for each Functional Area

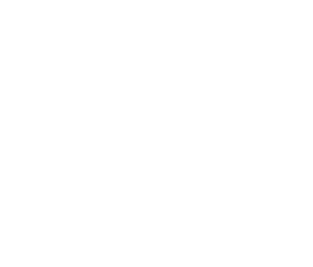


MATERIAL & EQUIPMENT

Breakout rooms

Audio-visual screen projector

Flip charts, markers, coloured cards



|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Topic | Method | Time |
| 1 | Rotation 1 | Presentation plus skill station | 45 mins |
| 2 | Rotation 2 | Presentation plus skill station | 45 mins |
| 3 | Rotation 3 | Presentation plus skill station | 45 mins |
| 4 | Rotation 4 | Presentation plus skill station | 45 mins |
| 5 | Rotation 5 | Presentation plus skill station | 45 mins |

**Session Purpose**:

The purpose of this workshop period is for participants within each Functional Area to gain an understanding of the other Functional Areas, and in particular, the areas they might work together during the acute response of the earthquake.

Content will focus on preparing participants to succeed in the subsequent completion of joint activities, handover practices or coordinated action during the scenario phase of the ERE event.

Participants from each Functional Group will rotate to maximise exposure.

**Session Activities In Detail:**

The following delivery flow to be implemented for each rotation. Timings for each rotation will need to be adjusted according to the organisation and number of groups.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Topic | Method | Notes for delivery |
| Overview of the Functional Area  (10 mins) | Presentation | The lead EXCON facilitator from the presenting Functional Areas provides a short overview of coordination arrangements, focusing on areas of overlap or joint activity with the participants in question.  This will need to be tailored each time (for example, the facilitator from the USAR team Functional Area might present to EMT participants on the triage / tagging system used in the affected country for handover of patients). |
| Tools and procedures for working together effectively  (30 mins) | Skills station | Content and training methodologies will vary for each Functional Area, however the emphasis should be on participatory groupwork or practical skills development, complemented by targeted presentations on key elements. |
| Wrap up and summary  (5 mins) | Presentation | Summary and conclusion, looking ahead to the scenario phase of the event. |

## EXERCISE SCENARIO START EX BRIEFING

**Session Learning Outcomes:**

SESSION LENGTH

1 hour

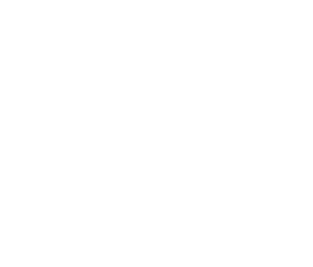


* Outline the key elements of the operational scenario
* State the rules of conduct during exercise live play

**Session Overview:**

MATERIAL & EQUIPMENT

Audio-visual screen projector



|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Topic | Method | Time |
| 1 | Exercise brief | Presentation | 45 mins |
| 2 | Questions and answers | Discussion | 15 mins |

**Session Purpose**:

This briefing is the final part of the on-site preparation sessions and provides the launching point into the exercise scenario. An effective briefing will enable participants to enter cleanly into the exercise mindset, clear on what they are being asked to achieve during the SIMEX and the scope of limitations on how they set about their work.

SUPPORT DOCUMENTS

National Disaster Response Plans (or equivalent) to be added as participant pre-reading.



It may be delivered in plenary or in the original breakout rooms, depending on the logistics context of the training venue. If delivered in separate rooms, the PPT slides and messaging should be agreed and standardized amongst the EXCON team.

Archive PPT slidedecks from previous events may be used to prompt ideas, however the content of the briefing will need to be customised.

