

OCHA
COMMUNICATIONS
HANDBOOK

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A. Purpose

Timely, reliable and field-driven communications are a critical component of OCHA's overall advocacy efforts. OCHA uses communications to create awareness among target audiences (inside and outside the organization) about humanitarian emergencies, including natural disasters and complex emergencies, as well as their impact on vulnerable people. OCHA Communications Officers are charged with the task of bringing humanitarian priorities to the world's attention, seeking to create an operating environment that averts, or alleviates, human suffering and promotes the well being and protection of individuals and communities affected by or at risk of natural or environmental disasters or conflict.

The purpose of this Handbook is to serve as an introduction to OCHA communications, familiarizing new Communications Officers with their responsibilities and the tools at their disposal. Containing a range of information and resources for OCHA communications, it is a key reference OCHA staff can use for effective outreach, planning and reporting.

B. Scope

This Handbook presents guidance on communications and provides specific information on Communications Officers' roles and responsibilities. It also includes a section on engaging with the media, comprising rules and practical tips for OCHA media relations.

While the Handbook is primarily targeted at Communications Officers, it will also be of use to other OCHA staff at Headquarters and in the field, especially those involved in advocacy, information management or humanitarian operations. All OCHA staff are encouraged use the information, templates and samples presented herein. Rules on media engagement apply for all OCHA staff and should be noted.

C. Rationale

The goal of every OCHA office is to support a well-coordinated UN effort to assess, meet and advocate on humanitarian needs in the field. Communications play a vital role in achieving this objective. At a practical level, communications involve drafting, compiling, packaging and disseminating information for use in the public domain (including but not exclusive to the news media), as well as for internal reporting. It requires consistent and effective messaging and media relations, and is both proactive (advocating on an issue or need in the public domain) and responsive (to humanitarian concerns).

Communications based on accurate and timely information from the field (disaster conditions, internal displacement movements, outbreaks of violence against civilians, etc.) can be used to:

- Mobilize and promote humanitarian assistance to victims;
- Raise public awareness of humanitarian principles;
- Raise public awareness of civilian populations in danger;
- Promote compliance with international humanitarian law by governments/parties to a conflict;
- Harness the moral authority of the Secretary-General and the UN system;
- Alert the UN Security Council.

Developed by the Communication Services Section (CSS) of OCHA's Communications and Information Services Branch (CISB), this Handbook offers a comprehensive document that presents the key elements and tools of OCHA communications.

D. Handbook

1. The Role of Communications in OCHA

Communications tools and practices are critical in supporting OCHA's core activity areas and achieving its organizational aims. Whether sharing information within OCHA offices or with the news media, public and partner organizations, it is essential that staff members understand their roles and responsibilities, the various mechanisms for information sharing, and the objectives of OCHA communications.

1.1 Communications and humanitarian action

Humanitarian response encompasses a broad range of activities aimed at saving lives, reducing human suffering and ensuring protection of vulnerable people affected by emergency. Without effective communications, coordinating, funding and advocating on humanitarian issues would be impossible.

While it is beyond the scope of this handbook to lay out the parameters of humanitarian engagement, OCHA Communications Officers need a clear understanding of humanitarian action and its reach and limits, and of the role of OCHA within the humanitarian community and the United Nations system. The **Glossary** in Annex J explains basic humanitarian terminology and concepts.¹ The **OCHA on Message** series available on OCHA.net gives an overview of the organization's position and approach on key humanitarian issues.

1.2 Communications and OCHA core activities

Communications in OCHA cover all of the organization's core activity areas: **coordination, policy, humanitarian financing, information management and humanitarian advocacy**. The communications tools and approaches described in this handbook are largely geared towards collecting and sharing information in support of OCHA advocacy efforts.

Building a "shared situational awareness" is one of five operational priorities for OCHA Country Offices. This awareness depends on routine tracking, analysing and reporting on critical aspects of the humanitarian situation – from initial onset through mobilization and response phases and to recovery – and using this information in core information products and public outreach activities.

OCHA Communications must also support the core activity areas of coordination, policy development and humanitarian financing, whether directly or indirectly, by providing, among others, data and reporting, key messaging, publicity and production support.

1.3 Humanitarian advocacy

Broadly stated, humanitarian advocacy aims **to get assistance to and enhance protection for those in need through the strategic use of information and messaging**, in order to influence the policies or practices of key actors.

OCHA conducts advocacy at all levels of the organization, from the Office of the USG/ERC to field offices around the globe. These efforts are founded on OCHA's position as a coordinating body representing the interests of all humanitarian actors – UN and non-UN – and advocating on behalf of communities in greatest need, in keeping with the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, independence and impartiality.

OCHA speaks to a wide variety of audiences, using different methods and approaches as appropriate. At the global level, the USG/ERC may encourage member states to take action in a new humanitarian crisis or draw attention to a neglected or protracted crisis; the USG/ERC may also focus attention on country-specific issues where an OCHA Country Office has less leverage to do so for political, security or other reasons. Advocacy initiatives by Country and Regional Offices may include, for example, efforts to enhance

¹ The Annexes of this handbook, in addition to providing further guidance and explanation, contain a list of online resources with links to useful pages and documents.

assistance to displaced persons and communities affected by conflict or disaster, to promote greater security for humanitarian personnel or to heighten awareness of the role of humanitarian action in a crisis context, among many others.

Communications Officers also need to understand in what realms OCHA does not interject its voice: political issues, first and foremost, must be handled with utmost caution; similarly, security matters, particularly in a conflict situation, must be viewed explicitly for their humanitarian implications. The Head of Office, RC/HC or Designated Official for security should be consulted as appropriate for any clarification on matters of security and political sensitivities.

Advocacy initiatives operate through two channels – public and private:

- **Private advocacy** takes place in a closed environment, most often by direct engagement with government, civil society, donor states and/or other stakeholders (e.g., opposition leaders, regional inter-governmental bodies). The diplomatic and political nature of private advocacy means that OCHA Communications Officers are seldom engaged directly, but they should be informed of such processes when appropriate.
- **Public advocacy** is central to OCHA Communications Officers' work, with activities ranging from awareness-raising on the nature of humanitarian work to campaigns around specific issues and concerns. Press releases, situation updates and other documents, as well as regular dealings with the news media, are among the most visible forms of humanitarian advocacy. Increasingly, online social media platforms such as YouTube, Twitter and others are also becoming standard outlets for advocacy initiatives – enabling new approaches and reaching new audiences.

Further information on humanitarian advocacy, including a **Strategic Overview of OCHA and advocacy**, can be found in Annex B.

1.4 Strategic communications – What does it mean?

Communications should leverage information to raise awareness and bring about change in support of the organization's objectives. Identifying the tools and approaches necessary to reach these goals is at the core of the **OCHA communications strategy** – in other words, how does OCHA most effectively use its public communications resources to achieve its objectives?

At the global level, the OCHA communications strategy has three objectives:

- Maximize communications on humanitarian crises and issues;
- Amplify the voice of the USG/ERC as the chief humanitarian advocate;
- Highlight the value-added and crucial role of OCHA to donors and Member States.

The Communications Strategy is a living document, and is part of an overall effort to support both the organization's Strategic Framework and the Annual Plan by establishing a more predictable basis for communications. An **implementation plan** based on the Communications Strategy is based on the following steps:

- Identify target audiences, communications channels and partners;
- List all relevant product outputs and outreach methodologies;
- Determine key events, outreach opportunities and evaluation processes.

Communications strategies should be developed at country level (and regionally, where appropriate) in order to focus advocacy efforts, establish clear roles and responsibilities, and increase the effectiveness of communications.

- Identify key advocacy issues within the area of responsibility;

- Consult the HCT and key stakeholders to clarify objectives and context-specific approaches;
- Map out audiences and public outreach channels;
- Share key messages and communications strategy with partners.

For more on strategic communications, refer to Annex C.

1.5 The Audience – Who are they and why does it matter?

“Know your audience” is a constant reminder in any guidance on official communications – and this handbook is no exception. But if the organization has something important to say, what difference does it make where it is going or who is on the other end?

First, not all information is suitable for general distribution. Humanitarian organizations work amid circumstances of extreme human vulnerability, and in some cases political tensions and conflict. **Maintaining confidentiality may have a direct impact on protecting lives as well as facilitating continued operations.** Consideration must be given to protecting suspect or highly sensitive information – in particular, disclosures on political, security or operational developments that could potentially jeopardize human lives or humanitarian efforts. Neutrality and impartiality are the guiding principles – perceptions of political bias or favouring the interests of one group over another can easily undermine the credibility of the organization.

The limits of public information – as standard procedure or on a case-by-case basis – should be decided in consultation with the OCHA Head of Office and/or the RC/HC. Further information on clearances and handling sensitive information can be found in **Section 2.6**.

Knowing the audience is also important whenever there is an “ask” or specific call for action. Such efforts may be directed at local government, international donors or other actors. How to address the target audience to get attention and achieve results is a strategic consideration – there is a big difference, for example, between condemning a violation of humanitarian principle and making an appeal for funding. Both involve public communications, and both require evidence to support their positions, but the tone and the message in either case will differ dramatically.

Furthermore, these two examples require **different communications tools**. Condemning a violation of principle might best be conveyed through a public statement by a senior UN official; it would be brief and to the point, with any further discussion to take place behind closed doors – pursuing a private advocacy approach. An appeal for funding, on the other hand, would be announced through a relatively detailed one-page press release, distributed broadly, and accompanied by outreach efforts with international news media to draw maximum attention to the situation.

Finally, **using the right language** is essential. Humanitarian terminology, acronyms and shorthand serve a useful function when communicating to an audience of practitioners, but that same language can be confusing or even alienating to an audience unfamiliar with specialist jargon. The ability to translate technical or bureaucratic terms into language easily understood by anyone is an important skill for Communications Officers, and it can make the difference between impact and indifference in public communications.

The [OCHA Style Guide](#) provides useful information on humanitarian terminology and other matters related to language.

2. Responsibilities of a Communications Officer

OCHA’s role as the coordinating body for humanitarian engagement, as well as its designated authority to advocate on issues of humanitarian concern, place the organization at the forefront in **speaking for the interests of the broader humanitarian community as well as people affected by disaster or conflict**. The work of OCHA Communications Officers, whether as Spokesperson or Reporting Officer or in other functions, plays a major part in these efforts.

Current, reliable information from the field is at the foundation of OCHA Communications. Using this information to achieve the organization's objectives requires technical skills, professional knowledge, and resourcefulness. Communications Officers need to have not only excellent written and spoken communications skills, but also sound knowledge of OCHA's role, the ability to analyse information quickly and accurately, an understanding of media practices, and good judgement.

Communications activities call for a **pragmatic and dynamic approach**. The basic terms of reference for Communications Officers include public information tasks as well as elements of reporting and information management previously associated with other functions. The specific focus of a Communications Officer's work may concentrate on external communications (i.e., public information) or internal communications (reporting and information management). In most cases the job will include aspects of both – to what degree will depend on the size and structure of the office and the demands of the operational scenario. Balancing these roles and responsibilities is a challenge under the best of circumstances, and Communications Officers should regularly consult their Head of Office to clarify priorities.

2.1 Internal and external information

Communications Officers handle a large amount of information and data in the field. The process of **filtering and directing information so that it reaches the appropriate audience**, whether inside or outside the organization, is an integral part of the Communications Officer's work.

In general, internal information is the responsibility of the focal point for reporting, while most external information is handled by the officer in charge of public information (in some cases they may be one and the same). Internal and external information often overlap (i.e., the same information is distributed internally and externally), but how it is packaged and presented can differ considerably. At the same time, certain information should be kept strictly confidential, and not all external information is for broad public distribution (for example, UN agencies, NGOs, donors and other partners may receive updates not meant for public release).

Various considerations determine what is internal and what is external information, including operational integrity, staff safety, and political and security concerns. For more on handling sensitive information, see **Section 2.6**.

2.2 Operational scenarios

In the field, four basic factors characterize the operational scenario for communications:

- Humanitarian **context**, including political and security dimensions
- Humanitarian **presence** and access
- OCHA communications **capacity** and roles
- Operational **phase**

Based on these factors, Communications Officers can **establish strategic priorities, identify roles and responsibilities and prioritize key outputs**.

2.2.1 *Humanitarian context*

Although it is difficult to categorize every humanitarian situation, emergency response generally takes place under one of these conditions:

- Sudden-onset natural disaster
- Sudden escalation in conflict/political crisis
- Slow-onset natural disaster
- Chronic conflict/vulnerability

There are two additional areas where OCHA is engaged:

- Disaster preparedness
- Transition/early recovery

As these conditions attract differing levels of interest and engagement from the media, donors and the public, the context will have significant implications for communications work. A new major disaster will often draw high levels of news coverage, requiring a crisis communications approach in reaction to extensive media interest. Other less visible humanitarian emergencies, such as a slow-onset disaster or escalation of conflict, will often call for a more proactive advocacy and media relations approach to draw attention to a situation.

In any humanitarian scenario, there may also be political and security conditions that affect the operating environment, which must be considered carefully in relation to communications.

2.2.2 *Humanitarian presence and access*

The operational structure of OCHA and the humanitarian community varies broadly in the context of emergency response. The reach of humanitarian presence on the ground, as well as the capacity of responsible bodies, will have a significant effect on how communications efforts are carried out.

In addition, the level of humanitarian access – the ability of humanitarian groups to reach affected areas and populations – will have a direct influence on information gathering and the ability to provide a comprehensive picture of the scenario. Constraints on access can be the result of various factors, including poor roads and infrastructure, ongoing conflict and insecurity, and bureaucratic obstructions.

Four main parameters describe humanitarian presence and access as they relate to OCHA communications:

- Size and capacity of OCHA office
- Presence of other humanitarian bodies
- Communications capacity of humanitarian community
- Degree of access to affected areas and populations

2.2.3 *OCHA Communications roles*

Within the scenarios of humanitarian presence given above, there will be varying degrees of OCHA communications capacity. In a new emergency in a country with no OCHA presence, the OCHA Regional Office will typically take the lead on communications, in consultation with available resources on the ground. Other UN agencies, the UN Country Team, UNIC and/or NGO partners may provide communications support, if available. OCHA Regional Communications Officers play a central role in planning, preparedness and response for emergencies in countries with little or no regular OCHA presence and limited national response capacity.

Where OCHA already has an established presence, communications resources will vary depending on the size of the office and scope of the crisis. Large offices will likely have more than one Communications Officer, while smaller offices may have only one, or even none. Overall communications capacity can be estimated based on available staff and responsibilities covered.

- Spokesperson/media relations/public information
- Reporting
- General communications
- Coordinated outreach

2.2.4 *Operational phase*

Humanitarian engagement encompasses a range of activities between pre-crisis conditions, the

onset of an emergency and the transition to normal conditions. In basic terms, these phases can be described as follows:

- Early warning and prevention
- Emergency response
- Emergency management
- Transition/recovery

The duration of this course of events can be a matter of weeks, months or years, depending on the size and scope of the emergency and humanitarian needs. The emergency response phase generally lasts up to six months, after which the crisis moves into recovery phase or becomes protracted, requiring continued emergency management. However, it is important to note that crisis is not a linear process – a number of these phases may be in effect at the same time in the same place.

Annex B of the *Policy Instruction on the Roles and Responsibilities of Country Offices* contains a description and graphic of the range of OCHA operations.

2.3 Primary duties

Communications Officers at all levels and in all OCHA duty stations should be familiar with the OCHA Communications Strategy (see Annex C), which guides the main tasks and activities in achieving organizational goals and objectives. They should also refer to the Regional Office and Country Office Policy Instructions, particularly as they pertain to various aspects of communications.

In assessing priorities as well as determining roles and responsibilities, Communications Officers are advised to consider the stages of information flow internally and externally:

1. information/data collection
2. analysis
3. reporting
4. coordinated messaging
5. product/platform placement
6. media relations
7. public outreach/advocacy

Communications Officers all work in a number of these areas; or in some cases, one officer may cover the full range of activities – specific roles and responsibilities will be determined by the terms of reference as well as priority areas determined in consultation with the supervisor and/or Head of Office.

Below is a brief description of the range of services and professional skills Communications Officers can be expected to provide in a country or regional setting. While in some cases specific duties may be more applicable to a specific grade level, the nature of communications in an emergency context dictates that all officers are prepared to take on responsibilities as befits the situation and available resources.

2.3.1 *Conduct reporting and analysis*

- Establish and maintain reporting system within the country
- Draft and distribute regular reports on the humanitarian situation, including all relevant OCHA reporting products
- Ensure flow of information and analysis of developments in the country/region, including tracking trends and sharing reports with OCHA HQ, NGOs, donors and other partners

2.3.2 *Serve as Spokesperson and Press Adviser to RC/HC and/or HoO*

- Advise RC/HC and HoO on media developments and approaches for media relations, and provide support in their interactions with media
- Represent OCHA and/or RC/HC to provide on-the-record information to journalists and media

- 2.3.3 *Raise awareness of humanitarian needs and response*
- Develop and disseminate OCHA information products to broaden awareness of humanitarian issues and the role of OCHA
 - Organize strategic media coverage of key issues and events
 - Support development and maintenance of OCHA web platforms, social media initiatives and other public products, and contribute to their content
 - Represent the office in relevant forums to enhance outreach on humanitarian issues
- 2.3.4 *Maintain communications and information network*
- Assess media presence and keep updated contact lists
 - Build and maintain media relationships within country/region
 - Enhance strategic partnerships with media, NGOs and other partners
 - Conduct regular media monitoring
- 2.3.5 *Coordinate common media and communications work*
- Lead development and implementation of communications strategy in coordination with RC/HC, HCT and key stakeholders around priority advocacy issues
 - Lead country-level messaging development in consultation with RC/HC, HCT and key stakeholders
 - Establish/chair humanitarian communications group with participation of UN agencies, NGOs and other partners
 - Lead/support HCT public communications
 - Organize joint media field trips, press events, interviews and other outreach initiatives
 - Clarify agency, cluster, NGO and other system focal points for communications and maintaining contact lists
- 2.3.6 *Manage/coordinate other OCHA information staff*
- Coordinate team of information officers (public information, reporting, information management) within office
 - Recruit and manage junior officers as required
 - Provide guidance and support on editorial, production, website and other cross-cutting activities
 - Oversee translations of key documents and products
- 2.3.7 *Support OCHA corporate communications*
- Ensure coherence with [OCHA Communications Strategy](#)
 - Draft and update Field Key Messages and ERC Key Messages as required
 - Support missions of the USG/ERC
 - Provide content for OCHA web platforms and other products
 - Liaise regularly with OCHA spokespersons
 - Support activities for World Humanitarian Day (19 August)
- 2.3.8 *Support preparedness and training*
- Provide training opportunities for international and national staff on media relations and other relevant skills
 - Strengthen disaster preparedness by mainstreaming crisis communications into contingency planning
- 2.3.9 *Support corporate fundraising and marketing*
- Contribute to drafting, editing and inputs for donor reporting and resource mobilization efforts such as the Consolidated Appeals Process
 - Support efforts to highlight the value-added role of OCHA to Member States, media and the public, for fundraising, brand awareness and visibility of OCHA

2.4 Priorities

In any emergency response scenario, Communications Officers are under pressure to deliver while faced with three competing priorities: **speed, accuracy** and **inclusiveness**.

Speed: Timeliness is critical for media and senior management information requests, and Communications Officers should seek to respond to such enquiries as efficiently as possible. In responding to media enquiries, note the deadline and respond within the given time, if an answer cannot be provided immediately. For more on media relations, refer to **Section 7** on Engagement with the Media.

Accuracy: Information – no matter how timely – is of no use if it is inaccurate or unverifiable; sources should be checked and facts double-checked. Refer to **Section 4** on the Information Network.

Inclusiveness: For in-depth reports, every effort should be made to ensure that UN agencies, implementing partners and other stakeholders have the opportunity to contribute, and that reports reflect the interests of relevant stakeholders. Refer to **Section 3.5** on Stakeholders.

2.5 Coordination

OCHA Communications Officers play a vital part in coordinating **communications that reflect the interests and efforts of the whole humanitarian community**. A strategic, consistent and cohesive approach to joint communications, including common messaging (Field Key Messages) should be developed in consultation with the RC/HC and HCT as well as the information focal points of cluster lead agencies and other partners. In addition, OCHA Communications Officers should lead or co-lead the humanitarian communications group (see Annex F) and organize press briefings, media field trips and other joint outreach efforts.

2.6 Clearances and handling sensitive information

There is no current Policy Instruction on information clearance in the field. However, in the interest of accountability and in keeping with the overall responsibility of the office, Communications Officers should have **established mechanisms for the approval and release of information** – both internal and external.

Routine reporting and other documents should follow a standard workflow that includes clearance or sign-off by a designated authority – the RC/HC, Head of Office or other senior officer. For ad hoc reports, updates for media and other information outside routine reports, Communications Officers should consult the Head of Office to determine approvals.

