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**REPORT FROM THE CLUSTER WORKING GROUP ON  
EMERGENCY TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

**August 2005**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

As outlined in the 12 July, 2005 meeting of the IASC Working Group on Humanitarian Reform, it was decided to dedicate a lead agency per cluster. The cluster working groups were assigned the task of defining the role and responsibility of the cluster lead.

It was the determination of the working group and the Executive Management of the participating organisations that the magnitude of the Inter-Agency Emergency Telecommunications (ET) activities precluded any one organisation accepting the responsibility of the cluster lead as originally defined.

In order to meet the spirit of enhancing the response capabilities of the cluster, the working group has suggested that the original role be split into two types of role (i.e. process owner and service provider). Three organisations have been proposed to assume the responsibilities and the obligations of these roles.

OCHA has been proposed for the role of overall Process Owner, UNICEF has been proposed for the role of Service Provider for common data services, and WFP has been proposed for the role of Service Provider for common security telecommunications service.

Background paper on the agenda item: Final Report of Cluster WG on Emergency Telecommunications

The implementation of this redefined model is dependant upon the acceptance of the responsibility by the three proposed agencies as well as the availability of the appropriate level of funding. The funding estimates will be subject to further planning guidance by the IASC concerning emergency levels.

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## **I. REPORT OBJECTIVE**

The objective of this report is to outline a proposal for consideration by the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) for the enhancement of emergency response capabilities within the Emergency Telecommunications (ET) cluster.

The following mandate was given by the IASC as the main objectives of the sectoral working groups:

1. Define the role and responsibilities of a cluster lead agency;
2. Produce actionable recommendations for improving the predictability, speed and effectiveness of international humanitarian response in the sector, taking into account relevant reports and humanitarian reform proposals, including the HRR;
3. Recommend to the IASC Principals for decision which IASC agency/ies should be the cluster lead agency on a global basis; and
4. Propose an implementation plan for short, medium and long term actionable recommendations and prepare options if there is no consensus.

## **II. CURRENT SITUATION**

Inter-Agency Emergency Telecommunications (IAET) is established as an IASC humanitarian common service although not as institutionalised as UNJLC. Inter-Agency common emergency telecommunications services have been provided in many emergencies (e.g. Afghanistan, Iraq, Liberia, Sudan, and Indonesia). Standardization initiatives have also been undertaken by the existing IASC working group on emergency telecommunications (WGET). However, the lack of a permanent structure, a clear mandate, standard operating procedures, and dedicated resources has made Inter-Agency emergency telecommunications services available only on an ad-hoc and often on a best effort basis.

### **Activation Procedure**

The activation of Inter-agency Emergency Telecommunications services has been formalized and approved by the IASC in November 2004 (see Annex 2, IAET Concept Paper (Rev 6) Mission Statement and Activation Guidelines.) The drawbacks with the approved activation procedure are as follows:

- The approved timing of the activation is not adequate for sudden emergencies;

- No individual agency is responsible for triggering the request, which tends to be made after many of the major agencies have mobilized and therefore have already made a significant investment in E.T. infrastructure in the zone of operation;
- No predictable funding is available for preparedness and to start-up the emergency response; and
- No individual agency has adequate stand-by capacity to provide Inter-Agency services in a systematic fashion.

These are all areas of deficiency to be addressed by this working group.

### **Services Provided**

Inter-Agency Emergency Telecommunications services, whenever provided, have been limited to the set-up and monitoring of a security radio network, considered the cornerstone of Moss (Minimum Operational Security Standards) compliance, and occasionally the provision of Internet Café's.

However, within the last few years there has been a significant dependency in the use of information systems within the Emergency Response community for everyday operational activities. To fulfil this new requirement, the Inter-Agency services traditionally provided should now include Inter-Agency data connectivity in addition to radio. It will however still be the responsibility of each agency to make available and secure its own information systems via the Internet.

