

Multimedia content gathering

19 December 2023

Key points

- Take photos and short videos to document what you see. A small glimpse of your daily reality can help audiences around the world to care about the people you serve
- If you don't have time or capacity to write a full web story, gather a selection of strong quotes from one or more characters together with background information (name, age, country/city of origin, family composition) and descriptive detail such as people's appearance or manner, what you can see or hear around you. The GCS Multimedia content section can help write up the story
- Focus on an individual or a family and share their story. Consider the protection and security of those you interview or film. Respect their dignity and seek their consent. Do not disclose details that might put them at risk. Explain that the image(s) or story could be seen all over the world on the internet, television, radio, etc. Discuss whether to change names or other details to ensure their protection
- Under the Ethical Communications Guidelines, images without consent cannot be used, in particular for fundraising purposes
- The GCS Multimedia content section will provide support, clarification and tools
- Think of the audience. Ask yourself: why will a reader or viewer living far away find this story interesting? Explain unfamiliar details and avoid jargon
- Use social media to share up-to-the-minute content in real time
- Share your content with the Multimedia Content Section, which can help edit and distribute it to a wider audience

1. Overview

Content gathering, including video, photo and human-interest stories, is key to ensuring media

coverage and financial support.

As such, any communication staff's TOR identified at the onset of an emergency should include content gathering as part of the assignment.

Content, including photo and video of the affected areas and population as well as quotes from affected individuals, should be gathered within the first 48h and delivered to the GCS Multimedia content section for global distribution.

The term 'content' refers to all the editorial material that we publish on our websites, post to social media platforms, or share with external media partners, sister agencies, and potential and existing donors.

Obtaining good content is especially important when major conflicts or natural disasters erupt. Their impact on civilians is often eclipsed by political and military issues, but strong, timely content helps UNHCR to humanize a distant conflict and call attention to the plight of civilians in need of protection and life-saving assistance. Content enables us to raise awareness of the rights and needs of the people we serve, advocate for open borders, humanitarian access and other favourable policies, and mobilize much-needed donor support.

GCS Multimedia content section colleagues will provide guidance and support, including content briefs, scripts for pieces to camera (PTC) and help drafting or editing web stories.

The Global Communications Service often deploys multimedia content staff to capture stories about individuals and families displaced from their homes, but field staff make a vital contribution, especially in the first hours and days of an emergency when access may be challenging and media corps are not on the ground, ensuring that resource mobilization efforts can be launched and media interest engaged.

2. Main guidance

Underlying policies, principles and/or standards

- Please read and adhere to UNHCR's [Ethical Communications Guidelines](#)
- When we share up-to-the-minute content, it helps UNHCR to lead the narrative by showing that we are on the ground, well-informed, and ready to engage with journalists.
- Content about an emergency can help generate empathy in ways that advance UNHCR's advocacy and fundraising objectives.
- Protection is paramount. Never share content that puts someone at risk.

Good practice recommendations

Focus on individuals. Stories and images that focus on an individual are almost always more engaging and memorable than general stories or images of a crowd. Find a sympathetic individual who can articulate his or her experience. Ask what life was like before he or she was displaced. Look for ways in which people exhibit resilience, and ways in which host communities are showing generosity. Look for the unexpected – details or themes that add an element of

surprise to the story. Transcribe spoken quotes word-for-word (record them on your phone if possible) - do not embellish or change them. When writing stories, vary the length of your sentences, avoid jargon, and omit unnecessary words. Start at a dramatic moment to hook the reader's interest and fill in context and backstory as you go along.

Consider these examples from UNHCR stories

<https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/ukrainian-family-confronts-new-reality-life-refugees>

<https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/south-sudanese-battle-record-floods-amid-rapidly-changing-climate>

Photographs. When taking photos, try to establish eye contact with the subject. Collect detailed captions with names, ages and direct quotes. If possible, take pictures in the early morning or early evening, when the light is often best. Take many photos and choose the best ones later. Take some in portrait format (vertical), which works well for report covers and [social media](#), but take most in landscape (horizontal) because they fit most of our other online platforms better. Rather than put the subject in the centre of the frame, consider the rule of thirds. (Please see the second photo below.)

Sometimes, nevertheless, images of a crowd can powerfully capture a newsworthy situation – like the below iconic photo of Syrian refugees crossing into Iraq (please see the third photo below).

Video. When shooting video with a smartphone:

- Hold your phone parallel to the landscape (think of a wide movie screen) so that we can distribute your footage to broadcasters. If possible, additionally shoot clips in vertical for social media.
- Keep it still (try to brace against a stationary object, like a tree or vehicle).
- Try to capture a sequence, three related shots that give continuity or compress time. This could be a wide, medium and close-up shot of the same subject, or the beginning, middle and end of an action (putting a kettle on to boil, pouring hot water over the tea leaves, pouring a cup for a visitor).
- Hold each shot for about 10 seconds.
- Do not pan (move from side to side), do not tilt (move up and down), do not zoom.
- Let the action move through the frame, rather than follow it with your camera.
- If someone is speaking, get as close as possible and try to minimize wind noise. Better still, use a lav mic.

See samples below –

Share photos, videos and written quotes or stories with the Global Communications Service. You can send large video files with shortlists to <http://www.wetransfer.com> and upload photographs directly to Refugees Media, UNHCR's searchable online distribution platform, at:

<http://media.unhcr.org> .

Considerations for practical implementation

- Capture the moment when they realized they had to flee. What went through their minds?
- Describe their flight to safety, their current situation and needs, and their hopes and plans.
- Ask what the subjects' lives were like before they were displaced.
- Record interviews. Quote the interviewee directly. Let the reader hear his or her exact words.
- When writing, start at the most dramatic point in the story and add context and backstory as you go along.

Resources and partnerships

- Key staff, including communicators working in emergency operations, should be issued smartphones, so that they can create content themselves and share it quickly on social media and with the Global Communications Service.

3. Learning and field practices

[Filmed in camera](#)

[Filmed on Iphone](#)

4. Links

[Refugees Media](#) [UNHCR Official Website](#) [UNHCR on Youtube](#) [UNHCR on X](#) [UNHCR on Facebook](#)
[UNHCR on Instagram](#) [UNHCR on Threads](#) [UNHCR on LinkedIn](#) [UNHCR on TikTok](#)

5. Main contacts

The Social Media Section in the Global Communications Service at Headquarters: socialmedia@unhcr.org

International Coordination Architecture

12 January 2024

Key points

- Coordination is a means to maximize the positive effects of action by UNHCR and partners on protection, the delivery of humanitarian responses, and solutions to displacement
- This entry describes, as relevant to UNHCR, the Chief Executive Board, the UN Reform, the UN Sustainable Development coordination components, the main IASC humanitarian coordination features and a summary of the RCM

1. Overview

This Entry summarizes the current international humanitarian coordination structures. In addition, it also touches on areas where humanitarian and development coordination intersect. The Entry should be read in conjunction with the entries on the [Cluster Approach](#), and the [Refugee Coordination Model](#).

2. Relevance for emergency operations

For UNHCR, the pursuit of effective coordination is not an end in itself, but a means to maximize the positive effects that UNHCR and its partners have on protection, the delivery of humanitarian responses, and solutions to displacement. UNCHR and other agencies have been promoting the connection between humanitarian action and development for many years. By recognizing and promoting such ways of working that increase complementarity, the [Global Compact on Refugees](#) has underscored the need to involve development actors. Connections with development should be made from the preparedness phase onwards, and the link is especially crucial when countries emerge from the emergency phase and transition into a phase during which development issues, such as livelihoods and employment, predominate.

3. Main guidance

Chief Executive Board

The UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) is the longest-standing and highest-level coordination forum of the United Nations system. It meets biannually and is chaired by the UN Secretary-General. It provides broad guidance, coordination and strategic direction for

the UN system as a whole in areas under the responsibility of executive heads. While ensuring respect for organizations' independent mandates, it focuses on inter-agency priorities and initiatives. The CEB is composed of 31 United Nations entities, including Funds and Programmes, Specialized Agencies such as the Bretton Woods institutions (the World Bank and International Monetary Fund), as well as related organizations (the WTO, IAEA and IOM).

The CEB works through two high-level committees: the High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP), and the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM). UNHCR is a member of the CEB and is represented by the High Commissioner; the DHC represents UNHCR in the HLCM and the AHC-O in HLCP.

UN Reform

The Secretary-General (SG) has initiated an ambitious reform agenda to enhance UN performance across the three pillars of UN work: peace and security, human rights, and development, at headquarters and in the field by adopting integrated, decentralized, and impact-oriented approaches wherever approaches have been fragmented, centralized or process-heavy. The SG is also reviewing UN gender policies to enhance gender parity; UN efforts to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse; various components of the counter-terrorism architecture; and the UN's whistle-blower policy. It is important to note that UNHCR strongly supports efforts to revitalize the UN development system because doing so is key to bridging the humanitarian/development divide and delivering responses that are sustainable.

The SG has put 'prevention' at the centre of the reform effort. His vision of prevention requires the UN system to do everything possible to help countries avert the outbreak of crises that take a high toll on human life, undermine their institutions, and weaken their capacity to achieve peace and development. Elements of preventive action include: early identification of risks; intensified diplomacy; acceleration of UN development work; and strengthened member state engagement. To achieve these goals, it is necessary to prioritize efforts to raise prevention concerns with relevant intergovernmental bodies and mechanisms, such as the Security Council, the General Assembly, ECOSOC and the Peacebuilding Commission. The SG has formed a High-Level Advisory Board on Mediation to provide him with advice on mediation initiatives and to support specific mediation efforts around the world. The Board is composed of 18 current and former global leaders, senior officials, and experts. He also relies on the SG's Executive Committee, composed of the Principals of all Secretariat agencies, which raises and discusses issues of critical risk and pursues an overall risk mitigation and prevention strategy.

With regard to peace and security, a broad set of measures seeks to ensure that: risk analysis and responses to risk are shared; women and youth are meaningfully engaged in peace efforts; peace funding increases (including a 'quantum leap' in support to the Peacebuilding Fund); and partnerships for peace multiply, including partnerships with regional and sub-regional organizations and with the World Bank.

Management reforms mainly focus on the UN Secretariat. They seek to improve the efficiency, transparency and accountability of a system that, according to some, is often slow, unresponsive and ineffective. Ongoing UN change processes are taking steps to: review and simplify human

resources procedures to raise the quality and speed of staff recruitment, deployment and development; achieve gender parity; improve workforce planning, training and development, paying special attention to the profile of leaders and managers; refocus the UN's strategy on information and communications technology; and improve global supply chain management.

Of the three areas of reform, reform of the UNDS currently has the most direct impact on UNHCR operations at country level. After the 2016 Quadrennial Comprehensive Programme Review initiated the UNDS reform process, the Secretary-General issued a report containing proposals for action, most of which Member States approved in the GA Resolution on UNDS reform of May 2019.

UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG)

At global level, the UNSDG provides a forum for joint policy formation and decision-making. It guides, supports, tracks and oversees coordination of development operations in 165 countries and territories. It brings together 36 UN funds, programmes, specialized agencies, departments and offices that play a role in development.

The UNSDG's current **strategic priorities** are to: assist countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) more swiftly and implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; assist national partners to implement their human rights obligations and integrate human rights principles and international standards into the work of the UN; and deliver effective support that will help crisis and post-crisis countries to build resilient societies and achieve sustainable recovery.

The UNSDG's current **strategic approaches** are to: promote coherent development results across the entire UN development system in order to improve transparency and accountability; ensure that Resident Coordinator systems are participatory, collegial and mutually accountable; simplify and harmonize business practices more swiftly; develop effective partnerships and wider multi-stakeholder engagement; strengthen capacity development as a core function of the UN development system; and integrate planning, programming and policy more completely.

Implementation of UNSDG strategic priorities and work plans is driven by **working mechanisms** – working groups and task teams – that focus on fostering system-wide norms, standards, and policies, as well as operational effectiveness.

The UNSDG meets twice a year under the chairmanship of its Chair, Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General, who chairs the UNSDG on behalf of the SG. The UNDP Administrator, Mr Achim Steiner, serves as Vice-Chair.

The UNSDG is composed of the executive heads of UNSDG member entities. The UNSDG Vice-chair convenes the **UNSDG Core Group**, whose members include DESA, FAO, ILO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UN Women, WFP, WHO, the rotating chair of the Regional Economic Commissions, and chairs of the UNSDG Strategic Results Groups.

Resident Coordinator (and Humanitarian Coordinator)

The [Resident Coordinator system](#) (RC) remains focused on sustainable development; its overarching objective is 'the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions'. RCs report to the SG through the UN Deputy Secretary-General. The UN Development Coordination Office (DCO) in the UN Secretariat will manage and oversee the system, reporting to the Deputy Secretary-General. RCs have authority to lead UN Country Teams (UNCTs) when they implement the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and assist countries to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Where international humanitarian assistance is required, and a separate Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) or lead agency is not designated, the RC leads and coordinates the response efforts of UN and other relevant humanitarian actors. In refugee crises, UNHCR is the designated lead agency and leads the response. To enable the RC to deploy and coordinate the UN development response coherently and effectively, UNHCR should brief the RC on all aspects of this work.

Where the scope and scale of a crisis requires it, following consultation with the IASC, the ERC may designate an HC. In most cases, the RC will take on the role, but in some circumstances a stand-alone HC will coordinate the humanitarian response. In instances where one operational UN agency or NGO is providing most of the humanitarian assistance, the ERC may consider designating that agency or NGO representative as HC; the ERC may also consider designating a Regional HC working with RCs and HCs in several countries.

The primary responsibility for coordinating humanitarian assistance rests with national authorities, but when international assistance is required, the HC or the UN RC is responsible for leading and coordinating the efforts of humanitarian organizations (both UN and non-UN). They also have a role to ensure that humanitarian action is principled, timely, effective, efficient and contributes to longer-term recovery. They are ultimately accountable to all people in need. Effective inter-agency mechanisms for accountability to affected people (AAP) should be established to ensure this is duly recognized and remains central to their humanitarian leadership. More information in the [RC/HC Handbook](#).

The accountabilities of UNCT agencies

Members of a UNCT are accountable and report to their respective agencies on matters relevant to their mandates. They are also expected to report periodically to the RC, on the activities of their individual agencies and on their agencies' contributions to the collective results of the UNSDCF. UNCT heads also report to the RC.

UN Country Teams

UNCTs organize UN inter-agency cooperation and decision-making at country level. The UNCT includes every entity of the UN system that delivers operational activities for development, emergency, recovery and transition in a country. Its main purposes are to ensure that UNCT members plan and work co-operatively, within the Resident Coordinator system, to deliver tangible results in support of the Government's development agenda.

The UN Resident Coordinator (RC) is the designated representative of the UN Secretary-General for development issues. The RC leads the UNCT. The UNCT meets at least once a month to make decisions through a consultative process. All UNCT members are collegially accountable to the RC and the UNCT, as well as directly accountable to their own organizations, for producing results under the UNSDCF and the joint UNCT workplan.

UNHCR can use the UNCT mechanism to exercise its protection leadership role and advocate for the inclusion of refugees in the UNSDCF. Advocacy is recommended both to engage UNCT members in support of UNHCR's advocacy objectives, and ensure that people of concern to UNHCR (PoC) are included in the UNSDCF and other national planning mechanisms.

The UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework

The UNSDCF is a multi-year strategic programme framework for UNCTs. Each national UNSDCF is designed to streamline UN development programmes at country level by introducing shared objectives, strategies and timeframes; it is prepared in close cooperation with the national Government. The World Bank may also participate in a UNSDCF when it contributes to development programmes.

The [UNSDCF process](#) starts with a Common Country Analysis (CCA). The CCA identifies needs and achievable changes. It provides the essential evidence base from which the UNSDCF's theory of change is derived and sets the direction and content for a strategic UN development assistance framework (UNDAF). CCAs are forward looking. In developing them, the UN system uses its convening power to consult and engage with the Government and other stakeholders. The analysis itself is the UN's, and does not require formal endorsement by Government. At the same time, preparing a CCA creates opportunities to build partnerships with key actors in a country, including international financial institutions, civil society organizations, and the private sector.

Unlike humanitarian and refugee planning exercises, the UNSDCF does not include NGO or civil society programmes, although these organizations may be consulted and may be implementing partners. Inter-agency humanitarian plans, IASC-led [humanitarian response plans](#) (HRPs), and UNHCR-led refugee response plans (RRPs) will continue to be independent but as far as possible should complement the UNSDCF.

Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)

The IASC is a global humanitarian forum established in 1992 under UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182. Led by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), who is also head of OCHA, its members are operational organizations that have links to the UN system. Standing invitees include the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), InterAction, OHCHR, the World Bank Group, and the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons. In practice, no distinction is made between 'members' and 'standing invitees', and the number of participating agencies has expanded significantly since 1992.

The IASC's main purpose is to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian action by coordinating the activities of IASC members and other humanitarian actors, assigning responsibilities, and sharing resources and knowledge. The IASC develops and agrees system-wide humanitarian policies and resolves disputes or disagreements between humanitarian agencies or over system-wide humanitarian issues.

A central role of IASC is to activate system-wide [Scale-Up](#) in response to emergencies when conditions apply. An IASC Scale-Up is a **humanitarian system mobilisation** in response to a sudden-onset and/or rapidly deteriorating situation in a given country or region where the capacity to lead, coordinate and deliver humanitarian assistance does not match the scale, complexity, and urgency of the crisis, and where there is a risk of failure to deliver without a scale-up.

The IASC may empower a **Humanitarian Coordinator (HC)** to lead the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT); in many situations, the Humanitarian Coordinator also acts as a Resident Coordinator, referred to as an HC / RC.

Overview of UNHCR's role in the IASC

- The IASC system deals with humanitarian issues that do not involve refugees. General Assembly Resolution 48/116 (December 1993) provides the legal foundation for UNHCR's engagement with internally displaced persons (IDPs). It is supported by the 2005 Humanitarian Reform that in turn led to the [cluster approach](#).
- UNHCR is actively involved in the IASC. It leads the [protection cluster](#), and co-leads the camp coordination/camp management cluster (CCCM) and the [shelter cluster](#). (On shelter, UNHCR leads in situations of conflict and IFRC leads in natural disasters.)
- The High Commissioner is a 'Principal' (head of agency) in the IASC.
- The Deputy High Commissioner represents UNHCR in the Deputies Group
- The Partnership and Coordination Service of the Division of External Relations represents UNHCR in the OPAG (Operational policy and Advisory Group) and ensure UNHCR coherent engagement in IASC Task forces and Working Group.
- The Division of Emergency, Security, and Supply represents UNHCR in the Emergency Directors' group.
- UNHCR has made firm commitments to fulfil its global and national cluster roles and obligations, and to report to the ERC on these.

It should be borne in mind that, in line with the IDP policy:

- UNHCR will always strive to lead the [protection cluster](#). Because UNHCR is not operational in all countries, however, in natural disaster settings leadership may be allocated to other agencies that have strong in-country capacity (such as UNICEF, OHCHR or UNFPA), subject to the agreement of peers.
- UNHCR will strive to lead the shelter and CCCM clusters in forced displacement settings. In general, UNHCR is not in favour of merging these clusters because each requires distinct technical expertise.
- The IASC/ERC does not lead on refugee matters, which are exclusively the domain of the High Commissioner, who reports directly to the UN General Assembly. (The ERC reports to

the Secretary-General on matters that concern the IASC.)

- The ERC activates cluster-based responses to IDP and natural disasters via the IASC. The ERC does not have authority to declare a refugee emergency. Equally, UNHCR may not issue a system-wide emergency declaration or initiate cluster coordination at its own initiative.

One of the central roles of the IASC is to declare that an emergency has been scaled up. In November 2018, protocols for 'system-wide scale-up' replaced the previous arrangements for activating 'Level 3 emergencies'. An IASC system-wide scale-up mobilizes the entire IASC humanitarian system in response to a sudden onset crisis, or a rapidly deteriorating situation, in a country or region. System-wide scale-ups are called when the local or regional capacity to lead, coordinate and deliver humanitarian assistance does not match the scale, complexity, and urgency of a crisis. The five criteria for determining a system-wide scale-up emergency are: scale, urgency, complexity, capacity, and risk of failure to effectively deliver to affected populations. Please read the Entry on the [Cluster Approach](#) for more information.

Refugee coordination

Under [its Statute](#), UNHCR provides international protection to refugees and seeks permanent solutions for them, acting on the authority of the General Assembly (GA). In that capacity, it is the lead agency with respect to refugee protection, responsible for seeking solutions in the UN system in association with a wider array of stakeholders. As set out in subsequent GA resolutions, its responsibilities include coordination, provision of protection and assistance, obtaining solutions, and advocacy. Importantly, UNHCR also has a supervisory role: it is the UN entity most immediately responsible for ensuring that States adhere to internationally accepted standards with respect to refugees and stateless persons and for strengthening States' capacity to protect both groups.

UNHCR has led and managed refugee operations effectively for decades. For many years, however, it did not articulate a model of refugee coordination that took account of changes in the humanitarian landscape. The [Refugee Coordination Model](#) (RCM), formalised in 2013 and further updated in 2019, makes UNHCR's approach to coordination more predictable by clarifying roles and responsibilities. Recent UN General Assembly Resolutions have confirmed the RCM and UNHCR's mandate to lead and coordinate the refugee response ([A/RES/69/152](#), [A/RES/70/135](#)).

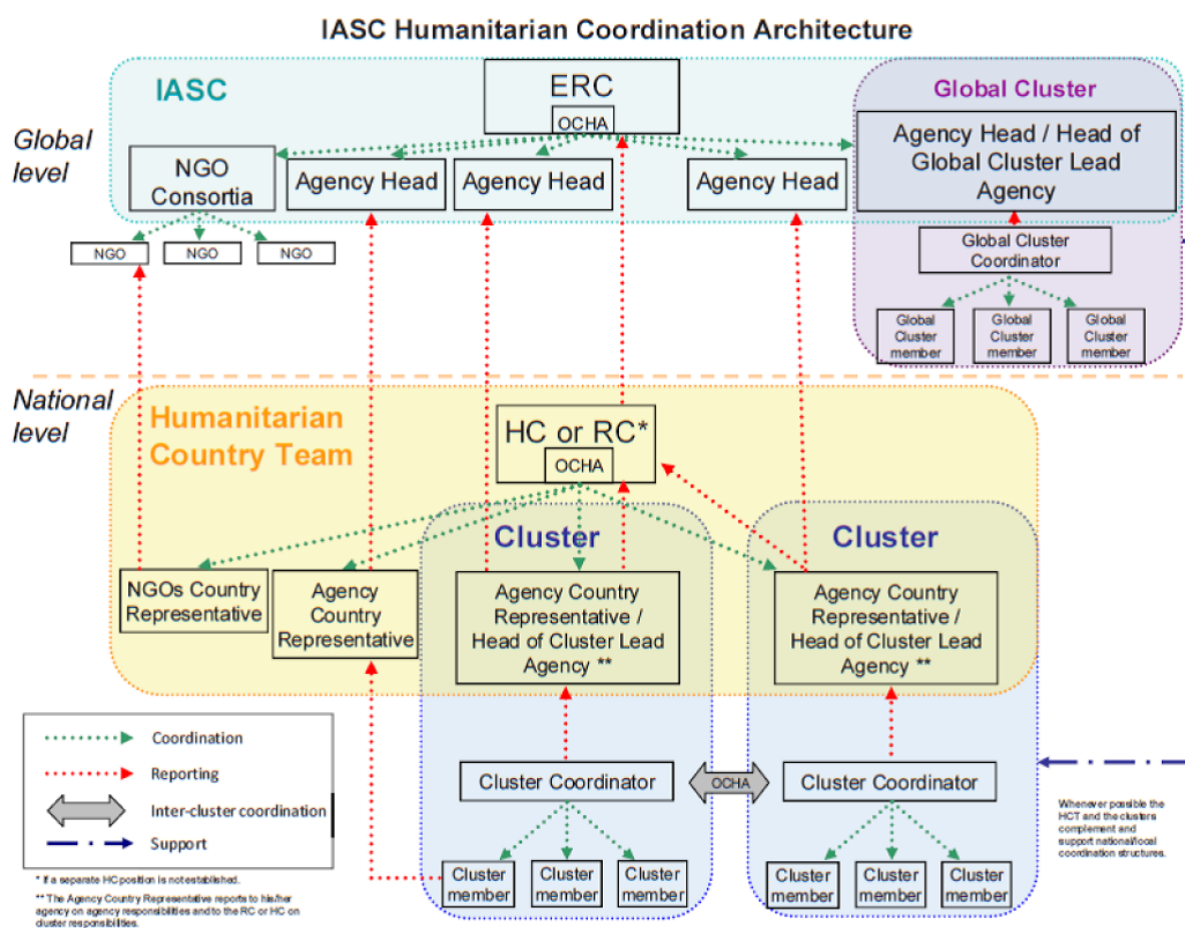
States are primarily responsible for protecting refugees. However, several factors can inhibit their capacity to fully discharge this responsibility. The arrival of large numbers of refugees may strain infrastructures and service delivery, that may be already stretched to begin with. In addition, States may not be equipped to appropriately receive, protect or otherwise respond to the challenges of receiving large numbers of refugees. For these reasons, international cooperation is required to support States that receive refugees. This understanding lay at the heart of UNHCR's creation and the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees. The importance of cooperation was subsequently confirmed in a range of regional instruments and was underscored by the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) which stated that "there is an urgent need for more equitable sharing of the burden and responsibility for hosting and supporting the world's refugees, while taking account of existing contributions and the differing capacities and resources among States. Refugees and host communities should not be left behind." The GCR

calls for a multi-stakeholder and partnership approach to reach this objective, to achieve which UNHCR plays both a support and catalytic role.

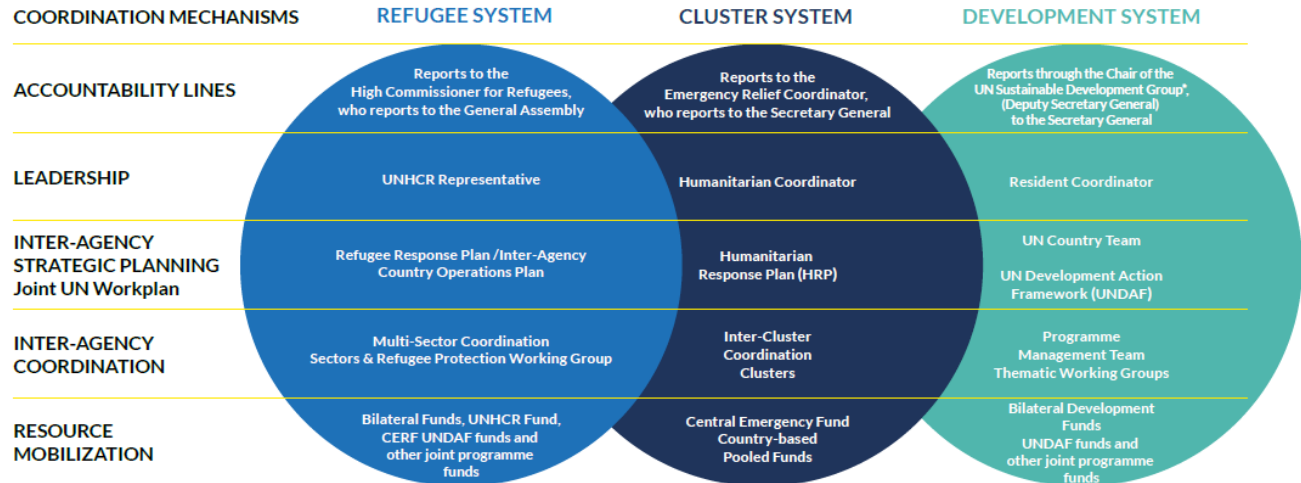
UNHCR is mandated to affirm and support the right of every refugee to a safe and dignified voluntary return to his or her own country. UNHCR provides advice and guides UN action to facilitate voluntary return to countries of origin where conditions are such that return is safe, dignified and sustainable.

The UN system expects UNHCR to advise it on refugee returns, based on its assessment of the country's readiness to receive returnees, guarantee their security, provide essential services, and do so sustainably over time.

For more information on the interface of refugee coordination with the development and cluster systems, see the Entry on the [Refugee Coordination Model](#).



Adapted from 2010 IASC Handbook for RCs and HCs on Emergency Preparedness and Response, p. 3



* the UN Development System is under reform

Post emergency phase

Nexus

The humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus approach encourages joined-up complementary efforts across stakeholders to reduce people's humanitarian needs, risks and vulnerabilities. It does not imply that humanitarian, development, peace and other actors should merge their activities or integrate roles, but it calls for programmes or activities to be layered in all contexts, in line with the respective mandates of each actor.

Responses to both IDP and refugee situations should contribute to operationalizing the HDP nexus by coordinating and combining mutually reinforcing humanitarian, development and peace efforts that work towards solutions for people in need and host communities, in line with the [OECD's DAC recommendation on the HDP nexus](#). This means that after the live-saving emergency phase, response partners need to embed longer-term objectives in national or local development plans, UNSDCF or other frameworks of relevance, as part of the Agenda 2030 commitment of leaving no one behind.

4. Main contacts

UNHCR Partnership and Coordination Service: hqng00@unhcr.org

Humanitarian programme cycle (IASC)

27 November 2023

Key points

- The HPC establishes the steps to take and tools to use to manage the inter-agency response to humanitarian crises (for IDPs and nationals of a country). The HPC seeks to achieve a needs-based rather than project-based approach to strategic planning, and standardises the approach to needs assessment and analysis, strategic planning, resource allocation and monitoring
- UNHCR engages fully in HPC processes: familiarize yourself with, and follow, HPC procedures and guidance; fulfill cluster obligations and commit financial and human resources to support cluster roles and responsibilities. Request support from HQ if there are gaps
- When UNHCR leads a refugee operation in a country with an HRP, it prepares the refugee chapter in the HRP, based on active and inclusive consultation with partners involved in the refugee response
- The HPC does not apply in refugee emergencies, which are covered by the UNHCR Refugee Coordination Model (RCM). In mixed situations including IDPs and refugees, UNHCR will apply the RCM and the arrangements in the UNHCR-OCHA Joint Note on Mixed Situations: Coordination in Practice. Contact the Partnership and Coordination Service in the Division of External Relations (DER) to consult on the best coordination and delivery arrangements

1. Overview

This entry needs to be read in conjunction with the entries on the [Humanitarian Response Plans \(HRPs\)](#) and [Flash Appeals \(FAs\)](#), the [Cluster approach](#) and the [International Coordination Architecture](#) as well as the [MIRA](#); please also refer to the entries on [pool funding](#) and [CERF](#).

The Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) is an operational framework developed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) that sets out the sequence of actions to prepare for, plan, manage, deliver and monitor collective responses in non-refugee humanitarian emergencies that may or may not have required a system-wide [scale-up activation](#). Its successful implementation depends on emergency preparedness, effective coordination between national and local authorities and humanitarian actors, and information management.

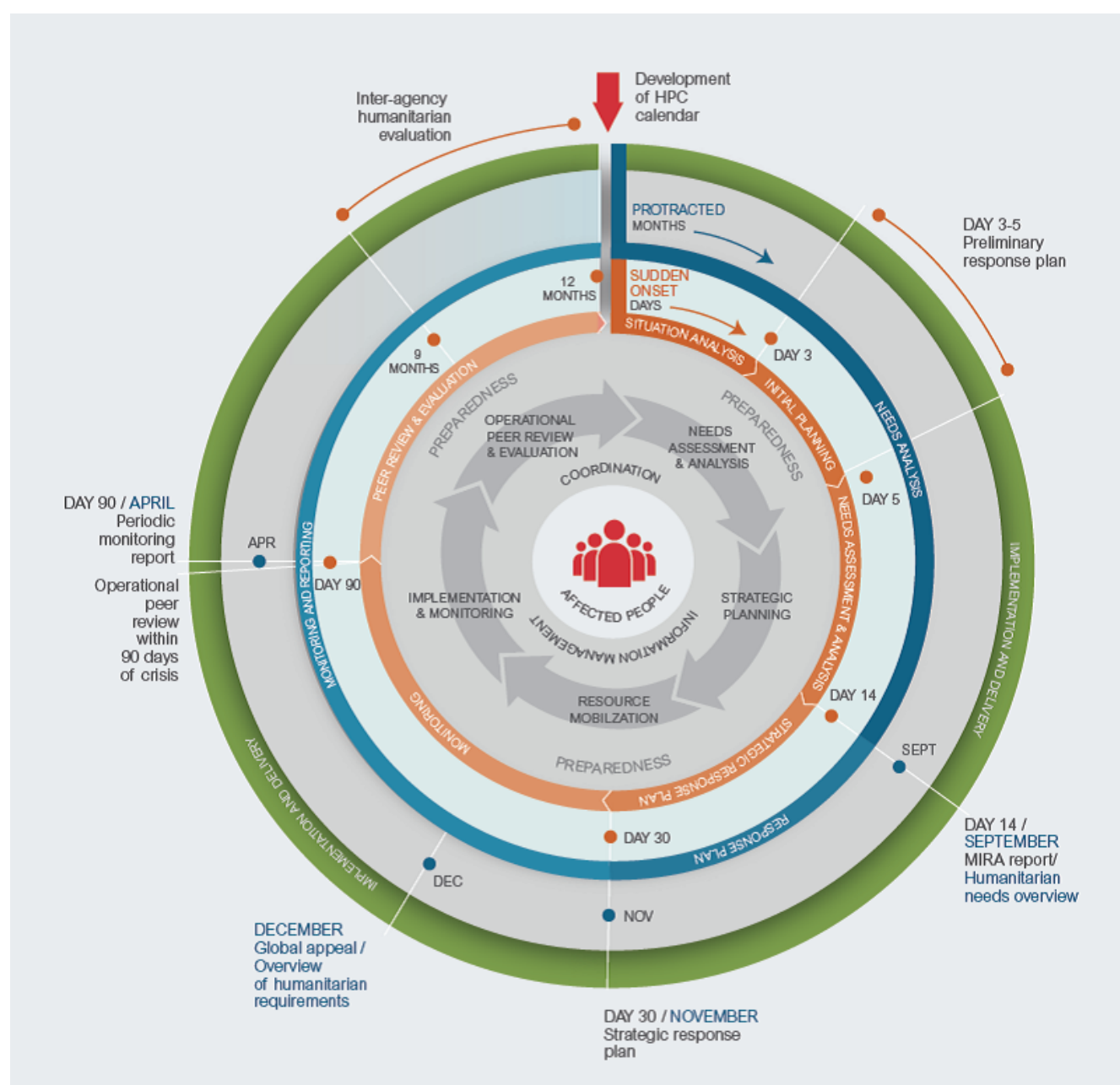
The model is driven by collectively owned evidence-based plans, direction by humanitarian

country teams (HCTs) led by a humanitarian coordinator (HC), and accountability for results. Its process and tools focus on humanitarian actors working at national and subnational level in the field, not on external audiences.

The IASC [HPC reference module](#) outlines the main elements of the cycle.

Note. The HPC does not apply in refugee emergencies, which are covered by the UNHCR refugee coordination model (RCM). In mixed situations, where operations assist IDPs and refugees, the UNHCR-OCHA [Joint UNHCR- OCHA Note on Mixed Situations: Coordination in Practice](#) describes the respective roles and responsibilities of the UNHCR country representative and the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC), ensuring that coordination is streamlined, complementary and mutually reinforcing.

Humanitarian Programme Cycle:



2. Main guidance

The HPC defines the standard for inter-agency joint programming in humanitarian emergency situations.

Underlying principles:

Protection. Protection of human rights and of people affected and at risk should inform the HPC and all operational activities. In practical terms, this means that agencies should identify who is at risk at the outset of a crisis, and determine how they are at risk and why, taking underlying vulnerabilities into account. The model requires agencies to analyse and prioritize protection needs; adopt a rights-based and participatory approach to collective action; and respond promptly to human rights violations ('rights up front'). See the IASC Statement on [Centrality of Protection in Humanitarian Action](#) (2013) and the IASC [Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action](#) (2016).

[Accountability to affected people \(AAP\)](#). The HPC requires humanitarian actors to listen to, communicate with, and involve affected people throughout an emergency. They are expected to establish a direct, responsible and respectful relationship with affected communities and ensure that, during planning, implementation and monitoring, affected communities participate in and provide feedback on decisions and activities that affect them. Feedback and two-way communication mechanisms should be established. Where their needs cannot be met or planned for, affected communities should be informed; and they should regularly receive programme updates. Good communication between humanitarian workers and affected communities improves trust and dialogue and strengthens agencies' understanding of needs and concerns, thereby improving the quality of the response. See the revised [IASC Commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#) (2017).

