



Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards of  
UNDP/UNFPA, UNICEF, UN-Women, and WFP

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Agenda item 3: Efficiency of emergency response and the transition to recovery and long-term development: lessons learned

Concept paper prepared jointly by  
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## Introduction

1. Many countries have been affected recently by the global financial crisis, the economic downturn, scarcity of resources and water, population growth, rapid urbanization, rising food and energy prices, conflict and natural disasters. These “mega-trends” threaten to create chronic acute vulnerability on an unprecedented scale: poverty, hunger, malnutrition, displacement and death are likely to increase because of them.

2. In line with their humanitarian and development mandates, United Nations agencies, funds, and programmes are on the ground before, during and after a crisis: their partnerships and programming extend beyond capital cities and government actors to direct contact with communities, so they are particularly well suited to helping populations to prepare for, respond to and recover from crises. The links between emergency response, recovery and development can, however, be improved with a view to establishing a comprehensive set of programmes to reduce poverty by addressing underlying vulnerabilities and to build local capacity and resilience.

3. The efficiency of emergency responses and the transition to recovery and long-term development will be discussed in the joint meeting of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and the World Food Programme (WFP) on 4 and 7 February 2011 in New York. This background paper, jointly prepared by the participating agencies, focuses on the transition phase and the importance of integrating recovery and development into the design of the immediate response. The paper is intended to inform the Executive Boards with a view to initiating discussion of issues related to the topic.

4. The country case in the Annex focuses on linkages between development, emergency response and recovery in the complex context of Liberia.

## Background

5. Humanitarian needs continued to rise in 2010 as a result of conflict, natural disasters and global structural challenges. This is reflected in the record high initial Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) for 2010 for 48 million people, compared with 43 million in 2009, which rose to 53 million people following the mid-year review of the CAP.

6. Post-conflict situations present unique challenges as a result of the links between humanitarian, recovery and development activities. An example is the need to maintain humanitarian access and space while establishing peacekeeping procedures or special political missions, as in Chad, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

7. Post-conflict situations also feature an interface between political, security and humanitarian issues. United Nations agencies, funds and programmes need to find creative ways to deliver their mandates in high-risk environments, for example by advancing efforts on the programme criticality prioritization approach **and by** reducing the risk of relapse into violence and conflict.

8. Agencies, funds and programmes must address the increased risk of disaster as a result of climate change. This affects poor countries disproportionately, erodes development

gains and slows progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. There is an increasing global trend in weather-related disasters: there are currently 400 to 500 natural disasters per year compared with an average of 125 in the early 1980s. Estimates by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) indicate that 50 percent of development assistance may be compromised by climate change.

9. Climate change and natural disasters exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and inequalities, and are hence development and humanitarian concerns. Many large emergencies are in fact a function of development patterns: the nutrition crises in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, for example, reflect the linkage between sustainable livelihoods and emergency and development programming.

10. These global challenges may create new kinds of caseload involving vulnerable people with severe life-saving needs. Humanitarian assistance may come to be driven by extreme poverty as well as conflict or disaster, which will make it more difficult to identify those in need of international humanitarian assistance. An emerging trend is that the urban poor may be more vulnerable and in greater need of life-saving assistance than rural communities in conflicts or natural disasters.

11. Recent experience in emergency contexts where humanitarian and development programmes coexist highlights the importance of disaster risk reduction as a major adaptation strategy that combines prevention, mitigation, and resilience-building measures. This in turn means investing more in developing the preparedness capacities of local and national humanitarian actors. Early-warning mechanisms and preparedness measures are critical to efficient and effective responses that respect development objectives.

### **Linking Emergency, Recovery and Development**

12. Experience shows that well managed recovery provides opportunities to: (a) reduce vulnerability and long-term reliance on relief; (b) lay the foundations for sustainable development; and (c) consolidate peace dividends in post-conflict settings while addressing ongoing humanitarian needs. Swift and efficient emergency response creates space for recovery, reconstruction and development.

13. Separate strategy and priority-setting processes guide the humanitarian, recovery and development aspects of international engagement in protracted crises. It is important to synchronize the planning of recovery programmes with humanitarian assistance, but any parallel planning may result in competing objectives, contradictory priorities and strategic incoherence, which will impede the transition to recovery and development.

14. In each case, international actors must agree a strategic framework that is driven by national strategies and based on harmonized needs-assessment and planning. This must include humanitarian needs assessments, humanitarian appeals such as flash appeals or consolidated appeals, long-term recovery plans based on post-crisis needs assessments, and development frameworks such as United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers.

