

1. **In 2024, the humanitarian community made the largest changes to humanitarian appeals in recent history:** the number of People in Need (PiN) globally decreased from 368 million at the end of 2023 to 300 million at the beginning of 2024; the number of people targeted decreased from 230 million to 183 million; and the amount appealed for globally decreased from US\$56.7 billion to \$46.4 billion.¹ These changes were driven by increasingly robust needs analysis as well as difficult discussions and decisions at country-level on the people and places that humanitarian appeals should target through renewed emphasis on boundary-setting.
2. **However, whilst humanitarian partners and donors appreciated the renewed emphasis on the quality and credibility of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC), some concerns were raised regarding the consistency in application of key concepts, as well as the inclusivity of the process and critical decisions that were taken.** To this end, the following lessons learnt from 2024 and proposed key points of emphasis for HPC 2025 have been consolidated by OCHA—building on inter-agency discussions at global- and country-levels, including through the [JIAF partnership](#), [After Action Reviews by HCTs/ICCGs](#) and discussions in various IASC forums—for discussion by the HPC Steering Group as the 2025 HPC cycle kicks-off.

Lessons Learnt through HPC 2024

Areas of Progress

3. **HPC Lightning:** The introduction of a merged Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP) document—in place of separate Humanitarian Needs Overviews and Humanitarian Response Plans—resulted in significant time savings. Around half of HPC countries worldwide (13² out of 25) published merged HNRPs for 2024. In these countries, the average time to complete the HPC³ decreased by nearly 1.5 months (44 days) from 2023 to 2024, while in countries that produced separate HNOs and HRPs, the process took 11 additional days on average from 2023 to 2024.
4. **Needs Analysis:** The introduction of Joint and Intersectoral Analysis Framework (JIAF) 2.0 enabled even greater emphasis on the multi-sectoral nature of needs and was easier for partners to use than JIAF 1.0. Twenty-four countries (out of 25) used JIAF 2.0 to facilitate the joint analysis of humanitarian needs, with 96 per cent of users finding it more logical and useful compared to JIAF 1.0, and over half of JIAF 2.0 users considered it useful for HRP prioritization.
5. **Response Planning:** Strong engagement by Humanitarian Coordinators—particularly with respect to response boundary-setting—ensured that difficult decisions occurred regarding who and what humanitarian appeals should include. Refocused appeals resulted in a significant reduction globally in the number of people targeted for assistance and the amount of funding requested (as outlined above), but remained ambitious, with the number of people targeted under Humanitarian Response Plans at the beginning of 2024 (143.6 million) higher than the number of people reached in 2023 (128.6 million) and the amount appealed for (\$46.4 billion) still more than double the amount received in 2023 (\$22 billion).

Areas for improvement

6. **HPC Lightning:** Whilst the introduction of the HNRP saved time, it did not lighten the overall HPC and further efforts are required to this end. Given the positive experience with the HNRP for 2024, this will be the standard for HPC 2025, with countries able to 'break off' the two different modules (needs and response) of the template, if for any reason this is required/desirable in the country context. In addition, continued efforts will be exerted to identify additional ways to lighten the HPC, with a particular emphasis

¹ As of 30 June 2024, funding requirements have increased to \$48.8 billion since the launch of the Global Humanitarian Overview, but this is still lower than the 2023 year-end figure.

² Afghanistan, Chad, Colombia, Haiti, Honduras, Mali, Mozambique, Myanmar, Niger, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Ukraine.

³ From HPC inception to the HNRP publication.

on the needs assessment and analysis phase and the costing phase, as these were identified in 2023 as the two elements that took the most time, after the documents themselves.

