

Enhancing efficiency and effectiveness of Food Security Cluster Coordination

Lesson: Planning and strategy development

Text-only version

In partnership with:

In this lesson

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Learning objectives

At the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- describe the process for preparing a Cluster Response Plan as part of the Humanitarian Response Plan;
- describe pooled funding mechanisms - the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPF); and
- describe the most important international humanitarian standards in a good food security intervention.

Introduction

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Principals have agreed on a list of six core functions for Clusters. These six functions are aimed at "refocusing Clusters on strategic and operational gaps analysis, planning, assessment and results".

(Recommendation 27, IASC, Transformative Agenda)

This lesson focuses on the second of the six core functions of Clusters at country level: **plan and implement Cluster strategies.**



The six core functions

Support service delivery by:

- ✓ providing a platform that ensures service delivery and is driven by the Humanitarian Response Plan and strategic priorities;
- ✓ developing mechanisms to eliminate duplication of activities.

Inform the HC/HCT's strategic decision-making by:

- ✓ preparing needs assessments and analysis of gaps (across and within clusters, using information management tools as needed) to inform the setting of priorities;
- ✓ identifying and finding solutions for (emerging) gaps, obstacles, duplication and cross-cutting issues, including gender, age, disability/diversity, protection, HIV/AIDS and environment;
- ✓ formulating priorities on the basis of analysis.

Plan and implement cluster strategies by:

- ✓ developing sectoral plans, objectives and indicators that directly support realization of the overall response's strategic objectives;
- ✓ applying and adhering to common standards and guidelines;
- ✓ clarifying funding requirements, helping to set priorities, and agreeing cluster contributions to the HC's overall humanitarian funding proposals.

Monitor and evaluate performance by:

- ✓ monitoring and reporting on activities and needs;
- ✓ measuring progress against the cluster strategy and agreed results;
- ✓ recommending corrective action where necessary.

Support robust advocacy by:

- ✓ identifying concerns, and contributing key information and messages to HC and HCT messaging and action;
- ✓ undertaking advocacy on behalf of the cluster, cluster members, and affected people.

Build national capacity in preparedness and contingency planning:

Preparedness is a continuous process. Broadly defined, it includes any action, measure or capacity development that is introduced before an emergency to improve the overall effectiveness, efficiency and timeliness of a response and recovery.

For more information see: the **IASC reference module for Cluster Coordination at country level** <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/coordination/clusters> in section 4 and the **Transformative Agenda Protocol: Common framework for preparedness**

https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/common_framework_for_preparedness.pdf

A collaborative spirit

This lesson focuses on the importance of a **coordinated and collaborative approach** to developing both country and Cluster strategies and plans.

A clear common strategy demonstrates a collective commitment to achieving these shared goals and objectives. A collaborative spirit can help partners to work closely throughout the planning process, agreeing on common strategic priorities so as to avoid any gaps or duplication.

Report on the situation in Aristopulous

- It has been 72 hours since a category 5 typhoon has made landfall on Aristopulous.
- The government of Aristopulous has welcomed international assistance however they have stated this must be carried out in close coordination with the government and that they will give the final approval to any strategy for intervention.
- There is a Humanitarian Coordinator and Humanitarian Country Team in place.
- The Emergency Relief Coordinator has declared an L3 emergency in Aristopulous.
- Clusters that already existed are meeting, additional clusters are likely to be activated.

The humanitarian response planning process

Successful humanitarian response planning makes collective, well informed decisions, to **set the course of the response** and its **coordination**.

The humanitarian response **planning process** is key to ensuring the **coordinated action** of all stakeholders. National and international **stakeholders** (including representatives of the population affected by the disaster or conflict) **work together** to develop a joint plan.



What is a Flash Appeal?

When crises or natural disasters occur, humanitarian partners develop a Flash Appeal to address emergencies in a timely manner. A Flash Appeal is a tool for structuring a coordinated humanitarian response for the first three to six months of an emergency, and appeal for urgent critical funding from donors. It provides an initial joint analysis of situation change, briefly outlines priority actions and initial funding requirements (estimates) and highlights the plan for scaling up the response. A Flash Appeal is issued three to five days after a sudden onset emergency, or in the event of the HC and HCT determining a significant and unforeseen spike in needs or a change in the context of a protracted or slow onset crisis, with the emphasis on timeliness. The appeal provides a concise overview of urgent life-saving needs, and may include early recovery projects that can be implemented within the appeal's time frame.

The Humanitarian Response Plan

What is the Humanitarian Response Plan?

Humanitarian response planning **produces a document** known as the **Humanitarian Response**

Plan (HRP). Humanitarian response plan:

Supports decision-making by the Humanitarian Country Team.

Captures the **shared vision** and big decisions.

Is a **management framework** for ensuring a coordinated response

Is a **living document** that will be **regularly updated** as the situation evolves

Explains the **decision-making process** and the links between needs and response activities.

Sets out **what will be done** and **what will not be done**, to ensure **accountability**.

Is **based upon the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO)**.

Components of the Humanitarian Response Plan

The Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) **has two interlinked components**:

A **country (or context) strategy**, with strategic objectives and indicators¹. ➡ Cluster Response Plans

These two elements outline **how the common strategy will be implemented** by sector partners, and **how much funding is required**.



The indicators will be covered in greater depth in **Lesson “Monitoring and reporting”**.

A country (or context) strategy, with strategic objectives and indicators.

The country strategy sets the **strategic objectives** for the response, and explains how the humanitarian community intends to achieve them. Humanitarian Response Plan seeks to achieve **strategic, coordinated, evidence-based** humanitarian action following the principles of the transformative agenda. It **guides the Cluster Response Plans** as part of the ongoing programme cycle.