**Session Activities In Detail:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Topic | Method | Notes for delivery |
| Exercise brief  (45 mins) | Presentation | A presentation to be delivered out of role by the Exercise Coordinator or one of the Group Facilitators, covering the following:   * Reiteration of exercise learning objectives * Recap of background exercise scenario and current status of emergency * Exercise rules and requirements * Coordinating features:   + Exercise timings   + Exercise locations   + Communication methods   + Movement plan (where relevant) * Additional exercise safety plan features, including confirmation of the “No Play” rule for real-time incidents * Confirmation of the participant groupings   Throughout the briefing, participants should be reminded that the purpose of the SIMEX is to allow them an opportunity to apply and explore in a safe learning environment; it is not an assessment of individual performance or suitability for future deployment. |
| Questions and answers  (15 mins) | Discussion | Facilitator deals with any clarification questions.  Participants are given any additional information, templates and documents as deemed relevant to the start of the exercise. |

# delivery of the exercise scenario phase

## excon roles and responsibilities

The following division of labour may be adjusted locally according to the respective strengths and capacities of those involved in implementing the exercise. Roles will need to be assigned using all available human resources, including national and international EXCON personnel.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Roles** | **Responsibilities** |
| Exercise Director (National) | * Acts as a high-level sponsor of the event, obtaining the approval and buy-in of national authorities; * Ensures the exercise is aligned and integrated with strategic goals in country workplans; * Activates the exercise planning team; * Appoints the National Exercise Coordinator; * Manages and approves the exercise budget; * Ensures the fulfilment of the work schedule; * Usually delivers the opening and closing address; * Briefs high-level VIPs observing the exercise. |
| Exercise Coordinator(s) | * Actively participates in the event planning phase to ensure a smooth handover to the EXCON delivery team, including confirmation of the adjustments to the exercise programme, including all on-site preparations sessions and the main scenario materials; * Provides regular briefings to the Exercise Director during exercise preparations and delivery; * Facilitates the EXCON set-up meetings and guides the EXCON team on all exercise aspects, including a confirmation of roles and responsibilities; * Provides guidance and clarification to the administrative and logistics support staff on practical and resource needs; * Coordinates delivery of the on-site preparations sessions, ensuring facilitators have adequate resources and support; * Oversees the set up and functioning of exercise areas, with a direct focus on the central EXCON control room; * Ensures a consistent and cohesive approach across all groups during the scenario; * Oversees the tracking of task delivery against the exercise timeline; * Oversees the flow of EXCON communications during the scenario, ensuring that participant requests / messages are dealt with; * Initiates the 360-degree feedback and coaching mechanism with each Group Facilitator for individual staff development purposes; * Works closely with each Group Facilitator to monitor his/her team’s strengths and areas to improve, and adapt upcoming tasks and responses to maximise the learning value; * Manages any troubleshooting issues of a serious nature for the exercise as a whole, and reports any major concerns to the Exercise Director; * Facilitates EXCON team meetings on a daily basis and at the end of the exercise; * Oversees preparatory briefings for role-players to help focus them on the learning outcomes in relation to their acting interventions; * Collates general feedback on team performance and synthesizes this into an overall picture of strengths and areas to improve; * Coordinates delivery of the final debrief and wrap-up sessions for exercise participants; * Ensures data on the evaluation of the SIMEX is collected at the end of the exercise using the * Writes the Post-Exercise Report, drawing on inputs and recommendations from participants and EXCON members. |
| Group Facilitators | * Supports the Exercise Coordinator and contributes to EXCON preparations in the lead-up to the event, including a review of adaptations to the scenario and Task Cards in relation to his/her Functional Area; * Actively attends the EXCON set-up meetings prior to the arrival of participants; * Supports and delivers the on-site preparations sessions within relevant to his/her Functional Area; * Set-up the exercise area and practical resources allotted to his/her participant group, and liaises with administration and logistics support staff in relation to the needs of his/her assigned group; * Oversees the delivery in task instructions to his/her group, ready to provide clarification to participants on learning outcomes and specified outputs at the start of each task activity; * Monitors and observes group dynamics and team functioning; * In consultation with central EXCON and other Group Facilitators, monitor and adjust exercise timings and communications, and add extra injects, where appropriate, to increase the level of challenge and complexity; * Interjects, where needed, during team activities to ensure successful learning is reached for all, including clarification of time jumps and other updates related to the operational scenario; * Manages any troubleshooting issues of a minor nature relevant to his/her allocated team, and reports major concerns through the Exercise Coordinator; * Briefs role-players on elements and considerations specific to his/her team; * Collects verbal feedback from role-players on participant behaviours; * Facilitate hot debrief sessions at scheduled points in the exercise timeline, referring to recommended practices and technical/operational examples where available; * Works closely with the Exercise Coordinator and other Team Facilitators to ensure a comparable learning experience with that of other participant teams; * Provides summary points to the Exercise Coordinator that are woven into the final debrief and wrap-up session, supporting its delivery as needed; * Takes part in the 360-degree feedback and coaching mechanism with an assigned member of central EXCON for individual skills development; * Participate in daily EXCON meetings and make recommendations to the Exercise Coordinator for continued improvement of the ERE. |
| Information Management Support Staff | * Supports the Exercise Coordinator in setting up and running the central EXCON room; * Tracks the delivery of tasks/injects against the exercise timeline and communicates this visually for all EXCON staff; * Facilitates the flow of communications between participant groups, and between participants and EXCON; * Collects information products from the participants and facilitates appropriate responses. |
| Administrative and Logistics Support Staff | * Actively participates in the event planning phase to ensure a smooth handover to the EXCON delivery team on all logistic and administrative issues; * Maintain the financial implementation of the budget; * Reviews the checklists provided for exercise administration and logistics, and ensures they are carried out according to plan; * Meets regularly with the Exercise Coordinator throughout ERE implementation; * Acts as primary point of liaison with site / facility managers, suppliers, interpreters and other support services before and during the event; * Monitors and responds to all safety aspects of the event; * Deals with any troubleshooting issues relating to administration and logistics; * Participate in EXCON meetings and make recommendations to the Exercise Coordinator for continued improvement of the ERE event, in relation to administration and logistics. |
| Role-Player | * Attend preparatory briefings from members of central EXCON and review guidance notes/scripts, as provided; * Liaise with Group Facilitators and/or other technical experts on the learning outcomes and conduct specific to each acting intervention; * Act as representatives of various stakeholders in the scenario that will interact with the participants; * Provide feedback to Group Facilitators on participant behaviours, and offer observations during participant feedback sessions where Group Facilitators feel appropriate; * Make recommendations for continued improvement of the exercise. |

