Editorial Style Guide

THIRD EDITION

OCHA

Contents

Introduction

Dear Colleagues

Welcome to the third edition of the *OCHA Editorial Style Guide* – the informative resource that helps to clarify many of the grammar and style issues that often cause confusion, such as capitalization, punctuation and spelling.

OCHA is under constant pressure to provide detailed, up-to-date information via a range of products. But whether it's a press release, an internal memo, a donor report or an annual report, the information needs to be clear, succinct and free of jargon. Regular use of this guide will help you to achieve these goals.

The *OCHA Editorial Style Guide* is now divided into 10 sections. A new section titled 'Keep it simple' explains how to shorten commonly used phrases in OCHA documents, and a new section on capitalization provides detailed advice on a range of words. The guidance in each section is presented alphabetically, along with details of where information is cross-referenced in a separate section.

The guide also provides updated information on UN writing style. All organizations and publications have individual style rules, and the UN is no exception. This guide will help you understand UN-specific rules, such as when to capitalize *Secretariat* and *Government*, and how to write the plural of *forum*. The guide also includes simple but effective rules that should be followed in any organization, such as allocating time for proofreading. This can help avoid embarrassing errors, such as referring to the humanitarian chief as the humanitarian chef.

To complement this publication, the OCHA Reporting Unit has also produced training modules on style and grammar that are available on OCHAnet. See page 59 for more details.

We hope this revised *OCHA Editorial Style Guide* informs, educates and becomes a permanent fixture on the desks of OCHA offices worldwide.

OCHA Reporting Unit

New York

September 2015

SECTION ONE:
Grammar and style

A

abbreviations and acronyms

Abbreviations are shortened versions of words, such as *etc*.

Acronyms are abbreviations pronounced as words, such as*, CERF, NATO, OCHA* and *UNDAC*.

In running text, use the full name on first mention followed by the acronym or abbreviation in brackets (but only if it will be used again in the text).

Use acronyms and abbreviations sparingly so that the document is not cluttered with capital letters.

In a table, abbreviation or shortened form is acceptable.

Do not use a full stop after each letter within an acronym or abbreviation (*UNDP* not *U.N.D.P*).

Where possible, do not use abbreviations in titles or headings.

Do not use *the* as part of an organization's name in acronyms (*WFP*, not *the WFP; CERF*, not *the CERF*).

When deciding whether to use *a* or *an* with acronyms, be guided by pronunciation. If it's a consonant sound, use *a*; if it's a vowel sound, use *an* (*a NATO decision; an NGO conference; an MSF programme; an L3 emergency*).

Always explain acronyms in documents that will be translated. Translators may not be familiar with OCHA or United Nations terminology.

about/around

Use *around* when referring to an approximate date, month or year. Use *about* when referring to an approximate number.

- The appeal will be launched around late October. It is expected to raise about US$20 million.

accents

Always include accents and special characters in the names of people, places and organizations.

- Médecins Sans Frontières is operational in Côte d'Ivoire.
- El Niño weather patterns are expected to affect the region this year.

> For accents and special characters in Word, go to **Insert** then click **Symbol**.

active vs. passive

Where possible, always use the active voice (*A approached B*). This is more direct and concise than the passive voice (*B was approached by A*).

- WFP delivered food to 800 refugees. (active)
- Food was delivered to 800 refugees by WFP. (passive)

Use the passive in situations where you cannot name the subject, e.g., in a situation where it is not yet confirmed who is responsible for an attack.

- Thirty civilians were killed in a bomb attack. (The active version could read: Rebels killed 30 civilians in a bomb attack.)

advocate (see section two)

affect/effect (see section two)

ages

Use numerals for ages. Only hyphenate the age when it comes before a noun in the sentence.

- A 98-year-old man was rescued from the rubble.
- The man rescued from the rubble is 98 years old.
- Tetanus vaccines are available for 7-year-old children.
- Tetanus vaccines are available for children who are 7 years old.

Exception: When referring to children who are under age 5, write the age as *under-five* when the age comes before a noun. Otherwise, write it as *under age 5*.

- The under-five mortality rate has declined.
- Mortality rates for children under age 5 have declined.

also

This word is overused. Try leaving it out and see if this changes the meaning of your sentence. If it doesn't, don't use it.

among/amongst

(see section two)

and/but (see also *semicolon*)

It is acceptable to start sentences with *and* or *but*. But don't overdo it.

annex

Use lower-case *a* when using this word in running text.

- Please see the annex for more details.

a period of/a total of

These phrases are overused in OCHA documents.

Instead of *the Government donated a total of US$5 million*, just say *the Government donated US$5 million*.

Instead of *she will work in Iraq for a period of six months*, just say *she will work in Iraq for six months*.

Exception: In UN style, sentences should not start with a numeral. Therefore, use "A total of…" to get around this rule, e.g., A total of 3 million people are now homeless.

apostrophe

For possessives:

- *'s* for singular possessive nouns (*the*

organization's policy)

- *'s* for plural possessives not ending in *s* (*children's rights*)
- *s'* for plural possessive nouns ending in *s* (*aid workers' security; farmers' concerns; refugees' belongings*).

For singular nouns ending in *s*, add *'s* to make it possessive only when the extra *s* is pronounced as part of the name (*Charles's report, James's contract*).

For abbreviations such as *NGOs* and *IDPs*, only use the apostrophe when referring to the possessive:

- The NGO's decision (the decision of one NGO)
- The NGOs' decision (the decision of many NGOs)
- IDP's concerns (the concerns of one IDP)
- IDPs' concerns (the concerns of many IDPs)
- Several NGOs (**not** *NGO's*) attended the meeting.

For timelines:

- One month's supply
- Two weeks' time
- Six weeks' holiday
- Three hours' drive north of the capital

armed forces

Use upper-case initials for the full official name of a specific force. Use lower case when used generically.

- The Rwandan army, the Rwandan Patriotic Army; the Air Force of Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwean air force.

B

Ban Ki-moon

Always hyphenate the final two words and

use lower-case *m*. And remember that he's *Mr. Ban* **not** *Mr. Ki-moon* (the family name comes first in Korean).

between/among

(see section two)

biannual

Bimonthly, biweekly and *biyearly/biannual* are ambiguous: they mean either twice a month/week/year, or every other month/week/year. Avoid these words. Instead, use *twice a month/week/year* and *every other month/week/year (*or *every two months/weeks/years),* as appropriate.

both

This word is overused. Try leaving it out and see if this changes the meaning of your sentence. If it doesn't, don't use it.

brackets

Use brackets (parentheses) for explanatory or side remarks in unquoted text. If the entire sentence is inside the brackets, then place the punctuation inside. Otherwise, place it outside the brackets.

- Clashes between tribal groups have created new displacements. (See the map below for more details.)
- The city's evacuation centres are hosting 216,941 people (45,129 families).

Use square brackets in quoted material to explain or specify implied information.

- "We are hopeful that they [the village leaders] will join the discussions," said the Minister.

- "When I returned to my house, they [the soldiers] refused to leave," she said.

bullet points

If the bullet points consist of whole sentences, use a full stop, **not** a semicolon, after each sentence. If the bullet points are short phrases, no punctuation is required.

burned

For this word, UN style is *burned*, not *burnt*.

C

capacity-building

This is always hyphenated, whether used as a noun or an adjective.

- The training focused on capacity-building. (noun)
- This is a capacity-building project. (adj.)

capitalization

See section six for detailed guidance on capitalization.

captions and credits

An example of the correct format for credits is: ©WFP/Tariq Smith.

Always place the credit after the photo caption.

Central Emergency Response Fund

When using the acronym, refer to it as *CERF*, not *the CERF*.

And remember: it's the *CERF secretariat*, not *the CERF Secretariat*. (See pages 20 and 37.)

chapter headings

(see also *subheadings*)

Only capitalize the first letter of the title in a chapter heading.

clusters

Only use upper-case initials when referring to specific clusters, e.g., *the Nutrition Cluster*.

Use lower-case *c* when referring to clusters in general, e.g., *the clusters have been activated*.

colon

The colon indicates that what follows is an elaboration or explanation. It can be used to introduce a list, an example or a text table. Never place a dash after a colon.

- The appeal focuses on two countries: South Sudan and CAR.

The word following the colon only starts with a capital letter if it is direct speech, a proper noun or an acronym/abbreviation.

When using a colon, do not separate the verb from the object.

- **Incorrect**: Three organizations attended the meeting. They were: Oxfam, WFP and OCHA. (In this example, *were* is the verb and *Oxfam* is the object.)

- **Correct**: Three organizations attended the meeting: Oxfam, WFP and OCHA.

comma

When writing a list, do not place a comma before the final *and* unless one of the items includes another *and* (this extra comma, also known as the Oxford comma, is not used in UN style).

- Governments, donors and aid agencies. (correct)
- Governments, donors, and aid agencies. (incorrect)
- Governments, donors, aid agencies, and water and sanitation experts. (correct)

Use a comma to separate explanatory information.

- Security in Gardez, the provincial capital, has deteriorated. (In this example, *the provincial capital* is explanatory information. If it were removed, the sentence would still make sense.)

Use a comma after the name of a location and its respective country.

- The Humanitarian Affairs Officer was deployed to Erbil, Iraq, for three months.
- The summit will be held in Istanbul, Turkey, in 2016.

Use a comma between two independent parts of a sentence (clauses) that are linked by a conjunction, e.g., *but*, *for*, *nor*, *or*, *so*, *yet*.

- Security has improved, but access remains limited.

Use a comma after an introductory phrase.

- According to WHO, three mobile clinics were damaged.

