



# LEADERSHIP IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION:

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**Handbook for the UN Resident  
and Humanitarian Coordinator**

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Front cover: Cyclone Kenneth in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique, 2019.

Photo: OCHA/Saviano Abreu.

This guide will be updated periodically to take into account feedback from Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators and further developments in IASC policy and guidance. Feedback and comments should be sent to OCHA's Humanitarian Leadership Strengthening Section: [hlss@un.org](mailto:hlss@un.org). The document is also available at [interagencystandingcommittee.org](http://interagencystandingcommittee.org).

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Running checklist of actions throughout the emergency





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## PREFACE

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In challenging times and despite rising needs, the humanitarian system continues to save and transform lives. Strong leadership by the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators plays a crucial part in this. This leadership is critical if we are to continue rising to the challenges we face.

As the highest-ranking in-country UN representative, the UN Resident Coordinator leads UN country teams in delivering coordinated and effective humanitarian responses to national needs and ensuring system-wide accountability on the ground. Humanitarian leaders must act quickly and impartially while keeping a focus on the big picture, the external environment, the future and organizational change. In particular, the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators must have leadership skills that enable them to build trust, support national needs and priorities, and bring the UN system together to deliver better results for the people we serve.

Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators work side by side with a range of partners. They include local communities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on defining needs; international NGOs and humanitarian organizations on activating global resources and networks; Governments on providing plans for sustainability; and companies on innovative solutions.

As humanitarian needs continue to increase worldwide, so does our understanding of risk and our ability to predict humanitarian impacts. With honest, evidence-based learning we can improve and adapt. This will make the humanitarian system even better at anticipating and responding to the risks and challenges we face.

None of this will be easy. In fact, it will be hard work. But with a shared determination driven by effective leadership, it can be transformative.

### **Mark Lowcock**

Emergency Relief Coordinator and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs

## **HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK**

### **What is the purpose of this Handbook?**

The Handbook is a guide to the normative framework for humanitarian action and the operational approaches, coordination structures, and available tools and services that facilitate the mobilization of humanitarian assistance.

The Handbook has a particular focus on the roles and responsibilities of the UN Resident Coordinator (RC) and the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) in leading and coordinating inter-agency humanitarian action in support of the host Government and local actors, and the skills, competencies and qualities of an effective humanitarian leader.

It is not a prescriptive guide. The approaches to humanitarian action (and levels of priority) will differ according to the context and the type of emergency.

### **Who is the Handbook for?**

The Handbook is designed to directly support the work of RCs and HCs in carrying out their humanitarian leadership functions. It is also a reference for the wider humanitarian community working with or supporting the RC and HC.

### **How can the Handbook be used?**

It can be used to support decision-making in a range of crises; help identify the international technical expertise available prior to and at the onset of an emergency; facilitate partnerships among humanitarian organizations, national Governments and local actors; and plan and better prepare for humanitarian response. The Handbook is not intended to be read from cover to cover, but as a reference with easy access to guidance on particular topics and links for further reading.

### **How is the Handbook organized?**

There are four substantive chapters:

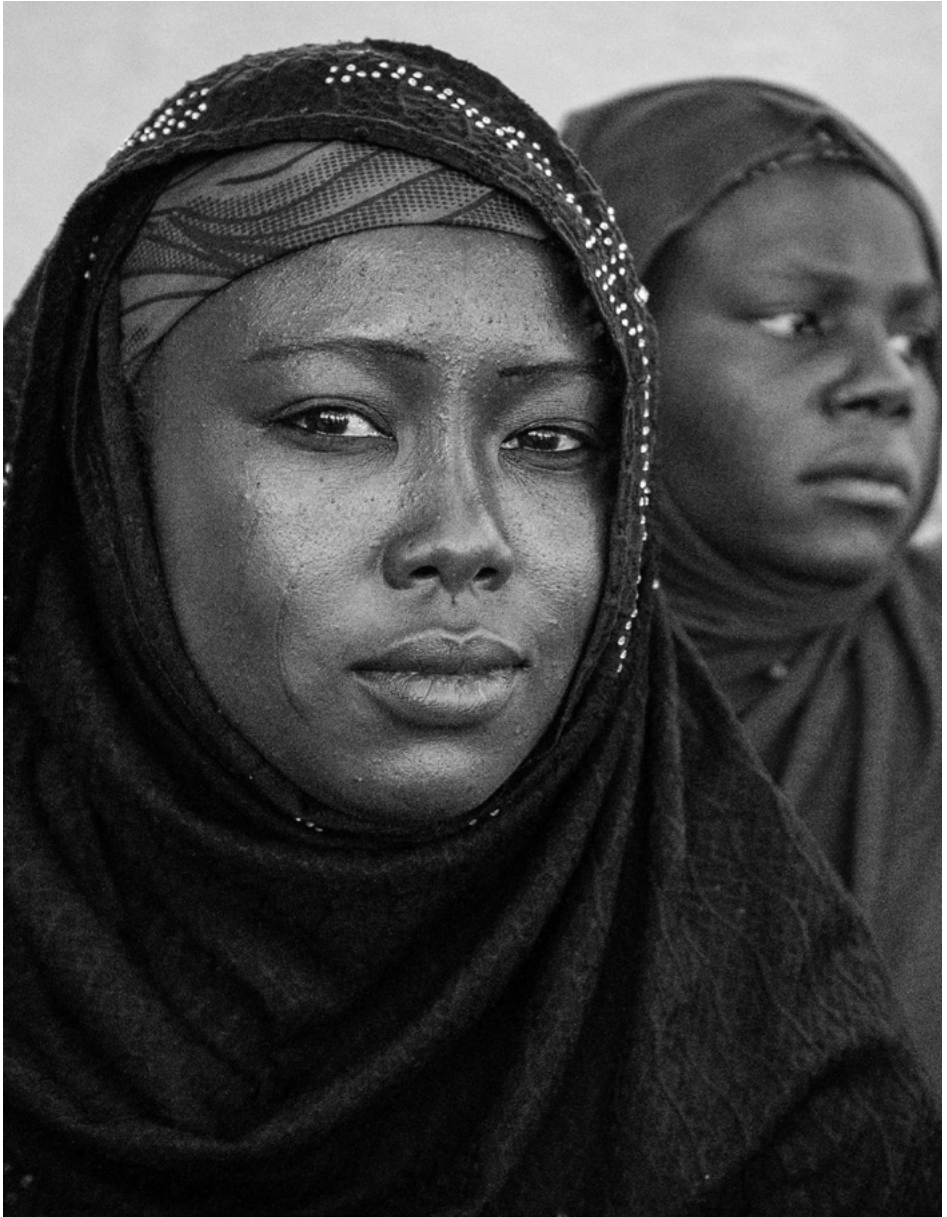
- Chapter A examines the normative aspects of humanitarian action: UN General Assembly resolutions, humanitarian principles, international law, leadership arrangements and mandatory responsibilities.
- Chapter B focuses on operational aspects: country-level coordination mechanisms, the humanitarian programme cycle and specific areas of work.
- Chapter C details approaches to strengthening national readiness and addressing the underlying drivers of risk.
- Chapter D provides guidance on leadership during health emergencies and disease outbreaks including the COVID-19 response.

The Handbook also contains a supplementary booklet: a quick reference guide for the RC on her/his humanitarian coordination role in an escalating or sudden-onset emergency, outlining the actions to take and events to anticipate.

Each section contains details of additional information and, where relevant, supporting services and tools. The annex provides a more comprehensive list of resources (organized thematically), with website links to support the user in seeking further information.

## **Explanation of terms**

The term 'Resident Coordinator' is used throughout to refer to the role of the RC when called on to carry out humanitarian functions – whether designated as an HC or not – and the role of the HC. Any significant distinctions between these roles are highlighted where necessary.



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Two displaced women. 2019, Awaradi displacement site, Niger.  
Photo: OCHA/Eve Sabbagh

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**CHAPTER A:****WHY HUMANITARIAN LEADERSHIP MATTERS**

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**INTRODUCTION TO UN LEADERSHIP IN  
HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS****Background**

Climatic shocks, the impact of emerging or protracted conflicts and the spread of infectious diseases are driving humanitarian needs to unprecedented levels. Strong leadership by Resident Coordinators (RCs) is instrumental in addressing the growing needs of crisis-affected people, and over the years it has been critical for furthering the effectiveness of humanitarian operations. Significant improvements have been made in planning, forecasting and analysis; in the ability to prioritize; and in coordination. Humanitarian partners can now better identify the people most in need and at risk and deliver priority assistance faster.

An RC – whether designated as a Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) or not – is ultimately responsible for ensuring organizations work together to prepare for emergencies and to support the host Government in responding to crises or emerging humanitarian situations.

**Mandate for humanitarian leadership**

One of the purposes of the UN, as stated in its Charter, is “to achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character”. The UN first did this in the aftermath of the Second World War when it helped to rebuild Europe. The organization is now relied upon to coordinate international humanitarian relief operations due to natural and human-made disasters in areas beyond the response capacity of national authorities alone.

UN General Assembly resolution 46/182 (see p. 18) sets out the basis of the leadership role of the UN Secretary-General in ensuring “preparation for, as well as rapid and coherent response to, natural disasters and other emergencies”. To this end, the General Assembly resolution established the position of the Emergency Relief

Coordinator (ERC) to work closely with the UN Secretary-General, in cooperation with the relevant organizations and entities dealing with humanitarian assistance. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) was established as part of the UN Secretariat to support the ERC in this role.

Recognizing the positive role that sustainable development can play in mitigating drivers of conflicts, disaster risks, humanitarian crises and complex emergencies, the General Assembly also reiterated in resolution 71/243 that a comprehensive whole-of-system response, including greater cooperation and complementarity among development, disaster risk reduction, humanitarian action and sustaining peace, is fundamental to efficiently and effectively addressing needs and attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As representative of the UN Secretary-General, the RC plays a critical role at the country level: facilitating inter-agency preparedness efforts, coordinating humanitarian response,<sup>1</sup> and promoting links between humanitarian and development planning and programming. The ERC and OCHA support RCs in this role.

## **Primary Humanitarian Leadership Responsibilities of the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator**

Detailed humanitarian responsibilities of the RC as leader of the UN country team (with system-wide accountability on the ground) are included in the [RC Job Description](#) adopted on 1 January 2019. This is when the reinvigorated RC system came into effect as part of the UN development system reform:<sup>2</sup>

*“In contexts where international humanitarian assistance is required, and a separate Humanitarian Coordinator is not designated and when there is no lead agency, [the Resident Coordinator] leads and coordinates the response efforts of United Nations and relevant humanitarian actors, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/182 and related resolutions, facilitating linkages between humanitarian and development programming for enhanced and sustainable impact.”*

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1 In refugee situations, UNHCR is mandated to lead the refugee response. See p. 126 or more details on this.

2 As a result of the reform, the RC now reports directly to the UN Secretary-General.

Where required, the ERC may choose to designate an HC to represent her/him. As outlined in the [Terms of Reference for HCs](#):

*“While the affected State has the primary role in the initiation, organization, coordination, and implementation of humanitarian assistance within its territory, in situations where a Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) is designated s/he is responsible for leading and coordinating humanitarian action of relevant organizations 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.”*

### **Coordination**

In an emergency, there may be several hundred organizations responding in the same location at the same time. Some will be well established before the crisis, while others may arrive after its onset. The role of humanitarian leadership entails improving strategic coordination among relevant organizations involved in humanitarian action and actively facilitating cooperation among them, recognizing that coordination is a collective endeavour. This role must be carried out in full respect of the mandates and authority of all relevant organizations and, importantly, of the host Government.

Where multiple organizations are involved in humanitarian response, coordination is critical. The RC supports the State to help ensure that humanitarian actors responding to a crisis work together to achieve shared strategic objectives and deliver assistance in a principled, effective and complementary manner. The various categories of humanitarian actors include crisis-affected people themselves; civil-society organizations such as community-based and voluntary organizations, faith-based organizations and local/national and international NGOs; the national and foreign private sector; national and foreign militaries; the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement (International Federation of the Red Cross, International Committee of the Red Cross, National Societies); UN entities; humanitarian and development donors; in-country diplomatic corps; international and regional organizations (including financial institutions); and intergovernmental forums.

Especially in conflict situations in which the State is a party to the conflict, humanitarian action will typically – in line with the principles of neutrality and independence – need to be carried out with limited or no Government involvement. This helps build trust and acceptance among the parties, communities and beneficiaries, which are critical for enabling humanitarian access.

## **Protection**

Humanitarian leadership is guided by and has a key role in promoting respect for international humanitarian law (IHL), international human rights law (IHRL), international refugee law (IRL), and the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. Humanitarian action is premised on the fact that, along with having their basic needs met, affected people often also need protection from violence, abuse, coercion and deprivation. Protection is enshrined in the principle of humanity and a prime objective of humanitarian action. It is defined by the IASC Principals as the protection of the rights of individuals under IHL, IHRL and IRL, and underpins all aspects of humanitarian preparedness and response. Leadership is critical for ensuring that the common goal of securing better protection outcomes for crisis-affected people remains central to humanitarian decision-making and response strategies.

## **Duty of Care**

As well as delivering on programmatic mandates, it is important to ensure that humanitarian actors remain physically and psychologically safe. There needs to be an appropriate balance between carrying out essential work in high-risk environments, while at the same time preserving the safety and security of personnel. The UN's High-Level Committee on Management defines [Duty of Care](#) as “a non-waivable duty on the part of the Organization to mitigate or otherwise address foreseeable risks that may harm or injure its personnel and their eligible family members”.

The RC plays an important role in ensuring a coherent approach at the country level regarding Duty of Care for UN and humanitarian personnel. Duty of Care risks primarily comprise occupational security risks (e.g. due to an armed conflict), health risks including risks to mental health (e.g. due to exposure to contagious dis-



eases, prolonged exposure to high stress situations, instances of violence, harassment or discrimination) and safety risks (e.g. working in substandard facilities).

## **Towards the 2030 Agenda**

Along with the rise in global humanitarian needs over the last few decades, the volume, cost and duration of humanitarian operations have grown dramatically, not least due to the increasingly protracted nature of crises and the failure to prevent risks from turning into disasters.

The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, adopted in 2015, set out a new ambition: to not just meet needs, but to reduce risk, vulnerability and overall levels of need. They provide a common framework for humanitarian and development actors based on a vision of a future in which no one is left behind.

Against this backdrop, the UN Secretary-General, eight UN Principals, the World Bank and IOM endorsed a Commitment to Action during the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit. In it, they agreed to seek to meet people's immediate humanitarian needs while at the same time reducing risk and vulnerability. This entails working towards collective outcomes, across silos, over multiple years, based on the comparative advantage of a diverse range of actors inside and outside the UN system. As many protracted crises are caused and sustained by conflict and violence, it is important to also include peace actors where possible.

Much progress has been made in recent years in terms of policy and guidance to ensure connectivity between humanitarian, development and other frameworks – notably the revised UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (see p. 184 for details on this).

In acute conflict situations, the scope for collaboration might be limited by the need to abide by the principles of neutrality, independence and impartiality to safeguard access to people in need. Whatever the context, collaboration must take place in a manner that neither undermines adherence to humanitarian principles nor exposes affected populations or humanitarian workers to greater risks. Humanitarian, development and peace actors should develop the right level of collaboration for the context.

## **NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR HUMANITARIAN ACTION AND LEADERSHIP**

The normative framework comprises UN resolutions and policies, international laws and treaties (including humanitarian law), and accepted principles and standards. It sets out the structure and role of humanitarian leadership, and guides in-country interactions during crises, providing support and a mandate for a principled humanitarian response.

### **United Nations General Assembly resolution 46/182**

United Nations General Assembly resolution 46/182 (adopted in 1991) sets out the framework for the coordination and delivery of UN-led international humanitarian assistance under the leadership of the UN Secretary-General, which continues to guide the work of the humanitarian system today. It established the ERC position; the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs, which in 1998 became OCHA; the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC); the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, which in 2005 became the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF); and the Consolidated Appeals Process, which in 2013 was replaced by the Humanitarian Programme Cycle.

> See p. 30 for more details on the Humanitarian Architecture.

These mechanisms have all been subsequently refined and expanded, and they continue to form key cornerstones of the current humanitarian system.

Resolution 46/182 also set out the guiding principles for humanitarian assistance, including that humanitarian action must be provided in accordance with humanitarian principles (see p. 22). These guiding principles address the relationship and interaction between State sovereignty and principled humanitarian action, including the primary responsibility of each State to assist and protect people affected by humanitarian emergencies on its territory and, when called upon, to facilitate humanitarian organizations in providing humanitarian assistance for which access to affected people is essential.

Since the adoption of resolution 46/182, subsequent humanitarian resolutions of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, and the Security Council

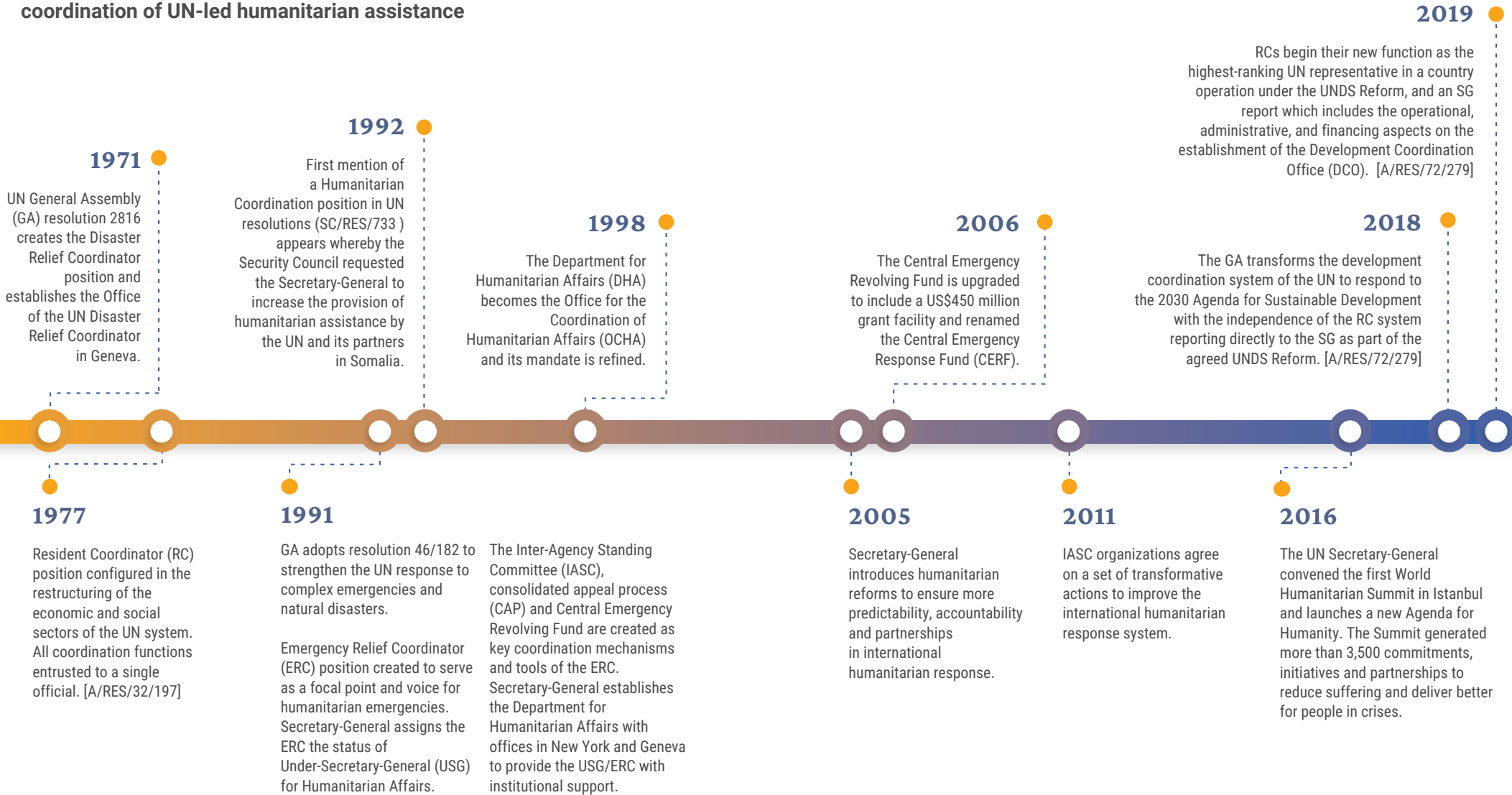
have continued strengthening the international normative framework, providing guidance and mandates on humanitarian action and coordination for addressing challenges that have emerged from increasing humanitarian needs and the changing operating environment. These themes include, among others, humanitarian access, the protection of civilians, internal displacement, accountability to affected people, humanitarian civil-military coordination, and the safety and security of humanitarian personnel.

In regards to refugees and migrants, the Compact on Refugees and the Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, adopted by the General Assembly in 2018, set out the international framework for international support for managing refugee movements and large-scale migration flows (see p. 89 and p. 92 for details on this). All decisions taken in the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council are equally binding on both the United Nations Secretariat and the UN funds and programmes that are accountable to these principal organs. These resolutions are not legally binding on Member States, but it has been common practice for them to adopt resolutions on humanitarian issues by consensus, giving them more prominence and weight.

RCs can refer to the General Assembly's and the Economic and Social Council's humanitarian resolutions and key policy decisions for in-country interactions, to help Governments, humanitarian organizations and other relevant parties strengthen their understanding of and support for a more principled, accountable and effective humanitarian response. In some operating contexts, humanitarian resolutions are essential in providing the normative basis, political support and legislative mandate for certain humanitarian activities, as well as legitimizing and facilitating the roles and responsibilities of the RC and international humanitarian organizations.

# A Brief History

## Key Milestones in strengthening the coordination of UN-led humanitarian assistance



## Humanitarian Principles



### Humanity

Human suffering must be alleviated wherever it occurs.

The goal of humanitarian action is to protect life and health while ensuring respect for human beings.



### Impartiality

Humanitarian action must be carried out on the basis of needs alone, making no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinions.



### Neutrality

Humanitarian actors must not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.



### Independence

Humanitarian action must be autonomous from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold that compromises the ability to act in accordance with the core principles.

## Humanitarian Principles

As established in resolution 46/182 and reaffirmed in subsequent humanitarian resolutions, humanitarian action must be provided in accordance with the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence (the latter added in General Assembly resolution 58/114 in 2003), which are central to establishing and maintaining access to affected people.

To reinforce the principle of independence, RCs can rely on Article 100, Chapter XV of the UN Charter<sup>3</sup> to remind UN personnel that they “shall not seek or receive instructions from any government or from any other authority external to the Organization” and that Member States should not “seek to influence them in the discharge of their responsibilities”.

In addition, IHL entitles impartial humanitarian organizations to offer their services to the parties to an armed conflict for the benefit of people who are not fighting. (Such offers are not considered interference in domestic affairs and do not affect the legal status of armed groups.) Once consent to humanitarian services is obtained from the territorial State, IHL also requires that all parties to the conflict allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need, which is impartial in character and conducted without adverse distinction.<sup>4</sup>

## International Law

Three main bodies of international law guide humanitarian action: IHRL, IHL and IRL, as reflected in treaty and customary law. These are complemented by regional treaties such as the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention). Other documents, such as the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998), provide useful restatement and summary of the various legal obligations and have been incorporated into the domestic legislation of some States.

When referring to international law, it is important to note that not all States are party to the relevant treaties of IHRL, IHL and IRL.<sup>5</sup> However, some fundamental rules are considered customary and are thus binding independently of treaty participation.

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3 [www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/chapter-xv/index.html](https://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/chapter-xv/index.html)

4 [https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1\\_rul\\_rule55](https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule55)

5 The following indicate who is party to what: for IHRL see <https://indicators.ohchr.org/>; for IHL see <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/vwTreatiesByCountry.xsp>; for the Refugee Convention and Protocol see [www.unhcr.org/en-us/protection/basic/3b73b0d63/states-parties-1951-convention-its-1967-protocol.html](http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/protection/basic/3b73b0d63/states-parties-1951-convention-its-1967-protocol.html)

## International human rights law

IHRL applies in times of peace and in situations of violence including armed conflict, as human rights are fundamental to every human being. IHRL lays down obligations that States are bound to respect. A State may restrict or suspend a limited set of rights during a serious public emergency (referred to as ‘derogation’), but certain human rights – such as the prohibition of torture and fair trial rights – are non-derogable, meaning they cannot be limited or suspended in any way, at any time, for any reason, even during an armed conflict. In addition, de facto authorities or non-State armed groups that exercise Government-like functions and control over territory are increasingly expected to respect international human rights norms and standards when their conduct affects the human rights of individuals under their control.<sup>6</sup>

At the core of IHRL is the International Bill of Human Rights, which consists of three elements: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) with its two Optional Protocols, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) with its Optional Protocol. Under the ICESCR, each State party to the Covenant recognizes the right to an adequate standard of living, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and has committed to take steps to ensure minimum essential levels of these rights to the maximum of its available resources, including those available from the international community through international cooperation and assistance. This includes ensuring that populations are not deprived of essential foodstuffs, essential primary health care, or basic shelter and housing. The right to life and the prohibition of inhuman treatment under the ICCPR have also been interpreted as including a requirement to accept offers of external humanitarian assistance. In resolutions 43/131 (1988) and 45/100 (1990), the General Assembly affirmed that “the abandonment of the victims of natural disasters and similar emergency situations without humanitarian assistance constitutes a threat to human life and an offence to human dignity”. The Convention against Torture, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of

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<sup>6</sup> For more substantive guidance see UNSDG Guidance Note on Human Rights for Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams

the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict are also widely ratified and can be particularly relevant in humanitarian crises.

### **International humanitarian law**

IHL aims to limit the effects of armed conflict by protecting people who are not or no longer fighting (civilians, wounded and sick fighters, prisoners of war).<sup>7</sup> IHL strikes a balance between competing considerations of humanity and military necessity.

