PMU Guidelines for Humanitarian Aid

Contents

Approved by PMU DF on 2022-01-18

A. Introduction

These guidelines relate to the PMU Humanitarian Strategy and further outlines the framework of PMU's humanitarian work, conditions on collaboration, essentials within humanitarian work as well as applicable methods and tools. The guidelines also give a brief, but not comprehensive, overview of the project cycle management. The guidelines serve as a guiding tool on principals specific to PMU's humanitarian work as well as the humanitarian project cycle, including assessment, planning, monitoring and evaluation. The purpose of these guidelines is to promote a common understanding of the framework of humanitarian work and the project management cycle of PMU supported humanitarian projects. The practical aspects of these guidelines are meant to be a complement to implementing partners' own resources. There are also a vast number of international resources, some of which are included and referenced to throughout these guidelines. The PMU Guidelines for Humanitarian Aid combines and replaces the former Section 4 of the PMU Project Manual as well as Annex 4.9 PMU Handbook for PME of Humanitarian Interventions.

1. Causes of Humanitarian Situations

Humanitarian aid is about providing support to people who are living under conditions in which they do not have access to basic services due to disasters or conflicts. Humanitarian situations can unfold slowly or develop rapidly for a variety of reasons. The lack of democracy and justice, and the struggle for resources, create tensions in societies and between states. All too often, these tensions lead to armed conflicts, in which large groups of civilians suffer. Many countries are also vulnerable to natural disasters such as floods, droughts, and earthquakes. Climate change has increasingly caused negative consequences in many countries, with growing problems of serious flooding or longer periods of drought in other locations. Endemics, which often thrive in situations where there are weak infrastructures and poor conditions although possible to affect any country, can also play a role in exacerbating an already difficult situation, or can be cause enough to provoke a humanitarian situation in themselves.

2. The role of Civil Society in Humanitarian Situations

When a humanitarian situation arises, organisations that are part of the civil society provide important local capacities. This applies especially in countries where there is conflict, and where the state is weak and/or is part of the conflict. One of the roles of civil society is to contribute to meeting peoples' basic needs for food, shelter, health etc.

For a long time, the international humanitarian system has largely acted separately from the contributions of humanitarian actors of local and national civil society in countries affected by crisis. Whilst there has been an increasing acknowledgement of the importance of local and national actors in humanitarian assistance, the vast majority of resources and decision-making power still lies with large international actors and donors.

PMU recognises that actors within the local and national civil society are instrumental in sudden-onset crisis responses, as well as in protracted crises and longer-term development efforts. In many cases, local responders are the first to respond to a crisis. Furthermore, local and national actors are often able to access hard-to-reach areas. PMU's role is to support implementing partners with resources, and capacity building since demands are high during humanitarian projects in regards to analysis, coordination, cooperation, compliance, respect for international guidelines and the reporting of project results. In contexts where PMU does not have a partnership with a local partner, PMU can also work with international partners.

There is often a large gap between the international humanitarian donors with their, requirements and guidelines and the

local and national organisations that are present in the area and that work to support development in a local context. For this reason, PMU tries to act as a bridge between these two, and as a driving actor towards the localisation of humanitarian assistance. PMU works to ensure awareness and the strengthen capacities of its partners in relation to key humanitarian standards and requirements and to continuously strengthen its partnership model to ensure effective and equitable partnerships. Furthermore, PMU works to ensure the visibility of its partners' work, conveying local partners' voices to key stakeholders in the Swedish and international humanitarian system, and ensuring the sharing of experience and learning through PMU's partner network.

3. Great demands on Coordination

The number of actors who provide humanitarian aid, has increased substantially over the past 20 years. As such, there are great demands on coordination to make sure that humanitarian interventions complement each other. At the same time, humanitarian access in many contexts has decreased whilst local actors have often the best access. This places great demands upon the coordination of humanitarian projects, and cooperation between implementing organisations, both international and local organisations. Coordination and collaboration is essential in order to minimise demands on the affected populations, do avoid duplication of services and humanitarian resources, and in order to maximise the coverage and service provision to those we are trying to reach.

A vital component of humanitarian action is the coordination among all actors involved in the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Coordination within this field allows for the most efficient, cost effective and successful interventions possible.[1] Humanitarian coordination involves bringing together humanitarian actors to ensure a coherent and principled response to emergencies. Humanitarian coordination seeks to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian response by ensuring greater predictability, accountability and partnership. Coordination involves assessing situations and needs; agreeing common priorities; developing common strategies to address issues such as negotiating access, mobilizing funding and other resources; clarifying consistent public messaging; and monitoring progress.

4. PMU's Support to Humanitarian Projects

PMU can support humanitarian projects through its own fundraising, which often comes from Swedish partners, second-hand shops and individuals. PMU can also support humanitarian projects by sending joint applications together with partners to back donors, see the Humanitarian Strategy for more information on this.

PMU's Humanitarian Strategy outlines what type of projects can receive funding. Funding can be provided for urgent humanitarian projects, such as responses to natural disasters or conflicts, for longer-term humanitarian projects in areas affected by protracted crises, as well as for rehabilitation oriented projects after disasters. Funding can also be provided for needs assessments conducted by implementing partners, or for capacity building an implementing partner wishes to organize or participate in. For more information on the different types of funding and application templates, please contact the PMU Humanitarian Unit.

[1] ATHA: Humanitarian Coordination – an overview, January 2008.

B. The Humanitarian Framework

The objective of PMU's humanitarian aid is to **save lives, alleviate suffering and to uphold human dignity** for vulnerable people affected by crisis that have been subjected to or are under the threat of armed conflict, nature-related disasters or other types of crises. This objective is also in line with the objective of Sweden's humanitarian aid provided through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).[2]

Each state has the primary responsibility for meeting the humanitarian needs that arise within its own national borders. In cases where the state or other organisations in the country in question either cannot or do not want to live up to this responsibility, external organizations and states with adequate capability and capacity have a responsibility to provide support to measures to meet these needs, in line with international humanitarian law and established practice within international humanitarian aid. For this reason, PMU can only channel humanitarian support in situations where the country's and local community's capacity is not sufficient to meet the needs of those affected by the disaster.

Humanitarian aid shall meet the *basic needs* of food, water, nutrition, non-food items, health, shelter, education and protection against assault or other forms of violations to the affected populations. Humanitarian aid can also include assistance that strengthens international human rights, so that it becomes possible to carry out projects that save lives, respond to needs and maintain human dignity in an impartial, neutral and independent manner.

[2] Strategy for Sweden's humanitarian aid provided through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) 2021–2025

1. The Humanitarian Principles

The fundamental humanitarian principles are described in The Humanitarian Charter and are based upon international humanitarian law, the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Refugee Convention , the international Code of Conduct (see below), and have been endorsed by the UN General Assembly. All humanitarian support supported by PMU shall be based upon *the fundamental humanitarian principles*, which are:

> *Humanity* – human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found. The purpose of humanitarian action is to protect life and health and ensure respect for human beings.
>
> *Impartiality* – humanitarian action must be carried out on the basis of need alone, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress and making no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinions.
>
> *Neutrality* – humanitarian actors must not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.
>
> *Independence* – humanitarian action must be autonomous from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.

The principle of **humanity**, or the humanitarian imperative, is the fundamental driving force of humanitarian action. It deems it a responsibility for us as fellow human beings to ensure that suffering is alleviated for any and all who may need it.

The principle of **impartiality** further explains how this is to be put in practice, and can be divided into two sub-principles: 1) proportionality – that resources are prioritized based on need, and 2) non-discrimination – that no identity marker of affected people other than humanity itself may affect the provision of assistance. Nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinion may not affect who is prioritized in humanitarian action. To act impartiality as an organization means, for example:

- To communicate publically its commitment to respect and promote impartiality in humanitarian assistance
- To ensure that staff on all levels understand what impartiality means, and use it to guide her or his work. Field staff need to make sure that they act in a non-discriminatory way in relation to communities affected by crisis.
- To make sure that an impartial assessment of needs, which includes the consultation of different groups in affected communities, guides the design and implementation of interventions.
- To strive for strategies of resource mobilization, and use of resources within the organization, in a way that prioritizes those most in need.

The principles of **neutrality** and **independence** can be viewed as the practical tools to enable humanity and impartiality, ensuring that humanitarian actors can work with credibility, also in very difficult environments (such as armed conflicts). Neutrality means that humanitarian actors must strive towards enjoying the confidence of different groups in society. This may refer to two sides in an armed conflict, or other situations where ethnic, religious affiliation or ideology may play a role. The principle of independence highlights the importance of not being steered by major actors' agendas. For example, a

government or large donor may wish to fund an intervention in an area in order to gain the favor of the leaders and citizens of that area. Also, a private company may wish to donate or otherwise support an intervention in order to further its economic interests in said area.

It is important to acknowledge that it is not possible to perfectly act in accordance with the principles. At times and in certain cases, the principles may contradict each other and you may need to balance between them. However, as a whole, the four humanitarian principles is a way of ensuring access and conducting humanitarian interventions in difficult and often polarized situations.

2. The IFRC Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct builds on the humanitarian principles, and contains ten core principles for humanitarian organisations to adhere to. The Code of Conduct was developed by the Red Cross and the Red Crescent movement, and has now been adopted by most international humanitarian organisations. The full name of the Code of Conduct is *The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief* and is not negotiable. Everyone who works in humanitarian aid must respect the Code of Conduct regardless of local traditions and culture.

The Code of Conduct consists of ten principles. The first three are especially important to comment on in light of the work that is conducted by implementing partners.

1. **The first principle** states that the humanitarian imperative comes first. This means that the right to receive humanitarian assistance is a fundamental humanitarian principle that should be enjoyed by all citizens of all countries. It also implies that humanitarian actors recognise our obligation to provide humanitarian assistance wherever it is needed.

2. **The second principle** states that aid is to be given regardless of the race, creed or nationality of the recipients and without adverse distinction of any kind. Aid priorities are calculated on the basis of need alone.
   It means:
   - that during the planning and implementation of a humanitarian project, an implementing partners cannot in any way be biased towards the needs of their own members/staff, or provide special benefits to members or certain groups in society.
   - That the implementing partner, in cooperation with authorities and organisations, must assist the most vulnerable people affected by crisis.
   - That there can be no conditions linked to the humanitarian aid. One exception to this rule is that people who are fully capable of working and in good health can receive food in exchange for work, e.g. the rebuilding of infrastructure in the area. *Food for Work* should be encouraged in protracted humanitarian crises, such as droughts, since support is often appreciated more if the recipients are expected to do something in return.

3. **The third principle** states that *humanitarian aid should not be used to further particular political or religious standpoints*.
   Humanitarian assistance is only intended to meet basic needs. For this reason, it cannot be combined with, for example, the distribution of religious or political materials. People who are suffering during a disaster are exposed and vulnerable, and assistance must be carried out with great sensitivity and respect.

For more information on the IFRC Code of Conduct, visit the IFRC website.

PMU is a signatory of the IFRC Code of Conduct, and also has a specific Code of Conduct, annex 3b.1, for its staff and management. The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to give guidance in and encourage an increased ethical responsibility in PMU's work, as well as towards Swedish and international partners and the people with whom PMU cooperates. Its purpose is also to give tools regarding how to report any lack of compliance with the Code. Based on the commitment of PMU to prevent fraud, corruption and abuse of power as well as sexual exploitation and harassment, the Code of Conduct seeks to protect both staff and people with whom PMU cooperates.

C. Quality and Accountability

1. PMU's Commitment

Accountability is fundamental in the work of PMU. PMU embraces the definition of accountability as provided by the Core Humanitarian Standard: *'the process of using power responsibly, taking account of, and being held accountable by, different stakeholders, and primarily those who are affected by the exercise of such power'*. PMU has developed a Humanitarian Accountability Framework, annex 4.10, which is a tool to enhance transparency and summarize PMU's quality and accountability commitments. For PMU, accountability is not just about processes and systems – it is a core organizational value which governs our behaviour, the approach in partnerships and how to go about implementing the work.

