



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
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Audit of UNESCO's Framework and Capacity for Support to Crisis and Transition Response

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key Audit Results

UNESCO implements over one third of its extrabudgetary portfolio in countries in crisis and transition. While the Organization commits to participate in the UN-wide response to most major crises, it has not articulated a well-defined role to position itself with partners and donors, and to guide staff.

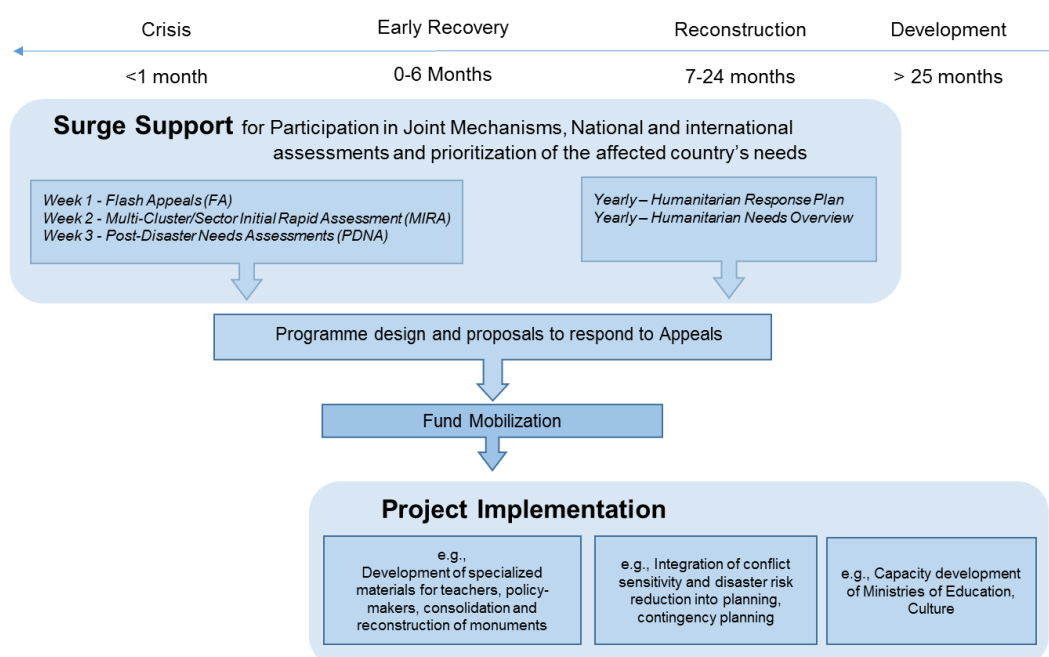
If UNESCO is to support crisis and transition response effectively, it needs to establish a clear strategic framework to communicate the institutional position widely to its stakeholders. It should then put in place specific procedures for crisis and transition situations to enable quick decision-making, rapid availing of human and financial resources and timely project implementation.

Background

1. In the context of the overall UN system-wide response to crisis situations, UNESCO is increasingly called upon to engage early on and provide a range of assistance even though it is not a typical humanitarian actor. Nowadays many crises are protracted and the non-linear and continuum nature of crises has required to rethink the nexus of humanitarian and development work. The 2016 World Humanitarian Summit recognized that humanitarian and development responses should be carried out in parallel, and not in sequence. Therefore, the ‘early recovery’ phase encompasses not only humanitarian assistance for life-saving activities but also increasingly contingency and long-term development planning.

