2023–2025

WORK PLAN & BUDGET

ALNAP

ALNAP is a global network of NGOs,
UN agencies, members of the Red Cross/
Crescent Movement, donors, networks,
academics and consultants dedicated
to learning how to improve response
to humanitarian crises.

www.alnap.org

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ALNAP work plan and budget 2023–25

ALNAP's strategic approach to the 2023–25 work plan

ALNAP is the global network for advancing humanitarian learning. In 2023-25, ALNAP will continue its work to improve the quality and performance of humanitarian action; ensuring the international humanitarian system benefits from the sector's collective experience, knowledge and learning and is better able to provide principled assistance and protection to the most vulnerable people who are affected by crises. ALNAP will achieve this through:

- Hosting the largest **library** of humanitarian knowledge and evidence, providing access to learning for humanitarians across the sector.
- Rigorously **distilling learning** from across the system, helping humanitarians make sense of the vast amounts of evidence available.
- Creating **collaborative spaces** where humanitarians can exchange insights, experience and practical ideas beyond their organisational mandates in order to identify and act on improvements.
- Producing **research, analysis and guidance** where there are gaps in humanitarian knowledge.
- Regularly reviewing and assessing the humanitarian system in our **State of the Humanitarian System reports**, shining a light on how the sector is performing.

The work plan has been shaped in response to our interactions with members, as well as the work we have conducted over the last year on the 5th edition of the State of the Humanitarian System report and ALNAP's 25th Anniversary Spotlight on Learning series. Each of these processes has contributed to the overarching insight that the critical barrier to learning-driven improvements in performance is no longer a lack of evidence, but rather a combination of:

1. Inequitable **access** to learning- and knowledge-sharing opportunities and resources across the sector.
2. The inability of individuals and organisations to **navigate and make sense of** the learning, knowledge and analysis that now exists.
3. The inability of individuals to **utilise existing learning to affect change** within their organisations.

Bringing together the insights gleaned from ALNAP's research on learning and performance and our discussions with members over the last year, we have identified priority themes for learning that consistently resonate across the humanitarian sector. We've grouped these themes into two key areas.

The first is what we're calling **sticking points**. These are the three key areas that continue to frustrate the sector and where we have seen little progress over an extended period: **localisation; accountability to affected populations; and linking relief and development/nexus**. The second group of themes consists of the **tipping points**, where innovative ways of working are brought into the mainstream through the momentum of networked learning and sharing of ground-breaking evidence, such as humanitarian preparedness for climate change; and risk and anticipatory action.

In addition to these thematic focuses, ALNAP's paper, Learning to change: The case for systemic learning strategies in the humanitarian sector, sets out a systems approach to our **understanding of how learning and change happen in the humanitarian sector**. This presents a useful model by which we can consider where and when ALNAP's activities are most likely to contribute to overall learning processes. In particular, it points us towards two specific areas of focus:

- Capturing learning that emerges at the project level. This is where new practices take shape and there is space for research and learning through experience, away from the normal dynamics and forces of the sector. Here ALNAP's role is likely to be most useful in **supporting the capture and representation of new learning as it emerges into the sector, and identifying the evidence base for where it adds value**.
- **Influencing the 'regime' level**, where established sets of practices, processes, technologies, etc. are embedded in a variety of institutions and organisations. In this area, ALNAP's role is to **present evidence showing where the sector is either making or lacking in progress, to engage with key stakeholders and decision-makers to present new thinking or evidence, and to convene the sector to reflect on the collective learning challenges** that cannot be addressed by any one agency alone.

To better address the two points above, ALNAP will increase its focus on audiences within this work plan. We need to **better target and engage with the audiences who are able to utilise learning and affect change** within their organisation and the wider system. ALNAP's scoping study, Communicating humanitarian learning: What do we know? is clear that there is currently insufficient knowledge on how to disaggregate humanitarian audiences effectively and to understand and cater for their communication preferences.

This work plan and budget have been guided by ALNAP's 2019–24 strategy and describe the activities that ALNAP will undertake under each of the four current strategic focus areas.

