



OCHA

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for the Coordination of
Humanitarian Affairs

On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC) Guidelines 2014

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INTRODUCTION

The On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC) is a rapid response tool that provides a platform for the coordination of international response activities in the immediate aftermath of a sudden onset emergency or a rapid change in a complex emergency. It is at the same time both a methodology and a physical location for on-site emergency response coordination. The OSOCC is designed to work in support of the Government of the affected country and is a tool for the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to carry out its mandate of coordination and information management in emergency response, particularly at the field level.

The nature of the OSOCC enables the concept to be utilized by other organizations when responding to emergencies, including international response organizations and Governments. These OSOCC Guidelines are intended for use by organizations or response teams who may be establishing and managing an OSOCC (e.g., United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination [UNDAC] teams), organizations or teams who may work within an OSOCC (e.g., Urban Search and Rescue [USAR] teams, Foreign Medical Teams [FMTs], Cluster Coordinators), and organizations who may interact with an OSOCC (e.g., Government of a requesting country, Local Emergency Management Authority [LEMA], Cluster Coordinators). The Guidelines may also be used and adapted by national or local emergency management authorities for on-site coordination of emergency responses.

The OSOCC Guidelines are designed to provide direction on establishing, managing, working within and interacting with an OSOCC. The Guidelines are comprised of three parts. Part I provides the foundation on which the OSOCC concept is built and the humanitarian context in which it operates. Part II presents guidance on how to implement the four OSOCC system components (Virtual OSOCC, Reception Departure Centre, OSOCC, Sub-OSOCC) and provides links to other more detailed guidance notes and resources. Part III is an annex of tactical tools for practical use during OSOCC operations.

The OSOCC Guidelines will be maintained electronically to allow for periodic changes to Part II and regular changes to Part III as the supporting tools are improved with experience. It is recommended that Parts II and III are considered field-based tools and taken by staff in hard copy during response operations.

The Guidelines have been developed by the Field Coordination Support Section (FCSS) of the Emergency Services Branch (ESB) of OCHA, which serves as the custodian for future revisions and developments. Content is drawn from the expertise and experience of a broad spectrum of international and regional organizations, response teams and Governments. The OSOCC Guidelines are grounded in the humanitarian context in which they are employed and reflective of the current state of the international response community.

PART I: CONTEXT AND FRAMEWORK

A.1 Historical Context

The International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) was established in 1991 and developed the INSARAG Guidelines, which describe a concept for an On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC) intended to improve the coordination of international assistance in support of the Government of an affected country specifically for coordination of international USAR operations. The United Nations General Assembly resolution 57/150 of 16 December 2002 “Strengthening the Effectiveness and Coordination of International Urban Search and Rescue Assistance” endorsed the INSARAG Guidelines and stressed the importance of member states following the INSARAG Guidelines for coordination of international urban search and rescue (USAR) assistance, thereby also endorsing the OSOCC concept.

INSARAG and OCHA originally developed the OSOCC concept to assist affected countries in coordinating international search and rescue efforts following an earthquake. However, the emergency management principles of the OSOCC concept make it a valuable tool in any sudden-onset disaster or complex emergency requiring the on-site coordination of international relief resources in the absence of an otherwise existing and functioning coordination system. Since its inception, the OSOCC concept has been successfully implemented numerous times in situations ranging from regional emergency events to major international disasters.

The OSOCC Guidelines were last published by OCHA in 2009. Since that time evolutions of methodology have occurred in functional areas such as assessment, information management, civil-military coordination, environmental emergencies, safety and security, and the coordination of FMTs – all of which have influenced OSOCC operations. Recent responses have further emphasized areas for methodological enhancement – particularly related to the use of the OSOCC in large-scale emergencies. In addition, many Governments have shown interest in using and adapting the OSOCC concept for domestic operations, further extending its applicability in humanitarian response and disaster management, and securing its place as valuable coordination tool.

A.2 Humanitarian Context

The OSOCC concept and the value it provides during a disaster are best understood within the humanitarian context in which it operates. The following sections provide an introduction to the humanitarian system as it relates to disaster response and its applicability to the OSOCC.

A.2.1 Humanitarian Principles

Humanitarian assistance is an extension of the desire to help others through a systematic mobilization of resources. Assistance is provided to population groups on the basis of rights and needs in an effort to save lives and alleviate suffering. International humanitarian

assistance is provided in accordance with a set of humanitarian principles established in the 19th century by Henri Dunant and endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly resolutions 46/182 and 58/114 (2004). The principles 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.

Neutrality – Humanitarian actors must not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

Impartiality – Humanitarian action must be carried out on the basis of need alone, making no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinions.

Independence – Humanitarian action must be autonomous from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold in relation to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.

The humanitarian principles are central to the work of OCHA and numerous international response organizations as they facilitate access to affected populations. They are an essential element of coordination activities and are applicable to the OSOCC as a mechanism supporting humanitarian assistance to all those in need.

Further information on the humanitarian principles can be found at https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/OOM_HumPrinciple_English.pdf.

A.2.2 The United Nations

The United Nations was established in 1945 with 51 countries as original Member States committed to preserving peace through international cooperation and collective security. The United Nations works through consensus of its Members and provides a means to address matters affecting the whole world. Today, 193 countries are Members of the United Nations and agree to the obligations of the [Charter of the United Nations](#). The Charter is an international treaty that sets out basic principles of international relations.

Under the Charter (Article 1), the United Nations has four main purposes:

- To maintain international peace and security.
- To develop friendly relations among nations.
- To cooperate in solving international problems and in promoting respect for human rights.
- To be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations.

The United Nations System consists of six principal organs – the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice and the Secretariat. OCHA is part of the United Nations

Secretariat and is led by the Under-Secretary General (USG)/Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC).

A.2.3 International Humanitarian Response

The international humanitarian community is guided by resolution 46/182 “Strengthening of the Coordination of Humanitarian Emergency Assistance of the United Nations” when responding to emergencies. The resolution outlines an enhanced framework for humanitarian assistance that includes establishment of the ERC position, authorization of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and creation of key funding programmes. The IASC is a forum for inter-agency coordination at the global level related to humanitarian assistance. Led by the ERC, it brings together United Nations and non-United Nations partners for policy development, decision-making and coordination.

The ERC is responsible for maintaining a view on all emergencies requiring humanitarian assistance and for coordinating humanitarian assistance of the United Nations System. OCHA supports the ERC through its mandate for coordinating the efforts of humanitarian actors to ensure a systematic response to emergencies within a common framework. A key component of OCHA’s mission is to mobilize and coordinate effective and principled humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors in order to alleviate human suffering in disasters and emergencies. To achieve its mission, OCHA focuses its activities around coordination, information management, humanitarian financing, policy and advocacy.

In countries where the United Nations System is present, the Resident Coordinator (RC) is responsible for leading the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), which ensures inter-agency coordination and decision-making at the country level to support the development agenda of the Government. Prior to a disaster, the RC and UNCT coordinate preparedness and mitigation activities, monitor and provide early warning of potential emergency situations, and lead contingency planning.

When a disaster happens, the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC), working at the country level, normally leads humanitarian coordination in support of the Government. The HC leads the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), which brings together United Nations and non-United Nations humanitarian organizations to provide common strategic and policy guidance on issues related to humanitarian action. Often the Resident Coordinator will also perform the role of the Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC). In large crises, sudden-onset or complex emergencies, an HC will be specifically appointed.

United Nations General Assembly resolution 46/182 explains that the Government of each Member State is responsible for meeting the needs of its people, including requesting assistance if needed and facilitating the work of humanitarian organizations. Assistance is never forced upon a state, unless the United Nations Security Council deems it necessary in order to preserve international peace and security. To do so without being invited can be considered a violation of international conventions. Consequently, all international humanitarian assistance is conducted in support of and at the request of national authorities.

An OSOCC may operate under one of three general models within the humanitarian system: direct coordination of response activities at the request of a Government, coordination of specific aspects and support of others as identified by the Government, or in support of the RC/HC. The OSOCC concept provides a platform and methodology for the operational coordination on-site in a disaster area when other structures for international assistance and coordination, such as clusters or a nationally established structure that incorporates international actors, are not yet functioning. Sectoral response is carried out following the cluster approach introduced by the Humanitarian Reform process.

A.2.4 The Cluster System

The Humanitarian Reform process began in 2005 to improve the predictability, timeliness and effectiveness of humanitarian response. As part of this process, the cluster approach was endorsed to strengthen response capacity and effectiveness in the main sectors of response.

Under the system, recognized sectors of humanitarian activity are organized in clusters that work together towards agreed common humanitarian objectives at both the global level and country level. The cluster approach ensures clear leadership, predictability and accountability in the international response to humanitarian emergencies by clarifying the division of labour among organizations and better defining their roles and responsibilities within the different sectors of response.

Cluster partners may include United Nations agencies, national organizations and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). At the country-level, government ministries/departments will ideally co-lead their respective cluster along with a globally-identified Lead Agency. Global Cluster Lead Agencies, who reports to the ERC, have been designated by the IASC for eleven sectors of humanitarian activity:

Cluster	Global Cluster Lead
Camp Coordination and Camp Management	UNHCR (conflict situations) & IOM (natural disasters)
Early Recovery	UNDP
Education	UNICEF & Save the Children
Emergency Shelter and Non-Food Items (NFI)	UNHCR (conflict situations) & IFRC (natural disasters)
Emergency Telecommunications	WFP
Food Security	FAO & WFP
Health	WHO
Logistics	WFP
Nutrition	UNICEF
Protection	UNHCR
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)	UNICEF

While the cluster system remains active at the global level at all times, the clusters may not be established on the ground in a given country. Following a disaster the RC/HC, in consultation with the HCT and usually the Government, can recommend activation of clusters as part of the international humanitarian response based on an assessment of need and of the coordination capacity of the responding organizations on the ground. The recommendation is sent for approval through the ERC to the IASC Principals and Global Cluster Leads.

As a coordination platform, the OSOCC provides an opportunity for clusters to plug into the established coordination mechanism when they arrive on-site. In some cases, functions that were being initially done by the OSOCC may transfer to a Cluster Coordinator when they become established on-site or functions may transition to tie in more closely with a Cluster Coordinator (e.g., FMT coordination to the Health Cluster). The specific collaboration between the clusters and the OSOCC will be incident-dependent and reflects the principle of flexibility (see section A.3.2).

A.2.5 IASC Transformative Agenda

Following the 2005 Humanitarian Reform process, a number of challenges remained in some aspects of international humanitarian response during large-scale responses and the perception of process-related issues in the application of the cluster system. As a result the IASC Transformative Agenda (2011) agreed to a set of actions to establish enhanced mechanisms to strengthen leadership, coordination and accountability during humanitarian response.

A key outcome of the IASC Transformative Agenda is the creation of systems and terminology related to large-scale disasters. A major sudden-onset humanitarian crisis triggered by natural disaster or conflict that requires system-wide mobilization and response is now called a Level 3 (L3) Emergency. While not specifically defined, a Level 1 (L1) Emergency is commonly considered to be one in which the national and international resources available in the country are sufficient for the response and no outside assistance is required, and a Level 2 (L2) Emergency requires some support from neighbouring countries, regional entities and possibly agency headquarters.

When the ERC, in consultation with the IASC Principals, declares an L3 Emergency, a number of actions are triggered. These include mobilization of coordination resources, deployment of a Senior/Emergency Humanitarian Coordinator, deployment of senior staff through the Inter-Agency Rapid Response Mechanism (IARRM), assessment activities consistent with the Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) Framework, release or revision of a Strategic Statement and launch of an appeal (the Strategic Response Plan).

Response to a large-scale disaster requires on-site assistance from many humanitarian relief organizations. Efforts of these organizations need to be coordinated to avoid duplication and gaps, focus resources on urgent needs, and approach the emergency in a strategic manner to enable work towards longer-term recovery. An OSOCC can provide this

initial on-site coordination in the absence of an alternate mechanism in an L1-L3 emergency. Work done in the initial phases of the response by the OSOCC supports many of the activities outlined above as part of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC).

