Checklist for RCs and HCs
on Emergency Preparedness and Response

IASC Inter-Agency
Standing Committee

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ABOUT THIS CHECKLIST

This checklist provides guidance to RCs and HCs who are confronted with any type of humanitarian emergency. It maps out actions to take at the onset of an emergency. As situations vary, the type and order of activities may need to be adapted on a case-by-case basis. The following applies to all emergencies however, whether the Government has requested, welcomed or declined international assistance :

1 Support the Government

Each State has the responsibility first and foremost to take care of the victims of emergencies occurring on its territory by initiating, organizing, coordinating and implementing humanitarian assistance.

The RC or HC should support national efforts by leading and coordinating humanitarian action of relevant organizations in country, whenever possible in support of and in coordination with national and local authorities.

2 Abide by international humanitarian and human rights law and humanitarian principles

In all activities, the RC or HC is guided by international humanitarian and human rights law as well as by the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

3 Be guided by the Principles of Partnership

Relations among organizations involved in humanitarian action are governed by the Principles of Partnership (PoP) : equality, transparency, result-oriented approach, responsibility and complementarity.

Accountability

The HC is ultimately accountable to the populations in need. When responding to humanitarian emergencies, RCs and HCs report directly to the Emergency Relief Coordinator. They should therefore immediately inform the ERC of the disaster, forward available information, and consult on the future course of action.

Support

If you are a HC, your first port of call is the OCHA Country Office, if one exists. If there is no OCHA presence in your country, contact the OCHA Regional Office.

If you are an RC, your first port of call is the OCHA Regional Office covering your country.

At headquarters level, your entry point is the Director of OCHA's Coordination and Response Division, based in New York.

For urgent support needs, contact the OCHA Emergency Relief Coordination Centre, based in Geneva, which operates 24/7 (+41 22 917 2010).

How to use this checklist

The checklist is split into two time frames: actions to take within 24 hours and actions to take within the first week of an emergency. Each section follows the sequencing of activities of the Handbook for RCs and HCs on Emergency Preparedness and Response.

Additional information on key concepts printed in blue can be found in the Handbook. Please refer to the index of the Handbook for page references.

ACTIONS TO TAKE WITHIN 24 HOURS

Alert	Obtain a brief overview of the scale and scope of the emergency (preliminary scenario) based on available information from national authorities, UN agencies, IOM, national and international NGOs, civil society organizations, the International Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, the media, GDACS, ReliefWeb.
	Alert OCHA and all relevant partners in-country.

	Contact the Government to :
	– Review national capacity to deal with the emergency.
	– Clarify its intent to declare a state of emergency.[1]
	– Remind it of its obligations vis-à-vis the UN Charter, applicable Security Council resolutions, and international humanitarian and human rights law.
	– Remind it of its obligation to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian actors, their premises and assets.
	   ⇨ If the Government cannot provide the required security measures, request UNDSS to assess the requirements to secure UN premises and assets and seek their advice on how this can be achieved.
	– Clarify its intent to request, welcome or decline international assistance:
	   ⇨ If the Government requests or welcomes assistance, outline support options available, request approval for humanitarian workers' entry into the country and request UNDAC and/or HIC standby.
	   ⇨ If the Government declines international assistance but assistance is nonetheless required, urge in-country humanitarian actors to increase their capacity to respond.
	– Request logistical assistance for site visits (e.g. helicopters), if required.

	Based on the preliminary scenario and the Government's capacity, assess if an international response is warranted.
	In case of an earthquake or collapse of urban structures, encourage national authorities to call for international urban search-and-rescue assistance, preferably from INSARAG members.

Capacity Assessment	Based on the preliminary scenario and the Inter-Agency Contingency Plan, assess the capacity of your office to coordinate the response.
	   ⇨ If available, reassign OCHA staff within the country.
	   ⇨ If additional capacity is required, request additional human resources (surge capacity).
	   ⇨ If warranted, request deployment of an UNDAC team by calling OCHA or UNDAC, and assess the need for logistical support (transport, base camp, IT) from the International Humanitarian Partnership (IHP).

	Request UNDSS to deploy Security Advisers, if needed.
Coordination Mechanisms	Convene all relevant humanitarian partners to form a HCT, including whenever possible national authorities.

	In consultation with the HCT, review contingency plans (national and inter-agency) and existing coordination mechanisms for response.
	   ⇨ If national coordination mechanisms exist, use them to avoid parallel structures.
	   ⇨ If clusters were envisaged in the Inter-Agency Contingency Plan, review their appropriateness in light of the emergency and establish them.
	   ⇨ In the absence of a contingency plan, agree on which clusters should be established and which agency/organization should lead them, based on identified priority needs/gaps, coordination capacity and operational presence.