2. The establishment of field offices in crisis-affected countries and territories has been an integral element of the Organization’s Decentralization Policy for many years. While the Organization does not provide emergency relief, its field presence creates an expectation at the country-level to participate in the response at the onset of crises. This includes participating in needs assessment and appeals as well as country-level coordination mechanisms to set priorities for medium to longer-term reconstruction work. The longer-term response consists of project implementation in the early recovery or reconstruction phase or where the crisis is protracted. These phases are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Simplified Emergency Response Cycle

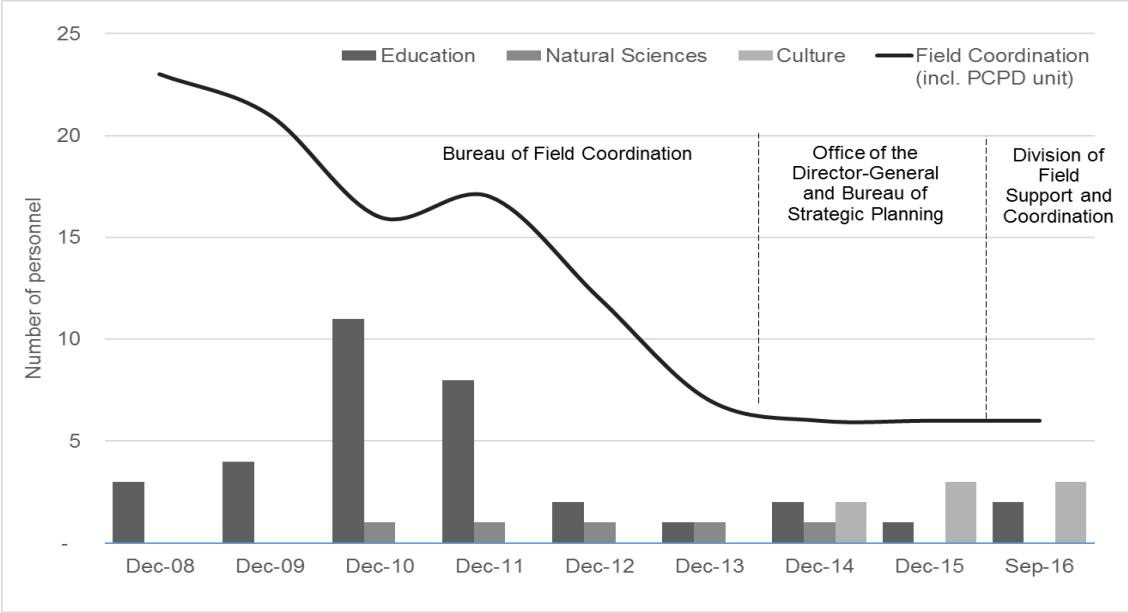


3. UNESCO, as reflected in its medium-term strategy for 2014-2021, is committed to making “effective and essential contributions to United Nations post-crisis coordination mechanisms, joint needs assessments, multi-donor and other post-crisis and pooled funding modalities and inter-agency coordination bodies at global and UN country levels.” At the time of the audit, UNESCO’s website for Crisis and Transition states that UNESCO places its emphasis on the human and institutional dimensions of relief, recovery and reconstruction, with a focus on supporting access to quality education, protecting culture, including World Heritage at risk, and promoting freedom of expression and information during and in the aftermath of crisis so as to lay the foundations for stable and sustainable recovery towards long-term development.

4. The Bureau of Field Coordination (BFC) was responsible for coordinating support to response for countries in crisis and transition from 2008 until 2014. Then this function was transferred to the Office of the Director-General (ODG) under the PCPD unit. In August 2016, the function was transferred to the Crisis and Transition Unit (CTR) within the Division of Field Support Coordination (FSC).

5. At Headquarters, resources dedicated to the overall response coordination and to support countries in crisis and transition have evolved, varying from one sector to another as illustrated in Figure 2. Dedicated personnel for field support and crisis response has steadily decreased from over 20 posts in 2009 in BFC to six today in FSC. Personnel under the Education Sector has also evolved with a peak of eleven personnel (including secondments from the Norwegian Refugee Council) in 2011 down to two posts today in the Education for Emergencies (EiE) desk. As of September 2016, the Culture Sector has an Emergency Preparedness & Response Unit of three staff since 2015 while the Natural Sciences Sector’s focal point for crisis within the Section on Earth Sciences & Geo-hazards Risk Reduction is unassigned since late 2015. The other Sectors do not have resources dedicated to crisis and transition response.