15. A greater challenge is to find a way for humanitarian and development actors and donors to agree that the only way to reduce the need for protracted and costly emergency responses is to invest in national prediction mechanisms, preparedness and response capacities. Development contexts provide opportunities to develop this link.

16. Effective response starts with community and government preparedness. United Nations agencies, funds, and programmes collaborate with other humanitarian and development bodies to build national and local capacities that mitigate risks to populations and promote effective responses. Such cooperation ensures that preparedness and response mechanisms build on and support national development strategies.

17. The early recovery approach should use disaster risk reduction strategies to build resilience, especially at the community level. This means utilizing emergency-related donor support and community awareness to implement interventions based on disaster risk reduction.

18. Emergency responses must be timely and reliable. To be effective they must be based on robust initial needs assessment, and should be limited in time to avoid creating dependency on the part of the recipient government. Post-disaster transition should include sustained support for the restoration of governance capacities relating to livelihoods, basic social services and preparedness measures to reduce vulnerability to disaster.

19. Complex and conflict-affected emergency settings can challenge early recovery. There is room for action, however, because the intensity of conflict will vary: areas of stability provide opportunities to reach needy populations, even if there is conflict elsewhere.

20. In such cases humanitarian and development actors face the challenge of embedding an early recovery approach in the humanitarian response. The main difficulties arise when a government is a party to conflict or when the legitimacy of local and national actors is called into question. By aligning themselves too closely with a government or other party to conflict, humanitarian actors may be unable to act in line with the humanitarian principles of impartiality and neutrality.

### **Clear and Complementary Roles – the Importance of the Clusters**

21. Agencies, funds and programmes base their humanitarian actions on rights and needs. This requires a humanitarian system that can collaborate with development actors to:

- a) reduce vulnerability and increase resilience by improving risk reduction and preparedness;
- b) improve the identification and monitoring of acute humanitarian vulnerability and needs;
- and c) enhance partnerships with governments, development actors, civil organizations and others for knowledge transfer and early analysis of potential problems.

22. To achieve this, greater attention must be given to prevention and preparedness, harmonized needs-assessment and analysis of acute vulnerability across sectors or clusters, improved monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of responses, and closer partnerships with governments and development organizations. Such improvements will facilitate smooth programme implementation, improve results in contexts where entry and exit strategies may be hard to define and lead to better understanding of the triggers of global and regional crises. Such improvements will ultimately lead to more effective and timely responses to vulnerability.

23. Post-disaster and post-conflict needs assessments, the tools agreed in the United Nations/World Bank/European Commission Partnership Framework, help to: (a) address infrastructure requirements and human recovery needs; (b) define agency roles and responsibilities; and (c) foster agreement on work plans for recovery. Agencies, funds and

programmes work constantly to ensure that governments, local authorities and partners receive support for the enhancement of their capacities.

24. Humanitarian reform has resulted in clearer definition of the roles and responsibilities of each of the agencies, funds and programmes and improved complementarity in situations with a common country-level strategy.

25. Gap and overlap analyses are requirements for effective implementation of the cluster approach, and so must be seen as opportunities, not additional burdens.

26. To improve the effectiveness of clusters it is important to ensure that (a) the establishment of a cluster takes into account existing capacities and structures; (b) inter-cluster coordination, including early recovery, is maximized; (c) the responsibilities of cluster leaders and partners are clear; and (d) the transition from cluster activities to government-led coordination mechanisms is addressed as early as possible.

27. There are cases where there are too many emergency coordination groups, which results in “meeting fatigue”. Activated clusters should engage with development and national actors from the outset to define common approaches and standards.

28. The global Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) clusters are increasing their collaboration to mainstream early recovery in their work. In particular, awareness is growing that early recovery is a priority for all actors: it is not a matter for individual agencies or clusters.

29. Mainstreaming includes integration of the early recovery approach in policy guidelines, training materials, needs assessment methods and strategic planning frameworks.

### **Sustainable and Effective Resources**

30. Humanitarian and development actors agree that effective leadership, common strategies and predictable support capacity will amount to little without rapidly accessible and flexible financial resources. The challenge is to maintain adequate levels of humanitarian financing immediately after a crisis and to bring forward the use of development funds. Both entry points can be used to build early warning and preparedness systems and awareness.

31. It is important for countries facing complex emergencies to secure funds for mainstreaming disaster risk reduction and capacity-building at all stages. Funding for prevention and preparedness is still a challenge, however, and there is consequently a gap in the funding continuum. Studies of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals demonstrate that disasters and conflicts impede progress – but better preparedness, prevention and mitigation strategies will lead to more timely and effective response and recovery. Embedding development strategies in emergency responses will minimize negative impacts on development and shorten emergency response phases.

