United Nations

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

An Overview of OCHA's Emergency Services

United Nations • 2004

Early Warning/Contingency Planning Support from HQs

Responsible Branch/Section:	Early Warning and Contingency Planning Unit (EWCP)/Advocacy, External Relations and Information Management Branch (AERIMB)/OCHA-New York
Response Time:	24 – 48 hours
Purpose of Deployment:	Contingency/preparedness planning, information/reporting in support of humanitarian coordination activities
Deployment Modalities:	Requested by Emergency Relief Coordinator
Tools/Support:	Communications and computer equipment, standard office-in-a box equipment/supplies
	Interagency Contingency Planning Guidelines, Framework Team Early Warning Indicators Methodology and Global Risk Matrix
Management:	Reports to Senior Management and Response Coordination Branch
How to Request:	Request to Emergency Relief Coordinator
Status:	Fully operational

United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team (UNDAC)

Responsible Branch/Section	Field Coordination Support Section (FCSS)/Emergency Services Branch (ESB)/OCHA-Geneva
Response Time:	Departure within 24 hours of request
Purpose of Deployment:	Normally to support Government of disaster affected country or UN Country Team/Resident Coordinator in the event of sudden-onset disaster
	Establish coordination mechanisms between international and national actors

Collect, analyse and disseminate information

Where required the Team will establish an On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC)

Deployment Modalities: UNDAC Teams are deployed by FCSS at the request of the Government of a disaster affected country, UN Resident Coordinator or relevant Response Coordination Branch desk, for a maximum duration of 4 weeks at 12-24 hours notice

Teams are alerted through national mobilizing centres

Teams are normally led by OCHA UNDAC-trained staff, composition of each team is decided upon by FCSS, depending on expertise required and availability

Teams are mandated to ensure handover activities to longer-term entities on completion of mission

Support: Teams travel with a basic office equipment kit

If needed, International Humanitarian Partnership (IHP, see below) support modules can be deployed

Management: Managed by FCSS/ESB/OCHA-Geneva

How to Request: When a disaster occurs the Government of the disaster-affected country can request assistance from OCHA either from the capital or through its Missions in New York and Geneva. Also, the UN Resident Coordinator can request OCHA for deployment of an UNDAC team

Examples of Applications: The UNDAC team has done over 100 missions in 68 countries since 1993. In 2003, it was deployed in: Solomon Islands, Turkey, Argentina, Kyrgyzstan, Sri Lanka, Algeria, the Sudan, Guatemala, Colombia, Micronesia and the Islamic Republic of Iran

International Urban Search and Rescue Teams

Responsible Branch/Section: Field Coordination Support Section (FCSS)/Emergency Services Branch (ESB)/OCHA-Geneva which is the INSARAG secretariat

Response Time: Immediate (in the air within 12 hours)

Purpose of Deployment: To assist national search and rescue efforts, especially in collapsed structures following earthquakes or man-made collapse

Deployment Modalities: Request can be initiated to providing countries by FCSS. Actual deployment modalities determined by providing countries

FCSS can request international Search and Rescue Assistance (SAR) through a specific request to the Virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC)

Support: Determined by providing countries

Management: INSARAG secretariat located in FCSS/ESB

Coordinated by On-Site-Operations-Coordination-Centre/UNDAC

How to Request: International SAR Teams respond to a request from the Government of the affected country. Once a request is made, FCSS coordinates deployment through the V-OSOCC - *http://www.reliefweb.int/virtualosocc*

OCHA should ensure that the Government of an affected country knows that it can appeal for international assistance and that OCHA can act as an information conduit to disaster response bodies around the world

OCHA should ensure that when a Government requires international assistance this information is communicated through

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- Situation reports
- Posting information on ReliefWeb
- Posting information on V-OSOCC – *http://www.reliefweb.int/virtualosocc*

Examples of Recent Application: Algeria earthquake May 2003: coordination of 30 USAR teams from all regions comprising 2,000 people and 200 dogs

Turkey earthquake, May 2003: rapid UNDAC response, excellent coordination between IFRC and UNDAC team and fast and widespread information management through V-OSOCC, which led to decision to put USAR teams on standby for deployment to assist the Turkish Government