PMU has developed different policies, guidelines and procedures related to accountability and quality in the humanitarian work which are presented in the Humanitarian Accountability Framework. Some examples are a robust PMER system for the humanitarian projects with guidelines and templates, a comprehensive computerized system for documentation of the projects, a cohesive system for deviation management, use of the COSO framework for risk management, internal control and fraud deterrence, etc.

PMU encourages all partner organisations working with humanitarian assistance to both define which your main stakeholders are and to whom you are accountable, as well as developing policies, systems, guidelines and procedures related to accountability and quality in your humanitarian work.

2. The Core Humanitarian Standard and CHS Alliance

At the onset of a humanitarian crisis, affected populations are often confronted with a breakdown in government and social services, severely diminished infrastructure and life-threatening situations. In order to affect greatest change and assistance to disaster or conflict stricken populations, humanitarian agencies and workers must be cognizant of their power and use it responsibly. In most circumstances, affected populations have little influence or control over decisions that affect their daily lives. Humanitarian quality and accountability emphasizes focus on two principles and mechanisms: (1) those by which individuals, organizations and States account for their actions and are held responsible for them; and (2) those by which they may safely and legitimately report concerns, complaints and get redress where appropriate. When implemented, it means that crisis affected populations are able to influence decisions about the help they receive and can complain if they feel the "helping power" was not exercised well.[3]

In recent years the humanitarian community has initiated a series of inter-agency initiatives in order to improve accountability and quality performance in humanitarian action. Humanitarian accountability emphasizes the needs, concerns, capacities and disposition of affected populations and explaining the meaning and reasons for actions and decisions. Humanitarian accountability strives to be intrinsic and inseparable from the fundamental principles of humanitarianism. Its goal is to ensure that all humanitarian work is planned and implemented in a way that respects the views, capacities and dispositions of disaster survivors.[4] Over the years, a number of initiatives have emerged to address this crucial topic. In 2015, a merging of such initiatives gave birth to the Core Humanitarian Standard and the CHS Alliance, of which PMU is one of its founding members. PMU works continually to strengthen its CHS work through provision of trainings and similar activities provided to its implementing partners as well as internally.

The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS) sets out Nine Commitments that organizations and individuals involved in humanitarian response can use to improve the quality and effectiveness of the assistance they provide. The CHS places communities and people affected by crisis at the center of humanitarian action. As a core standard, the CHS describes the essential elements of principled, accountable and high-quality humanitarian aid. It is a voluntary and measurable standard. The CHS is the result of a global consultation process and draws together key elements of existing humanitarian standards and commitments.[5]

Please also see annex 4.3: The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability

[3] Humanitarian Quality and Accountability Initiatives, ATHA, February 2018.
[4] Humanitarian Quality and Accountability Initiatives, ATHA, February 2018.
[5] https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/the-standard

D. Conditions for Humanitarian Cooperation

PMU channels its humanitarian funding mainly through local partners with which PMU already has a long-standing partnership in development cooperation. In certain cases, PMU also implements projects through international partners (see PMU's Humanitarian Strategy 2021-2025). In the development cooperation, PMU works according to a three party model, with the implementing partner, the Swedish partner and PMU all having their responsibilities and roles to play in a project, but with PMU having a leading and coordinating role. In humanitarian aid, PMU works directly with implementing partners, and there are several reasons for this:

- Very often, PMU has to be quick in matching needs and capacity with possibilities for financing and support.
- PMU, together with back donors, generally accounts for 100 % of the funding.
- Humanitarian projects require good coordination with other international organisations.

However, humanitarian projects are carried out in contact with the Swedish partners. Joint fund-raising activities can also be planned together with Swedish partners, as well as possible involvement of Swedish personnel. Since PMU works directly with implementing partners during humanitarian projects, there is no need to have an agreement with a Swedish partner. Instead, an agreement is drawn up between PMU and the partner who is implementing the project. For more information on these agreements, see PMU Finance and Administration Guidelines.

Besides fulfilling PMU's requirements for partnership, the implementing partners shall also:

- Have sufficient capacity and competence in humanitarian assistance to conduct a project in the situation at hand. Project managers should have previous experience in humanitarian assistance or development projects.
- Must observe the IFRC Code of Conduct in Disaster Response, and adhere to the Humanitarian Principles.
- Must, to the extent possible, cooperate and coordinate with relevant authorities, the UN and other relevant organisations for the whole project cycle.
- Follow the IFRC Code of Conduct.
- Should work towards the application of the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS)
- Normally be the one to initiate the humanitarian project. However, the initiative can also come from PMU, a Swedish partner, or a back donor.
- Shall plan and carry out the project with support from PMU. However, in larger back donor funded projects, PMU signs agreements with the donors and has considerable responsibility for both planning and carrying out the project. In situations where there is no local partner, or where the partner has very limited capacity, PMU can sometimes take responsibility for planning, implementation and administration in the field if this solution is seen as being the most effective.

Above and beyond these basic conditions, the implementing partner must fulfil the requirements that PMU establishes for its partners in regard to relevance, competence and capacity. These criteria apply to both development projects and humanitarian projects.

E. Essentials in Humanitarian Work

1 Coordination of Humanitarian Projects / Coordination and Collaboration

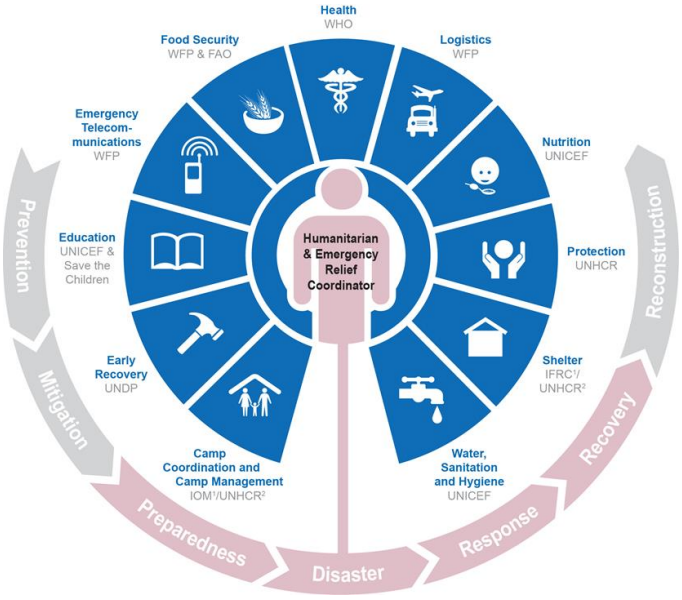
Responding to the needs of people and communities in crisis requires collective action. As part of the wider humanitarian community everyone must do their part in dividing responsibilities, identifying gaps in coverage or quality, avoiding duplication of efforts, and ensuring learning and information-sharing. This is done through different coordination mechanisms, which include:

- UN-led coordination mechanisms (clusters), established nationally and locally in many humanitarian contexts.
- Coordination mechanisms established by national governments or local authorities.
- NGO-specific coordination forums (formal and informal).

Why is coordination important?

- Coverage: identify service gaps as well as gaps in quality of services
- Efficiency: prevent duplication of efforts and waste of resources
- Relevance: exchange understanding of the context and specific needs
- Effectiveness: joint policies and principles; overcome logistic and technical challenges including access and security
- Coherence: more effective advocacy, better linking of relief, rehabilitation and development

Sectorial cluster systems are set up in locations of humanitarian disasters by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). They are usually led by UN representatives from different UN agencies depending on sector, together with NGO representatives for each sector of work, and are designated to ensure that relief is needs based and that efforts are not duplicated. The cluster sets out strategies and policies for each sector and coordinates the assistance given by different actors in the area. The number of sectors activated in each location depends on the needs and severity of the crisis. UN OCHA's website and UN clusters in respected humanitarian response, is the primary source of general information on situations, needs and planned interventions, and for sharing key information including the latest reports, maps, infographics and videos from trusted sources. PMU actively encourages and supports implementing partners to link up with the cluster system to ensure that their responses are included in the national humanitarian response plan where applicable.



For PMU and its partners, a spirit of coordination and collaboration in humanitarian response is essential. It is important to be as actively engaged as possible in clusters and other coordination forums. This is important in order to be able to share information, etc. However, as local or national organisations (which many PMU partners are), it is important to engage actively in coordination mechanism in order to increase the exposure vis-à-vis the actors that may often dominate the coordination mechanisms (UN agencies and larger INGOs). In other words, clusters and other coordination forums are a good way for national and local actors to present their work and build networks and rapport vis-à-vis others.

Key things to consider with regards to ensuring coordination:

- Participate in general and any applicable sectorial coordination mechanisms from the outset.
- Be informed of the responsibilities, objectives and coordination role of the state and other coordination groups where present.
- Provide coordination groups with information about the agency's mandate, objectives and programme.
- Share assessment information with the relevant coordination groups in a timely manner and in a format that can be readily used by other humanitarian agencies.
- Use programme information from other humanitarian agencies to inform analyses, selection for geographical areas and response plans.
- Regularly update coordination groups on progress, reporting any major delays, agency shortages or space capacity.
- Collaborate with other humanitarian agencies to strengthen advocacy on critical shared humanitarian concerns.
- Establish clear policies and practice regarding the agency's engagement with non-humanitarian actors, based on humanitarian principles and objectives.

2. Risk Analysis and Security Issues

A general risk analysis must be carried out for each humanitarian project in which: (1) the risks are identified and described, (2) an assessment is made of how high risk value they have, their possible impact and how they should be mitigated. A general risk analysis is especially important when planning humanitarian projects in volatile environments and complex situations that can quickly change. The issue of security is a central concern when providing humanitarian assistance in areas affected by armed conflicts. During conflict, the political and security situations are often fragile, and respect for humanitarian organisations can be low.

The organisation carrying out the assistance is responsible for security regarding both life and property. Implementing partners are advised to be linked to the UN and national authorities' security systems, i.e. work according to the guidelines that exist for proper security and participate actively in security meetings. Implementing partners should also develop internal guidelines for the security of personnel. Implementing partners shall be able to present these internal guidelines to PMU when requested to do so.

3. Targeting Most Vulnerable Groups

In every society, there are most vulnerable groups that may be even more negatively affected than others when a crisis occurs. They may have been marginalized already before a disaster took place, and their coping mechanisms may therefore be fewer or not in place at all. Understanding the context is crucial for knowing which group or individuals are the most vulnerable and this is where PMU's implementing partners often have an added value as they are well familiar with their respective contexts. Vulnerability criteria used for selection and prioritization of the aid response should be developed together with target communities. Whilst vulnerability criteria often overlaps between contexts, it still may vary. In conflict situations, internally displaced persons (IDPs) are often a vulnerable group since according to the Refugee Convention they are not included in the rights that apply to refugees, and may not have access to existing services nor livelihoods in the area they have fled to. IDPs have fled their homes, but not crossed an international border. They shall be protected by their own governments, even if it is the government that has caused their displacement, or has not succeeded in protecting them from e.g. rebel groups. More information on the Refugee Convention is provided by UNHCR.

4. Participation

Participation is an approach to engagement whereby people affected by a crisis have the power to influence their situation and the decisions and humanitarian activities affecting them. The modalities depend on the context, and the level of risk.

People and communities affected by crisis are usually the first to act when disasters hit, and possess and acquire skills, knowledge and capacities to cope with, respond to and recover from disasters. Participation of crisis-affected communities is central to humanitarian action. It is important because it is a way to ensure that our interventions are relevant and well functioning in accordance with its intended purposes. Nevertheless, participation is also important in and of itself. Striving for participation is central in our work to stay accountable to crisis-affected communities. In this way, it is both about crisis-affected peoples' 'ability to make or influence decisions about the use of external funding' and about their ability to hold us accountable 'for decisions that are made on their behalf' (ALNAP, State of the Humanitarian System 2018.)

