Response Monitoring
in the initial phase of an emergency

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In the first weeks of a sudden crisis, humanitarian actors encounter several specific issues:

- The situation is usually chaotic, as some of the basic activities may be difficult (telecommunications, meetings, transport, data systems, etc.);
- The situation is volatile: people move, things change, there is no stable context on which to start planning for months;
- Actions must be decided upon rapidly, leaving little time for well-prepared nuanced situation analysis and discussions on how to do things;
- Despite not having yet a clear picture of quantified needs, it is urgent to already deliver assistance;
- Needs of the population are important, and response resources are limited.
- Humanitarian actors are overloaded with work. Priority is given to rapid needs assessments, delivery of assistance and coordination of interventions, so not much resources may be available for conducting monitoring activities;
- And yet there is a strong demand (from the Media, the HQ's, the partners, the government, …) to know "what is being done, what was delivered";

This note proposes some advice on organizing response monitoring in an emergency.

Who is Emergency Response Monitoring for?

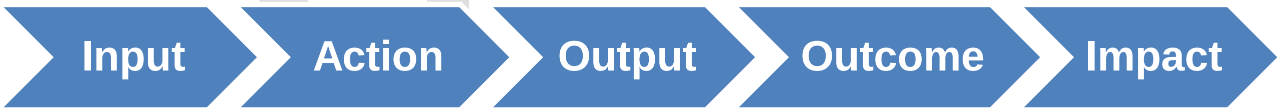
There are two target audiences for the response monitoring information collected:

1) Internally, to provide useful information to humanitarian actors: HC, HCT, inter-cluster coordination group, cluster coordinators and cluster members. The monitoring information should provide real-time information on the implementation of the response, contributing to an updated understanding of needs, response and gaps, allowing to channel resources in the best possible way.

2) Externally, to provide information to those outside the humanitarian community: the national government, the affected people, donors, the media and general public, informing them of aid being delivered to affected populations.

What should be monitored

Experience shows that, in the first days of an emergency, reports sometimes present a mix of data and information of different nature: financial pledges, announcements, goods in the pipeline, setup of coordination mechanisms, goods in the warehouse, actions planned, delivery of goods and services, distribution of cash, etc. While all these data are interesting, it is essential to adequately present them in a categorized way.



In the first weeks of an emergency, monitoring efforts should focus on **input**, **action** and **output**.

- **Input** refers to the financial, human and material resources that are availed for the response: money is pledged then granted, staff is deployed, goods are in the pipeline, then in the warehouse;
- **Action** refers to activities conducted to implement the response: distributing goods / services / cash;
- **Output** refers to the direct result of the completed action for the target population: the goods delivered, the services provided, the cash distributed.

Note: The above covers the different stages of the delivery of aid. Further to that, there is another type of activities: assessing the needs, forming a taskforce, setting a strategy, writing a collective plan, holding a cluster meeting, planning a distribution, coordinating with the local authorities, producing reports, etc. These are all useful activities that should be reported upon. However, they should be properly labelled as **Coordination Processes.** They don't deliver aid by themselves, but they enable an efficient aid delivery.

Based on the above, emergency response monitoring data and information could be categorized along the grid below:

Category	Explanation	Examples
Input	Financial resources, Human resources, Material resources availed for the response	**Pledges**: ECHO announces 10 M€ **Grants**: USAID gave 10MUSD **HR:** An ACF nutrition team is deployed **Pipeline**: Oxfam announces 5,000 tents **Ready**: 3,000 NFI kits in UNICEF warehouse
Action	Activities conducted to implement the response / deliver aid	**Goods**: Care organises a distribution of food **Services**: MSF opens a Health Center **Cash**: UNHCR sets up a credit card system
Output	Direct result of the completed action for the target population	**Goods**: 15.000 shelter distributed **Services**: 3.000 medical consultations **Cash**: 500,000 $ credited to target households
Coordination Process	All activities that enable a coordinated and efficient humanitarian response	UNICEF cluster coordinators are in place / Intercluster Coordination Group coordinates action / HCT agrees on a strategy / 3W operational maps prepared / Preliminary Response Plan released / etc.

Practically: Organizing Response Monitoring

In the very first days of the crisis, the Intercluster Coordination Group (ICCG: OCHA and the cluster coordinators) should prepare monitoring arrangements: how they will collect and aggregate, on a daily basis, all response monitoring data, and share it in a structured way. This work should be organized at two levels:

Clusters coordinators should:

- Designate an IMO in charge for response monitoring;
- Select a limited core set of input, action and output indicators, relevant to their emergency activities;
- Set for each indicator the basic data collection parameters: who measures and reports / a date field attached to each value / geographic level (as granular as possible) / data collection frequency (as real-time as possible);
- Prepare simple data collection tools (paper form, Excel, or online tool), allowing the cluster members to provide their data;
- Organize how data will be aggregated at the cluster level.

Note: At the early stage, targets and baselines are not mandatory: for example, the shelter cluster may report on the number of households receiving a shelter, without defining any starting baseline nor target.

At intercluster level:

A monitoring group should gather an OCHA staff member and the clusters staff in charge for response monitoring. This group should develop monitoring and reporting arrangements at intercluster level, that will be applied during the first weeks, until a more complete monitoring plan is installed. This should include:

- Agree on a terminology and categorization of data and information, as proposed above;
- Organize how data will be gathered from clusters and other sources;
- Ensure all actors contribute to the financial tracking done by OCHA through the FTS;
- Set the formats under which the monitoring data and information will be shared: online tool, (allowing independent real-time updates of any part); daily Situation Reports (offering a consolidated overview); weekly Humanitarian Dashboards (with easy-to-read summary of the situation, needs, response and gaps), or other;
- Set a schedule for the release of these different reports. Daily reporting is common in the first weeks, then with time, moving to weekly then monthly.