

**DRAFT : STRENGTHENING FIELD COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE
IN THE INITIAL RESPONSE PHASE OF NEW COMPLEX EMERGENCIES
13TH IASC WORKING GROUP MEETING
27 JULY 1994**

I INTRODUCTION

On July 13, 1994, at the Economic and Social Council, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Peter Hansen, introduced the report of the Secretary-General on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (E/1994/80).

He stated that relief organizations and NGOs appreciate the value-added dimension of the work of DHA in providing team leadership to facilitate the overall response by the allocation of responsibilities among the humanitarian organisations, organizing and leading assessment missions to determine the urgent needs and ensuring adequate field coordination arrangements.

He noted that the Inter-Agency Standing Committee [IASC] had agreed that one of the keys to effective cooperation lies in the system having the right leadership and supporting capacity at the field level, where policy is implemented, where day-to-day operations are planned, coordinated and carried out, and information gathered, analyzed and followed up.

The present paper, put forward for the consideration of IASC, suggests specific procedures to strengthen field coordination in complex emergencies, particularly in the initial response phase. If they are approved by IASC, more detailed Standard Operating Procedures reflecting them will be prepared at the Working Group level for the consideration of the Committee.

These Standard Operating Procedures will take into account the work in progress on other aspects of field coordination, including *the Guidelines for Implementing the Consolidated Appeals Process*, *the Field Guidelines for Situation Reports* and others.

II MEASURES TO BE TAKEN IN ADVANCE OF EMERGENCIES

Disaster Management Teams

It is already established, though not yet sufficiently implemented everywhere, that in developing countries the Resident Coordinator heads a Disaster Management Team [DMT] comprising the United Nations agencies concerned with response to humanitarian emergencies. The Teams will normally be expanded to include IOM, ICRC, IFRC and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and relevant national and international NGOs and should work in close association with the host government, the diplomatic missions of donor countries and regional organisations.

Priority will be given to the strengthening of the DMTs and updated instructions for their functioning will be issued in consultation with the members of IASC.

The DMTs will compile basic data on preparedness measures that exist or can be developed in advance of emergencies, including information on the types of food, clothing, shelter, medical and other supplies which are appropriate for local use and noting those which are available for local purchase in the country or the region; communication and transport arrangements; ports, airports and airstrips; and all other facilities relevant to a rapid and effective response to emergencies.

The DMTs, under instructions and advice from their headquarters, will progressively move towards the standardization of supplies and equipment appropriate for their area, giving priority to harmonizing communications equipment and then to standardization in other sectors.

The DMTs will prepare an Action Plan for their coordinated response and mobilization of resources in time of need, will rehearse their joint actions, and regularly review their Plans and keep them up to date.

Qualified Staff for Service in Emergencies

United Nations agencies will, to the extent possible, arrange postings to developing countries where emergencies can be anticipated for staff experienced in responding to such emergencies.

They will ensure that an adequate number of their staff are trained in emergency response through the Disaster Management Training Programme or in other ways.

Headquarters staff working on humanitarian affairs will whenever possible be given postings in the field to acquire needed experience and field staff with such experience will in turn be rotated to postings at headquarters.

Each agency will compile and maintain an up to date roster of experienced emergency staff listed according to their expertise and will share these rosters with DHA to facilitate rapid

assignment when emergencies arise. The Red Cross Movement and NGOs will be encouraged to cooperate in the compilation of such rosters by suggesting suitably qualified staff known to them.

The members of IASC will collaborate with DHA in compiling a roster of highly qualified staff suitable to serve, if required, as Humanitarian Coordinators [HC].

III MEASURES TO BE TAKEN WHEN EMERGENCIES ARISE

Early Warning and Early Response

Resident Coordinators and DMTs have primary responsibility for alerting their headquarters to impending emergencies, whether complex or otherwise.

The first initial assessment of the situation and of relief needs, and the initial response to complex emergencies, will usually be made by the agencies which are on the ground when the emergency arises, in accordance with their mandates.