The **country strategy** is **formulated by** the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and the Humanitarian Coordination Team (HCT). It is **informed** by the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO), as well as

¹ **Indicator:** Quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable means to measure achievement, so as to reflect the changes connected to an intervention, or help assess the performance of a development actor.

by **Cluster Coordinators** in consultation with sector partners, and depending on the context of the response, by **broad consultation**.

Cluster Response Plans are prepared **after the country strategy**, reflecting the **high-level decisions of the HCT**. They detail how the strategy will be implemented, specifying **how the Clusters will contribute** to the strategic objectives. At the **inter-Cluster** level, different Clusters work together to **agree on how to collaborate** in designing an effective, integrated approach to each of the strategic objectives. Cluster **Coordinators and Cluster partners** formulate the **Cluster Response Plan** and **log frames** in a **specific working session** or similar forum, based on regular consultations. Cluster plans include:

- specific objectives
- activities or projects
- planned outputs
- indicators and targets
- funding requirements

Case study: The Humanitarian Response Plan in Yemen

The 2016 Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan is a good example of how partners have consolidated their strategic focus to prioritize direct, life-saving assistance and protection, according to the population's targeted needs.

Yemen humanitarian planning response strategic objectives

1. Provide life-saving assistance to people in need, prioritizing the most vulnerable

Growing numbers of people in Yemen need humanitarian assistance to ensure their basic survival, as illustrated by major increases in severe food insecurity, acute malnutrition, lack of clean water, displacement and declining health services. In 2016, partners' primary objective will be to provide life-saving assistance, prioritizing the most vulnerable across the country.

2. Promote and advocate protection, access and accountability to and for affected people

Partners in 2016 will incorporate protection outcomes across the humanitarian response, ensuring that all assistance is delivered in a way that promotes the safety and dignity of those it serves and in accordance with humanitarian principles. These efforts will include stronger monitoring and advocacy of humanitarian access, protection risks, humanitarian principles and human rights, as well as improved two-way communication with affected people.

3. Ensure that all response activities promote equitable access for women, girls, boys and men

Humanitarian assistance is delivered strictly based on needs. However, needs-based assistance must also be delivered equitably if it is to be effective. Building on progress in developing gender and age-sensitive plans, partners in 2016 will ensure that these plans are translated into equitable access to assistance for women, girls, boys and men during implementation. Support and tools will be provided to ensure gender and age considerations are incorporated across the programme cycle.

4. Ensure that humanitarian action supports resilience and sustainable recovery

Experience in crises around the world demonstrates the need to link humanitarian assistance to recovery in order to shorten the relief phase. In 2016, partners will strengthen the overall response by undertaking humanitarian activities that support resilience and sustainable recovery. These efforts will mainly focus on surveying and clearing landmines, explosives and debris; strengthening capacity of local humanitarian responders; and supporting livelihoods in affected areas.

Partners are **committed to strengthening joint programming** as a way of addressing complex issues more effectively. An integrated approach is taken, in order to overcome **two major challenges** in Yemen: **internal displacement** and **malnutrition**. We can see that **Cluster objectives** have a **logical relationship** with the overall

| Food security and agriculture Cluster objectives | | HRP strategic objectives (SO). | |
|--|---|--|--|
| 1. Improve availability and access to food for the most vulnerable. | ➡ | ① Save lives, prioritizing the most vulnerable | |
| 2. Ensure equitable access and protection for women, girls, boys and men in all activities. | ➡ | ② Protect civilians and consider protection across the response. | ③ Promote equitable access for women, girls, boys and men. |
| 3. Improve food security by supporting agricultural livelihood systems, strategies and assets. | ➡ | ① Save lives, prioritizing the most vulnerable. | ④ Support resilience and sustainable recovery. |

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| 4. Strengthen capacity of partners, communities and authorities in preparedness and response. | ➡ | ② Protect civilians and consider protection across the response. | ④ Support resilience and sustainable recovery. |
|---|---|--|--|

Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan 2016:

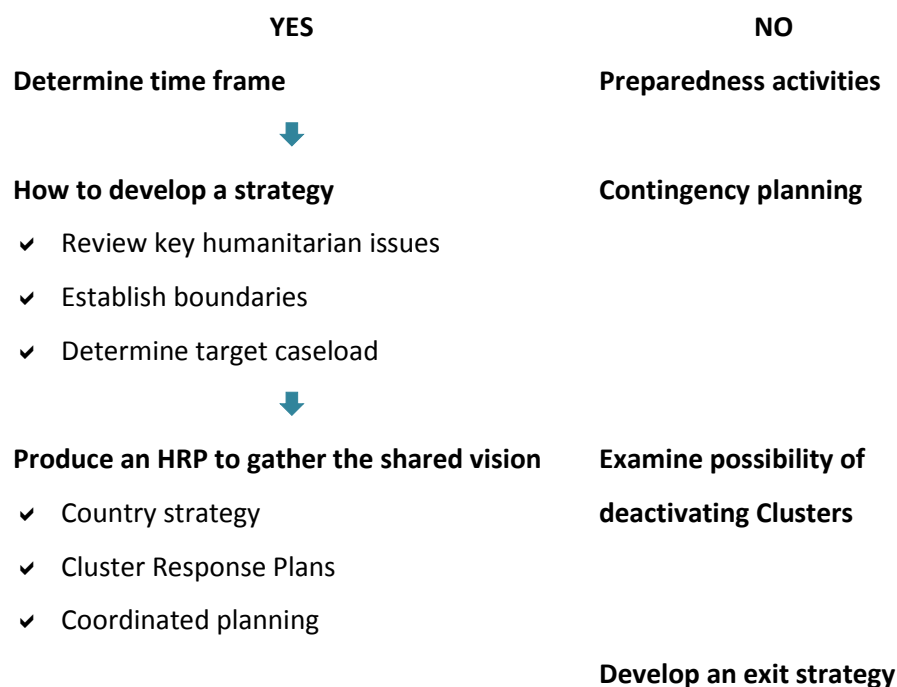
<http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2016%20Yemen%20Humanitarian%20Response%20Plan.pdf>

The Humanitarian Response Plan

There are certain key **decisions** to be taken before starting the humanitarian response planning process.

