C. UNITED NATIONS DISASTER ASSESSMENT AND COORDINATION (UNDAC)

C

C.1. Concept

The United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) system is designed to assist the United Nations in meeting international needs for early and qualified information during the first phase of a sudden-onset emergency and in the coordination of incoming international relief at national level and/or at the site of the emergency. It is designed to deploy staff and experts at very short notice (12-24 hours) anywhere in the world. It also aims at advising and strengthening national and regional disaster response capacity.

The UNDAC system consists of four components:

     1. Staff - Professional and experienced emergency managers made available for UNDAC missions by their respective governments or organizations together with Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) staff. UNDAC team members are specially trained and equipped for their task.

     2. Methodology - Predefined methods for coordination including the collection and management of information, assessment as well as structures for coordination support during the first phase of a sudden-onset disaster or emergency. UNDAC methodology is designed to fit any disaster around the world.

     3. Mobilization procedures - Proven systems to mobilize and deploy an UNDAC team, so that it will arrive within 24 hours at any disaster or emergency site anywhere in the world.

     4. Equipment - Adequate personal and mission equipment for UNDAC teams to be self-sufficient in the field when deployed for disasters/emergencies.

Added value

An UNDAC team is a neutral, international asset that provides experienced emergency managers with varied skills, free of cost at very short notice to a sudden onset emergency. An UNDAC team may be dispatched at the occurrence or early warning of an emergency. UNDAC teams are requested by, and work under the authority of the UN Resident Coordinator/ Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC), and, when requested, the national government of an affected country. They provide an international capacity to support cross-sectoral emergency assessment, relief coordination and information-management.

In an earthquake, the UNDAC team provides the On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC) which coordinates the international Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) teams assisting in the rescue of survivors. The OSOCC structure may also be established in other types of emergencies.

When required, UNDAC teams are reinforced with experts covering more specialized fields of emergency management, e.g., environment. An UNDAC team is self-sufficient in basic telecommunications, office and personal equipment.

C

UNDAC regional teams
The UNDAC team is divided into three regional teams:
- Africa-Europe.
- Americas.
- Asia-Pacific.

In emergencies of mainly national or regional concern, UNDAC will draw upon its regional teams consisting of UNDAC members from the affected country/region. This enables OCHA to deploy an UNDAC team of emergency managers who are well versed in the local conditions, languages and culture.

Triggers for mobilisation of the UNDAC team
Indicators triggering the mobilization of an UNDAC team by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) include:

- **Natural Disasters -** When a disaster affected country requests international assistance in coping with a natural disaster and requires additional international coordination resources, or when a disaster is imminent, e.g., hurricanes, UNDAC teams may be pre-positioned in the country.

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

In each case, the deployment and detailed tasks of an UNDAC team are decided in consultation with the RC/HC and/or the national government. The team normally stays in the affected area for the initial response phase of two to four weeks.

C.1.1. IASC Working Group agreed statement on UNDAC
Following is the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Working Group statement on the UNDAC concept of 2002 that provides guidance for the use and development of the concept.

"General:
UNDAC is part of OCHA, not an independent organization. Its main role is to give the ERC the capability to support a member state affected by an emergency by providing technical services, under the leadership of the RC/HC. Among the technical services that UNDAC provides, the principal ones are on-site coordination and information dissemination services.

Complex emergencies:
The response to complex emergencies is frequently politically sensitive and close consultation within the United Nations family is called for. When UNDAC teams are deployed into such environments it will normally be in the context of OCHA's surge capacity.

Assessment:
Substantive sectoral assessments will normally be made by the host government, UN agencies, or qualified members of the IASC family. An UNDAC team may be requested to provide technical support in support of the RC/HC or UN Country Team.

Reporting and appeals process:
UNDAC will not issue appeals. UNDAC's reporting will focus not only on the material dimension. This reporting will aim to give governments and others a broad understanding of the scale of an emergency. Any United Nations appeal will be managed by the RC/HC and the UN Country Team.

Agency participation in UNDAC:
IASC agencies will seek to make available a number of staff for training and deployment on UNDAC teams.

Governance arrangements:
UNDAC will be managed by OCHA. An UNDAC Advisory Board has been established to more closely involve partners and to provide advice to the ERC on the development of the UNDAC system. Participating governments and IASC member agencies are invited to join the board which shall be chaired by OCHA. OCHA will report regularly to the IASC Working Group on the functioning of the UNDAC system and will consult the IASC Working Group with respect to any significant policy proposals."

