THIS IS UNDAC
United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination
The United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) system is a part of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). It serves as the international response system for sudden-onset emergencies, such as an earthquake or a flood, and is designed to help the United Nations and governments of disaster-affected countries during the first phase of an emergency.

ABOUT OCHA

OCHA is the part of the United Nations Secretariat responsible for bringing together humanitarian actors to ensure a coherent response to emergencies. OCHA’s vision is one of a world that comes together to help crisis-affected people rapidly get the humanitarian assistance they need. Our mission is to coordinate the global emergency response to save lives and protect people in humanitarian crises. We advocate for effective and principled humanitarian action by all, for all.
United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination

THE TEAM

An UNDAC team can be deployed at very short notice (24-48 hours) anywhere in the world.

The UNDAC system is designed to support national governments, the UN in-country, Humanitarian Coordinators and Humanitarian Country Teams, and incoming international responders with coordination during the first phase of a sudden-onset emergency. It also aims to advise and strengthen national and regional disaster response capacity.

UNDAC teams are equipped to be self-sufficient.

They are trained in various skills, such as coordination, needs assessments and information management. The teams also advise and strengthen national and regional disaster response capacity.

When required, an UNDAC team establishes and runs an On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC) and a Reception and Departure Centre (RDC), which provide a platform for cooperation, coordination and information management for international humanitarian response agencies and national responders. First responders use the Virtual OSOCC website for real-time information exchange during ongoing emergencies.

MANAGEMENT

The UNDAC system is managed by OCHA’s Emergency Response Section (ERS) in the Response Support Branch (RSB).

As well as working with OCHA regional offices and other parts of OCHA, ERS works with UNDAC national focal points. ERS also acts as the secretariat of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG), which is the global network of countries and organizations dedicated to improving standards and coordination in urban search-and-rescue (USAR) preparedness-and-response operations.
UNDAC System

THE UNDAC SYSTEM CONSISTS OF FOUR COMPONENTS

PERSONNEL
Professional and experienced emergency managers and humanitarian experts made available by their respective governments or organizations, together with OCHA staff. UNDAC team members are specially trained and equipped for their task. For the devastating earthquake in Haiti in August 2021, the UNDAC team deployed among others civil-military coordinators and environmental management experts that supported the government in responding to the disaster.

OPERATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND EQUIPMENT
Personal equipment and service packages enabling UNDAC teams to be self-sufficient, as well as operational partnerships optimising service provision for the humanitarian community during UNDAC missions. In 2020, after the extremely powerful impact of hurricanes Eta and Iota in the Caribbean and Central America, the UNDAC team deployed among others civil-military coordinators and environmental management experts that supported the government in responding to the disaster.

METHODOLOGY
Predefined methods for coordination, including collection and management of information, coordinated assessment and coordination support structures for the first phase of a sudden-onset disaster. For instance, following the devastating Beirut Port explosion in 2020, UNDAC coordination and advice to local authorities and government proved effective especially during the height of the pandemic.

MOBILISATION PROCEDURES
Proven systems to mobilise and deploy an UNDAC team to a disaster site anywhere in the world within 48 hours of request. For the earthquake response in Albania, UNDAC members were able to arrive to Tirana within 24 hours after the disaster.

Facts and Figures

SINCE 1993 MORE THAN

1,826 MEMBERS DEPLOYED
300 MISSIONS CARRIED OUT
115 AFFECTED COUNTRIES

TOP FIVE DEPLOYMENTS

1. Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami 2004
2. Haiti Earthquake 2021
3. Caribbean Hurricane Matthew 2016
4. Pakistan Earthquake 2005
5. Haiti Earthquake 2010

NUMBER OF MISSIONS
**Milestones**

1993
- The UNDAC team was established.
  - with the first induction course held in Switzerland.

1994
- UNDAC’s first 10 missions are completed.

1995
- Regional team of the Americas is established.

2001
- First system review examines overall operations and geographical and demographic composition.

2002
- Asia joins Pacific regional team.
  - ISARAG guidelines endorsed by the UN General Assembly.

2003
- UNDAC completes its 100th mission.
  - the Cyclone Zoe response in the Solomon Islands.

2004
- Africa joins Europe regional team.
  - Record number of missions, 20 in one year.

2009
- Middle East joins Africa and Europe regional teams.

2010
- UNDAC completes its 200th mission.

2011
- Second UNDAC review to analyse its readiness, effectiveness, efficiency and impact.

2018
- Seventh UNDAC Field Handbook is available as phone application for mobile devices.