Participation in humanitarian response is affirmed in the IFRC Code of Conduct, principles 6 and 7, and CHS Commitment 4. The commitment to accountability and effective humanitarian action means that communities and people affected by crisis should be engaged to participate during all stages of the project, including assessment, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Different levels of participation may be appropriate at different times. For example, in the early stages, consultation might only be possible with a limited number of affected people, but over time, there will be more opportunities for more people and groups to become involved in decision-making.

Key things to consider with regards to ensuring participation:

- Participation is important in initial assessments. However, take care so that any initial participation will not be interpreted as a promise for assistance. It may be the case that going ahead with an intervention is not guaranteed. Therefore, also make sure not too overburden communities with a high level of participation at this stage. It may be the case that an intervention by the partner organisation is not the best solution, or that the organisation do not have the possibility or mandate to intervene with the requested support.
- Ensure a balanced representation of vulnerable people in discussions with the disaster-affected population to ensure that all voices are heard.
- Provide the affected population with access to safe and appropriate spaces for community meetings and information sharing at the earliest opportunity.
- Wherever feasible and appropriate, use local labour, environmentally sustainable materials and socially responsible business to benefit the local economy and promote recovery.
- All categories of people have the right to participate, including women, men, boys and girls. Representatives of particular groups may be more likely to step forward in participation. This may risk that other groups, or individuals within such groups, are overlooked. In your participation efforts, continuously think about "is there a perspective of a group or subset of the group that may be missing?"
- When engaging vulnerable and marginalized groups, do not only see the vulnerabilities, but the strengths and capacities of the groups and individuals in them.

5. Mainstreaming of Cross-Cutting Issues

5.1 Gender

A gender analysis is a tool to understand how gender roles, power structures and discrimination of women and girls determine how women, girls, men and boys experience a humanitarian setting, their coping mechanisms and capacities, and what their needs are. The analysis can be done by asking ourselves and the target group questions about the local context and what the reality looks like for women, men, girls and boys. Areas to look into could be:

- Division of labour
- Decision making
- Access to and control over resources
- Legal and religious systems, norms and attitudes
- Vulnerability
- Risks

Knowledge of the reality is key in the design and implementation of gender-responsive and rights-based humanitarian action. Doing a gender analysis will help us to take gender into consideration when planning, monitoring and following up on a humanitarian intervention, so that we involve both women and men (and girls and boys) in the planning process and make sure that there are equal opportunities to participate in and benefit from the project activities. The CHS, particularly commitment four regarding communication, participation and feedback, is an important guide to ensure that all groups are included in consultation and decision-making.

Women, men, boys and girls are not homogenous groups. In a gender analysis it is therefore important to apply an intersectional perspective. Intersectionality helps us to look into how different systems of discrimination (for example gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation or age) are linked and work together. In humanitarian settings women, children, elderly people, people with disabilities, and people living with HIV/Aids are often those who are the most vulnerable. In initial analyses, special consideration must be given to the specific needs of these different groups'.

When designing an intervention it is also important to consider gender aspects that are specific to the sector(s) in the project. For example, if food is to be distributed, consider how different groups, including women and girls, are consulted to ensure that food distribution points are safe, appropriate and scheduled at a good time. If an intervention includes hygiene and dignity kit distributions, consider how different groups are consulted to ensure that contents of the kits are appropriate and can be used safely. Please see further details regarding sector-specific guidelines for gender equality and prevention of gender-based violence in the resource box below.

A project application should contain estimated sex- and age disaggregated data (SADD), regardless of funding source, and concrete information on vulnerability related to gender. It might be difficult to gather statistics during planning and if so this information can be collected during the implementation of the project and reported on after the conclusion of the project. Projects are assessed with regards to how they incorporate gender aspects in the planning (needs assessment), implementation (activities) and reporting (M&E) of a project. PMU can support partners with consultations, resources and training on how to integrate gender in humanitarian interventions.

For more information, please see:

- IASC, Gender in Humanitarian Action Handbook, 2017.
- IASC, Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action, 2015.
- Gender Practitioners Collaborative, Minimum Standards for Mainstreaming Gender Equality.
- Care, Gender in Emergencies
- IFRC, Minimum standards for protection gender and inclusion in emergencies, 2018.

5.2 Protection Mainstreaming and Conflict sensitivity

Protection mainstreaming is "the process of incorporating protection principles and promoting meaningful access, safety and dignity in humanitarian aid".[6] Whilst PMU's partners are not required to specifically work within the protection sector, partners are expected to incorporate protection mainstreaming in their humanitarian program design as much as possible. Partners may or may not choose to include protection mainstreaming indictors when designing their projects. There are four protection mainstreaming principals that should be considered in any humanitarian action: [7]

- Prioritize safety and dignity, and avoid causing harm: prevent and minimize as much as possible any unintended negative effects of your intervention which can increase people's vulnerability to physical and psychosocial risks
- Meaningful Access: arrange for people's access to assistance and services - in proportion to need and without any barriers (e.g. discrimination). Pay special attention to individuals and groups who may be particularly vulnerable or have difficulty accessing assistance and services.
- Accountability: set-up appropriate mechanisms through which affected populations can measure the adequacy of interventions, and address concerns and complaints. Please see section G.4.5. for more information on Accountability.
- Participation and empowerment: support the development of self-protection, capacities and assist people to claim their rights, including - not exclusively - the rights to shelter, food, water and sanitation, health, and education.

Any intervention, whether it is a humanitarian, development or a peacebuilding project, always has an impact on the environment in which it is implemented. This impact can either push towards peaceful coexistence and social cohesion, or towards disparities and potential violent conflicts between various groups. Conflict sensitivity is the ability of organizations to understand the context in which you operate, understand the interaction between the project and the context, as well as to act upon this understanding in order to avoid any negative impacts and maximize positive impacts.[8]

Experience shows that humanitarian projects may create increased tension and conflict in an area, because they often include the transfer of large amounts of resources, and because implementing organisations often lack the necessary knowledge and sensitivity to local cultures and conditions. Even though PMU's implementing partners are well acquainted with local cultures and conditions, it is essential that an analysis of the planned project's positive and negative impacts is carried out, so as to strive to promote peace and reconciliation. The most commonly used method for assessing conflict risks is known as Do No Harm and contains a simple tool for analysis.

[7] Global Protection Cluster: Brief on Protection Mainstreaming
[8] Safer world: Conflict-Sensitive Approaches to development, humanitarian assistance and peace building.

The Do No Harm approach was built on six key lessons:[9]

1. Development cooperation and humanitarian assistance initiatives are never neutral, but rather become a part of the conflict context;
2. There are two realities in any conflict situation – dividers and connectors. Dividers are those factors that people are fighting about or cause tension. Connectors bring people together and/or tend to reduce tension;
3. Development cooperation and humanitarian assistance have an effect on both dividers and connectors. Conflict insensitive initiatives can increase tensions while conflict sensitive initiatives can support local capacities for peace;
4. An intervention consists of both actions and behaviors. Actions reflect the resources being brought into a context (what are we offering and doing?), while behaviors reflect the conduct of the actor bringing the resources (how are we doing it?);
5. The details (what, why, who, by whom, when, where, and how) of cooperation strategies and programs matter
6. There are always options. Redirecting a strategy or a program can help to mitigate negative impacts (increased tensions) and increase the opportunity to contribute to conflict prevention and peacebuilding

In order to support implementing partners in performing the three main tasks of a conflict-sensitive approach in a structured way, PMU has developed The Conflict Sensitivity Wheel.

The Wheel aims at helping non-governmental organizations and other civil society actors to make sure that their interventions are undertaken in a conflict- sensitive manner. Using the image of a wagon wheel, the model visually relates the intervention to the environment in which it is taking place and poses several key questions that help actors identify how the intervention is influencing this context, especially its peace and conflict status. It makes sure that all the relevant aspects are taken into consideration when the intervention is being designed, and hence, helps actors in making informed decisions on which actions should be taken to make the context more peaceful, or at least to ensure that the intervention is not making things worse.

For more information, please see:

- PMU: The Conflict Sensitivity Wheel, 2019
- Safer world: Conflict-Sensitive Approaches to development, humanitarian assistance and peace building, 2004.
- Sida: Conflict Sensitivity in Programme Management, Jan 2017.
- Sphere Handbook, Protection Principles, 2018.
- Global Protection Cluster, Protection Mainstreaming Toolkit, 2017.

[9] Sida: Conflict Sensitivity in Programme Management, Jan 2017.

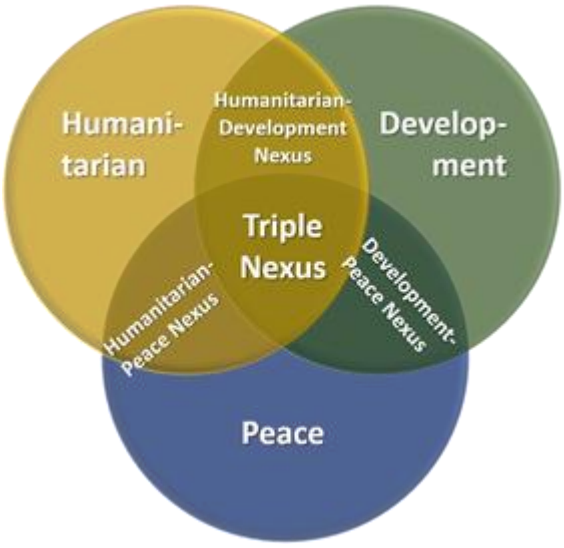
6. Other Thematic Areas of Importance

6.1 The Link between Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid

Over the past 10 years, the number of situations in the world, where conflicts interact with prolonged crises and deep-rooted development needs, has increased dramatically. The number of conflicts have both increased and become more protracted than previously. A need for an integral way of dealing with these challenges has risen. Humanitarian relief, development programmes and peacebuilding are not separate processes, they are often all needed at the same time. A 'humanitarian-development nexus', or a 'humanitarian-development-peace nexus' (triple nexus) has developed.

There is a strong link between poverty, the lack of respect for human rights and the risk of humanitarian disasters. Armed conflicts are often caused by a lack of democracy, poor governance, economic injustices, lack of equality, etc. During natural disasters, it is often the most vulnerable and marginalized groups that suffer most since they may live in sub-standard settings with simple houses and other risk factors. Through development cooperation addressing these underlying causes, humanitarian situations can be prevented and avoided.

When catastrophic tensions or stress strikes geographical areas or populations, it is the most vulnerable that suffer most and can cope the least. In many cases harmful situations cannot be prevented, but in areas or contexts where the risks are known a lot can be done to build resilience. Therefore dedication to building resilience in every situation, and particularly in fragile contexts is called upon. And the resilience building needs to address economic, environmental, political, societal, psychological, ethical and security conditions, in a way that reduces risks and enables sustainable living conditions.



There are also examples of situations in which people live under very difficult circumstances, but where the reasons are not armed conflicts or natural disasters. For example, there are states in which there is heavy political oppression, or states in which political upheaval creates difficult situations for many of the people. Such political or economic collapses are normally not eligible criteria for humanitarian aid, but are areas in which development cooperation or other types of work are conducted to create change. Addressing the root causes of vulnerabilities, conflict triggers, etc. can have a long lasting effect and be far more effective. PMU strives to always seek to address root causes of crises, while at the same time responding to urgent needs.

The emphasis on a more coherent approach offers many opportunities. Meeting immediate needs at the same time as ensuring longer-term investment addressing the systemic causes of conflict and vulnerability – such as poverty, inequality and the lack of functioning accountability systems – has a better chance of reducing the impact of cyclical or recurrent shocks and stresses, and supporting the peace that is essential for development to be sustainable.

PMU's implementing partners have a good knowledge of the context, working in an area before, during and after a challenge or a crisis, enabling them to coherently address people's vulnerability. Therefore, PMU encourages implementing partners to the linking of relief, rehabilitation, peace-building and development as a way of promoting more long-term results, and to ensure that the humanitarian interventions do not undermine the ongoing development work and that the development programming builds on humanitarian knowledge and results.