When carrying out humanitarian operations in situations of violence, it is important to determine whether the violence amounts to an armed conflict in order to know whether IHL applies. An international armed conflict exists when two or more States resort to armed force against each other, even if one of the parties denies the existence of a state of war. A non-international armed conflict exists when one or more non-State armed groups are fighting, either between themselves or against State armed forces, and the following two cumulative criteria are met: (1) the non-State armed group must possess organized armed forces that are under a certain command structure and have the capacity to sustain military operations, and (2) the hostilities must meet a minimum threshold of intensity. In a non-international armed conflict, IHL binds both the State and non-State parties to the conflict. Determining the existence of an armed conflict requires a thorough assessment of the facts on the ground and some legal expertise. Moreover, the decision to *communicate publicly* about the existence of an armed conflict and its implications under IHL may entail political considerations and some coordination with other parts of the UN.

The principal rules of IHL are found in the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 (applicable in international armed conflict except for common article 3), Additional Protocol I of 1977 (applicable in international armed conflict) and Additional Protocol II of 1977 (applicable in non-international armed conflict). As stated above, it is important to note that not all States are party to all treaties. Many of the fundamental rules in these treaties (e.g. on humane treatment, fair trial rights, offers of humanitarian services, the protection of civilians in the conduct

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<sup>7</sup> For an overview, see: [www.icrc.org/en/doc/assets/files/other/what\\_is\\_ihl.pdf](http://www.icrc.org/en/doc/assets/files/other/what_is_ihl.pdf)



of hostilities) are considered part of customary international law<sup>8</sup> and applicable in both types of armed conflict. However, some differences remain between the rules applicable in international and non-international armed conflict.

IHL contains specific rules that govern the parties' conduct of hostilities with a view to sparing civilians and civilian objects, such as the rules of distinction, proportionality and precautions in and against the effects of attack. Medical personnel, transport and facilities are afforded special protection requiring certain precautions before they might be lawfully harmed in an attack. IHL also allows offers of impartial humanitarian services for people who are not or no longer fighting, regulates the passage of humanitarian relief, and requires the freedom of movement of humanitarian personnel, and the protection of humanitarian personnel and assets against attack, harassment, misappropriation, looting and other forms of interference.<sup>9</sup>

## INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998) set out various legal protections derived from IHRL and IHL to provide a framework for the protection of and assistance to internally displaced persons who have had to flee, particularly as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights, or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to their fundamental human rights, in situations of armed conflict civilians enjoy safeguards that are specifically related to internal displacement.

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8 All States are party to the four Geneva Conventions. Customary international law consists of rules that come from "a general practice accepted as law" and exists independent of treaty law. For more details see: [www.icrc.org/en/war-and-law/treaties-customary-law/customary-law](http://www.icrc.org/en/war-and-law/treaties-customary-law/customary-law)

9 See OCHA fact sheet, [www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/Fact-Sheet\\_Humanitarian\\_Relief\\_Operations%20-%20January%202019.pdf](http://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/Fact-Sheet_Humanitarian_Relief_Operations%20-%20January%202019.pdf) and Oxford Guidance on the Law relating to Humanitarian Relief Operations in Situations of Armed Conflict, [www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/dms/Documents/Oxford%20Guidance%20pdf.pdf](http://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/dms/Documents/Oxford%20Guidance%20pdf.pdf)

10 While the Guiding Principles are not legally binding, they have gained significant authority and are recognized by the General Assembly as an important framework for the protection of IDPs. Many States have incorporated them into domestic law.

These include the right to seek safety in another part of the country; freedom of movement, including the right to move freely in and out of camps or settlements; the right to leave their country and to seek asylum in another country; the right to satisfactory conditions of shelter, hygiene, health, safety and nutrition; and respect for property rights relating to possessions left behind.

- > For further guidance see [Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons](#) and the OCHA fact sheet on [internal displacement in situations of armed conflict](#).

## International refugee law

IRL protects refugees and asylum seekers who are no longer protected by their own country, are outside their country of origin, and are at risk or victims of persecution and other forms of serious harm in their country of origin. IRL provides specific rights and standards of treatment for their stay in the country of asylum. The specific legal regime protecting the rights of refugees is referred to as ‘international refugee protection’. The rationale behind the need for this regime lies in the fact that asylum seekers and refugees lack the protection of their country and are therefore in a unique predicament, which calls for additional safeguards. The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol<sup>11</sup> provide a universal code for the treatment of refugees and include core principles of protection, such as non-discrimination and *non-refoulement*.<sup>12</sup>

Complementing the above-mentioned bodies of international law, the Conventions Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons (1954) and on the Reduction of Statelessness (1961) are the key international conventions addressing statelessness.<sup>13</sup> The 1954 Convention provides the legal definition of a stateless person as someone who is “not recognized as a national by any state under the operation of its law.” It establishes minimum standards of treatment for stateless people, such as rights to education, employment and housing, and it guarantees them a right to identity, travel documents and administrative assistance. The 1961 Convention

11 The 1951 Convention and its Protocol place a treaty obligation on States that have signed the Convention to cooperate with UNHCR in regards to the key cornerstones of refugee protection.

12 Non-refoulement is a fundamental principle of international law that forbids a country receiving asylum seekers from returning them to a country in which they would be in likely danger of persecution.

13 For further information see [www.unhcr.org/en-us/un-conventions-on-statelessness.html](http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/un-conventions-on-statelessness.html)

aims to prevent statelessness and reduce it over time, for instance by establishing that children are to acquire the nationality of the country in which they are born if they do not acquire any other nationality, and setting out safeguards to prevent statelessness due to loss or renunciation of nationality and State succession.

## **Core Humanitarian Standard and Sphere Standards**

The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS) sets out nine commitments that organizations and individuals involved in humanitarian response implement to improve the quality and effectiveness of the assistance they provide. It outlines the policies, processes, procedures and practices that an organization needs in order to deliver quality assistance, while at the same time being accountable to communities and people affected by crisis.

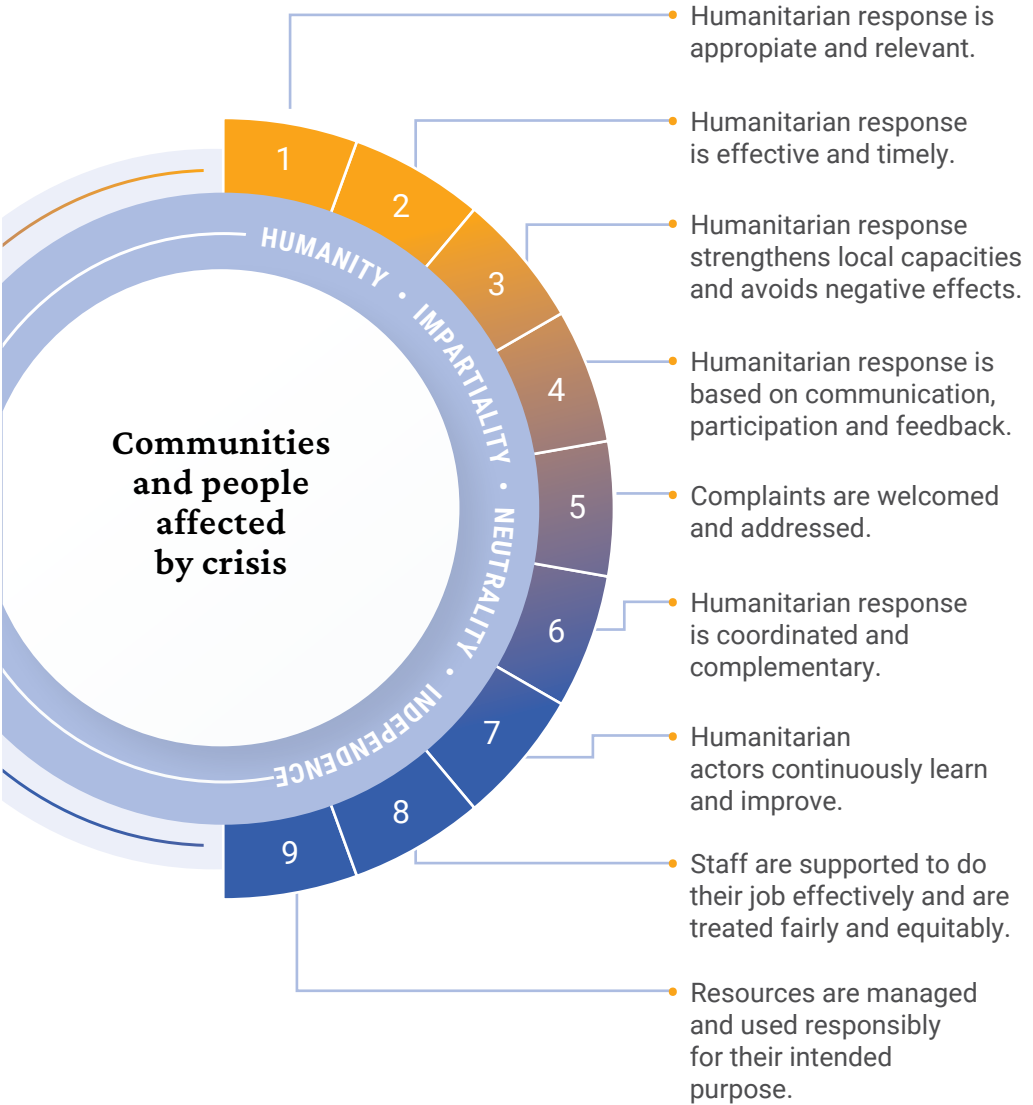
The Sphere Movement was started in 1997 by a group of humanitarian professionals aiming to improve the quality of humanitarian work during disaster response. With this goal in mind, they framed a Humanitarian Charter and identified a set of humanitarian standards to be applied in humanitarian response.

The Sphere standards have become a primary reference tool for national and international NGOs, volunteers, UN agencies, Governments, donors, the private sector and many others. Today, Sphere is a worldwide community that brings together and empowers practitioners to improve the quality and accountability of humanitarian assistance. Sphere's flagship publication, the Sphere Handbook, is one of the most widely known and internationally recognized sets of common principles and universal minimum standards in humanitarian response.

### **More information:**

- Sphere project: [www.sphereproject.org](http://www.sphereproject.org)
- Core humanitarian standards: [www.corehumanitarianstandard.org](http://www.corehumanitarianstandard.org)

## Core Humanitarian Standards



## **COORDINATING ACROSS THE HUMANITARIAN ARCHITECTURE**

The humanitarian architecture comprises a wide variety of organizations working at (and across) different levels: international, national and subnational. The RC plays an important role within this framework by bringing together and facilitating cooperation among the various stakeholders, including UN agencies, national Governments, NGOs and other actors.

### **Global Humanitarian Leadership**

In order to strengthen collective international efforts to provide humanitarian assistance, Member States came together in 1991 and established the IASC and the position of the ERC, as Chair of the IASC. Through General Assembly resolution 46/182, the IASC became the global inter-agency forum for coordination, policy development and decision-making for key UN and non-UN humanitarian partners, including UN agencies, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the International Organization for Migration, NGOs, NGO consortiums and the World Bank.

The ERC is supported by OCHA and serves as the Under-Secretary-General (USG) for Humanitarian Affairs (i.e. the head of OCHA). The USG/ERC is appointed by the UN Secretary-General to serve as her/his principal adviser on humanitarian issues and to lead, coordinate and facilitate humanitarian responses to all emergencies requiring UN humanitarian assistance. S/he also acts as the central focal point with Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations for UN relief, chairs the IASC, and maintains close contact with and provides leadership to RCs and HCs on matters relating to humanitarian assistance.

The USG and OCHA are part of several UN Secretariat committees. OCHA supports the ERC at the global level and RCs and HCs at the field level by coordinating humanitarian action, advocating for the rights of people in need, developing humanitarian policy and analysis, managing humanitarian information systems and administering humanitarian pooled funds. OCHA typically supports HCs through a country office and RCs through its regional offices and, in some cases, through a Humanitarian Advisory Team in country.

> See p. 41 for more details on Designated Leadership Arrangements for RCs and HCs.

In refugee contexts, UNHCR is mandated to lead the refugee response, including carrying out sectoral inter-agency coordination, contingency planning, response and resource mobilization, and finding durable solutions. In contexts involving refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), the 'Joint UNHCR-OCHA Note: Mixed situations – coordination in practice' details the division of responsibilities between UNHCR Representatives and RCs and HCs (see p. 90 for details on this).

### **IASC subsidiary bodies**

The IASC is supported by subsidiary bodies: groups of decision makers and experts who inform and carry out the priorities set by the IASC. These include the IASC Results Groups, which provide response-wide guidance, tools and technical support for specific areas of humanitarian response, which may be of particular relevance to RCs; and the Emergency Directors Group, which advises the IASC on operational issues of strategic concern and mobilizes agency and global cluster resources to address strategic and operational challenges and gaps, in support of RCs.

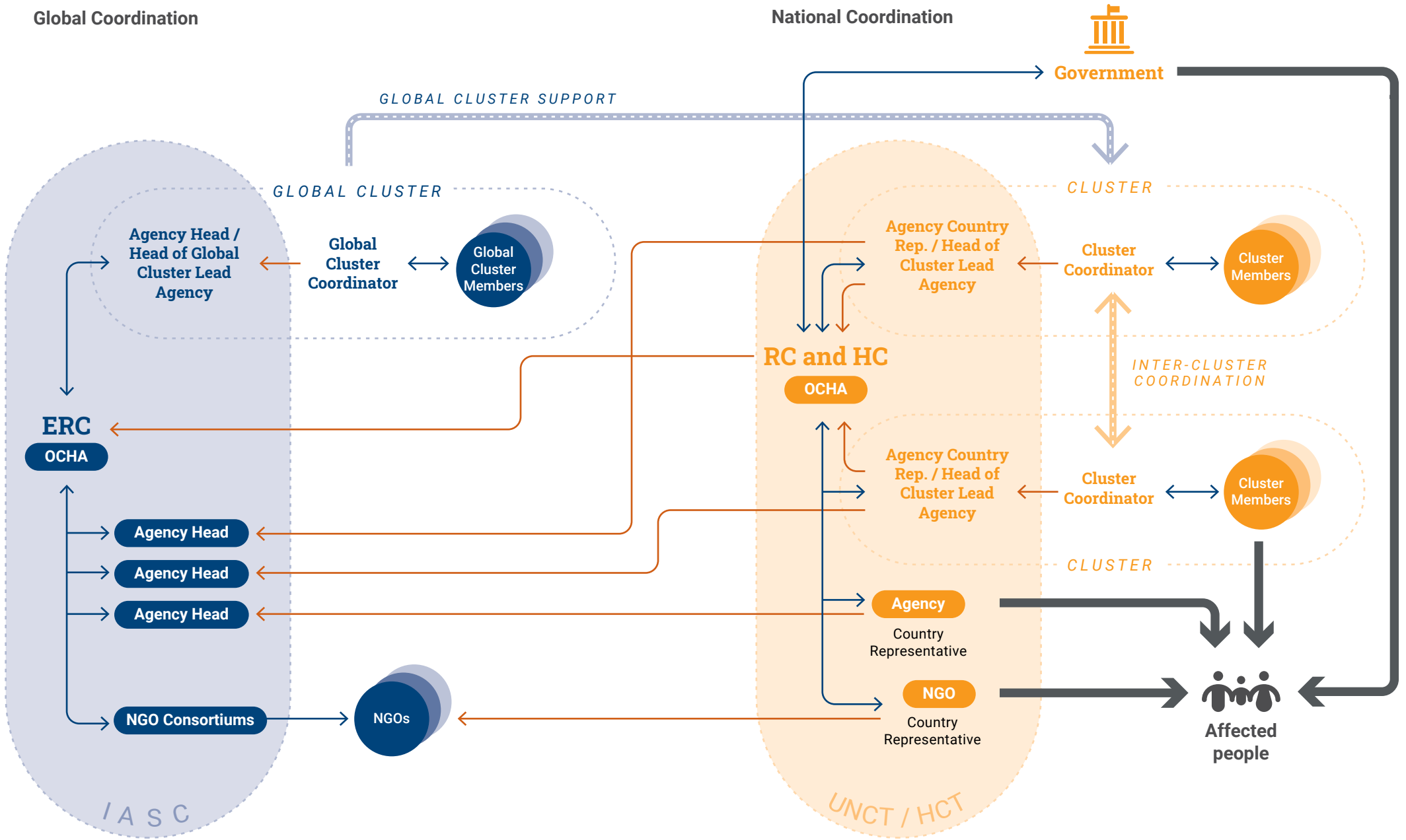
More information on the IASC's working methods and structures can be found at: [https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/iasc\\_structure-and-working-method\\_2019-2020\\_web.pdf](https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/iasc_structure-and-working-method_2019-2020_web.pdf)

# IASC Humanitarian Leadership Structure

↔ Coordination    → Reporting    → Aid

## Global Coordination

## National Coordination



## Host Government and Regional Organizations

### Host Government

At the country level, the State has the primary responsibility to assist and protect all people affected by an emergency within its territory, including by initiating, organizing, coordinating and implementing the humanitarian response. If the affected State is unable or unwilling to fulfil its international obligations, the RC should strive to ensure that people in need receive the required assistance and protection, while respecting the State's sovereignty. S/he should do so by advocating with the State to fulfil its obligations and by offering international assistance as appropriate.

When humanitarian assistance is required, it should be provided with the consent of the affected country – in principle, on the basis of an appeal by the affected country. The RC leads and coordinates the international response at the country level, ensuring that it adheres to humanitarian principles and that international responders respect and support the central role of the State. States whose populations need humanitarian assistance are called upon to facilitate the work of humanitarian organizations in implementing humanitarian assistance. Where relevant, the RC also advocates with the State for access (commonly referred to as 'humanitarian space') so that humanitarian actors can reach affected people to ensure those in need receive the required assistance and protection.

In situations of armed conflict, the State and parties to armed conflict are required to allow and facilitate safe, timely and unhindered access of impartial humanitarian organizations to deliver humanitarian assistance and protection to people in need. Where parties to armed conflict other than the State (e.g. non-State armed groups) are in de facto control of territory, they bear the primary obligation to meet the basic needs of the population under their control. The RC should advocate with these parties regarding respect for IHRL and IHL and remind them of their obligations towards affected populations (including refugees, migrants, IDPs and host communities).

> See p. 23 for more details on international law.



## **Regional organizations and intergovernmental forums**

Regional organizations (such as the African Union, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, among many others) are increasingly engaging in humanitarian action, mobilizing their membership to support Member States affected by humanitarian crises. In 2015, the UN General Assembly called for strengthening cooperation between the UN and regional and sub-regional organizations to benefit from their respective comparative advantages.

Many intergovernmental organizations are active in both emergency preparedness and response, helping Member States to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian action through strategic partnerships and joint planning, sharing good practice and fostering common understanding. Cooperation between the UN and these regional organizations has strengthened support among neighbouring countries and promoted subregional collaboration – especially in response preparedness – through coordination, training, dissemination of information, standardization of tools and discussion of common themes. Some regional mechanisms also include mutual aid tools and coordination forums.

## **NGOs, Civil-Society Organizations and Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement**

### **NGOs**

NGOs deliver the bulk of international humanitarian assistance. They are often well established through strong partnerships with local organizations and communities, including in locations where the UN has limited or no presence. As such, NGOs are central to humanitarian preparedness and response, and valuable allies to the RC in ensuring humanitarian action is coordinated and effective in reaching people most in need. NGOs should be treated as equal partners with UN agencies and be involved in all aspects of the response, including strategic decision-making. Humanitarian NGOs are important members of Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs), and the RC plays a key role in facilitating and supporting their work as part of broader inter-agency efforts.

> See p. 84 for details on country-level coordination mechanisms for NGOs.

Most NGOs have their foundations in addressing social, protection, gender equality, human rights, environmental or health issues. Some NGOs were founded around a specific humanitarian mandate, but most are not exclusively humanitarian actors; they also work towards longer-term development or human rights outcomes, as is the case for most UN agencies. This long-term presence can support acceptance by local authorities and communities but can also undermine perceptions of impartiality and neutrality. When NGOs' work is restricted, particularly by Government policies, NGOs will often call on the support of the RC in advocating for an operating environment that is conducive for principled NGO action. There is a direct link between NGOs' ability to operate in a principled manner and the effectiveness of a humanitarian response. Restrictions on NGO action should be treated as a serious concern.

Many NGOs work as partners to UN agencies, often receiving funding to do so. Others will be funded partly or fully by donor Governments. Often, NGOs will launch their own funding appeals or rely on contributions from their global base of private donors for significant parts of their budgets. This helps the response to meet a greater portion of needs and ensures the continued independence of NGO action. Ensuring continued and proactive engagement with NGOs is central to broader coordination efforts. In most situations, NGOs will organize themselves into NGO networks/forums, which also provide an effective mechanism to engage broader, collective perspectives. RCs should engage with NGO forums wherever possible, and they may choose to also directly engage a diverse group of representative NGO leaders, including women leaders and those representing particular at-risk populations, to benefit from their analysis and perspectives on humanitarian issues. Over the past few decades, a number of larger international NGOs (INGOs) have developed highly professionalized and specialist humanitarian arms that work globally alongside the UN and other actors. Some large INGOs continue to directly deliver relief items and services, but the majority are increasingly supported by their local and national partners, who are instrumental in ensuring last-mile delivery. In recent years, there has been increased recognition of the central role of local and national NGOs and civil-society organizations (CSOs) in supporting crisis-affected communities. A range of efforts, broadly termed 'localization', are under way to

ensure that the expertise and critical role of local and national NGOs is more central to the planning and implementation of humanitarian operations, and that local and national NGOs have better access to resources and take greater leadership roles in decision-making processes. The RC should be aware of the importance of supporting women-led NGOs and NGOs working with groups at risk of being left behind (such as organizations of persons with disabilities) to take greater roles in decision-making on humanitarian matters.

> See p. 161 for details on localizing the humanitarian response.

There are a number of global consortiums that act as umbrella agencies providing a range of support to their NGO members, including the three IASC standing invitees – the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), InterAction, and the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) – as well as a range of newer networks that have developed in response to the emerging localization agenda in recent years, including the NEAR Network<sup>14</sup> and the Charter for Change.<sup>15</sup> ICVA and InterAction provide ongoing programmes of support to national-level NGO forums.

### **Civil-society organizations and local leadership**

A wide range of CSOs are engaged in providing humanitarian assistance to communities in need. Broadly, the term ‘CSO’ can be taken to be inclusive of NGOs; however, in general usage, CSO often refers to more community-based or voluntary organizations, rather than more project-based or professionalized NGOs. This voluntary, community-driven nature means CSOs can often be very large and influential organizations. In particular, they have a role in ensuring representation of and accountability to affected populations. CSOs engage community workers and volunteers and established or emerging leaders within the populations they support, including women’s rights leaders or representatives of women-led organizations that provide specialized services to women and girls. These can be important points of contact for humanitarian actors.

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<sup>14</sup> [www.near.ngo/who-we-are](http://www.near.ngo/who-we-are)

<sup>15</sup> <https://charter4change.org/>

Different forms of local leadership should be recognized and considered, particularly the role of village, camp or community leaders. These leaders may already be key stakeholders in coordination with Government or other actors and will therefore be vital to the management of a humanitarian response within their communities. In many situations, communities themselves may be the only responders.

Faith leaders and faith-based organizations also play an important and increasingly recognized role. For example, experience from work in Ebola-affected countries has shown that faith leaders can play a key role in response to and recovery from health emergencies. In recent years, many international faith-based networks or confederations have worked extensively on their own approaches to localization to further embed their efforts in their local networks, predominantly working with local CSOs.

When visiting humanitarian settings throughout the country, the RC should aim to meet, wherever possible, with local leaders and discuss with the key humanitarian actors how they are ensuring their perspectives are included in strategic or operational decision-making.

### **Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement**

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent (RCRC) Movement is the world's largest humanitarian network, comprising nearly 100 million members, volunteers and supporters in 192 National Societies. The RCRC Movement is made up of three core components: National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Together, these components form a global network. Their mission is to prevent and alleviate human suffering, to protect life and health, and to ensure respect for humanitarian values, particularly in times of armed conflict and other emergencies. The Movement works in accordance with the fundamental principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality.

National Societies occupy a unique position as auxiliaries to public authorities in their respective countries. They provide disaster relief, support health and social programmes, and promote IHL and humanitarian values. They work alongside

national and local public authorities in disaster situations and are often the first points of contact for Governments seeking additional support from IFRC (in natural disasters) and ICRC (in situations of armed conflict).

IFRC interacts with Governments directly through the National Societies, coordinating and directing assistance in natural disasters. IFRC and National Societies also engage in preparedness and development activities, including disaster preparedness, emergency health, disaster law, water and sanitation, and humanitarian diplomacy. As such, they are important members of the HCT.

Based on its mandate under the 1949 Geneva Conventions, ICRC deals directly with Governments. In situations of armed conflict and violence, ICRC may coordinate the activities of other components of the RCRC Movement. IFRC and ICRC are standing invitees to the IASC. For more information see: [www.ifrc.org/en/who-we-are/the-movement/](http://www.ifrc.org/en/who-we-are/the-movement/)

## **The Private Sector**

The humanitarian community is increasingly engaging with the private sector to strengthen emergency preparedness and response. The presence of private companies and networks on the ground, their local expertise and access to resources, and their ability to swiftly adapt and innovate make them key stakeholders in supporting localized humanitarian action. This is particularly important given the growing complexity of the world's emergencies and the increase in humanitarian need, which requires the coordinated action of a wide range of stakeholders.

In addition to mobilizing resources (both financial and non-financial), private sector engagement entails integrating business networks – such as OCHA-UNDP Connecting Business initiative (CBI) networks, UN Global Compact local networks, and chambers of commerce – into humanitarian coordination systems to fully leverage their expertise in support of a range of activities, including aid delivery, humanitarian advocacy and information management. In some countries, such as Haiti and the Philippines, the private sector has a seat in the HCT. Engaging the private sector can also help to strengthen humanitarian-development collaboration

and disaster risk reduction, as demonstrated by the Private Sector Alliance for Disaster Resilient Societies.<sup>16</sup>

However, engaging with the private sector can involve potential reputational risks. For this reason, it is critical that due diligence is conducted on companies before engaging with them. UN agencies, NGOs and Governments generally have focal points for private sector partnerships and due diligence processes.<sup>17</sup>

Cooperation between UN agencies and the business sector is framed by the Principles of the United Nations Global Compact,<sup>18</sup> which sets out a principled-based approach to doing business. This requires companies to operate in ways that, at a minimum, meet fundamental responsibilities in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption. Most RC offices have a Partnerships and Finance Officer who can provide further guidance and support.

