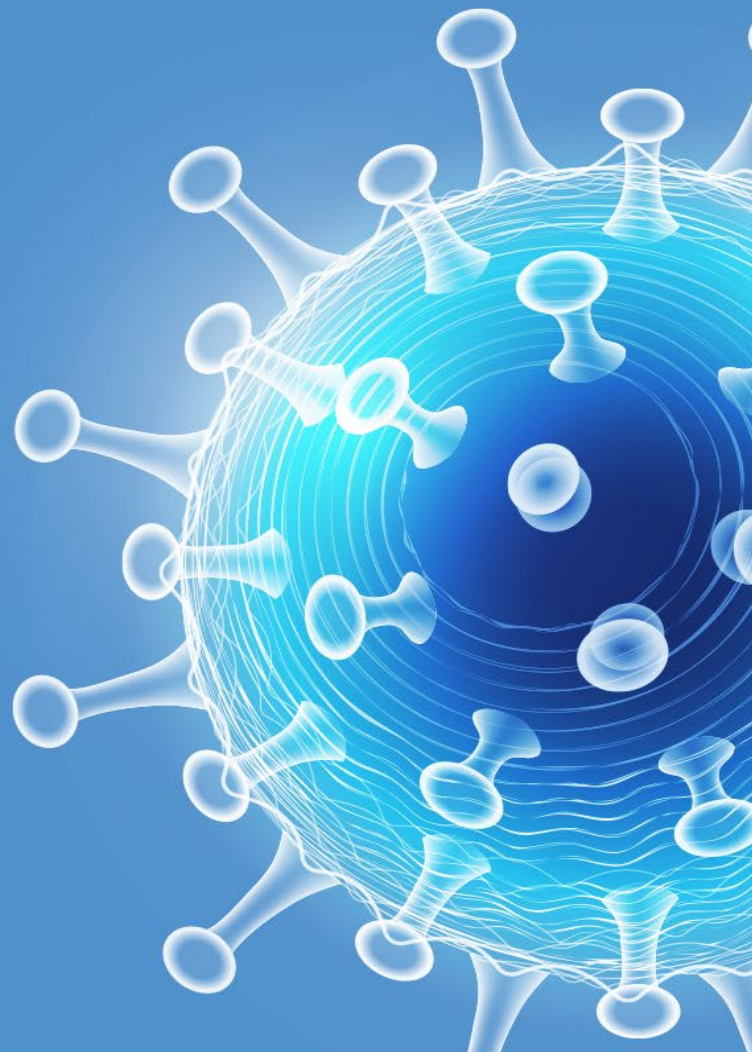


COVID-19 Response Evaluation Protocol

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OIOS

Office of Internal Oversight Services
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I. Introduction

Purpose

1. The Inspection and Evaluation Division (IED) of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) has developed this COVID-19 response evaluation protocol to be used for reviewing United Nations (UN) Secretariat entity responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. The protocol offers a conceptual framework for conducting the evaluation, with common questions, criteria, and performance indicators and measurements.
2. This protocol can be used for multiple purposes. UN Secretariat evaluation functions, as well as OIOS, can apply it in forthcoming evaluation assignments, or for stand-alone assessments, to evaluate the Secretariat response to the pandemic. It can also be used to facilitate internal reflection and learning. The protocol comprises all the steps needed to conduct a COVID-19 response evaluation, including:
 - determining the scope of the assessment (section II);
 - designing the assessment (section III);
 - selecting the assessment data collection methods (section IV); and
 - presenting the assessment information (section V).
3. The protocol has been developed based on the OIOS-IED Theory of Change (ToC) for the UN system COVID-19 response, which is presented in Annex I. Based on this ToC, the protocol applies three cross-cutting focus areas:
 - 1) Response delivery
 - 2) External coordination (or “Delivering as one”)
 - 3) Business continuity

Definition

4. Given the magnitude of the global crisis wrought by COVID-19, all UN entities have had to respond and adapt their work programmes accordingly. “Response” is thus defined as encompassing two distinct but interconnected parts:
 - (1) the existing mandate response needed to implement previously mandated activities in the new environment created by the pandemic (for example, servicing inter-governmental meetings virtually during the pandemic); and
 - (2) the COVID-19 specific response (health and non-health) needed to address the pandemic specifically (for example, ensuring the availability of adequate testing for the virus in the population being served; providing immediate humanitarian assistance; and supporting social and economic policies to enhance the resilience

and protection of vulnerable communities and populations).

5. While this protocol focuses primarily on the latter, both parts comprise the overall COVID-19 response of an entity, and must be considered together in determining how well, or not, entities are performing in the immediate crisis, as well as preparing for longer-term recovery.

II. Determining the scope

Define the scope and objective of the evaluation

6. One of the first steps to be undertaken when beginning the exercise is to define the scope and objective of the evaluation. The questions to be asked here include:
 - Is the assessment looking at the COVID-19 specific response, the general mandate response, or both?
 - Is the assessment being undertaken at the cross-cutting, programme, subprogramme, project and/or activity level?
 - Will the primary focus be one of learning, accountability, or some combination of the two?
 - How in-depth and comprehensive will the assessment be?
 - What time frame will be assessed?
 - What activities and functions will the assessment look at?
 - Is the assessment looking at activities, outputs and/or immediate / longer-term response outcomes?
 - Who is the primary audience(s) of the assessment?

