

2015

OR MULTI-YEAR

STRATEGIC RESPONSE PLAN

Guidance

July 2014

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A strategic response plan is prepared for a protracted or sudden onset emergency that requires international humanitarian assistance. The plan articulates the shared vision of how to respond to the assessed and expressed needs of the affected population.

The strategic planning stage of the humanitarian programme cycle (HPC) is sparked when needs require a joint response. The strategic response plan is a response management tool for country-based decision makers, primarily the humanitarian coordinator (HC) and humanitarian country team (HCT), but also agency and non-governmental organization directors, managers and cluster coordinators. Its purpose is to support strategic decision making based on solid analysis of the needs and concerns of the affected people.

The strategic response plan has two interlinked parts:

- A country or context strategy (regional - e.g. Sahel - or territory - oPt, eastern DRC), with a narrative, strategic objectives and indicators.
- Cluster plans, with objectives, activities and accompanying projects. These detail how the strategy will be implemented and how much funding is required.

The process is sequential: the country strategy guides the cluster response plans as part of the ongoing programme cycle. It seeks to achieve strategic, coordinated, evidence-based humanitarian action as part of the Transformative Agenda.

More information on the humanitarian programme cycle and guidelines: <https://humanitarianresponse.info/programme-cycle>

***Note on terminology:** The term “cluster” refers to sectoral coordination that uses the ‘IASC cluster approach’ introduced after 2005 as part of an effort to reform humanitarian response. However, the references to “cluster” in this guidance should be understood to refer to the range of sectoral coordination mechanisms that are in place in humanitarian response operations.*

***Note on coordination of refugee response:** Where applicable, this guidance should be read in conjunction with the UNHCR’s Note on Refugee Coordination and the ‘Joint UNHCR-OCHA Note on Mixed Situations (IDPs & refugees): Coordination in practice’, 24 April 2014 (<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/538dd3da6.html>)*

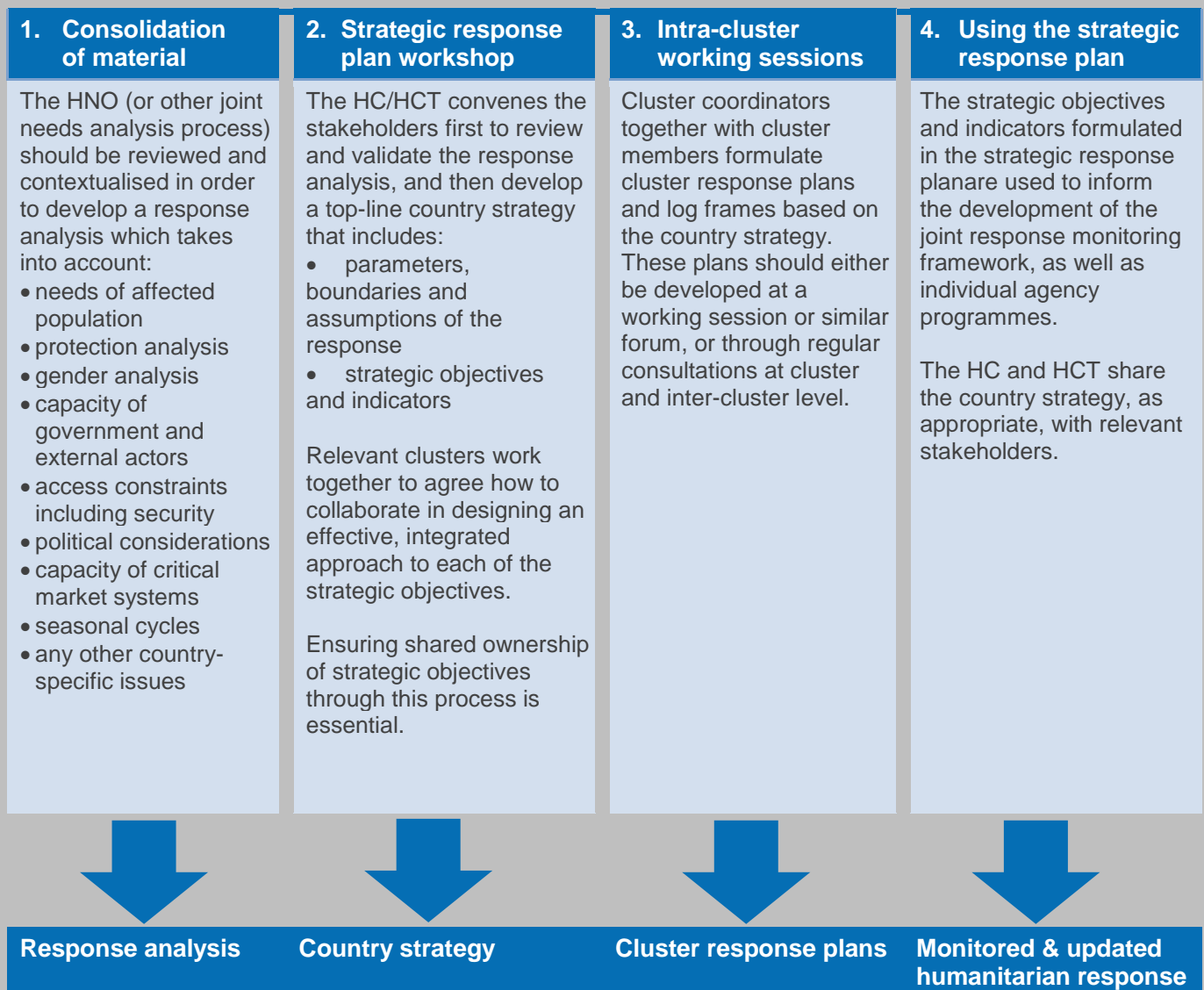
AT A GLANCE: DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC RESPONSE PLAN

1. Purpose The strategic response plan is designed to support country-based decision makers. It is a management tool that articulates a shared vision of how to respond to the expressed and assessed needs of affected people. The development of an strategic response plan is a key step in the humanitarian programme cycle and should be carried out *only* when the needs have been understood and analysed through the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) or other joint needs assessment and analysis processes (such as MIRA).

2. Structure The strategic response plan is constructed of two parts:

1. A top line strategy, with a narrative, strategic objectives and indicators.
2. Detailed cluster response plans with objectives, activities, indicators and accompanying projects followed by the refugee response chapter.

3. Process The strategic response plan is jointly developed by national and international stakeholders, including representatives of affected people. To ensure a robust process the following steps are recommended:



PROCESS

Structuring the strategic response plan

Adapt the template to the needs and context of the response to this crisis. Not all sections suggested in the template need to be drafted in every situation and headings may be deleted or added depending on the context.

The minimum information required is the strategic framework (objectives, indicators, targets) and an explanation of how the plan will be carried out. Keep the plan short enough to be readable.

Ensuring participation and ownership

From the very beginning of the planning process involve representatives from every level of the affected population,¹ and consult national and local authorities as well as civil society and relevant market actors. Listen to them and incorporate their concerns and views into the decision-making and planning process. NGOs are engaged through their representation in HCTs and membership of clusters, but it is also essential to ensure engagement with the full diversity of NGOs in the country, at national and sub-national levels.

