

Early recovery in humanitarian appeals¹

Early recovery perhaps deserves special mention as a ‘cross-cutting issue.’ Early recovery, which is a part of humanitarian action, takes advantage of opportunities to reduce aid dependence and vulnerability and to find durable solutions for displacement. It is often a priority, because in the medium term it frees up humanitarian resources for acute needs. It is thus one of the key strategic elements of humanitarian action, in that it aims to move the crisis to an eventual close. Despite this, early recovery programming is often under-emphasized in CAPs; and donors, for their part, often find it difficult to fund within the confines of their regulations for use of humanitarian funds, even though failing to do so may necessitate greater or more prolonged funding for direct relief.

An appeal’s boundaries should encompass well-prioritized early recovery actions that will address time-critical needs and contribute to saving lives and livelihoods. By hastening the end of aid dependence and supporting self-sustained recovery, such actions will also contribute to the progressive opening of alternative (e.g. non-humanitarian) funding opportunities (like those related to peace-building, rehabilitation and reconstruction, multi-donor trust funds, etc.).

Needs analysis by the HCT should encompass post-conflict/disaster early recovery needs assessments, when available. CAP strategy should outline a common inter-cluster early recovery strategy. This early recovery strategy component should indicate how, in the specific context of each CAP, early recovery:

- addresses time-critical, evidence-based needs;
- has a strong rationale for beginning sooner rather than later and can have a substantial and rapid impact on the affected populations; and
- can be built on and strengthen positive coping mechanisms and communities’ resilience to shocks, and seize recovery opportunities with targeted actions that can be effectively implemented within the CAP timeframe.

Empirical examination of CAP projects in recent years shows that most humanitarian projects have some early recovery elements, implicit or explicit.

In November 2008, the IASC Working Group “reaffirmed that all Clusters are accountable for mainstreaming early recovery into their work at both global and field levels, identifying and removing blocks to further implementation.” Early recovery support opportunities – and related needs and projects – should therefore be identified and mainstreamed within each CAP cluster as appropriate.

Customarily, early recovery areas of intervention that fall outside the clusters’ scope of response or could not be effectively mainstreamed (e.g. governance, rule of law, non-agricultural livelihoods, land and property, reintegration, basic and community infrastructure, etc.) could be presented in a specific early recovery response plan, usually named after the main sectors addressed (such as governance and livelihoods cluster or livelihoods and reintegration cluster etc.), according to the context.

In other words, there may be no need to present a separate ‘early recovery’ cluster response plan – each cluster should be pursuing early recovery within its scope – but early recovery activities that fall outside the clusters’ technical scope could be presented in a distinct cluster response plan.

¹ Adapted for the Pakistan context from the 2012 CAP Guidelines