Do not link two complete sentences with a comma (this is referred to as a comma splice). Instead, use a semicolon (see page 20).

- There is little food available; starvation threatens thousands of people.

When writing names and job titles, remember to use commas to separate explanatory information.

- The Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O'Brien, visited Pakistan earlier this month.

In the example above, the commas are required because the words *Stephen O'Brien* could be removed and the sentence would still make sense.

- Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O'Brien visited Pakistan earlier this month.

In the example above, there is no *The* preceding *Emergency Relief Coordinator*. Therefore, no commas are required around the words *Stephen O'Brien* because those words are a key part of the sentence. It would not make sense without them.

- The Indonesian Red Cross Field Coordinator, Rania Hanifi, said that thousands of people still need assistance.
- Indonesian Red Cross Field Coordinator Rania Hanifi said that thousands of people still need assistance.

compare to/compare with (see section two)

compose/comprise
(see section two)

continual/continuous
(see section two)

corporate emergency

Use lower-case initials when referring to a corporate emergency in general. Use upper-case initials when referring to a specific corporate emergency.

- These actions are in response to the Syria Corporate Emergency.
- OCHA responded to four corporate emergencies last year.

country names

If citing several countries in running text, list them in alphabetical order.

Always remember to include symbols in official country names, e.g., Côte d'Ivoire

Country names are listed in the United Nations Multilingual Terminology Database at: **http://unterm.un.org.**

currency

The US dollar is the currency of reference. On first mention, write *US$*. Thereafter use *$*. Do not insert a space between the symbol and the number.

In headlines use *$* (not *US$*). For keyboards without the *$* symbol, write *USD*.

When referring to another currency, always give the US-dollar equivalent in brackets.

- An appeal for US$33 million was launched on 1 November. To date, $10 million has been donated. The Australian Government contributed A$1 million ($737,000).

When writing the name of a currency in full, do not capitalize (e.g., Colombian peso, Swiss franc).

Remember: always check that **millions** or **billions** has been added after the numeral where relevant. Avoid embarrassing errors such as **The UN launched an appeal for $33.** If you're concerned that you might not catch such an error, do a search in Word for the **$** symbol so that you can check each entry.

D

dangling/hanging participle

If the first part of a sentence does not refer to the noun that is the subject in the main part of the sentence, it is referred to as a dangling or hanging participle. For example:

- After being trapped in the rubble for nine days, the ERC met the earthquake survivors.

After being trapped in the rubble for nine days refers to the earthquake survivors. However, the subject of the main part of the sentence is the ERC. Therefore, the sentence reads as though the ERC was trapped in the rubble. To avoid such confusion, it could be rephrased as:

- After being trapped in the rubble for nine days, the earthquake survivors met the ERC.

or

- The ERC met the earthquake survivors who had been trapped in the rubble for nine days.

dashes

Use the em-dash (long dash) to set off a phrase or interjection—like this—within a sentence. Try to use only one pair per

sentence, otherwise the sentence can look cluttered.

- The coordination meeting—the second this week—will focus on shelter issues.

Use the en-dash (short dash) in a table of contents to indicate paragraph numbers, e.g., 1-12. Also use to replace hyphens in a sub-list of bulleted items. For example:

- Clusters
  - Education
  - Logistics
  - Protection

> **Tip**: To find dashes in Word, go to **Insert**, click **Symbol**, then click **Special Characters**.

dates

Write as day, month and year. No commas. Do not use *the* before the date or *of* before the month (*19 August*, **not** *the 19 of August*).

Do not use ordinal suffixes, e.g., 1st, 15th, 23rd.

- World Humanitarian Day was first celebrated on 19 August 2009.

In tables or limited spaces, use the numeric form: 19.08.09.

When expressing a range of dates, choose from the following:

- From... to... (From 12 to 19 August)
- Between... and... (Between 12 and 19 August)
- On... and... (On 12 and 19 August)
- A hyphen (only in a table) (12-19 August)

Never mix the above, e.g., do not write *From 12 and 19 August*.

Give specific dates where possible. Avoid expressions such as *last week* or *next Tuesday*.

When providing a timeline, say *as of X date*, not *as at X date*.

Avoid using *weekend*, as it falls on different days in different countries.

decades

Express decades with four numerals, e.g., *the 1990s*, not *the nineties, the 90s* or *the 1990's*.

diseases

Diseases named after regions and people are capitalized, e.g., *Alzheimer's disease, Down's syndrome, Ebola, West Nile virus*.

Otherwise use lower case, e.g., *cholera, hepatitis, malaria, yellow fever*.

dollar (see *currency*)

E

effect/affect (see *affect/effect*)

e.g. vs. i.e.

e.g. means *for example* (*exempli gratia*); i.e. means *that is* or *in other words (id est)*. Both are preceded and followed by a comma.

- People urgently require household items, e.g., blankets and tents.
- Agencies now have access to the drought-affected areas, i.e., all villages in the south.

(A way to remember this: *example* begins with *e*, as does *e.g. In other words* begins with *i*, as does *i.e.*)

ellipsis

If words are omitted within a quotation, use an ellipsis (…). Insert a space on either side of the dots.

- "This is a major emergency … and people need help," she said.

Emergency Relief Coordinator (see also

Under-Secretary-General)

The Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) is the head of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. Use this title when referring to the broader context of the ERC role in the international humanitarian community.

F

follow up/follow-up

Follow up is a verb, *follow-up* is an adjective.

- OCHA will follow up with donors after the conference. (verb)
- The follow-up mission begins next week. (adjective)

font

Times New Roman 12 point and Arial 11 point are the preferred fonts. For additional guidelines, refer to the relevant document template.

Food and Agriculture Organization

This is often misspelled in OCHA documents as *Food and Agricultural Organization*. Remember: it's *Agriculture* not *Agricultural*. And always spell *Organization* with *z*, not *s*.

footnotes

Always place the footnote numeral **after** the punctuation, not before.

- More than 2,000 people are affected.[1]

foreign words

Use italics for foreign words that do not appear in the most recent edition of the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* [www.oed.com]. Do not use italics for non-English organization names, such as Médicines Sans Frontières.

formatting

In running text, justify paragraphs (i.e., the text is aligned to the left and right margins). Use single spacing. Insert only one space, **not** two, between the full stop and the following sentence.

In publications, avoid widows (very short lines at the end of a paragraph) and orphans (very short lines at the top of a page or column). This can make the page layout look uneven and poorly presented.

fractions

Spell out simple fractions. Use percentages (or decimals) for complex figures. Do not use figures with a slash or stroke. Instead, express

in words (*two thirds of the population* **not** *2/3 of the population*).

Only hyphenate fractions when used as an adjective *(a one-third share)*.

full stop (period)

Do not use full stops in acronyms and abbreviations, or at the end of headings and subheadings.

Only insert one space, **not** two, between a full stop and a new sentence.

G

geographic references

Use upper-case initials when referring to an official place name or a major geographical region. Use lower case for geographical direction or as a general reference to an area. Hyphenate compound words.

- Central Africa; the north-west of the country; south-eastern Afghanistan; North-South dialogue; the Middle East; The Hague; South-East Asia; Western Europe; East Africa; southern Lebanon.

government

Use upper-case *G* when referring to a Government that represents a State or a Non-Self-Governing Territory. This includes a transitional administration established under a peace agreement.

Also use upper-case *G* when referring to more than one Government, and for the following phrases: *any Government wishing to participate, all Governments concerned*.

Use lower-case *g* for the following phrases:

- a local or municipal government, a system of government, a change of government, a government department, the government-sponsored project, the government officials concerned.

graphics

When creating graphics, use the following guidelines:

- For main headings and titles, either use all capitals or only capitalize the first letter of the first word and proper nouns.
- For sub-headings, capitalize only the first letter of the first word.
- When referring to the denomination of numbers in graphs and pie charts, write the denomination in plural and place in brackets, e.g., (*in US$ millions*); (*in US$ thousands*).
- Always insert a space between the numeral and the denomination, e.g., *US$2 million*.
- When providing a timeline, *say as* **of** *X date*, not *as* **at** *X date*.

H

head (see also *job titles*)

Head (of State, Government or office); *head* (of a delegation or mission)

Head of Office (when referring to one person); *heads of office* (when referring to more than one)

headings

In document headings, use initial capitals only for the first word and proper nouns,

such as the names of places, organizations and specific people.

> Exception: Use all capitals for OCHA press release headings.

headlines

Use active verbs for headlines in products such as the humanitarian bulletin. For example, instead of: *Response coordinated by OCHA*, try *OCHA coordinates response*.

headquarters

Use upper-case *H* only when referring to the United Nations Headquarters. Use lower case when referring to OCHA headquarters.

When referring to the actual United Nations building in New York, refer to it as *the Headquarters Building*.

health care

Health care is a noun, *health-care* is an adjective.

- The majority of people have no access to health care. (noun)
- Health-care programmes are now active in the south. (adj.)

HIV

Remember: the *V* stands for *virus*, so do not write the *HIV virus*.

humanitarian chief

Use lower-case initials when referring to the

ERC in this capacity, as it is not the official job title.

Always double-check that *chief* is not spelled as *chef*. A computer spell check will not catch this error. If you're concerned that you might not spot this error, do a search in Word for *chef*.

Humanitarian Coordinator

(see also *Resident Coordinator*)

Use *Humanitarian Coordinator*, **not** *United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator*. This is because the Humanitarian Coordinator represents the entire Inter-Agency Standing Committee membership, not only UN agencies.

hurricane (see also *typhoon*)

A hurricane is a storm that occurs in the Atlantic with wind speeds of 75 mph and above. Only use upper-case *H* when referring to the name of a specific hurricane.