## managing group dynamics

Within the context of the ERE event, interpersonal group dynamics may be both an explicit training objective for participants as well as a conduit for the reflective learning process in general.

The EXCON team should be mindful of the potential impact – both positive and negative – that group dynamics will have on the participants’ learning experience and recognise that the accelerated time pressure of a simulation environment often heightens the intensity. Common team issues typically include (but are not limited to):

* How roles, responsibilities and task division are allocated within the team;
* How trust between team members is developed;
* How opinions are voiced and heard;
* How decisions are taken;
* How the team’s time is managed;
* How outputs are presented;
* How team success and setbacks are viewed and processed; and
* How different team members contribute to the review/debriefing sessions.

In general, EXCON members should adopt an approach of non-intervention, allowing participants to work through the team process stages (i.e. forming / storming / norming / performing / reforming) in their own way. It should be stressed repeatedly that the overarching purpose of the ERE is to enable learning, not measure performance. Time should be included within debrief sessions to unpack the relevant elements of team functioning further and allow participants an opportunity to reflect on the relative merits of how they sought to resolve internal team issues.

Further guidance to Group Facilitators on running debrief sessions is included in the Supporting Resources e-folder.

However, in the interests of time management there may be occasions within the Exercise Timeline where EXCON decide to make direct interventions to help troubleshoot one or more team dynamics issues. When and how this is done should be discussed by the Group Facilitators *prior* to the exercise, in combination with their assigned mentor or point of liaison within central EXCON.

The following options for direct EXCON interventions are:

* Best effort given to the initial team composition;
* Stipulating the team leadership structure to be used - systems can include EXCON-appointed leaders, a leader rotation schedule, or participant choice;
* Informal prompts and guidance offered within debrief sessions, including suggesting alternative approaches for team organisation;
* An exercise pause, allowing participants to visit the set-up / area of other teams for cross-comparison;
* Mandatory redistribution of team personnel within a Functional Area group or across the wider training audience (e.g. at the start of a new scenario phase).