Establish a regular dialogue between international humanitarian actors and national stakeholders; this will often happen in existing structures/ meetings and should not involve additional work. This engagement may be direct, or through their membership of clusters and other mechanisms such as NGO forums or national structures.

Groupings of clusters or similar structures, potentially led by members assigned by the HCT, can also focus on the formulation of plans on how to meet strategic objectives as well as regular monitoring of strategic objectives to take any remedial action. Where there is a UN political or peacekeeping mission, invite mission personnel to participate in the planning process, as appropriate.²

A workshop including all stakeholders is usually seen as the best platform to inform and discuss the findings of the humanitarian needs overview, situation, market analyses and the response analysis with the humanitarian community as a whole. This is also a good forum for delineating the scope and strategic objectives of the strategic response plan in a setting that builds consensus, commitment and ownership. Humanitarian country teams may of course choose other arrangements, such as short working sessions or integrating the workflow into their regular meetings/schedule.

Accountability to affected populations (AAP)

Accountability to affected populations (AAP) means ensuring affected people's views and contributions are effectively integrated into all phases of the HPC. The humanitarian community has collectively committed to improving AAP.

Set about integrating AAP into the Strategic Response Plan in a variety of ways:

- Define objectives and indicators that reflect the expressed perspectives, needs and concerns of the affected population across age groups, gender and other aspects of diversity.
- Include community satisfaction and indicators for quality of services.
- Ensure cluster decisions on setting local standards and beneficiary selection criteria are context-based.
- Ensure representation of the affected population is decided through community consultation.
- Commit to including community-based organizations and local communities in monitoring.
- Commit to sharing objectives and results of the response with communities (examples include using radio spots, local websites and public forums to inform communities).
- Make the strategy available/accessible to the affected population in their local language.

For a multi-year approach, consider:

- Degree of political stability.
- Sufficient information on crop cycles.
- Livelihood and market analyses.
- Iterative contingency planning process.
- Forecasting.
- Trends in national capacity.
- Environmental factors including climate change.
- The likelihood of humanitarian needs continuing to exist in the years covered by the plan.
- A context in which preparedness and resilience actions are possible.
- Sufficient monitoring methods are in place.

¹ For further information please refer to IASC Commitments to AAP and the Transformative Agenda Protocol (Operational Framework) on AAP.

² See the 'UN Policy on Integrated Assessment and Planning', 9 April 2013. See also IASC Principals guidance on risk analysis and the role of HCs and HCTs, 'UN Integration and Humanitarian Space: Building a Framework for Flexibility', July 2013.

Timeframe for the process

The HC decides the calendar for managing the process. Timelines will differ based on the circumstances under which the SRP is being developed. The general expectation is that in sudden-onset emergencies the strategic planning process is completed 30 days after the preliminary response plan. In protracted crises the needs-based strategic planning (HNO/SRP) process takes around 3 months. It may be useful to allow sufficient time for out-of-country stakeholders such as agency HQs to input into the draft plan.

Timeframe for delivery of the response

For both sudden-onset and protracted crises the HCT will decide in advance on an overall timeframe for delivery of the strategic response plan as this will directly affect the shape of the strategy.

The timeframe of a plan may start before or after January if it needs to take into account national/government planning, or the timing could accommodate the country's hazard cycle or harvest. Develop a multi-year plan if needs and planned responses change only slightly from year to year, or if they justify raising resources for multi-year programming of preparedness or resilience-building actions.

While the timing may differ, the sequence of processes/products remains the same. An humanitarian needs overview is developed first, followed by the country strategy. The strategy governs development of cluster plans and accompanying projects.

Connecting the humanitarian needs overview³ with the strategic response plan

The humanitarian needs overview is the foundation for the strategic response plan. A fully developed humanitarian needs overview provides a comprehensive analysis of the magnitude of the crisis and patterns of humanitarian impact, and culminates in the identification of the most pressing humanitarian needs. These needs are in a sense the key issues that the strategic response plan addresses.

The international humanitarian system will not respond to all needs highlighted in the HNO for a wide range of reasons, including the fact that a proportion of humanitarian needs will be addressed by the government, and that there may not be adequate response capacity in-country to address all needs. For this reason, the HC and HCT define parameters for the response and the focus areas for response and clearly articulate what the international humanitarian community aims to do. This will be articulated through the response analysis, which is perceived as the core of needs-based strategic response planning.

Key findings from the humanitarian needs overview process inform the strategic response plan. They help set the strategic objectives and response boundaries, articulate the links between the humanitarian and longer term development response, determine main actions, influence choice of indicators, and coordinate project planning.

Response Analysis

A response analysis follows the review, validation and analysis of the needs. It means deciding what to do, once the HC/HCT has a clear perception of needs and of the operational context. It also requires an analysis of the causes of the problem, in order to decide on an appropriate response.

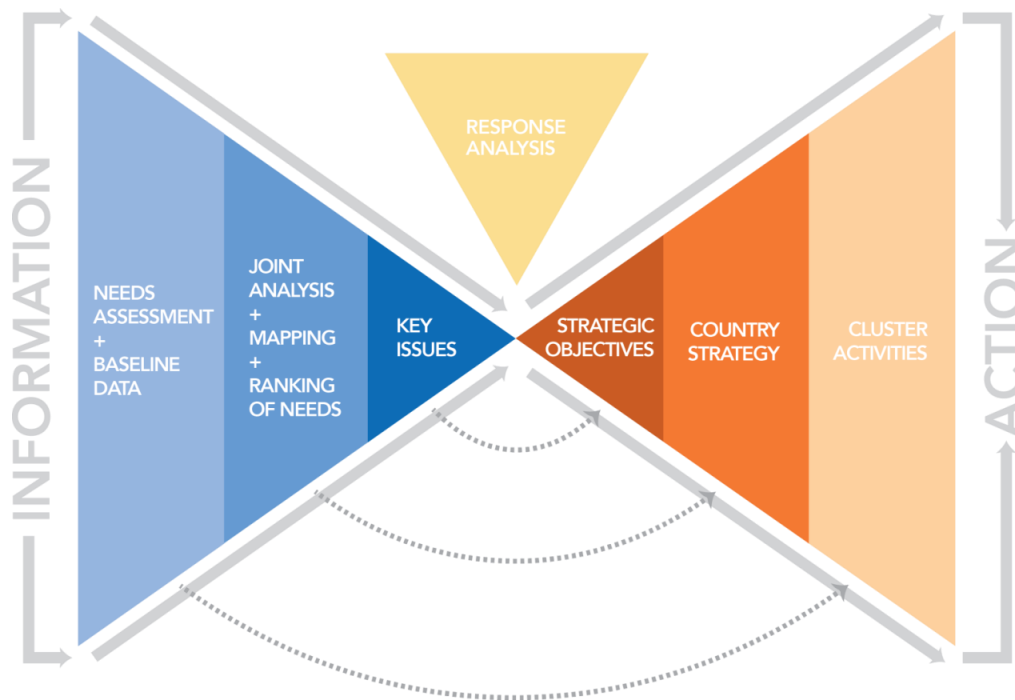
Maintaining this two-step approach by firstly, looking exclusively at the needs of the affected population as laid out in the humanitarian needs overview and, secondly, analysing the needs in view of the operational environment, capacities etc., gives the humanitarian community a clearer view of the situation. After this, the potential scope of the response is determined.