III. Designing the evaluation

Develop a Theory of Change (ToC)

7. To further specify the assessment scope, a ToC should be developed for the entity response being assessed. The ToC should provide an overview of the response (existing mandate and/or COVID-19 specific), including the specific steps taken to contribute to the change desired as a result of the response, and underlying assumptions that must be met to achieve the desired impact. The ToC can also be used to map the parameters of the evaluation, by determining what and where it will focus on the results chain. The IED-OIOS ToC for the UN response to COVID-19 in

Annex I can be a useful reference for this undertaking.

Conduct a stakeholder mapping

8. Once the scope has been determined, and the theory of change developed, a mapping of key stakeholders should be undertaken to identify the main actors in the response being assessed. This mapping will serve multiple purposes, including:
 - identifying the key actors in the response;
 - understanding the individual roles and responsibilities of the actors, as well as their linkages; and
 - defining the beneficiaries of the response;

Determine the main assessment questions

9. The assessment should be guided by over-arching questions that, when answered, meet the objective of the exercise. Core assessment questions can include the following:

Response delivery

Existing mandate delivery response:

What is the impact of the COVID pandemic on achievement of existing mandates for each of the following criteria?

- i. relevance – the extent to which objectives, outcomes, and planned outputs and activities, remain relevant
 - ii. timeliness – the extent to which there will be delays in mandate achievements
 - iii. efficiency - the extent to which the same resources will produce same results
 - iv. effectiveness – the extent to which mandate objectives will be met fully, partially or not at all
 - v. inclusiveness – the extent to which all beneficiary groups are included and considered in the mandate implementation
 - vi. sustainability – the extent to which mandate achievements can be sustained under COVID environment
- What was the response (adjustments, adaptations and/or innovations) required to ensure continued achievement of existing mandates?

COVID-19 specific response:

- What was the response strategy and how did it address the issues created with

the pandemic?

- How relevant was the response to the new environment created by the pandemic?
- How timely was the response delivery?
- How efficient was the response?
- How effective was the response?
- To what extent did the response meet the needs of key stakeholders, such as Member States and UN partners, as well as beneficiaries?
- How inclusive was the response for vulnerable groups?
- How sustainable is the response?
- How well coordinated internally was the response?
- To what extent were activities and functions adequately repurposed and adapted to address COVID-19?
- How aligned was the response to the entity's mandate and its comparative advantage?
- What (early) outcomes, if any, can be attributed to the response?
- To what extent was the response aligned with the Secretary-General's six priorities outlined in the Enterprise Risk Management?

External coordination (“Delivering as one”):

- How coherent was the response in relation to actions taken by other major actors (such as government and civil society) towards common objectives?
- How well or not was the response coordinated externally with other entities in the UN system?
-

Business continuity

- How well, or not, was the entity able to maintain business continuity of staffing, work processes and systems to carry out its mandated and COVID-specific activities?

Develop a design matrix

10. The next step is to develop a design matrix that links each over-arching question (and possible sub-questions) to specific assessment criteria, performance indicators, measurement and methods for data collection. An overview of suggested data collection methods can be found in Section IV. The COVID-19 response assessment framework presented in Table 1 below provides the conceptual framework from which to work, and includes a comprehensive, although not exhaustive, set of 12 key

criteria, indicators and measurement standards to be used in assessing the response. These have been derived from the OIOS-IED UN COVID-19 response ToC.

Table 1 – COVID-19 response design matrix

CRITERION	INDICATOR	MEASUREMENT
Response Delivery		
1. RELEVANCE	1.1. The entity's response addressed stakeholder and beneficiary needs and requirements	The extent to which response activities sufficiently addressed key stakeholder (including Member States) and beneficiary needs and requirements during the pandemic
	1.2 The entity's response was aligned with its mandate and comparative advantage	The degree to which response activities corresponded to the entity's overall mandate The degree to which response activities corresponded to the entity's comparative advantage
	1.3 The entity's activities and results continued to address its mandate	The extent to which the planned activities and results corresponded to achievement of its existing mandate
2. TIMELINESS	2.1 The response actions were undertaken in a timely manner	The entity issued a formal response in less than 45 days from the onset of the pandemic (March 11, 2020 as declared by WHO)
3. EFFECTIVENESS - EXISTING MANDATE DELIVERY RESPONSE	3.1 The entity effectively continued implementing its existing mandate in the new environment created by the pandemic	The extent to which the entity was able to deliver its core functions and activities during the pandemic The extent to which the entity was able to modify its work planning for general mandate delivery to adjust to the environment created by the pandemic The extent to which the entity was able to achieve its key outcomes as outlined in the strategic framework during the pandemic
	3.2 The entity effectively delivered its human rights and gender mainstreaming mandate during the pandemic	The extent to which the entity was able to maintain human rights and gender mainstreaming in its mandated activities during the pandemic

CRITERION	INDICATOR	MEASUREMENT
<p>4. EFFECTIVENESS – COVID-19 SPECIFIC RESPONSE</p>	<p>The entity effectively met the unique demands created by the pandemic (Choose one indicator that matches the sector of the entity being assessed. The measurement standards are directly taken from existing COVID-19 response plans)</p>	
	<p>4.1 The entity effectively delivered the emergency health COVID-19 response required during the pandemic</p>	<p>The extent to which the entity responded to COVID-19 needs by 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mobilizing information about prevention and containment measures; • collecting and disseminating health data; • strengthening vulnerable health systems; • providing emergency health services; and • accelerating priority research and innovation
	<p>4.2 The entity effectively delivered the humanitarian COVID-19 response required during the pandemic</p>	<p>The extent to which the entity responded to COVID-19 needs by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • activating and implementing actions under the Global Humanitarian Response Plan; • providing life-saving assistance to the most vulnerable; • undertaking rapid country needs assessments; • protecting, assisting and advocating for vulnerable population; • scaling up humanitarian logistics; and • mobilizing additional resources
	<p>4.3 The entity effectively delivered the peace and security COVID-19 response required during the pandemic</p>	<p>The extent to which the entity responded to COVID-19 needs by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scaling up COVID-19 related security impact measures; • activating preparedness plans for bioterrorism threats; • continuing efforts for conflict de-escalation; • maintaining vigil on terrorist organizations; and • scaling-up monitoring of human rights violations amongst vulnerable populations