## EXERCISE COMMUNICATIONS

Communications within the exercise scenario are critical to its overall success. The three different categories to consider are:

1. Communications ‘behind the scenes’ – in particular, between the Exercise Control Room and Group Facilitators;
2. Communications between exercise groups and other notional stakeholders within the SIMEX scenario;
3. Communications between participant teams within the SIMEX scenario.

For Category A communications, this is best managed through in person liaison face-to-face at the central simulation control room; in rare circumstances where the exercise venue is split over a large distance, it may be necessary to relay such communications through alternate means (e.g. via a WhatsApp group or handheld radios). Agreement should be reached prior to the exercise commencing with regards to how frequently the behind scenes communications should occur, and what level of detail needs to be passed amongst the EXCON.

For Category B and C, it is strongly recommended to establish a switchboard relay station in the central simulation control room that participants must use if they wish to connect with anyone beyond their own working group. This will allow the EXCON to monitor and influence all communications as they go.

Depending on the physical resources available and desired scope of realism, the following modes of external remote communications may be made available to teams:

* Email;
* Exchange of electronic. printed or hand-written documents;
* Bi-lateral face-to-face meetings;
* Collective face-to-face meetings; and
* Other information management, file sharing or social media platforms, as typically used within the country/region hosting the exercise.

## role-player management

Where significant numbers of role-players are being utilised, it is recommended to organise a collective briefing in advance of the scenario phase. In some instances, this may prove challenging logistically, in which case role-players can be briefed on the relevant exercise day with an early start.

It may also be possible to share written guidance, speaking points or scripts with actors ahead of the face-to-face event.

Usually a member of the central EXCON team or an experienced Team Facilitator will deliver the collective role-player briefing. It typically takes approx 60 minutes to collectively brief actors who have no prior knowledge or experience in the exercise; translation requirements may extend this further.

A suggested agenda for the collective role-player briefing includes:

* Provide context on the rationale and overall objectives of the exercise;
* Give an overview of participant profiles and general strengths/weaknesses;
* Explain how actors should provide feedback on participant behaviours (e.g. through the Group Facilitators in the first instance, and potentially during debrief sessions where deemed appropriate);
* Explain any support logistics elements (timings, rest areas away from participants, food, water);
* How to ensure that the integrity of in/out of scenario mechanisms are maintained – costumes, equipment, name badges, waiting areas away from participants;
* Allocate actors to tasks.

At least 30 minutes prior to each actor intervention, additional time should be set aside for Group Facilitators and/or other subject matter experts to brief and discuss the following points of specific concern:

* Clarify the learning outcomes for the activity under question;
* Give an individual backstory for each character (using the EXCON eyes only version of Task Cards as a start point);
* How to start the role-play;
* Allow technical experts time to explain any nuances in relation to the training content;
* How actors might respond to likely participant responses;
* How to escalate and deescalate the level of challenge (tip: agree on simple signals with Group Facilitator);
* How to end the actor intervention – Is it resolved? Will there be follow-up needed?

Following each actor intervention, Group Facilitators should take the time to speak with their role-players to collect their feedback (thoughts and/or feelings) that may be useful during subsequent participant debrief sessions. It is also an opportunity to point out ways in which role-players might adjust their further interventions to further improve the learning experience.

# TASK CARD Format

Task Cards are the engine of the ERE package, providing EXCON teams with expanded detail so that they can implement the exercise timeline in each of the Functional Areas.

Information is organised in a predictable two-part format:

* Blue cards include information that is provided openly to participants either on paper format or through an alternative delivery method.
* Red cards include additional information that is provided to EXCON personnel.

A template illustrating this format is included below, however due to length, each set of Task Cards is included in sequence within the Supporting Resources e-folder.