The response analysis takes into account that most needs require a multi-sectoral integrated approach and include the issues presented in the operational environment annex to the HNO.

A response analysis should also highlight actual and perceived neutrality, impartiality and independence of humanitarian actors in the context of how they may affect the response, and whether any corrective measures are to be considered in this regard. 'Do no harm' considerations for the response should also be indicated.

³ For guidance and templates for the humanitarian needs overview, go to: <https://humanitarianresponse.info/programme-cycle/>

Based upon the response analysis, the HCT presents the scope and top-line strategy of the response, which in turn informs inter-cluster and cluster strategies.



Bridging humanitarian strategies with recovery and development plans

Ensure that the strategic response plan is coherent and connected with national recovery, durable solutions and development frameworks existing in the country. This may include a United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) developed jointly with the national government, or a specific UN recovery or transition plan. Also consider national frameworks developed independently by the government, such as poverty reduction strategies, social safety nets, sustainable development strategies, compacts and transitional results frameworks. Articulate the interface between the humanitarian and the development processes. Use the humanitarian needs overview--its analysis of context, risks, structural vulnerabilities and underlying factors, and its unpacking of root causes for the crisis--to determine where humanitarian, recovery and development plans can complement each other. These synergies will be greater if members of both the humanitarian and development teams are part of the markets, livelihood and response analysis processes.

Experience indicates that failure to establish and articulate synergies and distinctions between different planning frameworks is a recipe for missed planning opportunities and generates confusion over the planning process, roles, responsibilities and accountability. Therefore, think through and articulate issues like the ones below when developing the strategic response plan:

- (i) Which relevant programmatic frameworks already exist in the country to guide humanitarian, recovery and development interventions?
- (ii) How can the HCT best coordinate and interface with national partners and their plans?
- (iii) What is the tipping point when transitioning from humanitarian assistance to recovery and longer term development assistance?
- (iv) Which coordination structure has the responsibility for developing and/or monitoring implementation of each programmatic framework and how does the strategic response plan feed into or build on these?
- (v) What implications do other existing plans have on design, implementation and monitoring of the strategic response plan?
- (vi) How can the strategic response plan explain, simply and clearly, the link between humanitarian response and national and development plans?

Leadership, roles and responsibilities in producing an strategic response plan

Roles and responsibilities of the HC/HCT, OCHA, the inter-cluster coordinator and cluster coordinators during the strategic response plan process are outlined below. Ensure that all involved actors understand the details. A smaller inter-agency group under the HCT can assist in developing the strategic response plan and ensure consistency and linkages between various stages of the process.

The UNHCR Representative leads on refugee preparedness and strategic response in partnership with members of the HCT and government and development agencies. The Representative will ensure that the refugee response plan (RRP) is an integral yet distinct part of the overall SRP.

HC/HCT

The HC leads the strategic planning process and, together with the HCT, defines the overall vision and focus for humanitarian action. The HC/HCT should ensure the strategy is based on a thorough and consultative protection analysis and reflects the needs and concerns of the affected population.

OCHA / Inter-cluster Coordinator

- Coordinates agreement around planning figures (for IDPs, refugees, host families and other vulnerable groups) established by the clusters/HCT.
- Facilitates the development (or revision) and subsequent monitoring of the strategy and leads the process up to the production stage, including development of a timetable and organizing a dedicated meeting of the HCT.
- Prepares a draft country strategy (strategic objectives and indicators) based on HCT decisions and inputs from agencies and clusters.
- Facilitates as needed, bringing together relevant clusters to ensure a collaborative multi-sectoral approach to the achievement of strategic objectives, that takes into account cross-cutting issues.
- Supports clusters as needed in identifying cluster objectives and activities (and accompanying projects) and in ensuring that they are in line with the strategic objectives.
- Finalizes the strategic response plan (country strategy and cluster plans) in coordination with agencies and clusters, and submits it to the HC and HCT for approval.
- Keeps a complete and up-to-date 'who does what where (when)?' (3 or 4Ws) database to better identify coverage, gaps and overlap based on inputs by the clusters.
- Cross-checks and, if needs be, relays funding information obtained locally from donors or agencies to the Financial Tracking Service (FTS).⁴
- Facilitates the preparation of a response monitoring framework, for tracking results and measuring progress towards strategic objectives, throughout the year.

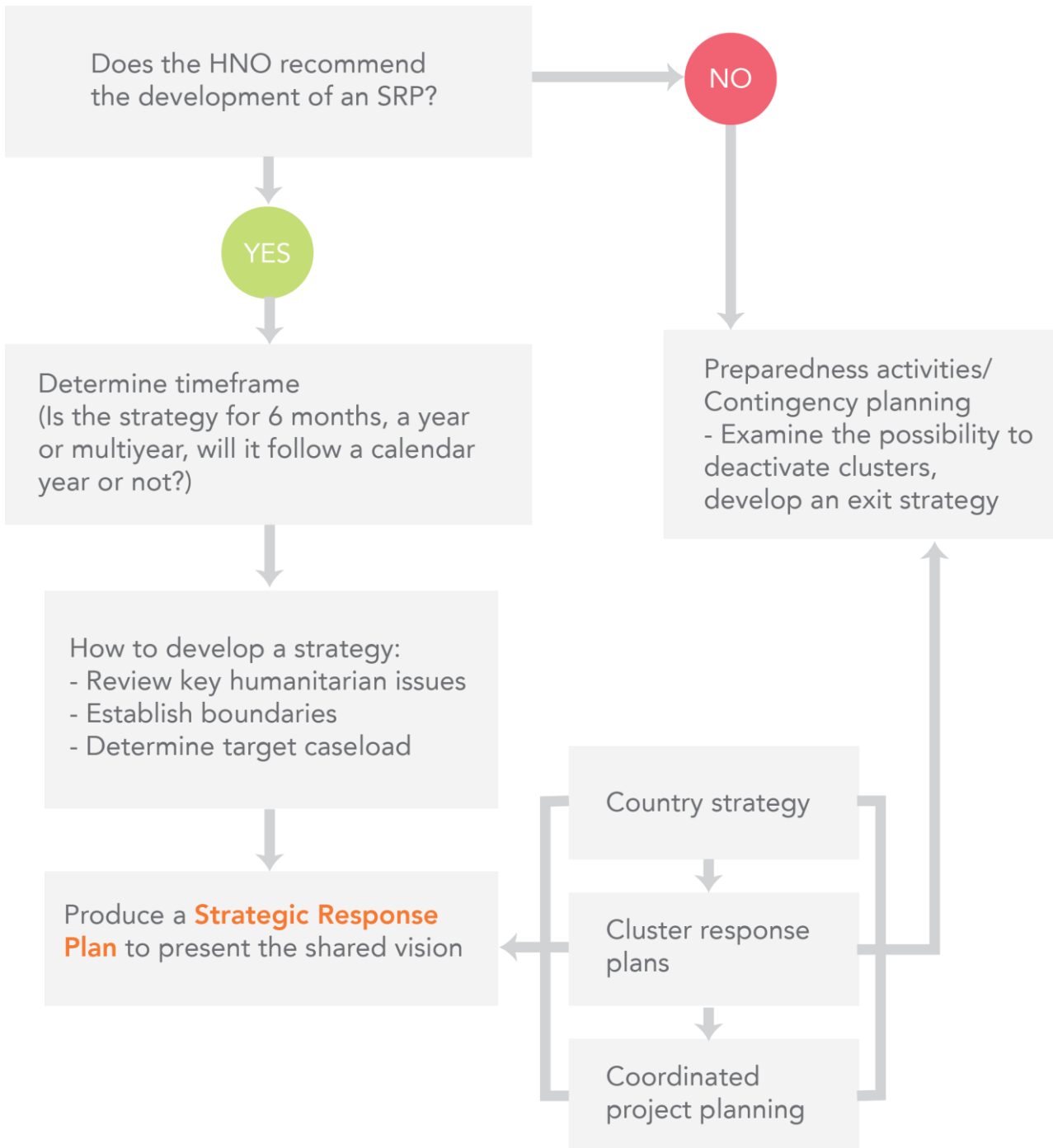
Cluster coordinator in consultation with cluster members