However, there are also some potential challenges. If long-term development goals are prioritized across the whole system, there is a risk that immediate humanitarian needs do not receive adequate responses. On the other hand, prioritizing humanitarian assistance across the response risks failing to strengthen local systems to accountably provide essential social services, and prevent and prepare for future crises, and to risk ignoring the systemic causes of conflict and vulnerability, including poverty, inequality and the lack of functioning democratic systems.

Therefore, achieving the right mix of humanitarian, development and peace approaches (usually referred to as HDN Nexus or Triple Nexus) and how they are integrated, is critical. A nexus approach should never be a reason not to deliver timely humanitarian assistance where needed, nor a reason to scale back development assistance.

OECD-DAC[10] has defined some key points when planning for a triple nexus intervention:

- Prioritize prevention, mediation and peacebuilding, investing in development whenever possible, while ensuring immediate humanitarian needs continue to be met
- Put people at the center, tackling exclusion and promoting gender equality
- Ensure that activities do no harm, are conflict sensitive to avoid unintended negative consequences and maximize positive effects across humanitarian, development and peace actions
- Ensuring that development, peace and humanitarian programming is risk-focused, flexible, context-adapted and avoids fragmentation through programming
- Strengthen national and local capacities
- Invest in learning and evidence

For more information, please see:

- OECD: DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, 2019.
- Oxfam: The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus. What does it mean for multi-mandated organizations?, 2019.
- Sida: Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, 2020.

[10] The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

6.2 Resilience

Resilience should, wherever possible, be mainstreamed in activities to ensure that humanitarian aid helps to strengthen the resilience, recovery and adaptation capacity of populations affected by natural disasters, conflicts or health threats, such as epidemics, without compromising on the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality.[11]

Resilience can be defined as 'the capacity of a system, be it an individual, a forest, a city or an economy, to deal with change and continue to develop. It is about the capacity to use shocks and disturbances like a financial crisis or climate change to spur renewal and innovative thinking. Resilience thinking embraces learning, diversity and above all the belief that humans and nature are strongly coupled to the point that they should be conceived as one social ecological system.'[12]

It is becoming increasingly important to understand the reasons behind disasters, so that the risks can be analysed beforehand, consequences can be assessed and preventive measures be taken. The term Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), referring to the work of reducing risks and preventing disasters, is used in the field of humanitarian aid and is also increasingly being applied in development cooperation. The work includes improved planning of infrastructure, safer buildings, warning systems and better preparedness for disasters.

Implementing partners should plan its projects to minimise risks related to people and property instead of increasing them. For instance, vast investments in an agricultural project may fail because an area becomes flooded. If a risk analysis had been carried out, such a situation could easily have been predicted and prevented through a redesign of the project.

When PMU, Swedish partners and implementing partners meet to develop country/regional programmes, it is crucial to discuss how each party can contribute to minimising the risk of conflicts and disasters. It is our responsibility to plan projects that contribute to the building of local capacity based on the risk analyses. Strengthening people's and communities' own resilience will be even more important in the future to mitigate the impact of new disasters.

For more information, please see:

- Action Aid, Resilience Handbook, 2016.
- IFRC, Framework for Community Resilience, 2014.

6.3 Environment and Climate

A project's impact on the environment shall always be taken into consideration, and it is important to strive to reduce any negative environmental and climate impact of humanitarian projects. For this reason, an environmental impact assessment (EIA) shall always be carried out; however, the extent of it is can be modified to suit the project. Humanitarian projects should be 'conducted in as environmentally sustainable a way as possible, without compromising on the fundamental goal of saving lives and alleviating suffering'.[13] In many humanitarian situations, the local environment is subject to a significant negative impact. The resettlement of populations and high population concentrations, e.g. in areas of conflict or flooding can create sanitary problems and also lead to deforestation due to the increased need of wood for construction and fires. It is important to ensure that humanitarian interventions do not pose a greater threat to environment by e.g. placing latrines close to a river

[11] Strategy for Sweden's humanitarian aid provided through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) 2017–2020
[12] Stockholm Resilience Centre: http://whatisresilience.org/en/start-en/
[13] Strategy for Sweden's humanitarian aid provided through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) 2017–2020

bed, and that e.g. drilling of boreholes, construction of dams, etc. does not leave a negative effect on the environment by oil leakage, that health interventions handles redundant medicines in a safe manner and similar.

Integration of climate and environment into humanitarian interventions should aim to ensure that opportunities for positive impacts are enhanced, while risks are managed. It is more than do-no-harm. Environment and climate change integration in projects is achieved when:

1. Opportunities for a positive impact from the intervention on the environment/climate are enhanced;
2. Risks and negative impacts from the intervention on the environment/climate are avoided or reduced and managed;
3. Risks from climate change or environmental degradation on the sustainability of the intervention are identified and avoided or reduced and managed, i.e., that the contribution is resilient to climate change and other environmental changes.[14]

For more information, please see:

- Sida, Environmental and climate change indicators, 2010.
- Sida, Guidelines for a Simplified Environmental Assessment, 2017.
- Sphere: Reducing environmental impact in humanitarian response, 2019.

7. Exit Strategy

The exit strategy is primarily a process of moving from emergency to rehabilitation and development, and can be defined as 'how the program intends to withdraw its resources while ensuring that achievement of the program goals (relief or development) is not jeopardized and that progress towards these goals will continue'.[15] Humanitarian aid, including short projects, always has long-term effects. For this reason it is important that, already early on in the planning phase of the project, consideration is given to whether or not the project will contribute to the humanitarian situation becoming "permanent", or that the key stakeholders will become dependent upon the aid provided. Humanitarian assistance shall in the extent possible enable a bridging towards rehabilitation and developmental programmes in the area. By linking up with CSO's in the area, or building in bridging components in a project (e.g. self-help groups, etc.) long-term effects can be achieved even in short-term humanitarian projects.

Some principles for good practice:[16]

- Plan for exit from the outset
- Think about sustainability early-on
- Consult with partners and stakeholders regularly (using assessments to monitor challenges), and
- Communicate constantly.

Successful exits typically involve a mix of realistic timeframes, careful and mutual planning, consultation, and flexibility to set up arrangements for handing over or find alternative ways of financing. The Sphere Handbook underlines the importance of

[14] Sida. Green toolbox: : Introduction to Environment and Climate Change Integration November 2016
[15] C-SAFE Regional Learning Spaces Initiative, What We Know about Exit Strategies: Practical Guidance for Developing Exit Strategies in the field, Sept. 2005.
[16] K4D, Kerina Tull: Responsible exit from humanitarian interventions

careful planning and implementation of closures, directing humanitarian organizations to "plan a transition or exit strategy in the early stages of the humanitarian programme that ensures longer-term positive effects and reduces the risk of dependency". Good planning for project closure may be overlooked or neglected, however, due to humanitarian organizations' tend to focus on present problems. When planning is lacking, the exit of humanitarian organizations is more likely to be disorganized and lead to disarray with other agencies left scrambling to make up the difference. To avoid such outcomes, planning should be carefully tailored to the context, including funding and partnership parameters, and well thought out early in the project lifecycle.[17] Clearly communicating timelines and the steps of project closure with local communities and partners is identified as contributing to a sense of agency for stakeholders, including staff, partners, and community members, in being able to make better informed choices for themselves and feeling greater ownership of the project. It also demonstrates respect, promotes dignity, and allows communities to anticipate how the exit will unfold so that they may plan accordingly. It is thus a precondition for enacting accountability. Information should be clearly conveyed to other organizations, for example during cluster meetings, so that they can anticipate any impacts for their own programs.[18]

For more information, please see:

- What We Know about Exit Strategies: Practical Guidance for Developing Exit Strategies in the Field, September 2005, C-SAFE Regional Learning Spaces Initiative.
- K4D, Kerina Tull, 2020: Responsible exit from humanitarian interventions
- Pal, N.E., Eckenwiler, L., Hyppolite, SR. et al. Ethical considerations for closing humanitarian projects: a scoping review. Int J Humanitarian Action 4, 17 (2019)

F. Methods and tools for humanitarian assistance

1. The Sphere Handbook - Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Assistance

The Red Cross, Red Crescent and a number of other international humanitarian organisations have jointly written a handbook, *The Sphere Handbook*, which is a voluntary initiative with the aim of improving the quality of humanitarian assistance and the accountability of humanitarian actors. It is now one of the most widely known and internationally recognized sets of common principles and universal minimum standards in life-saving areas of humanitarian response in different sectors. PMU strongly encourages the implementing partners to follow these minimum standards – the Sphere Standards.

Whilst organizational commitment to CHS is aiming at improving the quality and effectiveness of any humanitarian action, Sphere Standards focuses on meeting the urgent survival needs of people affected by manmade and natural disasters. Sphere Standards provides both sectorial specific guidance (most recently revised in 2018) as well as guidance on cross cutting issues. The Sphere Standards is a starting point when planning and designing humanitarian intervention, stating the minimum to reach and achieve in a crisis settings to save lives. Any humanitarian project supported by PMU and it´s back donors should consider Sphere Standards in its project design. Not all Sphere indicators will be feasible, but implementing partners are

[17] Pal, N.E., Eckenwiler, L., Hyppolite, SR. *et al.* Ethical considerations for closing humanitarian projects: a scoping review. *Int J Humanitarian Action* **4,** 17 (2019).
[18] Ibid

expected to strive to meet relevant standards and indicators as much as they can.

The Sphere Handbook puts the rights of disaster-affected populations to life with dignity, and to protection and assistance at the centre of humanitarian action, and it promotes the active participation of affected populations.
The minimum standards cover four primary life-saving areas of humanitarian aid:

- water supply, sanitation facilities and hygiene promotion
- food security and nutrition
- shelter, settlement and non-food items
- health action

Each of these sectors is also divided into sub-sectors. Each sub-sector has minimum standards with important indicators. The handbook also includes instructions for how these minimum standards can be applied in different situations. These instructions provide advice on prioritisation, suggestions for practical solutions and describe a number of difficulties that can arise. They are currently used throughout the world and provide a basis for common assessment and analysis. They are also used as a common base upon which to coordinate humanitarian assistance. The Sphere Handbook is a very practical tool during the implementation of a project. It helps users through the entire process, from initial analysis to evaluation. The handbook also helps users to identify problems and opportunities, and to establish goals and indicators when using the Logical Framework Approach (LFA). The section on project planning explains in more detail how the handbook's minimum standards fit into the LFA matrix.

Each chapter contains sector specific key actions, key indicators and guidance notes. Key actions are suggestions and may not be relevant for all contexts. Guidance notes links the sectorial guidance to cross cuttings issues such as protection and the CHS etc. Key Indicators are a way to measure that that the standard is achieved and is divided into the following three categories:

- Process Indicators: ensuring requirements are met, e.g. using standard tools and national and/or international guidelines.
- Performance Indicators: measure progress e.g. using baseline data versus end line data, and monitoring progress throughout the program implementation.
- Target Indicator: These should be specific and quantifiable and be based on the minimum target of a standard.

Many of the Sphere key performance and target indicators overlap with institutional donor mandatory indicators, and as such good to adhere to regardless of the respective funding source.

The Sphere Handbook is also useful both when planning humanitarian preparedness and working with advocacy.

The Sphere Handbook does not cover all sectors of humanitarian response to a disaster or conflict. Therefore, there are Companion Standards that share a similar rights-based approach and are developed in a broad consultative and consensus-based manner. They provide humanitarian professionals with a pool of harmonised sets of quality standards that are easy to refer to and to use.

The initiatives which currently compose the HSP are:[19]

- Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (CPMS)
  Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (The Alliance)
- Minimum Standard for Market Analysis (MISMA)
  Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP)
- Minimum Economic Recovery Standards (MERS)
  SEEP Network
- Minimum Standards for Education
  Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)
- Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards
  LEGS
- Humanitarian inclusion standards for older people and people with disabilities
  HelpAge International, Age and Disability Capacity Program

For more information on The Sphere Handbook, see www.spherestandards.org.