The assessment will cover estimated needs for additional staff as well as relief supplies, transport (including aircraft) and communications equipment.

Delivery of the needed items will be given priority by all concerned. Every effort will be made to ensure rapid pre-positioning which is often easier while the Early Warning stage is still in effect and before the full emergency impedes transport.

Division of Labour

At the very outset of complex emergencies the Emergency Relief Coordinator will consult the members of IASC by the most expeditious means available to reach agreement on the appropriate division of labour among them to deal with the crisis. A draft section on "Defining Complex Emergencies" is attached as Annex I.

Selection of Humanitarian Coordinator

The ERC will also consult IASC members on whether the Resident Coordinator in place has the right profile to serve as Humanitarian Coordinator and if so will confirm his/her designation.

Should the Resident Coordinator not have the necessary humanitarian profile, the ERC will consult IASC to identify a suitable candidate from the roster maintained by DHA in collaboration with the agencies, or any other candidate identified by UNDP and other IASC members.

If it is decided that the nature of the emergency, or the specific capacities of the agencies in the area, make it appropriate to employ the arrangement of a lead agency, that agency will, without delay, assume primary operational responsibility, in collaboration with the other concerned agencies.

For certain situations, where there is a need to designate zonal/area coordinators, under the overall coordination arrangement, the ERC will consider assigning such functions to the representative of the main operational agency carrying out responsibilities in those areas. This will be undertaken on the basis of the mandates and capacities of the agencies on the ground.

For purposes of overall coordination, the ERC will be consulting with the lead agency (if this arrangement has been adopted) and also with the other IASC members on whether a representative of this agency should be appointed as Humanitarian Coordinator.

In exceptional cases, where there is no Resident Coordinator in place, or where a Resident Coordinator will not be able to carry out that function, the ERC will, following consultation, appoint a Humanitarian Coordinator and ensure that he or she is provided with the necessary support in terms of staff and other resources.

It is essential that the Humanitarian Coordinator, so appointed in complex emergencies after consultation with IASC members, be clearly recognised as the single coordinating authority in the field, to whom the agencies' field representatives will be responsible.

While the UN agencies will carry out relief needs assessments within their respective areas of responsibility, the Humanitarian Coordinator will be responsible in-country for ensuring the coordination and overall coherence of these assessments.

In certain circumstances a special Representative of the Secretary-General may be appointed to head the UN presence in a country. Depending on the situation, a more formal or less formal reporting relationship may exist between the Humanitarian Coordinator and the SRSG.

The Humanitarian Coordinator will in any event also be directly responsible to the ERC.

Back-up Staff

To support Humanitarian Coordinators and the coordinated operation in-country, but without adding any unnecessary layers, there must be at least a minimum of direct support staff.

While agency representatives will remain responsible for providing reports to their respective headquarters, one Professional Officer will be needed for the drafting of coordinated reports. There will also be need for a Professional Officer to develop the in-country-level first draft of Consolidated Appeals. These two Officers, together with two General Service staff appear to represent such a minimum. UN agencies, including UNDP and the UN Volunteers, or NGOs, will be requested to provide such core staff for an agreed period of time.

Technical staff of the agencies in-country will provide advice and assistance to support the Humanitarian Coordinator.

Focal Points at Headquarters

For each complex emergency, an operational focal point, (normally the relevant desk officer), will be identified by each agency within its headquarters. The ERC will also identify, within DHA, a focal point for facilitating coordination for each complex emergency.

Managing the Emergency

The early needs assessments will be transmitted by the HC to DHA headquarters and by the field representatives of the agencies to their own headquarters.

These assessments will have to rely on rapidly assembled, estimated information. They will aim at identifying the most crucial needs, with a rough indication of their scale, and suggest how best to utilize existing relief resources. The emphasis from the outset must in the coordination of humanitarian assistance be based on the original needs assessment.

Development of more comprehensive assessments should occur in tandem with action as the situation develops. An important element will be the degree to which needed items can be obtained locally or in neighbouring countries.