- Collaborates with other clusters and humanitarian actors to ensure a holistic approach--inclusive of regular communication and feedback with all humanitarian partners--to achieving strategic objectives.
- Explains the process, and gives and seeks continuous feedback to cluster members throughout the whole process.
- Takes part in the development of the strategic response plan (reviews the guidance, adapts templates, agrees to timelines, etc.).
- Provides the HCT with inputs for the country strategy as needed, and reviews the overall strategic response plan as required.
- Drafts cluster objectives and activities to fulfil the cluster's part of the strategic objectives; ensures cross-sectoral collaboration and the mainstreaming of protection⁵ and incorporation of cross-cutting issues.
- Promotes the undertaking of appropriate consultations with affected populations by cluster members during all phases of the cycle.
- Prepares an internal division of labour, oversees the peer-review process for the selection and classification of projects, and supports the HC in the review and endorsement of projects.
- Updates 'who does what where (when)?' (3 or 4Ws) database to better identify coverage, gaps and overlap.
- Engages with cluster members to ensure the preparation of the response monitoring framework.

⁴ fts@un.org; <http://fts.unocha.org>

⁵ <http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/en/areas-of-responsibility/protection-mainstreaming.html>

Flowchart of strategic response planning decisions



PART I

COUNTRY STRATEGY

Effective strategic planning determines the direction in which the humanitarian community will go, the actions that will ensure progress and the way participating organizations will know if they are succeeding.

The strategic response plan is a response management tool for ensuring that independent humanitarian actors are working towards the same goals, and for assessing and adjusting the humanitarian community's course of action when responding in a volatile environment. The process is also 'strategic' because it addresses the situation at the highest level of action through the highest level of coordination. The sections below elaborate on these steps.

First, here are some quality standards to help develop your strategy.

How do you design a good humanitarian strategy?

- **Involve all.** Ensure that all actors are involved in the planning and understand the evidence base from which the plan derives (through an strategic response plan workshop, followed up with regular communication and information about the process).
- **Base it on needs.** Let the strategy be informed by the identified humanitarian needs informed by a protection analysis, and a well-grounded livelihood and market analysis.
- **Set boundaries.** Reflect on the issues raised by the humanitarian needs overview and identify the boundaries and target population. This will undoubtedly require hard choices to be made; the humanitarian community can never meet all needs.
- **Check response capacity.** Assess needs in the context of the operational environment and capacities.
- **Draw a line.** Many protracted crises occur in contexts of general poverty and deprivation, where humanitarian needs can be detected anywhere. The strategy must draw the line and be clear about what it will address, and what it will omit.
- **Classify it.** The humanitarian imperative demands that the humanitarian community identify and address the most severe needs first, whether these are time-bound, determined geographically, defined by population groups, sectors, issues or whether they fall into any other category.
- **Keep it simple.** Avoid using complicated language or UN/NGO jargon. Language should be clear, simple and easy to translate.

Framing the strategy

To help set the parameters of the strategy, consider the following steps:

Review the issues of concern of the affected population and the inter-sectoral analysis in the final humanitarian needs overview. These will determine the course of response operations.

List planning assumptions. Unexpected events or external factors—such as an economic recession, a fast-breaking health crisis (like cholera) or a flare-up of armed conflict—may impact humanitarian operations and subsequently necessitate revision of the plan. Consider how to adopt a robust yet flexible approach, which can be adapted following significant unforeseen events. List the major variables or factors and outline any key projections about the needs and concerns of the affected population. For example, judging by historical patterns, the number of people affected by food insecurity might increase mid-year, or the number of refugees might decrease.

Establish the scope or boundaries of the collective humanitarian response. This is essential as humanitarian actors cannot cover all the needs in country, particularly in contexts of chronic vulnerability and poor social services. Boundaries can be geographic, demographic, sectoral, temporal, or other measures of vulnerability to draw the line between what the HCT must achieve (which is included in the strategy) and what is achieved at a later stage or by others. Previous funding coverage or future funding forecasts and capacity are not factored into the scope of the strategy. In other words, it is not trimmed to match expected funding.

Take into account the needs being addressed by government and non-humanitarian actors, including national recovery plans, UNDAF, poverty reduction programmes, or bilateral aid programmes.

Establish intervention criteria which will help determine when and where to intervene. Vulnerability, analysis, thresholds, the combination of crisis factors and cost efficiency all come under this category.

Establish start up times, including capacity requirements, planning and funding for response interventions.

Determine the target population⁶ (number, type and location of people to be helped, perhaps broken down by cluster/sector). Remember that people in need are identified earlier in the process, and therefore planning assumptions might vary.

Examine cross-sectoral opportunities and ensure that the strategy enables cross-cluster collaboration on targeting criteria or response modality where appropriate.

