

(Version sent to IASC Working Group on 30 August)

STRENGTHENING FIELD COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE IN COMPLEX EMERGENCIES

I. INTRODUCTION

The present paper, put forward for the consideration of Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), suggests a number of specific agreements and procedures to strengthen field coordination in complex emergencies, especially in the pre-emergency and initial response phases. These agreements and procedures also respond to many of the points regarding field coordination addressed in recent ECOSOC and General Assembly deliberations. These include ones contained in the Agreed Conclusions on the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance of the 1993 Summer Session of ECOSOC, in General Assembly Resolution 48/57, and in the "Request for Additional Information on the Report Submitted on Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance" of the Summer 1994 substantive session of ECOSOC.

If the suggested agreements and procedures contained in the present document are approved by IASC, more detailed implementation procedures and Standing Operating Procedures reflecting these agreements and procedures will be prepared at by the IASC Task Force on Field Coordination for consideration by the Working Group. These documents would 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. The IASC Task Force on Field Coordination will also continue its work in developing recommendations regarding additional issues in this area.

The measures suggested in this paper focus on complex emergencies, which by definition exclude emergencies which fall within the mandate and competence of given UN organizations. Coordination responsibilities for emergencies which fall within the overall competence and mandate of a given UN agency, while possibly necessitating intervention by various UN agencies, remain with the agency concerned.

The following text is divided into two sections. The first deals with actions that need to be taken prior to the onset of a complex emergency. The second deals with those which need to be initiated after such an onset, focusing on rapid response measures in the initial emergency response phase. Information regarding the selection of Humanitarian Coordinators, a subject of obvious relevance to field coordination but which falls outside of the specific purview of this IASC Task Force (as it is being addressed at the IASC Heads of Agency level), is included in Annex I of this document.

II. MEASURES TO BE TAKEN IN ADVANCE OF COMPLEX EMERGENCIES

Disaster Management Team

In developing countries, the UN Resident Coordinator, working in consultation with the relevant UN agencies is responsible for the early identification of situations which might call for emergency humanitarian assistance, in making the necessary preparation for an effective response, and for implementing complex emergency programmes.

To this end, a Disaster Management Team (DMT) The role of such Disaster Management teams presently encompasses all aspects of emergency management, involving pre-disaster actions (e.g., disaster mitigation and preparedness) as well as those occurring after the onset of disasters. should be established (or re-activated, if this is the case), in all situations of potential emergency. The DMT, chaired by the Resident Coordinator, should include all UN organizations concerned with humanitarian assistance. The DMT should, as appropriate, be expanded in imminent emergency situations through seeking the collaboration of other international organizations, ICRC, IFRC, IOM and non-governmental organizations. The DMT should work in close consultation with the host government, the donor community, and regional organizations.

In situations of potential emergency, the DMT should, as soon as practicable, prepare a contingency Action Plan designed to ensure a coordinated response to the potential emergency, to include a strategy for the mobilization of locally available resources. In doing so, the DMT will also compile basic data on preparedness measures that exist or can be developed in advance of the emergency. Examples include information on the types of food, clothing, shelter, medical and other supplies which are appropriate for local use and noting those available through local purchase in the country or region; communications and transportation arrangements; ports, airports and airstrips and all other facilities relevant to a rapid and effective response; and the anticipated division of specific responsibility among relevant agencies for emergency response according to established mandates. This information should be reviewed regularly and kept up-to-date, and communicated to the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) and the headquarters of the member agencies.

Early Warning

The Resident Coordinator and Disaster Management Team member agencies in-country have primary responsibility for alerting respectively the Emergency Relief Coordinator (the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs) and the headquarters of the member agencies to signs of an impending complex emergency and to recommend appropriate preventative and preparedness actions. It is the responsibility of DHA and these agencies to ensure that appropriate preparedness actions (e.g., contingency planning measures, primarily at the in-country level) are undertaken, and that appropriate preventive actions (e.g., preventive diplomacy initiatives) are promoted.

