

I. UNDAC DISASTER RESPONSE PREPAREDNESS MISSIONS

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I.1. Introduction

The UNDAC team consists of individuals with a wide variety of specializations, skills and experiences related to disaster response. The international system does not have another entity that can put together such a multi-skilled team, tailored to special disaster response situations. While the UNDAC team is primarily meant for disaster response, its experience and skills may be utilized (when not actually responding to emergencies) to advise developing countries on improving their national disaster response systems.

I.2. Request and ToR for UNDAC Disaster Response Preparedness (DRP) missions

UNDAC Disaster Response Preparedness (DRP) missions must be requested from the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) by the government of the country concerned, with the consent and endorsement of the UN Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) in-country. Once the UNDAC mission is approved by the ERC, the Terms of

Reference (ToR) of the mission should be finalized in consultation with the government, the RC/HC, the Regional Office and the desk in the Coordination and Response Division (CRD), and the Field Coordination Support Section (FCSS) of OCHA-Geneva. FCSS should not send an UNDAC mission unless it is satisfied that the ToR is achievable.

It is essential to remember that an UNDAC mission of this nature deals only with the response management systems and not disaster mitigation. The UNDAC mission is provided free of cost to the requesting government and will normally last two weeks.

As far as possible, FCSS tries to send a follow-up mission to the concerned country one year after the mission. Such a mission will try to include key-members of the original team and will evaluate the implementation of the recommendations given in the mission report.

Example of ToRs and mission reports from Mongolia, Philippines, and Tajikistan may be found in the UNDAC mission software.

I.3. Selection of UNDAC team members

An UNDAC DRP mission is different from a standard UNDAC mission in that normally the need for such a mission is under discussion with the government over a period of time. As such, it is possible to tailor the composition of the team to meet the specific needs of the ToR. The normal process of issuing the UNDAC Information Message (M0) will be utilized to seek UNDAC member's availability and willingness to proceed on such missions. The actual UNDAC team will be selected in order to ensure balanced experience in the team for the three broad areas of such missions:

- Disaster response framework.
- Emergency services.
- Early warning and public education.

As far as possible, members will be from the geographical region in which the requesting country is located. There should be at least three people with good writing and editing skills, one administrative staff and a team member with legal knowledge in each team. It is desirable that the Regional Office or the Regional Disaster Response Advisor (RDRA) responsible for the country participate in the mission to ensure the follow up. In addition, the inclusion of associate team members from the International Federation of Red cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP's) Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR) should be considered.

I.4. Pre- mission actions

Since there will normally be a period of a few weeks between selection of the team and the actual mission, the UNDAC team must utilize this period to prepare for the mission. The Regional Office should take a lead role in this regard.

I.4.1. Discussion on the Virtual OSOCC

FCSS will open a “private” discussion on the Virtual OSOCC, accessible only to the selected UNDAC team members. They should use this for all pre-mission discussions and other preparations such as exchanging relevant information on the country. A considerable amount of material may be obtained from the internet. Further, selected team members should familiarize themselves with the final reports from previous DRP missions, available on the Virtual OSOCC and the UNDAC mission software.

I.4.2. Sub- teams and team members responsibilities

It is recommended that the UNDAC Team Leader divide the team into three sub-teams (each with a sub-team leader), each dealing with one of the three broad areas mentioned in I.3., utilizing the individual skills of respective team members. The paragraphs of the ToR should also be subdivided between each of the sub-teams. This will ensure focus on the relevant areas by those best qualified to do so. Sub-teams should prepare a list of questions they would like to ask in-country, addressing the paragraphs of the ToR that are their responsibility. It is also recommended that the UNDAC Team Leader appoint a deputy Team Leader to establish a clear managerial structure. It is also recommended that the UNDAC team identify two team members with good English writing skills to be responsible for the preparation of the UNDAC mission report.

I.4.3. Ensuring in-country preparation for UNDAC team activities

The UNDAC Team Leader, through FCSS, should try to ensure that an appropriate schedule for the UNDAC team’s activities is drawn up before the team arrives in country. This should cover meetings with the RC/HC, UN Country Team (UNCT), related government entities, NGOs, donors and Red Cross/Red Crescent Society as well as field visits. The team should aim to ensure that field visits start as soon as possible after arrival. It is recommended to reserve one day after arrival of the team for initial meetings with authorities and to schedule at least two day after the field visits to finalize the report.

I.4.4. The outline of the mission report

Based on the suggested layout of the UNDAC mission report in I.6., the team must produce a preliminary outline of the mission report including specific requirements indicated in the ToR of their mission. This will ensure that sub-teams are fully focused on what they are required to address and that the UNDAC team does not omit any part of the ToR in its final report. This preliminary outline may be amended once in-country but is essential to provide a framework for the mission.