- Hurricane Irene is the strongest hurricane to hit the region so far this year.

hyphens

Use hyphens when a compound (two or more words in a phrase) is used as an adjective before a noun. Hyphenate if one part of the compound is an adjective or ends in *ing*.

- Food-insecure population (but: The population is food insecure)
- Income-generating activities (but: The activities are income generating)

(continued overleaf)

Hyphenate compound adjectives to avoid ambiguity. Compare these sentences:

- An infectious-disease specialist will chair the meeting.
  (Meaning: a specialist in infectious diseases will chair the meeting.)
- An infectious disease specialist will chair the meeting.
  (Meaning: a disease specialist who happens to be infectious will chair the meeting.)
- A cross-section of the IDP camp
  (Meaning: a representative group of the IDP camp.)
- A cross section of the IDP camp
  (Meaning: an unhappy section of the IDP camp.)
- OCHA has a sound-management system.
  (Meaning: OCHA has a technical system that manages sound during events.)
- OCHA has a sound management system.
  (Meaning: OCHA's system of management is sound.)

Do not use a hyphen after adverbs ending in -ly. (An adverb is a word that describes a verb, an adjective or another adverb.)

- This is a firmly established rule.
- They crossed an internationally recognized State border.
- UNDP rebuilt badly damaged roads.

Remember: words such as *friendly* and *family* are **not** adverbs, even though they end in *ly*. So a hyphen **is** required for phrases such as *the family-run business was destroyed*.

Remember to use two hyphens in phrases that have two hyphenated words when they come before a noun, even though it may look unusual. One of the most common examples is *short- and long-term plans* (but *the plans are for the short and long term*).

Commonly used phrases that are **always** hyphenated:

- an X-magnitude earthquake
- Arabic-speaking countries/French-speaking countries, etc.
- awareness-raising campaign
- best-case scenario

- capacity-building
- cash-for-work programme
- CERF-funded project
- child-friendly programme
- child-headed household
- civil-military coordination
- civil-society organizations
- climate-related drought
- Communicating with Disaster-Affected Communities
- conflict-affected region/people
- Council-mandated mission
- country-based pooled funds
- cross-border assistance
- cross-cutting issues
- cyclone-affected region/people
- decision-making
- disaster-prone country/region
- drought-affected area
- female-headed households
- five-year plan
- food-insecure people
- food-security crisis
- gender-based violence
- hard-to-access areas
- hard-to-reach areas
- high-level meeting
- high-quality information
- human-made disaster
- income-generating activities
- inter-agency appeal
- Inter-Agency Standing Committee
- large-scale humanitarian crisis/displacement
- long-standing agreement
- long-term plan
- man-made disaster
- mid-year, mid-May, etc.
- mine-clearing programme
- most-populous country
- OCHA-led workshop
- post-2015, post-2016, etc.
- rapid-response window
- school-feeding programme
- search-and-rescue operation
- short- and long-term plans
- short-term plan
- sudden-onset disaster
- system-wide initiatives
- third-country nationals
- three-day visit
- time-critical needs
- toxic-waste dumping

- two-day workshop
- underfunded-emergencies window
- user-friendly
- wood-burning stove
- worst-case scenario

I

internally displaced person

(see also *people*; *apostrophes*)

Use this phrase to refer to a person who has been forced or obliged to leave their home or habitual residence, particularly due to, or to avoid, the effects of armed conflict, violence, human rights violations or natural or human-made disasters, and who has not crossed an internationally recognized State border.

On first mention, use *internally displaced person* or *internally displaced persons* (this is one of the rare cases where *persons* is used). On further mentions, use *IDP* or *IDPs*.

Take care when using the apostrophe with *IDPs*. Remember:

- IDP's - something that belongs to one IDP.
- IDPs' - something that belongs to many IDPs.
- IDPs - no apostrophe when referring to IDPs in general, i.e., not in a possessive sense.

in to/into

Use *in to* when *in* is part of a verb phrase. Use *into* when referring to direction or an action.

- She walked in to see if the presentation had started. (*to see* is the verb)
- We will go into this in more detail.

italics

See section five for detailed guidance on italics.

-ize, -ization, -yse

(see also *spelling*)

Use *–ize* and *–ization*, not *–ise* and *–isation*, as indicated in the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*. So, *organize*, *memorize*.

> Exceptions: advertise, advise, analyse, apprise, catalyse, chastise, circumcise, comprise, compromise, demise, despise, devise, enterprise, excise, exercise, franchise, improvise, incise, paralyse, premise, revise, supervise, surmise, surprise, televise

Use *–yse*, not *–yze* (analyse, catalyse, paralyse)

J

jargon

(see also sections three and four)

Avoid jargon or language that does not clearly state the facts. Be specific and use examples to help provide clarity. This is particularly relevant for documents that will be read by audiences external to OCHA. Keep it simple. Clear language conveys clear thought.

- Instead of *advancing/developing the humanitarian agenda*, provide context and explain what is actually on the agenda.
- Instead of *beneficiaries*, try *people in need*.

- Instead of *coping strategies*, give examples of what these strategies are.
- Instead of *humanitarian consequences*, be more specific. For example, if people are dying because of a disease or a war, say that.
- Instead of *impact*, try *make a difference to*, *have a positive/negative effect on*, *improve* (depending on the context).
- Instead of *leverage*, try *apply, dedicate* or *use*.
- Instead of *mainstream*, try *integrate*. But avoid using *mainstream* as a verb, i.e., *mainstreaming*, as it rarely explains the intention.
- Instead of *more effective and principled humanitarian action*, explain what this actually means.
- Instead of *showcase*, try *demonstrate, represent* or *illustrate*.
- Instead of *partners do not have the capacity to respond,* explain why, e.g., funding or staff shortages.

job titles

Use initial capitals for specific titles. Use lower-case initials for non-specific titles.

- The OCHA Public Information Officer organized the workshop in Juba. She invited the public information officers from several humanitarian organizations.
- The Minister of Finance of Japan chaired the meeting of finance ministers.
- An OCHA humanitarian affairs officer will join the mission.
- OCHA Humanitarian Affairs Officer Rita Singh will join the mission.
- The Head of Office will attend the regional meeting.
- The Head of Office will meet other heads of office.

Remember:
- Secretary-General and Under-Secretary-General (always hyphenate)
- Assistant Secretary-General (only hyphenate the last two words)
- Special Representative of the Secretary-General (only hyphenate the last two words)

K

kilometre

Spell in full when a specific number is not used, i.e., *The water supply is several kilometres away*.

Use the *km* abbreviation when a specific number is used. Write the numbers as numerals (including one to nine). Insert a space between the number and *km*.

- The camp is 9 km from the border.

L

less/fewer (see section two)

level-three emergencies

Use lower-case initials when referring to a level-three emergency in general. Use upper-case initials when referring to a specific level three.

- OCHA responded to four level-three emergencies last year. This presentation will focus on the Syria Level-Three Emergency.

Use the L3 abbreviation after first mention. Remember to refer to it as *an L3*, not *a L3*. This is because the *L* has a vowel sound ("el") in this instance.

Hyphenate *level three* when used as an adjective.

- OCHA confirmed that the Yemen crisis is now a level-three emergency.

life saving

Life saving is a noun; *life-saving* is an adjective.

- We need financial support for life-saving interventions in the region. (adjective)
- Nutritional interventions are critical and often life saving. (noun)

Always double-check that *life-saving* is not written as *live-saving*. A computer spell check will not catch this common error.

like

Avoid using *like* when making comparisons. Try *such as* instead.

- Regions such as (**not** *like*) the Sahel are experiencing extreme drought.

M

magnitude

When using this in relation to an earthquake, remember to use the hyphen when required. So, *an 8.2-magnitude earthquake*, but *an earthquake of magnitude 8.2*. Both of these examples are correct, but a hyphen is used in the first example as it is an adjective phrase.

metre

A *metre* is a length of measure. A *meter* is an instrument for measuring.

Spell in full when a specific number is not used, e.g., *The water supply is several metres away*. Use the *m* abbreviation when a specific number is used. Insert a space after the numeral.

- The fence is 3 m tall.

Member State(s)

Always use upper-case initials, whether singular or plural.

memorandum of understanding

Only use upper-case initials when referring to a specific agreement between two States. In all other references, use lower-case initials. When abbreviating, use *MoU*.

multi-

The majority of *multi* words are not hyphenated. The exceptions are as follows:

- multi-access; multi-bilateral; multi-cause; multi-centred; multi-client; multi-country; multi-donor; multi-ethnic; multi-faith; multi-hazard; multi-skilled; multi-stakeholder; multi-user; multi-utility; multi-year.

N

names (see also *diseases*)

Use the first and last name on first reference, without the *Mr., Mrs.* or *Ms*. For subsequent mentions of the name, use *Mr., Mrs.* or *Ms.* and then the last name.

For children, use first name alone after full mention.

Only use *Dr.* for a medical doctor.

Always double-check the spelling of names in documents. Check that symbols are included where needed, e.g., António Guterres.

neither/nor

(see also *singular nouns*)

When using *neither* and *nor* in a sentence, take care to use the correct verb. If the word following *nor* is plural, use a plural verb. If the word following *nor* is singular, use a singular verb.

- Neither water nor high-energy biscuits **are** available in the area.
- Neither high-energy biscuits nor water **is** available in the area.
- Neither the rebels nor the Government **is** willing to talk.
- Neither the Government nor the rebels **are** willing to talk.

non-food items

Use lower-case initials for all three words. Always hyphenate *non-food*. If the phrase is used more than once in the text, use the *NFI* abbreviation after the first mention, placed in brackets.

