MULTI-YEAR HUMANITARIAN FUNDING

WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT PUTTING POLICY INTO PRACTICE

THE COMMITMENTS INTO ACTION SERIES



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The Commitments into Action series

Humanitarian needs continue to grow, with millions of people affected by conflicts, natural disasters and other crises every year. Simultaneously, these shocks undermine development gains and block the path out of poverty and towards sustainable development. Furthermore, these negative events can destabilise neighbouring countries and have regional or even global repercussions.

And yet, many humanitarian crises remain underfunded or forgotten. Donors and operational agencies make hard decisions about which operations to prioritise, and which to let go. In short, there is insufficient quality money - which does not reach all those in need, to purchase what they need, when they need it. Human suffering continues unabated.

In May 2016, the World Humanitarian Summit reflected on the shifting nature of crises and the need for new ways of funding and delivering humanitarian assistance, so that humanitarian aid can remain a key and effective tool for the critical task of saving lives and preserving livelihoods. The question of how to better finance humanitarian operations – including how to finance some of emerging good practices and new ways of working in humanitarian crises – was seen as key to delivering a better response.

Under the OECD's mandate to monitor the effectiveness of aid and to promote peer learning, we will continue to support our members to deliver on the commitments they made at the Summit, especially the commitments around better humanitarian financing.

As part of this work, the Commitments into Action series was developed to provide straightforward, practical guidance for OECD Development Assistance Committee members and other humanitarian donors, helping them translate their humanitarian policy commitments into quality results in the field.

The series has been developed to help professionals with limited knowledge in humanitarian donorship, to better engage and deliver on the "new way of working" following the World Humanitarian Summit – supporting them to deliver better finance and better engagement with the humanitarian community on the key issues surrounding humanitarian responses in modern crisis situations. This serie specifically targets professionals in donor agencies making decisions about humanitarian funding.

All guidelines are available on a dedicated website designed especially for humanitarian donors: www.oecd.org/development/humanitarian-donors/ .

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1 Introduction

The last decade has seen unprecedented growth in humanitarian need. The 2017 UN global humanitarian appeal reached a record USD 22.2 billion, the largest in the history of the United Nations appeals, with the majority of this funding dedicated to protracted crises (OCHA, 2016). All 29 crises covered in the 2017 global humanitarian appeal already had response plans in 2016 – these are all long-term crises. In addition, six of these response plans are now set out over two or three-year periods, showing a welcome trend in the humanitarian community to move towards multi-year planning to match the multi-annual nature of the crises.

At the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016, humanitarian donors made commitments to shift from annual to multi-year humanitarian funding. However, delivering on this commitment will not be easy: with the majority of donors still continuing with funding cycles of 12–18 months, there is still much to be done to achieve this commitment (Scott, 2015)

Responding to long-term humanitarian needs with short-term funding keeps the focus on meeting immediate humanitarian needs, but can prevent a thorough and shared analysis of how to best address the root causes of those needs. Short term finance can also prevent closer links between humanitarian action and development programming, and therefore delay programming to reduce the root causes of humanitarian issues with the appropriate action and funding mechanisms.

This guidance note provides donors with some tools to help them implement multi-year humanitarian funding. It highlights the range of benefits that a shift from annual to multi-year funding can bring, as well as outlining some of the risks and ideas for how to manage them. It also gives practical guidance on how to support greater use of multi-year planning and funding.

2 Definition

Multi-annual funding refers to funding given over two or more years for humanitarian assistance, including funding for multilateral organisations, a national disaster management agencies, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and local and international NGOs. There are different ways this can be done:

• **Multi-annual core funding** is pooled and used to meet an organisation's running and programme costs for humanitarian assistance in such a way that it becomes an integral part of the recipient institution's financial assets to reach its operational and policy objectives. The funding is used to cover organisational and administrative costs including staff, facilities and equipment, or to cover programme costs towards humanitarian assistance.

• Multi-annual funding earmarked to specific humanitarian operations, such as funding for a food security programme in the Central African Republic. This funding can be provided in two ways: 1) Under a multi-annual contract, whereby funding is conditional on a specific set of results being met each year, or 2) On a more predictable basis as multi-year funding: a known flow of funds over a set period of several years, as in the example of the Dutch Relief Fund (Box 1).

