

DECEMBER 2013

REFERENCE MODULE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
**THE HUMANITARIAN
PROGRAMME CYCLE**

Note: This is Version 1.0 of the Module (dated 12 December 2013). It will be used in a handful of ongoing crises and in any upcoming L3 emergency, before being revised and subsequently endorsed by the IASC Working Group and the IASC Principals in the second quarter of 2014.

IASC
Inter-Agency Standing Committee

This Reference Module was prepared by the Programme Cycle Steering Group of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). The Group is composed of Directors from IASC UN agencies and NGOs, and oversees the work of various IASC bodies working on the programme cycle.

The Reference Module will be revised in the second quarter of 2014 to take account of feedback from practitioners and further developments in guidance and tools.

List of acronyms

4W	Database: Who does What Where and When
CAP	Consolidated Appeal Process
CADRI	Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative (UN)
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CHF	Common Humanitarian Fund
CLA	Cluster Lead Agency
COD	Common Operational Dataset
CRP	Contingency Response Planning
EDG	Emergency Directors' Group
ERC	Emergency Relief Coordinator
ERP	Emergency Response Preparedness
EWM	Early Warning Monitoring
FOD	Fundamental Operational Dataset
FTS	Financial Tracking Service
GCLA	Global Cluster Lead Agency
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HIR	Humanitarian Indicator Registry
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
HPC	Humanitarian Programme Cycle
IARRM	Inter-Agency Rapid Response Mechanism
IAES	Inter-agency emergency simulation
IAHE	Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IOM	International Organization for Migration
L3	Level three emergency
MPA	Minimum Preparedness Actions
MIRA	Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment
MTG	Monitoring Technical Group
NGOs	non-governmental organizations
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OPR	Operational Peer Review
OPS	Online Projects System
PRP	Preliminary Response Plan
RC	Resident Coordinator
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
SRP	Strategic Response Plan
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDAC	United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Transforming the HPC	4
What is new about the HPC?	4
How the HPC helps us work together	5
One approach.....	5
Exit and early recovery.....	5
Who is the audience for this module?	6
Enablers – the heart of the HPC	6
Coordination	6
Information management	6
Quality and accountability	8
Accountability to affected people	8
Cross-cutting issues and gender equality	8
Implementing a sound programme cycle	8
Phases and process.....	8
What triggers implementation of the HPC?.....	9
Who does what?.....	9
Guidance	10
Implementation of the HPC	10
Timeline	10
Who does what?.....	10
Purpose	10
Preparedness	11
Situation Analysis (day 2)	13
Strategic Statement (day 3)	14
Preliminary Response Plan (days 5-7).....	15
Multi-cluster/sector Initial Rapid Assessment (day 14)	16
Humanitarian Needs Overview	17
Strategic Response Plan	19
Monitoring the response	20
Operational Peer Review	21
Inter-agency Humanitarian Evaluation	22
Additional information	23

INTRODUCTION

Transforming the Humanitarian Programme Cycle

The primary responsibility to assist and protect people affected by emergencies lies with States. In addition, in situations of armed conflict, non-State parties to conflict are obliged to protect persons affected and at risk in accordance with international humanitarian law. The humanitarian community has an essential role to engage with these actors to protect and assist people in need, in support of and in complement to the role of States. This Module is intended to guide this engagement.

The Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) is an important element of the Transformative Agenda (TA) which the IASC initiated in 2011 and which oversaw the development of guidance in coordination, leadership and accountability. Although the experience of large-scale crises in Haiti and Pakistan in 2010 were the initial impetus for the TA, the majority of the guidance supports all humanitarian response, with only some guidance being specific to large-scale “level 3” crises.

The HPC serves as a guide for all crises. It is designed to revitalize the way in which humanitarian actors coordinate to meet the needs of people affected by disasters and conflict. The HPC seeks to meet the needs of affected populations in the most effective way by clearly defining the complementary roles and responsibilities of the different organisations involved in a humanitarian response. It creates a *process* that redefines the way in which international humanitarian actors engage - with each other, with national and local authorities, and with people affected by crises - to achieve more effective, efficient, predictable and transparent outcomes.

In refugee operations, UNHCR has the mandate to prepare for, lead and coordinate the response. Modalities are currently being put in place by UNHCR to ensure effective coordination and interface between refugee operations and other types of humanitarian operations.

What is new about the HPC?

The HPC highlights the need to:

- *Prepare as much as possible before emergencies strike.* Preparedness may include planning, prepositioning, and the integration of emergency planning in development programming.
- *Plan based on evidence.* To develop a sound information base, organisations need to collect, analyse and share information in advance of crises; analyse new information; and ensure that decisions are evidence-based.
- *Set objectives early and ensure they drive the response.* To do this, those involved need strong and accountable leadership and excellent coordination.
- *Locate decision-making in the field,* as close as possible to the affected population. While international support is often essential, notably in large-scale emergencies, it is vital to work with and listen to national and local authorities, humanitarian organisations already in the country, local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and people affected by the crisis.
- *Monitor the impact* of humanitarian action and adjust programmes in response. This requires the development of regular monitoring and periodic evaluation processes.

The HPC is innovative because it combines the above elements in a single strategic process that runs through the cycle of inter-agency coordination. Via the HPC, organisations working at all levels can help to define the overall shape of the response, position their role in relation to other organisations and programmes, and understand what needs to be done at a given moment. The HPC's structured and inclusive process has the potential to make international contributions to emergency response more coherent, effective, and accountable.

