

MULTI-YEAR HUMANITARIAN STRATEGIES

GUIDANCE FOR OCHA COUNTRY
AND REGIONAL OFFICES

HUMANITARIAN
PROGRAMME CYCLE
ISSUED ON 5 JUNE 2023



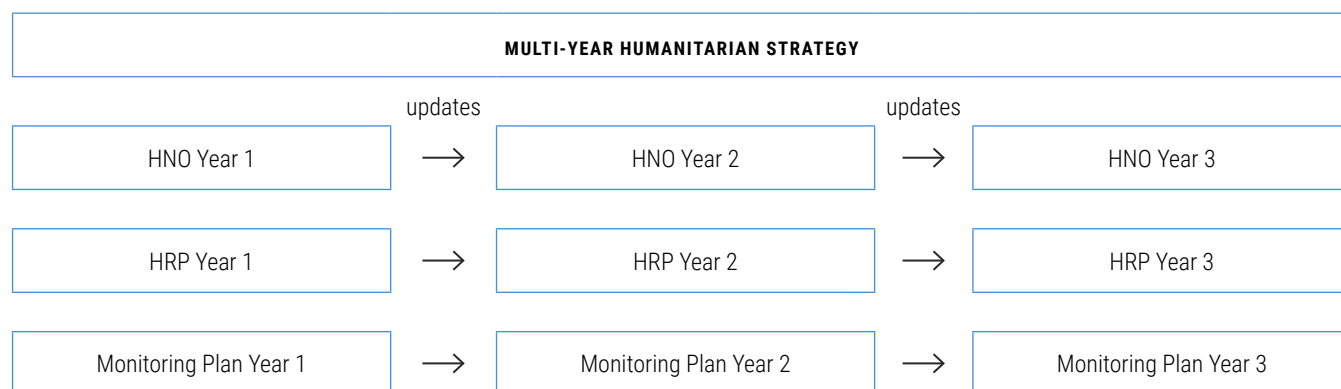
1. BACKGROUND

Multi-Year Humanitarian Strategies (MYHS) have been developed and implemented in different ways by different country teams over the last decade. While there is no one-size-fits-all, this guidance document seeks to offer a more systematic and efficient approach to undertaking multi-year humanitarian planning based on lessons learned thus far.

MYHS include an overarching strategy, accompanied by annual humanitarian analyses (Humanitarian Needs Overview – HNO) and operational plans (Humanitarian Response Plan – HRP) that present needs based on

severity and magnitude, programming actions, targets, and financial requirements. MYHS provide strategic direction to humanitarian operations and can be reviewed and adjusted whenever needed.

Multi-year planning should not be rushed. Sufficient time is needed for consultations with relevant stakeholders, to set up and adjust systems and carry out the process. In practical terms, the process should start in January or February of the year preceding the anticipated start of the MYHS.



2. AIMS AND KEY BENEFITS

A multi-year strategic approach aims to promote a **more effective humanitarian response** by taking a longer view to support appropriate, predictable, and realistic operational arrangements. A MYHS provides the framework to plan and coordinate the delivery of humanitarian action over two or more years.

MYHS can support more effective, strategic planning for **transitions: phasing down or graduating out of humanitarian operations**, and the alignment and **collaboration between humanitarian, development, and peace-building processes**.

MYHS maintain a humanitarian scope with the understanding that medium and long-term programmes addressing chronic and structural drivers of humanitarian needs should feature in – or should be increasingly shifted to – a UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework¹ (UNSDCF) or other development frameworks.

Executing MYHS require the same dynamic approach as an annual HRP: coordination of assessments,

needs and response analyses, planning, monitoring, and resource mobilization. MYHS require a regular analysis of the evolution of humanitarian needs and the progress of the response. The response should be adapted when gaps are identified. Updates and revisions of the MYHS occur annually but can also be triggered by new shocks (natural disasters, increased conflict, etc.), slow-onset changes (rainy season, harvest period, etc.) and / or inter-agency decisions.²

The annual HNO and HRP are developed within the framework of the MYHS, and feed into global data management systems and global advocacy: [HumanitarianAction](#), [projects registration](#), financial requirements, [financial tracking](#) and monitoring frameworks.