### **III. ROLES, RESPONSIBILITY, AND ORGANIZATION NOMINATION OF THE EMERGENCY TELECOMMUNICATIONS CLUSTER LEAD**

As outlined in the 12 July, 2005 meeting of the IASC Working Group on Humanitarian Reform, it was decided to dedicate a lead agency per cluster. The cluster working groups were assigned the task of defining the role and responsibility of the cluster lead. Guidelines were supplied which included the following items: 1) systematically develop capacity within a cluster; 2) provide a basis for more effective technical coordination, including setting up technical secretariats for each cluster; 3) identify the resources required; and 4) clearly define preparedness for specific crises.

It was the determination of the working group and the Executive Management of the participating Organizations that the magnitude of the Inter-agency ET

activities precludes any one Organization accepting the responsibility of the cluster lead.

Therefore, the working group studied the existing Inter-Agency ET response capabilities and considered areas for improvement and for increased organizational accountability.

## **Roles**

The working group has split the role of the cluster lead into two distinct sections.

- 1) A *Process Owner* role has been created to perform the overall preparedness, coordination, and activation of the response. The Process Owner will manage the initial Emergency Response pending the assignment of the Telecommunications Coordinating Agency (TCA). See Annex 2

**OCHA is proposed for this role**

- 2) Two *Service Provider* roles have been created to supply common ET services in the initial stage of the emergency where existing organizational capacity on the ground is insufficient and whenever requested by the Process Owner.

**UNICEF is proposed for the role of Service Provider for Common Data services.**

**WFP is proposed for the role of Service Provider for Common Security Telecommunication services.**

## **Responsibilities**

### Process Owner

The Process Owner will be responsible for the following functions:

- Coordination with Service Providers, other cluster leads, other agencies, and UNDAC;
- Ensuring ET standards are established and applied;
- Consolidating lessons learned and refining process definitions;
- Managing assessment missions and requesting the intervention of the Service Providers whenever appropriate;
- Managing the establishment of initial ET services until a TCA is appointed. The Process Owner will rely on the operational capacity of the

Service Providers, and/or other partners, for the actual implementation and provision of the initial services as regulated by pre-defined technical agreements;

- Establishing collaboration tools, web pages, repositories, links, and templates;
- Fund raising – ensure the availability of funding for standby equipment, staff, preparation of appeals, discussion with donors;
- Advocacy for the ET cluster;
- Preparedness – ensuring that sufficient staff, stock and funds are on stand-by for emergency deployments, training and contingency planning; and
- Inter-cluster linkages and alignment of sustainable common response and deployment strategies with the other humanitarian common services.

### Service Providers

Within their respective service, the Service Providers will be responsible for the following functions:

- Support the Process owner, through the WGET, in the development of standard operating procedures, technical standards, the definition of E.T. services and training modules;
- Maintain equipment stock and standby personnel to ensure a predefined level of Inter-Agency readiness for emergencies, as requested by the Process Owner;
- Respond to requests for emergency deployment by the Process Owner within the predefined response time;
- Provide a minimum of 2 senior ICT staff to the UNDAC roster; and
- Be ready to assume the role of TCA when appropriate.

### Emergency Response Activities

In the event of an emergency and when requested by the Process Owner, the Service Providers will provide the following services:

Within 1 week from activation. Support the initial team(s) in key operational areas with:

- The establishment of basic security telecommunications services;
- Support network planning, establishment of procedures and request for licenses;

- The establishment of data services in a common location – generic email addresses and local printing; and
- Electrical Power for these limited services.

#### Within 3 weeks from activation

- Equip a minimum of 1 common communications centre per operational areas with:
  - Expanded coverage of security telecommunications including radio checks, vehicle tracking, training and reliable backup power;
  - Expanded data services to include printing capabilities and fax.
- Support the Process Owner with the detailed assessment and finalization of ET response requirements.

#### Within 4 weeks from Activation

- A Telecommunications Coordinating Agency (TCA) is assumed to be operational (see annex 2 Mission Statement and Activation Guidelines IAET Concept Paper). In addition to the duties identified in the attached paper, the TCA will assume the emergency specific management role from the Process Owner.

#### Within 8 weeks from Activation

- Common security communications MOSS Compliant (i.e. full security telecommunication services including importation, licensing, programming of equipment, training, and 24x7 security telecommunications coverage if necessitated by security phase); and
- Inter-Agency data connectivity.