This diagram shows the **decisions to be made** in the humanitarian response planning process.

Does the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) recommend the development of a Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP)?



The Cluster Response Plan process

1. Inter-Cluster meeting to clarify joint responses

This is held to clarify how Clusters will jointly respond to strategic objectives of the Humanitarian Response Plan.

2. Cluster Coordinators convene partners

Together, the Cluster Coordinators, partners and other relevant stakeholders will determine Cluster objectives according to the HRP strategic objectives, and identify activities.

3. Cluster develops a plan

Clusters then develop a plan that corresponds to the HRP strategy and outlines the Clusters' plans for response in their sector. It also details the way in which cross-cutting dimensions will be integrated into the sector's work.

4. Cluster finalizes objectives, indicators & activities

The Cluster:

- finalizes the Cluster objectives and indicators;
- lists the activities; and
- agrees on a division of labour as the basis for coordinated project planning.

Clusters first **determine their Cluster objectives** and **key activities**, linked to the strategic objectives.

These will then serve as the **basis for partners' project development**.

5. Cluster plan is presented for review

Cluster plans are presented for review by:

- the inter-Cluster coordination group
- the Humanitarian Coordinator
- the Humanitarian Country Team.

6. Partners develop project concept notes

After the strategy has been developed, **coordinated project planning** takes place. Partners develop project concept notes, which correspond to the sector strategic objectives. Starting project planning only after the strategy has been developed ensures that it is based purely on needs analysis, and is unaffected by organizations' fundraising concerns.

7. Project concepts are peer reviewed

Partners' projects are peer reviewed within the Cluster.

8. Total sector budget is built

The total sector budget for each Cluster is built by combining the requested budgets of all approved partners' projects.

Coordinated project planning

A **coordinated planning approach** avoids duplication, ensures a proper division of tasks among partners, and facilitates agreements on criteria for project selection within the Clusters.

⑥ Project concepts are peer reviewed

⑦ Partners develop project concept notes

1. Cluster agrees to an internal division of labour

- To coordinate implementation and ensure **coverage of main needs**.
- **To avoid duplication** - consider those humanitarian actors who are not registering their planned actions on the Online Planning/Projects System (OPS).
- If **government projects** are not included in the plan, outline their main activities in the division of labour to map coverage.

2. Cluster establishes criteria for selection and classification of projects

Establish these criteria in advance, so as to **set the course of the process**, including the concerns expressed by the affected population.

3. Organizations design projects based on assessed needs response

Next, agencies and NGOs upload projects onto the **Online Project System**. OPS is an online project database where all partners' projects are stored and made accessible by donors to guide funding decisions. <https://ops.unocha.org/Home.aspx>

4. Sufficient time is allowed for partners to submit well designed projects

A period of one to two weeks is normally allocated for partners to design their projects. Previous training in how to complete the project format is often provided by OCHA or the Cluster team. Special attention is paid to ensuring that national NGOs have all the support they need to submit their projects.

5. Clusters peer review the projects

- Use is made of the established selection criteria as a basis for vetting.
- It is important to ensure fair and transparent representation in the peer review panel.
- Projects are endorsed only if they address the identified needs, correspond to the agreed division of labour, are reasonably costed, are realistic to implement and do not overlap with other partners' projects.

6. Clusters classify the selected projects

They also set categories such as "now vs later" or "before planting season vs after", enabling the HCT to programme the response so that it prioritizes the most urgent or sensitive requirements. The Cluster Coordinator, backed up by the HC, ensures that the projects are well classified.