For documents intended for a non-OCHA or non-UN audience, use *household items* rather than *non-food items*.

numbers

Numbers from one to nine are always written as words. Use numerals for 10 and above, up to 999,999.

> Exception: if a sentence lists two or more numbers to which different rules apply, the rule applying to the higher number applies to all. *Representatives from 12 African, 8 Asian and 5 Latin American countries attended the meeting.*

Use numerals for ages, dates, decimals, degrees, page references, percentages and measurements (*8 kg; 7 per cent; 6 years old; 0.5° C*).

Write the number as a numeral for millions, billions and trillions (*1.2 million; 16 billion*).

Use a comma, not a full stop, to denote thousands and millions (*1,234; 1,665*).

Don't start a sentence with a numeral: spell it out. Hyphenate the number if it consists of two words.

> Exception: a sentence can start with a year written in numerals.

Express ranges of numbers in full, e.g. *2 million to 3 million people* **not** *2 to 3 million people*, as this could be taken literally.

If the unit of measure is written out or abbreviated, only use it after the second figure. *Current supplies will last 12-16 months (**not** 12 months-16 months).*

Don't abbreviate the word *number* with the # symbol. Use *No.* instead, but not in running text, only in tables and charts.

Don't insert a numeral in brackets after spelling out a number. So do not write *two (2)*.

O

OCHA logo

For details on correct use of the OCHA logo, please refer to the *OCHA Graphics Style Book*. It is available on OCHAnet under the Reporting Guidance section.

office

When referring to the name of a specific OCHA office, use upper-case *O*. Otherwise, use lower case.

- The Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific; the office is based in Bangkok.

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

When using the acronym, use *OCHA,* not *UNOCHA* or *UN-OCHA*.

Regarding OCHA's online presence, the correct spellings are *OCHAnet, unocha.org* and *ReliefWeb*.

official correspondence

Please refer to the *OCHA Correspondence Manual*, which is the official guide for drafting, processing and dispatching official

OCHA communications. The manual is located on OCHAnet under the Policy Guidance section.

ordinal numbers

Use words, not numbers, to express ordinal numbers from first to ninety-ninth.

> Exception: express ordinal numbers in numerals to indicate the following:
> - Meeting numbers (2nd meeting, 3rd meeting, etc.)
> - Floors (14th floor; 33rd floor, etc.)

organization chart

UN style is to use *organization chart*, not *organigramme* or *organizational chart*.

P

parentheses (see *brackets*)

passive (see *active vs. passive*)

peace

The more commonly used peace-related words are written as one word:

- peacebuilder; peacebuilding; peacekeeper; peacekeeping; peacemaker; peacemaking; peacetime.

people/persons

(see also *Internally Displaced Person*)

Where relevant, use *people* instead of *persons, populations, individuals* or *beneficiaries*. This helps to make the text more reader-friendly.

- Instead of *the population in the south*, say *people in the south*.
- Instead of *the camp is overflowing with beneficiaries who need assistance*, say *the camp is overflowing with people who need assistance*.

Always use *who* rather than *that* when referring to people.

- UNICEF provided life-saving assistance to children who (**not** that) were affected by the drought.

Only use *persons* when using the term *Internally Displaced Persons*.

per cent

Always write as two words.

Always write the numbers as numerals before *per cent*. This includes numbers one to nine.

- More than 5 per cent of the population was affected.

Don't use the % symbol in running text. Only use it in tables.

period (see *full stop*)

plurals

Some plurals are spelled in a certain way in UN style. Some of the plurals most relevant to OCHA are as follows:

- aide-memoire/aides-memoires
- coup d'état/coups d'état
- curriculum/curricula
- embargo/embargoes
- forum/forums (**not** fora)
- memorandum/memorandums
- Secretary-General/Secretaries-General

proofreading (also see *typos*)

Always make time to proofread your work. For a fresh pair of eyes, ask a colleague to proofread a final draft. Always build in a substantial amount of time for the editing process of any document. But when time is short, at least do a quick spell check in Word.

Q

quotation marks

(see section five for more examples)

Use double quotation marks for quoted (verbatim) words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs. Use single quote marks for a quotation within a quotation.

Place the punctuation inside the quotation marks when it coincides with the end of the sentence. Otherwise place it outside the quotation marks.

- She said: "We will not condone this behaviour."
- The Government accused the NGO of "espionage and subterfuge".

Use double quotation marks for a word used in reference to its own meaning.

- The use of the term "genocide" remains contentious.

R

Resident Coordinator

(see also *Humanitarian Coordinator*)

When referring to the Resident Coordinator, the official title is *United Nations Resident Coordinator*.

But where the Resident Coordinator also functions as the Humanitarian Coordinator, use *Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator*, **not** *United Nations Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator*. This is because the Humanitarian Coordinator represents the entire Inter-Agency Standing Committee membership, not only UN agencies.

resolution

Always use lower-case *r*. Do not insert quotation marks around the resolution name.

- General Assembly resolution 46/182

Richter scale

Always use upper-case *R*, lower-case *s*.

rivers

Use upper-case *R* when referring to a specific river. Use lower-case *r* when referring to the names of multiple rivers.

- The River Danube; the Rhine and Danube rivers

roll out/roll-out

Roll out is a verb, *roll-out* is a noun.

- The team will roll out the project in March. (verb)
- The roll-out will take place in March. (noun)

S

search and rescue

Hyphenate this phrase when used as an adjective.

- The UNDAC team has completed the search-and-rescue phase.

If the phrase is not used as an adjective, no hyphens are needed.

- The team will focus on search and rescue.

seasons

Avoid referring to seasons, as they relate to different months of the year in different places. Write the name of the month(s) to clarify. In situations where seasons have to be used, do not capitalize *winter, spring, summer* and *autumn*.

Provide a time context for regional or local seasonal designations (e.g., *the dry season will be in X month, the monsoon season will be in Y month*).

When using local seasonal references, translate the word and write in italics.

- In Somalia, *deyr* (short rains) usually occur from October to November.

secretariat

Only use upper-case *S* when referring to the United Nations Secretariat.

- The World Humanitarian Summit secretariat and the CERF secretariat are positioned within the United Nations Secretariat.

Secretary-General

(see also *Ban Ki-moon; job titles*)

Always hyphenate this title and always spell it out in full; do not abbreviate as *SG*.

semicolon

Use the semicolon where there is no conjunction, such as *and* or *but*, and where a comma would be incorrect. It can be used to separate two related sentences:

- Roads in the north-east are flooded; delivery convoys cannot pass.

If a list could be confusing, use semicolons in place of commas to help make the text more reader-friendly.

- The Flash Appeal was launched by the Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon; the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres; and the Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O'Brien.
- Earthquakes could hit Karachi, Pakistan; Kathmandu, Nepal; and Lima, Peru.

singular nouns and verbs

Use the singular verb when referring to a team, a Government, an organization or a country.

- The team **is** arriving next week.
- The Government **has** issued a statement.

- The United Nations **is** an international organization.
- The Philippines **has** asked for international assistance.
- The Lord's Resistance Army **has** increased its attacks in the region.

singular verbs

When using the "one in X" phrase, e.g., *one in three children*, use the singular verb.

- One in three children in the region is (not *are*) malnourished.
- One in seven children has (not *have*) received assistance.

so-called

Do not use quote marks for the word or words that follow *so-called*.

- The so-called Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack (**not** The so-called "Islamic State" claimed responsibility for the attack).

spelling

(see also *-ize*, *-ization*, *-yse*)

United Nations spelling generally follows UK English spelling, as given in the most recent edition of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*.

Ending forms follow UK English style, rather than US style:

- –re (*centre, theatre*); –our (*colour, neighbour, favour*); double l (*travelled, cancelled*).

But always spell organization names exactly as the official name.

- Cent**er** for Disaster Recovery

subheadings

Only capitalize the first letter of the first word.

T

temperature

Use Celsius, always with numerals (including one to nine). Use the degree symbol (°) and insert a space before the C, e.g., 38° C.

An online temperature conversion is at: www.onlineconversion.com/ temperature.htm

that/which (see section two)

time

Do not use *o'clock*. Use *a.m.* or *p.m.* (lower case). Insert a space between the numeral(s) and *a.m./p.m.*

- A coordination meeting will be held at 8.30 a.m. and 3 p.m. each day.

Do not use *12 a.m.* or *12 p.m.*, as they are easily misunderstood. Use *midnight* or *noon*.

Where appropriate, the 24-hour system may be used. But use four figures, no punctuation, followed by *hours* (e.g., *1330 hours* is 1.30 p.m.).

When referring to time in a document, such as a situation report, always clarify if the time is local.

Time zone details are available at: www. timeanddate.com

ton

In standard United Nations terminology, *ton* denotes metric tons (MT = 1,000 kg, 2,204 lbs), not short tons (2,000 lbs) or long tons (2,240 lbs). Spell out in full (*ton* not *tonne* or *t*).

tsunami

Always spell with a lower-case *t*, even when referring to the name of a specific tsunami, e.g., the Indian Ocean tsunami.

typhoon (see also *hurricane*)

A typhoon is a storm that forms on the western side of the Pacific, through the Philippines, China, Vietnam and Japan.

Only use upper-case *T* when referring to the name of a specific typhoon.

- Typhoon Joe is the strongest typhoon to hit the region so far this year.

typos (see also *proofreading*)

Always allocate time for proofreading. If time is limited, at least use F7 for a quick spell check, or scroll through the text to find typos that Word has underlined in red.