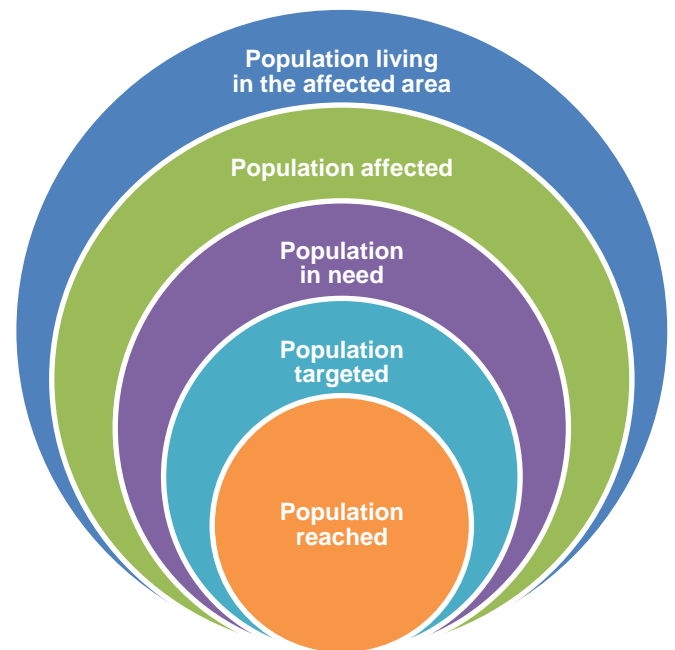
Describe the classification within the response: it can be time-bound [example: now vs later], geographical [example: east vs west], seasonal [example: before planting season vs after], a specific group within the population, or whatever criteria is most relevant within the context.

Make sure the discussion does not become cluster-centric and that due visibility is given to protection and other cross-cutting issues and concerns: for example, environment, disability, HIV/AIDS and mental health, among other issues relevant to the context.

Ensure gender and age-sensitive planning permeates the strategy. This approach will promote equitable participation and fair distribution of humanitarian benefits.

Base the strategy on a sound protection analysis including a disaggregated analysis of risk: what are the threats (their source and how they are manifested), who is vulnerable to these threats and why, what means do people have to mitigate them?

Make sure the strategy builds resilience⁷ by supporting the coping mechanisms and capacities of affected people. Aim to reduce chronic vulnerability. 'Do no harm' considerations should inform the response strategy.



Resilience focuses on the ability of households, communities and systems to withstand, adapt to and recover from stresses and shocks. Communities and households are resilient when they are able to meet their basic needs in a sustainable way and without reliance on external assistance. Resilience is therefore a goal, rather than an approach or activity in itself. Resilience can be strengthened by the use of empowering approaches such as cash transfers, emergency employment schemes and supporting national service providers to get back on their feet. Disaster risk management, conflict-sensitive programming, peacebuilding and climate change adaptation are also recognized by many governments and partners as key strategies to build resilience. Strengthening the resilience of communities and households can boost social cohesion between people and increase the impact and cost effectiveness of humanitarian aid.

⁶ For some activities (e.g. advocacy) it may be difficult to identify the exact target caseload. The reason for missing figures in these cases should be explained in the strategy.

⁷ Guidance can be found in the IASC Perspective on 'A resilience Based Approach to Humanitarian Assistance'.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1. Make three to five strategic objectives for the SRP. It is not necessary to choose an indicator per cluster to ensure all humanitarian action is covered. The selection is made in-country, according to criteria agreed to within the HCT. A strategic objective is a higher-level, medium-term result or change the humanitarian community aims to achieve over a specific period.
2. Strategic objectives, with indicators and targets to match, are pivotal to planning and programming. Each one provides a strong focus and the means for organizations to measure throughout the period of the plan whether they are achieving their aims.
3. Formulate each objective in a way that indicates:
 - What should result from the action
 - Who will benefit from it
4. Indicators with appropriate targets will measure progress towards achieving the objectives. They will need to be agreed by the HCT in close coordination with the inter-cluster coordination group (ICCG). Cluster activities are there to explain what needs to be done to achieve the objectives.
5. The strategic objectives are higher level than the cluster objectives, and consequently there should be a strong vertical relationship between the two. A cluster objective must contribute to the strategic objectives. Avoid abstract strategic objectives. An example of a poorly formulated objective might be 'prepare for and respond to emergencies in time'.
6. For multi-year strategies, strategic objectives may span the entire period of the plan (with phased indicators measuring yearly results), or be phased themselves in a multi-year sequence.
7. Tie each strategic objective to three to five indicators, with accompanying targets and relevant baselines. Strategic indicators are **outcome-level indicators**, for example 'percentage of global acute malnutrition in [location]'. They specify *how* the humanitarian community intends to measure progress towards strategic objectives. It is not necessary to choose an indicator from every cluster or cross-cutting issue in order to represent all humanitarian action.

See example of strategic objectives and indicators in annex 2.

Endorsing the strategy

The HCT will need to assign clear responsibilities to individuals or groups for review of the final document. Make sure that all stakeholders understand the process and timelines. The ultimate responsibility for determining the direction of the response lies with the HC, who endorses the final country strategy in consultation with the HCT.

Once the strategy has been endorsed, it governs the substance of the cluster response plan and the stages of coordinated project planning. It is published, implemented and monitored, and, if necessary, revised.

PART II

CLUSTER RESPONSE PLAN

The first step in drawing up cluster response plans is to hold an inter-cluster meeting. Use this meeting to clarify how clusters jointly respond to strategic objectives. Starting out with a collaborative approach can facilitate actors in working closely together throughout the process.

Each cluster then develops a plan, which corresponds with the overall strategy and outlines the cluster's plans for protection mainstreaming.⁸ Cluster coordinators convene with partners and other relevant actors to determine cluster objectives in light of the strategic objectives, and identify activities, which will fulfill the cluster objectives.

Subsequently, clusters finalise the cluster objectives, list activities and agree on a division of labour as the basis for coordinated project planning (see next section). Circulate the cluster objectives, along with their indicators and activities to partners for comments, before finalising the individual cluster plan for presentation to the inter-cluster coordination group and the HC/HCT for review.

Cluster objectives

Based on the strategic objectives and the humanitarian needs overview, each cluster agrees on three to five cluster objectives and activities to be carried out within the timeframe of the plan. Apply agreed boundaries in order to set the limits of cluster objectives and determine the number and categories of people to be reached. Findings from the joint analysis section of the humanitarian needs overview and the response analysis can be reintroduced here to help establish boundaries (geographic, needs-based, or other).

Make sure that cluster objectives articulate **the outcome or result** that the cluster intends to achieve. For example, 'Incidence of communicable diseases reduced among IDPs living in x, y, z' (this is results-oriented). Avoid formulating cluster objectives as activities. Activities are described separately under each cluster objective. The outcome-level objectives are accompanied by up to three specific, measurable indicators with accompanying targets and relevant baselines. At least one indicator should be at the outcome level. Outcome indicators demonstrate that the achieved short- to medium-term effects of a cluster's collective outputs are being achieved.

Cluster activities

Develop activities that correspond to the analysis of needs and concerns of the affected people. Specify the actions, beneficiaries, locations and targets necessary for each cluster objective. This makes the strategic response plan more concrete, and justifies the accompanying projects. Let the following also guide the development of activities:

- Set out the approach and actions required to ensure the neutrality, impartiality and independence of the response.
- Set out 'do no harm', and 'build back better' aspects of the response strategy, promote environmental sustainability, and ensure a focus on the most vulnerable when formulating activities.
- Create activities that respond to the distinct needs of women, girls, boys and men. Justify any focus on one of these groups.
- Cluster activities should be informed by the results of the assessments jointly carried out with affected populations and in line with an age, gender, or other diversity approach.
- Cluster activities should be informed by an environmental analysis to both integrate in environmental factors impacting on affected populations into planning, and ensure that activities do not exacerbate existing environmental problems.
- Ensure linkages across clusters where needed for multi-sectoral response (e.g. in a cholera response or community-based activities).

