

# INTER-AGENCY CONTINGENCY PLANNING GUIDELINES FOR HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE



November 2007

**IASC**

Inter-Agency  
Standing Committee

# INTER-AGENCY CONTINGENCY PLANNING GUIDELINES FOR HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Endorsed by the IASC Working Group

5 November, 2007

Developed by the IASC Sub-Working Group  
on Preparedness and Contingency Planning



# Table of Content

---

Preface.....	5
Section 1: Audience and Purpose .....	6
Section 2: Key Concepts .....	7
Section 3: The Planning Process .....	12
1. Prepare for and Organize the Contingency Planning Process.....	12
2. Hazard and Risk Analysis, Scenario Building and Developing Planning Assumptions.....	14
3. Response Planning .....	17
<i>Defining Response Objectives and Strategies</i> .....	17
<i>Defining Management and Co-ordination Arrangements         for Humanitarian Response</i> .....	18
<i>Developing Response Plans</i> .....	19
4. Implementing Preparedness .....	20
Section 4: The Plan.....	22
Annexes .....	25
Annex 1 – Comprehensive Inter-agency Contingency Planning Workflow .....	26
Annex 2 – Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Brainstorming Guide and Contingency Plan Checklist .....	27
Annex 3 – Terms of Reference for an Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Working Group.....	33
Annex 4 – Generic Terms of Reference for Sector/Cluster Leads .....	35
Annex 5 – List of Global Sector/Cluster Leads* .....	38
Annex 6 – Contingency Planning Reference.....	39
Annex 7 – Selected Glossary .....	40



## Preface

---

The following guidelines seek to provide practical guidance for Humanitarian Country Teams, composed of UN Agencies and other International Organizations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement<sup>1</sup> and NGO representatives, who are embarking on a process of inter-agency contingency planning in order to increase their level of preparedness and enhance their ability to respond to emergencies.

Within a broader framework of emergency preparedness, inter-agency contingency planning is essential to ensure that humanitarian agencies/organizations are as ready as they can be to manage future uncertainty by developing responses to natural disasters, conflicts and other crises. Inter-agency contingency planning should also be mindful of and linked with other initiatives on disaster prevention, risk reduction and early recovery.

The first version of the Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Guidelines for Humanitarian Assistance was developed in 2001. These guidelines have served as the principal reference document for inter-agency contingency planning. Since their release, the humanitarian context has continued to evolve, a wealth of experience has been gained by agencies/organizations around the world and a process of strengthening humanitarian response systems has been initiated. The revision of these guidelines was undertaken in an attempt to reflect accumulated good practice and efforts to enhance humanitarian response capacity, predictability, accountability and partnership in order to reach more people with comprehensive, appropriate, needs-based relief and protection in a more effective and timely manner. In particular, the cluster approach represents a raising of the standards for sectoral coordination, leadership and accountability and thus is integral to inter-agency contingency planning and preparedness processes.

The guidelines have been revised through a collaborative effort and consultative process under the guidance of the IASC Sub-Working Group on Preparedness and Contingency Planning, composed of members from CARE, ICRC<sup>2</sup>, IFRC, OCHA, UNDP, UNHCR, WHO and co-chaired by WFP and UNICEF.

The IASC Sub-Working Group on Preparedness and Contingency Planning would like to thank everyone from the range of agencies/organizations and duty stations around the world who offered their experience and analysis to contribute to the revision process.

---

<sup>1</sup> The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement's participation in Humanitarian Country Teams will be in accordance with the Movement's policies, agreements and decisions taken by country level Movement coordination mechanisms.

<sup>2</sup> The ICRC took part in the consultative process of these guidelines as a Standing Invitee to the IASC. However, as a neutral independent humanitarian organization the ICRC maintains its own system for contingency planning. Coordination between the ICRC and the UN will continue to the extent necessary to achieve operational complementarity and a strengthened response for people affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence.

## Section 1: Audience and Purpose

This guidance is written specifically for agencies/organizations involved in providing international assistance and protection to those affected by emergencies. In most countries there is a standing body, led by the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator, which serves as a forum for these agencies/organizations. For the purpose of these guidelines, this forum is referred to as a *Humanitarian Country Team*. While participation varies, Humanitarian Country Teams include UN Agencies, International Organizations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGO representatives.

These guidelines are premised on the understanding that governments hold primary responsibility for providing humanitarian assistance to people in need.<sup>3</sup> This guidance seeks to outline how the international humanitarian community can organize itself to support and complement national action.

The Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Guidelines aim to assist Humanitarian Country Teams in preparing to respond to potential emergencies with appropriate humanitarian assistance and protection. These guidelines provide recommendations on how to establish and implement an inter-agency contingency planning process, how to develop integrated plans and monitor ongoing preparedness actions.

---

<sup>3</sup> "Each State has the responsibility first and foremost to take care of the victims of natural disasters and other emergencies occurring on its territory. Hence, the affected State has the primary role in the initiation, organization, coordination, and implementation of humanitarian assistance within its territory." GA Resolution 46/182

## Section 2: Key Concepts

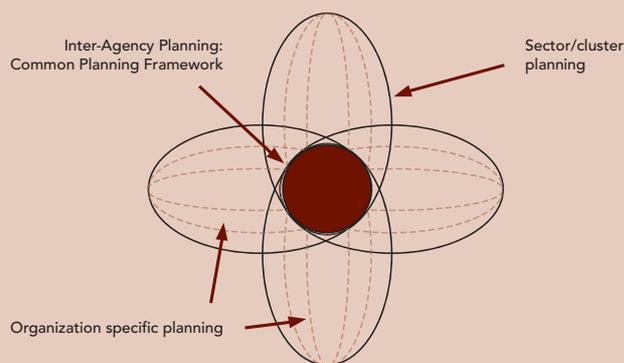
Two principal assumptions underpin this guidance. First, all agencies/organizations that will provide assistance and protection in an emergency should be prepared to ensure these services will be provided effectively and efficiently. Second, effective emergency response requires collective action. Agencies/organizations are expected to have coordination arrangements in place to ensure that their actions are coherent and complementary.

Contingency planning is a management tool used to analyze the impact of potential crises and ensure that adequate and appropriate arrangements are made in advance to respond in a timely, effective and appropriate way to the needs of the affected population(s). Contingency planning is a tool to anticipate and solve problems that typically arise during humanitarian response.

*Contingency planning helps humanitarian actors to plan while there is time.*

Experience confirms that effective humanitarian response at the onset of a crisis is heavily influenced by the level of preparedness and planning of responding agencies/organizations, as well as the capacities and resources available to them.

### Box 1: Inter-agency Common Planning Framework



Inter-agency contingency planning provides a common, over-arching framework to guide the collective action of all partners including individual agencies/organizations and sector/cluster<sup>4</sup> groups. Inter-agency contingency planning does not replace the need for planning by individual agencies/organizations in relation to their mandate and responsibilities within sectors/clusters. However, it provides focus and coherence to the various levels of planning that are required to effectively mount a humanitarian response.

Box 1 illustrates the relationships between inter-agency, sector/cluster and agency/organization-specific planning. Table 1 provides an indicative list of some of the elements of the different levels of planning. In order to ensure coherence, a dynamic interaction between the different levels is required throughout the planning process.