1 Humanitarian-Development-Peace Collaboration, Cooperation Framework Companion Piece, July 2020. <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org>

2 For more information on monitoring, please refer to the OCHA note on needs and response updates in the HPC. <https://assessments.hpc.tools/km/monitoring-needs-and-response-updates-humanitarian-programme-cycle>

Key benefits of a well-designed MYHS:

- Once the MYHS is in place, updates to the **annual HRP are typically lighter**.
- The framework can support **sequenced humanitarian action**, in which urgent and/or enabling interventions can pave the way for more sustainable interventions.
- A MYHS can support planning for **phased transitions from humanitarian assistance to development**, based on comparative advantages of humanitarian and development partners and national authorities. An exit strategy may focus on specific geographic locations or caseloads where humanitarian needs are decreasing.
- Longer timeframes provide more opportunities **for collaboration with development, peacebuilding, and human rights actors**, including linkages with development assessment and planning instruments (eg; UN Common Country Analysis (CCA) and UNSDCF³),³ including to:
 - **Clarify drivers of humanitarian needs based on underlying risks and vulnerabilities** to advocate for interventions by development and peacebuilding actors and where appropriate, national, and local authorities to address structural or chronic causes of need.
 - Inform areas of **complementarity with development and peacebuilding action**, including for sector and programmatic interventions through the mapping of existing development frameworks.⁴
 - Support dialogue and agreement on **collective outcomes** aimed at reducing needs, risks, and vulnerabilities over a defined period (typically three to five years).
 - Planning to support sequencing and layering of assistance to address the short, medium and long-term needs of people in the same geographical areas.
- Longer timeframes allow **more meaningful involvement of affected people** in the design, delivery, and recalibration of programmes, increasing the likelihood of fulfilling Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) / Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) commitments. Common service mechanisms can be set up for community engagement that informs decision-making.

³ See the [IASC Protection Policy](#) for further guidance on the responsibilities of all humanitarian actors in making protection central to humanitarian action.

⁴ Such as the UNSDCF, Integrated Strategic Framework (ISF), the World Bank Group's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), and Country Partnership Framework (CPF).

3. CONDITIONS TO UNDERTAKE A MULTI-YEAR HUMANITARIAN STRATEGY

When the majority of the four areas of questions below can be answered positively, an HCT is encouraged to undertake a multi-year strategy process.

CONDITIONS	GUIDING QUESTIONS	FOR WHOM?
1 A protracted crisis with relative stability / some predictability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you operate in a protracted or recurrent crisis? • Do you foresee a relatively stable planning scenario with no major changes soon? • Are humanitarian needs likely to continue during the period covered by the MYHS? 	RC/HC, HCT and ICCG
2 A committed humanitarian leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) ready to lead the process? • Do HCT members support the multi-year process and are they willing to engage throughout the process? Are HCT members aware/in agreement that MYHS does not do away with regular annual updates on needs and response? • Are humanitarian partners committed to engaging with other actors including local ones (e.g. development actors, international and regional development banks, private sector)? 	RC/HC, HCT
3 Non-humanitarian partners with the required capacity and commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are development actors present and targeting the most vulnerable people, to tackle structural and chronic drivers of humanitarian needs? • Do development actors acknowledge the need to scale up assistance to address the most important structural drivers of humanitarian needs? • Do development partners have the capacity to expand programming/coverage? • Are government programmes in place (and scalable) to assist people and communities most in need? • Are there political considerations that favor embarking on a multiyear humanitarian planning approach? 	Development, peace and human rights actors
4 A committed and supportive donor community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do in-country donors recognize advantages of a multi-year approach? • Are donors providing or willing to provide flexible multi-year humanitarian funding? • Are donors willing to increase their development aid to address the root / structural causes of humanitarian needs? • Are the World Bank or other international financing institutions investing in programmes that support humanitarian caseloads? 	Humanitarian and development donors

4. PRELIMINARY STEPS TO INFORM A MULTI-YEAR HUMANITARIAN STRATEGY

4.1 Stakeholder Analysis

Once a decision is taken to formulate a MYHS, consultation with key stakeholders will help set the parameters of the strategy and increase the likelihood of its successful development and implementation.