Box 1: The Dutch Relief Fund

While the overall volume of humanitarian aid is increasing, need continues to outpace demand. Flexible, multi-year funding is essential as it allows humanitarian actors such as the UN, civil society, and Red Cross movement to respond as quickly and efficiently as possible to crises. A good example of such a funding mechanism is the Dutch Relief Fund. The EUR 570 million Fund, which runs from 2014 up until the end of 2017, was created in addition to the existing Dutch humanitarian aid budget.

The Fund increased the overall amount of money available to spend on humanitarian aid and allowed for multi-year planning and funding, while also offering greater flexibility to both the Netherlands and the Fund's recipients. Total contributions to NGOs and international organizations from the Dutch Relief Fund - mostly unearmarked or softly earmarked, and all multi-year – amounted to EUR 450 million. This left EUR 120 million available for rapid mobilisation as and when the need arose. As a result, from 2014 to 2017 the Relief Fund is used to make extra contributions to humanitarian aid in the most severe emergencies during that period: Syria, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Iraq, and the Ebola outbreak.

3 Commitments

The call for increasing multi-year humanitarian funding is embedded in several different policy commitments, summarised below:

Good Humanitarian Donorship, Principle 13 (GHD, 2003)	While stressing the importance of transparent and strategic priority-setting and financial planning by implementing organisations, explore the possibility of reducing, or enhancing the flexibility of, earmarking, and of introducing longer-term funding arrangements.
The Grand Bargain, Commitments 1-2 (Grand Bargain, 2016)	Increase and support multi-year investment in the institutional capacities of local and national responders, including preparedness,

	response and co-ordination capacities, especially in fragile contexts and where communities are vulnerable to armed conflict, disasters, recurrent outbreaks and the effect of climate change ()
The Grand Bargain, Commitment 7 (Grand	Increase collaborative humanitarian multi-year
Bargain, 2016)	planning and funding
The 2015-2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, Priority 4, 33 (j) (Sendai Framework 2015)	To promote the incorporation of disaster risk management into post-disaster recovery and rehabilitation processes, facilitate the link between relief, rehabilitation and development, use opportunities during the recovery phase to develop capacities that reduce disaster risk in the short, medium and long term (). While not explicitly referring to multi-year humanitarian funding, such longer-term humanitarian funding facilitates the link between relief, rehabilitation and development in disaster risk reduction

4 Why is multi-year humanitarian funding important?

Multi-year humanitarian funding can help to make humanitarian aid more cost-efficient and effective. Potential benefits include not only a more efficient response, but also better outcomes for beneficiaries. A study on the reported benefits of multi-year humanitarian funding comprised the following (Cabot-Venton, 2013):

Lower operational costs: Multi-year funding can result in decreased costs, for instance through reduced procurement and transport costs (Box 2), savings on proposal writing, and reduced currency risk. For example, renting vehicles over a long-term period is cheaper than engaging in multiple rental contracts over a shorter duration. Staff costs may also be lower, as multi-year humanitarian funding allows partners to hire and retain longer term staff. It can also provide agencies with greater control over the timing of funds transfers, leading to cheaper currency conversions. Procurement, transport and implementation costs can be reduced by planning over a longer time horizon, and it may also make the donor's negotiating position stronger.

- Flexibility for early response: When multi-year humanitarian funding is combined with greater flexibility, agencies can react more appropriately and/or quickly to changing conditions, resulting in reduced caseloads, levels of need, and loss of life (Box 2). For example, humanitarian needs resulting from a sudden population displacement can be addressed immediately by a given partner without needing to agree on a new contract, thus avoiding a potential deterioration in the humanitarian situation.
- Predictability of funding allows for more strategic partnerships and better planning. It can facilitate early procurement and pre-positioning of stocks, as well as savings from making long term investments. It also facilitates the choosing of the most appropriate interventions. For instance, a medical humanitarian organisation that knows it has three years of funding can plan to work with local health authorities rather than for example having to create a stand-alone health facility providing a short term response.
- Local capacity building and enhancing resilience: When multi-year funding is provided directly or indirectly to local partners, they can invest in staff, training, and equipment, building local capacity. It also allows them to be better prepared to respond efficiently and at scale when a crisis hits. For example, a local emergency response agency working under a multi-year partnership is likely to have been able to prepare and train its staff, which would significantly improve the quality and swiftness of the organisation's crisis response.
- Coherence with development and recovery programmes: Due to its medium-term nature, multi-year funding can also facilitate a more coherent approach between development and recovery frameworks. The line between emergency and development interventions is increasingly blurred, and particularly in protracted crises and those involving long-term displacement, which calls for common analysis and coherent response plans. Multi-year humanitarian funding in itself is not sufficient to fill the gap between humanitarian aid and development programmes. However, it can help agencies with a dual mandate to integrate their resilience building strategies within wider development programming under the Busan principles, in line with the commitment to make development co-operation more predictable.
- More effective programming: Projects funded over several years can evolve or adapt to changes in circumstances or conditions, making them more adapted to the needs. Partners have more time to study the local context and develop longer term relationships with the same population groups, leading to more participatory approaches and community-driven design.