While overall objectives for public outreach are guided by the Communications Strategy, new developments frequently require analysis and consultation to determine the limits of disclosure. Rapidly unfolding events can lead to numerous interview requests from the media, with little time to prepare a response or consult the Head of Office or RC/HC; such instances require a measured approach that takes into account the needs of the media as well as the objectives of the office.

Particularly in areas of political sensitivity, instability or high media interest, consideration must be given to potential controversy, misunderstanding or harm that could result from publicizing information. For enquiries involving other agencies or organizations, Communications Officers should either first consult the organization or refer the question to them directly. See **Section 7** on Engagement with the Media.

2.7 Reporting lines

Communications Officers in a Country or Regional Office report to their respective Head of Office or Deputy Head of Office, or senior Communications Officer, depending on the size of the office. This is also the primary relationship for performance evaluation.

Due to the specialist nature of public communications work and the implications for overall OCHA and UN visibility – especially through on-the-record media relations – CISB has recommended a “dotted” reporting line between Communications Officers in the field and senior Communications managers at Headquarters. Practical guidance for managers and staff will be developed in order to formalize this arrangement.

3. Knowledge for effective Communications

In-depth knowledge of OCHA and the UN system is an essential asset for Communications Officers, as is an understanding of colleagues' roles, whether in Headquarters, a regional office or a sub-office in the field. For those in a Country Office, firsthand experience of the country is critical for developing a sense of context and establishing credibility.

Communications Officers should be familiar with stakeholders and target audiences, including the UN system, donors, host and local government representatives, local populations and the broader humanitarian community. They should also be aware of essential information sources and how and when to use OCHA communications tools (see **Section 5**).

3.1 Know OCHA and its network

3.1.1 *Know the boss*

Communications Officers at country level should have regular contact with the OCHA Head of Office and the RC/HC (for whom the Communications Officer may function as spokesperson). The RC/HC deals with high-level information the Communications Officer should be aware of in order to convey public positions of the RC/HC and the HCT. A Communications Officer should also be prepared to advise the RC/HC or Head of Office on media relations and facilitate interviews.

3.1.2 *Know everyone in the office*

OCHA staff members are a valuable source of information. Communications Officers should listen to national colleagues' views on critical issues, including perceptions of the media and the local community towards the UN and international presence. Similarly, international colleagues often provide perspective from their own experiences, whether in country or a different context.

3.1.3 *Know focal points at the Regional Office and Headquarters*

Communications Officers must get to know their counterparts in relevant OCHA branches. Maintaining close links with CISB and CRD at Headquarters, as well as with the Regional Office, will foster support and information exchange. CISB staff are available for consultation and advice, whether on dealing with media coverage or on procedures concerning reporting and public information. Annex A presents a list of key Communications contacts.

3.2 Know OCHA's "added value"

OCHA is uniquely positioned to provide insights on the humanitarian situation because it takes into account the full range of issues and actors. Based on its authority as a UN voice as well as its status as a neutral actor, OCHA may be asked to speak on behalf of other organizations (particularly NGOs). The Communications Officer in the field also acts as a referral service to other sources for more specialized information. Communications Officers should appreciate and make known these value-added aspects of OCHA.

3.3 Know the context

In addition to following reports and developments while in the office, a good Communications Officer makes every effort to spend time in the field with media, UN and NGO partners, as well as with local communities and beneficiaries.

3.4 Know the numbers – and what they mean

Communications Officers need to be informed of key statistics and what they tell about a situation. Numbers in themselves can provoke political sensitivities, and should therefore be treated with care – know your sources and be aware of the pitfalls of statistics. Wherever possible, use numbers in context to portray the bigger picture and to describe trends, both positive and negative.

3.5 Know the stakeholders

Communications Officers regularly interact with a range of groups, providing support and information tailored to each group's needs and priorities.

3.5.1 *UN system*

Communications Officers must be familiar with the activities and priorities of other humanitarian actors – particularly the various sector/cluster leads – and maintain close links with counterparts in UN agencies, UNICs, and UN missions.

3.5.2 *Local populations*

Affected communities and the general population want information about relief efforts. Increasingly, humanitarian actors are looking at Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC) as a critical aspect of emergency response. As these efforts develop, CDAC is likely to play a growing role in crisis communications, and OCHA Communications Officers are advised to keep informed of current practices in this area.

3.5.3 *Broader humanitarian community*

Common UN humanitarian positions and strategies should aim wherever possible to complement those of non-UN actors, including donors, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the NGO community.

3.5.4 *Host government and local authorities*

The RC/HC, HCT/UNCT and OCHA Head of Office all require information from the field for use in dealing with national and local authorities. Communications Officers should prepare information packages to assist in advocating to the host government and inform them of emerging issues or emergency needs.

3.5.5 *Donors*

Donors need current, reliable, field-driven information to make informed funding decisions. In addition to providing information for donors, Communications Officers support the RC/HC and OCHA Country Office to ensure that advocacy and communications needs are reflected in the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) and Consolidated Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP).

4. The Information Network

Information collection is a daily part of the Communication Officer's job, and takes place through a variety of channels. This section contains an overview of the main sources and mechanisms for information and data collection within OCHA and in the field.

It is important to remember that there are both formal and informal mechanisms for gathering information, and developing professional relationships is an essential aspect of information collection. Building an information network will provide a solid foundation for the work of a Communications Officer.

4.1 OCHA internal information collection

OCHA information collection starts from the ground up. Humanitarian Affairs Officers and Information Management Officers in the field play a critical role in gathering information and data. Their sources include sectors/clusters, UN agency and NGO programme officers, various forums and working groups, and local community leaders, as well as representatives of local government and in some cases opposition groups.

Field HAOs have day-to-day contact with operations on the ground, and they often have a useful perspective on the local context, such as political sensitivities, public sentiment, organizational challenges and other factors, which can bring an added dimension to factual reporting and data collection.

Communications Officers should have designated information sources within the office, including in any sub-offices. The rapid demand for information frequently necessitates follow-up and verification in addition to routine reporting, and quick access to colleagues on the ground is a vital asset.

In addition to narrative reports, there should be regularly updated data on affected persons, beneficiaries, IDPs and returnees, or other relevant statistics, along with “who/what/where” (3W) data, geographical information and mapping, which are critical in tracking humanitarian developments. OCHA Communications Officers need **predictable, evidence-based information with common measurable indicators** to enable the humanitarian community to advocate credibly, consistently and coherently on a situation.

As Country Offices move towards closer integration of public information, reporting and information management functions, common reporting and data management should become routine; however, regardless of the office structure, Communications Officers should maintain close links with the IM section to facilitate access to updated statistics and to utilize key resources.

Finalized and approved reports and documents produced at country level should be shared with counterparts at Regional and HQ level, including the responsible Desk Officer in CRD, the Spokespersons’ Office, Communications Officers, and the Reporting Unit. Each of these plays a role in ensuring that information reaches the appropriate level for further action; they may also provide feedback or request follow-up on relevant issues.

4.2 UN agencies and NGOs

Information officers in UN agencies and NGOs are important partners in collecting and sharing information, both formally and informally. Communications Officers should receive any relevant reports and documents issued by agencies and NGOs, as these frequently include useful data and reporting.

It should be noted that while agencies and NGOs are also part of the cluster system, there are occasions when direct contact with a specific organization is more appropriate – for example, in the case of developments that affect particular programmes or areas, or incidents involving specific organizations.

The relationship of NGOs and OCHA can at times be challenging to an open exchange of information, particularly in a highly politicized environment or a large-scale crisis where many organizations are engaged. In such cases, every effort should be made to foster an inclusive approach, emphasizing OCHA’s role as an advocate for the broader humanitarian community.

4.3 HCT/UNCT

In countries where there is both a UNCT and HCT, the HCT will function as the decision-making body on humanitarian issues. Communications Officers may or may not be requested to attend HCT meetings, but they should always keep informed of discussions and decisions of the HCT.

The UNCT will play a more prominent role in humanitarian issues in countries where there is no designated HC or OCHA Country Office, and therefore no HCT. In such a scenario, the UNCT (and Office of the RC) will usually be the first source of information in the event of a new emergency, and may begin issuing sitreps prior to establishment of OCHA and broader humanitarian presence. The UNCT is an important link for Communications Officers at Regional Level, because of its reach where there is no OCHA presence; its members usually include UNICEF, WFP and other agencies with a humanitarian mandate.

4.4 Clusters/Cluster Leads

Clusters play a key role at country level in providing information and updates on cluster/sector-based activities and developments. OCHA and humanitarian partners share responsibility in ensuring that relevant information on a humanitarian emergency is provided in a timely and usable form to facilitate situational understanding and decision making.

While responsibility for ensuring appropriate information management within a cluster rests with the cluster lead agency, OCHA bears this responsibility between the clusters (with the Inter-Cluster Coordinator position residing within OCHA). Cluster Leads must ensure there is a designated Information Management focal point for the cluster/sector responsible for updating cluster-specific information and sharing it with OCHA.

OCHA information management responsibilities at country level include providing information products to the humanitarian community (contact directories, “Who does What Where” database, mapping, etc.), as well as services such as maintaining common datasets and managing collection of inter-cluster information. OCHA also heads the Information Management Working Group at country level to coordinate and support sector/cluster information management.

The Inter-Cluster Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that Cluster Leads carry out their roles within the agreed framework. As such, the Coordinator is the primary liaison for inquiries and updates. It should be noted that cluster-based reporting can occasionally be weighted towards lead agency-specific information – such reporting is contrary to the design of the cluster system, as it tends to skew the overall picture of response within the sector/cluster. Should such bias become an obstacle to obtaining comprehensive sector-wide information, Communications Officers are advised to consult the Inter-Cluster Coordinator.

Further information on cluster roles in information management can be found in the *IASC Guidance Note on Using the Cluster Approach to Strengthen Humanitarian Response*.

4.5 UN missions

The OCHA *Policy Instruction on Structural Relationships within an Integrated UN Presence* does not provide guidance on how OCHA should interact with a mission on a day-to-day basis. Therefore, the specific duties and responsibilities of the Communications Officer should follow the *Policy Instruction on the Roles and Responsibilities of Country Offices*.

Within integrated missions, often engaged in environments of instability and political sensitivity, the Spokesperson for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General typically has broad authority to speak on behalf of UN bodies, and high importance is placed on strategic, coordinated communications. Given the challenges and complexity of working in such a context, the relationships between OCHA Communications Officers, the RC/HC (doubling as Deputy SRSG or not) and the mission Spokesperson should be clarified and agreed by all involved, in order to establish boundaries and avoid potential confusion around the delegated authority to address humanitarian issues.

The mission Spokesperson and/or Office of Communications and Public Information should be close partners in information sharing and the development of strategic communications. All public and relevant internal communications issued by the mission, as well as regular media monitoring, should be received by OCHA Communications Officers. For its part, the mission may routinely request information updates for its reports, as well as for press conferences, which Communications Officers should attend whenever relevant.

For more information on integrated structures, refer to [OCHA on Message: Integration](#).

4.6 ICRC/IFRC

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) are standing invitees to the IASC, and the IFRC convenes the Emergency Shelter cluster. However, the organizations are not accountable to the UN system and operate with a high degree of independence.

The ICRC and IFRC closely protect operational information as well as details on staff movements and other data – largely to ensure their independence. The ICRC, in particular, rarely issue public statements or press releases, and they generally object strongly to others speaking on their behalf. In a natural disaster context, however, the Federation plays an important role as an information source and advocate on humanitarian issues, as well as the coordinating body for Red Cross/Red Crescent organizations.

There may be instances where OCHA Communications Officers need to address issues concerning the Committee, the Federation or Red Cross/Red Crescent organizations; on such occasions, Communications Officers are strongly advised to consult the public affairs focal point within the delegation, in order to set agreed limits on public disclosure.

4.7 Journalists and media

As the news media operate on a 24/7 cycle, journalists working in a high-profile news environment are involved in a constant process of information gathering. In areas where media have extensive field presence, journalists may be in a position to provide useful updates on a situation.

While it is important to clarify the nature of any discussion with journalists, background discussions can be vital in building a trusted working relationship and establishing credibility. They are also helpful in gauging media interest in specific issues and perceptions of UN action – it is important to understand what the media need, and also to be able to convey to the media what OCHA needs.

Further information on dealing with media can be found in **Section 7**.

4.8 Other information sources

In addition to those cited above, various other actors may be useful sources of information in the context of an emergency. Among these are local government counterparts, donors, researchers and academics, and independent experts. Developing good communications links with these sources can be helpful in gaining a better understanding of the political climate as it relates to humanitarian issues, assessing the concerns of donor governments, and building knowledge of the local cultural and historical context, which should not be underestimated as an asset in establishing credibility and aiding in the analysis of a given scenario.

5. The OCHA Communications toolbox

Over the last several years, OCHA communications tools for public information and reporting have been extensively refined in an effort to meet strategic communications objectives and to standardize information products across the organization. As a result, some communications tools have been discontinued, some restructured, and some newly created.

The Communications Officer should ensure that information is presented in a manner appropriate to its content and target audience – different tools have different purposes and, to some degree, different audiences. Documents should follow the appropriate template and should be accurate, comprehensive and free of errors. The [OCHA Style Guide](#) provides a concise reference on matters of terminology, usage and rules on language, in following with UN editorial guidelines. Document templates and guidance are available in Annex E.

The OCHA Communications toolbox includes:

- Situation reports
- Press releases
- ERC and Field Key Messages
- Bulletins and updates
- Internal Weekly Reports
- Talking points
- Inputs to press briefings in New York and Geneva
- Statements attributable to the RC/HC, USG/ERC or the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General
- Appeals
- Photography
- Films
- Maps

Close collaboration between Headquarters and the field is vital to ensure that information products are used strategically, disseminated widely and followed up for maximum impact. CISB routinely forwards press releases/statements from the field to OCHA's information platforms (OCHA Online, ReliefWeb and IRIN), as well as to the UN Department of Public Information (DPI) for use by the UN News Centre (<http://www.un.org/>

news), UN Radio, UN Television and for incorporating in press briefings, as well as to media on HQ mailings lists. Geneva uses such products to brief Geneva-based press corps in the twice-weekly briefings.

5.1 Situation reports

Situation reports (sitreps) are one of the main information products produced by OCHA. A sitrep is a concise operational document intended to support the coordination of humanitarian response. It should provide a snapshot of current needs, response and gaps in a given emergency. Sitreps should only be issued during the acute phase of an emergency – i.e., at the onset of a new crisis or major deterioration of an ongoing emergency.

Sitreps are public documents (with rare exceptions) and are shared with humanitarian partners, news media and the public via a range of channels, including direct distribution to mailing lists and posting on OCHA's information platforms. Other humanitarian actors may also produce sitreps according to their specific areas of operation. For a new emergency in a country with no OCHA presence, the Office of the Resident Coordinator may draft sitreps based on available information from agencies and organizations on the ground. The value of OCHA sitreps is in their comprehensiveness, consistency and reliability.

Note: Responsibility for drafting sitreps lies with the designated focal point for reporting, whether a Communications Officer or Humanitarian Affairs Officer. In either case, the sitrep should be drafted in close collaboration with the Communications Officer responsible for Public Information.

Annex E1 provides guidance on OCHA sitreps, as well as a standard template.

5.2 Press releases

A press release is a brief written document (one page maximum) that provides information about humanitarian issues and developments. It may be used to announce or acknowledge a significant event or to state an institutional position, usually quoting a senior humanitarian official. Press releases are distributed directly to media outlets, and their primary function is to serve as news copy; they should also be shared on all relevant country-level public mailing lists to reach as wide an audience as possible, and posted to OCHA websites.

Quotes must be approved by the attributed speaker before being used (unless they have given explicit permission otherwise) and should not be altered once approved, except for grammatical or spelling errors. If a quote by the USG/ERC is necessary, a draft quote should be submitted to CISB for approval.

Note on embargoes: An embargoed press release alerts the media to information before it is intended for publication by specifying the date and time for release (typically one to three days after distribution). Embargoes are usually honoured, although major news outlets, particularly wire services, may release stories to their customers ahead of time, pointing out the embargo. If a journalist requests flexibility on an embargo, make sure these arrangements are communicated to all other media. Appearing to favour an individual journalist or news organization will make it more difficult to get cooperation from others the next time.

Annex E2 provides guidance on press releases, as well as a standard template.

5.3 ERC and Field Key Messages

Key Messages are an advocacy tool intended to promote coherent and consistent messaging on the main issues surrounding an emergency or crisis. ERC Key Messages provide strategic communications advice on situations in which the ERC or Chief of CISB determines messaging is required. Field Key Messages articulate the official position of the RC/HC regarding an acute crisis or chronic emergency.

Communications Officers are responsible for drafting and updating Key Messages on a regular basis – either quarterly or as circumstances demand. Key Messages at field level should be developed in collaboration with other OCHA staff, the Inter-Cluster Coordinator and the HCT; the CRD Desk Officer may also provide input.

ERC and Field Key Messages also contain a Q & A section of difficult or potentially contentious questions that

the press is asking or could ask. The field Communications officer must provide answers to these questions – not questions they want to get, but those they don't want to get.

Key Messages provide a core script for all staff members on the main issues of humanitarian concern, as well as the objectives in addressing these concerns – the “ask”. They are not intended for public distribution. Key Messages are shared with the HCT, cluster coordinators, OCHA staff, PI officers from partner organizations and missions. At the discretion of the RC/HC, they may also be shared with donors (in which case the Q & A section should be omitted).

Further information on ERC and Field Key Messages can be found in Annex E3.

5.4 Bulletins and updates

Country Offices not issuing regular sitreps still need to provide regular information on humanitarian action and issues. Periodic bulletins and updates are an important tool for keeping the humanitarian community as well as the media and local population informed on developments and activities. Unlike sitreps, which cover needs, gaps and response activities, bulletins and updates cover overall developments in a situation and key cluster/sector response activities.

Bulletins are issued on a weekly or bi-weekly basis and are typically four to five pages. Updates may be monthly, bi-monthly or quarterly; length will depend on the period covered and scope of humanitarian operations.

The [OCHA Global Product Catalogue](#) contains further information on bulletins and updates.

5.5 Internal Weekly Reports

The Internal Weekly Report (or Country/Regional Office Weekly) compiles information on humanitarian developments, notes on key meetings and events, and administrative updates from each office. At HQ level, it is used for talking points and updates to the USG/ERC and serves as a primary information tool for Coordination and Response. Desk officers will often follow up for further information on issues highlighted in the Internal Weekly; in this respect, it serves as a useful mechanism for maintaining close communications with the desk at HQ as well as HAOs and Reporting Officers in the field.

The designated focal point for reporting in a Country or Regional Office is responsible for drafting and circulating the Internal Weekly. All Communications Officers should follow the Internal Weekly – while some of the information may duplicate other internal reporting of the Country or Regional Office, it highlights the main issues being communicated to Headquarters on a regular basis.

Further information on the Internal Weekly Report can be found in Annex E4.

5.6 Talking points

Talking points highlight key messages and salient facts ahead of press appearances or official meetings. They are provided to the ERC/USG, RC/HC and other senior OCHA officials to ensure they are well-informed on a situation. A Communications Officer will normally be responsible for drafting talking points or for providing inputs if an HAO takes the lead in drafting.

Talking points should describe the pretext of the meeting or event, with details on the audience, participants and/or media present, expected duration of the encounter and the name and affiliation of the main interlocutor. Key messages should be bulleted, followed by facts for reference (*and any analysis or commentary on specific points in parentheses and italicized*). Talking points should be one to two pages maximum. They may also be supported with recent news clippings the speaker should be aware of.

Talking points are usually drafted by the focal point for the issue being discussed. Communications Officers draft talking points for all media-related events, in consultation with HAOs (or the CRD Desk Officer at Headquarters). Drafts should be shared with all parties concerned prior to submission for approval.

Talking points should be drafted with enough time for the ERC/USG, RC/HC or senior official to review them and request further background if needed.

Annex E5 provides guidelines on talking points.

5.7 Inputs to press briefings at Headquarters

When there is important information on a humanitarian situation, but not suitable for a press release, inputs should be provided for Headquarters press briefings. Their purpose is to raise the profile of an issue – such as when a major event has occurred but cannot be fully substantiated, which can help promote better coverage as a story develops.

Normally, inputs are prepared by Communications Officers at Headquarters in the form of bullet points. On occasion, the OCHA Spokesperson will directly request briefing inputs from the field, based on existing news interest in a particular issue. Inputs should provide a one sentence summary and as many facts as possible, including details about humanitarian implications and UN response. They should be reviewed by the Head of Office or CRD Desk Officer and sent to CISB/CSS for the daily press briefing in New York and the twice-weekly briefing in Geneva.