<sup>4</sup> Specific guidance on the cluster approach, including the 'Guidance Note on Using the Cluster Approach to Strengthen Humanitarian Response', November 2006; as well as detailed operational guidance is provided on the humanitarian reform website: [www.humanitarianreform.org](http://www.humanitarianreform.org)

**Table 1: Levels of Contingency Planning and the Role of Inter-Agency Planning**

Type of Planning	Inter-agency planning: Common Planning Framework	Sector/cluster planning	Organization-specific planning
Function	Provides a common strategic planning framework to ensure complementarity of humanitarian action between agencies/ organizations.	Defines how agencies will work to together to achieve sector-specific objectives.	Defines the specific organizational arrangements required to deliver the services that the organization is committed to provide.
Indicative Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Common analysis, risk &amp; vulnerability assessment</li> <li>• Scenarios &amp; planning assumptions</li> <li>• Agreed planning figures</li> <li>• Overall management &amp; coordination arrangements</li> <li>• Overall objectives &amp; strategies</li> <li>• Overarching principles</li> <li>• Gap analysis</li> <li>• Information management arrangements</li> <li>• Appeal and funding arrangements</li> <li>• Linkages with government</li> <li>• Preparedness &amp; maintenance actions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation &amp; coordination</li> <li>• Sectoral objectives &amp; response strategies</li> <li>• Needs assessment &amp; analysis</li> <li>• Capacity &amp; response commitments</li> <li>• Gap analysis</li> <li>• Information management arrangements</li> <li>• Standards for response</li> <li>• Monitoring and reporting</li> <li>• Personnel requirements</li> <li>• Material &amp; financial requirements</li> <li>• Preparedness &amp; maintenance actions</li> <li>• Standard Operating Procedures</li> </ul>	Describes how the organization's response will be delivered using their emergency response systems & capacities.

### *What is Contingency Planning?*

Contingency planning is a process that includes:

- Analysing potential emergencies;
- Analysing the potential humanitarian impact and consequences of identified emergencies;
- Establishing clear objectives, strategies, policies and procedures and articulating critical actions that must be taken to respond to an emergency, and;
- Ensuring that agreements are recorded and necessary actions are taken in order to enhance preparedness.

*Why plan?*

The fundamental reason for contingency planning is to improve the quality of humanitarian response. Experience demonstrates that contingency planning can enhance the effectiveness, appropriateness and timeliness of response to emergencies. Planning in advance of an emergency allows participants time to think through and address some critical questions including:

- What could happen?
- What would be the impact on the people affected?
- What actions would be required to meet humanitarian needs?
- How would agencies/organizations work together?
- What resources would be required?
- What can agencies/organizations do to be better prepared?

**Box 2: Benefits of Contingency Planning:**

- During an emergency, time pressure is one of the most acute problems. Contingency planning allows time to deal with anticipated problems before the onset of a crisis.
- Contingency planning provides an opportunity to **identify constraints and focus on operational issues** prior to the on-set of a crisis. For example, it provides opportunities to map the vulnerabilities of a potential target population, potential areas of rights violations, assess logistical infrastructure such as port or warehousing capacity, and assess coordination and institutional capacity.
- An active contingency planning process enables individuals, teams, organizations to **establish working relationships** that can make a critical difference during a crisis. By working together in a contingency planning process, people **develop a common understanding** of common challenges, of each other's capacities and organizational requirements. This helps facilitate effective collaboration in a crisis.
- Contingency planning processes can help to **reinforce coordination mechanisms** by keeping them active and by **clarifying roles and responsibilities** before a crisis.
- Contingency planning allows organizations to put in place measures that **enhance preparedness**, ahead of a potential crisis.

*When to plan?*

Two broad approaches guide when to plan for an emergency:

- **General preparedness planning** aims to establish a standing capacity to respond to a range of different situations that may affect a country or region by putting in place a broad set of preparedness measures<sup>5</sup>. General preparedness planning is a continuing activity which all Humanitarian Country Teams are expected to undertake and maintain. These plans and systems should be assessed and reviewed regularly.
- **Contingency planning** is undertaken specifically for an emerging or anticipated crisis. This may be a new situation or a potential deterioration in an existing situation to which the international humanitarian community must respond. Early warning is an important tool to help determine when to engage in a more detailed contingency planning process. Humanitarian agencies/organizations are encouraged to establish or create linkages between existing early warning systems and their contingency planning processes.

While these two approaches share many of the same planning elements, the primary difference between them is in the level of specificity – with the former outlining preparedness actions to respond to a range of threats and the latter focusing on the preparedness and response capacities required for a specific situation.

*What to plan for?*

Contingency planning can be used to plan for all types of emergencies including complex emergencies, natural and environmental disasters and other significant crises to which the humanitarian community must respond. Inter-agency contingency planning should focus on situations in which the scale and impact of the potential emergency requires the concerted action of a number of agencies/organizations. Inter-agency contingency planning should address response actions and coordination needs at multiple levels – national, sub-national and local.

In some situations contingency planning will address issues that are contentious. Contingency planning should not be avoided because it is sensitive. In certain instances a more discrete approach may be required.

It is equally important that humanitarian actors plan for situations that may affect their ability to maintain operations and put the health and safety of staff at risk. This is particularly important in situations where specific measures to ensure staff safety and security are critical to operational continuity.

---

<sup>5</sup> These measures are sometimes referred to as an emergency preparedness and response framework and typically include early warning systems, ongoing risk and vulnerability assessment, capacity building, creation and maintenance of stand-by capacities, and stock-piling of humanitarian supplies.

*Who to plan with?*

Contingency planning is most effective when it is a participatory process that includes all those who will be required to work together in the event of an emergency. Experience reaffirms the importance of using existing structures, such as Humanitarian Country Teams or Disaster Management Teams, so that contingency planning is not undertaken in parallel to other processes. However, it is important to ensure that these structures include representatives of the relevant humanitarian actors as described in section 1. In order to keep the planning process manageable, specific working groups should be established. Good information sharing mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that all relevant actors are kept abreast of progress.

Whenever possible, inter-agency contingency planning should involve the government as they hold the primary responsibility for providing humanitarian assistance to people in need.<sup>6</sup> The extent of involvement of national and sub-national authorities depends on the context and the assessment of the Humanitarian Country Team. Inter-agency contingency planning should be based on knowledge of the planning, capacities and systems of national and local authorities and guided by the principles of neutrality and impartiality.

It may be useful to involve partners with specific expertise at particular stages of the process. The analysis and perspectives provided by UN peace-keeping and political missions, regional organizations, donors, academics or think-tanks may be useful. It is also important to ensure that specific expertise on issues such as security, logistics and IT is incorporated.

For potential multi-country emergencies, a dynamic interaction between planning at country and regional level is needed. In these situations, experience has shown that leadership by senior decision-makers at global and regional level is important for effective inter-agency contingency planning.

To be successful there must be recognition of the diversity of approaches that exist amongst the different actors and contingency planning processes must be structured in ways that respect the roles and mandates of different agencies/organizations.

*Who leads the inter-agency planning process?*

The Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator is responsible for providing overall strategic leadership to the inter-agency contingency planning process. All members of the Humanitarian Country Team, in particular those with sector/cluster leadership responsibilities, are expected to ensure adequate coordination during the planning process within their respective sectors/clusters and agencies/organizations.

---

<sup>6</sup> "Each State has the responsibility first and foremost to take care of the victims of natural disasters and other emergencies occurring on its territory. Hence, the affected State has the primary role in the initiation, organization, coordination, and implementation of humanitarian assistance within its territory." GA Resolution 46/182



## Section 3: The Planning Process

It is the **process** of contingency planning that is important, not just the production of a document. Contingency planning is an ongoing process that includes regular reviews and updating of key planning components. The plan itself serves as a record of the agreements reached during the contingency planning process and can be used as a basis for managing follow-up actions as well as a tool for communicating the results to others.

Inter-agency contingency planning is organized around four basic components: *preparation, analysis, response planning, and implementing preparedness* as illustrated by Table 2.<sup>7</sup> **Strong coordination and management** is required throughout the contingency planning process.

**Table 2: Basic Components of the Inter-agency Contingency Planning Process**

1. Preparation	Prepare for and organize the inter-agency contingency planning process.	Strong Coordination and Process Management
2. Analysis	Analyze hazards and risks, build scenarios and develop planning assumptions.	
3. Response Planning	Define response objectives and strategies.	
	Define management and coordination arrangements.	
4. Implementing Preparedness	Develop and consolidate response plans	
	Enhance preparedness and continue the planning process.	

### 1. Prepare for and Organize the Contingency Planning Process

Organizing and effectively managing inter-agency contingency planning from the outset is essential. Best practice demonstrates that the following issues are of critical importance:

#### *Commitment*

The success of contingency planning depends on a strong commitment of senior decision makers. Appropriate leadership by Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator and Heads of Agencies/Organizations will ensure that organizations are committed to the contingency planning process and that the necessary resources, both human and financial, are provided and follow-up actions are taken.