#### Users of common ET services

The Process and Service Providers will expect each individual Agency, NGO, etc. to be responsible for the following:

- Their own ICT services and related support (e.g. corporate information systems);
- Infrastructure and support staff to connect to and use the common data and security radio networks (data standards to be developed and published);



- Agency-specific MOSS compliance;
- Adherence to the E.T. inter-agency standards and procedures (yet to be developed); and
- Cost sharing on a service oriented basis for those agreed services not included in the common appeal.

### IASC Working Group on Emergency Telecommunications (WGET)

The WGET will continue to exist and support the Process Owner and Service Providers in line with its current Terms of Reference.

### **Funding**

In order for Inter-Agency emergency telecoms services to be effectively and timely delivered and further preparations to commence, an appropriate funding mechanism and stand-by funding level must be established. In particular, initial seed funding is required by the Process Owner and the two Service Providers (and any other agency wishing to actively participate) to:

- Build an Inter-Agency emergency stock;
- Establish the necessary functions within their own organizations dedicated to Inter-Agency ET services/activities;
- Design and deliver training programmes to stand-by personnel;
- Establish a dedicated Inter-Agency emergency fund -- **accessible on a 24-hour notice** -- to:
  - Field the initial assessment(s)/UNDAC mission(s)
  - Ship and install the equipment in stock, necessary to cover the initial period of 3 weeks
  - Replenish the emergency stock to its original level.
  - *Note:* The funding level will be determined once the IASC supplies the estimate on the number, size and typology of emergencies for which to plan.

## **IV. ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

### **Recommendations**

#### **1. Approval of the re-defined cluster lead roles and proposed Organisations**

The IASC is requested to approve the re-defined cluster lead roles as identified in this document. Once approved, the Process Owner, Data Service Provider, and Security Telecommunications Service Provider roles to be accepted by OCHA, UNICEF, and WFP respectively. The acceptance of these organizational roles is critical to proceeding with the next steps of the process.

#### **2. Identification of funding required**

As agreed in the teleconference of September 11<sup>th</sup>, the working groups would be supplied with an indication of the number and size of emergencies to be used as planning figures. Once these planning figures are received, the Process Owner will commence a cost study to determine the funding required to implement the proposal.

#### **3. E.T. sector to be mainstreamed into UNDAC missions**

In order to ensure that the sector is able to mobilize as early as possible, the inclusion of the E.T. cluster in the UNDAC mission is vital. The assessment standards will be defined by the WGET to be used by the assessment team. The staff member will assist in the preparation of the project budget and appeal. A standby roster of E.T. assessment experts will be established. At a minimum, WFP, UNICEF and UNHCR must provide 2 standby assessment experts each.

The participant to the UNDAC mission would perform the assessment prior to any of the agencies establishing a presence on site.

#### **4. Creation of Process Owner Workplan**

Create a workplan for this new group integrating with the existing WGET workplan. This will include training, preparedness, stock level review, standardization review, detailed standing operating procedures, and advocacy.

#### **5. Continuation of Working Group coordination**

The Process Owner will need to coordinate the cluster activities with those of the other sectoral working groups. This cannot be done prior to the report to the IASC but must be done shortly thereafter.

### **Implementation Plan**

July 27	IASC Notification of the HRR-ET Working Group Members
August 1	HRR-ET Working Group Teleconference 1
August 4	HRR-ET Working Group Teleconference 2
August 10 - 11	HRR-ET Working Group Meeting in Geneva
August 22	Proposal Deliver to IASC for Consideration
September 6 - 7	Presentation to the IASC-WG Retreat
September 12	Approval by the IASC Principles meeting

If the IASC approves the proposal, the following actions will take place in the short term (September – December 05):

- Process owner inter-cluster coordination to begin;
- Identification of the E.T. WG assessment roster members;
- Identification of E.T. WG funding and resource requirements.

Within three months following the availability of funding, E.T. WG services will be made available for deployment.

As a way to ensure continued service enhancement the following actions will take place in 2006:

1. Review and modify the existing Inter-Agency Emergency Telecommunications (IAET) process to reflect the new E.T. WG activities
2. Perform an assessment and prepare an improvement plan based on the first year of experience.