7. **Needs Analysis: Building on the lessons learnt from the roll-out of JIAF 2.0, there are three key areas of focus to enhance inclusivity, consistency and transparency in needs analysis for HPC 2025:**
 - a. **Scope of analysis: Establishing a clear definition of the crisis and people affected, based on a transparent analysis of shocks, to inform the scope of needs analysis.** This is one of the most critical steps in the HPC (see further details below) and JIAF. Historically, the scope of analysis has been set differently in different countries, whilst in recent years there has been diminished focus on distinguishing between the overall population in a country and the people affected by the crisis. Bringing consistency and transparency to the definition of the crisis and hence the scope set for needs analysis will be critical in HPC 2025.
 - b. **Re-linking PiN and severity: Analysis of PiN by severity is critical to informing solid response planning and, in particular, well-informed boundary-setting.** The current JIAF 2.0 manual enables the articulation of intersectoral severity phase by geographic area, but not PiN by severity. At the same time, each cluster has a methodology for determining PiN by severity. Work is intensively underway to identify options to re-establish intersectoral PiN by severity for HPC 2025 and this will be vital to enabling strong, evidence-based boundary-setting discussions at the response planning stage.
 - c. **Enhancing JIAF 2.0 methodological implementation:** Efforts have been undertaken to simplify the flagging system, provide stronger advice on outcome indicators' value and use (especially with respect to determining an intersectoral humanitarian Phase 5 Catastrophe), and improve the consistency and level of sectoral needs analysis and severity interoperability. Implementation of these adjustments will be crucial to the integrity and credibility of needs analysis for HPC 2025.
8. **Response Planning: Building on the After Action Reviews done for HPC 2024 at country-level, there are three key areas of focus to enhance inclusivity, consistency and transparency in response planning for HPC 2025.** These are:
 - a. **Boundary-setting: Whilst boundary-setting discussions for HPC 2024 enabled major changes, concerns were raised regarding the different approaches taken across contexts and the need to promote greater inclusivity and consistency in such discussions for HPC 2025.** For HPC 2024, most countries applied one or more of the following approaches to boundary-setting: focus on specific geographic areas, based on severity (10 out of 25 plans); focus on specific groups of people (6 out of 25); and/or limitation of types of activities (11 out of 25). For HPC 2025, the focus will be on promoting a common understanding (see below) of boundary-setting and greater consistency in how this is applied across crises, whilst acknowledging that every context is unique.
 - b. **Risk-informed HPC: For HPC 2024, several countries took steps towards risk-informed HNRPs, and considered how to incorporate Anticipatory Action within the HPC.** Building on this, risk-informed planning will be encouraged in a broader array of countries for HPC 2025.
 - c. **Humanitarian-Development Collaboration, especially with respect to funding/financing for essential services: For HPC 2024, several countries specifically articulated what was needed of/from development actors.** However, far greater engagement is required with a wide array of development actors—both within and beyond the UN system, including international financial institutions (IFI) and multi-lateral development banks (MDB)—is needed for HPC 2025. One particular area where collaboration has improved in some countries, which should be expanded to others, is efforts by IFIs and MDBs to fund/finance the provision of essential services to the most vulnerable in the midst of crises and fragility. If IFIs/MDBs take this on, it has the double benefit of promoting predictability and improvements over time in essential service delivery through a development-orientated approach, whilst enabling humanitarians to refocus their response on the most urgent and time-critical activities.
9. **Inclusive HPC (for both needs analysis and response planning): Building on After Action Reviews and IASC discussions regarding HPC 2024, inclusivity has emerged as an area that requires greater attention in HPC 2025.** This includes two vital aspects:

- a. **Engagement NGOs (both INGOs and L/NNGOs) throughout the process**, and especially at critical junctures, including decisions on scope-setting for needs analysis and boundary-setting for response planning.
- b. **Meaningful engagement with affected communities**, to ensure that the HNRP reflects people's priorities, capacities and preferences, *as well as* to ensure that feedback is given to affected communities on how this information has been used to drive decision making and response, including to transparently communicate on what humanitarians cannot do that has been requested by communities.

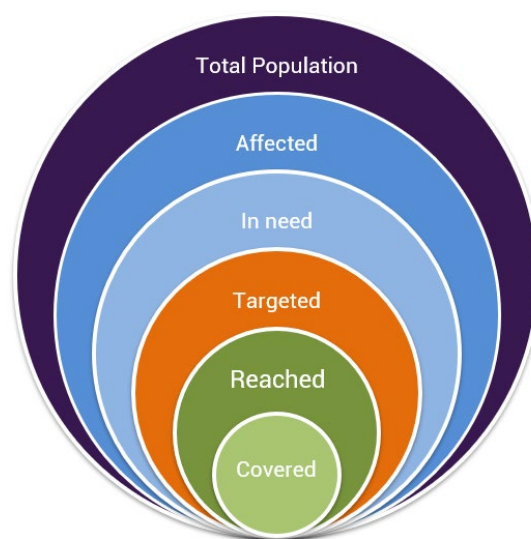
What does this mean for HPC 2025? Two key concepts for collective attention

10. Building on the above, for HPC 2025, the application of the following two concepts in a deliberate, inclusive and transparent manner is particularly critical. The following section proposes key aspects of these two steps for collective attention and action in HPC 2025:

Scope-setting for needs analysis (i.e., defining the crisis and people affected)

11. Using shock-based analysis to define 'what the crisis is' in any given country and determine the number of people affected by it has been part of IASC guidance for many years, as reflected in the 2016 [Humanitarian Profile Support Guidance](#) on Humanitarian Population Figures, and more recently in JIAF 1.0 and JIAF 2.0.