A.2.6 Humanitarian Programme Cycle

A part of the IASC Transformative Agenda, the HPC is a coordinated series of actions related to humanitarian response to help prepare for, manage and deliver humanitarian response. The five steps in the HPC are illustrated below:

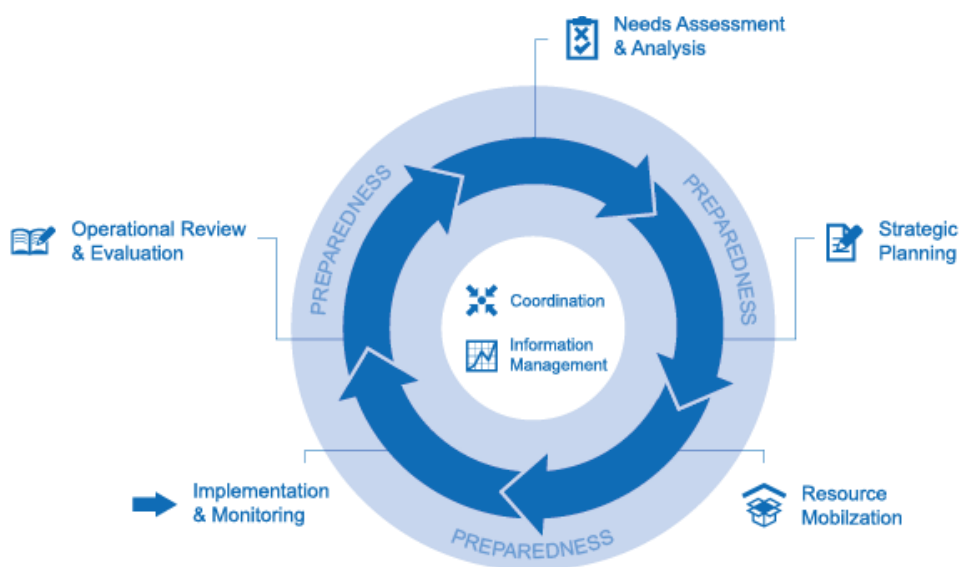


Figure A.1: Humanitarian Programme Cycle

The first two steps of the HPC should be closely aligned to the outputs of the OSOCC (see section B.2.1). The OSOCC, as a rapid deployment tool for on-site coordination, has the ability to collect information quickly within the first days of a disaster and provide this information to the broader humanitarian system. This supports the development of products such as the Strategic Statement and Preliminary Response Plan.

Successful implementation of the HPC is dependent on adequate emergency preparedness, effective coordination with national/local authorities and humanitarian actors, and information management. The latter two factors in particular form part of the foundation on which the OSOCC concept was built.

A.3 OSOCC Concept

The OSOCC concept was developed as a rapid response tool that works in close cooperation with the affected Government to provide a system for coordinating and facilitating the activities of international relief efforts at the site of a disaster. It is primarily used in sudden-onset disasters, and particularly L3 emergencies, however is applicable in

other contexts including complex emergencies and L1-L2 emergencies where a mechanism for operational coordination does not exist or requires enhancement.

A.3.1 OSOCC Purpose

The OSOCC has two core objectives:

- To rapidly provide a means to facilitate on-site cooperation, coordination and information management between international responders and the Government of the affected country in the absence of an alternate coordination system.
- To establish a physical space to act as a single point of service for incoming response teams, notably in the case of a sudden-onset disaster where the coordination of many international response teams is critical to ensure optimal rescue efforts.

The OSOCC is intended to serve as a conduit for information exchange between the Government of the affected country and various relief providers in a disaster receiving international assistance, to facilitate cooperation with and coordination of international humanitarian assistance, and to provide a platform for coordination amongst actors who do not normally work in close collaboration. The OSOCC facility supports on-site coordination and information exchange, and facilitates a broader coordination platform that extends well beyond the physical OSOCC.

To optimize its effectiveness, the OSOCC should be established in the immediate aftermath of a disaster requiring international assistance or when indicated by a change in situation of an existing emergency. Wherever possible, the OSOCC should be located in close proximity to the disaster site and to the relevant national government authorities. The timeliness of set-up and the appropriateness of location are both critical in sudden-onset disasters to ensure optimal rescue and relief efforts.

Although an OSOCC is intended as a short-term response tool for the immediate life-saving and relief phases of a disaster, it should be established with enough flexibility and foresight to adjust to the magnitude and complexity of an emergency as it unfolds. When an OSOCC becomes fully engaged in the coordination of international humanitarian response, its role and activities may be extended to meet the changing requirements dictated by an evolving situation. It is expected that an OSOCC in some form would be operational during the relief phase of an emergency until the Government of the affected country together with United Nations agencies and NGOs if required, can resume the responsibility of coordination of international resources through its own structures and offices.

A.3.2 OSOCC Context

When established, the OSOCC works within the existing humanitarian system both internationally and in the affected country, as illustrated in figure A.2 below:

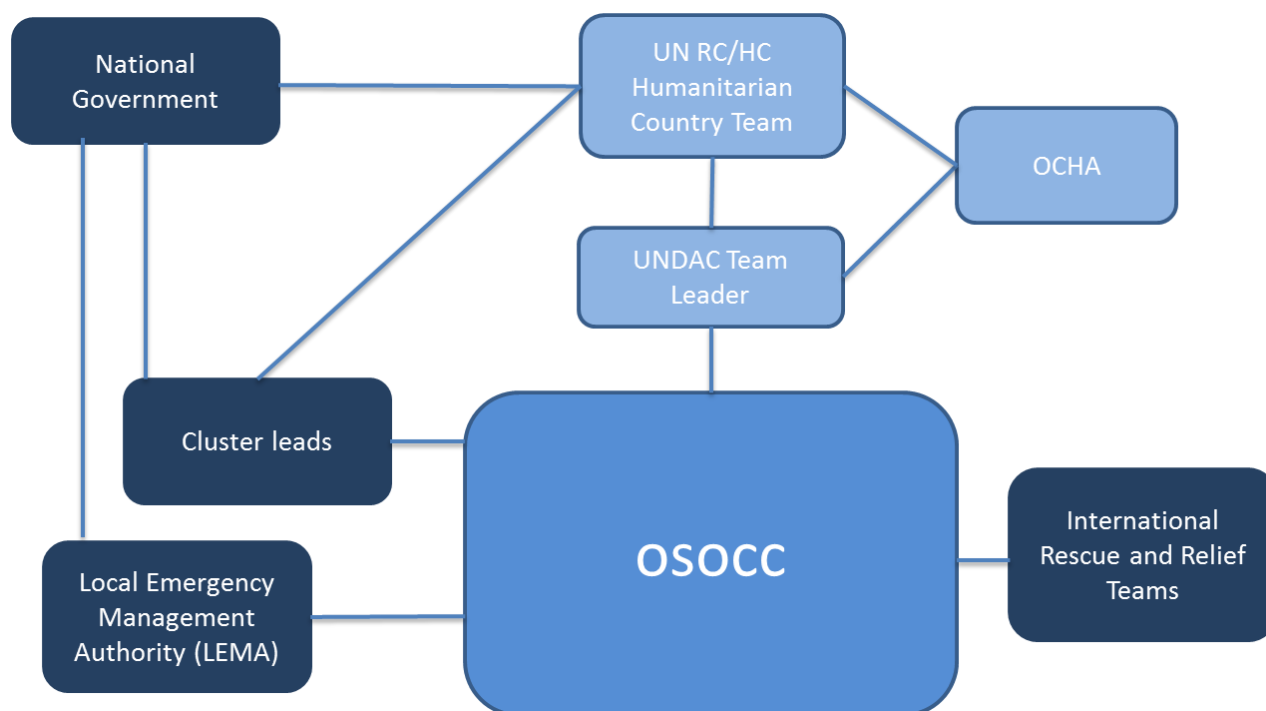


Figure A.2: OSOCC Context

The OSOCC generally reports to the UNDAC Team Leader, who in turn ensures that activities of the OSOCC are aligned with the strategic direction of the United Nations RC/HC and the Humanitarian Country Team, and supported by OCHA. In cases where an UNDAC Team is not deployed, the OSOCC may report directly to the UN RC/HC.

The OSOCC works in support of the affected government in coordinating the efforts of international response organizations. Within the affected country, the Local Emergency Management Agency (LEMA)¹ is responsible for the overall command, coordination and management of the response operation, thus the OSOCC maintains a strong connection to the LEMA throughout operations.

In addition to the entities within OCHA and within the affected country, the OSOCC supports and collaborates with Cluster Leads and responding teams. This can be done through integration in the OSOCC structure, including physically being located in the OSOCC facility, and/or through formal or informal liaison. Further detail on this can be found in section B.3.4 and B.3.5.

A.3.3 OSOCC Principles

The OSOCC is an effective response tool that is proven to facilitate coordination amongst international response organizations for the purpose of providing timely and efficient humanitarian assistance in a disaster. While the impact of a given disaster and the nature of the response will determine the specifics of the OSOCC operations, the following principles are consistent and fundamental to the OSOCC concept.

¹ LEMA is a generic term used by the international community in referring to organizations that may in reality work at a variety of levels of governments and take various forms. For example, a national disaster management authority, state or provincial emergency management organizations and/or local emergency responders.

Respect for Existing Mandates and Structures

The OSOCC operates in a manner that respects the authorities, mandates, capacities and capabilities that exist both within the Government of the affected country and the broader humanitarian system. The efforts of the OSOCC are intended to provide operational support to a strategic lead (e.g., national Government, United Nations organization/entity) in a disaster situation.

Coordination

The strength of the OSOCC is derived from its ability to encourage agreement from all parties to cooperate on a common ground in order to advance the provision of humanitarian relief for a disaster-affected population. Coordination is conducted in a cooperative manner that supports facilitation of activities rather than a directive approach.

Functional Approach

The OSOCC employs a functional approach to its structure whereby responsibilities belong to a function rather than a position or person. This approach allows the OSOCC to carry out the response activities required utilizing the resources available while ensuring functional responsibilities are met.

Flexibility

Throughout the duration of an active OSOCC, functions may expand and contract as required. All functions may not be activated during a given response and will be based on the specific needs of the disaster. The responsibilities of the functions that are not activated still need to be considered by the OSOCC to ensure there are no gaps and to enable the system to adapt to the changing situation.

Scalability

The OSOCC functions are scalable to suit the needs of the response. Functions can be expanded in terms of personnel and structure without compromising their core purpose and scope.

These principles are present in all aspects of OSOCC operations and contribute to the success of it as a rapid response tool in a period characterized by chaos, uncertainty and lack of adequate information. The practical application of these principles through the operational aspects of the OSOCC system is outlined in Part II of the Guidelines.

PART II: OSOCC OPERATIONS

Part II of the OSOCC Guidelines provides specific guidance for those operationalizing the OSOCC concept in the field. It is directly supported by Part III, which contains tactical checklists and templates. Links to these resources are provided throughout Part II.

Specific content in Part II includes:

- Descriptions of the four components of the OSOCC system (i.e., Virtual OSOCC, Reception Departure Centre, OSOCC and sub-OSOCC).
- An overview of the OSOCC operational “lifecycle” during an emergency, including daily operational cycles.
- Descriptions of the OSOCC’s functions and cells.
- Guidance for opening and operating a Reception Departure Centre (RDC).
- Processes for establishing, maintaining and demobilizing OSOCC components.

B.1 Components of the OSOCC System

The OSOCC system consists of four main components:

- Virtual OSOCC
- RDC
- OSOCC
- Sub-OSOCC

Each of these components has a specific purpose and consists of various functional elements.

B.1.1 Virtual OSOCC

The Virtual OSOCC (VOSOCC) is a real-time online coordination platform that allows information exchange early in an emergency. It is a component of the Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System (GDACS), a cooperative framework led by a Steering Committee and supported by OCHA’s Emergency Relief Coordination Centre (ERCC) in Geneva. In addition to the VOSOCC, GDACS provides near real-time alerts (e.g., earthquake, hurricane/typhoon, flooding), impact assessments, mapping, weather forecasting and information exchange standards.

Specific features of the VOSOCC allow responders to exchange information such as baseline country information, entry points and other aspects of logistical support, relief team status, assessment information, cluster activities, Civil-Military Coordination arrangements, environmental risks and security. Prior to an emergency the VOSOCC allows for training coordination, information sharing and project discussions.

For further information go to <http://www.gdacs.org>, or to request VOSOCC access go to <http://vosocc.unocha.org>.