The IASC Preliminary Guidance Note on [Protection and Accountability to Affected Populations in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle](#) sets out actions to be undertaken throughout the HPC to fulfil AAP commitments and ensure that protection is central to humanitarian response. The guidance note accompanies the IASC's [HPC reference module](#) (and the tools and guidance on protection mainstreaming developed by the Global [Protection Cluster](#) (GPC).

Protection mainstreaming is the process of incorporating protection principles and promoting meaningful access, safety and dignity in humanitarian aid. Accountability is one of the four key elements of protection mainstreaming, alongside participation and empowerment, meaningful access and providing safety and dignity and avoiding causing harm. Priorities and desired protection outcomes should be identified, pursued and achieved collectively across sectors/clusters and with communities through meaningful participation. **Meaningful participation** reinforces a rights-based approach, empowers communities, recognizes differences in [age, gender and diversity](#), guarantees transparent responses to community feedback, and leverages the complementary roles, expertise and mandates of humanitarian

actors.

Cross-cutting issues, such as gender, age, disability, and HIV/AIDS should be recognized and mainstreamed. Gender equality is of particular importance; data disaggregated by sex and age should be collected in support of gender analysis, and the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian programmes must take into account the implications for women and men (IASC Reference Group on Gender and Humanitarian Action, [Gender Handbook on Humanitarian Action](#), 2018), [persons with disabilities](#) (see [IASC, Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action](#), 2019), as well as other dimensions of diversity that can result in exclusion where not taken into consideration.

Environment. Humanitarian action must take into account that environmental issues underlie and contribute to humanitarian crises, and humanitarian action can harm the environment, affected people and host communities. Reducing the environmental footprint of humanitarian interventions can ease the transition into sustainable recovery and help to strengthen the resilience of affected communities.

Transition and early recovery. Plans for recovery should start when a crisis begins. A response should address recovery needs that arise during the humanitarian phase using humanitarian mechanisms that align with development principles. This approach enables affected populations to use the benefits of humanitarian action to create development opportunities, strengthens their resilience, and establishes a sustainable pathway to recovery. For humanitarian organizations, it provides a pathway to durable solutions and an exit strategy. On both grounds, programmes that promote sustainable long-term solutions, including greater system and community resilience, should be integrated in the HPC and explicitly identified in humanitarian strategies and planning.

Under the HPC, all partners:

- Support the national authorities, who have the primary responsibility to assist and protect populations affected by disaster.
- Promote the participation of affected populations.
- Operate under the leadership of the HC (or Resident Coordinator, if the HC has not been appointed).
- Accept the direction of the HCT (or UN Country Team if the HCT has not been created).
- Support inter-cluster or sector coordination and cooperate with clusters or sectors (when they are activated).
- Welcome and include a broad range of actors, including at sub-national level.

Underlying process - how does this work?

Pre-emergency

The HPC recommends that agencies should take a broad range of actions to promote [emergency response preparedness](#) (ERP). These make it possible to respond more quickly, more appropriately and more efficiently when a disaster strikes; and to take decisions on the basis of

more reliable information. The HC is responsible for leading the ERP process, for creating an effective and coherent HCT (or similar in-country mechanism), and for coordinating with national structures and plans. The HC is expected to work closely with the HCT, clusters/sectors, national authorities, and NGOs.

Scale-up

In November 2018, IASC introduced [protocols for a humanitarian system-wide scale-up](#). These strengthened the coordination of emergency responses and replaced arrangements for 'humanitarian system-wide emergency activation' (L3) which had been in place since 2012.

When major sudden-onset crises occur or a humanitarian situation deteriorates significantly as a result of natural or human-induced hazards or conflict, justifying system-wide mobilization, IASC will declare a humanitarian system-wide scale-up activation (henceforth referred to as 'scale-up activation'). This exceptional measure will last for a time-bound period of up to six months in circumstances where the gravity of the humanitarian situation justifies the mobilization of system-wide capacities and resources, beyond standard levels, to respond to critical humanitarian needs on the ground. A single three-month extension may be considered in exceptional situations.

Specifically, the declaration of an IASC scale-up activation is justified in a given country, including at sub-national level, when the national or local capacity to lead, coordinate and deliver humanitarian assistance does not match the scale, complexity and urgency of the crisis.

The procedure activates a range of mechanisms and tools to ensure that (a) the humanitarian system delivers effective support to national authorities that complements existing capacities, and monitors its own performance; (b) the humanitarian system puts in place adequate capacities and tools for empowered leadership and coordination; and (c) IASC member organizations and global cluster lead agencies install systems and mobilize resources that are sufficient to enable them to comply with their mandates.

Within 48 hours: Activation of a humanitarian system-wide scale-up.

Within 72 hours: The HC is designated and relevant clusters are activated.

Within 5 days: A flash appeal is launched.

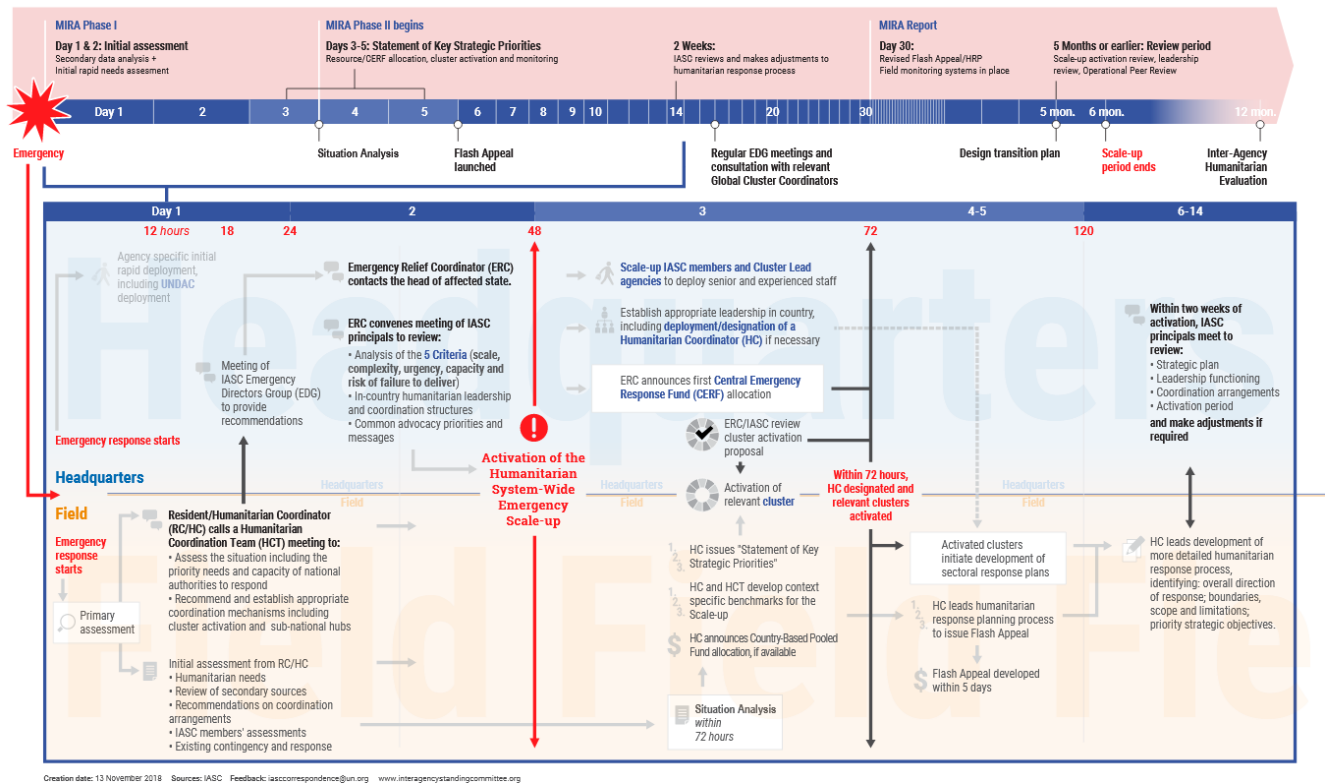
By day 30: A flash appeal is issued; a humanitarian response plan (HRP) is prepared.

5 months: Review period.

6 months: The system-wide scale-up ends (subject to a single extension of 3 months).

12 months: An inter-agency humanitarian evaluation is commissioned.

Scale-up Activation Timeline



Scale-up Activation Timeline

UNHCR's role and accountabilities

UNHCR performs a number of roles during the HPC:

As an IASC Principal, the High Commissioner takes part in decisions to declare a system-wide scale-up emergency response and is consulted on the activation of clusters.

As a member of the national HCTs, the UNHCR Representative is closely involved in developing the overall strategic objectives of the emergency operation, and discussions on cluster activation and cluster structure.

At country level, UNHCR is frequently the cluster lead for protection, shelter and [camp coordination and camp management](#) (CCCM), and in that capacity shapes cluster-level strategies and preparation of the HRP.

As an agency, UNHCR plays a key role in delivering services (according to the level of its engagement) and supporting agreed cluster-level strategies.

When UNHCR leads a refugee operation in a country with an [HRP](#), it prepares the refugee chapter in the [HRP](#), based on active and inclusive consultation with partners involved in the refugee response.

Considerations for UNHCR's engagement at country level

When and how to engage in the HPC. UNHCR will fulfil its obligations with regard to clusters that it leads globally. When clusters are activated at national level, UNHCR will involve itself in all aspects of the HPC. In refugee emergencies, UNHCR will apply the [Refugee Coordination Model](#) (RCM) for coordination and planning. In mixed situations including IDPs and refugees, UNHCR will apply the RCM and the arrangements in the UNHCR-OCHA [Joint Note on Mixed Situations: Coordination in Practice](#).

Applying the HPC in non-refugee situations

- **Preparedness.** Actively participate in shaping emergency response planning and related activities, for example by preparing risk profiles, establishing early warning procedures, completing minimum preparedness actions, and drafting standard operating procedures. Keep the Regional Bureau and the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply (DESS) informed of all initiatives and progress.
- **Assessment.** Ensure that key staff members, especially cluster-related staff, are aware of inter-agency processes such as the multi-sector/cluster initial rapid assessment (MIRA). Provide personnel for inter-agency assessments.
- **Flash appeals (FA) and the HRP.** Actively contribute to developing the [HRPs and FAs](#). Participate in the inter-agency assessment and planning processes. Ensure that protection underpins every cluster plan and the HRP. Provide necessary support to coordinator(s) of clusters relevant to UNHCR and help develop cluster specific response planning.
- **Resource mobilization.** Individual cluster plans determine the allocations of pooled funds, such as the [Central Emergency Response Fund \(CERF\)](#) and [Country-based pooled funds \(CBPF\)](#). Ensure that the actions prioritized by clusters that UNHCR leads are included in all available pooled funds.
- **Information management.** Ensure that UNHCR cluster coordinators are supported by one or more information management officers, and that these feed information into OCHA's [information management system](#) (the [humanitarian dashboard](#)).

3. Links

[IASC, Reference Module for the Implementation of The Humanitarian Programme Cyc... IASC, Protocol 1. Humanitarian System-Wide Scale-Up Activation: Definition and ... IASC, Protocol 2. 'Empowered Leadership' in a Humanitarian System-Wide Scale-Up...](#)

4. Main contacts

- UNHCR Partnership and Coordination Service: hqng00@unhcr.org
- The Global Protection Cluster: gpc@unhcr.org
- The Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster: globalsupport@cccmcluster.org
- The Shelter Cluster: HQShelter@unhcr.org
- UNHCR Division for Emergency Security and Supply (DESS): hqemhand@unhcr.org

Population estimation techniques

28 November 2023

Key points

- Each emergency situation is different, and therefore the choice of method(s) for estimating populations must reflect the diversity of contexts and available resources. Prioritize your information needs, assess the local capacity and the context, and choose the most appropriate methodology(ies) to produce population estimates. Document how UNHCR will use the population estimates at country and regional levels
- Producing population estimates is usually a multi-agency effort. It is essential to identify and convene key actors to agree on a common approach and to review and agree on the estimates prior to their publication
- Methods for rapid estimation exercises do not usually generate population figures of good quality, because sample sizes are often small and techniques are not representative. If resources allow, develop a robust estimation plan to ensure that the data collected is interoperable with other data and can be used to support other activities, such as needs assessments
- Triangulate the available primary and secondary data; assess its quality, including its accuracy and timeliness, and the reliability of the data's source
- Validate your estimates and publish them following the CORE guidance. Population estimates must be reviewed and cleared by the Representative and, as appropriate, key stakeholders and coordination mechanisms (e.g., the regional or national information management working group), and the government

1. Overview

Robust and interoperable population estimates are essential to understand the situation, inform the planning of a response, deliver and adjust programmes, advocate, and mobilize resources. As such, population estimates are of interest to the entire humanitarian response. [Multi-agency coordination](#) of the population estimates is therefore essential so that they meet the needs of all organisations involved in the response effort, to create confidence in the methods used and the figures they generate, to effectively disseminate the resulting estimates, and to ensure their effective use for a variety of purposes.

The steps explained below will help operations and regional bureaux to gather, quality assure, calculate, and report population estimates that will inform the emergency response.

Resources and partnerships

Population estimation is a collaborative process, led by an information management officer or equivalent function, working closely with protection colleagues, other thematic and sectoral focal points (e.g. Health, WASH, Nutrition, Education, Food/NFI distribution, and Supply) as well as the partner organisations. The Regional Bureau can support as needed, with additional support from relevant HQ entities if required.

2. Relevance for emergency operations

Timely, accurate and reliable information about people displaced by a crisis is crucial for an effective and efficient emergency response. Information on the **magnitude, locations and composition** of population movements is required. This includes information about where they are and where they are from (two location aspects), who they are (profiles), how many (number), when / since when (time), and why (causes of displacement). Population estimates are **aggregate population figures drawn from the best available primary and secondary data sources**.

3. Main guidance

Information required to produce population estimates

Population estimates include both flow figures and stock figures:

- Flow figures describe changes in populations over time. For example, the number of individuals who have been forced to flee from specific location(s) and are arriving in transit areas during a given week.
- Stock figures: describe populations at a given moment in time. For example, the number of people at a particular point in time living in a specific village. Stock figures change via flows (e.g. arrivals and departures as well as in situ changes such, as births and deaths). The estimates should include sex and age disaggregation, which is vital to AGD-inclusive humanitarian assistance activities, notably strategic planning, programming resource

mobilization, and advocacy.

The following information should be obtained to produce the population estimates:

- **Where?** Where are the key entry/exit/transit areas? Where does the displaced population come from? Where are they settling temporarily? Where are they going?
- **How many?** What is the magnitude of the population flow (i.e. the number of in/outflows by day/week; the number of forcibly displaced people in specific locations in a point in time)? This should be disaggregated to include the populations on the move through (flow) and presence (stock) in specific areas.
- **Who?** The broad age groups and sex of the displaced population. And what are their main causes of displacement? The latter is essential in mixed movements to assess if the target population is mainly refugees or a mixed movement with refugees and migrants.

To capture this information, use mixed methods at a geographical level that is sufficient to inform the response, as explained in the following steps.

Some population estimation methodologies require **personal data** to be collected and processed. You must take the necessary proactive steps to ensure that statistical [data is managed](#) in line with [UNHCR's personal data protection and privacy framework](#) (accessible to UNHCR staff only), as applicable. Critically, UNHCR does not further reuse personal data collected for statistical purposes for incompatible purposes and without an appropriate legitimate basis.

Step 1: Prepare by gathering baseline population data and assessing the context

Building on the Emergency Information Management strategy and [Guidance on Emergency Preparedness](#), gather baseline population data and assess the context. The following actions will help you determine the most appropriate methodology/ies to produce population estimates:

- [Common operational datasets \(CODs\)](#): Review the available geographic data for the operation [in UNHCR's geodatabase](#) or humanitarian [CODs](#). If these are not up-to-date, compile a list of locations and names of villages, existing service facilities (e.g., hospitals, health centres) in areas that are likely to receive refugees and/or IDPs.
- *Actors and informants*: identify possible key informants, including local/national authorities (e.g. migration directorates, municipalities, civil protection / emergency institutes), drawing on active humanitarian services and partners' presence in areas likely to receive refugees and/or IDPs.
- *Historic population flow and stock data*: If not already available, identify reliable data sources on the number and composition of people moving through relevant border or transit points between the country of origin and the host country (cross-border situations), or within the country (internal displacement). Try to review at least the previous 12 months to assess typical changes in movements.
- *Contextual data*: Consult the contextual information that has been gathered to inform the emergency response (and supplement it if needed), notably to understand the local security context. This is important to understand trends and to anticipate potential access constraints in implementing certain types of estimation methodologies. If not yet gathered, obtain recent conflict, access and armed groups presence data (e.g. [Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project \(ACLED\)](#) and [ACAPS](#) data) for the country of origin, the

country of displacement (if different), and the host country (for cross-border situations).

Step 2: Agree “Who” should be counted by defining the target population group(s), together with partner organisations

- The definitions of the target population(s) for the estimation should reflect the information needs of UNHCR and the wider community of actors responding to the emergency (including the government), and align with international standards and recommendations on forcibly displaced or stateless population groups (notably the Expert Group on Refugee, IDP and Statelessness Statistics (EGRIS) guidance on international statistics on [refugees](#), [internally displaced people](#) and [stateless people](#), as well as the [Refugee Data Finder](#) and [UNHCR’s Master Glossary of Terms](#)), and guidance on international migrants ([IOM key definitions](#), [UNDESA](#)).
- When elaborating the definitions of the target population groups, include the following dimensions: the population groups (e.g., refugees, IDPs, stateless – and whether the displaced population is also stateless), the temporality of the movement (e.g. what is the minimum and/or maximum length of displacement), its geographic scope (countries of origin, area of origin, country(ies) / region(s) of destination of the population groups to be estimated), and relevant AGD profiles (e.g., ethnicity, socio-economic status, etc.).

Step 3: Identify information gaps required to produce the population estimates

Conduct a desk review to identify and assess the available data to determine what information is currently missing:

- Identify reliable sources that may provide the data you need. Remember to consider sources such as traditional media reports and news articles in the country of origin, country of displacement and host country. Explore the existing systems that are in place to capture information on population movements, including those implemented by external partners (e.g. border monitoring). Where possible, prioritise corporate tools (e.g. in a refugee emergency, use emergency registration if possible) or systems that are implemented by the authorities.
- Quality assure and triangulate the secondary data you compile.
- Organise the data by category, format, theme, date, source, reliability, accuracy, geographic and time coverage.

The secondary data review will determine if there is still a gap between the information you need and the information you have. If you need to collect primary data consider the methodology(ies) in the next sections.

In many cases, the available data will be insufficient, but to collect additional primary data:

- *time* will be too limited,
- relevant *resources* (human and financial) will not be available,
- the locations hosting the displaced population will not be *accessible* (e.g. due to physical constraints or the security situation) or
- it may be difficult to find a suitable methodology for specific populations (e.g. due to social profiles, fast changing patterns of movements).

These are all considerations to bear in mind if you need to collect primary data to generate the estimate. Note that in many cases, the estimate will be generated by combining the existing (secondary data) and new data that has been collected.

Step 4A: Collect primary data (if needed) - methods and techniques requiring access to the displaced population

If you need to collect new data to meet your information gaps, bear in mind that this will require time, money and human resources. Taking account of the context (see the section on *considerations for a practical implementation* below), the following methodologies can be applied:

A.1. Consultations with key actors/stakeholders: consult the key stakeholders that were identified during the preparedness activities in step 1 to map the main displacement areas, routes, access constraints, and /or entry points at national, sub-national or local levels. The information can be gathered remotely (i.e. phone interviews, emails, online questionnaires) or in person.

A.2. Direct observation can be used to rapidly collect the information required to estimate populations on the move as well as those currently staying at specific locations that are in scope for the estimate. Conduct visual habitation counts and/or static crowd estimations. Drive or walk through the locality and record your observations on the location (its nature, size), population stocks, and population movements. Try to identify possible key informants, and places where enumerators could potentially conduct surveys with the target population.

A.3. Set up an alert system: if the context permits, regular updates can be organised to allow notification of new arrivals or new internal displacements. This requires a level of engagement of the authorities and/or humanitarian partners (or other stakeholders identified in *step 1*) to help set up the alert systems. The modalities of this alert system will depend on the context and should be defined at the outset and agreed with all members of the network. This would typically include a short questionnaire that members would update with information on the size, locations and nature of areas receiving the target population(s).

A.4. Key informant interviews: Design a short questionnaire to gather estimates of population flows at entry, transit/settlement and/or exit locations in the areas of interest through local key informants:

- Key informants can include district or village/residential areas authorities (in urban settings), host community leaders; service providers, humanitarian workers, religious leaders, refugee or IDP leaders and education or health staff. They can also include the key stakeholders you identified at Step 1.
- The information can be gathered by enumerators and through a range of modalities, including face-to-face interviews or by phone, email, surveys, and SMS. Estimates provided by key informants will be less accurate than by direct assessments, but they are particularly useful in situations where access to the population is limited.

A.5. Questionnaires with the target population(s): where resources are available, design a short questionnaire to collect data about the target population at entry, transit/settlement and

exit locations in the areas of interest via enumerators. Enumerators conduct short interviews with each person/family and collect the data noted above. This method is generally more applicable in border crossing contexts, where population flows are manageable. Where resources and capacity are limited, prioritize household/group interviews over individual interviews to ensure greater data collection coverage:

- Quantitative data on population flows gathered at household or group level will provide information on the scale of the movement, coupled with:
- Sampled individual data can be used to characterize the population and understand population flow trends locally.

Note: A statistical approach may also be inappropriate for the context, for example because it would be too time consuming, or the required level of expertise to design the approach and interpret the results is not available.

A.6. Conduct registration, enrolment or head counts: count the population through fixing exercises, rapid registration, enrolment or head counts. See [UNHCR's guidance on registration and identity management](#).

Step 4B. Collect primary data (if needed) - Alternative data collection methods

In addition to the methodologies explained above, it can be necessary to explore other data collection methods that are presented below, with regional or HQ technical support if needed. They have limitations, involve additional processing time and require technical resources – therefore, their implementation should be assessed on a case-by-case basis. That said, they can be pragmatic and relatively cost-effective options to triangulate secondary data and/or primary data collected through the methods above. They can also be used to provide information on past, current, and potential future trends of population movements. Here are some examples of methodologies that have been implemented by operations and partner organisations when the emergency context did not permit the primary data collection methods listed above in Step 4a:

B.1. Earth observations: if available and relevant, use data derived from UNOSAT [satellite imagery](#), such as NASA's [night-time lights](#) imagery to indicate population movements through changes in the levels of electricity luminosity in particular areas.

B.2. Call Data Records (CDRs): If there is *mobile connectivity*, displacement within countries can be assessed from analysing CDRs. Work with other UN Agencies or organisations such as [Flowminder](#) and [GSMA](#) to source and [clean](#) the data responsibly.

B.3. Social media and mobile application usage statistics: consider [usage statistics from social media](#) (e.g. [X/Twitter](#) or [Meta data for good](#)) if the internet penetration rate is greater than 70% (see [World Bank statistics](#)), following UNHCR [guidance on social media for community-based protection](#). Otherwise, consider using [mobile application usage data](#) such as the opt in use of locations services.

B.4. Proxy datasets: Explore other datasets that could be *proxies* for displacement such as trends in market prices and financial transactions/cash assistance data.

B.5. Mine *radio broadcasts*: to [understand movement and protection incidents](#).

B.6. Explore *Google data*: including [Google trends](#) (e.g. search for terms in the local language like “how to seek asylum in”, or “how to migrate to”, or “how to go to X country” or “what documentation or vaccines is required in this country”), and the [Google distance matrix API](#).

B.7. Data science techniques: can be applied if sufficient historical data is available (e.g. daily or weekly data for at least a year, or two to three years of monthly data). Estimates can be produced using nowcasting or forecasting approaches. Multivariate regression analysis helps to explore correlations and relationships between variables. Strive to corroborate the findings of data modelling by triangulating this with other data.

Step 5. Presenting the population estimates

- Use standard CORE templates and guidance to ensure population estimates are consistently presented. Produce both static and dynamic dashboards / reports, to support the needs of a broader set of users.
- Share those population estimates and information products through systems such as UNHCR’s Operational Data Portal.

For more information, please read the entry “Emergency Information Products”.

Considerations for practical implementation

The following tips and best practice should be considered when implementing the methodologies listed above:

- Population estimation is *not* protection monitoring or needs assessment: population estimation generates information about the number and characteristics of a population in a specific place and time. By contrast, protection monitoring generates information about trends in the protection situation of specific population groups and/or specific locations. Needs assessments identifies the needs, conditions and capacities of specific groups and/or specific locations, in order to determine gaps between a current situation and agreed-upon standards.
- *Multiple approaches* or methods may be employed to generate the population estimates in different areas or at different moments in the emergency response, according to gaps in data needs and operational contexts.
- *Key stakeholders* can include law enforcement officials (border, police, security), civilian government authorities, representatives of the civil society/refugee-led or IDP-led organisations, researchers, experts, humanitarian, development and peace organisations) at national and sub-national level. To assess which organisations are present, review the available 3W information.
- Review *the target locations* for which you are producing population estimates. Record them following [corporate location standards](#) to improve the comparability and re-usability of the

data collected over time. Minimise overlap between those locations or areas by assessing their geographical coverage and ensuring they are well known by the key informants and enumerators. Avoid gathering information in geographically close locations (e.g. on each side of a border, on the same road etc.).

- Improve *temporal coverage* by conducting time-location sampling (selecting location/time period combinations at random e.g. different days of the week and hours of the day). The magnitude and composition of flows can fluctuate, and for example, mornings are often busier.
- Improve analysis by collecting both *stock* and *flow* data, e.g. in key informant interviews in camps or host community settings. Collect a) stock data on the target population present in the area at the moment of the data collection, b) flow data on new incoming and outgoing individuals/families over a certain period of time in that same area. Do not try to produce stock data from flow data or vice versa, as the data will not be reliable.
- Be transparent about *data coverage* and limitations when disseminating data to partners, highlighting changes in the access and data collection coverage between rounds of data collection.
- Define the required *duration* of the data collection to manage expectations of how long it will take to generate the estimate.
- If the geographic scale or magnitude of the displacement exceed what is possible to assess with the available resources, define a sampling strategy: where possible, define *sampling frames* based on probabilistic methods to enhance statistical representativeness, such as network scale-up, the quadrant method, capture-recapture, and multi-stage and stratified samples. If probabilistic sampling is not possible, consider using respondent-driven sampling. Seek guidance from a regional or HQ statistical expert.

Annexes

[ACAPS, Rapid Estimation of Affected Population Figures, 2012](#)

[IASC, Guidelines on the Humanitarian Profile Common Operational Dataset, 2011](#)

4. Learning and field practices

Tips for applying the methodologies described in steps 4A and 4B in common operational contexts:

- For all scenarios: consult key actors/stakeholders (method A1).
- **Scenario 1: Measuring displaced population flows in cross-border situations:** Use method A4 to source data from border officials, supporting a border monitoring system in coordination with them, if required. If the security situation permits, triangulate with data from method A2, or if resources and time permits, method A5. If most displaced people

cross the border at less accessible situations, prioritize data collection in nearby transit locations (e.g. nearby villages and bus stations), as described in scenario 2.

- **Scenario 2: Estimating displaced populations located in host communities:** If key informant networks are active, use method A3. If not, conduct a field mission to identify key informants who have the capacity and willingness to monitor flows and stocks and can provide regular updates in the coming weeks or months.
- **Scenario 3: Estimating displaced populations located in camp-like settings:** Always use method A2 to triangulate other methodologies. Where resources and available time are limited use method A3. Explore opportunities for proxy indicators as described in method B4, such as analysing total water consumption by area/block in a site. Where greater time and resources are available, use methods A5 or A6.
- **Scenario 4: Estimating large population flows in rapidly evolving situations in transit locations:** If there is access to the locations, use method A2 and if resources are available, method A5. In mixed movement situations, knowing the reasons for fleeing is important to help assess how many people are likely in need of international protection. People fleeing persecution will be underreported in group responses, therefore ensure to conduct individual surveys to better assess how many their reasons for moving. If there is no access to the transit locations, consider the methods described in step 4B.

5. Links

[ACAPS, Secondary Data Review, Technical Brief, 2014](#) [ACLED early warning hub](#) [Google data](#) [IASC Humanitarian Profile Support Guidance, 2016](#) [IFRC Community mapping MMC – 4MI Methodology – Longitudinal Surveys](#) [UNHCR Master Glossary of Terms](#) [UNHCR Refugee Statistics](#) [International Recommendations on Internally Displaced Persons Statistics \(IRIS\)](#) [Refugee Statistics \(IRRS\) and Statelessness Statistics \(IROSS\)](#) [IOM, Key Migration Terms](#) [VIEWS violence early warning](#)

6. Main contacts

Global Data Service (GDS) – Statistics and Demographics Section: hqcs00@unhcr.org

Innovation Service: hqinlab@unhcr.org

Multi-cluster / sector Initial Rapid Needs Assessment (MIRA)

12 January 2024

Key points

- A MIRA is an inter-agency needs assessment and analysis process that is carried out within the first three days of a disaster under the guidance of the Humanitarian Coordinator. It forms the basis for the humanitarian country team's (HCT) joint strategic plan for emergency response
- UNHCR engages in and supports the MIRA at an early stage to ensure that protection concerns are incorporated in secondary data reviews, primary data collection methods, and results analysis
- UNHCR is expected to take ownership of MIRA elements, including analysis and interpretation of results that concern clusters (co-)led by UNHCR
- UNHCR provides protection guidance to the overall MIRA process

1. Overview

This entry should be read in conjunction with the entry on [Emergency Response Preparedness](#) approach (IASC), the [Humanitarian Response Plans \(HRPs\) and Flash Appeals \(FAs\)](#), the [Cluster approach](#) and the [International Coordination Architecture](#); you may also want to consider information in the [Needs assessment for refugee emergencies](#) (NARE).

A MIRA is an inter-agency needs assessment and analysis process that forms the basis for the humanitarian country team's (HCT) joint strategic plan for emergency response. While the MIRA analytical framework and approach may be adapted to various emergency contexts and can be used to respond to IDP or non-refugee emergencies, it is most effective in a sudden onset natural disaster, when conducted within the first weeks.

The MIRA process focuses on producing a situational analysis during the first three days after the onset of a disaster or an escalation, followed by a MIRA report within two weeks. MIRAs are managed by OCHA under the overall guidance of the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC), supported by the humanitarian community through clusters, and may be undertaken in coordination with host governments. They are included in the IASC Guidance for Inter-agency Contingency Planning and [Emergency Response Preparedness](#).

2. Relevance for emergency operations

A MIRA may be undertaken when the following conditions are present:

- New and sudden onset disaster followed by a period of relative stability enabling humanitarian access;
- Urgent need for information required to inform coordinated planning and response;
- The humanitarian community in country is willing to share information and coordinate.

Note: Additional details and an easy to use graph illustrating conditions which should be

factored into a decision to conduct a MIRA are available in the 2015 "[MIRA Multi-Sector Initial Rapid Assessment Guidance](#)", (page 2).

The MIRA is intended to support stakeholders in reaching a shared understanding of the humanitarian situation and its likely evolution at its earliest stages to inform initial strategic response decisions in relation to:

- The impact of the disaster, including scale and severity, priority needs, risks/vulnerabilities;
- The capacity to respond, both by national and international actors, including limitations; and
- Priority areas for intervention.

3. Main guidance

The MIRA methodology is comprised of the following fundamental elements: a secondary data review, collection of primary data, joint analysis and reporting.

According to the 2015 IASC MIRA guidance, a successful MIRA requires a small team of key response actors with the required technical skillset; too large of an assessment team may overwhelm the MIRA coordination process.

Secondary data review

The organizations participating in a MIRA collect and analyse quantitative and qualitative information pre and post disaster. e.g. information on the geographical area, people or sectors affected, using an adapted MIRA analytical framework as a guide. Within the MIRA approach, inter-sectoral analysis is then conducted jointly and consensus is reached on the most severely affected areas, population groups etc.

Secondary data plays a crucial role in the early stages of an emergency when it may be impossible to collect primary data because time, staff, resources and access may be limited. Where needed and in "mixed settings" where populations of humanitarian concern include refugees, IDPs and other affected groups, UNHCR may support the secondary data review, notably to collect information related to refugees (number, size of population, protection concerns, locations, demographics, etc.). For more information on how to conduct a secondary data review, see the entry on [needs assessment for refugee emergencies](#) (NARE).

Primary data collection at community level; sampling size and site selection

Led by OCHA, partaking organizations identify and agree on parameters for designing and testing the MIRA sampling form, and determine how primary data will be collected (sampling methods, sites, timeframe, other specifics). As cluster lead, UNHCR has a responsibility to participate in this phase by attending OCHA-chaired inter-agency meetings and supporting the analysis process with contributions. UNHCR staff will participate in this stage of the MIRA process by collecting data as members of inter-agency assessment teams. A small inter-agency assessment team collects primary data for the MIRA, generally through direct observation, key informants interviews and community focus group discussions.

Note: focus group discussions within the MIRA process are referred to as 'Community Group Discussion' and generally operate under the same principals as UNHCR's focus group discussions.

During observation and interviews, keep these key questions in mind:

- What has changed over time? What has remained the same?
- What is surprising, important or different about one group (or time, or place) when compared to another?
- If conditions did not worsen, why not? If conditions worsen now, what will be the cause?
- What is the next level of detail required?

Direct observation provides a snapshot of an affected population or location. Observe (see, smell and hear) conditions and features of the community or place from a range of viewpoints. Walk across the community, avoid obvious routes (roads, paths or natural boundaries), to obtain a variety of perspectives and a balanced view.

Look around and talk to people, with a gender, age and diversity approach. See what is there, what is not there, and what should be there: observe water collection points, latrines, communal washing areas, schools, storage facilities, tea shops, cemeteries, markets, health facilities, religious centres. In markets, see what people buy and sell and note the prices of basic commodities.

Interviews with key informants. Arrange interviews with individuals of different backgrounds, responsibilities, genders, ages, and religious and/or ethnic minorities to ensure a full picture of the affected community... Where an affected community includes different population groups, such as a host population and a displaced population, key informants should be selected from all groups of interest. Conduct Interviews (using tools and measurement that can be compared) at each group level.

Situation analysis: summarizing secondary and primary data

The MIRA process combines the secondary and primary data it has collected to generate an overall analysis. This includes possible scenarios (best case, worst case) of how the crisis is likely to unfold.

Coordinated by OCHA, a situation analysis should become available within 72 hours of the start of an emergency. The analysis is the product of discussion between all the humanitarian actors involved, and reports their agreed findings and the decisions that follow from them. Under OCHA's overall guidance/coordination, UNHCR contributes to this process by working in the cluster system, and providing field support, staff and analysis for clusters that UNHCR (co) leads or supports. UNHCR also participates in discussion and analysis of MIRA data at inter-agency MIRA meetings led by OCHA. The situational analysis is then continuously updated during the first two weeks of a disaster, and used as a basis from which to draft the MIRA report.

OCHA produces a MIRA report that contains the findings of the assessment within 2 weeks of the start of a disaster. The report informs more detailed response planning, including revised appeals, where applicable.

UNHCR's role and accountabilities

In emergency IDP situations, UNHCR contributes to the MIRA process for the clusters it co-(leads) during the MIRA assessment and analysis process. UNHCR may directly contribute to the inter-sectoral review process of available pre-crisis and post-crisis secondary data as part of an assessment team that produces the situational analysis within the first three days of a disaster. Clusters/sectors may also carry out a sector-specific analysis where needed.

UNHCR staff will participate in MIRA field assessments and data collection and engage in inter-sectoral discussions and analysis of the data. UNHCR will also contribute to the MIRA report findings and decisions.

Considerations for UNHCR's engagement at country level

Information management officers and UNHCR cluster (co-)leads for the protection, shelter, and camp coordination and management clusters, as applicable, contribute to the MIRA process, including design, delivery and results analysis.