Box 2: Ethiopia contingency funding

The United Kingdom's Department For International Development (DFID) provided early funding to partner organizations in Ethiopia during the 2015-2016 drought, using multi-year contracts to pivot funding to respond to a spike in need. A Value for Money (VfM) assessment of this DFID contingency funding found that timely procurement using this money avoided an estimated USD 6.3 million to USD 7.4 million in additional costs, which would have been the cost of late procurement, an overall saving of approximately 18%. The economic cost of no response could more than double this estimate.

This analysis shows the necessity for funding models that are to respond to the first signs of a crisis. Flexible funding, for example through multi-year humanitarian funding models with builtin contingency mechanisms, can allow shifts in funding depending on need and can help to stimulate a more timely response resulting in significant cost savings.

5 Prerequisites for multi-year funding

According to the OECD, 16 out of 30 OECD DAC donors were able to commit funding over a multi-year period by 2015, while for others, annually determined budgets and legal restrictions have made this difficult (Scott, 2015). Therefore donors wishing to engage in multi-year humanitarian funding need to identify the bottlenecks that could inhibit its implementation, flexibility or predictability

Legislative framework

Donors should evaluate and possibly review their current legal, strategy and grant making environment to identify ways in which these need to be adapted to allow the use of multi-year humanitarian funding – to ensure, for example, that current laws allow humanitarian funding to be provided for more than twelve months. In some cases, the laws will need to be changed, or workarounds found. Some donors use contingency mechanisms within existing funding streams, whereby additional funds can be released as part of a multi-year contract to respond to spikes in need, such as USAID's crisis modifiers (OECD, 2016a). Another workaround is to increase the flexibility given to development co-operation funds, notably in crisis contexts, to cover long-term humanitarian action. For instance, the European Development Fund has an inbuilt emergency reserve that can be mobilised in case of a sudden emergency in an ACP (Africa, Caribbean, Pacific) country affected by a crisis (Cotonou Agreement, 2010).

Budget allocations

Most OECD Development Assistance Committee members do not have predictable humanitarian budgets, as governments generally work with annual public expenditure cycles. As a result, some donors may be reluctant or find it difficult to commit funds on a multi-year

basis. However, annual budgets do not mean that multi-annual funding is impossible. Indeed, multi-annual development programmes are already funded out of these same annual budget allocations.

In practice, multi-year humanitarian funding involves a contract to finance a programme or an organisation with a specified amount of funding over several years. The contract often contains disclaimers, tying the agreement to the availability of donor funds and proof of operational agency results. Actual funds are transferred on an annual or twice-yearly basis, if these conditions are met. As a result donors are free to revise or terminate multi-year agreements if the organisation is not delivering satisfactory results, and/or if there is no funding available. This limits the donor's exposure to risk related to annual budget windows, while still providing greater predictability to operational partners.

Flexibility versus accountability

Multi-year funding requires a balance between flexibility and accountability. The benefits of multi-year funding can be maximized when flexibility is also maximized, allowing partners to respond to changing realities and needs on the ground. This may require reviewing how results are measured. For instance, keeping rates of water-borne disease under a certain level (measuring the outcome) would work better with multi-year funding than measuring outputs, as these needs may change significantly over time (such as water quantity available per person and new latrine numbers). Looking at overall outcomes and allowing flexibility for the ways in which those outcomes are achieved is a shift in thinking necessary for multi-year funding have the required plans and capacity to measure such outcomes.