All priority relief items which are available in-country from agencies' stocks or which can be purchased with funds already in their possession will of course be provided for the benefit of the victims without delay. Immediate additional relief requirements will be sought either

through an "interim" or fully consolidated inter-agency appeal. However, in the initial response phase of a new complex emergency, it is most likely that an interim appeal will be needed to ensure a full pipeline.

As reports received from the members of the DMT in-country and cross-checked between them indicate new needs (or the sufficient fulfilment of previously reported needs), their response actions will be modified accordingly and the changing assessments and updated appeals be reported to the respective headquarters.

Meetings of the DMT in the field, and between the agencies and DHA at headquarters (which may take the form of task forces for specific emergencies) will be action-oriented. They will aim primarily at assessing progress in satisfying the victims' needs and in deciding on solutions to problems as well as allocating tasks and division of responsibilities : which agency will do what to solve major shortfalls in supplies or transport or major bottlenecks in deliveries. The HC must build a matrix of needs and organisational activities which will be refined as additional information and experience dictate. The matrix will aid both planning for future interventions and ensuring all needs are met by sector and region. NGOs should be included in this process. They will regularly review the action taken on decisions agreed at previous meetings. The meetings will thus call for staff representation at the senior technical level. They will be much more than sessions for the mere exchange of information, though they will serve this purpose also.

Resource Available for Support for Field Coordination

Four sources of funds are available for supporting field coordination at the onset of an emergency :

Central Emergency Revolving Fund. Based upon availability, the CERF can provide initial funding from interest earned on capital to support field coordination. The Humanitarian Coordinator will have to contact the Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator in the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to determine the availability of CERF funds;

Special Programme Resources. UNDP Resident Representatives can request funds from UNDP's Special Programme Resources for the following : US\$ 50,000 for emergency assistance. Between US\$ 50,000 to 100,000, primarily but not exclusively for strengthening field level coordination mechanisms for internally displaced persons;

Agency Emergency Funding Resources. In those circumstances when an agency has been asked to serve as "lead agency", it might use its own emergency funds to ensure that its field coordination capacity is adequate to meet the demands of its coordinating role;

Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeals. Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeals, particularly interim appeals for immediate start-up operations, can be used as a means of mobilising initial resources for supporting field coordination.

ANNEX I - SAMPLE DEFINITIONS OF COMPLEX EMERGENCIES

OXFAM

A complex emergency is the type of crisis where the need for relief is complicated by security and political considerations, as in Bosnia and Somalia.

UNHCR

For the purposes of describing those situations in which the necessity of the DHA coordinating role pertains, a complex emergency can be defined as a humanitarian crisis, which both with regard to its causes and its effects, goes beyond the mandate of any single UN agency : It stems from a variety of causes such as natural disaster, socio-economic factors, civil conflict or war and it impacts on a broad mixture of population groups, who are in their country of origin. Where an emergency, either because of its causes (for example a health epidemic) or because of the nature or location of the population group it impacts on (for example children or refugees), while possibly necessitating intervention by various UN agencies, fall clearly within the overall competence of a single UN agency, it should not be treated as a complex emergency.

DHA

Defining Complex and Major Emergencies

A **Complex Emergency** is typically a protracted situation in which the fundamental right to basic survival resources is prevented by the direct consequences of political decisions. A **complex emergency** is furthermore frequently characterised by :

domestic or inter-state armed conflict, often the result of efforts by contending groups to assert political, economic, social and religious dominance;

an on-set and duration that, when compared with most natural disasters, save drought, are comparatively slow and long-lasting;

populations that are displaced either within or across borders or who are besieged;

politically or conflict motivated constraints and impediments that seriously prevent or delay humanitarian assistance to affected populations;

high security risks for relief workers attempting to provide humanitarian assistance;

situations that require a high degree of external political support to enable humanitarian responses, including access, to affected populations;

situations which often call for peace-making and/or peace-keeping operations;