[19] As of December 2021. Please see https://spherestandards.org/humanitarian-standards/standards-partnership/ for any updated information.

G. Project Cycle Management

1. Introduction

Humanitarian projects, like development projects, can be divided into four main phases: planning, implementation, monitoring & evaluation and presentation of results. Even if time frames for humanitarian project are typically shorter than development projects, dialogue, communication and learning are still important. As many stakeholders as possible should be involved in the process. During longer humanitarian projects or rehabilitation projects after a disaster, there is often time for thorough planning, so that the project contributes to sustainability of results. PMU provides support in all of these phases, but primarily during planning, monitoring and evaluation.

As with development projects, it is also important to identify the resources that already exist during a humanitarian situation, i.e. what people have and can do, so that the project enhances the key stakeholder's and participants strengths and inherent capacities. The energy and potential that people have to change a situation is the greatest asset a project can have and makes the project more successful. All parties in a project are also responsible for finding work methods and systems that increase efficiency and keep costs down. The use of time and resources, logistics and infrastructure as well as administrative routines and systems should be considered from the onset.

All planning, monitoring and presentation of project results shall be done in a way ensuring that knowledge and successful methods can be re-applied in the organisation and reported to PMU.

2Planning

2.1 The importance of good planning

Planning and preparing is key to a successful project, as a well-planned project has a better chance of being implemented in an efficient and timely matter. This is true of both urgent projects as well as larger and long-term projects stretching over one to two years in complex humanitarian situations. Identifying and understanding the local needs, opportunities and risks prior to implementing a humanitarian project is essential, Commitment one of the CHS states that "Communities and people affected by crisis receive assistance appropriate to their needs". It further highlights the importance of context specific understanding and the needs and priorities of the people. The assessment shall be done in close coordination with national and local authorities, as well as bilaterally with other potential implementing organisations, both local and international. . As mentioned, PMU actively promotes gender integration in humanitarian action and it is vital that implementing partners ensure that the needs assessment team is composed of both women and men to ensure that all views are included in the assessment. If a team is composed only of men, there is a risk women will not feel comfortable to speak about certain issues, and vice versa. The affected population should always contribute with their views.

There is a risk however, that the key stakeholders and affected population may misinterpret the joint planning as a promise of support and it's therefore important to not give the impression of promises of support.

Following a new emergency, PMU partners are expected to:

- Review any pre-existing secondary data
- If no needs assessment has been carried out by other agencies or coordination bodies, carry out a local assessment immediately, building in pre-disaster information to access changes in the context caused by the disaster, identifying and new factors that create or increase vulnerability. Participate in multi-sectorial, joint or inter-agency assessments wherever possible.
- Find information about local humanitarian capacity, the affected and wider population, context and other pre-existing factors that may increase people's susceptibility to the disaster.
- Disaggregate population data by SADD
- Include an inclusive range of people in the assessment – women and men of all ages, girls, boys and other vulnerable people affected by the disaster, local leaders and authorities and other potential agencies and service providers operating in the area
- Gather information systematically, using the variety of methods, triangulate with information gathered from a number of sources and agencies and document the data as they are collected. The assessment should ideally be multi-sectorial.
- Assess the coping capacity, skills and resources and recovery strategies for the affected population.
- Assess the response plans and capacity of the state.
- Assess current and potential safety concerns for the disaster-affected population and aid workers, including the potential for the response to exacerbate a conflict or create tension between the affected and host populations.
- Share assessment data in a timely manner and in a format that is accessible to other humanitarian agencies.

What is a needs assessment?

Needs assessment is how organisations identify and measure the needs of a crisis-affected community, as well as response and service gaps. This helps the organisation to decide how it can assist the community most effectively.

What are the problems?	Which people have been affected by the crisis? What are their greatest needs? Where are the most affected areas?
What are the sources of the problems?	What has the impact of the crisis been? What vulnerabilities exist? What capacities exist?
What resources will be needed to deal with the problems?	What resources will affected communities require? What resources are available or likely to become available? What resources will need to be mobilised?

An assessment preferably includes an on-site visit by an assessment team. A gender balanced assessment team, composed of generalists in humanitarian assistance and relevant technical specialists and with clear terms of reference, which actively seeks to involve the population in a culturally acceptable manner, constitutes the basis for the quality of an assessment. Consultations with beneficiaries should include inquiries on appropriate and safe ways to file complaints and receive answers. An assessment should be seen as step in a continuous process of reviewing and updating as part of the monitoring process, particularly when the situation is evolving rapidly, or where there are critical developments such as large population movements.

Principles of needs assessments

- Ensure the scope of the assessment reflects the size and nature of the crisis
- Collect usable, disaggregated data
- Set a baseline, noting any chronic needs that existed *before* the crisis
- Consider vulnerable and difficult-to-reach groups
- Assess local capacities
- Use transparent methods and validate your findings
- Manage community expectations
- Ensure that the affected communities have a voice in the process, and that they are asked about their priority needs
- Produce timely and relevant analysis
- Coordinate with others and share findings
- Continue to collect data as the response is implemented

Additional resources on needs assessments:

- Humanitarian Needs Assessment: The Good Enough Guide, 2014.
- IASC Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA), 2015.

The design of PMU supported interventions needs to be context-specific and any response should be based on locally collected information of the needs, priorities and capacities of the affected population; wherever possible this information should be disaggregated by gender. PMU working in accordance with the results based approach with measurable indicators. Indicators should normally be based on Sphere standards, but adapted flexibly and has to take full account of the local context, including national standards.

The Sphere handbook alone cannot constitute a complete guide or set of criteria for humanitarian action. First, the Minimum Standards do not cover all the possible forms of appropriate humanitarian assistance. These standards have been developed by humanitarian practitioners with specific areas of expertise and have been formulated based on evidence, experience, and learning. The standards were developed by consensus and reflect accumulated best practice at a global level. They are revised regularly to incorporate developments across the sector. These standards are a useful resource for practitioners to plan, implement, and evaluate humanitarian response, and they also provide a strong basis to advocate for the rights of crisis-affected communities.

It is recognized that in many cases not all of the indicators and standards will be met – however, the user of the Sphere handbook (or its companions) should strive to meet the standards and indicators as well as they can. In the initial phase of a response, for example, providing basic facilities for all the affected population may be more important than reaching the Minimum Standards and indicators for only a proportion of the population. The handbook will serve as a starting point and offers a tool for enhanced effectiveness and quality of the humanitarian assistance. As a general rule, deviations from the Sphere standard should be explained.

Key things to consider when planning the response:

- Design the programme based on an impartial assessment of needs, context, the risk faced and the capacity of the affected population.
- Design the programme to meet needs that cannot or will not be met by the state or the affected people.
- Prioritise life-saving actions that address basic, urgent survival needs in the immediate aftermath of the disaster.
- Ensure that the programme design and approach supports all aspects of the dignity of the affected individuals and populations.
- Design the programmes that promote early recovery, reduce risk and enhance the capacity of affected people to prevent, minimise or better cope with the effects of future hazards.

2.2 Roles during project planning between PMU and implementing partners

Responsibility for planning normally lies with the implementing partner. However, PMU gives active support through the exchange of e-mails and telephone contact. PMU coordinates any possible fundraising in Sweden. PMU also handles the contact with other organisations, primarily in Scandinavia, who often have the same cooperation partners in the field. PMU also handles the contact with other organisations in Sweden and Europe.

When planning humanitarian projects, the need of increased competence for project personnel should also be analysed. Training to strengthen the implementing partner's capacity to carry out the project could be financed by the project. This may include shorter educational programmes and training of the project leader or locally employed staff. A short description and reason for the training can be made in the application. PMU also offer partners other capacity building opportunities such as attending CHS trainings and humanitarian workshops organised by PMU or other partners. Partners may contact PMU with their inquiry for capacity building, which is not directly connected to a specific project. See Annex 4.11 Application for Capacity Support – Humanitarian Training.

3. Application Process

Planning of acute, minor humanitarian interventions usually occurs in two steps. The planning of larger and longer projects in areas with protracted humanitarian situations, or rehabilitation-oriented projects usually occur in three steps – as with development projects. Planning is adapted to the situation, and the time that is available. The planning done in different steps makes it possible for PMU to assess if needs and plans correspond with the requirements that donors set to be able to release funds.

Step 1: Appeal for funds to PMU

a. The implementing partner conducts an initial needs analysis, if possible together with the authorities and organisations in the area, and determines their own organisation's capacities for being able to carry out a project. Information on the humanitarian situation, general needs and planned projects can be found on www.reliefweb.int, the website of the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

b. The implementing partner makes a preliminary identification of key stakeholders* and most affected populations, and conducts a preliminary project plan. Remember to not give the preliminary key stakeholders the impression that they are being promised support.

c. The implementing partner makes an appeal for funds to PMU formulated in a Concept Note (see Annex 4.1). The appeal must be motivated in relation to the information that is found on www.reliefweb.int.

Step 2: PMU's response

At this point, PMU assesses the project idea presented in the concept note, the implementing partner's capacity, and possibilities of financing. In urgent situations, PMU takes a quick decision on whether the implementing partner can submit a full proposal or if the concept note is rejected. In some urgent situations, PMU may make a decision to provide support already on the concept note stage. If PMU decides to give the go ahead of the partner to submit a full proposal (based on the concept note), PMU will advise the partner on which templates to be used for the full application process. This can be PMU's own format or in the format used by a back donor. International partners can use their own formats and templates. PMU also looks into possible fundraising activities in Sweden. The Swedish partner, if applicable, is notified of the process.

PMU plays an active role in the planning of back donor funded projects from the outset since PMU is responsible for planning, implementation and monitoring of projects in line with agreements between PMU and these back donors.

Step 3: Full proposal

a. After receiving the go ahead from PMU, the implementing partner intensifies contacts with authorities, clusters and organisations on the local, district and/or national levels to continue the planning and coordination of humanitarian aid to avoid duplication of efforts and negative effects to those who are affected by the disaster.

b. The implementing partner writes a more detailed needs analysis together with the key stakeholders and other actors. In certain cases, PMU can provide support with personnel or consultants from Sweden based on the needs of the implementing partner. A full proposal package consists of a narrative application, budget and LFA.

c. The implementing partner sends the full application package to PMU: narrative application, budget and LFA.

Step 4: PMU's Assessment of Project Applications

The project application is evaluated by PMU based upon an assessment template that contains a number of important questions regarding the relevance, feasibility, coordination, participation and cost-effectiveness of the project. Also included are questions on monitoring and evaluation, risks and risk management, sustainability and long-term effects. The template can also be used by implementing partners for support during planning. The PMU Decision Forum (DF) will decide if the project is approved, and feedback will be provided to the implementing partner. See annex 4.7a: Template for Assessment of Humanitarian Projects

Step 5: Project proposal is submitted to a back donor

In case the project is approved for being proposed to a back donor, PMU writes a complete application in line with the donor's template. For projects in which a back donor has given a clear signal that support is possible, the implementing partner and PMU do the final project planning jointly. PMU is responsible for the final drafting of the project application to the donor, in which there are very precise requirements for the description of the project.

Logical Framework Approach (LFA)

The LFA is a common tool for planning, implementation and evaluation of projects in the world of development cooperation and humanitarian aid. The method began to take root in the 1960s, and since then its use has spread to many parts of the world. Most organisations involved in humanitarian programmes use the method, and it's intended to give an easy and comprehensive overview of the proposed intervention with measurable indicators as per the SMART standard.

The LFA should show the project objective, expected results and planned activities, and include reference to quality standards such as Sphere and/or national standards. implementing partners need to be specific by providing gender disaggregated indicators, both quantitative and qualitative indicators and show how the Sphere standards (or other applicable standards) have informed the choice of objectives and indicators. The LFA will later on be used by PMU to follow up on the intervention.