UNHCR supports UNHCR-led clusters during MIRAs and participates through these clusters in secondary data reviews, primary data collection, analysis, and MIRA results.

UNHCR may also take a lead role in analysing population estimates and trends in the context of a MIRA assessment.

4. Links

[Needs assessments: guidance & templates \(OCHA\)](#) [MIRA Guidance \(2015\)](#) [Needs assessment for refugee emergencies \(NARE\)](#) [The Cooperation Framework](#) [IASC Guidance for Inter-agency Contingency Planning and Emergency Response Prep...](#) [CCCM Cluster](#) [Global Protection Cluster](#) [Shelter Cluster](#)

5. Main contacts

- For technical advice and information on in-depth assessments relating to thematic areas falling under UNHCR's (co-)led clusters, please contact the [Assessment Team](#) (Division of Strategic Planning and Results)
- Global Protection Cluster: gpc@unhcr.org
- Global Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster: HQGLOBCC@unhcr.org
- Global Shelter Cluster: HQShelter@unhcr.org

Needs assessment for refugee emergencies (NARE)

20 February 2024

Key points

- The NARE is an easily customized rapid multi-sectoral needs assessment designed for refugee emergencies, that can also be used in other forced displacement contexts
- A needs assessment team decides what data collection methodologies should be used and which topics should be addressed. NARE users are not obliged to complete the entire assessment set out in the NARE Analytical Framework; they can pick and choose methods and themes depending on their circumstances (resources available, time, the purpose of the assessment, the types of interventions that are planned).
- Data collection questions in the NARE Analytical Framework may be customized to take account of the local situation. You can change or omit suggested questions, or add new questions
- The NARE Guidance Note contains considerations on how to implement the NARE

1. Overview

In refugee situations, UNHCR supports the coordination of a multi-sectoral response based on a joint assessment of the needs of the affected people. The Needs Assessment in Refugee Emergencies (NARE) is a multi-sector rapid assessment approach, designed to assist UNHCR operations in jointly assessing with partners the main unmet needs and concerns of refugees, host communities, and other forcibly displaced persons to inform immediate response planning. More specifically, the NARE answers the following question: What are the current priority concerns for refugees and their host community?

The key objectives of an emergency needs assessment are:

- To inform programme design and assistance priorities in the early stages of the response
- To ensure that humanitarian aid is based on need.
- To ensure that humanitarian aid promotes and does not undermine safe local coping mechanisms.
- To identify and understand the unique and respective needs of different populations.
- To make sure that decisions on humanitarian aid are based on facts.

Under its mandate, UNHCR coordinates and leads all aspects of humanitarian responses to refugee emergencies, including joint needs assessments.

2. Relevance for emergency operations

The NARE applies several methodologies to produce a rapid cross-sectoral analysis that provides a relatively complete description of needs in a refugee emergency.

3. Main guidance

Underlying process - how does this work?

The NARE is a community-level multi-sector rapid assessment, designed to obtain an initial understanding of the needs. Following the initial stages of the crisis, where a more detailed needs analysis is still required, an in-depth multi-sector or sector-specific assessment(s) can be conducted complementary to the NARE. The tool is intended to be a one-off activity and not a continuous monitoring system.

UNHCR's role and accountabilities

In an emergency, the UNHCR Representative in a country is responsible for leading and coordinating an overall refugee needs assessment, through sectoral coordination. In an appropriate inter-agency forum, the Representative should request operational partners to nominate staff to join a needs assessment. A needs assessment coordinator should be identified in UNHCR to contact sector or organizational focal points and follow up. Sectoral leads and emergency coordinators need to decide what information the operational strategy should receive from a needs assessment. An information management officer helps with assessment methodology, design, data collection, analysis and coordination. UNHCR should ensure that the assessment is coordinated with other data collection activities.

The following principles of NARE should be considered in all refugee emergency situations:

- A secondary data review should always take place, to determine what information is already available.
- Initial needs assessments should be multi-sectoral and coordinated across sectors. (Detailed sector-specific needs assessments can follow the initial multi-sectoral assessment.)
- Different types of information are best gathered by different data collection techniques, such as facility visits, observations, interviews with key informants and community/focus group discussions.
- Assessments should always be coordinated to ensure data collection activities produce comparable data, are not redundant and generate a shared vision of the needs and situation.

For a needs assessment in a new refugee emergency, UNHCR should lead a joint multi-sectoral needs assessment that involves a range of sectors and humanitarian actors. Joint assessments

help establish a common understanding of the situation and make good use of available resources. At the same time, all assessment activities should be harmonized, to ensure comparability of the data and the most efficient use of resources. This can be coordinated through an assessment working group, or equivalent forum.

Considerations for UNHCR's engagement at country level

Needs assessments are often situation dependent and many factors may influence their design. They include the level of humanitarian access, whether population movements are stable or dynamic, the amount of time and resources available for the assessment, and the types of interventions that the assessment should inform.

Emergency Needs Assessment Process:

Below are listed the basic steps for designing and conducting an emergency needs assessment. Note that, while they are broadly in order, many steps will run in parallel.

- Identify key stakeholders and determine coordination arrangements.
- Identify the NARE's [objectives](#), and decisions that require assessment information.
- Detail the information needs in a data analysis plan. What do we need to know to meet the objective? The list of possible information needs covering the most common information needs during a rapid assessment can be found in the [NARE Analytical Framework](#).
- Define the level of measurement. The NARE is designed for community level measurement (not household or individual level, which can be done at a later stage).
- Define the timeframe for the pre influx and the post influx phase that will be measured, for example whether post influx data will be captured since the start of the crisis, or for the last 30 days.
- Conduct a secondary data review, compile an assessment registry, a 3W (who, what, where), and identify remaining information gaps. Use the [NARE Primary data collection/ SDR template](#).
- Decide if primary data collection is required. If yes, design a methodology for primary data collection, including how communities will be sampled (see [NARE Guidance Annex 2](#)).
- Define data collection plan using the [NARE Primary data collection/ SDR template](#).
- Design and test data collection forms. Translate if required.
- Train the data collection team(s).
- Undertake primary data collection.
- Collate, clean, and analyze the information produced. Use the [NARE Primary data collection/ SDR template](#).
- Undertake joint analysis to identify key findings, priorities, and recommendations.
- [Disseminate](#) data and information products (including with communities).
- Begin monitoring.

Step 1. Who to involve

In the first phase of a refugee emergency, a wide range of humanitarian agencies, NGOs, government counterparts and possibly donors may be involved in the assessment planning process. Actors responsible for overseeing and providing assistance in the first phase of a response should be included within the assessment process. It is critical to involve WFP and other relevant partners when the population to be assessed is larger than 5,000 persons.

In urban contexts, refugees are often mobile and tend to cluster in the poorest areas of the city, or to disperse across many locations; as a result, they are difficult to identify. Refugee focal points can help the team to identify where refugees live, estimate the population and its demography, locate new points of influx, vulnerable groups, infrastructure and security issues, and identify coping mechanisms. Needs too may change rapidly in an urban context. Protection or community-based protection staff will usually compile the contact addresses of refugee focal points.

The Assessment Team and Refugee Information Management Working Group (RIM WG)

An assessment team is a temporary working group of stakeholders who manage a needs assessment. Members of this team include operational leads who decide what information is required for decision-making, interpret the results of the assessment, and design interventions based on those results; and an information manager, who designs the assessment, selects the sites that will be assessed, compiles the data, and produces final information products. The duties of the assessment team are to:

- Agree on a time frame, a methodology for data collection, a process for cleaning and analysing the results, and how the results will be shared and disseminated.
- Identify an emergency referral system to deal with urgent interventions that need to be made that are uncovered during the assessment process.
- Agree on minimum life-saving sectoral data.
- Finalize the assessment method and design.
- Select sites.
- Coordinate resources, training and logistics.

The assessment team will need to identify what resources will be required. If resources are limited, this may affect the assessment's design. It is important to ensure that the resources allocated to the needs assessment are proportionate and reasonable in relation to the anticipated value of the resulting interventions. Ideally, the cost of the assessment should be kept at a minimal and justifiable level.

The information manager may be tasked to: compile an assessment registry and do a 3W (Who, what, where); put together and coordinate needs assessment methodologies; make sure that data sets are compatible; and facilitate data sharing in the context of the Refugee Information Management Work Group (RIM WG). The RIM WG is a forum for coordinating multiple assessments, sharing and tracking available data, and keeping the assessment registry up-to-date. Needs assessment coordination functions should be included in the RIM WG terms of reference: see 'Policy documents, references and tools' below.

Step 2. What to assess

Identify clear and precise objectives and a focus for the needs assessment. Following the [NARE Guidance Note](#), detail the information needs. The [NARE Analytical Framework](#) is a worksheet covering key questions by thematic area and possible data collection methods that can be customized according to information needs, the context, and available resources. Users are guided through a list of possible areas of information according to the NARE analytical framework and can select questions relevant to the situation. For each thematic area of information, data collection methods are suggested as well as standard questions to be used. Users can filter by

topic, sector, data collection methods and phase, to allow decision making to be based on available resources.

Expected outcomes

At the start of the needs assessment process, ask several questions. What are the underlying causes of risk and vulnerability? Have these causes changed and, if so, how? How widespread is the problem (throughout the country or countries, or in specific areas)? How are host communities coping? Which geographical area is most affected, and which affected groups are the most at risk? How do we expect the situation to develop in the next three months? A crucial first step is to agree what operational information will be most relevant to intervention and programme planners.

Note. Do not start a needs assessment process by designing a data-collection form. Begin by identifying the questions that need to be answered, not the ones that will be asked. If you start with the form, your assessment is much less likely to yield actionable information.

Step 3. Secondary data review

The secondary data review provides valuable information. It should consider a range of issues, including:

- Conditions before the crisis (and whether they aggravated the impact of the crisis).
- Underlying vulnerabilities. Which groups were already at risk before the crisis?
- Threats (epidemics, climate, etc.).
- Current conditions (what is already known about the scope and scale of the crisis and the humanitarian consequences)?
- Lessons that can be learned from past crises or refugee operations in the same area.

Secondary data are any information that originates from outside the needs assessment, such as data from the Government, monitoring data, etc. It includes data that is owned by UNHCR, such as registration or ProGres data. Primary data are any kind of time-bound information that is collected by completing an assessment form during an emergency needs assessment. In addition to information from humanitarian partners already in situ, secondary data may be collected from or found through ReliefWeb, Alertnet, ACAPS, OCHA, HumanitarianResponse.info, media, blogs, crowd-sourcing, coordination meeting minutes, census data, etc. The [NARE primary data collection/ SDR analysis template](#) supports assessment teams to collect and structure the secondary data review.

Compiling an assessment registry

To help understand the overall situational context, the information manager should ensure that an 'assessment registry' is compiled. This lists the coverage of current and planned assessments and helps the assessment team to decide where to focus subsequent assessment activities.

Compiling a 3W

To obtain an overview of needs, it is important to understand and map existing services, by type and location, and the capacities of the Government and operational partners, in a detailed 3W (Who, what, when). As part of the secondary data review, protection and programme staff should

work with the information manager to compile or expand a 3W for the operation. This can be done through a traditional 3W spreadsheet, which may be used to establish a profile of each administrative unit, highlight service coverage (or its absence), and signal areas that should be included or prioritized in the needs assessment.

For additional information on compiling a 3W, see the Entry on the [Who does what where \(3W\)](#).

Step 4: Primary data collection?

While a needs assessment should always be undertaken when there is a refugee emergency, in some situations primary data should not be collected. Do not collect primary data:

- When collecting data will put collectors or interviewees in danger.
- When the results of an assessment will be incorrect or biased (for example, because interviewees are too afraid to tell the truth or external factors will distort data collection).
- When a population feels over-assessed and may be hostile to additional needs assessments.
- When programmatic decisions have already been made, and the assessment results will have no operational relevance.

In the above situations, it may be appropriate to assess needs by means of a secondary data review only (without collecting primary data).

Emergency referral system

Before collecting primary data, protection staff should arrange an emergency referrals system for the assessment team, by sector, with focal points identified. When field data collection teams come across life-saving issues or cases requiring urgent intervention (a collective centre in need of a water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) intervention, an individual who needs urgent protection), they should know how to refer them to appropriate service providers. To this end, teams should carry with information on UNHCR's referral mechanisms for assistance. In this manner, the emergency referral process and needs assessment fieldwork can be kept separate, and urgent action reports will not be mixed with assessment information for data entry. The emergency referral system needs to be operational when the field assessment occurs.

Needs assessment logistics and equipment

When planning an assessment, it is essential to cover the logistical requirements of the teams that will collect data. Core equipment includes appropriate vehicles, first aid kits, computers or tablets, radio or satellite phones, GPS devices, cell phones and chargers with appropriate SIM cards and credit, flashlights, spare batteries for all equipment, physical maps, and stationery. They will also need interview guides. Ensure that teams carry adequate food and water, particularly if supplies are difficult to obtain in the areas they visit.

Assessment method and survey design

The unit of measurement for an emergency needs assessment should be the community rather than the household or individual. This saves time and reduces the volume of primary data that needs to be gathered. Techniques of data collection at community level include direct observation, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions.

The recommended unit of measurement for an urban needs assessment is a neighbourhood or district. In addition to the above techniques, an urban needs assessment might gather information using crowd-sourcing technology or refugee call-in lines (either at the start or later on).

Participatory and AGD approaches

Assessments must be designed and conducted to allow the people for whom UNHCR works to voice their opinions about their own needs.

Needs assessments must adopt an [age, gender and diversity \(AGD\) approach](#), because the emergency will affect sub-groups in different ways. Field data collection teams need to be gender-balanced and to have had training in participatory approaches and conducting survey questionnaires before they collect primary data.

Community participation helps to build on a community's capacities. It also reduces the risk that needs assessments, and the humanitarian interventions to which they give rise, will undermine local coping mechanisms, neglect the needs of marginalized social groups, or waste resources on aid that is not required.

Data collection teams must explicitly request permission from interviewees to use the information they provide (informed consent). Personal information can never be disclosed or transferred for purposes other than those for which it was originally collected and for which consent was explicitly given.

Site selection

As the unit of measurement is at the community level, it may be possible to select key informants for each community (such as a site) in the first weeks of an emergency. When not possible, diversity-driven purposive sampling is the preferred sampling method. Purposive sampling aims to sample as many types of site as possible. For more information on sampling, refer to the [NARE Guidance Note Annex 2: Selecting the NARE Sampling Approach](#).

Step 5: Designing and implementing tools

Data collection questions in the NARE may be further customized, suggested questions may be changed or omitted, and new questions inserted. The [NARE primary data collection/ SDR analysis template](#) supports assessment teams to collect and structure the primary data collection following a secondary data review. The final product from this template will support the discussions during an assessment joint analysis workshop.

Primary data-collection forms must be tested before starting a full needs assessment in the field. Testing may be done with local colleagues: what matters is to be sure that the questions are clear and that answers can be analysed. Design of the questionnaire in the appropriate language is the preferred option. Translation is costly, time-consuming and, if done inappropriately, can greatly reduce data quality and accuracy. Plan and budget for translation at an early stage.

Agreement on minimum life-saving sectoral data

Needs assessment questions should focus on gathering the core emergency life-saving data that

are required for the first phase of an emergency response. All questions should relate directly to operational information that has been prioritized by the assessment team.

When prioritizing assessment questions, consider using a [prioritization graph](#) to facilitate a group discussion of questions to include in the assessment. Prioritize data elements that have life-saving importance and are easy to collect.

Step 6: Data cleaned, jointly analysed and agreed upon

Analysis should be done as much as possible jointly with the team involved, including partners, and other subject matter and geographic experts. Pooling existing expertise ensures that the analysis is likely to be more comprehensive, robust and accurate. Analysis by staff from different backgrounds can help to mitigate biases, while joint analytical processes can go a long way to create a common understanding of the situation and buy-in for the results.

In order for a needs assessment to have operational impact for the benefit of affected populations, analysis results must be communicated quickly and in an effective manner for key audiences. A [dissemination plan](#) should be developed to help facilitate this.

The report should be as short as possible, and the outline should be developed at the outset of the needs assessment initiative in order for stakeholders to agree on expectations and anticipated results. The NARE package includes a [report template](#) specifically for the NARE.

The results of an emergency needs assessment need to be set against any existing contingency plans. The information gathered should also be evaluated, for validity and relevance, the reliability of source(s), and the degree to which it corroborates other information. Any evidence or suspicion of fraud, misconduct, or falsely reported needs (to attract or deny aid to a place or group) must be reported to senior management.

People affected by the crisis deserve to know the findings of the needs assessment. This transparency enables them to hold the humanitarian efforts accountable for their actions, and use the evidence to plan their own response strategies. However, it is crucial to be honest and clear about the limitations of interventions (ongoing and planned) and avoid making false promises or raising unrealistic expectations. Throughout the assessment process, communication with affected people should be respectful and transparent, utilizing community-preferred and trusted communication channels.

The assessment coordinator should ensure that links between the assessment and monitoring needs are taken into consideration by the RIM WG and operational leads. For example, if the needs assessment shows there are severe problems in a particular sector or in one community, this information should be used to trigger monitoring of those problems. The assessment team should themselves verify the accuracy of the report and acknowledge any weaknesses of documentation or method in the final results.

In addition to the assessment report, the NARE contributes to camp profiles, updates, and funding appeals, as well as other information products. A 'refugee dashboard' (a one- or two-page visualization of key needs) may be produced to show the results. UNHCR colleagues can refer to the [CORE Guidance](#) on creating and releasing public information products in the first weeks of newly declared refugee emergencies.

NARE Package

- [NARE Guidance Note](#)
- [NARE Analytical framework](#)
- [NARE primary data collection/ SDR template](#)
- [NARE report template](#)

Checklist

- Establish an assessment working group with operational leads and an information manager.
- Compile an assessment registry.
- Clearly define assessment goals and expected outcomes.
- Use the NARE Analytical Framework to define information needs.
- Review existing data and identify gaps.
- Assess necessity for primary data based on safety, accuracy, and operational relevance.
- Select target population group(s), define what a community is as a unit of measurement, and if necessary, use diversity-driven purposive sampling, adopting an Age, Gender, and Diversity (AGD) approach when selecting respondents.
- Customize NARE questions, test forms before deployment.
- Establish a mechanism for urgent interventions during data collection.
- Evaluate validity, relevance, and reliability of gathered information.

- Conduct joint analysis involving diverse team members.
- Develop a plan for quick and effective communication using NARE report template.
- Communicate findings quickly and transparently via people's preferred channels, clearly stating intervention limitations.
- Integrate results into relevant products, consider a 'refugee dashboard'.

4. Links

[UNHCR Assessment and Monitoring Resource Centre](#) [UNHCR Needs Assessment Handbook](#) [Data and Information Management](#)

5. Main contacts

hqdspr@unhcr.org

Pre-existing data

16 November 2023

Key points

- Ensure that data presented on UNHCR maps incorporate accepted common operational datasets and established boundaries
- Ensure data collection exercises and databases use agreed CODs at country level
- Take the lead in using common datasets to set standards in operations; make colleagues and partners aware of their value and importance
- Communicate with the HQ GIS Support Team on location updates (especially with administrative level 1, 2 and places, there is a link between CODs and UNHCR administrative data and Pcodes)

1. Overview

Developed and endorsed by the Inter-agency Standing Committee (IASC), and disseminated by OCHA, Common operational data sets (CODs) are datasets used in humanitarian emergencies to support technical standards, improve the quality of data, and strengthen interoperability. OCHA identifies, publishes and maintains CODs for use in humanitarian emergencies on the [Humanitarian Data Exchange \(HDX\)](#).

Core CODs are administrative boundaries and population statistics. OCHA aims to make these available for all its operational countries. Other CODs (e.g., roads, hospitals, schools, hydrology, etc.) are available on the [Humanitarian Data Exchange \(HDX\)](#). Though not all countries are included in [HDX](#), information managers officers and designated focal points in UNHCR should periodically check OCHA's [COD Dashboard](#) that provides the status and availability of Core CODs to ensure their operations are using available CODs as the baseline for all operational data and information products.

All UNHCR staff should be aware of the contribution that COD datasets make to data collection, sharing data, and reporting.

Please note: much of the text for this entry was taken directly from OCHA's IM Toolbox, available online at [OCHA IM Toolbox](#).

2. Relevance for emergency operations

CODs provide a foundation for coordinating the humanitarian response in an emergency, by articulating and sharing agreed baseline data, across sectors, for mapping and other information and planning purposes.

UNHCR staff need to know about CODs as they are used as the baseline for operational data and information products (e.g., 3/4/5W, reference maps, etc.). A key aspect of the CODs is the use of a Place Code (Pcode), which is a unique alpha numeric ID used to identify locations. The COD Pcode is kept in the UNHCR administrative boundaries data as a 'source_ID' to maintain the link with the source data. All UNHCR staff should be aware of the contribution that CODs make to data collection, sharing data, and reporting. For more information about CODs please see: [COD Story Map](#). Information about new or updates to location data should be shared with the GIS Support Team (mapping@unhcr.org).

Common Operational Datasets (CODs) are the de facto standard for the humanitarian community. They represent the best-available datasets on a range of basic subjects:

- Core CODS
 - Administrative boundaries

- Population statistics (baseline)
- Other CODs
 - Populated settlements, towns, cities.
 - Transportation network (roads, ports, etc.)
 - Hydrology (streams, bodies of water, etc.)
 - Hypsography (elevation models, contours)
 - Humanitarian profiles (caseload)

When CODs are available, UNHCR and partners use them to inform the baseline that underpins response and planning in a refugee emergency.

3. Main guidance

Underlying process - how does this work?

OCHA maintains the agreed datasets and coordinates their distribution and updating in emergencies. If OCHA is unable to provide this service in a specific country, Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) or other inter-agency coordination structures may identify another agency to undertake this role.

According to OCHA, each dataset has a designated 'contributor' who is responsible for identifying and liaising with 'sources' or owners to analyze, collate, clean and reach agreement on a specific operational dataset. Sponsors are identified early in an emergency and then assume responsibilities in relation to their thematic dataset. OCHA maintains lists of dataset sponsors, in each country and globally, and coordinates relations between them.

Each dataset has one or more designated source or owner. These may be national authorities or agencies, a cluster, NGO, UN agency etc. The designated contributor of a dataset is responsible for developing and maintaining a dataset and associated metadata.

UNHCR's role and accountabilities

UNHCR is the 'source' and 'sponsor' of several standard datasets which it maintains, updates and disseminates: on refugee locations, population statistics, border crossing points, and the presence and status of UNHCR offices, for example. Other datasets may be added at country level. UNHCR's location data is available here: [UNHCR Operational Data Portal, Refugee Situations](#).

Considerations for UNHCR's engagement at country level

At country level, the information management officer (IMO) should participate in meetings about CODs in Information Management Working Groups; track the names of locations, coordinates, CODs and Pcodes. (Pcodes are unique geographic (geo)identification codes, represented by combinations of letters or numbers, that identify a specific location or feature on a map or in a database.) Contact your local OCHA office for area-specific Pcodes or consult the website.

Information Management Officers should: share the Excel database of Pcodes, CODs with all

operational partners to ensure that they use the same units of assessment for data analysis; liaise with them on data quality issues and data standards; participate in or organize inter-agency data groups at field level; advise partners on methodological issues (where needed); and encourage prompt reporting of data, according to agreed standards.

Distribute information products, CODs and baseline data that are to be used by all partners.

Coordinate with UNHCR GIS Support Team on update related to administrative boundaries and places.

Annexes

[IASC Guidelines Common Operational Datasets \(CODs\) in Disaster Preparedness and Response](#)

[What is a GLIDE Number. When to use them and why they are useful](#)

4. Links

[IASC, Guidelines on the Common Operational Datasets in Disaster Preparedness an... CODs and FODs Humanitarian Data Exchange \(HDX\) COD portal Core COD Dashboard COD Storymap OCHA IM Toolbox What is a GLIDE Number. When to use them and why they are useful](#)

5. Main contacts

Local OCHA office For questions on UNHCR datasets, contact UNHCR GIS Support Team at: mapping@unhcr.org

Data and Information Management

16 November 2023

Key points

- IM strategy fosters collaboration across humanitarian agencies and partners and should be developed in consultation with all stakeholders
- The Strategy is a road map which outlines how you plan to collate, collect, and analyze operational data
- Distinguish between the policies and principles that apply for sharing personal vs. non-

personal data

- Collect only the required data, collect it once, re-use often, re-use what is available and use everything you collect
- Identify benefits and risks and apply appropriate and feasible mitigation and prevention measures before sharing data

1. Overview

Data and Information Management is a critical component of humanitarian response and disaster management. It is the process to gather, store, clean, analyze, share, and use data and information to enable evidence-informed action in a coordinated, systematic, and responsible way. It ensures accountability and enables humanitarian support to reach people we serve.

This entry covers refugee emergencies.

2. Relevance for emergency operations

The data and IM strategy should be developed during the first six weeks of a refugee emergency and updated depending on needs.

Data collection in emergencies must adhere to ethical principles, including obtaining informed consent, protecting the privacy and dignity of individuals, and ensuring data security.

Information on the Operational Data Portal is publicly available. This means that it is available to everyone on the Internet, not only humanitarian actors. It is therefore vital to ensure that information and data are of good quality and have been formally cleared for dissemination.

3. Main guidance

1. Information and Data Management Strategy

An information and data management strategy defines the purposes, outputs, time frames and responsibilities for all operational information systems in an emergency. The information and data management strategy will provide a broad overview of how information systems relate to one another, and which organizations are stakeholders in which systems, allowing the Information Management Team to better coordinate information. The strategy will also help identify whether there are information gaps and duplications or redundancies between systems.

To develop an information/data management strategy, one needs to answer the following questions:

- What are the information gaps?
- What types of analysis products are needed? e.g. Comprehensive Overview of the Response to Emergencies (CORE)
- What is the geographic coverage of the system?
- Who are the focal points responsible for implementing each activity, tool, or process?
- What methods should be used to obtain the data?
- What human resources are required to run the systems?
- What is the frequency of reporting from each system?
- When should each system be implemented?

During planning, one needs to consider some of the following factors, which will affect the design of the information and data management systems:

- What is the scale of displacement?
- Is there secondary displacement?
- Do we have physical access to the population and the sites? Security?
- Is there a likelihood of return?
- What are the IM activities of others (Government, humanitarian, or private actors)?
- Is there humanitarian space (government and non-state armed actors' position)?
- Is a technical solution and the required data literacy available?
- What is the amount of information already available?
- What are the information gaps and what types of analysis/reporting products are needed? e.g. CORE
- What resources (staffing, budget etc.) are required to run the activity?
- What are the data protection requirements for each activity?
- What is the data sharing needs for each system?

2. Emergency Data Collection

Data collection in emergencies is a critical process that involves systematically gathering information to assess the situation, needs, and vulnerabilities of affected populations during humanitarian crises. The collected data serves as a foundation for informed decision-making, efficient resource allocation, and effective humanitarian response. In humanitarian context, primary data is normally data which has been acquired directly through a registration, profiling or survey/needs assessment exercise ([NARE/MIRA](#)).

Data collection should be guided by specific objectives, which may include determining the scale and scope of the emergency, assessing immediate needs, identifying vulnerable populations, and prioritizing response efforts.

To collect high-quality data that is relevant to your purposes, follow these four steps.

1. Define the aim of your data collection.
2. Choose your data collection method.
3. Plan your data collection procedures.
4. Collect the data.

Before starting any new data collection, it is recommended to always review data that has been collected, collated, and analysed by other agencies, institutions, or bodies (secondary data

review). Secondary data provides background of pre-crisis situation, identifies likely issues (vulnerable groups), helps to plan primary data collection, provides a baseline for primary data collection results and to triangulate primary data.

Primary data is data collected directly through first-hand experience, for instance using Key Informants, observation, focus group discussions, surveys, pre-screening, group/individual registration or other methods that involve direct contact with the respondents. It is useful to gather the most recent information, triangulate secondary data and fill a gap where secondary data is missing.

Data responsibility is a key approach to data and information management in all response contexts, including refugee situations. Responsible data management means that personal data and non-personal data is managed in a safe, ethical, and effective way for the operational response, in accordance with established frameworks for personal data protection. It is about principled approaches and ensuring we 'do no harm' while maximizing the benefits of data in the response. For more guidance on the principles and actions for data responsibility, see the [2023 IASC Operational Guidance](#).

Where data management involves the processing of personal data of refugees, host communities or other forcibly displaced and stateless persons, UNHCR's data protection and privacy framework applies, the General Policy on Personal Data Protection and Privacy (GDPP). For all policies, guidance and tools related to data protection, see the dedicated entry on [Data protection and information security](#).

Metadata (data that describes data itself) is an important component of data collection. Metadata allows for identification of the source of the data in the event of queries and can give users interpreting the data an idea of how reliable or current the data. Below are some important pieces of metadata that should be collected and stored:

- data collection date(s)
- data collection source
- data provider (if different from source)
- locations described
- method of acquisition
- publication source, if applicable

Below are some of the situations when data collection should be considered:

- Start of an emergency
- Beginning of the programming cycle or when decisions are being made
- When something has changed
- When information is out-of-date

UNHCR Kobo is a data collection platform and suite of tools designed for collecting, managing, and analysing data for assessments and humanitarian projects. It provides features and functionalities that facilitates design, deployment and analysis of surveys and forms in various context. UNHCR's own instance of Kobo is available at [KoboToolbox \(unhcr.org\)](#) . Kobo has centralized public repository of question blocks and survey templates that are accessible to all

registered users on the UNHCR Kobo instance located in the Kobo Library. The templates facilitate process of creating new surveys by re-using questions and forms for various data collection exercises.

3. Dissemination of Emergency Products

Data and information are shared among humanitarian agencies, government entities, and other stakeholders to facilitate coordination and avoid duplication of efforts. Standardized information-sharing protocols should be in place for the data sharing. Prioritizing the establishment of an Information Sharing Protocol (ISP) at the outset of an emergency helps raise awareness of data responsibility and lays the foundation for additional actions at all levels of a response. Data should be shared to:

- avoid duplicative efforts in primary data collection.
- create a bigger pool of available data for joint analysis, enhanced evidence based understanding, planning, and response.
- create a bigger pool of actors who can act on the data (who can respond to the issues raised).
- deliver a quicker and better response, better protection, and solutions outcomes for people we serve.

[UNHCR's Operational Data Portal \(ODP\)](#) is its flagship public website for disseminating detailed datasets and information products on emergencies that are aimed at partners and decision-makers. Many UNHCR operations already have an Operational Data Portal page, but the speed at which data and information are published there may increase in an emergency. An emergency may also result in the creation of a new Situation View in the Operational Data Portal. The ODP is an important resource for internal personnel too to see the latest population figures and other information that has been publicly released. UNHCR partners are also able to share their documents and activities on the ODP.

All information posted on the ODP must go through a defined external clearance process in-country. The ODP is a high traffic public website, so care and attention to posting only cleared data is important. Due to the fast changes in an emergency, external clearance procedures should be rapid and priority activities for those involved.

The former HumanitarianResponse.info platform, now called [ReliefWeb Response](#) is a service provided by OCHA, dedicated to support the coordination and information-sharing in natural disaster and internal displacement situations. Depending on the context, ReliefWeb Response might be used in parallel with the Operational Data Portal.

[The Humanitarian Data Exchange \(HDX\)](#) is an open platform for sharing data. The goal of HDX is to make humanitarian data easy to find and use for analysis. Launched in July 2014, HDX has been accessed by users in over 200 countries and territories. Data shared on HDX must not be personal or sensitive.

Checklist

- Ensure information and data are of good quality and are formally cleared for dissemination in the Operational Data Portal
- Assess data sensitivity in a context for different types of data / datasets to ensure no harm to any person, including the source of the information, or negative impact on organization capacity to carry out its activities or public perceptions of that organization (including reputational damage)
- Engage affected communities in data collection processes
- Cross-check information from multiple sources, conduct data audits, and verify data accuracy before posting in the Operation Data Portal

4. Learning and field practices

[Protection Information Management \(PIM\) Process - PIM Guide](#)

[Kobo Support Page \(accessible to UNHCR staff only\)](#)

[Operational Data Portal Guide \(accessible to UNHCR staff only\)](#)

5. Links

[UNHCR Kobo Server](#) [The Humanitarian Data Exchange \(HDX\)](#) [Operational Data Portal](#)

6. Main contacts

Information Management: hqim@unhcr.org

Kobo Support: kobohq@unhcr.org

Operational Data Portal Support: webportal@unhcr.org

Emergency Information Management Coordination

29 November 2023

Key points

- Information Management (IM) is central to coordination in emergencies
- To be effective, IM activities must be coordinated
- The primary mechanism for coordinating IM activities is an Information Management Working Group (IMWG)
- The Who does, What, Where (3/4/5W) tool is key for supporting coordination in an emergency

1. Overview

Information Management (IM) is central to coordination in emergencies. Humanitarian agencies need timely and accurate information to ensure an efficient and effective response. IM helps to determine the number of people in need of assistance and what kind of response is most appropriate, track the assistance provided and highlight and address the gaps. For these reasons, robust and coordinated IM is a required element of every emergency.

2. Relevance for emergency operations

Because emergencies create situations of rapid change and fast, large-scale decision-making, rapid cycles of processing data are required when compared with stable situations. Rapidly refreshed strategic information will help establish the scope and scale of the emergency and how the situation is evolving over time.

3. IM Coordination mechanisms and tools

To be effective, IM activities must be coordinated. This ensures that agencies are not wasting time collecting the same information from the same people. It also helps to develop a common understanding between agencies so that there is consistent information and messages about the response. IM activities should never be done in isolation, but rather in a coordinated manner, regardless of the context.

Emergencies may involve the creation of new coordination mechanisms or the evolution of existing ones, given the arrival of new populations and new partners, or shifts in the government's role in the response. Emergencies require frequent cycles of fresh information about the activities of organizations, and UNHCR's coordination mandate requires UNHCR to produce this. New data sources should be considered and leveraged, and coverage with assessments and monitoring systems between organizations should be complementary, not conflicting or redundant.

The coordination of information management and needs assessments in humanitarian situations is vital for:

- Prompt and predictable responses
- Evidence-informed decision-making, including for strategic planning. Programme delivery, resource mobilization, advocacy.
- Making the most effective use of all the information that has been collected and is available in the operational context.
- Avoiding duplicative data collection exercises that waste time and resources and expose refugees and host communities to unnecessary interactions with enumerators.
- Maximizing the efficiency of spending on information management to the benefit of the wider response and the impact on refugees and the communities that host them.

a) Information Management Working Group

The primary mechanism for coordinating IM activities is an Information Management Working Group (IMWG). This forum is a means for colleagues from different agencies (Government, UN, NGO, Red Cross, etc.) to come together, coordinate their activities, and jointly plan and implement IM activities, and to share data and information products. IMWGs can be found in most humanitarian settings.

The IMWG will seek to:

- **Coordinate Information Management activities**, including sharing of IM products and tools (registries, databases, maps, 3/4/5/6Ws, websites, Common Operational Datasets, etc.) and coordinating the development and implementation of IM systems.
- **Establish interagency data interoperability**, by ensuring that a core set of information management standards are in place for collecting, storing and sharing data. Interagency data interoperability will ensure that data produced by different organizations can be compiled, compared and triangulated, and responsibly (re)-used by more actors. Prioritizing the establishment of an Information Sharing Protocol (ISP) at the outset of an emergency helps raise awareness of data responsibility and lays the foundation for additional actions at all levels of a response.
- **Support Needs Assessment activities**, including supporting and coordinating joint and multi-sectoral assessments and ensuring the responsible sharing of data and information about concluded assessments in order to reduce gaps and overlaps in geographic and thematic coverage.
- **Support Interagency Appeal Monitoring**, including by aligning implementation monitoring processes and practices for Refugee Response Plans and Humanitarian

Response Plans, etc.

aa) In a refugee situation, [the Refugee Coordination Model \(RCM\)](#) is the coordination mechanism. UNHCR convenes and chairs the Refugee IMWG.

Additional information can be found in the Refugee Coordination Model toolkit. There is a template for the terms of reference (ToR) for the Refugee IMWG.

