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IMPLEMENTING EARLY RECOVERY
Early recovery is a vital element of an effective humanitarian response. It is an integrated, inclusive and coordinated approach to gradually turn the dividends of humanitarian action into sustainable crisis recovery, resilience building and development opportunities.

The IASC Principals requested UNDP, as Chair of the Cluster Working Group on Early Recovery (CWGER), to identify recommendations to strengthen early recovery as an integral part of humanitarian response.

The following recommendations were endorsed by the IASC Principals in 2013 after a broad consultation process.

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The IASC established the CWGER in 2005 with the aim of enhancing the global capacity for developing relief and recovery-related interventions, enhancing the impact of development interventions, and integrating risk reduction measures at the very early stages of emergency response and beyond.

The CWGER is chaired by UNDP and is comprised of 31 active global partners from the humanitarian and development communities, including representatives of UN Agencies, Red Cross Movement, and NGOs.

In 2006 the IASC WG endorsed the establishment of the “early recovery network” at the country level to assist in organizing the multi-sectoral dimension of early recovery. The IASC WG re-affirmed in 2008 and 2009 the importance for all cluster lead agencies, at both global and country levels, to strengthen the integration of early recovery in humanitarian planning and implementation. Early recovery is progressively being integrated by various clusters into their policy guidelines, training materials, and other important processes, including in needs assessment methodologies and frameworks.

The CWGER work agenda has focused on four main lines of action: 1: Providing direct strategic and coordination support to Humanitarian Coordinators, Resident Coordinators, DSRSGs, Humanitarian Country Teams and Cluster Lead Agencies at country level; 2: Defining and coordinating the work in the areas of early recovery not covered by other clusters (e.g. governance, non-agricultural livelihoods); 3: Providing support and guidance on integrating early

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1 Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict (11 June 2009)

2 This is reflected in: 1) **Principle 9 of the Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship**: “Provide humanitarian assistance in ways that are supportive of recovery and long-term development, striving to ensure support, where appropriate, to the maintenance and return of sustainable livelihoods and transitions from humanitarian relief to recovery and development activities”, and 2) **Principle 8 of The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief**: “Relief aid must strive to reduce future vulnerabilities to disaster as well as meeting basic needs. All relief actions affect the prospects for long term development, either in a positive or a negative fashion. Recognizing this, we will strive to implement relief programmes which actively reduce the beneficiaries’ vulnerability to future disasters and help create sustainable lifestyles. We will pay particular attention to environmental concerns in the design and management of relief programmes. We will also endeavour to minimize the negative impact of humanitarian assistance, seeking to avoid long-term beneficiary dependence upon external aid.”
recovery in the work of other clusters; and 4: Influencing the global policy agendas on bridging financial, capacity and strategic gaps for early recovery.

Existing challenges related to the support and coordination architecture of early recovery have been identified in a series of evaluations and discussions on early recovery such as the UNDP Early Recovery Review, CWGER 2009-2010 Lessons Learned exercise, the Cluster Evaluation Phase II (CE2), the inter-cluster workshop on Early Recovery coordination (Montreux, June 2010), and the subsequent draft 2011 Early Recovery Inter-Cluster Action Plan (ERICAP), and the workshop on ‘The Way Forward’ (February 2011).

The inter-cluster workshop on ‘The Way Forward’ for Early Recovery addressed the challenges and recommended actions, provided general recommendations and suggested next steps. The recommendations and next steps were further defined and clarified in the global cluster coordination meeting on strengthening early recovery held in March 2012.

There is widespread agreement as to the importance of the early recovery approach in response to humanitarian crises; to its place alongside emergency relief in the humanitarian response\(^1\) as the foundation for building resilience of women, men, boys and girls in a post-crisis context; to the need to link the relief phase to the development phase and bring their respective actors to better coordinate their work; to the need to reconcile early recovery and longer-term recovery\(^2\). While the acceptance of the concept is strong, there remained issues to be addressed regarding how the early recovery approach is designed, integrated, coordinated and supported at global, national and local levels to help better serve the needs of populations affected by crises and to help lay the foundations for real improvements in their lives for the medium and long term.

Early recovery is today mainstreamed by all programmatic clusters to a much greater extent than it used to be. Efforts towards mainstreaming should be pursued and intensified in order to influence the recovery agenda, support swift transition and ensure a joined-up approach with all relevant actors. However, the translation of common strategic plans into coordinated programmes and projects remains a challenge.

