Cross Cutting Issues Background

The cluster approach includes the responsibility for addressing cross cutting issues. Camp co-ordinators, therefore, need to be familiar with the nature of each of these cross cutting issues in order to know how to assess their status and identify gaps. This background paper provides brief orientations to the cross cutting issues that have been identified by the IASC as being within the prevue of the cluster approach. These issues include: protection, gender, HIV/AIDS and the environment. Indeed, many humanitarian organizations recognize additional cross cutting issues such as age and vulnerability, but this background paper is limited to those selected by the IASC.

There is unequal treatment of the content of these issues, not because some are more important than others, but because the IASC working groups on HIV/AIDS and the environment have developed this information for use by cluster leads. When the other cross cutting issue working groups have done the same, their information will be substituted.

Early Recovery

Early Recovery is defined as recovery that begins early in a humanitarian setting. It is a multi-dimensional process, guided by development principles. It aims to generate self-sustaining nationally owned and resilient processes for post-crisis recovery. Early recovery encompasses livelihoods, shelter, governance, environment and social dimensions, including the reintegration of displaced populations. It stabilizes human security and addresses underlying risks that contributed to the crisis.

The populations affected by the crisis require life saving support; their communities, institutions and livelihoods have often been physically destroyed and weakened. Recovery programming works to restore services, livelihood opportunities and governance capacity. This must start as soon as possible in the humanitarian or emergency phase. While most attention initially will be given to life saving interventions, the sooner the planning and work on recovery begins, the sooner the affected areas are stabilized and the national and/or regional institutions can move forward in providing basic services and assuming governance functions (security, local administration and judiciary).

Early recovery occurs in parallel with humanitarian activities, but its objectives, mechanisms and expertise are different. Early recovery aims to: augment on-going humanitarian assistance operations; ensure that spontaneous early recovery initiatives of the affected population are sustainable and avoid the rebuilding of risk; and establish the basis for longer-term recovery. Please consult the [IASC Cluster Working Group on Early Recovery Website](#) for more information.

Environment

Why is this issue important? *The environment is the physical, chemical and biological surroundings in which disaster-affected and local communities live and develop their livelihoods. It provides the natural resources that sustain individuals, and determines the quality of the surroundings in which they live - it needs protection if these essential functions are to be maintained.*

There is a strong link between the environment and disasters. Environmental pre-conditions often contribute to disasters. Disasters can result in negative environmental impacts. Emergency response can have positive <u>or</u> negative environmental impact. The cost of ignoring these links include: 1. secondary environmental threats with real or potential negative impacts on human life, health, welfare, livelihoods, environment, 2. short-term responses that do not deal with longer-term environmental effects, 3. emergency solutions that unnecessarily add garbage and waste materials to the environment, 4. loss of important ecological resources.

How to mainstream in emergencies? Those who respond to disasters have little time for in-depth environmental assessments, are not likely to be environmental specialist, and work in a situation where action must be taken quickly often without the benefit of "perfect" information. Therefore, being able to rapidly identify, evaluate and respond to critical environmental issues and their effects on lives and livelihoods during a disaster are key to effective disaster relief and recovery operations. Those conducting humanitarian assessments need a rapid, flexible and generalist tool for, such as the Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment Tool developed by CARE, which can scope or flag environmental issues resulting from the disaster or the humanitarian response and provide general guidance on what kind of experts may be needed and how to respond to environment-linked humanitarian issues that are identified.

Rapid assessments can include questions to consider and analyze:
- The general context of the disaster and related environmental issues
- Disaster related factors which may have an immediate impact on the environment
- Possible immediate environmental impacts of disaster agents
- Unmet basic needs of disaster survivors that could lead to adverse impact on the environment
- Potential negative environmental consequences of relief operations
- Opportunities for green procurement within the relief operation

How to integrate into cluster response? *(Please describe strategies, guidelines and activities for ensuring that environmental concerns are integrated into an interagency cluster/sector group response)*

Gender[1]
The equal rights of women and men are explicit in the human rights documents that form the basis of the Humanitarian Charter. Women and men, and girls and boys, have the same entitlement to humanitarian assistance; to respect for their human dignity; to acknowledgement of their equal human capacities, including the capacity to make choices; to the same opportunities to act on those choices; and to the same level of power to shape the outcome of their actions. Humanitarian responses are more effective when they are based on an understanding of the different needs, vulnerabilities, interests, capacities and coping strategies of men and women and the differing impacts of disaster upon them. The understanding of these differences, as well as of inequalities in women's and men's roles and workloads, access to and control of resources, decision-making power and opportunities for

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[1] Ibid.

skills development, is achieved through gender analysis. Gender cuts across all the other cross-cutting issues. Humanitarian aims of proportionality and impartiality mean that attention must be paid to achieving fairness between women and men and ensuring equality of outcome.