Earthquake in Bam, Islamic Republic of Iran in December 2003: 37 USAR teams from 26 countries coordinated by the UNDAC team

Virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (Virtual OSOCC)

Responsible Branch/Section: Field Coordination Support Section (FCSS)/Emergency Services Branch (ESB)/OCHA-Geneva

Response Time: Always available: Web-based application

Purpose: Real time information exchange mechanism for emergency managers and responders in the event of sudden onset emergencies

Facilitation of the decision-making process at Headquarters and in the field and improvement of information flow between involved organizations throughout relief operations

Support: Hosted on *www.reliefweb.int/virualosocc*

Management: Managed by FCSS/ESB/OCHA-Geneva

How to Request:	Use of Virtual OSOCC requires a username and password. These can be obtained be sending an email to *petert@un.org*
Examples of Applications:	Earthquakes in Algeria and the Islamic Republic of Iran, Micronesia Typhoon, various simulation exercises, Iraq crisis

Military and Civil Defence Assets (MCDA)

Responsible Branch/Section:	Military and Civil Defence Unit (MCDU) of Emergency service Branch (ESB)/OCHA-Geneva
Response Time:	A few hours to a few days after receipt of request, depending on response/availability by asset provider
Purpose of Deployment:	To supplement ordinary humanitarian/commercial assets in cases where these are not available or cannot be provided on time
Deployment Modalities:	As per:
	Guidelines on the use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief, May 1994 (Natural Disasters)
	Guidelines on the use of Military And Civil Defence Assets to support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies, March 2003
Support:	Self-sustained
Management:	Requests and coordination of asset mobilization are managed by MCDU
	Once in the field military and civil defence assets are managed by the provider as tasked by the HC
How to Request:	When all other sources have proved to be insufficient, exhausted or unavailable, MCDA may

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be requested by the Humanitarian/Resident Coordinator through MCDU. These requests are usually initiated by:

- United Nations Agencies (UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, WHO, etc.), usually in consultation with the Government of an affected country

- Directly by the Government of an affected country when all other sources have proved to be insufficient, exhausted or unavailable

- NGOs, which should route applications through their partner UN agency or, if not a partner of a UN agency, through the UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator

MCDU coordinates with the relevant desk of the Response Coordination Branch

Examples of Recent Application: Airlifts during the crises in Afghanistan and Iraq

UN Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination (UN-CMCoord)

Responsible Branch/Section: Military and Civil Defence Unit (MCDU) of the Emergency Service Branch (ESB)/OCHA-Geneva

Response Time: A few hours to a few weeks after receipt of request, depending on availability of UN-CMCoord Officers, and depending on OCHA funding and procedures for contracting UN-CMCoord officers

Purpose of Deployment: Establish civil-military coordination mechanisms and networks at the onset of an emergency and continue liaising throughout the emergency

Deployment Modalities: Deployment of MCDU staff

Deployment through MCDU external network of MCDU-trained UN-CMCoord officers

Support: Basic office kit and material as needed according to the situation (provided by OCHA) for MCDU staff

Arrangements for travel and additional equipment provided by OCHA

Management: Roster of UN-CMCoord officers is managed by MCDU/ESB

In the field the UN-CMCoord officer reports to the HC through the head of OCHA office

How to Request: HC, after consultation with UNCT/UNDMT or UN agency HQs, requests MCDU for a UN-CMCoord officer via the relevant desk in RCB

Examples of Recent Application: UN-CMCoord officers have been deployed in crises in Afghanistan, Iraq and Liberia

Central Register of Disaster Management Capacities

Responsible Branch/Section: Military, Civil Defence and Logistics Section (MCDLS)/Emergency Services Branch (ESB)/OCHA-Geneva

Response Time: Depending on availability of assets, based on the decision of the owners of these assets

Purpose of Deployment: Provide online timely and accurate information on contacts, assets and resources to be deployed in the event of sudden-onset disasters

Allow humanitarian actors and decision makers at all levels to contact the appropriate national authorities