In accordance with the priorities identified by the IASC Principals in the Transformative Agenda, strong leadership has been identified as critical when it comes to joint strategic planning, providing an opportunity to incorporate early recovery in the initial planning for a response to a larger scale emergency, as well as to build a common vision among a range of stakeholders. The integration of early recovery in assessments and planning processes is noted for its contribution to accountability and to achieve collective results, to identify joint early recovery programming opportunities, to mobilise resources, and as a basis for future planning, monitoring and coordination. Streamlined early recovery coordination mechanisms must be adapted to contexts and operational requirements to better facilitate a multi-stakeholder response.
Early recovery is a vital element of an effective humanitarian crisis response. Early recovery addresses recovery needs during the humanitarian phase, using humanitarian mechanisms in accordance with development principles.

It is an integrated, inclusive, and coordinated approach to gradually turn the dividends of humanitarian action into sustainable crisis recovery, resilience building and development opportunities. Just as emergency relief activities are crucial to saving lives by addressing the most urgent human needs, using an early recovery approach within humanitarian operations is crucial to the first efforts of a community to recover and build their resilience. It eventually serves as a basis for an effective ‘exit strategy’ for humanitarian actors and contributes to ‘durable solutions’ by establishing the base on which nationally-led development occurs after a crisis.

Integrating early recovery into humanitarian operations:

- Avoids institutionalization of the emergency and a protracted state of dependency
- Augments relief, framing a longer-term vision consistent with national development priorities
- Aims to shorten the time span of the emergency phase while jump-starting efforts to foster social cohesion and restore livelihoods
- Aims to reduce vulnerability of individuals, communities and local/national institutions’ to future crises
- Supports socio-economic processes to contribute to life-saving response and recovery, simultaneously
- Strengthens the national foundations for building resilience, and enables national authorities to engage in own humanitarian and recovery programmes as soon as possible after a crisis.
- Reinforces the ability of national actors at all levels to be prepared for and respond to future emergencies

Early recovery is both a set of specific actions to help people to move away from a dependence on humanitarian relief towards self-reliance and their own development. It is an approach focused on building resilience, re-building capacity, and contributing to solving, not exacerbating long standing problems that may have contributed to the crisis.
If humanitarian assistance is to bring the most benefits and to ‘do no harm,’ it must be inclusive and locally owned from the start, by affected communities and, when feasible by the national and local institutions. Such an approach could include restoring local government capacities, reviving livelihoods, strengthening basic social services, engaging the various capacities within the community itself, and addressing social cohesion and community security concerns. While most of these areas are equally relevant in the context of long-term recovery and development, early recovery focuses on those aspects that:

- are time-critical: i.e. emergency employment programmes for rubble clearance after a natural disaster will prepare the ground for reconstruction and uninterrupted flow of people and goods, as well as creating immediate short-term income opportunities for affected communities.
- are feasible and appropriate: i.e. mine clearance to open up roads and access to markets, coupled with mine awareness programmes which will quickly reduce the risk and number of casualties, while opening up areas for a resumption of economic activities.
- stress national ownership and promote local and national capacities: encouraging close coordination and consultation with, as well as active participation of communities and authorities in programming and activities will enhance operational effectiveness and help to provide the basis for nationally driven and owned longer-term recovery.

This requires the concurrent engagement of international and national humanitarian and development actors, around a framework upon which a nationally-owned strategy can be built. In common with cross-cutting issues such as gender, the environment, protection and HIV and AIDS, early recovery seeks to introduce into the humanitarian response, irrespective of the sector, a culture of planning and programming which is conscious of the need for a more lasting effect/change and which puts the affected communities and local and national authorities at the forefront in terms of guiding the process. Early recovery is guided by the principle of “build back better” and is underpinned by capitalizing on a detailed understanding of local situations. By applying the early recovery approach into humanitarian programmes those involved will be better able to identify issues that may have contributed the crisis in the first place and plan a response to compensate for technical, social, political and organizational weaknesses in crisis-affected areas. By doing this they will help individuals, communities and national institutions to be more resilient to future crises, and help people to be in a better position, post-crisis, to enjoy human development.