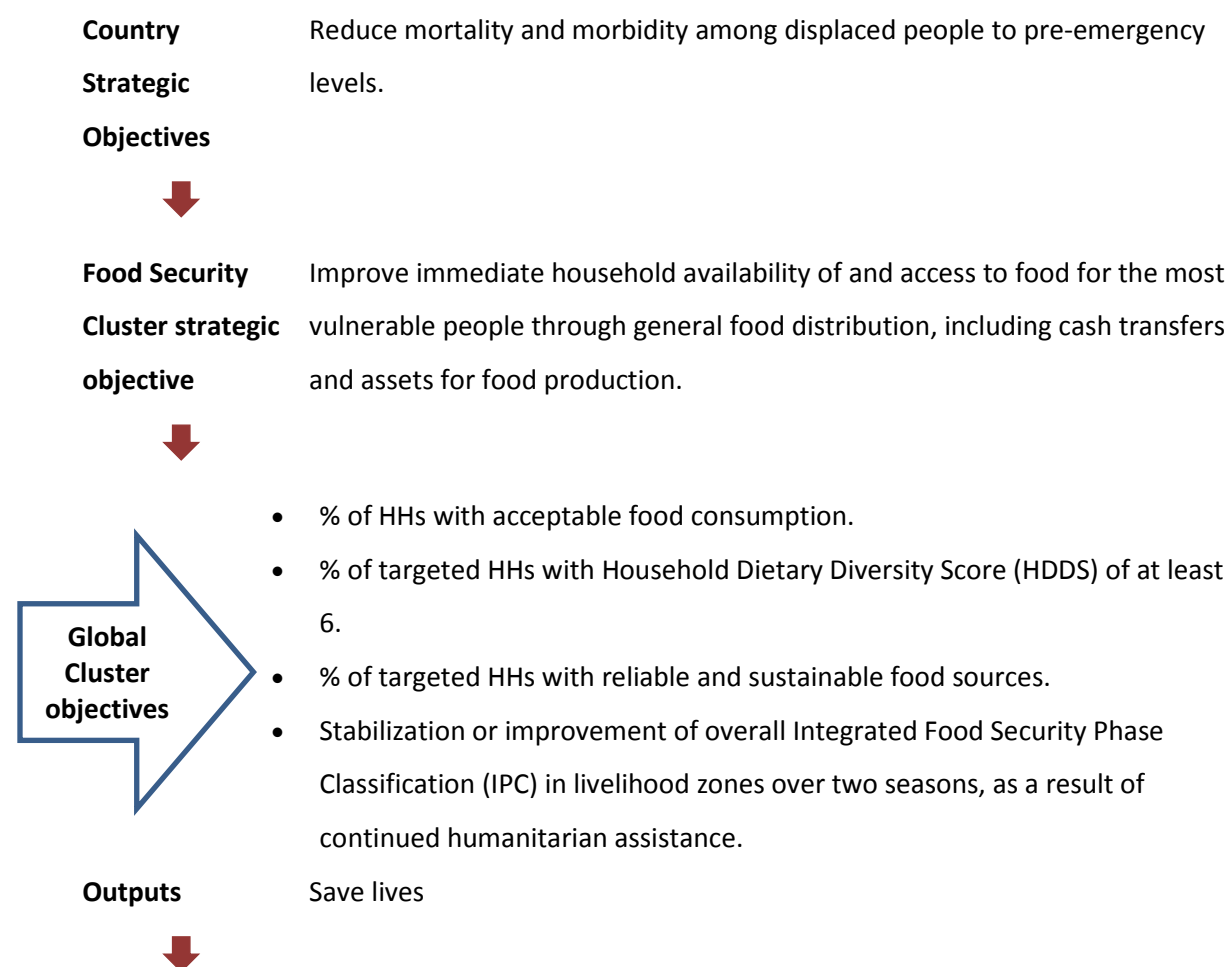
7. OCHA Geneva publishes the approved projects on the FTS website

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Geneva publishes the approved projects on the Financial Tracking Service (FTS) website. The Financial Tracking Service (FTS)

<https://fts.unocha.org/> database tracks funding of the plan, which facilitates transparency in the way that humanitarian funding is provided.

Food Security Cluster objectives and indicators

The following is an example of the relationship between country strategic objectives, Food Security Cluster (FSC) objectives, global Food Security Cluster (gFSC) objectives and indicators.



Outcomes

- Number of beneficiaries receiving food, non-food items, cash transfers and vouchers as % of those planned.
- Quantity of food/value of cash/voucher received by beneficiary household (HH) (and proportion in relation to food basket).
- Quantity of food assistance distributed as % of that planned (unconditional).

Guidance for aligning FSC output/outcome indicators with FSC strategic objectives and country strategic objectives <http://fscluster.org/programme-quality-working-group/document/food-security-cluster-generic-strategic>

The Humanitarian Response Plan as a fundraising tool

The strategic country objectives and Cluster plans form the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), which is the primary **planning tool** for the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT). The HRP serves a secondary purpose as a **fundraising tool**, since it can be shared with donors and partners to communicate the response's strategic priorities.



All **funding information** is recorded in the Financial Tracking Service (FTS) database, which is managed by OCHA, and is available to the public.

From the Humanitarian Response Plan to pooled funds

Each organization can either receive **direct funding from donors**, or obtain **funding from pooled funds**. Most often, humanitarian agencies that have participated in the **HRP** will use it **for fundraising** with bilateral donors. However, in sudden onset humanitarian crisis, or at critical times in a protracted crisis, humanitarian actors in the field can immediately provide life-saving assistance using **pooled funds** managed by OCHA.

There are two types of pooled funds: the **Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)** www.unocha.org/cerf and **Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPF)** www.unocha.org/what-we-do/humanitarian-financing/country-based-pooled-funds

OCHA's management

Funds come from the **voluntary contributions** of **more than 124 countries** and **private sector donors**, and are managed by the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

Faster response to humanitarian needs

OCHA's management of pooled funds allows for a **faster response to humanitarian needs**. In a humanitarian crisis, actors in the field **can immediately provide life-saving assistance** using pooled funds managed by OCHA. These pooled funds enable humanitarian organizations to:

- ✓ provide the **most urgently needed** assistance following a natural disaster;
- ✓ **fill critical response gaps** in countries with large, ongoing humanitarian operations;
- ✓ provide **basic life necessities** for people struggling to survive in many of the world's **forgotten emergencies**.

Pooled funds: CERF and CBPFs

There are **two types** of pooled funds:

- ① **Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)**
- ② **Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPF)**

In one of the major food crises in the Sahel region of Africa, CERF was really the **first large-scale response** to the early warning signals. It was quick, on a real scale. It was a real **game changer**, in terms of both **enabling** the UN system and our NGO partners to respond, and **sending a signal** to donors and governments that the scale of this crisis requires appropriate scale of the response.