<sup>7</sup> A more detailed workflow is presented in Annex 1

### *Establish a Steering Group of Senior Decision Makers*

Establishing a steering group of senior decision-makers can help to ensure a balance between participation and effective management, particularly in situations with a large number of humanitarian actors. This group will be responsible for providing overall strategic direction and guidance to the contingency planning process and ensuring that adequate resources are available to keep the process active. The steering group will approve the inter-agency contingency plan and monitor implementation of the preparedness actions identified. Existing coordination mechanisms such as Disaster Management Teams or Humanitarian Country Teams will typically perform these functions.

### *Establish a Technical-level, Contingency Planning Working Group*

On behalf of the steering group, this working group will manage the practical planning process. It will ensure that agency/organization and sector/cluster response plans are in line with the overall planning framework. It will consolidate the results of different elements of the planning process and ensure that cross-sector/cluster issues are addressed. Practical experience suggests that a smaller group (8-10 participants) is more likely to be effective than a larger group. However, appropriate representation is essential and should include representatives of agencies/organizations, sector/cluster groups and the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator's Office. The establishment of these on-going, technical level working groups on preparedness and contingency planning is increasingly common in Country Teams around the world.

### *Structure the Process*

Map out the inter-agency contingency planning process, articulate key timelines, meetings and outputs so that progress can be monitored by all participants.

### *Ensure Adequate Facilitation*

The primary responsibility for contingency planning rests with agencies/organization comprising the Humanitarian Country Team. Should assistance in facilitating the contingency planning process be required, facilitators with contingency planning experience can be drawn from humanitarian agencies/organizations at the regional and global level. Experience has found that facilitation teams composed of staff from more than one agency/organization are more effective as they bring a range of perspectives, experience and knowledge of different systems.

### Effective Planning and Facilitation

---

The most constructive planning processes are those which actively engage agencies/organizations, encourage real problem-solving and result in useful plans that are 'owned' by participants.

The least useful planning is that undertaken by external consultants or individual staff members in isolated exercises with limited involvement of staff from agencies/organizations responsible for implementation.

Facilitators should be used to help the planners manage the contingency planning process and provide technical support but should not do the planning or write the plan.

#### *Take Stock*

Review evaluations from previous emergency responses, existing vulnerability assessments, community-based disaster management practices, the current status of preparedness measures and systems, and government and agency/organization contingency plans. This will facilitate the incorporation of lessons learned in the planning process and will help to ensure that it builds on previous experience.

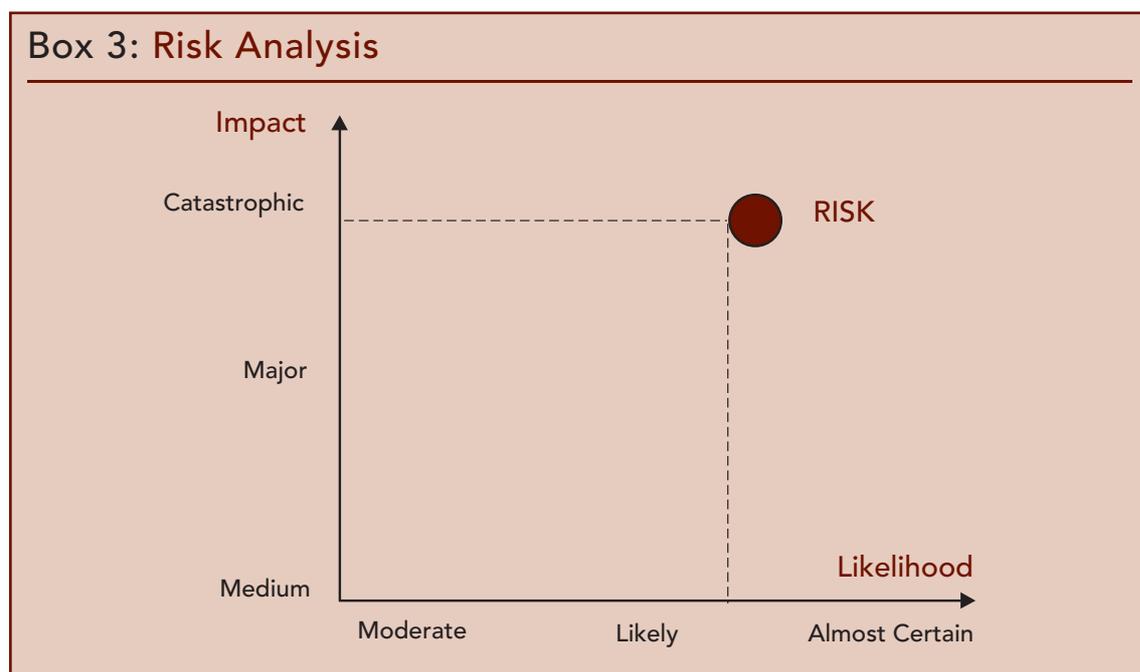
## **2. Hazard and Risk Analysis, Scenario Building and Developing Planning Assumptions**

---

This step in the planning process focuses on the analysis of likely hazards and their potential risks, as well as analysis of the existing vulnerabilities and capacities of the population so as to be able to make informed assumptions about the likely humanitarian impact of a particular hazard. All Humanitarian Country Teams are expected to maintain active early warning systems to help determine when humanitarian response may be required.

***Undertake a Hazard and Risk Analysis.*** Identifying hazards and determining their likelihood and impact is the first step in the analytical process. Even in planning for a specific emergency, it is important to begin with a broad analysis of all the hazards potentially affecting a country or region (e.g. earthquake, flood, or conflict) to ensure that the full range of risks are considered.

It is not possible to plan for every eventuality and planners need to ensure that the available resources are focused on the most critical hazard(s). A common way to prioritize is through *risk analysis*. Risk analysis considers two dimensions: a) the probability or likelihood of a hazard occurring, and b) the potential humanitarian impact of the hazard on different segments of the population, property and livelihoods. The process of conducting a risk analysis is based on a review of both the technical features of hazards such as their likely location, intensity, probability as well as an analysis of the physical, social, economic and environmental dimensions of the vulnerabilities and capacities of a population. Risk analysis often results in a narrative description but the can also be illustrated as shown in Box 3.



**Develop Scenarios** as tools to help explore the implications of a hazard or threat – the different ways it might unfold and its impact on the population. While there are several approaches to scenario development<sup>8</sup>, scenarios are simply tools to explore, describe and analyze the extent of a possible emergency. In this process it is important to consider a range of situations, it is not enough only to look at the most likely outcome.

*While it is necessary to be prepared for the likelihood of a humanitarian crisis, it is equally important that the planning process is not perceived to imply that a crisis is inevitable.*

*If including a specific scenario is considered unduly politically sensitive, simply remove reference to the scenario from the contingency plan but retain the planning assumptions.*

<sup>8</sup> For further advice on scenario development, see HPN Network Paper no 59, March 2007; *Contingency Planning and Humanitarian Action* by Richard Choularton, pages 13-23. Available online at <http://www.odihpn.org/>

**Define Planning Assumptions** which highlight specific aspects of a possible emergency that are critical in planning a response. This includes specific projections of humanitarian needs (i.e. number of people requiring shelter, food, etc.), characteristics of the population (i.e. gender, age, socio-economic status), potential violations of national, humanitarian or human rights law, particular vulnerabilities (i.e. prevalence of HIV/AIDS, specific protection concerns, food security status) and capacities of affected communities and government institutions to respond to the situation. The identification of potential operational constraints (logistics, security, communication) should also be included. It is particularly important that projected planning figures (beneficiary numbers) are agreed. As it is difficult to determine the exact figures in advance, a range of numbers should be included in planning assumptions. Box 4 provides some examples of planning assumptions.