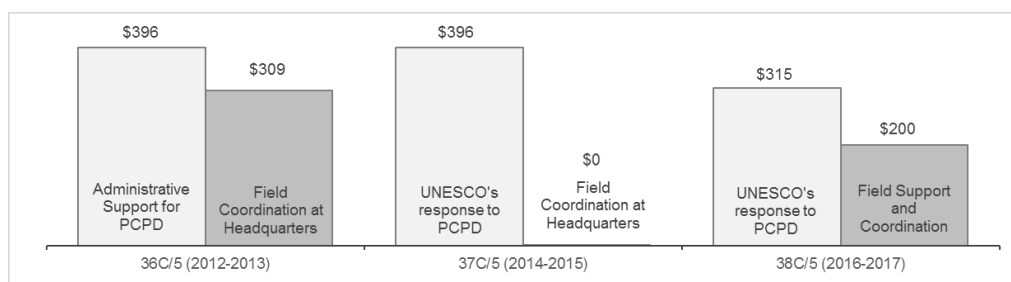
Figure 2. Posts Supporting Crisis and Transition Response



Source: STEPS data. This includes fix-terms, temporary assistance and secondments

6. The Regular Programme budget for PCPD response and administrative support decreased slightly while that of Field Coordination at Headquarters was completely eliminated in 2014-2015 as illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Regular Programme Operational Budgets for Field Support (USD '000)



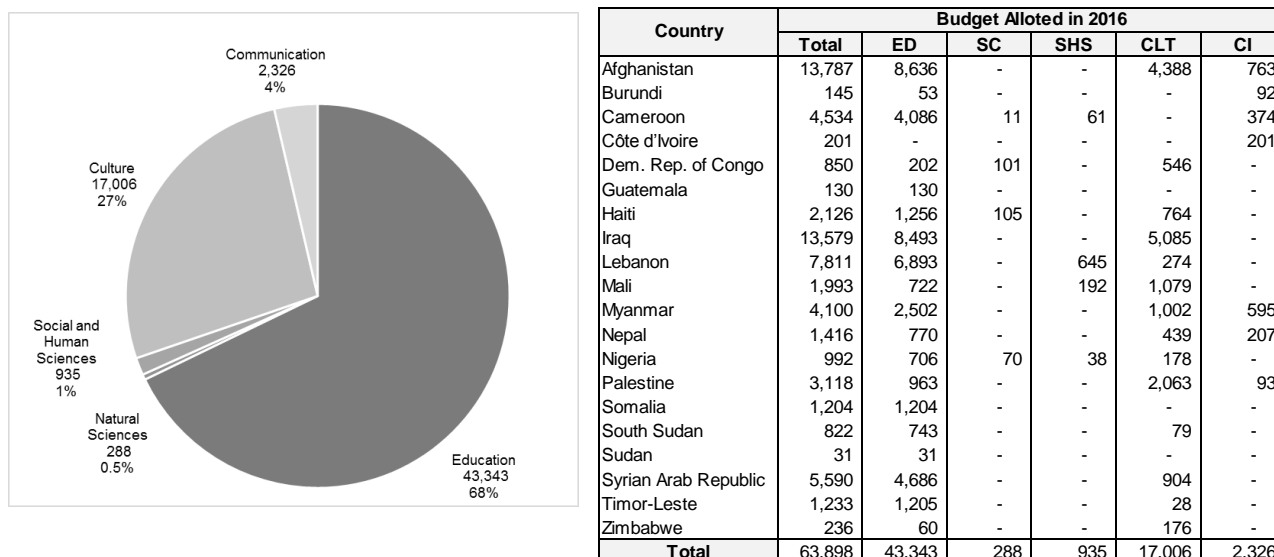
Source: C/5 Approved Programme and Budget documents

7. At the Sector level, both the Education and Culture Sectors have Regular Programme (RP) budgets to coordinate work in crisis and transition while the other Programme Sectors do not have funds dedicated to such work. The RP budgets for Education and Culture total US\$200,000 and US\$191,000 respectively. The Culture sector also has access to Heritage Emergency Funds, which total 2 million as of October 2016.