III. MEASURES TO BE TAKEN WHEN COMPLEX EMERGENCIES ARISE

This section focuses on a number of the coordination actions, as listed below, that must be undertaken in order to ensure an effective and coordinated rapid response to a new complex emergency. This listing is not meant to imply that these actions are to be taken sequentially. Rather, these actions (with the exception of updating resource requirements) constitute major components of the package of rapid response actions that need to be initiated together following the onset of a complex emergency. The issues addressed in this section include:

- o selection of the Humanitarian Coordinator;
- o initial needs assessments and appeals;
- o providing support for needs assessment and appeal production;
- o establishing the division of labour and framework of operations;
- o the use of inter-agency emergency response teams;
- o key functions of coordination meetings;
- o strengthening staffing for UN coordination actions;
- o funding sources for supporting field coordination; and
- o updating resource requirements.

Selection of Humanitarian Coordinators

At the very onset of a new complex emergency, the Emergency Relief Coordinator, in consultation with the IASC members, will take the necessary steps to ensure that a Humanitarian Coordinator is appointed.

Discussions on further refining the mechanisms regarding selection of Humanitarian Coordinators are being carried out at the IASC Heads of Agency level, and therefore fall outside of the mandate of this Task Force itself. For information purposes, additional text on this subject, drawn primarily from the presentation of USG Peter Hansen to the 1994 Summer Session of ECOSOC, is contained in Annex I of the present document.

Initial Needs Assessments and Appeals The following sections on needs assessments and appeals summarize many of the relevant conclusions of the IASC Task Force on the Consolidated Appeal Process, concentrating on the commitments of the UN agencies to facilitating and supporting these processes.

When a complex emergency arises, the initial assessment of the complex emergency situation and of relief needs (as well as, it should be noted, the initial response to complex emergencies) will usually be made by the agencies which are on the ground when the complex emergency arises, in accordance with their mandates. The UN Resident Coordinator (or the Humanitarian Coordinator, if one has already been designated at this point in time and is in-country) is responsible in-country for ensuring the overall coordination and coherence of such assessments, and their timely initiation.

These initial 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. If the needs markedly exceed the resources at hand to address them, it may be necessary to issue immediately a consolidated inter-agency "interim appeal" covering a very limited initial period until the normal consolidated appeal process can be carried out. While in exceptional circumstances, an agency may need to launch its own "interim appeal" prior to the issuance of a consolidated appeal, efforts will be made to minimize this necessity (e.g., by expediting the quick production of the first inter-agency consolidated appeal), and such appeals will be done in consultation with DHA. The UN agencies are committed to presenting their funding requirements to donors within the context of consolidated inter-agency appeals to the maximum extent possible. Development of more comprehensive assessments should occur in tandem with action as the situation develops.

Such appeals will identify the needs not only for relief items and direct assistance actions, but also those required for coordination.

Providing Support for Needs Assessments and Appeal Production

The initial needs assessment for a new complex emergency will be undertaken primarily by staff already in-country. However, subsequent assessments, and the consolidated appeal process, may often require additional experienced specialist staff to be provided by the concerned UN agencies. Such additional staff will work within the operational framework established by the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator and the Disaster Management Team. DHA will ensure that the staff required for the coordination of such actions are provided, looking first to itself and the relevant UN agencies for such persons, but seeking them through other channels if required (see later section on "Strengthening Staffing for UN Coordination Actions").

Logistics, financial and other support for needs assessments and appeal production are to be provided by the concerned humanitarian aid organizations in-country, including the UN organizations. "Concerned humanitarian aid organisation" is intended here to be consistent with the term "concerned organisation" (GA46/182, Par. 31) which refer to the United Nations system, and, where appropriate, national relief organisations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, intergovernmental organisations, indigenous and international non-governmental organisations and bilateral relief organisations..

. If additional financial resources are required, funding will be sought from the UN organizations themselves, including for coordinations aspects, from the Special Programme Resources of UNDP already earmarked for this purpose, and from donors. Use of interest from the Central Emergency Revolving Fund will be sought as a last resort, as, under the present regulations for the CERF, they must be reimbursed.

