10 STEPS TO ANNUAL OR MULTI-YEAR PLANNING

What's the purpose?
The application of the humanitarian programme cycle results in a seamless, strategic process whereby organizations agree collectively on needs, develop and implement a plan to meet them, and report back on what they have done and how the needs have evolved. The ultimate objective is to ensure a more effective and timely collective response to the needs of affected people. The different tools – humanitarian needs overview, strategic response plan, periodic monitoring report - are designed to help Humanitarian Coordinators (HCs) and Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) to manage humanitarian response operations more effectively and increase collective accountability for results.

When?
HCs and HCTs in protracted crises generally engage in an annual needs analysis and response planning process from September to November of each year. While it is advisable to stick to this planning timeframe whenever possible, it is meant to be flexible and may vary depending on different factors. The HC and HCT should ensure that a contextually-adapted approach is developed, taking into account the recommended steps below.

What needs to be done?

Preparation/ HPC Calendar

Step 1: Agree on the timeline, roles and responsibilities, and information/data requirements in a kick-off meeting. A key output of this meeting is a calendar outlining the different milestones for implementation of the programme cycle for a given response operation.

Step 2: Establish an analysis plan by agreeing on parameters for consolidating, analyzing and measuring humanitarian needs.

Step 3: Consolidate existing information (secondary data) from multi-cluster and sectoral assessments, monitoring data, survey results, and contextual judgment of humanitarian actors and of local sources. Identify information gaps and develop a plan to address these.

Step 4: Undertake a joint, inter-sectoral analysis and validate and triangulate findings with national counterparts and affected populations.

Step 5: Prepare, validate and disseminate the humanitarian needs overview.

Step 6: Review the needs analysis and key humanitarian issues from the humanitarian needs overview in relation to operational constraints in order to determine how to address needs in a given context.

Step 7: Agree a top-line country strategy which outlines the planning assumptions, boundaries, and priorities within those boundaries, and sets the strategic objectives and indicators to be monitored.

Step 8: Support clusters to agree multi-sectoral strategies that aim towards the achievement of the strategic objectives. Cluster/sector objectives and key activities are agreed and if applicable, projects are developed according to an agreed process, criteria and a division of labor.

Step 9: Prepare, validate and disseminate the strategic response plan. Ensure the alignment of each organization's projects/programmes with the strategic response plan.

Step 10: Use the strategic objectives and indicators to develop a response monitoring framework, and as the basis of reporting on results in the periodic monitoring report. The frequency of reporting is determined by the HC and HCT based on existing capacities and resources.

Humanitarian Needs Overview consolidates and analyses information on the needs of affected people to reach a shared understanding of the needs, priority issues and the likely evolution of the situation.

Strategic Response Plan sets the direction and serves as the basis for carrying out and monitoring the collective response. It is composed of two interlinked components: a country strategy and cluster response plans.

Response Monitoring (and Reporting) is a continuous process that records the aid delivered to affected people.

KICK OFF MEETING

Analysis plan

Data consolidation & information gaps

Joint analysis

HUMANITARIAN NEEDS OVERVIEW

Country strategy

Cluster response plans (and projects, if applicable)

STRATEGIC RESPONSE PLAN

GLOBAL LAUNCH

OCHA headquarters will publish and launch a consolidated appeal or global overview of humanitarian action in late November that summarizes the global needs, plans and requirements. The cut-off date for the submission of information and data to OCHA headquarters for inclusion in this document is 15 November. At the country level, the HC and HCT may wish to repackage information presented in the humanitarian needs overview and strategic response plan into fundraising and advocacy materials.
Who is involved?

The implementation of the programme cycle involves all relevant actors, adopting a cooperative approach to achieving objectives. It supports and complements the capacity of national actors to respond. While institutional and decision-making arrangements vary per context, the application of the programme cycle should be an inter-agency process which is

- Led by a Humanitarian Coordinator.
- Managed by a Humanitarian Country Team.
- Supported by an inter-cluster/sector coordination group and clusters/sectors.
- Inclusive of a broad range of actors, including at the sub-national levels to anchor and concretize the process.
- In support of the national authorities, who have primary responsibility to affected people.
- Inclusive of affected populations.

Each individual organization's piece of the response must fit together and contribute to the overall expected results.

How is it done?

The ‘how’ depends on the context, capacity of the government and of the humanitarian community, and the in-country coordination architecture. The technical guidance for each tool will help to determine the ‘how’. Collaboration, two-way flow of communication, timely meeting documentation, and clear roles and responsibilities among the various coordination structures are essential to support the implementation of the cycle.

There is a direct correlation between the quality and collective ownership or ‘perceived credibility’ of the humanitarian needs overview and strategic response plan and the donor’s willingness to fund the response.

An inter-agency analysis team is generally established to support the data collection and analysis for the development of the humanitarian needs overview; the analysis team may include technical or subject matter experts from UN agencies, NGOs and government representatives nominated by each cluster. For the strategic response plan, the HC and HCT set the strategy in a workshop or enlarged HCT meeting; clusters gather their members in a series of consultations/meetings to prepare the cluster response plans and if applicable, to undertake coordinated project planning. OCHA and cluster information management officers play an integral role, including collecting and managing data. OCHA supports the process throughout by compiling data, preparing drafts, and facilitating the process.

The use of common tools – such as the Financial Tracking Service, Online Planning/Project System, humanitarianresponse.info website, Common Operational Datasets, Fundamental Operational Datasets, humanitarian needs comparison tool, assessment registry, ‘who does what where (when)’ (3 or 4Ws) database, list of contacts and the Humanitarian Indicators Registry – are critical elements to the successful implementation of the programme cycle.

Key things to keep in mind:

✓ Keep the process operationally relevant. Adhere to and promote well-established humanitarian principles, standards, and codes of conduct throughout the process.
✓ Ensure close collaboration between information management and coordination staff.
✓ Ensure up-to-date data and robust analysis.
✓ Be sure to translate or produce documents in the local language.
✓ If you must use logos, ensure that the published documents use multiple logos or the IASC logo, but never only the UN logo.
✓ Keep documents brief, readable, and accessible to a broad audience. Post the documents on the country page of humanitarianresponse.info.
✓ Throughout the programme cycle, communicate with the affected populations through the most accessible mechanism and identify, where possible, ways of receiving feedback.

For more information, including the technical guidance and templates, please see: https://humanitarianresponse.info/programmecycle/space.

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1 The timeframe of the strategic response plan can be for one year or multi-year, if needs and planned responses change little from year to year or to justify resources for multi-year programming like resilience-building actions. The HC and HCT must decide the duration (one or more years) and the planning timeframe (January – December) of the strategic response plan in advance as this will directly affect the process as well as the direction of the strategy.

2 Response monitoring is performed in three stages: preparation of the framework, application of the framework and use of the data collected on the response in the periodic monitoring report. The periodic monitoring report is an internal management tool intended to help HCTs regularly examine whether sufficient progress is being made in reaching strategic and cluster objectives and to provide an evidence base for taking decisions about the direction of the response.