#### Box 4: Examples of Planning Assumptions

- Humanitarian assistance may be required to assist the Government in responding to the protection and assistance needs of 100,000 - 150,000 displaced households in the three districts.
- Should there be spoiling of wells by combatants, affected communities would not have access to potable water.
- As a result of drought, pastoralists are likely to migrate to areas with limited water and pasture resources. The increased number of animals around water points is likely to lead to increased disease and ultimately livestock deaths. The higher concentration of people and animals could lead to increased tensions between host and migrating populations.
- The potential floods could disrupt learning activities for as many as 100,000 children and treatment for 55,000 malnourished children under 5 years of age.
- Insecurity is likely to cut off the northern corridor, thus cutting of the normal supply routes and access to markets for the population.

**Triggers** identify circumstances or events that are likely to indicate changes in the situation. For example, reduced or erratic rainfall could be triggers for drought; low-level inter-communal violence may be a trigger for conflict; sustained storms may be a trigger for flooding; etc. Identifying potential triggers as part of early warning is helpful in determining when to activate response systems.

*Scenarios require regular refining and should be updated to reflect new developments and insights, such as assessment information and security analysis.*

### 3. Response Planning

#### *Defining Response Objectives and Strategies*

Establishing common objectives and strategies helps to ensure that all sectors/ clusters and agencies/organizations are working towards the same overall goal.

- **Define Objectives** of the humanitarian response which are high level statement(s) of what humanitarian actors will seek to achieve.

#### *Example of objectives:*

*“to support the Government in mounting a timely, consistent and coordinated response to minimize the humanitarian consequences on the population”*

*“based on agency mandates and international instruments, humanitarian agencies will assist with the provision of aid and assistance in a coordinated manner to save lives of civilians and to provide for the humanitarian needs of the population”*

- **Agree on Strategies** which articulate the way(s) the defined objective(s) will be achieved by describing the broad modalities of the response (i.e. support to government, direct implementation, focus on building capacity of local communities/structures, etc.)

#### *Example of strategy:*

*“the objective will be achieved through a number of life saving activities within the cluster leadership approach. A set of agreed standards will be used as the operational base for needs assessment and assistance delivery”*

- **Agree on Principles** that will guide the response. Humanitarian action is grounded on the basic principles of humanity, neutrality, and impartiality. Additional principles of accountability, ‘do no harm’, participation of affected communities, and respect for culture and custom are often used. The application of these principles in the specific context should be discussed so that they help to guide the response and provide a framework for establishing priorities, solving problems and making decisions.

### *Defining Management and Co-ordination Arrangements for Humanitarian Response*

Establishing clear mechanisms for accountability and coordination is critical to effective humanitarian response. A number of key decisions taken at the beginning of the planning process will shape the basic coordination and management arrangements:

- Under the leadership of the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator, the Humanitarian Country Team has overall responsibility for mounting a coordinated humanitarian response. Typically the Humanitarian Country Team or Disaster Management Team will agree on overarching policy issues and management structures. They are also responsible to ensure that cross cutting issues (e.g. gender, age, diversity, the environment, HIV/AIDS, and human rights) are adequately addressed.
- **Decide Which Sector/Cluster Groups to Establish.** This decision should be based on an analysis of the context, the planning assumptions and the potential needs for coordination.
- **Decide on Who Will Participate in Each Sector/Cluster Group & Which Organizations Will Lead Them.** Discussion and agreement on who will participate in specific sector/cluster groups and on which organizations will take on leadership roles is critical. In most cases the sector/cluster lead in-country will be the same organization(s) leading the cluster at the global level<sup>9</sup>. However, the designation of these lead roles should be based on the capacity of the organization to take on the accountabilities as spelled out in the Terms of Reference for Sector/Cluster Leads at the Country level (see Annex 4). This may mean that in some cases sector/cluster lead arrangements at the country level are not the same as those at the global level. Consulting with global cluster leads during this process will help to clarify what technical or operational support could be provided to assist in the process of planning or preparedness.
- **Agree on Cross Sector/cluster Coordination Mechanisms.** Throughout the planning and response phase, a dynamic interaction between sector/cluster groups and agencies/organizations is required. In the response phase a cross sector/cluster group will be responsible to ensure the alignment of the activities of each sector/cluster and ensure that cross-sector/cluster issues are identified and acted upon. This group should include sector/cluster lead agencies/organizations.
- **Decide Which Common Service Areas<sup>10</sup> Are Likely to Be Needed.** Key services required to support the inter-agency humanitarian response should

<sup>9</sup> See global sector/cluster lead list in Annex 5

<sup>10</sup> There are two established common services: UN Humanitarian Air Services (UNHAS) and Humanitarian Information Centres (HIC). These are standing facilities for which there are agreed triggering mechanism and for which specific agencies have responsibilities to provide services. In the context of the Cluster Approach, two 'Common Service Areas' are articulated: Logistics and Emergency Telecoms. These may be established as sectors/clusters to facilitate effective coordination in the delivery of these services.

be considered, as well as whether specific sector/cluster working groups are required to coordinate this support (through the establishment of a logistics or emergency telecoms sector/cluster, for example). The specific needs for these services will become evident as response plans are developed.

- **Establish Appropriate Coordination or Liaison Mechanisms with Government and Other Actors.** One of the accountabilities of the sector/cluster leads at country level is to establish and/or maintain appropriate linkages with government counterparts in the specific sector. Mechanisms to liaise with civil society, the media and national and foreign militaries<sup>11</sup> should also be articulated.
- **Agree on Arrangements for Coordinating Resource Mobilization.** This could include agreements on the mechanisms for developing joint appeals, as well as strategies for mobilizing support from donors in-country and externally.

### *Developing Response Plans*

Once the over-arching objectives, strategies, management and coordination arrangements have been established, specific sector/cluster response plans should be developed. These plans will describe how agencies/organizations will respond to needs within the sector. In developing response plans, sector/cluster groups should:

- **Discuss and Define Sector/Cluster Objectives** based on the planning assumptions identified.

#### *Example of sector/cluster objectives:*

- *The Protection Cluster will work with stakeholders to facilitate greater freedom of movement of the affected population, including the voluntary return of IDPs when conditions of return are deemed appropriate.*
- *The Health Cluster aims to support Government efforts to promote and protect the health and well-being of affected communities thereby minimizing morbidity, disability, and mortality.*
- *Prevent the deterioration of the nutritional status of vulnerable populations, especially children and women, and to ensure the maintenance of adequate health conditions of the maximum possible number of people.*

<sup>11</sup> See Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief (Oslo Guidelines), the Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies (MCDA Guidelines), and the IASC Reference Paper on Civil-Military Relationship in Complex Emergencies.

- **Define Individual and Collective Actions to Meet the Sector/Cluster Objectives.** In developing these plans of action sectors/clusters should consider the following issues:
  - Will specific agencies/organizations take on specialized roles within the sector/cluster?
  - What common standards will be used to guide the response?
  - What are the current capacities of the agencies/organizations to respond?
  - What are the gaps between the current response capacity and the scale of the emergency as described in the planning assumptions?
  - How will sector/cluster members address needs assessment?
  - What information management mechanisms will be required?
  - What kind of monitoring *and reporting tools will the sector/cluster develop?*
- **Develop a Strategy for Initial Assessment.** Given the importance of assessment in defining the scope and nature of the humanitarian response, how initial assessment will be undertaken is an important component to include in the contingency planning process. Planning for initial assessment should include:
  - Identification of agencies/organizations that will participate,
  - Agreement on specific rapid assessment tools,
  - Discussion of how sector/cluster assessment information will be collated and shared with others.
- **Consolidate and Review All Planning Outputs.** After the initial phase of sector/cluster response planning has been completed, the Contingency Planning Working Group should consolidate and review the all the outputs to ensure that the sector/cluster response plans are complementary and coherent. The consolidated response plans should be analyzed against the initial planning assumptions to identify any remaining gaps or significant issues that have been overlooked.

#### ***4. Implementing Preparedness***

---

Contingency Planning should not be a theoretical exercise; its main objective is to ensure that agencies/organizations develop a level of preparedness that is sufficient to respond to an anticipated emergency. Prioritizing and implementing preparedness actions and monitoring agreed early warning indicators for developments that would trigger a response convert intentions into action.