I.4.5. Meeting at marshalling point

All members of the UNDAC mission should convene for a meeting at the marshalling point a day before they enter the country. During this meeting they should discuss the outline of the mission report, questions each sub-group has prepared and their sequence of actions on arrival in-country. This meeting is important in ensuring that all members of the UNDAC team have a common understanding of their mission.

I.5. Actions in-country

Two weeks is quite a short time for this type of mission but it has been found that if the team is organized, the mission may be successfully completed in this time. Some of the aspects that have to be addressed are provided below.

I.5.1. Establishing a team base

It is essential for the UNDAC team to have a base from which they can operate without disturbance. This base should have sufficient space for team members to work when they are not going on field visits or meetings. It should also have enough wall space for charts, maps, etc. The administrative member of the team should always operate out of the team base. The team base should normally be in the UNDP office, as proximity to the RC/HC and administrative staff is important. However, if there is a paucity of space, the base could be established in the hotel in which the UNDAC team is staying or, alternatively, in relevant government offices.

I.5.2. Initial meetings and subsequent meetings

The entire UNDAC team must first meet with the RC/HC to ensure that it understands the political environment in which it will be working. Thereafter, it should meet with the National Disaster Management Authority in order to understand their perspective. Then, the UNDAC team may disperse into smaller groups.

The UNDAC team must ensure that it meets with all UN agencies in-country, preferably through the RC/HC convening a meeting of the UNCT, all government departments and institutions that have a part to play in national disaster management, all emergency services, national Red Cross/Red Crescent Society, major NGOs and donors, especially those with projects concerned with disaster management. It is worthwhile to meet with the World Bank and any of the regional development banks, as well as with private sector representatives, if time permits. Obviously, all UNDAC members will not attend all meetings but will attend those within their area of responsibility.

It is important to review the government's strategy to mobilize external resources to assist in strengthening its capacity and to review the country's capability to put these strategies in place.

During the course of the mission, the UNDAC Team Leader should hold periodic meetings with the RC/HC and the Head of the National Disaster Management Authority to keep them informed about the findings and possible recommendations that may emerge. It is also recommended that the UNCT be kept informed of progress. This will ensure that the UNDAC team does not stray off its ToR and that there are no surprises at the end of the mission. It also keeps major partners involved in the work of the mission. Furthermore, as the work proceeds, these important stakeholders may see additional opportunities for further analysis.

I.5.3. Field visits

The UNDAC team must undertake field visits, as appropriate. It is best to start on the first field visits as soon as possible as field visits are time consuming. The composition of the team going for the field visit should be such that one member of each sub-team is in every field visit. This ensures that all aspects of the ToR are covered in each field visit. A competent interpreter is a must.

Field visits in the first week of the mission are likely to be exploratory in nature, while field visits in the second week of the mission are more confirmatory since, by this stage, a significant amount of information should have been obtained. The team should try to complete the last field visit at least two days before the mission report has to be presented in order for all inputs to be incorporated in the report.

All field visits must be conducted in accordance with existing security regulations in-country. Information on prevailing security conditions and phases will be provided to the mission prior to departure by FCSS in consultation with the UN Department of Safety and Security (UN DSS) and the RC/HC.

I.5.4. Information management

From the outset, simple guidelines must be established to facilitate gathering of information, steering away from rigid positions. A simple format for data management should be drawn up and adhered to by all members covering:

- **Meeting and key interview schedule** - Date, time, place, agency, people met including best focal point to refer to for additional data and other relevant data.
- **Key issues identified during an agency visit.**
- **General observations made.**
- **Recommendations/action points.**
- **Examples of disasters/relevant case studies** – Referencing any materials collected during the agency visit related to event history or relevant actions taken.

Following each interview/field visit a report should be immediately produced. The report should strive to be direct and parsimonious, seeking to be no more than one page. In all cases the emphasis should be on analysis of findings, avoiding simple descriptions.

A diary/schedule of events should be made and updated on a daily basis to ensure no key events, e.g., interviews and meetings, are missed. This schedule should be updated during the daily operations briefing.

I.5.5. Daily internal meetings of the UNDAC team

The UNDAC team must meet daily both in the morning before starting its work and in the evenings when everyone has returned. This enables it to keep abreast of developments on all issues, as the team's overall understanding will change day-by-day. The field missions should be contacted via phone/radio and their feedback also received and considered daily. The importance of these daily meetings cannot be overemphasized. The outcome of the evening meetings provides the ongoing raw material for writing the mission report.

I.5.6 UNDAC team administration

Team administration should be given attention daily, especially tracking costs/bills/receipts. Each DRP mission should include a UN staff member knowledgeable about administrative procedures. Simple forms, in a checklist format, should be created to capture the necessary items/issues that need to be dealt with from day one. Administrative issues relating to hotel billing, etc. should be clarified with the hotel authorities from the outset to avoid confusion and delays.

