

## **Terms of Reference**

# **THE HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR**

---

May 2009

Endorsed by IASC Principals

## INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE

### **Terms of Reference for the Humanitarian Coordinator\***

#### I. ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

While the affected State has the primary role in the initiation, organisation, coordination, and implementation of humanitarian assistance within its territory,<sup>1</sup> in situations where a Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) is designated s/he is responsible for leading and coordinating humanitarian action<sup>2</sup> of relevant organisations<sup>3</sup> in country with a view to ensuring that it is principled, timely, effective and efficient, and contributes to longer-term recovery. The overall objective is to alleviate human suffering and protect the lives, the livelihoods and dignity of populations in need.

The leadership and coordination role of the HC entails building consensus among relevant organisations involved in humanitarian action and actively facilitating cooperation among them, recognising that the ownership of coordination rests with all relevant organisations. Such role must be carried out in full respect of the mandates and authority of relevant organisations.

The HC is guided by international humanitarian and human rights law, and by the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

The HC represents the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) in country.

If the HC is not also the UN Resident Coordinator (RC), s/he works in close collaboration with the RC, with a view to ensuring that humanitarian action is linked to, and consistent with, RC-led recovery and development activities, and the division of labour with respect to response preparedness is clear.

If the HC is not also the UN Designated Official for Security (DO), s/he works in close collaboration with the DO within the United Nations Security Management Team, with a view to achieving the United Nations Security Management System's goal of enabling the safest and most efficient conduct of the programmes, activities and operations of the United Nations system.

If the HC is not also the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG), s/he works in close collaboration with the DSRSG to ensure that all components of the UN mission/office and the UN Country Team operate in a coherent and mutually supportive manner, and in close collaboration with other partners.<sup>4</sup>

---

\* Endorsed by the 73<sup>rd</sup> IASC Working Group on 4 May 2009.

<sup>1</sup> Refer to UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991.

<sup>2</sup> This includes humanitarian assistance and protection activities in the response preparedness and response phases in either disasters or complex emergencies.

<sup>3</sup> These include UN Country Team members, as well as the International Organization for Migration, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organisations and components of the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement that commit to participate in coordination arrangements. In case of sudden-onset disasters, relevant organisations involved in humanitarian action may also include other international actors such as bilateral, military and private sector responders. Relations among organisations involved in humanitarian action are governed by the Principles of Partnership, endorsed by the Global Humanitarian Platform in July 2007.

<sup>4</sup> See the Decision of the Secretary-General No. 2008/24 of 26 June 2008.

## Response

The HC, whenever possible in support of and in coordination with national and local authorities:

- Ensures that response efforts are inclusive and coordinated, by regularly convening and leading the Humanitarian Country Team;<sup>5</sup>
- Ensures that a common strategic vision for humanitarian action in-country is articulated, by leading and coordinating its development;
- Ensures that a common strategic plan for realising this vision (CHAP — Common Humanitarian Action Plan — or equivalent) is articulated, based on documented needs and integrating cross-cutting issues (for example age, gender, diversity, human rights, HIV/AIDS, and the environment) and activities in support of early recovery, by leading and coordinating its development;
- Ensures that there is an efficient and effective division of labour among relevant organisations for implementing the strategic plan, by securing agreement on the establishment of clusters (sectors) and the designation of cluster leads;<sup>6</sup>
- Expends all necessary efforts to ensure that the strategic plan is implemented in a principled, timely, effective, and efficient manner, by holding cluster leads accountable for the performance of the functions outlined in the IASC Guidance Note,<sup>6</sup> and by establishing mechanisms for inter-cluster coordination, needs assessment, monitoring and evaluation;
- Expends all necessary efforts to ensure that the strategic plan is funded sufficiently and in a timely manner, by promoting and locally leading inclusive resource mobilization efforts (e.g. CAP, Flash Appeals), overseeing CERF grant applications, and managing in-country humanitarian pooled funds (e.g. CHF, ERF) where they exist;
- Expends all necessary efforts to obtain free, timely, safe and unimpeded access by humanitarian organisations to populations in need, where appropriate, by leading and/or promoting negotiations with relevant parties, including non-state actors;
- Promotes the respect of international humanitarian and human rights law by all parties, including non-state actors, by coordinating the advocacy efforts of relevant organisations and using private and/or public advocacy as appropriate;
- Expends all necessary efforts to ensure that Member States, regional organisations, UN entities (including integrated UN presences), civil society, the private sector, the media and other relevant actors take humanitarian concerns into due account, by coordinating the advocacy efforts of relevant organisations and using private and/or public advocacy as appropriate;
- Expends all necessary efforts to ensure that relief activities lead and contribute to the early as well as long-term recovery of affected populations, by cooperating closely with actors responsible for planning and implementing rehabilitation and development activities.