Robert Piper, Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sahel, 2013-2015

Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)

CERF receives voluntary contributions year-round to **provide immediate funding to UN agencies** for life-saving humanitarian action anywhere in the world.

In 2004, the Indian Ocean tsunami generated a huge international response, highlighting the **importance of speed and reliability** in funding for emergencies. The outpouring of contributions for people affected by the disaster underscored the fact that **not all crises receive**

CERF was set up to address these challenges by introducing a UN global emergency response fund to deliver funding quickly and **bring greater balance to emergency response**. In 2005, the UN General Assembly created CERF as **part of a broader package of reforms** to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian response.

! CERF **replaces** a loan facility known as the **Central Emergency Revolving Fund**. CERF includes a grant element.

The roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders in CERF

https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/CERF/CERF%203.0%20ROLES%20%20RESPONSIBILITIES_Myanmar.pdf

CERF today

Today, CERF is one of the most **effective** ways of providing assistance, including supplies, basic services and protection for millions of people in need. It is also a lifeline for those caught up in the world's most **neglected, underfunded and long-lasting crises**. CERF can set aside funds for an emergency **within hours of a crisis**, giving frontline humanitarian agencies the resources to **jump-start or accelerate** their work immediately.

For more information about CERF, read the 2015 report **10 Years of Saving Lives Together**

<http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/CERF%2010%20Report.pdf>

CERF criteria

CERF's criteria are a set of guidelines, established through **consultation** with UN agencies, partners and humanitarian colleagues, to assess how well a proposed project responds to critical needs. CERF supported interventions should always be consistent with the **basic humanitarian principles** of Humanity, neutrality, impartiality, independence.

Agencies implementing CERF funded projects should take the following **seven aspects** into consideration.

Vulnerability

The vulnerability of particular groups. Also of special concern in humanitarian crises are boys and girls (including adolescents), elderly women, persons living with HIV, persons with disabilities, the elderly, members of minority and indigenous groups and trafficked persons. In all response sectors, agencies

should ensure the application of gender equity principles that will promote the empowerment and protection of women and girls.

➡ Environment

Given the acknowledged fragility of the natural environment and possibly irreversible deterioration of soil and water quality, agencies are requested to pay maximum attention to the use of funds to avert negative effects on the environment.

➡ Partnership

Interaction and collaboration with governments and national and international NGOs, following the Principles of Partnership.

➡ Empowerment

Empowerment of affected populations. Special consideration should be given to gender and marginalized groups that may be particularly vulnerable in humanitarian crises, such as persons living with HIV, persons with disabilities, the elderly, members of minority and indigenous groups, and trafficked persons.

➡ Principles

Support for the principles of "good humanitarian donorship" and "do no harm".

➡ Sphere project

The Sphere Project: The Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response. This will be discussed in more detail later in this lesson.

➡ Cross-cutting issues

Particular attention should be paid to integrating and giving due consideration to other cross-cutting issues, including human rights and HIV.

Based on this information, the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) confirms what CERF funds will be used for.

Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPF)

CBPFs allow donors to pool their contributions to specific emergencies and can **finance the relief activities of a broad range of partners**, including national and international NGOs. Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPF) are **multi-donor humanitarian financing tools** established by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC).

CBPFs are managed by OCHA at **country level**, under the **leadership** of the **Humanitarian Coordinator (HC)**. Donor contributions to each CBPF are **not earmarked** and are allocated by the HC through an **in-country consultative process**. CBPF **allocations go to** UN agencies, National and international NGOs, Red Cross/Red Crescent organizations

Principles of Country-Based Pooled Funds

CBPFs follow **four principles** to avoid duplication and ensure the complementary use of available CBPF funding:

1. **Inclusiveness:** A **broad range of humanitarian partner organizations** (UN agencies and NGOs) participate in CBPF processes and receive funding to implement projects addressing identified priority needs.
2. **Flexibility:** CBPFs allocate funds and save lives **as humanitarian needs emerge** or escalate
3. **Efficiency:** CBPF processes are managed efficiently to ensure **timely** and **strategic responses** to identified humanitarian needs. CBPFs should employ **effective disbursement mechanisms**, minimizing transaction costs and operating in a **transparent** and **accountable** manner.
4. **Timeliness:** CBPFs can **adapt rapidly** to changing priorities and allow humanitarian partners to identify appropriate solutions to address humanitarian needs in the most effective way.



The OCHA Operational Handbook for CBPFs

The CBPF Operational Handbook sets the minimum global standards for the effective and efficient management of CBPFs, and should be used for all fund planning.

The handbook responds to the need for standardized management arrangements and builds on the vast experience gained by OCHA over the years in managing CBPFs in different country contexts.

<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/documents/operationalhandbook.pdf>

CBPFs: Cluster role and support

Clusters operate according to the terms of reference agreed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and the Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at the Cluster level. **Clusters are involved in three steps** of the fund programme cycle:

Application - When possible, proposals should be developed with **programmatic guidance** from the relevant Cluster Coordinator(s), before the applicant submits them to the fund.

Strategic review - Cluster Coordinators ensure that the strategic review of projects is carried out as agreed, contributing to the technical review of project proposals and promoting the systematic use of relevant standard indicators for projects.

Monitoring & reporting - Clusters participate in **field monitoring visits** to support the technical assessment of implemented projects according to the provisions of the accountability framework endorsed by the HC in each country.

They support CBPFs at **two levels**:

Strategic level (to ensure there are linkages between the fund, the HRP and Cluster agencies).

Operational level (to provide technical expertise to the process of project prioritization and technical review).

