



OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS

Checklist for OCHA staff in Promoting Recovery Activities at the Onset of a Disaster Response

- Draft -

Background

In the case of the South Asia earthquake, the affected population engaged in spontaneous recovery activities as soon as the conditions permitted. However, in the absence of a predictable support mechanism for early recovery, these spontaneous and sometimes haphazard recovery efforts had the potential to increase the vulnerability of affected people (Pakistan 2005 Earthquake - Early Recovery Framework, UN system Pakistan, November 2005). If recovery experts are on-site and work as a team at the onset of a disaster, they will be able to influence the way relief is provided so that it is more conducive to early recovery, and thus reduce vulnerability in the society.

General Assembly Resolution 46/182 states: *“In order to ensure a smooth transition from relief to rehabilitation and development, emergency assistance should be provided in ways that will be supportive of recovery and long-term development.”* Transition from relief to rehabilitation and development implies not only a handover from relief to recovery at the end of the relief phase but includes incorporation of recovery considerations in the early stages of the relief phase just after the ending of search and rescue activities.

In 2005, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee established a Cluster Working Group on Early Recovery (CWGER) in the framework of Humanitarian Response Review. The objective of the CWGER is to improve the predictability, timeliness, effectiveness, and efficiency of humanitarian and development-related action in the early phases of the humanitarian response to a crisis. The member agencies of CWGER will deploy recovery experts at a disaster site in the early relief phase to carry out early recovery activities.

Furthermore, UNDP, ISDR, ILO, ADRC, IFRC, WB, Japan and OCHA established the International Recovery Platform (IRP), a network of recovery related organizations. The IRP underpins the work of the CWGER by developing common tools, knowledge and capacities for recovery activities.

Taking into account the above developments, OCHA initiated to develop a checklist to support the participation of recovery actors in the relief phase so that they will be able to jump-start the recovery process by organizing early recovery needs assessment, strategizing and planning for a recovery framework. Although OCHA does not carry out recovery activities, OCHA's role in response and response preparedness should promote smoother transfer of responsibilities of coordination from relief to recovery. Therefore, OCHA will act as a catalyst to facilitate the smooth transfer and enhance coordination between relief and recovery actors during the relief phase.

Proposed actions in the checklist are extracted from best practices and lessons learned in past natural disasters and should be developed through further case studies. Although these provide general ideas on how to support recovery activities in the relief phase, specific actions should be determined on a case-by-case basis based on the specific physical situations and social and political context.

Objectives

- To support the participation of recovery actors from the onset of a disaster response
- To enhance coordination between relief and recovery actors

Main Elements

- Get the recovery and environmental experts on board at the onset
- Share information available on relief activities with recovery actors
- Enhance coordination among relief and recovery actors
- Promote a smooth handover taking into consideration residual humanitarian needs

Checklist

- **Get the recovery and environmental experts on board at the onset**
 - To start the recovery process at the onset of a disaster response
 - To carry out transition from relief to recovery in a coordinated manner
- Include recovery experts in the UNDAC / OCHA response team, if requested
 - Best practice**
 - UNDAC-Jamaica, Grenada in 2004 – A UNDP Recovery Advisor took part in the UNDAC team from the first day of the deployment
 - Tsunami in 2004 – Within two weeks of the crisis, the UN dispatched recovery teams to affected areas to begin assessing recovery needs and to support national authorities in recovery planning
- Designate a Recovery Focal Point within the OCHA response team
 - Lessons learned**
 - Currently no structure in OCHA
- Invite recovery actors into coordination meetings
 - Best Practice**
 - UNDAC-Haiti in 2004 – The coordination meetings were co-chaired by UNDAC team and a government official throughout the relief/recovery operations
- Invite recovery experts to field assessment missions to support and facilitate damage and needs assessment for recovery
 - Best Practice**
 - Tsunami in 2004 - UN Special Coordinator for Humanitarian Assistance to the Tsunami-affected Countries was accompanied by a UN DGO representative on several visits to the region to focus immediate attention on early recovery needs
 - Philippine landslide 2006 – UNDAC and others conducted joint field mission where temporary relocation center would be constructed, and gave advice to the Government
- **Share information available on relief activities with recovery actors**
 - To avoid duplication in the collection of baseline data and information, in particular with regard to needs and damage assessment
 - To facilitate the format of data integration of relief and recovery
 - *This part would be revised based on the results of the workshop on information management organized by OCHA in mid June