⁸ <http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/en/areas-of-responsibility/protection-mainstreaming.html>

- Activities do not need to be strictly 'life-saving' although life saving should certainly be the priority. They can also support response operations (e.g. coordination), or avert irreversible harm in a time-critical way (e.g. crop pest prevention).
- Design resilience- and early recovery-enhancing activities, which enable communities to resist future shocks and reduce dependence on aid. Early analysis can lead to the development of activities for the protection of livelihoods.
- Keep an overview of activities planned by all the partners within your cluster and seek synergies with other clusters to the extent possible to avoid duplication, ensure a holistic response plan, and to ensure even coverage.
- Be explicit about the approximate proportion of men, women, boys and girls who will benefit. This sets a basis for demonstrating that an activity will address the identified needs of different groups.

Cluster indicators and targets

Make sure to link cluster objectives with at least one outcome indicator and to link cluster activities with output indicators.

Cluster indicators, targets and baselines should help measure results or changes that affect beneficiaries, rather than processes, workload or functional statistics (e.g. number of meetings held, internal trainings implemented, reports produced). The exceptions may be the emergency telecommunications and logistics clusters, which sometimes need to measure material enablers (e.g. number of radios installed).

Consider these questions when developing indicators:⁹

- How should conditions have changed for affected people at the end of the planning period, and which indicators and targets best encapsulate and measure this change?
- What can feasibly be monitored and analysed given resources and capacity constraints?
- What information will be useful for decision-making and later for learning?
- If active sub-clusters exist, consider using indicators relevant for them.

Cluster Objective 1: Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	Supports Strategic Objective XX, XX	
Indicator	Baseline	Target
1. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	xxx	xxx

Activities	Locations	Indicator	Baseline	Target
• Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	X,Y,Z	• Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	xxx	xxx
	X,Y,Z	• Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet	xxx	xxx

⁹ See the Indicators Registry for suggested indicators: <http://ir.humanitarianresponse.info>

COORDINATED PROJECT PLANNING

Coordinated project planning takes place *after* the strategy has been developed, to ensure that the strategy is built on needs analysis and is unaffected by organizations' fundraising concerns. Clusters first determine their cluster objectives and key activities, linked to the strategic objectives; these then serve as the basis for project development.

A coordinated approach to project planning prevents duplication, ensures a proper division of labour amongst partners, and can facilitate agreements on criteria for project selection within the clusters. See below for how to coordinate project planning.

Stages of the process

1. **The cluster agrees to an internal division of labour** in order to coordinate implementation and ensure coverage of main needs. Take into account those humanitarian actors that do not register their planned actions on the Online Planning/Projects System (OPS), to avoid duplication. While government projects are not included in the plan, outline their main activities in the division of labour to map coverage.
2. **The cluster establishes criteria for the selection and classification of projects**, with guidance provided by the HC/HCT as needed. Establish these criteria in advance to set the direction of the process including the concerns as expressed by the affected population.
3. **Organizations design projects based on the assessed needs, response boundaries, strategic objectives and cluster objectives/activities**. The projects should be designed according to the expressed needs and concerns of the affected population. Then agencies and NGOs upload projects on OPS.¹⁰
4. **Allow sufficient time** for partners to submit well-designed projects. National NGOs might need more time and guidance, particularly if they are new to the process.
5. **Clusters peer-review the projects** using the established selection criteria as a basis for vetting. Ensure fair and transparent representation in the peer review panel. Projects are endorsed only if they address the identified needs, correspond to the agreed division of labour, and are realistic to implement.
6. **Clusters classify the selected projects** Setting categories--such as [now vs later], [east vs west], [before planting season vs after]--enables the HCT to programme for prioritising the response to the most urgent (or time-sensitive) requirements. The categorisation process helps focus the work of the clusters. The cluster coordinator, backed up by the HC, ensures that the projects are well-classified.
7. **Agency headquarters staff review the projects** and make any necessary adjustments.
8. **OCHA Geneva publishes the approved projects** electronically on the FTS website, where everyone can view all details alongside the SRP document.

Projects can have any start or end date within the period covered by the plan. Multi-year projects should split their requirements into the (approximate) amount per year. The HCT decides how to group or sort projects (different countries have different clusters, but projects can also be sorted according to other criteria such as inter-cluster groupings or themes if these are more convenient). Projects on coordination requirements (coordination and information management staff, transport, workshops/training, and cluster functioning costs) may also be submitted.¹¹

Projects can be revised on OPS at any time to react to situations evolving and shifts in the division of labour.¹² All organizations are encouraged to reflect funding received against projects in the Financial Tracking Service (FTS).

¹⁰ For multi-agency projects, each organization should separate out their component and related budget requirements and upload these onto OPS as separate project sheets.

¹¹ For a more detailed overview of funding cluster coordination costs in protracted emergencies, please see the *Framework on Cluster Coordination Costs and Functions in Humanitarian Emergencies at the Country Level*, May 2011.

¹² HC approval is needed for a revised project if there is a budget increase or decrease of 50% or more than \$1 million.

Online Project System (OPS)

For more information on OPS, including how to register as a user and how to upload or revise projects please see: <http://ops.unocha.org>.

IASC Gender Marker Coding

Include an IASC Gender Marker code in all projects. The Gender Marker is a tool that uses a scale of 0-2 to code whether a humanitarian project is calculated to ensure that women, girls, boys and men will benefit equally from the project or whether the project will advance gender equality in some other way. The Gender Marker also helps donors identify and fund gender-sensitized projects that help ensure that all segments of the affected population have access to an equal quality of services. Cluster coordinators (or project vetting teams) ensure that each project is coded correctly and consistently, and that project designers receive guidance as needed. A gender code is assigned based on three critical components: (i) there is gender analysis in the needs assessment that provides relevant sex- and age-disaggregated data and gives insights into local gender issues; (ii) this needs assessment is used to identify activities; and, (iii) gender-related outcomes.

In addition to support provided by the IASC Gender Standby Capacity Project secretariat, by its GenCap advisers or by other gender advisers located at headquarters or in the field, more information on the Gender Marker, including a detailed description of the coding, a guidance note, cluster-specific tip sheets, and other useful tools, can be found at: <http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/themes/gender/the-iasc-gender-marker>

Response monitoring

Humanitarian response monitoring is a continuous process that records the aid delivered to an affected population and measures results achieved against objectives set out in the strategic response plan, while also tracking the inputs to and the outputs of interventions.