	If you are the DO, convene the Security Management Team to assess the security situation and agree on immediate measures[2]. ⇨ If the emergency affects UN staff, assets or premises establish a Crisis Management Team.
	In consultation with the HCT, assess the need for a forum for cluster coordinators to discuss inter-cluster issues and eventually establish an inter-cluster coordination mechanism.
	In consultation with the HCT, agree on priority cross-cutting issues to be addressed in the response, such as age, diversity, environment, gender, HIV/AIDS, and psychosocial support. ⇨ Where needed, request expertise from existing national mechanisms (e.g. national AIDS programme) or establish inter-cluster thematic groups on cross-cutting issues.

Operational Response	Coordinate response activities through regular meetings with the HCT, including national authorities whenever possible. In cooperation with the HCT, prioritize activities according to the security environment.
	Ensure the release of at least one situation report to inform stakeholders of ongoing activities.
Operational Response	If national or foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets (MCDA) are inadequate to address needs or there is likely to be an extended need for MCDA, ask national authorities if the UN system can mobilize foreign MCDA. ⇨ If accepted, request OCHA to coordinate MCDA mobilized from international sources.
	In case of potential impact on natural resources and the environment, liaise with the relevant national authorities (including the Ministry of Environment), the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit (JEU) and UNEP Post-Conflict and Disaster Management Branch to discern the need for specialized assistance. ⇨ If warranted, urge national authorities and/or humanitarian partners to conduct an environmental impact assessment as quickly as possible.
Resource Mobilisation	Ascertain donor intentions.
	In consultation with the HCT and the ERC, assess the need for a Flash Appeal. ⇨ If warranted, assign an Appeal Focal Point within your office.
	Send a written request to OCHA for an Emergency Cash Grant. At a minimum, the request should specify the nature of the disaster and outline the assistance required (including the amount requested).
	Send a request to UNDP/BCPR for resources from UNDP's Immediate Response to Sudden Crisis (TRAC 1.1.3 Category II Resources), copied to the relevant BCPR Regional Bureau.
	In countries with an established ERF, launch a call for proposals.
Access	Based on the Inter-Agency Contingency Plan (if it exists) and in consultation with the HCT, identify which State or non-State actors affect access to affected populations.
	Remind all parties of their obligations to meet the basic needs of affected populations.
	Encourage all parties to allow and facilitate relief activities. Explain the strictly humanitarian character of these activities (e.g. by referring to the humanitarian principles) and gain parties' acceptance of these activities.
	Develop a humanitarian negotiation analysis and strategy for dealing with identified access issues.
Humanitarian and human rights law	Encourage the Government to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of its population in accordance with its obligations by invoking applicable domestic, regional and international legal instruments, including in respect of populations with special needs.
	Encourage the Government to appoint focal points on protection and human rights.
Media relations	In consultation with the HCT, as per the Inter-Agency Contingency Plan (if it exists) : – Establish an emergency public information team to develop a crisis communication plan. – Agree on who speaks to the media. ⇨ If capacity within your office is limited, request surge capacity from OCHA.
	Hold a press conference. Whenever possible, do this jointly with national authorities.
	Issue a press release and/or an official statement.

1. For some donors this is a prerequisite to disburse emergency funding.
2. If you are not the DO, support the process through the SMT.

ACTIONS TO TAKE WITHIN THE FIRST WEEK

Coordination Mechanisms	Upon arrival of the UNDAC team, organize briefings with national authorities and the HCT to discuss coordination mechanisms and structures. Agree on responsibilities and reporting lines of the UNDAC team, HIC and IHP team leaders.
	Send a letter to the ERC outlining which clusters will be established and the designated lead agencies. The ERC transmits the proposal to IASC agencies and Global Cluster Lead Agencies for them to give their approval within 24 hours. ⇨ If approved, inform relevant partners of agreed cluster coordination arrangements.
	In consultation with the HCT, establish an early recovery network consisting of focal points from each cluster to coordinate early recovery activities and develop an Early Recovery Strategic Framework. ⇨ If key recovery areas are not covered by clusters, establish a specific Early Recovery Cluster in addition to the early recovery network, in consultation with the HCT and the Early Recovery Advisor.
Needs Assessment	In consultation with the HCT, and based on the Inter-Agency Contingency Plan, define the procedures and focus of subsequent assessments and, in consultation with the HCT and OCHA, agree on multi-cluster assessments.
Response Planning	In consultation with the HCT and, where possible, national authorities, based on the Inter-Agency Contingency Plan (if it exists) and available needs assessment results, develop a strategic humanitarian response plan including early recovery and a protection strategy.
Operational Response	Coordinate response activities through regular meetings with the HCT, including national authorities whenever possible.
	Assign an information management focal point unless an UNDAC team is deployed and has adequate capacity to take on these functions. ⇨ If necessary, request OCHA to set up a Humanitarian Information Centre (HIC).
	If you are the DO liaise with appropriate Government institutions, Police, Ministry of Defense on security matters[3].
	If applicable, liaise with domestic and foreign military forces in-country. Based on consultations with UN Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination (UN-CMCoord) Officers, adopt a civil-military coordination strategy.
Resource Mobilization	Engage donors in needs assessment and response planning as appropriate in order to build trust and increase their understanding of priorities and funding needs.
	Advocate with donors to channel funding into priority areas.
	Lead the HCT in producing a draft Flash Appeal document based on the Inter-Agency Contingency Plan (if it exists) and on available assessment results by clusters. Approve the final draft of the appeal and send it to OCHA for inter-agency headquarters review prior to the official launch.
	In consultation with the HCT, assess the need for a CERF rapid response grant in parallel with the development of a Flash Appeal. ⇨ If warranted : – Assign a focal point within your office to liaise with the CERF Secretariat on the application process. – Determine funding priorities based on the CERF life-saving criteria, available results from the joint multisectoral rapid assessment, the humanitarian response plan, funding shortfalls, and capacity to implement within the grant's time frame. – Request Cluster Lead Agencies to submit priority projects of their respective cluster. ⇨ If a Flash Appeal exists, the most urgent life-saving projects should be prioritized submitted to the CERF for rapid funding. – In consultation with the HCT, and based on the agreed criteria and funding priorities, review and approve projects submitted by clusters. – Send a consolidated grant request to the ERC, with a copy to the CERF Secretariat.
	In countries with an established ERF, convene a meeting of the Review Board to select projects (after initial review by OCHA), or consult electronically and sign grant agreements with recipient organizations.

