



Executive Summary: Operational Guidance for Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crises

Endorsed: 2012

This guidance is due for revision in 2023. Note that it references out-of-date definitions/documents (i.e., the Humanitarian Dashboard, Preliminary Scenario Definition, and CASPAR secondment mechanism.) The key principles, actors, and approach remain valid and should be reviewed alongside the IASC Humanitarian Programme Cycle Reference Module and corresponding OCHA guidance and templates.

At a glance

The coordination of assessments is crucial to ensuring solid inter-sectoral analysis during humanitarian crises and therefore better decision-making and planning. The IASC Operational Guidance for Coordinated Assessments is both a procedural manual and an IASC policy document. It lays out the broad approach and rationale for preparing for, and implementing, coordinated humanitarian needs assessments and provides an accountability framework for key steps in the process. It promotes a coordinated approach to assessments to address recurring issues during emergencies. The Guidance supports all humanitarian actors but targets decision makers responsible for promoting and ensuring a coordinated assessment approach, including Humanitarian Coordinators/Resident Coordinators (HC/RCs), and entities tasked with its implementation, including OCHA, clusters and cluster lead agencies.

Six key recommendations for field leaders

1. The HC/RC establishes coordination mechanisms for cross-cluster/sector needs assessment and analysis.
2. Country-level cluster/sector leads ensure effective and coherent sectoral needs assessment.
3. Operational agencies have the primary responsibility for undertaking assessments. They do so in a coordinated manner and adhere to the definitions, principles, methodologies, and approaches set out in the Operational Guidance.
4. Plans for implementing coordinated assessments are part of preparedness and contingency planning work.
5. Coordinated assessments are part of ongoing processes guiding operational decision-making and complement monitoring of the overall humanitarian situation and the performance of the humanitarian response.
6. Coordination mechanisms applied to needs assessments differ depending on the phase and nature of a crisis. A multi cluster/sector initial rapid assessment (MIRA) is recommended during the first two weeks following a disaster, followed by joint or harmonized intra-cluster/sector in-depth assessments.

Five key actions to be taken under the assessment framework

1. Initial assessments carried out during Phase 1 (the first 72 hours)
2. Rapid assessments carried out during Phase 2 (the first and second weeks)
3. In-depth assessments carried out during Phase 3 (the third and fourth weeks)
4. In-depth assessments, including on recovery needs, during Phase 4 (week five onwards)
5. While geared towards sudden onset emergencies, the principles laid out in the Operational Guidance are applicable in all large-scale humanitarian crises.

The full IASC product is available at <https://iasc.ch/coordinated-humanitarian-assessments-2012>
For support using this product, or to provide feedback on the product or this summary, contact IASC secretariat at: iasccorrespondence@un.org.

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