8. At the time of the Audit, 52 countries and territories worldwide are considered to be crisis-affected¹. UNESCO has a presence through an office, an antenna or a project office in 20 of them and covers 30 others through its regional and cluster offices.

9. In 2016, 30 percent of extrabudgetary funding allotted by the Organization is to be implemented in countries in crisis or transition. These funds are mostly in the Education Sector and Culture Sector as illustrated in Figure 4. The main donors in countries in crisis and transition can be found in Figure 5. The average allocation for projects in these countries averages US\$1.8 million versus US\$1.3 million for other countries.

Figure 4. Extrabudgetary Projects Benefitting Countries in Crisis and Transition (in '000 USD)



¹ The list was created using three sources: (i) the World Bank Group Harmonized List of Fragile Situations which ranks countries and territories affected by fragility; (ii) the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) which provides up-to-date information on the impact of natural disasters and conflicts on education around the world; and (iii) the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA)'s Financial Tracking System which lists all countries with humanitarian response plans, flash appeals, and regional refugee plans.

Figure 5. Main Donors for Projects Benefitting to Countries in Crisis and Transition

Main Donors	Budget Allotted in 2016 ('000 USD)																			
		Afghanistan	Burundi	Cameroon	Côte d'Ivoire	Dem. Rep. Congo	Guatemala	Haiti	Iraq	Lebanon	Mali	Myanmar	Nepal	Nigeria	Palestine	Somalia	South Sudan	Syrian Arab Rep.	Timor-Leste	
European Union	8,698					x			x		x	x	x					x		
Japan	8,251	x							x			x	x	x						
World Bank	6,352	x		x		x		x									x			
Republic of Korea	5,741	x									x		x					x	x	
Sweden	5,018	x														x				
Kuwait	4,743									x										
Private Funds	4,606								x	x	x	x	x				x			
Saudi Arabia	3,677									x										
UN Funds	3,608		x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x			
Iraq	3,234								x											
Finland	1,718	x								x										
Australia	1,438											x								
Italy	1,242	x							x											
Heritage Emergency Fund ²	965								x			x							x	
Canada	840								x											
Switzerland	714	x									x									
Norway	560											x				x				
Total	61,406																			

Source: FABS Budget Status with Support costs – Allotment 2016 for projects in release phase

Audit objective, scope and methodology

10. IOS conducted an audit of UNESCO's framework and capacity for support to crisis and transition response in parallel to an evaluation of UNESCO's Role in Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises. The audit objective was to assess the overall organization-wide framework and capacities to support its response to crisis and transition situations.
11. The audit scope encompasses processes related to fund mobilisation, fund release and fund disbursement for Crisis and Transition situations. The team examined each process to identify risks of delays and corresponding controls and to recommend improvements where needed.
12. The audit was performed in accordance with the *International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing*. The audit was based on internal and external interviews, discussions, documents and data reviews as well as a review of practices in other UN agencies.
13. Evaluation and audit team members attended the meetings of a Task Force that was set up to fast track procedures for the crisis and transition response. Analysis of this exercise aimed to feed into the work of these working groups, and vice versa.

² The Heritage Emergency Fund was created in 2015. This multi-donor Fund is open to donors who want to support activities under the Culture Programme for "Heritage Emergency Preparedness and Response". So far, this Fund received USD 2.06 million of donations from Qatar (97 percent), Slovakia, Estonia, Luxembourg, Monaco, Andorra and PayPal donations.