Access	If access constraints are due to :
	– Bureaucratic impediments: seek to ensure that entry procedures for humanitarian personnel, equipment and goods into the country and their deployment to the field are streamlined.
	  ⇨ If the Government is party to international instruments or guidelines to facilitate international relief, refer to them.
	  ⇨ If necessary, act as a consignee for incoming goods.
	– Ongoing hostilities: in consultation with the HCT, assess the relevance and feasibility of humanitarian corridors, deconfliction arrangements or a temporary cessation of hostilities to enable the delivery of assistance and/or to enable civilian populations to leave areas of fighting.
	  ⇨ If warranted, negotiate with the relevant parties and ensure robust civil-military capacity within the HCT to support the development and implementation of these access strategies.
	– Attacks on humanitarian personnel, facilities and/or assets: in consultation with the HCT, assess the motivating factors driving attacks. Consult with DSS and humanitarian actors on possible solutions to mitigate risks, including efforts to increase acceptance of humanitarian action and undertake negotiations with the relevant parties.

Humanitarian and human rights law	Encourage the Government to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of its population in accordance with its obligations by invoking applicable domestic, regional and international legal instruments, including in respect of populations with special needs.
	Encourage the Government to appoint focal points on protection and human rights issues.
Media Relations	In consultation with the HCT, agree on the HCT's position, key advocacy messages, basic reference data/figures and sources.
	Request your PI Officer/team to develop Field Key Messages. Authorize the messages before issuance.

3. If you are not the DO, support the process through the SMT.

Useful Information Platforms

CERF	http://cerf.un.org
Clusters	http://oneresponse.info
Early Recovery	http://www.undp.org/cpr/
Flash Appeal	http://ochaonline.un.org/humanitarianappeal/
GDACS	http://gdacs.org
Reliefweb	http://www.reliefweb.int
V-OSOCC	http://ocha.unog.ch/virtualosocc

Glossary

CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
ERC	Emergency Relief Coordinator
GDACS	Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team, comprising UN agencies, IOM Red Cross Movement and NGOs
HIC	Humanitarian Information Centre
IASC	Inter-agency Standing Committee
SMT	Security Management Team
UNDAC	United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team
UNDSS	UN Department of Safety and Security
UNDP/BCPR	United Nations Development Programme / Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery
V-OSOCC	Virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Centre

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KEY CONTACTS IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

FOLLOWING A DISASTER, IMMEDIATELY CONTACT

1	**The OCHA presence in-country is your first point of contact**	Tel.:
2	**If there is no OCHA office in your country, contact the OCHA Regional Office**	Tel.:
3	**If there is no OCHA Regional Office covering your country, or further assistance is needed, call:** OCHA Emergency Relief Coordination Centre (ERCC) 24/7, Geneva	Tel: +41 22 917 2010

OTHER CONTACTS

Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) –New York Ms. Valerie Amos	Tel: +1 212 963 2738 Email: amosv@un.org
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INSARAG Secretariat – OCHA Geneva (for earthquakes)	Tel: +41 22 917 1600 Fax: +41 22 917 0023
UNDAC – OCHA Geneva	Tel: +41 22 917 1600 Fax: +41 22 917 0023 Email: undac_alert@un.org
OCHA Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) Section – Geneva	Tel: +41 22 917 1636 Email: CAP@un.org
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