

**INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP
59th MEETING**

**22-23 November 2004
UNHCR - Geneva**

**Humanitarian Response Review
Revised Draft Terms of Reference - 18 November 2004**

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1. Background:

There is a common perception that humanitarian response does not always meet the basic needs of affected populations in a timely fashion, that the response provided varies considerably from crisis to crisis and there may be insufficient humanitarian capacity to respond to the demands of concurrent major crises. While some of the factors affecting response are specific to individual crises – such as lack of access and obstruction of aid – some of the key challenges seem to be systemic in nature. In light of the high current levels of humanitarian demand, it is evident that there is a critical need to identify those factors that have hindered the speed and effectiveness of humanitarian response, including in the area of protection, and ensure that appropriate steps are taken to improve the timeliness and impact of humanitarian interventions.

2. Objective, Purpose and Scope of the Review

The objective is to develop a joint plan of action to improve the effectiveness and timeliness of the humanitarian response to emergencies.

To this end, the Emergency Relief Coordinator, based on his General Assembly mandate (resolution 46/182) has initiated an independent in-depth system wide review of humanitarian response capacities. The review will analyse the overall humanitarian response capacities as well as the potential resources available to meet future demands for assistance and protection. The focus of the review will primarily give attention to UN, NGOs and Red Cross/Red Crescent capacities. This should help achieve a common understanding of both the current response capacity and available expertise and of how the humanitarian system can effectively mobilize and deploy them. In addition, it will identify possible gaps in expertise and resources that exist and recommend measures that need to be taken to address the shortcomings.

This exercise should result in the identification of gaps in current capacity, as well as identifying trends in response. Based on this analysis it will develop a set of recommendations to address identified shortcomings in line with the principles and approaches envisioned in UN GA Resolution 46/182. The outcome of the review could help ensure that the UN and NGO response capacity, in terms of overall management, human and financial resources, tools and mechanisms, as well as

equipment and relief supplies is adequate and appropriate to the changing humanitarian environment. This should ultimately assist humanitarian agencies to meet future challenges through improved response mechanisms and delivery, strengthened emergency funding as well as provide clarification of respective roles based on resources and expertise.

Key Review Tasks:

- (i) Define Benchmarks for the expected performance of the international humanitarian response system in terms of scale, speed, intensity and impact.
- (ii) Undertake an inventory of current capacities (at HQ and Field level), in the key response sectors (such as shelter, food, water and sanitation, health, education, protection, joint services) of the UN, NGOs and the Red Cross family to respond to humanitarian emergencies, i.e. assess performance of the system against benchmarks as defined in (i).
- (iii) Review the establishment, strength, relevance and role of coordination functions.
- (iv) Review joint services and assess the capacity and potential of such services to appropriately address emergency needs.
- (v) Examine the adequacy, timeliness and flexibility of emergency funding.
- (vi) Analyze the effectiveness and appropriateness of existing surge mechanisms, including in the area of protection.
- (vii) Assess the timeliness, efficiency and effectiveness of external stand-by arrangements available to humanitarian agencies and how these contribute to meeting emergency needs.
- (viii) Review the effectiveness of existing arrangements for the provision of equipment, infrastructure and relief supplies
- (ix) Review relevant management structures and accountability mechanisms for the collective humanitarian response, including the role of the ERC and the HCs. Particular focus should be placed on procedures facilitating the release of funds and the deployment of personnel and other critical resources.
- (x) Identify existing best practices and gaps and develop practical and sustainable solutions to address these both inside and outside the humanitarian systems (e.g. from member states or private sources etc).

3. Review Methodology

The details of the review methodology will be developed by the team and outlined in the team's inception report. It can be anticipated that this review will consist of:

- (i) A physical mapping out of the existing capacities in the key sectors by visiting, interviewing and documenting relevant existing and prospective humanitarian partners.
- (ii) Review of factors that affect the rapid deployment of such capacities. (These could address issues such as: financing mechanisms for contingency planning and response preparedness).

- (iii) In-depth interview and dialogue with humanitarian partners, donors, host governments, communities and others stakeholders to help review the current response capacities. Relevant studies on response to past emergencies should be examined.
- (iv) Based on the above, a set of recommendations for improving humanitarian response capacity in assistance and protection.

It is expected that the recommendations from the review will be discussed by the IASC WG, which will develop a plan of action for their implementation to be presented to the IASC Principals.

The review will be based on an initial examination of relevant materials, followed by interviews with key informants, including agency focal points and focus groups. The team should also supplement the data collection with a survey among current, potential and/or former humanitarian aid workers.

5. Administrative Arrangements for the Review

A three-person team of senior external consultants will conduct this independent review, which is being commissioned by the Emergency Relief Coordinator. The team will consult regularly with the ERC, during the course of the review. OCHA Geneva will provide Secretariat support for the review under the leadership of the Assistant Emergency Relief Coordinator (AERC) who will be assisted by the Evaluation and Studies Unit of OCHA. The AERC will be the focal point for consultations with the humanitarian community, on behalf of the ERC.

The consultants should combine the following skill set: in-depth knowledge of UN and NGO humanitarian assistance, common service provision, monitoring and evaluation, experience with undertaking institutional surveys, good grasp of sectoral capacity issues, in particular for the issues raised above, and possess management expertise, as well as hands-on operational experience in emergencies. Additional specific sectoral expertise may be brought in as required. The ERC will seek external funding from donors for the Review.

It is proposed that each agency appoint a senior focal point for the review and that the IASC form a reference group. The role of the reference group would be to work alongside with the team, ensure inter-agency participation and reflection, promote the implementation of the survey and provide the team with an agency-specific perspective. In addition, it may be opportune to work with donors to ensure full donor engagement.

6. Review Timeline

The review will start in December 2004 and with a final output expected for May 2005.