Deployment Modalities: Determined by providing countries

Bilateral agreements

OCHA can act as a channel for a request

Support: Self-sustained

Management:	Managed by MCDU/ESB/OCHAGeneva
	Owned by UN Member States, governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organization
How to Request:	Bilateral agreement
	Through OCHA branches or sections, whose mission is activity-related to a specific directory
Examples of Applications:	Czech Republic, Afghanistan, Iraq Crisis, Sudan

Environmental Expertise

Responsible Branch/Section:	Environmental Emergencies Section (ESS), Emergency Services Branch (ESB)/ OCHA-Geneva
Response Time:	2-7 days (depending on type of incident)
Purpose of Deployment:	To conduct independent environmental assessment of environmental emergency events
	Provide technical guidance and make recommendations to affected countries to reduce immediate and long-term environmental impacts resulting from chemical and oil spills, industrial and technological accidents, forest fires and other natural disasters with significant damage to the environment and human health
Deployment Modalities:	Two options decided on a case by case basis
	Mobilization of expertise through established National Focal Points (NFPs); arrangement and deployment of expert missions based on identified needs
	UNDAC deployment (see United Nations Disaster Assessment Coordination Team)
Support:	Experts sponsored by donor Governments

deployed with own office equipment and analytical equipment as required;

OCHA and UNEP staff deployed with office equipment and analytical equipment as required

In case of UNDAC deployment, team travel with basic office equipment kit

Management: Mobilization and coordination of international response to environmental emergencies are managed by EES

EES can use UNDAC mechanism when deployment is within 24 hours, which is managed by FCSS with support from EES

How to Request: Request for assistance can be facilitated by the use of the "Environmental Emergency Notification/Request for International Assistance", form available online at *http://www.reliefweb.int/ochaunep*

Examples of Recent Application: Environmental assessment missions covering phenol spill in Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro (February 2003); hurricane in the Seychelles (March 2003); inland oil spill in Morocco, (March 2003); oil spill in Pakistan (July 2003)

Participation in UNDAC missions to provide assistance after the earthquake in Algeria(May 2003) and the floods in the Sudan (August 2003)

OCHA Emergency Response Roster (ERR)

Responsible Branch/Section: Field Coordination Support Section (FCSS)/Emergency Services Branch (ESB)/OCHA-Geneva

Response Time:	Within 24 to 48 hours of request
Purpose of Deployment:	The deployment of OCHA staff on a voluntary basis to enable OCHA to undertake its mandated functions
	Lend support to UN Country Team and HC/RC and other humanitarian partners by facilitating assessment and information-sharing and by taking the lead in developing coordination mechanisms in field offices when required
Deployment Modalities:	Deployed according to developed standard operating procedures
	Selection of staff based on relevance of profile for required tasks
	Maximum deployment period of six weeks. During this time Response Coordination Branch-Geneva and Humanitarian Emergencies Branch-New York and field offices should determine whether a field office should be opened or other longer-term OCHA presence be established. If so, normal recruit-ment procedures, combined with staff provided by standby partners (see below) should be used to fill these needs
Support:	Emergency Response Roster staff travel with a basic office equipment kit
	International Humanitarian Partnership (IHP) support modules (if needed)
Management:	Overall management by FCSS/ESB/OCHA-Geneva
How to Request:	(a) *New Crises/Intensifying Crises*
	RCB liaises with AERC, HC/RC and identi-fies whether ERR staff are needed. If so agreement is reached on what skills profiles are required initially;

Working group (ESB/RCB/HEB) agrees on skills composition of team based on request;

Concurrently, deployment of team approved by AERC, in consultation with ERC

Team is deployed.

(b) *Gap Filling and Backstopping (short term)*
In the event that staff cannot be deployed from RCB's internal staff:

Field Office identifies requirement for gap-filling and makes request to RCB for replacement staff while recruitment process is underway for permanent staff

Working group (ESB/RCB/HEB) agrees on appropriate person(s) for deployment

Concurrently, deployment of staff member approved by AERC, in consultation with ERC

Staff member (s) deployed

Examples of Recent Application: Thirteen members of the ERR signed up for August-September 2003, four of whom were deployed to assist with the crisis in Liberia.