Common Humanitarian Funds (CHF)

In 2005, the humanitarian reform initiative called for the piloting of a new type of fund - a Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF) - with the aim of making funding more flexible and predictable, in accordance with the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) principles. The CHFs:

- ✓ Support **immediate and urgent** humanitarian needs.
- ✓ Are intended to **complement other funding channels**.
- ✓ Support **understanding, coordination and collaboration both within and between** Clusters and humanitarian organizations.
- ✓ Facilitate stronger **humanitarian leadership** by HCs based on strategic planning and the identification of needs in-country.

Do not support early recovery or development assistance.

The CHF was piloted in Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 2006. With the addition of funds working in the Central African Republic (CAR), Somalia and South Sudan, there are now **five CHFs**.

Good Humanitarian Donorship principles: www.ghdinitiative.org/ghd/gns/principles-good-practice-of-ghd/principles-good-practice-ghd.html

There are three main steps to use of CHF funds:

1. The Humanitarian Coordinator publishes a standard allocation document and interested organizations submit proposals to the relevant Clusters.
2. The Cluster Coordinator and the Cluster Review Committees review, prioritize and submit recommendations to OCHA.

3. OCHA then reviews the projects and the HC makes a final decision.

Between 2006 and 2011, **21 different UN agencies received funding** from CHF. Of this, 62.6% (US\$577.9 million) was channelled to United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations via the Sudan and DRC funds.

As with CERF and CBPFs, CHF supported interventions must be consistent with the basic humanitarian principles of **humanity, neutrality and impartiality**.

Case study: CHF in Somalia

In **Somalia**, the CHF funds national and international NGOs and UN humanitarian agencies, targeting activities to address what have been identified as the most urgent and critical humanitarian needs, in alignment with the Somalia Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). The CHF supports life-saving critical gaps and responds to early warning signals. Examples of CHF achievements include:

- ✓ **Nutrition treatment programmes** to children under 5 and breastfeeding women
- ✓ **Vaccinations** to children and women of child-bearing age
- ✓ **Provision** of shelter, essential household items, safe drinking water, etc. to **internally displaced persons**

The human right to adequate food

The right of everyone to have adequate food and be free from hunger is recognized in international legal instruments. If individuals or groups, for reasons beyond their control, are unable to enjoy the right to adequate food by the means at their disposal, states have the obligation to ensure that right directly.

In the case of **disasters**, states should **provide food** to those in need, or may **request international assistance** if their own resources do not suffice. They should also facilitate **safe and unimpeded access for international assistance**.

The **international humanitarian standards** describe conditions that must be achieved in any humanitarian response in order for disaster affected populations to survive and recover, in stable conditions and with dignity.

The **Geneva Conventions** and additional protocols include access to food in situations of **armed conflict and occupation**.

The standards have been a subject of debate for decades. This is an **organic debate** that is ongoing and **under constant review**, since many questions persist.

The Sphere Project

The Sphere Project (or Sphere) was launched in 1997 as a **voluntary initiative** seeking to improve the **quality** of humanitarian assistance during disaster response, as well as the **accountability** of humanitarian actors. Sphere is a **community** of humanitarian response practitioners, governed by a board of 18 humanitarian agencies.

The Sphere Project website www.sphereproject.org

The project is structured around **three fundamental elements**:

- Humanitarian Charter
- Protection principles
- Core standards.

1. Humanitarian Charter

The Humanitarian Charter is the cornerstone of the Sphere Handbook, and lays the foundation for all that follows. It is considered indispensable reading for all humanitarian practitioners. The Charter is an expression of the current consensus of the humanitarian community and captures the ethical and legal foundations of humanitarian action.

The Humanitarian Charter: www.sphereproject.org/sphere/en/handbook/the-humanitarian-charter

Five renowned cartoonists were commissioned to produce drawings illustrating the key messages of the Humanitarian Charter: www.sphereproject.org/handbook/the-humanitarian-charter/humanitarian-charter-cartoons/

2. Protection Principles

There are **four Protection Principles**, which underpin all humanitarian action and encompass the basic elements of protection in the context of humanitarian response.

- ✓ Avoid exposing people to further harm as a result of your actions.
- ✓ Ensure people's access to impartial assistance - in proportion to need and without discrimination.
- ✓ Protect people from physical and psychological harm arising from violence and coercion.

- ✓ Assist people to claim their rights, access available remedies and recover from the effects of abuse.

Sphere Project Handbook Protection Principles chapter www.spherehandbook.org/en/how-to-use-this-chapter-5/

3. Core Standards

Core Standards are essential process standards shared by all sectors. They are a **practical expression of the principles** of the Humanitarian Charter, and provide a **reference point** for approaches that underpin all the standards in the Sphere Project Handbook. Until recently, the Sphere project was based upon **six core standards**.

1: People-centred humanitarian response

People's capacity and strategies to survive with dignity are integral to the design and approach of humanitarian response.

Key actions (to be read in conjunction with the guidance notes)

- Support local capacity by identifying community groups and social networks at the earliest opportunity and build on community-based and self-help initiatives (see guidance note 1).
- Establish systematic and transparent mechanisms through which people affected by disaster or conflict can provide regular feedback and influence programmes (see guidance note 2).
- Ensure a balanced representation of vulnerable people in discussions with the disaster-affected population (see guidance note 3).
- Provide information to the affected population about the humanitarian agency, its project(s) and people's entitlements in an accessible format and language (see guidance note 4).
- Provide the affected population with access to safe and appropriate spaces for community meetings and information-sharing at the earliest opportunity (see guidance note 5).
- Enable people to lodge complaints about the programme easily and safely and establish transparent, timely procedures for response and remedial actions (see guidance note 6).
- Wherever feasible, use local labour, environmentally sustainable materials and socially responsible businesses to benefit the local economy and promote recovery.
- Design projects, wherever possible, to accommodate and respect helpful cultural, spiritual and traditional practices regarded as important by local people (see guidance note 7).
- Progressively increase disaster-affected people's decision-making power and ownership of programmes during the course of a response.