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### **CASE STUDY: ENGAGING THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN THE PHILIPPINES**

The Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF), a member of the national CBI network, is a business-led coordination body that aims to address key gaps in disaster risk management and complement the Government in areas where it is restricted by limited capacity, budgetary constraints and bureaucratic challenges. Through its 24/7 private sector-run Emergency Operations Centre, the PDRF has been active in monitoring the COVID-19 situation as well as recent typhoons. It has worked with the local private sector to provide food vouchers worth US\$30 million to the urban poor (reaching over 7.6 million people) and, in close collaboration with the Government and humanitarian community, it has purchased essential protective gear for health-care institutions. PDRF is an observer on the HCT and participates in UN assessment processes.

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16 [www.preventionweb.net/arise/about/](http://www.preventionweb.net/arise/about/)

17 This process should take into account the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) [www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/GuidingPrinciplesBusinessHR\\_EN.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/GuidingPrinciplesBusinessHR_EN.pdf), endorsed by the Human Rights Council in June 2011.

18 [www.unglobalcompact.org/](http://www.unglobalcompact.org/)

## HUMANITARIAN LEADERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS

Where the scope and scale of a crisis requires it, the ERC is responsible for designating an HC, following consultation with the IASC. In most cases, the RC will take on the role, but in some circumstances a stand-alone HC, a UN agency or an NGO representative, or a Regional or Deputy HC will be designated to coordinate the humanitarian response.

### Designated Leadership Arrangements

#### Normative framework for HC designations

The practice of designating HCs dates to the early 1990s and is grounded in normative UN documents developed in consultation with the IASC. General Assembly resolution 46/182 from 1991 refers to “the Resident Coordinator [who] should normally coordinate the humanitarian assistance of the United Nations system at country level”. The first specific mention of a humanitarian coordination position in UN resolutions appears in Security Council resolution 733 from 1992, whereby the Security Council requested the UN Secretary-General to increase the provision of humanitarian assistance by the UN and its partners in Somalia “in liaison with the other international humanitarian organizations and to this end to appoint a coordinator to oversee the effective delivery of this assistance”. Following this precedent, the ERC appointed HCs for Angola and Mozambique in 1993 “on behalf of the Secretary-General after consultations with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee”.

After the appointment of the first HC in 1992, the designation of HC positions in response to humanitarian emergencies quickly evolved into standard practice. By 1994, the IASC had codified the basic parameters of the designation process, including the ERC’s competence to take the final decision and make use of the roster of experienced humanitarian managers (now called the HC Pool). Since then, the process has remained largely unchanged, although efforts to diversify the membership of the HC Pool continue.

## Designating leadership positions

Where the impacts of a humanitarian crisis require the designation of an HC, and where the RC in place has the right profile to serve as HC, the ERC, following consultations with the IASC, will confirm his/her designation. In a limited number of situations where the RC is not considered to have the necessary humanitarian profile, the ERC may, following consultations with the IASC, choose to appoint an HC outside the RC system. In instances where one operational UN agency or NGO is providing most of the humanitarian assistance, the ERC may consider designating that agency or NGO representative as HC, acting under the authority of and reporting to the ERC.

In situations where there is a need to designate regional coordinators for crises that go beyond national borders, the ERC may consider assigning such functions to a Regional HC working with RCs and HCs in several countries.

The ERC, in consultation with the IASC, may also choose to designate a Deputy HC (DHC) to support the RC or HC in carrying out humanitarian coordination functions, either across the country or for a specific geographical area. Deployment of a DHC has become increasingly common, particularly in situations where multiple or large-scale crises require dedicated coordination capacity under the HC's leadership to enable effective delivery of aid in a safe manner.

## Accountability and Performance Management

In times of crises, RCs and HCs are ultimately accountable to all people in need. Effective inter-agency mechanisms for accountability to affected people (AAP) should be established to ensure this is duly recognized and remains central to their humanitarian leadership (see p. 105). RCs and HCs are also accountable to the ERC for ensuring that the delivery of international humanitarian assistance and protection meets affected people's needs and is delivered according to the mandates of all relevant humanitarian organizations. This applies to all RCs when they are performing humanitarian functions, irrespective of whether they are designated as an HC.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> This does not supersede the RC's accountability to the UN Secretary-General.



If international humanitarian assistance is required and a separate HC position is not established, the RC is accountable to the ERC for the performance of humanitarian coordination functions. In fulfilling this function, the RC is supported by OCHA, usually through the regional office or, in some cases, an in-country Humanitarian Advisory Team.

The ERC also assesses the performance of RCs in proactively preparing for crises. Since the effectiveness of emergency response operations depends heavily on the quality of prior preparedness efforts, the RC's leadership in coordinating preparedness activities of UN Country Team (UNCT) members and relevant humanitarian actors is critical and may be assessed by the ERC regardless of whether a humanitarian emergency unfolds.

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## **CASE STUDY:**

### **LEADERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS IN VENEZUELA AND ZIMBABWE**

#### **Venezuela**

In May 2019, in light of the growing humanitarian needs in Venezuela and the need to scale up the humanitarian response, the ERC designated the sitting RC as an HC. Shortly after, in June, the ERC designated a DHC to support the HC's coordination role. Given the unique context in Venezuela, the Head of the OCHA Country Office was appointed as the DHC. While this arrangement may have posed challenges in other contexts, having one individual serving in these two key functions contributed to the efficiency of the response, helping to streamline humanitarian coordination as well as 'delinking' political and humanitarian aspects of the crisis. This unusual leadership arrangement functioned well, as key humanitarian stakeholders such as the RC/HC, OCHA, international and national NGOs and other critical constituencies rallied behind the proposed set-up. The RC/HC also recognized the need for support in addressing competing priorities that required undivided attention to allow for the implementation of humanitarian operations.

#### **Zimbabwe**

In November 2020, in view of the severity of the humanitarian crisis and the worsening outlook in Zimbabwe, the ERC designated the sitting RC as an HC. This designation acknowledged the RC's important role in leading a significant humanitarian operation in support of the Government of Zimbabwe.

In terms of the humanitarian architecture, a fully functioning cluster system providing support to the Humanitarian Country Team (chaired by the RC on a monthly basis) had already been established. After 2014, when needs were less acute, RCs in Zimbabwe were no longer designated as HCs. However, they continued to play a critical role in leading the ongoing humanitarian response, ensuring that adequate coordination mechanisms and response tools remained in place.

## COMPETENCIES FOR EFFECTIVE HUMANITARIAN LEADERSHIP

Competencies represent the experience, skills and behaviours required to perform effectively. Research by ALNAP<sup>20</sup> indicates that although many of the qualities and competencies possessed by effective leaders are not unique to the humanitarian sector, what is unique is the context in which they are being applied: working with people in distress, and taking decisions that will affect lives and livelihoods, often on the basis of incomplete and ambiguous information, while under pressure to act rapidly. Humanitarian leaders work in fluid situations with a wide range of different actors, some of whom may be hostile or ambivalent to humanitarian efforts, or unaware of their importance. As a result, successful humanitarian leaders generally exhibit an unusually broad range of leadership qualities and demonstrate a strong values base.

### IASC Competencies for Humanitarian Leaders

With this in mind, the IASC agreed a series of competencies that are critical for humanitarian coordination and leadership. These go beyond normal planning and operating procedures to define the higher-level competencies required in situations of rapid change, uncertainty and complexity.

#### Leadership

- **Formulating Strategies, Applying Humanitarian Principles and Norms:** Demonstrates a broad-based understanding of the growing complexities of humanitarian issues and activities. Creates a strategic vision of shared goals based on humanitarian principles and norms and ensures broad acceptance of it. Develops a road map that enhances humanitarian action.

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<sup>20</sup> Leadership in Action: Leading Effectively in Humanitarian Action; available here: [www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/leadership-in-action-alnap-study.pdf](http://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/leadership-in-action-alnap-study.pdf)

- **Deciding and Initiating Action:** Makes prompt, clear decisions that may involve tough choices or considered risks. Takes responsibility for actions, projects and people. Takes initiative, acts with confidence and works under own direction. Initiates and generates activity. Provides others with clear direction. Modifies decisions when necessary, in light of new information.

### **Managing Relationships**

- **Relating and Networking:** Establishes good relationships with stakeholders and staff. Builds wide and effective networks of contacts inside and outside the organization. Relates well to people at all levels. Manages conflict. Makes effective use of political processes to influence and persuade others.
- **Fostering Humanitarian Teamwork:** Builds and maintains humanitarian partnerships. Is committed to working in partnership with the Humanitarian Country Team. Promotes a climate of teamwork and harmony and facilitates a team approach. Pursues the efficient use of common resources and common goals. Shares information and supports others. Ensures the full participation of team members in common endeavours. Encourages clear, open and respectful dialogue.

### **Influencing and Representing:**

- **Advocacy and Negotiation:** Can effectively influence or persuade others of a course of action. Is an effective advocate of humanitarian principles on behalf of the humanitarian community. Is able and prepared to adopt a number of ways to negotiate to gain support and influence diverse parties, with the aim of securing improvements for humanitarian access and provision of assistance, and to ensure protection of the affected population.
- **Presenting and Communicating Information:** Speaks clearly and fluently. Expresses opinions, information and key points of an argument clearly. Makes presentations and undertakes public speaking with skill and confidence. Identifies information needs of a target audience or population and works systematically to address the needs. Projects credibility.

## Managing Complexity

- **Analysing Complexity:** Analyses numerical data, verbal data and all other sources of information. Breaks information into component parts, patterns and relationships. Probes for further information or greater understanding of a problem. Makes rational judgements from the available information and analysis. Produces workable solutions to a range of problems. Demonstrates an understanding of how one issue may be a part of the larger humanitarian system.
- **Planning and Organizing:** Sets clearly defined objectives. Plans activities and projects well in advance and takes account of possible changing circumstances. Manages time effectively. Identifies and organizes resources needed to accomplish tasks. Monitors performance against deadlines and milestones.

## Adapting and Coping

- **Coping with Pressure and Setbacks:** Works productively in a high-pressure environment. Keeps emotions under control during difficult situations. Balances the demands of work and personal life. Maintains a positive outlook at work. Handles criticism well and learns from it.
- **Adapting and Responding to Change:** Adapts to changing circumstances. Accepts new ideas and change initiatives. Adapts interpersonal style to suit different people or situations. Shows respect and sensitivity towards cultural and religious differences. Deals with ambiguity, making positive use of the opportunities it presents.

## United Nations Leadership Model

The UN Leadership Model, developed under the auspices of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), provides a useful reference for RCs.<sup>21</sup> In line with the UN System Leadership Framework,<sup>22</sup> effective humanitarian leadership comprises eight essential defining characteristics:

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21 <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/united-nations-leadership-model>

22 [www.unssc.org/sites/unssc.org/files/un\\_system\\_leadership\\_framework.pdf](http://www.unssc.org/sites/unssc.org/files/un_system_leadership_framework.pdf)

- It is **principled**, defending the organization's values, norms and standards.
- It is **norm-based** in that it is grounded in UN norms and standards – beginning with the UN Charter itself.
- It is **inclusive** of all personnel and stakeholders, irrespective of age, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, disability, grade, contractual status and other personal characteristics.
- It is **accountable**, both mutually within the system and to beneficiaries and the public beyond. This means that even as personnel ensure accountability from others, they equally accept their own accountability, striving for 360 degrees of mutual accountability.
- It is **multidimensional**, integrated and engaged across pillars and functions. It is now seen as axiomatic that the three pillars of the UN Charter (peace and security, human rights and development) are interdependent, and that all UN functions, whether humanitarian, political, security or other, have an impact on one another.
- It is **transformational**, of ourselves and of those we serve, heavily reinforced by attitudinal and behavioural adjustments, by development of leadership capabilities and by strong vision and leadership for change.
- It is **collaborative**, within and beyond the UN and the humanitarian system.
- It is **self-applied**, i.e. modelled in own behaviour – seeking to inspire, not to command. This means that in interactions within offices, teams and agencies, the leader is fully respectful of all colleagues at all levels, is gender-sensitive, promotes and celebrates diversity as a strength, fosters teamwork, empowers staff, recognizes and rewards merit, and operates with integrity, transparency and fairness.

To this, the UN Secretary-General has added a ninth characteristic:

- It is **pragmatic and action-oriented**, taking principled and practical action to deliver on mandates, balancing administrative and operational risks, and erring on the side of action to prevent and address human suffering.

### United Nations Leadership Model



To complement the UN System Leadership Framework, the UN Sustainable Development Group has developed an [RC Leadership Profile](#),<sup>23</sup> which articulates who RCs should be and how they should behave and do their work – based on the values of integrity, respect for diversity and professionalism. As well as improving the effectiveness of the humanitarian response, strong leadership from RCs is critical for enhancing the performance of the wider interna-

<sup>23</sup> <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/resident-coordinator-leadership-profile>

tional humanitarian system – mobilizing partners and leveraging the strengths of operational actors, while at the same time paying attention to risks and weaknesses that need to be addressed. As outlined in the UN System Leadership Framework, driving this type of transformational change requires a willingness to reflect, and to help the system learn and constantly innovate. To achieve results at scale, humanitarian leaders are expected to drive transformational change both within and outside their organizations to influence the behaviour of the systems with which they interact.

In addition to the defining characteristics of effective UN leadership, there are specific qualities and skills that are particularly important for the role of the RC and HC.

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### **Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators – five measures of success**

1. Clear appreciation of the independent and impartial role of the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator fully consistent with UNGA resolution 46/182, answering directly to the UN Secretary-General and guided by the UN Under-Secretary-General/Emergency Relief Coordinator.
2. Diplomatic and representational skills that will enable constructive and robust relationships with national sovereign Governments, whether donors or recipients of humanitarian relief.
3. Knowledge of and empathy with fundamental rights and needs, and with the international legal and constitutional frameworks that underpin global humanitarian action and interventions, e.g. the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its Covenants, the Geneva Conventions, and the Children and Women’s Conventions.
4. Intimate knowledge of the country-specific coordinated humanitarian assistance programme, for which the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator has direct responsibility, close rapport with the leadership of participating UN and NGO entities, both in country and at HQs, and intimate knowledge of individual mandates of these entities.
5. Advanced levels of personal commitment, interpersonal skills of a high order, relevant knowledge and experience, and a reservoir of fortitude and energy.

## Principles of Partnership



### **Equality**

Equality requires mutual respect between members of the partnership irrespective of size and power. The participants must respect each other's mandates, obligations and independence and recognize each other's constraints and commitments. Mutual respect must not preclude organisations from engaging in constructive dissent.



### **Transparency**

Transparency is achieved through dialogue (on equal footing), with an emphasis on early consultations and early sharing of information. Communications and transparency, including financial transparency, increase the level of trust among organizations.



### **Result-orientated approach**

Effective humanitarian action must be reality-based and action-oriented. This requires result-oriented coordination based on effective capabilities and concrete operational capacities.



### **Responsibility**

Humanitarian organizations have an ethical obligation to each other to accomplish their tasks responsibly, with integrity and in a relevant and appropriate way. They must make sure they commit to activities only when they have the means, competencies, skills, and capacity to deliver on their commitments. Decisive and robust prevention of abuses committed by humanitarians must also be a constant effort.



### **Complementarity**

The diversity of the humanitarian community is an asset if we build on our comparative advantages and complement each other's contributions. Local capacity is one of the main assets to enhance and on which to build. Whenever possible, humanitarian organizations should strive to make it an integral part in emergency response. Language and cultural barriers must be overcome.



## Principles of Partnership

Partnerships are the foundation of collaborative humanitarian action. The Principles of Partnership, adopted at the Global Humanitarian Platform (GHP) in 2017, provide a useful template for dealing with the complexities of coordinating a diverse set of humanitarian actors. The principles provide a framework for all actors in the humanitarian response – including Governments, UN agencies, NGOs the private sector and affected populations – for engaging on a more equal, constructive and transparent basis.

The GHP provides some [practical tips](#) on what humanitarian organizations can do to implement the Principles of Partnership – many of which are pertinent to the role of RCs.

## MANDATORY RESPONSIBILITIES OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION

RCs play a critical role in ensuring that the fundamental tenets of humanitarian action are factored into wider programming – both in humanitarian response and preparedness efforts. The integration of these different elements allows programmes to address immediate humanitarian concerns while helping to build longer-term resilience. However, it is important to bear in mind that how these are applied (or levels of priority) may differ according to the context.

### Key roles of RC and HC

#### Centrality of Protection

- Promote and facilitate an implementation of the IASC Protection Policy (2016) as part of a collective approach to ensure that protection outcomes are central to humanitarian action.
- Ensure that protection priorities, which are evidence-based and grounded in a solid data-collection strategy, are identified and addressed in strategic humanitarian planning and decision-making.
- Promote respect for human rights, refugee law and IHL by all parties, including non-State actors, coordinating the advocacy efforts of relevant organizations and using private and/or public advocacy as appropriate.

- Ensure all necessary efforts are made to secure sufficient funding for the protection response.
- Lead the development of a Humanitarian Country Team protection strategy, when needed.

### **Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)**

- Ensure that a collective PSEA strategy is developed, which includes safe and accessible inter-agency community-based complaint mechanisms, agreements for information sharing, and victim services.
- As a priority of the UN Secretary-General, ensure PSEA is raised upfront in all discussions as early as possible with all partners at all forums.
- Create an environment in which the prohibitions on sexual exploitation and abuse are known and understood and personnel are aware of their obligation to adhere to required standards of behaviour.

### **Accountability to Affected People**

- Ensure international humanitarian action in support of national capacities is executed through a Collective Accountability Framework that helps adapt the response accordingly.
- Ensure this is operationalized through a country-level action plan.

### **Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment and Gender-Based Violence (GBV)**

- Facilitate access to and engagement in humanitarian decision-making for women, women leaders and women's organizations.
- Ensure that an intersectional gender analysis is incorporated in humanitarian situational analyses, humanitarian needs overviews and humanitarian response plans, and informs decision-making and programming.
- Ensure gender issues, GBV prevention and women's organizations are prioritized for funding and resources; treat GBV as a serious and life-threatening problem, and take actions regardless of the presence or absence of concrete 'evidence'.

- Promote inclusion of GBV risk-mitigation efforts in all sectors, as laid out in the IASC Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action.

### **Addressing the Diversity of Needs**

- Ensure that the humanitarian response addresses the diversity of needs and takes into account people in all their diversities, including, but not limited to, gender, ethnicity, disability, age and the mental health of the affected population, throughout the needs analysis, planning and delivery of humanitarian assistance.

#### **Disability Inclusion**

- Ensure application of the IASC Guidelines on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action and the associated Guidance on Strengthening Disability Inclusion in Humanitarian Response Plans.
- Nominate a disability focal point for the RC office and engage with local organizations of persons with disabilities.
- Adopt a twin-track approach, mainstreaming disability in all programmes, while providing targeted support where needed.
- Report on annual achievements, as set out in the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy.

#### **Age**

- Ensure data disaggregation by age, gender and disability.
- Ensure attention is given to the needs of each age group, including by tackling age and disability discrimination.
- Support NGOs, State welfare departments and health-care providers to make services and distributions inclusive and accessible to all age groups.
- Ensure meaningful and safe engagement and consultation of people from across all age groups and diversities, across all sectors and phases of the humanitarian programme cycle (HPC), including by operationalizing the Humanitarian Inclusion Standards for Older People and People with Disabilities.

### **Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)**

- Advocate for MHPSS to be included as a cross-cutting issue in the humanitarian response, including in the cluster response and in HPC processes.
- Support the creation and work of a cross-cutting country-level MHPSS Technical Working Group in your country.
- Encourage donor agencies and donor Governments to include MHPSS in funding envelopes under health, protection, education and nutrition, and in multi-donor trust funds .

### **Environment and Climate Change**

- Advocate for environmental risk screening as a standard practice in humanitarian programming.
- Ensure that capacity and expertise to conduct environmental impact assessments are mapped.
- Advocate for recovery strategies that are environmentally friendly and risk-informed, and that lead to sustainable solutions.
- Advocate for closer collaboration between in-country development and humanitarian actors on environmental and climate-related issues.

## **The Centrality of Protection**

In order to be effective, humanitarian action must have the protection of all affected and at-risk people at its core. Protection must be central to preparedness efforts and humanitarian response and beyond.

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### **IASC DEFINITION OF PROTECTION**

The concept of protection encompasses “all activities aimed at ensuring full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law – i.e. human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee law. Human rights and humanitarian organizations must conduct these activities in an impartial manner (not on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, language or gender).”<sup>24</sup>

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24 IASC Policy Paper, Protection of Internally Displaced Persons, 1999, p.4, <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/focal-points/iasc-policy-paper-protection-internally-displaced-persons-1999>

## **IASC protection policy**

Protection encompasses efforts pursued by humanitarian actors in all sectors to ensure that the rights of affected people and the obligations of duty bearers under international law are understood, respected, protected and fulfilled without discrimination. States and, in armed conflict situations, parties to conflict have the primary responsibility to protect civilians and all affected people in accordance with international human rights and humanitarian law, as applicable. However, humanitarian actors have a crucial role to play in offering their services to help save lives, prevent and alleviate human suffering, and promote human dignity. As set out in the IASC Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action, protecting people in a manner that prevents and responds to violations of IHRL and IHL is imperative for the UN and a shared, humanitarian system-wide core responsibility. Given the multifaceted nature of protection threats and the complex contexts in which they arise, complementary coordinated actions across the different parts of the humanitarian architecture are required, as well as collaboration and engagement with a range of stakeholders beyond the humanitarian response.

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## **CENTRALITY OF PROTECTION**

The IASC Principals affirmed that all humanitarian actors have a responsibility to place protection at the centre of humanitarian action, in their Statement on the Centrality of Protection in 2013 and the IASC Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action in 2016. The policy emphasizes the importance of leadership on protection by the HC and HCT, and it recommends the process for its implementation at the country level, outlining steps for humanitarian actors to engage collectively to achieve meaningful protection outcomes that reduce the risks people experience in humanitarian crises.

The policy complements other initiatives in support of protection, including IASC commitments related to PSEA, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, AAP, and Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities.

Similarly, the UN Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights, which builds on the Human Rights up Front initiative, calls for individual and collective responsibility across the UN system to consider human rights in all decision-making, operations and institutional commitments. It highlights the need to prevent human rights violations and respond promptly and effectively when such violations occur; leverage the broad range of UN mandates, channels and capacities to respond; and ensure RCs and other senior officials in country are supported by UN headquarters when needed.

### **Protection principles**

The Sphere Humanitarian Charter outlines four Protection Principles<sup>25</sup> that apply to all humanitarian actors and to all stages of humanitarian action – from preparedness to response and recovery. These principles are particularly pertinent to the role of RCs.

#### **Principle 1: Enhance the safety, dignity and rights of people, and avoid exposing them to further harm**

Humanitarian actors take steps to reduce overall risks and vulnerability of people, including to the potentially negative effects of humanitarian programmes.

*This Principle includes:*

- Understanding protection risks in context.
- Providing assistance that reduces risks that people may face in meeting their needs with dignity.
- Providing assistance in an environment that does not further expose people to physical hazards, violence or abuse.
- Supporting the capacity of people to protect themselves.

#### **Principle 2: Ensure people's access to impartial assistance according to need and without discrimination**

Humanitarian actors identify obstacles to accessing assistance and take steps to ensure it is provided in proportion to need and without discrimination.

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25 <https://handbook.spherestandards.org/en/sphere/#ch001>

*This Principle includes:*

- Challenging any actions that deliberately deprive people of their basic needs, using humanitarian principles and relevant law.
- Ensuring people receive support on the basis of need, and that they are not discriminated against on any other grounds.
- Ensuring access to assistance for all parts of the affected population.

**Principle 3: Assist people to recover from the physical and psychological effects of threatened or actual violence, coercion or deliberate deprivation**

Humanitarian actors provide immediate and sustained support to those harmed by violations, including referral to additional services as appropriate.

*This Principle includes:*

- Referring survivors to relevant support services.
- Taking all reasonable steps to ensure that the affected population is not subject to further violence, coercion or deprivation.
- Supporting people's own efforts to recover their dignity and rights within their communities and be safe.

**Principle 4: Help people claim their rights**

Humanitarian actors help affected communities claim their rights through information and documentation, and support efforts to strengthen respect for rights.

*This Principle includes:*

- Supporting people to assert their rights and to access remedies from government or other sources.
- Assisting people to secure the documentation they need to demonstrate their entitlements.
- Advocating for full respect of people's rights and international law, contributing to a stronger protective environment.

## Role of the RC and HC

The RC has the overall responsibility to coordinate country-level humanitarian action that aims to save lives, alleviate human suffering and protect the lives, dignity and livelihoods of populations in need. Supported by the HCT, the RC leads this work in country, ensuring that protection priorities are identified and addressed in strategic humanitarian planning and decision-making, including leading and coordinating the development of an HCT Protection Strategy when needed.

The RC is responsible for fostering collaboration among humanitarian actors so as to enable analysis and collective commitments in addressing complex protection issues. Together with the HCT, the RC is also responsible for facilitating and coordinating collaboration and engagement with a diverse range of non-humanitarian actors (e.g. development and peace operations) in addressing protection threats. The RC's leadership is indispensable in promoting respect for human rights, refugee law and IHL by all parties, including non-State actors, through private/public advocacy, as appropriate, and by coordinating the advocacy efforts of relevant organizations. In addition, the RC is responsible for endeavouring to ensure sufficient funds are allocated to protection preparedness, responses and priorities.

> See p. 96 for details on advocating for the protection of civilians at country level.

## Resources

- [IASC Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action](#), October 2016
- [IASC Principals' Statement on the Centrality of Protection](#), 2013
- UN Secretary-General, [The Highest Aspiration: A Call to Action for Human Rights](#), 2020
- Centrality of Protection – [Peer 2 Peer Support website](#)

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### **CASE STUDY: LESSONS ON CENTRALITY OF PROTECTION FROM THE PEER 2 PEER LEARNING MISSION IN IRAQ**

The Peer 2 Peer Learning Mission in Iraq (August 2015) captured a series of good practices on collective leadership, including the practical steps taken by the HC to put the centrality of protection into practice in the work of the HCT, the Humanitarian Response Plan and operations more broadly:



- The HC demonstrates clear leadership for protection through clear statements, direct support to the Protection Cluster, and influence on the humanitarian response process.
- The HC ensures an HCT Protection Strategy prioritizing two to three of the most acute protection issues, as agreed with the HCT members.
- The HC ensures the Humanitarian Response Plan includes clear protection objectives that each sector must respond to, and encourages cross-cluster validation.
- The HC ensures that protection remains a standing item on the HCT agenda, supported by a Critical Protection Issues note with targeted follow-up actions for the HCT.