Here are some examples of errors in OCHA documents that were caught in the final proofread:

- The task force is helping local humanitarian teams to strengthen motoring and reporting.
- This strategy formed the basis for early response to the impending Sahel hood crisis.
- The humanitarian chef launched the appeal, calling on more donors to contribute.
- A new strain of food-and-mouth disease could threaten regional food security.
- The OCHA-managed pooled fund helps to fill gaps left by doors in the region.
- The intervention was funded through a CERF allocation of almost $5.
- Only 33 per cent of reports were received by the dreadline.

U

Under-Secretary-General

(see also *Emergency Relief Coordinator*)

The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs is the head of OCHA and the leader of the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs. *Under-Secretary-General* is the appropriate title for the head of OCHA when referring to matters relating to the United Nations Secretariat.

Remember: Always hyphenate this title.

unexploded ordnance

Ordnance is often misspelled as *ordinance* in OCHA documents. Remember: *ordnance* relates to munitions; *ordinance* relates to law. A computer spell-check will not catch this common error. If you're concerned that you also might not catch it, do a search in Word for *ordinance*.

United Nations

Do not use an apostrophe when referring to the United Nations in the possessive sense.

- *United Nations Headquarters; United Nations policy; United Nations statements.*

Always check that *United* is not spelled as *Untied*. A computer spell-check will not catch this error. If you're concerned that you also might not catch it, do a search in Word for *Untied*.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

This is often misspelled in OCHA documents as *United Nations High Commission for Refugees*. Remember that it's *Commissioner*.

W

weather

(see also *seasons*; *typhoons*; *hurricanes*)

Use italics for the name of seasonal designations in a foreign language, such as *deyr*.

websites

When referencing a website address, omit the *http* prefix if the URL contains *www*.

If the address does not contain *www*, keep the *http* to ensure the website can be accessed.

> Tip: To prevent misspelled website addresses, always copy the website address from the web browser and paste it into the document.

which/that (see section two)

working groups

If referring to a specific working group, use upper-case *W* and *G*. Otherwise use lower case.

- The Climate Change Working Group was the most heavily attended working group.

World Humanitarian Day

Spell with upper-case initials. But always spell *day* with a lower-case *d* when referring to the day in general. (The day was a huge success.)

> Remember: write the date of World Humanitarian Day in UN style (*19 August*) followed by the year. No commas.

Y

-yse (see *-ize, -ization, -yse*)

SECTION TWO:
Commonly misused words

A

acute/chronic

Acute means short but severe.
Chronic means ongoing or constantly recurring.

advocate

Advocate means to support, recommend, or speak in favour of a person or an action.

A person or organization advocates **something**. The words *for* or *against* are **not** used after *advocate* in this sense.

- OCHA advocates humanitarian reform.
- *The Economist* advocated a surge of troops to Afghanistan.

A person or organization can advocate **for** someone, meaning *on behalf of*.

- The Secretary-General advocated for people trapped in closed camps.
- UNICEF advocates for children.

A person or organization can be an advocate **of** something, meaning *in favour of*.

- Martin Luther King was an advocate of human rights.
- President Obama was an advocate of change.

affect/effect

affect (verb): to influence, often with negative implication.

- These factors affect lives and livelihoods.

effect (verb): to cause.

- The new coordination procedures were designed to effect positive change.

effect (noun): the result or outcome of an action or event.

- The conflict's damaging effects were evident.

among/amongst

UN style is to write *among*, not *amongst*.

among/between

Use *between* in reference to two items; use *among* for three or more.

- The war between the Government and the insurgents has intensified.
- The NGOs decided among themselves how to address the situation.

When using *between* with numbers, use *and*, not *to*.

- The landslide displaced between 400 and 600 people (not *400 to 600 people*).

C

compare to/compare with

A is compared **with** B when highlighting a difference.

- This year's funding levels were lower compared with last year's.

A is compared **to** B when highlighting similarities.

- The international response to the earthquake in Haiti has been **compared to** the response following the 2004 tsunami.
- Shall I **compare** thee **to** a summer's day?

> A way to remember this: you would say *I am similar **to** you*, **not** *I am similar with you*.

complement/compliment

Compl<u>e</u>ment means to complete something else, or to make it perfect.

- WFP's activities complement the Government's efforts to combat food insecurity.

Compl<u>i</u>ment means to praise someone or something.

- The Government complimented OCHA on its coordination activities.

> A way to remember this: **I** compl**i**ment you on your work.

compose/comprise

Compose is to make or form the basis of something; *comprise* is to include or contain.

- The working group comprises 10 members.
- The Secretary-General's speech was composed from various background documents.

continual/continuous

Continual means that something is intermittent or frequently repeated.

- There was a continual sound of gunfire in the village.

Continuous refers to something that remains constant or uninterrupted.

- There has been a continuous flow of refugees crossing the border since Sunday.

F

farther/further

Farther relates to distance; *further* relates to expansion.

- They have to travel farther to collect water. We will discuss this further.

fewer/less

Use *fewer* for numbers of items or people; use *less* to describe an amount or a measured portion.

- The recent hurricane caused less damage than Hurricane Andrew.
- Liberia now has fewer than 200 doctors serving 4 million people.

forums/fora

In UN style, the plural of *forum* is *forums*, not *fora*.

I

impact

Use as a noun, not as a verb. *Impacted* is a surgical term for an ingrown tooth, not a synonym for *affected*.

- The resolution will have a significant impact on the crisis.

incidence/incident

Incident means the occurrence of an event or a disturbance. *Incidence* is the rate at which something occurs, usually a disease.

- The kidnapping incident shocked the humanitarian community.
- The meeting focused on the high incidence of Ebola.

M

may/might

May refers to what is possible or factual.

- We may need to change the mission dates.

Might refers to something hypothetical.

- The outcome might have been worse if this had occurred during the rainy season.

P

people/person

(see also *people* in section one)

When referring to more than one person, use *people*, not *persons*.

> Exceptions: *internally displaced persons* and *missing persons*.

pre-position/preposition

Pre-position means that you prepare items in advance of something, e.g., food supplies before a storm.

A *preposition* is the name given to words such as *after* or *by*.

principal/principle

Principal means first in rank or importance (noun or adjective).

Principle means a fundamental law or moral rule.

- The school Principal met with teachers and parents (noun).
- The principal objective is to support the work of the Emergency Relief Coordinator (adjective).
- The group discussed the basic principles of humanitarian law.

T

that/which

That defines information. It introduces an essential part of a sentence, otherwise known as a defining clause. The words following *that* are vital to the part of the sentence that comes before it. No comma is required before *that*.

- The coordination meeting **that** took place on 15 September focused on the cholera outbreak. (So there may have been several coordination meetings that week, but using *that* focuses on the 15 September meeting.)

Which gives more information. It introduces additional, non-essential information and indicates a non-defining clause. In other words, the section of the sentence following *which* can be removed without changing the meaning. Place a comma before and after this section of the sentence.

- The coordination meeting, **which** took place on 15 September, focused on the cholera outbreak. (The clause *which took place on 15 September* gives additional information about the date of the meeting. If you remove it, the sentence still provides the key information.)

W

while/whilst

UN style is to write *while*, not *whilst*.

SECTION THREE:
Avoiding unnecessary words

Below are suggestions on how to shorten phrases often used in OCHA documents. For more guidance on this, see **section four**.

LONG	SHORT
a large proportion of/a great deal of	many/a significant
areas that are affected by drought	drought-affected areas
are going to	will
are in need of	need
as to whether	whether
change for the better	improve
combine together	combine
completely destroyed	destroyed
currently in the process of	currently
cut back	cut/reduce
donated a total of $5 million	donated $5 million
due to the fact that	because
during the duration of	during/throughout
during the month of May	during May
estimated at approximately	approximately
first established	established
for a period of x months	for x months
(the) general public	the public

LONG	SHORT
have provided assistance to	have assisted
hundreds of acres' worth of property	hundreds of acres of property
if extended for a longer period of time	if extended
if this is the case	if so
in an effort to prevent	to prevent
in an emergency situation	in an emergency
in bad weather conditions	in bad weather
in collaboration with	with
in excess of	more than
in order to	to
in spite of the fact that	although
in the aftermath/wake of	after/following
in the event of	if
in the majority of instances	mostly
in two weeks' time	in two weeks
it is a situation that is	the situation is
joint cooperation	cooperation
leverage	use
linkages	links
make use of	use
meet with	meet
on a monthly basis	monthly

LONG	SHORT
on numerous occasions	often
on the following page	overleaf
over the course of the next few days	in the next few days
owing to the fact that	because
people are in need of water	people need water
plan in advance	plan
put an end to	stop
reported to be	reportedly
return back to	return to
she carried out a visit to	she visited
still continues to be ongoing	continues
still ongoing	ongoing
Syria is a country that has	Syria has
the aim of the programme is	the programme aims to
the generous support of donors	donors' generous support
the reason is because	this is because
the workshop was facilitated by OCHA	OCHA facilitated the workshop
they are able to/will be able to	they can
they reached a total of 3 million people	they reached 3 million people
they treated a total of 85 people	they treated 85 people
together with	with
utilize/utilization	use

LONG	SHORT
very urgent	urgent/critical
visualize	see/predict
weather conditions	weather
were provided with	received
whilst	while
with regards to	regarding
worked together with	worked with

SECTION FOUR:
Keep it simple

To make your writing more effective, use shorter sentences. Rephrase or delete unnecessary words. Below are some examples from OCHA documents.

