



CASE STUDY TITLE

Managing Spontaneous Volunteers in the Response and Recovery to Natural Disasters



SUMMARY

The objective of this case study is to enhance disaster management practices by involving spontaneous volunteers following disasters in Chile and Argentina, using lessons from implementing ISO 22319 in the UK. Case study objectives:

- To show the role of national, sub-national and local governments in the UK in the development of the initial policy and plans for implementing ISO 22319 on spontaneous volunteers.
- To show how we used the UK policy and plans and translated those into local governments in Chile and then into Argentina – constantly enhancing the policy and making it more transferable to new countries.
- To show how the policy and plans for local government will translate into national capabilities and policies in Chile and Argentina.
- To show how the content of the policy and plans have differed (and how they were the same) for the UK, Chile, and Argentina.
- To share policymakers' experiences and lessons learned from developing a policy on spontaneous volunteers using ISO 22319.
- To show how the content of the policy and plans may differ when they are implemented in other countries.
- To show the value in sharing experiences and developing a nationally-consistent approach to building local resilience capabilities via a National Consortium for Societal Resilience

BACKGROUND

Spontaneous volunteers (SV) are individuals who are unaffiliated

AT A GLANCE

COUNTRY

- United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

LEVEL

- National

SDG ADDRESSED

- SDG 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities

with existing official response organisations but who are motivated to provide unpaid support to disaster response and/or recovery. SVs can form a local resilience capability to reduce the impact of disasters, particularly where the capacity of official responders is insufficient.

Given the difficulties encountered in the management of SVs in past disasters, authorities in the UK, Chile, and Argentina have taken steps to implement a formalised approach to managing these volunteers. ISO 22319 (Guidelines for planning the involvement of spontaneous volunteers in disasters) provides clear guidance on the topic, and thus, governments have worked to implement it.



STRATEGY

The new International Standard, ISO 22319: Guidelines for planning the involvement of spontaneous volunteers in disasters, was published in 2017 after being developed within Working Group 5 (Community resilience) of ISO Technical Committee 292 (Security and Resilience). This standard was initiated following a project for the UK Government department, which found that the UK civil protection community were in need of guidance on what to do with SVs who offer their support to emergency responders. Many other countries have experienced difficulties in knowing what to do when SVs offered their help during past disasters. ISO 22319 is available in Spanish, French, Russian and English, and has been adopted by IRAM (Argentina), BSI (UK), INN (Chile) and many other countries.

RESULTS & IMPACT

To better understand the impact benefits of implementing ISO 22319 and the SV policy, interviews were held with local government officials from different countries. Below are a number of quotes from these government officials:

- Increased capacity and speed to respond to a disaster: “we have been able to increase capacity to deal with spontaneous volunteers by training Rotary international and Civil Service representatives ... has led to quicker response times, as we now have people on the call to deal with the influx of spontaneous volunteers ... helped to reduce the risk for the volunteers ... now accepted by a small group of spontaneous volunteers who previously worked in the floods and found it difficult to work with the Local Authority - and made a commitment to working with us” Barbara Sharratt, Emergency Planning Officer, Somerset County Council, UK

- New confidence from exercising the policy and plans: “We have carried out two live play exercises involving members of the community role-playing as ‘spontaneous volunteers’ - one scenario around an evacuation and one scenario regarding spontaneous volunteers presenting to volunteer for oil pollution clean-

up” Laura Edlington, Emergency Planning Officer, Lincolnshire County Council, UK.

- Raised awareness in the public of how to respond and have good practices: “The project has impacted positively our region and it has consistently attracted media attention. Our region is quite exposed to natural hazards. Developing a plan on spontaneous volunteers is making us more aware of all the stages and actions we need to take to manage properly spontaneous volunteers in times of disaster. This will help us avoid several issues we had in the past because we didn’t know how to include spontaneous volunteers in our emergency plans.” Alex Tardón, Director of Emergency Planning, Biobio Regional Government, Chile.

- Strengthen the partnership working of our stakeholders: “This [policy] is the result of the effort and dedication of our Department of Civil Protection and Emergencies and 24 institutions in the Concepcion area which has involved several stakeholders ... The project has impacted positively our region” Robert Contreras, Governor, Concepcion province, Chile.





CHALLENGES & LESSONS LEARNED

To effectively implement ISO 22319 in different countries requires slight changes which reflect the distinct characteristics inherent to each country/ region, and fully respect the social, cultural and political differences. Further, the role of local government and strong local leadership are key factors in encouraging the sustainability of the SVs plans.

The need for bottom-up implementation was crucial and bureaucratic centralism is a fundamental challenge to the successful implementation of ISO22319. Instances of

bureaucratic centralism were mitigated through the use of running workshops and events to design the SV policies (i.e. the bottom-up approach). The involvement of stakeholders from the local and national governments (and from the public and voluntary sector) has been very successful. ISO 22319 has been successfully implemented in countries and regions that have a “real need” for managing SVs. Developing local and national plans on SVs gave a practical and simple approach to creating a new local resilience capability that could provide support from communities in times of disaster.

POTENTIAL FOR REPLICATION

Initially, the policy and plans were developed in two regions in the UK (Somerset & Lincolnshire) and then later reproduced in Chile and Argentina.

This work has been replicated in NGOs, which take responsibility for organizing spontaneous volunteers. Replication has also been done at national levels to create local resilience capabilities across countries.

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