C.1.2. Examples of what the UNDAC system can and cannot do

Examples of what the UNDAC system can do to support the RC/HC in case of disaster

- Support and facilitate the work of the RC/HC and the United Nations Disaster Management Team (UN DMT) and/or the IASC Country Team in the coordination of international assistance.
- Inform the RC/HC of developments in the emergency situation and other information which might be included in field and OCHA situation reports distributed to disaster relief organizations and the international community.
- Support the UN DMT and/or IASC Country Team in coordinating assessments of the emergency situation and analysis of relief needs.
- Support coordinated information management and dissemination related to the international humanitarian response to the disaster on behalf of the United Nations in-country system.

Examples of what the UNDAC System can do in support of the affected country's authorities

In case of disaster, the RC/HC and the government can agree on the use of the UNDAC team to:

C

- Strengthen the coordination centre of the government for international coordination.
- Strengthen the coordination centre of the authorities in charge at the site of the disaster.
- Support the following :

- Coordination of the process of evaluating immediate humanitarian needs.

- Management and dissemination of information towards the international/donor community.

- Mobilization of international resources.

- Reception and orientation of the international USAR teams.

- In the logistics sector, the government has overall responsibility and World Food Programme (WFP)/United Nations Joint Logistics Centre (UNJLC) normally assumes the responsibility of lead agency on behalf of the UN system. The UNDAC system, if requested, may provide support to the logistics operation by establishing a relevant coordination platform.

Outside cases of disasters

- Coordinates the selection of new UNDAC candidates in order to sustain the capacity of the UNDAC system worldwide.
- Trains new UNDAC members selected by national government and international organizations during induction courses of 12 days duration.
- Refreshes the skills of UNDAC members in 4-day courses held yearly for each UNDAC regional team.
- Keeps UNDAC members and UNDAC focal points in governments and agencies informed of developments in UNDAC system and its related missions.
- Ensures representation of the UNDAC system in relevant events or training worldwide.
- Conducts disaster response preparedness missions on request from disaster-prone countries. (See also Chapter I – UNDAC Disaster Response Preparedness Missions.)

Depending on available resources

- Facilitate or participate in simulation exercises involving disaster response coordination of relevance to the UNDAC system's role.
- Facilitate or participate in training initiatives addressing the subject of disaster response coordination relevant to the UNDAC system's role.

- Facilitate or participate in familiarization sessions to enhance understanding of the UNDAC system and OCHA's role.

Examples of what the UNDAC system cannot do

- In-depth or sectoral evaluation. The host government, UN agencies or qualified members of the IASC family, will normally make substantive sectoral assessments. However, the UNDAC system may help mobilize expertise in case of environmental impact of the emergency.
- Deliver humanitarian assistance. The UNDAC system only delivers support related to coordination, information management and resource mobilization.
- Take on a specialist role outside the areas of coordination, information management and resource mobilization.
- Sectoral coordination. This should be done by the ministries concerned, and within the UN system, by the designated lead agencies in each sector/cluster.
- Coordination of national/provincial entities. This is the responsibility of the national government.

C.2. UNDAC Standard Terms of Reference (approved by the ERC in Nov 2002)

The UNDAC system is a part of OCHA and is deployed pursuant to a request from an affected government, the ERC, or the RC/HC. It supports the RC/HC and the UN Country Team (UNCT)/UN DMT/IASC Country Team by providing technical services, principally in on-site coordination and information dissemination. It aims to facilitate close links between country-level, regional and international response efforts. It assists in meeting international needs for early and qualified information on the situation and, when necessary, in the coordination of international relief at the site of the emergency. UNDAC teams work in close consultation and coordination with the UNCT/UN DMT/IASC Country Team.

The following are standard Terms of Reference (ToR) for the mission of an UNDAC Team, which establish the overall framework for UNDAC deployments. The ERC may, within this framework, modify the ToRs for an UNDAC mission, consulting with the RC/HC and UNCT/IASC Country Team in the field, depending on the requirements of a given emergency situation.

"When on mission, the UNDAC team:

1. Assists and works under the authority of the RC/HC, who in turn reports to the ERC when responding to disasters

and emergencies. Supports and facilitates the work of the affected government and the UNCT/DMT in-country, in the initial response phase of an emergency.

2. Reports to the RC/HC and informs him/her and the UNCT/DMT of developments in the emergency situation.

C

3. The UNDAC team may provide and disseminate initial information on the material and human dimensions of an emergency with the aim of giving host governments and the international community a broad understanding of the nature and magnitude of an emergency. The UNDAC team will not issue appeals. Any UN appeal will be managed by the RC/HC and the UNCT.