*Throughout the contingency planning process, specific preparedness actions or issues requiring follow-up should be identified and recorded.*

**Preparedness actions** identified during the planning process should be reviewed, prioritized and responsibilities and timelines should be assigned. In order to ensure that a heightened level of preparedness is

### Box 5: Examples of Preparedness Actions

- Training humanitarian staff and partners in rapid needs assessment techniques
- Collecting baseline, disaggregated data sets
- Carrying out security assessment
- Identifying and establishing collaborative arrangements with local implementing partners
- Raising awareness on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.

achieved, **a minimum set of priority preparedness actions** should be identified and agreed to by all agencies/organizations. At each review of the contingency plan, progress made in implementing priority preparedness actions should be assessed in the context of any change in the situation. Humanitarian Country Teams may also want to develop Standard Operating Procedures detailing the key actions that each agency/organization and sector/cluster will take at the onset of an emergency.

An important part of the contingency planning process is the establishment of systems for monitoring **early warning indicators** based on the triggers identified during the scenario building process. Each scenario should have a set of agreed indicators which would allow for a more efficient monitoring and follow-up.

The contingency planning process does not end with the production of a plan. The process must be continued and plans **reviewed and updated** on a regular basis. Ongoing involvement in the follow up to the contingency planning process should be integrated into the work plans of participating organizations and individuals. It is particularly important that the plan be thoroughly reviewed when there is a change in the situation, signalled by the early warning system, or a change in the institutional environment such as a significant change in membership or leadership of the Humanitarian Country Team.

Simple simulation exercises are valuable in familiarizing those who will be involved in humanitarian response with the coordination and response mechanism envisaged in the plan. They also help to test planning assumptions and response systems. Simulations may be used as a part of the regular schedule for review and updating of the contingency plan.

## Section 4: The Plan

This section offers some practical advice on how to develop, circulate, and maintain a contingency plan. As a written record of the significant agreements and commitments for future action, the plan is simply a product or snapshot of the process.

In deciding how to document the key elements of the planning process, consideration should be given to who will use the plan and what information they will need. It may be useful to develop a short, high-level document for senior decision-makers and a more detailed version for those working at the technical level. Any plan should provide the information needed for future decision-making, advocacy and action.

### Avoiding the Consolidation Trap

Inter-agency contingency planning often gets mired in 'the consolidation trap', where a large planning document is compiled with the inputs from multiple sectors/clusters and agencies/organizations. The result is a complex and dense document that is difficult to develop, update and use. This trap can be avoided by defining what documents will be useful and what is usefully consolidated. Most often this means a set of different documents at inter-agency, sector/cluster and organizational level. For example, detailed sector/cluster contingency plans are not useful for senior decision makers or donors who need short focused documents that highlight the potential scenarios, response strategies, and resource needs. By contrast, water and sanitation programme managers definitely need the details.

The matrix below outlines the key outputs of the different phases of the planning process that should be documented in the inter-agency contingency plan. It is important to remember that the inter-agency contingency plan should focus primarily on the common planning framework and need not document all specific details of each sector/cluster plan which can be compiled separately or included as annexes to the main plan.

- 1. Executive Summary**
- 2. Hazard and Risk Analysis**
  - Brief Summary of the hazards and risks analyzed during the contingency planning process.
- 3. Scenarios and Planning Assumptions**
  - Brief summary of agreed scenarios and planning assumptions that define the parameters of the contingency plan.
- 4. Objectives and Strategies**
  - Concise statements of objectives, strategies and guiding principles.
- 5. Overall Management and Coordination Arrangements**
  - Clusters established and designated lead agencies/organizations;
  - Diagram of coordination mechanisms;
  - Arrangement for appeals and funding;
  - Information management arrangements;
  - Cross-cutting issues.
- 6. Summary of Sector/Cluster Response Plans**
  - Outline of participation in sectors;
  - Objectives and response actions;
  - Gap analysis;
  - Standards guiding response.
- 7. Preparedness Actions**
  - Agreed priority preparedness actions;
  - Preparedness actions by sector.
- 8. Annexes**
  - Summaries of sector plans;
  - Detailed schedule for implementation of preparedness actions;
  - Schedule for review and updating of contingency plan;
  - Terms of Reference for sector/cluster groups.

Contingency plans should not be considered to be instruction manuals to be strictly followed in an emergency. Their value is in establishing key working relationships, coordination mechanisms and agreeing on common standards – in short, solving potential problems ahead of time. The preparedness actions identified should contribute to strengthening emergency response systems which will be activated at the time of an emergency.



## Annexes

The annexes to the Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Guidelines for Humanitarian Assistance provide useful tools and information to assist planners. All the checklists and tools presented in the annexes are meant to be used flexibly by planners, who should adapt them to suit their requirements. They include:

### *Annex 1 - Comprehensive Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Workflow*

This annex provides a suggested step-by-step workflow for the inter-agency contingency planning process

### *Annex 2 - Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Brainstorming Guide and Contingency Plan Checklist.*

This annex provides some key questions aimed at focusing brainstorming sessions. In addition, it provides a checklist of issues related to the various planning components that should be captured and included in a written contingency plan.

### *Annex 3 - Sample Terms of Reference for a Contingency Planning Working Group*

This annex provides a sample Terms of Reference for an Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Working Group.

### *Annex 4 - Sample Terms of Reference for Sector/Cluster Lead at the Country Level*

This annex provides a sample Terms of Reference for Sector/Cluster Lead at the Country Level drawn from the IASC Guidance Note on Using the Cluster Approach to Strengthen Humanitarian Response, November 2006

### *Annex 5 - List of Global Sector/Cluster Leads*

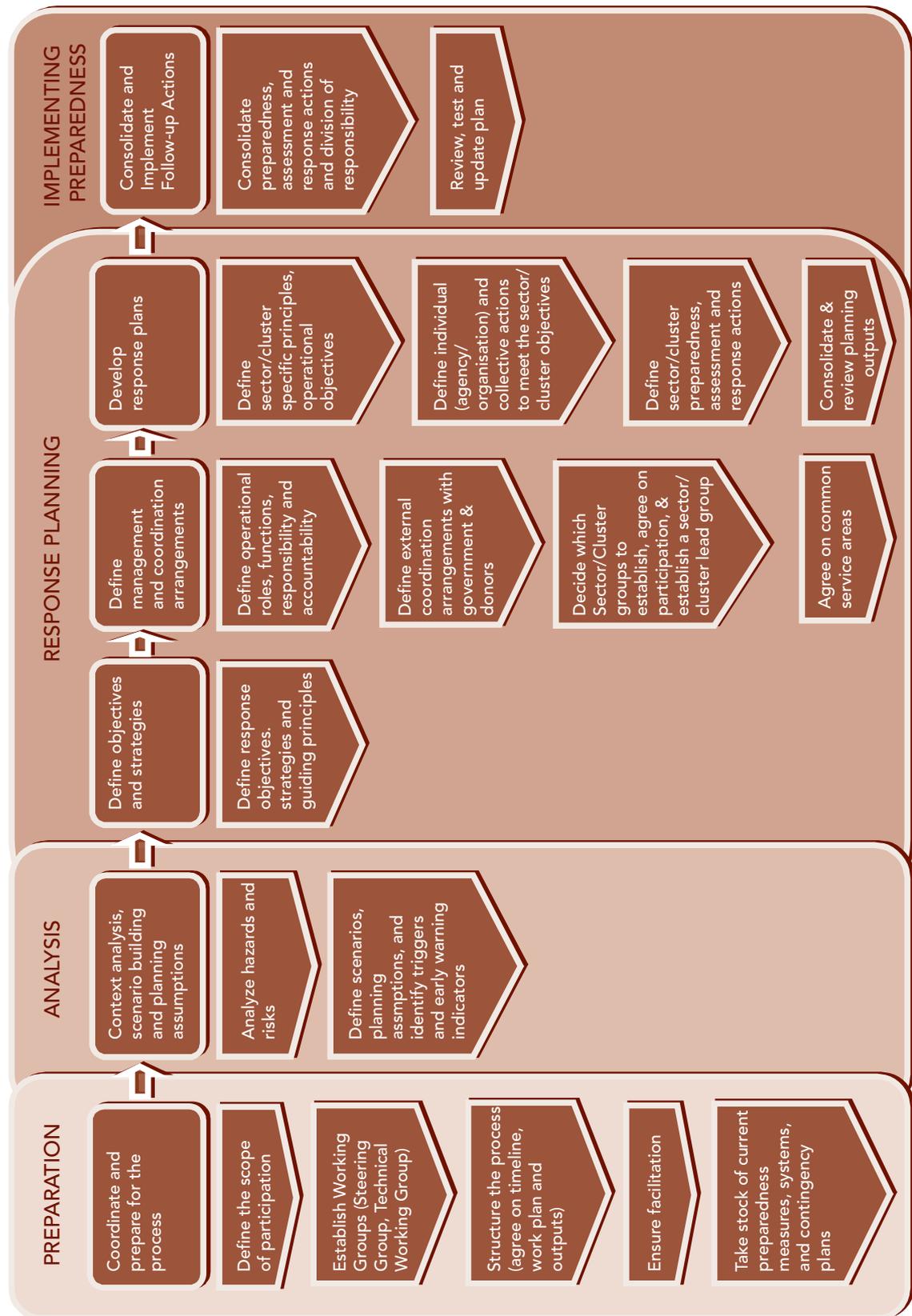
### *Annex 6 - Contingency Planning Reference*

