



**IASC** Inter-Agency  
Standing Committee

# perational Guidance for Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crises

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Along with emergency preparedness, the timeliness, accuracy and credibility of assessments help determine an effective humanitarian response. The *Operational Guidance for Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crises* has been developed by the IASC Needs Assessment Task Force (NATF) to enhance preparedness and provide guidance on how to coordinate assessments in complex emergencies and natural disasters.

## Structure of the Operational Guidance

The Operational Guidance is structured as follows:

- Background on purpose, audience and scope;
- Definition of coordinated assessments;
- Description of roles, responsibilities and key actions;
- Recommendations on the types of coordinated assessments and standard operating procedures by phase;
- Preparedness activities.

## Definitions

**Coordinated assessments** are assessments that are planned and carried out by humanitarian actors in partnership, in order to document the impact of a particular crisis and identify the needs of the affected population, with the results shared with the broader humanitarian community. These may be joint assessments in which agencies work together to produce a single report or harmonized assessments in which agencies produce separate assessments that are sufficiently comparable to be collated.

Coordinated assessments allow organizations to obtain a more comprehensive and precise picture of needs and gaps; use resources more efficiently; better guide donor funding; promote inter-agency learning and preparedness; minimize beneficiary "assessment fatigue"; and support shared monitoring processes.

### Key actions for coordinated assessments

- 1 Establish an assessment coordination structure at inter-Cluster/Sector and Cluster/Sector levels. An Assessment Working Group, open to IASC members and chaired by OCHA, may be established to: design, plan and manage joint multi-cluster initial/rapid assessments; support assessment coordination and promote harmonisation across Clusters/Sectors; share results; and promote partnerships with national authorities.
- 2 Establish a process for collating primary and secondary data from multiple assessments using Common Operational Datasets (CODs). Information should be collected on agreed-upon indicators with the results published on the Humanitarian Dashboard sector pages.
- 3 Establish a process for conducting an intra- and inter-cluster analysis of assessment data. Sectoral analysis should be followed by inter-sector analysis performed by the ICCM and supported by the Humanitarian Country Team.

### Key actions for harmonized assessments

- 1 Coordinate the location of assessments to ensure complete data sets for a set of locations, and the timing of assessments to allow for inter-sectoral analysis.
- 2 Use a consistent set of CODs to facilitate interpretation and comparison.
- 3 Use a consistent set of agreed qualitative and quantitative sectoral indicators based on who needs the information and for what purposes. The disaggregation of data by age, sex and diversity is vital in all phases of an assessment.

### Key actions for joint assessments

- 1 Agree, in consultation with government counterparts, on a process for preparing, launching, organising, managing and disseminating the results of a joint assessment including clear and agreed roles and responsibilities.
- 2 Jointly design and plan the assessment including the data collection methodology (purpose, analysis plan, sampling, coverage, collection instruments and questionnaire questions). Where possible generic assessment forms should be adapted to the context.
- 3 Jointly collect, analyse and interpret assessment data with prior identification and training of those tasked with collecting the data.
- 4 All participants must verify and clear the results before dissemination (incrementally where relevant); prior to this the report must remain strictly confidential. Final results must be communicated rapidly and widely in an easy-to-understand manner. The report must be clear about gaps in the analysis/data, translated into a common or local language where possible and the raw data made available.

### Principles for coordinated assessments

Coordinated assessments should:

- 1 Aim to identify immediate humanitarian priorities (based on gaps between the situation and the SPHERE Standard) by examining the needs and capacities of affected people, and the capacity of relevant authorities.
- 2 Promote the ownership/engagement of national and local authorities.
- 3 Ideally be undertaken with preparedness measures undertaken in advance.
- 4 Build on existing data.
- 5 Be designed with situation and performance monitoring in mind.

- 6 Collect the exact amount of data required for decision-making.
- 7 Be participatory, tailored to the local context and communicated transparently.
- 8 Address cross-cutting issues and account for the needs of vulnerable groups.
- 9 Be planned in consultation with information management specialists.
- 10 Support contextual analysis supported through open-ended questions.
- 11 Occur alongside early recovery activities including rapid-impact interventions.