B.1.2 Reception Departure Centre (RDC)

The RDC is generally the first OSOCC component established in-country during a major emergency, and thus the first on-site coordination point. It facilitates the efficient arrival of international relief teams and assists in coordinating their deployment to the field. It can also support the receipt of other resources, such as relief items. RDC operations are focused on:

- Registering teams and passing this information to the OSOCC to facilitate operational planning.
- Briefing arriving teams on the evolving emergency situation.
- Providing arriving teams with available information related to practicalities such as logistical support, airport/port procedures and services, security and OSOCC location.
- Supporting point of entry authorities in coordinating the arrival of international resources, including air/ground traffic control, ground services, storage, procedures and liaison.

The RDC is set-up at major entry points for international assistance by the first arriving UNDAC team, INSARAG-trained USAR team or Foreign Medical Team. Generally at least two team members will staff the RDC. As the lead in-country component of the OSOCC system, it is vital that the RDC is well organized, informed and facilitating as it sets the tone for the arriving teams.

Where indicated by the realities of the emergency, more than one RDC can be established. The decision to open additional RDCs is based on practicalities. For example, are there multiple points of entry (airports, seaports, roads, etc.) where a significant number of teams or relief items are arriving? If so, does it make sense to divert additional trained staff to these locations to open an RDC – or are there other more pressing operational needs? These decisions must be made based on operational realities.

During demobilization the RDC facilitates the return of international relief teams to their home bases by facilitating a coordinated and appropriate release of international resources. The RDC itself demobilizes when all teams have returned.

Detailed guidance on RDC operations can be found in section B.4.

B.1.3 OSOCC

Closely aligned with the efforts of the LEMA, or other national authorities, the OSOCC facility provides a common platform for the coordination of international response efforts and serves as the centre of the OSOCC system. It is simultaneously a place and a methodology, similar to a national Government's Emergency Operations Centre or local Incident Command Post, but with a distinct mission and approach applicable to its function within the international humanitarian system.

As stated in Part I, the two core objectives of the OSOCC are:

- To rapidly provide a means to facilitate on-site cooperation, coordination and information management between international responders and the Government of the affected country in the absence of an alternate coordination system.
- To establish a physical space to act as a single point of service for incoming response teams, notably in the case of a sudden-onset disaster where the coordination of many international response teams is critical to ensure optimal rescue efforts.

These objectives are achieved through the coordination or support of a variety of activities, such as the work of international relief teams, inter-cluster coordination, cluster-specific activities (especially early in the emergency), assessment, reporting, information management, media relations and safety and security planning/measures.

More in-depth information on OSOCC activities and functions is contained throughout Part II, and in particular section B.3.

B.1.4 Sub-OSOCC

In some emergencies it will be necessary to establish one or more sub-OSOCCs as a means of achieving the OSOCC's mandate. A sub-OSOCC replicates OSOCC functions, although carries them out in support of the primary OSOCC rather than producing duplicate processes. For example, situation reports written at the sub-OSOCC level would inform the situation report of the primary OSOCC. In all cases, the primary OSOCC will provide the sub-OSOCC with terms of reference, a geographically defined area of operations, objectives and/or expected outcomes and clear lines of reporting. Agreement will also be reached on the specific functions and staffing levels of the sub-OSOCC to meet its assigned tasks.

While the criteria to establish sub-OSOCCs are mission-specific, the following considerations generally contribute to the decision:

- Access and proximity to operational areas (e.g., if operations are spread over a large area a sub-OSOCC may be needed).
- There is a desire by national or OCHA authorities to establish a physical presence in a specific area.
- Logistical requirements or constraints make a sub-OSOCC more efficient than operating from the primary OSOCC (e.g., roads might be blocked or operations may be occurring in several remote locations).
- The capacity of the primary OSOCC is exceeded by the volume or complexity of one or more aspects of the operations (e.g., the number of international relief teams exceeds the capacity of the primary OSOCC to coordinate with them in an effective manner).
- The deployment of teams, even on a regular basis, will not fulfill the considerations listed above, or is impractical.
- The factor(s) above are anticipated to last for a duration that is sufficient to warrant the deployment of the resources.

Once the decision is made to establish a sub-OSOCC, it must be communicated to all OSOCC functions and good working relationships must be established with officials in the vicinity of the sub-OSOCC. Other established functions continue to operate within the same reporting structures. For example, any established RDCs would continue to work through the OSOCC, which would liaise with the sub-OSOCC to prioritize and coordinate relief team deployments into the sub-OSOCC’s area of operations.

B.2 The OSOCC “Lifecycle”

As discussed in Part I, the IASC Transformative Agenda outlines various processes that occur at different levels of emergency. It also reinforces earlier work to establish phases of assessment/response and standardized outputs that occur along a general timeline within the context of the HPC. The same concepts hold true during less complex emergencies, although the timelines may be shorter (due to reduced scope and duration) and certain outputs may not be required.

B.2.1 OSOCC Activities within the Humanitarian Program Cycle

While there is no typical OSOCC mission experience, knowledge of the humanitarian program cycle and lessons from past OSOCC deployments can inform expectations for those newer to the OSOCC methodology. Other components of the humanitarian response system have a mission cycle or timeline. Figure B.1 below illustrates generalized “phases” of OSOCC activity compared to related response activities.

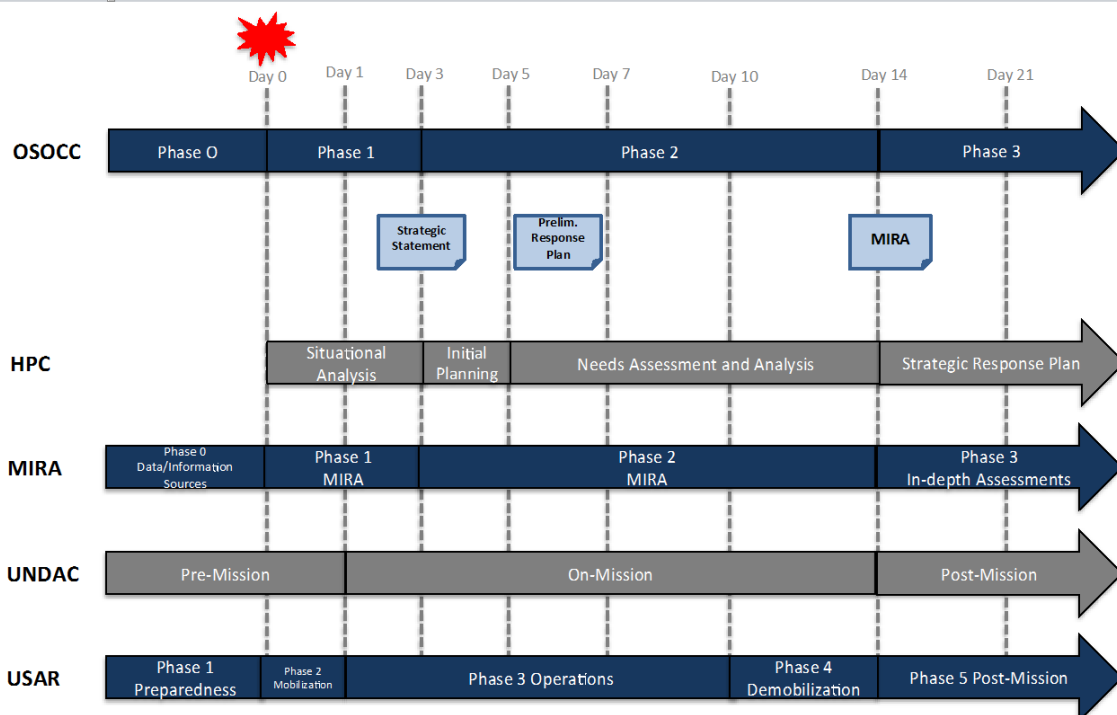


Figure B.1: The OSOCC Lifecycle

The following sections outline typical OSOCC activities that occur during general phases present in most emergencies.

Phase 0

A typical OSOCC response begins well before any emergency occurs. This phase consists of training, exercises and continuous consideration of possible enhancements to the OSOCC methodology – including new tools and templates for Part III of these Guidelines. Also included in this phase are all of the preparedness and overall readiness activities undertaken by responders who will usually establish or interact with the OSOCC – whether members of international relief teams, UNDAC, national authorities, etc.

Phase 1

The primary activity of the OSOCC in Phase 1 is to work in close cooperation with the LEMA, or other national officials, to support and coordinate the life-saving activities of incoming international relief teams. In addition, key humanitarian program cycle outcomes supported by the OSOCC system in Phase 1 are OCHA Situation Reports (SITREPs), the Strategic Statement and the Preliminary Response Plan (formerly known as a Flash Appeal). These documents are key to establishing the scope, scale and severity of the emergency, including establishing the need for life-sustaining relief activities during Phase 2. The OSOCC may also help to establish core coordination tools such as contact management and an operational web platform using humanitarianresponse.info.

Phase 1 starts with the onset of the emergency. If certain criteria are met, GDACS will issue an alert that provides basic situational information and an automated impact assessment. Within hours, or even minutes, national authorities and OCHA regional staff will begin providing situational updates via the VOSOCC. They will also advise on whether international assistance has been requested. International response teams and other resources will then typically indicate their status in the VOSOCC – particularly if a request for assistance is anticipated or made. Situation reports and other updates will be posted to the applicable sections of the VOSOCC by national authorities, OCHA, regional organizations and others involved in the response efforts. Once it is clear that teams will be deploying, each will provide information on its capacities and arrival time.

With the arrival of the first international OSOCC-trained USAR or Foreign Medical Team and/or UNDAC members, the RDC is generally established – particularly if other teams are en route. The initial RDC may consist of only one or two people, but the functions remain the same as described above and in detail in section B.4. The focus is on quickly establishing an orderly arrival and registration process, as well as informing incoming teams of possible priorities. The RDC begins reporting on the VOSOCC as soon as possible so as to share arrival and situational information required by incoming resources.

As soon as possible, OSOCC-trained USAR or Foreign Medical Team and/or UNDAC members will establish a provisional OSOCC to coordinate initial response activities – particularly those associated with the work of international relief teams (e.g., USAR and FMTs). This may consist only of specific Operations Function cells with basic support (see section B.3.5 for more on the Operations Function). As quickly as possible, processes are established to coordinate incoming team assignments to maximize life-saving activities for those that are trapped and/or injured.

As soon as practical, all of the OSOCC functions will be staffed. Early on, generalists such as UNDAC members, regional response organizations and members of the affected Government may have to perform multiple functions to ensure that coordination, assessment and early reporting activities are achieved. While initial life-saving activities are a top priority, assessment and reporting activities will set the pace for the next phase of response. These activities are a part of the Situation Function, described in section B.3.6 below. Within the first days, this function will coordinate or support an initial assessment and publication of regular SITREPs and the [Strategic Statement](#) (by the end of day 3).

While initial activities are underway, OSOCC support partners will also be deploying and may be able to set-up support modules (see section B.3.7) during Phase 1. At minimum, basic supports will arrive with teams and initial communications infrastructure can generally be established. As a part of early assessment, a determination will be made as to what further supports are needed.

Phase 2

Based on the Strategic Statement, a [Preliminary Response Plan](#) (formerly known as a Flash Appeal) will generally be developed within five to seven days after the onset of the emergency. Until this is issued, the Strategic Statement informs the mobilization of the broader international response.

During Phase 2, the OSOCC will be brought to full staffing supported by adequate facilities/modules as quickly as possible. Operational cells coordinating relief teams will be reinforced with additional operational specialists with expertise in coordination and planning. They will remain in place as long as their sector is required. Other functions (e.g., Situation) will most likely be performed by generalists to start, with specialist staff deploying as required – usually depending on the scale of the emergency. Where necessary, sub-OSOCCs will be established during this phase (see section B.1.4 above).

Concurrent to the OSOCC becoming fully staffed, cluster staff may arrive and begin to establish operations and coordination functions for their respective clusters. This may trigger the separation of early OSOCC Operations cells into cluster operations – for example, Logistics and Health. In other cases, cluster staff may be minimal and may work from within the context of the OSOCC. In either case, the OSOCC will ensure an inter-cluster coordination forum is established early on to coordinate efforts between clusters and with the affected Government and various international actors.

In addition to ensuring inter-cluster coordination and the continuation of effective life-saving activities, the OSOCC in Phase 2 will also coordinate or support the conduct of the [Multi-Sector/Cluster Initial Rapid Assessment](#) (MIRA), including publication of the MIRA Report. This report informs both ongoing response activities under the Preliminary Response Plan and the [Strategic Response Plan](#), published within a month of the emergency's onset.

