



## What is transition?

For its own operational purposes, OCHA defines “transition” as the phase of a humanitarian crisis (conflict or natural disaster) in which acute vulnerability begins to decline, leading to a reduction in international life-saving assistance and an increase in early recovery, recovery and rehabilitation activities.<sup>1</sup>

Transition relates to a situation that is improving. That improvement may be triggered by a reduction in risk factors, such as armed conflict, or an increase in coping capacities, such as the ability of government and development actors to care for acutely vulnerable populations. As a situation improves, international life-saving assistance should diminish. The implementation and coordination of early recovery, recovery, rehabilitation and development assistance should then take centre stage under the leadership of national authorities or development actors.

While early recovery is guided by development principles, it begins in a humanitarian setting. It seeks to build on humanitarian programmes and catalyse sustainable development opportunities. Early recovery activities gain traction during transition. These activities include re-establishing essential basic services, restoring primary infrastructure and providing income-generation opportunities. In this phase, humanitarian actors support early recovery activities and identify populations who are able to take advantage of programmes that support self-sufficiency.

When focusing on transition, the aim of the United Nations and its partners is to help national authorities initiate immediate, high-priority crisis resolution, early recovery and recovery activities; and then move from a short- or medium-term post-crisis recovery strategy to a longer-term national development framework. Several mechanisms, assessments and planning tools can support this process. For example, the Post-Conflict Needs Assessment and related Transitional Results Framework, Post-Disaster Needs Assessment, United Nations Development Framework for Assistance and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.

*“The key to an effective transition from relief to early recovery and development is for the United Nations system to enable systematic and predictable planning and coordination support, with clear roles and responsibilities, and the appropriate guidance and resources allocated to support these roles. Efforts to ensure lasting recovery should take place during a crisis as well as when it [the crisis] is winding down.”*

- Catherine Bragg,  
Assistant Secretary-General  
for Humanitarian Affairs,  
Deputy Emergency Relief  
Coordinator, Economic and Social  
Council Humanitarian Segment,  
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## What is OCHA’s role in transition?

In transition contexts, OCHA should fulfill six objectives:

- Continue to reduce remaining acute vulnerability through well-coordinated assistance efforts
- Assist development actors to launch and/or scale up recovery assistance
- Work with national authorities and development actors in the affected country to integrate humanitarian needs into social services networks and development frameworks
- Assist members of the in-country coordination system to prepare for resurgent or new crises

<sup>1</sup> This does not mean that the crisis is resolved, or that humanitarian assistance is no longer required. Nor does it mean that vulnerability is declining at the same pace across affected areas and groups.

- Handover/transfer appropriate services and coordination activities to national authorities and development actors, and phase out services no longer required
- Encourage strategic and operational coherence between humanitarian, recovery, reconstruction and development assistance.

OCHA should also promote mechanisms to ensure adequate, timely and flexible funding for transition activities in critical recovery programming areas.

When an OCHA Country Office is identified as being in a transition country, that office will initiate an internal planning process aimed at developing a detailed and practical phase-down and exit plan. The exit plan should provide an overview of the country strategy, a timeline for phasing out any sub-offices, and detail on the phasing-down, adaptation, handover or termination of any OCHA services and activities. OCHA's phase down and exit plan should be coordinated with cluster activities. These activities may remain active in transition situations to address residual or potentially new humanitarian needs, or be reoriented to support longer-term recovery activities.

## What does OCHA say?

- OCHA is committed to supporting in-country humanitarian coordination systems for crises in all phases of a conflict and until the scale of international assistance required no longer necessitates OCHA's coordination services.
- A sustainable development process is reliant on adequate recovery assistance and effective management of the transition, whether from conflict or natural disaster.
- Groundwork for a successful transition starts well before the transition phase begins. The humanitarian response should be undertaken in a way that supports recovery activities.
- Transition planning should support national objectives and complement longer-term planning of United Nations and development actors.

## To find out more

- Policy Instruction: OCHA's Role in Transition
- Cluster Working Group on Early Recovery in cooperation with UNDG-ECHA Working Group on Transition - Guidance Note on Early Recovery
- General Assembly A/C.2/62/L.63 Triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system
- Policy Instruction: OCHA Field Presences: Exit/Entry Strategy and Review
- Policy Instruction: The Roles and Responsibilities of Country Offices
- Guidance on UNDAF and PCNA is available on [www.undg.org](http://www.undg.org)

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Following the signing of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement in Côte d'Ivoire in March 2007, security across the country improved and internally displaced persons started returning to their areas of origin. This signalled the need to shift from providing humanitarian assistance to initiating recovery and development activities. OCHA started to plan its transition and exit.

The Country Office reviewed and re-oriented its core functions as follows:

- Humanitarian coordination structures were adjusted to meet the needs of longer-term recovery coordination.
- OCHA worked hand-in-hand with the Resident Coordinator Office (RCO) and the United Nations Development Operations Coordination Office to support the adaptation of coordination structures through joint offices. OCHA also worked with UNDP to support the development of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and United Nations Development Assistance Framework.
- The Information Management Unit developed a longer-term strategy and handed over its functions to the RCO.
- OCHA worked with the RCO to support the local transition fund to cover remaining humanitarian needs.
- OCHA handed over protection and internal-displacement initiatives, including its databases, to UNHCR.

A plan was implemented outlining the office closure. There was a gradual reduction in staff as OCHA's core functions were handed over to development and national actors. A Humanitarian Advisory Unit was created and then integrated into the RCO to support residual humanitarian needs, preparedness and early warning.