**For Participants**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **TASK**  **01** | ***(Title of Task)*** |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Phase of Response** | *Insert* | **Approx Completion Time** | *Insert* |

|  |
| --- |
| **Learning Outcome(s)** |
| * *Insert* |

|  |
| --- |
| **Task Description** |
| *Insert* |

|  |
| --- |
| **Specified Output(s)** |
| * *Insert* |

**For EXCON Eyes Only – Read In Addition to Blue Copy**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **TASK**  **01** | ***(Title of Task)*** |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Primary (Mandatory) or Secondary (Optional) Task** | *Insert* |

|  |
| --- |
| **Task Delivery Options** |
| 1. *Insert* |

|  |
| --- |
| **Background Reference Documents** |
| * *Insert* |

|  |
| --- |
| **Accompanying Information Inject(s)** |
| * *Insert* |

|  |
| --- |
| **Instructions for Role-Players / Switchboard** |
| * *Insert* |

|  |
| --- |
| **Recommended Facilitator Debrief Points** |
| * *Insert* |

# training evaluation and assessment methods

## evaluation of the ere event

Whilst it is broadly expected that exercise participants will apply aspects of what they learned during subsequent disaster management roles, the complexities and organisational investment needed to systematically collect behavioural data before and after the simulation mean that an in-depth evaluation of training impact on operations is not included within the current exercise model.

During the ERE event, EXCON teams are requested to apply simple evaluation measures which focus on gathering data to identify how training content, methodologies and other elements of the exercise such as practical might be modified to further strengthen future participants’ learning experience. Questions may be organised around the 6 OECD evaluation criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability.

It is recommended to analyse evaluation data trends drawn from all ERE events worldwide within a 12-month period, before making substantial changes to the exercise package. This approach relies on consistent use of the same data collection methods by each delivery team. While consistency is key, extra questions may be added for a given exercise at host nation request, for internal purposes.

Importantly, evaluation results should then be written into a standard Post-Exercise Report format and shared openly across the ERE network so that future event planners in all regions can benefit from the lessons learned.

A brief description of the three required evaluation measures follows, while templates can be found in the corresponding electronic sub-folder under Supporting Resources:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Daily individual reaction and reflection survey | At the end of each training day, participants are given time to complete a short online survey which explores their immediate views on training content, methodology, organization, and how they will use their learning in future roles. Surveys are anonymous and should be collected separately for each Functional Area. |
| Final individual reaction and reflection survey | On the final day of the ERE event, individuals are asked to complete an overall online questionnaire which looks at the deeper aspects of their exercise experience as a whole. Questions are organised around the 6 OECD evaluation criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. Again, responses should be collected separately per Functional Area and kept anonymous. |
| EXCON reflection survey | A separate online survey should be given to EXCON staff, facilitators and observers during the set-up meetings prior to each ERE event, which staff members are encouraged to complete as the training unfolds and then submit on the final day. The questions focus on suggestions for improved coordination of the delivery phase as well as technical content and other aspects which will be useful for future EREs. |

## assessment of participants and exercise stakeholders

Assessment of Training Audience

In relation to the performance of individual participants during the exercise, no formal assessment processes are included in the package. This is due to an intentional desire to keep the exercise culture focused on learning and development issues (to encourage risk-taking and problem-solving behaviours), rather than act as a human resources screening tool (which tends to draw out risk-averse and problem-avoidance behaviours). It is also a reflection of the huge resources and expertise which would be needed to carry out a fair and meaningful assessment of participant capabilities.

There are, however, multiple opportunities for the EXCON team to make observations of group processes, decisions and actions, and present these back to participants informally through a structured debriefing and review mechanism (see section on [Managing Group Dynamics](#_managing_team_dynamics)). Such feedback is typically led by the assigned facilitator for each Functional Area group, however other members of the EXCON team should be readily available to support, especially on topics of technical specialty.

The main observations from each of the Functional Areas should then be recorded on summary slides and shared with the overall exercise coordinator(s). Facilitators should follow a set formula e.g. one or more slides with positive points of feedback, and one or more slides with recommendations for further development. This information will be useful when the overall observations are presented back to the training audience during the final session of the ERE event.

