

Levels of Organizational Crisis Response

1. The SOPs use two main criteria (levels and phases) for structuring the UNDP response in immediate crisis situations. The first criterion is the **level of organizational response** required. In part two of these Procedures, the **definition** of each of the three distinct levels of organizational response (Levels 1, 2, and 3) is provided, and the **determination process used to identify the appropriate level of organizational response** in the first hours of any given crisis is also described in detail.

Definition of Crisis Levels

2. The first key decision that is made when a response effort is launched is the level of organizational response. The three response levels are distinctly different when it comes to the extent of HQ involvement in and the governing structures for the response.
3. At all three levels, the Country Office manages and assumes ultimate responsibility for the response to the crisis situation: however, the increment of HQ support varies from level to level. The three levels are distinct and exclusive of one another, such that a response is categorized at only one level at any given time. However, the relevant authority/ies may take a decision to downgrade or upgrade the level if in-country developments so warrant. If upgrading or downgrading from a Level 1 response, the decision is the prerogative of the Regional Bureau and CRU Directors based on the recommendation of the RR/RC. If upgrading or downgrading from a Level 2 response, or downgrading from a Level 3 response, the prerogative rests with the Crisis Board.
 - a) **Level 1** is the response to situations that can be managed by the CO with some additional ad hoc support as needed from HQ. The CO manages all aspects of the response with the regular backstopping support arrangements from HQ.
 - b) **Level 2** is the response to situations that require large-scale, day-to-day organizational support. The CO manages the response with expanded support from HQ in the form of a CB that directs the response, and the HQ SURGE Management Team that takes responsibility for day-to-day management of the support to the CO and reports to the CB.
 - c) **Level 3** is the response to situations that are full-blown “corporate emergencies” and as such require the attention of the entire organization and the direction the very top of management. A Level 3 response is automatically activated once the Inter-Agency Steering Committee (IASC) has confirmed a level 3 crisis in a country. In Level 3 responses, the **AA personally directs the response effort** by chairing the CB for corporate emergencies and taking on a set of well-defined responsibilities.
4. The criteria used by the RR/RC (and Crisis Board as a whole) to determine the appropriate levels of response are described in the following sections.

Determination and Criteria for Crisis Levels

5. Section “SOP Triggers and Activation Sequence of Immediate Crisis Response” describes the process which will lead to the determination of the crisis response. The level of response is determined on the basis of an evaluation of on-the-ground conditions as well as the impact of the crisis. Often after a crisis, information about the situation is sketchy and, therefore, decisionmakers may need to make a speedy determination on the basis of limited data. In making such a summary assessment, three distinct factors need to be considered. These factors are detailed below.

The nature and magnitude of the crisis

6. Information on the nature and magnitude of the crisis may be derived from a variety of sources, including UNDP staff in-country, other UN agencies (often OCHA), the UN Disaster Team, government consultations and other development agencies/partners. This information is crucial for understanding the immediate UN/UNDP staff safety and business continuity-related implications of the crisis. Additionally, it provides an understanding of the effect of the crisis on local people and communities. This helps to roughly gauge the potential for a significant adjustment in UNDP programme orientation.
7. Criteria to evaluate the nature and magnitude of the crisis:
 - a) The geographic extent (including list of locations of areas) hit by the crisis;
 - b) If the crisis is confined to one country or has regional implications;
 - c) The dynamics of the crisis – whether it is ongoing, progressive, and when/if there is an expected end-point, and whether law and order is being maintained;
 - d) Key characteristics of the population in the affected areas (size, socioeconomic status, accessibility);
 - e) Approximate number of people/proportion of the population affected by the crisis;
 - f) If the crisis has had a significant impact on national and/or local institutions and infrastructure and their capacity to cope;
 - g) Local or national entities with reliable and accurate information about what is happening;
 - h) If political, administrative, and social and economic infrastructure still exists in affected areas;
 - i) The extent of the expected response by the government and local authorities in terms of meeting the affected population’s needs;
 - j) The status of other development agencies/programmes operating in the area;
 - k) If an UNDAC rapid assessment team has been requested and/or deployed; and
 - l) Other internationally recognized indicators (natural disaster risk, crude mortality, gender related human development index, UN Security Council mandate, etc).