STAKEHOLDER	KEY POINTS	LEAD
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform authorities of the intention to undertake a MYHS. • Identify synergies between humanitarian assistance and government programmes and priorities. 	RC/HC, OCHA HoO
Development, peace and human rights partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult to better understand existing and planned development assistance and seek agreement on feasible adjustments. • Identify opportunities for scale up of development assistance in line with collective outcomes (where they have been agreed) or to drive agreement on collective outcomes. 	RC/HC, HCT, ICCG, UNCT, OCHA, RCO
Clusters and operational partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure buy-in for multi-year process. • Understand required adjustments to needs assessment and analysis, response planning and monitoring processes and tools. 	OCHA, ICCG
Donors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure buy-in for multi-year process. • Advocate for flexible multi-year funding⁵ and support for the approach. 	RC/HC, HCT

4.2 Data Systems Review and Adjustments

Appropriate data systems are needed for projections of humanitarian needs and evolution of crisis risks, vulnerabilities, and capacities, for the full period covered by the MYHS and each calendar year therein. These projections are used to inform adjustments to planning and financial requirements.⁶

⁵ RC/HCs may consider visiting targeted donor capitals and the OECD to foster donor buy-in and support, including identifying potential champions for the approach.

⁶ While this is an important element also in countries with annual HRPs, it becomes more critical in countries undertaking a MYHS, to support trends analyses and projections.

5. STEP BY STEP CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 Coordination Structures

- Promote linkages and complementarity between humanitarian and development strategic and operational coordination mechanisms, to facilitate collaboration and coherence during the analysis and planning processes and implementation of the MYHS. Ideally, the RC/HC would decide on and chair dedicated ad hoc forums to support the development and implementation of MYHS (e.g. joint planning cell, task force, etc.), with the inclusion of relevant humanitarian, development, and peace-building actors. Technical co-chairing by OCHA and RCO may be an option in some contexts.
- Undertake an annual humanitarian coordination architecture review to assess whether coordination structures are fit for purpose. Consider the timing of the review; initiate after the development of the MYHS if possible, to accommodate changes if needed.
- Use the MYHS to engage with authorities, including to reinforce coordination responsibilities and strengthen capacities and facilitate the transition of coordination functions to national counterparts, where appropriate.

5.2 Context and Humanitarian Needs Assessment and Analysis

- The MYHS requires an HNO with a broader and more rigorous analysis, including:
 - A thorough **contextual analysis of vulnerabilities and capacities** that includes root and structural causes of humanitarian needs.
 - A **multi-year trend analysis** to indicate how the situation has evolved prior and leading up to the MYHS period.
 - Detailed risk analysis to inform **projections/forecasts**⁷ on how *the situation is most likely* to evolve during the MYHS period, ideally including quantifiable trends by region, number of people to be affected/in need and how current needs may evolve. Emphasis should be on building informed consensus on the most likely evolution of the humanitarian situation, as perfect forecasting does not exist.
 - Subsequent annual HNO updates serve to validate or adjust key humanitarian trends and figures including changes to the situation and operational environment.
- Where a CCA exists or a CCA update is underway, ensure close collaboration with the Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) to **capitalize on joint needs and capacity analysis** (including elements above) to inform a shared understanding of structural and chronic drivers of needs (including humanitarian) and vulnerabilities. Engage non-humanitarian actors to reach a common understanding of the factors contributing to the crisis, current needs, and anticipated risks.

⁷ See IASC guidance on "[Analyzing risks and determining the most likely evolution of the humanitarian situation](#)" to jointly establish projected humanitarian figures.

- Ensure the analysis considers the findings of **assessments for longer-term planning**⁸, either through the CCA process or where not present, direct review. Integrate relevant findings, notably causal factors of needs and trends, into the HNO.
- Facilitate **joint analysis around recurrent shocks and the main anticipated risks** (moderate to high probability and impact) and agree on most likely evolution of the humanitarian situation during the MYHS timeframe (humanitarian scenario). Use available risk models (e.g. INFORM⁹) and databases (e.g. [UNDRR Rix](#)) as well as predictive analysis capacity at global level (e.g. [Center for Humanitarian Data](#)) to determine levels of hazards and exposure to risks (natural and human); vulnerabilities (socio-economic and vulnerable groups); and coping capacity (institutional and infrastructure). Estimate changes to the people in need figures (see examples below).
- Leverage (joint) analysis under the HNO to inform any upcoming CCA or similar analysis process which informs planning for longer-term development cooperation.