12. However, in recent years, distinguishing people affected by a crisis from the total population has received less attention in many countries, in part due to the increased duration of appeals (with the average HRP now running for more than 10 years) and the assumption—over time—that the country's entire population is 'in crisis'. At the same time, there are countries where, because of the *raison d'être* for humanitarians being present (e.g., a specific request by the Government to respond to a specific emergency), the scope of analysis has been automatically limited to the 'Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) mandate' rather than based on an analysis of shocks that may generate humanitarian needs in the country.



13. For HPC 2025, as outlined in the revised JIAF 2.0 manual, it is therefore recommended that stronger emphasis be placed on the following:

- i. **Analysis of shocks in the country:** This should identify all shocks that are causing humanitarian needs—whether sudden or slow onset, man-made or natural—and should identify:
 1. Nature and intensity of the shock;
 2. Geographical areas affected;
 3. (If relevant) Specific population groups affected (e.g., host communities, internally displaced persons (IDP), rural farmers, etc.); AND
 4. Overlap of different shocks (i.e., how many shocks are affecting different parts of the country)

NOTE: *Types of shocks that could be considered in this analysis include: (i) natural hazards and climate-induced shocks (e.g., earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, droughts, volcanic eruptions); (ii) conflict and violence (e.g., armed conflicts, wars, widespread violence); (iii) health shocks (e.g., disease outbreaks); (iv) sudden economic shocks (as distinguished from chronic impoverishment); and (v) other disasters (e.g., chemical contamination, oil spills, explosions, crop pests, etc.)*

- ii. **Analysis of people affected by the shocks (i.e., 'crisis-affected people'):** This should estimate the number of crisis-affected people, based on the analysis of shocks.

NOTE: In general, people will be considered to be 'affected' if they are in close geographic proximity to a crisis, physically or emotionally impacted by the crisis, experienced personal loss or loss of capital assets as a direct result of the crisis or are faced with an immediate threat from the crisis BUT this may be adjusted if a crisis is protracted (in which case, contingent upon analysts' recommendations and HCT decisions, it may take into consideration people who are geographically distant from the initial shock but have experienced secondary effects, as outlined [here](#)). What is critical is to ensure that the humanitarian community does not default to an understanding that all people in the country are crisis-affected, as this may have significant implications for the perceptions of people in that country as well as the support available to them from non-humanitarian actors.

- iii. **HCT agreement on proposed JIAF scope of needs analysis, based on analysis of shocks and crisis-affected people:** Once analysts have provided a detailed analysis of shocks and people affected (i.e., defined the crisis in the country), the HCT should agree on the scope of analysis. If for any reason, the HCT recommends a scope of analysis that is different than that recommended by the analysts, this should be clearly and transparently documented.

Boundary-setting for humanitarian response

14. Setting boundaries for humanitarian responses has been part of IASC guidance for many years, as reflected in the [IASC Reference Module for the Implementation of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle](#) (especially p.9) from 2015.

15. However, over time, as crises became protracted, boundaries became blurred and in multiple instances, the biggest humanitarian appeals saw partners targeting nearly 100 per cent of people in need, even where this was not feasible with respect to capacity to deliver. This is contrasted with smaller-scale appeals, where humanitarian partners have tended to have more refined and realistic targets (e.g., usually targeting between 50 and 75 per cent of people in need under Flash Appeals). There are also some protracted emergencies where people targeted has been more tightly defined against PiN (e.g., in the Democratic Republic of the Congo).

16. For HPC 2024, there was a concerted effort to re-introduce a stronger focus on boundary-setting for humanitarian appeals. This is critical given the persistent trend of humanitarian partners not reaching (let alone covering) the people who have been targeted for assistance and is especially urgent in light of the continued decline of humanitarian funding available as 2025 approaches. Without collective boundary-setting, there is a risk that humanitarian partners will not target the people and places who need humanitarian assistance the most.