Dynamic but structured decision-making is vital in the fast-moving and confused environment of an emergency. The HPC establishes a transparent decision-making process and timeline that enable organisations to know what to do when.

At the same time, the HPC process is inclusive. It involves all relevant actors in decisions, and adopts a cooperative approach to achieving agreed objectives. ‘All actors’ includes humanitarian NGOs, who play a critical role, as well as national authorities and affected people.

The HPC is therefore an important opportunity and a challenge, since it requires humanitarian actors to cooperate more actively in planning and information-sharing, and to apply agreed decision-making parameters. It is a new way of doing. Organizations will need to change their practices, but also their mind-set and institutional culture.

The rewards are potentially enormous, because the adoption of the HPC approach should enable humanitarian organisations to meet the needs of people affected by crisis faster, more efficiently, and with greater transparency and accountability.

How the HPC helps us to work together

The HPC is a collective, consultative process. The way in which it builds components, such as the Strategic Response Plan, creates an environment in which all those involved in a response can see their role in relation to others, and position their work in terms of agreed and shared objectives. It affirms the value of inclusion and consultation. Processes that are inclusive and consultative generate better planning decisions, more robust cooperation, greater accountability, and legitimacy.

The HPC process applies this approach to the relations between all the international and national actors who are involved in humanitarian response – clusters and sectors and humanitarian agencies, but also national authorities and national civil society organizations and, above all, affected people.

The construction of a coherent and agreed process, with clear overall objectives, also enables senior managers to oversee the response as a whole, and set more consistent parameters for programmes and projects. Managers within clusters/sectors are in a position to do the same at that level.

One approach

The HPC (and the Reference Module) do not distinguish between different kinds of crisis or emergency response. It incorporates response to sudden-onset emergencies within an on-going response framework and, in doing so, offers a single approach to all forms of emergency response. Managers must therefore exercise judgement when they use it. No two emergencies are the same. The Reference Module stresses the importance of analysing the context in which an emergency occurs, including the social and political environment. It recognizes that managers will need to adapt their planning and programmes to meet conditions on the ground.

It also recognizes that institutional and decision-making arrangements vary, especially at the onset of a disaster. Ideally, a response involving IASC members should be

- Led by a Humanitarian Coordinator (HC)¹,
- Managed by a Humanitarian Country Team (HCT),²
- With external oversight by the IASC Principals,
- In support of the national authorities, who have ultimate responsibility.

If an emergency occurs suddenly, however, no HCT may exist and essential expertise or leadership may not be in country or appointed. In these circumstances, it is recognized that decisions must be taken by those who are in place, and that decision-making processes may need to be adapted (or may be slower) while an appropriate inter-agency infrastructure forms. If the emergency is protracted or occurs in a conflict setting, structures may already be in place but they may not have the capacity to cope with a large-scale crisis, especially at sub-national level. The Reference Module should be read with this in mind.

Exit and early recovery

Early recovery is a vital element of any effective humanitarian response. Planning for it should start when the crisis begins. Early recovery is an approach that addresses recovery needs that arise during the humanitarian phase using humanitarian mechanisms that align with development principles. It

¹ Terms of Reference for the Humanitarian Coordinator (2009).

² An HCT is composed of organisations that undertake humanitarian action in-country and that commit to participate in coordination arrangements. Its objective is to ensure that activities are coordinated, that humanitarian action in-country is principled, timely, effective and efficient, and that it contributes to longer-term recovery. The overall purpose is to alleviate human suffering and protect the lives, livelihoods and dignity of populations in need. The HCT is ultimately accountable to the populations in need.

enables people to use the benefits of humanitarian action to seize development opportunities, builds resilience, and establishes a sustainable process of recovery from crisis.

For humanitarian organizations, early recovery can provide a path to durable solutions, and an exit strategy. For both reasons, development programmes that promote sustainable long-term solutions should be integrated into the HPC and explicitly referenced in humanitarian strategies and approaches.

Who is the audience for this module?

This Reference Module is primarily for managers of organizations that prepare for and respond to humanitarian emergencies. It provides an overview of what needs to be delivered at each step of a planning cycle that includes preparedness, response, and active learning through peer review and evaluation. It is designed to enable managers to allocate staff and tasks, sequence decisions and planning, and identify priorities.

ENABLERS: THE HEART OF HPC

Coordination

Responding to the needs of affected people is at the heart of humanitarian response, and coordination facilitates that response. Coordination seeks to improve humanitarian response by generating a decision-making process that is inclusive, transparent, consultative, guided by objectives, and evidence-based. A key aim is to engage operational actors in the planning process in a manner that enables them to influence it and the direction of the response, and to negotiate priorities and resources in a rational and cooperative manner.

For more information, please see the [IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at the Country Level](#).

Information management³

Humanitarian information management is the systematic process of collecting, collating, storing, processing, verifying, and analysing data and information, and disseminating relevant information to humanitarian stakeholders. Information management underpins each phase of the HPC and helps connect phases by carrying enriched information from one to another. If the HPC is to run smoothly, information managers need to coordinate closely, particularly at the inter-sectoral level.

³ The [IASC Operational Guidance on Responsibilities of Cluster/Sector Leads and OCHA in Information Management](#) outlines the information management responsibilities of OCHA and the clusters, and sets out expectations of sector/cluster members, including the role of an Information Management Working Group.

QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY: FOUNDATION OF THE HPC

The foundation of humanitarian action and a responsibility of all humanitarian actors is to enhance the protection of affected populations. System-wide efforts to jointly achieve this aim require applying a rights-based approach and ensuring protection driven strategic analysis and priority-setting.

Accountability to affected people

Humanitarian organisations engaged in a response are expected to listen to, engage with and communicate transparently with affected populations throughout all phases of the HPC. Humanitarian actors need to establish a more direct and responsible relationship with aid recipients. Affected communities need to be engaged in the different element of the HPC, their views incorporated into the deliverables, and the different outputs shared with them. Good communication between aid workers and the affected communities leads to meaningful dialogue, thereby improving the quality of the strategic process and the actions linked to it.

In December 2011, the IASC Principals endorsed the five commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP): leadership and governance; transparency; feedback and complaints; participation; design, monitoring and evaluation which can be found on the IASC website. Additional operational guidance is in development.

Cross-cutting issues and gender equality

Humanitarian organizations should not consider affected populations as a homogeneous group but acknowledge differences with respect to sex, gender, ethnicity, disability, age, and other social markers of exclusion. These differences should shape communication messages and community consultations (for assessment, design, implementation, etc.).

Gender equality is a fundamental principle within humanitarian response. All agencies undertake to assess the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies and programmes, in all areas and at all levels. Making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian policies and programmes is vital to an effective response. For more information, please see the [IASC Gender Handbook on Humanitarian Action \(Women, Girls, Boys and Men: Different Needs, Equal Opportunities\)](#) and the online [IASC gender training course](#).

IMPLEMENTING A SOUND PROGRAMME CYCLE

Phases and process

The Reference Module summarises each phase of the HPC in order. Key phases of the HPC apply to all disasters. These phases are preparedness, needs assessment and analysis, strategic planning, monitoring, and operational peer review and evaluation. Implementation covers the operationalization of all these phases.

Large-scale humanitarian crises triggered by natural disasters or conflict, which require enhanced system-wide support (referred to as level 3 or L3 emergencies⁴), are subject to specific procedures to ensure a more effective response to the humanitarian needs of affected people. When the IASC Principals declare a crisis to be a L3 emergency, mechanisms and tools are activated to ensure that the system delivers effectively and can monitor its performance. In this regard, in the first thirty days from when a crisis hits of a subsequently declared L3 emergency, several deliverables need to be completed. These have been designed to ensure that well-coordinated action is taken, driven by agreed objectives, as quickly as possible in the very confused and fast-moving environment. The Module devotes a section to each L3 deliverable. To indicate these specific L3 procedures, the pages in question are marked with an orange square in the top right corner. *As appropriate, the process and deliverables could be followed in non-L3 emergencies.*

⁴ For more information, please see the IASC paper, Humanitarian System-Wide Emergency Activation: Definition and Procedures, April 2012. .

Most pages follow a specific structure. The headings are: when, purpose, what needs to be done, who does what, who is the audience. If available online, links to further technical guidance are included on each page. A list of additional information sources can be found at the end of the Module.

WHAT TRIGGERS IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HPC?

In all forms of emergency, regardless of the phase they are in, international humanitarian organisations should implement the HPC whenever they agree to respond. In large-scale sudden-onset emergencies, the scale of need, the relative lack of information, and the need to communicate and mobilise resources very rapidly, mean that decisions must be taken on the basis of less information and analysis. In such cases, the IASC has determined that the HPC should have a strict, faster timeline.

The overall approach and objective nevertheless remain the same for all crises. The approach to a slow onset, protracted crisis and the approach to later stages of a large-scale sudden onset crisis are the same. This reflects the fact that similar levels of information have become available, making it possible in both cases to do detailed assessments and analysis of need, and plan for the longer-term.

Who does what?

In a L3 emergency

The HC or RC (or whoever has authority in their absence) decides whether an emergency has occurred that warrants international assistance. The HC/RC reaches this decision in close cooperation with the HCT (or whatever group fulfils this role in its absence). They draw on initial information that is available on sectoral needs, and the advice of the national authorities and relevant NGOs. This implies that the L3 timeline is initiated from when an event or emergency starts.

The RC/HC then initiates the preparation of a [Situation Analysis](#), a [Strategic Statement](#), a [Preliminary Response Plan](#) (using the Contingency Response Plan, if one is available), and a [Multi-cluster/sector Initial Rapid Assessment \(MIRA\)](#); and determines a process for completing these tasks and who has responsibility. The RC/HC and HCT, supported by information from clusters/sectors, determine the extent to which they need additional assistance to deal with the emergency. They consider coordination gaps, and their ability to manage the initial phases of the HPC.

The RC/HC informs the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) that an emergency has started and indicates what resources may be required, such as support for clusters, access to the Inter-Agency Rapid Response Mechanism (IARRM)⁵, etc.

The role of the HC and HCT in an L3 emergency cannot be overstated. How they define the crisis and the responsibility for leading the response to it, are critical. For more information, please refer to the TA protocols on *L3 system-wide activation*, *empowered leadership* and *IARRM* for further guidance on decision-making and levels of responsibility in-country.

In sudden onset, slow onset or protracted emergencies

The HC (or whoever has authority in their absence) decides that a humanitarian situation exists or has deteriorated to the point that (additional) international assistance is required, or that an ongoing crisis needs continued support. This decision is made in close cooperation with the HCT (or whatever group fulfils this role in its absence). The RC/HC and HCT draw on information that is available on sectoral needs, and the advice of national authorities and relevant NGOs.

