

OCHA



FIELD COORDINATION SUPPORT SECTION  
(FCSS)

**United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) Team**

**INFORMATION NOTE**

**What is the UNDAC team?**

The UNDAC team is part of the international emergency response system for sudden-onset emergencies. It is designed to assist the United Nations and Governments of a disaster-affected country in meeting international needs for early and qualified information during the first phase of a sudden-onset emergency, as well as in the coordination of incoming international relief at national level and/or at the site of the emergency. It is capable of deploying at very short notice (12-48 hours) anywhere in the world and is provided free of charge to the disaster-affected country. The UNDAC team may also undertake disaster response preparedness mission to evaluate national and regional disaster response plans upon request. The UNDAC System is managed by the Field Coordination Support Section (FCSS) in the Emergency Services Branch of OCHA Geneva.

The UNDAC team was established in 1993 and today consists of more than 250 national emergency managers from more than 70 countries, together with staff from OCHA and 16 international and regional organizations including UN agencies. The UNDAC system comprises three regional teams: Europe-Africa-Middle East; the Americas (including the Caribbean); and Asia-Pacific. In major international emergencies, UNDAC teams are drawn from the entire membership, whereas in disasters of a more regional or national concern, they are normally drawn from the affected country/region.

**What does the UNDAC system consist of?**

The UNDAC system consists of four components:

- i) **Staff**: Experienced emergency managers made available for UNDAC missions by their respective governments or organizations. UNDAC Team members are specially trained and equipped for their task;
- ii) **Methodology**: Predefined methods for establishing coordination structures, organizing and facilitating assessments, and information management during the first phase of a sudden-onset disaster or emergency;
- iii) **Procedures**: Proven systems to mobilize and deploy an UNDAC team to arrive at the disaster or emergency site within 12-48 hours of request;
- iv) **Equipment**: Personal and mission equipment for UNDAC teams to be self-sufficient in the field when deployed for disasters/emergencies; when required, also by support modules provided by our technical partner organizations.

## **What is the 'added value' of UNDAC?**

An UNDAC team can be dispatched at very short notice on occurrence or early warning of an emergency, upon receipt of a request from the national Government and/or UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator in-country. In either case, they work under the umbrella of the UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator. The UNDAC team provides additional capacity to organize cross-sectoral emergency assessment, coordination and information management and provide immediate support in the form of a small, highly-experienced team of international professionals, used to dealing with sudden-onset emergencies. Where necessary, teams can be supplemented with experts covering specialized fields of emergency management e.g. environment. An UNDAC team is self-sufficient in basic telecommunications, office and personal equipment.

In response to earthquakes, the UNDAC team provides an immediate On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC) to assist coordination of international Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) teams responding to the disaster - essential if USAR assistance is to function effectively. This concept was strongly endorsed in UN General Assembly Resolution 57/150 of 16 December 2002 on "Strengthening the effectiveness and coordination of international urban search and rescue assistance".

## **UNDAC Emergency Response Missions**

As of April 2010, the UNDAC Team has conducted 204 emergency missions to date in over 90 countries since its creation in 1993. OCHA (FCSS) mobilizes the UNDAC team mostly in:

**Natural Disasters:** when a disaster-affected country requests international assistance in coping with a natural disaster and requires additional international coordination resources;

and exceptionally in:

**Complex Emergencies:** when there is the sudden-onset or change in intensity of a complex emergency, which is likely to result in an unforeseen requirement for additional international coordination resources.

In each case, the deployment and detailed tasks of an UNDAC team are decided in consultation with the national Government and/or UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator. The team normally stays in the affected area for the initial response phase (up to three weeks in a natural disaster).

## **Costs of UNDAC deployment**

The UNDAC team is provided free of charge to the affected country.