## **V. REPORT ASSUMPTIONS**

1) IASC will provide an indication as to the number of Emergencies the working groups should plan for. An important element will be the estimate as to whether the emergencies will be handled in parallel.

This indication will be supplied to the working groups post-22<sup>nd</sup> August report. The working groups will use these estimates as the basis for funding for staff, equipment, standby capacity.

2) Pending the decision for the implementation of the new sectoral roles and allocation of funding, the organizations will continue with the existing procedure. This includes the activation of the Telecommunications Coordinating Agency (TCA), and Telecommunications Coordinating Officer (TCO). Annex 2 contains a copy of the IAET Mission Statement and Activation Guidelines.

**ANNEX 1: LIST OF WORKING GROUP PARTICIPANTS AS ANNOUNCED BY THE IASC**

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The following staff members were included in the correspondence and had the opportunity to be resource members to the working group.

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## **ANNEX 2: MISSION STATEMENT AND ACTIVATION GUIDELINES IASC CONCEPT PAPER (REV 6)**

IASC/WGET SUBWORKING GROUP

Plenary Meeting – 18-19 November 2004

IAET Concept Paper (Rev. 6)  
Mission Statement and Activation Guidelines

### **Statement of Intent:**

Inter-Agency Emergency Telecommunications (IAET) is a service that supports the co-ordination of humanitarian assistance for the initial period of a declared emergency through the provision of common basic IT and telecommunications infrastructure and services.

IAET aims at enhancing personnel security and information exchange.

### **I. IAET Activation Guidelines**

The objective of these guidelines is to ensure that the appropriate Telecommunications Coordinating Agency (TCA) in a specific operation is appointed in a coordinated manner (see diagram in Annex 1) to ensure the best combination of inter-agency resources are used in an optimal manner. This is done between the Inter-Agency (UN) Country Team and the IASC Working Group on Emergency Telecommunications (WGET). Concerned agencies are expected to participate in the activation process in response to the circulated information: non-attendance will imply agreement with the decisions taken, by default.

1. At the onset of an emergency with multi-sectoral involvement the WGET secretariat, upon its own initiative or at the request of a member agency, will convene an interagency consultation to take place within 3 days of the request (e.g. teleconference in the case of sudden onset emergencies and as part of the contingency planning/ preparedness process lead-time permitting for others).
2. The participating members are expected to provide the following information prior to the first consultation:
  - Presence of agencies in the country, focal points and contact lists

- Presence of ICT equipment, standards, procedures and personnel in the country
  - Availability of stand-by equipment and staff
  - Availability of commercial resources
  - Radio licensing, regulations, restrictions
  - Existing assessments and operational plans
  - Current security status
3. This consultation will analyse whether the conditions exist to warrant the establishment of IAET services. Activation would be a consensus decision among this group in consultation with the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC), or in his/her absence the United Nations Resident Coordinator (RC). This consultative group shall take a decision within 7 days, which should include the identification of an agency to perform an initial assessment with its own funding or through funds available at the country level. The assessment must be conducted in liaison with the Country UN Telecommunications working group. The assessment proposal should include:
- The name(s) and CV(s) of the proposed Telecommunications Officer(s) to conduct the assessment;
  - A Project plan including the expected outcome, coverage and timing of the assessment.
4. The selected 'agency' performs the Inter-Agency telecommunications assessment (on the ground), and prepares a sketch of the project, including cost and services to be provided – based on the guidelines of the minimum services (see Annex 2 attached) to be provided by the TCA. The assessment report should be provided to the HC and to the WGET including a copy of this IAET mission statement and guidelines. A decision to appoint a TCA should await the recommendation of the WGET, as described in points 7 and 8 below. The assessment report will be based on the template attached in Annex 4 and should include, but not limited to:
- The status of the telecommunication elements of the Minimum Operational Security Standards (MOSS),
  - Inventory of agencies' existing infrastructure and staffing
  - Availability of commercial resources
  - Radio licensing, regulations, restrictions
  - Detailed list of procedural and technical recommendations
  - Estimated IAET services cost