Beyond the completion of core Phase 2 deliverables and life-saving supports, during Phase 2 the OSOCC establishes a number of supports to the humanitarian community. This includes distribution of information (reports, safety procedures, maps, etc.), providing a

venue for meetings, serving as a focal point for operational, logistical and administrative matters and continuing to support the VOSOCC.

Phase 2 is generally considered complete when the MIRA Report is issued and international teams either depart or are well established in their operations (generally meaning that the RDC is closed by the end of this phase, following the bulk of team departures).

Phase 3

Informed by the MIRA, and if required, Phase 3 includes the issuance of the Strategic Response Plan, the continuation of Phase 2 response activities and in-depth cluster-specific assessments.

The OSOCC may or may not continue to operate in Phase 3. In some cases, where the emergency is of more limited scope and duration, the OSOCC may simply not be needed past Phase 2 and its functions would be absorbed into existing structures. In other cases, the international community may establish a longer-term presence – for example, a new or enhanced OCHA office that performs the OSOCC functions. Section B.5.4 discusses OSOCC demobilization and section B.4.5 discusses RDC demobilization.

B.2.2 The OSOCC Operational Cycle

Just as the OSOCC operates within the context of the HPC, the OSOCC itself (as well as its component parts, such as the RDC) needs to establish its own operational cycle. In many operations, this cycle will initially be based on a 24-hour schedule/clock with activities occurring at set intervals. For example, a set time for the OSOCC to send a daily Situation Report to the RC/HC or OCHA Head of Office, briefing times for international relief teams and deadlines for establishing and distributing daily operational priorities/work locations. The operational cycle also contributes to regular internal information sharing for the OSOCC through a schedule of briefings and wrap-up meetings.

As the operation progresses, the cycle may be extended over two or more days depending on the nature of the emergency, the expectations placed on the OSOCC and the external reporting requirements. This shift may also be reflected in the number and type of internal and external meetings scheduled to accommodate greater numbers of OSOCC staff and other actors.

Further information on the OSOCC's internal operational cycle is referenced in the functional descriptions below and templates/examples are provided in Part III.

B.3 The OSOCC

The fact that an OSOCC can be established rapidly anywhere in the world by diverse responders is reliant on a shared understanding of a common OSOCC methodology and terminology. This section outlines key terms and the core functional elements of the OSOCC, including duties, outputs and linkages of each function.

B.3.1 OSOCC Terminology

Standard terminology is used throughout the OSOCC Guidelines to assist with building an understanding of the concept and operations. The terminology listed below is applicable to all components of the OSOCC system (outlined in section B.1) and is presented in the context of the OSOCC.

- Function refers to a broad organizational component of the OSOCC (e.g., Management and Operations). These functions will need to be considered for every OSOCC mission and at every stage of the mission. A function is led by a Coordinator. One or more people may perform each function and/or one person may perform multiple functions. Each function can be expanded as necessary to include the number and organization of personnel required to fulfill its responsibilities.
- Cells are components under functions that can be used to further organize the OSOCC into common sub-groups that reflect the key areas of responsibility of that function. The use of cells is particularly beneficial in circumstances where the OSOCC has a large number of personnel and additional layers of reporting are necessary for effective management or where particular areas of expertise are needed to focus on performing response activities rather than on coordination/leadership (e.g., the use of a USAR Coordination Cell). A cell is led by a Coordinator.
- An officer refers to a person working within a function or cell (e.g. Information Management Officer) or to a person leading a specific function that is focused on performing a role rather than coordination (e.g., Safety and Security Officer).
- A module is a pre-determined set of material resources deployed to support response activities (e.g., RDC module, Base Camp). Modules are often provided by partner organizations such as the [International Humanitarian Partnership](#) (IHP), Asia-Pacific Humanitarian Partnership (APHP) and Americas Support Team (AST). Modules provide the basic material and equipment that enable response teams to carry out their activities at the site of a disaster.
- A sector is a geographic division used to establish defined areas in which to conduct operations and may further be divided into sub-sectors if the operational activity necessitates it. Sectors are commonly used by USAR teams when assigning search and rescue areas, although other teams may also find sectors a useful organizational tool. A common naming convention and consistent boundaries should be used. In the absence of another naming convention (i.e., that provided by the LEMA or Government), the [INSARAG Guidelines](#) describe the use of a letters to denote sectors (e.g., Sector A, Sector B). A geographic identifier may be added to the letter name (e.g., Sector A North Padang) for additional clarity. Part III contains further detail on sectorization.

Only one set of sectors should exist for a given disaster and where possible, existing geographic divisions should be used. These may be pre-disaster regional boundaries

or those established by the LEMA and/or Government for the purposes of the disaster. Where sectors do not exist, the OSOCC in consultation with the on-site response teams can determine if sectors would be beneficial to the operation. The sectors need to be communicated to all OSOCC Operations Cells and other responding organizations. Maps indicating the sectoral boundaries should be available in the OSOCC.

Note: The use of the word sector to denote a geographic division should not be confused with its use to describe thematic areas of humanitarian activities at a country level (similar to cluster).

Consistent use of common language when describing operational elements of the OSOCC facilitates a clear understanding amongst actors working in or interacting with an OSOCC. The concept of functions and cells form the basis of the OSOCC structure.

B.3.2 OSOCC Structure

As outlined in Part I, the OSOCC concept consists of both the physical OSOCC facility and the broader coordination platform that is developed as a result of the activities of the OSOCC. The broader platform can include United Nation agencies, clusters and international humanitarian organizations. For the purposes of this section of the Guidelines, the OSOCC structure will focus mainly on that within the physical OSOCC.

The OSOCC is generally structured into four functions, each of which may be composed of multiple cells. The basic OSOCC structure is illustrated below, however, not all functions or cells may be needed in every situation.

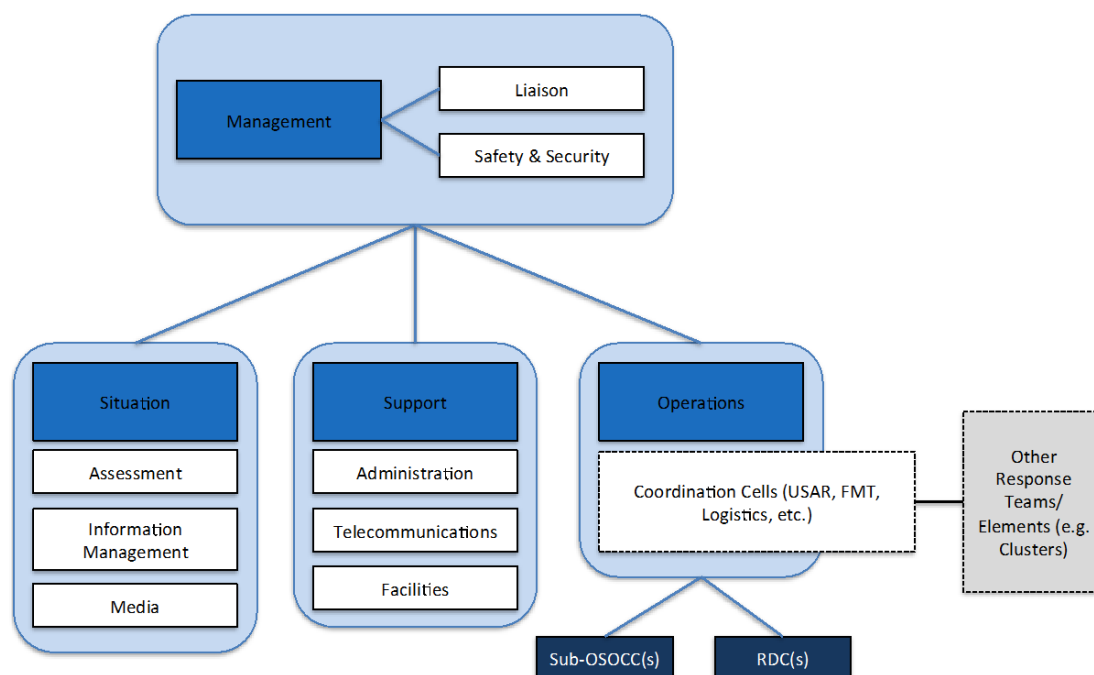


Figure B.2: OSOCC Structure

The principle of flexibility allows the structure to adapt to the operational requirements of the disaster. Depending on the magnitude of the event, situational demands and available resources, one person may manage multiple functions simultaneously and other functions may require a larger complement of personnel. An organizational chart should be developed and displayed in the OSOCC to illustrate the reporting lines of OSOCC staff. The chart will need to be refreshed regularly to reflect the expansion/contraction of the OSOCC to meet the operational needs of the response. A sample organization chart can be found in Part III.

OSOCC Staffing

Staff for the OSOCC will come from the UNDAC team, OCHA, OSOCC support staff, international organizations, USAR teams, FMTs and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The agreement and willingness to commit personnel and equipment to an OSOCC may be a significant undertaking for a relief team. It is crucial that as more international relief teams arrive, they are requested to support the personnel and equipment needs of the OSOCC. As additional qualified staff become available, for example through OCHA surge mechanisms, staffing at the OSOCC should be complemented and reinforced.

The number of staff needed to perform OSOCC functions will depend on the volume and complexity of activities and the number of shifts per day. During the immediate lifesaving phase the workload will usually require a 24-7 commitment thus a minimum of two work shifts to cover 24 hours should be established. As relief operations continue and routines are established, the hours of the OSOCC will shift to reflect the changing workload.

The same staffing philosophy should be applied to other components of the OSOCC system, particularly the RDC and sub-OSOCC(s).

B.3.3 Common Functional Responsibilities

Each function/cell within the OSOCC shares a number of broad responsibilities that serve to contribute to the overall effectiveness of the OSOCC. Of primary importance is conducting operations in line with the four humanitarian principles that guide all assistance activities of OCHA and many other international organizations – humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence (see section A.2.1). In addition to the humanitarian principles, the following responsibilities are common among all functions:

- **Liaison** – All functions will need to liaise with their respective counterparts in the Government of the affected country and the broader humanitarian response community as applicable. Liaison activities should be focused on relationship building, information sharing and optimization of operational actions. This cross-communication is important for effective response coordination and supports a cooperative environment.
- **Safety and Security** – In line with the safety and security protocols that are established for the incident (see section B.3.4), each function needs to take an active role in the personal safety of staff assigned to the OSOCC and contribute to the maintenance of a safe and secure operating environment.

- **Accountability** – The OSOCC system is responsible for the decisions and actions it undertakes during a response, as well as the consequences of those decisions and actions. Each function within the OSOCC shares this responsibility and supports responsible conduct through the use of trained and experienced personnel, as well as utilizing functional procedures and operational guidelines to navigate the response. As an extension of OCHA and a humanitarian tool, this accountability extends beyond the United Nations to the affected country, affected population, donors, etc.
- **Reporting** – All functions have a role in contributing to the development of information products through provision of information, data, observations and assessments acquired through their activities. Each member of the OSOCC staff contributes to the reporting of information that is of consequence to their function, another function and/or the broader OSOCC system. This information will be compiled into reports produced by the Situation Function.
- **Demobilization** – Functions will need to consider the appropriate transition and/or exit strategy for their role. The timing and particularities of handover to a local authority or other international organization (e.g., United Nations agency, Global Cluster Lead) will be specific to the function and how it is being carried out in-country.

In addition to the common functional responsibilities outlined above, each Function and Cell has specific responsibilities outlined in the following sections.

B.3.4 Management Function

The Management Function coordinates the efforts of other OSOCC functions, establishes formal liaison with national authorities and other response organizations, and works to ensure the safety and security of international responders. The OSOCC Manager leads this function.

OSOCC Manager

The OSOCC Manager coordinates all OSOCC functions and activities, including sub-OSOCCs and RDCs. Key responsibilities include conducting internal meetings/briefings, managing the task allocation amongst OSOCC personnel and providing leadership to the OSOCC functions. The OSOCC Manager is focused on ensuring that the OSOCC meets the objectives and fulfills the terms of reference (TOR) set out by the Government of the affected country, the UNDAC Team Leader and the RC/HC.