IASC Peer 2 Peer, [The Centrality of Protection, Practical Steps for Humanitarian Coordinators and Humanitarian Country Teams](#)

## **Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse**

Sexual exploitation means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. Sexual abuse means actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

### **Conduct of humanitarian personnel**

Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) is a form of sexual misconduct perpetrated against a member of the affected population by national or international aid workers, including those working for the host State, NGOs or anyone affiliated with the UN-wide system, including UN staff or related personnel or non-UN forces acting under a Security Council mandate. Acts of sexual abuse or exploitation of the affected population are always serious misconduct and grounds for immediate termination of contract and potential criminal prosecution under national law. In addition, when the perpetrator is a State actor and has acted as an agent of the State or with its consent or acquiescence, some of these acts may amount to violations of international law, including international human rights, humanitarian and criminal law.

During an emergency, the lack of physical security and access to basic services can make local populations dependent on humanitarian personnel for life-saving assistance. Limited participation in decision-making and failure to consult and involve local populations add to the imbalance in power dynamics. Because of this, sexual relationships between international/national humanitarian personnel and the local population can constitute sexual exploitation, as per the revised IASC Six Core Principles Relating to SEA (see resources below).

There are no exceptions to the prohibition of sexual activity with children. Sexual activity with people under the age of 18 is prohibited, regardless of the legal or cultural age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the child's age does not constitute a defence.

UN staff members and related personnel are obliged to report concerns or suspicions of SEA in line with internal reporting procedures and/or agreed inter-agency referral pathways, as endorsed by the RC and UNCT/HCT. Anonymous complaints and complaints where the institutional affiliation of the alleged perpetrator is unidentified or unknown should be treated as seriously as complaints where the identity is known.

Addressing SEA requires the efforts of all personnel. It is the ultimate responsibility of heads of office, human resources departments and designated programme personnel to ensure that all humanitarian responses take adequate and appropriate steps to mitigate risks of SEA. As articulated in the IASC Principals' Statement on PSEA, and reinforced in the 2018 IASC Plan to Accelerate PSEA at the country level, HCs will report regularly to the ERC on PSEA, and the HC annual meeting will have PSEA as a standing agenda item.

### **The role of the RC and HC**

At the onset of an emergency, the RC must ensure that existing in-country PSEA systems are sufficiently robust and adapted for the emergency context. As the lead coordinator, it is the RC's responsibility to drive home the message that SEA and inaction upon allegations by the UN are not tolerated, and to ensure that all entities, sectors and heads of office within the humanitarian response take

appropriate measures to prevent SEA and are accountable for their responsibility to respond diligently to allegations.

> See p. 100 for details on delivering PSEA at country level.

## Resources

- [Secretary-General’s Bulletin on Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, 2003](#)
- [IASC Six Core Principles Relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, 2019](#)
- [IASC Principals’ Statement on Protection Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, 2015](#)
- [Management and Accountability Framework of the UN Development and Resident Coordinator System](#)
- [The IASC PSEA microsite](#) contains useful resources including a global PSEA dashboard

## Accountability to Affected People

AAP is the active commitment by humanitarian actors to take account of, give account to, and be held to account by the people they seek to assist. AAP’s primary aim is to ensure that responses are informed by the needs and preferences of affected communities. This entails informing<sup>26</sup> and listening to communities, establishing feedback-and-complaint mechanisms, building partnerships with local actors and promoting representation in decision-making.

For RCs, collective approaches, especially those that are localized, are critical for understanding the overall needs and preferences of affected people across the response, identifying where gaps exist and guiding the prioritization of response actions.

Different response operations use different but comparable terms for AAP including Communicating with Communities, Communications and Community

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26 It is not enough to simply provide information; it also has to be made accessible – e.g. by ensuring that websites are compatible with screen-reader software, providing the information through several channels (written, audio, in simple language, etc.) and in the local language(s) – to make sure it reaches and can be understood by people in all their diversities.

Engagement, Community Engagement and Accountability, and Communications for Development.

### **Collective commitments to AAP**

System-wide accountability is essential to meeting organizational and collective commitments as outlined by the Grand Bargain Participation Revolution Workstream,<sup>27</sup> the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability and the IASC Commitments on AAP and PSEA.

The IASC Commitments include:

1. **Leadership** - Ensure a predictable approach to elevating community information into response analysis, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and learning.
2. **Participation and partnerships** - Ensure agency mechanisms identify and maintain equitable partnerships with local actors that enable people – including those of different sex, age, disability status and other relevant factors – to have unimpeded and equal access to accountability mechanisms to drive decisions that affect their own lives, well-being, dignity and protection.
3. **Information, communication and action** - Ensure the coordination of agency-specific community engagement mechanisms, including those that address allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, are integrated into programming, feed into collective approaches, inform and listen to communities, and result in action taken that is communicated back.
4. **Results** - Ensure overall response performance measurement is built into planning processes, including the measurement of quality and accountability at the collective level – for example, by applying the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability.

### **Role of the RC and HC**

In meeting these commitments – including the HCT commitment to collective accountability as mandated in the IASC HCT Terms of Reference – response

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<sup>27</sup> <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/a-participation-revolution-include-people-receiving-aid-in-making-the-decisions-which-affect-their-lives>

operations are expected to strengthen the coordination and harmonization of community engagement. In practice, this means the RC should ensure a Collective Accountability Framework is developed. This sets out the core commitments to AAP and the steps for developing joint information sharing and community feedback mechanisms, which can then be used to adapt the response accordingly. The Framework should be supported by a country-level action plan.

- > See p. 87 for details on community engagement coordination mechanisms, and p. 103 for developing and implementing a country-level Collective Accountability Framework.

## Resources

- [IASC HCT Terms of Reference](#)

## Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment and Gender-Based Violence

Women and girls are severely constrained by gender inequalities and differences in power, privilege and opportunity. Consequently, women and girls die in larger numbers in natural disasters. They are also disproportionately exposed to loss of livelihoods, increased domestic responsibilities, and sexual and gender-based violence, as well as to threats to many aspects of their health and well-being, especially in contexts where there is a breakdown of law and order and a disruption of social networks. This is particularly true for women and girls living with a disability, and those from indigenous or other marginalized communities. The impacts of crises on women and girls are further exacerbated by their restricted opportunities to influence humanitarian action.

Men and boys are also affected by crises in specific ways, including as fatalities of armed conflict, as combatants, and as both survivors and perpetrators of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence.

There is now a general consensus that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (GEEWG) are fundamental human rights and humanitarian imperatives. This principle is enshrined in international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law, as well as in UN Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace

and Security (WPS).<sup>28</sup> It is also reflected in recent global agreements, such as those from the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, the Sendai Disaster Risk Reduction Framework (2015), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015), the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies – and its new road map (2021-2025) – and the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants (2016).

These global agreements and resolutions have identified emerging themes that have implications for GEEWG in humanitarian action. These include the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, new financing mechanisms and localization (i.e. the allocation of resources and decision-making to local actors including women's rights organizations). They also reinforce critical gender equality concerns such as the need to:

- Adopt and implement measures to eradicate GBV and violence against women and girls.
- Recognize women's capacities as well as vulnerabilities.
- Extend the focus on women's participation to their transformative leadership in humanitarian action and peacebuilding.
- Expand the notion of gender to include persons who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI).
- Support non-militarized solutions to conflict.
- Strengthen women's economic empowerment (which will also help to speed up recovery and increase the resilience of communities).
- Address the care responsibilities women are expected to shoulder.
- Enable equal access to all services in humanitarian contexts.

> For more details on prioritizing GBV prevention at country level, see p.106.

## Resources

### Gender

- [IASC Guidelines on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action](#)

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28 In particular, UN Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2009), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2010), 1960 (2011), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015) and 2467 (2019).

- [IASC Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action](#)
- [IASC Reference Group on Gender and Humanitarian Action](#)
- [The inter-agency minimum standards for gender-based violence in emergencies programming](#)
- [UN System-Wide Policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women](#)

## Meeting the Diversity of Needs

Crises do not affect everyone equally: aspects of social identity related to gender, age, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, caste, ethnic and religious affiliation, and economic and migration status are drivers of inequality. They interact to determine the capacities and vulnerabilities of women, girls, men and boys – resulting in different risks and needs. Crises can exacerbate existing vulnerabilities as well as create new ones. Physical, social, environmental and political factors may result in the exclusion and marginalization of some affected groups, or parts thereof.

As part of wider AAP and inclusion efforts, programmes need to proactively engage these groups to identify and address their unique needs and vulnerabilities to ensure that no one is left behind in the response. The Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) – particularly the Humanitarian Needs Overviews and Humanitarian Response Plans – must reflect these diversities. These should also be explicitly integrated into the work of clusters and inter-cluster coordination.

> For details on clusters and cluster coordination see p. 78 and p. 82; for the HPC see p. 119.

In addressing the diversity of needs, the provision of services (health, food, shelter, etc.) must take into account accessibility (the ease with which all people can safely reach, understand and use services) and acceptability (the extent to which people consider the services to be appropriate, e.g. whether they respect social/cultural norms, including of minorities, and are sensitive to gender, age and disability requirements). To achieve this, people in all their diversities must be included meaningfully in preliminary consultations and in assessments. It may also require overcoming barriers related to the discrimination of traditionally marginalized groups.

## Disability inclusion

Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term sensory, physical, psychosocial, intellectual or other impairments that, in interaction with various barriers, prevent them from participating in or having access to humanitarian programmes, services or protection. About 15 per cent of the world's population suffers from a disability (of which 38 per cent are older persons and 10 per cent are children).

Persons with disabilities are not a homogeneous group. They are diverse in their experience, in the ways that attitudinal, physical and communication barriers impede their participation and inclusion in humanitarian action, and in their identity, including their age, gender, ethnicity, location and race. Due to the intersectionality of these factors, persons with disabilities face greater marginalization and discrimination. During humanitarian crises, for example, children with disabilities are at higher risk of abuse and neglect, and women with disabilities are at higher risk of sexual violence.

Disability inclusion is achieved when persons with disabilities meaningfully participate in all their diversity, when their rights are promoted, and when disability-related concerns are addressed – in compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).<sup>29</sup> Article 11 of the CRPD specifically requires State parties, in accordance with their obligations under international law, to take all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including armed conflicts, humanitarian emergencies and natural hazards.

Disability inclusion in the UN is based on a human rights approach, which builds upon the concept of 'social inclusion', defined as "the process by which efforts are made to ensure equal opportunities so that everyone, regardless of their background, can achieve their full potential in life. Such efforts include policies and actions that promote equal access to (public) services as well as enable citizens' participation in the decision-making processes that affect their lives."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy website and UNDIS, annex I. Key concepts and definitions

<sup>30</sup> UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Social Inclusion. [www.un.org/development/desa/socialperspectiveondevelopment/issues/social-integration.html](http://www.un.org/development/desa/socialperspectiveondevelopment/issues/social-integration.html).



Reasonable accommodation requires individuals and institutions to modify (accommodate) their procedures or services where this is necessary and appropriate and does not impose a disproportionate or undue burden, to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with others.<sup>31</sup>

## Age

Under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), a child is any person under the age of 18. Different actors use different categorizations for youth, but the most common definition is any person between the ages of 15 and 24. In many humanitarian contexts, adolescents, youth and children constitute close to 70 per cent of the affected population. The UN defines 'older persons'<sup>32</sup> as any person aged 60 and over, while recognizing the diversity of needs and capacities within this group.

Working with and for children, young people or older persons is not just about serving an underserved population; they must participate in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This is not only to make programmes more sustainable and relevant, but because participation is a basic right in itself, including for children, as described in the [UNCRC](#). Participation must never be tokenistic or manipulative, and ethical and safety standards must be followed.

It is important to recognize the impact of humanitarian emergencies on people of different age groups and to ensure an 'age-wide' lens in humanitarian action. Data collection should be fully disaggregated by sex, age and disability. Programmes should invest in tackling age discrimination, and support NGOs, State welfare departments and health-care providers to make services and distributions inclusive and accessible to all age groups. Particular attention should be given to the needs of each age group, e.g. that children are protected from violence, exploitation and abuse; they have access to education, basic health, WASH and nutrition services; and they receive opportunities to have their voices heard.

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31 CRPD, Article 2.

32 In line with a people-centred approach, it is recommended to use the term 'older persons' not 'elderly people'.

## **Mental health and psychosocial support**

The experience of an emergency can significantly impact a person's mental health and psychosocial well-being. It can also have immediate as well as long-term and sometimes life-threatening consequences for individuals, families and communities. In conflict-affected areas, one person in five lives with some form of mental condition, from mild depression and anxiety to psychosis.

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) is a composite term used to describe any type of local or outside support that aims to protect or promote psychosocial well-being and/or prevent or treat mental health conditions. MHPSS is a critical aspect of all humanitarian emergencies and must play a role in all preparedness, response and recovery operations. As a cross-cutting issue, MHPSS is relevant across a wide range of clusters, particularly camp coordination and camp management, education, health, nutrition, and protection clusters.

In many humanitarian contexts, an MHPSS Working Group (MHPSS WG) serves as a platform or forum where agencies providing MHPSS programmes can meet to discuss technical programming issues related to the humanitarian response.<sup>33</sup> The Co-Chairs of the global IASC Reference Group on MHPSS in Emergency Settings (see resources section below) can provide details of MHPSS WGs in specific countries. MHPSS surge capacity may also be made available in certain contexts.

It is also important to ensure that agencies establish programmes to protect and promote the mental health and well-being of national and international humanitarian staff and volunteers, many of whom work in demanding or stressful environments.

### **Role of the RC and HC**

The RC should ensure that humanitarian action considers the diversity of needs and ensures that no one is left behind. Throughout the planning and delivery of humanitarian action, the RC must take into account gender, disability, age and other diversities, as well as the mental health of the affected population (commonly referred to as 'cross-cutting issues'). Issues related to both protection and assistance need to be identified and addressed. Consideration should be given to conducting vulnerability analyses or profiling the affected population to identify

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<sup>33</sup> As of end 2020, inter-agency MHPSS Working Groups exist in 50 countries.

the most marginalized and at risk in order to understand why they are at risk or in need and better inform preparedness, response and recovery. Failure to analyse and address the different impacts of an emergency on particular segments of the population and their differing needs increases the chances of doing harm and exacerbating inequalities – diminishing the appropriateness and effectiveness of humanitarian action.

As Chair of the HCT, the RC is well positioned to advocate for concerns with national authorities and across the range of actors involved in the humanitarian response, ensuring that analysis of different segments of the population and the risks and needs they face is incorporated into and informs wider programming.

More specifically, the RC's role is to:

- Advocate for the integration of cross-cutting issues in humanitarian preparedness and response and in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (specific guidance now exists to facilitate inclusion in Humanitarian Needs Overviews and Humanitarian Response Plans – see resources below).
- Support the creation and work of relevant cross-cutting country-level technical working groups.
- Remind all clusters of the need to include people in all their diversities in their respective programmes, and ask for issues related to needs and responses to be raised at inter-cluster coordination group meetings.
- Encourage donor agencies and donor Governments to account for people in all their diversities in funding envelopes under health, protection, education and nutrition, and in multi-donor trust funds (which usually direct funding through clusters at country level).

## Resources

### Disability Inclusion

- [IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action](#)
- [Guidance on strengthening disability inclusion in Humanitarian Response Plans](#)
- [UN Disability Inclusion Strategy](#)
- [Humanitarian Inclusion Standards for older persons and persons with disabilities](#)

## Age

- [Minimum Standards for Child Protection In Humanitarian Action \(CPMS\) - 2019 edition](#)
- [IASC advocacy paper: Humanitarian Action and Older Persons - an essential brief for humanitarian actors](#)

## Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

- [IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings](#)
- [IASC Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Programmes in Emergency Settings](#)

## Environment and Climate Change

Humanitarian crises continue to grow in scale and complexity. While the root causes of many of today's most urgent humanitarian emergencies are political, the climate crisis is now a primary intensifier of humanitarian needs. Climate change is already intensifying conflict situations, and it will continue to increase the severity and frequency of disasters unless there is a major shift towards enhanced climate change mitigation, adaptation and disaster risk reduction. The humanitarian implications of this massive global challenge are substantial and require accelerated action to reduce existing disaster risk and prevent the emergence of new risks. By exacerbating vulnerabilities, the climate crisis is putting a further strain on existing capacities, acting as a powerful stressor on human and environmental health, food security and migration.

By its very definition, humanitarian action focuses on people affected by conflict and disasters, looking in particular at their basic needs. Subsequently, impacts on the environment – either related to the disaster itself or to the ensuing humanitarian activity – are often viewed as secondary to the humanitarian imperative. This has often led to environmental degradation and destruction, which can impede the long-term recovery of affected communities, many of whom depend on natural resources for their livelihoods

## Role of the RC and HC

Integrating environmental and climate considerations into humanitarian action can lead to a faster, risk-informed crisis response, and contribute to shifting from short-term stability to long-term resilience. More than ever, we need coordination among development and humanitarian stakeholders to jointly address the environmental dimensions of disasters and conflicts, as well as the response itself. These efforts should be linked to wider efforts to reduce disaster risk in humanitarian action and humanitarian-development collaboration.

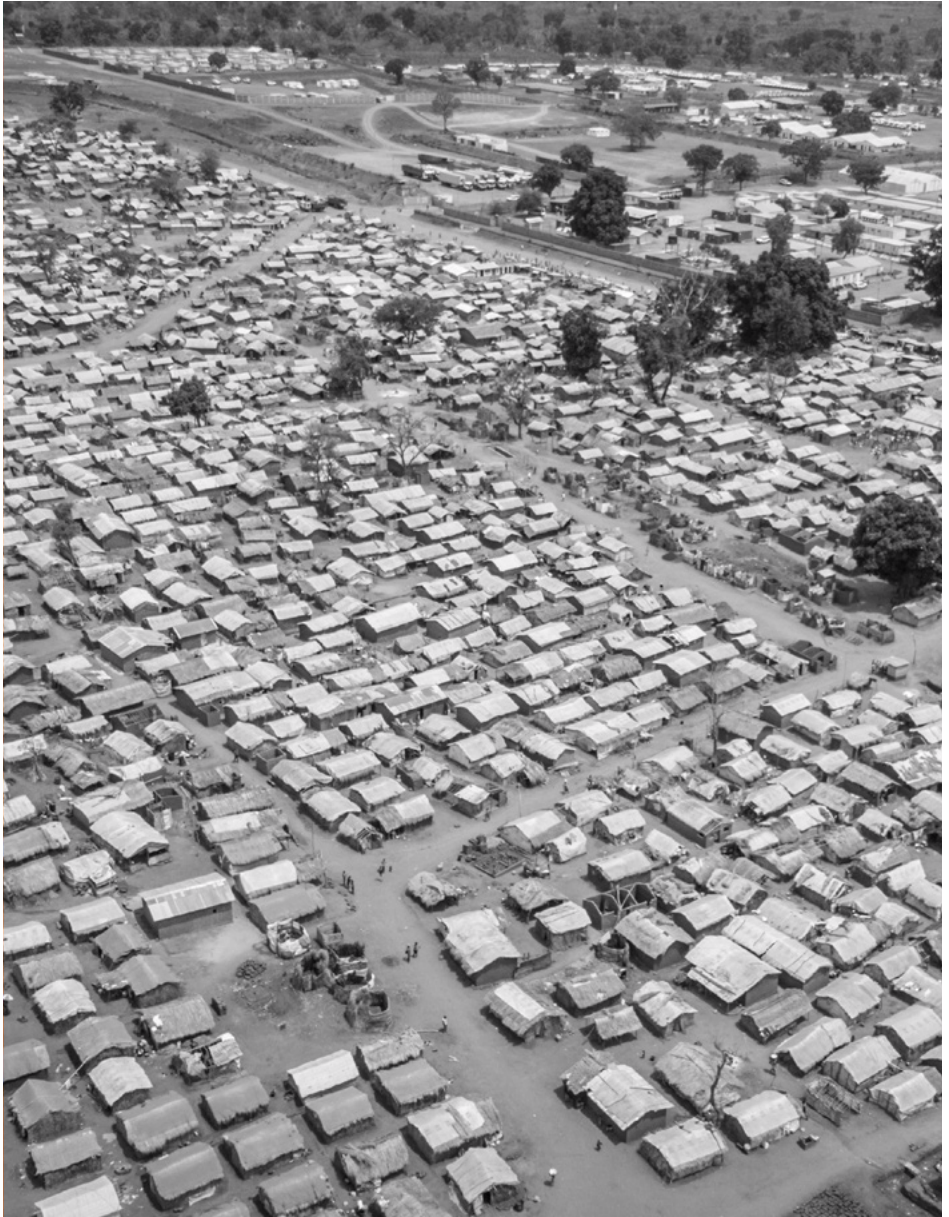
> See p. 171 for more details on coordinating preparedness and disaster risk reduction.

## Key support

- National disaster management agencies, hydrometeorological services and/or Government ministries with responsibilities for environmental matters all play a key role in preparing for and responding to the environmental dimensions of disasters and conflicts. It is vital to map these actors, establish relationships and promote collaboration with and among them. It is also important to develop an understanding of existing capacities and resources for environmental risk mapping and environmental impact assessments.
- The Joint Environment Unit (JEU) can provide technical advice, guidance and tools for the integration of environmental and climate considerations in humanitarian programming and planning.
- After an emergency, the JEU can rapidly deploy environmental/technical expertise (within 48 hours) at no cost to the affected country. Experts can be dispatched either on stand-alone environmental emergency response missions coordinated by the JEU or as part of United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) teams. These experts can perform rapid environmental assessments to identify risks and mitigation solutions.

## Resources

- Guidance on how to request [emergency response services from the JEU](#)
- Resources and online training modules on environmental issues and emergencies: [Environmental Emergencies Centre](#)
- Guidance on how to integrate environmental and climate considerations in broader humanitarian action (including by clusters): [EHA Connect](#)



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Bria IDP site hosts some 50,000 internally displaced people, most of whom have been displaced several times due to repeated attacks. 2019, Central African Republic. Photo: OCHA/Florent Vergnes

**CHAPTER B:****COORDINATING HUMANITARIAN ACTION AT COUNTRY LEVEL****ESTABLISHING HUMANITARIAN COORDINATION MECHANISMS**

With the increasing impacts of climate change compounding existing risks and fragility globally, it is a priority for the UN Resident Coordinator (RC) to ensure that appropriate humanitarian coordination mechanisms are planned as part of ongoing preparedness efforts. Effective preparedness means that when an international response is required, these mechanisms can be stood up quickly. This will not involve setting up completely new structures, but rather addressing gaps where these exist, or adapting existing structures to the specific needs of the humanitarian response. Humanitarian coordination mechanisms should support and complement national preparedness and response efforts led by the Government.

**Key roles of the RC and HC****In-country Humanitarian Architecture**

- As part of preparedness efforts, and in consultation with all relevant actors, lead reviews of existing coordination architecture and develop or revise an effective and inclusive inter-agency coordination mechanism – ensuring complementarity to Government coordination structures.
- Establish the appropriate humanitarian architecture (Humanitarian Country Team, clusters/sectors, inter-cluster/sector coordination group and subsidiary bodies) for effective response at the national and subnational levels.
- Engage and maintain dialogue with national and local authorities and all relevant humanitarian actors, including international and local/national NGOs, on the role of humanitarian coordination to support national response.
- Lead consultations on the development of a comprehensive and inclusive needs-based strategy for the humanitarian response. This could be articulated through a funding appeal (a Humanitarian Response Plan or a Flash Appeal).

- Lead and coordinate inter-agency advocacy and fundraising efforts.

### **NGO Coordination**

- Open direct dialogue with relevant NGO coordination forums, ensuring to include both local/national and international NGOs, as well as women-led organizations.
- Include representatives from NGOs (local/national and international) in the Humanitarian Country Team or other strategic bodies, where appropriate.

### **Cash Coordination**

- Ensure that cash coordination mechanisms are well resourced, representative of all sectors and promote activities in line with the overall priorities of the response.
- Support the use of cash and voucher assistance (CVA) as part of the response, encouraging collaborative approaches. Consider CVA as a default response option, where feasible and appropriate, and the potential link with national social protection mechanisms and anticipatory financing mechanisms.

### **Community Engagement**

- Ensure community engagement is coordinated through formal architecture and supports delivering on an agreed Collective Accountability Framework.
- Ensure a mechanism is in place to support Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA).
- Support complementary approaches to protection, disability inclusion, gender, age, mental health and other cross-cutting issues.

## **Setting up an Effective Country-Level Humanitarian Coordination Architecture**

In consultation with national authorities and humanitarian actors, and taking into account the context, available resources, and existing capacities and mechanisms, the RC is responsible for determining the most adequate and efficient coordina-



tion ‘architecture’. Its purpose is to ensure that (i) all actors<sup>34</sup> responding to the emergency work together to achieve shared, strategic objectives, and ii) that humanitarian programmes are designed and delivered in a principled, effective and complementary manner. Effective coordination helps to avoid a chaotic and fragmented response.

The types of coordination mechanisms established, their duration and their location (national, subnational) depend on the scale and complexity of the response as well as the type of crisis. To help ensure buy-in, it is important for RCs to focus on the added value of coordination. Overall, coordination structures should be light and streamlined to improve how humanitarian actors collectively meet the priority needs of affected people, without duplication or gaps.

The coordination architecture for international responders builds on and complements existing national- and local-level mechanisms, instead of creating separate or parallel structures.<sup>35</sup> Contextual and flexible approaches will allow for the adaptation of coordination structures over time, including an increased role for local actors, national authorities and/or development partners as the situation moves from emergency to recovery.

> For details on localizing the response, see p. 161.

It is essential that the RC maintains dialogue with national counterparts as the humanitarian architecture is being established, and ensures they are supportive of the international mechanisms for preparedness and response to humanitarian emergencies and understand how international roles and responsibilities complement national efforts. Transparency is essential for maintaining effective coordination and collaboration with national counterparts leading the response efforts.

