STRATEGY

2013-2018

ALNAP

WHAT IS ALNAP?

ALNAP is a system-wide network organisation dedicated to improving the accountability and performance of humanitarian action by strengthening the humanitarian evidence base through sharing lessons, identifying key issues and, where appropriate, providing leadership to find collective approaches and solutions.

ALNAP's Full Members include agencies from the United Nations, the Red Cross/Crescent Movement, bilateral and multilateral donor organisations, international non-government organisations, humanitarian networks and inter-agency initiatives, research institutes, Academics and consultancy groups.

The ALNAP Secretariat is the implementing arm of the network and is responsible for delivering an annual work plan that has been informed by the needs of the Membership and approved by the Steering Committee. ALNAP Members actively support the Secretariat by providing specialist advice and support; physical resources; and assisting with dissemination, take-up and use of ALNAP materials within their own organisation and in the wider humanitarian community. In this way, the Secretariat works in tandem with Members to implement the work plan; disseminate and amplify key messages and encourage take-up and use of ALNAP materials.

AIM OF STRATEGY 2013-18

The strategy 2013-2018 has been developed to increase the efficiency and internal coherence of ALNAP by helping to ensure that the different Members and constituent groups of the ALNAP network have a shared understanding of ALNAP's focus.

The Strategy encapsulates ALNAP's Vision, Values, Strategic Focus Areas and Key Principles. Importantly, the Strategy recognises that humanitarian action evolves in a constantly changing landscape which does not lend itself to static long term objectives and indicators. The approach is therefore to define direction without confining it by presenting some 'simple rules' that will guide decisions about how ALNAP allocates and uses its resources to work towards its vision. This will allow flexibility to change direction and avoid a situation where resources could potentially be diverted from emerging issues of high importance. Shorter term annual objectives will be set at the beginning of each financial year in the ALNAP Work Plan and a 'Monitoring and Learning Plan' will measure the quality, engagement and utilisation of specific products and processes.

The assumption underpinning the simple rules approach is that through the proper selection of work (according to the simple rules) and the successful execution of the work (according to the Monitoring and Learning Plan), ALNAP will make a significant contribution in moving towards its vision. Information from the Monitoring and Learning Plan will be captured and organised in an Impact Log which will provide the evidence base for assessing the success of the Strategy at the end of the five-year period.

VISION

The ALNAP vision is of a world where aid is sufficient, effective, efficient, relevant, accountable and coherent; and one in which the lives of people affected by any humanitarian crisis are equally valued by the global humanitarian system. Aid is assigned and delivered on the basis of humanitarian need and according to fundamental humanitarian principles.

There is a process of continuous improvement with regard to the quality of evidence and the management of knowledge. Lessons from previous emergencies are captured, disseminated and acted upon. As a result, the quality of humanitarian aid and the performance of humanitarian agencies are continually improved.

Humanitarian practice is undertaken in a more accountable manner that adheres to best practice captured in relevant humanitarian norms, codes and standards. There is an explicit recognition of local capacities and, wherever possible, aid is planned and implemented in cooperation with affected populations and in partnership with regional bodies, local administrations and civil society groups.

ALNAP's role in achieving this vision

The realisation of this vision will depend on the actions of a diverse range of people and organisations involved in all types of humanitarian action. As the only system-wide repository of knowledge and improvement for the sector, ALNAP can help bring together humanitarian actors to share lessons and work collaboratively wherever possible, across a range of cultures and contexts towards a collective good.

VALUES

There are four core values that underpin the workings of the ALNAP network.

EQUALITY

All actors across the humanitarian spectrum, regardless of race, country of origin, gender, religion or politics have important experiences to share.

Full Members meet as equals in all ALNAP fora and are respected as equal co-owners of the organisation.

NEUTRALITY

In order to enjoy the confidence of all Full Members and others in the humanitarian community, ALNAP does not take collective positions or sides on debatable issues related to humanitarian assistance.