The OSOCC Manager is also responsible for developing and updating a Plan of Action for the OSOCC in line with the objectives and TOR as mentioned above. The Plan should be communicated to OSOCC staff (including those working in the RDC and sub-OSOCCs) at least daily to ensure clarity of future direction. The OSOCC Manager may wish to assign an individual to this function and to coordinate the Plan with the operational planning taking place in Operations cells.

The UNDAC Deputy Team Leader usually fills the role of the OSOCC Manager and reports to the UNDAC Team Leader. The UNDAC Team Leader, along with the RC/HC and Government, will determine the overall strategic and operational planning and direction for the mission, and by extension the OSOCC. The Team Leader is generally not directly involved in the operations of the OSOCC, leaving this to the OSOCC Manager.

Other than the OSOCC Manager, the most common functions within the Management Function are Safety & Security and Liaison. Other functions can be established at the discretion of the OSOCC Manager, although these should not duplicate any of the other OSOCC functions described below.

Liaison Cell

As noted in section B.3.3 above, liaison is a crosscutting responsibility of all functions and personnel in the OSOCC that supports an effective and collaborative approach to disaster response. The Liaison Cell establishes and maintains formal information exchange procedures between the OSOCC and other actors that require a dedicated resource and/or are not otherwise being served by the other functions. In some instances, the Liaison Cell may be staffed when a large number of organizations send a liaison to the OSOCC and coordination of these representatives is necessary for continued OSOCC operations and effective information sharing. This is not intended to duplicate already established liaison between other OSOCC functions and their appropriate counterparts (e.g., USAR liaison), but rather to ensure there are no gaps in liaison.

The Liaison Cell works to build and maintain relationships with the LEMA, Government of the affected country and/or response organizations that are pivotal to cooperative and coordinated OSOCC activities. Those performing the role of the Liaison Officer should be diplomatic with a strong ability to build relationships with a variety of organizations through mutual understanding and consensus building. They should be able to communicate effectively and to see opportunities to strengthen collaboration and coordination among responding organizations.

Safety & Security Cell

The Safety & Security Cell works to support and inform the safety and security of all international humanitarian actors. The Cell directly supports the responsibilities of the United Nations Designated Official (DO), who is typically the most senior United Nations staff member in the country, and works closely with security officers from other relief actors and the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) Chief Security Advisor. Although the first arriving teams, including UNDAC, will create a basic security plan, staff from UNDSS will typically assume the lead of the Safety and Security Cell as soon as possible.

Key responsibilities of the Safety & Security Cell include developing, implementing and monitoring security and medical plans for the response, including all personnel associated with the OSOCC.

The medical plan is developed based on existing protocols for the affected country, or in close liaison with the Foreign Medical Team Coordination Cell (see section B.3.5 below),

national authorities and other medical resources present (e.g., medical resources associated with USAR teams).

The security plan is developed in accordance with the United Nations Security Policy Manual (SPM). It will be based on a Security Risk Assessment (SRA). This process identifies the threats and vulnerability to them. Based on likelihood and potential impact, risks are prioritized and prevention and mitigation strategies implemented. These include Minimum Operating Security Standards (MOSS), which are country-specific. The safety measures in the MOSS apply to all United Nations organizations operating in that country, including the OSOCC. Implementation of MOSS is typically achieved through the provision of briefings to incoming responders and ongoing liaison with all of the OSOCC functions.

Further information on Safety and Security is available in the SPM and the [UNDAC Handbook](#) (Chapter H).

B.3.5 Operations Function

The Operations Function is responsible for coordinating the efforts of international response teams and other resources involved in providing relief to affected populations. This Function is led by the Operations Coordinator who works with the leads of a variety of coordination cells – each focused on a specific functional area. Together these cells respond rapidly to perform functions such as rescuing people, providing emergency medical care, mitigating environmental impacts, moving people and goods, and coordinating with military/armed actors. Depending on need, the leaders of each coordination cell can establish sub-cells within each cell. These sub-cells focus on functions such as operational planning and tactical logistics.

Each coordination cell within Operations is generally staffed by experts from the cell's functional area. In the immediate aftermath of a disaster, cells may be staffed by members of first arriving teams trained in OSOCC methodology and UNDAC members. For this reason, cross-training of these individuals is done to provide maximum flexibility in the first phase of any major response.

In addition to the responsibilities described above, the Operations Coordinator works with each cluster that is active in the response. It is recommended that an Inter-Cluster Coordination Officer working within the Operations Function be appointed to carry out this role. A Cluster Coordination Cell may be established if warranted by the expansion of the coordination activities.

The Operations Coordinator is also the primary point of contact for the RDC(s). The RDC(s) work closely with most Operations coordination cells to provide information on arriving resources and to ensure implementation of processes related to logistics, safety and security, etc.

In addition to the coordination cells described below, cells can be created for any purpose at the discretion of the Operations Coordinator, in consultation with the OSOCC Manager.

USAR Coordination Cell (UCC)

Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) teams work within a narrow window of opportunity to rescue those trapped in collapsed structures. To maximize the efforts of these specialized teams, coordination via the VOSOCC begins as soon as a potential deployment is recognized. The first arriving USAR team trained in OSOCC and INSARAG methodology then works in cooperation with UNDAC (upon arrival) and national authorities to establish an RDC and the UCC. The UCC uses INSARAG methodology to coordinate international USAR teams in cooperation with other OSOCC functions and national authorities.

Staffing in the UCC (i.e., coordinator, planning, information management and logistics) can be expanded based on the size and complexity of the response. The personnel for the UCC will generally be supplied from some of the first arriving teams trained to fulfil this function and arriving INSARAG-trained teams may be required to allocate staff to the UCC. The staff in the UCC should have specialized USAR knowledge and experience with the complex task of coordinating multiple international USAR teams, as well as an ability to work as a member of the broader OSOCC team. Each arriving USAR team should also identify a liaison to work with the UCC.

As USAR teams begin arriving in the affected country, they will register at the RDC or through another point of entry mechanism. This includes indicating their capacity and capabilities by indicating their [INSARAG classification](#). USAR teams are classified as Light, Medium or Heavy based on a set of INSARAG criteria. Typically Light USAR teams do not deploy internationally, however, it is possible that Light teams from the affected country will be active.

When the UCC is stood up, it is critical to begin the systematic planning and assignment of USAR teams based on an assessment of known information regarding geography and populations, and where rescue efforts can have the greatest impact. A simple matrix (see Part III) is often used to track the utilization and availability of international USAR teams in each geographical sector of the affected area, as well as the trends of each area (e.g., where more resources are required). This snapshot of USAR operations can be easily displayed in the OSOCC to inform the overall situational awareness.

When there are a large number of international USAR teams responding to an incident, sectors become essential for effective operational management. The UCC will work with incoming international teams to allocate the most appropriate number of teams to each sector. If necessary, a suitable USAR team in each sector can be designated as the Sector Coordinator, coordinating the activities of the teams in an assigned sector and working under the direction of the UCC.

As Phase 1 begins to wind down, the activities of the UCC will turn towards supporting teams in returning home and/or transitioning USAR resources to support other areas of the operation.

Detailed information on international USAR operations can be found in the [INSARAG Guidelines](#), and in particular in Volume II Manual B – Operations.

Foreign Medical Team (FMT) Coordination Cell

The FMT Coordination Cell aims to work in close cooperation with national authorities to ensure the most efficient and effective use of incoming specialist resources. This is particularly important in the medical context, as each team's field of activities in an affected country is derived from the national health authorities at the time of a team's arrival. Qualified international responders from the FMT system work with these national authorities to ensure that only teams registered through the FMT classification system are recommended to receive authorization to practice for each given response.

As with the UCC, the FMT Coordination Cell is established as soon as possible following a request for assistance and the deployment of teams. As soon as practical, designated and trained FMT members will assume leadership of the cell and will establish core positions (i.e., manager, planning, information management and logistics). These positions will work closely with their counterparts from other Operations cells and OSOCC functions (e.g., Situation). In addition, each team is expected to assign a liaison to the FMT Coordination Cell.

As soon as adequate staffing is in place, the FMT Coordination Cell will begin receiving arriving teams. Based on prior registration, teams will be identified under three classification types:

- Type 1: Outpatient Emergency Care
- Type 2: Inpatient Surgical Emergency Care
- Type 3: Inpatient Referral Care

Other specialized cells may exist within Type 2 and 3 teams. For a full explanation of FMT-related definitions and for classification tables, see [Classification and Minimum Standards for Foreign Medical Teams in Sudden Onset Disasters](#).

Following identification and authorization, teams are then deployed by the FMT Coordination Cell based on their classification and the identified needs obtained through assessments. Careful consideration is made to balance the deployment of limited resources for the greatest impact based on what may be very limited information from a Phase I MIRA or limited sectoral assessment. Deployed teams will then ensure regular reporting through their liaison officer and may be called on to participate in planning processes.

Once the Health Cluster is established (where applicable), the FMT Coordination Cell will work in close cooperation and support of the Cluster – potentially taking on additional duties at the discretion of the Cluster lead. At the discretion of the Health Cluster, generally one of three transitions will take place: the responsibilities of the FMT Coordination Cell may be absorbed by the Health Cluster and the Cell will be demobilized; the FMT Coordination Cell may continue to coordinate international medical teams as an extension of the work of the Health Cluster; or the FMT Coordination Cell may continue its role in the OSOCC and receive direction from the Health Cluster.

Logistics Coordination Cell

The Logistics Coordination Cell supports other cells in the Operations Function (e.g., the USAR and FMT Coordination Cells), while also potentially being required to support the

overall humanitarian response over an extended period. In many cases, the coordination cell will serve as the early precursor to the Logistics Cluster led by the World Food Programme (WFP). Key responsibilities include working closely with the national authorities to source, procure, move and store supplies (e.g., fuel and timber), moving people (e.g., relief team members) within the affected country, securing access points, arranging for cargo handling – and possibly customs clearances, and prioritizing incoming relief items for processing (e.g., prioritization of airplanes requesting landing).

The earliest staffing of the Logistics Coordination Cell will typically come from UNDAC, first arriving relief teams or in-country WFP staff. These individuals will work closely with national authorities to establish an initial logistics plan/system to meet the immediate needs of the response. At first, these needs will be very specific and urgent – for example, getting teams where they need to go. They may also work with other partners, such as the DHL Disaster Response Team, arriving support module staff (see section B.3.7) or military actors (possibly through the Civil-Military Coordination Cell described below).

As the emergency evolves, so will the Logistics structures – where required. In some cases, a Logistics Response Team (LRT) will be sent to the field by WFP to assess the situation and determine what logistics support might be needed in-country. If activated, the LRT usually initiates or assumes Logistics Cluster operations from the first arriving responders.

Various tools and guidelines exist to support implementation of a logistics plan/system during the first phases of an emergency. A key resource is the Logistics Cluster's Logistics Operational Guide, which can be found at <http://log.logcluster.org>. Other resources include www.humanitarianinfo.org/stockmap which maps information on “who has what where” as a means to support preparedness initiatives and relief operations and LogIK (<http://logik.unocha.org>) which is a global on-line database created to record international humanitarian contributions of relief items.

United Nations Civil-Military Coordination Cell (UN-CMCoord Cell)

In humanitarian relief operations, coordination between humanitarian and military actors is essential to protect and promote humanitarian principles, avoid competition, minimize inconsistency and, when appropriate, pursue common goals. The need to coordinate is further amplified in complex and high-risk environments where a clear distinction between humanitarian and military actors is essential to maintain the civilian character of humanitarian operations in order to ensure safe humanitarian access, the protection of civilians and security of humanitarian aid workers.

OCHA is responsible for leading the establishment and management of dialogue and interaction with military actors through the UN-CMCoord function. Within the OSOCC, this is fulfilled through the CMCoord Cell, which establishes dialogue with military/armed actors to ensure the most effective and appropriate use of Military and Civil Defence Assets (MCDA). As with other Operations functions, this work is done in close cooperation with the affected Government and assisting militaries, where applicable.

When an UNDAC team deploys (or pre-deploys) in an emergency and military actors are present, the nominated UN-CMCoord focal point or dedicated officer in the team takes responsibility for assessing and establishing the initial interface with military actors, both

national and foreign. As the international response operation grows, the extent of the UN-CMCoord function is influenced by the number of foreign military forces present or being deployed, and/or extensive involvement of national military forces. It is the responsibility of the OCHA Civil-Military Coordination Section, in close consultation with the field, to determine the scale and structure of the UN-CMCoord function.

