

# Handover, transition and exit

**A programme ‘transition’ or ‘exit’ refers to the withdrawal or handover of all externally provided resources and services. The decision to withdraw should be made in full consultation with programme stakeholders and, where possible, be an integral part of the programme strategy from the early design phase.**

A Handover Plan or Exit Strategy will assist in clarifying when and how the programme intends to withdraw and the measures proposed to ensure sustained achievement of the programme goals.

## Exit criteria: What determines “when” to exit?

It is critical, particularly in short term emergency response programmes, to plan handover, transition or exit strategies right at the start of the programme.

Criteria used to determine when and how to exit programmes vary. However, they can be grouped into four general categories.

1. **Time limit** - All programmes have time limits dictated by availability of resources or funding cycles. Avoid starting projects or programmes which will require continuous funding to keep running and where funding after the end of the original project may not be forthcoming.
2. **Achievement of programme impacts** - Indicators of programme impact can guide the exit strategy time line.
3. **Achievement of benchmarks** - Measurable indicators or identified steps in the graduation process of an exit strategy. This should be linked to specific programme components that are to be phased out or over e.g. community take on responsibility of maintenance etc.
4. **Cancellation** - when a project is no longer viable or sustainable or if the humanitarian context has evolved and no longer requires external intervention.

## Three approaches to transition or exit

### 1. Phasing down

Gradual reduction of programme activities.

- careful planning and coordination is important.
- often a preliminary stage for Phasing out or Phasing over.

### 2. Phasing out

Agency’s withdrawal of involvement in a programme without handing over to another institution for continued implementation.

- activities should be phased out when emergency needs no longer exist and normal services, together with ongoing development activities, can meet the needs of the population.

### 3. Phasing over

Agency transfers programme activities to local institutions or communities.

- during design and implementation, emphasis is placed on institutional capacity building and empowerment so that services provided can continue through local organisations.

**What are the main points an exit strategy should cover?**

- Who will be responsible for handling the transition or exit?
- Is there another agency or local NGO with the capacity to take on this activity?
- How will the activity be transferred?
- How will it be funded?
- How will these changes affect programme beneficiaries and other stakeholders?
- How will staff be affected, and how will changes be communicated to them?
- What notice periods are required for staff, lease/rental agreements, etc.?
- What are the donor requirements in relation to handover, transition or exit?
- What are the government/legal requirements?
- What security provisions are needed e.g. for assets, information?

Adapted from Aid Workers Network

### Additional resources on All In Diary website

Programme management guidelines/Transition © CARE Emergency Toolkit 2011  
Lessons Learned and Good Practice Toolkit: Adapting coordination mechanisms to support national transitions © OCHA, UNDP & DOCO 2012

### Web links for further information

Empowerment sustainability-OECD – Chapter 10  
[https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/poverty-reduction-and-pro-poor-growth\\_9789264168350-en#page7](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/poverty-reduction-and-pro-poor-growth_9789264168350-en#page7)  
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