As chair of the RIMWG, UNHCR must identify relevant technical focal points from the partners and participating agencies to participate in the Working Group. UNHCR is responsible for planning and organizing meetings, documenting the meetings, establishing efficient information sharing and data sharing arrangements, establishing joint data standards and inter-agency tools, developing and supporting the release of information products, establishing assessment registries and other databases that facilitate an understanding of the ecosystem and the re-use of information, and ensuring follow up on planned activities. Keeping the RIMWG active and relevant to the objectives of the operation's multi-year strategy is an important task and vital to ensuring high-quality IM support to refugee responses, including emergencies.

bb) In an IDP or another context where OCHA is coordinating the response, it is normally they who would convene the IMWG. UNHCR therefore becomes an active participant, normally representing those clusters in which UNHCR is the Cluster Lead Agency. This role requires UNHCR to ensure its IM activities meet its own needs, while also fitting into the larger operation, to the extent possible. Given that UNHCR may lead several clusters, each with IM capacity, it is possible that more than one UNHCR staff member would participate in the IMWG.

More information on OCHA led IMWGs [can be found here](#).

Interagency coordination between all agencies at the IMWG is important. In addition to inter-cluster IM coordination, IM officers supporting UNHCR-led clusters are expected to coordinate IM activities WITHIN their respective clusters. More information on the roles and responsibilities of cluster IMOs can be found:

- [Global Protection Clusters](#)
- [Global CCCM Cluster](#)
- [Global Shelter Cluster](#)

In an emergency, the IMWG chair will need to pay close attention to new organizations and personnel arriving to support the response and who should be invited to the forum.

Emergencies tend to generate new places where affected populations move to or from, and these new locations should be assigned a p-code and included in the standard IMWG gazetteer, so that location data remains aligned between responders. A new multi-sectoral needs assessment (possibly to support a new appeal) is also often part of an emergency response and could be coordinated by the IMWG in the absence of an Assessment Working Group. And with the increase in population movements an emergency brings, coordinating population figures in the IMWG is often a standing agenda item.

b) IM Tools

1- Who does What Where (3/4/5W)

Coordination requires an understanding of WHO is active in the response, WHAT they are doing, and WHERE they are doing it. The basic tool humanitarians use to collect and share this information is known as a “Who does, What, Where” database, also known as a 3W. Many of these systems collect additional information on WHEN an activity is taking place (4W), as well as for WHOM the interventions are being delivered, I.e., targeted and reached beneficiaries (5W). A 3/4/5W tool is a valuable information management tool for coordination and activity gap analysis.

An emergency situation will necessitate a rapid shift in response activities that need to be mapped. Many new activities will be planned and some pre-emergency activities might be stopped. The 3/4/5W tools should distinguish between “planned”, “implemented” and “completed” activities. Because sometimes many “planned” activities at the start of an emergency may not receive enough funding or face security or practical challenges that prevent them from starting. Management may decide in some situations to publish the activities that are actually being implemented or that have funding confirmed.

These types of 3W tools can be implemented in a variety of ways, from a simple Excel table, to a more complicated database using tools such as [ActivityInfo](#). Whatever the approach, it is important to facilitate reporting for partners (e.g., by avoiding approaches that require them to resubmit data that should already be documented) and to establish a clear process flow, with timelines and roles. An SOP document, however short, is often helpful to create predictability around the production of 3Ws and information products that rely on that data.

Typically, a simple solution (.xlsx or Google sheet) is used in the first weeks of an emergency. The sensitivity of the data allowing, flexibility is required since it may not yet be known who is involved in the response, the exact locations where the response is happening, and the type of activities underway. It is not possible to impose the ‘controlled vocabularies’ of a data collection form if the acceptable answers are not yet known. Once a response is more stable, it is better to set up a data collection solution that standardizes information and its collection process. For example, early versions of a 3W can allow a free text answer for WHAT a humanitarian agency is doing. Later versions may restrict this to a dropdown-menu with a list of activities included as part of the HRP or RRP.

An information management officer may lead this process, with support and collaboration from programme, protection and sector leads, the external relations officer, and senior managers.

The 3/4/5W is an essential aspect of coordination. It should be an output of the Information Management Working Group (see above). The IMWG should design the tool, including which information is being collected, the frequency of reporting, and process flow, e.g., who should report to whom, etc. All organizations active in the response should be encouraged to contribute to the 3Ws including UN agencies, the Red Cross/Crescent, international and national NGOs, and the government.

The 3W has several objectives:

- Map and define **operational presence**. It should answer the question, “I am planning to work on shelter in XXX location, who should I contact to ensure effective coordination?”, or “What is our response in community-based protection?”.
- Ensure **visibility** for the humanitarian response. Anyone interested should be able to quickly see an overview of what humanitarian partners are doing for and on behalf of the people we serve, with the money entrusted to us by donors. For this reason, activities in a 3Ws should focus on relief goods and services that materially improve the lives of refugees. Planning, monitoring and reporting activities like meetings should not be included as these are not of an operational nature, i.e., they are not part of the refugee-facing operational response.
- Ensure **accountability**, particularly with the Government. UNHCR and the RCM work in support the Government, which has the primary responsibility in protecting refugees and asylum-seekers who have arrived in their country. At a minimum, the RCM should always be able to explain and show to the government which actors are involved in the response (both international and national), , where they are working, and what they are doing.

Since emergencies can vary from context to context, there is no standard 3/4/5W template that operations must use. Any solution which meets the objectives above will work, as long as the necessary measures are taken to manage data sensitivities. If OCHA is coordinating the response, OCHA may introduce standard templates for all agencies to follow, while if UNHCR is coordinating the response, UNHCR should issue the standard templates.

Before creating a 3W system from scratch, always check with colleagues in-country to see what approach is being used now (or in the past), what is preferred by partners, what works well, etc. If there has not been IM capacity in the operation for some time, check with the relevant Data, Identity Management and Analysis (DIMA) Unit in your Regional Bureau to see if there are standard or suggested tools used in the region. This is particularly relevant when there is a regional refugee response plan (RRRP). A 6W template can be found on the [IM Coordination page of the Data Community Hub](#) (accessible to UNHCR staff only). This template, as well as questions from the Kobo library can be downloaded, edited for your context and used. <https://im.unhcr.org/imtoolkit/chapters/view/who-s-doing-what-where/lang:eng>

It is important to remember that 3W information is meant to be used. Information products such as reports, dashboards, maps, and infographics should be created and published, using the information from the 3Ws. The products should always be developed with the intended targeted audience, so they are tailored to a specific objective(s) that is relevant to the response and the positive impacts UNHCR aims to achieve for refugees and host communities. These products may be internal and/or public, with different information provided in both to address risks or other concerns related to context-specific sensitivities.

UNHCR’s role in a 3/4/5W will vary depending on the context. In a refugee emergency (RCM) it is UNHCR’s responsibility to consolidate a wholistic overview of the entire response, including all relevant sectors. It is UNHCR’s job to determine the most efficient way to gather this information and to make it available to the humanitarian community.

In an IDP or other humanitarian context, it would likely be OCHA's role to provide this broad overview of the entire response. Therefore, UNHCR would be expected to:

- As cluster lead agency (Protection, CCCM, Shelter): Collect information on the activities of all cluster members and share this into an OCHA-led inter-cluster 3/4/5W. In this scenario, cluster lead agencies are expected to have a detailed understanding of what is happening in their cluster, while OCHA is expected to have basic information across all clusters.
- As a cluster member (e.g. WASH, Health, etc.) contribute information on UNHCR's activities to the cluster-lead agency using a cluster specific system.

2- Assessment registry

The assessment registry, sometimes called the survey of surveys, provides a way for organizations to share the data and/or findings of their assessments (i.e., in the form of a report) and coordinate plans for future assessments.

An assessment registry is an important tool for helping the Information Management Working Group (IMWG) to coordinate assessments, maintain an overview of the available evidence base, deduplicate and prioritize activities, and promote the effective use of available information, including for strategic planning and programme design, delivery and monitoring.

3- CORE

CORE (Comprehensive Overview of the Response to Emergencies) is UNHCR's solution for establishing recognizable, predictable, and consistent information products that are publicly released in the early days of an emergency response.

CORE products support UNHCR's leadership and coordination role in refugee emergencies through the development and dissemination of quality information products to support evidence-informed action, enhance the visibility of the response and its impact, mobilize funding, etc.

4 - Operational Data Portals

The UNHCR [ODP](#) was created in 2011 to enable UNHCR's institutional responsibility to provide an information and data dissemination platform to facilitate the coordination of refugee emergencies.

The ODP contains several tools for coordination: population data and key figures, documents, reports and infographics, meeting calendar, etc.

Post emergency phase

Review what went well and what did not. Document lessons learned and share with the functional unit in UNHCR Headquarters.

Checklist

- Coordinating IM in Refugee emergencies:
 - Establish a Refugee Information Management Working Group (RIMWG).
 - Encourage active participation in the RIMWG and jointly plan IM activities.
 - Identify who is doing what where.
 - Establish common datasets including population data; compile and share.
 - Agree on standards to use for data collection and analysis.
 - Set up an online platform for sharing of data, information and reports with all stakeholders.
- Coordinating IM in Humanitarian / IDP emergencies:
 - Join the inter-cluster IMWG
 - Actively represent the relevant UNHCR (co-)led clusters in joint IM activities.
 - Establish cluster-specific 3/4/5W processes for UNHCR (co-)led clusters
 - Ensure cluster activities are reflected in the inter-cluster 3/4/5W mechanism

Annexes

[IASC Operational Guidance on Responsibilities of Cluster/Sector Leads & OCHA in Information Management, 2006](#)

[IASC Operational Guidance on Data Responsibility in Humanitarian Action, 2023](#)

4. Learning and field practices

Accessible to UNHCR staff only

[IM Coordination on the Data Community Hub](#)

5. Links

[UNHCR Operational Data Portal](#)

6. Main contacts

UNHCR Information Management: HQIM@unhcr.org

MOUs and LOUs with partners

12 January 2024

Key points

- UNHCR and partners have concluded several global MOUs of relevance in emergency operations. Being familiar with the terms of these agreements can greatly help partnership at field level. UNHCR can regularly consult the intranet MOU repository
- Operations in emergencies can conclude new LOUs at with strategic partners. They should, however, not sign new LOUs on issues that involve the direct transfer of funds. Other types of agreement, such as a Project Partnership Agreement (PPA), are used in those cases

1. Overview

UNHCR works in partnership with many different actors. It formalizes such partnerships by means of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) at global or regional level, and Letters of Understanding (LOUs) at field level – nomenclature can vary at all levels, with Letters of Agreement, Joint Letters or other names being equally used. Their purpose is to clarify roles and promote productive relationships, support strategic partnership on priorities, and provide a formal framework for cooperation. Partnerships maximize complementarities and support efficient use of capacities and resources, while defining the roles and responsibilities of the participating entities. MOUs/LOUs should also refer to coordination mechanisms as the protection working group or partner roles in the cluster system, to help structure the collaboration between the partners.

2. Relevance for emergency operations

In emergencies, it is important to be aware of the global and regional frameworks that apply. Operations don't need to conclude country level letters of agreement to implement the global frameworks or plans of action. Good practices at country level are typically related to thematically and operationally focused agreements that address contextualized needs. The

global arrangements may help framing these country-level arrangements, enhancing complementarities.

3. Main guidance

UNHCR has global Memoranda of Understanding with many UN agencies. Examples include: WFP (food supply and distribution); FAO (food security and self-reliance); WHO (health); UNFPA (reproductive health and SGBV); UNICEF (child protection); ILO (microfinance and skills training); UNDP (reintegration and post-conflict recovery), ICRC and the World Bank (data-sharing agreements).

UNHCR also has global MOUs with several major NGO partners, including NRC, DRC, LWF, and Oxfam. As with UN agency MOUs, these agreements are relevant in a variety of contexts, including emergency response. In an emergency context, the most relevant UN MoU is with WFP (2011), and the most relevant LOU is with UNICEF. Neither is relevant for the [cluster approach](#) or resources designed to assist IDPs.

The **MOU with WFP** clarifies respective roles and responsibilities in the planning, distribution and monitoring of food assistance. It is valid in contexts where more than 5,000 refugees in need of food assistance are concentrated on one or more areas of a given country.

Following the move to cash-based assistance, UNHCR and WFP signed an **MOU Addendum on cash assistance** in May 2017, and a **MOU Addendum on data sharing** in September 2018. Both addenda are extremely important wherever cash-for-food assistance is foreseen. These documents set out beneficiary targeting principles as well as detailed guidance on sharing of beneficiary data.

The [2023 UNHCR-UNICEF Strategic Collaboration Framework \(SCF\)](#) sets out the joint ambition to promote the inclusion of refugee children and their families in national plans, budgets, datasets and service delivery systems. The SCF is applicable globally, wherever UNICEF and UNHCR are present. The framework commits both organizations to a series of goals on inclusion of refugee children in national systems, such as education, water and sanitation, child protection, social protection and data; and on elimination of childhood statelessness – all by 2030. It also supports the continuation and strengthening of UNHCR and UNICEF collaboration in other areas, including nutrition and health.

The **LOU guidance and template for partnering with UNICEF** provides a general basis for collaboration, with particular reference to [WASH](#), [health/nutrition](#), [child protection](#), and [education](#). The template includes a Joint Action Plan that provides clarity at operational level for a specific timeframe.

The **MOU with WHO** clarifies what technical support and normative guidance WHO will provide UNHCR and Ministries of Health to assist a host Government to extend national health services to refugees.

The **MOU with IOM** outlines what evacuation support will be offered in emergencies to persons of concern, [third country nationals](#), stranded migrants, and others. There are regular Joint Letters

issued to all staff by the two Principals, the last one in January 2019.

The **Framework Agreement on Personal Data Protection between ICRC and UNHCR** of 2021 sets out the terms and conditions under which either Party shares personal data with the other Party. It should be complemented by Implementing Agreements. However, exceptions are possible in cases of urgency, security or other similar circumstances.

Annexes

[UNHCR - WFP MOU January, 2011](#)

[WFP Addendum on cash assistance, 2011](#)

[WFP Addendum on data sharing, 2018](#)

[UNHCR - WHO MOU, 2020](#)

4. Links

[UNHCR - WFP MOU, 2011](#) [UNHCR - WFP cash addendum, 2011](#) [UNHCR - WFP Addendum on Data Sharing, 2011](#) [UNICEF - UNHCR Strategic Collaboration Framework, 2023](#) [UNHCR - WHO MOU, 2020](#)

5. Main contacts

For general questions, contact the Partnership and Coordination Service: hqng00@unhcr.org

Inter-agency Refugee Response Plans (RRPs)

17 April 2024

Key points

- An RRP is an inter-agency planning, coordination and fundraising tool that supports host governments in providing protection and assistance to refugees, the communities hosting them and other relevant population groups in large and complex emergencies through international solidarity

- It is designed to assist UNHCR and partners to operationalize the Refugee Coordination Model (consult entry RCM) and reflects UNHCR's facilitation and convening role, as set out in its mandate and the GCR
- Country RRP reflects the needs of all refugee populations hosted in a country. In emergency situations, a country RRP can also be developed targeting one refugee population or covering a specific geographic area, reflecting the context, the protection and solutions strategy, and the inter-agency response to the new emergency
- Regional RRP are developed under the leadership of a Regional Refugee Coordinator and consist of a regional overview and country chapters summarizing the protection and solutions strategies and inter-agency responses related to a specific refugee population at the country level
- It is essential to involve the government and the whole humanitarian community, refugees and host community from the start of an emergency in preparing the RRP
- Ensure that requirements by agencies are realistic, match presence and capacity in the country, and can be implemented within the RRP timelines. Avoid duplication or overlaps in budgeting. When agencies issue their own appeals, take account of requirements that might be included in the budgets of UNHCR or other UN agencies
- Draft RRP in language that is agency-neutral and avoid focusing on agency-specific planning

1. Overview

An RRP is inter-agency planning, coordination and fundraising tool that supports host governments in providing protection and assistance to refugees in large and complex emergencies through international solidarity. It is designed to assist UNHCR and partners in operationalizing the [Refugee Coordination Model](#) (RCM).

The RRP articulates the protection and solution priorities and describes the needs of refugees and their host communities, outlines how and by whom these needs will be addressed, and defines the collective financial requirements of all RRP partners. RRP reflects UNHCR's facilitation and convening role, as set out in its mandate and the Global Compact on Refugees, build on host government approaches and capacities, involve a wide array of actors¹ and incorporate refugee and host communities' abilities.

¹ Including UN agencies, international NGOs, local NGOs, refugee-led organizations, sports organizations, development entities, and private sector actors, among others.

2. Main guidance

Purpose and scope

An RRP is prepared in situations where the scale of a refugee crisis requires a formal coordinated inter-agency response plan. The RRP sets out a strategy and implementation plan that provides a framework for all partners involved. The planning process should be inclusive, building on partner's comparative advantage to produce a complementary combination of interventions to respond to refugee emergencies in various contexts. The plan serves as advocacy tool and seeks to mobilise international support and funding for the collective response, and raise the profile of the emergency response for more visibility of refugee and host community needs. While an RRP is developed in close collaboration and consultation with relevant government counterparts in countries of asylum, it should not include financial requirements of host governments.

Refugees should be included in the response design and implementation of an RRP along with other partners to ensure responses are needs-driven and impactful. It is also necessary to capitalize on networks of local NGOs, refugee-led organizations, development, and private sector actors. For further guidance see [Localization in UNHCR-led Coordination Structures \(July 2023\)](#).

Country RRPs reflect the needs of all refugee populations hosted in a country. In emergency situations, a country RRP can also be developed targeting one refugee population or covering a specific geographic area, reflecting the context, the protection and solutions strategy, the inter-agency response to the new emergency. These are developed and coordinated under the leadership of the host country, where possible, and the Refugee Coordinator, who is typically the UNHCR Country Representative.

Regional RRPs are developed in situations involving more than one refugee-hosting country, under the leadership of a Regional Refugee Coordinator, typically a senior staff in the UNHCR Regional Bureau, to ensure a coherent engagement of all actors within an overarching vision for protection and solutions. Regional RRP consist of a regional overview and country chapters summarizing the protection and solutions strategies and inter-agency responses related to a specific refugee population at the country level.

An RRP can also be adapted for mixed refugee and migrant situations, resulting in a **Refugee and Migrant Response Plan**, typically co-led by UNHCR and IOM, in response to the challenges related to identifying and protecting refugees within broader population movements.

Depending on the context of the displacement situation and the capacity of host communities, the RRP focuses on reinforcing and supporting national structures, where conditions permit.

The response plan should be pillared on broadening partnerships and channel efforts to achieve the [Global Compact on Refugees \(GRF\)](#) objectives, underpinned by the [Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework \(CRRF\)](#) and incorporating the humanitarian-development and peace nexus into the response.

Country Plans and Country Chapters of Regional RRP should be reviewed and vetted by country MFT and Senior Management. This is followed by review from the Regional Bureau and UNHCR

DER / Partnerships and Coordination Service (plan 10 days for PCS review) that is consulting relevant Divisions/Services as required.

Note: An RRP does not cover UNHCR's involvement in Internal displacement caused by conflicts or natural disaster. These are covered by the IASC cluster approach system in a separate planning process led by the Humanitarian Coordinator and supported by OCHA. UNHCR may be a partner in these responses as member of the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and potentially as a cluster lead. Please consult the entries on the IASC [Cluster Approach](#) and the [Humanitarian Programme Cycle](#) for more information.

The RRP:

- Provides partners with a platform and tools to coordinate an inter-agency refugee response and engage additional partners;
- Sets out a monitoring framework to understand progress towards planned results and allow for corrective action where necessary.
- Raises the profile of the refugee response and enhances refugee inclusion in national and local development plans and policies;
- Mobilizes resources for operationally engaged partners by providing donors with a jointly agreed plan;
- Provides the host government and donors with an overview of actors and actions in the refugee response within an overarching common vision and coherent engagement in pursuit of protection and solutions.
- Aligns with other planning frameworks, such as national development plans and UNSDCF, which sets the groundwork for an eventual transition of the refugee response out of the RRP and RCM framework.

Operational cycle

Needs assessments: An RRP is developed through the country coordination structures and is based on evidence and findings from needs assessments. The [needs assessment for refugee emergencies \(NARE\)](#) is designed to assist in setting up initial multi-sectoral needs assessments when there has been a significant sudden, forced displacement of populations across borders. Through joint assessments and analysis, RRP partners step up cooperation, exchange information and shape a common understanding of challenges and interventions. Assessments should consult refugee and host communities about their needs, capacities and possible solutions.

Plan development: Within the refugee response structures, the Refugee Coordinator engages stakeholders to develop an emergency inter-agency RRP within the first week of the situation to cover the first three to six months. When the situation persists, the RRP is reviewed and extended, aligned with the calendar year. Based on jointly agreed planning assumptions and broad strategic objectives, the RRP sets out the comprehensive protection, multi-sectoral assistance and solutions strategy for the refugee response based on the feedback of refugees and affected communities; priority areas of intervention; comprehensive financial requirements; and a reporting, monitoring and evaluation framework. Sector Working Group determine sector-specific objectives and activities within the overall protection strategy based on sector-level

assessments.

Sector plans should provide:

- A situation analysis for the sector;
- An overview of needs and vulnerabilities;
- Planning figures for assistance-targeted populations, disaggregated by age, gender and, where relevant, location;
- List of intervention locations;
- Key assumptions that affect the work of the sector (such as government policies, refugee specific needs and protection related risks, security issues, etc.);
- Monitoring framework
- Financial requirements, disaggregated by partner.

Information Management: In an early stage in the RRP planning process, UNHCR will reinforce its country data and information management capacity. Data portals facilitate coordination and information-sharing among stakeholders engaged in the response. Online inter-agency RRP portal (operational data portals: [Operational Data Portal \(unhcr.org\)](https://operationaldata.unhcr.org/)) should be established with the support of UNHCR HQ. In addition, as part of UNHCR's information management and dissemination role, field operations should produce external inter-agency operational updates to report on the progress achieved by all agencies in the country and regional RRP, separate from UNHCR-specific updates.

Monitoring and reporting on results: Every RRP should have a monitoring framework that sets out the indicators (and their targets), as well as the process and tools for collecting data, analyzing, using and disseminating the monitoring findings. RRP partners monitor the progress of the planned results via the monitoring framework. Detailed guidance on establishing and implementing a monitoring framework for an RRP is available in the [RRP Monitoring Guidance](#). UNHCR operations include RRP indicators in their country strategy results framework and M&E plan. For alignment between sectors and UNHCR outcome areas see the following guide: [How RRP Sectors correspond to UNHCR Outcome Areas](#).

Fundraising: While the RRP is not linked to a pooled fund and while activities in an RRP are not guaranteed funding, donors do favour funding activities that are part of a single vetted inter-agency strategic response plan coordinated with host governments, complementing their action. The (Regional) Refugee Coordinator, RCF and sector coordinators create opportunities to publicize the RRP and the partners' resource requirements, contributions and impacts. They also seek to engage with donors by keeping them informed about operational and political developments related to the RRP, such as achievements, constraints, funding gaps, and ways to support advocacy efforts.

Fund tracking: As the lead coordinating agency, UNHCR is responsible for tracking funding received for the RRP and for sharing inter-agency funding updates. The [Refugee Response Financial Tracking \(RRFT\)](#) was developed by UNHCR as a platform compiling all financial data related to refugee programmes. All partners, including UN agencies, NGOs and others appealing for funds within a RRP, must report the funds they receive against their requirements. Reporting on funding received is essential to portray an accurate picture of the funding gaps for the host

governments, donors, and partners throughout the year.

Recap

An RRP includes:

- A situation analysis, including contextual information and maps;
- Planning figures;
- An overview of the needs and vulnerabilities of the refugees, host communities and other persons of concern as relevant;
- Strategic protection and solutions priorities;
- Key sector specific responses by partners, and their responsibilities;
- Indicators with baselines and targets for each planned result (Monitoring Framework);
- Inter-agency budget;
- Coordination arrangements.

A regional RRP includes:

- Regional planning figures and strategic protection and solutions objectives;
- A plan or chapter for refugee-hosting country;
- Regional Working group and sector arrangements;
- Inter-agency financial requirements, broken down by country of asylum and sector;
- Regional coordination arrangements.

Post emergency phase

While the RRP should primarily capture humanitarian activities, ideally, national and international development and peace actors are coherently involved in the RRP from the start of a response, as per nexus efforts. Depending on the country context, this means that RRP partners need to establish a timeline and steps or benchmarks to link or embed longer-term refugee inclusion objectives in national or local development plans, UNSDCF or other frameworks of relevance, while maintaining UNHCR's mandated responsibilities and accountabilities.

The UN Development System reform and the strengthened role of the Resident Coordinator (RC) has presented UNHCR and RRP partners with opportunities to work with the RCs to advance the inclusion of refugees and solutions in countries of origin, as part of the commitment to leave no one behind, and to facilitate the engagement of development actors in refugee responses.

Other frameworks to engage with in transition settings include the comprehensive approaches proposed within the Global Compact on Refugees' "Programme of Action", and the regional and national [support platforms](#) for thematic engagement (MIRPS, IGAD, SSAR, CAR) encouraging regional cooperation among countries of origin, transit and destination for a greater responsibility-sharing in matters of prevention, protection and durable solutions. These mechanisms integrate cooperating States in the platforms and work alongside regional and international organizations committed to the humanitarian and development agenda.

RRP Action Plan

- Following a decision to develop an RRP, UNHCR, the government and RRP partners agree on a detailed timeline for preparing an RRP and a coordination mechanism, determining sector co-coordinating agencies.
- The Refugee Coordinator forms a small core strategy group composed of senior representatives of response agencies and convenes a strategy meeting. This group prepares a situation analysis, develops the planning scenario and assumptions, reviews the protection and solutions priorities and establishes the strategic objectives. These are communicated to sector co-coordinators and sector members.
- The draft RRP should include the financial requirements of agencies participating in the response by sector. The RRP is based on available evidence and a needs analysis.
- Circulate a consolidated draft for review to the core strategy group and all response agencies, including government counterparts.
- The Refugee Coordinator provides a consolidated RRP draft to UNHCR the Regional Bureau and headquarters for review.
- Thereafter, the Refugee Coordinator shares the draft with the participating agencies for information and further feedback. At that stage, a validation meeting could be organized among all the partners involved.
- The Refugee Coordinator, in cooperation with UNHCR headquarters, reviews and integrates the comments of other agencies; upon approval by the UNHCR Regional Bureau Director and headquarters, the RRP is finalized and prepared for launch.
- The RRP is launched where possible with the host government, partners, as well as donors and other stakeholders; if possible and where appropriate, with the OCHA HRP.

3. Links

[RRP 2024 Guidance Note Refugee Coordination Model RRP on the UNHCR Operational Data Portal Accessible to UNHCR staff only: UNHCR Intranet Site on RRP](#)s

4. Main contacts

Contact the UNHCR Partnership and Coordination Service: hqng00@unhcr.org

Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster (IASC)

02 December 2021

Key points

- Contact UNHCR's CCCM Cluster Unit at headquarters as soon as it becomes evident that activation of clusters will be discussed
- Coordinating a cluster is a full-time job. Ensure that a dedicated CCCM cluster coordinator is appointed, supported by an information manager and a capacity-development specialist. Sub-national cluster coordinators should also be appointed when necessary
- CCCM does not support the establishment of camps; rather provides and coordinates dignified assistance and protection to IDPs living in sites and surrounding affected population while actively seeking durable solutions
- Essential to ensure that the CCCM cluster coordination mechanisms are established and properly supported / resourced to meet UNHCR's IASC accountability
- Provide comprehensive and timely analysis to HCT and inter-cluster regarding the condition of people in sites
- Engage with and capacitate the local authorities on management and coordination of sites

1. Overview

The Global CCCM Cluster was established in 2005 and is co-led at Global level by UNHCR in conflict situations and by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in natural disaster

situations. The CCCM cluster's overall goals are to coordinate and facilitate the efficient, effective and predictable delivery of protection and services at community level, ensure that the rights of IDPs and other affected populations are protected, and advocate for durable solutions.

The CCCM Cluster coordinates the activities of its members, which can include (or the members expect it to include) the following:

- **Providing permanent presence and management of services in formal camps** (through camp management agencies), as well as **permanent or mobile management of informal settlements, collective/reception/transit centers and any other collective sites** (maintaining a list of all sites monitored with agreed information collected).
- **Setting up governance structures and participatory committees** (in collaboration with protection) and provide capacity development to internally displaced populations in such structures. This can include support to enhance self-management by the displaced populations.
- **Coordinating the provision of sectorial services and assistance** in specific sites/locations. This includes monitoring of services, identification of gaps (based on needs assessments) or duplications and **sharing of such information** with the respective sectors to intervene, as well as facilitating the creation and update of beneficiary “master lists” for multi-sectorial purposes.
- **Ensuring complaints and feedback mechanisms, as well as various sectorial referral pathways** are set up (by the relevant actors or CMA) and efficient; and facilitating the coordination of sectorial outreach initiatives.
- **Population data management** and facilitation of **site-based information management systems** - as a minimum implementation of tools for site monitoring and multi-sectorial reporting using a standard monitoring and alerting system (i.e. traffic lights), mapping of service providers, IDP enrolment and assistance list management at the site level, displacement trends analysis.
- Overall **maintenance of infrastructures and improvements of the site environment** (e.g. to prevent fires, to reduce risks of SGBV – Safety audits), including collaboration with relevant experts/engineers (from the authorities, the Shelter Cluster, etc.) on site planning and construction work, if required by the nature of the intervention.
- Strategies and activities linked to **camp/site decongestion, consolidation and closure**, transfer of its residents and decommissioning of infrastructures with the technical aspects done by relevant experts. These activities also support the communities for identification of and preparation for **durable solutions** (incl. intention surveys).
- **Capacity building activities, trainings and mentorship schemes** for all humanitarian actors as well as displaced populations in the management of camps/sites, with **particular focus on the support to the national/local authorities** to take on the responsibility for camp/site management and overall displacement.
- Implementation of **area-based approaches** (multi-sectorial coordination targeting all populations within a geographical area) **in both urban, as well as rural contexts**, which can also be applied in areas of return. From a CCCM perspective, this can include interventions through **remote** management (if challenges with access) or through **mobile** approaches in situations of numerous small sites/informal settlements.

Key considerations relevant for decisions (additional to the general decision-making process for cluster activation):

1. The inclusion of “CAMP” into the name of the CCCM Cluster should not limit its application to situations with formal camps. In order to adapt to the various country realities, the name of the Cluster has been contextualized to better reflect the situation to e.g. Site Management Support (SMS).
2. Whenever contextually relevant, it is recommended that all three CCCM, Shelter and Protection Clusters are activated without delay. The three Clusters are complementary and can jointly increase the protection dividends and rationalize UNHCR programming.
3. Given the evolved scope of the CCCM Cluster activities, it is recommended in the preparedness phase to consult the Global CCCM Cluster team if in doubt about advocating for activation or otherwise. Activities enumerated above and accepted by the humanitarian community as falling under the coordination of the CCCM Cluster might differ from what and under which sectors UNHCR would coordinate and deliver its operational response in refugee situations.
4. In situations in which internally displaced persons are not located in formal camps (or the creation of formal camps is not planned/intended), but the displacement numbers are quickly rising and collective occupation of unused public or abandoned buildings becomes common (e.g. schools, churches), consultation with the Global CCCM Cluster and positioning should Cluster activation be envisaged, is highly recommended. This includes situations, where large groups of people are accommodated with host families, as the progressive reduction in resilience, depletion of available resources and limitations in access to basic services would likely rapidly lead to the creation of informal settlements.
5. In situations in which those internally displaced persons due to conflict are located in urban areas and/or live in a dispersed manner, some modalities of response falling under the CCCM Cluster coverage might be applicable and advocated for by NGOs and/or IOM (mobile teams and displacement/site monitoring, community resource centres, capacity development of communities and authorities, etc.). UNHCR will coordinate such activities, even though activation of a full-fledged CCCM Cluster might not be warranted, if necessary through a dedicated working group, stand-alone or under another Cluster it leads (e.g. Protection).
6. In all situations, the Global CCCM Cluster is to be consulted if there are major gaps in location-specific information management and displacement data, as the CCCM Cluster has the tools and capacity to provide displacement and multi-sector assessment data in such context.
7. UNHCR default action is to advocate in the HCT for the activation of the CCCM Cluster (or set up a dedicated working group) and deploy an expert to assess and advise, then review the need to maintain this coordination structure after 3 months.

In line with IASC cluster coordination leadership commitments, the following positions are recommended at country level, at a minimum:

- A dedicated CCCM Cluster Coordinator
- A dedicated CCCM Information Management Officer
- Depending on the humanitarian response's size and scale, it may be necessary to designate a full-time post to support the cluster coordinator with deputising the role and

- coordinate sub-national clusters
- A Capacity Building CCCM Officer for cluster support is recommended

The IASC cluster approach does not apply to refugee situations, where responses are coordinated in line with the [Refugee Coordination Model \(RCM\)](#). In mixed situations (refugee and IDP) the 2014 Joint UNHCR – OCHA Note on Mixed Situations: Coordination in Practice is applicable.

2. Main guidance

Underlying rationale / objective of the approach or system

- The CCCM cluster's roles are to ensure that humanitarian action for internally displaced persons (IDPs) is coordinated, access to services and protection during displacement is equitable, and IDPs participate meaningfully in efforts to enable them to enjoy their rights, ideally by developing their own capacities. In practice this means that the human or 'software' dimensions of the humanitarian response are fully integrated and coupled with 'hardware' programmes such as shelter, relief item distributions or WASH infrastructure. Accountability mechanisms are fundamental to achieving this goal. They permit displaced population to participate meaningfully in governance and enable them to influence decisions that concern them and the direction of humanitarian programming. **The CCCM cluster should be viewed as a mechanism for mainstreaming protection, considering its key partners work in all areas of humanitarian action and have the closest contact with the displaced community.**
- The **Global CCCM Cluster** develops tools, provides field support through remote guidance and rapid response mechanisms, capacity development through training and e-learning, and coordinates policy development to guide national CCCM clusters. To fulfil this task, UNHCR and IOM, which co-lead the Global CCCM Cluster, work closely together to develop common approaches for broader CCCM responses and design specific tools and methodologies to address specific subtleties that arise in natural disasters and complex emergencies. The Global CCCM Cluster also works closely with other global clusters and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). It also supports cross-cutting initiatives of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), including its work on accountability to affected populations (AAP) and communicating with communities (CwC).
- **At national and sub national levels**, CCCM clusters develop an overarching strategy to provide a harmonized, efficient and effective humanitarian response to displaced persons and communities. Central to this is a strong information management and monitoring system that ensures similar approaches are adopted. Identifying relative gaps and duplications in service delivery and protection within specific camps and regions must be coupled with a strong advocacy role to ensure that other clusters and stakeholders provide the most efficient, equitable and logical humanitarian response across all camps and communal settings outside of camps.
- The CCCM cluster is unique in that it has an additional level of coordination and engagement – **the communal area/camp (or CM) level**. This is the level of the CCCM cluster's operational engagement, and involves coordinating service provision, monitoring, governance and engagement within a single (or small grouping) of camp/communal

setting. Several Camp Management specific activities also need to be accounted for and are described in depth in the Camp Management Toolkit (2015).

