K. OCHA SUPPORT RESOURCES

K.1. Introduction

There are various assets found especially within the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) that might be useful in a disaster and which an UNDAC team may draw on for additional support. This chapter comprises what OCHA's response system consist of and what these resources can provide.

Support received from the International Humanitarian Partnership (IHP) is covered in Chapter D – Mobilisation and Mission.

K.2. Human resources

OCHA has a system of desk officers and duty officers in New York and Geneva. The desk officers are responsible for information gathering and organizing OCHA's response to a specific emergency and they, along with the Field Coordination Support Section (FCSS), are the focal points for an UNDAC team in Geneva. OCHA also operates a twenty-four-hour duty system through which duty officers may be contacted, especially outside working hours and during weekends and holidays. An UNDAC team wanting to contact OCHA-Geneva outside office hours would be put through to the duty officer. Should an UNDAC team wish to discuss technical issues, they should contact FCSS in OCHA- Geneva, directly.

K. 3. Services provided by OCHA

In compliance with General Assembly Resolution 46/182, OCHA-Geneva has established an emergency response system for coordinating actions taken by the international community as a result of natural disasters and environmental emergencies, including technological accidents. OCHA is the focal point in the international community for mobilizing and coordinating international disaster response and may be contacted on a twenty-four-hour basis. The OCHA-Geneva

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Operations Centre is immediately activated, when necessary, and is especially designed and equipped for the mobilization and coordination of international emergency operations in response to disasters.

Outside official working hours, the OCHA-Geneva Operations Centre is activated by the Duty Officer who, in case of emergency, may be reached at any time through the emergency telephone number (+4122) 917-2010. As the focal point for coordinating international response to an emergency, the relevant Regional Desk immediately prepares and disseminates Situation Reports to emergency relief services of donor governments, the United Nations system, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations (all together about 600 addressees).

Countries may address requests for information and/or international assistance in cases of natural disasters or environmental emergencies directly to OCHA, or through the UN Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) in the affected country. In case of emergency, OCHA alerts and mobilizes the international community.

K.3.1. Emergency Cash Grant

When the situation warrants and subject to the availability of funds, OCHA will provide an emergency cash grant to the disaster-stricken country. The purpose of the grant is to cover the most pressing needs of the affected population, which cannot be satisfied from national resources, while awaiting the response of the international donor community. OCHA can make available up to US $100,000 routed through the office of the RC/HC. In addition, certain donor countries have pre-positioned emergency funds with OCHA and have given these funds equivalent to the amount sanctioned for the Emergency Cash Grant for distribution without prior approval from them.

K.3.2. Channel for donor contributions

OCHA is ready to act as an expeditious channel for donor contributions, relying on quick and simple administrative procedures. Cash contributions by donors to affected countries will be managed by OCHA, in accordance with existing procedures, under a dedicated sub-account in the United Nations Trust Fund for Disaster Relief. Contributions channelled through OCHA will be used to cover priority relief needs identified in close consultation with the government of the affected country and the affected country's United Nations Disaster Management Team (UN DMT).

K.3.3. The Central Emergency Response Fund, CERF

The Central Response Emergency Fund (CERF) is a stand-by fund established by the United Nations to enable more timely and reliable humanitarian assistance

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to victims of natural disasters and armed conflicts. The CERF has the following objectives:

- Promote early action and response to reduce loss of life.
- Enhance response to time-critical requirements.
- Strengthen core elements of humanitarian response in under-funded crises.

The CERF will have a grant and loan facility. The CERF is funded by voluntary contributions from around the globe from Member States of the United Nations, private businesses, foundations and individuals. The Fund is managed by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) on behalf of the United Nations Secretary-General and allows the UN to react immediately when a disaster strikes. CERF is intended to complement -not to substitute- existing humanitarian funding mechanisms such as the UN Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP). The CERF provides seed funds to jump-start critical operations and fund life-saving programmes not yet covered by other donors.

