

Community action planning and learning – applying microgrants and community volunteer facilitators

Locally Led Anticipatory Action Toolkit

Purpose

The purpose of this tool is to set out a participatory action and learning (or PALC¹) process for locally led anticipatory action.

Guidance

PALC seeks to strengthen or establish information systems that are owned, managed and used by communities themselves. Volunteers enable communities (and facilitating agencies) to better understand the community-based capacities and opportunities for action, and for collaboration with others.

The volunteers strengthen the effectiveness, efficiency, accountability, inclusiveness and conflict sensitivity of their own community-led actions, and inform the planning and interventions of external actors (Government authorities, national NGOs, INGOs, UN agencies). They may also be members of groups which will apply for microgrants, or members of community committees tasked with providing feedback to the facilitating agency. As volunteers take on more responsibility for facilitating the process, less will need to be done by the facilitating actor – which enables more time to be spent, for example, on coordination with other actors.

This tool guides the process of community action planning and learning steps, and should be facilitated and supported by community (PALC) volunteers. The steps indicated lead towards the development of proposals, self implementation of interventions and review of microgrants.

¹ When applied in a disaster or crisis context, this process is adapted to facilitate the planning of actions by groups to respond to and to recover from a disaster or crisis. This process is then referred to as Participatory Action Learning in Crisis (PALC).

Community Action Planning and Learning Steps - Applying Microgrants

Steps	Timeline
Step A: Orientation session (and training, see below) to engage volunteers to support the collection of initial information for the community action planning and microgrants process; and to agree how the information will be communicated, collected, and shared.	During the Orientation and PVCA Steps
Step B: Spreading information about microgrants support (MG#1). Clarifying best systems of transparency and accountability for microgrants.	Following the EPCP Workshop
Step C: Community meetings for sharing information on microgrants, risk information, and enhanced participatory contingency planning (EPCP). Communities discuss proposed options for microgrants projects (see below). Details on groups applying for microgrants are gathered (MG#3).	When EPCP Workshop information/advisories are communicated.
Step D: Groups develop and submit project proposals (MG#4) for review (MG#5 & #6). Based on feedback from review panels, groups revise their project proposals and budgets.	Within 1 month of the EPCP Workshop.
Step E: Microgrants are awarded, contracts signed (MG#7), groups are trained on procurement and book-keeping (MG#8), and project details are communicated publicly (MG#9).	Within 1 month of the EPCP Workshop.
Step F: Transfer of microgrants to groups (MG#10). Implementation, skills upgrading (training), coordination with stakeholders, and monitoring (MG#11) of microgrant funded projects (transparency, accountability, inclusion, conflicts, etc.). Includes the submission of project and expenditure reports and receipts (MG#12).	2 to 3 month period.
Step G: Evaluating completed microgrant funded projects (MG#13) and sharing lessons (within the community, between communities, and with other stakeholders).	Within 1 month of receiving project and expenditure reports.
Step H: Exploring options for improved coordination and local resource mobilisation – for community-led preparedness, anticipatory action, or response.	Through the EPCP process
Step I: Discussions with relevant groups about strengthening community resilience, reducing vulnerability to future disasters, and addressing root causes.	Through the EPCP process

Orientation session and further training for volunteers [Step A]

Topics	Suggested Time
Explain the Role of Volunteer Community Facilitators – communities’ eyes, ears, and voice (see below) for group activities (microgrant supported projects)	30 mins
Providing simple information about the opportunities for supporting community-led initiatives (refer to MG#1 Flyer and MG#2 Criteria for Groups Applying for Microgrants) so they are able to then share this information with the active groups and individuals that they meet: the “voice” function	30 mins
Issues to be Explored with Volunteer Community Facilitators (see below): the “eyes and ears” functions	2-3 hours
Agree how information will be documented to ensure it is used and shared (refer to MG#4 Project Proposal Form; MG#9 Microgrants Transparency & Accountability Checklist – for groups; and MG#11 Peer Monitoring)	1 hour
Agree on a flexible plan for collecting and communicating information. (Include a discussion on what these volunteers require to conduct their role.)	30mins
Total time	4-5 hours

Role of Volunteer Community Facilitators – communities’ eyes, ears, and voice

- Search for, and share, experiences of community-led actions, local solutions, ideas, engaging and mobilising the community – with reference to information gathered and outputs from the PVCA and enhanced participatory contingency planning (EPCP) process
- Informing people about support for community-led actions and how to apply for assistance: microgrants, skills development, making connections
- Giving special encouragement to women and marginalised groups to develop their ideas into action plans
- Identifying gaps and gathering ideas on how to deal with them (to encourage ‘collaborative’ coordination)
- Identifying best local ways of reducing risks of doing harm and of strengthening transparent and accountable use of microgrants
- Facilitating monitoring, evaluation, and lesson learning from group microgrant projects
- Starting community conversations about longer term resilience and addressing root causes; encouraging people to look at longer term issues and opportunities
- Contributing to local coordination and information sharing

Issues to be Explored with Volunteers

The suggested guiding questions are to be discussed with volunteer community facilitators in focus group discussions, and followed up on throughout the process.