Check list for **a CCCM cluster at country level based on IASC core cluster coordination functions:**

Core Function 1: To support service delivery

- *By: Providing a platform that ensures service delivery is driven by the Humanitarian Response Plan and strategic priorities.*

- *Developing mechanisms to eliminate duplication of service delivery. [IASC, 2015]*

- The CCCM Cluster is activated as a standalone cluster

- Cluster ToR is in place

- Cluster is adequately staffed (including a dedicated Cluster Coordinator & IM Officer) and proportional to the size of needs for coordination

- Focal points or sub-national coordinators are appointed for any sub-national coordination structure

- ToRs are in place for all coordination team positions (full-time staff and focal points)

- If a cluster co-ordination arrangement is in place, an MoU is signed between the Cluster Lead Agency and Cluster Co-ordinating Partner

- The participation and strategic leadership of local and national actors in the Cluster is promoted

- A Strategic Advisory Group is established, selected by a transparent election process, and has a ToR in place

- Any Technical Working Groups established under the Cluster have a ToR in place

- Information-sharing is established (website & mailing lists are regularly maintained)

- Regular cluster meetings are held, with minutes & action points disseminated

- Cluster coordination team contacts are made available to all Cluster members

- A CCCM Cluster Workplan is in place

- A reporting system for Cluster members to regularly report on CCCM activities is established

- Information products are regularly updated and shared, showing operational presence and activities of CCCM partners

- Appropriate actions are being taken to support eventual transition / a transition plan for the Cluster is in place

Core Function 2: To inform the HC/HCT's strategy decision-making by:

- *By: Preparing needs assessments and analysis of gaps (across and within clusters, using information management tools as needed) to inform the setting of priorities.*
- *Identifying and finding solutions for (emerging) gaps, obstacles, duplication & cross-cutting issues.*
- *Formulating priorities based on analysis. [IASC, 2015]*

- Assessments are conducted to determine CCCM needs

- Standard CCCM indicators are agreed, and are integrated into CCCM needs assessments and multi-sectoral assessments

- Analysis highlighting CCCM geographic or programmatic gaps is regularly updated, easily accessible, and discussed during coordination meetings

- A database ('site masterlist') including displacement sites' name, typology, status, and location is maintained and appropriately shared

- Demographic data for displacement sites is compiled on a regular basis and appropriately shared with humanitarian actors

- Multi-sectoral data for displacement sites is collected in agreement with relevant actors (e.g. multi-sectoral site assessments, intentions surveys) and products and analysis are appropriately shared (e.g. site profiles, site maps)

- Durable solutions are supported for IDPs living in displacement sites and communities supported by CCCM actors, as is appropriate to the context

Core Function 3: To plan and implement cluster strategies by:

- *By: Developing sectoral plans, objectives and indicators that directly support realization of the overall response's strategic objectives.*
- *Applying and adhering to common standards and guidelines.*
- *Clarifying funding requirements, helping to set priorities, and agreeing cluster contributions to the HC's overall humanitarian funding proposals. [IASC, 2015]*

- A CCCM Cluster Response Strategy is in place, developed through a consultative process, and is updated annually

- A CCCM response plan is in place, addressing identified CCCM needs, including priorities, monitoring plan, and funding requirements

- Protection mainstreaming is promoted. A Protection Risk Assessment for CCCM response is conducted and used to inform strategic planning.

- Technical guidelines and standards to support CCCM response implementation are developed and agreed by CCCM partners, based on globally-agreed standards (e.g. Minimum Standards for Camp Management), and/or on national standards where applicable

- Technical guidelines and standards to support setup, maintenance and monitoring of service delivery, and closure of displacement sites are developed and agreed by relevant stakeholders, based on national standards where applicable and/or on globally-agreed standards

- Capacity gaps and needs of CCCM actors are identified, and a capacity-strengthening plan is developed and agreed if necessary

- Localization is promoted throughout CCCM response

- Environmental considerations and actions are taken into consideration in strategic planning, and are promoted in CCCM response

Core Function 4: To monitor and evaluate performance

- *By: Monitoring and reporting on activities and needs.*
- *Measuring progress against the cluster strategy and agreed results.*
- *Recommending corrective action where necessary. [IASC, 2015]*

- Progress of CCCM response implementation against the agreed CCCM response plan targets is monitored (using data reported by Cluster members), and information products are regularly disseminated

- A mechanism is in place to monitor the quality of CCCM services against agreed standards – included in, or separate to, monthly partner reporting

- Funding status for the planned CCCM response is regularly monitored, and any funding gaps are identified. Information products are disseminated.

- A Cluster Coordination Performance Monitoring (CCPM) exercise is conducted annually, and progress on a performance Action Plan monitored

Core Function 5: To build national capacity in preparedness and contingency planning

- Cluster contributes to any response-wide Emergency Response Preparedness planning

- Hazards and risks that may affect displacement sites are identified (e.g. fire, flooding)

- Preparedness/contingency plans are in place (CCCM Cluster, or joint plans) for any high impact or recurring risks, including for new displacement

- Suitable guidance is in place for CCCM actors to develop site-level contingency plans, and for incident response and preparedness – incorporating any national emergency response or civil defence protocols

- Cluster supports national preparedness capacity-building efforts with the Cluster Lead Agency, where relevant

Core Function 6: To support robust advocacy

- *By: Identifying concerns and contributing key information and messages to HC and HCT messaging and action.*
- *Undertaking advocacy on behalf of the cluster, cluster members, and affected people. [IASC, 2015]*

- Critical issues relating to CCCM response or impacting communities living in displacement sites, are identified and raised to relevant stakeholders

- Advocacy initiatives, including joint advocacy, are undertaken when required

- A CCCM Cluster Advocacy Strategy is drafted, if needed

- Relationships with existing and potential humanitarian donors are maintained

- Advocacy for funding for CCCM response is conducted by the Cluster Coordinator (and CLA) with donor communities on behalf of the CCCM Cluster as a collective (inclusive of local and national actors), when needed

To promote and strengthen accountability to affected people

- Accountability and community engagement in CCCM response is promoted and strengthened through development of relevant guidance, tools, and standards. Use of Minimum Standards for Camp Management is promoted.

- Assessment and reporting data is disaggregated by sex, age, and other contextually relevant characteristics, wherever feasible

- Guidance and tools are jointly developed to guide CCCM actors on cross-cutting issues e.g. on Age, Gender & Diversity, GBV, child protection, MHPSS

- Strategic planning (HNO, HRP, CCCM Cluster Response Strategy) and monitoring & evaluation are informed by community input and participation

Cluster coordinator

A UNHCR CCCM cluster coordinator reports to UNHCR's Representative or (in sub-national clusters) Head of Office, and is responsible for providing overall cluster leadership. S/he works closely with other country-level cluster coordinators, and particularly with Protection, Shelter, and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH). For guidance and support, s/he also keeps closely in touch with UNHCR's Global CCCM Cluster coordinator and support team.

Appointing an NGO or an authority as co-chair or co-facilitator promotes inclusion and capacity development, but this decision should be discussed and endorsed by cluster partners. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) or terms of reference (ToR) should clarify exact roles and responsibilities of the co-facilitator, and define clear lines of accountability.

Information management officer (IMO)

An information management officer (IMO) reports to the cluster coordinator and is responsible for identifying and satisfying data-analysis and information requirements at a range of levels. The IMO's work: supports cluster priorities, informs decision-making by the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) or the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), strengthens data collection and processing systems, establishes information dissemination mechanisms and facilitates information exchange between key stakeholders.

Capacity development specialist

In principle, a capacity development specialist should be deployed alongside the cluster coordinator and IMO. Experience has shown that CCCM training and other modalities of capacity development are required at an early stage, because many of the new personnel hired at the start of an emergency are unfamiliar with CCCM concepts.

Sub-national and field level coordination

Complex emergencies or geographically spread responses may require additional coordination at sub-national or field level. Sub-national coordinators and resources to support sub-national coordination may be mobilised externally but also internally, through standby partner arrangements or CCCM cluster members (if they are willing and have the capacity).

To know more about the CCCM Cluster main roles and activities refer to the CCCM Coordination Toolkit (2023).

See graphic: A minimum CCCM cluster coordination structure for a system wide L3 emergency.

Policy, strategy and/or guidance

The [IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at the Country Level \(2015\)](#) explains the work of clusters, including their activation and de-activation and core functions. The paragraphs below set out specific steps that an activated (or soon to be activated) national CCCM cluster should take in the first months.

Formal activation of a CCCM cluster

Under the [Transformative Agenda](#), IASC Principals agreed that activation of clusters must be more strategic, less automatic, and time limited. In consultation with the Humanitarian Country Teams and cluster lead agencies, the Humanitarian/Resident Coordinator (HC/RC) should only recommend the activation of clusters when there is an identified gap in the enabling environment warranting their activation. Formal activation of clusters may be difficult in circumstances where government capacity is constrained. In such contexts, different ways of augmenting coordination and response capacity may need to be found, underpinned by the principles of the [cluster approach](#). To ensure that clusters continue to operate for no longer than they are strictly needed, plans to deactivate and transition clusters should be prepared as soon as possible after activation. Building the capacity of local partners and government institutions should be an objective from the outset.

The criteria for cluster activation are met when:

1. Response and coordination gaps exist due to a sharp deterioration or significant change in the humanitarian situation.
2. Existing national response or coordination capacity is unable to meet needs in a manner that respects [humanitarian principles](#), due to the scale of need, the number of actors involved, the need for a more complex multi-sectoral approach, or other constraints on the ability to respond or apply [humanitarian principles](#).

The procedure for activating cluster(s)

1. The RC/HC and cluster lead agencies (CLAs), supported by OCHA, consult national authorities to establish what humanitarian coordination mechanisms exist, and their capacities.
2. Global CLAs are alerted by their country representatives and OCHA, prior to the UN Country Team (UNCT)/HCT meeting to discuss activation, to ensure they are represented at the meeting.
3. The RC/HC, in consultation with the UNCT/HCT, decides which clusters should be recommended for activation, informed by analysis of the situation and preparedness planning. In each case, the decision should be based on the criteria for cluster activation.
4. The RC/HC, in consultation with the UNCT/HCT, selects CLAs based on agencies' leadership accountably in IASC, their operational presence, and their ability to scale up. Ideally, the selection of CLAs mirrors global arrangements; but this is not always possible and sometimes other organizations are in a better position to lead. Under the IASC [Transformative Agenda](#), CLAs were encouraged to consider developing a clearly defined, agreed and supported sharing of cluster leadership with NGOs wherever feasible.
5. The RC/HC writes to the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), following consultation with the

HCT, outlines the recommended cluster arrangements, suggests CLAs, and explains why particular clusters need to be activated. If non-cluster coordination solutions have been agreed, these are also described.

6. The ERC transmits the proposal to the IASC Principals for approval within 24 hours and informs the RC/HC accordingly. The principals may ask the IASC Emergency Directors Group to discuss this in more detail, if necessary.

7. The ERC writes to the RC/HC to confirm that activation of the suggested clusters has been endorsed and/or to provide feedback from the IASC Principals.

8. The RC/HC informs relevant partners when decisions on clusters and lead agencies are approved.

For recent developments, consult the Global CCCM Cluster.

Role of partners involved

Partners	Roles
Internally displaced persons	Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are important CCCM partners at operational level. The CCCM cluster should explore how to involve them at cluster level, through representatives or camp management agencies (CMA). They are a key source of information on the needs and capacities of the displaced community, and on solutions. At community level they are directly engaged in governance and grievance mechanisms and play a crucial role in identifying specific and individual needs and targeting assistance.
Host communities	Host communities play crucial roles. They grant access to fuel wood, pasture, and other community services; facilitate a smooth humanitarian response; give IDPs access to protection and rights; promote harmonious relations by participating in peace and co-existence programs; protect the environment; and participate in efforts to prevent and respond to SGBV, etc.
National authorities	Government offices are responsible for policies, regulations, land allocation, data and documentation, camp administration, camp security and access, and provision of protection and assistance to the IDPs. The Government also promotes peaceful relations and co-existence with host communities. Where feasible, national authorities should be encouraged and assisted to assume responsibility for camp management as well as camp administration. This will ensure ownership and continuity after UNHCR exits. The ministries of home affairs and land are most commonly a CCCM cluster's counterparts.

HC, HCT supported by OCHA	The Humanitarian Coordinator and Humanitarian Country Team determine the shape and functions of inter-cluster coordination, supported by OCHA.
Other UN agencies	UN agencies share information on protection and assistance needs, participate in joint needs assessments, and respond to needs/gaps in their respective areas. Cluster/sector leads, notably those responsible for shelter, protection and WASH, should be invited to participate in the CCCM cluster.
National NGOs	National NGOs make a crucial contribution to CCCM responses and should be encouraged and assisted to participate in the cluster. Typical roles will be camp management and the provision of services to IDPs in camps. After clusters phase out, national NGOs ensure the continuity and sustainability of a response; they should be capacitated to fulfil these roles

International NGOs	<p>Like national NGOs, international NGOs (INGOs) with relevant experience should also be represented in a CCCM cluster. INGOs that typically participate in a CCCM response include (note that programs and activities are subject to change):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ ACTED. Emergency response, camp management, access to basic services, inclusive economic opportunities, infrastructure and climate action, strengthening civil society, peace, stability and justice. ◦ CARE. Food security, maternal and child health, climate change, education, HIV and AIDS, WASH, economic development. ◦ Catholic Relief Services (CRS). WASH, community resettlements and camp construction, agriculture, health, children, (girls') education, microfinance, road, justice and peacebuilding, partnership and capacity strengthening. ◦ Danish Refugee Council (DRC). Camp construction, camp management, shelter and non-food items, food security, community-based protection, WASH, education, income generation, humanitarian mine action, armed violence reduction (AVR). ◦ International Rescue Committee (IRC). Emergency response, economic recovery, governance and rights, protection of children, youth and women. ◦ Lutheran World Federation (LWF). WASH, shelter/construction, community services (special needs, psycho-social counselling, peace building, distribution of non-food items), protection (of unaccompanied minors). ◦ Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). Camp management, education, information-counselling and legal assistance (ICLA), livelihood and food security, shelter and settlements, WASH, expert deployment to UN. ◦ REACH. Emergency response, assessments, data collection, remote sensing, data analysis, publications, maps, web-maps and online dashboards. ◦ Red R. Capacity building in camp management, recruitment for the humanitarian sector.
Donors	Relevant donors interested in the work of a CCCM cluster should be involved as soon as possible and invited to strategic discussions.
Media	The media are important partners but should not join cluster meetings. To ensure accurate reporting and cluster visibility, specific mechanisms for working with the media should be established

UNHCR's role and accountabilities

Under the [cluster approach](#), UNHCR has specific CCCM roles and accountabilities at national level associated with its responsibilities as a cluster lead and an operational agency.

UNHCR as a CCCM cluster lead

At national level, the UNHCR Representative heads the lead agency of the CCCM cluster and is accountable to the HC. The Representative has responsibility to:

- Ensure that coordination mechanisms are established and properly supported.
- Serve as first point of call for the Government and the HC.
- Discuss cluster-specific concerns at the HCT as well as challenges the cluster cannot solve.
- Act as provider of last resort.

The CCCM cluster coordinator is responsible and accountable for ensuring that the CCCM cluster performs the IASC Cluster coordination six core functions as detailed above.

Operationalising UNHCR's commitments

The text below is drawn from [UNHCR's Policy on UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement \(2019\)](#).

The scope of UNHCR's engagement in situations of internal displacement consists of global and country leadership, advocacy and coordination responsibilities, including those set out in arrangements agreed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) under the leadership of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, as well as operational involvement in line with relevant General Assembly resolutions. It will normally be aligned with UNHCR's leadership and coordination responsibilities related to protection, [camp coordination and camp management](#) and shelter, with a particular emphasis on displacement owing to conflict and violence, in line with IASC arrangements.

UNHCR will at all times strive to place protection at the centre of humanitarian action through strategic leadership of the three UNHCR-led clusters and ensuring, together with partners, an evidence-based analysis that informs inter-agency decision-making and operational delivery. UNHCR will also contribute to any inter-agency response to disaster-induced internal displacement, taking the lead on protection, whenever the three criteria of field presence, a government request and inter-agency agreement are met. The scope of UNHCR's engagement in such situations will generally be time-limited, and will be determined in consultation with the Senior Executive Team.

UNHCR may also make available its protection expertise in the context of national, regional and international preparedness and response measures related to forced displacement or planned relocations arising from development projects, climate change and environmental degradation. The implementation of the Policy requires concerted organisation-wide commitment and effort to ensure the predictable exercise of leadership and coordination responsibilities in line with IASC agreements, and an operational stance that is fit for purpose at each stage of our engagement.

Notably:

- The Senior Executive Team (SET), namely the High Commissioner, Deputy High Commissioner and Assistant High Commissioners for Operations and Protection shall ensure that our IDP commitments are fully reflected in the exercise of their leadership, oversight, management and support responsibilities, including in relation to strategic planning and resource allocation;
- Regional Bureaux Directors and Representatives have a crucial accountability and

responsibility for ensuring prompt and robust engagement in humanitarian crises characterized by internal displacement, from prevention through to solutions, on a 'no regrets' basis; and

- Directors of Divisions and Heads of Services are responsible for mainstreaming internal displacement in their respective areas of work and ensuring that the necessary capabilities, systems, processes and procedures are in place to resource, guide and support Regional Bureaux and country operations in preventing and responding to internal displacement, including through strategic and effective global cluster leadership, strategic communications and advocacy, and contributing to global policy development and standard setting.

Delivering a protection and solutions response

With respect to delivering protection and solutions, and disengaging, the Policy states: UNHCR will support Resident/Humanitarian Coordinators and UN/Humanitarian Country Teams to develop an overarching [protection and solutions strategy](#), based on an evidence-based protection analysis. UN and humanitarian partners will be able to rely on UNHCR for expertise and advice on protection priorities and Representatives will participate actively in UN/Humanitarian Country Teams, to help ensure that protection is placed at the centre of the humanitarian response.

When cluster or cluster-like arrangements are established, UNHCR will assume leadership and coordination functions in line with global responsibilities. These will be supported by dedicated cluster coordination capacities, underpinned by a robust operational response – with both aspects supported by information management capacities.

In its cluster leadership capacity, UNHCR will support and steer the development and implementation of comprehensive cluster strategies while, as Provider of Last Resort, mobilizing internal and external resources and engaging a range of stakeholders to fill response gaps. UNHCR will promote protection mainstreaming, working with all clusters to design and deliver an inter-agency response that is shaped by protection considerations. Appropriate opportunities will be identified to reinforce local and national actors, including those responsible for development, to engage in and eventually lead the response to internal displacement.

In its operational capacity, UNHCR will ensure a [community-based protection](#) approach and prioritize interventions to prevent, respond to and mitigate the most urgent and immediate protection risks and needs, including [protection against sexual exploitation and abuse \(PSEA\)](#), [sexual and gender-based violence \(SGBV\)](#) and [child protection](#). UNHCR will apply and integrate systematically to its work with IDPs its longstanding expertise in shelter, and camp and site management, including experience gained in the refugee context in transitioning from camps into inclusive settlements.

UNHCR will also prioritise actions that contribute to the conditions conducive for safe, dignified and comprehensive solutions, including (where relevant) for refugees returning from countries of asylum. Special areas of focus will include community engagement, law and policy, documentation, shelter, secure land tenure, livelihoods, peaceful co-existence and conflict resolution.

UNHCR will galvanise and contribute to government led efforts to address the needs of IDPs – including those who are integrating locally, returning to places of origin or settling in another part of the country, as well as the wider displacement-affected community.

In line with the 2030 Agenda and the principle of "leaving no-one behind," UNHCR will work

together with partners to secure the inclusion of IDPs in national services, such as education, health, access to livelihoods and social services, including social safety nets; promote the participation of IDPs in local and national social and economic development, including through an enabling legal framework; and build effective approaches to resilience and solutions that assist IDPs, wider displacement affected communities and their governments to better manage and overcome the consequences and effects of displacement. In pursuit of solutions, UNHCR will contribute to transition strategies that link humanitarian and development action, and activities that build and sustain peace.

Results from protection monitoring and assessments, and other monitoring systems, will be systematically utilised to generate an evidence-base to inform analysis, advocacy, programme design, resource mobilisation and communications. Protection assessments and monitoring will also be used to reinforce community-based protection work and to ensure that the humanitarian response takes full account of age, gender, disability and other diversity elements.

Protection and conflict analysis will also be used to ensure a "do no harm" approach to solutions. In this regard, UNHCR will initiate and participate in multi-stakeholder assessments, profiling and analysis, engaging relevant national bodies and other actors to develop a comprehensive understanding of the longer term protection and assistance needs, vulnerabilities, socio-economic conditions, capacities and aspirations of IDPs, returning refugees and wider displacement-affected communities.

Disengaging responsibly

UNHCR will disengage responsibly when local and national actors can meaningfully take over operational delivery, coordination and monitoring in relation to protection and solutions for IDPs. This will require UNHCR, from the outset of its involvement, to undertake interventions and measures aimed at enhancing national response capacity, including technical advice and support for national laws and policies on internal displacement, training and capacity development. UNHCR will work alongside others in the UN/Humanitarian Country Team to support the gradual de-activation of clusters in support of government-led coordination arrangements, including in the transition of any IDP sites to governments and/ or other agreed approaches.

3. Links

[Global CCCM Cluster webpage](#) [Twitter CCCM cluster](#)

4. Main contacts

Contact the Global CCCM Cluster: globalsupport@cccmcluster.org

Civil - military coordination

Key points

- Work with OCHA CMCS or the individual appointed to establish civil military coordination. Understand the specific UN-CMCoord strategy for the operation.
- Establish who is participating in UN-CMCoord cell meetings, and channel relevant requests or concerns to them.
- Understand how Government and local authorities coordinate with the military. Understand how partners and other relevant actors coordinate with the military. Share this information with the UN-CMCoord officer.
- Establish and share contact details with CIMIC personnel (if the HCT/UNCT has determined that they are the appropriate interlocutor).
- Understand in which sectors, and where, the military are operating and how their operating methods may differ from those of other actors.
- Understand the security environment in which you operate, and risks that may arise from associating with the military.
- Understand the military structure and hierarchy.
- Build and use networks, in accordance with country or other guidelines.
- Avoid public criticism of any actor.
- Determine whether the operation depends on military and civil defence assets (MCDA). If it does, identify additional or alternative forms of delivery.
- Review plans for phasing out military assets and factor these into operational planning.

1. Overview

Humanitarian operations may take place in areas affected by armed conflict. It is frequently justified and essential to interact and dialogue with military forces, in order to gain access to persons of concern and deliver vital humanitarian assistance.

In natural, technological and industrial disasters, governments may use national and external military forces to deliver relief (Haiti 2010, Philippines 2013). Particularly in complex emergencies (Pakistan 2005, 2010), coordination between military and humanitarian actors is vital, to ensure that [humanitarian principles](#) are fully understood, avoid competition, minimize inconsistency and, where appropriate, pursue common goals.

The United Nations Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination (UN-CMCoord) exists to provide such coordination. UN-CMCoord promotes a broad understanding of humanitarian action, guides

political and military actors on how best to support that action, helps develop context-specific policy based on internationally agreed guidelines, and establishes humanitarian civil-military coordination structures, ensuring that staff members are trained to make coordination work. It plays a particularly essential role in complex emergencies and high-risk environments, where it is vital to facilitate humanitarian access, protect civilians, and provide security for humanitarian workers.

Within the UN and humanitarian community, OCHA's Civil Military Coordination Service (CMCS) has responsibility for civil-military coordination. It supports relevant field and headquarter activities by developing institutional strategies to enhance the capacity and preparedness of national and international partners. By means of non-binding guidelines on use of military assets, and through training, workshops, conferences and simulation exercises, it improves the response of operational partners to humanitarian crises. As the custodian of UN-CMCoord guidelines, CMCS also helps humanitarian actors to develop context-specific guidance for operations in particular situations.

When necessary, CMCS advises the international community on mobilization of foreign military assets to support relief operations or humanitarian assistance. Its advocacy, coupled with the publication of operational guidance, complements and supports USG-level dialogue.

CMCS deploys experts known as Civil Military Coordination Officers to support the HCT/UNCT. Where they are not present, the Resident or Humanitarian Coordinator takes the lead, relying on UN-CMCoord doctrine. All UN personnel are expected to understand and follow UN-CMCoord policies and guidelines.

2. Main guidance

Underlying policies, principles and/or standards

- Preserve humanitarian space.
- Cooperation (or perceptions of cooperation) with the military must not jeopardize core [humanitarian principles](#) of neutrality and impartiality, or put persons of concern or humanitarian personnel at risk.
- Form and maintain appropriate relations between humanitarian and military or armed actors.
- Make appropriate and timely use of foreign or national military assets to support humanitarian operations.
- Ensure that relief efforts are consistent, whether they are delivered by civilian or military actors.

Good practice recommendations

- Planning. This varies according to the phase of an emergency. All those involved in the response need to share the same strategic overview, share information regularly, and understand clearly who is doing what, where and for how long.

- Information sharing. This works best when it is proactive. Information sharing helps to validate plans and adjust priorities and is critical to the safety and security of humanitarian workers and persons of concern.
- Task allocation. Clear attribution of roles ensures consistency and avoids duplication. It matches capacities to needs and supports forward planning by organizations on the ground.

Considerations for practical implementation

Map the actors

This will help you to identify the critical actors in the civilian and military communities, and decide which actors can most effectively operate and meet needs in given areas, in accordance with [humanitarian principles](#). Military actors may help particularly to:

- Secure and maintain access to persons of concern.
- Support the security and logistical dimensions of an operation.
- Provide additional resources, especially in emergency operations.
- Make available their good offices to expedite assistance and resolve difficulties.

Assess and analyse civil-military relations, perceptions and approaches

Short-term cooperation can be effective, but long term implications must be considered, particularly where international military actors may be involved and where action to establish security on the ground might compromise (perceptions of) neutrality.

Determine missions and mandates

Consider the roles of:

- Domestic civilian actors: local leaders, NGOs, Government.
- Domestic military and paramilitary actors: military, police, gendarmerie, border and customs forces.
- International civilian actors: UN, INGOs, donors, ICRC.
- Foreign military actors: UN and non-UN peacekeeping forces, UN Civil Military Officers (CIMIC), military police, UNPOL.

Ascertain the mission or mandate of each of the actors identified, and understand their engagement in terms of UN-CMCoord.

Agree the character of civil-military relationships and set a CMCoord strategy

Basic strategies range from co-existence to cooperation. Coordination (essential dialogue and interaction) is always required, but its character should reflect the strategy.

Understand the strategy of the HC/RC and HCT/UNCT

When military and civilian actors clearly understand the HCT/UNCT's strategy, it helps the HCT/UNCT and the response to:

- Build shared situational awareness and understanding.

- Establish a common approach.
- Agree and implement a strategy.
- Facilitate implementation and monitoring.
- Share lessons learned.

Country specific UN-CMCoord guidelines should be developed for each operation, and persons with coordination responsibilities identified clearly.

Resources and partnerships

- OCHA Civil Military Coordination Officers.
- OCHA Civil Military Coordination Section.
- Consultative Group on Humanitarian Civil Military Coordination.
- UNHCR Field Security Advisors.

Annexes

[IASC, Non-Binding Guidelines on the Use of Armed Escorts for Humanitarian Convoys, February 2013](#)

[Recommended Practices in Humanitarian Civil Military Coordination, OCHA 2018](#)

[UN Civil Military Coordination Handbook 2018](#)

[OCHA, On Message – Civil Military Coordination, November 2013](#)

[CMCoordination Operational Guidance COVID19](#)

[IASC, Civil-Military Relationship in Complex Emergencies, Reference Paper, June 2004](#)

[Guidelines on the Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief, the Oslo Guidelines](#)

[Recommended Practices for Effective Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination of Foreign Military Assets in Natural and Man-Made Disasters](#)

[Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies, the MCDA Guidelines, Rev. 1, January 2006](#)

3. Links

[OCHA Humanitarian/ Military Dialogue Resource Library of Humanitarian/Military Dialogue OCHA Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination](#)

4. Main contacts

UNHCR Field Security Service (FSS), Division of Emergencies, Supply and Security (DESS).

Refugee Coordination Model (RCM)

11 July 2019

Key points

- UNHCR's is accountable for coordinating refugee responses as follows:
 1. Preparedness. It makes sure that joint risk analyses are prepared and that, where necessary, joint preparedness plans and actions are completed.
 2. Protection strategy. It guides the development of a comprehensive refugee response, drawing on the contributions of partners.
 3. Resource mobilization. It coordinates immediate and ongoing inter-agency funding appeals. It seeks support from pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum and other relevant fundraising fora.
 4. Sectoral set up:
 - a. It determines whether current Government-led or interagency coordination mechanisms (including clusters) can be adapted to address the needs arising from refugee influx, in accordance with UNHCR's accountabilities.
 - b. Where necessary, it establishes sectoral coordination mechanisms, with government counterparts where possible, to lead sector-specific needs assessments, planning, monitoring, reporting, and information management, within and across sectors, at national and sub-national level.
 - c. It leads the refugee protection working group; ensures protection concerns are reflected in the work of other sectors; and ensures that refugees and host communities participate in a manner that is sensitive to age, gender and diversity.
 - d. It ensures that other sectors and their leaderships, including leads from other agencies, have appropriate expertise, experience and operational capacity.

- e. Being accountable for the quality of the refugee response, the UNHCR Representative maintains a direct line to the Government on refugee issues.
- 5. Coordination forum. Where appropriate, it establishes a national coordination forum, if possible co-chaired by the Government, to support the overall refugee response.
- 6. Information management. It builds or strengthens information management, including through contributions by other agencies.
- 7. Information sharing. It ensures that information is shared regularly with the RC and UNCT; updates and ensures coordination with the HC and HCT (where they operate); and shares information regularly with donors.

1. Overview

The coordination of international protection, assistance and solutions is central to UNHCR's refugee mandate and derives from the High Commissioner's responsibility to ensure international protection for persons of concern to UNHCR from the time they become a refugee or internally displaced person (IDP) until they find a solution, whether they live in urban or rural host communities or in camps, with other refugees and internally displaced people, with other populations affected by humanitarian crises, or in non-emergency settings.

The Refugee Coordination Model (RCM) provides the model for leading and coordinating refugee operations. It sets out our shared duty to refugees, an integrated humanitarian vision, and responsibilities. Together with the [UNHCR-OCHA Joint Note on Mixed Situations: coordination in practice \(2014\)](#), the RCM sets out a framework and principles for responding to refugee and mixed situations.

2. Main guidance

Underlying rationale / objective of the approach or system

UNHCR's mandated responsibility to protect refugees, and coordinate action on their behalf

Under [its Statute](#), UNHCR provides international protection to refugees and seeks permanent solutions for them, acting on the authority of the General Assembly (GA). In that capacity, it is the lead agency with respect to refugee protection, responsible for seeking solutions in the UN system in association with a wider array of stakeholders. As set out in subsequent GA resolutions, its responsibilities include coordination, provision of protection and assistance,

obtaining solutions, and advocacy. Importantly, UNHCR also has a supervisory role: it is the UN entity most immediately responsible for ensuring that States adhere to internationally accepted standards with respect to refugees and stateless persons and for strengthening States' capacity to protect such persons.

UNHCR has led and managed refugee operations effectively for decades. For many years, however, it did not articulate a model of refugee coordination that took account of changes in the humanitarian landscape. The Refugee Coordination Model (RCM), formalized in 2013 and further updated in 2019, makes UNHCR's approach to coordination more predictable by clarifying roles and responsibilities. Recent UN General Assembly Resolutions have confirmed the RCM and UNHCR's mandate to lead and coordinate the refugee response ([A/RES/69/152](#), [A/RES/70/135](#)).

States are primarily responsible for protecting refugees. Several factors can inhibit their capacity to fully discharge this responsibility. Over two thirds of all refugees live in low- and middle-income countries that face economic and development challenges. The arrival of large numbers of refugees strains already over-stretched infrastructures and service delivery. In addition, the institutions of many States across the development spectrum are not equipped to appropriately receive, protect or otherwise respond to the challenges of receiving large numbers of refugees. For this reason, it has long been recognized that international cooperation is required to support States that receive refugees. This understanding lay at the heart of UNHCR's creation and the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees. The importance of cooperation was subsequently confirmed in a range of regional instruments and was underscored by the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) which stated that "there is an urgent need for more equitable sharing of the burden and responsibility for hosting and supporting the world's refugees, while taking account of existing contributions and the differing capacities and resources among States. Refugees and host communities should not be left behind." The GCR calls for a multi-stakeholder and partnership approach to meet this objective, to achieve which UNHCR plays both a supportive and catalytic role.

UNHCR's approach to coordination is determined by the needs and concerns of refugees and persons of concern, the capacity of Government to respond, and the operational context. Coordination is a means to an end, whose purpose is to ensure that refugees and other persons of concern receive the protection and assistance they need through the collective efforts and capacities of all stakeholders involved. Reflecting these points, the RCM:

- Reaffirms that States' have the primary responsibility to protect refugees, and that the High Commissioner has a mandate to provide international protection to refugees and support the efforts of host Governments to protect refugees by providing leadership and coordination.
- Affirms that coordination of a refugee response takes account of the approach of the host Government, and its capacity, and builds on the resources of refugees and host communities.
- Makes clear that UNHCR's approach to coordination is predictable, inclusive and partner-friendly, designed to ensure that refugees receive the assistance and protection they need throughout the duration of a refugee response.
- Underlines that UNHCR is mandated to undertake advocacy on refugee issues and international protection.

- Welcomes sector leadership by partners who have the necessary expertise and experience.
- Seeks to widen the support base for refugees and countries that host them, and promotes self-reliance and collaboration with development actors, in accordance with [UN Reform and the Global Compact on Refugees](#).

In practical terms, UNHCR's coordination responsibilities lie operationally in the following broad areas:

1. **Preparedness.** It works with Government and partners to assess the likelihood of refugee inflows, determine the impact of inflows on national response mechanisms, and (depending on the level of risk) take preparedness actions.
2. **Advocacy.** It intervenes politically, diplomatically and legally to influence legislation and national practices. When doing so, UNHCR may engage directly with host Governments.
3. **Strengthening national capacity.** It may strengthen the capacity of national institutions and local actors to protect refugees and find solutions for them.
4. **Delivery.** It delivers protection and assistance and facilitates solutions.
5. **Coordination.** It involves UN partners and other stakeholders in developing and implementing a [protection and solutions strategy](#) that supports refugees and assists host countries to support refugees.
6. **Participation.** It works with refugees and host communities in ways that are sensitive to [age, gender and diversity](#), and ensures they participate in designing responses to their needs that are appropriate, accessible and inclusive.
7. **Resource mobilization.** It raises funds for responding to refugees, including through inter-agency plans and appeals. **Inter alia**, it sets protection objectives; coordinates resource mobilization; drafts initial inter-agency plans; reports on their implementation and impact; and tracks contributions.
8. **Broadens the support base.** It seeks out and works with a wide array of stakeholders, including private sector organizations and multilateral and bilateral development actors, to strengthen institutional capacity and assist host communities to address their urgent humanitarian needs. Where applicable, it works with such stakeholders to overcome shocks that result from conflict or large refugee arrivals.
9. **Monitoring and reporting.** It monitors and reports on the situation of refugees and application of the international protection regime.
10. **Prevention.** UNHCR uses the High Commissioner's good offices to prevent situations that cause refugees to flee, address root causes of migration and displacement, and promote the involvement of refugees in efforts to sustain peace.
11. **Solutions.** It promotes durable solutions; designs refugee responses that facilitate solutions; and ensures that solutions are implemented in ways that are safe and sustainable. This work includes efforts to secure return and reintegration, resettlement, local integration, obtain complementary pathways, and achieve other local solutions.

UNHCR's mandate includes leadership responsibilities. Within countries, the **Representative** speaks for the High Commissioner on matters concerning UNHCR's mandate and is responsible for coordination, as described in the next section. Where large refugee movements occur, the Representative coordinates UN and NGO partners as they prepare a refugee response plan, which serves as an advocacy tool and is used to raise resources.

At regional level, the High Commissioner may appoint **Regional Refugee Coordinators** to address a specific refugee situation and lead development and implementation of regional refugee response plans. These are developed jointly with partners at regional level.

The High Commissioner may also appoint **Special Envoys** to provide political representation and advocacy on behalf of the High Commissioner in specific contexts.

Resident Coordinator system

In the UN system, the Resident Coordinator (RC) in a country leads the UN Country Team (UNCT) in undertaking development activities under the UN Strategic Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF, formerly UNDAF) and assisting countries to implement the 2030 Agenda. As a member of the UNCT, UNHCR contributes to this work and is accountable to the RC for UNHCR programming in support of the UNSDCF/UNDAF. RCs are in turn accountable to members of the UNCT, who expect the RC to support their efforts to fulfil their mandates. UNHCR exercises its mandate as an agency and fulfils its supervisory responsibilities. These include the duty to monitor States' compliance with their international obligations to refugees and stateless persons, and play a catalytic as well as support role in implementing the GCR, which encourages a broad range of stakeholders – including development actors – to participate in refugee responses.

In line with the GCR, UNHCR is committed to work with RCs and UNCTs to advance national development priorities and ensure no one is left behind. This collaborative work includes encouraging development actors to intervene on behalf of refugees and in support of host communities, as well as to work with States to include refugees in national development plans, as part of the Agenda 2030 imperative to 'leave no one behind'.