¹ Elements derived from WHO COVID-19 country and technical guidance, found at <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance>

CRITERION	INDICATOR	MEASUREMENT
	4.4 The mission effectively delivered the peacekeeping COVID-19 response required during the pandemic	<p>The extent to which the peacekeeping mission responded to COVID-19 specific needs by²:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supporting in an impartial manner, local efforts to combat the spread of the virus; • keeping UN personnel safe by enhancing medical testing and treatment capabilities; and • ensuring that peacekeepers practiced virus mitigation measures; and • delivering its COVID-19 response in an integrated manner with the Special Political Missions and UN Country Teams
	4.5 The entity effectively delivered the social protection, economic recovery and environmental COVID-19 response required during the pandemic	<p>The extent to which the entity responded to COVID-19 specific needs by³:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing support and basic services (such as education, shelter, and food) to vulnerable populations; • protecting at-risk population groups; • conducting assessments and rapidly scaling-up social protection mechanisms; • convening social dialogues; • providing expertise and support in building community resilience • providing expert policy advice and programming to protect jobs, SMEs and the informal sector; • providing expert policy advice and programming to protect jobs, SMEs and the informal sector; and • providing expert advice on securing global food supply chains and facilitating trade flows • Providing expert policy advice on environmental strategies that would mitigate the slowing of any progress made on environmental protection, conservation of biodiversity and climate change
5. INCLUSIVENESS	5.1 The entity's response	The extent to which the entity's response actions incorporated a gender and a human-rights based

² Elements derived from WHO COVID-19 country and technical guidance, found at <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance>

³ Elements derived from 1. United Nations, Comprehensive Response to COVID-19: Saving Lives, Protecting Societies, Recovering Better, and 2. OIOS-IED Theory of Change (ToC) for the UN system COVID-19 response found in Annex I.

CRITERION	INDICATOR	MEASUREMENT
	was inclusive	<p>approach</p> <p>The extent to which the entity's response actions included marginalized groups such as youth, the elderly, women, indigenous groups, LGBTI, and disabled persons</p>
	5.2 Stakeholders were adequately informed of response	The extent to which stakeholders (including partners, Member States, and beneficiaries) were properly informed of the entity's response actions
6. INTERNAL COHERENCE	6.1 The entity's response was internally coordinated	<p>The extent to which response actions were well coordinated amongst the various Divisions and Sections of the entity to have coherent impact</p> <p>The adequacy of clear internal decision-making, communication and information sharing</p>
7. AGILITY	7.1 The entity adequately repurposed its work programme to deliver mandated and COVID-19 specific activities	<p>The extent to which the entity made the necessary changes to its work programme to deliver its general mandate</p> <p>The extent to which the entity made the necessary changes to its work programme to provide a COVID-19 specific response</p>
	7.2 The entity's response was innovative	The extent to which the entity devised new ways of working and delivering its mandate which met the unprecedented needs brought by the pandemic
	7.3 The entity's response was evidence-based	The degree to which response actions were the result of evidence-based decision-making based on current situational analyses, gap assessments and/or current monitoring and evaluation data
8. RECOVERY	8.1 The entity's response strategy incorporated recovery measures	<p>The degree to which the response actions incorporated medium- and long-term recovery measures for Member States</p> <p>Where relevant, the degree to which response actions addressed the 2030 Development Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change</p>
9. SUSTAINABILITY	9.1 The entity's response was sustainable	The extent to which the entity's response can be sustained through the pandemic
External Coordination ("Delivering as one")		

CRITERION	INDICATOR	MEASUREMENT
10. EXTERNAL COHERENCE	10.1. The entity's response was coordinated with other entities in the UN system	<p>The extent to which the entity's response was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • planned jointly with other relevant UN entities; • part of a global level coordinated response across the UN system; • part of a regional level coordinated response across the UN system; • part of a country level coordinated response across the UN Country Team, SPM and PK mission; and • aligned with the S-G's overall response priorities
Business Continuity		
11. ADAPTABILITY	11.1 The entity was able to maintain business operations	<p>The extent to which the entity was able to maintain overall business continuity of its work programme to deliver its general mandate and COVID-19 response actions</p> <p>The degree to which entity staff was able to continue working remotely, as needed</p> <p>The extent to which the entity was able to maintain business continuity of work processes and systems to carry out its mandate and COVID-19 response actions</p> <p>The extent to which management structures (including delegation of authority and clear staff roles and responsibilities) enabled the response actions</p>
12. PREPAREDNESS	12.1 The entity had crisis risk mitigation mechanisms in place which were operationalized	<p>The existence of crisis risk mitigation mechanisms in the entity</p> <p>The extent to which risk mitigation mechanisms were effectively operationalized at the onset of the pandemic</p>
13. EFFICIENCY	13.1 The entity had sufficient resources for an effective response	<p>The sufficiency of resources (human, material and financial) available for an effective response</p> <p>The adequacy to which the budget was repurposed as needed to accommodate response actions</p>