A more detailed compilation of exercise observations in each Functional Area may also be documented and provided to the hosting organization and/or appropriate network lead agency as soon as possible after the ERE event. The scope, format and level of depth for this follow-up documentation should be discussed and determined as part of the ERE event planning process, with sufficient human resources dedicated to its implementation during the delivery phase.

In some cases the host government may request a detailed appraisal of national response capacity at the institutional level. This can be explored further by asking management representatives from key government departments to complete an additional self-assessment survey looking at various aspects of its emergency preparedness in relation to the ERE overall objectives. The survey might be completed after the event, or alternatively as a pre- and post- measure of self-confidence. Whatever option is selected, it is usually not necessary or desirable to include such data in the official Post-Exercise Report; rather this is a subject for the important follow-up discussions that take place between the stakeholder organisations involved.

Assessment of EXCON

For EXCON members in the role of Group Facilitator, again there are no formal performance assessment measures built into the ERE design. However, it is strongly recommended that a 360-degree feedback relationship is initiated by an experienced member of central EXCON for each individual Group Facilitator.

This should be explained during the set-up meetings and framed as an opportunity for mutual improvement and, where appropriate, mentoring. Regardless of how technically proficient or operationally experienced a facilitator, he/she will always be able to learn from the experience and may not have been systematically trained in performing the role of a coach.

As a minimum, it is recommended for the assigned mentor to reach out to Group Facilitators at least once every training day. The basis for most feedback will be through informal conversation in the margins of the exercise, however for new Group Facilitators such dialogue might take a more structured format. The following prompt questions may be useful:

* What went well today in terms of your facilitation role?
* What were the main challenges you faced, and how did you seek to overcome them?
* What techniques did you apply during the participant debrief sessions, and how well did these work?
* Would you change anything about your interventions in participant learning from today?
* How well did you manage troubleshooting issues within your allocated participant group?
* Is there anything we can do together to improve the exercise communications?
* What can central EXCON do differently to make your role more effective?

# Remote Exercise delivery option

While the ERE package is primarily designed for delivery in a face-to-face setting and this remains the preferred option, there is scope for adapting elements of it to be delivered through remote methodologies. Development of a virtual delivery approach for the ERE may be seen as a back-up and complement to the face-to-face model, rather than a complete replacement in the long-term. Once developed, a remote option could also be used as a refresher option for previous participants, or as a preparatory step in the lead up to future on-site ERE events.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown exercise owners that operational continuity in the face of travel and meeting restrictions requires forward-planning, flexibility and support from appropriate technological solutions and expertise.

The planning for a remote ERE follows broadly the same process as described in this SIMEX Guide, with the additional key considerations:

* Participation in a virtual exercise is limited to a much smaller number of people at a given time (e.g. 24 maximum); however, once developed, the exercise scenario may be rerun repeatedly for other participants within the target training audience. To allow active participation, the recommended size of each Functional Area group is between 4-6 people;
* It is not necessary to invent a new platform as several options are in existence and have been trialled within the disaster management sector. The INSARAG Secretariat can advise on the options available as well as provide access to lessons learned from other simulations. Early identification of a specialist provider in remote training technologies is recommended. The planning and design timeline suggested by most providers typically involves a minimum of 3 months;
* Depending on the duration of the virtual exercise, content from the package will need to be reduced and further refined to suit remote delivery. It is recommended to plan on 4 – 5 hour sessions at a time, run on consecutive days where needed.
* Team-based live virtual exercises are not push and play solutions. They require every bit the same commitment and coordination behind the scenes as the on-site approach, minus the logistical aspects. EXCON team members will need to work together in much the same ways, with additional training in how to use the exercise technologies.
* While the technical learning objectives for an ERE can be met to a large extent through remote methodologies, the *experience* is undeniably different and cannot be compared to an on-site event in this regard. In particular, the networking aspects, peer-to-peer learning, and mixing of nationals / internationals responders is especially challenging to simulate virtually.

1. The SIMEX Guide and associated documentation are not intended to be distributed to, or read directly, by ERE participants. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)