

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND GUIDANCE ON MULTI-YEAR STRATEGIC RESPONSE PLANS

May 2014

This FAQ and guidance aims to cover the most salient points regarding discussions on whether or not a country team can and should consider a multi-year approach for their strategic response plan.

What is a multi-year SRP? There is, as yet, no accepted definition for this, but some common concepts are emerging from those countries (such as oPt, Kenya and Somalia) which have adopted it in some form. A multi-year SRP remains primarily a tool for planning and delivering coordinated humanitarian aid (life-saving). Where it differs from a traditional SRP is in its greater focus on establishing a strategy for the emergency that goes beyond one year of activities and projects. It aims to set multi-year targets for a wider range of humanitarian activities, includes a wider range of early recovery activities and social services, and has an increased focus on building the resilience of affected populations so as to work towards a gradual drawdown of humanitarian assistance. As such, a multi-year SRP can be considered more reflective in its approach to an emergency.

Key questions the country team should consider

- What is the problem statement? What specific issue/problem is the country team trying to address? What opportunities will a multi-year SRP provide?
- What implications does a multi-year strategy have for the boundaries and scope of an SRP?
- What implications does a multi-year strategy have for activities/projects inclusion and prioritisation criteria?
- Is it possible to set and monitor indicators and targets beyond the first year?
- What will be the measurement of either success or unexpected challenges?
- Can agencies project multi-year budgets with only this year's snapshot needs assessment information?
- What are donors saying? Do they have multi-year funding envelopes to support a multi-year strategy?
- What implications will this have for the financial requirements that are presented to donors?
- What is the impact on the roles and responsibilities of cluster coordinators, OCHA staff, the HCT?
- Will there be distinct phases or are activities planned along a continuum? Is it possible to define a timeline for the phases or the continuum?
- Will targets be cumulative? What monitoring methods are needed to ensure reporting and measurement at the end of the first year and at the end of subsequent years?

Proposed criteria to determine in which situations countries might consider a multi-year strategy

- Degree of political stability and sufficient government interlocutors.
- Overall predictability and/or a relatively stable planning scenario.
- Sufficient information on cropping cycles, climatic changes, or harvest predictions.
- Indications donor behavior is/will change, such as in demonstrated intent in moving away from humanitarian funding.
- A context in which meaningful resilience activities can take place.
- Sufficient monitoring methods in place.

Will the process of doing a multi-year SRP be different from an annual SRP?

No, the same process of consultation, strategy-definition, and project submission and vetting will remain.

How often will the strategic priorities and cluster response plans be reviewed? Will there be triggers and thresholds for revisions? Both will need to be reviewed on a yearly basis. As with current practice, if there is a substantial change in the humanitarian situation, the strategic priorities and response plans can be reviewed at any time.

How will targets for the strategic objectives and cluster-specific objectives be set and then monitored? Objectives and targets should be mid-year and end-year. Monitoring should be the same as for current SRPs—based on needs, but with a minimum of a one by year monitoring report, and an end-of-year report.

Will project requirements be one-year or multi-year?

This is up to the appealing agency; however, all requirements should be based on needs assessments and in line with the strategic priorities. In addition, the budget in OPS must be for one year only. The full amount of the multi-year requirements may be included in the project sheet narrative.

There is, however, some concern about the idea of developing multi-year projects with corresponding yearly budgets, indicators and targets. Some country teams may have to move beyond purely humanitarian activities and incorporate, for example, resilience-building projects into their SRP. However, even in more stable environments, most agencies are not budgeting for 2-3 years, and donors' funding envelopes do not, generally speaking, allow them to make commitments which span several years.

Consider as well that resilience programming is much more expensive than strictly humanitarian actions. This will have considerations for multi-year requirements. Are donors willing to seriously consider and fund a 3-year SRP with billions of requirements? This is an important question to consider, as a key rationale raised for doing a multi-year SRP is to enable the mobilisation of more predictable funding.

How often will the projects need to be reviewed?

Standard SRP practice will apply: projects will be created as part of the cluster response plan, and can be reviewed during the year as needed—either individually, or as part of an organised revision.

Should projects be uniquely humanitarian or resilience or can they be a combination of both?

This is up to each country team to decide. It is important to bear in mind that—should agencies try to create projects which incorporate both—most agencies will not be able to break down funding to such a level of detail.

Example from Somalia¹: comparative table of differences between a one and three year document (note that this example predates the current SRP guidance)

One Year CAP	Three Year CAP
Year in Review: 2012	Initial year review remains the same, but will have to be updated at the beginning of year 2 and year 3
Needs Analysis	
Current situation of food security, nutrition and mortality, conflict and displacement	Remains the current situation in year 1 but will have to give some assumptions for year 2 and 3.
CHAP	
Scenarios: best, worst and most-likely	Scenarios with generic assumptions for 3 years, but emphasis on year one.
Response strategy: focus on the one year deliverable	The response strategy will incorporate the full 3 year investment and pay off of the investments.
Strategic priorities: one year	The current priorities already have reference to the broader goals we hope to achieve through a multi-year CAP: (a) life-saving, (b) livelihoods/resilience and (c) safety nets.
Monitoring Matrix	
Targets per indicator for Mid-Year (MY) and End Year (EY)	Targets per indicator for year 1 at MY and EY but for year 2 and 3: only at EY
Cluster response plans	
N/A	Cluster specific assumptions: Does not have a specific part in one-year CAP, but would elaborate assumptions each cluster is using in projecting activities over the course of three years that differ from the generic assumptions contained under the CHAP scenarios.
# of projects: for 1 year	#of projects: for years 1-3 years depending on duration. These will have the appearance of programmes and not simply projects as activities build on previous gains.
Cluster objectives: year 1	Specific Cluster objectives to be projected over three years, ideally with a breakdown over the course of the three years showing incremental milestones.
Number of beneficiaries: year 1	Different number and quality of beneficiaries over 3 years
Funds required: year 1	This will depend on the clarity of programming. The default will be budgetary requirements for year 1 with an indication of trends in funding based on projected progress over years 2 and 3 using year 1 as a baseline. Those in a position to do so will provide a full budgetary picture for the duration with a breakdown by year.
Cross-cutting issues: 2012: gender, capacity building, early recovery	Gender, Capacity building and the link to early recovery
Cluster logframes	
Objective, activities, success indicator, Mid year and End year target	Objectives: can progress the same over 3 years Activities: will demonstrate the incremental change as activities build on previous gains Success indicator: is linked to the activity and will change as the activities progress, broken down for each year. Targets: for year 1: MY and EY, for year 2 and 3: only EY targets.
Projects	
2012: projects for 1 year framework	Default option is one year with an indication of trends, advances over the course of three years or duration of activity if less than three. Otherwise, detailed programme with defined project activities by year.

¹ For more information on the approach being taken by Somalia, please contact the OCHA Somalia office directly.