Timeliness is critical for press briefing inputs – even if information is not complete, journalists appreciate and pay attention to news that is fresh.

Note: Negative media coverage or anticipated controversy may call for a response by the organization. Communications Officers should consider how to diffuse or respond to criticism before engaging with the media. Reactive press lines should have a top-line message accompanied by supporting details. If a controversial issue is likely to draw the attention of international media, press lines should be sent to CSS for the Headquarters briefing, marked “if asked only”. At country level, the same message should be disseminated among senior staff and Communications focal points. Coordination with relevant partners for development of the top-line message is advised for issues concerning multiple stakeholders.

Consult the OCHA Spokesperson for further guidance on briefing inputs.

5.8 Statements attributable to the ERC, RC/HC or Spokesperson for the Secretary-General

Statements by top UN officials are issued in the event of significant concerns arising out of a developing situation, such as a **violation of humanitarian** principle, or in the event of a **major natural disaster**. When issued at country level, statements are attributable to the RC/HC; at Headquarters, they are attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General or the USG/ERC.

Unlike press releases, which tend to focus on broader issues, attributed statements are driven by specific events. They should be used sparingly, only when other communications tools are unsuitable or insufficient. A statement on a violation of principle should draw attention to the issue, explain the impact on civilians and call for action or a change in behaviour. It should open with an expression of concern, followed by one or two sentences describing the situation. Finally, it should call on parties involved to address the problem.

Statements in the event of a major disaster should describe the basic scope of the event, express concern for lives lost and damage incurred, extend condolences to victims and their families, and (if needed) note UN readiness to assist. It may be appropriate to express support for efforts of local government and first responders. Usually these types of statements are drafted and issued at Headquarters, but they may be proposed by the field as appropriate.

Statements can also be used to recognize or acknowledge positive developments – these should not be overlooked, as in many crisis situations there are few opportunities to deliver good news. Key agreements on the delivery of assistance, the release of humanitarian staff held hostage, or other notable events may warrant a statement demonstrating the appreciation and good will of the UN. Again, such communications are best used sparingly, as greater frequency tends to diminish their impact.

Attributed statements should be issued as quickly as possible. In most cases, it is preferable to issue a statement attributable to the RC/HC rather than the USG/ERC or the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General (advised only in circumstances that warrant the Secretary-General go on record).

In the field, statements are usually drafted by the Communications Officer at the request of the RC/HC or Head of Office. At headquarters, Communications Officers are responsible for proposing and drafting statements, often in consultation with other UN departments. They are subject to approval by the Secretary-General's Chef de Cabinet.

Annex E6 provides samples of statements attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General.

5.9 Appeals

The Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) and rapid response Flash Appeals are critical global advocacy, coordination and fundraising tools for the humanitarian community. An appeal presents comprehensive information on a given emergency and its priority needs. Communications Officers should organize a local media launch for the CAP or Flash Appeal, attended by the OCHA Head of Office and a government counterpart, as well as by OCHA staff and partners to answer questions if necessary.

Communications Officers should distribute embargoed information kits in advance of the launch. News coverage of the global launch may reach the media ahead of the local launch – explain to editors that the local launch will have local angles and will be worth waiting for. Prepare a press release for the launch, including a quote from the RC/HC or OCHA Head of Office relating the appeal to local conditions and outlining OCHA's role in assisting the government. After the launch, propose to television and radio producers a panel discussion on the national significance of the CAP and suggest the OCHA Head of Office and other knowledgeable partners as participants. Pitch with leading editors the possibility of post-launch interviews with the OCHA Head of Office and/or other OCHA experts in New York or Geneva.

CAP and Flash Appeal summaries and media launch documentation should be sent to all media, as well as to a selection of government, UN, NGO, academic and other representatives of the humanitarian community.

For more information on the CAP, refer to <http://ochaonline.un.org/humanitarianappeal/>.

5.10 Photography

OCHA uses photographs for its publications and communications materials and always requires images of emergencies and their impact on the population, as well as of OCHA staff in action. OCHA Country Offices should have a digital camera available; OCHA staff members are encouraged to make use of the camera and provide photographs to CISB or IRIN.

Photos can be submitted to ochaphoto@un.org, accompanied by a basic caption stating when the photograph was taken (year, month, day) and where (place name and whether it is a town, district, etc.), as well as identifying the subjects by name and age (unless this would put them at risk). This information can be included in the image file using any digital photo management software.

Credit should always accompany a photograph (photographer, organization). If the image is fully owned by OCHA, credit should acknowledge the OCHA Country Office from which the image is sent. Images owned by others but donated for OCHA use also need to be credited; in these cases, it is important to clarify OCHA's reproduction rights (internal or external use).

Note: Although Communications Officers are encouraged to shoot and submit photos from the field, it is seldom convenient to take photographs while carrying out other responsibilities. For this reason, it is best to have a dedicated photographer – a staff member or contributor – to take images. Communications Officers should make an effort to build relationships with local photographers and videographers willing to provide OCHA with images. Other UN organizations, particularly peacekeeping missions, may have a staff photographer willing to provide photos from the field.

5.11 OCHA Films

OCHA uses video content in order to raise awareness and perceptions and to support funding efforts. Since establishing the film unit in 2008, OCHA has produced some 60 films for a wide variety of audiences (from Member States to the general public to OCHA colleagues), tailored for a variety of formats (from television and cinema to web and portable mobile devices).

The primary objectives of the film unit are to:

- Amplify the voice of the USG/ERC, including participation in field visits to generate targeted films, video messages and news content, focusing on key advocacy issues;
- Provide coverage of emergencies and emergency response, including participation in UNDAC deployments to generate UNifeed packages, interviews, b-roll and public service announcements;
- Support campaigns to help tell the stories of the organization and the people it aims to serve; among these are films for CERF, CAP, OCHA in 20XX and World Humanitarian Day.

All OCHA films for external audiences can be found on www.youtube.com/ochafilms. Films for internal audiences can be found on <http://ochanet.unocha.org>. IRIN also produces humanitarian-focused films, which can be found at www.irinnews.org/film.

For technical assistance on production, editing and uploading video materials, including reports for UNifeed, Communications Officers should contact the Advocacy and Visual Media Unit at ochavmu.org.

5.12 Maps

OCHA produces a variety of maps in support of emergency response and advocacy efforts. These include location maps, situation maps and Humanitarian Snapshots, which focus on key developments in a crisis. In addition the Advocacy and Visual Media Unit produces illustration materials such as financial graphics to support a range of documents.

Maps produced by OCHA Country Office IM units are also a useful tool for advocacy and information sharing, and can be included in briefing kits, reports, presentations and displayed on posters and other materials.

Further information on OCHA maps can be found on OCHAnet (Core Activities > Information Management) and on ReliefWeb.

6. OCHA information platforms

OCHA's main information platforms include OCHA Online, field office websites, ReliefWeb and Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN). All are resources intended to provide fast, accurate and relevant public information on humanitarian response in complex emergencies and natural disasters. In 2009, OCHA launched OCHAnet, which provides OCHA staff at headquarters and in the field an online space to share information internally.

6.1 OCHA Online and field office websites

6.1.1 *OCHA Online*

<http://unocha.org>

OCHA Online is OCHA's corporate website that presents information about OCHA. OCHA Online acts as a gateway to other OCHA websites, including the CAP, IASC, Financial Tracking Service and field office websites.

6.1.2 *Field office websites*

<http://ochaonline.un.org/country>

Through the "Where We Work" section, the new OCHA Online offers a centrally managed web page for each OCHA field and regional presence. Pages include a brief overview of the humanitarian

context in that country or region plus more dynamic content such as funding updates and IRIN stories, and links to country-managed web presences. A detailed review of all country-managed websites will be undertaken in 2011 and guidance developed on purpose/audience, platform, branding, content and management, to ensure a coherent web presence.

6.1.3 *ReliefWeb*

<http://www.reliefweb.int>

ReliefWeb is the main global portal for aggregating information on humanitarian emergencies. It collects information from more than 2,000 sources, including OCHA, IRIN, UN agencies, NGOs and other international organizations, governments, academic and research institutions and the media.

6.1.4 *Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN)*

<http://www.irinnews.org>

IRIN's principal role is to provide news and analysis for the humanitarian community, targeting relief agencies, host and donor governments, human rights organizations, humanitarian advocacy groups, academic institutions and the media. It also strives to ensure that affected communities can access reliable information so they can make informed decisions about their future.

Note on the relationship between IRIN and OCHA: While IRIN is structurally a part of OCHA, its news service is editorially independent and does not necessarily reflect the views of the UN.

6.1.5 *OCHAnet*

<http://ochaonline2.un.org/intranet>

The primary purpose of OCHAnet is to provide a platform for internal information exchange within the organization and between headquarters and the field. All OCHA staff members are encouraged to consult OCHAnet on a regular basis, drawing upon and contributing to the resources available.

6.2 Other OCHA websites

OCHA maintains a number of other public websites that focus specifically on inter-agency collaboration, humanitarian financing, emergency response and disaster preparedness. A list of online resources can be found in Annex J, as well as on OCHAnet and OCHA Online.

7. Engaging with the media

Media exposure is a means for OCHA to reach key audiences (government officials, donors, community groups, etc.) for a specific purpose (e.g., to promote advocacy initiatives, encourage donor support, or raise public awareness), and to communicate on key issues and facts for the public record.

The news media is often the best way to reach a wide audience with focused messages, at relatively little cost to the organization. Media relations can be seen as a "high risk, high reward" venture – meaning that the comparative advantage that comes with widespread media exposure also brings potential setbacks.

While direct interaction with journalists may not take up the majority of the Communications Officer's time, the immediacy and broad exposure of news coverage requires that Communications Officers and senior staff are well prepared. Any humanitarian crisis is likely to attract news attention – often but not always commensurate with the scale of the emergency itself – and a Communications Officer is responsible for managing how the office conducts relations with media, as well as representing the organization as spokesperson and/or press secretary, as required.

When carried out effectively, media engagement can bring useful support to the organization and its objectives; on the other hand, poor handling of the media can result in missed opportunities or, worse, can damage the reputation and credibility of OCHA and the United Nations. In any case, it is advisable to treat the news media as an asset rather than an adversary, in order to develop partnerships that support the interests of both OCHA and the media.

7.1 Rules for OCHA media engagement

Communications Officers should be familiar with the document *UN Secretariat relations with the media* to understand the fundamental principles that guide the Organization in its dealings with the press (see Annex D). As preparation for engaging with the media, OCHA Communications Officers need to ensure their office has appropriate arrangements in place:

- Assign designated spokesperson(s) for the HCT and/or OCHA Country Office. Usually, the spokespersons will be the RC/HC, OCHA Head of Office and Communications Officer in charge of Public Information.
- Clarify under what conditions other OCHA colleagues (senior staff of sub-offices in the field, for example) can communicate with the news media.
- Establish procedures for rapid clearance of press releases and other communications products and for handling or directing media enquiries.
- Establish criteria for conducting news interviews: Who will talk, to whom, when, and under what conditions.
- Establish regular contact with CISB New York and Geneva and the Regional Communications Officer, and remain available to them at all times.

The following should be taken into consideration for any media encounters:

7.1.1 All media outlets:

- Establish the main point and say it in simple and effective language.
- Brainstorm in advance the most challenging questions that could be asked and prepare answers, seeking guidance from the Head of Office, RC/HC or CISB staff at headquarters if necessary.
- Clarify that as a humanitarian, you do not discuss political issues.
- Avoid responding to any question with “No comment”.
- Admit honestly if unable to answer a question; do not guess or speculate – offer to follow up as soon as possible after checking.
- “Bridging the question”: If a question is too contentious or invites unnecessary controversy, make a transition to a key point; for example, “A better question would be...”, or “The real issue here is...”, and return to the message you want to deliver.
- Be relaxed and personable, but not personal – you are offering the views of the organization, not your own.

7.1.2 Print:

- Clarify in advance whether the media encounter is on record/off record/on background/on deep background. The UN speaks **on the record**. Everything said is considered on the record unless specifically noted otherwise.
- Off record/on background means that information can be used, but you are not named as the source; both parties should agree beforehand how the source is identified. Options for protecting your identity include being referred to as a “UN worker”, an “aid worker” or simply an “informed source”.
- Off-the-record formulations should be used only when there is an overriding reason for OCHA to disclose information without attribution.
- If you choose to speak off the record or on background, do so only when there is established trust with the journalist. An unethical journalist could reveal a confidential source and compromise you and the organization.
- “Deep background” means information cannot be used, even anonymously, except as a tip or lead to investigate a story using other sources.
- You may choose to record a media encounter, informing the journalist in advance. The recording will provide a backup should questions arise later.
- If you believe you have been misquoted or misrepresented in your statements, it is advisable to follow up with the journalist; however, be prepared to make your point clearly and strongly,

as no journalist wants a story corrected after it is in print or online.

Note: Communications Officers shall only give off the record information when the situation truly merits. The UN is a public organization; its engagement with the media should reflect its commitment to transparency.

7.1.3 *Radio and television:*

- Ask in advance if the interview will be live or taped.
- Ask about the duration of the interview. Most taped television interviews provide only a few minutes (or even seconds) for you to speak.
- An entire taped interview may be cut to a few quotes or a single sound bite.
- Ask if there are other participants in the interview or other speakers to be interviewed for the same segment. If so, who?
- Request having your voice not used as voiceover for other television footage, as you have no control over the images shown while your words are aired.
- After a taped interview, ask when it is scheduled for broadcast, and if the segment will be posted online or can be transmitted electronically.

Note: Taped interviews have drawbacks, as the material will be cut and edited without your control. (Ask in advance whether comments can be rephrased or struck from the record if necessary.) Live interviews may seem more pressured because they provide no room for error, but they offer a distinct advantage: the opportunity to convey your message exactly as you wish to express it.

Finding a news hook: Do not waste journalists' time with something that is not news. Look for angles that will attract media attention:

- *Problem-Solution:* There is a problem, and here's what we are doing about it.
- *Dramatic human interest:* Include stories of real people, their triumphs, tragedies, adventures and experiences.
- *Trends:* Find at least three examples to illustrate an emerging trend – new opinions, behaviour patterns or attitudes.
- *Key dates calendar:* Tie the story to an event or anniversary already in the news – for example, one year later, or a decade since.
- *New announcement:* Is your news "groundbreaking" or "first-ever"? Reporters are interested in new stories, not old news. Make your news fresh.
- *Localize a national story (or vice versa):* Use breaking story to show its local impact – e.g., how fighting is affecting access to life-saving health services.
- *Profiles and people:* Feature individuals who may become news themselves because of their personal stories of heroism, inspiration or great hardship.
- *Celebrity:* If you have a nationally known celebrity on your side, make sure they are included in the story.

7.2 Practical tips for effective media engagement

Helping journalists do their jobs will help Communications Officers do theirs. Media engagement is about enabling journalists to get their story – one that also gets your message out. Maintaining good relations with media through regular briefings, interviews and updates will earn respect for the organization and can pay dividends when controversies arise.

The demands of the media should never interfere with humanitarian operations or official meetings and deliberations. Do not be intimidated – be firm in setting ground rules to protect OCHA and humanitarian colleagues, and avoid making comments that could potentially put them in a compromising position.

Be **fast, factual, frank, friendly** and **fair**:

Be fast: Journalists work to deadlines, and speed is critical in the competitive environment of 24/7 news. Always return calls with a minimum of delay, and ensure colleagues do the same. Encourage journalists to call you at any time, and make sure you or your colleagues are available day or night if important changes in the situation occur.

Be factual: Use plain, clear language – not “UN-speak” – including relevant quotes wherever possible. Avoid alarmist and emotional language in releases and briefings – the facts should speak for themselves. Communications Officers should not offer evaluations, speculation or predictions.

Be frank: If you don’t know an answer, admit it. If information is not available, say so. If you’ve spoken in error, offer a correction. Journalists value trust and honesty, especially when it comes to an organization admitting its own mistakes. Be generous in giving credit to partners, avoiding claims or sole credit for OCHA for shared operations or activities.

Be friendly: Know the names and affiliations of journalists, and track the interviews and briefings you provide. Wherever possible, wear UN identification clothing. Treat local media with the same respect and courtesy that you give to international media.

Be fair: Be prepared to assist in arranging a place on an aircraft or vehicle carrying supplies to journalists eager to reach affected areas. Give space to journalists representing the most influential media outlets, but do not suggest or assume that this will “buy” coverage favourable to OCHA and the UN.

Further practical tips:

Political awareness and sensitivity: Refrain from commenting on the policies or actions of the government or other agencies on issues apart from those related to OCHA’s humanitarian mandate. Because OCHA cooperates with journalists, it risks being identified with them when negative stories appear, which may anger the government and strain its relations with OCHA. Take particular care not to provide journalists with comments that could be used to link OCHA to criticism or negative coverage.

Pitching a forgotten humanitarian story: With a little determination, a good news pitch, credible statistics and firsthand reporting, news editors will take notice of a forgotten emergency. Make a connection between a forgotten crisis and another crisis (e.g., “Some three million civilians have died in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since 1998, the highest death toll since World War II”) and invite journalists to the field to see the crisis firsthand. What was previously a forgotten humanitarian story can make headline news.

Journalists’ security in the field: Keep track of the journalists you are working with in insecure environments – for their safety and yours. A simple form that includes reporters’ names, affiliations, contact details, stated interests, and what information they have been briefed on can be very helpful should the situation turn violent or chaotic. Also, by keeping records a Country Office can alert relevant agencies, sub-offices, and NGOs when journalists are passing through.

7.3 Media activities

In addition to the communications tools described earlier, Communications Officers have a range of activities to support their media strategy. Press conferences, briefings, field trips, interviews, photography, maps, presentations and the CAP are all events a Communications Officer can use to communicate to the media.

7.3.1 *Media interviews*

An interview is a briefing for a single journalist and may produce an exclusive story. Sometimes OCHA offers a selected journalist an exclusive interview with a senior official to increase the chances of reaching a particular audience. For such requests, the Communications Officer should determine what the thrust of the interview will be, prepare the interviewee and consider how to respond to

any controversial questions. Communications Officers should be prepared to provide background briefing if necessary to bring journalists up to speed prior to an interview. They should also conduct a short debriefing following the interview.

More commonly, a journalist will contact OCHA seeking an update or statement on a particular development. Any call or conversation with a journalist should be considered interview material. An unexpected call from a journalist can always be delayed by offering to call back, allowing time to consult the Head of Office and make relevant inquiries; the call should be returned promptly.

Make the points you wish to emphasize early in the interview, keeping answers short for impact and in order to cover as much ground as possible. Try to include anecdotes from personal experience: "Last week when I was in Zuma Province, I met a doctor who ought to be a national hero...". Avoid overloading replies with too many statistics and instead provide the interviewer background documents with supporting details.

7.3.2 *Press conferences*

Press conferences are held for major events or announcements by senior OCHA or UN officials. They should be well planned and publicized. A media advisory should be sent out 48 hours before the event, followed by calls to key journalists to encourage attendance. A press release or detailed background paper covering the essentials of what is to be announced and the name/title of the moderator and speaker(s) should be prepared for distribution to the journalists as they arrive. An assistant should have a sign-in sheet to register attendance and build media contacts.

The location should have room for television lights and cameras, a table for the speakers and any necessary visual aids (kept to minimum if the press conference is televised). Try to place a UN flag where it will appear in photos and on television. If language interpreting is available and needed, make sure all equipment is functional and language staff are prepared.

Press conferences are handled by a moderator – in some cases this may be the Communications Officer – who is known to the media and can encourage questions from reporters. Try to keep presentations to 10 minutes (15 minutes if more than one speaker), leaving time for questions and for delays due to translation. A press conference should normally run 30 to 45 minutes and not longer than an hour.

Following the press conference, a transcript and any handout materials should be sent to all media and public mailing lists. Documents should be translated and distributed in local languages whenever possible.

7.3.3 *Media briefings*

A media briefing is useful way for OCHA to update selected reporters on specific activities or to clarify complicated or emerging issues. It is not a formal press conference for the entire press corps; rather, it should bring together journalists particularly interested in a situation with an authority who can discuss it in detail in an informal, relaxed atmosphere. The purpose is to increase media understanding of a situation and to promote accurate coverage that reflects OCHA's or the UN's viewpoint. No announcements should be made, nor is a press release distributed (although a background paper may be made available).

This type of briefing should be reserved for special situations and/or take advantage of the presence of a particularly knowledgeable OCHA official or partner. Only journalists should be invited. As for press conferences, journalists should be given at least 48 hours advance notice. Allow up to an hour for a briefing.

It must be clearly established at the outset whether the briefing is on the record. In most circumstances, it is recommended to speak on the record. The person conducting the briefing should be aware that anything not specifically stated off the record may be reported by journalists. An alternative to "off

the record” is to allow for information to be reported without direct attribution to OCHA (for “off the record” alternatives, see **Section 7.1.2**).