This annex presents a concise list of reference material related to humanitarian contingency planning.

### *Annex 7 - Selected Glossary*

The glossary provides definitions for some key contingency planning terms.

## Annex 1 – Comprehensive Inter-agency Contingency Planning Workflow



## Annex 2 – Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Brainstorming Guide and Contingency Plan Checklist

There are many things to consider during the inter-agency contingency planning process. Effective documentation of key elements of the planning process is also important in documenting agreements and commitments for future action. The questions included in the column on the left are intended to spark or catalyze ideas during brainstorming or working group meetings. Six to ten questions are provided for each topic. The column on the right provides a checklist of issues related to the various planning components that should be captured and included in a written contingency plan. This table is by no means comprehensive and can be reviewed and expanded to address issues relevant to the specific planning context.

Brainstorming Guide	Contingency Plan Checklist
<b>Cover Page</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Country (region) covered</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Contingency (ies) covered</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Period covered</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Date and plan version (update number)</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> List of participating organizations</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Level of confidentiality</li> </ul>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	
	<p>The executive summary should summarize the key points listed below. The focus of the summary is to inform decision makers of the critical elements of the plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brief scenario description (locations, number of affected, triggers)</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planned inter-agency response (intervention strategy, response plan summary)</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Summary of management and coordination arrangements</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Key operational constraints</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Anticipated costs (if available)</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Priority preparedness actions</li> </ul>

### Hazard and Risk Analysis

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ What are the socio-economic and political trends?</li> <li>✓ Consider recent assessment / reviews / baseline studies / analytical exercises as sources of information.</li> <li>✓ What is the country's recent record with regards to particular hazards such as drought, floods, earthquake, epidemics violence or security threats, population movements, resources constraints, human rights abuses, demographic / land issues (etc.)?</li> <li>✓ What are the risks in order of priority?</li> </ul>	<p>Summarize main hazards/risk assessment. Can be summarized in a matrix.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☑ Country information and context analysis</li> <li>☑ Brief summary of hazards</li> <li>☑ Risk assessment of different hazards</li> </ul>
---	--

### Scenarios and Planning Assumptions

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ What areas are likely to be affected and what will be the geographical extent of the damage / crisis?</li> <li>✓ Numbers and percentage of population affected; population profile and demographics?</li> <li>✓ Gender considerations; specific vulnerable groups; and target beneficiaries?</li> <li>✓ What will be the impact on livelihoods? What will the specific sectoral impacts be?</li> <li>✓ How long are emergency conditions likely to last under this scenario?</li> <li>✓ Do the government / local authorities have prior experience in responding to the situation?</li> <li>✓ How will the scenario affect on-going operations?</li> <li>✓ What other organizations are likely to respond to the emergency and in what way?</li> <li>✓ What are likely to be the major constraints to an emergency response?</li> <li>✓ What are likely to be the major gaps?</li> <li>✓ What are the various factors (negative or mitigating) influencing the situation?</li> <li>✓ What events could trigger this scenario? What are the early warning indicators that should be monitored?</li> </ul>	<p>This section elaborates the planning scenario(s). It contains the main planning assumptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☑ Geographical location.</li> <li>☑ Description of the main humanitarian consequences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vulnerabilities and anticipated consequences on populations, provision of basic services.</li> <li>• Coping mechanism of population.</li> </ul> </li> <li>☑ Description of government capacity to respond.</li> <li>☑ Gaps and constraints: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity gaps in provision of humanitarian assistance &amp; protection.</li> <li>• Major obstacles (security, logistics, etc).</li> </ul> </li> <li>☑ Planning figures for humanitarian assistance.</li> <li>☑ Triggers, early-warning indicators and monitoring arrangements.</li> </ul>
--	---

Response Planning – Objectives and Strategies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ What are the over-arching objectives of the humanitarian response? What will the humanitarian community seek to achieve?</li> <li>✓ How is the implementation strategy linked to the realisation of the objectives?</li> <li>✓ What are the overarching principles that will guide the response?</li> <li>✓ How will individual sectors/clusters projects contribute to the overall objectives?</li> <li>✓ How long will the assistance be required for?</li> <li>✓ Who are the target beneficiaries?</li> <li>✓ Are the levels and the types of assistance to be provided to the different beneficiaries agreed on?</li> </ul>	<p>This section outlines the agreed response objectives that define the common planning framework and the strategies for achieving those objectives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☑ Overall objectives to be achieved during the response.</li> <li>☑ Strategy for achieving objectives.</li> </ul> <p>Guiding principles.</p>
Response Planning – Overall Management and Coordination	
<p><i>External Relations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ How does the government coordination body work?</li> <li>✓ What are the coordination arrangements between the government, the Humanitarian Country Team, donors, civil society, private sector and beneficiaries? Have partners been briefed on the cluster/sector approach?</li> </ul> <p><i>Coordination</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Does the Humanitarian Country Team understand the cluster/sector approach?</li> <li>✓ Have the cluster/sector leads been identified?</li> <li>✓ Have the specific cluster/sector TORs been agreed?</li> <li>✓ Have the reporting procedures be agreed?</li> <li>✓ What joint activities will be undertaken: Assessment, monitoring, programming?</li> </ul>	<p>Based on the planning assumptions developed, this section of the plan highlights what management and coordination mechanisms have been established to guide the humanitarian response.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☑ Operational roles, responsibilities and accountabilities.</li> <li>☑ Cluster/sector arrangements, including designated lead agencies.</li> <li>☑ Cross-cutting issues</li> <li>☑ Common Services Areas required.</li> <li>☑ Immediate response mechanisms (rapid assessment, advance funding, response).</li> <li>☑ Resource mobilization strategy (funding and appeal arrangements).</li> <li>☑ Internal and external coordination arrangement.</li> <li>☑ Information management.</li> <li>☑ Media strategy.</li> <li>☑ Safety and security arrangements.</li> </ul>

*Information Management*

- ✓ How will information/data be collected?
- ✓ How will information flow between the various levels (local, national, regional and HQ) and vice-versa?
- ✓ What report formats will be used?
- ✓ What GIS and mapping capacity will be needed?

*Safety and Security*

- ✓ What are the security coordination arrangements at the local, national, regional levels (i.e. SMT, information-sharing meetings)? Is there a need for additional arrangements/ resources?
- ✓ Are there specific security training needs?
- ✓ What are the security and evacuation plans? Who is responsible for them?
- ✓ Who maintains a central list of names and locations of all international and local staff??