32. With regard to the funding gap in transition settings, the Secretary-General’s 2009 report on peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict urges “... donors to be bold and innovative in finding solutions that will establish flexible, rapid and predictable funding modalities for countries emerging from conflict...”. In response, the International Network on Conflict and Fragility under the OECD Development Assistance Committee has launched a process to develop common guidance on transition financing.

33. The IASC Humanitarian Financing Group is working to improve the predictability of financing for early recovery through humanitarian funding mechanisms, particularly CAP and flash appeals and to some extent the Central Emergency Response Fund, and is addressing the challenge of funding for preparedness.

34. Funding tools tend to remain isolated, with no clear links between emergency response and development funds, so there is a gap between the approaches of field agencies and those of financing bodies. Humanitarian and development actors must improve coordination and establish joint priorities to ensure that service delivery continues uninterrupted during transition. They must use humanitarian responses as a basis for moving gradually towards government engagement and national ownership. Funding for strictly life-saving activities based on needs should phase into state-building and, in conflict-affected contexts, peace-building priorities.

35. The generosity of donors – governments, individuals, companies and foundations – has increased, but it is generally limited to the most urgent humanitarian needs, which are estimated at US\$12 billion per year. Many needs are not met. Early recovery remains underfunded.

36. Pooled country-level and global funding mechanisms can enable donors and agencies to work together and share risks. Expectations as to what pooled funds can achieve are often too optimistic, however: such funds are a temporary bridging mechanism for the start-up period, and they cannot be the only source of funding for mid-term and long-term activities. Different pooled funding mechanisms must be aligned with common strategies, and steering committees must build on existing structures where possible.

### **Measuring Outcomes**

37. Outcomes result from the cumulative impact of all projects in an area of intervention. Project outcomes should therefore be defined jointly by stakeholders such as communities, governments and humanitarian and development actors. This requires early agreement on the formulation of common objectives and indicators for measuring impacts against objectives.

38. Outcomes are too often neglected. They should be at the heart of all evaluation M&E systems, which tend to focus on outputs because they are usually easier to identify and measure, especially in an emergency-response context.

39. Technology can enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian responses and should be used more extensively to collect information during an emergency. The increasing use of cell-phones in the developing world, for example, is being used to alert more people to hazards and to track displacements, as in Haiti after the earthquake.

40. Satellite imagery and improved telecommunications and mapping systems have made the assessment of remote humanitarian caseloads more timely and accurate. Such technology can track population movements after a disaster, and can collect data that will improve the documentation of achievements.

41. To ensure that emergency response is a foundation for transition to recovery and development, it is vital to measure the impact of an emergency response on development and recovery programmes with a view to improving the design of future interventions. Defining

and reviewing outcomes and indicators for transition at the outset is a determinant of the effectiveness of an emergency response.

42. An efficient way of measuring such impacts is to conduct systematic operational reviews and gather lessons learned. These exercises should assess the extent to which the relief response is accurately targeted and achieves the intended impact and should measure its timeliness, appropriateness, relevance, sustainability and efficiency.

43. Real-time inter-agency evaluations are now a standard tool for improving relief interventions. It is important that lessons from such evaluations be integrated into future coordination mechanisms and programme design with a view to improving future operations. Failures are an important source of learning, so it is important to document and discuss the failures of an emergency operation as well as the successes, but without assigning blame. Real-time evaluations should include study of transition issues to ensure that humanitarian responses are linked to longer-term development.

#### **Contribution of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN-Women, UNOPS and WFP and Coordination Mechanisms**

44. Agencies, funds, and programmes are linking and mainstreaming preparedness, humanitarian, recovery and development activities with a view to enhancing continuity and sustainability. This work is complemented with increased collaboration among the organizations and with host states.

45. Agencies, funds, and programmes are including local and national capacity development as a priority to support medium-term and long-term resilience and sustainability.

46. Agencies, funds and programmes are measuring effectiveness in terms of outcomes and are implementing post-operation reviews to identify strengths and weaknesses and guide improvements.

47. **UNFPA** protects the reproductive health of communities in crisis through reconstruction by assisting and protecting women, men, young people and elderly people made vulnerable by natural disaster, conflict or other causes. It supports data-collection activities such as censuses and rapid health assessments. **UNFPA** also supports the inter-agency GenCap initiative, which deploys gender advisers throughout the emergency cycle to ensure that the needs of women and men, girls and boys are addressed.

