Lead Agency: HelpAge **Consortium Members**: [1] Oxfam, CARE, Islamic Relief, Handicap and Concern[2] **Budget:** £1,978,268
Preliminary countries of operation: This project will be implemented through country office/partners "opt-in" approach in eight high-risk countries - Mozambique, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Kenya, DRC, Philippines (all DEPP focus countries) plus Haiti, Somalia[3]. **Timeframe:** 3 years

Project description
This project aims to develop an information management system for humanitarian agencies that facilitates an increased level of emergency preparedness and maintains the operational preparedness at a consistent and appropriate level. The project will improve effective delivery of humanitarian assistance to disaster-affected communities. It will increase emergency preparedness capacity in 8 countries and provide the humanitarian community with an emergency preparedness management system that facilitates an increased level of emergency preparedness and maintains their operational preparedness at a consistent and appropriate level. The system will be freely available and compatible with a wide range of humanitarian agencies irrespective of their size or mandate.

Where and how did this project originate?
Our research indicates that generally country offices and national partners continue to be inadequately prepared to respond effectively immediately after a disaster strikes. Furthermore the literature demonstrates[4] that there are serious defects in current emergency preparedness processes[5]. Choularton (2007)[6] found that achieving and sustaining dynamic emergency preparedness processes remains a major challenge for humanitarians.[7] Levine et al (2011) concluded that, "*Preparedness could be given a huge boost if everyone took it more seriously*". All humanitarian agencies we interviewed[8] recognised that their processes were inadequate and were reviewing or were interested in improving their preparedness. In 2012 HelpAge, CARE (US) and Oxfam (GB) began designing an improved and compatible emergency preparedness system. This project is a continuation of that initial work.

Why is collaboration fundamental to the success of this project?
Engagement with a wide spectrum of humanitarian agencies (national, international and UN), their country offices and partners in a cyclic process of research, consultation, design and critical review will enable us to develop an emergency preparedness system that is freely available, harmonised, straightforward, inclusive of vulnerable groups, effective and adaptable to any humanitarian agency irrespective of its size or mandate.

Which other projects in the Start Network portfolio does this project rely on?
This project is related to Talent 1, Shifting the Power and Surge which all have complimentary elements of capacity building (skills development) and the devolution of systems to national NGOs and partners.

What change does this project envision to achieve?
NGOs (especially national) will gain access an emergency preparedness system (training materials, software, tools and manuals) that is easy to use, appropriate and adaptable, thus enabling increased levels of preparedness. Increased preparedness will result in an improvement in the speed, appropriateness and effectiveness of their response.

Describe the project as briefly as possible.
Through consultation with humanitarian agencies (national and international NGOs, UN), private sector[9], donors and academia the project will develop an emergency preparedness system (software, tools and manuals) that is effective, easy to use and adaptable to any NGO irrespective of its size or mandate. This will enable higher levels of preparedness, which will, in turn, result in faster, more effective humanitarian response. The ALERT system will be tested in 4 countries (multiple agencies and partners[10]). Users will have access to a web-based "help desk" where they can log recommendations, problems, and suggestions for improving the system or tools. Based on learning from the testing phase the system be revised and then implemented in 4 more countries before disseminating to the wider humanitarian and NGO community.

What are the key activities associated with this project?
(1) Research - existing preparedness processes and concepts. (2) Design a harmonised and configurable emergency preparedness system. (3) Convert the preparedness concepts into practice (preparedness package - tools, guides, manuals, software, helpdesk and training material). (4) Test the preparedness process in 4 countries. (5) A web-based "help desk" is used to log recommendations, problems, and suggestions. (6) Based on learning and review "tweak" the system. (7) Implement the system in 4 more countries. (8) Based on learning and review finalise the system. (9) Disseminate to humanitarian sector.

How will this project make a difference to people affected by crisis?
How prepared agencies are to respond to a disaster can often mean the difference between life and death for those affected. Improving preparedness means, when a disaster strikes agencies have the necessary resources[11] for an immediate, effective, appropriate response and the individuals responsible know how to use those resources.

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[1] The following agencies have shown an interest in ALERT: CAFOD (UK), PLAN (UK), World Vision, Concern Worldwide, ActionAid (UK), Muslim Aid. National agencies include Mozambique Ministry of Health & Mozambique Red Cross. In Pakistan Sindh Rural Support Organisation & Baluchistan Rural Support Programme
[2] Concern and Handicap membership is agreed in principle. We expect definitive confirmation later in March 2014

[3] Haiti has been chosen as a high risk poor Latin American country and Somalia is a complex emergency where the response is mostly delivered through partners. These two countries are important to increase the breath and depth of the systems and software testing.

[4] Further evidence includes The WFP evaluation emphasised the need to "*re-conceptualize contingency planning from being a stand-alone operational planning activity to an element in an integrated strategic problem-solving process conducted within an overall inter-agency framework*"[4] *i.e.* integrated into the normal routine of the country office.

[5] In terms of the ALERT project we define disaster preparedness as "*the advance actions, arrangements and procedures that humanitarian agencies take in anticipation of a disaster so that the response, when needed, is immediate, appropriate, effective and recovery is quick when a disaster strikes*".

[6] '*Agencies should carefully consider how to develop emergency preparedness systems and contingency planning processes that reinforce each other, and thus improve the effectiveness of their humanitarian response*'.

[7] Other sources that contain similar evidence includes: Levine et al (2011), Hellmuth et al (2011), Suarez & Arame Tall (2010) and WFP, (2008)

[8] CARE, Oxfam, Islamic Relief, PLAN, CAFOD, Save the Children and Handicap International

[9] e.g. Aon

[10] Number of agencies and partners from the ALERT consortium participating in the country testing will depend on the countries that "op-in" to the process

[11] Resources in this context refers to people, relief supplies, equipment and money