

**INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE  
PRINCIPALS MEETING**

**11 December 2003  
10.00 – 13.00 hrs  
Palais des Nations, Geneva  
Room XI**

**Humanitarian Access – IASC Discussion Paper**

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Limited access to vulnerable populations continues to be one of the most significant challenges facing humanitarians. There are access difficulties in more than 20 of the countries where humanitarian organizations operate. As a result, millions of people do not receive the assistance they are entitled to, and which humanitarian organizations are obliged to provide.

Solving crises of access is a complex undertaking and requires the full and collective efforts of the humanitarian community. As a collective, humanitarian organizations are better placed to take the three complementary elements that are essential to “unblocking” inaccessible areas:

- Understanding our environment – developing solutions requires a full understanding of the real and underlying reasons that access is denied. Combining the information and experiences of the wider humanitarian community will greatly improve our ability to do so.
- Developing complementary approaches – Working in concert, the humanitarian community has significantly more leverage than when we work as individuals actors.
- Systematic action and joint strategy – Clear strategies must be implemented in a systematic fashion. The right information and the right messages must be delivered to the right people at the right time. The humanitarian community must be prepared for dialogue with Governments, with armed non-state actors when required, as well as with the Security Council and donors in order to improve our access to those in need.

This three step approach would benefit from an analytical framework, which would allow us to better review and assess situations where access is being limited, identify obstacles to improving access, define the impact in humanitarian terms and also build a global picture of the problem.