48. The mission of **UNOPS** is to expand the peacebuilding, humanitarian and development capacity of the United Nations system and its partners. It supports project management, human resource management, financial management, procurement, contract management and common or shared services. **UNOPS** also engages in projects focused on physical infrastructure, income generation and the procurement of health-related goods.

49. **UNICEF** is committed to assisting the most vulnerable people through support for national policy development, normative and capacity development work and local social service delivery. The Recovery and Risk Reduction Section of its Office of Emergency Programmes provides policy, guidance and field support in the transition from response to recovery and longer-term development, and in disaster risk reduction, peacebuilding and conflict prevention. **UNICEF** has revised its Core Commitments for Children in

Humanitarian Action to include preparedness, disaster risk reduction and early recovery. It is also instituting a global initiative on risk-informed emergency programming to ensure that its planning addresses more effectively emergency risks threatening the rights of children.

50. **UNICEF** is active in post-disaster needs assessment and post-conflict needs assessment. It leads the nutrition cluster and the water, sanitation and hygiene cluster, and co-leads the education cluster with Save the Children Alliance. It is the focal point for the child protection and gender-based violence working groups, which it co-leads with UNFPA, in the protection cluster. **UNICEF** co-chairs the cross-cutting Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Reference Group, and mainstreams the early-recovery approach in all its flash appeals to ensure a seamless link between emergency response and the early-recovery approach.

51. **UNDP** leads the early-recovery agenda in IASC. Early recovery aims to empower national authorities to reassert leadership and ownership while advancing a development agenda. **UNDP** supports the restoration of community infrastructure, livelihoods and core government functions for responding to community needs. It usually leads post-disaster needs assessments to support the development of a comprehensive recovery plan; in complex emergencies, it is active in the post-conflict needs assessment process. **UNDP** leads the Cluster Working Group on Early Recovery to ensure that all essential recovery needs are addressed and that humanitarian actions support future recovery goals.

52. **WFP** is the food aid agency of the United Nations system. Its mandate is to eradicate hunger and poverty. The multilateral character of WFP is one of its greatest strengths in that it enables the agency to operate virtually anywhere in the developing world and provide a neutral conduit for assistance in situations where many donor countries cannot provide assistance directly. **WFP** leads the logistics cluster and the emergency telecommunication cluster; it also provides transport and logistics expertise and assistance to ensure rapid and efficient delivery of humanitarian aid. Its programmes are based on community participation, particularly by women. **WFP**'s lessons-learned mechanism has assessed emergency responses in Central America, Haiti, Pakistan and the Philippines.

### **Strategic Issues for Discussion**

53. The number of people at risk in emergencies is projected to increase through population growth alone. The challenges will require the humanitarian system to help more people in more places, probably with fewer resources in view of the financial situation. The number of beneficiaries in existing humanitarian contexts may therefore increase, and the need to intervene may spread to new contexts as vulnerability becomes acute in what have hitherto been considered traditional development contexts.

54. Rapidly changing demographics combined with an increase in natural disasters may create additional vulnerabilities and risks in groups such as urban and elderly populations that have hitherto not been specifically assisted in emergencies. By 2025 two thirds of the world's population will be living in urban or peri-urban settings, and the number of people over 65 will more than double from 390 million to 800 million. This will have significant implications for humanitarian action.

55. Information will become more plentiful, but not necessarily more accurate, applicable or useful. The humanitarian and development system may need to increase its ability to collect, analyse and disseminate information from an increasing number of actors to promote



optimal humanitarian, recovery and development action. The need for information for populations will increase, as opposed to information about populations. It is likely that new centres of knowledge will emerge based on local knowledge and local solutions. Instant media coverage will increase public awareness but will reduce the time-frame in which decisions will need to be made.

56. The following questions need to be addressed:

(a) How can the agencies, funds and programmes help to ensure that recovery is transformed into development-focused assistance with national ownership while funding and international attention is sustained?

(b) How can the agencies, funds and programmes help to ensure that adequate support is provided for the United Nations leadership in transition settings?

(c) How can national and international actors reach a clearer understanding as to ways of establishing funding mechanisms at the country level on the basis of transparent and regular consultation?

(d) How can the agencies, funds and programmes help to ensure that recovery frameworks are transferred and used to inform country programmes in a timely manner?

(e) How can the agencies, funds and programmes help to ensure meaningful national ownership of transition and recovery planning frameworks?

## **Acronyms used in the document**

CAP	Consolidated Appeals Process
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UN-Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WFP	World Food Programme