Strategic focus area 1:

Improving the quality and accessibility of evaluative evidence

Guidance on using DAC evaluation criteria

How, and on what basis, the humanitarian sector decides to measure its performance is a critical and sensitive discussion that is of concern to humanitarians across the world. Evaluation criteria offer a reflection of how the humanitarian system addresses learning and change and of the key values and concerns of many humanitarian actors. Since their publication in 1991, the evaluation criteria of the OECD DAC (Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) have formed the backbone of evaluation design, thinking and conceptualisation in the development sector. In 2006, ALNAP published guidance to help evaluation professionals apply the criteria more effectively in humanitarian settings. It remains one of ALNAP's most popular publications and has been cited in thousands of evaluations and research reports.

In 2023–25, ALNAP will continue to update the 2006 guidance to reflect the most recent revision to the DAC criteria (2019). This project enables ALNAP to further explore evaluation issues specific to humanitarian action, including common constraints and challenges experienced in applying the criteria within humanitarian settings over the past 15 years. ALNAP will include recent examples from real-world evaluations, alongside notes on good practices and learning since the 2006 publication. The updated guidance will also reflect changes in evaluation practice such as the move away from linear log frames, the greater emphasis on adaptive management, wider use of theories of change, and complexity-aware evaluation approaches, among others. Similarly, limited data availability, access constraints and shorter time horizons in humanitarian settings now present obstacles to the quality of evaluation and may limit evaluation scope and methods. The updated guidance will address how to apply the criteria in evaluating humanitarian partnerships, nested interventions, wider policy-level issues, and conducting joint and system-wide evaluations.

Working with a global advisory group representing diverse actors from across the sector and informed by an in-depth review of how the DAC evaluation criteria have been applied, ALNAP will convene the sector through a range of consultation processes across the world, with a particular focus on those located in the Global South. These sensitive and important consultations will take us to the heart of key questions around how the sector measures its performance, how it understands and defines 'quality' and who gets to shape those decisions. ALNAP is uniquely well placed to manage this process, given both our previous experience of creating guidance and our reach through our members and wider networks. The resulting ALNAP guidance and training will be critical in supporting the sector's collective action on learning and performance.

COVID-19 synthesis evaluation

The COVID-19 pandemic has been unlike any other crisis in recent history: a humanitarian response undertaken on a global scale, with traditional humanitarian action disrupted and transformed due to measures to limit the spread of the virus such as social distancing.

This synthesis, based on approximately 80 evaluations, will summarise and share key findings collated from the existing evaluative evidence base and outline succinct policy and practice recommendations in an accessible format. The synthesis will shed light on how humanitarian organisations adapted to respond to the pandemic and the successes and challenges across the system in delivering this response. Working closely with the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) and the COVID-19 Global Coalition, the target audience for this work stream is the humanitarian policy and practitioner community at large. We expect it to be of interest to evaluators, policy, programming and operational humanitarian staff. As the focus of discussion will be on the current shortcomings in the humanitarian system, this work will be useful for those advocating for system change.

Synthesis evaluation of the humanitarian–development–peacebuilding (HDP) nexus

For decades there has been a focus on how to improve the link between humanitarian response and longer-term development. In recent years, the focus has also included peacebuilding alongside humanitarian action and development. While we have seen strong policy shifts, restructuring of donor agencies and new initiatives around the so-called HDP nexus, at country level the impact has not been evident. There are frustrations that the discussion on closing the gaps between short- and long-term assistance are too abstract and confusing, that programmatic progress has been piecemeal, and that there was no collective accountability to implement collective outcomes. The nexus continues to be flagged in ALNAP's work as a sticking point for learning.

Evaluators have contacted ALNAP for expert advice on how to develop strong evaluation frameworks and a robust methodology for HDP nexus evaluations. A number of these evaluations have been completed recently. ALNAP members (and those within the IAHE group) have also expressed keen interest in looking at lessons and findings from evaluations on the HDP nexus and implementing nexus approaches.

ALNAP will produce two resources from this work: the first will be a synthesis drawing together findings from evaluations that focus specifically on the nexus and those that look at other thematic topics cutting across the HDP nexus. This will provide opportunities for findings to inform wider policy dialogues and will also support evaluation practitioners and evaluation managers who are commissioning or conducting HDP nexus evaluations. The second resource will be a paper summarising evaluation approaches, methods and key considerations for HDP nexus evaluations that will target evaluation practitioners in particular. We have experienced high levels of member interest in this area so it is likely that we will consider introducing further activities in response to member requests during the course of the year.

