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**Background paper prepared for the WHO workshop:
"Tracking Health Performance and Humanitarian Outcomes"
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Tracking the performance of essential health and nutrition services in humanitarian responses, by A. Griekspoor, A. Loretto, S. Colombo¹

Summary

The paper starts by identifying the main dimensions of performance of life-saving health services in a crisis, namely: coverage, timeliness, access, utilization and quality/effectiveness. It argues that the work already done –mainly by Sphere- in identifying performance indicators, provides the basis for integrating a sub-set of them into the proposed *Humanitarian Outcomes and Performance Tracking Service*. As such there is no need to develop new indicators or standards. Understanding the context of a crisis is crucial. Thus, the first indicator of performance that we need to track is the Coverage of Humanitarian Assistance, which defines the humanitarian space in which the other indicators are measured. Any measurement on performance of a critical service should state to what percentage of the affected population it refers that can be reached by humanitarian aid.

The background paper to the workshop refers to the pioneer work of Sphere and SMART in identifying a comprehensive set of standards and related performance indicators, selecting key public health indicators and developing methodologies for the collection of mortality, nutrition and food security data. The IASC Needs Analysis Framework provides an analytical frame for determinants and outcomes. The proposed *Humanitarian Outcomes and Performance Tracking Service* wants to build on them and recognized that information on performance is critical for understanding the determinants and risks of the health outcomes, i.e. mortality and acute malnutrition. In its turn, the tracking service will strengthen these existing initiatives and processes for inter agency planning and monitoring.

The paper proposes an incremental approach for monitoring performance, using information that is already available by routine data collection –including surveillance- or can be easily integrated in surveys. The paper lists the characteristics that should guide the selection of indicators, including relevance to the context, ability to inform planning, consistency across the disaster planning cycle, explanatory capacity, reference to the Sphere list, as an internationally accepted humanitarian tool.

The paper concludes by reviewing selected performance and coverage indicators related to: a) availability and access to primary and secondary health services; b) measles vaccination; c) selective feeding programmes; d) emergency obstetric care, and e) health surveillance. Timeliness

¹ The opinions expressed in this paper are those of the authors only.

is a major benchmark of effectiveness, mainly in sudden natural disasters. The Sphere handbook, using the rights based approach, indicates that there should be universal coverage for the most essential services. In protracted crises, thresholds for minimal coverage and time to deliver a service are captured in the concept of 'progressive realization', and the need for monitoring trends in coverage and explaining them is the basis for the tracking system. The paper presents the definition, uses, limitations and provisos for each of the selected indicators proposed in the five categories above. The paper concludes by reviewing the main methods for collection of performance and coverage indicators and their main limitations. It underscores triangulation of data from different sources and methods as the best way for dealing with the above limitations.