17. There are three critical aspects to boundary-setting, each of which requires robust and inclusive discussion as part of HPC 2025, to address the calls for more consistent boundary-setting in HPC 2024. These are as follows:

- a. **Undertaking a "reality check" on humanitarians' capacity to deliver in the country:** This should include a robust and frank review of what humanitarians have managed to deliver in 2024, and what humanitarians would and could be capable of delivering in 2025, both sectorally and collectively, based on: (a) capacity of partners (number, presence etc.); and (b) past delivery. It should also be *informed* (but not driven) by funding trends and projections, where available.

NOTE: Whilst targets should not be set solely based on 2024 achievements, or on 2024 funding levels, it is important that any proposed major increase in delivery from 2024 to 2025 is carefully scrutinized for feasibility and is accompanied by a clear articulation of why the relevant cluster/sector/partner believes they can so dramatically increase their delivery (e.g., changes in operating costs, modalities, operating environment etc.).

NOTE: At this stage, the focus should be on analyzing what humanitarians could deliver if the operating environment was/is permissive. Access should not be considered as a limiting factor at this stage but may be considered as an explanation for why more people are targeted in 2025 than in 2024 (i.e., the cluster/sector/partners believe they could reach more people—and have a track record that proves they could do so—IF access improved).

- b. **Defining "who and where" humanitarians will target under the appeal:** Once the "reality check" has

given a general indication of the number of people that the response is capable of assisting, discussions should be had regarding who and where the response should focus on. This should be based, primarily, on the intersectoral and objective analysis of the severity of needs, emanating from JIAF 2.0. For example, some countries have chosen to target only geographic areas with the most severe (intersectoral severity Phase 4 and above) needs, while others have chosen to target population groups assessed to have the most severe needs (e.g., population groups with overlapping and reinforcing disadvantages such as old age, disability, gender and belonging to a minority group). The “who and where” may take into consideration—per the focus on risk-informed HPC—risks with a high probability of materializing during the HNRP and which entail a high impact (e.g., anticipated flooding that may lead to new displacement).

NOTE: As highlighted above, the resumption of analysis of PiN by severity will play a critical role in informing this aspect of boundary-setting.

NOTE: Discussions during this step may take into consideration access-related issues, such as whether the response should focus on assisting a relatively small number of people who have the most severe needs but are difficult to access (and therefore require more cost/time to reach) OR a larger number of people who may have less severe needs (though still severe enough to be included in PiN) but are more easily accessible and/or how these two may be combined based on the overall capacity available.

- c. **Defining “what” humanitarian will deliver under the appeal:** In addition to considering the “reality check” on capacity and defining “who and where” the response should focus on, it is important to have a collective understanding of “what” humanitarian will deliver. This should take into consideration:

- i. **People’s own priorities**, as expressed in community consultations, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, assessments, feedback/complaints mechanisms, etc. For example, needs assessments/analysis may conclude that WASH and health are the highest needs in IDP sites, but the community may request to prioritize camp decongestion.

NOTE: As highlighted above, it is vital that humanitarians are proactive in feeding back to communities on how their priorities are reflected in the HNRP and on what humanitarians can (and cannot, see next point) deliver through the plan.

- ii. **Complementarity with other planning frameworks and funding/financing channels**, in particular with respect to essential services and systems, which should—wherever feasible—be funded/financed through development channels, even if delivered by UN/NGO partners. The HRP should not include activities that are reflected in other planning frameworks (e.g., the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework), but should reference these other frameworks to highlight where and how these activities are planned to be implemented.

NOTE: This step should involve inclusive engagement with a broad array of development actors—including UN, NGO, IFI/MDB and bilateral donors—and provide an opportunity to clarify humanitarians’ asks of other duty bearers (e.g., Governments, development actors, peace actors, etc.), which may be reflected as advocacy messages in the final HNRP.

- 18. Finally, to note: “how” humanitarian will deliver is equally important as “who and where” they will target and “what” they will deliver, but it is not reflected under boundary-setting as this should instead inform the Response Strategy**, which should include, for example, considerations around cash versus in-kind assistance, cost effectiveness in delivery and measures to ensure quality, inclusive and accountable responses.

NOTE: This document focuses on building collective clarity regarding scope-setting for needs analysis and boundary-setting for response for HPC 2025, given that it is about to kick-off. Other HPC issues—including response monitoring (e.g., people reached vs people covered)—will be brought to the HPC Steering Group at a later stage, whilst other substantive topics (including costing) will be shared as part of HPC 2026, as previously agreed. Guidance on multipurpose cash inclusion in HPC 2025 has been endorsed by the HPC SG separately.