- Share baseline data and operational information such as security, communications and common logistical systems to avoid duplication in data collection
Lessons learned
 - Tsunami in 2004, Pakistan EQ in 2005 – Insufficient baseline data at the local level hampered both relief and recovery work
- Share information collected by relief team, including OSOCC, HIC and FTS, which is also useful for assessing damage and needs for recovery
Lessons learned
 - Tsunami in 2004 – In the Maldives, the results of damage and needs assessment were not shared with recovery actors deployed at the later stage of the relief phase
 - Pakistan EQ in 2005 - There was little compatibility between FTS and DAD
- **Enhance coordination among relief and recovery actors**
 - To expedite both relief and recovery activities by establishing an inclusive coordination structure
 - To understand the vulnerability of affected areas and promote ways to mitigate impact of future disasters
- Prioritize repairing infrastructure of transportation and small settlements, removing debris to expedite supplying relief goods
- Provide displaced communities with information on progress made and planning to support the smooth return of the internally displaced people
Best Practice
 - Tsunami in 2004 – In Sri Lanka, HIC’s transitional Shelter Site Tracking project, which surveyed the locations and quality of temporary shelters was much appreciated by all concerned
 - Tsunami in 2004 – In the Maldives, OCHA assisted the Government in reinforcing its capacity to deal with IDPs. OCHA also established 15 IDP committees and conducted a training of trainers for all IDP committee members
 - Pakistan EQ in 2005 – UN Country team developed sustainable return strategy to address the needs of IDPs
 - Philippine landslide 2006 – The UN deployed personnel to the municipal disaster coordination center to support the local government in disseminating public information to evacuees
- Involve local governments and communities so that the relief and recovery activities will reflect local needs
Lessons learned
 - Tsunami in 2004 – In Indonesia, victims were not involved in the planning and implementation of relief programmes. Aid sometimes provided regardless of the actual needs
- Engage NGOs (especially local NGOs) in relief and recovery activities
Best Practice
 - Pakistan EQ in 2005 – The UN contacted two local umbrella NGOs to include local NGOs as many as possible**Lessons learned**
 - Tsunami in 2004 – While INGOs participated in information sharing meetings, local NGOs were not well represented

- Identify/define political, cultural and religious realities and sensitivities in-country to avoid tensions between local populations and international emergency relief/recovery teams

Lessons learned

- Tsunami in 2004: Lack of understanding of religious and local habits in some cases led to friction between aid workers and local communities

- Identify future risks in the early relief phase so that recovery activities can be carried out to reduce vulnerability of a society

Best Practice

- Tsunami in 2004, Pakistan EQ in 2005 - Environmental experts were deployed as part of the UNDAC team to identify urgent and life threatening environmental issues

Lessons Learned

- Tsunami in 2004 - In the Maldives, asbestos mixed with other debris hampered recycling of the debris as resources in the reconstruction phase
- Tsunami in 2004 - In Sri Lanka, a lot of money was required to clear waste that had been hastily dumped in wetlands
- Tsunami in 2004 - In Aceh, Indonesia, an entire village was rebuilt with the help of an international NGO to be discovered that the area was un-viable due to subsequent flooding

➤ **Promote a smooth handover taking into consideration residual humanitarian needs**

- To support the design of recovery coordination structures
- To ensure visibility and continuity of humanitarian and recovery efforts after the completion of a CAP or Flash Appeal, vis-à-vis the donors and local populations

- Support planning and setting up coordination structures for recovery phase

Best Practice

- Tsunami in 2004 – UN Special Envoy for Recovery was designated in 2005
- Pakistan EQ in 2005 – The UN supported the Government in establishing a recovery agency (Earthquake Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Authority)

Lessons learned

- Tsunami in 2004 – The concept of an UN Integrated Office needs to be formalized and agreement reached between UN agencies on funding and staff allocation
- Tsunami in 2004 – Reporting lines were not clear. The UNORC, which was supposed to report to the HC in Jakarta, instead reported to the Office of the Special Envoy

- Prepare an exit strategy for OCHA to phase out

Best Practice

- Tsunami in 2004 – OCHA Sri Lanka developed the UNCT transitional strategy paper when it phased out
- Pakistan EQ in 2005 – A detailed roadmap for OCHA's exit strategy elaborated (in progress in 2006)
- Philippine landslide 2006 – UNDAC team formulated mission handover note and action plan

- Prepare handover notes on equipment, financial situations and other administrative matters

Best Practice

- UNDAC-Jamaica in 2004 – A detailed handover list was elaborated on Day 7

- Ensure the continued presence of relief actors into the recovery phase if further humanitarian needs remain

Best Practice

- Pakistan EQ in 2005 – A few international and national OCHA staff are to be placed in the UN Integrated Office (in progress in 2006)

Lessons learned

- Tsunami in 2004 - The high turnover and shortage of staff led to a loss of institutional memory

- Support advocacy with donors to mobilize financial resources for the transition from relief to recovery

Lessons learned

- Generally, it is difficult to obtain enough funds for early recovery activities. Resources for transition and the handover of coordination responsibilities must be planned carefully in order to prevent a disruption of coordination services and timely exit for OCHA