Principal Conclusions

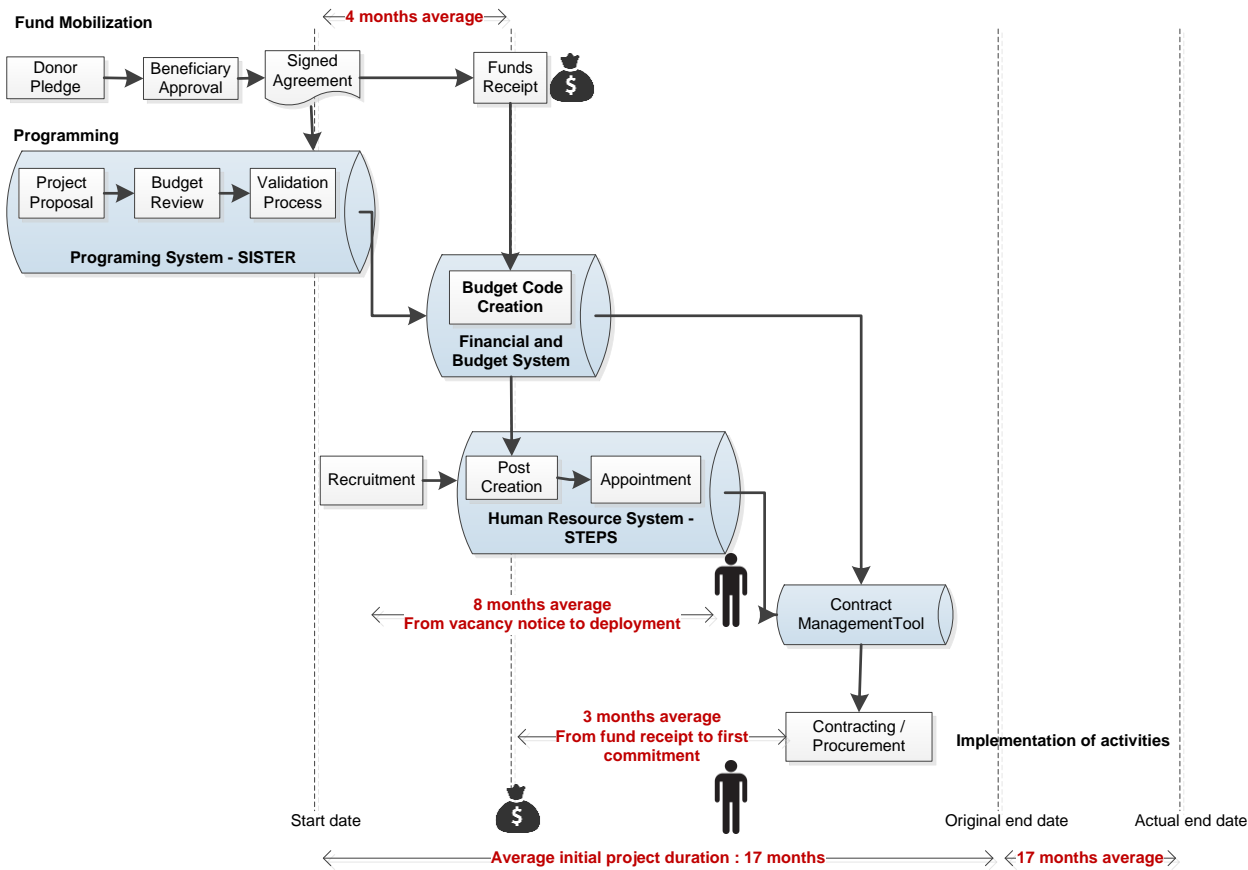
14. UNESCO lacks a clear and solid strategy framework to implement its decision to support crisis and transition response. While previous efforts were made to develop a strategic framework for UNESCO’s post-crisis response, these have not been sustained. Going forward, UNESCO should draw from past experiences and involve all Programme Sectors and field offices to collaborate and develop such a framework.