Example: Nigeria 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview

The 2023 HNO for Nigeria quantified projections for three humanitarian crisis variables:

Planning assumptions

HUMANITARIAN CRISES VARIABLES	GENERAL EXPECTED CHANGE	SPECIFIC CHANGE EXPECTED AND REFERENCE PERIOD	SIZE OF EXPECTED CHANGE COMPARED TO RECENT CHANGES	SEASONAL PATTERNS OF CHANGE	CONFIDENCE
Conflict and displacement	Stable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary displacements triggered by the closure of camps • People coming from the inaccessible areas • Emergence of new hotspots due to conflicts/attacks, floods and elections • Continuing disruption of livelihoods and basic social services 	Large (0%) 2.2 million IDPs	During the rainy season conflict-induced displacement through 2023. Quarter 1 for potential IDPs due to elections	90-95%
Camp closures and resettlement	Increase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No improvements in security in return/relocation areas • Overstretched capacity of existing resources • Increased loss of livelihoods • Damaged or no educational structures/ human resources • Reference period: Throughout 2023 	More significant (60%) 150,000 individuals likely to re relocated	3rd and 4th quarter of the year	90%
Floods	Slight decrease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to poor drainage, env. factors, poor planning, climate change • Crowded IDP camps are more impacted 	Smaller (20%) 78,000 individuals are expected to be displaced due to floods	During the rainy season. The impact and its aftermath will continue to quarter 4 of 2023	70-80%

8 For example, Recovery and Peace-Building Assessments (RPBAs), Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNAs), human rights analysis and assessments conducted by financial institutions (e.g., World Bank), bilateral donors or the development branches of agencies.

9 The INFORM index provides forward looking (3-5 years) information, including capacity to cope with crises and shocks, particularly at the infrastructural level, and people’s high exposure to conflict, etc.

Example: South Sudan 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview

The 2023 HNO for South Sudan used INFORM to determine the level of hazard and exposure to risks (natural and human), vulnerabilities (socio-economic and vulnerable groups) and coping capacity (institutional and infrastructural).

INFORM index 2015-2023

Very High Risk class



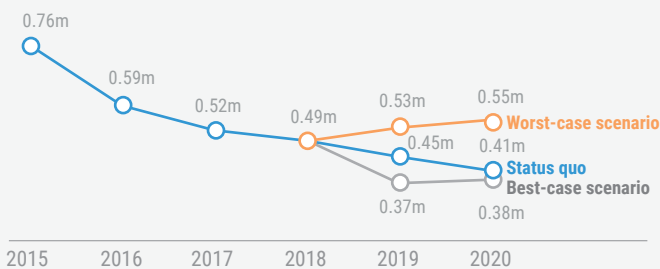
INFORM For more information visit: www.inform-index.org
SHARING CRISIS ANALYSIS

Example: Occupied Palestinian territory 2018 Humanitarian Needs Overview

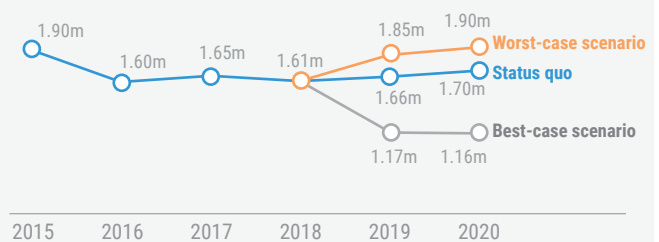
In 2018, clusters in the occupied Palestinian territory made projections of sector PiNs for the HNO based on three scenarios: i) best-case scenario; ii) worst-case; and iii) status quo, with different

assumptions related to the evolution of key variables (e.g., economic situation, reconstruction, supply of electricity, restriction of movement of people and goods, intra- Palestinian unity, etc.).