The CWGER proposes to review and rethink the early recovery coordination mechanisms to ensure greater levels of ownership and clarity on different actors’ roles, which will improve the efficiency of a common multi-stakeholder response. These recommendations are in line with the IASC Transformative Agenda which aims to enhance the effectiveness of the system as a whole, from the immediate response to longer-term planning including through simplifying processes and mechanisms, strengthening inter-agency communication and collaboration, and improving accountability to affected populations.
There is a need for a strong profile for Early Recovery Advisors, who meet the need for high level coordination abilities and analysis of the socio-economic and political context. The Early Recovery Advisor will support Humanitarian Coordinators from the onset of a crisis on early recovery strategic planning, prioritisation and coordination, advocacy with national authorities, donors and other partners on early recovery issues, supporting information management and monitoring, and shaping funding strategies for the early recovery elements of the humanitarian response. The Early Recovery Advisor will also assist the Resident Coordination functions by linking early recovery to the broader recovery agenda, (e.g. through identification of strategic entry points for building sustainable institutions and systems); and will contribute to the work of the Country Team in strengthening national authorities and partners.

In order to focus on delivery of results, a flexible approach should be adopted for coordinating inter-cluster early recovery at the national level, using existing inter-cluster humanitarian coordination fora rather than creating new ones for coordinating early recovery as a component of the humanitarian response. The CWGER stresses the importance of the involvement and leadership of the national actors in the coordination mechanism where possible.
Furthermore, depending on how ‘local level’ is defined, the idea of an ad hoc coordination structure, or no structure at all if too cumbersome, could be a feasible approach as long as the spirit of coordination and the principles behind early recovery are maintained. Therefore inter-cluster coordination at the local level need not (and probably should not) mirror coordination at the national level.

Together with the integration of early recovery into the work of country clusters, the HCT identifies if an additional coordination body needs to be created locally to meet specific early recovery needs (e.g. livelihoods recovery, community infrastructure, restoration of local governance) which would not be covered otherwise. The HCT in consultation with the global cluster lead for Early Recovery should determine the name of this coordination arrangement according to the issue being addressed and designate an agency with the appropriate capacity and presence to lead it, whose role would be confirmed by the ERC during the cluster activation process. That agency would be accountable, as a cluster lead agency is, for support to that work in the country.

The cluster approach, as the standard coordination mechanism for responding to large-scale complex and natural humanitarian emergencies requiring a multi-sectoral response, was never envisaged as a suitable mechanism for coordinating recovery and development. As the affected area emerges from the humanitarian emergency, clusters should be phased out or transitioned into structures which are more appropriate for the evolving context.

3 The humanitarian programme cycle refers to a series of actions undertaken in the management of humanitarian programmes: assessment, planning, resource allocation, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation. beneficiary dependence upon external aid.”
INTER-CLUSTER COUNTRY SUPPORT

To date, there is no corresponding global mechanism to the early recovery network at the country level, which could bring together global cluster leads and cross-cutting issue focal points to address inter-cluster early recovery and contribute to more effective humanitarian action by providing collective and coherent guidance to humanitarian country teams. This lack of inter-cluster coordination at the global level was identified in the reviews which highlighted the need to “move beyond a focus of inter-agency coordination” which is how the CWGER operated.

The inter-cluster approach addresses area-specific issues in a holistic manner, taking into account the local context and the complex interaction between programmes, actors and factors in that area. This integrated approach encourages coherence and collaboration in interventions to address concerns that often require a multifaceted response. In order to ensure more effective mainstreaming of early recovery across the clusters and to ensure that multidisciplinary and cross-cutting issues which cannot be tackled by individual clusters alone are addressed appropriately, it is recommended:

01 To establish the CWGER as a wider forum which will ensure that early recovery multidisciplinary issues that cannot be tackled by individual global clusters alone, or that call for a concerted action, are addressed appropriately and that inter-cluster duplications and gaps are eliminated. The CWGER, supported by a Secretariat led by UNDP, remain the coordination mechanism for supporting early recovery policy and operational issues at the global level and for linking early recovery to the resilience building and development agendas. The CWGER consists of representatives from global clusters, OCHA, and non-IASC organisations.

02 To establish an inter-agency Strategic Advisory Group within the CWGER at the global level. This smaller group has been created and is charged with providing direction, developing and adjusting as necessary the strategic framework, priorities and work plan for the CWGER on the basis of in-country needs and priorities. Its roles and responsibilities are, in particular, to ensure the work of the CWGER remains inclusive and representative, help streamline processes on issues covered by the CWGER such as refining system-wide tools in support to the humanitarian programme cycle, cluster activation, de-activation and transition; assist with country support (missions or remotely); support the deployment of early recovery advisors or early recovery teams at the request of Humanitarian/Resident Coordinators; and support deployment of experts in the context of the activation of the Inter-Agency Rapid Response Mechanism (IARRM). The SAG also guides the CWGER members in putting in place the right systems and mobilizing resources to contribute to the integration of early recovery in response to a Level 3 crisis as per their mandate areas, responsibilities, and commitments. The Strategic Advisory Group is chaired by UNDP and include expertise from UN and non-UN humanitarian and development organisations (UNICEF; WFP; UNHCR; FAO; OCHA; ActionAid; DRC; MSB).