7.3.4 *Media field trips*

Field visits can be a useful method of advocacy and offer journalists a chance to observe the dimensions of a situation and the effectiveness of response. Field visits are either initiated by the media with support of OCHA or are planned and largely organized by OCHA – it is important that everyone involved, especially the host government and on-site aid workers, knows the difference. When coordinating a media field trip, Communications Officers should make clear to participants the subject, scope and approach of planned reporting, what financial, logistical and security arrangements are necessary and the precise responsibility of OCHA and each of its partners.

The trip should start with a background briefing, followed by a visit to the site itself, allowing maximum exposure to selected projects. The Communications Officer or other officer should accompany all television crews and the more high-profile media visitors to ensure that questions are properly answered and that no unfamiliar scenes or situations are misinterpreted. Remember, OCHA will not be there when the film is edited. Once on site, do not overlook the schedule: interviews take time and journalists need opportunities to gather impressions.

When visiting sensitive areas, all participants should be advised on appropriate procedures, polite forms of address, courtesy rituals to be expected and returned, etc. While it is generally unwise to combine the visits of writers and photographers with film crews, you may have no choice. If you do so, you should have another vehicle and OCHA Officer available for the film crew. Photographers and film/television crews should be clearly advised on what they can and cannot shoot.

Where feasible, OCHA should facilitate journalists’ travel in UN vehicles or aircraft, whether within or between countries, when part of an official press delegation on a USG, ASG or UNCT mission, and OCHA should absorb any costs. Journalists are expected to cover expenses for commercial travel and for lodging and board. If they are taken to a location where these facilities are not commercially available, OCHA should arrange local accommodation with UN agencies or NGOs, if possible, and put on additional vehicles as needed, provided they are travelling at the invitation of the UN.

As field trips with media often involve logistical complexities and high profile coverage, Communications Officers are advised to alert CISB on planned field trips and to consult senior communications staff for guidance and advice.

7.3.5 *Public speaking and presentations*

Face-to-face communication is an effective means to convey a message – if the presentation is well prepared and tailored for the audience. The development of a presentation or speech should consider these steps:

- *Clarify your aims:* Ask yourself the following: Why am I making this presentation? Who is the audience? What is their level of knowledge? What might their reaction be to what I say? What questions will they ask? What will they do with the information? How will I structure my presentation? How many key points do I need?
- *Brainstorm:* Give yourself 20 minutes and write down everything you know about the subject. Take a break.
- *Group:* Group the material into a maximum of three topics for a 20-minute presentation – five minutes per topic, plus two minutes for pauses between topic areas and three minutes for introduction and conclusion. When grouping material, think of the key points and give them titles so it is clear to both you and your audience..
- *Order the topics according to your aim:* Put the most important topic first and the rest in a logical progression.
- *Consider the pros and cons of presentation software/visual aids:* PowerPoint is a visual aid,

not simply a screen for the audience to stare at as you talk. Visual aids should grab the audience's attention and help focus your message. Photographs, maps and graphics can be easily incorporated into slides that add an additional dimension; however, make sure you practice delivery before delivering your presentation.

8. Missions of the USG/ERC and ASG/DERC

The USG/ERC and ASG/DERC routinely travel to areas of humanitarian operations around the world to assess conditions on the ground and to meet with government officials, affected communities, UN and NGO representatives, donors, OCHA Country Offices and other stakeholders. They also attend meetings, conferences and forums in support of global partnerships.

For Communications Officers, missions of the USG or ASG involve extensive planning, organization and coordination. Missions also represent an opportunity for high-level advocacy and broad media exposure, both locally and globally, and therefore require a well thought-out media strategy and close cooperation with national and international journalists, as well as production of key outputs in support of the mission.

Missions of the USG or ASG typically cover two to five days, often including extensive travel within the country or region. Given the complex logistical and scheduling demands, preparations should begin well in advance – one month or more, if possible. In the case of a new emergency, however, there may only be a few days to prepare, and numerous details to attend to.

Communications Officers at country/regional level are responsible for all aspects of media relations surrounding visits of the USG or ASG, including the following:

- Pre-mission planning, including updated ERC Key Messages, draft media plan and schedule of media engagements
- Accompanying USG/ASG during mission at any time media is present
- Drafting and distributing daily press releases during mission
- Providing morning updates highlighting news coverage and key issues
- Organizing press conference(s), including logistics, invitations, draft opening statement and advisory brief on media environment
- Arranging one-on-one media interviews
- Securing coverage of the visit by in-house media (photo/video)
- Conducting post-mission follow-up on media coverage

Communications Officers should work closely with CISB/CSS colleagues in preparing for a visit of the USG or ASG, and during the mission should maintain regular contact with the OCHA Spokesperson's office to ensure timely updates and coordination. Communications colleagues in other OCHA Country Offices may also be a useful source of guidance in preparing for missions.

Note: Partnership missions generally entail fewer logistical and organizational complexities than field missions, but Communications Officers should nonetheless be prepared to provide full support as required.

Complete guidelines on the media component for USG/ASG missions can be found in Annex H.

E. Terms and Definitions

See Annex I. Glossary of humanitarian terms

F. References

Related guidance

OCHA, 2010, *Policy Instruction on the Roles and Responsibilities of Country Offices*, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, New York

OCHA, 2010, *Policy Instruction on the Roles and Responsibilities of Regional Offices*, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, New York

OCHA, 2010, *Policy Instruction on OCHA's Structural Relationships Within an Integrated UN Presence*, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, New York

OCHA, 2006, *Guidelines for OCHA Advocacy*, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, New York

OCHA, 2006, *Policy Instruction on OCHA Advocacy*, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, New York

IASC, 2006, *Guidance Note on Using the Cluster Approach to Strengthen Humanitarian Response*, Inter-Agency Standing Committee, New York

G. Monitoring and Compliance

CISB shall monitor implementation of this Handbook, including future revisions.

H. Dates

This Handbook shall be effective on [DATE] and reviewed no later than [DATE].

I. Contact

The contact for this Handbook is the Chief CISB.

J. History

This Handbook was approved on [DATE] and has not been amended.

SIGNED:

DATE:

This Handbook supersedes the *Handbook on OCHA Public Information* (2006).

ANNEXES

- A. Key contacts: OCHA Communications
- B. OCHA and advocacy
- C. OCHA Communications Strategy
- D. UN Secretariat relations with the media
- E. Product guidance, templates and samples
 - Situation reports
 - Press releases
 - ERC and Field Key Messages
 - Internal Weekly Reports
 - Talking points
 - Statements by the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General, ERC or RC/HC
- F. UN Communications Group: SOP for crisis communications
- G. Clusters and advocacy
- H. Guidance for USG/ASG missions
- I. Glossary of humanitarian terms
- J. Online resources

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B. OCHA and advocacy

Introduction

This document presents a strategic overview of OCHA and advocacy. It outlines four key areas: how OCHA defines advocacy; how OCHA approaches advocacy; how OCHA internally coordinates and communicates advocacy; and how OCHA plans to further develop its advocacy strategy and initiatives. It is an evolving document that is meant to provide a background understanding and overview of the practicalities of how advocacy is carried out and linked across the organization.

Overall, OCHA's strategic approach to advocacy is based on the organization's comparative advantage of being able to:

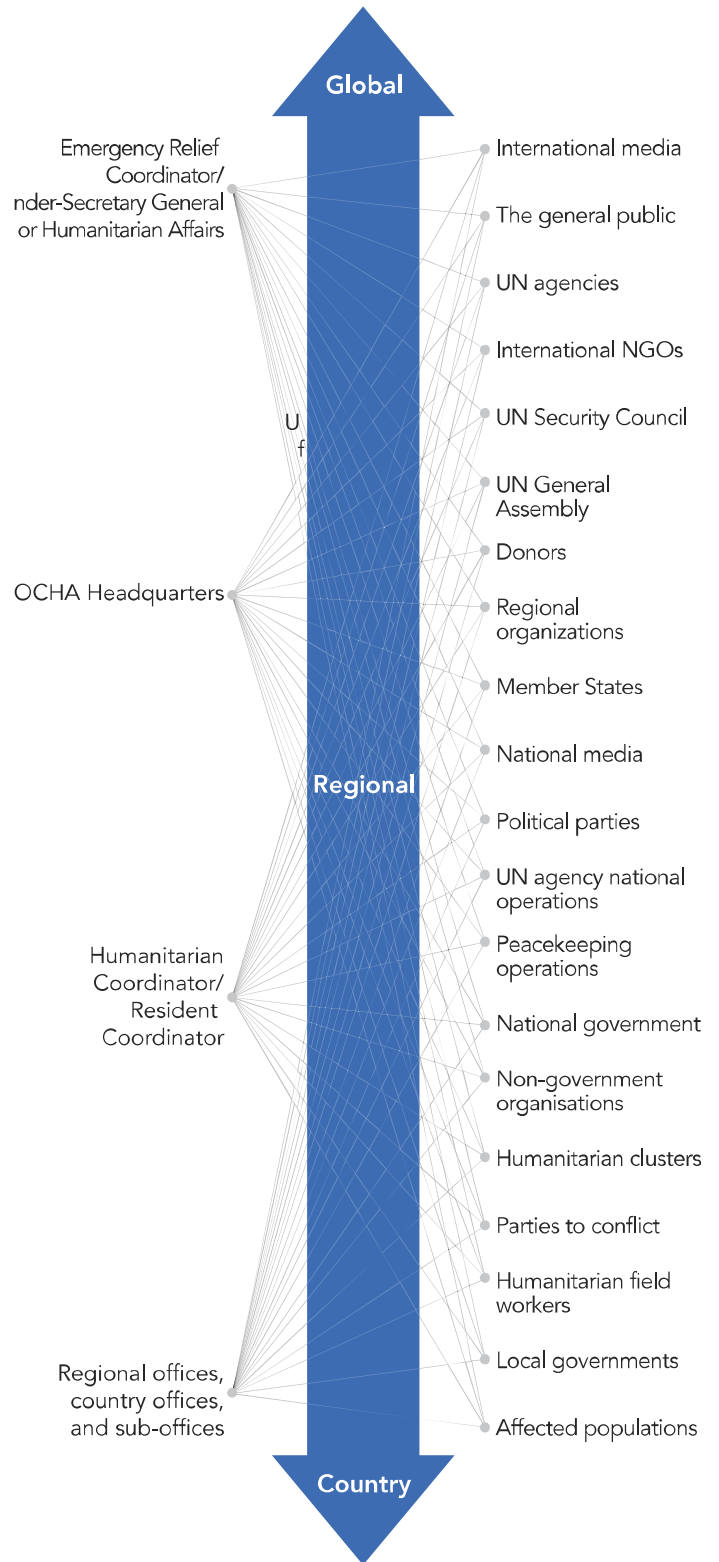
- Carry out humanitarian advocacy consistently **at all levels of the organization**, in all environments, on all relevant humanitarian issues, and through **public and private methods**.
- Use its **presence on the ground** in crisis environments to understand real-time information and context-specific needs, and **shape timely and relevant advocacy positions**.
- Serve as a **coordinating body and a nexus for information gathering**, research and analysis that underpin **credible advocacy**.
- Fairly and inclusively represent the humanitarian needs of ALL sectors, thereby being able to **represent the views of many diverse actors** within the United Nations system and externally.
- Stand for more than just one or two issues - **OCHA can provide unbiased and comprehensive messages**. It advocates all issues and all crises at all times to all relevant audiences.

Defining Advocacy

Why does OCHA do advocacy?

OCHA's advocacy mandate "to raise awareness of humanitarian issues" is derived from General Assembly Resolution 46/182. The Secretary-General's 1997 Reform further reinforced OCHA's advocacy role by reaffirming advocacy as one of the then three pillars of OCHA's work, along with policy development and emergency response coordination. As the United Nations body charged with leading humanitarian response, OCHA is responsible for advocating on behalf of those in greatest need. It is charged to do this based on the four humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, independence and impartiality.

Advocacy at every level



What does advocacy mean to OCHA?

For OCHA, advocacy means privately and publicly using information to influence the policies or practices of key actors, with the aim of assisting and enhancing protection for those in need.

OCHA targets numerous audiences. They include operational humanitarian actors of all kinds; Member States; donors; affected States; parties to conflict; affected populations at large; international and regional organizations; the media; NGOs and community-based organizations; the private sector; and the public at large.

OCHA seeks to get the right message to the right person/group/institution at the right time. The aim is to effect a change in behaviour, policies or programmes.

What is the focus of OCHA's advocacy?

OCHA's advocacy initiatives fall within five key areas:

- Action: **Ensuring principled, coordinated and timely humanitarian action** to meet humanitarian needs at all stages of an emergency, including preparedness.
- Representation: **Giving a voice to all segments of populations** affected by crises.
- Awareness: Raising the profile and **increasing awareness of humanitarian issues** (displacement, vulnerability, preparedness, gender equality, etc.).
- Mobilization: **Mobilizing policy and financial support for humanitarian response.**
- Promotion: Actively **promoting the fulfilment of applicable rights and responsibilities in accordance with international law.**

In practice, working within these five advocacy areas consists of implementing initiatives that are tailored to specific emergencies, contexts and needs. For each advocacy initiative, the tactics, messages, partners and audiences may vary.

EXAMPLES				
Action	Representation	Awareness	Mobilization	Promotion
Myanmar 2008: OCHA worked intensively behind the scenes with all levels of the Myanmar Government to secure visas for essential relief personnel from United Nations agencies.	Haiti 2010: OCHA presented community leaders' views that relief agencies and Government officials needed to ensure that IDPs were given options as to where to resettle and not be forcibly relocated.	COP15 2009: OCHA lobbied with Member States to ensure that language on the humanitarian consequences of climate change was reflected in the Global Climate Change agreements.	DRC 2010: OCHA produced a series of visual media products to highlight the consequences of funding gaps and to increase financial support for the DRC CAP, which was only 30 percent funded.	Pakistan 2010: OCHA led the humanitarian community in adopting a common position on civilmilitary relations and advocated this with Government and military officials.

Advocacy in Action

How does OCHA approach advocacy?

To achieve consistent progress in these five areas, OCHA takes a broad and organization-wide approach to advocacy.

Advocacy is carried out at numerous levels, in numerous locations and in public and private spheres. At its simplest, advocacy is a one-on-one discussion with a beneficiary or service-delivery stakeholder to ensure the provision of food aid in a particular camp. In a more complex environment, advocacy can be a shared responsibility between humanitarian actors who work together to advocate through a comprehensive process. This may involve engaging political leaders, building partnerships, mobilizing community groups and engaging the media.

Some activities involve speaking out using public information, while other activities comprise quiet diplomacy or even anonymous actions.

- **Public advocacy** includes using public information to create awareness among target audiences about humanitarian emergencies and humanitarian needs, initiatives to explain the nature and work of humanitarianism, and initiatives around specific issues such as the rights of IDPs. The most visible forms of public advocacy are public statements and media work (Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator and Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC)), as well as support for the Secretary-General's initiatives in this regard (op-eds, interviews, articles, published reports, etc.).
- **Private advocacy** is more akin to humanitarian diplomacy: using methods such as briefings, personal meetings or other quiet communications to achieve change. Whether it is direct engagement with a rebel force to gain access to people who need assistance, or long-term work to generate support for a funding mechanism, some of the most consistent and timeconsuming advocacy is often made far from the public eye.

Who is responsible for advocacy within OCHA?

While advocacy is carried out by all parts of OCHA and by numerous staff, much of it happens on two distinct levels: the global level and the regional/country level.

Advocacy at the **global level** is primarily led by the ERC, supported by OCHA, including senior managers. At the Headquarters level, virtually all of OCHA's units conduct advocacy in some form. However, some branches and sections have particular responsibility for conducting OCHA's most visible and sustained advocacy activities:

- The Communication and Information Services Branch leads on OCHA's public advocacy activities involving all aspects of information platforms, media relations, visual media, reporting and public awareness events.
- The Coordination and Response Division shapes context-specific response strategies.
- The Policy Development and Studies Branch leads on building an analytical basis to inform and shape policy development on key humanitarian issues, including those that can shape advocacy.
- The External Relations and Support Mobilization Branch, Central Emergency Response Fund, External Relations and Partnerships Section and the Financial Coordination Section are responsible for outreach, predominantly for funding and associated political and policy support.

Advocacy at the **country/regional level** is led by the RC/HC, supported by OCHA staff in regional and country offices. OCHA staff are responsible for developing and implementing advocacy initiatives and related activities that support and are consistent with the overall response strategy for an emergency. Often, through the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), OCHA supports the HC to facilitate a process to outline country-specific issues for advocacy, and provide country-specific input to regional and Headquarters advocacy efforts as required.

OCHA's Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) also plays a crucial role in bringing attention to humanitarian issues that are overlooked by mainstream media at country level. IRIN's relationship with OCHA is unique in that it can sometimes publicly advocate issues that OCHA cannot.

Despite this diversity of public and private, local and global activities, OCHA's advocacy initiatives and strategies strive to follow a series of core steps: identifying the issues concerned and the desired changes; identifying the target audience; selecting appropriate methods for reaching them; developing an action plan; and executing that plan.

Coordinating and Communicating Advocacy

How is advocacy coordinated at the strategic level in OCHA?

Given the wide scope of advocacy in OCHA, it has always been challenging to ensure there is a joined-up, "whole of organization" approach to advocacy, while still allowing for the flexibility to respond to unpredictable emergencies and contextual differences. To help confront this, starting in 2010 OCHA's advocacy initiatives will be better coordinated and communicated at strategic and operational levels through the implementation of OCHA's Strategic Framework 2010-2013 and OCHA's pilot Communications Strategy.

At the strategic level, the OCHA Strategic Framework 2010-2013 provides an organizational development plan. It is focused on establishing the systems and tools that will let OCHA perform advocacy better and in a more coordinated fashion.

The Strategic Framework will help ensure that:

- All OCHA branches, divisions, country offices and regional offices can be better linked-up in their advocacy initiatives, as they will all work around clear organizational objectives (facilitated by Management Task Teams for each objective, each chaired by a member of OCHA's Senior Management Team).
- Advocacy is linked to the other core functions of OCHA (coordination, policy development, humanitarian financing and information management), all of which are cross-cutting elements of the Strategic Framework.
- OCHA develops a prioritized policy and advocacy agenda that will help identify thematic priorities that OCHA should increasingly analyse, and develop organizational policy and advocacy positions.

How is advocacy communicated?

At the operational level, advocacy is now being better coordinated through OCHA's new Communications Strategy. This pilot strategy aims to set a predictable basis for communications, which will enable OCHA to communicate more effectively, coherently and consistently right across the organization, from the ERC to the head of a sub-office in the field.

The three key objectives of the Communications Strategy are to:

- Maximize OCHA communications on humanitarian crises and issues through better coordinated use of all communications platforms, products, content, channels and networks.
- Amplify the voice of the ERC – the chief humanitarian advocate.
- Highlight the value-added and crucial role of OCHA to donors and Member States, particularly with regard to funding OCHA's role in humanitarian assistance.

OCHA's Communications Strategy helps bring different parts of the organization together to 'speak with one voice' and amplify efforts to raise awareness of particular concerns, challenges or solutions. Coordinated communications are also targeted around key events.

For example, the Communications Strategy has led to a new ERC Mission Coordination Communication Initiative. This catalyses all of OCHA's key public advocacy and communications units (e.g. IRIN, OCHA Online, the Visual Media Unit, ReliefWeb and media relations) to work with the Office of the Under-Secretary-General, CRD, and OCHA's regional and field public information officers. Together they develop coordinated public advocacy messages and products to help maximize the impact of recent ERC missions to West Africa, Niger, DRC, Chad and Sudan. This includes boosting pre-, post- and during-mission communications activities through joined-up interventions such as

ERC press breakfasts, OCHA Online content coordinated with IRIN and ReliefWeb, and the development of interactive advocacy and visual media products.

How do OCHA's communications services, products and tools support advocacy?

OCHA has developed numerous products, tools and services that help OCHA support various advocacy initiatives and communicate more effectively, coherently and consistently. These range from standard products such as press releases, media interviews, web stories and publications, to targeted products that highlight or illustrate specific events or crises, give guidance for common messages, or visual tools for OCHA staff and partners to promote humanitarian issues.

For example, OCHA produces humanitarian situation reports, bulletins, as well as policy reports to provide information and analysis that assist decision-makers develop advocacy positions. To help guide common-positions, ERC Key Messages are developed to enable OCHA and the humanitarian community to speak with a unified voice both publically and privately. Similarly, Field Key Messages articulate the HC's official position regarding a particular crisis or ongoing emergency. OCHA has also begun to enhance its delivery of advocacy messages in creative and visual ways through films, graphics and maps. Finally, OCHA also manages web platforms and information aggregates such as OCHA Online and ReliefWeb. It is also now developing its use of media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to engage with existing and new target audiences on humanitarian issues.