Two surge capacity officers provided by the Government of Switzerland

Responsible Branch/Section: Response Coordination Branch (RCB)/OCHA-Geneva

Response Time: 48 hours

Purpose of Deployment: Address needs of rapid deployment during sudden-onset emergencies

Provide technical expertise to assist in assessment activities, and/or establishment of an office

Deployment Modalities: Arranged by relevant RCB regional desk

Support: OCHA arranges travel and equipment for the two surge capacity officers seconded to OCHA

Management:	Day-to-day operational relations handled by RCB
How to Request:	Need for additional staffing resources identified either by Field Office, HC/RC or RCB

Staff for the field through standby arrangements from partners

Responsible Branch/Section:	Field Coordination Support Section (FCSS)/Emergency Services Branch (ESB)/OCHA-Geneva
Response Time:	Can be deployed in 24 hours but may take longer from time of request from OCHA to standby partner
Purpose of Deployment:	Provide additional equipment, staff and other resources to assist OCHA's activities in emergency situations
	Provide technical experts to assist in assessment activities, and/or establishment of an office
Deployment Modalities:	FCSS is the focal point for deployments from standby partners. A request to FCSS is needed from either the concerned entity within OCHA or the UN Country Team. Standby partner staff are regarded by the UN as "Type II Gratis Personnel" (ST/AI 1999/6 refers)
	Copies of memoranda of understanding with each partner are available from FCSS
Support:	Standby partners arrange travel and equipment for staff seconded to OCHA
Management:	FCSS/ESB/OCHA Geneva
How to Request	Need for additional staffing resources identified by either Head of Field Office, HC/RC or RCB
	Request, in accordance with the Guidelines of 20/11/2001, forwarded to FCSS
	FCSS approaches standby partners and provides terms of reference

Standby partners give CVs of candidates that are shared with RCB, HC/RC and Field Offices for decision

Accepted candidate is deployed

For Support modules deployment, request through FCSS/ESB/OCHA-Geneva.

Status and Examples of Recent Application:

Operational with Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), United Nations Volunteers (UNV), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID)

Memorandum of understanding under development with Switzerland

During 2003 a total of 43 staff were provided to OCHA to support field operations around the world

Support modules of various types provided in most disaster response and UNDAC missions including Bam, Islamic Republic of Iran, Algeria and Turkey

International Humanitarian Partnership (IHP) and Equipment Support Modules

Responsible Branch/Section:

The Field Coordination Support Section (FCSS)/ESB functions as IHP secretariat

Response Time:

Within 24-hours of request to IHP partner

Purpose of Deployment:

To ensure availability of tailor-made, highly mobile and flexible support modules and service packages for rapid deployment to the field in support of UN missions.

Emergency Support Modules are designed to provide rapidly available, practical support to

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UN missions in the context of natural disasters and complex emergencies; the UNDAC system and the Humanitarian Information Centre (HIC) are significant OCHA recipients of this support. The modules cater for any or all of the necessary functions, ranging from communications, office facilities and accommodation to catering and logistics

The IHP supplies service packages providing technical or logistic services where capacity does not exist locally or is unequal to the task (i.e. truck convoys, decontamination facilities)

IHP hosts the biannual Triplex Exercise, the only civilian-run multilateral humanitarian response field exercise

Deployment Modalities: Request for assistance routed via the relevant RCB desk to FCSS/ESB, which then liaises with the IHP members to determine which country will provide the module. At present the countries making up this partnership are the United Kingdom, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland and the Netherlands

Support: Emergency Support Modules are staffed by specialists from the country/countries providing the module. They receive specific training in operation and maintenance of the equipment provided. In addition to the technical skills, support staff undertake UNDAC familiarization training

Management: IHP in cooperation with FCSS and the requesting Desk. Day-to-day management modalities to be worked out between OCHA and support staff at field level

Status and Examples of Recent Application: Operational with United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), Danish Emergency Management Agency (DEMA),

Swedish Rescue Services Agency (SRSA), Norwegian Directorate for Civil Protection and Emergency Planning, the Finnish Rescue Force and the Dutch Foreign Ministry.