## Response Preparedness

The HC, whenever possible in support of and in coordination with national and local authorities:

- Leads efforts to improve the response preparedness capacity of national and local authorities and their ability and willingness to work with international organisations;

---

<sup>5</sup> The Humanitarian Country Team includes, in addition to UN Country Team members, representatives of the International Organization for Migration, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the components of the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement who commit to participate in coordination arrangements.

<sup>6</sup> See the IASC Guidance Note on Using the Cluster Approach to Strengthen Humanitarian Response, 24 November 2006.

- Ensures that the response preparedness efforts of relevant organisations are inclusive and coordinated, by regularly convening and leading the Humanitarian Country Team;
- Ensures that an inter-agency common planning framework is articulated, by leading and coordinating its development and regular updating;<sup>7</sup>
- Expend all necessary efforts to ensure that the preparedness efforts envisaged in the common planning framework are implemented, by holding cluster leads accountable for the performance of the functions outlined in the IASC Guidance Note.<sup>6</sup>

## II. ACCOUNTABILITY

The HC is ultimately accountable to the populations in need.

The HC reports directly to the ERC. S/he should agree with the ERC at the beginning of each reporting year on a Compact spelling out agreed objectives and planned outcomes, and what each can expect from the other.

If the HC also performs other roles, such as that of RC, DO, DSRSG, or country representative of a UN agency, s/he reports to the ERC for the performance of the functions outlined in these Terms of Reference, and to other senior UN officials for the performance of the other roles, as outlined in the respective Terms of Reference.<sup>8</sup>

The performance of the HC is appraised annually by the ERC against the objectives set forth in the Compact. If the HC is also RC, the appraisal is recorded in the RC/HC/DO and UN Country Team Performance Appraisal System. If the HC is not the RC, the appraisal is recorded in the HC/HCT Performance Appraisal System.<sup>9</sup>

## III. SUPPORT

In discharging his/her responsibilities as outlined in these Terms of Reference, the HC is usually supported at country level by an OCHA Field Office. The Head of the OCHA Field Office reports to the HC, who provides overall strategic guidance, but is accountable to the ERC for the management of the OCHA Field Office.<sup>10</sup>

The entry point for OCHA headquarters support to the HC is the Director of the Coordination and Response Division.

---

<sup>7</sup> See the Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Guidelines for Humanitarian Assistance, endorsed by the IASC Working Group in November 2007.

<sup>8</sup> For the RC role, see the UN Resident Coordinator Generic Job Description, endorsed by UNDG on 29 January 2009; for the DO role, see UN Department of Safety and Security, Guidelines for Designated Officials, 7 March 2008, and Inter-Organizational Security Measures: Framework for Accountability for the United Nations Security Management System, endorsed by the UN General Assembly on 29 March 2007; for the DSRSG role, see the Note of Guidance on Integrated Missions issued by the UN Secretary-General on 17 January 2006; for the role of country representative of a UN agency, please refer to the concerned agency for the Terms of Reference.

<sup>9</sup> To be developed.

<sup>10</sup> See OCHA's Policy Instruction "The Relationship between Humanitarian Coordinators and Heads of OCHA Field Offices", 18 February 2009.