11. Each response indicator in the framework above can be scored based on the extent to which the entity meets the defined measurement standards using the 4-point scale below. Depending on the entity being assessed, as well as the scope of the assessment, **specific and precise scoring metrics must be developed** to ensure consistency and transparency in how the scoring system is applied.
 - 4 = **completely/mostly met the standard** (the extent and substance of all or most of the measurement standard(s) was/were achieved)
 - 3 = **partially met the standard** (the extent and substance of some of the measurement standard(s) was/were achieved)
 - 2 = **minimally met the standard** (the extent and substance of a few of the measurement standard(s) was/were achieved)
 - 1 = **the standard was not at all met** (the extent and substance of none of the measurement standard(s) was/were achieved)
12. In order to enhance the visualization of the assessment results, the scoring can be color-coded using a traffic light system of green for 4, yellow for 3, and red for 2 and 1. The presentation of the results for each entity can then be displayed in a dashboard using the color-coded scores. This will allow for a visual identification of response achievements, gaps and trends. A sample dashboard is presented in Annex II.

IV. Selecting the Methods

13. This section discusses the methods that can be used to assess an entity's specific response to COVID-19. It contains specific guidance for the COVID-19 context, including how to choose the sample population, and a list of illustrative assessment questions. The questions provide general guidance but are neither mandatory nor exhaustive. A discussion of After-Action Reviews, a very specific assessment approach, is also included.
14. It should be noted that given the new COVID-19 world, there will be an increased need to use remote technologies for data collection. However, remote data collection is not specifically discussed in this protocol.

Key informant interviews

15. A key informant interview is a qualitative method that consists of a semi-structured or structured discussion where questions are asked by an interviewer and responses are given by an individual interviewee or group of interviewees; they involve personal interaction and the interviewer has the ability to ask follow-up questions or probes. This method is particularly useful to understand decision-making processes and staff and stakeholder opinions. In selecting key informant interviewees, consideration should be given to individuals with first-hand knowledge and/or involvement in the entity's COVID-19 response, as well as with key stakeholder

groups. Ideally, in order to ensure different perspectives are heard, there should be diversity within the interview population in terms of hierarchy, gender, and roles.

Focus groups

16. A focus group is a qualitative method used to gain in-depth understanding of a particular topic through a facilitated group discussion between 5 to 10 participants. In selecting participants for the focus group discussion, consideration should be given to individuals who have experience with and can share their perspectives on how the entity has adapted and responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. Multiple focus groups can be conducted with staff at different levels who have correspondingly different responsibilities, to understand the full range of the entity's response. A focus group with key stakeholder groups should also be considered. Table 2 presents possible focus group and key informant questions for assessing an entity's COVID-19 response.

Table 2 - Illustrative questions: focus groups and key informant interviews

FOCUS AREAS	ILLUSTRATIVE QUESTIONS
RESPONSE DELIVERY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When did your entity draft a response strategy and/or plan? • What did the strategy and/or address? • When was it launched? • How inclusive was the process of developing a response strategy? • What adaptations, if any, were made to the regular work programme to deliver the general mandate? • How was the mandate delivery maintained? • What changes, if any, were made to address COVID-19 specific needs? • How well coordinated within the entity has the response been so far? • To what extent have resources been sufficient for the response? • What lessons have been learned thus far? • What good practices have been noted thus far?
COORDINATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which entities did you coordinate your response with and why? • To what extent were the response actions of your entity coordinated with the wider UN system at the global/regional level? • At the country level, how did your entity work with the SRSG and the Special

FOCUS AREAS	ILLUSTRATIVE QUESTIONS
	<p>Political Mission, the Peacekeeping mission, as well as the Resident Coordinator and the UN Country Team to ensure a coordinated and coherent strategic planning and response implementation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What barriers, if any, hindered external coordination?
BUSINESS CONTINUITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent was your entity able to continue working remotely? • Which activities could not be performed remotely, and how was that managed? • Which information technology systems worked well and why? • To what extent were human resource functions maintained and how? • Did your entity have a risk mitigation plan in place? If so, to what extent was this plan effectively operationalized?

Surveys

17. Surveys are a quantitative method for gathering information from individuals systematically, typically about their behaviours, experiences, and opinions; these can be conducted through a printed questionnaire, over the telephone, by mail, in person, or – most commonly - on the web or using a smartphone app. Surveys are a practical tool to swiftly gather standardized data from a large number of people, and the data collected can be analyzed with descriptive and inferential statistical methods.
18. In assessing an entity’s COVID-19 response, surveys are a useful tool to gather standardized data from large populations and offices in different countries. Assuming the number of respondents is sufficient, survey data can be disaggregated by various variables such as sex, office, location, type of contract, etc. to gain a more nuanced understanding of differences and similarities in the perception of the COVID-19 response.
19. Various sampling strategies can be used for the surveys, including full samples of the entire population, random samples, and purposive samples. The latter may be a good choice for a COVID-19 response assessment, since the evaluation team can deliberately select members of the survey population who have had direct experience with and understanding of an entity’s COVID-19 response. Table 3 presents possible survey questions for assessing an entity’s COVID-19 response.