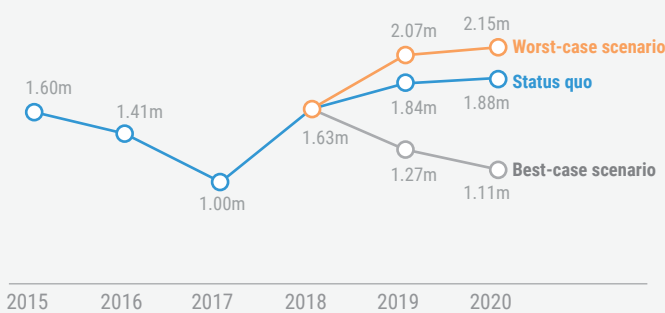
Education



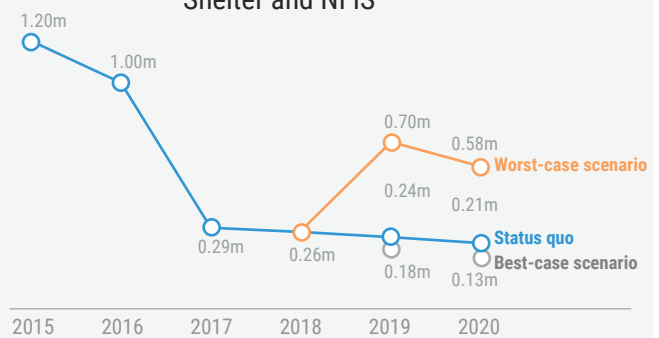
Food Security



Health/Nutrition



Shelter and NFIS



Example: Afghanistan 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview

The 2019 Afghanistan HNO included a response context analysis based on three variables known to drive humanitarian needs in the country: i) political and economic stability; ii) conflict / insecurity; and iii) environment / climate. These drivers provided common planning assumptions against which clusters incorporated sector-specific considerations and methodologies for the multi-year plan. Historical trends, population increases, and expert judgement informed PiN projections.

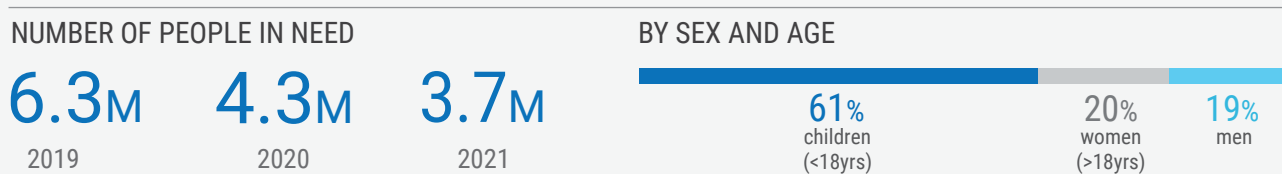


Table 1: Projected population of vulnerable groups (2019-2021)

PROJECTED POPULATION FIGURES*		2019	2020	2021
New conflict IDPs		500,000	450,000	400,000
Drought IDPs		300,000	-	-
Undocumented returnees	Pakistan	49,000	48,000	47,000
	Iran***	114,000	117,000	120,000
Registered refugee returnees	Pakistan	56,000	60,000	65,000
	Iran***	4,000	5,000	5,000
Pakistani refugees residing in Afghanistan		50,000	50,000	50,000
Natural disaster-affected people (sudden-onset)		150,000	154,000	159,000

5.3 Response Analysis and Planning

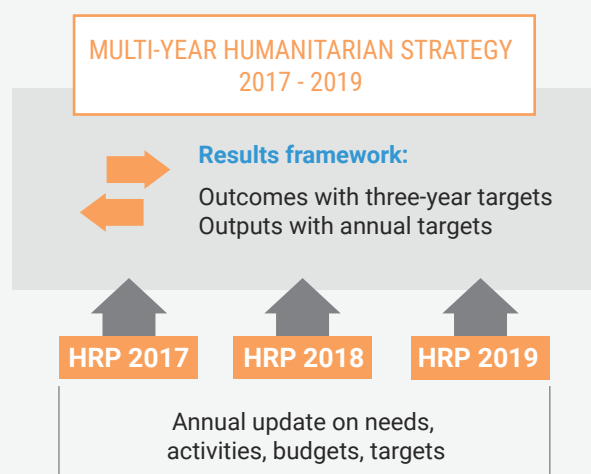
MYHS provide the overarching framework for the humanitarian response. Key elements to consider include:

- How does the MYHS interface with development planning instruments, including the UNSCDF, and how do the Strategic Objectives of the MYHS and UNSCDF relate to each other?
- How are the needs, vulnerabilities, and coping capacities of various groups of people in different geographic areas likely to evolve considering projected shocks, seasonal events, long-term stressors?
- How is the implementation capacity of humanitarian, development, and government partners expected to change and what are the implications for humanitarian operations?
- Are access and other operational considerations expected to improve or deteriorate over time?
- Will response modalities (in-kind, cash assistance) appropriateness evolve over time?

The more granular response analysis and planning should be undertaken through the annual HRP development process. If desired, MYHS may include people targeted or financial requirements projections, which will be reviewed/updated annually.

