

# Workshop 3. Lessons Learned: Resilient Municipalities Respond to Crises

THE FORTNIGHT  
Tunisia-Canada  
Municipal Exchanges  
May 17-28, 2021



## Objectives

Share and learn from good practices acquired as part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and other crises. Discuss how the response took into account inclusion and the different needs of the population (women and other groups).

## Experiences

Municipalities are on the front line for crisis management. The COVID-19 pandemic was the first major crisis that Tunisian municipalities have had to manage since the first municipal elections in 2018 as part of the decentralization process in which crisis management responsibilities were delegated to the local level.

The municipality of **Hammam Chatt** (Tunisia), one of the IMLP's partner municipalities, hosted the first isolation center to care for people with COVID-19, in coordination with the Ministry of Health and the Red Crescent. The municipality had to manage the community's concerns about the presence of these patients. The municipality also coordinated actions to provide supplies to the citizens who could not leave their homes. Strategies for care, screening, and vaccination evolved and improved during the three waves of COVID. The municipality of Hammam Chatt provided care and vaccination services for four municipalities in the region.

Based on the experience of COVID-19, a **Municipal Guide for Inclusive Crisis Management** was developed by the IMLP team, using a participatory process. The guide takes into account gender and inclusion in all phases of crisis preparation and management: raising public and media awareness of vulnerabilities; access to data disaggregated by sex; active



involvement of men and women in the vulnerability assessment; planning interventions and equal access to emergency services.

The Canadian municipalities of **Gatineau, QC** and **Squamish, BC** shared their experiences in crisis management. In Gatineau, within a few years they faced severe flooding, a tornado and then COVID-19. In Squamish, they had to deal with forest fires at the same time as the pandemic. The presenters stressed the importance of recognizing the distress of citizens; continuously being prepared for the next crises; collaborating with other levels of government; being flexible and knowing how to adapt to a changing context; and having clear and transparent communications with the population.

# Resilient Municipalities

## Lessons Learned

1. **Develop an emergency plan** before the crisis hits. There needs to be a general plan for handling any crisis, and specific plans for the most probable hazards.
2. **Prepare an operations center** and identify the people who will be involved in the response.
3. **Define the roles of each person.** There needs to be a captain on board and there must be no ambiguity in roles. Set up a guide that gives clear directions.
4. **Put citizens at the heart of the response.** They suffered losses. You must be empathetic, but at the same time follow the protocols. The collective interest must take precedence over individual interest.
5. **Communicate clearly and continuously.** Communicate the reasons for the decisions made. Communication helps citizens take action. When there is uncertainty, rumours and misinformation circulate.
6. **Invest in preparation.** Do not ask yourself IF the crisis will come, but rather WHEN it will happen.
7. **Identify the likely risks and how to respond to them.** Prepare elected officials, offer training, and form a crisis management team.
8. **Take care of the staff and the management team.** The staff are responding to the crisis, but they are affected by it as well.
9. **Plan for recovery during the response.** Implement a participatory process to identify needs and build back better.
10. After the crisis, **reflect on what went well and what did not.** Identify lessons learned with all stakeholders. Incorporate the lessons into the emergency plan. Include a plan of how to handle two emergencies at the same time.
11. Carry out **technical studies** and identify risk areas, as well as the most vulnerable groups.
12. Create an **emergency fund** that accompanies the crisis management plan.

*In general, we must consider crisis management as a cycle: we prepare, there is a crisis, we manage it, we learn, and we prepare for the next! We are always in crisis management mode.*

## Additional Resources



[Workshop recording](#)

[Video of crisis response in Gatineau, QC](#)

[Video of public health crisis response in Hammam Chatt](#)

[Promotional video of Hammam Chatt](#)

[Video of public health crisis response in Nabeul](#)



[Women leaders and the management of the public health crisis, CREDIF \(Arabic and French\)](#)

[Presentation on the Municipal Guide for Inclusive Crisis Management \(French\)](#)

[Presentation on crisis management in Squamish, BC](#)

[Template for Municipal Crisis Management: A Pandemic Response Plan](#)

[A feminist economic recovery plan for COVID-19](#)