ENQUIRY

Humanitarian performance can be improved through research; learning from experience; and the judicious application of those lessons in future planning and practice. ALNAP Full Members are open to learning and are committed to acting upon and sharing experiences, both positive and negative, throughout the network.

SHARED OWNERSHIP

ALNAP is able to achieve a high volume and quality of products partly as a result of members making contributions to specific work plan activities. In-kind contributions can unlock the potential of the network to deliver more whilst also embedding ownership of the network amongst its members.

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS

ALNAP aims to foster and develop a culture of learning and evaluation that brings about improvements in the performance of the humanitarian system. It will achieve this by focusing on three mutually supportive, strategic focus areas.

1. Evaluations (creating a high quality evidence base)

Improving the quality of evaluations of humanitarian assistance and their related research and learning activities; as well as providing a key repository of knowledge for the humanitarian system. The aim here is to improve the quality of evaluative evidence which in turn will be distilled and synthesised to produce high quality reports and other useful products.

2. System performance (using the evidence base for analysis)

Monitoring and reporting on system-wide performance, on the basis of evaluative material and other sources of evidence. The aim is to provide the humanitarian community with a means of knowing how well it is doing over time. The effectiveness of this process will be influenced by the quality of the evidential materials that are available, thus both strategic areas 1 and 2 are inextricably linked.

3. Improvements (making improvements from the analysis)

Identifying key areas for progress, providing leadership and initiating work to bring about positive changes and improvements to system performance. This will be achieved through the findings that emerge from ongoing monitoring and reporting on system-wide performance, emerging issues from the ALNAP work plan and issues raised by the membership. The aim is to take action in specific areas which have been identified as barriers to improved performance and which have been neglected by the system as a whole.

SIX 'WHAT' PRINCIPLES: WHAT ALNAP DOES

Each year the ALNAP Secretariat will develop an annual work plan which identifies specific activities linked to each of the three areas above. The following six principles, or 'simple rules', aim to define direction without confining it.

They will be applied when deciding what specific activities and work streams should be in the work plan.

1 Balancing resources

As a general rule, both financial and human resources will be allocated equally between each of the three strategic focus areas.

5 Balancing primary and other forms of research

On occasion, primary field research may be carried out into key performance issues that are clearly lacking attention and investigative resources, such as humanitarian feedback mechanisms for affected populations. This contrasts with much of the current work ALNAP has traditionally undertaken on synthesising and distilling secondary data and material. Primary research has a high monetary and human resource cost and will only be undertaken when three conditions are met: there is a clear lack of attention placed on the issue by the system as a whole, the issue is deemed of high importance, and Members are prepared to support access.

3 Balancing existing and emerging issues

ALNAP will continue to identify key performance issues and, when there is an obvious gap, it will move quickly to find collective approaches and solutions. New issues will be identified using various sources such as: ALNAP's ongoing work on system performance, the membership's perceived needs or specific problems and questions arising from new international emergencies. However, ALNAP will also maintain a working balance between its ongoing core areas of work (especially in the area of evaluation) and new work streams. Efforts will therefore be made to balance existing and emerging issues.

2 Ensuring a representative spread of issues

The needs of ALNAP's different constituent groups will be taken into account when formulating the work plan. Efforts will be made to balance different activities to create a plan which contains a representative spread of issues and topics that are

4 Balancing fixed term projects and process activities

The ALNAP work plan contains a mix of fixed term projects which produce tangible outputs such as papers, reports or best practice guides; and process activities which have longer term objectives, such as the Evaluation Capacities-Community of Practice which aims to create a safe space for learning and exchange amongst evaluators. Care will be taken to provide a balance between these two different types of activities.

6 Transition

In order to use resources efficiently and maintain its strategic focus, when various issues and processes have been more widely incorporated and taken up by others agencies, judgements will be made about when and how to cooperate, partner or 'hand over'.