Locally led monitoring and evaluation – scoping study

Locally led monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is a leading topic of discussion among many evaluators and one which our members and the wider sector have been keen for ALNAP to explore. Linking closely to ALNAP's ongoing work on locally led humanitarian action, this work stream will enable us to look into issues such as: non-Western approaches to evaluation; racial and culturally sensitive M&E approaches; how to better promote and utilise local knowledge, experience and capacity in M&E; and the processes and assumptions of evaluation commissioners, including the structure and hierarchy of evaluation systems; among others.

This new work stream will initially explore this area, working with ALNAP members and other stakeholders, to develop a scoping study to better understand and frame the issues, to capture the existing evidence, guidance and practice, and to identify any gaps. We expect this topic to be of significant interest to our members and that ALNAP will identify further work leading to useful outputs and forums for additional knowledge exchange within the M&E community.

Monitoring and evaluation capacities

ALNAP is a sector leader in providing high-quality M&E learning. This area of work provides the ALNAP membership and wider humanitarian sector with opportunities for strengthening M&E skills, bringing together current learning and experience on emerging M&E themes and challenges, and connecting M&E practitioners across the globe to share their knowledge. This year we are conducting an engagement exercise with members' M&E representatives to review how we can best support the M&E community and continue to be a critical resource for humanitarian M&E practitioners seeking guidance and best practice advice.

ALNAP's M&E team plays a significant advisory role for member organisations, responding to queries and requests for technical assistance and advice in the development and implementation of their M&E approaches. This function is highly valued by member organisations. It is an important part of the work of the Secretariat in maintaining contact with and responding to the priorities and expectations of its members and bringing together current thinking and approaches in ongoing M&E debates.

In 2023–24, ALNAP will continue to deliver its popular M&E skills-exchange workshops and webinars. We have recently increased the size of our M&E team in response to member requests, increasing capacity to respond flexibly to new ideas and topics that emerge – either from other work streams or new initiatives that arise during the year.

Strategic focus area 2:

Monitoring the performance of the humanitarian system

The State of the Humanitarian System (SOHS) Report

The State of the Humanitarian System (SOHS) report is ALNAP's flagship publication, providing consistent, independent and robust evidence to the humanitarian system on its performance and on key issues and challenges. It serves as a key reference point for decision-makers in the humanitarian sector, provides regular, structured analysis on performance, and is routinely used to inform the strategies and policies of top humanitarian donors and policy-makers, as well as by a vast range of implementing agencies. ALNAP has a superb track record of influencing the humanitarian sector through this report over the past five editions. The report is endorsed by humanitarians across the sector and backed up with impressive download statistics (the 2022 edition has already been accessed over 11,500 times) and evidence of significant uptake and utilisation of findings by the sector. The report enables the international humanitarian community to understand how well it is performing, where aid is working and where it isn't, and provides a system-wide platform for establishing collective opportunities for improvements. The core framework for the SOHS report is kept constant over each edition, enabling longitudinal comparison over time and allowing ALNAP to offer a 15-year perspective on change and performance.

Building on the significant success and impact of the 5th edition of the SOHS report, ALNAP will begin the research phase for the 6th edition, drawing on a wide consultation of decision-makers, crisis-affected communities, frontline responders and other key stakeholders. For the 6th edition, ALNAP will aim to apply a similar structure to that used for the 5th edition, namely: **eight core research components** that have remained fixed since the 1st edition (up to six country case studies; aid recipient survey; humanitarian practitioner and national government surveys; evaluation synthesis; literature review; financial analysis; demographic analysis of the system; and global key informant interviews) as well as **four additional thematic components** providing in-depth research on key performance themes identified through discussions with key stakeholders at the outset of the research.

ALNAP is still engaged in early planning and consultation for the 6th edition and will finalise plans by June 2023. However, we have already set our ambition for the next report to include some key changes/improvements that will increase its impact and practical use:

1. Partnership with local and national researchers and deepening the community-based research.
2. Running a concurrent performance analysis series of products alongside the primary research.
3. Introducing a structured process for offering agency-specific recommendations.
4. Improving the evidence base for humanitarian action.

