What is a Situation Report?

A Situation Report (sitrep) is a concise operational document intended to support the coordination of humanitarian response in an acute crisis. It should provide a brief situation overview that summarizes major developments during the reporting period and presents key information on the crisis (number of people displaced, etc.). In addition, each cluster is asked to report on the specific needs, response, gaps and constraints in their operational area (See Situation Report Product Guidance and the Situation Report template for more information).

What are "needs", "response" and "gaps" in an OCHA Situation Report?

Terminology can be easily confused in humanitarian reporting. When writing a sitrep, **needs, response and gaps should refer only to the people we are trying to assist** (and not the needs or gaps of the agencies, partners, cluster or sector).

Ideally, cumulative figures would be available for each of these terms, with the total gap comprising the difference between total needs and total people reached by response. In practice, cumulative figures are often unavailable, particularly at the start of a crisis. In this case, it is important to be clear about any available estimates (or lack thereof).

Once an overall needs figure becomes available, it is unlikely to change very much during the response. While it may seem redundant, it is important to repeat this information for each cluster in every Situation Report. The gap in coverage will initially be large, but as response continues, the gap will narrow until, hopefully, all people in need have been reached.

Key terms:

Affected
All people impacted by a crisis

People in need
People affected who need assistance

Targeted
All people a cluster or sector is trying to reach with assistance

Reached
People who have received some form of assistance from a cluster

Covered
People who have received enough assistance to cover their needs for an extended period of time (against a standard such as Sphere)

Gap
Unmet beneficiary need (best expressed in terms of people still in need rather than goods still not delivered). The gap is determined by the following equation: Needs minus response equals gap or N-R=G.

Constraint
An issue that is hindering a response activity from taking place and

Example: "Needs minus response equals gaps."

- Needs: 200,000 displaced people (120,000 women) in 19 camps require WASH sector support including safe drinking water and critical sanitation items.
- Response: Approximately 94,000 people (49,000 women) have received WASH sector support to date. This includes 60,000 people who received safe drinking water and 74,000 who received sanitation items. Of the 60,000 who received safe drinking water, 40,000 also received sanitation items. Total WASH beneficiaries to date are therefore 94,000 people (without double counting).
- Gaps: Of the 200,000 people estimated to need WASH sector support, 106,000 (55,000 women) still require assistance.

What if cumulative figures are not available?

If cumulative figures are not available, it is best to state this upfront and, if possible, briefly explain why, or indicate if cumulative figures will be available soon. You can also include contextual information that may give a proxy indication (e.g., number of people living in a crisis-affected area as a proxy for total needs in that area). If these options are not possible, you can describe general or projected needs ("Affected people mostly likely require shelter materials.") or simply omit that section entirely.

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The mission of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is to mobilize and coordinate effective and principled humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors.
Coordination Saves Lives

What if the cluster will only target a portion of the total people in need?

In some cases, the cluster might not try to reach everyone in need. This could be because other actors, such as the Government or non-state groups, are providing aid outside the cluster syste, or because the need is greater than the cluster's capacity to respond. Access restrictions (such as a ban on entering certain areas) may also contribute. In these situations, the cluster should be clear about how many of those in need it plans to target for assistance.

Example

- Needs: An estimated 3.7 million people are in need of health cluster support. Of these, the Health cluster is targeting 2.6 million people with the provision of access to primary and/or basic secondary health care, including 150,000 people targeted through the use of mobile health clinics. Access to the remaining 1.1 million people in need is currently impossible due to a ban by rebel groups on aid organizations operating in certain areas.

What are "constraints" in an OCHA Situation Report?

Constraints are any issues that prevent humanitarian actors from responding to identified needs. These generally include a lack of funding, a lack of staff or partners in the early days of a big response, access limitations, capacity gaps or logistical challenges, such as lack of vehicles or fuel.

Note: In the context of humanitarian reporting, the need for fuel is not a "need". Needs refer only to the number of people who require assistance. Likewise, a lack of funding or fuel is not a "gap". Gaps refer only to the unmet needs of affected people. Because fuel needs and funding needs refer to needs faced by responders, they are referred to only as "constraints" in an OCHA Situation Report.

What is a good examples of needs, response, gaps and constraints for a life-saving sector?

💧 Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Needs

- 200,000 displaced people (about 40,000 families) in 19 camps require WASH Cluster support including safe drinking water, sanitation/bathing facilities and hygiene promotion.

200,000
displaced people require water and sanitation support

Response

- Cluster members are providing over 4.2 million litres of safe drinking water per day to the camps, enough for all residents.
- Oxfam and UNICEF have so far constructed latrines for 77 per cent of camp residents (154,000 people). Twenty new latrines were constructed during the reporting period.
- Bathing places for 100,000 people have been installed. Cluster members have also started installing hand pumps and distributing hygiene kits in all 19 camps (figure for number of people reached is not available).

Gaps & Constraints

- Just under 50,000 people remain without adequate access to latrines in 5 camps. There are also gaps in the provision of hygiene packages and promoting good hygiene practices.
- Two of the recently established camps in Area B are stretching cluster capacity.
- The lack of adequate funding is a major constraint on cluster activities.

What are the differences in reporting requirements for service clusters?

The service clusters – Logistics and Emergency Telecommunications – do not report on needs in terms of affected people. Instead their job is to provide services to humanitarian actors so that they can respond. Because these clusters do not directly address affected people, only the headings Response and Constraints should be used to report on their activities.

✈ Logistics

Response

- In the coming week, 126 metric tons of humanitarian cargo will be shipped to Mogadishu via the Logistics Cluster coordinated sea transport.
- Cargo includes construction materials, jerry cans, soap, and non-food item (NFI) kits comprising plastic sheeting, mosquito nets, blankets, cooking pots, plates, spoons, cups, jerry cans, kettles, and iodized salt.
- Since the start of the response, the Cluster has transported over 1,117 metric tons of humanitarian cargo to Somalia on behalf of 13 organizations.

Constraints

- With the start of the Deyr rains, some routes may become inaccessible. For more information about road conditions in Somalia, please visit http://www.logcluster.org/ops/som11a/somalia-physical-road-conditions.