Table 3 - Illustrative COVID-19 assessment questions for surveys

FOCUS AREAS	ILLUSTRATIVE QUESTIONS
RESPONSE DELIVERY (STAFF)	<p>To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about your entity's COVID-19 response? (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, don't know)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My entity developed a response strategy that was timely • My entity developed a response strategy that was relevant • The response actions undertaken were generally aligned with my entity's mandate • Strategic planning for delivery of the general mandate was adequate • Necessary adaptations to the work programme were made • The level of resources available was sufficient for an effective response • My entity has been focused on results • Internal collaboration and coordination within my entity was strong • Senior leadership in my entity has been focused on the response • Staff have been well informed about my entity's COVID-19 response • Innovation has been encouraged as part of my entity's COVID-19 response <p>How effective has your entity been in its specific COVID-19 response to meet the unique demands for pandemic support created by the crisis? (Very effective, somewhat effective, somewhat ineffective, very ineffective, don't know)</p> <p>How effective has your entity been in <u>delivering its mandated activities</u> in the new environment created by COVID? (Very effective, somewhat effective, somewhat ineffective, very ineffective, don't know)</p> <p>How could response delivery have been improved?</p>
COORDINATION	<p>How would you rate your entity's coordination with each of the following on its COVID-19 response? (excellent, good, fair, poor, very poor)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other entities in the UN secretariat, including SPMs and PKMs • Funds, programme and specialized agencies in the wider UN system • Regional partners [if applicable] • National partners [if applicable] • United Nations Country Team [if applicable]

FOCUS AREAS	ILLUSTRATIVE QUESTIONS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other entities [please specify] <p>How could coordination with other entities have been improved?</p>
<p>BUSINESS CONTINUITY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the sequence of COVID-19 response actions in the first months of the crisis? • How were crisis protocols activated? • Which offices/units/teams were first activated to respond? • To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, don't know) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ My entity ensured that the information technology required for telecommuting (such as Skype, Teams, Zoom) was in place ○ It was possible to conduct all my tasks remotely ○ I had the technical skills required to perform my tasks remotely ○ Where needed, remote procedures were put into place where on-site work was not possible ○ I was able to maintain my workload during telecommuting ○ My entity adequately accommodated individual staff needs during the pandemic ○ Delegation of authority was properly exercised ○ Staff roles and responsibilities during the pandemic were clear ○ (Only for managers) I was able to adequately manage my work portfolio ○ (Only for managers) I was able to provide adequate supervision to my staff <p>How could business continuity have been improved?</p>

20. It is also possible to include open-ended questions in surveys, which would gather qualitative information similar to those collected through interviews. The same questions in Table 2 above may be used for this purpose.

Case studies

21. Case studies are a primarily qualitative method used to understand complex topics

in their context based on the in-depth analysis of a purposely selected case. A 'case' is a unit of analysis and reporting, and can include, for example, a subprogramme, an office, a function, or a country. A case study approach can be particularly useful to provide a closer and more comprehensive assessment of a part of an entity to draw lessons learned and uncover good practices for the future.

22. When using case studies for COVID-19 response assessments, the following steps should be taken:

Select the case (unit of analysis): This unit is the case which is used to understand the wider COVID-19 response, such as a subprogramme, a project, the entire entity or a regional office.

Choose a sampling design: The design can be based on a "typical case" approach (where cases are purposely chosen to be representative of other cases) or a "diverse case" approach (where cases are purposely chosen to portray outliers showing maximum variation). With regard to the latter, for example, in assessing an entity's COVID-19 response, the assessment can include one or more cases where the response took place mainly at the headquarters level, as well as one more cases, where the response took place mainly at the field level.

Choose sampling criteria: Most cases are selected using purposive sampling strategies, in which they are not randomly selected but rather chosen due to the prevalence or non-prevalence of certain characteristics. For COVID-19 response assessments, possible case selection criteria are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4 – Illustrative selection criteria for COVID-19 assessment case studies

FOCUS AREAS	ILLUSTRATIVE QUESTIONS
RESPONSE DELIVERY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of response strategy and/or plan • Extent of work programme repurposing • Extent of the COVID-19 response activities • Variation in sectoral response • Geographical diversity of response activities • Diversity in programme stakeholder groups
COORDINATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of joint work planning with other entities • Extent of joint activities implemented together with other entities
BUSINESS CONTINUITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complexity of response delivery (number of different delivery locations) • HQ vs field operations

FOCUS AREAS	ILLUSTRATIVE QUESTIONS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of IT tools • Availability of risk mitigation plan

Direct Observation

23. Direct observation is a qualitative method using intentional observations of events, activities, locations and/or meetings, and can be helpful to understand an entity's work dynamics and operational environment. In the context of assessing COVID-19 response, if feasible, direct observation can be used for a real time evaluation focus in observing response activities as they occur. The accessibility of virtual meetings, discussions and other fora creates an additional option for applying direct observation to assessing COVID-19 response, including intra- or inter- entity coordination meetings, response planning meetings, and strategy discussions. It is also an opportunity to directly observe business continuity in action, by seeing how an entity is able to connect virtually and use information technology to deliver its work. Furthermore, observation of staff and stakeholder meetings and interactions (if possible) can provide insights into the inclusiveness of the entity's response.

Document Review/ Content Analysis

24. A document review is a method which collects data through the systematic review of the content of internal and external documents. The information obtained from the documents can be used to understand the context, activities, processes and intended outcomes of a programme. When assessing an entity's COVID-19 response through a document review, the time frame of documents included in the review should be well-defined as pre-, during or post-pandemic. The following documents can provide a good source of information for the assessment:

- Pre-COVID and current work plans and relevant strategies
- COVID-19 response strategy and/or plan
- Crisis risk mitigation strategy
- Memos and/or meeting notes on inter-agency cooperation
- Records and meeting notes on decisions taken in response to COVID-19 requirements
- Monitoring and self-evaluation data and reports
- Relevant external assessments or reports; e.g. media reports on COVID; local government policies; WHO monitoring data, etc.