What can the ODSG do to Support OCHA?

- ODSG could support OCHA's advocacy efforts by consistently promoting ERC and Field Key Messages, and working with their respective capitals to further amplify the positions privately and publicly.
- ODSG could support OCHA in forming a network of public information officers at the capital level to support strengthened communications between OCHA and capitals, and to help OCHA identify creative new approaches that could be used to reach wider audiences. This could also include ODSG members working in their regional capacity to support OCHA's engagement with regional organizations, e.g. AU, NATO, EU.
- In advance of key decision-making forums such as ECOSOC, the ODSG could work on controversial issues with outlying Member States to help foster agreements and language supporting effective humanitarian action. In some instances, this could include ODSG members partnering with two or three non-traditional humanitarian Member States to advocate proactive engagement in the humanitarian agenda. This work could involve initiatives such as bilateral meetings, workshops and training opportunities.

C. OCHA Communications Strategy

Communications and Information Services Branch (CISB) OCHA Communications Strategy

CISB develops and produces a range of communications products and services that enable OCHA to advocate more effectively and coherently. This includes a paper on 'OCHA and Advocacy: Strategic Overview' (June 2010), which explains the difference between *private* and *public* advocacy, and clarifies which Branches and Sections of OCHA have ownership or participate in implementing advocacy. CISB leads on OCHA's public advocacy: communications activities involving all aspects of information platforms, media relations, visual media, reporting and public awareness events and campaigns.

- ❑ OCHA public communications in major emergencies already follow a relatively well-established pattern, with clear objectives, messaging, regular coordination between field & HQ, effective outreach methods and target audiences (which we constantly review and strive to improve).

WHY

- ❑ In order to strengthen OCHA communications overall, including on the priorities set out in the annual plan, 'OCHA in 20xx', and in support of the Strategic Framework 2010-2013, an overarching OCHA communications strategy has been developed.
- ❑ The **goal** is to set a **more predictable basis** for communications, which will enable OCHA to communicate more **effectively, coherently and consistently**, right across the organization, from the ERC, to heads of country offices and communications officers.

WHAT

- ❑ The three key **objectives** of the corporate communications strategy are to:
 1. **Maximize OCHA communications** on humanitarian crises and issues through more coordinated and consistent use of *all* communications platforms, products, content, channels & networks
 2. **Amplify the voice of the ERC/USG** – as the chief humanitarian advocate
 3. **Highlight the value-added and crucial role of OCHA**, to donors and Member States, particularly with regard to supporting OCHA's resource mobilization efforts.

HOW

- ❑ To support the Strategic Objectives, regularly updated **communications plans** need to be developed, which requires collaboration with the appropriate OCHA Branches, Units or field presences. These all contribute to a living calendar of key dates, opportunities and events, which – in addition to sudden-onset or emerging crises – informs communications planning on humanitarian situations and issues/themes.
- ❑ Elements of this pilot strategy were first developed and tested in 2010. A summary of initial steps and ongoing work includes:

Maximizing OCHA communications

OCHA is the proud steward of a number of key communications products, platforms, and coordination mechanisms (see Annex I), which enable both the organization and the broader humanitarian community communicate more coherently. More consistent use of and coordination between these well-established and trusted tools would help to maximize their potential impact.

A two-month communications coordination pilot (across OCHA comms channels and platforms) was initiated to maximize the impact of ERC missions to DRC, West Africa, Sudan and Chad in April and May 2010. This included more focus on pre- and post- mission communications as well as 'during'; including content on humanitarian issues/ situation coordinated between OOL, IRIN and RW, OOL content promotion, ERC press breakfasts (background only), and more systematic capture of audio-visual material for post-mission advocacy use, such as Member States briefings or report launches.

The pilot helped clarify the advocacy objectives of the missions by bringing in CRD, OUSG, and field offices; improved linkages between complementary communications efforts in the field and at HQ; and broadened our outreach by targeting additional audiences and making more effective and timely use of existing communication channels and platforms.

We immediately began to apply this coordinated approach to our operational communications, for example by holding weekly HQ editorial meetings on public information, web, and social media content (see below), maintaining a communications calendar, prioritizing development of a corporate social media presence, and informing the restructuring of the OCHA Online portal and to workflow within the Section.

Similar coordinated communications approaches are used for corporate campaigns such as 'World Humanitarian Day 2010', for emergency communications response, for ERC and DERC mission planning, and for launches of high-profile publications or reports.

In progress:

- *Implement this approach through OCHA and the Communications Network*
- *Incorporate into guidance for OCHA Communications Officers*
- *Continue to evaluate and improve existing communications products and platforms*
- *Further development of measuring, archival and dissemination mechanisms and systems*

Amplifying the ERC

The ERC is the chief humanitarian spokesperson, giving a voice to all affected by disaster or in need of protection, and providing leadership to the broader humanitarian community. While every effort is made to support the ERC and USG advocacy functions on a daily basis, a more systematic approach is needed to ensure the most effective leverage of messaging, briefings and media/other external appearances by the ERC.

A review of the public information flow around the USG/ERC was initiated by CSS, to ensure all opportunities and outreach are maximized and systematized across all our communications products, platforms and channels, and in view of the handover to a new ERC in Quarter III, 2010. An inter-branch working group looked at triggers, workflows, dissemination mechanisms and platforms, relationships and linkages with OSSG, Geneva and field communications officers etc, effective communications tools; and identified priority tasks. In addition to the measures described above:

- We continue to develop and issue ERC key message products, as well as disseminate USG/ERC statements, presentations, briefing transcripts and opinion editorials
- We share more video material of the ERC, both with international and regional broadcasters, but also through our own platforms.
- The re-design of the OCHA Online portal will include a dedicated ERC home page space, while a key objective of our social media presence is to amplify the ERC's advocacy efforts.
- We are strengthening engagement with the SG's Spokesperson and DPI to harness their capacity to amplify humanitarian messaging and leverage the role and voice of the ERC.
- More systematic engagement is underway with country offices in order to encourage support of, capacity for, and complementarity to the corporate communications strategy. Guidance on preparing for and organizing communications activity related to ERC missions has been shared.

In progress:

- Further development of web and social media strategy and implementation
- Further development of linkages with partners such as OUSG, OSSG, and DPI
- Further development of relations between OCHA HQ, Geneva & field communications officers
- Further development of the 'ERC brand' and appropriate public relations

Highlighting OCHA's value and crucial role

In view of the key role played by donors and Member States in supporting humanitarian assistance and OCHA's role in it, more emphasis needs to be placed on communications services support to the annual OCHA Resource Mobilization Strategy, and to relevant OCHA Sections leading these efforts.

A communications pilot exercise focused on the launch of 'OCHA in 2010' and outreach to the OCHA Donor Support Group, in the lead-up to the High Level Meeting in Canberra in June 2010. Feedback from the ODSG HLM focused on the need to continue raising OCHA's visibility and marketing our crucial role and value-added.

- With the ERC and OCHA staff we have developed a new OCHA tagline: Coordination Saves Lives; to clearly and simply illustrate our work and the real value of coordination. We are now working to disseminate all new products and platforms with this tagline and OCHA branding.
- We continue to highlight coordination and resource mobilization action through web, social media, partner events and other opportunities, in addition to press outreach; working closely with DRS, ERPS, CERF, CAP and others.
- Working with DRS and ERPS we develop messaging and materials illustrating the value of OCHA, our strategic plan, and services available to Member States.
- We continue to work closely with DRS on the development of guidance on donor visibility; and in the meantime are building more visible coverage of funding or impact of funding into the new OOL portal.
- We are working with DRS and ODSG on a pilot communications network, to strengthen public messaging and amplification of humanitarian action by donors and interested Member States.

In progress:

- Further collaboration with OCHA donor/external relations sections on communications to support resource mobilization and donor visibility
- Further collaboration with ODSG donor/Member States on amplification of OCHA efforts
- Roll-out of tagline and 2011 messaging and products

Annex I

Brief overview of tools developed and used by CISB or other OCHA branches/sections to help the whole of OCHA communicate more effectively, coherently and consistently (and support related advocacy initiatives), including key products, platforms, coordination mechanisms, and guidance/training.

Not included in Annexes as these are covered in the Communications Handbook in more detail.

Updated, February 2011

D. UN Secretariat relations with the media

The Policy

1. The United Nations is committed to being open and transparent in its dealing with press. It is in our interest to work with the media quickly and honestly, and to develop a coherent communications strategy based on those same principles. We should not only react to events but also, where appropriate, project the organization's point of view on important international developments. However, we must sometimes keep confidences—not to mislead or conceal, but to protect a diplomatic process. Our media policy must therefore balance the need to be open and the need to respect confidentiality.

Speaking to the Press

2. The principal voice of the organization is the Secretary-General. He speaks to the media frequently, at headquarters and when travelling.
3. Media policy is an integral component of the broader communications and public information work of the organization, headed by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information. The Director of Communications in the Office of the Secretary-General is responsible for coordinating the development of a communications strategy that would help project to the world's media a coherent and consistent message for the organization.
4. The Secretary-General's Spokesman and his staff speak to journalists on the Secretary-General's behalf throughout the day. The Spokesman gets his guidance directly from the Secretary-General and senior members of his staff. As the Spokesman's staff cannot be expert in all subjects, they seek the assistance of UN specialists—either to provide them with information that they can pass on to the press or to speak directly to the journalists themselves.
5. As a matter of principle, every member of the Secretariat may speak to the press, within limits:
 - Speak only within your area of competence and responsibility;
 - Provide facts, not opinions or comment;
 - Leave sensitive issues to officials who are specifically authorized to speak on them (See paragraph 6 below).

Sensitive Issues

6. The number of officials speaking on sensitive issues is necessarily limited to:
 - The Spokesman, on the basis of guidance.
 - Designated members of the Secretary-General's staff and Heads of Departments within their areas of competence.
 - Staff authorized by their Heads of Department, on the basis of guidance.
 - Directors of UNICs, on the basis of guidance from Headquarters.
7. For those speaking on sensitive issues, knowing the particular interest in the story can be useful. The Director of Communications or the Spokesman can usually provide such information.
8. No staff member should presume or pretend to speak for the Secretary-General or characterize his views without his explicit consent.

Sharing Information

9. For the United Nations to communicate effectively with the outside world, it needs to do the same internally. Senior officials should share information with those under their supervision and should keep each other informed of their media activities.

Ground Rules

10. All UN officials should normally speak to journalists on the record—that is, for attribution. Sometimes, though, officials specifically authorized to address sensitive issues can give a journalist a deeper understanding of an issue by speaking on background. However, it is very important that the journalist know on which of the following bases the conversation is being conducted:
 - On the record: “Everything I say can be attributed to me by name.”
 - Not for attribution (on background): “Don’t attribute this to me by name, but rather to a UN official.”
 - On deep background: “Use my ideas but not my words; don’t attribute to anyone.”
11. Keeping the Secretary-General’s Spokesman informed of important background briefings will help provide an indication of the issues that the media is interested in.
12. It is unwise, and may sometimes be unethical, to tell one journalist what another is working on, or to suggest that one journalist discuss a pending story with another.
13. Officials should not feel that they have to answer every question, in particular any hypothetical ones.

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News and Media Division
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E. Product guidance, templates and samples

1. Situation reports
2. Press releases
3. ERC and Field Key Messages
4. Internal Weekly Reports
5. Talking points
6. Statements by the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General, ERC or RC/HC

Additional information, as well as electronic templates, can be found on OCHA.net under Reporting Resources.



Situation Reports

Product Guidance

OWNER

Emergency Relief Coordinator

FOCAL POINT

Headquarters

Director, Coordination and Response Division (CRD)

Field

Head of Country Office or Regional Office

PURPOSE

A Situation Report is a concise operational document intended to support the coordination of humanitarian response in an acute crisis. It should provide a snapshot of current needs, response and gaps in a given emergency.

An OCHA Situation Report is used to help actors directly involved in the humanitarian emergency to be aware of what each of them is working on and to inform the wider humanitarian community about developments in the field. It is also a resource mobilization tool.

A Situation Report should be a factual, neutral, unbiased and unemotional accounting of an emergency response. There should be only one OCHA Situation Report per emergency in the public domain at a time. (See below, Frequency)

TRIGGER

A Situation Report should only be issued during the acute phase of an emergency (complex emergency or natural disaster), i.e. at the onset of a new crisis or deterioration of an on-going emergency.

The term "Situation Report" and the corresponding template should not be used to report on chronic emergencies where the humanitarian situation may be dire but is not rapidly changing. A regular weekly humanitarian bulletin or monthly humanitarian update should be used to convey this information (contact ochareporting@un.org for a template).

The Head of Office (or delegate) is responsible for deciding whether an event merits an OCHA Situation Report. This judgment should be made in consultation with the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC), where applicable, and on the advice of the staff in country and/or the responsible CRD Desk Officer. (See below, Drafting)

The decision to issue information in a Situation Report or to include it in a regular weekly or monthly report should not delay the proactive collecting and consolidating of information on the event. The information will be needed regardless of its final format.

Things to consider, among others, when deciding to issue a Situation Report:

What are the numbers of dead and missing and are they likely to rise? How many people may be affected? How significant is the number of dead and affected in the context of the overall population figure? Has there been a GDACS alert? Has the government declared an emergency? Has the government requested international assistance? Is an UNDAC team on standby to deploy? Will a Flash Appeal be issued? Has there been a CERF request? Is an OCHA Emergency Task Force being established?

Situation Reports

Product Guidance

FREQUENCY

The first Situation Report should be issued within 24 hours of the emergency. In the initial phase of the emergency, a Situation Report should be issued every day. As the situation becomes more stable and the information changes less frequently, reporting should move to every second or third day and eventually once a week.

Once the emergency response phase has subsided, the Head of Office is responsible for deciding whether to phase reporting into a weekly or monthly report, or to end public reporting altogether. This decision should be made in consultation with the RC/HC and on the advice of the relevant Humanitarian Affairs Officer/Reports Officer and Desk Officer.

Recipients should be informed of this change when the last Situation Report in a series is issued. Include the following text in the body of your last email: "This is the last Situation Report for [emergency], unless unforeseen developments occur. For more information on [country], go to [website] or read the following regular report: [report name]." (Also see Life Cycle of a Situation Report visual)

AUDIENCE

The Situation Report has multiple audiences, with differing requirements. The primary audiences to consider include: humanitarian actors in the affected country, humanitarian actors outside the country, donors, and OCHA staff outside the country.

- Humanitarian actors in the affected country want to assess the overall situation and know what other agencies are doing.
- Humanitarian actors outside the country want to decide whether to intervene.
- Donors want the big picture of how the overall situation and response are evolving in order to make funding decisions and recommendations.
- OCHA staff outside the country use Situation Reports as a basis for other types of internal and external reports.

Secondary audiences include national governments, civil society organizations, the media and the general public.

FORMAT

The standard template for an OCHA Situation Report should be followed in all cases.

Situation Reports should have the following basic headings: highlights/key priorities, situation overview, humanitarian needs and response, coordination, funding and contact details.

The humanitarian needs and response heading should include sub-headings for the main clusters/sectors. The cluster information should be delineated by needs, response and gaps/constraints, except for the service clusters (logistics and emergency telecommunications) which only have response and gaps/constraints. (See below, Content)

Other headings might include access, security and/or geographic locations. A heading or sub-heading can be removed or the designation NTR ("nothing to report") can be used when there has been no development of importance. (See embedded template for more guidance)

Situation Reports

Product Guidance

DRAFTING

For emergencies that occur in a country where there is an OCHA Country Office, the Humanitarian Affairs Officer/Reports Officer is responsible for compiling the first draft of the Situation Report.

For emergencies that occur in a country where there is an OCHA Humanitarian Support Unit, the OCHA staff person in country is responsible for compiling the first draft.

For emergencies that occur in a country where there is no Country Office or Humanitarian Support Unit, the UN Country Team (UNCT) or Office of the Resident Coordinator is required to produce their own Situation Report (contact ochareporting@un.org for a template). It is at the discretion of the Head of the Regional Office in consultation with the team in country and the CRD Desk Officer whether to issue a separate OCHA Situation Report or to just support the production of the UNCT or RC Situation Report. (See below, Clearance Process)

CONTENT

The main sources of content for the Situation Report are humanitarian partners and actors in the field. This includes cluster and sector leads and to a lesser extent, national and international NGOs, civil society organizations, the national government, parties to the conflict, donors and the media.

The information should not be listed cumulatively from the start of the emergency. The history of the response can be dealt with in another information product, if necessary. Situation Reports should not be a roster of organizations or projects in the field. The details of assessments or cluster/sector response activities can be hyperlinked or annexed.

Make sure the information requirements for the Situation Report are clear to humanitarian partners. Distribute the template and guidance for cluster input to the Situation Reports to cluster leads and their reporting focal points and work with them on defining the process (deadline for inputs, whether there is a revision period) and explain the frequency and maximum length of the entries. Provide regular feedback on the content they submit. (Contact ochareporting@un.org for the Guidance Note on Situation Report Input and Cluster Sitrep Template)

MAPS AND GRAPHICS

When feasible, Situation Reports should include a small map on the first page, especially at the beginning of the crisis when the geography of the location might not be well known. Larger A4 maps should be included as a separate attachment. Use tables or graphics to display a set of figures that change over time. For support with a map or graphic, contact the OCHA Advocacy and Visual Media Unit at ochaavmu@un.org.

CLEARANCE PROCESS

For non-corporate emergencies, the Situation Report is cleared by the Head of Office and issued in the field to a local audience and copied to the Desk Officer. Should the report merit global distribution, the Desk Officer should send it (as is) to the global mailing list, based on agreement with the field. Supplementary Headquarters content should be incorporated into the next numbered version of the Situation Report to avoid having competing versions in the public domain.

For the CRD Desk: When deciding whether to send the Situation Report to the global distribution list, consider the following: Does the emergency have global significance? Will an appeal be launched? Is the situation likely to escalate?

Situation Reports

Product Guidance

CLEARANCE PROCESS CONTINUED

For large-scale, politically complex or corporate emergencies, the Director CRD will notify the Head of Office that the Situation Report will be cleared and distributed through Headquarters. The Director CRD may decide to transfer responsibility for clearance and distribution back to the field as the crisis stabilizes.

The Head of Office has responsibility for the content and quality of the Situation Report prior to its arrival at Headquarters. The Desk Officer should supplement the report with Headquarters information as required. The final report should be cleared by the Director CRD (or delegate) before being distributed simultaneously to a local and global audience.

In cases where local time differences may prevent issuing a timely report, the Director CRD may delegate responsibility for clearance to the Head of Office. In this instance, the Desk Officer should distribute the final version (as is) to the global mailing list. Supplementary Headquarters content should be incorporated into the next numbered version of the Situation Report.

NAMING CONVENTIONS

The title of a Situation Report should follow the following format: OCHA Situation Report No. [x] Country Emergency Date.

When saving a Situation Report file, use the following metadata format: OCHASitrepNo.[x]CountryEmergencyDate.

DISTRIBUTION

The Situation Report should be sent by email to an agreed distribution list. If no mailing list exists, the focal point should send it to their contact list, and provide a link to sign up for Situation Reports on the country website. For distribution at Headquarters, the global OCHA SitRep mailing list should be used.

Make it an option for your audience to get on and off of a distribution list. For the global OCHA SitRep list, requests to be added or deleted from the list can be sent to ochareporting@un.org with 'sitrep' in the subject line.

The subject line of the email should read: OCHA Situation Report No. [x] Country Emergency Date. The Situation Report should be attached as a PDF file to prevent alteration. Limit the file size as much as possible: An empty Situation Report template is 100KB; a ReliefWeb location map is under 50KB; a ReliefWeb situation map can be up to 1MB. The maximum file size for Lotus Notes is 3MB.

In the body of the email message, cut and paste the text from the "highlights/key priorities" section so that busy readers can access that information without having to open the attachment.

If the Situation Report is issued by the field (for non-corporate emergencies), the focal point in country is responsible for sending the Situation Report to ReliefWeb (submit@reliefweb.int), and the Desk Officer should ensure that this has been done. If the Situation Report is issued at Headquarters (for corporate emergencies), the Desk Officer is responsible for sending it to ReliefWeb.

TRANSLATION

Situation Reports produced for non-corporate emergencies and cleared by the field should be distributed in the most appropriate language for the local humanitarian partners (i.e. Spanish, French or Arabic). Should a locally-distributed, non-English language Situation Report be forwarded by the Desk Officer to the global Sitrep mailing list, an English language version should also be made available, depending on the capacity of staff.

Situation Reports produced for corporate emergencies and cleared by Headquarters should always be distributed in English.