Additional resources:

- Sphere Handbook 2018
- Guidance on SMART indicators for Relief & Development Projects

4. Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL)

To ensure that projects are implemented efficiently and successfully, and to establish clear links between interventions and results, MEAL is crucial in any humanitarian response – regardless of the funding source/type of donor. Without monitoring and evaluation, it would be difficult to understand if any progress towards goals and impact are made, and if there is a need for adjustments and improvements to ongoing and future projects. Whilst an implementing partner may have specific MEAL staff within the organisation, all senior organisational staff and project staff should be aware of and involved in MEAL. Monitoring and Evaluation varies in purpose and processes, however they are closely interlinked e.g. data collected during monitoring can be utilized for evaluation purposes.

4.1 Start up

When a project has been approved, PMU sends out relevant templates and guidelines in a Start Up Package to be used in the implementation and reporting of the project. The project should be implemented according to plan and in accordance with the applicable agreements, taking into account the flexibility mentioned below.

Any major changes and/or deviations needs to be communicated with PMU for approval in accordance with the applicable project agreement. This is essential to uphold trust by back donors, but also to avoid unnecessary repayment of funds. For full information regarding financial administration, see the PMU Finance and Administration Guidelines.

How the project will be monitored should ideally be illustrated in a monitoring plan, which is developed either during the proposal process or at the onset of the project. This should include how each LFA indicator will be measured, type of data collection needed, frequency of data collection, who is responsible and how it will be reported.

In order to measure progress indictors in an end line evaluation (described in section G.4.4.), a baseline survey may be required. A baseline study helps to set project benchmarks against which to monitor and track changes in performance indicators. The need for a baseline will depend on the progress indicator selected. E.g. if indicators stating an increase or a decrease, or the target is to reach below (<) or above (>) a minimum/maximum target - then baseline data may be needed. Baseline data can be secondary data collected from other sources available such as nutrition rates and food security data available through clusters, other partners or relevant national and local ministry departments. Examples of these are Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM), Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), prevalence of acute watery diarrhoea and many more. Baseline data should be included in the LFA for any progress indicator, however if not available during the project design phase, it can be collected during the first phase of the project implementation. First line baseline data can be collected during the needs assessment, or during the first 3 months of a 12 months project. For shorter-term projects, 3-6 months, baseline data and progress indicators will most likely not be applicable. This will depend on the project scope as well as specific donor requirements. Baseline surveys should be incorporated in the overall project implementation, and serve the project progress monitoring. It should not be conducted in isolation or independent of the intended project. If no progress indicators are included in the project, then baseline should not be conducted in order to avoid survey fatigue among the target communities, and to avoid unnecessary costs. PMU may be able to support partners in designing baseline surveys where and when needed.

4.2 Flexibility in programming and monitoring

Since humanitarian projects are almost always carried out in complex situations in a constant state of change - a good system of monitoring is needed so that the project can be adapted to the changing situation and needs. Project descriptions should be used as a plan during the implementation of a project, but it is not realistic to expect that it can be followed in detail since the project description is based upon *assumptions* regarding the situation and on *expectations* of what the project should lead to. If the activities do not lead to the planned results and expected effects, the project plan has to be revised. This especially concerns larger, longer projects in areas of protracted humanitarian situations or in rehabilitation oriented projects. For the most part, it is often enough to make small adjustments to activities. However, if project activities need to be changed and the budget adjusted, PMU's humanitarian unit must be contacted. More information about PMU's rules for budget changes can be found in the PMU Finance and Administration Guidelines.

PMU emphasizes that activities must take the different needs of men, women, boys and girls into consideration. During a humanitarian project, the needs may vary, and so does the capacities, skills, limitations, etc. for different groups. By planning activities so that e.g. trainings do not coincide with hours of the day when women by tradition and culture may be occupied

with food preparation or distributions take place in areas which are unsafe for certain groups to reach. Likewise, the design of relief packages should be done with regards to who the likely recipients are. A bag of 50 kilo that is likely to be collected by young people is not a suitable design as it would most likely hinder some groups to have de facto access to the humanitarian support. More specific gender tip sheets for the different sectors can be found at the PMU webpage. All M&E activities should also collect sex and age disaggregated data (SADD) to ensure the project can easily trace who has benefitted from the project.

Reflecting on the changes that arise is a key to learning and increased project quality. The most useful learning occurs when the different humanitarian actors and key stakeholders meet. One should not be afraid of discovering problems and difficulties in a project. *Being aware* of a problem is the first step to solving it. Carrying out project work with a degree of humility in which communication and reflection are prioritised, leads to mutual learning for the implementing partner, PMU and key stakeholders.

4.3 Monitoring

4.3.1 Methods of Monitoring.

Monitoring is the continued collection of data and information to understand the progress of the project. Based on the project description with its goal (outcome), expected results (output) and indicators, risk analysis and project budget, the implementing partner shall make regular follow up of the operational activities and output, risk management and financial spending. A plan for *how* monitoring, evaluation and reporting will be organised must be included in the project description, and should be included in the project activity plan. Time and resources must be set aside for regular monitoring visits in which the managers and personnel participate. It is recommended that the project leader/project team conducts monthly or bimonthly monitoring visits to follow up with key project staff, beneficiaries (representative and/or focus groups), key humanitarian actors and local community representatives. The ongoing project monitoring should identify if progress is made towards the overall goal and objectives, if things should be done differently or better and if the project design needs to be modified in case of changes in the context. Monitoring and reporting meetings shall be documented, so that other involved parties such as the management of the implementing partner, coordination forums, and PMU can receive information. Proper documentation of a project makes it possible to follow its development over a longer period of time, and take into account different points of view as well as important observations, results and effects.

Routine monitoring, specifically of LFA indicators, is strongly recommended. Measuring and documenting progress on indicators should not be left until the end of the intervention. Frequency and type of data collection will depend on if the respective indicator is qualitative or quantitative. Additional information on quantitative and qualitative data can be found under section G.4.4 “Evaluation”. It is recommended to outline and plan for the data collection needed already during the project design phase including budgeting, and then monitor and document progress on the indicators throughout the project using monthly internal reporting. Progress reports such as a monthly situation report or Indicator Performance Tracking Table (IPTT) can be developed and utilized for this purpose. Regular progress reports report can aid the project staff to regularly and timely understand if the project is on track or not, as well as if indicators and expected results will indeed be achieved. Key components should be baseline, targets and results data. IPTT can include all indicators needed such as donor requirements and national cluster requirements. If deviations from the expected results are detected early, the project staff might then need to adjust the project plan and re-design accordingly. Whilst sharing monthly progress reports with PMU is not required, any changes to the project design including indicators should be discussed with PMU, and any changes need approval as per the applicable agreement approved before adjusting the intervention.

In case of distributions of in-kind items such as food, NFIs (non-food items) or cash - implementing partners are recommended

to conduct Post Distribution Monitoring (PDMs) after a distribution is completed. This is relevant for both blanket and targeted distributions. The purpose of a PDM includes;

1) confirming that the intended recipients have indeed received the in-kind items;
2) understanding if there has been any diversion of items,
3) encouraging learning,
4) understanding if recipients have been well informed and agreed or not agreed with e.g. selection criteria,
5) assessing any potential risks related to the distributions.

Guidelines on PDMs can usually be sourced through respective national sectorial clusters. Global PDM guidelines can be found in the resource box below.

PMU has the overall responsibility for quality assurance of a project towards its back donors. Monitoring is carried out to check the budget, activities and schedule, and to also be able to reflect on results and effects. More can be read about how the balancing of finances is done in PMU's Finance and Administration Guidelines.

A part of the monitoring consists of the accounts given by the key stakeholders. Listening to the views and opinions of the affected people is an effective tool for measuring how quality in people's living conditions has improved, and they provide an important foundation for the qualitative presentation of project results. The accounts that people give of their experiences tell us how they see their living conditions, how they see the project and how it has affected their lives. By doing this, the key stakeholders have an opportunity to make their voices heard, and also see that their experiences are valued and documented. In addition, it helps us being accountable to the people we are serving.

The implementing partners follow up is the basis for the periodic reporting to PMU, which can be bi-monthly, in the middle of the project or annually – depending on the project timeframe.

PMU will assess Periodic Reports including financial reports, and respond to deviations or needs for adjustment of the project plan. PMU will also make field-monitoring visits, which include monitoring of the implementing organization, monitoring of cross cutting issues as well as monitoring of operational activities. For this purpose, PMU has developed a Monitoring Guide for Humanitarian Projects (see annex 7.26). When relevant and/or needed, digital and remote monitoring tools are also used.

Additional resources on monitoring:

- Post Distribution Monitoring for Shelter Programming, 2021 (including NFIs)
- Cash: Monitoring Guidance for CTP in Emergencies, 2017 (including PDM guidance)
- IPTT Guidelines, 2008:

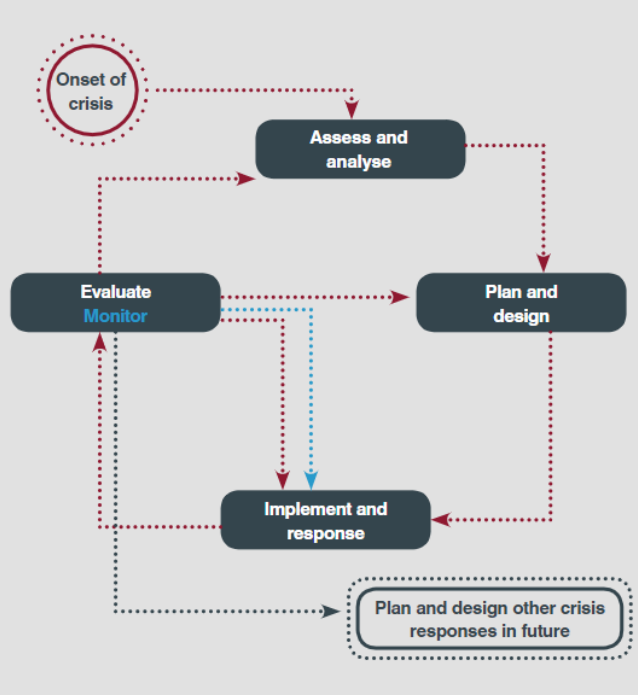
4.4 Evaluation

An evaluation can be defined as 'the episodic assessment of the performance of a programme or project; helps to answer questions of what and why; focuses on outcomes and impact'.[20] The main purposes of evaluations are accountability and learning. Accountability by taking responsibility for an intervention to different stakeholders, e.g. those who are affected by the intervention, those who finance it, other humanitarian actors, etc. Learning where experiences and reflection lead to changes in behaviour or the acquisition of new abilities.

PMU encourages the implementing partner and evaluators to, when possible, take into account the following key words when evaluating a humanitarian intervention:

- *Utility* – Evaluations must be useful and used.
- *Feasibility* – Evaluations must be realistic, diplomatic, and managed in a sensible, cost effective manner.
- *Ethics and legality* – Evaluations must be conducted in an ethical and legal manner, with particular regard for the welfare of those involved in and affected by the evaluation.
- *Impartiality and independence* – Evaluations should provide a comprehensive and unbiased assessment that takes into account the views of all stakeholders. With external evaluations, evaluators should not be involved or have a vested interest in the intervention being evaluated.
- *Transparency* – Evaluation activities should reflect an attitude of openness and transparency.
- *Accuracy* – Evaluations should be technical accurate, providing sufficient information about the data collection, analysis, and interpretation methods so that its worth or merit can be determined.
- *Participation* – Stakeholders should be consulted and meaningfully involved in the evaluation process when feasible and appropriate.
- Co*llaboration* – Collaboration between operating partners in the evaluation process improves the legitimacy and utility of the evaluation.