As of April 2023, we are continuing to deliver launches of the 5th edition of the report globally, as well as reflecting on lessons learned from the 5th edition launch. This includes a survey to better understand how key sector colleagues have used the 5th edition to support their work – the responses to which will feed into and inform the next edition.

Strategic focus area 3:

Addressing key evidential gaps

Accountability to affected populations (AAP) – scoping study

Over the past decade, the sector has increasingly focused on accountability to affected populations as critical to humanitarian performance. A wide range of tools and guidance now exist on how to create effective feedback mechanisms and how to engage communities throughout the project cycle via participation. New platforms such as Loop, the IASC Results Group 2 on Accountability and Inclusion, and the CHS Alliance's Results Tracker have been established to specifically address the issue of accountability. Key questions being raised by the sector ask: Why, despite the existence of guidance, has effective AAP not been achieved across the system? What effect do AAP processes have on providing a humanitarian response that is effective and relevant to crisis-affected populations?

Given the recent high-level claims that the system has not progressed far enough on AAP issues in recent years, we will consider whether there are evidence gaps or a learning role that ALNAP should usefully fill to support further progress on these issues. There are two proposed components of this work stream: 1) a scoping study; and 2) a research/learning component to be defined based on the scoping study.

The purpose of this scoping study is to explore the current state of evidence on accountability to crisis-affected populations in the humanitarian system and consider which evidence gaps and important learning questions remain. As such, initial research questions include: 1) What is the current state of evidence relating to AAP programming in the humanitarian sector? 2) What questions remain to be answered that have the potential to have an impact on practice or policy? and 3) what is ALNAP's potential role in filling these?

Locally led humanitarian action – scoping study

'Localisation' has been debated in the sector for a number of years. Much of this has focused on the Grand Bargain and related international agreements. The term 'localisation' has also been used interchangeably with 'locally led', though many practitioners feel there are key differences. The research literature around localisation has also focused primarily on the metrics in the Grand Bargain – most notably on funding. In the debates around 'who is local?' and the focus on the need for change within larger organisations, the existing aid architecture has been at the centre of the discussion.

Even with these metrics, there is still little agreement. Locally led action is already happening in many affected areas and communities – only some of which is aided by the formal international humanitarian aid architecture. Yet there remains a gap in sharing this knowledge and learning – including about the value that these approaches can bring.

The objective of this work stream is to build a broader understanding of the comparative value of locally led action, to inform shifts in the sector and ultimately help deliver better programmes. The scoping phase will focus on capturing the current understanding around localisation/locally led concepts and the existing learning gaps. As such, the scoping questions focus on the terminology and attributes, value-add and challenges of locally led action, as well as areas where key respondents feel learning focus would be helpful. The scoping study will inform ALNAP's further work in this area.

Communicating humanitarian learning

The sector is under pressure to learn faster and better with fewer resources compared to the level of need. Effective communication of critical lessons is essential to improve response to crises. ALNAP's scoping paper Communicating humanitarian learning: What do we know? found that although humanitarians produce a wealth of research and knowledge, there is little evidence on how to communicate this knowledge to maximise its impact. There is no evidence-based guidance for understanding humanitarian audience segments, how they prefer to learn, and in what formats/via which channels. If this evidence-based guidance existed, organisations and individuals seeking to share knowledge and information and effect change across the sector would be more likely to reach the right people with the right information at the right time – and therefore more likely to influence policy and practice. This project sets out to develop this guidance, based on audience research, and to improve the ability of humanitarian organisations to engage across the system more efficiently – thereby influencing positive change in organisational and sector-wide performance.

Strategic focus area 4:

Supporting system-wide learning

Lessons and new emergencies

New crises present a critical learning opportunity for the sector, with the potential not only to improve the response to that emergency but to become a point of evolution for the performance of the sector across crises over time. ALNAP will continue to synthesise and present learning from previous responses in a timely and accessible way to help inform improved practices and decision-making in new and emerging crises.

ALNAP has been producing Lessons papers since 2001, with the aim of improving the performance of humanitarian action by presenting the lessons of previous responses in a concise and timely manner. The papers are aimed mainly at humanitarians designing and implementing humanitarian responses. They seek to identify a broad range of lessons from across the international humanitarian community in the context of a specific crisis or crisis-type.