\[such as the Inter-Cluster Coordination group, where it exists.\]
03 To avoid feelings of exclusion by the larger CWGER membership, the SAG is complemented by separate forums or mechanisms to ensure broader information exchange for all CWGER partners through the Secretariat.

04 To establish inter-cluster technical working groups at the request of the SAG when appropriate: for instance, to revise the guidance note on Early Recovery and incorporate the Operational Framework on Accountability to Affected Populations; to agree on minimum standards, formulate appropriate technical practices, and support their roll-out at country level, (e.g. a technical working group on the Durable Solutions Framework for Returning IDPs and Refugees co-led by UNHCR and UNDP has been created), to revise the training course for early recovery advisors or develop early recovery training modules (e.g. for the Humanitarian Coordinator pool); to finalize a monitoring & evaluation tool for early recovery; to identify specific solutions to country requests (e.g. livelihoods and economic recovery in urban settings) and advise the SAG accordingly. The inter-cluster technical working groups are time-bound, coordinated by co-chairs nominated by the SAG (NGOs are encouraged to co-lead) and consist of the necessary technical experts.

05 To strengthen links to the development community, peace building and peacekeeping actors. There are a number of existing inter-agency entities which could offer an opportunity to address the perceived disconnection. The CWGER member agencies and the secretariat will continue to look into enhancing the engagement between the relevant actors.

**INTER-CLUSTER COUNTRY SUPPORT ROSTER MECHANISM**

It is recommended that the country support roster mechanism should become more of an inter-agency resource. The roster should be open to staff from other agencies, including NGOs and other civilian capacity stand-by mechanisms, with the CWGER Strategic Advisory Group involved in the selection of roster members. The roster will continue to be managed by UNDP.
THE IASC PRINCIPALS:

01 Request clusters* to integrate early recovery into all the different phases of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) as the foundation for building resilience in a crisis or post-crisis context, and request the CWGER supported by global clusters to report to the Principals on progress in integrating early recovery into their work. **Action by: UNDP and all global clusters* by December 2014.**

02 Confirm the Cluster Working Group on Early Recovery (CWGER), led by UNDP, as the cluster coordination mechanism for developing early recovery policies and supporting their implementation in close consultation with other IASC bodies. Agree that the roles and responsibilities of the CWGER are to develop guidance on early recovery; support clusters on integrating early recovery into the strategic humanitarian response and into the operational programming of all clusters; advocate on resource mobilisation for all clusters and Humanitarian Country Teams (HCT) early recovery strategic objectives; strengthen the capacity of HCT in early recovery and strengthen the linkages between humanitarian operations and development frameworks including durable solutions strategies for IDPs and Returning Refugees.

03 Request UNDP as chair of CWGER to develop an early recovery inter-cluster country support roster, steered by the CWGER Strategic Advisory Group. The purpose of this roster is to deploy early recovery advisor(s) who report(s) to the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC). **Action by: UNDP and CWGER.**

04 Recommend that IASC organisations use existing coordination structures such as inter-cluster coordination groups to coordinate and integrate the overall early recovery approach at the country level. **Action by: HC, country cluster lead agencies, OCHA (initiated by CWGER).**

05 Request HCTs to identify thematic areas that are not included within the existing coordination mechanisms of a crisis-affected country. An additional coordination body may be created locally to meet specific early recovery needs which would not be covered otherwise. In consultation with the global cluster lead for early recovery, the HCT will determine the name of this body according to the issue being addressed and recommend the agency with the appropriate capacity and coverage to lead it at the national and sub-national level. This agency would be confirmed by the ERC during the cluster activation process and be accountable to support that work in the country, as a cluster lead agency would be. Where possible, local capacities and structures will be encouraged to lead early recovery coordination efforts. **Action by: HC and HCT**

* except Logistics and Emergency Telecommunications clusters
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This publication was produced by the Secretariat of the Global Cluster for Early Recovery. The information presented is based on consultations and inputs provided by clusters both at global and country level and as reported in the Financial Tracking Service and Online Project System as of 30 April 2015.