In most such cases, a considerable amount of work will already have been done to identify vulnerable populations, build their resilience, assess and monitor their needs, and define and cost the elements of a response. When a detailed analysis of the situation and humanitarian needs can be determined

⁵ The IARRM is a roster of experts who can be deployed at very short notice to provide technical and management support, especially in the early phases of a large scale emergency. It was established by the IASC to help the RC/HC and HCT to manage phases in the HPC where there was a lack of capacity. Please see the TA protocol on the IARRM.

quickly through a [Humanitarian Needs Overview](#), or is already available in the form of a Contingency Response Plan, the RC/HC and HCT may move directly to produce a [Strategic Response Plan](#).

Guidance

For guidance on L3 activation and the accompanying procedures, please see the TA protocols on *L3 system-wide activation*, *empowered leadership* and *IARRM*.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HPC

Timeline

Affected people are very often the first responders, alongside local and national authorities and national NGOs. However, the HPC process enables all the organizations involved to assess needs in a thorough manner, to coordinate and plan, and prioritize use of resources.

Who does what?

Implementation should support and complement the capacity of national actors to respond, whether these are affected populations, national NGOs, national authorities or other national mechanisms. The contribution of each organization involved in an international response is based on its mandate, expertise and capacity. The HPC coordinates the work of international organizations so that their contribution is complementary, needs are prioritised, and implementation is as effective as possible.

Purpose

The Reference Module focuses on what needs to be done, when, and by whom. It does not describe how to do each action. For this, managers should refer to the technical guidance that is available. Recommended tools are listed at the end of each section and at the end of the document.

This Reference Module is a guide, not a book of rules. Organizations and their managers are asked to think dynamically, to cooperate actively with other organisations and managers across the response, and act in context. They should relate each step of the HPC to the response's overall objectives, taking full account of the context. By using this Reference Module, managers and staff can make sure that the resources of their organisations contribute effectively to the overall humanitarian response.

PREPAREDNESS

The purpose of preparedness

Where possible, preparedness actions foresee emergencies that are likely to occur and put in place key components of a response. Though plans will need to be revised when the event happens, preparedness makes it possible to respond faster, more appropriately and efficiently, and to take decisions on the basis of more reliable information. Staff at every level are likely to respond more effectively if training, analysis, planning, prepositioning, and information collection have occurred, coordination mechanisms have been established, and simulation exercises held.

What needs to be done?

The IASC has developed guidance on *Emergency Response Preparedness* (ERP). It has stressed that ERP is a continuous process, divided into five key elements.

(1) Risk Profiling

A risk profile identifies and ranks risks according to seriousness. It generates a country risk profile that includes indicators and triggers that can be monitored using early warning mechanisms and tools. Risk analysis should identify groups and populations that are particularly vulnerable, and their likely needs after an emergency. Protection agencies and the Protection Cluster (where clusters have been activated) should be able to provide analyses of vulnerability and needs on the basis of their own risk profiling work.

(2) Early Warning Monitoring

The situation should be monitored, using indicators and triggers identified in the country risk profile. Monitoring should detect signs of deterioration or crisis, making an early response possible. The Risk Profile plus Early Warning monitoring make it possible to draft a Contingency Response Plan and take related advanced preparedness actions.

(3) Minimum Preparedness Actions (MPA)

MPAs focus on the main elements of the programme cycle. They identify steps that need to be taken ahead of time to ensure that the HPC can be implemented effectively when a crisis occurs. MPAs cover: coordination; assessment; response planning; resource mobilization and monitoring; information management; reporting, public information and crisis communication; and capacity building/training. Simulation exercises are recommended to test the effectiveness of MPA implementation.

(4) Contingency Response Planning (CRP)

Bringing all relevant actors to an advanced level of readiness, a Contingency Response Plan should be developed whenever monitoring suggests an emergency may be imminent or in the case of a very specific risk with catastrophic impact (such as a massive earthquake in a vulnerable metropolitan area like Kathmandu). If an emergency occurs, the CRP informs the [Situation Analysis](#), the [Strategic Statement](#), and the [Preliminary Response Plan](#). CRPs should be drafted using the same format as the Preliminary Response Plan that will be used to respond once the crisis hits to ensure that what the HCT prepares for looks a lot like the way it eventually responds

However a CRP should also identify advanced preparedness actions that can be taken at an early stage to strengthen readiness. These may include: updating the [Situation Analysis](#), pre-positioning resources or people, training, and simulations. The CRP should assess the timeframes and budgets of such actions and allocate responsibilities. Action to reduce the effects of certain risks can sometimes be taken even in predictable sudden onset emergencies.

Where a scenario involving high risk can be identified (for example an earthquake in a metropolitan area) Advanced Preparedness Actions may be undertaken. These might involve updating arrangements and training for needs assessment; re-organizing management structures; and simulation exercises. Some actions, such as activating cluster arrangements, can be taken concurrently with development of a CRP.

(5) Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the Initial Emergency Response

SOPs guide responders in their initial emergency response. They must allocate roles and responsibilities, set out plans for scaling-up humanitarian assistance, and make clear coordination arrangements. They should also assist responders to:

- Prioritize needs and immediate critical interventions.
- Identify the initial steps of a response.
- Coordinate with humanitarian actors and sources of resources outside the country.

Wherever possible, the SOPs of individual agencies should mirror those used by the HCT and sectors/clusters.

Who does what?