Strategic coherence

In protracted contexts or complex emergencies both humanitarian aid and development cooperation can be mobilised. In such contexts, donors should ensure that humanitarian aid programming is aligned with development co-operation interventions to achieve a commonly defined objective. Emergency nutrition programmes and long-term food security or health development programmes, for instance, are mutually reinforcing in the Horn of Africa under the SHARE initiative¹. With this strategic coherence in place, multi-year humanitarian funding offers its best potential to enhance engagement between humanitarian and development actors.

Human resources

Multi-year funding requires a more strategic approach to humanitarian aid, and donors should ensure that their humanitarian staff has the time and sufficient humanitarian knowledge to allocate funding strategically. This may mean, for example, providing training for staff members. Staff time that is freed up from administering small, repeated grants will need to be re-allocated to increased interaction with partners on humanitarian issues, supporting better context analysis and helping define better project outcomes together with partners and other donors. In addition if humanitarian needs evolve during the course of a multi-year programme, because of a new crisis or because of a trend towards recovery for instance it is important that humanitarian staff in capitals or in embassies are able to link up with partners to analyse how the current project can be adapted to better respond to the changing needs.

6 Programming multi-year humanitarian funding

The design and targeting of programmes will influence the effectiveness of multi-year humanitarian funding. This section outlines some of the considerations that donors should take into account when engaging in multi-year humanitarian funding.

Type of Humanitarian Emergency

The benefits of multi-year funding will vary depending on the type of crisis, and donors may want to consider how the specific country context may influence their multi-year humanitarian funding design:

- Protracted crises: There is a clear imperative for multi-year funding in protracted crises, including in fragile and conflict-affected states. The majority of humanitarian aid is spent on long-term crises all countries currently covered by UN humanitarian response plans are experiencing protracted crises (OCHA, 2016). In such contexts, Humanitarian needs will be acute for several years, which make multi-year planning and funding relevant. A population escaping a conflict to an urban centre, for instance will need accommodation and basic services over several years. Multi-year humanitarian funding is an appropriate funding mechanism to deliver such services, taking into account host population's need along with development actors and municipalities
- Predictable and regular rapid onset events (e.g. hurricane season, regular cholera outbreaks): The root causes of predicable events, and risk reduction activities, are best addressed by development finance and programming. However, emergency preparedness for crises is a core part of humanitarian action, and can benefit from multi-annual financing, especially through the cost efficiencies that can come about through pre-positioning emergency stocks and equipment. Providing multi-annual finance for preparedness can also facilitate alignment with investments in longer-term measures to reduce risk, and boost resilience.
- > Unpredictable, rapid onset events (e.g. earthquakes): At first glance, this category of event is not as intuitively suited for multi-year funding. However, humanitarian crises, including

those triggered by large natural disasters can remain acute for a long time, and recovery from these large scale events typically takes many years. Large scale crises require long-term response, and are likely to qualify for multi-year funding.

Type of Organisation Funded

Choosing the right partner for multi-annual funding is important, as this is a strategic relationship that is planned to last over a number of years. Typically, donors should look for partner organisations that:

- Demonstrate the capacity to deliver the expected results, over a number of years
- Plan on a multi-annual basis, and revise these plans regularly as the situation evolves
- Are able to report on outcomes, and not just outputs (or inputs)
- Have skilled personnel in place with knowledge of the context
- Use appropriate financial systems with proper controls
- Are able to enter into regular strategic dialogue with the donor about the programme

The tension between accountability and flexibility can mean that donors are more likely to steer their multi-year humanitarian funding contracts to their biggest partners, particularly United Nations agencies and other large multi-laterals, such as the ICRC and IFRC, especially when these organisations have already developed multi-year strategic plans.

Multi-year humanitarian funding can be extremely efficient early in the crisis, notably for the biggest actors that can deploy rapidly, for instance in large-scale natural disasters in populated areas. For donors, funding these types of partners ensures that domestic accountability requirements, for example to Parliamentary Select Committees and Courts of Auditors, can be met. These organisations often also provide useful evidence and branding that helps the donor to communicate about the results of its funding to taxpayers. In addition, providing larger organisations with multi-year funding at the start of sudden onset crises can provide useful breathing space for donors, who then have time to calibrate their funding to more carefully analysed needs in a second phase of the response cycle.