Division of Labour and Framework of Operations

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 regarding the appropriate division of labour among them to deal with the crisis.

For each complex emergency, a Focal Point will be identified by DHA and each concerned organization within its Headquarters. This information will be shared immediately among the concerned agencies.

From the very onset of a new complex emergency, every effort will be made to reach agreement by all the relevant entities regarding the basic framework within which in-country relief actions will be undertaken, in accordance with their respective mandates and capacities, and with the basic division of responsibilities established by the ERC. The primary responsibility for facilitating this process lies with Humanitarian Coordinator, working with the DMT members and with the other relevant actors.

Examples of important components of such a framework are:

- o Acceptance by all parties to the conflict to the key operating principles that underlie the UN humanitarian assistance efforts (e.g., neutrality, impartiality, access to those in need, accountability to donors, etc.)
- o Agreement on the overall geographic and sectoral division of responsibility among the range of humanitarian assistance entities (including both UN and non-UN entities to the maximal extent possible)
- o Agreement on which entities will assume responsibility for important categories of persons in need, such as internally displaced persons, and special problem areas such as de-mining.
- o Receiving clarification from the responsible authorities (e.g., the Office of the UN Security Coordinator and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations) of how security-related responsibilities are to be handled and how relevant procedures will be implemented (e.g., procedures for authorizing staff to enter more insecure areas, for convoy security procedures, and for maintaining radio contact, liaison with the Designated Official for Security, etc.) and ensuring that this is communicated to the concerned agencies in the field.

Every effort will continue to be made to ensure the clear delineation of coordination functions from those to be carried out directly by the operational UN agencies themselves. Coordination is meant to provide value added to the actions of the UN operational agencies, and to avoid any extra bureaucratic layers.

Inter-Agency Emergency Response Teams

For most complex emergencies, the UN emergency response will be carried out by staff already in-country, supplemented as needed by additional staff provided by agency headquarters, and working within the DMT framework. However, in exceptional circumstances, where there is little or no UN field presence to build on, the UN may deploy an inter-agency emergency response team.

For example, in certain civil conflict situations work must be carried out at considerable risk, with the need to keep the number of staff at risk small and to ensure that for each staff member, the work that he or she can accomplish outweighs the risks involved. In such cases, it may be appropriate to utilize a small inter-agency team, with staff of different agencies rotating in and out of the team. Each member of the team may therefore act not only on behalf of his or her agency, but also on behalf of the Team as a whole, and even on behalf of another agency as required. An example of such a Team is the Advance Humanitarian Team sent into Rwanda in

the early days of the current Rwanda emergency, a model that will be evaluated for its lessons learned.

Coordination Meetings

Meetings of the DMT in the field, and among the agencies and DHA at Headquarters (which may take the form of Task Forces for specific emergencies) dealing with responses to the complex emergency will be action-oriented. They will aim primarily at assessing progress in satisfying the victims' needs and in deciding on solutions to problems -which agency will do what to solve major shortfalls in supplies or transport or major bottlenecks in deliveries. In-country, the Humanitarian Coordinator should use these meetings in part to establish the matrix of needs and organizational activities which will be refined as additional information and experience dictate. The matrix will aid planning for future interventions and will help ensure that all needs are met by sector and region. The DMT should seek the collaboration and participation of other international organizations, ICRC, IFRC, IOM and non-governmental organizations in such meetings.

The coordination and consultation meetings at the headquarters level will call for staff representation at the senior technical level.

Strengthening Staffing for UN Coordination Actions

In major complex emergencies there is a need for staff to assist the Humanitarian Coordinator in performing his/her coordination functions, including in support of the DMT. Staffing for such positions will first be sought in-country among the relevant UN assistance agencies. For posts which cannot be filled quickly in this fashion, these UN agencies will be requested to provide such qualified staff for quick deployment from other locations. DHA and these agencies will work together to further clarify the terms under which such persons could serve in coordination functions, and to determine how best to identify and deploy such persons as rapidly as possible when needed.