In countries where IASC humanitarian coordination structures are in place

The HC, working with the HCT and country level clusters/sectors, should lead the Emergency Response Preparedness process, and should ensure coherence in the HCT as well as with national structures.⁶

In countries where IASC humanitarian coordination structures are not in place

The RC should work with the UNCT, national authorities and NGOs to implement as much of the ERP approach as possible. The RC should ensure coherence by working through in-country mechanisms. Extra support is available from headquarters and the regional offices of OCHA and other agencies/organizations.

The RC should encourage the input and participation of local, national and international NGOs active in the country, to ensure that their capacities and expertise are recognized and taken into account. In-country mechanisms may need to be expanded to achieve this.

Clusters/sectors

National preparedness needs will vary widely. Sectors and clusters should:

- Use the Risk Profile to identify which clusters are likely to be most relevant and what risks are most likely to affect their activities.
- Put in place MPAs on coordination; assessment; response planning; information management; capacity mapping; and training.
- Assist the UNCT/HCT to prepare the ERP and provide technical support as needed. (See the [IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at the Country Level](#) for more detail on the cluster role in preparedness.)

Agency/organisation

The ERP approach does not determine how individual organizations prepare themselves for a crisis. To increase coherence, agencies and NGOs should strive to align their preparedness training and planning with the interagency and cluster/sector arrangements established under the ERP. To access support from the global level to do this, please refer to the Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative (CADRI). An inter-agency emergency simulation can facilitate the collective preparedness and alignment of multiple humanitarian actors.

Guidance

For more detailed guidance on preparedness, including on the Emergency Response Preparedness (ERP) approach, the Inter-Agency Emergency Simulation (IAES) Guidance, and the Government Emergency Simulation Guidance, please see:

www.preparednesstracker.org

<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/emergency-response-preparedness>

⁶ As noted, in refugee contexts coordination is led by UNHCR.



SITUATION ANALYSIS

When

A Situation Analysis is completed two days after the onset of a large-scale emergency and is always used for an L3 emergency.

What is a Situation Analysis?

A Situation Analysis provides an initial assessment of the scope and severity of an emergency, and an initial understanding of the required response. Based on a review of secondary information by the HCT, led by the RC/HC, it draws on baseline information gathered during the [Preparedness](#) phase and initial information from affected populations, national authorities, civil society organisations, other implementers, and clusters/sectors. Its assessment of humanitarian needs is the first step towards setting overall objectives for the [Strategic Response Plan](#) that takes shape during the first 30 days of a large sudden onset emergency. It is based on the MIRA framework.

Purpose

- To bring the RC/HC, HCT, and clusters and sectors together around a shared analysis of the impact of the crisis on the affected people.
- To enable the IASC Principals to take key decisions relating to scale, leadership and capacities needed.
- To initiate a collective and coordinated process of assessment and response, recognizing that local ownership and national engagement from the start are crucial to the quality of the response and the quality of coordination and decisions.
- To inform the next steps in the joint rapid needs assessment process.

What needs to be done?

A Situation Analysis based on Emergency Response Preparedness includes:

- A preliminary identification of needs based primarily on secondary data.
- A preliminary review of the drivers, scale and scope of the emergency.
- A preliminary description of the context, including access and security.
- A preliminary review of the capacity to respond of national, local and international actors, taking account of constraints.
- A description of how the situation may evolve.

The Situation Analysis is the first step in a joint rapid needs assessment followed by primary data collection (geographic coverage, population groups and sectors).

Who does what?

In consultation with national authorities, the RC/HC prepares the Situation Analysis in close consultation with the HCT and supported by information from the clusters/sectors, including NGO partners. An interagency assessment/information management group is normally convened, chaired by OCHA. The HCT should ensure that cross-sectoral language is used, notably when preparing the analysis. Key principles and approaches should also be taken into account.

When no capacity exists at country level to produce a Situation Analysis, the RC/HC (or whoever has authority) may request OCHA or the IASC Principals for international expertise to help draft it. In such cases, every effort should be made by the RC and international actors to consult and involve clusters/sectors, the national government, and relevant civil society organisations as fully and quickly as possible.

Who is the audience?

- Humanitarian organisations in-country, and international organisations deploying staff.
- Government, national partners and donors.
- UNDAC and other rapid response capacities

Guidance

For additional guidance, see the [Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment \(MIRA\) Manual](#).

STRATEGIC STATEMENT



When

A Strategic Statement is produced three days after the start of a large-scale emergency and/or a L3 is declared.

What is a Strategic Statement?

A Strategic Statement is the first public document produced by the HC and HCT after the emergency starts. It establishes preliminary objectives, summarises the context (drawing on the [Situation Analysis](#)), and lists considerations that will condition the ability of the response to meet humanitarian needs effectively.

In a slow-onset L3 disaster, a Strategic Statement consolidates and sharpens earlier decisions and communications.

Purpose

- To define some strategic objectives, and focus the response on them.
- To indicate factors that may condition their achievement.
- To provide a first overview of the scale of the emergency and the nature of the response required.

What needs to be done?

To produce the Strategic Statement, it is necessary to:

- Consult with national authorities, notably on overall objectives.
- Summarise the situation, and the scope of the emergency.
- Review the humanitarian context.
- Set out strategic objectives, including actions that are vital to the response's success.

Who does what?

The RC/HC produces the Strategic Statement in close coordination with the HCT. Clusters/sectors provide information. National authorities are consulted.

Who is it for?