*Resources Mobilisation*

- ✓ What are the potential sources of funds? Will rapid response resources (e.g.CERF) be needed?
- ✓ Is there a need for a specific appeal for this operation? Should there be a CAP or a Flash Appeal?
- ✓ Should a donor consultation be organised?

*Common Service Areas*

- ✓ What common services areas will be required to support the response: Transport and logistics, media and information, TC/IT.
- ✓ Can staff and material be shared?
- ✓ How will shared resources be paid for? Who will own them? To whom will personnel report?

<p><i>Media Strategy</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ What will be the public information strategy?</li> <li>✓ Can the current staff handle the influx of journalists and information requests or should Public Information personnel be recruited?</li> <li>✓ How should media relations be coordinated?</li> <li>✓ What will be the information strategy for the target population?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Response Planning – Sector/Cluster and Agency Response Plans</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ What are the specific cluster objectives?</li> <li>✓ What are the provisions in place for immediate response?</li> <li>✓ What initial assessment arrangements are needed?</li> <li>✓ What actions will be taken as an immediate response to the situation? Who does what and when?</li> <li>✓ What is required to support the immediate response (logistic/transport, TC-IT, commodities, staff...)?</li> <li>✓ Who will participate in the Emergency Needs Assessment?</li> <li>✓ What are the critical sector gaps?</li> <li>✓ Which sectors/clusters are most likely to be critical / should be prioritised?</li> <li>✓ Are all the sector/cluster needs identified covered in sector/cluster or agency plans?</li> </ul>	<p>Concise summaries of the sector/cluster response plans should be included in the Inter-Agency Contingency Plan. Some critical issues to include in sector/cluster summaries are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Outline of participation in sector/ clusters</li> <li>✓ Objectives and response actions</li> <li>✓ Gap analysis</li> <li>✓ Standards that will guide response</li> <li>✓ Outline of the roles and responsibilities of agencies</li> </ul>

Preparedness	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Who is responsible for the update and maintenance of the contingency planning document?</li> <li>✓ When and how will the plan be updated and tested?</li> <li>✓ Have specific preparedness actions be agreed on for sectors/clusters and agencies?</li> <li>✓ What follow up actions are required?</li> </ul>	<p>This section documents the preparedness actions that agencies/organizations have agreed to undertaken in order to strengthen their preparedness. It also describes the arrangement for the continuation of the contingency planning process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☑ Priority preparedness actions identified <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparedness levels</li> <li>• Stockpile levels</li> <li>• Equipment needed</li> <li>• Resources (human, cash, material) on stand-by</li> </ul> </li> <li>☑ Preparedness action to be taken <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrangement and responsibilities for monitoring of early warning indicators.</li> <li>• Training/capacity strengthening required.</li> <li>• Development of initial assessment formats</li> <li>• Stand-by capacities to be activated</li> </ul> </li> <li>☑ List of focal points and deadlines for individual activities.</li> <li>☑ List of agency or sector/cluster level of preparedness (staff, stocks, programs etc)</li> <li>☑ Workplan for regular review and updating of contingency plan</li> </ul>
Annexes	

### **Annex 3 – Terms of Reference for an Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Working Group**

---

Under the guidance of the Resident Coordinator or Humanitarian Coordinator, the Humanitarian Country Team is responsible for the effective and efficient implementation of inter-agency contingency planning activities in the country. In order to fulfil this task, an Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Working Group has been formed.

The membership of this group includes:

- Representative of UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator (Chair)
- Relevant UN Agencies
- Representative of NGOs active in humanitarian response
- The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

Note: This is a sample membership for an inter-agency contingency planning working group. Actual composition will depend on the key actors involved in humanitarian response. Care should be taken to ensure that the group is small enough to be able to operate at a working level. Information sharing meetings can be organised on a regular basis with all actors to ensure their participation.

The Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Working Group will perform the following main tasks:

- Coordinate inter-agency contingency planning activities, including:
  - Prepare for the inter-agency contingency planning process
  - Analyze hazards and risks, building scenarios and developing planning assumptions
  - Define objectives and strategies
  - Define management and coordination arrangements
  - Develop response plans
  - Consolidate the planning process
  - Implement preparedness actions
- Organize the necessary technical support and assessments required in support of contingency planning activities;
- Co-ordinate with government and partners on any relevant action and measures required to enhance preparedness and capacity to respond;
- Explore ways to further enhance preparedness by establishing viable networks at the national and regional level;
- Facilitate coordination at the sub-regional basis, if required by the country context and planning process;
- Facilitate the mainstreaming of contingency planning within development and disaster mitigation programming activities across the Humanitarian Country Team;

- Consolidate outputs of the planning process, review contingency plans on a regular basis and present to the Humanitarian Country Team issues requiring specific decision-making or action; and
- Act as a repository of knowledge and experience, as well as a transparent accountability mechanism, by ensuring that all relevant contingency planning materials and by-products emerging from the process are recorded and accessible to all partners.

## **Annex 4 – Generic Terms of Reference for Sector/Cluster Leads at the Country Level**

---

The Cluster Approach operates at two levels. At the global level, the aim is to strengthen system-wide preparedness and technical capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies by designating global Cluster Leads and ensuring that there is predictable leadership and accountability in all the main sectors or areas of activity. At the country level, the aim is to ensure a more coherent and effective response by mobilizing groups of agencies, organizations and NGOs to respond in a strategic manner across all key sectors or areas of activity, each sector having a clearly designated lead, as agreed by the Humanitarian Coordinator and the Humanitarian Country Team. (to enhance predictability, where possible this should be in line with the lead agency arrangements at the global level.)

The Humanitarian Coordinator – with the support of OCHA – retains responsibility for ensuring the adequacy, coherence and effectiveness of the overall humanitarian response and is accountable to the Emergency Relief Coordinator.

Sector/cluster leads at the country level are accountable to the Humanitarian Coordinator for facilitating a process at the sectoral level aimed at ensuring the following:

### *Inclusion of key humanitarian partners*

- Ensure inclusion of key humanitarian partners for the sector, respecting their respective mandates and programme priorities

### *Establishment and maintenance of appropriate humanitarian coordination mechanisms*

- Ensure appropriate coordination with all humanitarian partners (including national and international NGOs, the International Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, IOM and other international organizations), through establishment/maintenance of appropriate sectoral coordination mechanisms, including working groups at the national and, if necessary, local level;
- Secure commitments from humanitarian partners in responding to needs and filling gaps, ensuring an appropriate distribution of responsibilities within the sectoral group, with clearly defined focal points for specific issues where necessary;
- Ensure the complementarity of different humanitarian actors' actions;
- Promote emergency response actions while at the same time considering the need for early recovery planning as well as prevention and risk reduction concerns;
- Ensure effective links with other sectoral groups;
- Ensure that sectoral coordination mechanisms are adapted over time to reflect the capacities of local actors and the engagement of development partners;

- Represent the interests of the sectoral group in discussions with the Humanitarian Coordinator and other stakeholders on prioritization, resource mobilization and advocacy;

### *Coordination with national/local authorities, state institutions, local civil society and other relevant actors*

- Ensure that humanitarian responses build on local capacities;
- Ensure appropriate links with national and local authorities, state institutions, local civil society and other relevant actors (e.g. peacekeeping forces) and ensure appropriate coordination and information exchange with them.

### *Participatory and community-based approaches*

- Ensure utilization of participatory and community based approaches in sectoral needs assessment, analysis, planning, monitoring and response.

### *Attention to priority cross-cutting issues*

- Ensure integration of agreed priority cross-cutting issues in sectoral needs assessment, analysis, planning, monitoring and response (e.g. age, diversity, environment, gender, HIV/AIDS and human rights); contribute to the development of appropriate strategies to address these issues; ensure gender-sensitive programming and promote gender equality; ensure that the needs, contributions and capacities of women and girls as well as men and boys are addressed;

### *Needs assessment and analysis*

- Ensure effective and coherent sectoral needs assessment and analysis, involving all relevant partners.