The grant and loan facilities
United Nations and its funds, programmes and specialized agencies as well as the IOM are eligible for both grants and loans. The two components have a number of distinct features:

- Grant facility.
  - Up to US $450 million, depending on voluntary contributions received.
  - It allows the ERC to ensure coverage of life-saving programmes when funds are not available from other sources.
  - Used to allocate funds to UN operational agencies to address critical humanitarian needs based on priorities established under the leadership of the RC/HC in the field.
  - Each applicant must justify the need for funds, taking into consideration other available resources. If a donor pledge is forthcoming, the loan facility should be used.
- Loan facility.
  - US $50 million available.
  - Used to make loans to UN agencies for emergency programmes based on indication that donor funding is forthcoming.
  - Loans must be reimbursed within 6 months.
  - Primarily used as a cash-flow mechanism allowing UN agencies to access funds rapidly while they are waiting for donor pledges to be transferred.

An UNDAC team must support the RC/HC in the role of prioritising needs on the ground through the provision of appropriate data and analysis and also advise the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Country Team on how to apply for CERF funding. More information on this process may be found at:

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http://ochaonline2.un.org/Default.aspx?tabid=7951

K.3.4. Warehouse of emergency related items

OCHA maintains a permanent (renewable) stock of donated disaster relief items at the UN Humanitarian Warehouse in Brindisi, Italy managed by the World Food Programme (WFP). There are essentially non-food and non-medical items, such as tents, blankets, generators, etc., donated by various governments and which OCHA can transport immediately to disaster affected areas, subject to the donor's agreement and the items being available in stock. In case of need, the warehouse may act as an assembly centre for the international relief community. Goods and transport are offered to the disaster-affected country free of charge.

K.3.5. International Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) teams

Being the secretariat of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG), OCHA alerts and coordinates international Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) teams from different countries when the situation warrants it, e.g., in the case of a major earthquake affecting urban areas. Together with INSARAG, OCHA maintains close contacts with operators of major international USAR teams and has developed a directory of USAR teams which meet agreed operational criteria for international operations. The INSARAG Guidelines which are endorsed by UN General Assembly Resolution GA 57/150 of 16 December 2002 deal with all aspects of international USAR operations. (See also Chapter H – Urban Search and Rescue for further details.)

K.3.6. Emergency telecommunications

OCHA may assist in establishing and coordinating secure and reliable telecommunications during the emergency response phase. In connection with an OSOCC, and when required, OCHA may provide satellite and radio telecommunications equipment together with experienced technicians in order to establish reliable telecommunications channels internationally and between a capital and an affected area, as well as within the affected area. Following the Humanitarian Response Review of 2005, OCHA is named process owner for emergency telecommunications.

K.3.7. Technical and logistics resources

OCHA may assist in identifying needs for, and accessing technical and logistics resources in, support of field coordination. OCHA has established stand-by arrangements with governments and humanitarian organizations for access to field coordination support resources, e.g., office support, transport, telecommunications, coordination centre infrastructure, etc. When required, in large scale emergencies, OCHA may assist in the mobilization, deployment and management of such resources for the establishment of a Coordination Centre and other common services.

K.3.8. Environmental emergencies

When requested, OCHA may also assist countries to cope with environmental aspects of emergencies, including industrial accidents, not covered by other existing arrangements. In particular, depending on the circumstances, the joint United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP)/OCHA Environment Emergencies Unit will:

- Act as a broker to facilitate quick direct links between focal points in requesting countries and providers of expertise and specialised equipment, and, if necessary, help with the practical modalities of delivering assistance.
- Serve as an information clearing-house to provide rapid access to existing national bodies and international sources of information and advice on the response required.
- Facilitate initial assessment and/or post-emergency analysis, by establishing contacts between requesting countries and designated experts or international bodies, and arranging assessment missions upon request.

See also Chapter J - Environmental Emergencies for additional information.