- Humanitarian organisations in and outside the country, and the government
- IASC Principals and IASC organizations
- Member States and donors
- Other emergency responders and rapid response mechanisms, such as UNDAC
- People affected by the crisis, including vulnerable groups or individuals

Guidance

Please see the Strategic Statement annotated template and guidance.

PRELIMINARY RESPONSE PLAN



When

A Preliminary Response Plan (PRP) is issued five to seven days after a large-scale emergency starts or a L3 is declared.

What is a Preliminary Response Plan?

A PRP expands the information in the [Strategic Statement](#) and sets out an initial planning framework for response operations and the initial funding requirements in support of donor decision-making. It is a first attempt to say what must be done and how much it will cost. It defines the response's objectives in more detail. It provides the basis for more focused inter-sectoral/cluster programming. It sets the direction of the [Strategic Response Plan](#) that (in large-scale emergencies) will be completed by day 30.

Purpose

- To provide more detailed information on areas covered by the Strategic Statement.
- To communicate preliminary coordination requirements.
- To provide preliminary information on cluster/sector funding requirements, enabling donors to take early decisions.
- To tie initial programme planning to the overall objectives outlined in the [Strategic Statement](#), creating a framework for sound coordination.

What needs to be done?

The Preliminary Response Plan sets out:

- A refined list of strategic objectives, drafted in cross-sectoral language, that indicate (to the extent possible) how vulnerabilities will be addressed.
- The scope of the emergency (displaced, needs, geographic area, etc.).
- How the international response will support and link with the government's actions.
- The coordination architecture of the response, showing how organizations, agencies and donors will cooperate with national authorities to achieve the response's objectives.
- Gaps in coverage or capacity that need to be filled.
- Cluster/sector activities.
- A first estimate of funding requirements.

Who does what?

A PRP is prepared by the RC/HC, with the full and active participation of the HCT, in consultation with clusters/sectors and national authorities, and with the support of OCHA.

Who is the audience?

- Humanitarian agencies and organisations in-country.
- The government and national civil society organisations.
- The IASC, headquarters staff of international humanitarian organizations, donors.
- People affected by the crisis, including vulnerable groups and individuals.

Guidance

Please see the Preliminary Response Plan annotated template and guidance

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Needs assessment provides the evidence on which a sound HPC is based. A response's objectives are based on it; and the precise knowledge it provides about the needs of particular groups in specific locations determines the response staffing and resources.

All humanitarian actors engage in completing needs assessments, but it is important to coordinate so that assessments are done jointly or in a harmonized approach.⁷ No organization should be considered the 'owner' of data or information and the information and analysis they generate should be shared. All organizations have a duty to inform and engage with the national and local authorities and the affected populations throughout the needs assessment process.

For additional guidance, see [IASC Operational Guidance for Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crises](#) or visit www.assessment.humantiarianresponse.info.

A. Needs Assessment in large sudden onset emergencies Multi-cluster/sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA)



When

A MIRA should be initiated as soon as possible after a large-scale, sudden onset emergency. A MIRA Report should be produced no later than 14 days after onset.

What is a MIRA?

A Multi-cluster/sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) is a process for collecting and analysing information on vulnerable populations and their needs. Information for it starts to be gathered after publication of the [Situation Analysis](#) on Day 2. The report also draws on baseline information collected during the [Preparedness](#) phase.

Purpose

- To confirm, adjust or change the initial assessment of needs in the [Situation Analysis](#).
- To lay a sound information base for the [Strategic Response Plan](#) published at day 30.

What needs to be done?

To prepare a MIRA report, clusters and sectors, and agencies and organisations involved in the response, need to:

- Agree a simple needs assessment investigation form that allows the HCT to probe further into issues identified in the [Situation Analysis](#).
- Coordinate joint data collection using appropriate sampling approaches.
- Jointly analyse and share primary and secondary data that is collected.
- Make the analysis available to the HC/RC, HCT, and sectors/clusters, so that it can inform the [Strategic Response Plan](#), sectoral/cluster planning, and the projects and programmes of individual organizations and the government.

Who does what?

Every actor in a response, including national authorities, should be involved in the MIRA process, coordinated by OCHA to ensure a joint approach. The RC/HC will normally initiate and oversee the exercise, in close cooperation with the HCT and with the support of clusters/sectors. OCHA provides technical and information management support, as needed.

Who is the Audience?

- Humanitarian organisations in the country, and at international level
- National and local authorities
- Donors
- People affected by the crisis, including vulnerable groups or individuals.

⁷ In refugee situations, the responsibility for coordinating needs assessments is borne by UNHCR

Guidance

Information on assessment tools – IASC *Operational Guidance for Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crises*, MIRA Manual, MIRA framework, MIRA reporting template and MIRA investigation forms – can be obtained at <https://assessments.humanitarianresponse.info/guidance>. For support, contact OCHA's Coordinated Assessment Support Section: cass@un.org or www.assessment.humanitarianresponse.info.

B. Needs analysis in ongoing emergencies Humanitarian Needs Overview

When

A Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) is produced to identify and prioritize needs in-country six months after a crisis starts or in a protracted crisis, in advance of the Strategic Response Plan. It is then reviewed at regular intervals. It is based on available assessment information and also serves to identify information gaps.

The HNO is the output of coordinated assessments in protracted emergencies, whereas the Situation Analysis and MIRA report are recommended in sudden onset crises.

What is a Humanitarian Needs Overview?

An HNO consolidates and analyses information gathered on the needs of people affected by an emergency.