4. While substantive multi-sectoral assessments will normally be made by the host government, UN agencies or qualified members of the IASC, within the framework of RC-UNCT coordination, UNDAC aims to support the host government and UNCT/DMT in facilitating the coordination of initial assessments of both the emergency situation and the international relief requirements stemming from it, with a particular view to ensuring:

• The consistency of any preliminary information regarding the nature and scale of the emergency, the preliminary needs assessed and the relief interventions required; and,

• The coordination of the infrastructure and logistics, including in relation to a possible deployment of UNJLCs.

5. During earthquakes and other emergencies involving collapsed structures where international urban search and rescue teams are deployed, UNDAC may, when requested by the affected government, ERC, RC/HC or the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG), establish a specialized On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC) with the local emergency management authorities to enable them to meet the technical needs of coordination of the international urban search and rescue teams.

6. When requested by the affected government, ERC or RC/HC, UNDAC may establish an OSOCC for the effective integration and use of international relief assets in support of the appropriate national emergency management authority.

7. When requested by the affected government, ERC, RC/HC and UNCT to operate in complex emergencies, UNDAC normally deploys and functions with the context of OCHA's surge capacity and operates in close consultation and coordination with the UN operational agencies.

8. The UNDAC team maintains links with and regularly reports on the progress of its mission to the ERC, UNCT/DMT and IASC partners throughout the duration of its mission.

9. As part of a joint effort to enhance system-wide coordination, OCHA will provide regular reports on UNDAC missions and field deployments to the UNDAC Advisory Board and the IASC Working Group, as required."

C.3. The UNDAC mission cycle

An emergency response mission normally proceeds in an operational cycle. Given below is an outline of possible actions that an UNDAC member may be required to take during the various stages of an UNDAC mission commencing from preparation to lessons learned.

It should provide UNDAC members with a check-list that allows them to anticipate the next steps they may need to take during a mission. Not all the actions listed here are applicable all the time and thus this list is not prescriptive but rather is primarily meant to be a guide for the UNDAC members' discretionary use.

UNDAC member's pre-mission awareness

- The international disaster environment, e.g., the consequences of floods, earthquakes, refugee movements, etc.
- The key players and their mandates.
- International humanitarian law.
- International resources for relevant information, e.g., web sites.
- Monitor Virtual OSOCC on a regular basis.
- OCHA's coordination mandate and UNDAC *raison d'être.*
- At all times make sure that Field Coordination Support Section (FCSS) has updated contact and personal information.

Personal preparation as an UNDAC team member

- Vaccinations/medical (updated vaccination-card).
- Family.
- Physical (pre-, during, and post-mission).
- Kit (personal and team-equipment).
- State of readiness.
- Passport valid for more than six months.

UNDAC mobilization

- Know the system:
- Step by step.
- Forms and procedures.
- National/Geneva level.
- Contractual arrangements for:
- Insurance.
- Liability.
- Readiness.

- Compensation.
- Contacts.
- Length of deployment.
- Daily Subsistence Allowance (DSA).
- Certificate.
- Status as "UN Expert on Mission".
- Arrangements for evacuation in the event of serious injury/illness.
- Arrangements/preparations for the possibility of death.

Deployment

- ToR.
- Mission objectives (determined in consultation with RC/HC and OCHA-Geneva).
- Briefing (mission tasks, expectations, methods of operation, briefing file, initial Plan of Action).
- Team capacity (members' strengths and weaknesses – personally and collectively).
- Team Leader's role and responsibilities.
- Cultural conditions existing in the country/region.
- Climatic conditions at disaster area.
- Security situation, phase and clearance.

Arrival in country

- Contacts.
- Entry formalities (forms, telecommunications and IT equipment).
- Logistical practicalities, e.g., bills, transport, money, food, etc.
- Select appropriate team profile level / visibility on entry.
- Marketing our services (using targeted literature, presentations, and member profiles).
- Identifying the key people and gaining their confidence as soon as possible.
- Establishing communication links (with the field, OCHA-Geneva).
- Briefing the RC/HC and/or government authorities.

Orientation phase

- Dispel pre-conceived ideas and re-adjust objectives on facing reality.
- Begin the information management process that continues throughout.
- Identify the key issues; establish a clear aim / objectives and then stay focused.
- Although missions are short, look at transition (short - medium - long term), i.e., what happens after the UNDAC mission and plan the exit strategy from the beginning.

- Win RC/HC / other key players' (government, UN agencies) confidence and manage their expectations.
- Get a feeling for the security situation.