K.3.9. Central Register of disaster management capacities

The GA resolution 46/182 requests the UN to establish a Central Register of all specialised personnel and teams of technical specialists, as well as relief supplies, equipment and services available within the UN system, governments, inter-governmental, and non-governmental organizations that may be called upon at short notice by the UN. The Register is maintained by OCHA through the Civil Military Coordination Section (CMCS) and includes, as follows:

- **Customs directory -** National focal points and legislation for customs facilitation in international emergency humanitarian assistance.
- **Roster of experts -** Rosters of internationally available disaster management experts.
- **Disaster response contact directory -** Emergency response services of national and international organizations.
- **Donors directory -** National and international organizations re-gularly responding, by contributions in-kind or in cash, to the appeals for international assistance launched by the affected countries.
- **Military Civil Defence Assets (MCDA) -** Military, and/or civil defence, and/or civil protection expertise, capacities and range of services which may be offered in case of an emergency by Member States and sectoral multinational organizations for international humanitarian disaster relief.

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- **Emergency stockpiles -** Emergency stockpiles run by different humanitarian organizations and primarily oriented towards providing disaster relief items free of charge to a disaster-stricken country
- **USAR teams –** Directory of international USAR teams registered through the INSARAG.

K.3.10. Military Civil Defence Assets (MCDA)

OCHA may mobilize and coordinate the deployment of MCDA from a number of countries and multinational organizations. In most major disasters, the stricken country will mobilise its own military and civil defence resources to enhance its national disaster response capacity.

In some cases, however, the need for additional and/or specialised assets exceeds the capacity of the stricken country. For that purpose, OCHA has developed a system for the mobilisation of international MCDA through the CMSC..

CMCS is established within OCHA as a focal point for the use of military and civil defence (civil protection) resources in all types of humanitarian emergencies. It may establish an on-site coordination centre for multi-agency employment of such assistance. In case of natural disasters and environmental emergencies, including technological accidents, the provision of military and civil defence assets takes place in accordance with agreed upon procedures (Oslo Guidelines, May 1994).

MCDA include a wide variety of specialised equipment, skills and personnel for disaster relief operations. Examples from past emergencies include fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters, rescue boats, air traffic control, airfield safety control, Nuclear Biological Chemical (NBC) decontamination facilities, chemical detection, field hospitals, bridge construction and repair, rapid runway repair, water purification and distribution, and provision of shelter (camp construction and security). Such assets are provided, normally free of charge, by a number of donor countries on the basis of existing arrangements and procedures with OCHA. The CMCS maintains a database of MCDA which donor countries have indicated as potentially available for humanitarian emergencies. Information from this database is available on the OCHA-Online website.
http//ochhaonline.un.org/webpage.asp?Page=990

Requesting MCDA

The CMCS never initiates requests for assets on its own initiative, but only on the basis of a request from a responsible humanitarian agency or organization. The UNDAC team may recommend to OCHA, through the RC/HC and in agreement with the disaster-affected country, that the CMCS be instructed to mobilise MCDA if such are found to be beneficial.

The basic criteria should be that military and/or civil defence assets are necessary

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due to the urgency or magnitude of the disaster or because the specific equipment or skills required do not exist elsewhere. An UNDAC generated request, through the RC/HC, to OCHA should indicate:

- The task to be performed (as detailed as possible).
- Indication of and reason for the urgency.
- The reason why the task cannot be completed by civilian resources.
- Responsible point of contact who will receive the requested MCDA.

In case of large scale employment of MCDA in an emergency, the CMCS may be required to send a staff member or a person trained at the UN-Civil Military Coordination (CMcoord) courses to assist in the liaison between the military and the civilian disaster response coordination mechanism.

If neither CMcoord nor CMCS personnel are deployed, it is the responsibility of the requestor (UNDAC team/RC/HC) to ensure that incoming MCDA are received and guided to their place of employment. (See also Chapter L – Civil Military Coordination for additional information on CMcoord.)

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