During 2023–25, we will update existing Lessons papers and identify and address gaps where we do not currently have papers on particular crisis types. We will determine the most effective communications outputs that enable humanitarians across the world to access the core learning within these resources quickly during new and emerging crisis responses.

We will also be looking at the outlook for crisis types in order to better pre-position learning for future emergencies. Where we know that the characteristics of certain types of crises are likely to evolve over the coming years, we will be updating and releasing our lessons papers to both address future patterns of emergencies and to pre-position learning resources to ensure that they contribute to organisations' preparedness planning.

Increasing the accessibility of learning

Across the sector, the accessibility of knowledge, evidence and learning continues to be limited, with key learning resources often only known to a relatively small number of people – usually within the organisations who produce them or those that have time to read the volume of materials available. As mentioned previously, the learning challenge for the sector now has less to do with capturing lessons and experiences – there is now a vast body of learning materials – and is more to do with the need to create new space to absorb and act on what is already known. ALNAP would like to increase the reach and uptake of this learning to deliver on our mandate more effectively. This work stream links to our work to better understand our audiences and our objective to strengthen our impact model for the new strategic plan. The four priority areas for this year are distinct in nature but share the common theme of aiming to improve the accessibility and use of knowledge and learning resources.

Humanitarian Evaluation, Learning and Performance (HELP) Library and portals

ALNAP's HELP Library is the sector's first and largest open-source library, containing over 20,000 resources on humanitarian learning, evaluation and performance. The HELP Library is a rich and valued resource as a repository of learning for the sector, but it requires constant maintenance to ensure it is fit to respond to the sector's needs. During 2023–25, ALNAP will be working on an updated website that more easily facilitates access to the wealth of evidence and resources available. We will also be educating ourselves on the current applications of artificial intelligence, both within the sector and outside, to explore its possible application to the HELP Library.

Academic partnerships

ALNAP recognises the important role played by the academic constituency in contributing to the learning of future humanitarian leaders and decision-makers. This work stream will draw together ALNAP's rich back catalogue to provide a more tailored and accessible way for academics to engage with and use our work in their teaching, thereby contributing to the learning of the future generation of humanitarians. Through this we will contribute to the sensitisation of students to past and current humanitarian dilemmas, challenges and progress, and spark thinking about how to integrate learning and generate change. We will provide a catalogue of resources accompanied by suggestions for assignments and lecture/seminar content. This will be rolled out in 2023 and further adapted as we get feedback from this target group.

Support for operational decision-makers

ALNAP has identified senior operational decision-makers as one of the target audiences who are making high volumes of strategic decisions while having the least time to engage with evidence and learning from the sector. We will pilot a new approach to engaging senior operational decision-makers with key sectoral learning, providing them with a high volume of tailored, accessible learning content in a way that is time-efficient and appropriate to their communication and learning preferences. Our aim is to update this target group with the latest learning and evidence – as well as the implications for their work – on key thematic areas within the humanitarian sector. If this approach is successful we hope to replicate it regionally or nationally, as deemed useful.

South–South learning platforms

Inequitable access to learning- and knowledge-sharing opportunities and resources across the sector remains a challenge. The majority of flexible funding still primarily goes to Northern institutions, which means this is where the majority of learning capacities exist. There is limited equivalent investment in Southern learning. This is an inhibitor to the sector's ability to benefit from the wealth of learning and experience at a national and regional

level. ALNAP will seek to identify regional networks with a learning-/ knowledge-sharing mandate that we can work with over an extended period of time to provide financial and technical support in developing their role as a regional learning platform. This is an exciting new project area for ALNAP and one which we hope will set a good precedent for the future.