Instead of	Try
A contribution of US$5 million was received from the Irish Government.	The Irish Government donated US$5 million.
The number of IDPs at the border is estimated at approximately 2,000.	Approximately 2,000 IDPs are at the border.
Natural disasters that have happened in previous years include…	Previous natural disasters include…
The project will focus on people who were affected by conflict.	The project will focus on conflict-affected people.
The cluster is carrying out an assessment of malnutrition levels.	The cluster is assessing malnutrition levels.
The assessment will be carried out by an OCHA-led mission.	An OCHA-led mission will carry out the assessment.
The report listed projects that were funded by CERF.	The report listed CERF-funded projects.
There is a possibility of hostilities becoming worse.	Hostilities could deteriorate.
Three NGOs are working on the construction of latrines.	Three NGOs are constructing latrines.
The findings of the mission will be discussed this week.	The mission's findings will be discussed this week.
The report will be issued on a quarterly/annual basis.	The report will be issued quarterly/annually.
OCHA is committed to supporting this emergency.	OCHA will support this emergency.
We will optimize the number of lives saved.	We will save more lives.
IOM is in the process of hiring local staff.	IOM is hiring local staff.

SECTION FIVE:
Quotation marks and italics

The information below explains when (and when not) to use double or single quotation marks or italics when referring to certain items in running text.

"Double" quotation marks

- Words quoted verbatim
- For a word used in reference to its own meaning (see example on page 18)

'Single' quotation marks

- Article in a journal/publication/book
- Conference/meeting name or theme
- Chapter in a publication/book
- Database name
- Definition of a word
- Draft publication/document
- Interview title
- Press release title
- Speech name/title
- Web-page heading

Italics

- Titles of official United Nations publications
- Titles of books, periodicals, newspapers, films, television and radio programmes
- Foreign words that do not appear in *Oxford English Dictionary*
- Titles of court cases and foreign-language laws and decrees
- Names of ships and airplanes
- Name of seasonal designations in a foreign language, such as *deyr*

Neither quotation marks nor italics

- Award name
- Lecture name
- Peace agreements (formal/internationally recognized)
- Programme or project name
- United Nations official reports (e.g., numbered General Assembly or Security Council documents)
- United Nations resolutions, conventions and treaties
- Non-English organization names
- Words after the phrase *so-called* (see example on page 20)

SECTION SIX:
Capitalization

This section provides guidance on capitalization for a range of words often used in OCHA documents.

A

Afro-Colombian

agencies

agenda, agenda item, *but* Agenda if used in a specific title

airport, *but* Airport if part of the official name

Ambassador in reference to a specific representative, *but* a seminar for ambassadors; the ambassadors in the region

annex, an annex, annex II, the report's annexes

annual report, *but* the *OCHA 2015 Annual Report,* the *CERF 2016 Annual Report*, etc.

anti-Balaka

Armed Forces, in reference to the armed forces of a specific State

C

camp

Central, but only in reference to a major region, e.g., Central Africa

chapter, chapter II

Chargé d'affaires

cholera

civilian police

civil-society organization (*CSO* when written as an abbreviation)

cluster, *but* the Nutrition Cluster, the WASH Cluster, etc.

coast, *but* Pacific Coast

Commission, in specific references, *but* the regional commissions, the functional commissions of ECOSOC

Committee, in specific references, *but* the Security Council committees, the sanctions committees

Community of Practice (*CoP* when written as an acronym)

Conference, in specific references and when used as a short title

conference room, *but* Conference Room 4, etc.

constitution, in general reference to one or more constitutions, *but* Constitution in relation to a specific constitution

consultant

continent

corporate emergency, *but* the Syria Corporate Emergency, etc.

country office, *but* the Yemen Country Office, etc.

Cyclone, but only when referring to the name of a specific cyclone

D

data set

delegation

E

Earth in reference to the planet; earth in reference to soil

earthquake

Ebola

explosive remnants of war (*ERW* when written as an abbreviation)

ex-Seleka

F

Financial Tracking Service

G

Gender Marker

General Service staff

global acute malnutrition

Global South

Goal (in reference to a Millennium Development Goal)

H

Head, Head of State, Head(s) of Government, *but* head of a delegation or mission, heads of office

headquarters, *but* United Nations Headquarters, the Headquarters Building (only when referring to the UN building in New York)

hemisphere

hepatitis A

high-level meeting, *but* the CERF High-Level Meeting, the Climate Change High-Level Meeting, etc.

hospital, *but* Hospital if part of the official name

humanitarian bulletin, *but* the Colombia Humanitarian Bulletin, etc

Hurricane, but only when referring to the name of a specific hurricane

I

Internally Displaced Persons

international humanitarian law (*IHL* when written as an abbreviation)

international organizations

International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (always use upper-case *M*)

Internet

intranet

island, *but* the Cayman Islands, the Solomon Islands, etc.

L

level-three emergency, *but* the Iraq Level-Three Emergency, etc.

M

management

Member State

Memorandum of Understanding, but only when referring to an official agreement between two States (*MoU* when written as an abbreviation).

Millennium Development Goals

Mission, in relation to an actual presence, e.g., the Permanent Mission of the Solomon Islands to the United Nations, *but* members of permanent missions at the United Nations, the OCHA mission to Sierra Leone, etc.

moderate acute malnutrition

N

new year, New Year's Day

non-governmental organization (*NGO* when written as an abbreviation)

North-South dialogue

note verbale

O

occupied Palestinian territory

office, *but* Head of Office, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, etc.

Organization, but only when referring to the United Nations

P

Part One, when used as a heading, *but* as stated in part one of the report, etc.

peacekeeping force

police, police force, United Nations civilian police

(the) president, *but* President Obama, President Rousseff, etc.

President of the General Assembly

presidential elections

Province, for specific references, e.g., the Province of Herat, Herat and Farah Provinces

Q

(the) queen, *but* Queen Noor, Queen Elizabeth, etc.

R

Regional Office, but only when referring to the name of a specific office, e.g., the Regional Office for Southern Africa

report, e.g., report of the Secretary-General

Richter scale

S

Secretariat, but only when referring to the United Nations Secretariat

section, as in section 3 of the report, *but* Section when referring to the name of a Secretariat unit

Senior Management Team, *but* senior management

session, e.g., the seventieth session of the General Assembly

severe acute malnutrition

situation report, *but* the CAR Situation Report, the Iraq Situation Report, etc.

South-South cooperation

staff members

State, but only when part of the official name of a state, e.g., Blue Nile State, New York State

Summit, but only when describing the full name of a summit, e.g., the World Humanitarian Summit

system (the United Nations system)

T

Task Force, but only when referring to the name of an official task force

third-country nationals

trust fund

tsunami

Twitter, *but* send a tweet, tweeting

Typhoon, but only when referring to the name of a specific typhoon

V

vitamin A

volume

volunteers, *but* United Nations Volunteers

W

war, e.g., the Iran-Iraq war, *but* the First World War, the Second World War

web

working group, *but* the Climate Change Working Group, the Gender Working Group, etc.

working paper

SECTION SEVEN:
Spelling list

adj. = adjective

adv. = adverb

* indicates a change from the second edition of the *OCHA Style Guide*

A

above-mentioned

ad hoc

adviser

airdrop

airlift

air strikes

Al-Qaida

among (not *amongst*)

antenatal

antimalarial

anti-poverty

Assistant Secretary-General

asylum seeker*

awareness-raising (noun and adj.)

B

Ban Ki-moon (Mr. Ban)

bednet

birth rate

break down (verb)

breakdown (noun)

build up (verb)

build-up (noun)

burned (not *burnt*)

C

cancelled, cancelling

capacity-building (noun and adj.)

carry over (verb)

carry-over (noun)

caseload

cash for work

cash-for-work (adj.)

ceasefire

checkpoint

cheque (in relation to a financial tool; not *check*)

childbearing

childbirth

civilian police

co-chair

Communicating with Disaster-Affected Communities Network

cooperate

coordinate, coordinating, coordination (no hyphen)

countrywide

coup d'état

cross-cutting

crowdsourced/crowdsourcing

D

data set

decision maker

decision-making (noun and adj.)

defence (but *United States Department of Defense; Israel (***not*** Israeli) Defense Forces*)

diarrhoea

discreet (prudent)

discrete (separate)

disinterested

dos and don'ts

Dr.

E

early warning system (not hyphenated)

east(ern) (a geographical direction or area within a country)

East(ern) (a major region, e.g., East Africa or Eastern Europe)

eDoc

Eid al-Adha

Eid al-Fitr

El Niño

e-mail

enquire, enquiry (a request for information)

enrol, enrolled, enrolling, enrolment

enterprise resource planning (not hyphenated)

ePAS

equalled, equalling

every day (adv.)

everyday (adj.)

extrabudgetary

eyewitness

F

favour

fieldwork, fieldworker

first-hand (adj. and adv.)

flash flood

focused, focuses, focusing

follow up (verb)

follow-up (noun and adj.)

Food and Agriculture (**not** Agricultural) Organization

foodgrains

foodstuff

forums (**not** *fora*)

freedom fighter

fresh water (noun)

freshwater (adj.)

front line (noun)

front-line (adj.)

fuelled, fuelling

fulfil, fulfilled, fulfilling, fulfilment

fundraising* (noun and adj.)