- Entity website

After Action Review (AAR)

25. After Action Reviews (AARs) are a qualitative assessment method for reviewing actions taken in response to a specific event.⁴ An inventory of UN AAR tools and resources are provided in Annex III. The review can be done using different data collection methods, including interviews and focus groups, and is typically used for organizational learning. One main characteristic of an AAR is that it brings stakeholders together to collectively reflect in an open and honest manner. The focus is not about what or who failed, but rather about what happened and how action undertaken could have been improved to feed into future situations. In assessing an entity's COVID-19 response, an AAR can be useful to identify additional actions that need to be implemented more immediately, and medium- and long-term actions needed to strengthen and institutionalize the necessary response capabilities of the entity for the future.⁵
26. AARs can be implemented in various ways⁶. The simplest form of an AAR is to hold a debrief, which is a facilitator-led discussion involving a small group over no more than a day. AARs can also use a working group format, which blends small group and plenary sessions. If a more in-depth review is needed, the AAR can use a mixed-method format which includes a documentary review followed by group discussions, interviews, focus groups and/or surveys. When using a mixed-method format, it is important that the AAR report is then shared with those involved in the process for validation, ideally through a facilitated group process.

V. Presenting the Information

COVID-19 response assessment report

27. If the decision is made to present the results of the COVID-19 response assessment in a report, it should provide concise information, with findings and possible recommendations related to response achievements and gaps and suggestions for improving Organizational resilience for future crises. The report can provide a timeline of COVID-19 response by establishing a chronology of events and response actions. Overall, the report should provide a solid evidence base for assessing the extent to which an entity's response met the standards described in the response framework presented above in Section III.

⁴ WHO, Guidance for After Action Review AAR, page 3

⁵ Adapted from WHO, Guidance for After Action Review AAR

⁶ Ibid.

Lessons learned repository

28. In order to draw lessons learned and identify good practices system-wide, IED can create a repository of best practices and recommendations resulting from the COVID-19 assessments conducted both by the division and embedded Secretariat evaluation offices. The repository can build institutional knowledge and serve as a resource for UN Secretariat preparedness and response to future crises. The repository can reside in an online excel file and saved in IED's SharePoint site, for ease of use.

VI. Literature

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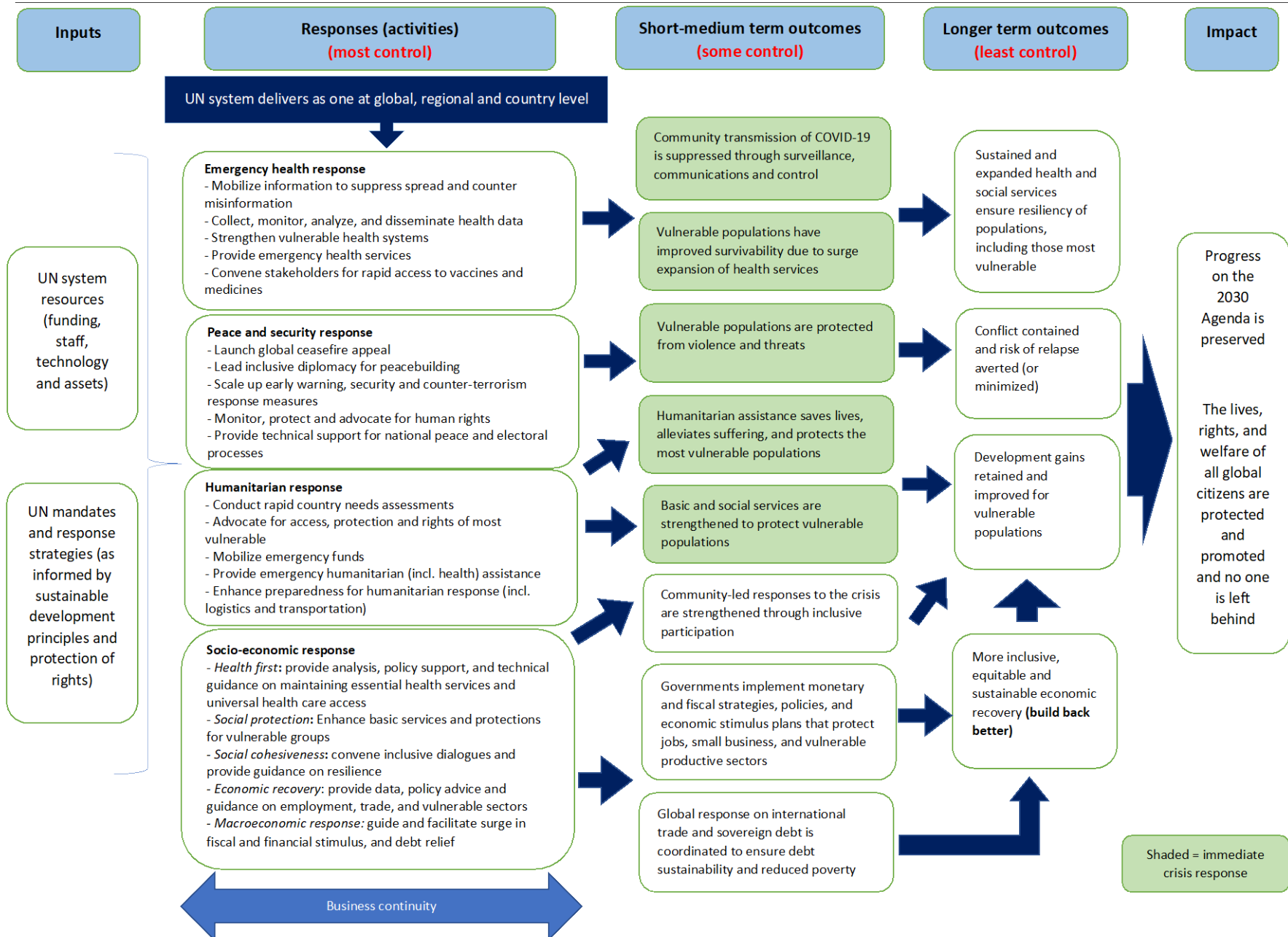
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Annex I: OIOS-IED Theory of Change High Level Summary Diagram for the UN COVID-19 Response (11 June 2020)



