

Frequently Asked Questions about new emergencies

What is a “new emergency”?

The Protocol defines a “humanitarian emergency” as an “urgent response designed to save lives subject to imminent threat”. New emergencies involve a significant increase in vulnerability. They can be caused by natural disasters or deteriorating security, as well as by forced displacements and continuing threats, which finally exhaust local coping strategies.

Why a “new emergencies policy”?

A core premise of HAP’s work is that humanitarian action is more likely to be effective when beneficiaries are able to express their needs and be heard. It follows that agencies need to work accountably from the beginning of an emergency and not just when decisions are being implemented and evaluated. Media attention is also greatest during the first few days and weeks of an emergency, providing opportunities for agencies to demonstrate their good (or bad) practices.

Who does the NEP apply to and where?

The NEP has been endorsed by the HAP General Assembly and approved by the HAP Board, so it applies to all HAP member agencies operating in any new emergency. This said, the implementation of the NEP is not automatic. It must be initiated by a member agency or the HAP Secretariat, and is voluntary.

How does the NEP work?

The Protocol for the implementation of the NEP foresees a process whereby HAP member agencies or the HAP Secretariat can initiate a teleconference meeting of member agencies' focal points with 48 hours' notice if a new emergency has occurred or is imminent. During this meeting, focal points will discuss major opportunities for, and challenges to, promoting accountability during the emergency, and explore options for action. This may include the following joint activities:

- project appraisals and implementation – e.g. joint beneficiary information system
- capacity building for staff
- awareness raising of accountability issues among stakeholders
- learning activities – e.g. peer reviews, beneficiary focus group discussions, joint evaluations
- quality management support - e.g. shared complaints handling system
- preparedness activities – e.g. accountability capacity building for staff

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