15. UNESCO’s overall capacity for crisis and transition response is weak. Following organisation-wide funding constraints, UNESCO’s ability to respond to major crises is diminished and its support for response needs to be selective based on clear criteria. These should take into account physical presence, timeliness and resources available. To allow for readiness and flexibility in such situations, the Organisation needs to quickly deploy adequate human and financial resources at the onset of the crisis which requires a sustainable funding mechanism.

16. Specific procedures for crisis and transition situations are few and outdated. UNESCO needs to fast-track its administrative procedures to enable quick decisions and support timely programme delivery for crisis and transition response.

17. Project implementation in crisis and transition takes twice as long as planned in the donor agreement. Procedures are lengthy and applied in a sequential manner as illustrated in Figure 6. A Task Force has begun to identify ways to speed up these procedures for greater efficiency.

Figure 6. Key steps from fund mobilization to project implementation³



³ Average delays based on a sample of 12 projects implemented in Haiti, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Philippines and South Sudan

Table of Recommendations

Recommendation 1: FSC, in collaboration with BSP and Programme Sectors, to develop the organization-wide strategic framework for support to countries in crisis and transition. The framework should identify (i) the specific areas where UNESCO can add value, taking into account intersectoral initiatives, (ii) include a portfolio of best practices where UNESCO has demonstrated successful results and (iii) then be widely communicated both to staff within the Organization and to partners and donors.

Recommendation 2: FSC, in collaboration with HRM, to improve UNESCO response to crises from their onset by (i) identifying internal staff qualified for work in emergencies; and (ii) establishing a mechanism to enable competent staff to participate in short-term missions on short notice.

Recommendation 3: FSC, in collaboration with the Programmes sectors to (i) identify and share lists of qualified external experts to represent UNESCO during Needs assessments and Appeals, (ii) ensure that a mechanism is in place to enable them being sent onsite rapidly, and (iii) to develop or expand use of standby partnerships to draw on expertise in crisis and transition situations.

Recommendation 4: FSC, in collaboration with BFM and BSP, to (i) establish an Emergency Revolving Fund, or other special account mechanism, to ensure UNESCO can participate at the onset of a crisis, before earmarked funds are raised. Once established, surge support costs could be anticipated against this fund and be reimbursed subject to donor agreement; and (ii) encourage Member States to donate to it.

Recommendation 5: FSC, in collaboration with the Fast Track Task Force, to: (i) establish a decision mechanism that coordinates the institutional response to facilitate quick decision based on established criteria, (ii) convert the Fast-Track Task Force team into a stand-by crisis response cell to ensure internal coordination mechanism in case of major crises; (iii) introduce a trigger and a fast-track process to respond to crises and flag all related requests as priority, (iv) update procedures for crisis response in the Administrative Manual; and (v) update and disseminate relevant guidelines and training materials to field staff with priority given to crisis-affected countries, including updating and reintroducing the dedicated knowledge management platform.

Recommendation 6: BSP, in collaboration with FSC and the Programme Sectors, to strengthen resource mobilization mechanisms for response to crisis and transition situations, by developing statement(s) of capacity which outlines UNESCO's added value, capacity, experience in areas where UNESCO typically intervenes in crisis and transition situations to facilitate effective engagement with partners.

Recommendation 7: FSC, in collaboration with the Programme Sectors, and BSP to harmonize procedures for the Beneficiary Country Approval by including a relevant provision in the revised Host Country Seat Agreement template.

Recommendation 8: FSC, in collaboration with the Fast Track Task Force to establish generic vacancy notices and terms of reference templates for each grade level, from P-2 to P-5, in order to facilitate timely recruitment of project officers in crisis-affected countries.

Recommendation 9: FSC, in collaboration with HRM and the Fast Track Task Force, establish fast-track recruitment procedures to ensure flagged recruitments in crisis-affected countries are prioritized and receive active follow-up.

Recommendation 10: FSC, in collaboration with BFM/FPC, establish fast-track contracting and procurement procedures to ensure flagged projects in crisis-affected countries are treated in priority with active follow-up.