I.6. Layout of the mission report

The UNDAC mission report is the product of the mission and the mission's success will be determined, in large measure, by its quality. The suggested layout of the mission report is given below though this will vary depending on the country assessed and types of hazards, disasters and capacities. Under the suggested chapter headings are some of the aspects that may be covered.

The UNDAC mission report should be prepared, printed and distributed in-country before the mission departs.

1. Message.
 - From RC/HC /or Head of Government Disaster Management Authority.
2. Executive Summary.
 - Background of the mission.
 - Overview of the ToR of UNDAC mission (It should be made clear that the mission is dealing only with disaster response preparedness and not disaster mitigation.)
 - Overview of the competencies of UNDAC team.
 - Methodology followed by UNDAC team and areas covered.
 - Brief overview of conclusions/recommendations.
3. Table of contents.
 - Outlining each section and subsection with page numbers.
4. Summary of recommendations.
 - Each recommendation should clearly indicate the paragraph in the main body of the report from which it is drawn.

5. Overview of country and nature of disasters experienced by it.
 - Geographic, geological and climatic status of country.
 - Indicate types of hazards country faces.
 - Could include examples of disasters that have been experienced and how the country handled them (including the international response) and any significant lessons learned.
6. Disaster management in country.
 - Disaster management governmental framework existing in country.
 - Legislative framework for disaster response and management.
 - Important in-country definitions used.
 - Disaster management coordination systems in place.
 - Mechanisms for facilitating international assistance.
 - Resource allocation for disaster management.
7. National and local disaster response capacity.
 - Decision-making protocols for activating emergency response.
 - Operations/control room facilities at various levels of government.
 - Status of emergency telecommunications/ICT networks.
 - Status of national and local fire rescue and other first responder units.
 - Damage assessment and needs analysis systems activated at the occurrence of disasters.
 - Sectoral responsibilities and mandates (consider using cluster framework).
 - Logistical and relief goods handling capacities.
 - Rehearsals of emergency plans.
8. Disaster preparedness and awareness.
 - Disaster contingency plans and planning systems.
 - Public awareness and education systems.
 - Monitoring systems, e.g., meteorological, seismographic, etc.
 - Early warning systems for the public.
 - Special concerns, e.g., sites of international tourism.
 - Training systems.
9. Recommended timeline for implementation of recommendations.
 - Recommendations suggested to be implemented in the short, medium and long term.
10. Conclusion.
11. List of annexes.
 - Terms of Reference (ToR) of the UNDAC mission.
 - Programme of activities of UNDAC team.
 - List of persons consulted by UNDAC team.
 - List of institutions visited by UNDAC team.
 - List of acronyms.
 - Copy of relevant national law on disaster management.
12. Acknowledgements.

I.7. The preparation of the mission report

While preparing the report remember:

Content, physical layout and printer requirements, format

- Preparations for this should be done from day one.
- All members need to understand the need to plan the report as soon as the mission starts and the importance of gathering data to meet the content requirements.
- The layout and format should be discussed with the printers and set out from the start. This includes decision on number of photographs/colour illustrations to determine budget constraints, if any.
- The content, format and layout should be clearly displayed on a white board or sheet of paper for all members to visualize and understand.

Writing the report

- Division of duties should be made from the outset to cover the different chapters.
- Report should be updated on a daily basis, especially on the less-dynamic areas in chapters where data should be readily available.
- When photos or illustrations are used, ensure they are relevant to the issues discussed and each must be captioned and the source cited.
- Writing should be in a positive style; avoid being over-critical
- Whenever a recommendation is made in the body of the report it should be written after the relevant paragraphs, in italics and clearly numbered.
- One person should be assigned to type the report in one pre-designated laptop.
- Regular backups on an independent storage device, e.g., floppy disk, CD-rom, memory stick must be made to avoid loss of data in case of computer failure.
- Before finalizing the report a consultation with the RC/HC and the Head of the National Disaster Management Authority is recommended to ensure that the recommendations that the team have reached are understood and foster local ownership. This will engender the required follow-through.
- Ensure that at least half a day is set aside for final editing; this should not encroach into the final deadline to pass the report to the printer.
- The whole team should be encouraged to take an active role in the final review of the report. The use of an LCD projector might be useful.
- Always bear in mind that printing costs escalate when deadlines are tight.

I.7.1. Presentation of the report

The report should be formally presented by the UNDAC team, in hard copy, to the government and the RC/HC. The team must give a presentation of its findings and recommendations to the UNCT and the National Disaster Management Authority. The modalities of how this should be done should be worked out in consultation with both parties.