### *Emergency preparedness*

- Ensure adequate contingency planning and preparedness for new emergencies;

### *Planning and strategy development*

Ensure predictable action within the sectoral group for the following:

- Identification of gaps;
- Developing/updating agreed response strategies and action plans for the sector and ensuring that these are adequately reflected in overall country strategies, such as the Common Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP);
- Drawing lessons learned from past activities and revising strategies accordingly;
- Developing an exit, or transition, strategy for the sectoral group.

*Application of standards*

- Ensure that sectoral group participants are aware of relevant policy guidelines, technical standards and relevant commitments that the government has undertaken under international human rights law;
- Ensure that responses are in line with existing policy guidance, technical standards, and relevant Government human rights legal obligations.

*Monitoring and reporting*

- Ensure adequate monitoring mechanisms are in place to review impact of the sectoral working group and progress against implementation plans;
- Ensure adequate reporting and effective information sharing (with OCHA support), with due regard for age and sex disaggregation.

*Advocacy and resource mobilization*

- Identify core advocacy concerns, including resource requirements, and contribute key messages to broader advocacy initiatives of the HC and other actors;
- Advocate for donors to fund humanitarian actors to carry out priority activities in the sector concerned, while at the same time encouraging sectoral group participants to mobilize resources for their activities through their usual channels.

*Training and capacity building*

- Promote/support training of staff and capacity building of humanitarian partners;
- Support efforts to strengthen the capacity of the national authorities and civil society.

*Provision of assistance or services as a last resort*

- As agreed by the IASC Principals, sector leads are responsible for acting as the provider of last resort (subject to access, security and availability of funding) to meet agreed priority needs and will be supported by the HC and the ERC in their resource mobilization efforts in this regard;
- This concept is to be applied in an appropriate and realistic manner for crosscutting issues such as protection, early recovery and camp coordination.

Humanitarian actors who participate in the development of common humanitarian action plans are expected to be proactive partners in assessing needs, developing strategies and plans for the sector, and implementing agreed priority activities. Provisions should also be made in sectoral groups for those humanitarian actors who may wish to participate as observers, mainly for information-sharing purposes.

### Annex 5 – List of Global Sector/Cluster Leads\*

	Sector/Cluster	Leads
1	Agriculture	FAO
2	Camp Coordination and Camp Management	UNHCR and IOM
3	Early Recovery	UNDP
4	Education	UNICEF and Save the Children Alliance
5	Emergency Shelter	UNHCR (conflict IDPs) and IFRC (convenor disaster situations)
6	Emergency Telecommunications	OCHA
7	Food**	WFP
8	Health	WHO
9	Logistics	WFP
10	Nutrition	UNICEF
11	Protection	UNHCR
12	Refugees**	UNHCR
13	Water Sanitation Hygiene	UNICEF

\* For an updated list, please check the Humanitarian Reform website: <http://www.humanitarianreform.org/>

\*\* While food and refugees are not formally designated as global clusters, they remain important sectors with designated lead agencies.

## **Annex 6 – Contingency Planning Reference**

---

Choularton, Richard, Contingency Planning and Humanitarian Action: A Review of Practice. HPN Network Paper No. 59, March 2007. Available online at <http://www.odihpn.org>

IASC Sub-Working Group on Preparedness and Contingency Planning, Challenges and Suggestions for Enhancing Inter-Agency Contingency Planning: Report of the 1st Global Consultation of Contingency Planners in Humanitarian Agencies. 2-4 July, 2007. Available online at <http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc> or <http://www.reliefweb.int>

## Annex 7 – Selected Glossary

---

This annex provides a condensed glossary of key terms relevant to these guidelines.

**Capacity:** A combination of all the strengths and resources available within a community, society or organization that can reduce the level of risk, or the effects of a disaster. Capacity may include physical, institutional, social or economic means as well as skilled personal or collective attributes such as leadership and management. Capacity may also be described as capability. (Source: ISDR)

**Cluster Approach:** The Cluster Approach aims to strengthen humanitarian response capacity and effectiveness in five key ways: i) ensuring sufficient global capacity is built up and maintained in key gap sectors/areas of response; ii) identifying predictable leadership in the gap sectors/areas of response; iii) facilitating partnerships and improved inter-agency complementarity by maximizing resources; iv) strengthening accountability; and 5) improving strategic field-level coordination and prioritization in specific sectors/areas of response by placing responsibility for leadership and coordination of these issues with the competent operational agency. (IASC Guidance Note on Using the Cluster Approach Nov 2006)

**Cluster:** A “cluster” is essentially a “sectoral group” and there should be no differentiation between the two in terms of their objectives and activities; the aim of filling gaps and ensuring adequate preparedness and response should be the same. (IASC Guidance Note on Using the Cluster Approach Nov 2006)

**Cluster Leads:** A “cluster lead” is an agency/organization that formally commits to take on a leadership role within the international humanitarian community in a particular sector/area of activity, to ensure adequate response and high standards of predictability, accountability & partnership. (IASC Guidance Note on Using the Cluster Approach Nov 2006)

**Disaster:** A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society causing widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses... A disaster is a function of the risk process. It results from the combination of hazards, conditions of vulnerability and insufficient capacity or measures to reduce the potential negative consequences of risk. (Source: ISDR)

**Early Warning:** The provision of timely and effective information, through identified institutions, that allows individuals exposed to a hazard to take action to avoid or reduce their risk and prepare for effective response. Early warning systems include a chain of concerns, namely: understanding and mapping the hazard; monitoring and forecasting impending events; processing and disseminating understandable warnings to political authorities and the population, and undertaking appropriate and timely actions in response to the warnings. (Source: ISDR)

**Emergency Preparedness:** Consists of all activities taken in anticipation of a crisis to expedite effective emergency response. This includes contingency planning, but is not limited to it: it also covers stockpiling, the creation and management of stand-by capacities and training staff and partners in emergency response. (Source: ODI-HPN Contingency Planning Review Paper 2007)

**Hazard:** A potentially damaging physical event, phenomenon or human activity that may cause the loss of life or injury, property damage, social and economic disruption or environmental degradation. Hazards can include latent conditions that may represent future threats and can have different origins: natural (geological, hydro meteorological and biological) or induced by human processes (environmental degradation and technological hazards). Hazards can be single, sequential or combined in their origin and effects. Each hazard is characterized by its location, intensity, frequency and probability. (Source: ISDR)

**Planning Assumptions:** The key elements of a scenario that form the basis for developing a contingency plan (for example, projected caseloads) (Source: IASC Contingency Planning Guidelines 2001)

**Risk:** The probability of harmful consequences, or expected losses (deaths, injuries, property, livelihoods, economic activity disrupted or environment damaged) resulting from interactions between natural or human-induced hazards and vulnerable conditions. Conventionally risk is expressed by the notation Risk = Hazards x Vulnerability. Some disciplines also include the concept of exposure to refer particularly to the physical aspects of vulnerability. Beyond expressing a possibility of physical harm, it is crucial to recognize that risks are inherent or can be created or exist within social systems. It is important to consider the social contexts in which risks occur and that people therefore do not necessarily share the same perceptions of risk and their underlying causes. (Source: ISDR)

**Risk Assessment/Analysis:** A methodology to determine the nature and extent of risk by analyzing potential hazards and evaluating existing conditions of vulnerability that could pose a potential threat or harm to people, property, livelihoods and the environment on which they depend. The process of conducting a risk assessment is based on a review of both the technical features of hazards such as their location, intensity, frequency and probability; and also the analysis of the physical, social, economic and environmental dimensions of vulnerability and exposure, while taking particular account of the coping capabilities pertinent to the risk scenarios. (Source: ISDR)

**Scenario:** An account or synopsis of a possible course of events that could occur, which forms the basis for planning assumptions (for example, a river floods, covering a nearby town and wiping out the local population's crop) (Source: IASC Contingency Planning Guidelines 2001)

**Scenario-building:** The process of developing hypothetical scenarios in the context of a contingency planning exercise. (Source: IASC Contingency Planning Guidelines 2001)

**Vulnerability:** The conditions determined by physical, social, economic and environmental factors or processes, which increase the susceptibility of a community to the impact of hazards. (Source: ISDR)

**Notes**

---

## Notes

---