5. Agencies in a position to provide the TCA/TCO services are invited to submit their proposals to the WGET within 72 hours from presentation of the assessment report including:
  - A complete project implementation plan (see Annex 5), including staff and budgetary requirements, transition strategy and requirements for project sustainability;  
The name(s) and CV(s) of the proposed TCO (Telecommunications Coordinating Officer). See TCO terms of reference in Annex 3;
6. A WGET meeting will take place and recommend a TCA<sup>1</sup> to the HC within 48 hours.
7. The HC presents the WGET-endorsed proposal to the I.A. Country Team, receives their comments and appoints the TCA. At the same time, the HC will also identify the necessary funding, and/or requests the TCA to identify them.
8. The TCA in its lead role, and upon identification of funding, will take the necessary actions for deploying the IAET services in co-ordination with concerned agencies, which will include:
  - Advising all relevant authorities of the imminent activation of the IAET;
  - Providing full administrative and operational support to the IAET;
  - Recruiting the TCO following WGET criteria (see TCO terms of reference in Annex 3);
  - Advising participating agencies of the resources and services available within the TCA and resources expected from participating agencies,
  - Identifying and recruiting suitable ICT staff;
  - Estimating the total cost of the proposed IAET operation and providing the necessary input to the flash appeal process as required;
  - Initiating the mobilisation of adequate resources for the IAET deployment; and
  - Determining exit strategy and
  - Ensure after the exit communications are sustainable (Hand over strategy);

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<sup>1</sup> In some situations, it may not be necessary to appoint a TCA. A standalone TCO may be enough to provide the IAET services.



General Remarks:

- In the case of complex emergencies involving a peacekeeping or multinational force, the TCA will ensure that the activation will be co-ordinated with the relevant authorities. In this case, the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) and/or the UN Resident/ Humanitarian Coordinator should be consulted (input by DPKO sought).
- In Sudden Onset Disasters, the consultation process will take place in close co-ordination with the relevant UN designated official, OCHA and the Local Emergency Management Authority (LEMA).
- The IAET may be represented on UNDAC missions to assess inter-agency ICT co-ordination structures and requirements.