In 2003 the IHP provided support modules and service packages to UNOHCI, HIC, JLC, WFP and UNMAS for field operations in Iraq

Stockpile of emergency relief items in the United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD), Brindisi

Responsible Branch/Section:	Logistics Support Unit (LSU) of Military, Civil Defence and Logistics Section (MCDLS) ESB/OCHA-Geneva
Response Time:	5 to 7 days from time of request
Purpose of Deployment:	The delivery of non-food, non-health emergency relief items (shelter equipment, water purification equipment, etc) to victims of disasters/emergencies
Deployment Modalities:	Cargo normally delivered by air to the disaster site to natural disasters and complex emergencies at no charge to the recipient
Support:	A Brindisi warehouse staff member from the UN Logistics Base at Brindisi (UNLB) may accompany shipment upon request
Management:	OCHA stocks managed by LSU; United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot at UNLB managed by WFP
How to Request:	To request a shipment, contact a LSU staff member, providing information on the kinds and quantities of goods needed in the field. Shipments must be approved by the Chief, Emergency Services Branch, and cleared by the donor Government

Examples of Recent Application: In 2003 OCHA organized the shipment of 235 tons of relief supplies to Afghanistan, Iraq, Liberia, Niger, the Central African Republic and the Republic of the Congo in the context of complex emergencies, and to Argentina and Algeria in the context of natural disasters

Rapid Response Planning: Inter-Agency Appeals

Responsible Branch/Section: Response Coordination Branch (relevant geo-graphical section plus CAP Section)

Response Time: *SitRep (including initial estimate of resource needs):* Within 48 hours of any emergency situation that may draw international attention and/or require an international response

Flash appeal: Within 2-4 weeks of an emergency situation that is likely to be timebound (not likely to last more than 6 months) or volatile (likely to require new appeal in next 6 months)

Consolidated appeals: Within 3-6 months of an emergency situation.
Note: All three appeal types apply equally to natural disasters or complex/major emergencies.

Purpose of Deployment: To develop a common humanitarian action plan with coordination and prioritization and to mobilize funding rapidly; to provide training and methodology for inter-agency planning

Deployment Modalities: SitReps are triggered by the High Commissioner, in collaboration (to the extent possible) with the IASC Country Team (and the Government as required). SitReps are typically written by ESB or RCB. Flash appeals and consolidated appeals are similarly triggered by the High Commissioner, but additional collaboration with the ERC and IASC. The RC/HC is responsible for their development, with input

and support from the intervening agencies and RCB (geographical section/desk and CAP Section)

Support: RCB (Geographical Section/desk and CAP Section). In the rare cases where personnel are deployed specifically to write a sitrep or appeal, support for deployment and maintenance of such personnel is from UNCT/OCHA and RCB

Management: Managed by the RC/HC in collaboration with the IASC Country Team, with support from ESB and RCB (geographical section and CAP Section)

How to Request: Through RC/HC, or indirectly through IASC Country Team. Request training from RCB/CAP Section

Examples of Application in 2003: 21 consolidated appeals issued for 2004; flash appeals issued in 2003 for Iraq and Central African Republic, and in January 2004 for the earthquake in Bam, Islamic Republic of Iran; numerous SitReps. For details and guidelines on appeal, see *www.reliefweb.int/cap*

Humanitarian Information Centre

Responsible Branch/Section: Field Information Support Project/AERIMB/OCHA-New York

Response Time: Currently 1 – 3 weeks

Rapid deployment scheme under preparation envisaging deployment time within 72 hours

Purpose of Deployment: Provide information management services to the humanitarian community, including the collection, collation, analysis and dissemination of information, the provision of IM services to partners and the promotion of data standards

Deployment Modalities:	Deployments are managed by FIS on behalf of the humanitarian community. Equipment is provided by DFID, with startup funding available from OFDA
Support:	Core technical support provided by FIS/AER-IMB through inter-agency coordination role
	Support for deployment and maintenance of team from UNCT/OCHA and OCHA Desk
Management:	FIS/AERIMB
How to Request:	Requests are made to FIS by the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator or Country Team
	Examples of recent application:
	Iraq, Liberia, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, occupied Palestinian territories

Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN)

Responsible Branch/Section:	IRIN Headquarters located in Nairobi (+254 20 622147 *irin@ocha.unon.org*), Organisationally under AERIMB NY
Response Time:	Can provide humanitarian coverage in the form of news reports within 3-6 hours of the emergency within sub-Saharan Africa and countries covered in Central Asia (Afghanistan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan)
	coverage outside the current IRIN region of operation can be initiated within 4-7 days of an OCHA/IRIN agreement
Purpose of Deployment:	The provision of accurate and punctual flow of information
	Collect, analyse and disseminate information
	In addition to the initial coverage, IRIN provides

follow-up reporting even after the crises stage has passed

Deployment Modalities: IRIN utilized in-country stringer network to access and sustain continued flow of information on new crises

Stringers and/or IRIN Information Officer are redeployed to disaster area and backed up by regional offices

Support: IRIN staff are self-sufficient

If needed, access to satphone may be requested of UNDAC and other UN agencies

Management: Managed by IRIN Headquarters in Nairobi

How to Request: IRIN Liaison Officers in Geneva and New York to facilitate field contact

Examples of Application in 2003:   In 2003, IRIN stringers were deployed to Iraq, a country outside the normal IRIN geographical coverage area, and Liberia where they were able to provide a continual flow of daily reports from inside the countries despite UN evacuation orders.

After the December 2003 earthquake in Bam, in the Islamic Republic of Iran, the IRIN stringer filed a first report within 5 hours of quake and continued filing from Bam the next day

Regional Disaster Response Advisors

Responsible Branch/Section: Response Coordination Branch (RCB)/OCHA-Geneva

Current locations: RDRA in Panama; Kobe, Japan; Suva, Fiji; Nairobi; Johannesburg, South Africa

Response Time: Departure within 12-24 hours of request

Purpose of Deployment: Provide timely and appropriate assistance to United Nations Resident/Humanitarian Coordinators and United Nations Disaster Management Teams in response to natural disasters and complex emergencies in the region

Provide impact and needs assessment, information management, coordination of relief operations and assist in the preparation of UN Inter-Agency Appeals for Emergency Relief and Initial Rehabilitation

Assist in strengthening the disaster response preparedness and capacity of the UN in-country teams

Lead, participate in or facilitate the deployment of United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) missions

Deployment Modalities: Chief RCB deploys the adviser following consultations with the UN Humanitarian/Resident Coordinator for a maximum duration of 4 weeks at 12-24 hours notice

Support: The adviser travels with a basic office equipment kit.

Management: Managed by RCB (or RCB/FCSS for UNDAC matters)

How to Request: Contact Chief, RCB

Examples of Application in 2003: RDRA deployed for: cyclone in Fiji, floods/landslides in Nepal, floods in Pakistan and Viet Nam

Together with UNDAC Mission, RDRA was deployed for Guatemala Response Preparedness

OCHA Emergency Cash Grant

Responsible Branch/Section: Response Coordination Branch (RCB)/OCHA-Geneva

Response Time: As soon as request is received from United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office

Purpose of Deployment: Purchase locally relief items and delivery or distribution thereof

Provide immediate life-saving and life-sustaining support to victims of disaster

Relief operations in natural, environmental and technological disaster situations

Logistics support such as rental of aircraft for search, rescue operations and clearing or roads

Deployment Modalities: Response Coordination Branch - Geneva is responsible for determining amount to be allocated

A maximum of $50,000 can be allocated for an extremely damaging disaster, generally after receipt of a cost-plan

Support: Response Coordination Branch and Administrative Office in Geneva

Management: Response Coordination Branch and Administrative Office in Geneva

How to Request: The UN RC/UNDP Resident Representative sends a written request to OCHA Geneva, based on the fact that the recipient country requests or welcomes international assistance

A cost-plan for use of the grant should reach OCHA Geneva within 10 days

Examples of Recent Applications: Approximately $700,000 in cash grants to 23 countries was disbursed in 2003

Notes