However, multi-annual funding is also useful for NGO partners. In a protracted crisis context, humanitarian actors have sometimes taken responsibility for basic service delivery, substituting the role of local authorities and development actors. In such a context, both multilateral agencies and NGOs are increasingly adopting multiyear humanitarian planning, and the benefits outlined above in section 4 apply to all partners whatever their size or operational scope.

National disaster management agencies generally have multi-year plans to strengthen their ability to respond to disasters. These organisations can also benefit from multi-year humanitarian funding, as seen in section 4. For instance, a National Disaster Management

Agency will be better able to interact with humanitarian actors and acquire specific skills, such as flood response capacity, if this is sustained by a financial predictability over several years.

Strategic Multi-Year Planning

Multi-year planning should be about achieving better outcomes over time, not merely repeating activities (copy and pasting plans) from one year to another. Accordingly, multi-year planning should include a blend of short and long-term activities to support a transformative agenda. Donors considering multi-year funding should therefore ensure a multi-year strategy is in place, based on solid information, so that their support contributes to a transformative outcome, rather than doing the same thing over multiple years. OCHA has proposed guidance before a multi-year strategic Response Plan is elaborated (OCHA, 2015).

Such strategic plans should be based on a shared analysis of risks and context amongst humanitarian and development actors, such as the resilience system analysis (OECD, 2014) which helps translating country strategies into programme plans, based on a shared understanding of the impacts of risks and agencies' respective comparative advantage – whether government, humanitarian and development co-operation partners, or other international, national and local agencies.

7 Risk Management

Multi-year humanitarian funding can also bring its own set of risks and challenges that can limit the benefits of multi-year humanitarian funding. For example, there is a risk that multi-year humanitarian funding can support repeated annual activities rather than supporting a true multi-year strategy. Multiyear funding can also be a challenge for donors and operational agencies, as it changes the way programme results are set, managed and monitored, moving to outcomes instead of outputs.

Blending humanitarian and development programming

In protracted crises where emergency and long-term issues intertwine, there is a concern that multi-year humanitarian funding is mobilised to support activities that would be better funded through development co-operation. To avoid blending while maintaining coherence between humanitarian aid and development funding, donors should ensure that multi-year humanitarian funding clearly focuses on humanitarian issues, in the first instance to save lives and protect civilians in a crisis context. Development co-operation should be used as a complementary measure, addressing the root causes that led to the humanitarian crisis in the first place, including through building the capacity of national and provincial institutions to deliver basic services and security, taking disaster risk reduction measures, and engaging in political dialogue with relevant authorities.

For example, lowering malnutrition rates in a certain context needs a long-term humanitarian response for affected people, in parallel with a development approach that addresses all the structural causes of malnutrition.

Multi-year downstream partnership

Primary recipients of multi-year humanitarian funding, such as UN agencies or major international NGOs, who then pass on that funding to local partners on an annual (or shorter) basis. In these cases, many of the benefits of multi-annual funding are lost. Donors should ensure that multi-year funding is truly multi-year right down to the first line responders, to increase efficiency and strengthen the partner's capacities, unless there is a clear operational or strategic reason for not doing so.

Communication

Reporting to parliament and taxpayers is critical for donor ministries or agencies in charge of humanitarian aid. Multiyear and flexible funding, especially when lightly earmarked, can make reporting to political constituencies difficult, and communication to the general public challenging, if the donor doesn't know what is being done with taxpayer's money until the multi-year programme is over. Therefore, it is important that the donor requires regular updates on progress towards expected outcomes under the multi-annual grant, accompanied by human interest stories for communications purposes, as part of the multi-annual grant agreement.

8 Co-ordination and co-operation

Multi-year humanitarian funding will be significantly enhanced if it is underpinned by strong coordination across donors and between implementing partners in a given context.