G

gender-based (adj.)

gender-specific (adj.)

gDoc

gram(s)

grey

grounds pass

groundwater (noun and adj.)

gunfire

H

halfway

hand grenade

hashtag

health care (noun)

health-care (adj.)

helpdesk

help line

high-mortality-risk groups

HIV-positive

home page

hostage-taking

hyperlink

I

income generation (noun)

income-generation (adj.)

in depth (adv.)

in-depth (adj.)

in-kind (adj.)

inter-agency

intercommunal

inter-ethnic

intergovernmental

Internet

interoperability

inter-State (between countries)

interstate (between states, e.g., New York and Texas)

intranet

iSeek

ISIL

J

jerry can

jihad

jihadi

jump-start

K

kick-start

kilogram (kg)

kilometre (km)

knowledge-sharing

Koran

L

labelled

labour

landmine

learned (not *learnt*)

least developed countries

liaison

licence (noun)

license (verb)

life-saving (adj.)

litre

log in, log out (verb)

login, logout (noun)

log on, log off (verb)

logon, logoff (noun)

long-standing (adj.)

long-term (adj.)

loose (not bound or tight) (adj.)

lose (cease to have) (verb)

M

MailChimp

man-made

medium-sized (adj.)

Member State

memorandums

meter (measuring instrument)

metre (unit of length)

mid-1990s, mid-2015, etc.

midterm/midway/midweek/midyear

mine clearance (noun, preferable to *demining*)

mine-clearance (adj.)

mosquito/mosquitoes

Mr./Mrs./Ms.

much-needed (adj.)

multi-access

multi-country

multi-donor

multi-ethnic

multinational

multisectoral (not *multisectorial*)

N

nation State

nationwide

neighbour/neighbourhood

neonatal

non-governmental

no one

O

occupied Palestinian territory (oPt)

OCHAnet

old age (noun)

old-age (adj.)

ongoing

online

op-ed

ordinance (law)

ordnance (munitions)

organization chart (**not** *organigramme* or *organizational chart*)

organize

over age 5

P

peacebuilder, peacebuilding

peacekeeper, peacekeeping

per cent

postnatal

practice (noun)

practise (verb)

pre-position (verb)

preschool

principal (first in rank) (noun and adj.)

principle (fundamental truth) (noun)

private sector* (not hyphenated)

program (computing only)

programme

psychosocial

public-health (adj.)

public sector (not hyphenated)

R

rainwater

re-elect

re-emphasize

referendums

refoulement

region-wide

ReliefWeb

Richter scale

risk reduction (noun and adj.)

roadblock

road map

roll out (verb)

roll-out (noun)

round table (verb)

round-table (adj.)

S

school-age (adjective)

schoolchild

schoolroom

schoolteacher

Secretary-General

sectoral (not *sectorial*)

self- (compound forms are hyphenated, e.g., *self-administered*)

set up (verb)

set-up (noun)

shanty town

shellfire

shortlist (noun and verb)

sitrep

slum-dweller*

socioeconomic*

sociopolitical

specialized, specializing

staff member

standby (noun and adj.)

State-building (in reference to a country or a State)

subgroup

sub-office

sub-province

sub-Saharan

subtotal

sudden-onset disaster

summarize

Sunni (adj. and noun, singular and plural)

super-Power

system-wide

T

targeted, targeting

think tank

time frame

timeline

timescale

titled (not *entitled*)

ton

totalled, totalling

towards (**not** *toward*)

town hall meeting

traffics, trafficked, trafficking

travelled, travelling

turn out (verb)

turnout (noun)

twofold

U

under age 5

underdevelopment

under-five mortality

underfunded, underfunding

underrepresent

Under-Secretary-General (plural: Under-Secretaries-General)

under way

unexploded ordnance (*UXO* when written as an abbreviation)

UN-Habitat

United Nations Country Team

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

up-to-date (adj.)

upward (not *upwards*)

usability (not *useability*)

user-friendly

username

V

value added (noun and adj.)

vis-à-vis

vitamin A

W

war crime

war-torn (adj.)

Washington, D.C.

wastewater

waterborne

waterlogged

web*

webcast

web page

website

weekday

well-being

well water

west(ern) (a geographical direction or area within a country)

West(ern) (a major region, e.g., West Africa or Western Europe)

while (not *whilst*)

Wi-Fi

workplace

workplan

worldwide

Y

year-round (adj.)

YouTube

SECTION EIGHT:
Acronyms and abbreviations

Below is a list of acronyms and abbreviations often used in OCHA documents. Note that when some of these are spelled out they use lower-case initials, not upper case.

3W	Who does What Where
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASG	Assistant Secretary-General
ASP	Associates Surge Pool
AU	African Union
BCPR	Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery
BCRF	Budgetary Cash Reserve Fund
BLO	Brussels Liaison Office
CADRI	Capacity for Disaster Risk Reduction Initiative
CAR	Central African Republic
CCCM	Camp Coordination and Camp Management
CDAC	Communicating with Disaster-Affected Communities
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CHF	Common Humanitarian Fund
CMCOORD	civil-military coordination
CMCS	Civil-Military Coordination Section
CoP	Community of Practice
CPD	Corporate Programmes Division
CRD	Coordination and Response Division

CSB	Communications Services Branch
CSO	civil-society organization
CwC	Communicating with Communities
DERC	Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator
DOCO	Development Operations Coordination Office
DPA	Department of Political Affairs
DPI	Department of Public Information
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DRR	disaster risk reduction
DSRSG	Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General
ECHA	Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
EES	Environmental Emergencies Section
EMERCOM	Emergency Control Ministry
EPRU	Emergency Preparedness Response Unit
EPS	Emergency Preparedness Section
ERC	Emergency Relief Coordinator
ERCC	Emergency Relief Coordination Centre
ERF	Emergency Response Fund
ERR	Emergency Response Roster
ERRF	Emergency Relief Response Fund
ERSMB	External Relations and Support Mobilization Branch
ERTF	Emergency Response Task Force
ESB	Emergency Services Branch

ESS	Evaluation and Studies Section
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
EU	European Union
EWARN	Early Warning and Alert Response Network
FCSS	Field Coordination Support Section
FIS	Field Information Support
FSS	Financing Support Section
FTS	Financial Tracking Service
GAT	Gender Advisory Team
GCMS	Geographical Coordination and Monitoring Section
GDACS	Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System
GenCap	Gender Standby Capacity Project
GHDIG	Good Humanitarian Donorship Implementation Group
GHP	Global Humanitarian Platform
GIS	geographic information system
GIST	Geographic Information Support Team
GLO	Gulf Liaison Office
GMP	Guidance Management Project
HAP	Humanitarian Action Plan
HAT	Humanitarian Advisory Team
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HCG	Humanitarian Communications Group
HCSS	Humanitarian Coordination Support Section
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HDX	Humanitarian Development Exchange

HFA	Hyogo Framework for Action
HIC	Humanitarian Information Centre
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
HoO	Head of Office
HPC	humanitarian programme cycle
HRF	Humanitarian Response Fund
HXL	Humanitarian Exchange Language
IA-RTE	Inter-Agency Real-Time Evaluation
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICT	information and communications technology
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
IDP	internally displaced person
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IGO	intergovernmental organization
IGSS	Intergovernmental Support Section
IHL	international humanitarian law
IM	information management
INSARAG	International Search and Rescue Advisory Group
IPC	Integrated Food Security and Humanitarian Phase Classification
IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Networks
ISDR	International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
ISS	Information Services Section

ITA	IASC Transformative Agenda
ITS	Information Technology Section
L3	level-three emergency
LSU	Logistics Support Unit
MCDA	military and civil-defence assets
MIRA	Multi-Cluster Initial Rapid Assessment
MPP	Minimum Preparedness Package
NAF	Needs Analysis Framework
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDRA	National Disaster Response Adviser
NFI	non-food item
NGO	non-governmental organization
ODSG	OCHA Donor Support Group
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OSOCC	On-site Operations Coordination Centre
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
PDNA	Post-Disaster Needs Assessment
PDSB	Policy Development and Studies Branch
PFRG	Programme Funding Review Group
POC	Protection of Civilians
PPAS	Policy Planning and Analysis Section
ProCap	Protection Standby Capacity Project
PSC	programme support cost

PSNP	Productive Safety Net Programme
RC/HC	Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator
RDRA	Regional Disaster Response Adviser
REC	Regional Economic Community
REDLAC	Regional Risk, Emergency and Disaster Task Force
RHPT	Regional Humanitarian Partnership Team
ROAP	Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
ROCCA	Regional Office for the Caucasus and Central Asia
ROLAC	Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean
ROMENA	Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa
ROP	Regional Office for the Pacific
ROSEA	Regional Office for Southern and Eastern Africa
ROWCA	Regional Office for West and Central Africa
RSO	Roaming Surge Officer
SBPP	Standby Partnership Programme
SCHR	Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response
SCS	Surge Capacity Section
SPEGS	Strategic Planning, Evaluation and Guidance Section
SRP	Strategic Response Plan
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDAC	United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDMT	United Nations Disaster Management Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

UNETT	United Nations Emergency Technical Team
UNF	United Nations Foundation
UNHAS	United Nations Humanitarian Air Service
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNHRD	United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNJLC	United Nations Joint Logistics Centre
UN RC	United Nations Resident Coordinator
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
USAR	urban search and rescue
USG	Under-Secretary-General
UXO	unexploded ordnance
VOSOCC	Virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Centre
WASH	water, sanitation and hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WHD	World Humanitarian Day
WHO	World Health Organization
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
XB	extrabudgetary

SECTION NINE:
Glossary

A

advocacy

Using information strategically to influence the policies or practices of key actors with the aim of assisting and protecting people in need. Advocacy entails speaking up (privately or publicly), drawing attention to an important issue and directing decision makers towards a solution.

assessment

Reconnaissance mission related to some aspect of a humanitarian crisis or disaster. Its purpose is to determine the situation on the ground, estimate needs and/or evaluate the adequacy of a response. Assessments result in recommendations and may lead to humanitarian assistance being started, ended or changed.

asylum seeker

An asylum seeker is a person who says that he or she is a refugee, but whose claim has not yet been definitively evaluated. National asylum systems are there to decide which asylum seekers actually qualify for international protection. Those who are judged through proper procedures not to be refugees, nor to be in need of any other form of international protection, can be sent back to their home country.