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34 It is critical for the RC to have an understanding of the mandates of actors involved in the response (community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, national and foreign militaries, local/national and international NGOs, the national and foreign private sector, the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement (IFRC, ICRC, National Societies), UN entities, and neighbouring and other States) and their adherence to humanitarian principles. Although each has different mandates, accountabilities and cultures, the RC must strive to ensure coordination among them.

35 In conflict situations in which the State is a party to the conflict, humanitarian coordination may need to happen with limited State involvement to ensure that affected people have access to humanitarian protection and assistance, independent of whether the State controls the territory on which they reside.

Typically, the humanitarian architecture includes one, some or all of the following:<sup>36</sup>

- Humanitarian Country Team (HCT): chaired by the RC, the HCT is responsible for the strategic coordination of the international response and preparedness.
- Clusters or Government-led sectors: composed of operational UN agencies/ NGOs, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and often Government actors. These bodies are responsible for coordinating service delivery and identifying gaps around designated sectoral priorities.
- Inter-Cluster or Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ICCG/ISCG): comprised of sector/cluster coordinators, the ICCG/ISCG ensures coordination among the sectors for a more coherent response and to support the HCT by highlighting key operational concerns.<sup>37</sup>
- Information Management Working Group (IMWG): comprised of OCHA, sector/ cluster, agency and occasionally Government IM officers, the group's role is to build on existing in-country information systems and support the coordination and harmonization of the IM activities of all humanitarian partners. The IMWG supports efforts to achieve consensus on authoritative common data sets disaggregated by sex and age, administrative boundaries and operational areas.

In addition to the HCT, ICCG/ISCG and clusters, the RC, with the HCT, may establish other coordination groups – to support, for example, IM, needs assessment and analysis, CVA, risk management, the administration of country-based pooled funds (CBPFs), humanitarian access and humanitarian civil-military coordination, among others.

In setting up humanitarian coordination in a new emergency, the RC should endeavour to ensure that all UNCT/HCT members have a solid understanding of the rationale for establishing humanitarian coordination and the steps being taken to put it in place, ensuring common messaging on this issue is followed.<sup>38</sup>

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36 In refugee situations or mixed situations involving IDPs and refugees, UNHCR plays an integral role in the humanitarian architecture – see p. 30.

37 See ICCG Standard Terms of Reference [www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/iccg\\_tor\\_23mar2016.pdf](http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/iccg_tor_23mar2016.pdf)

38 In many cases, UNCT members may be unfamiliar with humanitarian principles and coordination mechanisms. To avoid mixed messaging coming from UNCT/HCT members, the RC, with OCHA's support, should ensure the leadership team is well briefed on this issue and key messages are in place to answer questions from national counterparts, donors, NGO partners, and staff members.

## **The Humanitarian Country Team**

An HCT is set up at the outset of a humanitarian crisis to bring together operationally relevant actors in a humanitarian response. This will include country directors (or equivalent) of relevant UN agencies, NGOs and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement. The HCT is chaired by the RC (or HC, if designated) and is the highest-level international humanitarian body in the country. It is primarily responsible for strategic decision-making, and to facilitate the centrality of protection and adequate, efficient and needs-based response and preparedness. To enable effective and representative decision-making, HCT membership should be inclusive of a range of relevant stakeholders, including representatives from women-led organizations.

The UNCT and HCT coexist; they do not replace each other. The RC is responsible for ensuring complementarity between the two entities. The RC may also decide to set up a separate forum to facilitate information sharing with the broader humanitarian community or with donors.

Following its initiation, the HCT's immediate decisions will address urgent operational humanitarian matters. The RC and HCT will need to decide quickly on which additional coordination structures and expertise, if any, are required to support the response (e.g. clusters – see below). Through the HCT, the RC is required to lead an annual Coordination Architecture Review to ensure that coordination structures in place remain appropriate and relevant to the changing context.

OCHA supports the RC throughout the process to make sure that an appropriate architecture is put in place, in line with the guidance and procedures of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). OCHA's role is to support the RC in his/her coordination function as secretariat to the HCT, ensuring that effective links are made with other coordination bodies such as the ICCG/ISCG.

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## HCT checklist for RCs and HCs

- At the outset, ensure HCT members understand the rationale for shifting to a humanitarian response and what this entails in terms of the pace of response, new coordination mechanisms, expertise and adherence to humanitarian principles. To facilitate this shift, seek OCHA support to draft key messages for the HCT.
- Clearly outline the role and Terms of Reference of the HCT and the responsibility of members to contribute to the HCT and to pursue collective outcomes.
- Ensure inclusive national and international NGO representation in the HCT by supporting NGOs to implement transparent selection processes.
- Ensure national NGOs adequately represent diverse operational organizations and are supported to assume this leadership role.
- Ensure Government authorities are supportive of the set-up of the HCT and the related humanitarian coordination architecture.
- Ensure the HCT develops an annual workplan that addresses the centrality of protection and has been committed to by HCT members.
- Establish a separate forum for regular engagement with donors to ensure they are kept informed of the response and can share their views and concerns.

## Resources

- [Standard Terms of Reference for HCTs](#)

## Clusters and Cluster Lead Agencies

### Clusters<sup>39</sup>

Clusters bring together UN and non-UN partners actively involved in delivering humanitarian action. Their primary function is to coordinate actions within particular humanitarian sectors (e.g. health, food, nutrition) while ensuring adherence to the centrality of protection. One or more clusters may be established ('activated') if a context analysis deems that (i) response and coordination gaps exist in a particular

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<sup>39</sup> Note that in some contexts the use of the term 'cluster' may be undesirable; the term 'sector' is used instead.

sector due to a sharp deterioration or significant change in the humanitarian situation, or (ii) existing national response or coordination capacity is unable to meet needs. Clusters are intended to be temporary structures, handing over their responsibilities where/when national capacity is sufficient.

Clusters are activated in consultation with the Government and the HCT, and following the endorsement of the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) and IASC. Clusters can also be established at subnational level or for a specific geographical area depending on the nature and scope of the emergency and the needs of the response.<sup>40</sup>

Each cluster is chaired by a Cluster Coordinator, who is appointed by the cluster lead agency (CLA – see below). The Cluster Coordinator’s role is to promote an effective and coherent response by operational actors in a given sector. S/he provides leadership and works on behalf of the cluster as a whole, facilitating all cluster activities and developing and maintaining a strategic vision and operational response plan. S/he also ensures coordination with other clusters in relation to inter-cluster activities and cross-cutting issues.<sup>41</sup>

### Cluster Lead Agencies

Each cluster is led by a CLA responsible for running and staffing the cluster. The CLA is an agency/organization that formally commits to take on a leadership role within a particular sector or area of activity. CLAs/clusters are also the primary entry points for collaboration with line (sectoral) ministries, as well as the first point of call for RCs for any issues relating to their sectoral area.

The CLA serves as the ‘Provider of Last Resort’, i.e. it commits to do the utmost to ensure an adequate and appropriate response. This means calling on all relevant humanitarian partners to address critical gaps in the response and, if this fails, to commit to filling the gap itself (or advocate for resources or access to do so). All clusters have six ‘core functions’ – standardized actions against which they

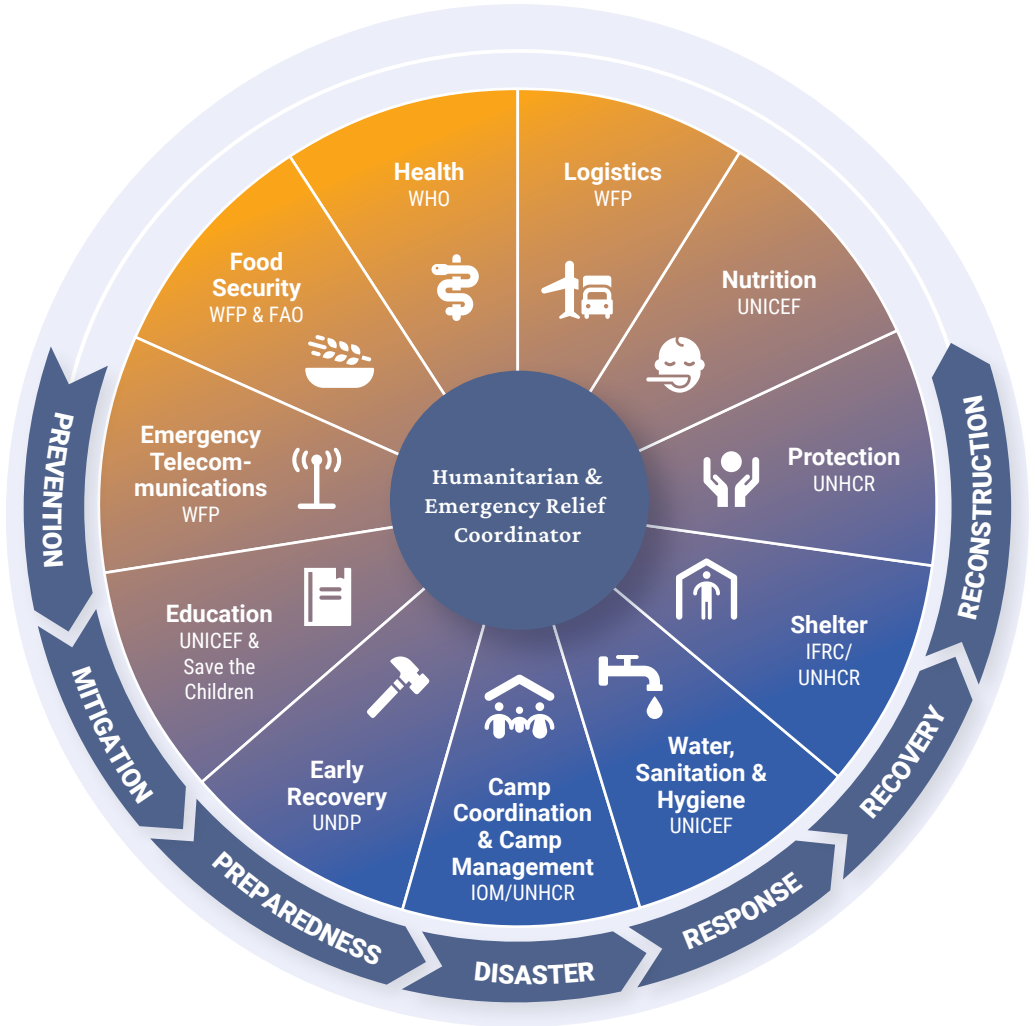
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<sup>40</sup> Where subnational/area-specific clusters are established, the national-level cluster normally focuses on policy issues and strategic planning, while localized clusters are tasked with local planning and implementation.

<sup>41</sup> The CLA also appoints a Cluster Information Management Officer to work with the Cluster Coordinator to support intra-cluster coordination and, in collaboration with OCHA and through the Information Management Working Group, to contribute to inter-cluster coordination (see p. 82 for more information on this).

must deliver and monitor performance on an annual basis (e.g. supporting service delivery, informing RC/HCT strategic decision-making, planning and implementing cluster strategies).<sup>42</sup>

### Humanitarian Cluster System



42 The six core functions are described in the IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at the Country Level.

The RC, in consultation with the HCT, selects CLAs based on their coordination and response capacity, operational presence and ability to scale up. The selection of CLAs ideally mirrors global arrangements (see figure on p. 80); but this is not always possible, and in some cases other organizations may be in a better position to lead.<sup>43</sup> The RC should encourage all clusters to have an NGO co-lead to enhance coordination, wherever feasible.

Heads of CLAs are accountable to the RC and ERC for their cluster's performance and for ensuring that sectoral coordination mechanisms are established and properly supported. They represent both their agency and the cluster at the HCT, bringing a broader operational perspective to the table.

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### **CLA checklist for RCs and HCs:**

- Remind CLAs that they are expected to represent their cluster as well as their agency.
- Actively promote the shared leadership of clusters with NGOs, with clear roles and responsibilities.
- Promote a field-centric approach by advocating for coordination at the subnational level, strengthening capacity where needed.
- Encourage CLAs to invite their Cluster Coordinator to participate in HCT meetings where relevant to the agenda.
- Impress on CLAs that they are responsible for the performance of their cluster, full staffing of coordinator and information management positions, as well as annual cluster performance monitoring.
- In cases where a CLA is not adequately carrying out its responsibilities, consult the Country Director/representative of the agency/organization concerned to avoid the need to propose alternative arrangements.
- Highlight the need to maintain flexible and contextually relevant coordination; remind CLAs that the HCT is required to perform an annual Coordination Architecture Review.

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43 UNHCR is the CLA for the Global Protection Cluster. However, in disaster situations or complex emergencies without significant displacement, the three protection-mandated agencies (UNHCR, UNICEF and OHCHR) will consult and, under the overall leadership of the RC, agree which of them will assume the role of CLA for protection. In the case of service clusters (logistics, emergency telecommunications), the global CLA will usually take on the role of CLA at country level because service clusters require technical expertise that other agencies may not possess.

## Resources

- [IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at Country Level](#)
- [Cluster Lead Agencies Joint Letter on Dual Responsibility](#)
- [IASC Operational Guidance on Designating Sector/Cluster Leads in Major New Emergencies](#)
- [IASC Operational Guidance: Generic Terms of Reference for Cluster Coordinators at country level](#)
- [IASC Operational Guidance for Cluster Lead Agencies on Working with National Authorities](#)

## Inter-cluster Coordination

When two or more clusters are activated, the RC and HCT are responsible for establishing an ICCG/ISCG. The ICCG brings together all active clusters to collaborate on the operational response: closing delivery gaps, eliminating duplication and ensuring an impartial, people-centred approach. This is done by reaching a shared understanding of needs, informed by a robust protection and gender analysis, and agreeing on a joint strategy. The ICCG plays a critical role in developing the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP)<sup>44</sup> and informing the RC/HCT of key strategic concerns requiring resolution at the leadership level. At the same time, the HCT guides the ICCG's priorities, offering strategic direction to enable coherence in operational response, and it tasks the ICCG as required.

The ICCG is accountable to the RC and reports to the HCT through OCHA, who chairs the ICCG. Specific working and advisory groups on cross-cutting, inter-cluster/thematic issues (such as CVA, accountability to affected people, etc.) can be established directly under (and report to) either the ICCG or the HCT.<sup>45</sup>

The ICCG provides operational direction and support to subnational coordination groups and plays a critical role in tracking and monitoring the response. Based on the context and specific coordination needs of the response, the ICCG may be replicated at subnational level and/or for a specific geographic area.

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44 See p.125 for details on the Humanitarian Response Plan.

45 Chairs/co-chairs of such bodies are active members of the ICCG or HCT, respectively.



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## ICCG checklist for RCs and HCs

- Reinforce the link with the ICCG by attending ICCG meetings on a quarterly or ad hoc basis.
- Remind the ICCG members that they are expected to bring relevant strategic concerns to the HCT, based on their shared analysis.
- Encourage cluster coordinators to attend the HCT where the agenda is relevant to their cluster/sector.
- Convey the need for clusters and the ICCG to reinforce local capacities as part of their work with national counterparts.
- Hold an annual HCT-ICCG retreat/meeting to strengthen coordination and collaboration.
- Encourage the ICCG to perform the annual ICCG Performance Monitoring exercise.
- Encourage clusters to perform their Annual Cluster Coordination Performance Monitoring exercise.

## Resources

- [The standard ICCG Terms of Reference](#)

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## CASE STUDY: COORDINATING A COHERENT AND COLLABORATIVE RESPONSE TO THE NEPAL EARTHQUAKE

Following the Nepal earthquake in 2015, it was important for the RC/HC to react quickly while ensuring that the Government, key UN/NGO counterparts as well as (influential) Member States were all working from the same page. This required rapid and objective decision-making; not easy, given that many of the organizations involved were under pressure from their HQs to raise their profile and visibility within the response – with media coverage and fundraising in mind.

The RC/HC, in collaboration with the HCT, decided to adopt a two-tiered cluster response: activating the clusters required for the immediate 30-day critical response (shelter/non-food items, health, food security, logistics/communications, water and sanitation, and protection), with the remaining

clusters in preparation mode. This helped to focus the daily HCT meeting and manage the initial response.

Key donors were quickly brought on board to help develop and deliver a credible and focused response strategy as well as push back on ‘big agency’ pressure. Daily preparatory meetings took place with the RC/HC office, essential staff and the key response donors (including USAID/OFDA, DFID/Chase and EU/ECHO). As a result, the response benefited from strong donor support (political, advocacy as well as financial) and was able to harness the strength, energy and influence of donors to deliver more focused and time-bound assistance. These donor meetings were instrumental in shaping the agenda, reinforcing priorities and creating operational discipline in the daily HCT meeting. Critically, they helped to strengthen coordination, especially with large organizations pushing for a different and mandated response.

## **NGO Coordination**

Local, national and international NGOs deliver a significant part of humanitarian assistance, and they are integral partners in ensuring humanitarian action is coordinated and effective in reaching people most in need.

> For more details on the role of NGOs, see p. 35

NGOs primarily coordinate their operational planning with other stakeholders through the clusters or sectors. The RC can help to ensure cluster leads are proactively inclusive of NGOs and support their participation, including through the use of local languages if needed. As described in p.81, the RC should encourage all clusters to have an NGO co-lead to enhance coordination and contextualization of the response.

At a response-wide level, NGO networks or forums play an important role in supporting and coordinating the work of NGOs. NGO forums are voluntary groupings of local, national or international NGOs, or a combination of these. In protracted settings or where disasters are recurrent, NGO forums often become well established over years or even decades, and they establish independent relationships with Government, donors and other partners. In other settings, forums may emerge, scale up or down, or disband, depending on the requirements of NGOs working in the response.

NGO forums provide their members with a range of support, including coordination, collective advocacy, partnership-building, capacity strengthening and strategic representation. This diversity in size, representation and focus means investing in effective engagement with NGO forums is vital. In most cases, they are supported by a small secretariat team and led by an elected governing body or steering committee. It is important for the RC to have a good understanding of the membership and representative scope of the major NGO forums, and to consider them strategic allies in the overall coordination architecture.

### **Role of the RC and HC**

The RC should ensure, wherever possible, that NGO forums are represented in the HCT, alongside individual NGOs, so that collective NGO positions or perspectives inform the priorities of the overall response. It is important to note that no UN agency, including OCHA, has responsibility for NGO coordination. Therefore, there is no substitute for direct and sustained engagement with NGOs – both from the RC and through the HCT.

The RC should champion and advocate for the importance of NGO coordination with the host Government and donors. NGO forums are often informal groups without legal registration, and they face associated risks due to Government actions that may restrict the space for NGOs to assemble freely and establish suitable governance and accountability mechanisms. To function effectively, NGO forums require adequate resourcing. This may be provided in part by their members, but often additional support from donors is needed. Advocacy from the RC can prove invaluable in this regard.

### **Resources**

- The global consortiums ICVA and InterAction provide ongoing support to national-level NGO forums and can be a valuable resource for NGOs and the RC if support or advice is needed.
- ICVA maintains a [website with resources for NGO forums](#), which may also be a useful reference for the RC on specific topics.

## Cash Coordination

The use of cash voucher assistance (CVA) is growing across humanitarian contexts, offering a response modality that can help meet basic needs, supplement household incomes, reinvigorate local markets, promote financial inclusion, protect livelihoods and help local economies to recover. Where CVA constitutes, or has the potential to constitute, a significant proportion of the response, the RC and HCT may consider the need to establish a dedicated Cash Working Group (CWG) under the ICCG/ISCG.<sup>46</sup> Where a humanitarian response is established in a context where a CWG already exists, it should be supported to link into the relevant response architecture.<sup>47</sup> Any actor(s) that is able to support cash coordination across all sectors can lead or co-lead the group – the agreed leadership structure of each group (co-chairs, chairs or leads) will depend on the context and available capacity. Leadership arrangements must offer dedicated capacity for the function, where possible, ensure coordination independent of agency or sector mandates, and uphold humanitarian standards and principles. Leadership should be of sufficient seniority to engage with the ICCG/ISCG, HCT and other relevant forums; be able to inform and contribute to strategic decision-making; offer a diverse set of competencies, including technical cash expertise; and prioritize the role of local actors wherever feasible.

Cash coordination activities – supporting both sectoral and multipurpose cash assistance – must be in line with the overall intersectoral operational priorities of the response (as set by the ICCG or ISCG). Given the inherent benefits of CVA as one of the modalities as part of the humanitarian response and its potential to link to longer-term development, it is important to establish a common understanding of the feasibility and appropriateness of using CVA in general, and multipurpose cash in particular; the potential for linking humanitarian CVA with national social-protection mechanisms while leaving no one behind; and the use of CVA as part of anticipatory financing mechanisms.

Efforts to ensure a collaborative and coherent approach should be encouraged to better assist affected populations in a principled and dignified manner. This should

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<sup>46</sup> See standard ICCG Terms of Reference on p. 83.

<sup>47</sup> Including response mechanisms for IDPs and/or refugees.

be done in a way that improves complementarities, synergies and accountabilities among response actors.<sup>48</sup> Additionally, a range of technical measures may also support greater coherence in the implementation of the cash response, such as developing a minimum expenditure basket, collaborating around the use of financial service providers, and harmonizing transfer rates, among others.

### **Role of the RC and HC**

The RC should promote a common understanding of the feasibility of different response options as part of strategic planning processes, including advocating for the consideration of CVA as a default response option alongside in-kind items and services, where feasible and appropriate. Where appropriate, the RC should also advocate for stronger links between humanitarian cash actors and national social-protection mechanisms, by leading efforts to coordinate with development actors (including the World Bank) and national Governments around a common vision, objectives and workplan. This includes promoting the consideration of CVA as part of anticipatory financing mechanisms, where feasible and appropriate. The RC should ensure that cash coordination mechanisms are well resourced, representative of all sectors and promote activities in line with the overall priorities of the response.

### **Resources**

- Cash Learning Partnership [State of the World's Cash Report 2020](#)
- Grand Bargain workstream [position paper on linking humanitarian cash and social protection](#)
- [UN Common Cash Statement July 2020](#)
- [Collaborative Cash Delivery Network \(CCD\)](#)

### **Community Engagement Coordination**

The HCT, ICCG and other relevant coordination groups must ensure that international humanitarian action in support of national capacities is people-driven and

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<sup>48</sup> Numerous collaborative approaches for CVA include the UN Common Cash Statement (UNCCS) and the Common Cash Delivery (CCD), among others.

accountable – as mandated in the HCT Terms of Reference. This could involve, where appropriate, establishing a Community Engagement/Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) Working Group linked to the in-country coordination architecture. This group would take the lead in delivering and reporting on the country-level action plan to operationalize the Collective Accountability Framework. In the absence of a dedicated technical working group, the responsibility should be assigned to an alternative body such as the ICCG. Community engagement mechanisms, whatever form they take, should harness and coordinate the complementarity of approaches to PSEA, protection, disability inclusion, gender, age and other cross-cutting issues.

> For details on implementing a Collective Accountability Framework, see p. 103.

## **Humanitarian, Development and Peace Collaboration (HDPC)**

RCs are increasingly exploring ways of improving collaboration between humanitarian, development and peace actors due to the recognition that humanitarian crises have development and political solutions that need to be coordinated by increasing alignment on analysis, planning, programming, financing and coordination. This has gained traction, especially since the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, and most recently reiterated in the 2020 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of UN system operational activities.

HDPC is framed in a highly context-specific manner – there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach, though there are basic tenets to the collaboration that can be applied in most, if not all, countries with a HRP. The types of coordinating mechanisms established may depend on existing planning processes and frameworks (such as Humanitarian Needs Overviews, HRPs, UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, national development plans, bilateral strategies, etc). The extent of HDPC will also depend on the type and severity of the emergency; in situations of acute armed conflict, where saving lives and protection is the overriding priority, humanitarian-development collaboration and its links to peace may be more limited.

> For more details on advancing HDPC, including examples of country-specific approaches, see p. 158.

## Refugee Response Coordination

As set out in General Assembly resolutions, UNHCR is mandated to lead the refugee response, including carrying out sectoral inter-agency coordination, contingency planning, response and resource mobilization and finding durable solutions. As such, it is the lead agency accountable for refugee protection and seeking solutions within the UN system and engaging a wider array of stakeholders. Importantly, UNHCR also has a supervisory role: it is the UN entity accountable for ensuring States' adherence to internationally accepted standards vis-à-vis refugees and stateless people and for strengthening State protection capacities.

Refugee responses are protection focused and multisectoral, geared to allow refugees to exercise their legal rights deriving from international refugee law. Being outside their home country means that refugees often face increased difficulty in meeting basic needs, leading to increased levels of vulnerability.

Within a country context, the UNHCR Representative speaks for the High Commissioner on matters pertaining to UNHCR's mandate and exercises the coordination responsibilities. In situations involving large refugee movements, the Representative coordinates UN and NGO partners in articulating a Refugee Response Plan, which serves as an advocacy and joint resource mobilization tool.

## Global Compact on Refugees

In 2016, the world began to look afresh at refugee responses and agreed in the New York Declaration<sup>49</sup> to adopt more comprehensive approaches that engaged a broader array of stakeholders. The subsequent implementation of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework – now embedded in the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR)<sup>50</sup> – also informs UNHCR's coordination accountabilities. The GCR recognizes the importance of national ownership and the need to employ a multi-stakeholder and partnership approach in which UNHCR, consistent with its mandate, plays a supportive and catalytic role. It provides a blueprint for Governments, international organizations and other stakeholders to ensure that host communities get the support they need and that refugees can lead productive lives.

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49 [www.unhcr.org/584689257.pdf](http://www.unhcr.org/584689257.pdf)

50 [www.unhcr.org/the-global-compact-on-refugees.html](http://www.unhcr.org/the-global-compact-on-refugees.html)

In line with the GCR, UNHCR is committed to work with RCs, HCs and UNCTs/HCTs to advance national development priorities and ensure no one is left behind. This collaborative work includes encouraging development actors to intervene on behalf of refugees and in support of host communities, as well as to work with States to include refugees in national development plans.

### **Coordination arrangements**

When a complex emergency takes place and a UNHCR-led refugee response is under way or imminent, UNHCR leads refugee response planning in a manner that is coherent with the overall humanitarian response led by the HC. This is set out in the 2014 'Joint UNHCR-OCHA Note: Mixed situations: coordination in practice'<sup>51</sup> reconfirmed by the ERC and the UNHCR High Commissioner on 5 June 2018. It provides a detailed overview of the division of responsibilities between the UNHCR Representative and the HC in these situations.