<http://www.spherehandbook.org/en/core-standard-1-people-centred-humanitarian-response/>

2: Coordination and collaboration

Humanitarian response is planned and implemented in coordination with the relevant authorities, humanitarian agencies and civil society organisations engaged in impartial humanitarian action, working together for maximum efficiency, coverage and effectiveness.

Key actions (to be read in conjunction with the guidance notes)

- Participate in general and any applicable sectoral coordination mechanisms from the outset (see guidance notes 1–2).
- Be informed of the responsibilities, objectives and coordination role of the state and other coordination groups where present (see guidance note 3).
- Provide coordination groups with information about the agency's mandate, objectives and programme.
- Share assessment information with the relevant coordination groups in a timely manner and in a format that can be readily used by other humanitarian agencies (see Core Standard 3).
- Use programme information from other humanitarian agencies to inform analysis, selection of geographical area and response plans.
- Regularly update coordination groups on progress, reporting any major delays, agency shortages or spare capacity (see guidance note 4).
- Collaborate with other humanitarian agencies to strengthen advocacy on critical shared humanitarian concerns.
- Establish clear policies and practice regarding the agency's engagement with non-humanitarian actors, based on humanitarian principles and objectives (see guidance note 5).

<http://www.spherehandbook.org/en/core-standard-2-coordination-and-collaboration/>

3: Assessment

The priority needs of the disaster-affected population are identified through a systematic assessment of the context, risks to life with dignity and the capacity of the affected people and relevant authorities to respond.

Key actions (to be read in conjunction with the guidance notes)

- Find and use pre-disaster information about local humanitarian capacity, the affected and wider population, context and other pre-existing factors that may increase people's susceptibility to the disaster (see guidance note 1).

- Carry out an initial assessment immediately, building on pre-disaster information to assess changes in the context caused by the disaster, identifying any new factors that create or increase vulnerability (see guidance note 2).
- Carry out a rapid assessment as soon as possible, following up with subsequent in-depth assessments as time and the situation allow (guidance note 3).
- Disaggregate population data by, at the very least, sex and age (see guidance note 4).
- Listen to an inclusive range of people in the assessment - women and men of all ages, girls, boys and other vulnerable people affected by the disaster as well as the wider population (see Core Standard 1 and guidance notes 5-6).
- Participate in multisectoral, joint or inter-agency assessments wherever possible.
- Gather information systematically, using a variety of methods, triangulate with information gathered from a number of sources and agencies and document the data as they are collected (see guidance note 7).
- Assess the coping capacity, skills, resources and recovery strategies of the affected people (see guidance note 8).
- Assess the response plans and capacity of the state.
- Assess the impact of the disaster on the psychosocial well-being of individuals and communities.
- Assess current and potential safety concerns for the disaster-affected population and aid workers, including the potential for the response to exacerbate a conflict or create tension between the affected and host populations (see guidance note 9).
- Share assessment data in a timely manner and in a format that is accessible to other humanitarian agencies (see Core Standard 2 and guidance note 10).

<http://www.spherehandbook.org/en/core-standard-3-assessmen/>

4: Design and response

The humanitarian response meets the assessed needs of the disaster-affected population in relation to context, the risks faced and the capacity of the affected people and state to cope and recover.

Key actions (to be read in conjunction with the guidance notes)

- Design the programme based on an impartial assessment of needs, context, the risks faced and the capacity of the affected population (see Core Standard 3).
- Design the programme to meet needs that cannot or will not be met by the state or the affected people (see guidance note 1).

- Prioritise life-saving actions that address basic, urgent survival needs in the immediate aftermath of a disaster.
- Using disaggregated assessment data, analyse the ways in which the disaster has affected different individuals and populations, and design the programme to meet their particular needs.
- Design the response so that vulnerable people have full access to assistance and protection services (see guidance note 2).
- Ensure that the programme design and approach supports all aspects of the dignity of the affected individuals and populations (see Core Standard 1 and guidance note 3).
- Analyse all contextual factors that increase people's vulnerability, designing the programme to progressively reduce their vulnerability (see Core Standard 3 and guidance note 4).
- Design the programme to minimise the risk of endangering people, worsen the dynamics of a conflict or create insecurity or opportunities for exploitation and abuse (see guidance note 5 and Protection Principle 1).
- Progressively close the gap between assessed conditions and the Sphere minimum standards, meeting or exceeding Sphere indicators (see guidance note 6).
- Design programmes that promote early recovery, reduce risk and enhance the capacity of affected people to prevent, minimise or better cope with the effects of future hazards (see guidance note 7).
- Continually adapt the programme to maintain relevance and appropriateness (see Core Standard 5).
- Enhance sustained recovery by planning for and communicating exit strategies with the affected population during the early stages of programme implementation.

<http://www.spherehandbook.org/en/core-standard-4-design-and-response>

5: Performance, transparency and learning

The performance of humanitarian agencies is continually examined and communicated to stakeholders; projects are adapted in response to performance.