Plan of Action
- Create a Plan of Action based on known information, including partners.
- Contents, e.g., times, objectives, etc.
- State clearly to the team and to outsiders the purpose of UNDAC.
- Give mission focus.

Execution
1. Assist and work under the RC/HC:
- The RC/HC's ToR and roles in specific disaster situations.
- ERC responsibility, role, power, etc.

2. Participate in the UN DMT/IASC Country Team:
- Participants.
- Work procedures.
- Its responsibility vis à vis the affected country as an effective platform for coordination.

3. Coordination:
- Major players and their expressed intentions and possible agendas.
- Definition of coordination to different people / agencies.
- Pre-established, workable plan or model for coordination.
- Identify possible conflicts of interest.
- Identify what is working in this situation and what is not.
- Identify and analyze existing coordination fora for strengths / weaknesses.

4. Provide cross-sectoral support to information and response coordination:
- Definition, i.e., what are the tasks / activities they imply.
- How to accomplish these tasks / activities.
- Identify and obtain the support one require, e.g., support modules / Military and Civil Defence Assets (MCDA).

5. Coordinate, initiate, and participate in joint assessment of situation, response, and relief needs:
- Know the characteristics and needs of other stakeholders in assessment.
- Where, when, and how to carry out joint assessment?
- How UNDAC may best support the joint assessment?
- How to achieve consistency of assessment information?
- How to prioritize needs and act as an arbiter between stakeholders?
- How to identify gaps, overlaps, and inefficient or weak response?
- How to present assessment findings?

6. Information management:
- Define priority information requirements.
- Collect the relevant information.
- Collate the information collected.
- Consolidate and organize the information.
- Analyze the collated and consolidated information.
- Make recommended courses of action for decision-makers.
- Report and disseminate the findings and recommendations, as appropriate.
- Sitreps:
- Audience and purpose.
- Configuration and what they should / should not contain.
- Preparations (dos and don'ts).
- UNDAC role in preparing them.
- Processing in Geneva.
- Practice good sitrep producing skills (by reading, writing, and critiquing them).

7. Appeals
- Audience and purpose.
- When to do them, when not to (they should be generated in-country / be joint).
- Configuration and what they should / should not contain.
- Extent of UNDAC's supporting role in their preparation.
- Implementation in the country and processing of them in Geneva.
- Practice good appeal producing skills (by reading, writing, and critiquing them).

8. Maintain links with the Coordination and Response Division (CRD) desk / FCSS, i.e., the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for:
- Regularity of contact.
- Reporting, lines and schedule.
- Personnel, administrative procedures, etc.

Consolidation phase
- An open discussion; "are we on the right track?"
- Are the right people doing the right jobs?
- Need for additional equipment and/or support?
- Analyze distribution of work load (is there a need to rotate?).

UNDAC team disengagement phase

- Exit strategies (must be integral to the team's entry strategies, i.e., in the Plan of Action).
- Clarify to partners that UNDAC is not there for ever, but just a stage in a longer process.
- Who makes the decision, based on what, clearances and needs? Indicators for withdrawal.
- Full or partial pull-out, who to handover functions to?
- Ensure systems are in place to avoid total breakdown of structures the team have set-up.
- What equipment stays behind, i.e., is left for counterparts to continue using.
- Bring in other resources/counterparts/agencies at an early stage, to facilitate hand-over.
- "Shadowing" by local counterparts from the start of the mission, to build capacity.

Geneva debrief

- With whom (involve the whole team)?
- Type of debrief / format / presentation.
- Keep in-house to improve the system, i.e., with confidentiality, and/or open to promote transparency and confidence in the UNDAC system.
- When? An immediate "post mission" unburdening of the team members and / or a later follow-up of members' mental and physical states?

Lessons learned

- For "closing the loop".
- A corrective action process to improve practice / rectify problems.
- A way of marketing our services ("continuous improvement" for future missions).
- Providing feed-back to team members about the corrective action process.
- Mission reports: their purpose, audience, e.g., the UNDAC team and focal points, the UN team in country, the national govt., OCHA desks, donors.
- A standardized format for reports and approach to their production on mission.
- How big, i.e., how much time and effort should be spent on them?

Diagram of core UNDAC skills

C

Planning

Meetings
(chairing, recording,
participating)

Briefing

Negotiation
(with authorities, UN)

Security
awareness

First aid

Cultural
awareness

Use of modern
telecomms

Skills
needed for
UNDAC
missions

Media
awareness

Information
technology

Stress
management

Time
management

Interviews
(questioning, listening)

Team
maintenance

Analysis
(info management)

Personal
administration

Presentation
(graphical display of info)

Writing
(sitreps, appeals)