Governance, management and membership

Strengthening ALNAP's communications capacity

Inherent in ALNAP's unique mandate to create a culture of learning for the humanitarian sector is a critical balance between the collation of evidence and learning, and our capacity to make that learning accessible to the sector. In 2023–25, ALNAP will continue to increase its focus in this area and will invest in its capacity to communicate learning across the sector, thereby supporting increased accessibility and uptake of knowledge and evidence. A number of these activities were started in 2022–23 and will come to fruition during 2023–25. They include:

- Continuing to update ALNAP's audience analysis and targeting based on our understanding of the evolution of the humanitarian sector in recent years, the role of learning within it, and our theory of change.
- Finalising and rolling out ALNAP's refreshed brand among key stakeholders. This will promote acknowledgement of the critical role of learning in the humanitarian sector and increase awareness of the accessibility, uptake and practical application of ALNAP's products.
- Continuing diversification of creative communication products and platforms. ALNAP will continue to pilot new approaches to the communication of learning to understand which formats best suit our target audiences and have the biggest impact on learning uptake. We will also continue to innovate and to trial new approaches.
- Redesigning the ALNAP website with a focus on improved user-journeys, increased consistency in core messages, improved accessibility to the wealth of resources it hosts, and better use of the website as a platform for learning communities within the sector.

ALNAP network

ALNAP was created in order to establish a system-wide mechanism to generate evidence, to bring people together to learn, and to find collective ways to improve humanitarian action. ALNAP's membership now numbers more than 100 organisations representing the diversity of actors that make up the formal humanitarian sector. Our membership is ALNAP's greatest asset and is central to our ability to support the sector in promoting accountability and continuous improvement of global humanitarian performance. ALNAP's belief is that a more engaged membership will lead to increased levels of learning and therefore improved performance by the sector.

This is an ongoing project that aims to deepen ALNAP's engagement with and among its members to increase uptake of learning across the humanitarian sector. As a result of this project, ALNAP expects to see increased engagement and active participation by members across ALNAP's work, products and services. We will achieve this through reviewing and further developing ALNAP's network engagement strategy; we will also build on much of the work we conducted as part of our 25th anniversary series by continuing to provide 'back to basics' communications on areas such as

ALNAP's purpose, the benefits of membership, the annual work plan, and opportunities to engage, among others. We will ensure that every work stream explicitly incorporates members' engagement within the design and delivery of activities.

Monitoring, impact and learning

ALNAP monitors the uptake, use and outcomes/impact of its activities by canvassing the ways in which members engage with ALNAP products and activities. We capture information through periodic surveys, immediate feedback after events and monitoring outcome indicators. ALNAP uses analytics from online channels (i.e. website, social media, bulletins) and other quantitative data to inform the monitoring of research activities and their outcomes. These metrics enable us to understand when, where and how our work is used as a basis for learning in the humanitarian sector as well as providing a contribution to cross-system learning and improvement. ALNAP continues to undertake after-action reviews in relation to major events and research projects. The team will also continue to conduct quarterly reviews to assess progress on projects, identify any issues and make adjustments to our plans where necessary.

Governance and Secretariat Steering Committee

The Steering Committee functions as ALNAP's quasi-executive and key decision-making body and is mandated to act on behalf of all members. The ALNAP Steering Committee is composed of eight Full Member Representatives plus the Steering Committee Chair. The Steering Committee members represent the different ALNAP member constituencies, and include two representatives each from the donor, United Nations agencies and NGO constituencies, and one representative each from the Red Cross and Crescent Movement and academia/research institutes. This ensures that the Steering Committee maintains a balance of representation of the different types of organisation that make up the humanitarian sector and the ALNAP membership. The Steering Committee meets three times a year and members are elected by their respective constituencies to join the Steering Committee for a two-year period.

The purpose of the Steering Committee is to determine the direction and development of ALNAP in accordance with the views and priorities of the different constituent groups in its overall membership.

The ALNAP Secretariat currently has 15 staff:

- Director
- Senior Programme Manager
- Project Manager
- Programme Assistant
- Head of Communications
- Communication Manager
- Communications Officer
- Head of Research and Impact
- 2x Senior Research Fellows
- 2x Research Fellows
- 2x Research Officers
- Research Assistant

Budget 2023-24 and forecasted budget 2024–25

Activity	Year 1 Budget 2023-24	Year 2 Forecast 2024-25
Staff costs plus overheads	£1,592,682	£1,751,950
Strategic area 1	£79,500	£87,450
Strategic area 2	£54,000	£59,400
Strategic area 3	£56,500	£62,150
Strategic area 4	£115,400	£126,940
A strong functioning Secretariat and network	£156,200	£171,820
Total	**£2,054,282**	**£2,259,710**

ALNAP