Critical assumptions

The theory of change for the UN system-wide response to the COVID-19 pandemic rests on critical assumptions about both UN activities and the environment in which they are delivered. These assumptions will need to be met in order for the UN to achieve its desired impact in the most timely, effective, efficient and sustainable way. Critical assumptions for each UN response area are summarized below⁷.

Overarching priority response area	Critical assumption
<i>Under Inputs</i>	
UN rules, procedures and bureaucracy	UN rules and procedures allow for rapid and dynamic action, and entities are able to react quickly to new information and circumstances.
Funding	Funding received for the immediate response is timely and sufficient. Financial planning considers requirements for longer term socio-economic recovery. Member States sustain funding levels to the UN for work across all pillars, and increased funding from a multi-stakeholder pool will be available.
Business continuity	The UN is able to safely maintain business continuity of its mandated critical functions for its human rights, peace and security, and development pillars.
<i>Under Responses</i>	
UN system-wide coordination	UN reform is fully realized at the global, regional and country levels, producing enhanced coordination across the UN system. Coordination is fully enabled at all levels with clear roles, responsibilities, procedures and resources to deliver as one.
Data collection, analysis and needs assessments	Governments, UN entities and other stakeholders have the capacity to undertake timely and reliable data collection, analysis (including health surveillance) and needs assessments of all vulnerable populations.
Oversight and learning	The UN system continuously monitors, audits, investigates (when needed), evaluates and learns from response implementation in order to ensure that the intended outcomes are being achieved, that it continuously course corrects, and that it is better prepared to respond to future pandemics and other crises.
Regional and sub-regional organizations	Regional and sub-regional organizations have increased capacity to respond to transnational/cross-border response and recovery challenges in coordination with the UN.
Delivery partner capacity	Delivery partners (including community-based organizations and NGOs) have the capacity to respond to the need and deliver increased service to beneficiaries despite COVID-19 conditions.
<i>Under Outcomes</i>	
Member State involvement	National governments have the will and capacity to coordinate with each other and the UN to respond to COVID-19, including on agreements on compliance with virus suppression, transmission and universal access to treatment, development assistance, debt, trade, and ceasefire initiatives.

⁷ Please note that assumptions are not listed in order of priority.

Annex II: COVID-19 response dashboard

"Entity's Name" COVID-19 Response Dashboard					
Criterion	Indicator	Scoring			
		Mostly / Completely 4	Partially 3	Minimally 2	Not at all 1
RESPONSE DELIVERY					
1. Relevance	1.1 The entity's response addressed stakeholder and beneficiary needs and requirements				
	1.2 The entity's response was aligned with its mandate and comparative advantage				
	1.3 The entity's activities and results continued to address its mandate				
2. Timeliness	2.1 The response actions were undertaken in a timely manner				
3. Effectiveness - Existing mandate delivery response	3.1 The entity effectively continued implementing its existing mandate in the new environment created by the pandemic				
	3.2 The entity effectively delivered its human rights and gender mainstreaming mandate during the pandemic				
4. Effectiveness - COVID-19 specific response	4. The entity effectively met the unique demands created by the pandemic (Choose one indicator that matches the sector of the entity being assessed. The measurement standards are directly taken from existing COVID-19 response plans.)				
	4.1 The entity effectively delivered the emergency health COVID-19 response required during the pandemic				
	4.2 The entity effectively delivered the humanitarian COVID-19 response required during the pandemic				
	4.3 The entity effectively delivered the peace and security COVID-19 response required during the pandemic				

	4.4 The mission effectively delivered the peace-keeping COVID-19 response required during the pandemic				
	4.5. The entity effectively delivered the social protection, economic recovery and environmental COVID-19 response required during the pandemic				
5. Inclusiveness	5.1 The entity's response was inclusive				
	5.2 Stakeholders were adequately informed of response				
6. Internal coherence	6.1 The entity's response was internally coordinated				
7. Agility	7.1 The entity adequately repurposed its work programme to deliver mandated and COVID-19 specific activities				
	7.2 The entity's response was innovative				
	7.3 The entity's response was evidence- based				
8. Recovery	8.1 The entity's response strategy incorporated recovery measures				
9. Sustainability	9.1 The entity's response was sustainable				
External Coordination ("Delivering as one")					
10. External coherence	10.1. The entity's response was coordinated with other entities in the UN system				
Business Continuity					
11.. Adaptability	11.1 The entity was able to maintain business operations				
12. Preparedness	12.1 The entity had risk mitigation mechanisms in place which were operationalized				
13. Efficiency	13.1 The entity had sufficient resources for an effective response				