2022
- UNDAC completes its 300th mission.

**Methodology**

The UNDAC methodology is based on best practices from more than 300 missions to over 115 countries since UNDAC’s inception in 1993. It can adapt to a wide range of emergency situations and challenges. The UNDAC Handbook and trainings clarify UNDAC’s roles and responsibilities in a typical mission cycle.

**CORE VALUES**
- Equal
- Committed
- Competent
- Flexible
- Inclusive
- Operational
- Supportive

**HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES**
- The principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence are fundamental in the UNDAC system.

**DISASTER MANAGEMENT**
- UNDAC is rooted in disaster management but influenced by humanitarian coordination. The system bridges these two approaches.

**BUILT ON FOUR CORNERSTONES**
- underpinning the system and providing the basis for how individual members and deployed teams approach UNDAC mission objectives.

**LEADERSHIP**
- UNDAC supports and provides leadership at operational and tactical levels while supporting leadership at strategic levels.
UNDAC members usually work in disaster management at the national level or in international humanitarian response. Member governments are self-financing countries that hold UNDAC mission accounts with OCHA/ERS, through which funds are deposited to cover the deployment costs of their national UNDAC staff. Participating countries are sponsored members of the UNDAC system. UNDAC trainings ensure all active UNDAC members remain ready to deploy for response.

Membership
To become a member country, the national authority of the interested country should contact the Chief of the Emergency Response Section (ERS).

Contact details are available at: https://www.unocha.org/our-work/coordination/un-disaster-assessment-and-coordination-undac/undac-contacts

Training
and-preparedness missions. As experienced disaster managers and humanitarians, all UNDAC members must attend an induction training, which gives them the basic tools for deployment. UNDAC members are expected to regularly attend refresher courses in specific areas of expertise, such as civil-military coordination, environmental emergencies and on-site coordination. Trainings are held in all regions and conducted in cooperation with Member States and operational partners.
OCHA works with a range of partners to enable UNDAC teams to carry out their activities on the ground. UNDAC operational partners are essential members of the UNDAC system and include governments, NGOs, private sector and UN. From logistics and ICT support to assessment & analysis, remote sensing and mapping to technical expertise (environment, health, etc.). Their support extends to all UNDAC associated member organisations such as the UN and governmental agencies, Cluster Lead Agencies and other humanitarian actors collaborating with UNDAC.

UNDAC operational partners include the following (in alphabetical order), and a strategic partnership is also established with the European Commission - Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO) to support UNDAC response and preparedness activities.

**Emergency Preparedness**

UNDAC teams directly contribute to OCHA's key preparedness objectives:

- to strengthen the capacity of national authorities and regional organizations to access and coordinate international humanitarian assistance effectively, and to become self-reliant in coordinating national humanitarian assistance in emergency response.

The UNDAC system brings together experienced national disaster management experts and international humanitarian professionals who undertake specific disaster response preparedness missions at the request of interested Governments, and with the buy-in and support of the respective UN Resident Coordinator and UN Country Team.

UNDAC teams contribute to preparedness through capacity-building activities during response missions, and by participating as associates in the capacity-assessment missions of other organisations, such as the Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative (CADRI).

Team members act as international observers, advisers or exercise controllers of emergency response simulation exercises.

Many team members help to prepare and host training courses for UNDAC teams, and for other regional and international humanitarian response organizations, such as the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and the ASEAN Emergency Rapid Assessment Team.
The UNDAC system combines local knowledge with international experience to support Governments in the early phase of disaster responses. It continuously adjusts and tailors its approach to fit the operational needs and environment of any given response.

This was the case during the global Covid-19 pandemic, when the UNDAC system recognized that the assistance provided to the affected populations could not remain static. During the pandemic response, the UNDAC system demonstrated a high degree of flexibility in its operations. Of particular note was its ability to transform and provide remote support as a new and strengthened course of action.

This new approach was adopted with the full support of UNDAC’s key partners. The strong spirit of partnership among UNDAC members, as demonstrated during the pandemic response, is key towards ensuring the network’s continued success.

- SEBASTIAN RHODES STAMPA, CHIEF, OCHA EMERGENCY RESPONSE SECTION

Donors

UNDAC would not be possible without the generous support of the contributing UNDAC Member States listed below:

These donors provide funding to UNDAC mission accounts with OCHA.
The UNDAC system is managed by the Emergency Response Section (ERS) of OCHA in Geneva.

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For more information about OCHA, visit unocha.org