Humanitarian Coordinator system

In complex emergencies, the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC), if one has been appointed, leads overall humanitarian planning, advocacy and resource mobilization. When a complex emergency occurs that has a refugee dimension, UNHCR leads the refugee response, working with the overall humanitarian response to make sure it is coherent. The arrangements are set out in UNHCR's and OCHA's **Joint Note on mixed situations: coordination in practice** (2014). They were reconfirmed by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) and the High Commissioner in 2018. The Note describes in detail the division of responsibilities between the UNHCR Representative and the HC in such situations.

The High Commissioner remains accountable for protection of persons of concern; the Joint Note is about increasing operational efficiency by flexible and pragmatic organization, not about transferring accountability or responsibility. The High Commissioner's protection responsibilities, combined with his advocacy and supervisory functions, mean that he must continue to oversee and monitor the delivery of services to refugees during UN responses. UNHCR's refugee response is an **integral yet distinct** element in the overall humanitarian coordination architecture. By developing visions that are integrated and strategic alongside distinct but interoperable plans and funding tools, UNHCR and the larger humanitarian response can remain accountable and fulfil their responsibilities coherently and transparently.

The RCM is applicable **in all refugee situations and throughout a refugee response**,

whether the emergency is new or protracted, and whether refugees are living in camps, rural areas, urban settings or in mixed situations. According to the operational context and the size and length of the response, certain features of the RCM may be less or more significant.

Policy, strategy and/or guidance

Preparedness

Refugee influxes can often be anticipated. Large movements may build over time and can be predicted as the conflict that drives them intensifies.

UNHCR's emergency policies require operations to prepare annual risk analyses and complete minimum preparedness actions. This work is done with government and partner counterparts to: assess the likelihood of refugee inflows; determine the impact that refugee flows are likely to have on national response mechanisms; and, depending on the level of risk, make ready.

When refugee influxes are anticipated, UNHCR coordinates refugee preparedness actions. Where relevant, it does so as part of broader UNCT or Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) preparedness processes. Wherever possible, UNHCR works jointly with Government. Preparedness actions include mapping of partner capacities.

The growing engagement of multilateral development actors, including the World Bank Group, mean that preparedness efforts can be supported more actively by national institutions, whose capacity goes well beyond what UNHCR can do on its own. By engaging early on with development and financial institutions, UNHCR can provide information and guidance that will help them to: strengthen the institutions that will manage any refugee influx; prepare instruments to facilitate flows of financial support; devise social protection systems able to support affected host communities and refugees; and establish surge capacity for service delivery.

Emergency

At the outset of a refugee emergency, UNHCR's knowledge and operational capacity assists Governments to design and roll out quickly a response that has the capacity to be sustainable and encourages contributions from a wide array of stakeholders. Importantly, Governments expect UNHCR to act immediately to raise financial and in-kind resources to meet urgent and pressing needs.

Operations are expected to reinforce or establish coordination arrangements, as prescribed in the RCM, ensuring a smooth interface with other interagency mechanisms.

Building for resilience

Not all refugee situations start with an emergency influx, but all emergency responses need to become consolidated programmatically and become a more stable form of operation.

National ownership is crucial. Wherever possible, UNHCR will work to establish and support national arrangements for coordinating a comprehensive refugee response. As envisaged by the GCR, UNHCR may support the development of a comprehensive plan, in line with national policies and priorities. Comprehensive plans set out: policy priorities; institutional and operational arrangements; requirements for support from the international community, including investment, financing, and material and technical assistance; and solutions, including [resettlement and complementary pathways](#) for admission to third countries, as well as voluntary repatriation.

The GCR also makes clear that refugee responses should be designed (or adapted) to be able to evolve into more sustainable forms of support and response. One objective of the GCR is therefore to strengthen the resilience both of refugees and the communities that host them, especially when displacement is protracted. The GCR's Programme of Action sets out various arrangements for supporting refugees and hosting countries and identifies areas in which immediately or long term support is likely to be needed. Longer term action is likely to be required to: strengthen the capacity of facilities and systems that deliver asylum, education, health and [child protection](#) services; enhance accommodation, energy supply, and natural resource management; increase livelihoods and grow the economy; and empower women and youth.

UNHCR will remain engaged in all areas of refugee protection and solutions; however, the transformative support envisaged by the Programme of Action requires **investments that go well beyond a humanitarian or even a UN development response**. A much broader array of stakeholders must be engaged. While UNHCR can act as a catalyst, it recognizes that it is not competent to lead in all areas.

UNHCR must therefore encourage others to make significant contributions, to strengthen institutional capacity, help host communities overcome shocks resulting from conflict or large refugee arrivals, and advance the rights of refugees. These objectives can be pursued in the following ways:

-Within the UNCT. UNHCR actively draws on the expertise of other agencies to promote refugee resilience: UNICEF and UNESCO in education; ILO in employment; WHO in health etc. It works to include refugees in UN development frameworks (UNSDCF/UNDAF).

-NGOs. NGO contributions and leadership are vital and can be promoted in HCTs and within refugee responses that UNHCR coordinates. Encouraging others to lead in their areas of expertise strengthens their engagement and the inclusion of refugees without undermining UNHCR's mandate or accountability.

-The private sector, and multilateral and bilateral development actors. UNHCR

encourages involvement by the private sector and development actors. Its knowledge of refugees, of the operating environment, and other agencies and actors involved in refugee response, mean that UNHCR can be an invaluable guide and source of information for such organizations.

Voluntary repatriation and returns

Within the UN, UNHCR is the authoritative voice on the right of every refugee to a safe and dignified voluntary return to his or her own country. It advises and guides UN action and facilitates voluntary return by refugees to their country of origin when conditions in those countries are such that their return can be safe, dignified and sustainable.

UNHCR advises the UN system on the basis of its own assessment of the degree to which countries are in a position to: receive returnees; assure their security and provide essential services; and sustain return. In its assessment, UNHCR identifies obstacles to voluntary return, conditions favourable for voluntary return, and specific protection needs. UNHCR also leads on a range of other relevant activities by UN and operational partners. These include: compiling information on possible return areas; structured dialogues with refugees and intention surveys; go and see visits; identification of specific protection needs; monitoring; and comprehensive measures to support protection and solutions. With both host and receiving Governments, UNHCR may sign a Tripartite Voluntary Repatriation Agreement that defines the legal framework, lists refugee guarantees, and describes the responsibilities of the parties.

In countries of return, UNHCR's work to support returning refugees usually focuses on the country's coordination mechanisms (notably the UNCT and HCT, where applicable), and, for an initial period of time, on the protection, assistance, and well-being of returnees. Its responsibilities include the provision of: return packages; initial reintegration support; returnee monitoring; information sharing on protection risks in areas of refugee return; and advocacy and operational guidance on measures to reduce those risks.

It is a given for UNHCR that Governments should lead refugee responses wherever possible. Beyond this, how UNHCR exercises its coordination responsibilities is context specific.

Refugee Response Plans. With respect to both inter-agency refugee response plans (which are country specific) and regional refugee response plans (which address refugee influxes in several countries), UNHCR leads their development, their implementation, and resource mobilization. Response plans are a coordination tool: they establish a common strategy and give host Governments as well as donors an overview of the inter-agency response, including resource requirements.

Comprehensive Response Framework. When requested to do so, UNHCR assists Governments to put in place the national, regional and international arrangements needed to establish a comprehensive refugee response framework. These frameworks should engage a broad range of stakeholders as envisaged by the GCR and are context specific.

As recognized in the GCR, population movements are not always homogeneous and may be

composite. Some large movements involve both refugees and others on the move; others involve refugees and internally displaced persons; in certain situations, people are displaced across frontiers by sudden-onset natural disasters and environmental degradation.

These situations present complex challenges for affected States. In responding to refugee movements within mixed movements, UNHCR works with a range of operational partners, such as OCHA, UNDP and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), drawing on their mandates, roles and expertise as appropriate to develop a coordinated approach.

In **complex emergencies** that include internal displacement and refugees, for example, UNHCR and OCHA apply a joint coordination model that ensure their leadership and coordination are complementary and clearly defined, reflecting their expertise, mandates, and responsibilities.

UNHCR is also actively engaged in efforts to ensure that humanitarian and development responses are linked and engage multilateral partners such as the World Bank and international financial institutions. These efforts include the [humanitarian-development-peace nexus](#), the [collective outcomes approach](#), and the New Way of Working set out in the [Agenda for Humanity](#).

Mechanisms for joint coordination, which can be adapted to regional contexts, have been designed for responses to mixed movements of refugee and migrants, and responses to refugees and hosting communities. These are elaborated by UNHCR and IOM in their [Joint UNHCR-IOM letter on Global Compact for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration](#) (25 January 2019).

Wherever **inter-agency mechanisms** function in countries or regions, UNHCR will seek similarly to coordinate its work with them.

At all times, UNHCR exercises its mandate responsibilities which include coordination of efforts to ensure refugees are protected and to advance solutions for them.

Annexes

[Joint UNHCR and OCHA, Note on Mixed Situations. Coordination in Practice](#)

[Note on the Mandate of the High Commissioner for Refugees and his Office](#)

3. Links

[Refugee Coordination Model - Updated Guidance \(2019\) UNHCR-OCHA, Joint Note on Mixed Situations: Coordination in Practice](#) [Refugee Coordination Model \(internal link\)](#) [Note on the Mandate of the High Commissioner](#)

4. Main contacts

Contact the Partnership and Coordination Service of the Division for External Relations:

Sara Baschetti: baschett@unhcr.org

Noelia Díaz: diazno@unhcr.org

IASC Scale Up Activation

28 January 2018

Key points

- A system-wide scale-up activation automatically triggers mechanisms and responses that UNHCR has undertaken to support. These include the deployment of cluster coordinators and information management support, and development of a budgeted inter-agency response plan.
- It is a priority to deliver humanitarian support to IDPs and affected populations in a sudden onset or significantly deteriorating humanitarian crises requiring a system-wide scale-up activation. Empowered leadership and effective coordination help to achieve this priority.
- The decision to activate a system-wide scale-up is a high level priority statement as much as a practical response mechanism. It will (and should) generate attention. Agencies will be scrutinized on how well they deliver their response.
- Be proactive and share information about the emergency with bureaux and support divisions.
- Inform HQ which clusters should be activated and why.
- Actively participate in HCT discussions.
- Assess your office's capacity and identify resource and staffing gaps that will impede or prevent delivery of assistance; request support from HQ to fill gaps.

1. Overview

This entry provides guidance on humanitarian system-wide scale-up activation, related inter-agency processes and actions, and their implications for UNHCR. It should be read in conjunction

with the most recent version of the IASC's [Humanitarian Programme Cycle](#). The entry is based on IASC's 'Protocol 1. Humanitarian System-Wide Scale-Up Activation: Definition and Procedures' (November 2018), which replaces the 2012 Transformative Agenda Protocol on L-3 definition and procedures.

IASC scale-up activation is a system-wide mobilization in response to a sudden onset or rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation in a given country, including at subnational level, where the capacity to lead, coordinate and deliver humanitarian assistance does not match the scale, complexity and urgency of the crisis. It is an element of the Transformative Agenda (TA), which aims to strengthen leadership, coordination, and accountability in inter-agency responses to major humanitarian emergencies.

A scale-up declaration activates mechanisms and tools which:

- Ensure that the IASC system delivers effective support both to national authorities and existing capacities, and monitors its own performance.
- Ensure that adequate capacities and tools for empowered leadership and coordination of the humanitarian system are in place.
- Engage IASC member organisations and Global Cluster Lead Agencies to put in place the systems and resources required to contribute to the response in line with their mandates.

Activation is for a time-bound period of up to six months, and is appropriate only in cases where the gravity of the humanitarian situation justifies the mobilization of system-wide capacities and resources, beyond standard levels, to respond to critical humanitarian needs on the ground. In exceptional situations a single additional three-month extension can be considered. During the activation, sufficient capacity should be created to sustain the level of response. The procedure mandates the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) to develop benchmarks, appropriate for the context, followed by a transition plan and post-activation accompanying measures. Though UN system-wide scale-up declarations and agency-specific emergency level declarations are often linked in practice, they have separate procedures.

Note. Refugee emergency responses (and where applicable emergency responses for returning refugees) are led and coordinated by UNHCR and guided by the [Refugee Coordination Model](#) (RCM). The scale-up protocol does not apply to such situations.

2. Relevance for emergency operations

In December 2011, the IASC Principals agreed to the Transformative Agenda (TA). This set of actions was designed to improve the humanitarian response model while reaffirming that the [cluster approach](#) is the most appropriate coordination model for non-refugee inter-agency humanitarian responses. Since then, as part of this initiative, the Principals have approved or continued to update protocols that set parameters for the TA, strengthen leadership, increase stakeholder accountability, and improve coordination.

UNHCR is committed to successful implementation of the TA. It will continue to contribute to its evolution, implementation, and tools, as well as monitor its implementation.

3. Main guidance

The Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) declares a scale-up activation based on five criteria:

- Scale.
- Urgency.
- Complexity.
- Capacity.
- Risk of failure to deliver effectively and at scale to affected populations.

Within 24 hours of the event, or recognizing that the humanitarian situation has deteriorated dramatically, the ERC receives an initial assessment of the situation, including data on affected populations. The information is provided by the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) in the affected country, under the leadership of the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC), or a Resident Coordinator (RC) if the former is not yet designated. The IASC secretariat should share the assessment with the Emergency Directors Group (EDG) and Global Cluster Coordinators.

Within 24 hours of receiving the initial assessment, the IASC Emergency Directors Group (EDG), composed of representatives from each agency, convenes to discuss the event. It considers the context, the response, capacity, expected gaps, lessons learned from past emergencies, and advocacy priorities, and agrees recommendations. These cover leadership and coordination arrangements, including cluster activation for the IASC Principals' consideration. The Global Cluster Coordinators should be consulted on proposed coordination arrangements, where relevant.

Following receipt of the EDG recommendations, the ERC contacts national authorities at the highest level to brief them on the measures being considered to bolster operational capacity. The ERC informs the UN Secretary-General (S-G) and the lead UN Secretariat Department (Department of Peace-Keeping Operations or Department of Political Affairs as applicable), as well as the chair of the UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) and the UN Operations and Crisis Centre (UNOCC), that a scale-up activation is under consideration.

Within 48 hours of the crisis, the ERC convenes the IASC Principals to jointly review the initial assessment and present recommendations on a 'no objections' basis. The Principals discuss whether the initial assessment warrants a scale-up activation. The ERC, as Chair of the IASC, makes the final decision. If it is agreed to declare a scale-up activation, the Principals also discuss (1) the most appropriate leadership model, (2) the most appropriate coordination arrangements, (3) common advocacy priorities for the humanitarian system and common messages, and (4) other context-specific arrangements.

The ERC announces the activation via e-mail to all IASC Principals. The ERC also issues a note for the attention of the Secretary-General (including the UNOCC Director), and a note to the HCT via the RC/HC. The ERC contacts national authorities at the highest level to explain the decision and its implications, including additional support that will be provided to national and in situ capacity. All messages from the ERC include information on geographic coverage, the length of the activation (up to six months), and leadership and coordination arrangements (including the

appointment of a HC, cluster activation, and designated in-country cluster leads).

The activation automatically triggers:

- Immediate establishment of a HCT. The current RC is re-hatted as HC pending a decision on the most appropriate leadership model.
- Activation of the 'empowered leadership' model.

Within 72 hours of the onset of the crisis:

- A HC is designated and deployed for up to six months, to lead coordination of the overall humanitarian response, exercising empowered leadership in line with the IASC protocol.
- A Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and Country-Based Pooled Fund (CBPF), if available in country, are announced. Allocations are issued by the ERC (by the HC in the case of CBPFs) on a 'no regrets' basis, in support of priorities identified in the strategic statement.

Within 72 hours of the scale-up activation:

- The ERC activates clusters for priority sectors, after consulting the IASC Principals on the basis of a request from the RC/HC in consultation with the HCT.
- The IASC Principals, after consulting the Global Cluster Lead Agencies, immediately deploy appropriate coordination capacity, including qualified cluster coordinators and information managers (as required).
- The RC/HC issues a 'Statement of Key Strategic Priorities', to establish shared messaging and advocacy from headquarters level down, and for press releases.
- A multi-cluster or -sector Initial Rapid Assessment (or alternative rapid assessment) is implemented based on coordinated assessments. The initial Situation Analysis is followed by a multisector assessment and report within the first two weeks.

Within 5 days of the scale-up activation:

- A Flash Appeal is developed, supported by the Situation Analysis. It contains a top-line analysis of the scope and severity of the crisis, sets out priority actions, and lists financial requirements.

Within 4 weeks of the scale-up activation:

- The Flash Appeal is revised. If a longer response is required (beyond the initial activation period of six months), the HCT develops or updates the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO). The HNO consolidates and analyses information on the needs, vulnerabilities and capacities of the affected population, and develops or updates a Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). The HRP sets out the strategy chosen to respond to the assessed needs, and is the basis for implementing and monitoring the overall response.

Within 5 months of the scale-up activation:

- An Operational Peer Review (OPR) takes place.

Within 9-12 months of a Scale-Up activation:

- An Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) is conducted, in accordance with IAHE terms of reference.

End of the scale-up

The scale-up activation automatically expires after a maximum period of six months. The IASC Emergency Directors (EDG) meet towards the end of the activation period to review the situation.

The EDG may, in exceptional circumstances and before the scale-up activation expires, recommend to the ERC that the scale-up activation should be extended for an additional three months (to a total maximum duration of nine months). Exceptional circumstances might include a further deterioration of the situation, based on an OPR recommendation.

UNHCR's role and accountabilities

When a decision to declare a system-wide scale-up activation is considered, UNHCR will actively contribute to the initial assessment of the UN Country Team (UNCT) or Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), because the decisions taken will affect UNHCR's involvement later in the process. If the crisis involves refugees, UNHCR will lead discussion of refugee aspects. Scale-up activation is not applicable to such situations.

In its internal communications with HQ, the UNHCR office will:

- Communicate the outcomes of UNCT/HCT discussions to the Director of the concerned bureau and to DESS, focusing especially on the five criteria on which the decision to declare is based.
- As cluster lead agency, share with the Directors of the regional Bureau and DESS its assessment with respect to:
 - (1) UNHCR's in-country capacity (cluster coordinators, information management, needs assessment officers, etc.).
 - (2) Which clusters should be activated (if they are not already operational).
 - (3) Available stocks of core relief items (CRIs), and staff readiness.
- (4) The RC's ability to lead a scale-up mobilisation as HC.
 - Brief the Bureau Director and DESS Director in preparation for the Principals' review of leadership and coordination (within 72 hours of the event).

In addition, if a system-wide scale-up is activated, the office will:

- Mobilize internal response capacity and prepare to receive additional staff for clusters deployed under the Inter Agency Rapid Response Mechanism (IARRM).
- In consultation with the bureau, prepare to receive other support staff.
- Make sure that personnel (particularly cluster coordinators and information management focal points) are aware of their roles and the time-bound outputs they need to deliver under the system-wide scale-up procedure. These include: an emergency response plan; a strategic response plan; cluster response plans; and CERF submissions and allocations.

Considerations for UNHCR's engagement at country level

IDP situations

During a system-wide scale-up activation, all or some of the three clusters that UNHCR co-leads at global level (Protection, Shelter, and [Camp Coordination and Camp Management](#) (CCCM)) may be activated at country level. This decision is made by the ERC, in consultation with the IASC Principals, based on recommendations by the RC or HC.

At country level, the UNHCR office should be involved in discussions of cluster activation and should keep the bureau, DESS, DIP, DPSM and other relevant HQ entities informed.

Once clusters are activated, UNHCR must be ready to lead the clusters for which it is responsible for. It should provide dedicated staff for coordination and information management (IM). For both functions, it may need to have dedicated personnel at national and local level.

Mixed refugee and IDP situations

If a new emergency also affects refugee populations, UNHCR should lead discussion of refugee aspects of the crisis and determine the coordination arrangements for an effective response (in accordance with the [Refugee Coordination Model](#) and the **Joint UNHCR-OCHA Note on Mixed Situations - Coordination in Practice**). Field operations should keep Headquarters (the DESS and Partnership and Coordination Service) closely informed.

Post emergency phase

If factors affect the response that the scale-up activation cannot address, a transition from scale-up may commence. The IASC Principals and leadership on the ground should provide clear messaging on both the expiry of the scale-up activation and the transition strategy as soon as possible. The transition plan should include (at a minimum):

- A statement indicating how the chosen leadership model will affect arrangements at the end of the period, and how the transition will be managed.
- A strategy for continuing core coordination functions, in support of national and local coordination efforts (where applicable and relevant).

- A statement indicating how reporting lines, roles and responsibilities will be defined at the end of the period of application.
- An outline of measures that will contribute to efforts to reach solutions. This should indicate how the humanitarian response will bridge with longer term recovery and national development priorities.

Annexes

[Protocol 1 IASC, Humanitarian System-Wide Scale-UP Activation - Definition and Procedures](#)

[Protocol 2 IASC, 'Empowered Leadership' in a Humanitarian System-Wide Scale-Up Activation](#)

[IASC, Humanitarian System-Wide Scale-Up Activation – Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[UNHCR-OCHA, Note on Mixed Situations. Coordination in Practice](#)

4. Links

[IASC web-site](#)

5. Main contacts

UNHCR Division for Emergency Security and Supply (DESS). At: hqemhand@unhcr.org

Shelter Cluster

20 September 2023

Key points

- Contact UNHCR's Global Shelter Cluster Section in the Division of Resilience and Solutions (DRS) as soon as there is an indication that cluster activation will be discussed. This permits the section to provide guidance and support effectively.
- UNHCR leads the shelter cluster in conflict-related emergencies. Representatives should consult UNHCR's Global Shelter Cluster Section if they feel their office cannot take the lead, as a decision not to lead the shelter cluster contradicts UNHCR policy and guidance and can have important operational and reputational consequences.

- The appointment of a NGO partner or a government body as co-chair is encouraged by the IASC, where appropriate and possible, but should be made after consulting UNHCR's Global Shelter Cluster Section because the decision has important consequences.
- Coordinating a cluster is a full-time job. It should not be merged with another function. A dedicated full-time Shelter Cluster Coordination Officer and a full time Information Management Officer should be appointed. Other coordination positions (Information Manager, Technical Coordinator, Sub-national Cluster Coordinators) are normally also required.
- UNHCR's Global Shelter Cluster Section can deploy surge capacity for Coordination but also Information Management at short notice to help establish a cluster or support during an emergency situation. It can also provide support and advice from headquarters.

1. Overview

The Global Shelter Cluster was established in 2005 and it is co-led by UNHCR (conflict situations) and IFRC (disaster situations) at the global level. The Shelter Cluster is an inter-agency mechanism that coordinates shelter, settlement, and shelter-related non-food items (NFIs) during a humanitarian response for internal displacement (IDP) situations. When activated at country level, it is responsible for coordinating the emergency shelter and NFI response with Shelter Cluster partners, other clusters and government authorities to support affected populations (through the provision of plastic sheeting, shelter kits, tents, cash, NFIs or other support) and longer-term needs (through transitional shelter, building or reconstruction of houses, capacity building, and related matters).

The Shelter Cluster promotes the inclusion of disaster risk reduction measures in the design and construction of shelters and settlements. Protection mainstreaming and risk analysis, particularly for [housing, land and property \(HLP\)](#), have important implications for shelter interventions. Close coordination with the Protection Cluster but also other clusters is therefore very important.

2. Relevance for emergency operations

The objective of a Shelter Cluster is to ensure there is a coordinated approach for meeting the shelter needs of affected populations more effectively by strengthening leadership, coordination, and accountability in the humanitarian shelter sector. UNHCR should recommend the activation of shelter clusters when there are shelter needs and the government requires additional capacity for coordination of shelter-related responses. According to the [Policy on UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement](#), in situations of conflict UNHCR should lead the Shelter Cluster.

The UNHCR Global Shelter Cluster Section should be contacted as soon as there is an indication that the activation of clusters will be discussed.

Please note that the cluster coordination approach is applicable in situations of internal displacement and natural disasters. In refugee situations the IASC does not apply, and the response is coordinated within the framework of the (RCM). In mixed settings, the "[Joint UNHCR – OCHA Note on Mixed Situations: Coordination in Practice](#)" (2014) applies.

3. Main guidance

The Shelter Cluster has developed tools and guidance for shelter operations which can be found on the [GSC website](#). The Global Shelter Cluster Coordinator and the GSC support team at HQ stand ready for any advice needed.

Preparedness/ Pre-Crisis

- Understand and familiarize your team with Shelter and settlements issues and the Shelter Cluster and responsibilities of UNHCR as Cluster Lead Agency: The shelter sector is very broad covering household or shelter-related NFIs, emergency shelter, transitional and longer-term shelter, and issues related to settlements, including settlement planning and infrastructure development. UNHCR is the lead for conflict contexts which includes being the first port of call for the activation of the cluster at country-level, and the responsibility to be the “provider of [last resort](#)”

- Familiarize your team with Shelter and the Shelter Cluster: Educate your team on the wider impact and importance of Shelter as a way to achieve protection, improve health and a basis for livelihoods. Several helpful tips from the [Guidance Package on UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement](#) (public) or the [UNHCR \(internal\) “Building Blocks”, the Implementation Planning Tool for IDP contexts](#)

- Advocate for activation and leadership by UNHCR and analyse the country context and evolving emergency situation and identify existing coordination mechanisms and whether they will be able to cope. Get in contact with donors as resources and donor support will be needed early on. Donors will not only be able to provide funding, they have also very useful expertise, insights and leverage with the government and cluster partners that can be of enormous support to the cluster.

- Pre-identify Shelter Cluster Partners, particularly the Government and local actors – start getting in contact with shelter actors present in country, including local shelter actors or other organization, e.g. architects or engineers’ societies, local academia or research. Identify which of the different government bodies will be best placed to be the counterpart of the Shelter Cluster or to co-lead a coordination mechanism, where applicable, including at subnational level.

Once the activation of the Shelter Cluster at country level has been activated:

✓ Establish a cluster coordination team: When UNHCR takes the leadership of a Shelter Cluster, a dedicated Shelter Cluster Coordinator should be appointed. Information management capacity should also be put in place.

✓ Define national Shelter Cluster ToR: Establish a clear ToR clarifying the role of the cluster in this specific context, scope, regulations for membership and national structure including subnational structures. Where appropriate and possible, co-leadership with Government bodies and NGO partners is strongly encouraged.

✓ Create a Strategic Advisory Group (SAG): Chaired by the Cluster Coordinator, the SAG is responsible for developing and adjusting the strategic framework, priorities and work plan for the [cluster](#). SAGs must represent the overall cluster partnerships, including the different types of cluster partners (International NGOs, national NGOs, UN, Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement) but also government representatives. A SAG should not have more than about ten members.

✓ Outline a shelter strategy: Aim initially for a quickly produced one page document that outlines what the cluster would like to do, why, by who, how and by when. Do not aim for perfection initially but rather create something that gives direction and elaborate details with time. Examples and templates can be found in the [GSC Coordination Toolkit](#).

✓ Establish a regular and predictable dissemination of Information Management Products. The GSC has a [toolkit](#) and a companion available to support this. Initially this should include activity planning, 3/4Ws (Who, What, Where, and with Whom), and basic information on population, key indicators and mapping. The onset of an emergency is a critical moment to harmonize systems among partners as this becomes increasingly challenging as the response becomes more established. The [Shelter Severity Classification](#) (SSC) System can improve IM activities to support evidence-based decision-making.

Checklist on UNHCR's roles and accountabilities in countries where UNHCR leads the Shelter Cluster

As Shelter cluster lead agency, the **UNHCR Representative** as head of the Shelter Cluster lead agency is accountable to the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and is responsible to:

- Ensure that coordination mechanisms are established and properly supported.
- Serve as first point of call for the Government and the Humanitarian Coordinator.
- Represent at the HCT cluster-specific concerns and challenges that the cluster cannot solve.
- Act as provider of last resort.

The **Shelter Cluster Coordinator** is responsible and accountable for ensuring that the Shelter Cluster performs the following six core functions:

- To support service delivery by providing a forum in which approaches can be agreed and duplication eliminated.
- To inform the strategic decision-making of the Humanitarian Coordinator and Humanitarian Country Team by coordinating needs assessments, gap analysis, and prioritization.
- To plan and develop strategy (including cluster plans, adherence to standards, funding needs, HPC processes, CERF and Country-Based Pool Fund processes, etc.) and mobilise resources
- To advocate for identified concerns on behalf of affected populations and cluster partners.
- To monitor and report on the cluster strategy and its results and recommend corrective action where necessary.
- To conduct contingency planning, preparedness, and capacity building where needed.

As an Operational Organization and as indicated in the guidance on UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement, assuming cluster leadership not only implies readiness to coordinate, but also readiness to be operationally relevant, predictable and accountable.

1. Promoting State responsibility for Shelter and Settlements interventions: Ultimately this suggests that shelter coordination and shelter interventions need to be designed with a handover/exit or transition phase in mind, especially where internal displacement is likely to remain protracted.
2. Upholding and maximizing synergies with refugee protection and right to asylum, predominantly in mixed contexts;
3. Promoting human rights: Particularly Housing Land and Property (HLP) rights should be carefully addressed.
4. Applying a community-based approach responsive to age, gender and diversity (AGD);
5. Responding in partnership: Designing a response that fosters collaboration with other sectors such as WASH, [CCCM](#), and Protection as well as development and peace actors, CBOs and faith groups.
6. Infusing protection principles across clusters in an interagency response;
7. Promoting comprehensive solutions: Shelter interventions are more meaningful when holistic, multi-sectoral interventions at a neighbourhood or settlement level are considered. All shelter interventions should include adequate access to water and sanitation, all settlements should have drainage, health and education facilities, garbage collection and waste disposal facilities. Engagement with the WASH, Health, Education, CCCM, and Protection clusters, but also (local) government authorities will be important to ensure multi-sectoral issues are adequately addressed. It is also essential to include the host community and find ways to ensure that the interventions are designed jointly and will also benefit them. Disaster risk reduction should be considered in every shelter and settlement intervention. Overall, keep in mind these approaches and long-term solutions from the start of a response.
8. Disengaging responsibility: Shelter interventions should be sustainable and as easy to maintain as possible. Local building practices and local materials should be prioritised so that shelters can be maintained and repaired with the existing know-how. Building capacity of the local population and local builders such as masons and carpenters should also be considered.

The Shelter Cluster performance can be measured against the 6 core functions of the Clusters and accountability to affected population. The [CCPM Process](#) is a tool provided to country Clusters to carry out a yearly self-assessment. Standard indicators will follow the following headings:

1. Supporting service delivery
2. Informing HC/HCT strategic decision-making
3. Planning and implementing cluster strategies
4. Monitoring and evaluating performance
5. Building national capacity in preparedness and contingency planning
6. Supporting robust advocacy
7. Promoting accountability to affected populations

Post emergency phase

UNHCR and IFRC, as Shelter Cluster co-lead agencies at global level, work in close partnership with shelter actors to develop common approaches for shelter responses while developing more specific tools and methodologies for Disasters and Conflict contexts, which might include longer-term considerations. The Shelter Cluster develops an overarching strategy to provide a harmonized, efficient and effective humanitarian shelter response and support resource mobilization efforts.

Given the often long-term impact of shelter interventions, it is essential to ensure that appropriate approaches and technical solutions are defined based on good practices, needs, and capacities. Advocacy with donors and government is a key activity of a Shelter Cluster in order to get funding for cluster partners and support for issues such as land allocation or other HLP issues. The Shelter Cluster Coordinator also plays a crucial role in advancing coordination and cooperation between different sectors' intervention (e.g. WASH, Protection, Early Recovery (where existing), etc.). Country Shelter Clusters should coordinate and provide inputs to the shelter sector sections of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) and its outputs including the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP).

Annexes

[IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at the Country Level 2015](#)

4. Links

[Global Shelter Cluster Website](#) [Global Shelter Cluster Coordination Toolkit](#) [Global Shelter Cluster Information Management Toolkit](#) [Shelter Cluster Performance Monitoring](#) [Shelter severity classification system](#) [More than just a Roof: GSC online training on Shelter Building Blocks \(access for UNHCR staff only\)](#)

5. Main contacts

Functional mailbox: Global Shelter Cluster <info@sheltercluster.org>

Protection Cluster

31 January 2024

Key points

- Contact the Global Protection Cluster Ops Cell within the Division of International Protection in UNHCR as soon as there is an indication that cluster activation will be discussed. Ensure the Protection Cluster is well-run, structured, staffed and capacitated at national and sub-national levels (at minimum, a protection cluster coordinator and information management officer for the Protection Cluster and its Areas of Responsibilities (AoRs))
- Ensure coherence of action with the Areas of Responsibilities (AoRs) in coordination with their respective lead agencies, as well as with other clusters, in particular the UNHCR-led Shelter and CCCM clusters i.e., work to implement the UNHCR tri-cluster approach. Ensure the response always meets minimum standards
- Act as provider of last resort. This means that, where necessary, and depending on access, security and availability of funding, UNHCR as the cluster lead, must be ready to ensure the provision of services required to fulfil crucial gaps identified by the cluster and reflected in the HC-led Humanitarian Response Plan. Acting as provider of last resort similarly applies to the AoRs for their respective areas
- Ensure accountability to the crisis affected persons and communities and the Humanitarian coordinator on behalf of the Cluster. Ensure the voices of crisis affected persons and communities are heard, predictably and consistently
- Promote the Centrality of Protection in the overall humanitarian action and on the pursuit of solutions by providing regular collective protection analysis briefings to Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs), at the inter-cluster level and to donors to ensure that protection risks and resulting needs of affected populations drive humanitarian strategies, advocacy and response plans; and by engaging and supporting other clusters in mainstreaming and integrating protection in their own analysis, strategies, and response and services. Assist the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC-HC) in preparing the HCT's Protection Strategy.

1. Overview

The mission of protection clusters is to ensure well-coordinated, effective, and principled preparedness actions and responses, and that protection is at the core of all humanitarian actions and recognized as essential in any nexus with development and peace action to achieve solutions. Through such coordination, people are better protected in humanitarian crises and their rights respected and solutions found in accordance with international law. The protection cluster includes 'areas of responsibilities' that are attributed to UNFPA for gender-based violence (GBV), to UNICEF for child protection, to UNMAS for mine action, and to NRC and UN-Habitat for [housing, land and property](#) (HLP). Recognizing that protection is central to the purpose of any humanitarian response, the protection cluster advises and provides continuous analyses of protection risks to the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and HCT, and works with all clusters to strengthen protection and rights-based responses.

Values and principles of the protection cluster include: 1) affected persons are at the centre and meaningfully participating in protection activities. Preparedness action and response are driven by the diversity of people affected by crises to whom we are accountable; 2) we are committed to humanitarian and protection principles, gender equality and inclusion; 3) field priorities guide our action while we embrace and respond to the diversity of our membership, from local to global actors; 4) we are forward-looking and readily adaptable to address growing and emerging protection challenges.

2. Relevance for emergency operations

IASC Clusters are created when existing coordination mechanisms are overwhelmed or constrained in their ability to respond to identified needs in line with humanitarian principles, which frequently occurs in emergencies. Clusters are activated as part of an international emergency response, in situations of internal displacement and natural disasters, based on an analysis of humanitarian needs, existing coordination mechanisms and capacity on the ground. Clusters are a temporary coordination solution and efforts should be made as soon as appropriate and possible to hand over coordination to the relevant authorities. Within the inter-agency humanitarian architecture, UNHCR is the lead agency for Protection, Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCCM) and Shelter clusters for non-refugee humanitarian crises, including for internal displacement in conflict situations. Final arrangements at country-level should be dictated by operational circumstances, including the presence and capacity of protection actors. The three Clusters are complementary and can jointly increase the protection dividends and rationalize UNHCR programming. Our responsibilities and accountabilities in leadership and coordination require dedicated cluster coordination capacities which should be planned for accordingly.

UNHCR should recommend the activation of protection clusters when there are protection risks and needs and the government requires additional capacity for coordination of protection-related responses. According to the [UNHCR Policy on Emergency Preparedness and Response \(2023\)](#), in situations of conflict, UNHCR leads the Protection Cluster from the start of the emergency and leads or co-leads inter-agency efforts on AAP and participate in or (co-) lead PSEA. In cases of natural hazard-induced internal displacement, UNHCR assesses its capacity for operational response and cluster leadership, based on an adequate UNHCR in-country presence and in consultation with the government and other humanitarian actors as appropriate. If UNHCR is already leading the cluster for a conflict-induced emergency when a natural hazard event occurs, that leadership must be maintained. For cluster activation and cluster transition and deactivation, see [IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at Country Level](#).