Subject to the scale of the emergency, OCHA may deploy dedicated UN-CMCoord officers to coordinate humanitarian civil-military coordination activities within the OSOCC and/or sub-OSOCCs. Specifically, undertaking liaison and establishing coordination structures between the humanitarian and military communities necessary to advise on the appropriate relations between humanitarian and military responders and the possible utilization of MCDA to support/complement humanitarian operations.

Should the number of actors and identified needs increase significantly, a shift from the OSOCC-based approach to a dedicated Humanitarian-Military Operations Coordination Centre (HuMOCC) may be deemed necessary. The HuMOCC, comprising humanitarian and military representatives, will remain linked to the OSOCC and/or sub-OSOCCs through the CMCoord Cell. In such cases, the HuMOCC will ideally be led by the LEMA with support from UN-CMCoord officers. Its main purpose is to further facilitate information sharing, joint planning and task division between humanitarian actors, through the clusters, and military actors. Key deliverables are to: (1) optimize the use of available military assets to support humanitarian priorities and gaps; (2) streamline and validate requests for military assistance at the national or sub-national level; (3) produce and maintain common situational awareness; (4) monitor and report on the use of military assets; and (5) plan for the disengagement of foreign military assets to avoid a shortfall in capability.

Further information is available on OCHA's [UN-CMCoord website](#) (including information on related courses) and in OCHA's [Guidelines on the Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief](#) and [Civil-Military Guidelines and Reference for Complex Emergencies](#). The [UNDAC Handbook](#) (section D.5) also provides detailed guidance for those establishing the UN-CMCoord Cell early in an emergency.

Environmental Emergencies (EE) Coordination Cell

The potential release of hazardous materials and major secondary environmental impacts, such as landslides, may pose an acute risk to life, health and the environment. The complexities of a spill or other secondary environmental impact during a major emergency presents additional challenges related to identification and assessment of the incident, the safety of responders, access to locations and a potential shortage of specialized resources to address the situation. The purpose of the Environmental Emergencies (EE) Coordination Cell is to coordinate the response to such incidents with the national authorities to ensure an effective approach to assessing and managing them. The scope and scale of this role varies greatly depending on the capacity of the national authorities and international actors and the extent of the risk. In some cases, the entire reason for the OSOCC presence could be an environmental emergency. In many cases though, hazardous materials releases are related to other causes (e.g., earthquakes, landslides and floods).

Following a disaster, the Joint United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)/OCHA Environment Unit can identify potential secondary risks posed by industrial facilities and

major infrastructure located in the affected area to alert emergency responders to such potential risks. This information can be accessed via the VOSOCC. Initial on-site assessment can then occur by responders trained on the [Flash Environmental Assessment Tool \(FEAT\)](#).

Following this assessment, the Environmental Emergencies Roster (EER) can be triggered if required. EER members may then be integrated with the UNDAC team and/or can fully establish the EE Coordination Cell. The Cell will then work with available resources from the affected Government and first arriving international response teams (e.g., USAR teams with Hazardous Materials response capacity) to identify and assess sites and risk levels. An initial response plan is developed and implemented through the EE Coordination Cell. Throughout this process, the cell will share information with the Situation Function and will work in direct cooperation with the Assessment Cell of that Function.

Further information on Environmental Emergencies is located on the website of the [Joint Environment Unit](#).

B.3.6 Situation Function

The Situation Function is responsible for collecting, managing and communicating information about the emergency to provide an updated, common situational analysis. This analysis is used to directly inform decisions by responders, senior officials, donors and – through mass media – the general public. Information is also displayed in the OSOCC for use by staff and visitors. This is achieved through the work of three cells:

- Assessment
- Information Management
- Media

Together these cells interact with numerous humanitarian actors who provide information about the situation and collaborate on communications. In many cases, these same actors become consumers of the Situation Function products (for example, assessment reports, media key messages, situation reports and maps).

Those working in the Situation Function in the first phase of the emergency should have highly developed communication skills, attention to detail and a strong ability to analyze large quantities of information. Immediately following a disaster, this Function will often be established remotely with information being shared through the VOSOCC. This may include the collection, synthesis and analysis of secondary data to provide an updated and ideally common picture of the situation while international responders are mobilizing. The Situation Function will often be staffed by UNDAC members – often with support from other rapid response mechanisms/teams, United Nations agencies and the affected Government. During this first phase, remote specialist support is generally available to assist each of the three cells, as described in the functional descriptions below. As the emergency progresses, specialists will be physically deployed as required. This may include OCHA's regional Information Management Officer(s) or staff from the Field Information Section (FIS), assessment experts from OCHA's Coordinated Assessments Section (or other rosters, agencies and organizations) and the deployment of Public Information Officers.

Assessment Cell

The Assessment Cell collects, synthesizes and analyses information that contributes to a common understanding of the situation. This includes identifying main challenges and impacts, root causes, and the size of the population affected and/or vulnerable groups. This is done in very close cooperation with humanitarian partners and the Information Management Cell.

As noted above, both assessment and information management activities may start remotely with the sharing of information on the VOSOCC and possibly through the collection and analysis of secondary data. Once established on the ground, the Assessment Cell immediately implements the methodology outlined in the IASC *Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) Manual*. The initial situation analysis, informed by ongoing secondary data analysis, is updated within 48-72 hours of the response and provides an initial overview of the situation, priority humanitarian needs and information gaps. This analysis will include information from media reports, satellite imagery, reports from local officials, etc., as well as from field visits conducted by the first arriving international responders, such as USAR, UNDAC and FMTs (this information should be supplied through direct liaison between the Assessment Cell and the Operations Coordinator).

As soon as possible, the Assessment Cell begins work on the second phase of assessment (primary data collection), which involves the collection of data using an agreed methodology from key informants in field locations by the Assessment Cell members. At the conclusion of the primary data collection phase, this information will be analyzed in conjunction with available secondary data and the MIRA Report produced within 10-14 days of the onset of the emergency. In larger scale emergencies, the MIRA process is conducted under the leadership of an Assessment Coordinator designated by the HC, often led by OCHA, and in collaboration with the Government, where possible.

Following completion of the MIRA process, assessment activities will generally evolve to focus on in-depth sectoral assessments. This will typically be guided and coordinated by cluster coordinators.

More information on conducting assessments and producing key products can be found in the MIRA Manual (referenced above), the *Operational Guidance on Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crises* and Chapter E of the *UNDAC Handbook*.

Information Management (IM) Cell

The IM Cell collects information related to the disaster (including information obtained by the Assessment Cell), organizes and analyzes the information and develops a variety of products (e.g., situation reports, who/what/where [3W] data, maps, contact lists, schedules, databases), which are then disseminated directly to organizations (e.g., through the OSOCC) or to the media/public through the Media Cell. It also oversees the flow of information of the OSOCC components (VOSOCC, RDC, OSOCC, sub-OSOCCs) including information into each component, between the components and from the components externally. All of these activities ensure a common operating picture that informs response decisions at all levels of the disaster.

During the initial hours and days of an emergency, the IM Cell is typically staffed by UNDAC members and representatives of partner organizations such as [MapAction](#). One of their primary tasks is to issue situation reports to inform classification of the emergency and response levels. Given the importance of this task, it is often necessary to assign a dedicated reporting officer within this Cell. This officer will be supported by an FCSS focal point, OCHA’s “desk” for the affected country/region, the OCHA regional office – including the regional OCHA IM Officer. As required, OCHA will deploy additional IM staff through surge mechanisms such as the ERR or directly from FIS in Geneva.

More information on Information Management is contained in the [Operational Guidance on Responsibilities of Cluster/Sector Leads & OCHA in Information Management](#) and in Chapter F of the [UNDAC Handbook](#).

Media Cell

The Media Cell coordinates all external media relations, monitors the media for media relations purposes and for situational awareness, and prepares information products for the media and the public. It develops a media plan for the OSOCC that indicates the main spokesperson (potentially the OSOCC Manager) and the role of the other team members with respect to media relations. The Media Cell also serves as the OSOCC focal point for both local and international media and supports site visits of donors and VIPs.

The work of the Media Cell enables the OSOCC to clarify/reinforce response activities being supported by the OSOCC, contributing to international awareness of and advocacy for relief for the affected population. The OSOCC Manager will often fulfill the Media responsibilities until an OCHA Public Information Officer (PIO) arrives on-site. The PIO then forms the Media Cell and works closely with all of the OSOCC functions, but particularly the Situation Function.

B.3.7 Support Function

The Support Function ensures the ability of the OSOCC to operate under adverse and challenging field conditions. This includes establishing appropriate facilities, an Information Communications Technology (ICT) platform and applicable OSOCC administrative processes. These duties are often performed and/or led by one or more deployed support teams from the International Humanitarian Partnership (IHP), the Asia-Pacific Humanitarian Partnership (APHP) or the Americas Support Team (AST). The support teams may be supplemented by additional resources, such as partner organizations, as required (e.g., Télécoms Sans Frontière for ICT support). While the Support Function is not generally broken into cells, the scale of an emergency may occasionally require such a division of labour as follows below.

Facilities Cell

This Cell ensures that the OSOCC and its component parts are established in adequate workspaces to enable current and future operations. As noted above, this is generally achieved through deployment of standardized modules provided by the IHP, APHP or AST. Further guidance on OSOCC facilities is contained in section B.5.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Cell

The ICT Cell produces an ICT plan for the OSOCC, in support of the overall response. The ICT plan ensures the availability of appropriate technology to enable the OSOCC to conduct its activities effectively. This includes facilitation of data and voice communications to link the various OSOCC system components with each other and the broader response, including deployed teams, the affected Government and humanitarian actors. As with the Facilities Cell, the equipment to support the ICT plan is deployed in standardized modules by partner organizations at the same time as other OSOCC staff.

Administration Cell

The Administration Cell is responsible for internal procedures and processes to support the day-to-day running of the OSOCC. This includes maintaining financial records in support of the OSOCC Manager, purchasing and contracting, staffing reception areas, developing a staffing roster, arranging translation/interpretation support, organizing physical files and resources in support of the IM Cell, and other support duties as determined by the OSOCC Manager.

B.4 Reception Departure Centre (RDC)

A large-scale disaster generally results in a sudden influx of assistance from the international community to the affected country. These response teams and relief supplies will converge in the country at one or more points of entry, seeking access to the disaster area. Depending on the geography of the affected country and the infrastructure damage, the point of entry may be an airport, seaport and/or land border. All incoming international resources will need to navigate key processes, such as immigration and customs, upon entry to the affected country, regardless of the type of entry point. Even in the best situations, the local authorities may be quickly overwhelmed by the sudden increase in volume of traffic, and at worst the airport, seaport or border-crossing facility may not be left standing to receive the international assistance. Additional resources are likely required to provide the necessary surge capacity and to facilitate timely and organized entry.

The RDC serves as the central intake hub for international relief traffic and is often the first OSOCC component established in the affected country. As such, it is usually set up by the first arriving USAR, FMT or UNDAC team members. In the early hours and days, the RDC must be prepared to facilitate the basic services of an OSOCC including delivering situational and operational briefings, providing basic logistical support, facilitating the operational activities of response teams and tracking resources. The extent to which these services are conducted will shift as the OSOCC becomes established and/or the affected country gains the means to facilitate incoming/outgoing international resources.

As the first contact point for incoming international assistance, the RDC needs to be established in a systematic manner that imparts a level of organization in the chaotic environment of the disaster. To achieve this, the RDC requires a clear structure that mimics the functional approach of the OSOCC.

B.4.1 RDC Structure and Functions

The RDC is structured in three functions aligned to its key responsibilities – Management, Operations and Support. In line with the principles of flexibility and scalability, the RDC structure can be expanded or contracted to meet the demands of the situation and to align with the available staffing complement at any given time.

RDC Management

RDC Management is responsible for overseeing the RDC operation and providing leadership to assigned personnel. Along with ensuring RDC operations run as effectively as possible, RDC Management is responsible for liaison with local authorities, particularly those operating the point of entry, and for ensuring regular communication with the OSOCC. Management is the first function to be staffed when establishing an RDC and thus will usually be a member of UNDAC, USAR or FMT.