#### **Extract from the Joint UNHCR-OCHA Note: Mixed situations – coordination in practice**

##### **Leadership**

The Humanitarian Coordinator, through leadership of humanitarian coordination in complex emergencies and disasters, facilitates the following collective outputs:

- Shared situational analysis
- Common vision and strategic plan for the humanitarian response
- Common advocacy messages
- System-wide resource mobilization and allocation of pooled funds

The UNHCR Representative leads the provision of international protection, humanitarian assistance and durable solutions for refugees (including in complex emergencies involving refugees) and is responsible and accountable

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51 [www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/joint\\_unhcr\\_-\\_ocha\\_note\\_on\\_mixed\\_situations.pdf](http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/joint_unhcr_-_ocha_note_on_mixed_situations.pdf)



for contributing, as a member of the HCT, to the delivery of the IASC collective outputs listed above. S/he shall also:

- Share a situational analysis of the refugee situation.
- Ensure a common vision and strategic refugee response plan, coherent with other humanitarian and development strategies and programming.
- Exercise the High Commissioner's supervisory responsibility and advocate for the protection of and assistance and solutions for refugees.

### **Refugee response plans**

UNHCR leads the development and implementation of and resource mobilization for inter-agency refugee response plans (country specific) and/or regional refugee response plans (to respond to a significant refugee influx into several countries). These response plans are a coordination tool that establishes a common strategy and provides the host Government and donors with an overview of the inter-agency response, including the resource requirements. In the contexts of HRP, a dedicated refugee response chapter is included.

### **Comprehensive response framework**

As requested by the host country, UNHCR supports Governments to establish and support national, regional and international arrangements for the application of the comprehensive refugee response framework. These frameworks should engage a broad range of stakeholders as envisaged by the GCR and will be context specific. As recognized in the GCR, population movements are not necessarily homogeneous and may be of a composite character. Some may be large movements involving refugees and others on the move; other situations may involve refugees and IDPs; and, in certain situations, external forced displacement may result from sudden-onset natural disasters and environmental degradation.

In mixed situations involving refugees and IDPs, as defined by the UNHCR-OCHA Joint Note, the HCT is responsible for developing a common strategic response

plan to address issues around internal displacement, ensuring alignment and complementarity with response plans coordinated by UNHCR.

> See p. 165 for details on developing durable solutions for refugees and IDPs.

## Resources

- [Updated Refugee Coordination Guidance Note](#), April 2019
- [UNHCR-OCHA Joint Note: Mixed situations: coordination in practice](#), 2014
- [Refugee Response Plans](#)

## Migrant Response Coordination

Migrants – whether living in, transiting through or returning from a country affected by a humanitarian crisis – are among the most vulnerable during conflicts and natural disasters. Furthermore, large-scale mixed flows can create conditions that require life-saving humanitarian assistance. However, the current humanitarian coordination system, largely framed around the IASC cluster system and the Refugee Coordination Model, does not systematically account for migrants' needs, including when in mixed settings with internally displaced populations, asylum seekers and refugees. In 2016, the United Nations Summit for Refugees and Migrants was convened to discuss a more robust international response to large movements. It resulted in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, and set in motion the development of two compacts: the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), which reiterated the need for enhanced cooperation on international migration in all its dimensions,<sup>52</sup> and the Global Compact on Refugees (see p. 89).

Migrants are identified as a population of humanitarian concern in an increasing number of HRPs, refugee response plans, refugee and migrant response plans and other types of inter-agency strategic planning processes. However, the humanitarian

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<sup>52</sup> With a view to supporting the implementation of the GCM, the UN established a Network on Migration to ensure effective, timely and coordinated system-wide support to Member States. In carrying out its mandate, the Network will prioritize the rights and well-being of migrants and their communities of destination, origin and transit. IOM serves as the coordinator and secretariat of the Network, which, as of January 2021, includes 43 regional and country-level coordination platforms established under the leadership of RCs.

coordination approach specific to those crises has been largely addressed through ad hoc structures coordinated at the country or regional level.

In line with a growing number of precedents, effective responses are based on the needs and concerns (as opposed to the status) of migrants and other affected populations, the capacity of Governments to respond and the operational context. Migrants' needs should be mainstreamed into existing humanitarian coordination frameworks before considering alternative arrangements. As a last resort, dedicated coordination mechanisms can be established, using a migrant (or migrant and refugee) response platform model, to ensure an effective and holistic response to meet migrants' protection and assistance needs.

These platforms cover the specific needs of migrants and people of concern who are not accounted for in existing in-country coordination mechanisms. In mixed settings involving migrants, refugees and potential asylum seekers, IOM alongside UNHCR coordinate with other UN agencies and stakeholders to ensure that assistance is complementary with broader humanitarian response operations.

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### **CASE STUDY: COORDINATING THE RESPONSE TO THE OUTFLOW OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES FROM VENEZUELA**

Political instability, a deteriorating socioeconomic situation, and growing insecurity and violence in Venezuela continue to put pressure on an already stressed population. As a result, as of the end of 2020, more than 5.4 million refugees and migrants from Venezuela had left their country. Of these people, 4.6 million had moved to 17 middle-income Latin America and Caribbean countries, leading to the biggest population movement in Latin America's recent history.

Since 2018, at the UN Secretary-General's request, IOM and UNHCR have co-led an Inter-Agency Coordination Platform to oversee the analysis, strategic planning and operational response to migrants and refugees from Venezuela. The platform works closely with RCs/HCs, who are responsible for setting the overall national strategic vision, ensuring coherence and synergies in development and humanitarian action, and in UN coordination, strategic policy, partnerships and investments around the Sustainable Development Goals.

In addition, UNHCR and IOM have appointed a joint special representative, tasked with promoting a coherent and harmonized regional approach in coordination with national Governments, international organizations, non-traditional actors and other relevant stakeholders, and advising RCs/HCs, UN principals and their respective senior managers on overarching strategic, contextual and situational considerations.

The objectives, roles and responsibilities of the Regional Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela are mirrored at the country level through national/subregional platforms also co-led by IOM and UNHCR. Regional, subregional and national platform coordination teams continuously work with RCs and their teams to:

- Provide updated information on the platform's activities and plans.
- Collect inputs for strategic planning and overarching policy matters.
- Involve RCs in the platform's discussions with political actors and, in particular, national Governments.
- Strengthen the links between the emergency response and in-country development agendas.

## **PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST**

Placing people at the heart of humanitarian action is critical for supporting principled action, ensuring access for all to assistance and protection, addressing violations and enhancing accountability. In leading and coordinating the humanitarian action of relevant organizations at country level, the RC is responsible for ensuring that protection and accountability are at the forefront of humanitarian response and preparedness.

### **Key roles of the RC and HC**

#### **Advocating on Protection**

- Lead and coordinate high-level humanitarian advocacy efforts to secure better protection outcomes for crisis-affected populations, and ensure regular engagement with the wider UNCT to ensure complementary advocacy activities and messaging, as appropriate.

- Promote respect for human rights, refugee law and IHL by all parties, including non-State actors, through bilateral dialogue and using private and/or public advocacy, as appropriate.
- Lead negotiations with parties to conflict to ensure humanitarian access to affected populations and access to services for people in need; preserve humanitarian space; and enhance respect for international law, humanitarian principles and core protection principles.
- Ensure the implementation across all sectors.

### **Prioritizing Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse**

- Create and maintain an environment that prevents sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Ensure that PSEA is integrated into coordination structures across humanitarian, development, peace and political operations.
- Ensure that a country-level action plan to address sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) is developed and implemented.
- Ensure that a quality, victim-centred assistance mechanism is operational.

### **Implementing a Collective Accountability Framework**

- Initiate and guide an HCT Collective Accountability Framework that coordinates and integrates community information and feedback into response analysis, planning, implementation and monitoring – which, in turn, informs decision-making and adaptive programming.
- Ensure financial and human resourcing for collective information provision and complaint-and-feedback systems, including for complaints on sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Work with the HCT and other relevant stakeholders to ensure independent and participatory processes for monitoring, evaluating, verifying and learning from humanitarian response operations – making sure that these inform future actions.

## **Prioritizing the Prevention of Gender-Based Violence (GBV)**

- Ensure IASC GBV guidelines are implemented across all sectors to mitigate risks and ensure the application of ‘do no harm’ principles.
- Advocate with Government officials on the prevention of and response to GBV.
- Prioritize life-saving GBV specialized services, and ensure investment in sustainable GBV response services through GBV subsector referral pathways, including as a means to strengthen SEA victim assistance.

## **Advocating on Protection**

Persuasive advocacy can be an effective tool to encourage the relevant authorities to better fulfil their protection-related obligations and responsibilities under international law. In accordance with the IASC Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action (2016) and the IASC Principals’ Statement on the Centrality of Protection (2013), all humanitarian advocacy efforts should contribute to action that enhances the protection of affected people and ensures that the rights of affected people and the obligations of duty bearers under international law are understood, respected, protected and fulfilled.

- > For details on the IASC Policy on Protection and the IASC Principals’ Statement of the Centrality of Protection, see p. 54.

The RC is responsible for leading and coordinating the high-level advocacy efforts of relevant organizations in country to address protection concerns and secure better protection outcomes for crisis-affected populations. This includes bilateral quiet or private engagement and/or public advocacy, as appropriate, to promote compliance with international humanitarian law, refugee law and human rights law; to raise awareness of the specific vulnerabilities and needs of affected people, including IDPs; and, as part of negotiations with relevant parties, including non-State actors, to secure free, timely, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access.

- > See p. 107 for details on negotiating humanitarian access.

At the same time, the RC needs to strike a balance between the possible impact of engaging in public advocacy to address protection risks and violations, and the potential consequences for continued access to affected persons. The HCT must therefore consider and agree on how best to leverage the different roles and capacities of different entities, and on how to use regional and global actors and processes to ensure that advocacy takes place to support the achievement of protection outcomes and to prevent and address violations of international law. The UN Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights (2020), which builds on the Human Rights up Front initiative, calls on UN leadership to consider and act upon information and analysis of human rights concerns and violations, and adopt an approach that advances human rights and prioritizes the protection of civilians. In doing so, they should leverage the capacities of the entire UN system. RCs can call on the support of the ERC and the High Commissioner for Human Rights (HCHR) to use their positions to address the Security Council, Human Rights Council and other avenues to draw the international community's attention to deteriorating situations and protection risks. Furthermore, the ERC and the HCHR, in their capacity as members of the UN Secretary-General's Executive Committees, the Policy Committee and Chief Executive Board, can use their positions to initiate a concerted response from within the UN system to protection concerns as they evolve. In recognition of the collective responsibility of all humanitarian actors to contribute to protection outcomes, the RC is expected to foster collaboration among HCT members to undertake joint and complementary advocacy actions to address protection concerns where appropriate/feasible, based on a comprehensive and shared analysis of the protection situation provided by the Protection Cluster and other sources. This is to ensure that the HCT speaks with one voice on core protection priorities (often articulated in the HCT Protection Strategy),<sup>53</sup> while agencies continue dedicated advocacy on mandate-specific issues. Together with the HCT, the RC is responsible for facilitating and coordinating engagement and advocacy with a diverse range of humanitarian and non-humanitarian actors in

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53 Global Protection Cluster provisional guidance note on HCT Protection Strategy on HCT Protection Strategy (see resources).

addressing protection concerns (including development and peace operations). Given the collective responsibility on protection, the RC should encourage non-protection agencies to integrate the centrality of protection across their work in order to achieve collective protection outcomes.

### **WHAT ARE PROTECTION OUTCOMES?**

A response or activity is considered to have a protection outcome when the actual and potential risk – including violations of IHRL and IHL – to affected persons is prevented, reduced, mitigated or ended. The reduction of actual and potential risks occurs when threats and vulnerability are minimized and, at the same time, the capacity of affected persons is enhanced – or the capacity and willingness of national authorities to meet their human rights obligations is enhanced. Protection outcomes are the result of changes in behaviour, attitudes, policies, knowledge and practices on the part of relevant stakeholders, including national authorities. Some examples of protection outcomes include:

- Parties to conflict release child soldiers and issue explicit prohibitions, reinforced by disciplinary measures, to prevent child recruitment by their forces.
- National legislation formally recognizes land tenure entitlements of displaced populations.
- Safe access to alternative sources of cooking fuel reduces exposure to the threat of sexual violence.
- Community-based preparedness and early warning mechanisms support timely evacuation of especially vulnerable individuals from areas where they are at risk of violent attacks.
- Community leaders renew and promote societal norms that condemn GBV and its perpetrators.
- Community-level protection committees influence security forces to change their conduct in and around civilian areas through ongoing liaison and negotiation.



- Government authorities support the voluntary movements of affected persons by ensuring full access to information that enables free and informed decision-making.
- > See report from a [Global Protection Cluster round table](#) for more details.

In contexts where there is significant displacement, the UNHCR Representative has the primary responsibility for advocacy with the host Government and all relevant actors on refugee issues, as set out in the Joint UNHCR-OCHA Note on Mixed Situations – Coordination in Practice (2014). In such contexts, the RC supports UNHCR and ensures other humanitarian advocacy initiatives are complementary and supportive.

- > See p. 167 for details on durable solutions for IDPs and coordination in mixed migration settings.

## Resources

- Contributing to and engaging systematically with protection and human rights monitoring mechanisms can inform analysis, programming and advocacy messages. These include protection monitoring conducted by the Protection Cluster, the monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave violations committed against children ([MRM – SCR 1612](#)), monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence ([MARA – SCR 1960](#)), displacement tracking matrices, and OHCHR human rights monitoring and fact-finding missions.
- The IASC Operational Policy and Advocacy Group is a forum to support the IASC’s normative and strategic policy work, including on system-wide policy matters with a direct bearing on humanitarian operations. It is supported by the [IASC Results Group 3 on Collective Advocacy](#) (RG3), which focuses on improving the effectiveness of collective advocacy efforts, including on key areas of work such as counter-terrorism, IHL, negotiations with non-State armed groups, food security, climate change, etc. It is also supported by the [IASC Results Group 1 on Operational Response](#) (RG 1), which focuses on supporting system-wide implementation of the IASC Protection Policy.
- At headquarters level, various actors can mobilize support, staffing and funding, as well as engage in supportive advocacy. These actors include the ERC, the

HCHR, the High Commissioner for Refugees, the IASC Principals, the Emergency Directors Group, the UN Human Rights Mechanisms (including the treaty bodies and special procedures) and the Global Protection Cluster.

- The inter-agency ProCap project can deploy senior protection advisers to support the RC's office – for example, to help with the development and implementation of an HCT Protection Strategy.
- [Global Protection Cluster Provisional Guidance on HCT Protection Strategies](#)
- [Global Protection Cluster HCT Strategies Review 2020](#)

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### **CASE STUDY: ADVOCATING FOR THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN FALLUJAH, IRAQ**

In 2016, Iraqi security forces sought to recapture Fallujah and its surrounding suburbs from ISIL. More than 100,000 civilians were in areas affected by fighting, raising serious and sensitive concerns about the protection of civilians and the conduct of hostilities. The HC worked with a wide range of key political, military and diplomatic decision makers to seek measures to protect civilians inside Fallujah and those attempting to escape. This included engaging in direct, real-time diplomacy with Iraqi leaders and security forces to minimize casualties and prevent violations, while reaching out through the media to influence the behaviour of parties to the conflict.

### **Prioritizing Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse**

> For definitions of sexual exploitation and abuse, see p. 59.

Under the standard RC and UNCT, and HC and HCT responsibilities on PSEA, each country should already have a PSEA structure in place (see figure below). This includes an inter-agency PSEA Network, a PSEA Coordinator, and a PSEA Strategy and associated Workplan. The UNCT/HCT acts as a Steering Committee for the PSEA Strategy.

The RC and HC are accountable for delivering on collective PSEA commitments in country. Specific responsibilities for PSEA are articulated in the Management and Accountability Framework of the UN Development and Resident Coordinator System, and in the 2015 Principals' Statement on PSEA.

However, how these responsibilities are carried out may be different during an emergency. The coordination bodies the HC will oversee will change, for instance, when the cluster system comes into play. The influx of new actors and pressures to deliver quickly may lead to increased risk of SEA. At the outset of the emergency, an SEA risk assessment should be conducted and prevention and mitigation mea-

### In-Country PSEA Programme

#### Overall responsibility for collective PSEA: Senior-most UN Leadership (RC/HC)



asures identified and implemented. Referral pathways and complaint mechanisms will need to be adapted to take account of the new operating context. Incoming responders should be made aware of standards of conduct. RCs and HCs are encouraged to recruit a full-time PSEA Coordinator to advise and support on their leadership role.

When designated as the HC, RCs have a particular coordination role, leading and coordinating the response efforts of the UN and relevant humanitarian actors, including NGOs and Red Cross/Red Crescent counterparts. The IASC Plan for Accelerating PSEA in humanitarian response includes a country-level framework, which RCs may use to ensure that a comprehensive strategy is effectively implemented. The framework includes three strategic objectives: encouraging victims/survivors<sup>54</sup> to come forward and speak up, improving quality victim/survivor-centred assistance, and strengthening vetting, investigations and disciplinary measures. The RC also facilitates links between humanitarian and development programming, including the integration of the UNCT's work with UN peacekeeping or political missions. The RC is therefore uniquely positioned to facilitate strategic information sharing on prevention of and response to SEA across the full range of development, humanitarian and mission contexts, ensuring that PSEA is raised upfront in all discussions, as early as possible, with all partners at all forums.

Emphasis should be placed on outreach to local communities and authorities to ensure awareness raising and to establish, with the participation of the local population, context-appropriate reporting/community-based complaints mechanisms, and ensure the availability of appropriate holistic services for victims/survivors.

## Resources

- [IASC Plan for Accelerating PSEA in Humanitarian Response at Country Level \(2018\)](#)
- [The Management and Accountability Framework of the UN Development and Resident Coordinator System](#)
- [IASC Principals' Statement on Protection Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, 2015](#)

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54 The term 'victim' is more commonly used in legal and medical contexts, while the term 'survivor' is preferred in psychological and social support sectors as it implies resilience.

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## **CASE STUDY: IMPLEMENTING COLLECTIVE COMMITMENTS ON PSEA IN MOZAMBIQUE**

Strong leadership and a clear prioritization of PSEA from the onset of an emergency are critical for establishing an accountable PSEA programme. In Mozambique, one of the first actions taken by the newly designated RC was to issue a statement affirming collective commitments to protect the affected population from SEA and initiate the structures to follow through on these.

The RC's communication to the whole humanitarian community explicitly included a reminder of their individual and collective responsibility for PSEA, along with the immediate actions that each head of organization should take, including:

1. Ensure that all staff have completed PSEA training.
2. Provide a clear message to staff, related personnel and the affected community that SEA is unacceptable.
3. Provide clear guidance to all staff and related personnel on codes of conduct, including for PSEA.
4. Nominate a PSEA focal point for their office.

In addition, the PSEA Task Force is developing clear referral pathways for SEA complaints and victim/survivor assistance based on the IASC Best Practice Guide for Inter-Agency Community-Based Complaints Mechanisms.

### **Implementing a Collective Accountability Framework**

A Collective Accountability Framework provides the conceptual structure for contextualizing and operationalizing AAP commitments and standards into appropriate response-wide activities, enabling them to hear and act upon the voices of people in a coordinated manner – including for SEA.

- > See p. 61 for details on AAP commitments and standards, and p. 87 for community engagement coordination mechanisms.

A Collective Accountability Framework is not designed to inform individual agency or programme accountability approaches; rather, it provides the basis for working collaboratively and delivering on five key outputs:

- **Output 1:** Coordinated needs assessment and analysis reflects the perceptions of information needs and communication preferences of all affected community groups.
- **Output 2:** The Humanitarian Response Plan is inclusive of the voices of all affected community groups.
- **Output 3:** A resourced country-level approach coordinates information provision, community feedback systems and participation.
- **Output 4:** Response implementation is coordinated with and driven by informed community participation and feedback systems and is monitored and adjusted as needed.
- **Output 5:** Coordinated, independent and participatory evaluation, verification and learning from response operations informs future actions at all levels.

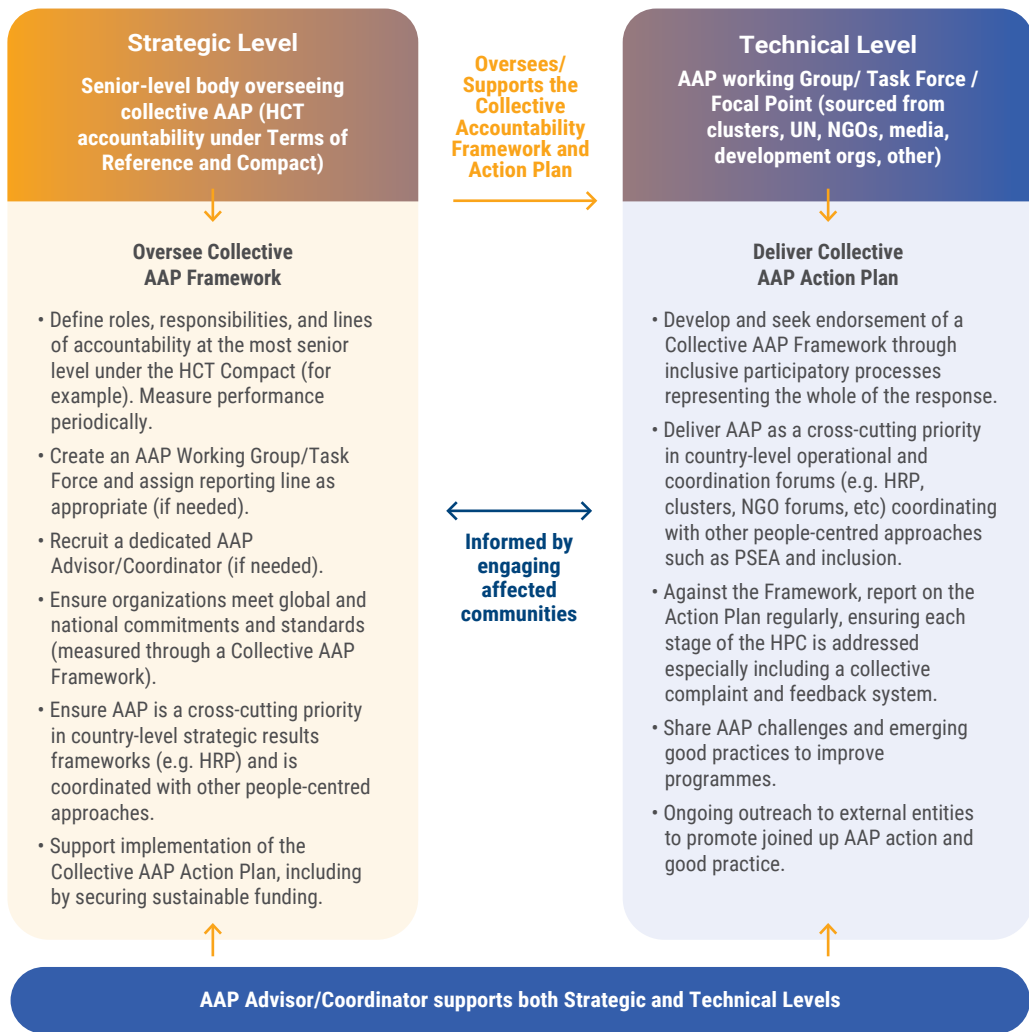
## Resources

- The IASC Results Group on Accountability and Inclusion provides response-wide guidance, tools and technical support through the following:
  - [Collective Accountability Framework](#) - the building blocks for leaders to ensure accountable and inclusive collective responses
  - [Global Accountability and Inclusion Portal](#) - an accessible repository of accountability and inclusion tools, guidance, policies, standards and advice
  - [Service Directory](#) - a tool to direct practitioners and leaders to service providers that specialize in collective and inclusive accountability
- [IASC Emergency Directors Group Preliminary Guidance Note](#)
- [Operational guidance on Accountability to Affected People](#)
- [IASC Accountability and Inclusion Resources Portal](#)

The diagram below provides an overview of the in-country structure for implementing the Collective AAP Framework and Action Plan.

### In-Country Collective Accountable to Affected People (AAP)

**Overall responsibility for in-country AAP:  
Senior-most UN leadership (RC/HC)**



## **CASE STUDY: DEVELOPING COLLECTIVE ACCOUNTABILITY AND PSEA INITIATIVES ACROSS THE HUMANITARIAN SYSTEM IN SOUTH SUDAN**

Strong leadership on community engagement has been critical in grounding the South Sudan operation in a people-centred and accountable approach. The establishment of an inter-agency Community Communication and Engagement (CCE) Working Group and the system-wide PSEA Task Force demonstrates the overarching leadership in these complementary and important areas. The CCE Working Group led the integration of AAP considerations in the 2020 HNO and HRP, using data from the 2019 REACH Community Perception Study and input from clusters. The PSEA Task Force led on the risk analysis for SEA, using data from a recent SEA risk assessment.

The South Sudan CBPF funded collective accountability initiatives in 2018 and 2019, with a focus on improving coordination and feedback mechanisms across the whole humanitarian system. In 2021, AAP will continue to be integrated into the HPC, with clusters monitoring whether people feel informed and consulted. A common AAP performance indicator selected by clusters for protection, WASH, education, camp coordination and camp management, emergency shelter and non-food items, nutrition, food security and livelihoods, and health will allow clusters to monitor progress across geographical areas and demographic groups, track community engagement at cluster and inter-cluster levels, and garner key lessons.

The CCE Working Group will continue to provide a forum for a strategic, collective review of community perceptions of humanitarian aid delivery (against key intersectoral and cluster objectives), enabling clusters to adjust their response accordingly. In 2021, the group will explore how best to utilize intersectoral and cluster-level community data, including developing analysis to be presented to the Inter-Cluster Working Group and HCT that can be used to inform their understanding of communities' prioritization of needs, assess the quality of aid delivery and inform decision-making.

### **Prioritizing the Prevention of Gender-Based Violence**

The RC, in her/his capacity to lead and coordinate the response efforts of the UN and humanitarian partners, is responsible for strategic information sharing



and advocating for the prevention of and response to GBV across the full range of relevant actors.