3. Main guidance

In refugee situations, the clusters do not apply, and the response is coordinated within the framework of the Refugee Coordination Model (RCM). In mixed settings, the [Joint UNHCR and OCHA Note on Mixed Situations: Coordination in Practice](#) applies.

Support service delivery	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish appropriate coordination platforms and mechanisms for the Cluster and its AoRs, which may include Strategic Advisory Groups (SAGs) and key technical working groups (TWG) 2. Ensure appropriate participation of national/local actors in coordination structure 3. Adopt Terms of Reference (ToR) and disseminate with operational partners 4. Develop an annual calendar and roadmap/workplan 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Update the 3W/5W data on a monthly basis 2. Address duplication of action and take action on critical challenges & response delays or gaps 3. Update GPC data on a quarterly basis 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Update the mapping of service providers on a regular basis 2. Adopt and disseminate referral minimum standards 3. Sensitize humanitarian actors on minimum standards on safe and appropriate referrals
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Inform HCT strategic decision-making	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct information landscape review 2. Set up appropriate mechanisms to collect/gather data on key indicators 3. Establish information sharing protocols 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish collective analysis WG 2. Consolidate and analyse quarterly Protection data and information 3. Produce Protection Analysis Updates (PAU) by identifying protections risks and providing recommendations 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and collect data for Joint and Inter-sectoral Analysis Framework (JIAF) & sectoral HNO strategic needs indicators 2. Define severity mapping & People in Need (PiN) 3. Organize regional and national workshops for collective risks and needs analysis 4. Draft Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) narrative
Plan and implement Cluster strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contribute to the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) 2. Develop a multi-year Protection Cluster strategy 3. Contribute to the HCT Protection Strategy 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contribute to the HCT Protection Strategy 2. Ensure the Centrality of Protection in the HRP and other strategic planning processes 3. Engage with human rights, development, and peace/security actors (nexus) 4. Engage in the Protection of Civilians (PoC) and/or durable solution strategies (nexus) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engage donors 2. Contribute to County-based Pooled Funds (CBPF) allocations 3. Contribute to the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)

**Monitor and
evaluate the
response**

1. Monitor response progress monthly/quarterly (5W)
2. Monitor funding monthly/quarterly
3. Monitor program and service quality (field visits, peer-2-peer visits, etc)

1. Identify priorities for training and capacity building for partners on sector standards
2. Sensitize partners on Code of Conduct (CoC), PSEA, Child Safeguarding, and AAP
3. Train partners on safe and appropriate referrals and Psychological First Aid (PFA)
4. Train protection cluster and other cluster partners on protection mainstreaming/integration

1. Sensitize and engage cluster partners on the Cluster Coordination Performance Monitoring (CCPM)
2. Organize CCPM workshop with partners to review achievements and discuss survey results
3. Adopt CCPM report and action plan
4. Monitor coordination action plan and keep GPC data up to date

<p>Build national capacity</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Integrate prevention and preparedness in the HRP 2. Develop specific preparedness/contingency plans (armed violence, disaster, health emergency) 3. Building local capacity and preparedness 4. Ensuring the centrality of protection in preparedness and contingency planning 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build on existing national/local coordination structures and strategies whenever possible and appropriate 2. Ensure Cluster SAG and strategic review panels (HRP, Pooled Funds) include NGOs 3. Promote local authorities and NGO leadership or co-ordination of the cluster and its AoRs at national or subnational level when and where appropriate 4. 25% of Protection & AoR funding dedicated to NGOs through direct funding, with Pooled Funds prioritized for NGOs whenever possible 5. Promote partnerships between international and local actors, including through HRP and Pooled Fund projects, and in engagement with donors 6. Promote community-led programming 	
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Support robust advocacy

1. Map advocacy priorities and capacity across cluster partners
2. Develop a collective advocacy strategy and action plan with clear priorities, objectives, targets, actions and leads
3. Develop, update and disseminate key collective messages/talking points to be used by cluster partners
4. Set up a collective advocacy WG to coordinate advocacy actions from partners, and develop and implement the Cluster's advocacy strategy based on the Cluster SAG instructions and oversight
5. Contribute to HCT advocacy actions to address acute protection risks

1. Brief the Inter-cluster Coordination Group (ICCG)/HCT at least quarterly
2. Brief donors at least quarterly
3. Brief the UNHCR Rep/Senior Management Group (SMG) at least quarterly
4. Contribute to the UN Peace Operation mandates/Group of Experts

1. Identify communication priorities
2. Cultivate relationship with media
3. Update regularly GPC website operation page

AAP/Protection mainstreaming	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Train protection partners on protection mainstreaming principles 2. Engage OCHA to ensure concrete protection mainstreaming requirements in HRP and Pooled Fund projects – including through clearly identified resources 3. Train/Sensitize cluster partners on protection mainstreaming principles and requirements prior to HRP and Pooled Fund projects submissions 4. Engage and support (key) clusters to ensure protection mainstreaming and integration in their strategy and programs 5. Centrality of protection, AAP, AGD, human rights, PoC, Durable Solutions mainstreamed 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coordinate with OCHA and PSEA network to vet all cluster partners to ensure they have policies and trained their (protection) staff on CoC, PSEA, and Child Safeguarding 2. Support capacity building of partners to ensure they have the policies in place and capacity to implement them 3. Ensure partners are cleared and eligible for HRP and Pooled Funds as per OCHA’s Humanitarian Funding Unit (HFU) standards 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engage interagency WG on AAP, Communication with Communities (CWC), Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) 2. Coordinate partners approaches on RCCE 3. Coordinate partners approaches on Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms (CFMs) in line with applicable standards
Leadership and resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Activating the Cluster 2. Deactivation/Transition strategy 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish effective leadership and governance of the Cluster 2. Recruit required coordination staff 3. Budget for Cluster coordination 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Capacity-building of coordination teams

Through the GPC Operations Cell, protection clusters at national level can access additional support through the Interagency Protection Support Desk and through emergency deployment rosters from UNHCR and stand-by partners. Support missions can be requested for short-term assistance on strategy development, capacity building, and specific programmatic or advocacy activities. UNHCR and the GPC, through its global network, can also provide targeted capacity building and resources, for example on IDP law and policy and on protection information management. Finally, protection clusters can access tools and guidance through the [GPC web portal](#).

Post emergency phase

In situations of sudden-onset emergency, the review of cluster coordination architecture,

transition and de-activation should take place within three months to ensure it is fit for purpose. The HC/HCT should ensure that clusters have developed an outline of a transition or de-activation strategy at 90 days after activation. In protracted crisis situations, the review should be done annually. More regular reviews are required if strategic response plans are revised to reflect changes in the humanitarian context. Where possible, reviews should be completed before the start of new strategic planning cycles. For cluster transition and deactivation, see [IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at Country Level](#).

Checklist

- Core Functions of a Protection Cluster at Country Level (see, [Field Coordination Package | Global Protection Cluster](#) and [IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at Country Level](#))

4. Standards

Protection risks analysis and monitoring

The GPC and Protection Clusters regularly monitor and provide analysis on most critical protection risks. The GPC and its AoRs agreed on 15 standard protection risks to report against across emergency crises. These include:

- 1) Abduction, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary or unlawful arrest and/or detention;
- 2) Attacks on civilians and other unlawful killings, and attacks on civilian objects;
- 3) Child and forced family separation;
- 4) Child, early or forced marriage;
- 5) Discrimination and stigmatization, denial of resources, opportunities, services and/or humanitarian access;
- 6) Disinformation and denial of access to information;
- 7) Forced recruitment, and association of children in armed forces and groups;
- 8) Gender-based violence;
- 9) Impediments and/or restrictions to access to legal identity, remedies and justice;
- 10) Presence of mines and other explosive ordnance;
- 11) Psychological/emotional abuse or inflicted distress;

- 12) Theft, extortion, forced eviction or destruction of personal property;
- 13) Torture or cruel, inhuman, degrading treatment or punishment;
- 14) Trafficking in persons, forced labour or slavery-like practices;
- 15) Unlawful impediments or restrictions to freedom of movement, siege and forced disappearance.

Dedicated guidance on agreed protection risks definitions is available [here](#), and additional guidance and standards on protection analysis is available [here](#).

Protection cluster severity of needs, people affected, in need and targeted

Protection Clusters contribute to the Humanitarian Project Cycle (HPC), on a yearly basis, by providing a comprehensive needs analysis based on 'severity of protection needs'. The analysis and severity of needs guides the calculation of People in Need (PiN), which is one of the key deliverables for the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO).

At the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) stage, the Protection Cluster provides a narrative on its sectoral response, indicating how the latter contributes to the collective response to achieve the strategic objectives of the HRP. People targeted is one of the key deliverables of the HRP, which should be derived from the response capacity on the ground, physical access, etc. The HRP details the financial requirements and an overview of the monitoring objectives.

The Protection Cluster uses a set of standards such as the Protection Cluster methodology on severity/people in need and intersectoral analysis. These guidelines, together with the suggested list of indicators for need analysis, are available at [HPC Guidance | Global Protection Cluster](#), and updated regularly.

Common Framework of Analysis for Protection Sector

The Global Protection Cluster, AoRs and Partners have endorsed a common Protection Analytical Framework (PAF). The PAF provides the common approach to organize data and information for robust, context-specific protection analysis. The PAF guides Protection Clusters and partners' identification of most critical protection risks, to inform the identification of actions, resulting critical needs and dedicated advocacy efforts. The PAF guidance includes 1) an Introduction; 2) [Specific tools](#); and 3) [Guidance on the analysis process](#). The GPC provides regular updates on methodologies and tools [here](#).

Protection Clusters, with the support of their AoRs, coordinate continuous joint-analysis. These processes inform strategy, planning and the Protection Clusters contribution to the Humanitarian Project Cycle. The analysis is regularly provided through Protection Analysis Updates (PAUs) which inform the Protection Cluster contribution to the overall analysis of HNOs and are used for the coordination of joint actions with protection partners and AoRs. The GPC has developed: [1\) Standard formats and samples](#); [2\) Annotated guidance](#), [3\) A tutorial on protection risks analysis](#); and [4\) A repository of PAUs published by operations](#).

A [Protection Risk Analysis Training Package](#) and an [Introduction to Protection Analysis course](#) have been developed with the support of the GPC Information and Analysis Working Group.

Annexes

[GPC, Protection in a Climate of Change Strategic Framework 2020-2024](#)

[Guidance Package for UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement, 2019](#)

[IASC, Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action, 2016](#)

[IASC, Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at Country Level, 2015](#)

[Joint UNHCR OCHA Note on Mixed Situations, Coordination in Practice, 2014](#)

5. Learning and field practices

[Protection Analytical Framework - Global Protection Cluster](#)

[Protection Risks - Global Protection Cluster](#)

[Specialisation Programme on Protection Coordination - International Institute o...](#)

6. Links

[Global Protection Cluster Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Inter-Agency Standing Committee](#)

7. Main contacts

hqproclu@unhcr.org

Cluster Approach

20 November 2023

Key points

- The cluster approach is activated by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) at the request of the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator, and with the endorsement of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Principals, including the High Commissioner, as coordination architecture for non-refugee humanitarian emergencies. In refugee situations, coordination is guided by the Refugee Coordination Model (RCM); clusters are not activated in refugee situations
- All clusters have lead organisations, known as Cluster Lead Agencies, which operate at the global and country levels. UNHCR leads the Global Protection Cluster; co-leads with IFRC the Global Shelter Cluster and with IOM the Global CCCM Cluster (UNHCR comes in when conflict causes displacement; IFRC and IOM when disaster causes displacement). Global Cluster Lead Agencies act as a “provider of last resort” in their respective cluster
- At country level, inter-agency cluster-based responses are led by the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) through the Cluster Lead Agencies. Cluster coordinators provide sector-specific strategic directions and operational coordination. UNHCR also leads the protection cluster when disasters induce displacement, provided it has a presence, is requested to do so by the government, and there is inter-agency agreement
- The UNHCR Representative actively participates in the HCT, representing both the agency and the cluster(s) UNHCR leads. Through the UNCT or HCT, UNHCR participates in deliberations on country cluster activation

1. Overview

This entry needs to be read in conjunction with the entries on the [Humanitarian Response Plans \(HRPs\)](#) and [Flash Appeals \(FAs\)](#), the [Humanitarian Programme Cycle](#) and the [International Coordination Architecture](#); please also refer to the entries on [pool funding](#) and [CERF](#).

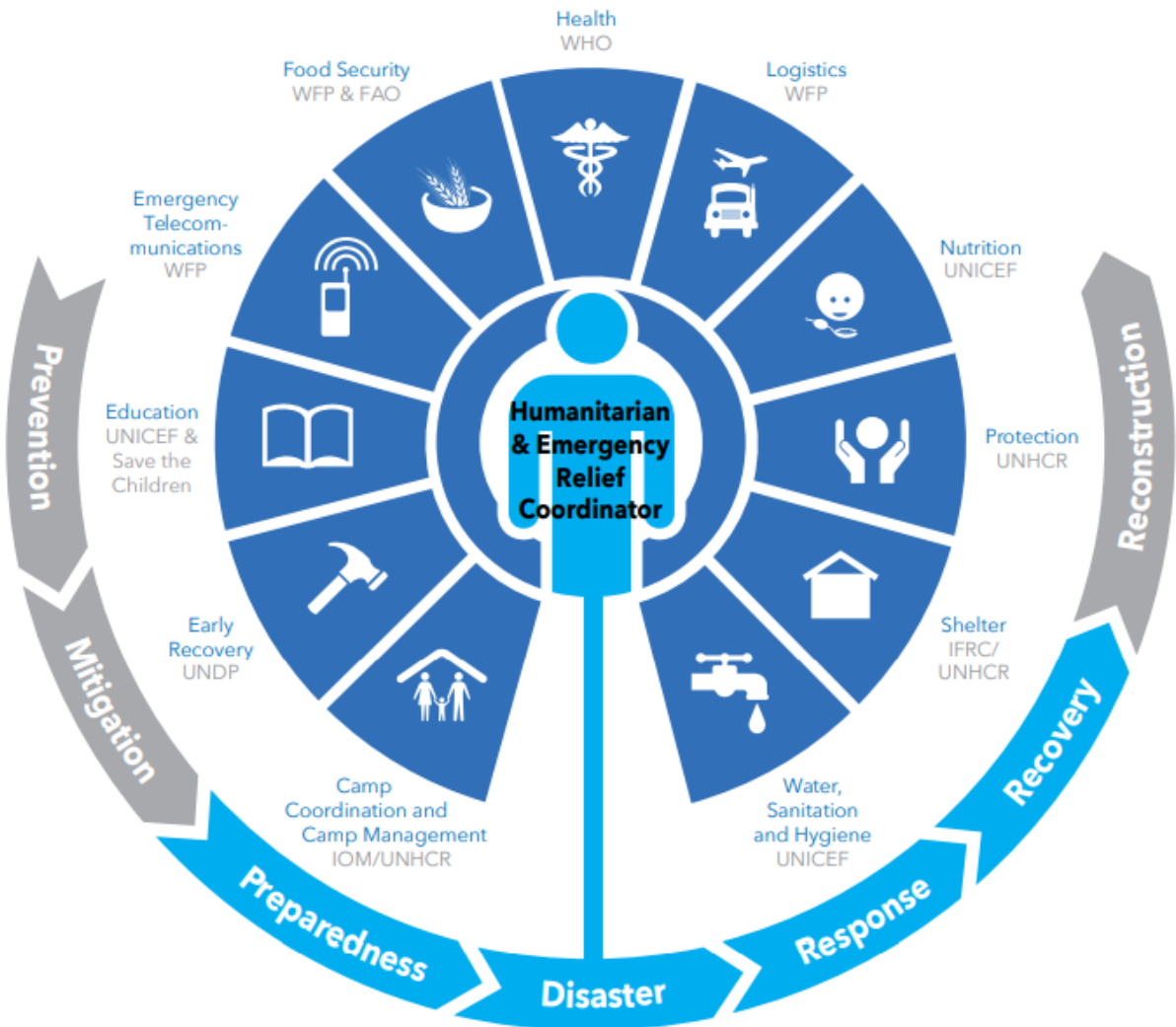
The Cluster Approach is used for coordinating in non-refugee humanitarian emergencies. Humanitarian organisations have agreed to lead certain clusters at global level, and have defined a cluster structure for non-refugee humanitarian responses at country level, where cluster leadership should ideally mirror global arrangements. Clusters are often co-led with government and/or co-chaired with NGO partners.

The cluster system spreads accountability for the delivery of services (health, shelter, etc.) across different cluster lead agencies, so that no single agency is accountable for the entire response. In each country situation, overall accountability for coordination and delivery rests with the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC).

Clusters are groups of humanitarian UN and non-UN organizations in each of the main sectors of humanitarian action (water, health, shelter, logistics, etc.). They are designated by the IASC and have clear responsibilities for coordination ; they are time-bound bodies that are meant to fill a temporary gap. Their aim is to build the capacity of the national systems to respond to humanitarian situations with a protection and accountability lens and progressively hand over coordination to national and local entities.

Note. Protection and assistance to refugees is coordinated and delivered through the [Refugee Coordination Model](#) (RCM). Clusters are not activated for responses to refugee situations. In mixed situations with refugee and internally displaced populations, the [Joint UNHCR- OCHA Note on Mixed Situations: Coordination in Practice](#) should be used for guidance.

Global Cluster Lead Agencies, IASC



2. Main guidance

Large non-refugee humanitarian crises are those:

- in which the needs of affected and/or displaced people exceed a government's capacity to address these;
- characterized by scale and complexity that warrants a multi-sectoral response with the engagement of a wide range of humanitarian actors.

In such situations, a cluster response is activated under the overall leadership of the designated Humanitarian Coordinator (HC). Each cluster is accountable to the HC through its Cluster Lead Agency (CLA), as well as to national authorities and to people affected by the crisis.

A cluster approach may be used in humanitarian emergencies caused by conflicts or caused by

natural disasters.

The approach aims to strengthen system-wide preparedness, make sure that critical materials and expertise are immediately available, and focus technical capacity by:

- Increasing transparency and accountability. Its mechanisms improve transparency in resource allocation, establish leadership, and focus on operational performance, leading to stronger accountability.
- Enhancing predictability. Sector and thematic responsibilities are clarified; formal mechanisms at national and international level bring clarity to areas that are not otherwise covered.
- Engaging with national and local authorities. Government authorities are the primary duty-bearers. Humanitarian actors should actively engage with and support them to lead or progressively take over operational delivery, coordination, and monitoring of protection, assistance, and solutions for IDPs.
- Including affected communities. Humanitarian actors are required to make themselves accountable to affected populations. At minimum, they must consult and engage with the populations they assist. Affected communities help to determine the best responses to the problems they face.
- Advocating more effectively. When clusters, singly or collectively, speak with one voice on issues of common concern, and do so in association with affected groups who are not normally heard, advocacy has more weight.
- Joint strategic and operational planning. Formal processes of coordination within and between clusters enhance efficiency and improve effectiveness.

Centrality of Protection

The 2013 IASC Principals statement on the [Centrality of Protection in Humanitarian Action](#) is considered to be a core commitment of HCs, Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs), and clusters, affirming that, while governments are primarily responsible for protecting people in humanitarian emergencies, humanitarian actors must protect people, and respect and promote their human rights in accordance with international human rights law and international humanitarian law (IHL), as well as other internationally recognized protection standards. HCTs must develop a specific protection strategy covering preparedness, all aspects of the humanitarian response, and solutions. The [protection cluster](#) is expected to provide analysis and support the HCT in preparing this strategy.

Cluster activation. Clusters can only be activated by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), with the endorsement of IASC Principals. In 2018, the '[system-wide scale-up](#)' replaced the previous emergency activation procedure referred to as 'Level 3'. An IASC Scale-Up is a system-wide mobilization in response to a sudden-onset and/or rapidly deteriorating situation in a given country or region and is declared when national or regional capacity to lead, coordinate and deliver humanitarian assistance does not match the scale, complexity, and urgency of the crisis. Five criteria are used to determine whether an emergency should be scaled up to a system-wide emergency: scale, urgency, complexity, capacity, and risk of failure to effectively deliver to affected populations.

Key steps include:

1. Consultation with the IASC Principals.
2. Mobilization of cluster lead agency response capacities.
3. Immediate deployment of cluster coordination teams that possess information management expertise and capacity to scale up.
4. Activation of clusters, including designated leads.
5. Empowerment of an HC.

The HC:

- Leads the HCT in a multi-sector initial rapid assessment (MIRA), leading to a strategic statement and response plan.
- Leads requests for allocations from the Central Emergency Response Fund ([CERF](#)).
- Seeks consensus in the HCT for key decisions, but has authority to finalize proposals.
- Raises any cluster lead performance problems with the ERC, who may bring them to the IASC Principals for discussion.
- Oversees effective coordination and delivery, monitoring, and reporting.

UNHCR's participation and involvement in initial discussions on cluster activation at country level are crucial. In this period, UNHCR should express its readiness and commitment to lead particular clusters and activate internal mechanisms for rapid deployment of relevant staff.

Coordination structure

A cluster-based response is led by the HC, in support of the host government. At senior level (usually in the HCT), clusters are represented by the country head of the cluster lead agency. For example, the UNHCR Representative will represent the protection, the shelter and the [camp coordination and camp management](#) (CCCM) clusters where UNHCR is leading these. OCHA supports the HC's coordination role, and typically convenes inter-cluster coordination meetings with cluster coordinators at country level.

Core functions of a cluster:

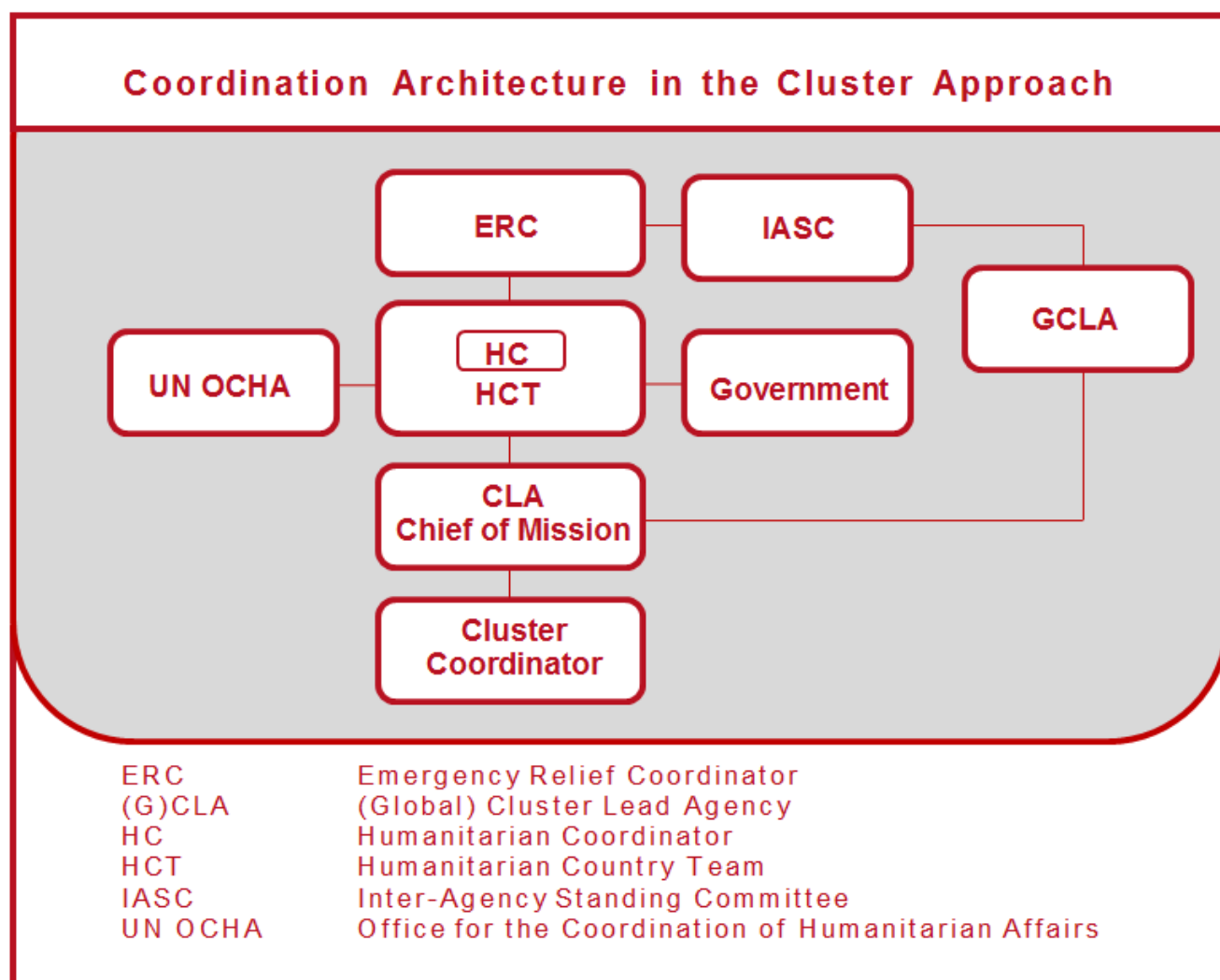
At country level, a cluster has six core functions:

1. Support service delivery by providing a space/platform to: (i) agree on approaches in line with the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and strategic priorities; (ii) develop mechanisms to eliminate duplication.
2. Inform strategic decision-making of the HC/HCT by: (i) coordinating needs assessment, (ii) identifying gaps and obstacles within and across sectors, including cross-cutting issues, as well as ways to address these; (iii) formulating priorities on the basis of this analysis.
3. Plan and develop (i) strategies, including cluster plans with objectives and indicators within the overall response strategy; (ii) arrangements for adhering to standards; and (iii) means to meet funding needs.
4. Advocate on behalf of cluster participants and affected people by identifying their concerns, which informs the HC and HCT messaging and action.
5. Monitor and report on the cluster strategy, needs, activities and its results, and recommend corrective action where necessary

6. Undertake contingency planning and preparedness actions and build capacity where the cluster has resources to do so.

From the outset of a humanitarian response, each cluster is also responsible for **mainstreaming protection** and maintaining a **solutions-oriented approach**.

Information management (IM) is critical to coordination and to the cluster approach. Cluster lead agencies are expected to provide or identify dedicated IM support for their cluster. There is [IASC Operational Guidance on responsibilities of cluster leads & OCHA in IM](#). This guidance explains that cluster leads are responsible for coordinating information *within* their cluster, and OCHA is responsible for coordinating information *across* all clusters.



Role of stakeholders involved

Government and national actors. Under UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182 (19 December 1991), the affected State, including the government and its official institutions, is primarily responsible for initiating, organizing, coordinating, and implementing humanitarian assistance in its territory.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee. The IASC is an inter-agency forum for coordination, policy development and decision-making that includes the key UN and non-UN humanitarian partners. Led by the ERC, the IASC develops humanitarian policies, determines responsibilities across areas of humanitarian assistance, identifies and addresses gaps in response, and advocates for effective application of [humanitarian principles](#).

The Emergency Relief Coordinator. The post of ERC is held by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, who leads the IASC. The ERC is responsible for overseeing responses to complex emergencies that require UN humanitarian assistance. In countries affected by disasters or conflict, the ERC may appoint a Humanitarian Coordinator (HC). The ERC secures IASC endorsement of HC proposals to activate clusters and appoint cluster leads. The responsibility of the ERC does not detract from the High Commissioner's mandated accountability for refugees.

Humanitarian Coordinator. When crises occur, the HC in a country is responsible for assessing whether an international response is warranted and, if it is, for ensuring that it is well organized. HCs are accountable to the ERC. At national level, they lead the HCT in deciding the most appropriate coordination solutions for a crisis, taking into account the local situation. Agreement must be reached on which clusters to establish, and which organizations will lead them.

Humanitarian Country Team. The HCT is a strategic and operational decision-making and oversight forum established and led by the HC. It includes representatives from the UN and NGOs; the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement often attends with observer status. Agencies that are designated cluster leads represent their clusters as well as their organizations in the HCT. The HCT is responsible for agreeing on strategic issues relevant to humanitarian action.

Cluster lead agencies. Heads of cluster lead agencies are accountable to the HC. They

- Ensure that coordination mechanisms are established and properly supported.
- Act as first point of call for the government and the HC.
- Are the provider of last resort in their respective cluster.

Note. The IASC term 'provider of last resort' "translates into a commitment by the Cluster Lead Agency to do the utmost to ensure an adequate and appropriate response. This means calling upon all relevant humanitarian partners to address critical gaps; if this fails, depending on the urgency, and subject to access, security and funding availability, the cluster lead may need to commit itself to filling the gap".

Cluster coordinators. A cluster coordinator is responsible for ensuring that the cluster fulfils its role with regard to needs assessment, response planning, setting strategies/approaches, provision of policy/operational guidance, coordination of field responses, inter-cluster engagement, information management, monitoring and evaluation, donor engagement, government engagement, advocacy, etc.), as set out in the [IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at the Country Level](#). Cluster coordinators co-operate through the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) to jointly deliver an effective and efficient humanitarian response that results in meaningful protection outcomes in line with the IASC Policy on Protection; reach a shared understanding of needs, informed by a robust protection and gender analysis; and agree a joint strategy to meet needs. They brief the HCT and raise strategic issues for discussion in the

HCT. Find more information in the 2017 [ICCG standard terms of reference](#).

Shared leadership. The IASC recommends that country-level cluster leadership should mirror global arrangements. Accordingly, UNHCR should lead the [protection cluster](#) and, in conflict situations, the [shelter cluster](#) and the [CCCM cluster](#). When appropriate, governments should co-lead the cluster. Practice has shown that the appointment of NGOs to co-chair a cluster generally improves partnership, advocacy and information distribution and, therefore, the response as a whole. When an NGO co-chairs a cluster, it should contribute staff to the cluster coordination team in roles that complement and enhance the cluster's capacity. Appointing two UN agencies to co-lead clusters should be avoided because this does not strengthen ownership or make coordination more sustainable, but dilutes accountability and complicates decision-making. Global clusters should be consulted on considerations of co-leads or co-chairs before cluster activation. For IASC guidance on cluster leadership, see IASC, [Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at the Country Level](#), activation procedures, p. 10.

OCHA. OCHA works closely with global cluster lead agencies and NGOs to develop policies, coordinate inter-cluster issues, disseminate operational guidance, and organize field support. At field level, it helps ensure that the humanitarian system functions efficiently and supports the HC's leadership. OCHA provides guidance and support to the HC and HCT, and facilitates inter-cluster coordination in all phases of the response, when required, including needs assessment, joint planning, and monitoring and evaluation.

A cluster benefits from wide and representative participation, but can become unmanageable if it has too many members or its members are transient. In such cases, the appointment of a smaller strategic advisory group (SAG) or technical working groups (TWIG) can improve its performance.

Minimum commitments for participation. Local, national, or international organizations that join clusters undertake to:

- Adhere to [humanitarian principles](#) and [principles of partnership](#).
- Participate in actions that specifically improve [accountability to affected populations](#) and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Engage consistently in the cluster's collective work and make capacity available for this.
- Make the best use of resources and share information on organizational resources.
- Take on leadership responsibilities as needed and as capacity and mandates allow.
- Help develop and disseminate advocacy and messaging for relevant audiences.

The minimum commitments are not prescriptive and should be adapted to needs and context. Country-level clusters should consult the [IASC's Coordination Reference Module](#) when they develop or update their terms of reference or commitments.

UNHCR's role and accountabilities

Within the IASC system, UNHCR (co-)leads three clusters:

Protection. UNHCR leads the [protection cluster](#) in conflict-induced situation and also where a

natural disaster has caused displacement, provided that it has an in-country presence, the government asks it to lead, and there is inter-agency approval. This cluster includes 'areas of responsibility' (AoRs) that are attributed to UNFPA for gender-based violence (GBV), to UNICEF for [child protection](#), to UNMAS for mine action, and to NRC for [housing, land and property](#). Recognizing that protection is central to the purpose of any humanitarian response, the [protection cluster](#) advises the HC and HCT, and works with all clusters to strengthen protection and rights-based responses.

[Camp coordination and camp management \(CCCM\)](#). In conflict situations involving IDPs, UNHCR leads this cluster. IOM leads this cluster in natural disasters. The CCCM cluster neither advocates for nor automatically creates camps and similar collective settings; rather, it seeks to establish and maintain the dignity and an appropriate standard of living conditions and services for displaced populations, whether they live in planned or spontaneous collective settings.

[Shelter](#). In situations involving conflict, UNHCR leads this cluster. In natural disasters, the IFRC leads. If IFRC is not present or is not able to lead the cluster at the outset of a natural disaster, UNHCR may temporarily lead until IFRC is ready to do so. Since IFRC is not a recipient of CERF funding, UNHCR can support in natural disasters by receiving CERF funds for shelter. Country operations should consult the [Global Shelter Cluster](#) in such situations.

When new emergency situations arise, UNHCR country representatives consult with their respective regional bureau and participate in UNCT or HCT discussions on cluster activation. When a UNHCR-led cluster is activated, in accordance with IASC commitments and accountabilities, UNHCR offices must be prepared to resource cluster coordination, including coordination capacity at national and local level and information management support. Merging of clusters (shelter/NFI and CCCM) is not considered a good practice and should be avoided. Country operations should consult global clusters before taking steps to merge clusters.

What is encouraged is to seek **tri-cluster synergies** where feasible, meaning ensuring that strategies, initiatives and messaging are mutually reinforcing across protection, shelter and the CCCM clusters. Specifically, this may mean to:

- Agree on priority geographic areas and integrate strategies, approaches and activities
- Establish collaboration and a joint communication mechanism between humanitarian, development and where appropriate peace actors working in an area
- Carry out joint sectoral assessments
- To the extent possible, align clusters' results chains in HRPs with UNHCR's
- Ensure dedicated separate UNHCR & cluster IM capacity
- Engage joint resources such as translation services and other services for cluster activities

More UNHCR-internal information in [the Implementation Planning Tool for IDP Contexts \("Building Blocks"\)](#).

Post emergency phase

IASC cluster deactivation can take place for a single cluster or several. It may occur after a coordination architecture review, or after other events in the country reduce the need for humanitarian response. Cluster deactivation must always be based on an assessment of national capacity and consideration of the context. The criteria for deactivation must be met, i.e.: (i) The humanitarian situation improves, significantly reducing humanitarian needs and associated response and coordination gaps and/or (ii) national structures acquire sufficient capacity to coordinate and meet residual humanitarian needs in line with humanitarian principles.

Cluster Activation CHECKLIST

- The RC/HC and Cluster Lead Agencies (CLAs), supported by OCHA, consult national authorities what humanitarian coordination mechanisms exist, and their respective capacities.
- Global CLAs are alerted by their country Representatives and OCHA before the UNCT/HCT meeting to discuss activation and to ensure they are represented at the meeting.
- The RC/HC, in consultation with the UNCT/HCT, determines which Clusters should be recommended for activation, assisted by analysis of the situation and preparedness planning. In each case, the decision should be based on the four criteria outlined above.
- The RC/HC, in consultation with the UNCT/HCT, selects CLAs based on agencies' coordination and response capacity, operational presence, and ability to scale up. **Ideally, the selection of CLAs mirrors global arrangements, but this is not always possible,** and sometimes other organizations are in a better position to lead. Under the IASC Transformative Agenda, Cluster Lead Agencies were encouraged to consider developing a clearly defined, agreed, and supported sharing of cluster leadership with NGOs wherever feasible.
- The RC/HC writes to the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), following consultation with the HCT, outlining the recommended Cluster arrangements, suggesting CLAs, and explaining why particular clusters need to be activated. Where non-cluster coordination solutions have been agreed upon as well (such as Gender or PSEA networks), these are also described.

- The ERC transmits the proposal to the IASC Principals for approval within 24 hours and informs the RC/HC accordingly. The principals may ask the IASC Emergency Directors Group to discuss this in more detail, if necessary.
- The ERC writes to the RC/HC to confirm the endorsement of activation of the suggested Clusters and/or provide feedback from the IASC Principals.
- The RC/HC informs relevant partners when decisions on Clusters and lead agencies are approved.
- UNHCR operations should inform the three UNHCR-led global Clusters as soon as discussions are being prepared on Cluster activation, who can provide support and guidance regarding the way forward. The relevant global Clusters also need to be consulted before making decisions on co-chairing clusters or not leading a country-level cluster in conflict-induced contexts.