Purpose

- To identify and prioritise the humanitarian needs of affected people based on assessment and monitoring data.
- To identify information gaps and to inform the development of a plan to fill gaps in information on humanitarian needs.
- In subsequent updates of the HNO, to provide an evidence-base to enable the HC and HCT to evaluate the degree to which the objectives and cluster/sector response plans of the [Strategic Response Plan](#) continue to address the needs of people affected by the emergency.
- In subsequent updates of the HNO, to provide an evidence base to enable all organizations involved in the response to monitor, evaluate and review the impact and relevance of their programmes and objectives on the basis of sound information.

What needs to be done?

To produce HNOs, agencies and organisations involved in the response need to:

- Select indicators for measuring humanitarian needs.
- Agree parameters for collecting, analysing and sharing information.
- Involve affected populations in identifying and understanding their needs.
- Identify and resolve information gaps.
- Collect and analyse information.
- Identify and jointly agree on priority needs.
- Disseminate the outcomes of the HNO and apply them to the strategic response planning process.

Who does what?

HNOs are initiated by the HC and HCT and may be initiated by national authorities. Every organization involved in a response should participate in collection of data for HNOs, and apply HNO findings to their policies and programmes.

Who is the audience?

- HC and HCT
- Humanitarian organisations involved in the response
- Government, local authorities and national actors
- IASC members

- Donors
- People affected by the crisis, including vulnerable groups and individuals

Guidance

Additional guidance – including the Humanitarian Needs Overview (template and guidance), prioritisation tool, Indicator Registry, assessment registry template, Humanitarian Dashboard template, IASC *Operational Guidance for Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crises* – may be found on assessment.humantiarianresponse.info. OCHA's Coordinated Assessment Support Section may be contacted at cass@un.org.

STRATEGIC RESPONSE PLAN

When

The Strategic Response Plan is completed on the basis of in-depth needs analysis and assessment data. In the case of large-scale sudden onset crises, a Strategic Response Plan should be completed 30 days after the emergency starts.⁸

What is a Strategic Response Plan?

It is a comprehensive plan of action for responding to the emergency, supported by evidence. It defines priorities, gaps and accountabilities and includes detailed funding requirements. It is developed through an inter-agency process which reviews the needs, outlines the boundaries of the response, and sets priorities within those boundaries. The plan can be of any duration required, including multi-year, and for protracted crises it can follow a non-calendar year approach in order to take into account a country's hazard cycle or harvest. The Strategic Response Plan should inform decision-making at national and sub-national levels and within clusters/sectors. All aspects of planning should aim to advance the protection of affected populations.

Purpose

- To set priorities and confirm the overall objectives of the humanitarian response
- To articulate the parameters of the response
- To provide cluster/sector funding requirements
- To make clear how each area of work will be coordinated, and to ensure more effective coordination
- To provide objectives, indicators and targets for monitoring progress
- To indicate how the response will provide a path into recovery

What needs to be done?

The Strategic Response Plan contains:

- An explanation of the strategy, a description of its scope, and priorities.
- The cluster/sector and inter-cluster/sector mechanisms needed to coordinate the response.
- Strategic objectives with indicators.
- Links to existing development plans in-country for ongoing crises, as appropriate.
- Analysis of cross-cutting and specific issues, including protection risks and threats.
- Analysis of risks and constraints and how the HCT and clusters/sectors will address them.
- Cluster/sector response plans.

The Strategic Response Plan should consider issues of sustainability. In particular, it should indicate what conditions must be met before the emergency response can be phased out or can transition into 'normal' development activity.

Who does what?

Development and implementation of the Strategic Response Plan is led by the HC/RC, with the active participation of the HCT, supported by sectors/clusters and OCHA, in consultation with national authorities and taking into account the views of the affected people. Fundraising for the response is led by the HC/RC and HCT, supported by OCHA. At the cluster/sector and project/programme level, humanitarian agencies fundraise individually.

Who is the audience?

- Humanitarian organisations in the country, and at international level.
- Donors.
- National and local authorities, and people affected by the crisis, including vulnerable groups.

Guidance

Please see the [Strategic Response Plan](#) annotated template and guidance.

⁸ In refugee situations, the development of the Refugee Response Plan is led by UNHCR with active participation by all involved actors.

MONITORING THE RESPONSE

When

Humanitarian response monitoring is a continuous process. The frequency of data collection and reporting will vary at different stages of an emergency. In large sudden onset crises, collection of baseline data starts when the [Situation Analysis](#) is prepared (if not before) and includes the [MIRA Report](#). Monitoring reports are produced at regular intervals. A first Monitoring Report should be prepared no more than 90 days after the start of a large-scale sudden onset and/or L3 crisis.

What is Humanitarian Response Monitoring?

Humanitarian response monitoring is a continuous process for recording the aid delivered to an affected population. It measures inputs, outputs and outcomes and:

- Tracks inputs (funds, humanitarian actors, projects).
 - Charts the outputs and outcomes of cluster/sector activities.
 - Measures progress towards the objectives of the Strategic Response Plan.
- The aim is to establish whether aid is actually delivered to affected people as intended.

All humanitarian actors involved in a response should constantly monitor the quality of the response and report failures or problems of delivery.

Purpose

- To provide humanitarian actors with the evidence they need to take decisions and adapt short and long-term strategies.
- To ensure that organizations involved in the response remain accountable to affected people, national authorities, donors and the general public.

What needs to be done?