FOUR 'HOW' PRINCIPLES: HOW ALNAP CONDUCTS ITS ACTIVITIES

ALNAP's role in the humanitarian system is that of a key agent of change and improvement. It also contributes to this improvement by supporting the development of learning and accountability approaches – especially evaluation approaches – within member organisations by promoting learning and dissemination of best practice across the network and by conducting original research on behalf of the membership as a whole. These define how ALNAP goes about its work.

RELATIONSHIPS

Create good relationships within, and outside, of the membership
The ALNAP Network is widely recognised for its independence, neutrality and trustworthiness. These qualities are part of the culture of ALNAP. In all of its activities, ALNAP will endeavour to create, develop and support good working relationships both within and outside of the network. The links between the Secretariat and Members, and between Members themselves will be strengthened so that activities can be carried out more efficiently and effectively.

COMMUNICATION

Use state of the art communication tools
The ALNAP Secretariat will use a greater variety of contemporary media channels to accommodate the communication and information needs of ALNAP's broadening membership. It will aim to substantially increase global reach through social media and online platforms. To achieve more inclusivity, ALNAP will reach out to the non-English speaking world (particularly French, Arabic and Spanish) by developing and using clearer messaging for media channels and target audiences. All projects and processes will also have their own communication officer and tailored communication plan.

ENGAGEMENT

increase global engagement
ALNAP will continue to take an inclusive approach in its fostering of learning and understanding across the expanding international system. This will be reflected in activities such as: the development of a wider range of membership categories, the hosting of meetings in the global South and the creation of new relationships with international groups and networks.

MONITORING

Monitor and learn
ALNAP will monitor its strategic progress and impact by using three main complementary tools. The first is an Impact Model which lays out how specific activities and processes lead to particular kinds of outputs and impacts, see Annex 1. The expectation is that the main focus of ALNAP's impact will be at the level of 'Impact 1' i.e., how well members absorb and use ALNAP products to bring about positive changes and improvements in their work.

The second tool is a 'Monitoring and Learning Plan' which will track specific work plan activities by setting annual objectives and indicators for specific work streams in order to measure the quality, engagement and utilisation of each ALNAP product and process.

The third tool is an Impact Log which is designed to capture and organise information related to the Monitoring and Learning Plan in order to build an evidence base for assessing the success of the Strategy at the end of the five year period.

The ALNAP Steering Committee will undertake a light mid-term review of the Impact Log data to ensure that the strategic direction is still relevant and provisions are made to make changes or modifications if necessary.

As outlined in the aims of the Strategy, the assumption underpinning the simple rules approach is that through the proper selection of work (according to the simple rules), the successful execution of the work (according to the Monitoring and Learning Plan) and successful monitoring of activities (captured in the Impact Log), ALNAP will be able to demonstrate if it has made a significant contribution in moving towards its vision and describe how it has done so.

IMPACT MODEL FOR ALNAP

ACTIVITIES	Learning and facilitation	Filtering	Amplifying		Convening and community building	Investing and providing
	[LEARNING]				[NETWORK]	
OUTPUTS	Best practice guides CoPs Specific research streams: innovation, leadership, networks, etc.	Lessons papers State of the System Presentations	Key messages from research Presentations		CoPs Annual Meeting Ad hoc meetings Forums and blogs	Assistance to regional networks and NDMAs
IMMEDIATE OUTCOMES	Evidence base improved Learning made more accessible to all main players in system				Understanding and links between component parts of international humanitarian system improved and basis for collective action strengthened	
IMPACT 1	ALNAP Members absorb and use learning to improve practice, policy and structures					
ULTIMATE OUTCOMES / IMPROVED PERFORM-ANCE	Improved coverage	More relevant and appropriate responses	More effective responses	Better connected-ness and capacity building	More efficient responses	More coherent responses
IMPACT 2	Increased number of lives saved Suffering alleviated More resilient livelihoods and human dignity maintained in communities experiencing humanitarian crises					