In order to assess the success of the strategy, know whether progress is being made, and whether revisions are needed, it is important to measure quantifiable results and read them against the targets set for strategic objectives, cluster objectives, and cluster activities. The indicators and targets are set during the planning phase and form the basis of the response monitoring framework. A few definitions are provided below:

An **indicator** is a quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable means to measure achievement, or reflect the changes brought about by an intervention. Whenever relevant, indicators should be disaggregated according to gender and age. The online humanitarian indicators registry (ir.humanitarianresponse.info), developed by the global clusters, provides a menu of commonly-used indicators corresponding to most humanitarian activities, providing standard definitions, explanations and applications for each one. The humanitarian indicators registry includes specific indicators on feedback, participation and transparency that can be adapted by clusters. When selecting an indicator, consider the feasibility and the cost of data collection, and foresee who will measure the indicators, how, how often and with what resources. Whenever possible, the indicator should be the same as (or reflect) the indicator that was originally used to assess the needs.

A **baseline** is a gauge of a prevailing situation before an activity is implemented. It is expressed by a known value, in reference to an indicator and is not always needed.

A **target** expresses what is considered necessary and realistically achievable by the humanitarian community within the period of the plan if means are provided. In most cases, the target will not cover the overall estimated need or the total affected population, mainly due to coverage by others, lack of access, boundaries, thresholds of intervention, or cost inefficiency.

Beneficiaries are the people targeted for receiving the humanitarian assistance. Defining and counting (and not double counting) beneficiaries is a necessary but difficult exercise, for which specific guidance will be provided.

Successful response monitoring relies on precisely defined indicators, targets and beneficiaries, on clear roles and responsibilities for monitoring tasks and on having the right resources to put it into practice. All this should be described in a document called '[country name] monitoring framework'. Ideally, this is prepared at the same time as the SRP. The monitoring framework document should detail the specifics of the data requirements of each indicator, along with the frequency, responsibilities and methods for data collection, overall analysis and reporting. This document will include a timeline showing when reports will be produced, presenting the monitoring data. See the monitoring guidance for more information.

Financing the plan

The total funding requirement (or 'price tag') for the strategic response plan is derived through coordinated project planning. It should reflect all planned humanitarian action needed to reach the strategic objectives. Engage the government in the process as appropriate, in spite of the fact that funding requirements for its part in humanitarian response are not included in the plan. Also take into account the actions developed by humanitarian actors who are not participating in the joint coordination system, in order not to duplicate parts of the response.

Appealing for funds

In addition to its primary role, the strategic response plan is also an advocacy tool which can be used in support of resource mobilization. Organizations are encouraged to approach donors directly, citing their part in the plan. OCHA Geneva produces an annual, consolidated appeal, compiling information from SRPs for advocacy and fundraising purposes. This document will summarize the strategic response plans and list funding requirements for the individual crises. The HC/HCT may wish to prepare other material for local resource mobilization and advocacy purposes, with support from OCHA or other organizations' headquarters.

Updating and revising an strategic response plan during the year

During the year changes in the humanitarian situation and needs may affect the course of the collective operational response. It may also happen that some actions do not achieve the expected outcome. In such cases, the humanitarian community will need to update or revise its strategy. The HCT should decide if and when this is necessary, and choose one of the following options:

* **Strategic response plan update:** The situation in-country has encountered minor changes. The strategic objectives, the cluster objectives and the main parameters of the strategy remain unchanged. Activities, targets, projects, and budgets are updated. Financial requirements are updated and accessible online. Ideally, an strategic response plan update will be produced before the release of a periodic monitoring report.

Example: The IDP population in province YYYY has grown from 50,000 to 100,000 people. In that situation, the targets and requirements need updating, though the strategy remains untouched.

* **Strategic response plan revision:** The situation in-country has changed significantly. The HCT and clusters revise the humanitarian needs overview and then the whole strategic response plan: strategic objectives, cluster objectives, main parameters of the strategy, activities, targets, and budgets. A revised strategic response plan is produced. Financial requirements are updated and accessible on FTS and in the revised strategic response plan. A revision might be prompted by a periodic monitoring report.

Example: The HCT in country Z responds to an IDP situation. However, the food security situation worsens rapidly, and the country team needs to refocus their energy to respond to it, probably having to postpone other planned activities. In this situation, the whole plan must be changed to conform to information in the most recent needs analysis and to reorient scope, strategic objectives and cluster response plans.

ANNEX I: KEY THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Topic	Key Points
Purpose	The strategic response plan articulates a humanitarian country team's strategic priorities for a period of one or more years. It is the principal point of reference for activating and monitoring response operations. It can also be used in support of advocacy and resource mobilization.
Applicability	The process starts with a humanitarian needs overview indicating that a strategic response plan is required.
Format	See the strategic response plan template. The finalized plan is published online.
Components	The strategic response plan consists of two parts: (i) a country strategy which lists the strategic objectives and indicators, and (ii) cluster plans and projects , which detail how the strategy will be implemented and what the financial requirements will be.
Timing	The strategic response plan should be drafted following the recommendation to do one in the humanitarian needs overview. Strategy development follows needs analysis.
Update/Revision	If there are changes to the humanitarian situation that affect the direction of response operations, the HCT and clusters should update or revise the strategic response plan as needed.
Responsibilities	The HC determines the direction of the humanitarian strategy. The HCT develops the strategy. Clusters determine cluster objectives and activities and prepare corresponding projects. OCHA supports these efforts.
Process Management	Once the humanitarian needs overview has been finalised, the HC/HCT sets the boundaries and priorities for the strategic response (and the corresponding strategic objectives and indicators), usually by holding a workshop or meeting or establishing a small working group to develop initial strategic objectives and indicators. These are circulated electronically before the HCT meets to finalize the strategy. (HQs contribute to the review). Cluster coordinators bring partners together around the finalised strategy (perhaps in a series of meetings or consultations) to determine cluster objectives and key activities—in line with the strategic objectives—and then prepare projects according to an agreed division of labour. Agency headquarters staff review the projects and make any necessary adjustments.
Participation	All humanitarian actors, including national and local authorities and national and international NGOs are invited to participate. Views and opinions of the affected population are included in the design of the strategy.