Example: Sudan 2017-2019 Multi-Year Humanitarian Strategy

In Sudan, a MYHS provided the overarching framework for humanitarian response in Sudan for three years from 2017 to 2019. Annual HNOs continued to provide the basis for humanitarian activities, identifying key humanitarian issues and severity of needs across the country. The MYHS was operationalized through annual HRPs presenting updates on strategies, activities, financial requirements and targets. The annual analysis and planning process were instrumental to bring all partners together, take stock of progress made against planned results and enable annual joint analysis of needs and joint work planning. During these three years, humanitarian partners monitored and evaluated progress against the outcomes identified in this strategy, which further shaped and improved annual planning and to refine the strategy. Periodic reviews of the severity of needs provided



the basis for a rigorous prioritization of humanitarian activities. The multi-year planning process allowed for the identification of areas to link humanitarian programming with development programming under the 2018-2021 UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

Example: Democratic Republic of Congo 2023-2024 Multi-Year Humanitarian Strategy

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the HCT decided to adopt a MYHS for 2023-2024 to enable humanitarian partners to increase their collaboration with development and peace actors, in connection with the humanitarian-development nexus approach and to ensure alignment between the HRP and other strategic planning initiatives such as the UNSDCF 2020-2024. Only the needs analysis, targeting and required funds will be updated for the second year. Targets for Strategic and Specific Objectives were set for a two-year period:

Strategic Objective SO1

Multi-sectoral emergency assistance responds in a timely, adequate and adapted manner to vital needs of **10 million** men, women and children with particular attention to vulnerable groups

INDICATORS	NEED	TARGET	FOLLOW-UP LEADS
Numbers of people who have seen their living conditions improved (access to basic goods and services and livelihoods)	26,4M	10M	Follow-up leads
Percentage of affected people who believe that the aid received covers their basic needs	Survey results 2022 44%	Target 2023-2024 70%	Follow-up leads
Percentage of affected people who believe that the assistance received takes into account their preferences	37%	60%	Ground Truth Soution
Percentage of affected people who trust humanitarian actors	81%	95%	Ground Truth Soution
Percentage of people who believe that the assistance provided by humanitarian actors reaches the people who need it most	71%	80%	Ground Truth Soution
Percentage of affected people who feel safe when accessing humanitarian aid	95%	100%	Ground Truth Soution

5.4 MYHS Response Monitoring Plans

Having a MYHS and annual HRPs calls for two dimensions of monitoring:

1. As for any country, each annual HRP should come with an annual monitoring plan, stating indicators and targets at project (if applicable), cluster and strategic level, indicating how and when these will be measured. The purpose is to provide timely updates that inform adjustment to response operations and to produce reports for various audiences, as a means of accountability of the humanitarian community. For more detail, see specific guidance on monitoring in the HPC package.
2. MYHS should include indicators that will be measured across the years, to inform the evolution of needs and the response. These may be situation indicators, needs indicators, risk indicators and response indicators (some of the response indicators may be included in annual HRP monitoring plans).

5.5 MYHS data management tools

HPC.tools platforms that support Response Planning and Monitoring (RPM), Project Module (PM), and the Financial Tracking Service (FTS) are currently designed around single-year processes, including requirements to publish annual information (caseloads, funding requirements etc.) for the Global Humanitarian Overview (GHO) / Humanitarian Action.

5.6 Financing and Advocacy

- Engage donors at the conceptualisation phase of the MYHS to advocate for flexible, multi-year funding, noting the Grand Bargain commitments made by several donors on quality funding.
- Encourage RC/HCs to visit donor capitals and OECD to advocate for additional resources and as appropriate, explain how the extended time period and scope of activities affect MYHS financial ask.
- Use the MYHS to advocate for and work with development partners to ensure humanitarian and

development funding is coherently layered and sequenced to enable short, medium, and long-term programmes that target the most vulnerable.

- Advocate for development funding to be more flexible and risk-tolerant to enable development programmes in fragile and conflict-affected areas, including greater coordination with World Bank funding to support a range of interventions with impact on humanitarian caseload in fragile contexts.
- Advocate for the inclusion of “crisis-modifiers” into development financing arrangements to allow a pre-agreed proportion of funds to be redeployed for crisis response, if needed.
- Use MYHS as a platform to strengthen advocacy with national governments for increased investments to address humanitarian needs and progressive inclusion of humanitarian caseloads in government programmes, wherever feasible.
- Consider how country-based pooled funds can be used as a tool to provide timely and flexible funding for multi-sectoral and multi-year projects.