Additional coordination support staff, as needed, will be sought through the expanded use of a variety of mechanisms. Examples include: seeking quick secondments of experienced NGO staff; use of standby staffing mechanisms established with governments; increased use of UN Volunteers; and expanded use of experienced consultants (including those listed on the DHA roster of such consultants). However, it is agreed that such mechanisms should be used to provide staff to build on the core of staff provided by the UN agencies themselves, and not as a substitute for these core staff.

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

The relevant UN agencies will ensure that an adequate number of their staff are trained in emergency response (including in recognizing and managing high stress, and its effects) through their own training programmes, the Disaster Management Training Programme, or in other ways. Further, 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 relevant postings at headquarters.

Funding Sources for Supporting Field Coordination

Four sources of funds are available for supporting rapid response field coordination actions at the onset of a complex emergency:

UNDP Special Programme Resources. UNDP Resident Representatives serving jointly as the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator can request up to \$50,000 for field coordination actions (and/or certain other specific assistance actions) from Category A-2 of UNDP's Special Programme Resources fund. They may also request up to \$100,000 from Category A-4 for field level coordination activities in complex emergencies which include internal displacement, refugee, or returnee components.

Central Emergency Revolving Fund. Based upon availability, the CERF can presently provide initial funding (which must be reimbursed) to support field coordination from interest earned on its capital. In each case, the Humanitarian Coordinator must contact the Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator to determine the availability of CERF funds. The IASC members ask that this mechanism be continued, but urge that strong consideration be given to expanding the level of funds available for coordination purposes via CERF.

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 initial appeals for immediate start-up operations, are also a means of mobilising resources for supporting field coordination.

Unfortunately, the total level of funds available for quick response coordination actions via these four mechanisms continues to be insufficient to cover the needs. The UN humanitarian assistance agencies are not able to significantly reduce this shortfall, as their continued funding shortages makes it very difficult to reallocate donor funding away from the purposes for which they were originally requested in order to fund inter-agency coordination efforts. Thus, the UN agencies ask the donor community to provide the level of funds required, both via increased standby funds for quick-response coordination actions as well as via quicker and more generous responses to the coordination components of inter-agency consolidated appeals for specific relief operations.

Updating Resource Requirements

The initial inter-agency consolidated appeal for a new complex emergency will be updated, or replaced by a new appeal, through a joint, inter-agency process when major changes in needs and resource requirements make this necessary. If individual agencies need to modify their funding requests in the period between such consolidated inter-agency appeals, this will be done in close consultation with the Humanitarian Coordinator in-country and with DHA-Headquarters. DHA is responsible for providing the donors, and the larger concerned humanitarian community, with updated information concerning the consolidated resource requests of the UN agencies for specific major relief operations and the outstanding shortfalls against these requests. These actions are complementary to the resource mobilization and donor reporting activities of the individual UN agencies. The UN agencies will continue to provide DHA with regular, monthly updates of this information, in agreed upon formats, in order to facilitate this process.

Annex I:

Selection of Humanitarian Coordinators

(NOTE: The following text is drawn from the presentation of USG Peter Hansen to the 1994 Summer Session of ECOSOC, and represents the most current, definitive statement on this subject. Discussions are continuing to be held at a higher level than this Task Force, i.e., between USG Hansen and IASC member agencies at the Heads of Agency level, on further refinements and agreements regarding this subject. Thus, the following summation is provided for information purposes, and not as part of the conclusions and recommendations of the Task Force itself.)

At the very onset of a new complex emergency, the ERC will consult IASC members on whether the Resident Coordinator in place has the right profile to serve as Humanitarian Coordinator. If so, the ERC will confirm his/her designation as Humanitarian Coordinator.

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

In instances where one operational agency of the system may be providing the overwhelming majority of UN humanitarian assistance, the ERC will consider designating this agency's representative as Humanitarian Coordinator, acting under the ERC's authority and reporting to him on coordination matters.

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.

For certain situations, where there is a need to designate zonal or area coordinators within 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, with such zonal or area coordinators to be responsible to the Humanitarian Coordinator for these functions.