Key actions (to be read in conjunction with the guidance notes)

- Establish systematic but simple, timely and participatory mechanisms to monitor progress towards all relevant Sphere standards and the programme's stated principles, outputs and activities (see guidance note 1).
- Establish basic mechanisms for monitoring the agency's overall performance with respect to the agency's management and quality control systems (see guidance note 2).

- Monitor the outcomes and, where possible, the early impact of a humanitarian response on the affected and wider populations (see guidance note 3).
- Establish systematic mechanisms for adapting programme strategies in response to monitoring data, changing needs and an evolving context (see guidance note 4).
- Conduct periodic reflection and learning exercises throughout the implementation of the response.
- Carry out a final evaluation or other form of objective learning review of the programme, with reference to its stated objectives, principles and agreed minimum standards (see guidance note 5).
- Participate in joint, inter-agency and other collaborative learning initiatives wherever feasible.
- Share key monitoring findings and, where appropriate, the findings of evaluation and other key learning processes with the affected population, relevant authorities and coordination groups in a timely manner (see guidance note 6).

<http://www.spherehandbook.org/en/core-standard-5-performance-transparency-and-learning>

6: Aid worker performance

Humanitarian agencies provide appropriate management, supervisory and psychosocial support, enabling aid workers to have the knowledge, skills, behaviour and attitudes to plan and implement an effective humanitarian response with humanity and respect.

Key actions (to be read in conjunction with the guidance notes)

- Provide managers with adequate leadership training, familiarity with key policies and the resources to manage effectively (see guidance note 1).
- Establish systematic, fair and transparent recruitment procedures to attract the maximum number of appropriate candidates (see guidance note 2).
- Recruit teams with a balance of women and men, ethnicity, age and social background so that the team's diversity is appropriate to the local culture and context.
- Provide aid workers (staff, volunteers and consultants, both national and international) with adequate and timely inductions, briefings, clear reporting lines and updated job descriptions to enable them to understand their responsibilities, work objectives, organisational values, key policies and local context.
- Establish security and evacuation guidelines, health and safety policies and use them to brief aid workers before they start work with the agency.
- Ensure that aid workers have access to medical care and psychosocial support.

- Establish codes of personal conduct for aid workers that protect disaster-affected people from sexual abuse, corruption, exploitation and other violations of people's human rights. Share the codes with disaster-affected people (see guidance note 3).
- Promote a culture of respect towards the disaster-affected population (see guidance note 4).
- Establish grievance procedures and take appropriate disciplinary action against aid workers following confirmed violation of the agency's code of conduct.
- Carry out regular appraisals of staff and volunteers and provide feedback on performance in relation to work objectives, knowledge, skills, behaviour and attitudes.
- Support aid workers to manage their workload and minimise stress (see guidance note 5).
- Enable staff and managers to jointly identify opportunities for continual learning and development (see guidance note 6).
- Provide appropriate support to aid workers who have experienced or witnessed extremely distressing events (see guidance note 7).

<http://www.spherehandbook.org/en/core-standard-6-aid-worker-performance>

In November 2014, the Sphere Project board endorsed the **Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS)** which is the result of a Joint Standards Initiative (JSI) created between the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International, People In Aid and the Sphere Project, to make implementation of standards simpler and more coherent. The CHS was based on a global consultation with more than 2 000 humanitarian workers, and draws on and replaces several existing humanitarian standards and commitments, including the Sphere Core Standards. The CHS sets out **nine commitments**

The Sphere Core Standards will remain in place until the CHS key indicators and guidance notes are fully tested and ready for use by field workers.



HAP International and CHS Alliance

In 2002, The Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) International was established as the humanitarian sector's first **international self-regulatory body**. The **Core Humanitarian Standards Alliance (CHS Alliance)** was formed in 2015 through a merger between People In Aid and HAP International. The CHS Alliance works with humanitarian and development actors to improve the effectiveness and impact of assistance to crisis affected and vulnerable people. The Alliance brings together more than two decades of experience supporting the sector in applying standards and good practices. Creating a truly global enterprise, it already has a membership of

more than 240 organizations that are headquartered in 55 capitals and operating in more than 160 countries worldwide. CHS Alliance website: www.chsalliance.org

Food Security and Nutrition Standards

The **minimum standards for food security and nutrition** are a practical expression of the shared beliefs and commitments of humanitarian agencies, and of the common principles, rights and duties governing humanitarian action set out in the Humanitarian Charter. These standards must be **used consistently with the Sphere Project Protection Principles and Core Standards**.

For each set of minimum standards, there are key actions and key indicators, which should be used alongside the **guidance notes**. Food security standards consider the resources required to meet the **food needs** of both the general population and specific **vulnerable people** at increased nutritional risk.

Four sets of minimum standards:

Food security and nutrition assessment

Infant and young feeding

Food security (divided into food transfers, cash and voucher transfers and livelihoods)

Management of acute malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies

The minimum standards in food security and nutrition are described in detail in the Sphere Handbook www.spherehandbook.org/en/how-to-use-this-chapter-3

Summary

In this lesson you have learned about the process from the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) through the development of the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and the development of Cluster Response Plans.

The steps to prepare a Cluster Response Plan start with a meeting between Clusters, to define areas of responsibility. The Cluster partners then convene to develop and plan, finalizing objectives, indicators and activities. After the plan is agreed, the process of collaborative project planning and budgeting is undertaken.

The two most important pooled funds we have considered are CERF (the Central Emergency Response Fund) and CBPFs (Country-Based Pooled Funds), although in the five countries where they operate, CHFs (Common Humanitarian Funds) also play an important role.

You have explored the various humanitarian standards, and the communities and organizations whose role it is to define and continually refine these.