Assessing opportunities for action

1. What are the different successful initiatives that communities are already undertaking? Are there any examples of effective actions that could be scaled up?
2. Who and where are the active groups or individuals who are already carrying out initiatives?
3. What sort of support do they need to scale up initiatives and make it more effective - funds, skills, connections and alliances, etc.?

Mechanism of transparency, accountability, and avoiding harm

4. What are the best means of making sure that providing microgrants do not cause problems by provoking confusion, misinformation, jealousies, gossip, local tensions or even conflicts?
5. What are the best means to ensure local accountability and ensure that all the grants are used properly according to approved proposals?
6. Are there any tensions, conflict or cases of increased insecurity being inadvertently provoked by any possible interventions? If so, what can be done to address these and avoid them from occurring in the future?

Inclusiveness and analysis of gaps

7. Are particular parts of the community who are at high-risk being left out? e.g. More exposed and vulnerable areas, women, children, elderly, persons with disabilities, ethnic groups, different sexual orientations. And if so, what more needs to be done to include them?
8. What are the potential attitude barriers, social stigmas, or tensions that prevent some people from participating in group or community-level activities?
9. Are there any psychosocial issues which need to be considered in the planning of community-led actions?

Gender

10. Are there barriers preventing women from participating in decision-making and leadership roles? How can these barriers be addressed?
11. Are there any safety issues relating to women participating in or leading microgrant supported groups?

12. Could female participation in groups impact negatively on their households? How can the risk of overburdening be mitigated, whilst still ensuring their effective inclusion?

Coordination and sharing information with other actors

13. What are the priorities for local coordination that communities are requesting? What are the options for establishing or supporting local coordination mechanisms to meet these coordination needs?
14. What are the opportunities to strengthen positive collaboration between external interventions (authorities, NGOs, INGOS, UN agencies) and community-led interventions?

Longer term resilience and addressing root causes

15. What are the ideas for beginning to address root causes of disasters and identified vulnerabilities?

Options for microgrants

Firstly, microgrants are provided to groups to enable them to implement their own actions. Categories of potential microgrant actions include :

- Preparedness actions which strengthen capacities to take action in the event of a warning / alert
- Short term actions which have potential to contribute to reducing losses or damage in exposed and vulnerable areas
- Early actions – ahead of a forecast disaster or crisis
- ‘Early response’ actions – prior to the peak impact of a disaster or crisis

Secondly, groups can include within their budget skills upgrading support, or the facilitating agency may decide to deliver skills upgrading upon demand. These include:

- Community contingency planning and funds management
- Strengthening / formation of Community Disaster Risk Management structures (committees / volunteers), including on women’s leadership role
- Training for committees / community organisations, including financial management and fundraising, conflict sensitivity, etc.
- Meetings / networking
- Information management hubs
- Skills training: for psychosocial support, technical planning and maintenance of structures, etc.

Thirdly, activities to be conducted by or with other actors (i.e., local government disaster management structures) could be facilitated, including:

- Strengthening community-based early warning systems – by connecting them to national systems
- Strengthening / formation of Community Disaster Risk Management coordination structures (local platforms)
- Conducting simulation exercises

Acknowledgement

This document has been adapted from [training resources](#) developed by Local to Global Protection for use in survivor and community-led crisis response (sclr), and CaLP [Group Cash Transfers Guidance & Tools](#). The [Locally Led Anticipatory Action Guide and Toolkit](#) was authored by Chris Ball, Director of [Bounce Back Resilience Ltd](#) and Humanitarian Advisor DRR and Climate Change for Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe. It was developed based on learning from the Local Leadership for Global Impact project implemented in partnership between [Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe](#), [CARD](#), [CEDES](#), [SAF/FJKM](#) and [GNDR](#); and supported by funds of the Federal Republic of Germany through the [Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development](#) (BMZ).