Humanitarian actors at all levels need to better prioritize GBV in order to create and implement scaled-up responses that better address women's and girls' rights and needs. They must assume GBV is occurring and threatening affected populations, treat it as a serious and life-threatening problem, and take actions regardless of the presence or absence of concrete 'evidence'. All survivors, regardless of perpetrators, need access to GBV referrals and, as such, the HCT should promote investment in existing GBV structures.

The IASC Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action outline the specific methods, tools and recommendations for humanitarian actors and communities affected by armed conflict, natural disasters and other humanitarian emergencies to coordinate, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate essential actions for the prevention and mitigation of GBV across all sectors of humanitarian response.

In addition, the GBV Accountability Framework provides a guide for humanitarian actors, including humanitarian leaders and HCTs, on the steps they can take to combat GBV within their mandates. By taking on the actions in the Framework, the humanitarian system as a whole can ensure that every humanitarian response, from the earliest phases of a crisis, provides safe and comprehensive life-saving services for GBV survivors and mitigates the risks of GBV.

## Resources

- [IASC Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action](#)
- [GBV Accountability Framework](#)

## NEGOTIATING AND FACILITATING HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

Humanitarian access is critical for establishing operations, assessing needs, monitoring assistance, moving goods and personnel to where they are needed, and enabling affected people to benefit from assistance and access basic services.

Facilitating and coordinating efforts to establish and maintain safe, timely and unimpeded access is central to the mandate of RCs.

### **Key roles of the RC and HC**

- Promote and facilitate a strategic and coordinated approach to access.
- Ensure that access constraints are identified and monitored.
- Advocate for safe, timely and unhindered access.
- Regularly engage on issues related to bureaucratic and administrative impediments.
- Present the issue of access as linked to a population's humanitarian needs rather than to a particular territory.
- Make it clear to all parties that access negotiations do not confer legitimacy or recognition of control over a population or territory.
- Establish high-level dialogue with military actors relevant to the specific context (natural disaster or conflict).
- Ensure coherence among humanitarian actors on the use of military assets and engagement with parties to conflict.

### **What is Humanitarian Access?**

Humanitarian access refers to the ability of humanitarian actors to reach crisis-affected people, as well as the affected population's ability to access humanitarian assistance and services. Rapid and unimpeded access is a fundamental prerequisite for effective humanitarian action. An understanding of the international legal framework (including IHL, IHRL and UN General Assembly resolution 46/182) is critical for framing the access conversation.

> For details on IHL and IHRL see p. 23-25.

### **Role of the RC and HC**

The RC is responsible for leading the development of a strategic and coordinated approach to access. Joint reflection and common strategies are critical. The RC may decide to establish dedicated coordination structures to support analysis and

assessment of humanitarian access, which could include, when relevant and/or requested by the HCT, a Humanitarian Access Working Group.

The RC has a key role in building a coherent evidence-based narrative on access, built on quantitative and qualitative analysis and systematic monitoring of access constraints. Encouraging HCT members to report on access constraints (including bureaucratic impediments) is critical in this regard. The RC is also responsible for advocating for safe, timely and unhindered humanitarian access with all parties (including non-State armed groups). This involves engaging in high-level humanitarian advocacy and negotiations, and promoting compliance with and respect for humanitarian principles and relevant international law.

## Resources

- Humanitarian Access in Situations of Armed Conflict, [Handbook on the International Normative Framework](#) (2014)
- [Humanitarian Access in Situations of Armed Conflict](#), Practitioners' Manual (2014)
- [Humanitarian Access in Situations of Armed Conflict](#), Practitioners' Manual Summary (2017)
- OCHA Minimum Package of Services on Humanitarian Access, Jan 2019 (available upon request)
- [OCHA on Message: Humanitarian Access](#)

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## CASE STUDY: FACILITATING ACCESS FOR A LIFE-SAVING HUMANITARIAN CONVOY IN SYRIA

In February 2019, after more than two months of advocacy and negotiations, the UN successfully carried out a large-scale humanitarian convoy in Syria, providing life-saving assistance to more than 40,000 people in Rukban in the south-east of the country. The area in question was largely inaccessible; only one humanitarian operation had previously been conducted. The complex aid operation lasted nine days and consisted of 133 trucks with more than 300 staff, volunteers and commercial suppliers. The HC's role was crucial in coordinating the operation, along with a number of UN agencies, INGOs and national partners (including the Syrian Arab Red Crescent).

## **Bureaucratic and Administrative Impediments**

Bureaucratic and administrative impediments refer to administrative practices and policies that affect humanitarian organizations' ability to reach people in need in a timely and unfettered manner. These may be intentionally restrictive (such as restrictions on the import of aid equipment or security equipment required for the response) or unintentionally burdensome (such as onerous donor funding application and reporting processes or cumbersome administrative procedures to approve or register organizations). Humanitarian action can be impeded by the administrative practices adopted by host Governments, non-State armed groups controlling territory where people in need reside, Government donors, and partnership agreements between UN or INGO donors and local NGOs.

NGOs tend to be disproportionately affected by bureaucratic and administrative impediments. Foreign NGO workers are often subject to residency, labour and other requirements of the host State. The lack of privileges and immunities means that INGOs often need to comply with more stringent administrative requirements to operate legally and safely.

In many countries, civil-society organizations are regulated by domestic legislation and operate within a national legal framework. Ideally, these frameworks help streamline bureaucratic and administrative processes for NGOs; however, in some contexts they have the opposite effect, at times contrary to international law and humanitarian principles. Common impediments include convoluted or opaque processes for NGO registration, withholding or delaying visa approvals for international staff, or restrictions on the movement of relief items into and within the country. The need for some form of travel authorization to conduct work in specific areas is a common means of limiting both the provision of assistance and accurate needs assessments by NGOs. In some cases, these also affect UN and ICRC operations.

### **Role of the RC and HC**

The RC should be prepared to speak out and lead collective action to counter the imposition of bureaucratic and administrative impediments by the Government, non-State actors and donors. This could involve regular discussions in the HCT on

developing a common understanding of the range, nature and impact of bureaucratic and administrative impediments, and an associated action plan to address them. To be effective, these efforts should engage with and learn from the NGO community, particularly by engaging NGO forums, to ensure efforts are informed by current operational realities. The RC should ensure partners' coordinated and systematic reporting of bureaucratic and administrative impediments through Humanitarian Access Working Groups. Where efforts at the national level may not be sufficient to resolve such impediments, the RC could request support from the ERC and IASC Principals for high-level advocacy to resolve the impediments and facilitate effective humanitarian response.

## **Resources**

- Under the IASC Operational Policy and Advocacy Group Results Group 1 on Operational Response, NGO consortiums InterAction and ICVA lead a Bureaucratic and Administrative Impediments Working Group, which provides learning, resources and guidance for the humanitarian community, including HCTs.

## **Negotiation Analysis and Strategy**

The practitioner's manual on Humanitarian Negotiations with Armed Groups provides a nine-step generic framework that can be applied to humanitarian negotiations (see p. 113).

It is important to be aware that, while negotiations can help facilitate humanitarian access, they can also have unintended or unanticipated consequences for humanitarian organizations:

- Negotiating with armed groups can generate or reinforce a perception among other armed groups, the population, the host Government and/or other States that the humanitarian organization is biased or lacking impartiality.

- Entering into negotiations with an armed group can also have potentially serious consequences for the security of the negotiators themselves, their colleagues, other humanitarian organizations and the populations they serve.
- Host-country Governments, other States, regional organizations and third parties external to the humanitarian negotiations may attempt to exert pressure on or sanction the humanitarian organization in order to limit or cease their contact with armed groups, or they may attempt to influence the negotiations in pursuit of political objectives. Host-country Governments may see the negotiations as legitimizing particular armed groups (especially when these are labelled as terrorist groups), or as recognizing, de facto, their territorial control.

## Resources

- [Guidelines on Humanitarian Negotiations with Armed Groups](#), United Nations, 2006.

## Armed or Military Escorts for Humanitarian Convoys

Armed escorts should be used only as a last resort. Their use can weaken perceptions of the impartiality of humanitarian actors and threaten the operational independence of humanitarian action. Therefore, if all deterrence measures have failed, the humanitarian community should work together on creating alternatives to the use of armed escorts.

Escorts are used at the [Designated Official's](#) discretion to help mitigate the risks associated to humanitarian movements, such as harassment and armed attacks. Military escorts include UN forces conducting peace operations (governed by Security Council decisions), other international forces or State forces.

The deployment of armed escorts is subject to a security risk assessment/ security risk management process<sup>55</sup> that considers, but is not limited to, the following criteria:

- Sovereignty: national authorities or the local controlling authority are unwilling or unable to provide a secure environment.

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55 This includes a Programme Criticality Assessment – see p. 134 for details on this.

## Humanitarian negotiations: nine-step generic framework

1

### PHASE I PREPARATION

Coordinate Approach, Decide on Strategy and Gather Information

#### 1 Coordinate approach with humanitarian partners

Coordinate and liaise with humanitarian partners on overall approach to humanitarian negotiations. Involve a Security Advisor.

Identify by consensus a senior-level, experienced lead negotiator.

#### 2 Decide on objectives and strategy

Clearly identify the reasons for entering into negotiations and the desired outcome(s).

Use humanitarian principles, policies and elements of international law as the basis for identifying a "bottom line". Ensure that the various humanitarian, development and human rights agencies have achieved consensus on the objectives of the negotiation.

Consider possible alternatives to a negotiated agreement that could be pursued if the negotiations are unsuccessful.

#### 3 Learn about and analyse your negotiating partner

Identify the main representatives/interlocutors.

Learn about the other party's motivations; structure; principles of action; interest; constituency; needs and cultural and ethnic influences. Assess the level of control exerted over a given population/territory.

2

### PHASE II SEEKING AGREEMENT

Process, Issues, Options, Outcomes

#### 4 Build consensus on the process of negotiations

Build consensus among all parties to the negotiation on how the negotiation process should unfold (for example, on the primary and alternate representatives from each party, the location to be used for the negotiations and the number of meetings to be held).

Agree on procedures for revising the process during the negotiations.

#### 5 Identify the issues

Once the parties have agreed on the negotiation process, identify the substantive issues to be discussed.

#### 6 Develop options

Use humanitarian principles, international law and humanitarian policies to assist in developing options and as criteria for evaluating the available options.

#### 7 Seek agreement

Seek agreement on the option(s) that best meet humanitarian objectives.

3

### PHASE III IMPLEMENTATION

Define Criteria for Implementation, Follow-up

#### 8 Define criteria for implementation

Once an outcome or solution has been agreed, focus on defining criteria for implementing the outcome such as specification of roles and time frame (who does what when); reference benchmarks against which to measure implementation; safeguards for the safety and security of humanitarian workers; and procedures for resolution of disputes arising during implementation.

#### 9 Follow-up: monitoring and relationship building

Identify mechanisms to facilitate joint monitoring of implementation.

Identify process-related actions that will help to maintain communications.

- **Need:** the level of humanitarian need is such that the lack of humanitarian assistance would lead to unacceptable human suffering.
- **Safety:** armed or military escorts can provide the credible deterrent needed to enhance the safety of humanitarian personnel and the capacity to provide assistance without compromising the security of beneficiaries and other local populations.
- **Sustainability:** the use of armed or military escorts does not compromise the longer-term capacity of humanitarian organizations to fulfil their mandate safely and effectively.
- **Time-bound:** the use of armed escorts should be limited in time and an exit strategy should be planned from the onset.

Humanitarian and military vehicles should remain distinctly separate. Other than the vehicles, weapons and personnel providing the escorts, the convoys should remain exclusively humanitarian. It is important to bear in mind that non-UN organizations have their own rules and decision-making processes for the use of armed or military escorts for humanitarian convoys. NGOs are never bound by the security framework of the UN.

Deployed UN humanitarian civil-military coordination officers (see below) can act as an intermediary between the humanitarian community and the military when requests for military or armed escorts are considered.

## Resources

- [IASC Non-binding Guidelines on the Use of Armed Escorts for Humanitarian Convoys, 2013](#)
- The UN [Programme Criticality Framework](#)

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### **CASE STUDY: THE PERILS OF USING ARMED ESCORTS IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (DRC)**

In some parts of DRC, the UN Mission for the Stabilization of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) is perceived as a party to the conflict, supporting the national military. The MONUSCO Force Intervention Brigade is engaged in offensive operations against some non-State armed groups,



especially in North Kivu Province, and is regarded with suspicion in areas under the control of such groups. Using armed escorts to access these areas increases the risk of attacks. Non-State armed group commanders claim that humanitarian actors are usually granted access to assist the populations under their control if unescorted. As a result, only the few organizations that are negotiating with all parties and not using escorts have access to the controlled areas, which limits assistance considerably. In addition, the inconsistencies in security risk management within the humanitarian community often blur the distinction between escorted and non-escorted assistance and can expose those opting out of the escort model to greater risk.

## Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination

Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination (UN-CMCoord) is the essential dialogue and interaction between civilian and military or armed actors in humanitarian emergencies. Through systematic engagement, UN-CMCoord aims to promote humanitarian principles, avoid competition for resources, minimize inconsistency and, where appropriate, pursue common humanitarian goals.

UN-CMCoord can be applied across all contexts, from natural disasters to conflicts and complex emergencies, including migration crises, pandemic response and in preparation for the potential effects of climate change. Conflicts and complex emergencies have become increasingly protracted and require sustained and substantive dialogue with parties to conflict. Many of these emergencies are characterized by persistent failures to protect civilians, multiple constraints to humanitarian access, and the need to engage with a myriad of armed actors with different profiles and motivations.

UN-CMCoord can support RCs in a number of ways:

- Establishing and sustaining dialogue with armed actors
- Facilitating humanitarian access and access negotiations
- Advocating for the protection of civilians
- Providing guidance on the appropriate use of armed escorts
- Establishing and maintaining humanitarian notification systems<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Systems to share the geographic coordinates of aid operations with military forces, as a means of reducing civilian casualties and protecting humanitarian missions in areas of active hostilities.

- Influencing combatant behaviour and upholding IHRL and IHL obligations
- Analysing non-State armed groups to support improved access
- Providing guidance on operating in counter-terrorism environments
- Providing guidance on the appropriate use of foreign and domestic military and peacekeeping assets
- Facilitating military capacities to address the effects of climate change and climate change planning
- Facilitating pandemic planning and response

### **Role of the RC and HC**

The RC may be the primary interlocutor with the most senior levels of national militaries, armed elements and other parties to conflict, and/or the senior leadership of domestic and bilateral military support in natural disasters. The RC is responsible for providing direction across the HCT on engaging with military and armed actors. This involves ensuring coherence across a wide range of issues, including, but not limited to, the use of armed escorts; negotiating humanitarian access with armed actors; ensuring positive protection outcomes; influencing the behaviour of armed actors (reminding them of their obligations to IHL) in an effort to prevent the deliberate targeting of health facilities, schools and other protected sites; and the appropriate use of military assets to fill an identified gap in the humanitarian response.

### **Resources**

- [OCHA's Civil-Military Coordination Service \(CMCS\)](#) is the designated UN focal point for UN-CMCoord, supporting field operations as well as regional and global activities. CMCS deploys UN-CMCoord capacity to address needs in sudden-onset emergencies as well as in complex and protracted crises. CMCS also supports the channelling of requests for foreign military assets.
- CMCS is the custodian of global UN-CMCoord guidelines and handbooks:
  - [Guidelines on the Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief – Oslo Guidelines](#)
  - [Civil-Military Guidelines and Reference for Complex Emergencies](#)

- [IASC Non-binding Guidelines on the Use of Armed Escorts for Humanitarian Convoys, Feb 2013](#)
- [UN-CMCoord Field Handbook, v 2.0](#)
- [UN-CMCoord Guide for the Military, v 2.0](#)
- [Recommended Practices for Effective Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination of Foreign Military Assets \(FMA\) in Natural and Man-Made Disasters](#)
- The [UN-CMCoord training programme](#) equips humanitarian, civil and military actors with the knowledge and skills to effectively and appropriately interact in humanitarian contexts

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### **CASE STUDY: INSTITUTIONALIZING UN-CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION IN HUMANITARIAN RESPONSES IN THE PHILIPPINES**

The After-Action Review of Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination during the Typhoon Haiyan response in 2014 put forward six recommendations, one of which was the need to create an understanding and awareness of the UN-CM-Coord concept among senior civilian and military officials and executives of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

The HC in the Philippines, upon assuming his post in 2015, established an ongoing relationship with the NDRRMC leadership as part of his strategic engagement on preparedness and response. Building on previous efforts, the HC convened a learning event for selected executives and senior officials from the NDRRMC and the AFP. This then fed into the development and refinement of NDRRMC-AFP response mechanisms, which were tested and enhanced in the 2016 earthquake response exercise of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group. These tools continue to be used in Government-led responses to natural disasters and human-made emergencies.

### **Sanctions and Counter-terrorism Measures**

The implementation of sanctions and counter-terrorism measures targeting local actors by the host State, donors or other States can have an important impact on humanitarian operations and access. Sanctions regimes may prohibit or require

authorization ('licences') for certain humanitarian activities, or for the export of items and services necessary to humanitarian operations (which often entails lengthy, cumbersome and complex procedures). Humanitarian organizations and private partners may incur heavy penalties in case of aid diversion to sanctioned entities. As a result, private sector organizations (including banks) may be reluctant to provide services in support of humanitarian operations in countries affected by sanctions. Donors and, in some instances, host States have adopted a zero-tolerance policy on aid diversion to sanctioned groups and individuals (including through funding cuts, no-contact policies with certain groups, requests for information on beneficiaries, beneficiary vetting or prohibitions on implementing programmes in certain areas).

In some contexts, these measures have resulted in major delays or even the cancellation of programmes; restricted key humanitarian activities (e.g. the impartial provision of medical care, engagement with sanctioned groups for humanitarian purposes or protection activities for detainees); prevented access to areas where sanctioned groups have influence; or restricted access to local vendors, contractors and implementing partners. Humanitarian staff have also faced intimidation, threats and other forms of violence following accusations of supporting sanctioned groups.

### **Role of the RC and HC**

RCs have a key role in documenting how sanctions and counter-terrorism measures affect the operations of humanitarian organizations in the HCT and sharing this information with OCHA HQ to inform potential advocacy for remedial measures. RCs also have a responsibility to advocate with relevant interlocutors – host Governments and/or donor States and other Member States – to ensure that sanctions and counter-terrorism measures do not prevent timely humanitarian access and impartial, needs-based humanitarian assistance. RCs are encouraged to seek support, advice and guidance from OCHA HQ on these sensitive matters.

## IMPLEMENTING THE HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMME CYCLE

The Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) is an operational framework developed by the IASC. It sets out the sequences of actions that should be taken to prepare for, manage, deliver and monitor collective humanitarian responses. It details the processes for developing the evidence base, brings key actors together to determine a collective response, and ensures that programmes adapt to changing circumstances and respond to the needs of affected populations. Essentially, it helps RCs to answer four basic questions: Who needs what and when? Where are they? How is this best done? Who will do it?

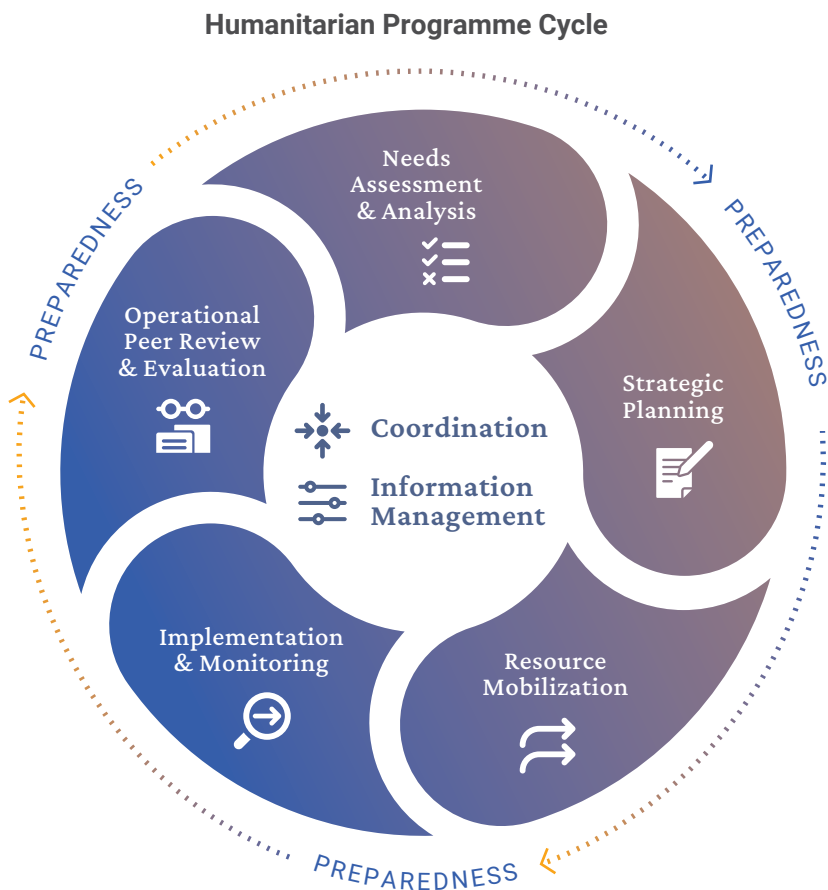
### Key roles of the RC and HC

- Initiate the HPC, starting with an analysis of the scope and severity of the emergency.
- Establish an Assessment and Analysis Cell (in sudden-onset emergencies) or an Assessment and Analysis Working Group (or an Information Management Working Group with analysis capacities) as part of inter-agency coordination mechanisms, at the outset of the HPC.
- Initiate a review of secondary data, including information from the preparedness phase and initial feedback from affected populations, national authorities and implementing partners.
- Ensure agencies, clusters/sectors and organizations have the requisite capacity (staff and resources) for dedicated joint needs and response analysis and planning.
- Emphasize the importance of data sharing and agency and cluster/sector engagement in joint analyses.
- Ensure engagement between humanitarian and development partners, and complementarity of the HRP with development activities – with explicit links to collective outcomes, where these have been agreed.
- Promote a people-centred approach that is inclusive of all segments of the population, particularly vulnerable groups, integrating gender analysis, disability inclusion and the needs of older persons.

- Ensure the timely endorsement of analysis outputs, response plans and monitoring frameworks; make sure that monitoring systems are in place that allow for ongoing analysis of changes in humanitarian conditions, needs and risks, together with progress towards outcomes.

## Elements of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle

The HPC consists of five steps, with each step logically building on the previous and leading to the next (see figure below). Successful implementation of the HPC is dependent on comprehensive emergency preparedness, effective coordination



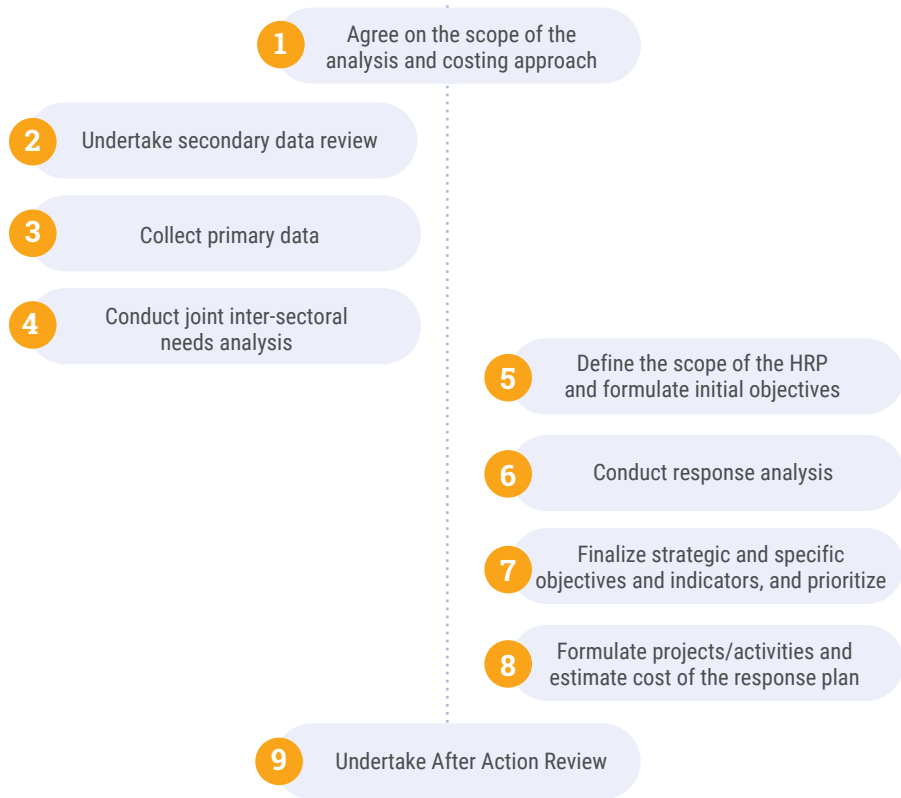
with national/local authorities and humanitarian actors, and systematic information management.

In 2019, the HPC templates and guidance were revised in line with consolidated best practice and commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit and Grand Bargain

### HPC Step by Step

#### Needs assessment & analysis

#### Response analysis & planning



Year: 2021

They reflect the complexity of the environments in which humanitarian practitioners work and the depth of analysis that is required and expected.

The enhanced HPC approach emphasizes the importance of a people-centred, inter-sectoral analysis of the humanitarian consequences of a crisis and the associated response, helping programmes to arrive at a prioritized and evidence-based plan.

## Resources

- [Step by Step Guide – 2021 Humanitarian Programme Cycle](#)
- [Knowledge Management Platform](#) and repository for HPC guidance and templates

## Coordinated Needs Assessments and Joint Analysis

A needs analysis provides the evidence base and foundation for the HPC. The analysis should always be based on a desk review of existing secondary data, from which a quick situation analysis can be derived, as well as an understanding of the information gaps that exist. A decision can then be taken on whether and how primary data collection should proceed.

### Sudden-onset disasters

In sudden-onset disasters and in contexts that may lead to an IASC Scale-Up activation,<sup>57</sup> a Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (or alternative rapid assessment based on coordinated assessments) is implemented. This consists of a situation analysis within the first 72 hours, followed by a multisector assessment and report within the first two weeks. This inter-agency approach enables actors to reach, from the outset, a common understanding of the situation and its likely evolution. Based on the assessment's findings, humanitarian actors can develop a joint plan (including a Flash Appeal), mobilize resources and monitor the situation. The results of the rapid assessment also inform and support the design of subsequent needs assessments and analysis, which are often more detailed and operational in focus.