Example: Democratic Republic of Congo Humanitarian Fund

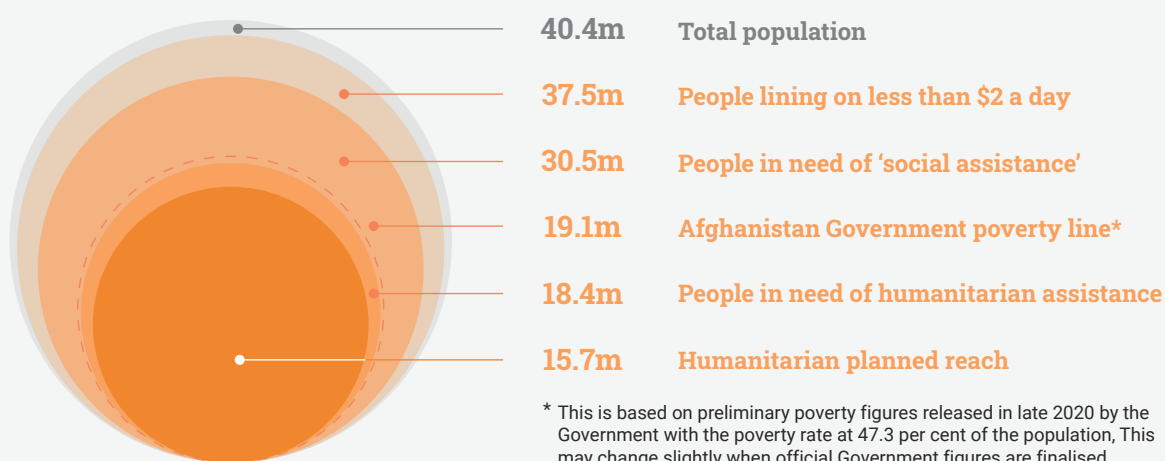
The Country-Based Pooled Humanitarian Fund in the Democratic Republic of Congo is jointly managed by OCHA and UNDP. The CBPF provides a timely and flexible financing mechanism supporting the MYHRP, with a window that includes funding for multi-year (up to two-year) projects. The fund also provides un-earmarked and flexible funding in support to the MYHS.

Example: Afghanistan 2018-2021 Humanitarian Response Plan

The 2018-2021 Afghanistan HRP aimed to deliver the right assistance at the right time and contribute to recovery through stronger collaboration with development actors on common needs analysis and common outcomes, where possible. The World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), UNDP, UNICEF, WFP, FAO and ILO, as well as OCHA and the ICCT worked together to draw common planning parameters to identify people with chronic needs who required social assistance to weather the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19

pandemic. In 2021, a rigorous and targeted approach was employed to reflect the multiple layers of vulnerability, poverty, and food insecurity experienced by households in Afghanistan. Based on this analysis, some 76 per cent of the population or 30.5 million people were in need of some form of social assistance to avoid falling into more acute state of need, threatening their wellbeing. This work demonstrated the reality that humanitarian aid is just one part of a broader package of assistance that was required from the Government and development actors to support the country's most vulnerable.

Common Needs Analysis 2021



Excerpt from the 2020-2021 HRP Logframe and One UN Results

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN	ONE UN FOR AFGHANISTAN FRAMEWORK	SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS
S01: Save lives in the areas of highest need	3. Food Security, Nutrition, and Livelihoods	2. Zero Hunger
1.2 Shock-affected people (IDPs, returnees, refugees, natural disaster affected, people affected by COVID-19 and seasonally food insecure people in IPC phase 3 and 4) of all ages have a minimum household food consumption score above 42.5.	3.1 Food insecure populations, including crisis-affected people, have improved access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round.	
1.6 Decline in GAM among IDP, returnee, refugee and non-displaced, conflict-affected children under 5 and a decline in PLW suffering from acute malnutrition.	3.2 Vulnerability groups in particular children under five years, adolescent girls and women of reproductive age, have improved nutritional status.	
SDG 2.1 By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round.		
SDG 2.2 By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under five years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons.		

References

- [2024 HPC Facilitation Package : Step by Step to producing 2024 HNOs and HRPs, HNO Annotated Template, HRP Annotated Template, May 2023](#)
- [Analyzing risks and determining the most likely evolution of the humanitarian situation, October 2020](#)