HIV in Situations of Humanitarian Concern

Why is this issue important?

In 2006, 2.9 million people died of HIV and another 4.3 million were newly infected. At least 70% of the world's 40 million people infected with HIV live in countries affected by acute and protracted crises. HIV programming needs to be systematically addressed in humanitarian action to avoid the spread of HIV infection, to maintain existing HIV prevention, care and treatment services and to help ensure that the vulnerability those individuals already living with HIV is not unduly increased during a crisis. More systematic integration of HIV programming into humanitarian action will help prevent HIV related morbidity and mortality that may occur as a result of the crisis. This means prioritizing humanitarian interventions that are designed to avert new HIV infections, and reduce the vulnerability of those already infected with HIV.

Currently, at least 22 countries with Humanitarian Coordinators have generalized HIV epidemics, which interact with other factors such as endemic poverty, conflict and mass displacement to exacerbate humanitarian crises. Although the result of new HIV infection will not be evident for many years, it is nevertheless fatal. Therefore HIV prevention is a life-saving intervention in humanitarian situations. Similarly, care and treatment provided to people with HIV in crisis settings are life- extending activities that have a long-term impact not only on the person living with HIV but also their families and communities. Clearly, the context of each humanitarian situation will determine the extent and level of engagement on HIV issues, however, even in low prevalence settings, appropriate HIV prevention, care and treatment should remain a feature of the humanitarian response.

How to integrate HIV in emergencies?

HIV and AIDS are complex problems with impacts that extend far beyond the health sector. Therefore, a multi-sectoral response is required to prevent HIV- related morbidity and mortality both during and after the crisis. In many humanitarian situations, HIV programming will already be operational prior to the crisis, and priority should be given to maintaining or restoring HIV prevention, care and treatment programs that may have been disrupted by the humanitarian situation. In complex emergencies, insecurity and mass displacement may prevent HIV interventions from reaching populations in need, and humanitarian action may be required to start relevant HIV prevention, care and treatment programs. Preparedness, planning and good coordination are essential for effective HIV interventions during emergencies.

How to integrate HIV into cluster response?

No single humanitarian actor has the capacity to implement all necessary interventions for HIV in emergencies; therefore, an inter-agency and coordinated approach by different actors is required. HIV has been designated as a priority cross cutting issue, meaning that all Clusters or Sectors are responsible for ensuring that HIV is integrated throughout humanitarian preparedness and response.

The integration of HIV questions into humanitarian needs analysis is a critical step to assure

HIV is addressed appropriately during emergencies. Clusters should ensure that HIV programming needs are considered while developing tools, policies and funding appeals. An IASC Task Force on HIV and Humanitarian Action has been established and is updating the IASC Guidance on HIV Interventions in Emergency Settings that serves as a practical tool to guide integration of HIV into cluster and sector work.

In addition, it is important that Clusters seek to consolidate their efforts on HIV to ensure a coordinated and coherent multi sectoral response. Efforts are underway to systematize UNAIDS participation in humanitarian processes, including Humanitarian Country Teams, to help ensure that effective coordination and support is available for implementation of HIV programming within the humanitarian response.

Tools and Resources

- ***IASC Guidelines on HIV/AIDS Interventions in Emergency Settings*:*** Technical guidance package on HIV interventions in emergencies

- ***IASC Training Package on Guidelines on HW/AIDS Interventions in Emergency Settings***

- Cluster leads should seek, as required, technical support from their own HIV focal points participating in the IASC Task Force on HIV and Humanitarian Action, or UNAIDS for support to integrate HIV into clusters and sectors.

* IASC Guidelines on HIV/AIDS Interventions in Emergency Settings
http**://**www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/content/products/docs/FinalGuidelines17Nov2003.pdf

Protection[2]

Assistance and protection are the two indivisible pillars of humanitarian action. Humanitarian agencies are frequently faced with situations where human acts or obstruction threaten the fundamental well-being or security of whole communities or sections of a population, such as to constitute violations of the population's rights as recognised by international law. This may take the form of direct threats to people's well-being, or to their means of survival, or to their safety. In the context of armed conflict, the paramount humanitarian concern is to protect people against such threats.

The form of relief assistance and the way in which it is provided can have a significant impact (positive or negative) on the affected population's security. The SPHERE handbook does not provide detailed descriptions of protection strategies or mechanisms, or of how agencies should implement their responsibility. However, where possible, it refers to protection aspects or rights issues – such as the prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation, or the need to ensure adequate registration of the population – as agencies must take these into account when they are involved in providing assistance.

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[2] *Cross-cutting issues - Key Messages*, a paper presented at first CSLT pilot by Mark Prasopa Plazier, Oxfam International, Conflict and Humanitarian Policy Advisor.