Annex III: After Action Review tools and resources

Entity	Tool	Short Description	Main Use
United Nation Entities			
WHO – World Health Organization	The Global Practice of After-Action Review (2019)	A literature review that identified existing AARs, including their methodologies, formats, planning and roles. The findings of this review contributed to the design of the WHO Guidance for AAR (see this Guidance in the row below).	Literature Review
	Guidance for After Action Review (2019)	Guidance document (+tools) aimed to assist Member States in planning, preparing and conducting after action reviews (AARs) for collective learning and operational improvement after a public health response.	Learning tool –Country level
	Management and facilitation of an after action review (AAR), online training course	The AAR is one component of the International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005) Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.	
CERF – Central Emergency Response Fund	AAR Guidance (2014)	The CERF AAR Guidance is a tool that enables a Humanitarian Country Team to reflect on the overall CERF process, how the team and the broader humanitarian community worked together, what was learned, what was achieved with the grant, what follow-up actions should be taken and what can be done better next time.	Learning tool – Project level
WFP -World Food Program	The 72-hour Assessment Approach: A guide for vulnerability and spatial analysis in sudden-onset disasters (2018)	Designed for professionals and organizations intending to carry out a rapid emergency assessment following a sudden-onset disaster, such as a cyclone, earthquake or flood. With a strong emphasis on data preparedness and other essential organizational readiness actions, the 72-hour assessment approach provides a good enough snapshot to fill the initial information vacuum in the first three days after the disaster, based on the most recent available information and pre-disaster secondary data.	Learning Tool – Country level
DPPA - Department of Political and Peacekeeping Affairs	Guidelines for After-Action Reviews (no date)	How to conduct AARs for DPA staff	Knowledge Management Tool
	After-Action Review (AAR) of Recent Strategic Reviews of Peacekeeping Missions (2016)	AARs of Strategic Reviews of MINUSMA, MINUSCA and UNOCI	Report AAR Outcome
UNICEF	AAR Tool and Retro-spect Tool (Part of “ Knowledge Exchange Toolbox ” (2015)	The UNICEF Knowledge Exchange Toolbox was created to help UNICEF staff and partners to plan and implement successful knowledge sharing events.	Knowledge management tool

FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	After-action Reviews and Retrospects (2006)	One-pager practical guide on key points for an AAR, developed to accompany an e-learning course.	Knowledge Management Tool
UNDP – United Nations Development Programme	Knowledge management toolkit for crisis prevention and recovery practice area (2007)	Developed for the Crisis Prevention and Recovery (CPR) Practice Area for guidance on knowledge management tools and techniques.	Knowledge Management Tool
UNITAR - United Nations Institute for Training and Research	Organizing an after action review (2017)	Short checklist of key aspects when organizing an AAR session.	Knowledge Management Tool
OHCHR -Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights	Share, learn, innovate! Toolkit (2011)	Presents methods and technologies to enhance knowledge sharing within the OHCHR and through its activities.	Knowledge Management Tool
IFAD - International Fund for Agricultural Development	Country-level policy engagement in IFAD , AAR tool in page 93 (2017)	Presents a series of appendices – including case studies, terms of reference and in-depth descriptions of workshop tools – that seek to provide practical examples and “cut and paste” solutions for those planning policy-related activities.	Knowledge Management Tool
Non-United Nations Entities			
ADB - Asian Development Bank	ADB Real-time Evaluation of 2008 Crisis (2011)	This evaluation provides feedback on the relevance of ADB assistance during the crisis, an assessment of how ADB formulated and delivered support, and the results and their sustainability.	Evaluation Report
	Conducting After-action Reviews and Retrospects (2008)	A quick reference guide to AARs offered as a resource to ADB staff.	Knowledge Management Tool
NASA – US National Aeronautics and Space Administration	After Action Review (no date)	Guides for staff to implement AARs and PALs (Pause and Learn sessions).	Knowledge Management Tool
	Pause and Learn Guidance (no date)		
USAID – US Agency for International Development	After-action review: technical guidance (2006)	Guidance intended for professionals within USAID and across the partner community to better understand important events, activities, or programs.	Knowledge Management Tool
US Army	A leader’s guide to after-action reviews Training Circular (1993)	This training circular is a leader's guide on how to plan, prepare, and conduct an AAR.	Learning Tool – Project level

Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency	After-action report for the response to the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings (2014)	The report reflects the findings of an after-action review of response and recovery activities related to the bombings. It details best practices, lessons learned and recommendations. (Of interest to our review: see how they structured the report).	Report AAR outcome
FEMA – US Federal Emergency Management Agency	Operational lesson learned in disaster response (2015)	This is a review of after-action reports from major disasters. It has an AAR guidance on page 49.	Learning Tool – Entity level
US National Police Foundation	How to conduct an AAR (2020)	The guide lays out evidence supporting the need to incorporate the AAR process into everyday activities and provides a solid framework and suggestions for undertaking this work in law enforcement agencies.	Learning Tool – Entity level
NHS – UK National Health Service	Knowledge management postcards (2010)	Slides on different knowledge management methodologies	Knowledge Management Tool
Overseas Development Institute	Tools for Knowledge and Learning (2006) AAR tool in page 64	Guide with more than 30 tools to share knowledge.	Knowledge Management Tool
WB – World Bank	WB Real Time Evaluation of the 2008 Crisis (2011)	This report presents an initial real-time evaluation of the readiness, relevance, quality-at-entry, short-term results, and likely sustainability of the Bank Group response from the start of the crisis through. This evaluation builds on a 2008 Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) assessment of Bank Group interventions during past crises and draws extensively on 11 country case studies and field visits.	Evaluation Report



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