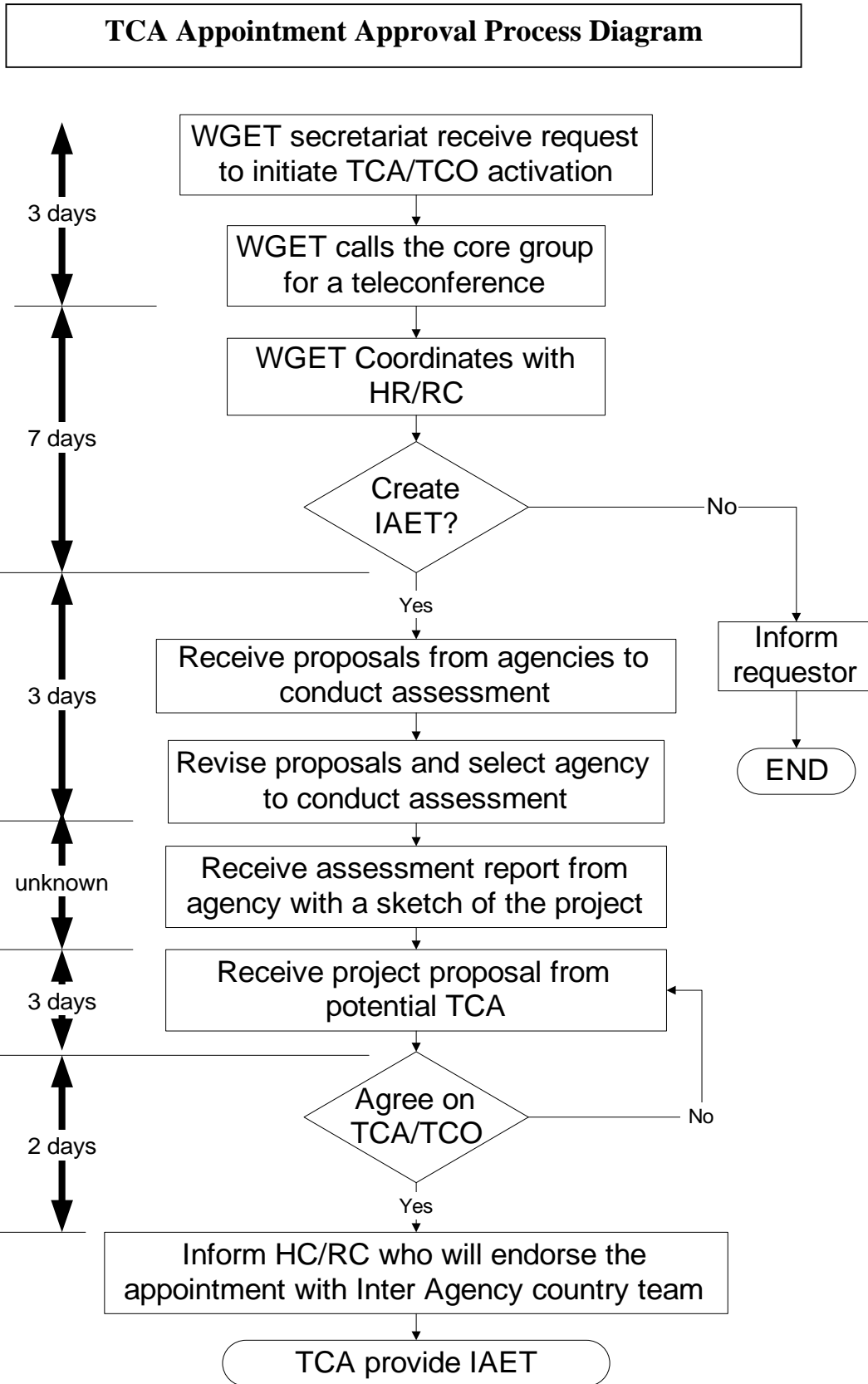
## **II. IAET Transition Guidelines**

1. IAET Transition process will be implemented as outlined in the initial project proposal.
2. The TCO will verify that the TCA has full documentation of the whole project inventory.
3. In the event of change of TCA, the TCO, HC and WGET will consult for selection and appointment of new TCA.
4. One month before a change of TCA, the TCO will make a proposal as to which agency, based on local support, is best suited to take over as TCA.
5. An overall assessment of the status of the current and required work to be completed by the TCO should be submitted to the HC and the Country Team at least one month before the end of the TCA assignment to determine if an extension of the project is required.
6. In case of a change of TCA, equipment installed during the project should be handed over to the newly appointed agency 14 days before the end of the project. The handover reports should include Brand, type, serial number, guarantees and installed/stocked location. The reports should highlight any outstanding financial/technical issues.
7. Based on the decision of the HC to terminate the project, the TCO will liaise with the HC to identify the entity to provide care and maintenance support for the installed network equipment.
8. Formal Project Closure will be the signing off of the Project Closure form by the HC, TCA and TCO.

## **III. Management and Oversight of an IAET:**

1. The WGET member agencies act as an oversight body for the IAET services.

2. As a rule, the country UN telecommunications working group (established as early as possible by the TCO) acts as the local steering committee. Membership of the group should ideally number no more than 10 members, drawn from different stakeholders within the humanitarian community, including:
  - UN Agencies;
  - NGOs (preferably through a local coordinating body);
  - Donors
  - Where appropriate, the national government.
3. The steering committee has five main functions:
  - Provide immediate feedback to the IAET on current and planned activities, ensuring that priorities match those of the humanitarian community;
  - Act as advocates within the UN community on issues related to emergency telecommunications infrastructure and the common security network;
  - Act as advocates in the wider community on issues related to emergency telecommunications, including frequency management/allocation and interoperability;
  - Provide strategic direction to the project;
  - Conduct IAET performance monitoring, evaluation and deployment reviews.