ANNEX II: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

MAIN STEPS	Preparation/ pre-planning	Needs Analysis	Strategic Planning			Response Monitoring
		<i>Humanitarian Needs Overview</i>	<i>Response Analysis</i>	<i>Country strategy</i>	<i>Cluster Plans</i>	<i>Periodic Monitoring Report</i>
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning for a needs-based strategic response planning, including time frame Establishing the broad parameters of the process Considering options for consulting the affected population Agreeing on roles & responsibilities 	<p>Joint needs analysis/overview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key problem statements Impact of the following on the crisis: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drivers/underlying factors Scope/scale and demographic profile Population status – including livelihood analysis Impact of the crisis on critical markets Information gaps (assessment planning in SRP) <p>Annex: Operational environment</p>	<p>Components for response analysis:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Needs analysis (HNO) Operational environment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity (local, national, international, HCT) Community concerns Access constraints Security constraints Political considerations Seasonal cycles Market capacity Country specifics 	<p>Country strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parameters: boundaries; assumptions; results of response analysis Strategic objectives Access constraints, baselines and targets Assessment planning 	<p>Cluster strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cluster objectives <p>Log frames</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cluster activities, locations, indicators, baselines and targets 	<p>Overview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes in context Needs analysis Response capacity <p>Strategic Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achievements to date <p>Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding analysis Cluster Performance and achievements Challenges Contingency/Preparedness Plans <p>Recommendations</p>
Modalities	HCT planning meeting in consultation with the ICCG	Analysis team, supported by OCHA, responsible for the development of humanitarian needs overview	Response analysis during strategic planning workshop based on needs analysis and operational environment	Workshop Wider consultations/reviews Validation by HCT	Intra-cluster work validation by HCT	Through processes, responsibilities and reporting format outlined in monitoring framework
Main actors	Humanitarian Coordinator (HC)/HCT/ICCG	HCT/ ICCG, Clusters, OCHA analysis team assigned by HCT/ICCG comprising cluster representatives and technical experts	HCT ICCG Humanitarian stakeholders	HC/HCT ICCG	Cluster coordinators and members	Clusters, ICCG, HC/HCT
Roles + responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HC/HCT: decision on the overall process from joint needs analysis to strategic response planning Cluster coordinators: planning with the HCT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HC/HCT: custodians of the process, responsible for initiating and validating joint analysis Analysis team: conducts consultations and develops humanitarian needs overview OCHA: convenes analysis team and supports data compilation, consultations, caseload estimation, joint analysis, production of needs overview document and dissemination as appropriate, maintains assessment registry Cluster coordinators: coordinate member inputs, participate in consultations, identification of needs and gaps, validate findings NGOs, agencies: participate in consultations, provide expert inputs, validate findings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HC/HCT: custodians of the process Analysis team: present and ensure availability of needs overview Cluster coordinators: prepare and ensure availability of information for response analysis OCHA: facilitates response analysis process and discussion NGOs, agencies: participate in consultations, provide expert inputs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HC/HCT: leads planning process, defines overall vision Cluster coordinators: participate in planning, engage with cluster members, provide HCT with inputs for the strategy, ensure cross-sectoral collaboration OCHA: facilitates planning process, coordinates caseload planning, prepares draft country strategy, finalises response plan NGOs, agencies: participate in consultations, provide expert inputs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cluster coordinators: Prepare internal division of labour and establish peer review panel for projects Cluster members: contribute to cluster plans, elaborate on requirements in line with cluster objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cluster: reviews compiled core and supplemental information and synthesises challenges faced in reaching objectives and making recommendations for cluster/HCT action OCHA: facilitates compilation of core and supplemental information for inter-cluster analysis and reporting ICCG: analyses compiled information and synthesises challenges faced in reaching objectives, makes recommendations for HCT HC/HCT: deliberates on findings and recommendations makes evidence-based decisions to address major constraints. Optionally, endorses report for public release
Timeline	A meeting ahead of the start of the process	4-6 weeks before SRP development	One meeting /session (ideally at SRP workshop)	4 weeks including workshop	4 weeks	As agreed in the Monitoring Framework

ANNEX III: STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND INDICATORS: SOME EXAMPLES¹³

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: reinforce the protection of civilians, including of their fundamental human rights, in particular as it relates to women and children

Indicator (outcome)	Baseline	Target
1. % of victims of physical, sexual, and gender-based violence provided with holistic assistance (medical, psycho-social, legal, etc.)	20%	35%
2. % of humanitarian organizations and service providers that have in place codes of conduct on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse by own staff	10%	100%
3. % of land cleared of land mines and/or unexploded ordinances	5%	15%
4. % of children registered for tracing that have been reunified and stayed with their family for more than six months	40%	60%
5. IDP policy issued in accordance with international standards	no	yes

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: strengthen local government preparedness and response capacity in affected districts

Indicator (outcome)	Baseline	Target
1. Number of updated contingency plans in place in 80 districts at risk	0	45
2. Early warning systems functioning in all districts at risk	no	yes
3. Local governments in all districts manage the crisis response in an effective, equitable and accountable manner ¹⁴	no	yes
4. Community feedback in all affected districts consolidated and incorporated into the crisis response	0	80

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: enhance women's and men's access to livelihoods, by addressing the underlying causes of vulnerability to regain self-sufficiency and increase resilience

Indicator (outcome)	Baseline	Target
1. % of affected vulnerable workers, men and women, in urban/rural areas employed in livelihoods activities (micro businesses, Small to Medium Enterprises, fisheries and farming)*	10% women 15% men	40% women 35% men
2. % of communities without physical access to functioning markets	60%	30%
3. % of households owning productive assets*	35%	65%
4. % of affected population in urban and rural areas with access to formal or informal financial services	30% urban 5% rural	75% urban 50% rural

¹³ Data on IDPs need to be disaggregated by sex, age, location etc. to be meaningful, and indicator data with individuals as the unit of measure should, as much as possible, be disaggregated by sex and age.

¹⁴ A country would define in a cross-sectoral manner what 'effective', 'equitable' and 'accountable' mean and to what degree they need to be performed to report that 'yes' they have been achieved.

*Denotes indicators that contain concepts, categories and/or thresholds that are context specific and would be defined by the country.

5. % of households having lost main source of income *	75%	<75%
6. % average spent on food of overall total expenditure	65%	<65%

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: quick access of affected people of all ages to basic community services including education, health care, social services and public facilities

Indicator (outcome)	Baseline	Target
1. % of affected primary schools providing quality education	30%	90%
2. Number of affected health facilities fully functioning	25	50
3. Local government's department of community services functioning in affected areas	no	yes
4. % of public places (parks, roads, markets) cleared of debris and open for public use	10%	50%

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: immediate improvement of the living conditions of internally displaced people, through provision of essential commodities

Indicator (outcome)	Baseline	Target
1. % of target population having access to shelter	40%	90%
2. Average number of litres of water per person per day, among the target population	10	15
3. % of targeted households with reliable and sustainable food sources*	30%	65%
4. Average Dietary Diversity*	<3	>6
5. Affected population's overall self-assessment of their living conditions, on a scale of 1 (worst) to 5 (best)*	2	4

Each strategic objective is associated with three to five outcome indicators with baselines and targets, to measure whether the collective response is achieving the objective. The set of strategic indicators equips the HCT with an overview of the collective humanitarian response showing the trend towards meeting the strategic objectives.

The strategic indicators and targets are at the outcome level. They should respect the SMART criteria,¹⁵ and describe the major changes that need to occur for an objective to be considered reached. Together with objectives they tell what has changed for whom.

Some strategic indicators may be drawn from cluster response plans, to represent the results of a cluster's cumulative activities (for example: percentage of households with access to a source of safe drinking-water).

Others may be developed at an inter-sectoral level for a more overarching result (for example: affected population's overall self-assessment of their living conditions, on a scale of one to five).

In the attached examples, all baselines and targets are for illustrative purposes only. Countries will determine their own baselines and targets when defining their strategic objectives, indicators and targets.

¹⁵ Specify exactly what is being measured and the appropriate level of disaggregation. If **measurable** it is quantifiable and can be measured. If **achievable** there's a realistic expectation of data collection with anticipated monitoring resources. If **relevant**, it captures the essence of the desired results and relates to the overall objective, and if **timely**, time spent on data collection, considering the required resources, is the measurement applied.