### Roles and responsibilities in coordinated assessments

Responsible	Activity
Humanitarian Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Coordinate emergency assessments across clusters/sectors at the country level</li> <li>2. Appoint a focal point for the initial assessment</li> <li>▶ 3. Promote the use of coordinated assessment tools and services</li> <li>4. Share assessment data across clusters/sectors</li> <li>5. Decide on strategic priorities</li> </ul>
Cluster/sector lead agencies at the country level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Coordinate needs assessment and analysis within clusters/sectors</li> <li>▶ 2. Establish an internal mechanism for intra-cluster/sector assessment planning, implementation, analysis and coordination</li> <li>3. Integrate cross-cutting issues</li> </ul>
Clusters/sector coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support inter-cluster/sector assessment</li> <li>▶ 2. Coordinate/promote the use/harmonisation of intra-cluster/sector assessments and data sharing within clusters/sectors</li> </ul>
Inter-Cluster Coordination Mechanism (ICCM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lead the MIRA, promote the harmonisation of assessments</li> <li>▶ 2. Promote the harmonisation of assessments</li> <li>3. initiate the joint collection data</li> <li>4. Form a Assessment and Information Working Group if required</li> </ul>
Individual organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 1. Support joint assessments and/or harmonise individual assessments;</li> <li>2. Share information on assessments within clusters/sectors</li> </ul>
Cluster/sector leads and OCHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 1. May request the deployment of NATF-trained individuals for additional support</li> </ul>

### Approaches and procedures for coordinated assessments

The Assessment Framework distinguishes between assessments carried out in four phases and presents the approach to be taken in each. Reports and findings from each phase should inform subsequent phases.

#### **P** hase 1: first 72 hours – Preliminary Scenario Definition

An initial coordinated assessment should establish the scale and severity of a crisis, forecast its evolution, locate affected populations and identify key affected sectors. Assessments are based mostly on pre-existing secondary data sources but also primary data including remote sensing and direct observation of limited sites. The resultant Preliminary Scenario Definition should be widely shared. It should inform initial response and funding decisions, contribute to a multi-sectoral analysis and be condensed to form an initial Humanitarian Dashboard.

#### **P** hase 2: first 2 weeks – Multi Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA)

A Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) is undertaken based on a coordinated methodology agreed on by clusters/sectors under the leadership of the ICCM. The assessment will draw on primary field data collected jointly from selected locations across affected areas. This data is managed according to a pre-arranged format and structured by relevance. Secondary data to be used as appropriate. This data will be combined with

single-agency harmonized assessments in a database. The ICCM will interpret cross cluster/sector data. The resultant MIRA Report should be widely shared and inform initial situation reports and key messages by the ERC. The assessment data will be available to participating clusters/sectors. Unit of measurement: community and institution.

### **P** hase 3: week 3 and onwards – Single cluster/sector coordinated in-depth needs assessment

Each cluster/sector should coordinate a joint (or at a minimum harmonised) Single-Cluster/Sector In-Depth Needs Assessment. More primary data collection should occur with information coming from (re)-established information systems and additional Community Level Assessments. Data is to be compiled into a routinely updated database based on an agreed Key Indicator Table. The data should be analysed by each Cluster/Sector under the leadership of the Cluster/Sector Coordinator, followed by a multi-cluster/sector analysis by the ICCM. The results and data should be shared widely and used in decision-making. Unit of measurement: household and individual.

### **P** hase 4: Week 4 onwards - Addressing recovery needs

Essentially a continuation of phase 3, phase 4 differs in that early recovery considerations are more explicitly and formally integrated in the Cluster/Sector assessments and analysis. Formal Post Disaster or Post Conflict Needs Assessments (PCNA/PCNA) may be carried out on the request of the government. Recovery considerations must be integrated into humanitarian assessments and programming.

## Preparing for coordinated assessments

Assessment preparedness should be part of a broader inter-agency planning process. Preparedness activities should: identify participating agencies/organisations; agree on rapid assessment tools; discuss how results will be collated and shared; and define how cluster/sector members address needs assessments.

The following activities are recommended in planning coordinated assessments:

- Raise awareness about and advocate the use of coordinated assessments;
- Agree on assessment coordination structures making use of existing coordination mechanisms;
- Review existing assessment planning;
- Agree on standard operating procedures for assessments including draft terms of reference for an Assessment Working Group;
- Prepare the Common Operational Datasets
- Identify which Key Humanitarian Indicators will be collected;
- Compile baseline data and risk analyses, and share it through the Dashboard;
- Develop assessment tools and a data collection methodology for each phase, and revise them on the basis of stakeholder feedback and field tests.
- Organise logistics and human resources including agreements for funding, transportation and equipment. Identify team participants and train capacity;
- Define the parameters of the assessment design;
- Develop a process for communicating findings.

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