Figure: Monitoring and evaluation in the emergency response cycle[21]



Internal evaluations are conducted by those responsible for implementing a project/programme. They can be less expensive than external evaluations and help build staff capacity and ownership. However, they may lack credibility with certain stakeholders, such as back donors, as they are perceived as more subjective (biased or one-sided). These tend to be focused on learning lessons rather than demonstrating accountability.

External or independent evaluations are conducted by evaluator(s) outside of the implementing team, lending it a degree of objectivity and often technical expertise. These tend to focus on accountability.

[20] ALNAP: Evaluation of Humanitarian Action
[21] ALNAP: Evaluation of Humanitarian Action

Internal as well as external evaluations can be conducted as participatory evaluations (conducted with the beneficiaries and other key stakeholders, and can be empowering, building their capacity, ownership and support) and/or joint evaluations (conducted collaboratively by more than one implementing partner, and can help build consensus at different levels, credibility and joint support).

Advantages with internal evaluations	Advantages with external evaluations
Benefits evaluators derive from learning and reflection during the evaluation process remain within the organisation.	They are increasing the evaluation's credibility outside the organisation and might be required by external donors.
Evaluators know the organisation and its culture.	Less likely to have organisational bias.
Evaluators are known to staff.	Bring fresh perspectives.
Evaluators may be less threatening and more trusted.	May have broader experience to draw on.
Findings and recommendations may be more appropriate for the organisation.	They are more likely to be trained and experienced in evaluations.
Recommendations often have a greater chance of being adopted.	Evaluator is not part of the organisation's power structure.
Less expensive.	Can serve as an outside experts or facilitators.
Builds internal evaluation capability and generally contributes to programme capacity.	Often more objective and regarded as experts

4.4.1 Internal evaluations

An internal evaluation focuses primarily on learning. When a humanitarian project is moving towards its conclusion, or shortly after, an evaluation should always be conducted and also include recommendations for future projects. It can also be a tool to measure certain progress project indicators included in the LFA.

After the termination of the project, the implementing organization shall, with or without the presence of PMU, make an internal evaluation of the project[22], using the principles presented below when relevant and as far as possible. The main objectives of the internal evaluation is both to learn and develop knowledge within the organization as well as within the group of stakeholders, and to provide comprehensive information for the presentation of results and the final reporting of the intervention. The evaluation should assess the outcome of the project and not only the output, and as far as possible also the impact of the project. The evaluation should refer to the needs assessment and baseline study.

Top-level questions should focus on the information needed for major policy and operational decisions. They may include the following:

- Did the intervention achieve its purpose, and if not, why not?
- Should we continue with this approach, and if so, why?
- What changes do we need to make to our system to be better able to respond to a similar crisis in the future?

[22] However, some projects with institutional funding require an external evaluation either by PMU or external donors. For more information, see 5.2 External evaluation.

Competent evaluators should be able, in the inception phase, to identify the key second-level questions that they need to ask in order to answer the top-level questions.

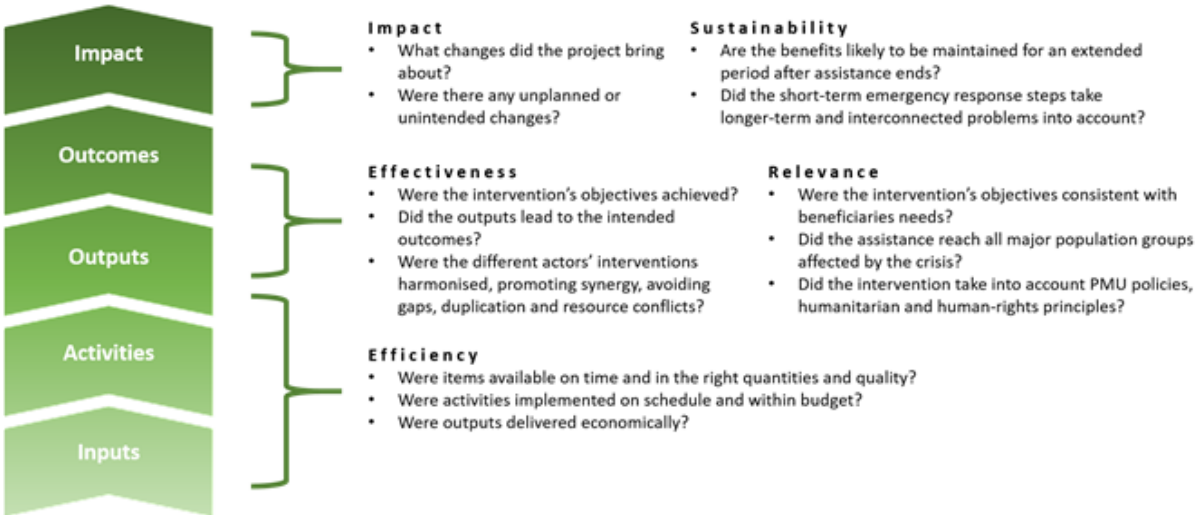
The key stakeholders' descriptions of the intervention and their experiences play a central role during the evaluation. This is why it is important that their personal accounts have been categorised, analysed and documented correctly during the implementation of the project. A review of the key stakeholders' accounts is very instructive since the qualitative changes then become visible. Unexpected effects and results can also become evident. It is also important to review documentation from earlier monitoring and reporting meetings to ensure that important experiences, issues and results do not become lost in the conversation.

The final narrative report, i.e. the presentation of results that is to be submitted to PMU, is done by the project personnel after the joint evaluation with the key stakeholders and other stakeholders.

As a result of the inputs and activities the intervention will result in different outputs, outcomes and impact. According to PMU, an evaluation should assess the outcome of the project and not only the output, and, as far as possible, also the impact of the project.

- **Outputs** are the defined deliverables provided by the actor or actors being evaluated. Outputs are the result of inputs received and activities developed by the actor. An output must be fully attributable to an actor or group of actors – for example, water points provided in a camp of internally displaced people.
- **Outcomes** are the uses made of the outputs by the affected population. An outcome is only partly attributable to an actor – for example, the use made of the water from newly installed water points (for domestic consumption, animal consumption, or other livelihood activities such as brick making).
- **Impact** is the social, economic, technical, or environmental effect of a project on individuals, gender and age groups, communities, and institutions. Impacts can be positive or negative, macro (sector-level) or micro (household-level), intended or unintended. For example, providing food aid may prevent malnutrition (a positive, intended impact), but in some circumstances it may also discourage local food production (an unintended impact).

PMU encourages the implementing partner and evaluators to use the following key questions when conducting an evaluation of humanitarian interventions:



Below is a summary, by ALNAP, of basic evaluation criteria in the form of a question, followed by a criterion and its definition, followed by an action that could be taken based on an answer to the question. These criteria take both positive and negative and intended and unintended impacts into account.

Appropriateness

How well activities are tailored to local needs. Increases ownership, accountability, and cost-effectiveness. It is a variant on the OECD/DAC criterion of relevance, the extent to which a project is in line with local needs, priorities and donor policy.

Question: To what extent was the food package adapted to local needs?

Action steps: Management may change planning procedures; operations may change the design of future aid packages

Effectiveness

How well an activity has achieved its purpose, or can be expected to do so on the basis of existing outputs.

Question: To what extent did the food distribution reduce malnutrition?

Action steps: Management may refine its policy for such interventions; operations may redesign the current programme and design future programmes differently.

Connectedness

The extent to which short-term emergency response steps take longer-term problems into account. Related to the concept of sustainability - that interventions should support longer-term goals.

Question: How did the distribution of food assistance affect the level of planting for the next harvest?

Action steps: Operations may improve the design of future programmes.

Impact

Any effect on an individual, group, community, or institution. It can be positive or negative, intended or unintended.

Question: What impact did the decision to provide food to the senior female in the household rather than the male head of household have on household dynamics?

Action steps: Management may change its policy on mode of distribution; operations may fine-tune the distribution practice, for example to better take gender dynamics into account.

Coverage

The extent to which assistance reaches all major population groups affected by the crisis.

Question: To what extent did the food distribution target the most vulnerable?

Action steps: Operations may improve the design of future programmes.

Efficiency

A measure of the outputs, qualitative and quantitative, achieved as a result of inputs. Usually requires comparing alternative approaches to achieving an output, to see whether the most efficient approach has been used.

Question: Was using partners for distribution more cost-effective than using contractors would have been?

Action steps: Management may change or retain its policy on giving priority to partners; operations may negotiate fairer rates with partners.

Coordination

The extent to which different actors' interventions are harmonised, promote synergy, and avoid gaps, duplication, and resource conflicts. Coordination is sometimes included in the effectiveness criterion rather than being a separate criterion.

Question: Did gaps or duplication exist in food distribution by this agency and other agencies?

Action steps: Management and operations may seek better ways to engage with other actors.

Coherence

The extent to which there is consistency across security, developmental, trade, military, and humanitarian policies, and to which all policies take into account humanitarian and human-rights considerations. A policy-level issue that may not be relevant in all evaluations.

Question: How did the decision to import sugar rather than purchase it from the national mill fit with the donor's policy on encouraging local purchases?

Action steps: Management may seek better ways to balance cost-effectiveness with adherence to broad policies.

PMU encourages the implementing partner and evaluators to present both quantitative data and qualitative data in the evaluations.

Quantitative data measures and explains what is being studied with numbers (e.g. counts, ratios, percentages, proportions, average scores, etc.). Quantitative methods tend to use structured approaches (e.g. coded responses to surveys) which provide precise data that can be statistically analyzed and replicated (copied) for comparison.

Examples:

- 64 communities are served by an early warning system.
- 40 % of the households spend more than two hours gathering water for household needs.

Qualitative data explains what is being studied with words (documented observations, representative case descriptions, perceptions, opinions of value, etc.). Qualitative methods use semi-structured techniques (e.g. observations and interviews) to provide in-depth understanding of attitudes, beliefs, motives and behaviors. They tend to be more participatory and reflective in practice.

Examples:

- According to community focus groups, the early warning system sounded during the emergency simulation, but in some instances it was not loud enough.
- During community meetings, women explained that they spend a considerable amount of their day collecting drinking water, and so have limited water available for personal and household hygiene

The project leader is normally responsible for the internal evaluation of a humanitarian intervention to take place. Sample groups that have not been consulted earlier in the project cycle should also be consulted at this stage as they may have a different view on project progress and result.

The results and learning's of the internal evaluation should be shared with the management and project staff, and should be part of the capacity building and continuous improvement of the implementing partner. The partner is expected in every evaluation to also include beneficiaries in the evaluation process and also report the results and learning's back to the beneficiaries as a part of the information sharing and strengthening local resilience, and developing knowledge as well as promoting changes attitudes and practices among the right holders.

The implementing partner does not need to submit internal monitoring reports to PMU, but PMU reserves the right to ask for copies when justified or asked by back donors. Partners are also encouraged to highlight to PMU (and, when possible and relevant, also to other PMU partners) the different lessons learned and best practices when it comes to methods used in the intervention.

4.4.2 External evaluations

For back donor funded projects, or before an application for a new phase, an external consultant could evaluate the project. The advantage of engaging a consultant is that an external, professional consultant can see the project from the outside, and see relationships, connections and contexts that the project personnel may not see, and it also gives credibility to positive results that have been obtained. The relevance and need for an external evaluation should normally be discussed at the planning stage of all humanitarian interventions. The decision whether or not to include an external evaluation should normally be done in agreement between PMU and the implementing partner organization. External evaluations are a normal

tool for countries where PMU cannot make onsite field visits for follow ups, as per Annex 7.21 PMU Guidelines for remote monitoring and evaluation. An external evaluation can be done during an ongoing project, or after the activities have been concluded. The financing of the evaluation is budgeted for in the project application, and approved by PMU and/or the back donor. Primary responsibility for the evaluation can either rest upon the implementing partner or PMU. This shall be made clear in the application.

Procedure and Responsibilities in External Evaluations:

1) Formulation of Terms of Reference
The of References (ToR) for external evaluations can be drafted either by the implementing partner or by PMU. The partner or PMU will comment on the draft before both agree on the final ToR that will be used for the procurement of the evaluator.