It is the responsibility of the Country or Regional Office to provide translation from the local language into English, when necessary. Translation support may be available at Headquarters depending on the language.

FEEDBACK

Within one week of the final Situation Report being issued for a long running crisis, conduct an audience survey in order to get feedback and make improvements for next time.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER
OCHA PRODUCTS

If an UNDAC team is deployed, the UNDAC Situation Report, an internal report for the disaster response community, should be used as a source for the OCHA Situation Report. Information from an OCHA Situation Report is often used as the basic content of other OCHA core products. This includes but is not limited to: Press Releases, Key Messages, Talking Points and Notes to the USG/SG.

Situation Report Checklist

- 1. Is the emergency an acute crisis?
- 2. Have you provided the big picture of the response and remaining gaps?
- 3. Is all of your information sourced?
- 4. Is all of the information placed into context?
- 5. Are technical terms and uncommon acronyms explained?
- 6. Is there any information that is too vague to be useful?
- 7. Is it less than three pages?
- 8. Has it gone through the appropriate clearance process?
- 9. Have you used the OCHA template?
- 10. Is it clear what the reporting period is and when the next report will be issued?

Version 2
August 2010



How to Write a Situation Report

A Situation Report should be as short and **TO THE POINT** as possible, generally no more than three pages.

Avoid long narrative paragraphs. Use **SHORT STATEMENTS, TABLES and BULLET POINTS**.

Example: Heavy rains since 29 January have caused flooding in a number of areas of the Solomon Islands. Four provinces are reported to have been hardest hit: Guadalcanal, Malaita, Makira and Central.

Example: • Flow of aid and staff into Gaza remains insufficient.

Aim for **BALANCED COVERAGE** of who is responding; do not overemphasize UN agencies.

SOURCE all information clearly, especially numbers. Do not bulk-source information at the beginning or end of the situation report. Readers often cite numbers as official UN figures, so be sure you can justify everything you include.

Example: The Government of Nepal estimates approximately 70,000 people were affected by flooding in the Saptari and Sunsari Districts.

Example: ICRC reported that at least 100 people have been registered by their families as missing since the fighting began.

Put numbers into **CONTEXT**. Ask your sources to explain their response in terms of how many people they helped and for how long – not just how many kits or tons of food were distributed.

Example: From 10 to 23 December, 1700 families, or 54 percent of the population living in temporary shelters and tent sites, received reconstruction kits and cash to cover transportation costs for the materials received.

Indicate if information has not been verified, and provide **FOLLOW-UP** in future situation reports whenever possible.

Example: Unconfirmed reports suggest that more than 20,000 IDPs have returned.

EXPLAIN specialist terminology for non-specialists.

Example: Fifty UNICEF emergency family water kits (enough for 500 families) were distributed on 9 January through the local Red Crescent Society. Each kit contains buckets, collapsible water containers, soap, and water purification tablets.

Make every effort to **COMPLETE THE THREAD** of reporting on any given situation, even if considerable time has passed since the initial reporting.

Example: If you report that an assessment is taking place, make sure to report on its outcome.

How to Write a Situation Report

Always explain uncommon **ACRONYMS**. Use full name or description on first mention, with acronym in round brackets, if needed; thereafter, use the acronym where appropriate.

Example: In response to the serious risk posed by Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) and Unexploded Ordnance (UXO), Mine Action is airing two new radio announcements on mine risk education. The amount of UXO in the country is estimated to be highest in the border region.

Note: For more specific advice on filling in the headings of a Situation Report, refer to the embedded template.



Press Releases

Product Guidance

OWNER Chief, Communications and Information Services Branch (CISB)
FOCAL POINT Headquarters OCHA Spokespersons Regional Office/Country Office Public Information Officer (PIO)
PURPOSE A Press Release raises the public profile of an event or issue. It is a one-page external document that provides information on a key area of interest.
TRIGGER At the onset or escalation of an emergency, a Press Release should be issued to highlight OCHA response. A Press Release can announce the launch of an appeal, a report or an assessment. It can also state a position, report on a high-level mission or another significant event worthy of media attention.
FREQUENCY A Press Release should be issued strategically and only when it addresses a development that is newsworthy at the local, regional or international level. If a major event occurs in your area of responsibility, contact the Spokesperson immediately to discuss the response strategy.
AUDIENCE The primary audience for a Press Release is the media and, by extension, the public — particularly donors, the humanitarian community and people interested in the affected country.
CONTENT The sources of information for a Press Release can be an OCHA Situation Report, an internal briefing note, or other report. This material may be supplemented by input from United Nations agencies, NGOs or affected governments.
CLEARANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At Headquarters, the Spokesperson clears the Press Release after consulting with relevant parties. The responsible CRD Desk Officer should be sent a final draft for notification purposes only. Front Office clearance is necessary if the Under-Secretary-General or Assistant Secretary-General is quoted, or if the release concerns a sensitive issue. Field Offices may not edit Headquarters Press Releases, but they should inform the Spokesperson immediately of any textual errors. At the field level, before a PIO issues a Press Release, he or she must notify the Spokesperson's Office ahead of time as to when the Press Release is likely to be issued so that the Spokesperson on duty can be on standby. When appropriate, the PIO should send a draft press release to the Spokesperson's Office for a final edit before it is made public. The Reporting Unit Editor can also do a final edit at the Spokesperson's request. If there is no time to send the draft to Headquarters for editing, then the final press release must be sent to the Spokesperson's Office in a Word document and never in PDF format. The Head of Office approves Press Releases drafted by a PIO. The release should also be approved by the Office of the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) if it includes a statement from the Humanitarian Country Team, a quote from the RC/HC, or if it covers a sensitive matter. When the Press Release relates to an Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) mission, or when it quotes the ERC, it must be approved first by the Spokesperson's Office, which then clears it with the ERC's Office before it is issued. If a press conference is organized, a Press Release may be written and approved beforehand, and distributed to the media at the event. As an alternative, a PIO may opt to provide a fact sheet or other materials.

DISTRIBUTION

At Headquarters, the OCHA Spokesperson's Office is responsible for distributing Press Releases. There are two email groups for internal and external audiences respectively: OCHA PR AERS Internal and OCHA PR AERS External. The distribution lists include major news outlets, the United Nations Department of Public Information, all OCHA PIOs, the OCHA Web team, IRIN and ReliefWeb. Also copy OCHA staff in-country, relevant staff in the OCHA Regional Office and neighbouring OCHA Country Offices, the relevant Desk Officer and the Chief of CISB.

For field Press Releases, the Country or Regional Office is responsible for distribution locally with a copy to the relevant Desk Officer, IRIN, ReliefWeb, the OCHA spokespersons and the appropriate Regional Office. It is at the Spokesperson's discretion to distribute a field Press Release at Headquarters.

If the Press Release is datelined only from a field location, the United Nations News Centre will not use it. It is therefore advisable to dateline both the field location **and** New York (e.g., Bangui/New York, [date]).

The subject line of the e-mail should read: "Press Release: [Headline]" (insert headline in sentence case). In the body of the e-mail message, include the headline and the lead sentence so that busy readers can access that information without having to open the attachment.

Press Releases should be disseminated externally in PDF format to prevent alteration. They must be sent as a Word file to the OCHA spokespersons.

DEADLINES

Press Releases for New York must be submitted by 11 a.m. (New York time) for inclusion in the daily noon briefing of the Spokesperson of the Secretary-General. They should also always be sent to the Geneva Spokesperson. Press briefings are held on Tuesdays and Fridays; Press Releases need to be received in Geneva by the Geneva Spokesperson by close of business the previous day (and should also be sent to New York spokespersons). In a breaking emergency, issue information as soon as possible.

TRANSLATION

Press Releases should be issued in English and, where the capacity exists, translated and distributed locally in the respective country's working language(s). It is the responsibility of the Regional or Country Office to provide translation.

Press Release Checklist

- 1. Have you used the standard OCHA template (see Reporting Resources on OCHA.net)?
- 2. Is the information newsworthy, timely and clear?
- 3. Is the headline compelling?
- 4. Does the first paragraph cover who, what, when and where?
- 5. Does the entire Press Release fit on one page? You may alter the size of the font or the margins to make it fit.
- 6. Has it been proofed for grammatical, spelling and style errors?
- 7. Are sentences short and direct — less than three lines?
- 8. Does it mention partners, if appropriate?
- 9. Is the contact information correct?
- 10. Have you copied the Press Release headline and lead sentence into the body of the email?

United Nations  Nations Unies

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

HEADLINE

(Local City/New York, Date):

*For further information, please call: **Stephanie Bunker**, OCHA-New York, +1 917 367 5126, mobile +1917 892 1679, bunker@un.org; **Nicholas Reader** +1 212 963 4961, mobile +1 646 752 3117, reader@un.org;
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OCHA press releases are available at <http://ochaonline.un.org> or www.reliefweb.int.
For more information about CERF, please see <http://cerf.un.org>*

The mission of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is to mobilize and coordinate effective and principled humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors.

Emergency Relief Coordinator

Key Messages



Product Guidance

PRODUCT OWNERS

..... Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), Chief of the Communications and Information Services Branch (CISB), in consultation with the Director of the Coordination and Response Division (CRD).

FOCAL POINT

..... Public Information Unit (New York) – OCHA spokespersons

PURPOSE

..... ERC Key Messages provide strategic communications advice on issues related to an acute crisis or chronic emergency. They are developed on behalf of the ERC in his/her role as chief advocate and enable the humanitarian community to speak with a unified voice.

Whenever applicable, OCHA staff should use ERC Key Messages as the basis for their communications with external partners such as the media, affected governments or Member States.

TRIGGER

..... ERC Key Messages are issued either when the ERC declares a “corporate response” to an emergency, or when political complexities seriously undermine humanitarian response, particularly when combined with significant media attention.

..... Based on advice from other parts of OCHA, the Chief of CISB will determine if Key Messages are warranted and will present his/her recommendation to the ERC, who has the final decision.

FREQUENCY

..... The Chief of CISB will determine how often ERC Key Messages are updated and establish deadlines to submit messages for ERC approval. The Chief of CISB will also determine when to phase out ERC Key Messages, in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

AUDIENCES

..... The main audiences for ERC Key Messages are OCHA staff and humanitarian partners, including agency spokespersons, Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) principals, global cluster lead agencies and donors.

CONTENT

..... The initial drafts of ERC Key Messages are developed by an OCHA Spokesperson at Headquarters. If Field Key Messages have already been developed in the country concerned, ERC Key Messages should build on their language. When Field Key Messages do not exist, the field Public Information Officer or Humanitarian Affairs Officer will be requested to provide advice on the local context and concerns, including questions from the media and donors, suggested responses and other relevant facts. The OCHA Head of Office should clear this input. It should then be sent to the focal point at OCHA Headquarters.

..... OCHA situation reports or internal emergency task force notes can provide additional sources of information. The CRD Desk Officer and the Front Office should be consulted during the formulation of the messages and can provide input. If there are political concerns, it is the responsibility of the Front Office or Desk Officer to consult the Department of Political Affairs or the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for the official position of the United Nations Secretariat.

..... Global cluster lead agencies should be encouraged to share their own key messages with OCHA so the ERC can advocate on their behalf. When applicable, the messages are incorporated into the ERC Key Messages.

..... The internal guidance section “If Asked” is usually presented as Questions and Answers. These are prepared questions and responses to difficult questions from the media. All internal guidance is always in italics and on a separate page to the ERC Key Messages.

CLEARANCE

..... The final draft should be cleared by the senior Spokesperson and the Deputy Chief of CISB before being sent to the Chief of CISB for approval. The Reporting Unit Editor can also do a final edit of the document on request. The final product is then submitted to the ERC for clearance.

DISTRIBUTION

..... The Chief of CISB disseminates the ERC Key Messages via e-mail to two separate mailing lists: Global Key Messages and Donor Key Messages.

(1) Global Key Messages

The Global Key Messages mailing list includes all OCHA Headquarters and field staff; global cluster lead agencies; the IASC principals; the Emergency Directors Group; the Department of Public Information; and United Nations spokespersons. Global cluster leads are encouraged to distribute the messages further within their own clusters.

The Spokesperson should consult the CRD Desk Officer to discuss who should be cc'd on the Global Key Messages e-mail. This should include the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator, additional staff working in or on the country concerned, relevant CRD desk officers and the Section Chief. CRD may also recommend sending to a regional entity.

Once the ERC has approved the Key Messages, the Spokesperson's office will draft an accompanying e-mail on behalf of the Chief of CISB. The body of the e-mail will explain the purpose of the ERC Key Messages and highlight the main messages. Busy readers can then access the information without having to open the attachment:

Dear colleagues,

Please find attached (*insert issue and name of ERC Key Messages*). These provide guidance to be used by OCHA staff in all public and media interviews.

The main messages are:

Key Message
Key Message
Key Message

ERC Key Messages are also shared with cluster lead agencies and donors to enable the humanitarian community to speak with a unified voice. We encourage you to use them for your own advocacy and to forward them to relevant partners or staff within your organization. We welcome any additional key messages or feedback and invite you to send these to (*add name of Spokesperson and e-mail*).

If you would like to be added or deleted from this mailing list, please e-mail ochareporting@un.org.

Best regards
Pat Banks
Chief, CISB

The e-mail's subject line should read: "ERC Key Messages on [name of emergency] (Issue xx)."

ERC Key Messages should be attached as a PDF document to prevent alteration. The document should be saved as: ERC Key Messages on [x] (Issue x).

The PDF document should be posted on OCHANet as an "Announcement" to the Office of the Under-Secretary-General, and on the Advocacy and Public Information Key Messages pages.

A Word version should also be sent to the spokespersons, the CRD Section Chief and Desk Officer, and the Deputy Chief of CISB.

DISTRIBUTION
(CONTINUED)

..... (2) Donor Key Messages

The Donor Key Messages mailing list includes the OCHA Humanitarian Working-Level Group in New York and Geneva.

The Spokesperson should notify Donor Relations in New York so they can discuss with the Front Office and the CRD Desk Officer any potential sensitivity regarding the messages going to donors. In exceptional circumstances, the messages can be sent to the wider Member State community. Approval for this must come from the ERC and Donor Relations.

ERC Key Messages that are sent to donors should never include the internal guidance section "If Asked", which is usually presented as Questions and Answers. The Spokesperson is responsible for removing the internal guidance section from the document. The amended version should be saved as "ERC Key Messages on [x] Donors (Issue x)" in PDF.

The same protocol and format as the Global Key Messages e-mail should be used. The e-mail should be sent to the Donor Key Messages mailing list and cc'd to the Chiefs of External Relations and Support Mobilization Branch; Donor Relations in New York and Geneva; OCHA-DRS; the Deputy Chief of CISB; and the spokespersons. The PDF document should be posted to the OCHA.net Key Messages page.

Never post Key Messages on an external website, such as OCHA Online or ReliefWeb.

TRANSLATION

..... ERC Key Messages should be issued in English and, where the capacity exists, translated and distributed locally in the respective country's working language(s). It is the responsibility of the Regional or Country Office to provide translation.

FEEDBACK

..... An audience survey should be conducted annually to obtain feedback on the product's value. When clusters or agencies provide direct input to ERC Key Messages, a thank-you e-mail is appropriate. The Spokesperson should provide constructive feedback to all OCHA staff who contributed to the final product.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER
OCHA PRODUCTS

..... **Field Key Messages** are developed by a Country or Regional Office and provide strategic communications advice on humanitarian issues on behalf of the Humanitarian Coordinator. They are developed in collaboration with the Humanitarian Country Team and are a standard product in every office. They are updated on a regular basis or when the humanitarian situation deteriorates. See the product guidance for Field Key Messages on OCHA.net for more information.

ERC Key Messages Checklist

- 1. Does each message advocate specific change or action, or a key concern?
- 2. Is each bullet point short and concise (approximately five lines)?
- 3. Is the information timely and relevant?
- 4. Are there no more than seven key messages in the document, or is it no more than 1.5 pages long?
- 5. Have you included the relevant contact details?
- 6. Has the ERC approved the messages?
- 7. Has the Editor reviewed the final product for OCHA Style Guide adherence?
- 8. Does the accompanying e-mail follow the standard format included in the guidance?
- 9. Have you used the standard ERC Key Messages template?
- 10. Has the document been posted on the relevant OCHA.net pages?

Version 3
October 2010



**EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATOR
KEY MESSAGES ON (COUNTRY)
(Date) • Issue Number (No.)**

- For internal use only -

I. Key Messages

1.

II. Internal Guidance

If asked only

Q:

A:

The mission of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is to mobilize and coordinate effective and principled humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors.



Field Key Messages

Product Guidance

TITLE Field Key Messages, authorized by the Humanitarian Coordinator

PRODUCT OWNER Humanitarian Coordinator (HC)

FOCAL POINT Regional/Country Public Information Officer (PIO)

PURPOSE Field Key Messages articulate the HC's official position regarding an acute crisis or chronic emergency. The messages enable OCHA to shape communications so that the Humanitarian Country Team speaks with a unified voice.

Field Key Messages are also a valuable information and advocacy tool for OCHA staff and the humanitarian community when communicating with external partners such as the media, donors, regional entities and the affected national Government.

Field Key Messages can also provide substantive input to Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) Key Messages that are distributed to OCHA's humanitarian partners and donors at the global level.

TRIGGER Field Key Messages should be developed as a standard product in all locations where OCHA has a presence and the HC agrees to them.

At the onset of a new crisis or the deterioration of an ongoing emergency, these messages should be updated on the advice of the country or regional PIO in consultation with the HC and the Head of Office (HoO). The HC has the final decision as to whether the situation merits Field Key Messages.

In general, developing or updating Field Key Messages should be considered within the first 48 hours of an emergency in which a situation report is issued, or if there is significant media interest in the emergency.

If there is a humanitarian emergency in an area with no OCHA presence, the regional PIO is responsible for advising the Resident Coordinator (RC) of the need for Field Key Messages and coordinating their development.

FREQUENCY The HoO should decide how often Field Key Messages are updated and when to phase them out. This is done in consultation with the country or regional PIO and the HC.

AUDIENCE The main audiences are the Humanitarian Country Team, OCHA staff working on or in the country or region concerned, clusters, donors, agency spokespersons, United Nations Information Centres and in-country peacekeeping or political spokespersons.

Field Key Messages

Product Guidance

CONTENT

The PIO should develop Field Key Messages in collaboration with other OCHA staff, the Inter-Cluster Coordinator and the Humanitarian Country Team. The Coordination and Response Division (CRD) Desk Officer and the spokespersons at Headquarters may also provide input.

For sudden-onset emergencies, Field Key Messages should highlight the main concerns of the Humanitarian Country Team, and respond to the main questions asked by the media and donors. In chronic emergencies, the content can be supplemented by strategic documents such as a humanitarian appeal or common messages developed in contingency planning, or by the local United Nations Communications Group (UNCG).

Field Key Messages sent to donors should never include the internal guidance section “If Asked”, which is usually presented as Questions and Answers. These are prepared questions and responses to difficult questions that the media might ask. All internal guidance is always in italics and on a separate page to the Field Key Messages.

CLEARANCE

The final draft of the Field Key Messages should be sent to the CRD Desk Officer and the spokespersons at Headquarters for any final feedback. The Reporting Unit Editor can also do a final edit of the document on request. The final product should then be cleared by the HoO and then submitted to the HC for clearance.

DISTRIBUTION

The OCHA office disseminates Field Key Messages via e-mail on behalf of the HC. They should never be posted on a public website, but should be made available on an in-country Intranet and OCHA.net.

The subject line of the e-mail should read: “[Name of crisis] Key Messages, authorized by the Humanitarian Coordinator, (issue x)”. Field Key Messages should be attached as a PDF file to prevent alteration.

In the body of the e-mail, explain the purpose of the product and highlight the main messages so that busy readers can access the information without having to open the attachment.

Dear colleagues,

Please find attached (insert name and issue of Key Messages), authorized on behalf of the Humanitarian Coordinator. These messages provide strategic communications advice on humanitarian issues and are developed in collaboration with the Humanitarian Country Team. They enable the humanitarian community to speak with a unified voice and should be used when communicating to the media.

The main messages are:

Key Message
Key Message
Key Message

Best regards
Head of Office
Country

The distribution list should include the Humanitarian Country Team, cluster coordinators, OCHA staff in-country, PIOs from partner organizations and peacekeeping or political mission spokespersons. Also copy relevant staff in the OCHA Regional Office and neighbouring OCHA Country Offices; the relevant Desk Officer; the Front Office; the Chief and Deputy Chief of the Communications and Information Services Branch (CISB); and the OCHA spokespersons. It is at the HC’s discretion to distribute to donors in-country.

TRANSLATION

Field Key Messages should be distributed in English and in the working language(s) of the country. It is the responsibility of the Country or Regional Office to provide translation.