The impact of the crisis on staff

8. This information comes from early efforts of the RR/RC/DO to ascertain the whereabouts, status, and well-being of UNDP staff, dependents, and other personnel working with UNDP. Additional broad criteria used to gauge overall impact relate to the condition of the office, presence of basic infrastructure, and access to evacuation routes.
9. Criteria to evaluate the impact of the crisis on UNDP staff, assets, and operations:
 - a) If a request for UNDSS regional security support has been made by the DO/RC/RR;
 - b) Identification of those areas hit where UNDP has offices and staff – including the number of offices and associated staff/dependents/personnel;
 - c) Proportion of UNDP staff (incl. dependents) and personnel for whom UNDP has updated status information;
 - d) Availability and adequacy of regular facilities and access to the outside world (hospitals, banks, roads, airport, communications, transport facilities);
 - e) Extent of any casualties suffered by staff in the Country Office or the project locations;
 - f) Extent of any medical attention required by UNDP staff, dependents, and/or project personnel;
 - g) Issues/risks threatening staff security and/or an elevation in UN Security Phase;
 - h) If the UN has done a risk and threat assessment;
 - i) If restrictions on movement have been imposed by the government or by non-state actors;
 - j) Physical integrity of the office and the extent of any damage;
 - k) Condition and functionality of Country Office/project office/safe haven infrastructure (including communications system for security management; business continuity requirements including ICT, power, water and sanitation; work facilities);
 - l) Damage to staff houses/property and the extent of this; and
 - m) Need for emergency supplies, kits, or other equipment.

Capacity of the country office to meet response requirements

10. Criteria to evaluate the CO's capacity to respond to the crisis:
 - a) Relevant security, evacuation, and business continuity plans at the CO;
 - b) If the CO has a functional system in place to obtain and monitor staff location, security, and health;
 - c) Relevant & substantive capacities and crisis management experience of the CO senior management and programme units;
 - d) The extent of the expected response by the government and local authorities, in terms of meeting UN security and protection needs;
 - e) Request from government for international support and/or other international mandate for provision of support;

- f) Existence of other external factors hindering CO capacity to operate, such as weather;
 - g) If the CO has an updated personal list and can account for all of its staff;
 - h) Number/proportion of staff reporting to work;
 - i) Expectations/requests of other UN agencies and partners of UNDP in the context of UN coordination, early recovery, or support to relief efforts;
 - j) If UNDP has a reliable channel of contact with other UN agencies or I-NGOs;
 - k) UNDP's level of access to affected populations;
 - l) If UNDP has a reliable and continuous information channel on what is happening from government or other partners; and
 - m) Other internal conditions hindering CO capacity to operate.
11. Following review of the above criteria, if the CO is deemed able to meet the response demands of the crisis without significant backstopping support from HQ, the response should be categorized as a Level 1. In this case, the CO will operate as per its standard arrangements with the respective RB coordinating and channeling any additional technical assistance or inputs required from other HQ units to the CO. If the situation requires a large-scale but not an organization-wide response, a Level 2 response will be applied. In corporate emergencies, where a full-scale mobilization across the organization is needed, a Level 3 response will be applied. The declaration of a Level 2 or Level 3 response implies that the CO requires significant and coordinated support from HQ on a day-to-day basis and therefore requires sustained and dedicated direction and support at the level of the RBx or the AA. The following section, "Directing the Organizational Response," is therefore primarily concerned with the details of Level 2 or Level 3 responses.
12. The section which follows, "Directing the Organizational Response," is primarily concerned with the details of a Level 2 or Level 3 response. The inter-bureau mechanism which is activated upon determination of the response level is described in the next section.