## **TCA Deliverables**

The Inter-Agency ICT services include:

### **Minimum security communications infrastructure**

The procurement, installation, maintenance and running for the common security communications infrastructure, ensuring MOSS compliance of the common the UN system. The network operates within a defined operational area and will only cover the common UN security system. Individual agencies will be responsible for their own MISTS compliance (funding, equipment, installation and support staffing), and the equipment necessary to access to the common security system.

### **Minimum common IT infrastructure**

The TCA will deliver the equipment, provide the staffing for the installation, maintenance and running of a common UN facility equipped with basic computing facilities and Internet connectivity, on the basis of a limited and best effort service. This function will be made available for each of the locations where the Country or Area TCOs are based, complementing existing Inter-Agency ICT infrastructure.

### **Telecoms Coordinating Officer's (TCO) function**

The appointed TCA will be responsible to provide one dedicated and full time TCO, which will be established:

**Generic Terms of Reference for  
Telecommunications Coordinating Officer (TCO)**

**Document 11 / rev.1**

**21 February 2003**

**Working Group on Emergency Telecommunications /  
Inter-Agency Standing Committee, Reference Group ICT**

<sup>1</sup>4th Plenary Meeting, Geneva,

–0 - 21 February 2003

**WGET / IASC-RGICT**

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## **GENERIC TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS COORDINATION OFFICER (TCO)**

Under the supervision of the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC), [or in his/her absence the United Nations Resident UN Coordinator (RC)], or of the official to whom the latter may delegate this authority, the Telecommunication Coordination Officer (TCO) will

- coordinate the installation, maintenance, support and staffing of the common security networks, such as common UN radio rooms, VHF/UHF repeaters and HF systems, using, to the extent possible, already existing infrastructure;
- liaise, on behalf of the SMT, with the local/national regulatory authorities for radio licensing for all UN telecommunications networks, in full cooperation with all concerned agencies;
- liaise with the country or area SMT on security telecommunications issues and work to establish a UN telecommunications working group;
- support, in close cooperation with the Designated Official (DO) under the country security plan, each agency's full compliance with the telecommunication elements of the Minimum Operational Security Standards (MOSS), using equipment to be provided by each individual agency, commensurate to the security phase in force or anticipated;
- ensure all agencies' telecommunications systems are compliant to the relevant frequency and call sign allocations and ensure network discipline;
- coordinate all changes to the UN frequency and call sign allocations across the operational area;
- ensure the individual agencies' telecommunications directories (listing telephone, call sign and frequency lists) are maintained and effectively distributed to all agencies in the operational area;
- coordinate all actions with the coordinating body and the ICT officers from each agency present in their area of responsibility;
- ensure, that the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for common telecommunications network management are properly implemented;
- maintain an inventory of all equipment provided as part of the Inter-Agency response within his/her area of responsibility including the hand-over of all planning documents, equipment inventory, the management of the support staff, ICT-related budget and finance documents and the telecommunications directories;
- assume other telecommunications-related duties as directed by the supervisor.

## **Inter-Agency Telecommunications Assessment Template**

### **1. Executive Summary**

Providing the background and context and highlighting the main challenges and recommendations.

### **2. Country working environment**

Including the description of the UN operations in the country/area.

### **3. Existing Status**

Description of the current status in regards to MOSS compliance of UN agencies, and highlights challenges in creating an Inter-Agency MOSS compliant, minimum security Telecommunications system.

Description of the status of the status of telecommunications links with humanitarian and other partners. Technical and regulatory situation.

### **4. Detailed Recommendations**

Outlining the steps required to implement a fully MOSS Compliant minimum security Inter-Agency (Common) Telecommunications System for UN operations.

### **5. Budget – Cost estimates for Implementation**

### **6. Appendixes**

Inter-Agency Telecommunications Working Group Contact List

Existing HF/VHF/UHF Frequency Listing

Master UN & NGO HF/VHF Selcall and callsign allocation template

## **Project Implementation Plan Template**

**1. Executive Summary**

Project proposal based on the recommendations of the Inter-Agency Emergency Telecommunications assessment mission.

**2. Detailed project plan**

**3. Project Management**

**4. Exit strategy**

**5. Equipment procurements and Logistics**

**7. Project Budget**

Including a detailed breakdown.