Strategic Co-ordination

While not specific to multi-year humanitarian funding, long-term funding should be coordinated with other donors to ensure all the priority aspects of the response are covered. To that aim, donors should ensure early communication, and when possible involvement with the UN at country level when a multi-annual response plan is elaborated. Such communication increases coherence between a shared risk analyses, needs assessment, response strategies and funding modalities in a given crisis context. For instance, knowing in advance that a specific sector, such as education in a displacement crisis, is underfunded increases the possibility to allocate funds to that sector. The UN country team in the field, where the Response plans are devised, is not always abreast of donor's strategies or timeframe, resulting in lost opportunities for programming coherent multi-year programming.

Moreover, when multi-year humanitarian funding supports activities that require

complementary actions through development co-operation programming, humanitarian donors will need to co-ordinate closely with their development colleagues.. For instance, supporting a humanitarian multi-purpose cash programme in a country where a social safety net is already functioning will require careful planning and co-ordination to avoid inconsistencies and harmful consequences.

Operational Co-ordination

Multi-year funding can facilitate greater joint planning from an operational perspective as well. Even in a protracted crisis, operational agencies may tend to act in parallel, resulting in substantial cost inefficiencies. (OCHA, 2015) Multi-year planning can help to address some of these inefficiencies, alongside other humanitarian coordination mechanisms such as the cluster approach, for instance by avoiding duplication or overlap between responses. It requires donors to be active and to participate in UN humanitarian co-ordination fora and ensure that their embassy staff is able to follow humanitarian issues in protracted crises.

9 Impact and Monitoring

In order to measure success, monitoring tools will need to be adapted, and measurement frameworks established to measure outcomes. Metrics should also measure progress and provide robust evidence of change to complement traditional outputs (OECD, 2016b). Donors and humanitarian partners need to measure regularly that the programme is on track towards meeting objectives, so that the flexibility provided with a multi-year funding can be used for course corrections long before the end of the multi-year programme.

Adapting planning tools

OCHA guidance on multi-year planning suggests that humanitarian planning tools will need to be adapted for multi-annual programming, to be able to accommodate more flexible and outcome-based planning, including in the humanitarian planning cycle, the tools and services that support it, such as the financial tracking service, as well as in development frameworks (OCHA, 2015). This will also require more flexible and dynamic strategies for monitoring, with real-time revisions rather than static models of one-time assessments and mid-term reviews. Donors should be a driver for change and engage with the UNRC/HC in protracted crises to achieve those goals.

Measuring outcomes

Outcomes depend on the intervention and context but they should measure how the situation has changed over the course of the programme². Donors should be able to measure progress towards the outcomes of a programme, as well as the outcomes themselves and report on

short term deliverables should not overshadow understanding of progress towards longer term objective.

Outcomes are generally more complex and more expensive to measure than output indicators. Outcome require that objective is clear (keeping malnutrition rate under a certain threshold, for instance) so that they can be measured through surveys and studies as well as narrative reporting by the partner that focuses on the transformative aspect of the programme.

When monitoring progress towards outcomes, donors may look at how need for humanitarian funding have reduced (through, for example, humanitarian caseloads being reduced or transferred into development or Government-led programming schemes), or national capacity building, if relevant.

Strategic priorities and individual programme activities should be reviewed regularly, at least on an annual basis, so that any changes in the context or lack of progress on implementation lead to a change in the way the programme is being delivered.

The end of a multi-year planning should be the opportunity of a strategic review of the outcomes between donors and partners before entering in another multi-year plan.

10 Conclusion

In line with the World Humanitarian Summit's commitments, better serving people in need requires that donors adapt their funding modalities to evolving needs. Offering multi-year humanitarian funding is an important step in that direction. Multi-year humanitarian funding attracts minimal risk, and has significant potential to decrease operational costs in protracted crises, improve collaboration between actors, and provide for a more strategic response that can adapt to evolving contexts. There is also potential to help bridge the humanitarian action and development programming. OECD Development Assistance Committee members, and other humanitarian donors, are encouraged to make multi-annual funding a larger part of their humanitarian financing portfolio.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 The SHARE initiative is a joint humanitarian-development approach to improve the ability of people, communities and countries to face persistent and acute emergencies. in the Eastern Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya, Djibouti and Somalia) since 2012
- 2 Several organisations have developed thematic outcomes indicators. For instance, the UN-OCHA *humanitarian response* website provides a set of output and outcome indicators per cluster or domain: <u>https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/applications/ir</u>