Clusters should not be merged and each UNHCR-led Cluster should have its own dedicated resources, as per the [2019 UNHCR's Policy on Situations of Internal Displacement](#) (minimum a dedicated Cluster Coordinator and a dedicated Information Management Officer).

As the activation of the CCCM Cluster requires specific considerations, please consult the [Building blocks](#) tools (accessible to UNHCR staff only) and guidance for detailed information on what these are.

3. Learning and field practices

Accessible to UNHCR staff only

[Workday learning components on coordination in situations of internal displacem...](#)

4. Links

[IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at country level, 2015](#)

5. Main contacts

- UNHCR Partnership and Coordination Service: hqng00@unhcr.org.
- Global Protection Cluster at gpc@unhcr.org
- Global Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster at: HQGLOBCC@unhcr.org.
- Global Shelter Cluster at: HQShelter@unhcr.org

Working with the host government

17 April 2024

Key points

- Familiarize yourself with the political dynamics, capacities and institutional arrangements of the host government as relevant to the emergency response
- Understand other UN agencies' engagement with the government and identify synergies and complementarities
- Always work with local government authorities (governors, municipalities) in operational areas and maintain an up-to-date contact list of key government counterparts
- In refugee situations, the UNHCR Representative or most senior UNHCR official in the country keeps a direct communication line with high-level government authorities to advocate for refugee protection and solutions as per UNHCR mandate

1. Overview

States are responsible for the safety and security of forcibly displaced and stateless people on their territory. This responsibility includes providing protection and assistance and treat them according to internationally recognized standards. UNHCR's mandated role is to support host governments in their response, including through international cooperation efforts. This entry outlines basic principles and practical advice for working with host governments in both refugee and IDP responses.

2. Main guidance

State Responsibility

While the responsibility for refugee protection lies with the central government, regional and local authorities play an essential role, international cooperation in support of States receiving

refugees is at the heart of the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and for UNHCR to play a supportive role. This was reaffirmed by the [Global Compact on Refugees](#) in 2018. This role includes engaging development actors in support of host governments from the onset of an emergency response to ensure the socioeconomic inclusion of forcibly displaced, and link up the response with State coordination mechanisms to avoid creating parallel systems. UNHCR and partners will work with national and local authorities to bolster their operational capacity.

UNHCR's relationship with the host government

Refugees

Given the particular character of refugees as people seeking protection outside their country of origin, the 1950 Statute confers legal authority to the High Commissioner to intercede on behalf of refugees, as illustrated by the supervisory responsibilities.

The High Commissioner's refugee mandate applies to asylum-seekers and refugees in both emergency and non-emergency situations, in mixed movements, camps and urban settings.

The High Commissioner and his Office (UNHCR) are authorized to declare which individuals or groups may be of concern to the Office under its core mandate. Their concern may relate to a specific individual or a wider group. Exercising the mandate in this way informs other actors of the High Commissioner's international protection interest in and responsibility for forcibly displaced and stateless people.

Stateless persons

The High Commissioner for Refugees has responsibilities for refugees who are stateless, pursuant to the 1951 Convention. Moreover, in accordance with GA resolutions 3274 XXIX and 31/36, and pursuant to Articles 11 and 20 of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, it is to UNHCR that persons claiming the benefits of the 1961 Convention apply, both to examine their claims and assist them to present claims to the appropriate authorities.

Internally displaced persons (IDPs)

The High Commissioner does not have a general or exclusive mandate to intercede on behalf of internally displaced persons, however, it has been authorized by the UN General Assembly to become involved operationally under certain circumstances for the purpose of enhancing protection and providing humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons through special operations.

Certain requirements must be met before the High Commissioner may act in favour of internally displaced persons. The Secretary-General or a competent principal organ of the UN must issue a specific request or authorization; the State or other entities concerned must consent; there must be assurances that UNHCR will obtain access to the internally displaced persons in question; adequate resources and the Office's particular expertise and experience must be available; action should complement the action of other agencies; and adequate staff safety should be

assured.

The scope of [UNHR's operational engagement in situations of internal displacement](#) will normally be aligned with our global [cluster](#) leadership and coordination responsibilities related to protection, and co-ordination of shelter and camp coordination and camp management. Please see the Handbook entries on the [IASC cluster approach](#) for more information as well as the [2019 Policy on UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement](#).

When a major new crisis occurs, UNHCR operations should be conscious that government arrangements to respond to refugee or IDP needs may change. Emergency response operations are delivered by a number of government departments, such as those responsible for public works (water, sanitation), education, health, and home affairs (safety and security), which often also oversees local government institutions. Many Governments may have emergency-specific institutions, such as Civil Defence and DRM.

In terms of the practical management of government relations, UNHCR emergency managers should keep an up-to-date contact list and regularly engage with their key government counterparts. These can make a big difference when quick or urgent operational and protection decisions or interventions need to be made.

Refugee emergencies

Emergency preparedness

UNHCR offices, or visiting missions if there is no presence, support host governments in preparing for emergencies. Assistance covers all aspects of preparedness, from identifying and monitoring emergency risks and scenarios to advanced preparedness actions related to contingency planning. UNHCR offices should be aware of government contingency plans and national response capacities. For more information on preparedness, please consult the chapter on [Emergency Preparedness](#).

During refugee emergencies

When a refugee emergency occurs or is imminent, UNHCR should initiate high-level consultations with the host government on the points listed below. With respect to inter-agency coordination arrangements, the [Refugee Coordination Model](#) (RCM) applies, by which UNHCR (co-)leads the refugee emergency response with and in support of the host government.

Main points to consider in deliberations with the government:

- Highlight the groups of people who, in UNHCR's view, are or may be in need of international protection and assistance by UNHCR.
- Seek to ensure that newly arriving asylum-seekers and refugees have access to the territory, to asylum and asylum procedures.
- Seek to ensure that new arrivals are granted appropriate status and enjoy corresponding rights.
- Given that the government is responsible for ensuring the civilian character of asylum, clarify security arrangements as well as related procedures for separating civilians from

combatants and former combatants, as required.

- Enquiring about existing government-based operational interventions and coordination mechanisms, if any.
- Establish who will be the most senior government counterpart in charge of the emergency situation, as well as primary working-level counterparts.
- Open consultations on the response strategy and how (as appropriate) UNHCR can enhance the host government's emergency response capacity.
- Propose joint development of a contingency plan or lead a refugee response plan (RRP), as applicable.
- Offer assistance with coordination of the emergency response, given the possible involvement of UN and NGO partners.

UNHCR assists the government in coordinating, delivering the response and addressing protection issues. Typically, this involves coordination arrangements, partnership with various government departments in service delivery, and regular dialogue at all levels on refugee protection issues.

At the request of government, UNHCR may complement national capacities to deliver essential services to newly arriving refugees in an emergency situation. It is of critical importance that an emergency response operation supported by UN and NGO actors does not displace or operate in parallel to government services: existing national capacity should always be the starting point when planning emergency response services.

IDP emergencies

When an IDP emergency occurs or is imminent, the UN Resident Coordinator (RC) or Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) initiates consultations with the host government on UN engagement. In terms of inter-agency coordination, the [cluster approach](#) applies to IDP emergencies and the overall response is (co)-led by the RC or HC. Please read the entry on the [IASC Cluster approach](#) for important information on UNHCR's role in IDP responses.

UNHCR's role and engagement with host governments focuses on the three global clusters for which it has lead or co-lead responsibility. UNHCR leads the Global [Protection Cluster](#) (GPC) and co-leads the Global [Cluster for Shelter](#) and the Global Cluster for [Camp Coordination and Camp Management](#) (CCCM). UNHCR does not normally support the entire response. Its role and interventions reflect the plan and approach adopted by the UN Country Team (UNCT) or Humanitarian Country Team (HCT).

UNHCR presence /offices

All staff should be familiar with their host country agreement (often referred to as the Accord de Siège), which specifies the basic conditions under which UNHCR, in accordance with its mandate, cooperates with the government, opens or maintains an office or offices, and carries out its international protection and assistance functions on behalf of refugees and other persons of concern, in the host country. In countries that have not agreed an Accord de Siège, the UNHCR country office or the emergency team should strive to formalize exchanges with the government and define the initial scope and modalities of cooperation. This needs to be done in consultation

with the relevant regional bureaux and divisions at UNHCR headquarters.

Country partners

National government authorities

National authorities lead and manage the overall emergency response in a country. It is vital that UNHCR plans and coordinates with national authorities and engages them in protection and operational issues.

National authorities include government leaders; the principal focal points or task forces on refugee and IDP issues; relevant line ministries, such as those responsible for foreign affairs, justice, immigration, social welfare, civil registration, etc.; and relevant security forces, enforcement agencies and the military. Policies and guidance issued by national authorities, including the executive and line ministries, may have a major impact on the approach that local authorities take in specific operational areas.

Local government

Local government may include governors, mayors, municipalities, local councils, police, security forces, and branches of line ministries. The influence and role of local government authorities should not be underestimated. They are usually responsible for all local public services, land and settlement issues, and security and law and order. Municipal authorities are often at the forefront of **emergency** response and are often pragmatic, hands-on actors.

In both out-of-camp and camp operations, the success of a response will depend significantly on the degree to which persons of concern have access to public services. UNHCR may put in place capacity-building initiatives or community support projects to facilitate service delivery and ensure the good will of local populations.

Judicial authorities

Judicial authorities are institutions of the State but are normally independent of the government in terms of their functions. They may operate at national, regional or local level, and include courts of appeal as well as first instance. UNHCR's engagement with the judicial system may take several forms. It may intervene formally as a party in legal proceedings, may offer informal support or input to courts or other judicial bodies, and may support lawyers or applicants associated with an action or who seek redress, for example, after removal or to prevent refoulement.

Independent bodies

Independent bodies may include commissions (such as national human rights commissions), ombuds offices and other independent institutions that may be established or appointed by the government or parliament to investigate and address complaints of maladministration or violations of rights. They can be useful allies for advocacy, including when UNHCR needs to juggle advocacy with supporting government co-leadership, for instance in Protection Clusters.

Where appropriate, UNHCR approaches such bodies for support or intervention, for example to prevent refoulement.

UNHCR's role and accountabilities

- UNHCR engages with the host government at all levels on emergency preparedness and response.
- On issues of operational delivery and to channel international humanitarian assistance, UNHCR works in support of government authorities in line with protection principles and the humanitarian imperative.
- When appropriate, feasible and in agreement with authorities, UNHCR may engage in emergency service provision for refugees and IDPs, and in capacity-building initiatives that strengthen the ability of host government systems and services to cope with an emergency situation.

Post emergency phase

The humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus approach encourages joined-up complementary efforts across stakeholders to reduce people's humanitarian needs, risks and vulnerabilities. It does not imply that humanitarian, development, peace and other actors should merge their activities or integrate roles, but it calls for programmes or activities to be layered in all contexts, in line with the respective mandates of each actor.

Responses to both IDP and refugee situations should contribute to operationalizing the HDP nexus by coordinating and combining mutually reinforcing humanitarian, development and peace efforts that work towards solutions for people in need and host communities, in line with the [OECD's DAC recommendation on the HDP nexus](#). This means that, after the live-saving emergency phase, response partners need to embed longer-term objectives in national or local development plans, UNSDCF or other frameworks of relevance, as part of the Agenda 2030 commitment of leaving no one behind and as part of UNHCR's responsibility to find durable solutions for refugees. It is useful, as soon as feasible in an emergency, to map policies and programmes from relevant line ministries to identify the best approaches to achieve inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless persons in national plans and services.

3. Links

[UNHCR, Global Compact on Refugees. 2018 IASC Cluster approach OECD's DAC recommendation on the HDP nexus](#)

4. Main contacts

Contact UNHCR's Division for Emergency, Security and Supply (DESS): hqemhand@unhcr.org.

Partnership and Coordination Section: hqng00@unhcr.org

Coordination on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)

15 August 2023

Key points

- Ensure that structures for inter-agency coordination on PSEA are established from the outset of the emergency
- Take lead in establishing and coordinating in-country PSEA Networks in refugee emergencies
- Actively engage in in-country PSEA Networks in non-refugee emergencies in collaboration with other actors
- Ensure close coordination with all concerned sectors / clusters for PSEA to be effectively mainstreamed across the emergency response

1. Overview

Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) of forcibly displaced and stateless persons and other affected communities by aid workers causes irrevocable harm to victims and their communities. Even one incident of SEA breaks community trust and undermines the work of the entire humanitarian response. UNHCR works in close collaboration with sister UN agencies, non-governmental and civil society organisations, government and other partners to coordinate engagement, strengthen prevention and promote a victim-centred approach in response to SEA within the humanitarian and development systems. In emergency situations which continue to rapidly evolve, inter-agency and multi-sectoral coordination is of critical importance to ensure that protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) is effectively integrated into the emergency response from the outset, including prevention, risk mitigation, community engagement, safe and accessible reporting, and a victim/survivor-centred response.

While PSEA is the responsibility of all UNHCR personnel, at UNHCR, PSEA Focal Points (FPs) are formally appointed by the Representative and work to ensure PSEA is implemented within the operation in line with UNHCR policies. While certain activities fall under specific functional units, the PSEA FP provides guidance to all colleagues in their respective areas of responsibility to ensure PSEA is adequately implemented and mainstreamed across the operation. In large operations, more than one PSEA FP may be appointed. Usually, the PSEA FP represents UNHCR in the inter-agency PSEA Network.

In-country inter-agency PSEA networks serve as the primary body for technical level coordination and oversight of PSEA activities to prevent and respond to SEA and mitigate risks thereof. The network is responsible for implementing coordinated activities between members to minimize the risk of SEA by aid workers and associated personnel delivering humanitarian assistance, ensure effective response when incidents do arise, and raise awareness of PSEA. The network should also ensure collaboration and coordination with other sectoral working groups or clusters in relevant thematic areas to ensure that PSEA is mainstreamed across the response.

2. Main guidance

Close coordination amongst agencies is essential for PSEA efforts to be coherent and effective in an emergency response. Inter-agency coordination brings organizations together under a common situation analysis, strategy and approach, to ensure consistent messaging on PSEA to communities and stakeholders, build on good practices and expertise of partners, streamline procedures and mechanisms for reporting and referral, utilize shared tools and resources, ensure complementarity of interventions and avoid duplication, and increase overall efficacy of interventions.

In addition, coordination with various sectors / clusters is essential in order to mainstream PSEA prevention, risk mitigation and response across sectors, including mapping potential SEA risk areas by sector and taking actions to mitigate those risks, integrating PSEA messages into community outreach and capacity-building sessions, and ensuring multi-sectoral services and referral pathways are in place for survivors to access the support that they may require including safety and security measures, basic material assistance, medical care, psychosocial support or legal services as part of GBV response.

PSEA is a cross-cutting issue requiring a range of technical expertise. Working to prevent and respond to SEA is a collective responsibility for all actors in all sectors. For this reason, the PSEA Network is an independent, standalone structure and not a sub-group of Protection, GBV, Gender, or AAP.

PSEA inter-agency coordination in refugee, IDP, development and mixed contexts

Under the auspices of the Refugee Coordinator (UNHCR Representative) in a refugee situation and the Resident Coordinator / Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) in a development or an internal displacement situation, an in-country PSEA Network should be established (if one does not exist already) as the primary body for technical-level coordination and oversight of PSEA activities. It is recommended that the PSEA Network is situated as a cross-sectoral group, rather than under a specific sectoral / cluster working group, given the cross-cutting nature of PSEA which requires mainstreaming across sectors and clusters. The PSEA Network should liaise regularly and closely with the broader inter/multi-sector coordination group.

For refugee emergencies, UNHCR has the role to take the lead to establish (if one does not exist already) and coordinate / co-chair the PSEA Network in accordance with the Refugee Coordination Model. For non-refugee emergencies, UNHCR should actively engage in the PSEA Network, which may include co-chairing if appropriate or required depending on the operational

context. (See also [UNHCR's Policy on Emergency Preparedness and Response](#), paragraphs 7.1 and 7.2)

- The above structure is an example, to be adapted depending on the local context of the operation.
- UNHCR Representative / Refugee Coordinator is accountable for coordination of refugee response.
- UNHCR establishes sectoral coordination mechanisms, with government counterparts wherever possible. PSEA Network is part of RCM coordination structure.
- The PSEA Coordinator reports to the UNHCR Representative / Refugee Coordinator.

In mixed situations, where a Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) has been appointed and the populations of humanitarian concern include refugees, IDPs and other affected groups, the [UNHCR/OCHA Joint Note on Mixed Situations Coordination \(2014\)](#) applies and the PSEA Coordinator has a shared reporting line to the HC and the Refugee Coordinator / UNHCR Representative. On PSEA, UNHCR maintains overall coordination and leadership responsibilities for PSEA in the refugee response, while the configuration of PSEA coordination structure will need to be guided by the operational context, what structures already exist, and what would be fit for purpose and optimize results (e.g. separate PSEA Network for refugee response or merged PSEA Network covering both refugee and IDP operations). Moreover, the UNHCR Representative, as Refugee Coordinator, actively engages in coordinating PSEA efforts with the HC, shares updates on developments on PSEA in the refugee response with the HC and UN Country Team (UNCT)/ Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and actively contributes to system-wide efforts maximizing resources, efficiency, and impact in addressing PSEA. In accordance with the [IASC Vision and Strategy : Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment \(PSEAH\) 2022-2026](#) and the IASC's [Generic Terms of Reference for In-Country PSEA Coordinator](#), in country contexts where refugee situations are the predominant humanitarian concern, the PSEA Coordinator should be situated within the UNHCR office with a shared reporting line to the UNHCR Representative and the (D)SRSG/RC/HC as appropriate.

These considerations also apply in countries where there is a refugee response as well as a UN development coordination system under the auspices of the UN Resident Coordinator (RC). UNHCR maintains overall coordination and leadership responsibilities for PSEA in the refugee response and the configuration of PSEA coordination structures will need to be guided by the operational context, what structures already exist, and what would be fit for purpose and optimize results (e.g. sub-national PSEA Network for refugee response or integration into the national PSEA Network if one exists, etc). The UNHCR Representative, as Refugee Coordinator, actively engages in coordinating PSEA efforts with the RC, shares updates on developments on PSEA in the refugee response with the RC and UNCT and contributes to system-wide efforts maximizing efficiency and impact in addressing SEA.

In situations of mixed movements of refugees and migrants, UNHCR and IOM seek to achieve co-leadership of the response and establish adequate coordination mechanisms in accordance with the [UNHCR-IOM Framework of Engagement](#). While guidance and models of coordination arrangements in mixed refugee / migrant movement situations is evolving, building on experience in the Coordination Platform for refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V model) and other existing models, it is considered good practice to establish a cross-cutting PSEA

Network as part of the inter-agency coordination structure for coordination of response to the mixed movements, in a similar way to refugee and mixed refugee / IDP situations.

The role of the Inter-Agency PSEA Network

The PSEA Network is responsible for implementing coordinated activities between member organizations to minimize the risk of SEA, ensure that systems are in place for effective response when incidents do arise, and raise awareness of PSEA in the operation. It provides technical level coordination and oversight on PSEA, including: developing and/or adapting country level strategies for endorsement by country-level leadership (e.g. UNCT / HCT, Refugee Coordination Forum, depending on the operational context), workplan, guidelines, procedures and mechanisms contextualizing global and/or regional guidelines and tools where applicable; carrying out joint SEA risk assessments; and organizing activities and advocacy for prevention, response and risk mitigation for PSEA. The PSEA Network activities should follow a victim-centered approach and respect the principles of safety, confidentiality, respect, and non-discrimination. For further information on the role of the Network, please refer to the Generic ToRs of an in-country PSEA Network available at the links below.

The Network should be open to all UN agencies, international and national NGOs, and local organizations operating in the response, and engage in outreach with relevant non-member organizations as part of ongoing activities. The presence of the PSEA Network does not lessen the responsibility of individual network members to develop, implement, and strengthen measures, activities and programmes internally for PSEA at the country level. Senior management within each member organization is accountable for PSEA within their organizations. However, the Network ensures that initiatives by agencies are well coordinated and provides a forum through which joint inter-agency efforts for PSEA can be undertaken collectively.

The PSEA Network is not responsible for investigating or adjudicating complaints. Within UNHCR these functions rest exclusively with the Inspector-General's Office (IGO), or in case of allegations against individuals employed by other agencies the entity that employs the individual against whom a complaint has been alleged, in line with internal policy and procedures.

To ensure adequate coordination capacity in a rapidly evolving environment, it is highly recommended that a dedicated PSEA Coordinator is appointed to coordinate and represent the PSEA Network (or support the PSEA Network in coordination with the network co- chairs if the latter are different from the Coordinator), particularly in a refugee emergency where UNHCR is responsible to take lead. The PSEA Coordinator is responsible for reporting on Network activities, including progress made against key objectives and priorities. The PSEA Coordinator also represents the Network in relevant coordination bodies and advises actors in country on good practice to support effective PSEA implementation. PSEA Network Co-chairs take an active role at the Network level in convening and managing network meetings and events and help coordinate and oversee the PSEA Network Action Plan. In operations where there is no PSEA Coordinator position available in the country, the Coordinator role will usually be divided between the co-chair agencies as appropriate. In some countries the PSEA Coordinator may serve as the Network Chair or co-chair.

Relationship between the PSEA Network and other inter-agency coordination groups

It is important that the PSEA Network and PSEA Coordinator ensure close coordination with inter-agency coordination structures and focal points for GBV, child protection, accountability to affected people (AAP), community-based protection and other sectors / clusters, with a view to ensure effective inclusion of SEA victims in GBV referral pathways and services, inclusion of SEA in communication with communities planning and messaging and the development of feedback and response mechanisms, integration of PSEA in programmes for groups at heightened risk (including children, persons with disabilities, older persons, women at risk, and LGBTIQ+), and assessment and mitigation of SEA risks in programming by sectors / clusters such as camp management and coordination, shelter, WASH, health, food, education, etc.

Member organizations of the PSEA Network will be represented by their PSEA focal points, who actively participate in the meetings and activities of the Network on behalf of their organizations. Additionally, membership to the network is also open to sector / cluster coordinators, who are strongly encouraged to attend PSEA Network meetings in order to improve two-way coordination between sectors / clusters and the network and ensure that PSEA considerations are integrated in multi-sectoral programming.

PSEA in the Inter-Agency Programme cycle

In refugee contexts, in order to mainstream PSEA across the [Refugee Response Plan \(RRP\)](#) cycle, it is important to look at the full programming cycle, i.e. collecting information on PSEA through multi-sector needs assessments (MSNAs); developing PSEA indicators (both regionally and nationally); and informing the planning process and the information provided to RRP partners on the topic. Please also see the [Guidance on Reflecting PSEA in RRP](#)s (link accessible to UNHCR staff only).

In IDP contexts, integrating PSEA in the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) is critical to embed PSEA within the cluster system as a standard and integrated part of the humanitarian response and to ensure that PSEA activities are properly resourced. PSEA indicators should be integrated into the humanitarian needs assessments overseen by OCHA, as its findings shape the country-level Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO). The HNO is then used as a basis for the design of the HRP. Integrating PSEA in each cluster chapter reflects the importance of building strong relationships with each of the clusters. Please also refer to the [OCHA Guidance Note on Reflecting PSEA in the HRP](#).

Role of partners involved

- **Host government authorities:** The Government has the primary responsibility for the protection of forcibly displaced and stateless persons. Therefore, engagement of national and local governmental structures early on is essential for the success and sustainability of inter-agency coordination on PSEA. Without government support and buy-in, it will not be possible for the PSEA Network to undertake its roles and responsibilities. As SEA can also be perpetrated by government officials, it is important that the relevant authorities are included in initiatives for awareness-raising, capacity-building sessions, and risk assessment and mitigation as appropriate.
- **UN agencies, international and national NGOs:** It is important that agencies designate

PSEA focal points who coordinate PSEA activities within their organization and actively engage in the PSEA Network. Based on their area of expertise, experience and available resources, such agencies may take on the co-chair role of the PSEA Network, contribute to the work of the PSEA Network, take lead on specific activities in coordination with other Network members, and ensure linkages with sectors / clusters to promote mainstreaming of PSEA.

- **Community-based organizations (CBOs) and community-based structures:** Community-based organizations and structures are often the bridge between affected communities and organizations. CBOs and community-based structures have a good understanding of the needs, views and situation of the community, and also often enjoy great trust within communities and can provide links between agencies and the communities that they serve. Therefore, they are ideally situated to help identify relevant entry points to feedback and response mechanisms, communication channels for effective community outreach and awareness-raising, identify protection risk areas including SEA risks, and social and cultural dynamics that must be taken into account in designing appropriate and relevant prevention and response mechanisms. They also have responsibility to ensure PSEA in their own activities and projects, with the support of UNHCR and other larger organizations and PSEA Network as appropriate.
- **Forcibly displaced and stateless persons:** It is important that PSEA Networks closely engage with and work in partnership with affected communities. Consultations with girls, boys, women and men in affected communities, including those of diverse backgrounds and groups at heightened risk, to help to design and tailor PSEA messages, information campaigns, community outreach strategies, and feedback and response mechanisms to ensure that they are effective in reaching the community and are accessible. Furthermore, engaging the community in programme design, adjustment, implementation and monitoring of interventions will also allow more ownership by the community and sustainability.

Sector / cluster coordinators: Close engagement with sector / clusters is key to ensure that PSEA is mainstreamed across the emergency response, including integrating SEA prevention, risk mitigation and response assessment and mitigation of SEA risks in programming by sectors. To this end, sector / cluster coordinators are strongly encouraged to attend PSEA Network meetings, and the PSEA Network and PSEA Coordinator must maintain channels of communication with relevant sector working groups / clusters through the inter-sector / cluster coordination group and bilaterally where appropriate.

UNHCR's role and accountabilities

As noted above, UNHCR has leadership and coordination responsibilities in refugee situations, in line with its mandated accountabilities and reflected in the [Refugee Coordination Model \(RCM\)](#). For refugee emergencies, UNHCR therefore has the role to take the lead to establish (if one does not exist already) and coordinate the PSEA Network in the refugee response in accordance with the Refugee Coordination Model. It must also ensure that referral pathways and services are in place for the provision of needed assistance to SEA survivors, in line with a victim centred approach, through inclusion of SEA victims in GBV and child protection referral pathways. For non-refugee emergencies, UNHCR should be actively engaged in the PSEA Network, which may include co-chairing if appropriate or the situation so requires, depending on the operational

context.

In accordance with the UN system-wide “[Guidance Note: Requirements and procedures for all United Nations entities on information on allegations of sexual exploitation and/or abuse related to United Nations staff and related personnel and implementing partner personnel with the most senior United Nations official in country](#)” dated 8 June 2023, as well as the “[UNHCR Internal Guidance Note to UNHCR Representatives on Sharing Incident Information on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse with Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators](#)” of June 2023 (links accessible to UNHCR staff only), UNHCR Representatives are also responsible to share information on SEA allegations related to its personnel and personnel of UNHCR funded partners with the Resident Coordinator (RC), Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators (RC/HC), Special Representatives of the Secretary General (SRSG) and Heads of Mission (HoM), depending on the country context.

In addition to engagement in inter-agency PSEA efforts, UNHCR remains accountable to ensure that mechanisms and measures are in place to prevent and respond to SEA and to mitigate risks thereof throughout its programmes, while ensuring that a [victim-centred approach](#) is applied throughout all related processes and procedures. (Please refer to entry [Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse \(PSEA\)](#) for further details)

Senior level coordination responsibilities

While everyone has a responsibility to prevent and respond to PSEA, Senior Management has a particular coordination role at the strategic and leadership level – to promote a multi-functional approach to PSEA in inter-agency response; pool resources to enhance what’s being done; burden share; and identify what needs strengthening. Whether as Heads of Office, Sector / Cluster leads, or Inter-Agency Coordinators – their role is to cultivate a culture of collective responsibility, and create a space where members reflect honestly on SEA risk areas in their organisations and sector / cluster programming, seek support from others, raise concerns, acknowledge shortcomings and commit to agreed actions.

In refugee contexts, the PSEA Network reports directly to the Refugee Coordinator, who is also the UNHCR Representative. The Representative, therefore, has overall accountability and strategic oversight for PSEA inter-agency coordination within the refugee response.

3. Policies and guidelines

[UNHCR, 2023-2025 Strategy and Action Plan: Tackling Sexual Exploitation and Abu...](#)

[Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: A Collective Responsibility](#)

4. Learning and field practices

[UN Online course on PSEA \(accessible to UNHCR staff only\)](#)

5. Links

[UNHCR intranet page on SEA and sexual harassment and resources page \(accessible... Reflecting Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse \(PSEA\) in RRP \(access... Checklist on PSEA/SH for Representatives and Senior Managers \(accessible to UNH... Checklist for emergency deployees - PSEA/SH \(accessible to UNHCR staff only\) Generic ToR for PSEA in Refugee Emergencies \(PSEA Network, PSEA Coordinator\) \(a... Module 10: Inter-agency Coordination on PSEA \(accessible to UNHCR staff only\) UNHCR website: Tackling sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment IASC PSEA website IASC PSEA resource library IASC Secretariat, Generic Terms of Reference of In-country PSEA Network IASC, Deployment Package for PSEA Coordinators UN website: preventing sexual exploitation and abuse Interagency PSEA Community Outreach and Communication Fund](#)

6. Main contacts

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Emergency Information Products

29 November 2023

Key points

- In emergencies it is critical to frequently create and publish information products, to enable speedy decision making
- CORE is UNHCR's solution for ensuring key data and information on displaced people is made available to all in the early days of an emergency
- Emergency maps are important to organize and orient the humanitarian response
- Mapping templates are available to facilitate the production of official UNHCR maps
- eSite is UNHCR's centralized platform where GIS users can find data, maps and support
- Only good quality data should be used to generate information products

1. Overview

The information products in an emergency are typically characterized by a rapid-fire frequency of release to enable speedy decision-making. They must be rapidly digestible and self-contained to influence management's quick decision making. Rapidly publicly releasing information products is both vital and difficult, and having a clear idea of which datapoints are priority to get at the outset of an emergency is essential to not waste time and resources, or to create information distractions that are of low priority. For these reasons, UNHCR has introduced standard emergency information products.

2. Relevance for emergency operations

UNHCR has several tools, resources and methodologies to support Information Management Officers (IMOs) and operations to quickly create and release emergency information products. The quick production and publication of information products is critical in supporting a coordinated and effective response. They help to quickly establish a common understanding of the situation and allow all responders to get on the same page.

3. Main guidance

There are several resources available to help emergency operations create and publish information products quickly and frequently. Below four of these are described: CORE, Emergency Mapping, Mapping templates and eSite.

Data Visualization Guidelines

All charts and data visualizations created by/for UNHCR should follow the Data Visualization Guidelines available at dataviz.unhcr.org.

Data quality

Good data is crucial for creating accurate info products in a humanitarian context. When disasters or crises hit, decision-makers need real-time, reliable info to allocate resources, like food, shelter or medical supplies, where it's most needed. If the data is not of good quality, help might go to the wrong places, or critical needs might get overlooked.

Having quality data also builds trust with stakeholders, like governments and aid organizations. If they're confident in the info you're providing, they're more likely to collaborate and make data-driven decisions. This is key for fast and effective humanitarian responses.

a) CORE

CORE (Comprehensive Overview of the Response to Emergencies) is UNHCR's solution for

establishing recognizable, predictable, and consistent information products which are publicly released in the early days of an emergency response.

CORE products support UNHCR's leadership and coordination role in refugee emergencies through the development and dissemination of quality information products to support evidence-informed action, enhance the visibility of the response and its impact, mobilize funding, etc. The guiding philosophy of CORE is to make the best use of information available, and to consistently make it available for analysis and re-use by UNHCR partners, the wider humanitarian and development community, donors, researchers, and other public audiences.

CORE is not an information system in and of itself. It is a means for visualizing and sharing data that are a result of information systems that are established in emergencies. These may be UNHCR information systems or systems of the government, authorities, or partners.

CORE products are designed to become more detailed, precise, and data-centric over time. A CORE product in the first week may rely mainly on secondary data, and include more general information, narrative, and estimates. By the third or fourth week, it is expected that the CORE product will be several pages with more disaggregated data, verified information, and cover various aspects of the response.

CORE products are intended to meet information needs in the early days of a refugee emergency. After about four weeks, CORE products will begin to transition to other types of information products, which could be dynamic dashboards, monthly bulletins, or other regularly maintained products.

The products are posted, along with other relevant information outputs, on UNHCR's [Operational Data Portal](#) (ODP).

UNHCR staff interested in more technical guidance on CORE products, can access [the CORE guidance](#) on the UNHCR Data Community Hub. Please note this is accessible only to UNHCR staff. The publicly accessible website on CORE is core.unhcr.org (link coming soon)

b) Emergency Mapping

Emergency mapping refers to the different processes involved in producing and using maps during the multiple phases of an emergency. Emergency maps are important to organize and orient the humanitarian response. Examples of such maps can be to identify the damages following an Earthquake or Tsunami, or represent the population movements triggered by an armed conflict.

First, it's necessary to gather the data that will be necessary to create the maps from different sources. In addition to the UNHCR core GIS database, some data providers which are used in emergency contexts are the [Humanitarian Data Exchange platform](#) which hosts both base and thematic data. [OpenStreetMap](#), the open data and community driven project, can also be a great source. If the data is not available in the area of the emergency, OpenStreetMap volunteer mappers can be involved to map the zone of interest. This has been done in multiple emergencies in the past. Finally, satellite images are valuable, especially if they are recent and of high resolution, and can serve as a base to create new datasets. If the required information is

not available, field campaigns can be organized to collect data with the use of tools like mobile data collection devices, GPS and surveys.

The maps produced during an emergency are meant to be updated frequently as more information is gathered. The first versions of such maps might be very basic with only part of the information present. Nevertheless, these maps are important as they help understand the spatial dynamics at play and can help the first phase of the response. In addition to the common elements that compose a map (title, source, legend, scale, etc.), it is important for emergency maps to clearly indicate the date (and sometimes the hour) or the version. In very volatile situations, the context can change rapidly, and maps quickly become obsolete.

To maximize the utility of emergency maps, whether in digital or printed form, it is essential to disseminate them to the entire humanitarian community.

c) Map templates

Map templates allow UNHCR staff to produce official UNHCR maps. They come with the UNHCR logo and the official styles and colors, to represent the different geographic entities that are generally present on UNHCR maps. These include the sites hosting the people we serve, UNHCR's offices, and international (and disputed) borders. The templates ensure a unified and recognizable look for all maps produced by the organization. By using the templates, the producer of the map can concentrate on the data and the intended message, thereby saving crucial time in the context of an emergency where maps must be produced rapidly. It's important to note that the templates serve as a base which is applicable in most cases. There may be cases where the user will have to adapt them based on the context and the available data.

The map templates are available for the software ArcGIS Pro, in A3 and A4 formats, in portrait and landscape. They require an internet connection to access the data from UNHCR Geoservices, but the templates can be edited to work with a local database. The files can be downloaded on [eSite](#) (accessible to UNHCR staff only) or on the [Operational Data Portal](#) (publicly accessible).

d) eSite

eSite is UNHCR's centralized platform for GIS where users can find:

- **Data:** In this section one can access and explore UNHCR's core GIS database, satellite and drone images, but also curated sectorial and thematic datasets from UNHCR and other organizations.
- **Maps:** contains base and thematic maps for integration into customized maps and the list of all web applications developed and maintained by UNHCR (Site mapping, CCCM, WASH, Health). From this section the user can access all PDF maps hosted on the Operational Data Portal.
- **Support:** Any guidance, tutorials and resources related to GIS are collected here.

Checklist

- Operations should quickly produce and publish CORE products and make data available to all partners.
- Use the mapping templates, UNHCR data visualization guidelines and the eSite online platform to support CORE products, as well as stand-alone maps and spatial analysis.
- Gather good quality, verified data.

4. Learning and field practices

[Data Visualization Platform](#)

[UNHCR's GIS Ecosystem and Best Practices \(accessible to UNHCR staff only\)](#)

5. Links

[eSite \(accessible to UNHCR staff only\)](#) [UNHCR Geoservices](#) [CORE guidance \(accessible to UNHCR staff only\)](#)

6. Main contacts

- For Mapping: GDS Mapping support: mapping@unhcr.org
- For CORE: GDS Information Product Development: ipda@unhcr.org