EXCEPTIONS

For a regional crisis, country inputs are sent to the regional PIO for consolidation. In this case, the OCHA Regional HoO is responsible for clearance. Reference to HCs should be removed in the Key Message template. The regional PIO is responsible for distribution to partners at the regional level and for copying the Desk Officer, the Front Office, the Chief of CISB, the OCHA spokespersons and the relevant OCHA Country Offices. It is the OCHA Country Offices' responsibility to disseminate them locally.

Field Key Messages can also be used for emergencies in RC countries with no HC. In this case, the regional PIO is responsible for drafting Field Key Messages on behalf of the RC and in collaboration with the Disaster Management Team. If a local UNCG is established, the Key Messages should be developed in this forum. A UNCT Key Messages template is available on OCHA.net.

FEEDBACK

An audience survey should be conducted annually to receive feedback on the product's value. To create a survey with SurveyMonkey [www.surveymonkey.com], e-mail ServiceDeskOCHA@un.org for the necessary account information.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER
OCHA PRODUCTS

ERC Key Messages are developed on behalf of the ERC in his/her role as the global advocate. They are issued when the response to a large-scale humanitarian crisis has a political dimension and is attracting significant media interest. Field Key Messages can form the basis of ERC Key Messages when needed. For more information on this product, see the ERC Key Messages product guidance on OCHA.net.

Field Key Messages Checklist

- 1. Does each message advocate specific change or action, or a key concern?
- 2. Is the information timely and relevant?
- 3. Are there no more than seven key messages in the document, or is it no more than 1.5 pages long?
- 4. Does the information represent the position of the Humanitarian Country Team?
- 5. Are relevant contact details listed?
- 6. Have you shared the messages with the relevant HQ sections?
- 7. Has the HC approved the messages?
- 8. Does the accompanying e-mail follow the standard format included in the guidance?
- 9. Have you used the standard template?
- 10. Has the document been posted on OCHA.net?

Version 3
October 2010



NEPAL

(Name of crisis) Key Messages
Authorized by the Humanitarian Coordinator

1 January 2009 • Issue #



OCHA

I. Key Messages

- 1. Key Message**
- 2. Key Message**
- 3. Key Message**

II. Internal Guidance

If asked only

Q:

A:

Q:

A:

Contact Details

Name, title, email and phone number of person responsible for drafting key messages.

- For internal use only -



How to Write Key Messages

The **TITLE** should include the name of the emergency and reflect whether the key messages are on behalf of the Emergency Relief Coordinator or the Humanitarian Coordinator. Specify the date and the issue number in the series.

Example: ERC Key Messages on the Situation in Gaza
12 January 2009, Issue No. 2

Example: Zimbabwe Key Messages
Authorized by the Humanitarian Coordinator
27 January 2009, Issue No. 4

When drafting a **KEY MESSAGE** consider the following: What needs to be done now to save lives and alleviate suffering? What are the potential consequences of delays, inaction or intransigence? What is the scope of the disaster? What are the needs of the people affected? Are there protection or access issues? The key messages should...

- **HIGHLIGHT** urgent needs:

Example: Lives are on the line. The risks posed by disease, displacement and deprivation – and further unnecessary death – increase with each passing day.

Example: The humanitarian situation in Zimbabwe is acute and is worsening. Zimbabwe's political impasse has plunged the country ever deeper into an economic and humanitarian crisis. This is a critical moment to support humanitarian efforts in Zimbabwe.

- **ARTICULATE** how the United Nations and partners can help:

Example: A multilateral humanitarian response is necessary because of the enormous scale of this disaster. The response must be presented in a way that will be found acceptable by national authorities.

- **ADVOCATE** the use of further resources to do so:

Example: Massive logistical support is needed for an effective response, including the use of external assets. While we are investigating possible logistical hubs, we note with regret that the Government has not yet accepted the many offers made by other countries to provide these assets.

- **REITERATE** humanitarian principles:

Example: The humanitarian community continues to call on the parties to facilitate immediate, safe and unimpeded access for humanitarian agencies to the affected areas that remain unreachable.

- **DEFUSE** any controversial issues that are being raised or are likely to be raised by the media or donors:

Example: We remain very concerned about the well-being of the civilian population. All parties are to be reminded of their obligation to respect civilians and to take appropriate steps to ensure their protection, in accordance with International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law, including by taking steps to re-establish law and order.

How to Write Key Messages

Some of the messages may not change from day to day. If they remain the same then reference this clearly with a [FOOTNOTE](#).

Example: The impact of rising food and fuel prices*.
*Please see previous guidance on this issue, as it remains unchanged.

[UPDATED INFORMATION](#) in a key message should be in bold. Reference this with a footnote upon first use of bold type.

Example: In addition to causing large numbers of casualties, the bombing and ground campaign are causing significant trauma to the civilian population, especially the **56 percent of Gaza residents under the age of 18****.
** Updated information highlighted in bold.

Key Messages can include an [INTERNAL GUIDANCE](#) section in the form of “*If asked only*” or “*Issues to watch*”. Internal Guidance should always be in italics.

If asked only

*Q: How is the United Nations preparing for a possible dramatic rise in the number of Ethiopians who need assistance?
A: The new seasonal assessment figures are under discussion. OCHA, the Government and humanitarian partners are exploring the possibility of revising the joint UN-Government Humanitarian requirements document.*

Issues to watch

Cluster Munitions:

Human Rights Watch has alleged (15 August) that Russia used cluster munitions in populated areas, killing at least 11 civilians and injuring many more. This is the first, and so far the only, report of the use of cluster munitions and has not yet been verified by the United Nations or other sources. If true, this would raise questions of compliance with International Humanitarian Law and require the decontamination of land.

Note: For more advice on ERC Key Messages and Field Key Messages, refer to the Standard Operating Procedures and embedded templates.

Country Office and Regional Office Internal Weekly Reports



Product Guidance

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Country Office and Regional Office internal weekly reports is to provide regular updates to Headquarters on the key changes in the humanitarian situation and the work of the office.

AUDIENCE

The primary audience is the Desk Officer and Section Chief. The report may also be read by the USG should he need country-specific information. The secondary audience is all OCHA staff (via OCHAnet).

CONTENT

The weekly reports have five sections: Key Developments in the Humanitarian Situation; OCHA Response Activities; Meetings and Events; Missions; and Actions Required by HQ.

The Head of Office is responsible for the content within the report. The entire submission should be limited to two pages.

PROCESS

The report should be submitted by Tuesday each week to the Desk Officer and Section Chief with a copy to ochareporting@un.org.

The focal point in the Country or Regional Office is responsible for uploading the report to OCHAnet. The Desk Officer is responsible for ensuring that this happens.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PRODUCTS:

The Desk Officer should send any noteworthy information or actions for SMT to the CRD focal point for inclusion in the Weekly Actions for Management, an internal Senior Management Team report.



OCHA

Country Office Internal Weekly Report

Duty Station:
Field Office Reporting Focal Point:
Desk Officer:
Reporting Period:

I. Key Developments in the Humanitarian Situation
II. OCHA Response Activities
III. Meetings and Events
IV. Missions / Annual Leave
IV. Actions Required by HQ

Send this report to the relevant CRD Desk Officer and Section Chief, with a copy to the Special Assistant to the Director and ochareporting@un.org.



OCHA

Regional Office Internal Weekly Report

Duty Station:

RO Reporting Focal Point:

CRD Desk Officer:

Reporting Period:

I. Countries/Situations of Concern	
a. Covered by the RO	b. Covered by an OCHA Field Office
II. Countries/Situations Covered by RO	
III. Meetings and Events	
IV. Missions	
V. RO OIC arrangements	

Send this report to the relevant CRD Desk Officer and Section Chief, with a copy to the Special Assistant to the Director and ochareporting@un.org.



How to Write Talking Points

• PREPARATION

Good preparation is the most important aspect to writing effective talking points. Before you start writing, do some background research:

- Who is the audience?
- What is the meeting's objective?
- What are the key messages you want to convey on this subject?
- What happened at the last meeting on the same issue or the last meeting between the same actors?
- Has the United Nations spoken out on this issue before, what was said, by whom and at what level of authority?
- Find out if there are previous talking points on the same issue that you can build on, or whether there are any Note to Files or summary notes on previous meetings.
- If there is overlap on a particular subject with another section, consult with them prior to crafting the key messages.
- Are there any difficult issues that may be raised during the meeting?
- What background information or documents may be needed?
- What is the deadline? Each speaker will have a preference as to how much time beforehand they need to review the talking points.

• DRAFTING

As you write, put yourself in the speaker's position. Think about what needs to be said and how it should be said for the discussion to achieve its objective(s).

Each speaker has a personal preference about how they like to deliver talking points. Some like their talking points verbatim, whereas others want to know the message they have to convey and do not want the words "put in their mouth". It is important to understand the speaker's preferred style beforehand. If in doubt, use the second approach, i.e. indicate how the person should use the information so they can decide how best to explain something during a meeting. Do this by starting the sentence with a verb.

Example:

- **Inform** him of your plans to travel to Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia.
- **Seek** Mr. Hess's opinion about the likelihood of Sudan funding being tied to the Iraq supplemental that is going through Congress.
- **Ask** whether another overture to Stephen Hadley about a CERF contribution would be helpful. **Seek** Mr. Hess's tactical advice in so doing.
- **Ask** whether the US can help raise funds for CERF by influencing other potential donors, whether they are Member States or private-sector entities.

• INTRODUCTION

At the top of the page, describe the context of the meeting. Provide the name and title of the person who will use the talking points; the name and affiliation of the main interlocutor; and the location, time, duration and date of the encounter.

Example:

Talking Points for the Humanitarian Coordinator Liz Leahy
Meeting with Foreign Minister of Thailand, Aroon Bhuwanath
At the Foreign Ministry of Thailand
3 May 2008 at 3 p.m. (20 minutes)

- **TALKING POINTS**

Talking points should follow a clear, logical argument. Use bullet points. Each bullet point should be no longer than five or six lines.

Limit the talking points to one page. Additional information or particular sensitivities about how something should be expressed can be placed in a background note. (See example)

Facts and analysis or commentary on specific points should be enclosed in parentheses and italicised following the relevant point. For example:

Express concern about Thailand's decision to close all humanitarian assistance programmes at the end of 2008. The Government's decision could have a dramatic impact on the nutritional and health status of millions. (WFP current programme is aimed at 6.5 million persons; international organizations are providing 70 percent of medicine and 100 percent of vaccine requirements.)

Point to the importance of a mission of the USG in continuing the dialogue. (You may wish to refer to the possibility of an inter-agency mission.)

- **NOTE**

Both the Secretary-General and the Emergency Relief Coordinator have their own guidance and templates for talking points, which must be used when drafting their talking points. These templates and guidance can be found on OCHA.net.

- **BACKGROUND NOTE**

A background note is a separate page (or pages) behind the talking points. The length of a background note varies depending on the speaker's knowledge of the subject. The issues should be divided into separate paragraphs with sub-headings as necessary. The first paragraph should set out the objective or objectives of the meeting from the speaker's point of view. Sometimes it is useful to also attach one or two key documents, such as a funding table or policy paper.

Example:

**Background for HC meeting with
Name/Organization
Date**

Objectives of the meetings:

- 1) Touch base with USAID
- 2) Seek better US support and CERF advocacy

Sudan funding

There is a rumour circulating that the Administration intentionally did not include humanitarian assistance to Darfur (and perhaps Northern Uganda) with the expectation that Congress add it to a massive supplemental funding bill for Iraq. Democrats are not going to act on the Iraq supplemental until 2008, and likely not until mid to late in the year because of Iraq politics. This game of political chicken could result in a funding shortage for Darfur from one of its largest donors.

CERF and the US

The US has made only one small contribution to the CERF. In addition to the US legislative rules that make it next to impossible to send funds to pooled accounts, Mike Magan, an NSC staffer has been blocking a US CERF allocation for years. USAID, who strongly support the CERF, feel that going directly to Hadley is the only way to move forward.

US Government influence and CERF funding

The US Government should be encouraged to advocate the CERF with Gulf States in particular. The Government may be helpful in advising on strategies for approaching the US public, who give millions to aid NGOs every year.

**STATEMENT ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE SPOKESMAN
FOR THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

The Secretary-General remains profoundly concerned over the heavy toll the continuing fighting in Liberia is taking on civilians and the threat it poses to the stability of other countries in the region, particularly Sierra Leone. Since fighting intensified last month, some 17,000 Liberians and 8,000 Sierra Leonean refugees have fled into Sierra Leone. The exact number and conditions of tens of thousands of civilians displaced within Liberia remain unknown because humanitarian agencies do not have access to conflict zones where vulnerable populations are living in extremely precarious conditions. The movement and effectiveness of humanitarian agencies are further disrupted by the harassment of humanitarian workers and looting of humanitarian organizations' assets and supplies.

The Secretary-General urges the dissident forces and the Government of Liberia to allow humanitarian workers safe and unhindered access to affected populations. He calls upon the Governments of neighbouring states to cooperate in this endeavour. Further, the Secretary-General reiterates his call upon the international community to provide humanitarian agencies with the resources necessary to respond to the vital needs of the rising number of Liberians who have been displaced both within and outside their country's borders.

New York
1 July 2003

**STATEMENT ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE SPOKESMAN
FOR THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

The Secretary-General has learned with distress that an earthquake measuring 6.3 on the Richter Scale hit various provinces in the western part of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Secretary-General is deeply saddened by the important loss of lives and the extensive damage that resulted from the disaster. He wishes to convey his condolences and deepest sympathy to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and to the victims of the disaster.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has been in contact with the Iranian authorities through the United Nations Resident Representative's office in Tehran, and offered assistance to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, including the deployment of a United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination team to work with the United Nations country team in Iran and the national emergency management authorities in coordinating international response to the emergency.

New York
26 December 2003

F. UN Communications Group: SOP for crisis communications

Communicating together in times of crisis: Standard Operating Procedures for the UN system¹

Objective: To standardize UN communications guidelines and provide an organizational structure for operating in times of crisis.

Background: Crises, whether a result of a natural disasters inter/ intra-state conflicts or an act of terrorism, can happen anywhere at any time. They **can** hit places and people when least expected. In recent years, Asia has been hit by tsunami, tropical storms and earthquakes, each leaving behind thousands dead or wounded and hundreds of thousands affected. Bomb attacks against UN premises in Baghdad and Algiers left dozens killed and wounded. Sudden outbreak of violence in Lebanon and Kenya created humanitarian crises, affecting large sections of population of these countries and beyond.

Crises should not be confused with longer-term or continuing emergencies. For the purposes of this SOP, they are situations where the focus of global public attention is on a particular event over a specific period, and the expectations of United Nations action that this focus builds.

To preserve this definition, in terms of both the content and duration of the crisis, a review should be conducted within the first two weeks, and at fortnightly intervals thereafter, to determine whether the situation continues to be a “crisis”, whether it has been resolved or whether it should then be regarded as a longer-term, continuing emergency.

For the United Nations, effective communications and public information, especially in times of crisis, is both a practical tool and an operational necessity. Public perception about the Organization’s response is key to its credibility and public image. Effective public information is also crucial to achieving greater internal coordination and collective action.

Various UN entities, including DPKO, OCHA, UNDP and WMO, have developed guidelines or SOPs for emergency response, but no attempt has been made to systematize the UN system’s public information and communications response or to set up a common mechanism during sudden onset crises. The objective of this SOP is to standardize UN communications guidelines and to provide an organizational structure for operating in times of crisis.

The United Nations system, through the network of UN system organizations, UN information centres and information focal points of the Office of the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinators and UN system organizations, already maintains a significant communication presence in over 160 countries, covering most regions of the world. With the establishment of the UN Communications Group (UNCG) as the UN system’s common communications platform, a practical tool has been developed for bringing the UN system’s communications resources and skills under a common umbrella². UNCGs already operate in more than 80 countries with varying degrees of success and operational unity. With organizational support from Headquarters and UN offices operating on the ground, the UNCG could be made a more effective tool in leading UN communications efforts in times of crisis.

A. Policy declaration:

The United Nations is committed to being open and transparent in its dealings with the media. It is in the interest of the Organization to work with the media quickly and honestly, and to develop a coherent communications strategy based on those same principles. The Organization should not only react to events but, where appropriate, project its point of view on related international developments. Under no circumstances, should UN officials responsible

¹ Adopted by UNCG principals at the semi-annual meeting, New York, 28 January 2009

² For background information on UNCG, please see reports of the Secretary-General (A/AC.198/2006/2)

for communications and public information mislead or conceal. At the same time, given the special nature of the Organization and its operational objectives, they must protect the diplomatic process and organizational confidentiality, where applicable.

B. Guiding principles:

1. UN system partners must work together and speak together. This does not mean that the UN must have only one person speaking, but it does mean that the overall messaging be complementary as agencies speak according to their own mandates. Since much of the outside world perceives the UN system organizations as one entity, it is even more important that the communication branches of member organizations speak without contradicting each other.
2. Each organization relevant to a crisis must identify its own information focal points, who can serve as spokespeople when called upon, and take the lead in areas of their expertise. The local coordination of communication messages does not, however, preclude individual agencies sending communication material (data, stories, photos, footage etc) to their headquarters separately for information and fundraising purposes. All statement issued on the crises by the HQs and Regional Offices of the agencies will reflect the messages agreed on and issued by the local UNCG.
3. When complaints or criticisms are made, UN communicators must communicate an openness to investigate errors and to report back on findings.

C. Five simple steps to set up and run a crisis management mechanism

Before crisis:

1. Set up a local UN Communications Group (UNCG-Country³)

- i. The UN Country Team (UNCT) which is chaired by the Resident Coordinator, with support from the local UNICs/UNISs wherever they exist, will oversee the establishment and work of the local UN Communications Group.
- ii. The purpose of the UNCG at the country level is to strengthen inter-agency cooperation in the field of communications, ensure consistency of messaging and increase the media profile of United Nations activities at the national and/or regional level as desired. It provides leadership in communications for the UN Country Team, communicates information on the situation and highlights overarching concerns, identifies new and creative ways to show how UN programmes are delivering results and promotes a coherent image of the United Nations.
- iii. UNCG at the country level will include communications focal points of all United Nations entities operating in the country and, if agreed to by its members, will be chaired by the Director/Officer-in-Charge of the UN Information Centre (UNIC), if one exists, or, with agreement from participating UN entities, the most senior Information Officer of any UN agency represented in that country.
- iv. A convener or “moderator” of the group should be identified, which could be either the UNIC/UNIS Director, or another appropriate communications officer from the UN Country Team.
- v. Recognizing that communications specialists are present in only a few UN agencies, communications focal points will be appointed by UN agencies as they may find appropriate, who will serve as their respective spokespersons. An alternate will also be appointed whenever possible.
- vi. The country level UNCG will report to the UNCT, chaired by the Resident Coordinator.
- vii. UNICs/UNISs will provide secretariat to the group. In places where no UNIC exists, the UNCG will jointly agree on the assignment of Secretariat responsibilities. The UNCT will act as provider of a focal point of last resort if necessary.
- viii. All UNCGs are expected to report to the global UNCG secretariat (the Department of Public Information) at least once a year on the activities undertaken.

³ For example, UNCG-Pakistan, or UNCG-Egypt.

During crisis:

2. Automatically activate the UNCG at the country level as soon as a crisis situation emerges

- i. UNCG secretariat, in consultation with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and key stakeholders on the ground, will activate the SOP by informing the principal UN coordinator on the ground (e.g. SRSG, Head of peacekeeping mission, RC/HC etc.) and the chairperson of the local UNCG. Relevant UN field offices and all UNCG members will be informed immediately on activation.
- ii. The UNCG chairperson, in his/her capacity as moderator of the group, will contact key UN agencies relevant to the crisis and convene a coordination meeting without delay. All UN system public information messages will be channeled through this Group for the consumption of the local and international media on-site, for UN agencies at HQ or regional levels, and for the Spokesperson's Office at UN Headquarters. In addition, based on the common agreed position, individual agencies will have the flexibility to share additional information and materials with their respective Regional Offices and HQ for use at those levels.
- iii. If no UNCG exists, the Resident Coordinator will ensure that such a group is immediately convened and will designate a focal point/spokesperson.
- iv. The Resident Coordinator will ensure that the UNCG chairperson is invited to attend all relevant senior management meetings, including interagency meetings.

3. Set up a media centre to serve as the hub for all media-related activities for the UN system.

- i. This centre could be located at UNIC/UNIS, or any other appropriate location easily accessible to the media.
- ii. It should be equipped with the appropriate communications technology, and include, wherever possible, teleconference/video conference equipment.
- iii. The media centre should offer its good services to act as a clearing house for media inquiries.
- iv. The Secretariat/convenor will prepare a media contact list, identifying UN system information focal points for the media.
- v. A mailing list will be prepared that will include all major local, national and international media outlets currently on location.