RDC Operations

RDC Operations is responsible for the processing of international response teams/relief supplies arriving in and departing from the affected country. Personnel working within Operations will facilitate the in-processing and/or out-processing of relief teams/supplies at the point(s) of entry (see section B.4.3). This can include immigration and customs procedures, registration and briefings. If the OSOCC is not yet established, RDC Operations may also assign incoming response teams to areas of operation in collaboration with team leaders (e.g., USAR, FMT).

RDC Support

RDC Support is responsible for establishing and sustaining the systems that support the RDC operation. This can include sourcing and setting up materials for processing stations and ensuring available and functioning ICT and Internet connectivity. Support is also responsible for the management of RDC information including maintaining files and establishing an information board. In conjunction with Logistics Coordination Cell and/or the Logistics Cluster, RDC Support may arrange for the transportation of incoming relief teams to the OSOCC or to assigned areas of operations.

The RDC reports to the OSOCC through the Operations function as illustrated in Figure B.3 below:

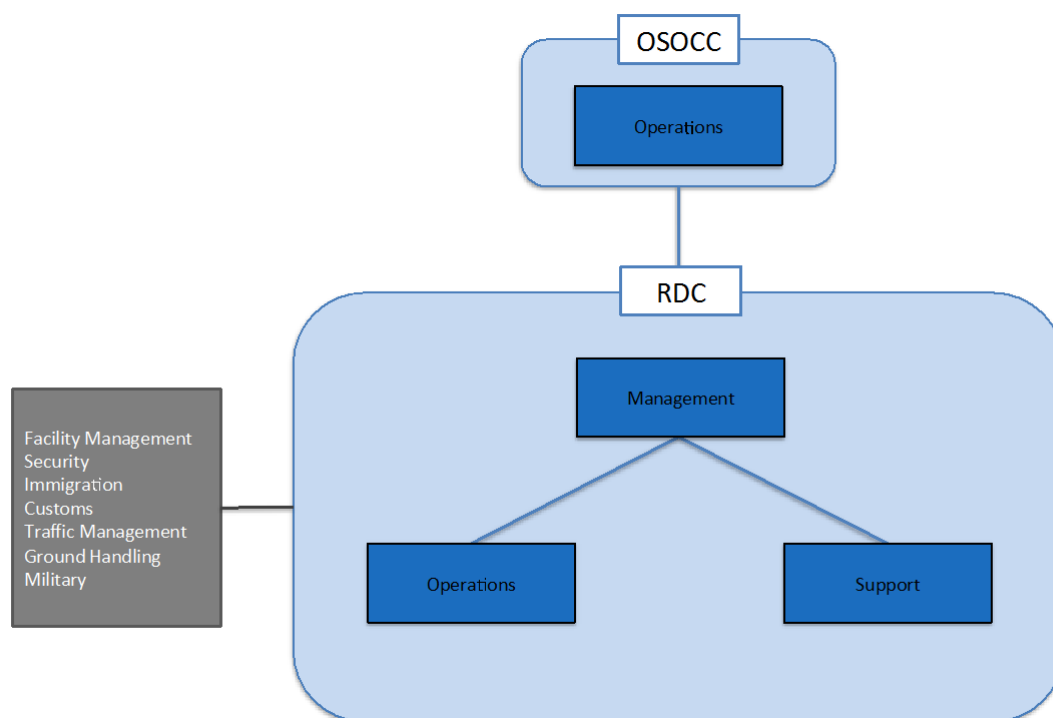


Figure B.3: RDC Structure

While all operational decisions should be made through RDC Management and OSOCC Operations, communication lines may be established with other OSOCC functions to facilitate RDC activities. For example, RDC Support may work with the Logistics Coordination Cell to provide transportation for arriving international response teams from the point of entry to the OSOCC. This ongoing information flow will allow the OSOCC to prepare for incoming resources, thus expediting the assignment of teams to the field.

B.4.2 RDC Coordination

The RDC often serves as the first coordination stop for international response teams and a well-functioning centre is a valuable asset for the OSOCC. The OSOCC will require information about the capacity of incoming response teams and any identified logistical needs in order to plan and carry out operational activities. In turn, the RDC will need up-to-date information from the OSOCC on the situation and the realities of the operational environment in order to brief incoming teams effectively.

A priority for the RDC is to establish a system for information flow, including identified communication channels and processes between the RDC and OSOCC. While the specific set up and routine for coordination will be dictated by the needs and cadence of the incident, common practices include:

- An established time for a morning briefing/coordination discussion between the RDC and the OSOCC.
- An established time for the provision of updated registration information.

- An agreed upon protocol for daily communication (e.g., by email as frequently as possible, by phone if urgent).
- Regular updating of the VOSOCC.
- A cyclic process for request of departing teams and arrangement of travel.

In addition to daily coordination and information sharing activities with the OSOCC, the RDC may also participate in similar activities at the point of entry. For example, daily meetings may occur with the point of entry authorities, local representatives and/or the military. The RDC is intended to support the affected country in managing incoming international response teams and the specific support model will be determined through discussions with the authorities responsible for the point of entry. In addition, the RDC may rely on other response or government organizations for elements such as electricity, water or a place to sleep. Refer to the [UNDAC Handbook](#) for information related to coordination methodology (section D.2) and civil-military coordination tips (section D.5).

The approach to an RDC needs to reflect it as an extension of the OSOCC coordination platform under the same principles as the OSOCC (see section A.3.2). Promoting cooperation with and amongst the organizations represented at the point of entry is crucial to RDC effectively facilitating the reception and departure of international resources.

B.4.3 Reception Activities

Upon arrival in a disaster-affected country, setting up an RDC to receive incoming international response teams is often one of the first actions of the UNDAC or USAR teams. Particularly in situations that will see an influx of USAR teams and FMTs who will engage in life-saving activities, it is important to establish a basic reception area as quickly as possible. Primary actions to consider include:

- Establish liaison with the local authorities responsible for the point of entry.
- Establish a visible presence at the point of entry facility.
- Establish communication with the VOSOCC and OSOCC.
- Track incoming resources including capacity and contact information.
- Facilitate moving response teams to the field.

Speed is of the essence in incidents with significant damage to infrastructure and high numbers of casualties. In advance of the OSOCC being set up, the RDC can move USAR teams and FMTs into the field quickly, enabling them to conduct life-saving operations. In these circumstances, coordination of the movement from the point of arrival to the field can be done through RDC personnel or by setting up a coordination cell (UCC or FMTCC – see section B.3.5) with available experts in those functions. When the OSOCC is prepared, this responsibility will transfer to Operations and the RDC will facilitate the movement of teams to the OSOCC for assignment.

When establishing an RDC, strong linkages with key components operating the point of entry are vital. There are several entities, which if active (i.e., not impacted by the disaster), will be involved in handling incoming relief teams and resources:

- facility and operational management

- security
- immigration
- customs
- traffic management (e.g., air, ground, harbour)
- ground handling facilities
- military representatives (if the point of entry is a military-civilian complex)

All entities involved must be informed of the roles and responsibilities of the RDC to ensure cooperation. The RDC is there to support the local authorities with the handling of incoming relief traffic and needs to work in conjunction with the existing systems. While the specific division of responsibilities will be determined by the incident and capacity of the local authorities, RDC personnel should be familiar with all potential stations to enable a methodical processing of incoming relief teams.

Initial Reception

As teams begin arriving at the port of entry, it is beneficial to have an RDC staff available to greet them as close to the point of arrival as possible. This immediate greeting helps to establish a connection with the teams and impart a sense of structure to the arrival process. Arriving teams should be given a brief overview of the reception process and specific guidance on the next steps. Depending on the type of response team and the set up of the RDC, this may include direction to a holding area for cargo, direction a safe area for canines, a decontamination station (e.g., boot wash) and/or proceeding to immigration.

Immigration

Immigration is concerned with the arrival of personnel into the disaster-affected country who are not residents. Immigration authorities will be ensuring that responders are carrying appropriate documentation that permits them to enter the country (e.g., passport, visa, letter from deploying organization). Responders who work in specialized and regulated fields (e.g., medical personnel) should also carry appropriate documentation to support their qualifications.

As soon as possible, RDC staff should become familiar with the basic immigration practices of the local authorities. While the country immigration authorities will lead this process, RDC staff will work in collaboration with the immigration authorities to facilitate the efficient clearance of arriving international response teams.

Customs

Customs is responsible for controlling the movement of goods (including equipment, vehicles and animals) into the country. During a disaster, this can be everything from communications, medical and rescue equipment to vehicles and supplies for humanitarian aid.

Similar to the immigration process, RDC staff should work to support the local point of entry staff in facilitating the customs clearance of arriving teams. The specific customs regulations of the affected country will need to be followed and RDC staff should aim to learn the basics of the requirements quickly. Cargo that includes ICT equipment, canines and medicine has

particular and more stringent country-specific regulations the RDC staff will need to be especially aware of.

All containers being brought into the affected country should be labeled with the type of equipment/supplies, contents, weight and value. Certain goods, and animals in particular, may need specific paperwork accompanying them to ensure that the items are permitted entry. For example, canines will need to travel with record of vaccinations and veterinary checks.

If cargo is being off-loaded from one type of transport (e.g., plane or ship), it will likely need to be moved to a holding area prior to being moved further into the disaster site. As more teams and supplies arrive in the affected country, the logistics demands at the point of entry will become greater as responders endeavor to move their materials into the affected area. RDC staff may be required to support the local authorities, military, Logistics Coordination Cell and/or the Logistics Cluster to ease the congestion.

Registration

Coordination of response activities relies on knowing who is active on the ground and how to contact them. All incoming international response teams should be registered prior to deployment using the established protocols through the VOSOCC and confirmed upon arrival at the RDC. USAR teams will register using the USAR Team Fact Sheet (found in Part III) that includes information regarding the INSARAG classification of the team, canine units, capabilities and support needs. A similar form also exists for FMTs. In addition to team registration, individuals will also be asked to register on the in-country contact management platform, including OCHA's 'Humanitarian ID' system.

International response teams who did not register prior to arrival will need to do so at the RDC. Registration information can be collected using a simple table and should include the following:

- Name of the team
- Type of assistance provided
- Number of people on the team
- Contact person for the team
- Contact phone number and email
- Capacity
- Material resource needs
- Arrival date
- Estimated departure date

Registration information gathered at the RDC should be uploaded to the VOSOCC and shared with the OSOCC as frequently as realistic. This information will serve as input to the OSOCC contact directory and to the who-what-where (3W) database. The details regarding the number, type and capacity of incoming teams is also necessary for the Operations Function to facilitate operational planning activities. If the information sharing is effective between the RDC and the OSOCC, incoming teams can be deployed to the field quickly after arrival in a coordinated manner supportive of the mission objectives.

Briefing

Arriving international teams should be given an initial briefing to orient them to the current situation and provide practicalities related to the response. The briefing should begin with an overview of the current situation. While teams will likely have some awareness of the incident, they may not have the same level of detail available on the ground and/or additional information may have become available while they were in transit. Where possible, the situation overview should be supported by visual aids (e.g., maps).

It is beneficial for the incoming teams to be briefed on the response activities and elements currently in place at the incident. This could include the locations of key facilities (e.g., OSOCC, LEMA/government operations centre, USAR base of operations), the coordination structure in place and/or clusters active on the ground.

This initial on-site briefing should also include information related to safety & security, and in particular the risk management measures outlined in the MOSS (see section B.3.4). A standard briefing checklist for USAR teams can be found in the INSARAG Guidelines and can be used/adapted for all incoming teams.

Logistics & Transport

After teams have navigated the arrival process at the point of entry, they will be ready to move further into the affected area. Particularly in the initial days/weeks of the incident, this will likely mean transport to the OSOCC. RDC Support staff will need to work closely with the Logistics Coordination Cell, the Logistics Cluster, local personnel and/or the military to facilitate both the movement of people and of the equipment/supplies. This may include negotiating for available transportation, keeping teams informed of the transportation process and/or ensuring the needs of the waiting teams are met.

If possible, the RDC should notify the OSOCC when teams are en route. This will allow the OSOCC to better prepare for the teams and enable the teams to begin their response activities as soon as possible.

B.4.4 Departure Activities

Discussions with the Government of the affected country and/or LEMA will determine the appropriate time to begin to wrap up of particular response activities, generally starting with the lifesaving operations during Phase 1. When the first teams have completed their mission and begin demobilization, the RDC shifts its focus to include the departure of teams from the affected country.