The IASC Monitoring Technical Group is developing *Guidance on Country Response Monitoring (to be issued in early 2014)*. It will indicate how to implement a country response monitoring framework.

Who does what?

The RC/HC ensures, with the HCT, that monitoring is initiated. International organisations, and ideally national civil society partners, are involved. OCHA provides technical and information management support, as needed.

Audiences

- HC and HCT
- IASC Emergency Directors
- Government, local authorities and national actors
- Donors
- People affected by the crisis including vulnerable groups and individuals.

Guidance

- *IASC Response Monitoring and Reporting Framework* (in draft, version 14 December 2012).
- The [Humanitarian Indicators Registry](#) lists output and outcome indicators that the Global Cluster Coordinators have recommended.

OPERATIONAL PEER REVIEW

When

An Operational Peer Review is triggered by a request from the HC/ HCT, the Emergency Directors Group (EDG) or the IASC Principals and should be conducted early in the response. In the case of L3 emergencies, an OPR is mandatory and must be conducted with the first 90 days of the L3 declaration.

What is an Operational Peer Review?

An OPR is an internal, inter-agency management tool. It helps the HC and HCT determine whether they need to adjust or improve the collective humanitarian response; whether the response is on track to meet its objectives; and whether there are significant gaps. It is meant to serve as a “course corrector” by reviewing the efficiency and effectiveness of the management to the response. An OPR is not a real-time evaluation, and it is not designed to measure results or the impact of the response.

Purpose

To recommend corrective actions as necessary with regard to:

- Leadership arrangements.
- Implementation of the other elements of the HPC.
- Coordination mechanisms.
- Mechanisms of accountability to affected populations.

An OPR is remedial and forward-looking. It is designed to achieve rapid corrective action early in a response. It does not evaluate accountability, or measure results; it does not produce a public document and is not a lengthy process.

What needs to be done?

An OPR generates a brief narrative report and action plan, discussed between the review team and the HC/HCT. The final report is submitted to the HC/HCT within two weeks of the end of mission.

Who does what?

OPRs are initiated by the HC/HCT, EDG or IASC Principals. They are managed by the RC/HC with support from OCHA. In L3 emergencies and some designated crises as required, OPRs are managed by the EDG with support from OCHA.

OPRs are undertaken by a small group of experienced external ‘peers’ of the HC/RC, HCT, and a government representative as appropriate. L3 OPRs are undertaken by a small group of Emergency Directors or senior operations managers delegated by the EDG. A team leader is nominated when planning begins.

Who is the audience?

- RC/HC and HCT for action
- EDG and IASC Principals

Guidance

Please see the Operational Peer Review guidance, reporting template, and terms of reference for more information.

INTER-AGENCY HUMANITARIAN EVALUATION (IAHE)

When

All international humanitarian responses should conduct an Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) at least once every four years. In L3 or large-scale sudden-onset emergencies, an IAHE is required within 9 to 12 months after the emergency starts. Results should be available at the 12 month mark.

What is an IAHE?

An IAHE is an external, independent assessment of a collective humanitarian response.

Purpose

- To enable the HC/RC and HCT, the Emergency Directors, and the ERC and IASC Principals to evaluate the extent to which a response meets its objectives and the needs of affected people, and make changes where required.
- To enable those involved to learn collectively and individually from their experience and thereby improve humanitarian policy and their approach to this emergency.
- To strengthen the accountability of organisations involved in the response, to people affected by the emergency and to their own objectives and standards.

What needs to be done?

Specific terms of reference are established for each IAHE. IAHEs assess collective results that have been achieved during an agreed time period. They focus on:

- The quality of aid delivered.
- The degree to which affected people have been protected.⁹
- Progress towards both the response's objectives and targets set by the HC and HCT.

IAHEs do not focus on management and coordination arrangements, which are covered by the Operational Peer Review, or on individual sectors or specific agencies.

Who does what?

IAHEs are initiated by the ERC or the HC/HCT when agreed triggers are reached. They are undertaken by independent evaluation experts who have not been involved in designing or implementing the humanitarian intervention that is to be reviewed. OCHA's evaluation section works with a small inter-agency management group to oversee their day-to-day management. OCHA may also assist HC/RCs to lead IAHE advisory groups. The latter help to focus evaluations, analyse recommendations, and prepare management plans in response to them. In-country advisory groups include national authorities where appropriate.

Who is the audience?

- The RC/HC and HCT.
- Emergency Directors and IASC Principals.
- All agencies and organisations involved in the response.
- National authorities.
- Those affected by the emergency.

Guidance

A manual on IAHE is in preparation.

⁹ UNHCR's evaluation policy is applied in refugee situations.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

(to be further developed in version 2 of the Module)

Coordination

- [IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at the Country Level.](#)

Financing

- [Central Emergency Response Fund](#)
- [Emergency Response Funds](#) and [Common Humanitarian Funds](#)
- [Financial Tracking Service](#) (FTS)

Gender

- [IASC Gender Handbook on Humanitarian Action \(Women, Girls, Boys and Men: Different Needs, Equal Opportunities\)](#)
- [IASC gender training course](#)

Needs Assessment

- [Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment \(MIRA\) Manual.](#)
- [IASC Operational Guidance for Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crises](#)
- [Humanitarian Indicators Registry](#)
- [Humanitarian Needs Overview](#)

Planning

- [Strategic Response Plan](#)

Preparedness

- www.preparednesstracker.org
- <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/emergency-response-preparedness>