4. Organize regular briefings for the media.

- i. Briefings will be chaired by the convenor and attended by spokespersons/focal points from agencies/ UN offices relevant to the crisis.
- ii. The briefings will take place each day at the same appointed time, at a UN office or a "neutral" public place easily accessible to the media.
- iii. Depending on the gravity of the situation or evolving communications needs, the frequency of the briefing will be determined: once daily or three times a week.
- iv. All common UN statements should be cleared in advance with the appropriate authorities, with overall authority retained by the UNCT locally and with the ERC globally. Additional information materials and statements related to specific agency mandates will be cleared by their respective agencies and to avoid contradictory statements, will use the common UN statement as the reference point.
- v. The UNCG coordinator should hold a short meeting prior to the press briefing with UN system communications focal points and review their respective statements. The objective is to ensure "commonality of purpose" and to avoid duplication and contradiction. They will also discuss possible queries from the media and agree on their responses.
- vi. All press statements will be in writing, so that they can be made available to the media, UNHQ and agencies upon request.
- vii. Whenever possible, the Q & A portion of the briefing should be transcribed.
- viii. The latest briefing notes should be posted on a regular basis on relevant websites including the UN News Centre and Relief Web.
- ix. Members of the UNCT and other heads of UN agencies, experts and special guests from Headquarters

- will be invited to attend the briefing as often as possible or deemed necessary.
- x. WMO's communications focal points within National Meteorological and Hydrological services, NGO partners, including IFRC and IOM, may be invited to attend the briefing. Only UN agencies and non-UN entities heading clusters (e.g. IFRC, IOM, Save the Children) will address the briefings.
 - xi. An appropriate banner/backdrop will be created that clearly identifies the sponsor of the briefing (United Nations Communications Group) and its location.
 - xii. At the end of each briefing, the press will be informed about the next briefing, including about the possible participation of any high-level guest speaker.
 - xiii. The media team will closely monitor media reports. All inaccuracies and factual errors must always be rebutted, either at the regular briefing or through rejoinders.
 - xiv. UN spokespeople must avoid opinions, speculation and alarmist or emotional language in all communications materials.
 - xv. On security-related information, advice should be sought from the Designated Security Official (DSO) in the country.
 - xvi. All media focal points should hold de-briefing sessions. Each day, or as often as necessary, they will sit together to discuss the briefing session, fine tune their strategy and agree on next steps.

5. Keep UN Headquarters fully informed

- i. The UNCG chairperson/coordinator will stay in close contact with the Secretary-General's Spokesperson for information and guidance, while agencies will keep their respective HQs informed. He/she will send the Spokesperson's Office daily updates – more than once if necessary – including draft statements to be issued at Headquarters on the situation on the ground.

6. Future review

The UNCG secretariat, in association with the relevant UNCG at the country level and/or UN field offices leading coordination, will prepare a "lessons learned" at the end of each crisis, which will be shared with all UNCG members, and, if necessary, revise the SOP accordingly.

For further information, please contact UNCG secretariat: uncg@un.org.

G. Clusters and advocacy

Cluster Approach: Strengthened Advocacy and Public Information

Guidance for the cluster leadership approach (November 2006)

1. At the global level, cluster leads are responsible for ensuring: (c) links with other clusters, including preparedness measures and long-term planning, standards, best practice, **advocacy**, and resource mobilization; (d) taking action to ensure that required capacities and mechanisms exist, including **rosters for surge capacity**; and (e) **training and system development** at the local, national, regional, and international levels.
2. **At the country level, the cluster leadership approach should help to strengthen coordination by clarifying the division of labour among organizations and lines of accountability to the Humanitarian Coordinator.**
3. **“Cluster leads have mutual obligations to interact with each other and to address cross-cutting issues.”**
4. **At the country level, the Humanitarian Coordinator – with OCHA support – is responsible for ensuring the effectiveness of the humanitarian response, including**
 - **Support to Cluster Leads in advocacy and resource-mobilisation efforts that ensure a balanced, comprehensive and well-prioritised humanitarian response**
5. Implementation of the cluster approach along with the other elements of the humanitarian reform process will require more sophisticated coordination among a wider range of partners. The demands for **common systems and services, such as information management tools, advocacy and resource mobilisation will be greater**. At the country level, OCHA will need to continue to act as the secretariat body in support of the Humanitarian Coordinator, with a continued focus on four main areas: coordination; information management; advocacy and resource mobilisation; and policy development.
6. **Cluster leads at the country level** – in addition to their normal institutional responsibilities – are accountable to the Humanitarian Coordinator for ensuring the following:
 - Represent the interests of the cluster in discussions with the Humanitarian Coordinator on prioritization, resource mobilization and advocacy;

Advocacy and resource mobilization

- Identify core advocacy concerns, including resource requirements, and contribute key messages to broader advocacy initiatives of the Humanitarian Coordinator and other actors;
- Advocate for donors to fund cluster participants to carry out priority activities in the sector concerned, while at the same time encouraging cluster participants to mobilize resources for their activities through their usual channels.

AP, ROAP
Apr 2007

H. Guidance for missions of the USG/ERC and ASG/DERC

Guidelines for public information officers responsible for the media component of USG/ASG missions

Pre-mission:

- Updated ERC Key Messages and a Q&A that includes the widest possible range of potential lines of questions, especially potentially difficult or controversial ones, including political.
- 3 top line messages/day appropriate for her location and activities for her review, to be refined as needed on mission.
- One draft press release per day, to be refined/revised on the day of the dateline.
- 1 draft statement (readable) for the closing press conference, to be revised with local color during the mission.
- Indicative schedule of media engagements (one-on-one interviews, press conferences, camp walkthroughs with media presence, etc)
- Presentation of media plan and objectives therein to be discussed with the USG immediately on arrival in-country.

During mission:

- Media cuttings prepared every morning (*before* the USG's/ASG's breakfast) highlighting coverage of the previous day's message and any issues in-country and elsewhere which may be raised in interviews.
- Top line daily messages revised as required one day before they are used.
- Close presence of PI Officer to USG/ASG at any point when media is present and immediately in advance of any media engagements.

Press releases:

- To be prepared in advance of the mission (unless otherwise agreed) and shared with the NY Spokesperson's office for comments, then amended with the Special Assistant or staff member accompanying her on the day of the mission and presented to the USG/ASG for review at an appropriate point, sufficiently early in the day for a timely release.
- Should be clean, no longer than one page, and reflect the main message the USG/ASG has been delivering (not necessarily the same messages prepared for the ERC Key Messages).

For press conferences:

- Careful preparation of the room, podium, lighting, translation support and sound system.
- A 5 minute (2.5 pages double spaced text) statement for the USG/ASG to read based on the mission message, to be presented to and reviewed in the first instance with the USG's accompanying Special Assistant/Chief of Staff, then the USG/ASG directly, **at least** the day before the engagement, at a reasonable time of day.
- One hour before the press conference to be blocked out for the USG/ASG to spend time reviewing the press conference statement and Q&A with the PIO, HoO and RC/HC.
- Brief the USG/ASG on the engagement, the expected attendance and the likely tone and themes of the questioning.
- Ensure the OCHA HoO/RC/HC/DSRSG as appropriate is on the podium with the USG/ASG if required.
- Updated Q&A focused on any new/contentious issues which might arise in the press conference (related to the mission or globally, including relevant comments of the SG/OSSG) and local or global political issues that may arise.

For interviews:

- Arrange a suitable location (appropriate visual backdrop for cameras/quiet room for radio or print/always out of the sun or other climatic extremes whenever possible).
- Brief the USG/ASG on the profile of the journalist and their publication or outlet and, if not immediately obvious, the significance of their outlet, the agreed line of questioning, length of the interview, and any other pertinent details.
- Ensure the journalist arrives in the right place at the right time and is fully set up in advance, and keeps to the allocated time for the interview.
- Provide water for the USG/ASG if possible.

Coverage of the mission by in-house media:

- If possible, the USG/ASG should be accompanied by an OCHA-hired camera person and photographer to provide in-house channels with content. This person should be pre-vetted and pre-briefed about the need to provide unobtrusive but comprehensive coverage of the USG/ASG.
- The in-house reporter will need to film a "video message" with the USG/ASG. The PIO should advise the USG/ASG on finding a suitable backdrop for this message to be filmed. The USG/ASG will deliver the message off-the-cuff, unless otherwise indicated.

New York, 11 February 2011

I. Glossary of humanitarian terms

See also the OCHA glossary available at <http://ochaonline.un.org/GetBin.asp?DocID=1328>

access The ability to reach a civilian population in need. Access is essential when it comes to administering, monitoring and evaluating relief programmes. For example, if an agency is unable to monitor how goods are distributed and how civilians benefit from them, it is difficult to maintain credibility with donors. Access also becomes an issue in cases where Governments or other actors prevent or hinder humanitarian services to civilians.

advocacy Using information strategically to influence the policies or practices of key actors with the aim of assisting and protecting those in need. Advocacy entails speaking up (privately or publicly), drawing attention to an important issue, and directing decision makers towards a solution.

assessment Reconnaissance mission related to some aspect of a humanitarian crisis or disaster. Its purpose is to determine the situation on the ground, estimate needs and/or evaluate the adequacy of a response. Assessments result in recommendations and may lead to humanitarian assistance being started, ended or changed.

capacity building Efforts aimed at developing human skills or societal infrastructures within a community or organization.

cluster approach Aims to strengthen overall humanitarian response capacity and effectiveness, in support of national authorities' efforts, in five key ways: to ensure sufficient global capacity in all main sectors/areas of response; to ensure predictable leadership in all main sectors/areas of response; to promote the concept of partnerships (i.e. clusters) between UN agencies, international organizations, NGOs and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement; to strengthen accountability; and to improve strategic field-level coordination and prioritization by placing responsibility for leadership and coordination of these issues with the competent operational agency.

civil-military coordination Essential dialogue and interaction between civilian and military actors in humanitarian emergencies that is necessary to protect and promote humanitarian principles, avoid competition, minimize inconsistency, and, when appropriate, pursue common goals. Basic strategies range from coexistence to cooperation. Coordination is a shared responsibility facilitated by liaisons and common training.

civil society Refers to structures independent from governments, such as non-governmental organizations and human rights groups, independent activists and human rights defenders, religious congregations, charities, universities, trade unions, legal associations, families and clans. Domestic civil society represents one of the most critical sources of humanitarian assistance and civilian protection during humanitarian emergencies.

complex emergency A multifaceted humanitarian crisis in a country, region or society where there is total or considerable breakdown of authority resulting from internal or external conflict and which requires a multi-sectoral international response that goes beyond the mandate or capacity of any single body and/or ongoing UN country programme. Such emergencies have, in particular, a devastating effect on children and women, and call for a complex range of responses.

Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) Field-based coordination mechanism used by governments, donors, and members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. It has contributed significantly to developing a more coherent and strategic approach to humanitarian action. The process provides a framework for aid agencies to analyze the context, consider scenarios, assess needs, agree on priorities, set goals, and draw up a Common Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP) to address them.

contingency planning Management tool used to ensure that adequate arrangements are made in anticipation of a crisis. That is achieved primarily through engagement in a planning process leading to a plan of action, together with follow-up actions.

direct assistance Face-to-face distribution of goods and services.

disaster A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society causing widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses which exceed the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources.

displaced person Someone rendered homeless as a result of war or disaster. An individual fleeing such conditions who crosses a border is considered a refugee. Anyone who takes flight but never leaves his/her country is an internally displaced person (IDP).

early warning The provision of timely and effective information, through identified institutions, that allows individuals exposed to a hazard to take action to avoid or reduce their risk and prepare for effective response.

Financial Tracking System (FTS) Web-based searchable database of humanitarian requirements and contributions. It serves to analyze aid and monitor accountability among humanitarian actors, by clearly indicating to what extent a certain population receives humanitarian aid, and in what proportion to needs. FTS offers a series of standard tables that show humanitarian aid flows in various formats, and also allows users to produce custom financial tables on demand.

flash appeal Urgent inter-agency requests for funding that are issued when a crisis suddenly emerges and that are meant to meet immediate and medium-term needs. Examples of events triggering flash appeals include natural disasters like the earthquake in Bam, Iran, and sharply deteriorating humanitarian situations, such as Haiti in 2004 and Liberia in 2003.

food security The notion that all people, especially the most vulnerable, have dignified and unthreatened access to the quality and quantity of culturally appropriate food that will fully support their physical, emotional and spiritual health.

framework agreement Negotiated agenda for "Agreement in Principle" negotiations. It should identify the subjects and objectives of the negotiations, as well as establish a timetable and procedural arrangements. In the humanitarian context, a framework agreement often forms an important component of peace negotiations.

humanitarian assistance Aid that seeks to save lives and alleviate suffering of a crisis-affected population. It must be provided in accordance with the basic humanitarian principles and can be classified into three categories: direct assistance, indirect assistance and infrastructure support. Those three categories respectively connote diminishing degrees of contact with the affected population. The UN seeks to provide humanitarian assistance with full respect to the sovereignty of States.

humanitarian principles Humanity, neutrality, impartiality and operational independence – humanitarian principles provide the foundations for humanitarian action, and are central to establishing and maintaining access to affected populations. These principles are formally enshrined in General Assembly Resolutions 46/182 and 58/114.

humanitarian space An environment in which humanitarian agencies can work effectively and assist those who need their support, and which is governed by humanitarian principles. Three things are needed to maintain a humanitarian space. First, combatants must respect humanitarian principles. Second, humanitarians and peacekeepers must understand their respective roles. Third, all actors must accept their responsibilities within an overall framework.

humanitarian workers Includes all workers engaged by humanitarian agencies, whether internationally or nationally recruited, or formally or informally retained from the beneficiary community, to conduct the activities of that agency.

humanity Humanitarian principles that states human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found, with particular attention to the most vulnerable, such as children, women and the elderly. The dignity and rights of all victims must be respected and protected.

impartiality Humanitarian principle that states humanitarian assistance must be provided without discriminating as to ethnic origin, gender, nationality, political opinions, race or religion. Also, relief for the suffering must be guided solely by needs, and priority must be given to the most urgent cases of distress.

independence Humanitarian principle that makes it possible to guarantee humanitarian action is free of political, economic, denominational, military, and ideological influences or bias.

indirect assistance At least one step removed from the population. It involves such activities as transporting relief goods or personnel.

infrastructure support Involves providing general services, such as road repair, airspace management and power generation, which facilitate relief but are not necessarily visible to or solely for the benefit of the affected population.

integrated mission A UN mission characterized by collaboration across divisions, departments and agencies. It aims to achieve better planning and greater communication among those responsible for such areas as political analysis, military operations, civilian police, electoral assistance, human rights, development, humanitarian assistance, refugees and displaced persons, public information, logistics, finance and personnel recruitment.

internally displaced person (IDP) Refers to person or group of persons who have been forced or obliged to leave their homes or habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border. A series of 30 non-binding 'Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement' based on refugee law, human rights law and international humanitarian law articulate standards for protection, assistance and solutions for IDPs.

international humanitarian law (IHL) Also called the law of war or armed conflict law, this body of rules seeks, for humanitarian reasons, to limit the effects of armed conflict. It forms a part of international law, protects persons who are not or are no longer participating in hostilities, and restricts the means and methods of warfare by prohibiting weapons that make no distinction between combatants and civilians, or weapons and methods of warfare which cause unnecessary injury, suffering and/or damage. The rules are to be observed not only by Governments and their armed forces, but also by armed opposition groups and any other parties to a conflict. The four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their two Additional Protocols of 1977 are its principal instruments. It does not regulate resort to the use of force; that is governed by an important, but distinct, part of international law set out in the UN Charter.

logistics Support-related activities concerning the procurement, maintenance, and transportation of equipment, supplies, facilities, and personnel.

mandate Legal framework that defines the responsibilities of UN agencies, peacekeeping operations and other international organizations.

military actors Official military forces, of a State or regional/inter-governmental organisation, that are subject to a hierarchical chain of command, be they armed or unarmed. This may include local or national military, multi-national forces, UN peacekeeping troops, international military observers, foreign occupying forces, regional troops or other officially organized troops.

natural disaster A sudden major upheaval of nature, causing extensive destruction, death and suffering among the stricken community, and which is not due to human action. Some natural disasters can be of slow origin, e.g. drought. Other seemingly natural disasters can be caused or aggravated by human action, e.g. desertification through excessive land use and deforestation.

neutrality Humanitarian principles that states humanitarian assistance must be provided without engaging in hostilities or taking sides in controversies of a political, religious or ideological nature.

non-food items Basic supplies other than food or water. These include but are not limited to blankets, clothing, containers, utensils, cooking equipment, soap, detergent and plastic sheeting.

non-governmental organization (NGO) A group of private citizens not subordinate to any State agency. Humanitarian NGOs may be professional associations, foundations, multinational businesses, or simply groups with a common interest in humanitarian assistance activities. They may be national or international in reach. They may have consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council or with one of the three NGO consortia in the IASC (Interaction, SCHR, ICVA).

peacekeeping Method to help countries torn by conflict create conditions for sustainable peace. UN peacekeepers – soldiers and military officers, civilian police officers and civilian personnel from many countries – monitor and observe peace processes that emerge in post-conflict situations and assist ex-combatants to implement the peace agreements they have signed. Such assistance includes confidence-building measures, power-sharing arrangements, electoral support, strengthening rule of law, and economic and social development.

protection Encompasses all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and spirit of human rights, refugee and international humanitarian law. It involves creating an environment conducive to respect for human beings, preventing and/or alleviating the immediate effects of a specific pattern of abuse, and restoring dignified conditions of life through reparation, restitution and rehabilitation.

Where protection is not available from national authorities or controlling non-State actors, vulnerable populations have a right to receive international protection and assistance from an impartial humanitarian relief operation. Such action is subject to the consent of the State or parties concerned and does not prescribe coercive measures in the event of refusal, however unwarranted.

refugee A person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, or for reasons owing to aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country or origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge outside his country of origin or nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of his country of origin or nationality

sector Area of concern to be addressed by humanitarian work. Examples of sectors are: food and agriculture; education and protection; economic recovery and infrastructure; health and nutrition; water and sanitation; and shelter and non-food items.

sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) Violence resulting in, or likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm to an individual because of his/her gender. It includes rape, threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. Although anyone can be a victim of SGBV, women and girls are the primary victims.

surge capacity Ability to rapidly deploy staff and mobilize material in response to sudden emergencies.

transition Characterized by the absence of large-scale armed conflict, often secured by international peace-keeping forces, but still too volatile to speak of sustainable peace. The transition from conflict to post-conflict is perhaps the most crucial phase in any kind of assistance program.

vulnerability Describes people who are at greatest risk from situations that threaten their survival or their capacity to live with an acceptable level of social and economic security and human dignity. Often, these are refugees, displaced persons or victims of natural disasters, health emergencies, or poverty brought about by socio-economic crises.

J. Online resources

OCHA Internal

OCHANet

<http://ochanet.unocha.org>

OCHA Advocacy and Public Information

<http://ochanet.unocha.org/CA/Advocacy/>

OCHA Reporting Resources

<http://ochanet.unocha.org/AS/Reporting/>

ERC and Field Key Messages

<http://ochanet.unocha.org/CA/Advocacy/Pages/KeyMessages.aspx>

Internal Weekly Reports

http://ochanet.unocha.org/OS/HQ_Branches_Offices/CRD/Pages/IWReports.aspx

OCHA Information Management

http://ochanet.unocha.org/CA/Information_Management/

Public Sites

OCHA Online

<http://unocha.org>

OCHA on Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/UNOCHA/>

OCHA Films on YouTube

<http://www.youtube.com/user/ochafilms/>

Humanitarian News and Information

IRIN News

<http://www.irinnews.org>

ReliefWeb

<http://www.reliefweb.int>

RedHum (in Spanish)

<http://www.redhum.org>

UN News Centre

<http://www.un.org/news/>

Humanitarian Funding

Consolidated Appeals Process
<http://humanitarianappeal.net>

Central Emergency Response Fund
<http://cerf.un.org>

Financial Tracking System
<http://fts.unocha.org>

Humanitarian Bodies

IASC
<http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/>

InterAction
<http://www.interaction.org>

International Council of Voluntary Agencies
www.icva.ch

Disaster Reduction

International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
<http://www.unisdr.org>

PreventionWeb
<http://www.preventionweb.net/english/>

Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities

Info As Aid
<http://infoasaid.org>

Other UN sites

UN Editorial Manual Online
<http://69.94.137.26/editorialcontrol/index.htm>

UN Multilingual Terminology Database
<http://unterm.un.org/>

UN Cartographic Section
<http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/english/htmain.htm>

UN Peacekeeping
<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/>

UN Data
<http://data.un.org>

Unifeed
<http://www.unmultimedia.org/tv/unifeed/>