2) Procurement of Evaluator and Inception Report
Any interested evaluator needs to provide a bid, including an inception report describing how he/she plans to conduct the evaluation, based on the Terms of Reference. CV's of all consultants involved in the evaluation need to be attached to the bid. Please also refer to the applicable Guidelines for Procurement and Purchase of Goods and Services, which can be obtained from the Humanitarian Unit.

It is normally the implementing partner who is responsible for the procurement of the external evaluator, and PMU should be provided with the bids, including the inception reports and CV's of the potential evaluators, for approval. However, in larger and more long-term humanitarian interventions, PMU reserves the right to procure the evaluator. A copy of the contract drawn up with the chosen evaluator needs to be shared with PMU before being signed.

3) Evaluation Plan, Field visit and Initial Findings
The implementing partner has the responsibility for the planning and logistics etc., connected to the field visit of the evaluator. An evaluation plan, based on the inception report, needs to include meetings with focus groups and key representatives of relevant authorities and organizations. All documents related to the project have to be at the disposal of the evaluator and all key people within the organization need to be available for interviews. At the end of the field visit, the evaluator should make a briefing on the initial findings in a meeting with key people of the implementing organization and preferably also representatives from the target group/right holders.

4) Draft report and feedback to the evaluator
A draft report will be sent by the evaluator to PMU and the implementing partner for comments and corrections before the evaluator compiles the final evaluation report. The final version should be sent to both PMU and the implementing partner.

5) Management Response and Plan of action
PMU will discuss the evaluation report with its conclusions and recommendations and the implementing partner will draft a management response. It should include comments on all recommendations of the evaluation report and a suggested action plan for follow up of the recommendations. The management response with its draft action plan should then be sent to the PMU for review and feedback. When appropriate, the management response and the action plan, if relevant, be sent to the back donor(s). The action plan will be implemented by PMU and/or the implementing partner depending on the nature of the recommendations. The implementing partner has the responsibility for providing feedback to the beneficiaries. PMU will monitor the action plan in cooperation with the implementing partner.

4.5 Accountability to Affected Populations

Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) is a widely used concept in the humanitarian sector to ensure that target communities are involved in the decision making of humanitarian responses and that organisations can be accountable for their actions. It can be defined as a commitment to use power responsibly by taking account of, giving account to, and being held to account by the people humanitarian organisations seek to assist. AAP core practices includes giving target communities equal influence over decision making, creating opportunities for communities to hold humanitarian actors responsible and sharing information in a transparent way with communities.

AAP relates to CHS Commitment 4 "Communities and people affected by crisis know their rights and entitlements, have access to information and participate in decisions that affect them" and CHS Commitment 5 "Communities and people affected by crisis have access to safe and responsive mechanisms to handle complaints".

Additional resources on AAP

- CHS Alliance: Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment, Quick Reference Handbook, 2020.

4.5.1 Information sharing

A key principle for accountability is the active sharing of information. Information sharing is important throughout the whole project cycle management, but even more so during the implementation of the project. Information sharing should seek to ensure the involvement and influence of the target communities in the decision making of the intended response. Implementing partners are expected to ensure that basic information is presented in a language, formats and media that are appropriate for, accessible to, and can be understood by the people it aims to assist and other stakeholders. However, if information sharing constitutes any security risk for people or properties the partner has to take this into consideration and be restrictive in its information sharing.

The implementing partner is recommended to share the following information with the beneficiaries. If the partner is not able to work according to these minimum standards the reasons should be specified in the project description.

- A brief background description of the implementing organisation and its cooperation with PMU, including contact details
- A brief description of the project including project goal, expected results, main activities targeted right holders, time plan and a financial summary
- Criteria for selection of right holders/beneficiaries and deliverables
- Staff roles and responsibilities and name of the project leader for contacts
- How input from participation activities has contributed to the decisions
- Summaries of progress reports and evaluations
- The implementing partner's Code of Conduct, and expected behaviour of staff

Make sure the information is presented in languages, formats and media that are appropriate for, and accessible to, the people you aim to assist. It is also important that there are equal opportunities for different stakeholders, including the most vulnerable and marginalized.

PMU further recommends that information about the following mechanisms are also shared with the beneficiaries and other stakeholders:

- PMU's Accountability Framework
- PMU's Complaints and Response Mechanism, annex 1.18

4.5.2 Complaints and Feedback

Beneficiaries have the right to complain to an agency and seek a corresponding response. Formal mechanisms for complaints and redress are an essential component of an organisations accountability to help populations to re-establish control over their lives. The Policy for Complaints Handling for PMU's Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (Annex 1.18) is part of the accountability framework of PMU. By this, PMU seeks to enable stakeholders and right-holders to raise complaints and receive a response through a safe, accessible and effective process. As an essential part of this policy the PMU staff are also expected to follow PMU's staff code of conduct (Annex 3b.1 Code of Conduct for all PMU employees).

PMU is encouraging its implementing partners to develop and implement a complaints response mechanism and PMU will provide support to implementing partners in developing such mechanisms. For implementing partners' receiving institutional funding through PMU the development and implementation of a complaints response mechanism is a requirement.

Some examples of the aim and benefits of having a complaints response mechanism:

- improve your accountability to partners and beneficiaries and raise awareness amongst partners, beneficiaries and other stakeholders' about their right to raise concerns and complaints with your organization
- ensure the respect and dignity of those wishing to raise an issue, concern or complaint about your organization
- alert your organisation to problems in our work and allow your organisation to rectify mistakes
- improve the effectiveness of your work
- help your organisation to continuously learn and improve
- protect and guide your staff in handling complaints
- strengthen the relationship between your organisation and your partners

The complaints response system should also define the main stakeholders to whom you are responsible. As an example PMU has defined the following main stakeholders in Annex 1.18: PMU's implementing partners and their employees, representatives from Swedish partner organisations, institutional donors and other donor organisations of PMU, and right-holders as well as affected communities and institutions of PMU supported development cooperation projects and humanitarian projects. In order to avoid misunderstanding and ambiguity PMU has also defined the different kinds of complaints that can be handled by PMU's complaints response system.

An important part of a complaints response system is also to handle complaints from its own employees against the organisation itself (whistle-blowing policy), but also between staff within the organisation (grievance procedure policy). Upon request PMU will provide the implementing partners with PMU's internal policies regarding these issues.

All implementing partners are also, at a minimum, expected to inform the beneficiaries and other stakeholders of the name and contact details of the manager of the implementing organisation and the project leader of the intervention, thus enabling beneficiaries and other stakeholders to forward feedback and complaints to the implementing organisation. If the partner has a complaints and response mechanism, this system is expected to be used in relation to the beneficiaries and other stakeholders in all projects supported by PMU.

PMU wants to be a learning organization that constantly takes advantage of its own and others' lessons learned and experiences. PMU therefore welcomes various forms of constructive feedback, both positive and negative, from PMU's partners and other stakeholders, as well as from PMU's staff. Even those complaints that fall outside what PMU handles in its system for complaint management, PMU sees as feedback that can help us develop the organization. PMU also encourages its implementing partners to take advantage of various forms of feedback.

4.6 Learning

Monitoring and evaluation, as well as information sharing and complaints handling should all contribute to continued learning within the organisation. CHS commitment 7 emphasizes the importance of learning: “Communities and people affected by crisis can expect delivery of improved assistance as organisations learn from experience and reflection”. Learning from previous and current actions should be considered at both an organisational level as well as throughout project design and implementation. The goal of learning is to make better and more efficient decisions. PMU also encourages its partners to have a learning working environment where staff are encouraged to question and contribute, and to ensure an ability to modify guidance, processes and activities when needed. Learning should include lessons learned from key external stakeholder such as target communities, local authorities and other operating agencies. A partner should also share their learnings with others, to support collaboration through exchange and contribute to the humanitarian sector in general. Lessons learned should be included in proposal writing and reporting, especially through evaluation reporting.

Partners should also seek to strengthen the capacity of their staff through identifying potential knowledge gaps and encourage continued theoretical and in-service trainings on different topics related to the humanitarian sector. PMU will also in certain instances provide training on relevant topics such as CHS, gender in humanitarian action and other topics identified as a need together with partners. PMU also provides training specifically on donor requirements relevant for PMU funded projects, e.g. finance and procurement related to humanitarian work. Through PMUs partnership with back donors, trainings may also be conducted within these partnerships and jointly with other local actors outside PMUs own network. Partners may contact PMU with their inquiry for capacity building, which is not directly connected to a specific project. See Annex 4.11 Application for Capacity Support – Humanitarian Training.

Additional resources on learning:
There are several online learning portals providing free courses specifically for humanitarian action:

- https://www.disasterready.org/
- https://kayaconnect.org/
- https://fabo.org/

6. Reporting

6.1 Periodical Reporting

Periodical reporting generally applies only to longer and larger humanitarian projects, and not to humanitarian minor grants. However, the nature of reporting is made clear in the respective project agreement. A periodical report generally consists of two parts: a financial report and a narrative report. The financial report shows the funds sent and expended during the specified period and allows PMU to see how the project is being implemented in relation to the budget, as well as discover any exchange gains or losses that might have an impact on the project implementation.[23] The narrative report serves as a snapshot of the project progress, any challenges that might impact the implementation and timeline, as well as a revisit and possible update of the risk analysis.

6.2 Final Reporting

The final reporting to PMU shall provide an accurate and overall view of the results and effects of the project during the implementation period. Internal monitoring and documentation as well as any external reports, such as supporting reports from health centres or similar, forms the basis of the reports that are sent to PMU.

PMU requires financial and narrative reports of each humanitarian project. The reporting cycle is decided on a case-by-case basis, and is included in the project agreement. The narrative reports focus on the presentation of results, reflections and what has been learned.

PMU uses the reports primarily to monitor and assure the quality of the project as well as to draw general conclusions from the project that can be applied also in other humanitarian projects. The reports are also used to present project results to any back donors. The reports are also used by PMU's Communications Unit for information and fundraising purposes.

The results achieved using the funds that are channelled with support from PMU, or a back donor, must be measured, accounted for and presented clearly. Final reports are to be sent within two months after the end of the project, and feedback is to be sent by PMU within three weeks. The final reporting and the project as a whole is assessed by PMU through annex 4.7b, Template for Assessment of Final Reporting of Humanitarian Projects, and the concluding assessment is shared also with the implementing partner before closing the project.

[23] For more information on financial reporting, please see the PMU Finance and Administration Guidelines.

H. List of annexes

The following annexes are available:

	The IFRC Code of Conduct
	The Humanitarian Charter
	PMU's Humanitarian Strategy
	PMU's Finance and Administration Guidelines
Annex 1.18	Policy for Complaints Handling
Annex 3b.1	Code of Conduct for all Employees of PMU
Annex 4.1	Template for Concept Note for a Humanitarian Project
Annex 4.3	The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability
Annex 4.4	Template for Logical Framework Approach (LFA)
Annex 4.5	Template for Application for Humanitarian Assistance via PMU
Annex 4.6	Template for Application for a Humanitarian Minor Grant
Annex 4.7	Template for Final Narrative Report for Humanitarian Minor Grants
Annex 4.7a	Template for Assessment of Humanitarian Projects
Annex 4.7b	Template for Assessment of Final Reporting of Humanitarian Projects
Annex 4.8a	Template for Narrative Periodical Report for Humanitarian Projects
Annex 4.8b	Template for Final Narrative Report for Humanitarian Projects
Annex 4.10	PMU Humanitarian Accountability Framework
Annex 4.11	Application for Capacity Support – Humanitarian Training
Annex 7.21	PMU Guidelines for Remote Monitoring and Evaluation
Annex 7.26	PMU Monitoring Guide for Humanitarian Projects

These annexes, and the list of readings provided in these guidelines, can be obtained by sending a request to PMU's Humanitarian Unit.