In many regards, the departure activities are a reverse of the process that response teams went through when they arrived. This includes responsibilities such as:

- Identification of support needed for departing teams, either through use of a specific form (e.g., USAR Team Demobilization Form) or another format.
- Coordination and/or arrangement of travel schedules.
- Collection of reports (e.g., USAR Mission Summary Report).
- Checking out the departing team.

Generally, the response operations will be much more established when the first teams are preparing for departure, and aspects such as establishing relationships and acquiring resources will already be in place.

Personnel working in the RDC may be simultaneously receiving incoming teams and out-processing departing teams. Each of these processes should be established separately, however opportunities exist to maximize the shared use of limited resources. For example, the registration desk may double as the check out desk.

Transportation

As response teams and individual responders near the end of their time on mission, they will begin to prepare to head home. Some teams will have arranged their transportation out of the country and will simply notify the OSOCC as to their plans. Others will work through the OSOCC to communicate their departure needs and preferences to the RDC so that arrangements can be made at the point of exit. Response teams should inform the OSOCC as to their preferred departure dates and provide their equipment and passenger manifests.

RDC staff will need to work closely with the OSOCC and the departing teams to coordinate transportation to the point of exit, and also with the local authorities and other organizations regarding transportation out of the country. Given the large amount of traffic likely moving into and out of the country, RDC staff and departing teams will need to remain flexible. Provisions should be made in the event that teams are required to wait at the point of exit for an extended period of time. This could include food, water, telecommunications and a place to store equipment.

Check Out

Much as teams and individuals were registered upon arrival, they will also need to check out upon departure. Check out information can be tracked using the same mechanisms as registration and include the departure date and any notes related to departure that could affect future response operations (e.g., if not all members of a team have left). This information should be uploaded to the VOSOCC and in-country contact management platform, as well as shared with the OSOCC in a timely manner, as it is important for operational planning purposes.

RDC staff will continue to work with and support the activities of the local authorities at the point of exit as teams depart. This can include assisting with the handling of cargo and canines, ensuring teams are ready for departure and collecting reports (e.g., USAR Mission Summary Report per the INSARAG Guidelines). The extent to which RDC staff are involved in departure activities will depend on the ability of the local authorities to manage the flow of international response traffic.

B.4.5 Transition and Demobilization

The RDC is intended as a tool for use during the initial phases (Phase 1 and 2) of a disaster and is established at the request of the Government of the affected country. This is usually when assistance is needed to coordinate incoming international relief at one or more points of entry. In keeping with the principle of scalability, this assistance can be tailored to each

emergency and to fulfill the need identified by the Government. As the Government establishes or re-establishes mechanisms to facilitate the arrival/departure of international aid, the functions of the RDC may transition to the local authorities and the RDC itself demobilized. Alternatively, the RDC may simply be demobilized at a point when the influx of international assistance ceases.

In situations where the functions of the RDC (e.g., receiving of international assistance) will be transitioned, the RDC team will need to work closely with the local authorities to ensure ongoing operations during the changeover. Each component of the reception process may transition at a different time, depending on the capacity of the local authorities. Where possible, the transition planning should begin as earlier as possible and be done in consultation with Operations.

As with all operations, demobilization should be considered from the onset. Whether the RDC transitions to local authorities or the operation is such that the RDC is no longer necessary, wrap up activities will need to occur. Equipment and personnel may be reassigned to the OSOCC or another RDC as appropriate, or may return to their home country. Further information on demobilizing the RDC can be found below in section B.5.4.

B.5 Establishing, Maintaining and Demobilizing OSOCC Facilities

As noted above, the UNDAC team or the first arriving qualified USAR team or FMT is responsible for initially establishing an OSOCC presence. If an RDC is required, this should be the first priority as the next arriving response teams are likely close behind. As soon as feasible, a suitable location for the OSOCC should be sought.

B.5.1 Selecting Facility Locations

The location of the OSOCC facilities (OSOCC, RDC and sub-OSOCCs) plays an important role in the coordination process. The establishment of the facilities is a priority, but each location should be carefully planned. The location must be readily visible and accessible to all who would benefit from its services, and should have sufficient space to meet both the immediate needs and the projected expansion of the operation. The most suitable location for each facility is not necessarily in the midst of the disaster-affected area and consideration should be given to where coordination activities can be best facilitated.

RDC Site

The site for the RDC will need to be in close proximity to the point of entry and may be located near entry authorities or the LEMA. The RDC may be established in an existing facility or may be a separate temporary shelter (e.g., tent) close by. The facility itself will need to be adequate to set up office space with considerations such as power, space for displaying information, logical flow of incoming traffic, etc. In addition to the RDC facility, other parts of the site may need to be marked out, such as a cargo holding area. The RDC site should be well marked with arrows/signage to assist incoming and outgoing response teams navigate the area and the RDC flag should be placed in a position that is highly visible for those entering the country.

OSOCC Site

The location of the OSOCC should ideally be in close proximity to the disaster site, LEMA and other agencies/organizations providing humanitarian assistance. This will facilitate cooperation and information exchange. The site should also maximize the effective use of communication equipment (e.g., on higher ground and not surrounded by hills or other natural obstructions) and should slope and drain effectively. Consideration should be given to a location that facilitates proper security procedures including ease of access and evacuation and an easily guarded perimeter.

Depending on the type of emergency and if it is safe to do so, the OSOCC may be established in an existing building that meets the needs of the operation. Alternately it can be set up in one or more tents. There are advantages to each set up and the type of incident and available resources will often determine which model is most suitable. Regardless of the type of structure, the OSOCC facility should include several separate office spaces, a large meeting space, a general area for receiving visitors and allow for the flow of traffic as more organizations work with or work within the OSOCC. Once established, the OSOCC flag should be placed in a location that ensures high visibility. A sample OSOCC layout can be found in C.2.

In large-scale emergencies it is important to think big from the start as the OSOCC may need to provide operating space and services for a large number of people as OCHA surge capacity and other international organizations start to deploy.

The same considerations outlined above apply to the sub-OSOCC(s).

B.5.2 Establishing Facilities

A series of deployable modules to support the OSOCC system are maintained by and available through IHP, AHP and AST. The modules provided by these support partners range from basic ICT and administration for use in an existing building to full tent-based OSOCC and base camp modules. When deployed in a disaster, these modules will be accompanied by support staff to establish and maintain facilities (see section B.3.7).

When establishing the OSOCC in particular, consideration will need to be given to the varying space requirements among the operational cells. For example, USAR teams carry large amounts of equipment that will need a designated space.

It is important to note that some Cells may need to be forward located in order to minimize the time between the onset of the disaster and the operational activities of response teams. This is particularly true for Cells within the Operations Function that are engaged in life-saving activities such as USAR and FMT.

B.5.3 Maintaining Facilities

Throughout the operation of the OSOCC system, the Support Function (see section B.3.7) is responsible for ensuring that the facilities are maintained on a daily basis and can continue to serve as the base of operations for OSOCC activities. In order to provide for continued operation of the OSOCC facilities, the following needs to be maintained:

- Access to a regular power supply (for example through the use of generators or an existing power source).
- Adequate lighting to enable round-the-clock operations as necessary.
- Access to food supplies and maintenance of food preparation areas.
- Access to water for consumption, sanitation, cooking, etc.
- Physical structures (i.e., tents and/or buildings) and the sites on which the facilities are established.

This can be a challenge in a disaster environment in which resources may be scarce, regular supply chains may be interrupted and field conditions may be harsh. In addition to working with these challenges, the OSOCC facilities need to retain a degree of flexibility. The facilities may need to be adjusted to accommodate changes in the size of staffing, changes in the scope of operations and/or changes in the flow of visitors/staff from other responding organizations.

B.5.4 Facility Demobilization

Planning for the demobilization of the OSOCC facilities should begin at the onset of operations and will become more concrete as the end of OSOCC operations come into sight.

In general, the RDC will demobilize first, although sub-OSOCCs may demobilize before the RDC if their primary purpose was the coordination of international relief teams. The OSOCC itself may remain in one form or another well beyond the presence of international teams, including UNDAC (as discussed above in section B.2.2).

Overall demobilization plans for OSOCC facilities are led by the Support Function in cooperation with international teams, partners and local authorities. They should consider whether any of the equipment is needed to remain in-country to continue to support the work of OCHA. All other modules will need to be packed up and returned to their home organization. In addition, efforts should be made to return the space and/or buildings to a usable state prior to departure.

In conjunction with physical demobilization, the OSOCC Manager will ensure reporting to relevant authorities to provide a summary of lessons learned to inform future OSOCC missions, guidelines and training.

PART III: OPERATIONAL TOOLS

C.1 Position Checklists

Specific responsibilities for the lead of each function or cell are described in position checklists:

- Assessment Cell Coordinator
- CMCoord Cell Coordinator
- Environmental Emergencies Cell Coordinator
- FMT Coordination Cell Coordinator
- Information Management Cell Coordinator
- Liaison Officer
- Logistics Cell Coordinator
- Media Officer
- Operations Function Coordinator
- OSOCC Manager
- Safety and Security Officer
- Situation Function Coordinator
- Support Function Coordinator
- UCC Coordinator
- RDC Manager
- RDC Operations
- RDC Support

Position checklists can be downloaded from the VOSOCC (<http://vosocc.unocha.org>).

C.2 Operational Resources

A set of resources to support OSOCC operations is available in the VOSOCC (<http://vosocc.unocha.org>):

- OSOCC Set Up
- OSOCC Site Selection
- USAR planning tool
- Operational Cycle
- Organizational Chart

These tools will be maintained by FCSS and updated on a regular basis based on the collective experience gained through OSOCC operations, training and exercises.

The [INSARAG Guidelines](#) contains a number of additional tools supportive to OSOCC operations. Of particular note are the following in Volume II Manual B and Volume III:

- Sectorization guidance
- USAR Team Fact Sheet
- Demobilization Form
- RDC Establishment Checklist
- RDC Briefing Handout
- RDC Briefing Checklist
- OSOCC – LEMA Briefing
- Standard Meeting Agenda
- Mission Summary Report

The INSARAG tools can be downloaded from <http://insarag.org/en/methodology/guidelines.html>.

C.3 OSOCC Visualizations

Signage and information display is an important aspect of a well-functioning OSOCC. A set of commonly used visualization tools for use in the OSOCC/RDC can be downloaded from the VOSOCC (<http://vosocc.unocha.org>).

C.4 List of Acronyms

APHP	Asia-Pacific Humanitarian Partnership
AST	Americas Support Team
BoO	Base of Operations
CASPAR	Coordinated Assessment Pool and Roster
CLA	Community Level Assessment
DO	United Nations Designated Official
ERC	Emergency Relief Coordinator
ERCC	Emergency Relief Coordination Centre
ESB	Emergency Services Branch (of OCHA)
FCSS	Field Coordination Support Section (of OCHA)
FMT	Foreign Medical Team
GDACS	Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HPC	Humanitarian Programme Cycle
HuMOCC	Humanitarian-Military Operations Coordination Centre
IARRM	Inter-Agency Rapid Response Mechanism
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICC	Inter-Cluster Coordination
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICT	Information Communications Technology
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IHP	International Humanitarian Partnership
IM	Information Management
INSARAG	International Search and Rescue Advisory Group
IOM	International Organization for Migration
EE	Environmental Emergencies
EER	Environmental Emergencies Roster
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FEAT	Flash Environmental Assessment Tool
FIS	Field Information Section (of OCHA)
FMT	Foreign Medical Team
LEMA	Local Emergency Management Authority
LRT	Logistics Response Team
MCDA	Military and Civil Defense Assets
MIRA	Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment
MOSS	Minimum Operating Security Standards
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OSOCC	On-Site Operations Coordination Centre
PIO	Public Information Officer
RC	Resident Coordinator
RC/HC	Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator
RDC	Reception Departure Centre
SDA	Secondary Data Analysis

SPM	United Nations Security Policy Manual
SRA	Security Risk Assessment
TOR	Terms of Reference
UCC	Urban Search and Rescue Coordination Cell
UN	United Nations
UN-CMCoord	United Nations Civil-Military Coordination
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDAC	United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDSS	United Nations Department of Safety and Security
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAR	Urban Search and Rescue
USG	Under-Secretary General
VOSOCC	Virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Centre
WFP	World Food Programme (UN)
WHO	World Health Organization (UN)