C

capacity-building

Efforts to develop human skills or societal infrastructures within a community or organization.

civil society

Refers to structures independent from Governments, such as NGOs and human rights groups, independent activists and human rights defenders, religious congregations, charities, universities, trade unions, legal associations, families and clans. Domestic civil society represents one of the most critical sources of humanitarian assistance and civilian protection during humanitarian emergencies.

cluster approach

Aims to strengthen overall humanitarian response capacity and effectiveness, in support of national authorities' efforts, in five key ways: to ensure sufficient global capacity in all main sectors/areas of response; to ensure predictable leadership in all main sectors/areas of response; to promote the concept of partnerships (e.g., clusters) between UN agencies, international organizations, NGOs and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement; to strengthen accountability; and to improve strategic field-level coordination and prioritization by placing responsibility for leadership and coordination of these issues with the competent operational agency.

complex emergency

A multifaceted humanitarian crisis in a country, region or society where there is total or considerable breakdown of authority resulting from internal or external conflict, and which requires a multisectoral international response that goes beyond the mandate or capacity of any single body and/or ongoing UN country programme. Such emergencies call for a complex range of responses.

D

disaster

A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society causing widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses that exceed the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources.

displaced person

Someone rendered homeless due to war or disaster. A person fleeing such conditions who crosses a border is considered a refugee. Anyone who takes flight but never leaves his/her country is an internally displaced person (IDP).

E

early warning

The provision of timely and effective information, through identified institutions, that allows people exposed to a hazard to take action to avoid or reduce their risk and prepare for effective response.

F

flash appeal

Urgent inter-agency funding requests that are issued when a crisis suddenly emerges. This funding is meant to meet immediate and medium-term needs.

food security

The notion that all people, especially the most vulnerable, have dignified and unthreatened access to the quality and quantity of culturally appropriate food that will fully support their physical, emotional and spiritual health.

H

humanitarian assistance

Aid that seeks to save lives and alleviate suffering of crisis-affected people. It must be provided in accordance with the basic humanitarian principles and can be classified into three categories: direct assistance, indirect assistance and infrastructure support. Those three categories respectively connote diminishing degrees of contact with the affected population. The UN seeks to provide humanitarian assistance with full respect to States' sovereignty.

humanitarian principles

Humanity, neutrality, impartiality and operational independence. These humanitarian principles provide the foundations for humanitarian action, and they are central to establishing and maintaining access to affected people. These principles are formally enshrined in General Assembly resolutions 46/182 and 58/114.

humanitarian space

An environment in which humanitarian agencies can work effectively and assist people who need their support, and which is governed by humanitarian principles. Three elements are needed to maintain a humanitarian space: combatants must respect humanitarian principles; humanitarians and peacekeepers must understand their respective roles; and all actors must accept their responsibilities within an overall framework.

humanity

A humanitarian principle that states that human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found, with particular attention to the most vulnerable people, such as children, women and the elderly. The dignity and rights of all victims must be respected and protected.

impartiality

A humanitarian principle that states that humanitarian assistance must be provided without discriminating as to ethnic origin, gender, nationality, political opinions, race or religion. Relief for suffering people must be guided solely by needs, and priority must be given to the most urgent cases of distress.

independence

A humanitarian principle that makes it possible to guarantee that humanitarian action is free of political, economic, denominational, military and ideological influences or bias.

integrated mission

A UN mission characterized by collaboration across divisions, departments and agencies. It aims to achieve better planning and greater communication among those responsible for areas such as political analysis, military operations, civilian police, electoral assistance, human rights, development, humanitarian assistance, refugees and displaced people, public information, logistics, finance and personnel recruitment.

internally displaced persons (IDPs)

People forced or obliged to leave their homes or habitual residence, particularly in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border. A series of non-binding Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement based on refugee law, human rights law and international humanitarian law articulate standards for protection, assistance and solutions for IDPs.

international humanitarian law (IHL)

Also called the law of war or armed conflict law, this body of rules seeks, for humanitarian reasons, to limit the effects of armed conflict. It forms a part of international law, protects people who are not or are no longer participating in hostilities, and restricts the means and methods of warfare by prohibiting weapons that make no distinction between combatants and civilians, or weapons and methods of warfare that cause unnecessary injury, suffering and/or damage. The rules are to be observed by Governments and their armed forces, and by armed opposition groups and any other parties to a conflict. The four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their two Additional Protocols of 1977 are its principal instruments. IHL does not regulate resort to the use of force; that is governed by an important, but distinct, part of international law set out in the UN Charter.

international migrant

Organizations define who falls under the category of 'international migrant' differently, depending on their mandate. OCHA's working definition is the following: international migrants are people who leave or flee their habitual residence and cross an international border to seek opportunities for safer and better prospects. Migration can be voluntary or involuntary, but most of the time it involves a combination of choices and constraints. This definition does, however, exclude refugees and asylum seekers, for whom there is a specific international protection framework.

M

mandate

A legal framework that defines the responsibilities of UN agencies, peacekeeping operations and other international organizations.

N

natural disaster

A sudden major upheaval of nature, causing extensive destruction, death and suffering among the stricken community, and which is not due to human action. Some natural disasters can be of slow origin, e.g., drought. Other seemingly natural disasters can be caused or aggravated by human action, e.g., desertification through excessive land use and deforestation.

neutrality

A humanitarian principle that states that humanitarian assistance must be provided without engaging in hostilities or taking sides in controversies of a political, religious or ideological nature.

non-food items

Basic supplies other than food or water. These include blankets, clothing, containers, utensils, cooking equipment, soap, detergent and plastic sheeting.

non-governmental organization (NGO)

A group of private citizens not subordinate to any State agency. Humanitarian NGOs may be professional associations, foundations, multinational businesses, or simply groups with a common interest in humanitarian assistance activities. They may be national or international in reach. They may have consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council or with one of the three NGO consortia in the IASC (Interaction, SCHR, ICVA).

P

peacekeeping

Method to help countries torn by conflict to create conditions for sustainable peace. UN peacekeepers (soldiers and military officers, civilian police officers and civilian personnel from many countries) monitor and observe peace processes that emerge in post-conflict situations and assist ex-combatants to implement the peace agreements they have signed. Such assistance includes confidence-building measures, power-sharing arrangements, electoral support, strengthening rule of law, and economic and social development.

protection

Encompasses all activities designed to obtain full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and spirit of human rights, and of refugee and international humanitarian law. It involves creating an environment conducive to respect for human beings, preventing and/or alleviating the immediate effects of a specific pattern of abuse, and restoring dignified

conditions of life through reparation, restitution and rehabilitation. Where protection is not available from national authorities or controlling non-State actors, vulnerable people have a right to receive international protection and assistance from an impartial humanitarian relief operation. Such action is subject to the consent of the State or parties concerned and does not prescribe coercive measures in the event of refusal, however unwarranted.

R

refugee

A person who, due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, or for reasons owing to aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his/her country or origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his/her place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge outside his/her country of origin or nationality, and who is unable or, due to such fear, unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of his/her country of origin or nationality.

S

sector

Area of concern to be addressed by humanitarian work. Examples of sectors are food and agriculture; education and protection; economic recovery and infrastructure; health and nutrition; water and sanitation; and shelter and non-food items.

sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)

Violence resulting in, or likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm to a person because of his/her gender. It includes rape, threats of such acts, and coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. Anyone can be a victim of SGBV, but women and girls are the primary victims.

surge capacity

Ability to rapidly deploy staff and mobilize material in response to sudden emergencies.

T

transition

Characterized by the absence of large-scale armed conflict, often secured by international peacekeeping forces, but still too volatile to speak of sustainable peace. The transition from conflict to post-conflict is perhaps the most crucial phase in any type of assistance programme.

V

vulnerability

Describes people who are at greatest risk from situations that threaten their survival or their capacity to live with an acceptable level of social and economic security and human dignity. These people are often refugees or displaced people, or victims of natural disasters, health emergencies or poverty brought about by socioeconomic crises.

SECTION TEN:
Learning resources

United Nations resources

United Nations Editorial Manual Online
dd.dgacm.org/editorialcontrol/index.htm

'United Nations Multilingual Terminology Database'
http://unterm.un.org/dgaacs/unterm.nsf/Welcome?OpenPage

OCHA resources

The 'OCHA Numbers module' gives simple and practical guidance on how to improve written communication involving numbers. The module is available on the Reporting Guidance page of OCHAnet at:
http://ochanet.unocha.org/AS/Reporting/Pages/TrainingModules.aspx

The 'OCHA Keep It Simple module' offers easy-to-follow guidance on how to write simply but effectively. The module is available on the Reporting Guidance page of OCHAnet at:
http://ochanet.unocha.org/AS/Reporting/Pages/TrainingModules.aspx

Visit the Reporting Guidance section of OCHAnet for templates and guidance on OCHA information products, such as situation reports, weekly reports and key messages.http://ochanet.unocha.org/AS/REPORTING/Pages/default.aspx

External resources

The Chicago Manual of Style
www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/contents.html

The Economist Style Guide
www.economist.com/styleguide/introduction

The Elements of Style
www.bartleby.com/141/

The Oxford English Dictionary http://www.oed.com/

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