The situation analysis provides an initial assessment of the scope and severity of an emergency, and an initial understanding of the required response. Based on

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<sup>57</sup> See p. 128 for details on this.



a review of secondary information by the HCT (led by the RC), it draws on baseline information gathered during the preparedness phase and initial information from affected populations, national authorities, civil-society organizations, other implementers and clusters/sectors. This is the first step towards setting overall objectives for the response plan that takes shape during the first 30 days of a large sudden-onset emergency. The situation analysis brings together the RC, HCT and clusters/sectors around a shared analysis of the impact of the crisis. It also enables the IASC Principals to take key decisions relating to scale, leadership and required capacities. It is instrumental in initiating a collective and coordinated process of assessment and decision-making, recognizing that local ownership and national engagement from the start are crucial to the quality of the response.

### **Protracted or slow-onset crises**

In protracted or slow-onset crises, which characterize most humanitarian situations, needs assessments and analysis are anchored within the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO). The IASC Operational Guidance on Coordinated Assessments outlines the agreed approaches and protocols that inform a coordinated assessment approach. It recommends that the RC establishes coordination mechanisms for cross-cluster/sector needs assessment and analysis, such as an Assessment and Analysis Working Group.

Once a secondary data review has been conducted, the Assessment and Analysis Working Group, in collaboration with the ICCG, and with guidance from the HCT, will decide whether a joint needs assessment (such as a multisectoral needs assessment) is required, or whether harmonized in-depth sectoral assessments better serve the information requirements.

Using the Joint Intersectoral Analysis Framework (JIAF),<sup>58</sup> the data and information from assessments can be used to answer key questions about the humanitarian conditions: which geographical areas and population groups are most affected or at risk as a result of the crisis; who and how many people face severe, critical and

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58 The JIAF is a set of protocols, methods and tools used to classify the severity of humanitarian conditions (including humanitarian needs) resulting from a shock event or ongoing crisis; identify the main drivers and underlying factors; and provide actionable insights for decision-making.

catastrophic needs; what are the immediate and underlying structural causes; and how are the needs expected to evolve. The JIAF helps develop a comprehensive understanding of how sectoral needs and factors correlate and compound each other, and how they change over time. It is a valuable tool for analysing risk and potential shocks, helping to predict the evolution of a humanitarian situation. This will then inform planning for the most likely scenario in the HRP. The JIAF can be used to inform decisions on prioritization, preparedness, anticipatory action and disaster risk reduction (DRR).

The analysis should link as well as contribute to the in-depth and integrated analysis of protection risks, violations and harms that informs humanitarian action and response – as set out in the IASC Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action<sup>59</sup> – as well as ensure proper and integrated analysis of impacts on more vulnerable segments of the population, based on (at the very least) factors related to age, gender, disability and other diversities.<sup>60</sup>

Humanitarian analysis should also inform Common Country Assessments (CCA). This helps build an evidence base for humanitarian-development collaboration, highlighting critical areas that require longer-term development interventions to reduce humanitarian needs, risks and vulnerability. HNOs as well as other needs and vulnerability assessments and analyses are useful inputs into the CCA. Conversely, they can also benefit from recent CCAs and, where available, multi-stakeholder, multidimensional risk analysis, to help incorporate risk drivers in needs assessment and analysis. Granular information on people’s vulnerabilities, risks and humanitarian needs can enrich broader social, institutional, economic and political analyses conducted by development actors.

## Resources

- [IASC Operational Guidance on Coordinated Assessments](#)
- [Joint Intersectoral Analysis Framework](#)

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<sup>59</sup> See p. 54 for details on the IASC Protection Policy.

<sup>60</sup> See p. 64 for details on addressing the diversity of needs.

## Humanitarian Response Analysis and Planning

Based on the assessment of humanitarian needs and the situation analysis, partners then collaborate to develop a response plan. Depending on the context, this will result in one of the following products:

- In a sudden-onset disaster where there is a rapid deterioration in humanitarian conditions, a **Flash Appeal** may be launched within 72 hours. This covers a period of up to six months. In situations where the needs are expected to require sustained assistance, the Flash Appeal can be followed by a full HRP.
- In a protracted crisis, or one that requires a response for 12 months or longer, an **HRP** is developed.
- In some instances, where the situation is sufficiently stable to allow for multi-year planning, a **Multi-Year Humanitarian Response Plan** is used.

The HRP is primarily a management tool for the RC and HCT. It can also be used as a means of articulating and communicating the scope and scale of the crisis and response (to donors and the public) and, as such, can act as a resource mobilization tool. The HRP articulates the HCT's common vision for in-country humanitarian action, the strategy for achieving that vision, and the actions to be taken to implement the strategy, as well as agreement on the monitoring of the collective response. Contributions against the HRP (and Flash Appeal) are recorded and tracked by the Financial Tracking Service (FTS).

> See p. 146 for details on resource mobilization and the FTS.

OCHA facilitates the development of the HRP in consultation and close collaboration with the HCT, ICCG and relevant humanitarian partners. The elaboration of an HRP is directly linked to the analysis undertaken through the HNO. All people in need identified in the HNO should be considered from the outset of the planning process, given that their needs are humanitarian by definition and their severity has been ascertained by the analysis in the HNO.<sup>61</sup> Based on the type and severity of needs identified in the HNO, a response analysis is used to review the appropriateness,

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<sup>61</sup> A needs analysis should include causes and driving factors, severity, magnitude, trends and projections, as well as people's own prioritization of their needs (as identified through AAP initiatives). See the HPC 2021 Response Analysis and Prioritization Guide for more details on this (see resources).

relevance and feasibility of different interventions and response modalities – such as cash, voucher and in-kind assistance.

The HRP defines outcome-level objectives that articulate the intended improvements in people’s lives and livelihoods (that ensure full respect for their rights). ‘SMART’ objectives are used to identify specifically how the results will be achieved. Links with collective outcomes as part of humanitarian-development collaboration – and, where appropriate, collaboration with peace actors – are also made explicit if they exist. Where possible, complementary strategies are identified and referenced in the HRP and other strategic plans, such as the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, Integrated Strategic Frameworks, and Government national plans, including national DRR strategies and/or the relevant strategic plans of financial institutions and bilateral donors. Some countries, often under national leadership, have articulated a set of collective outcomes to measurably reduce risk and vulnerability in areas such as food security and nutrition, health, basic social services, and durable solutions to internal displacement, among others. These are then referenced and linked to appropriate strategies in the HRP and equivalent development plans.

### **The HPC in refugee situations**

In humanitarian refugee crises, UNHCR leads the development and implementation of and resource mobilization for inter-agency refugee response plans (see p. 91). Refugees are included in HNOs, and in the contexts of HRPs a dedicated refugee response chapter is included in the HPC templates. UNHCR is responsible for providing the chapter information. The same applies for other emergency humanitarian appeals, such as Flash Appeals.

- > See p. 156 for details on Humanitarian-Development-Peace Collaboration, collective outcomes and durable solutions for internal displacement.

## Resources

- [Flash Appeal guidance and templates](#)
- [Humanitarian Response Plan](#) – template and instructions
- [Response Analysis and Prioritization Guide for the HRP](#)
- [UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework guidance](#)

## Monitoring

Monitoring is ongoing throughout the HPC. It is used to track the evolution of the situation and needs, the implementation of the humanitarian response and the effectiveness of aid delivery. It also considers the diversity of the affected population and their perspectives on the response. The enhanced HPC places increased emphasis on monitoring to ensure that the response remains appropriate to evolving needs and to track progress against agreed outcomes. Based on the results of the monitoring process, humanitarian partners are advised to revisit planning assumptions and adapt the response accordingly. To fulfil this function, monitoring should:

- Start from a clear idea of what to monitor and why.
- Aim for as ‘real time’ as possible, rather than occasional one-shot events or documents.
- Cover the full scope, from needs to results.
- Support analysis that will enable decision-making.

## MANAGING THE EMERGENCY RESPONSE (TOOLS AND SERVICES)

In leading and coordinating the emergency response, the RC can call on a wide range of tools and services for additional support, many provided through OCHA. It is important to ensure that, where possible, international assistance complements and works alongside national response mechanisms.

## **Key roles of the RC and HC**

- In the event of a sudden-onset crisis or a rapid deterioration in humanitarian conditions, lead an initial assessment of the humanitarian situation in consultation with the HCT.
- Liaise with OCHA and the ERC to help determine whether the initial assessment warrants a Scale-Up activation.
- If required, request additional humanitarian capacity through OCHA, both for coordination and specialist technical support.
- Determine, in consultation with OCHA, the Terms of Reference for international responders.
- Where appropriate, ensure that incoming international responders support or complement national/local response capacities and mechanisms.
- In the event of a disaster, contact the relevant national authority to determine any damage to infrastructure that might affect the delivery of relief assets or assistance.

## **Emergency Declarations**

### **Scale-Up Protocols**

An IASC Scale-Up activation is a system-wide mobilization in response to a sudden-onset and/or rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation in a given country, including at the subnational level, where capacity to lead, coordinate and deliver humanitarian assistance does not match the scale, complexity and urgency of the crisis. This exceptional measure is only applied for a time-bound period of up to six months. Only in very limited circumstances is an additional three-month extension considered.

The procedure activates mechanisms and tools to:

- Ensure that the IASC system delivers effectively in support of national authorities and existing capacities, and monitors its own performance.
- Ensure that adequate capacities and tools are in place for empowered leadership and coordination of the humanitarian system.

- Engage IASC member organizations and global cluster lead agencies in establishing the required systems and mobilizing the necessary resources to contribute to the response, as per their respective mandates.

The Scale-Up activation is issued by the ERC, in consultation with the RC and IASC Principals, based on an analysis of the following criteria: scale, complexity, urgency, capacity and risk of failure to deliver at scale to affected populations. In the case of an infectious disease event, the IASC Level 3 activation procedure for infectious disease events applies (see chapter D for more details on this).

A Scale-Up activation indicates the scale at which the humanitarian system needs to step up its efforts and to activate internal procedures to better respond to the crisis. It does not indicate a ranking of the severity of the crisis, or that the crisis should, at this stage, be prioritized for funding by the international community.

A Scale-Up activation is primarily a mechanism for emergency response. That said, humanitarian and development partners can use other mechanisms to invest in preparedness, operational readiness, early warning and early action to limit the number of emergency situations in which Scale-Up activation would be required (see below for details).

## Resources

- [Protocol 1: Humanitarian System-Wide Scale-Up Activation](#) – definition and procedures
- [Protocol 2: ‘Empowered Leadership’ in Humanitarian System-Wide Scale-Up Activation](#)
- [Frequently asked questions on the Humanitarian System-Wide Scale-Up Activation](#)
- [Scale-Up Activation timeline](#) – infographic
- [IASC System-Wide Scale-Up Protocols – adapted for the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020](#)
- [IASC Humanitarian System-Wide Activation Protocol for the Control of Infectious Disease Events, 2019](#)

## **Emergency Surge Teams**

If additional humanitarian capacity is required, OCHA can mobilize a number of mechanisms (both internal and external) to provide immediate and longer-term assistance. These include coordination and specialist surge capacity from regional offices, HQs and other country offices, the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team, the Stand-By Partnership Programme, the Protection and Gender Standby Capacity Projects, and environmental and private sector experts. The OCHA country and regional office, through the Operations and Advocacy Division in New York and the Response Support Branch in Geneva, will initiate procedures to mobilize these resources.

### **UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination**

The UNDAC system is a roster of disaster managers and humanitarian aid professionals from Governments, regional organizations, UN agencies and cluster lead agencies. The teams comprise 3 to 30 experts, depending on needs, and can support any phase of the HPC. UNDAC deploys with operational partners who provide support for logistics, communication, base camps, mapping and GIS capacities.

UNDAC is managed by OCHA in Geneva. It deploys teams in the immediate response phase (the first four weeks) in support of the UN system and the affected State. In emergency situations, an UNDAC team is mobilized and deployed within 48 hours of a request. Unlike other emergency surge mechanisms, UNDAC embeds thematic experts from a wide range of different organizations (many of them from Member States). Their ability to work with the affected Government's response mechanisms ensures effective coordination between national civil protection authorities and the incoming international responders. OCHA deploys teams (at no cost) following a request from the RC.

UNDAC teams can also be deployed in advance of a crisis to evaluate and strengthen national response preparedness, including national policies and legislation, and support capacity-building activities and training for emergency management. The RC determines the Terms of Reference for an UNDAC mission. These should



focus on strengthening or complementing local response coordination capacities in any of the following areas (for up to 30 days):

- The coordination of the international response through an Emergency Operation Centre or On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC)
- Technical support for UN-CMCoord, environmental risk analysis, security, etc.
- Assessments and analyses (humanitarian needs, environmental issues, infrastructure damage, etc.)
- Information management and reporting
- Operational coordination for urban search-and-rescue activities through the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) managed by OCHA's Emergency Response Section
- Logistical support such as base camps and telecommunications

## Resources

- [UNDAC website](#)
- [UNDAC field handbook](#)
- [OSOCC Guidelines](#)

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### **CASE STUDY: UNDAC SUPPORT TO THE BEIRUT PORT EXPLOSION**

In 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the UNDAC system was mobilized to support the HC for Lebanon and the Lebanese Government following major explosions at the Beirut port. The UNDAC team was assembled and deployed within hours of a request. The team's composition reflected the expertise required to meet the mission's Terms of Reference. UNDAC operational partners worked together to provide mapping and data analysis support, both on the ground and remotely through an Assessment and Analysis Cell. The team supported the coordination structure established by the HCT, which included a variety of UN agencies, urban search-and-rescue teams, local NGOs, the Lebanese Red Cross, donor missions and municipal engineers, among others.

## **Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative (CADRI)**

[CADRI](#) is an inter-agency mechanism that provides technical support and tools to develop national capacities for DRR, including preparedness for emergency

response. Typically, support is provided in three phases: DRR capacity assessment, the development of a national plan of action, and support in implementing the plan. RCs request support from CADRI directly.

## **Single Expert Surge Capacity**

### **Stand-By Partnership Programme (SBPP)**

OCHA can deploy experts to support the RC through surge capacity rosters or standby partnership arrangements, but only if the deployment is humanitarian focused and placed under OCHA supervision. SBPP deployments usually range from three to six months and commonly include expertise in humanitarian coordination, information management, access negotiations and civil-military coordination. SBPP also deploys expertise in community engagement, cash coordination, public communication, managing environmental emergencies, logistics, needs assessments and protection. RCs signal to OCHA (through their regional office) the support required (at no cost).

### **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**

In the event of industrial accidents, fires, chemical spills and other types of environmental emergencies, the RC (and/or the State) may request assistance from OCHA. In partnership with UNEP, it can provide technical expertise and advice and, in specific circumstances, mobile equipment for on-site sampling and analysis. Experts can be deployed within 24 to 48 hours (at no cost).

### **Inter-agency Protection and Gender Standby Capacity Projects (ProCap/GenCap)**

To help ensure the centrality of protection and gender in humanitarian action, the ProCap and GenCap projects work to strengthen leadership, programmes and localization strategies. The projects are implemented through three key modalities: deployments, capacity-building and sharing of best practice. Direct support is provided to operations through the deployment of highly skilled and experienced senior advisers, who work closely with the RC and HCT to find solutions to complex challenges.

ProCap deploys senior protection advisers for up to three years to strengthen inter-agency protection capacity and leadership. Areas of work include the development and implementation of comprehensive protection strategies and associated accountability systems (e.g. in situations of internal displacement). Senior protection advisers also promote synergies with development and peace actors, especially in protracted displacement contexts.

GenCap deploys senior gender advisers for up to three years to strengthen inter-agency capacity and leadership for delivering on commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment in humanitarian action. Areas of work include assisting in developing strategic documents, ensuring improved gender analysis for enhanced gender equality programming, and activities to strengthen the skills and accountabilities that place gender at the centre of humanitarian operations.

ProCap and GenCap engage in a diverse set of crises: sudden-onset emergencies, protracted situations and transitional contexts. Support from ProCap and GenCap can be requested directly from the project ([procapgencap@un.org](mailto:procapgencap@un.org)). All costs are charged to the projects, with the exception of expenses for office space and internal travel while on mission.

## **Emergency Logistics and Airport Efficiency**

Prior to a significant weather event, such as a cyclone, the RC's office should monitor the situation and contact the Civil Aviation Authority to find out if there are any contingency plans for closing the airport and, if so, when it is likely to reopen. Likewise, after an earthquake, the RC's office should establish contact with the relevant national authority to determine the damage to infrastructure and any effects on the operational capacity of airports and other ports of entry.

The sudden influx of relief goods during an emergency is often problematic if national authorities continue to apply normal customs clearance procedures. This may take considerable time and delay the response, especially when sensitive or restricted goods are involved. It is therefore important to encourage Governments, especially those of disaster-prone Member States, to develop and disseminate clear operational guidance in advance, to expedite the clearance of all types of

emergency relief goods (telecommunications equipment, medicines and medical equipment, etc.). Setting up a 'one-stop shop' at major customs entry points to speed up the clearance of life-saving equipment has often proven effective.

## **Programme Criticality Assessment (PCA)**

The [Programme Criticality \(PC\) Framework](#) is a common UN system policy for decision-making on acceptable risk. It establishes guiding principles and a systematic structured approach to ensure that activities involving UN personnel can be balanced against security risks.<sup>62</sup> PCAs are mandatory in contexts of high or very high risk. In principle, this is undertaken jointly by all UN stakeholders, under the RC's leadership. A PCA can also be used to inform business continuity planning in contexts without high security risk, as happened during the COVID-19 pandemic. The RC has overall responsibility for ensuring PCAs are completed, in place, in line with the PC Framework, and kept up to date. In a deteriorating situation, where the programmatic conditions have changed significantly, the RC should consider a full revision or a light review of a current/valid PCA.

## **ESTABLISHING SYSTEMS FOR INFORMATION MANAGEMENT (IM)**

IM is an essential component of any humanitarian response, enabling and facilitating shared analysis and decision-making. A clear and simple IM strategy ensures that the right information is provided to the right people at the right time, and that all relevant actors are working with the same or complementary information and baseline data.

### **Key roles of the RC and HC**

- Ensure effective collaboration between the HCT, the ICCG and the Information Management Working Group (IMWG) in support of the HPC.

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62 Programme Criticality home page, United Nations Secretariat, Dec. 2020

- Ensure that Common Operational Data sets (CODs) are maintained according to COD guidance (the RC is responsible for the final endorsement of CODs).
- Ensure that all organizations are sharing critical data sets.
- Look to the IMWG to develop and/or provide the following:
  - Inter-cluster/sector information management coordination structures
  - Agreed humanitarian indicators and plans for the HNO and response analysis
  - Data-sharing mechanisms and schedules
  - Inter-agency assessment and analysis coordination and support
  - Contact lists and Who does What, Where (3W) products
  - CODs

### **Information Management Working Group**

OCHA is responsible for convening an IMWG to support the work of the RC and HCT in delivering humanitarian assistance. The IMWG serves as a forum for strategic and technical discussions and collaboration on IM issues relating to humanitarian response and preparedness, as set out by the IASC Operational Guidance on responsibilities of cluster/sector leads and OCHA in Information Management (2008). The RC is responsible for ensuring that the HCT establishes and maintains close links with the ICCG and the IMWG to ensure that they work together to support the HPC. Given IM's crucial role in the HPC, RCs should make sure that the IMWG is actively involved in HCT meetings and that IM officers are not used solely to provide technical support.

Each IMWG faces context-specific challenges and must develop its own Terms of Reference in collaboration with all its members. IMWGs normally focus on data standards, inter-cluster information products and services, the coordination of information for assessments and analysis, and the development and/or dissemination of CODs, indicators, web platforms and information-sharing protocols. Working group membership is defined at the country level and is largely made up of IM officers from clusters/sectors and other areas of programming. Membership

can also be encouraged among IASC members with operations in country. Government representatives and domestic civil-society groups, such as national NGOs, can be encouraged to participate, depending on the agreed Terms of Reference. The IMWG supports the ICCG with guidance on all issues relating to IM, and the IMWG Chair is a member of the ICCG. The RC should ensure meaningful collaboration between the ICCG and IMWG, with clear guidance stipulating the need for IMWG representation in all ICCG forums.

## Resources

- [IASC Operational Guidance on responsibilities of cluster/sector leads and OCHA in Information Management \(2008\)](#)
- [Generic IMWG Terms of Reference](#)
- [OCHA IM Toolbox](#)

## Common Operational Data sets

CODs are used to support the work of humanitarian actors across multiple sectors. They are authoritative reference data sets used by all actors in a humanitarian response to ensure consistency and simplify the discovery and exchange of key data. Core CODs provide essential demographic and location data. They are critical for information and data products, as well as for effective coordination. They are the first data sets used when responding to a humanitarian situation. They form the basis of effective risk analysis, needs assessment, decision-making and reporting on all aspects of the response. Core CODs are required in all disaster-prone countries as a preparedness measure. The IMWG is responsible for working with relevant governmental entities to define, develop, maintain and endorse Core and other CODs. The RC should advocate with the Government in support of this work. The RC has overall responsibility for ensuring that CODs are maintained according to the COD guidance and technical support package (see resources below), including final endorsement of CODs. The HCT and ICCG ensure that member organizations provide the necessary resources and support for the management of CODs. Members should be made aware of the Core CODs and the list of other CODs that have been endorsed by the IMWG and RC. The ICCG should also be part of the endorsement process (or at least made aware of it).

## Data Responsibility

Data responsibility in humanitarian action is the safe, ethical and effective management of personal and non-personal data for operational response, in accordance with established frameworks for personal data protection. It is a critical issue for the humanitarian system to address, as the stakes are high. For this reason, data protection is of fundamental importance for humanitarian organizations and an essential consideration for HCTs.

Humanitarians must be careful when handling data to avoid placing already vulnerable individuals and communities at further risk. For example, disclosing the location or particular identity or affiliation of an individual or community could lead to targeted attacks, social exclusion and/or stigma, among other potential harms. In addition to avoiding harm, the safe, ethical and effective management of data has a number of benefits: it can lead to more informed and transparent decision-making, more efficient humanitarian response, and increased trust among humanitarian actors and with the people they seek to serve.

Data responsibility requires collective action that extends across all levels of the humanitarian system. This includes, for example, actions to ensure data protection and data security, as well as strategies to mitigate risks and ensure that agencies 'do no harm' in their use of data, while maximizing benefits in all steps of operational data management. ICRC's [Handbook on Data Protection in Humanitarian Action](#) outlines how humanitarian organizations should comply with personal data protection standards by raising awareness of and providing specific guidance on the interpretation of data protection principles in the context of humanitarian action, particularly when new technologies are employed.

### Resources

- [OCHA's online IM toolbox provides information on CODs](#)
- [OCHA's Centre for Humanitarian Data](#) offers guidance and support on data responsibility
- [COD technical support package](#)

## IM Platforms and Services

The RC is responsible for ensuring that IM platforms are established and used to support humanitarian coordination and the HPC. OCHA manages several web platforms for this purpose.

- [HumanitarianResponse.info](#) – a platform for sharing operational information including programme documents, contact lists, meeting schedules, maps and infographics, an assessment registry and cluster-specific pages.
- [ReliefWeb](#) – an information service for global humanitarian practitioners.
- [Virtual OSOCC](#) – a platform for information exchange and the coordination of international assistance in the early phase after major disasters (used by UNDAC teams).
- [INFORM](#) – a forum for developing shared, quantitative analysis relevant to humanitarian crises and disasters.
- [HDX - humanitarian data exchange](#) – an open platform for sharing data related to a humanitarian response.
- [CBPF Business intelligence portal](#) – OCHA's grant management system.
- [H.id - humanitarian ID](#) – a single sign-in for many humanitarian response-related platforms.
- [KoBo Toolbox](#) – a free open-source tool for mobile data collection.
- [HPC.tools](#) – information services provided by OCHA that enable the humanitarian community to manage information around the HPC. The following platforms are used for these purposes:
  - [Response Planning and Monitoring Module](#) (RPM) manages the framework for each tracked HRP. This is where humanitarian profile data is stored, at both national and cluster levels, as well as the objectives, indicators and targets that make up the results framework. The RPM includes a monitoring component, allowing the submission of data on people reached with aid and other progress against objective and activity indicators.
    - [HPC Projects Module](#) facilitates the appeal-costing process by allowing project owners to submit project proposals for vetting by clusters and inclusion in HRPs. Projects can be linked to the caseloads and results frameworks established in the RPM.



- [Financial Tracking Service](#) tracks, curates and publishes authoritative humanitarian financing data, with a focus on internationally coordinated appeals and response plans.
- [Humanitarian InSight](#) provides a publication layer and single point of entry for all programme cycle data managed using the HPC.tools suite. It enables country operations and clusters to curate interactive online presentations of their needs, planning and monitoring information, while simultaneously providing a reference for globally aggregated data used in corporate products, such as the Global Humanitarian Overview.

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### **CASE STUDY: UTILIZING INFORMATION MANAGEMENT TO DEVELOP A RESILIENCE FRAMEWORK FOR BURUNDI**

In 2018/19, the OCHA Information Management Unit (IMU) and the IMWG worked closely with the RC's Office (RCO) to develop a United Nations Resilience Framework for Burundi.

The aim was to develop a vulnerability mapping for use by humanitarian and development partners as well as donors. The mapping would be used to determine priority provinces for the implementation of humanitarian-development projects. A monitoring system for humanitarian and development funding was also part of the tools for the Resilience Framework.

The OCHA IMU/IMWG supported these efforts by:

- Advising on the most suitable methodology and indicators to elaborate severity mapping.
- Developing the Terms of Reference for two consultants who were hired to develop the projects.
- Helping to organize a workshop to kick-start the development of the vulnerability mapping.
- Organizing the collection and management of data for the mapping.

The main outcome of the collaboration was the Burundi subnational INFORM risk mapping. This is continuously being improved, and it demonstrates how regular and collegial interaction between the RC/HC/RCO and the OCHA IMU/IMWG can help address strategic and operational priorities.

## **MOBILIZING FINANCING AND PARTNERSHIPS**

The RC plays an important role in leading system-wide resource mobilization efforts for the humanitarian response. This entails building strong partnerships with donors, remaining abreast of humanitarian funding, and being familiar with the various funding mechanisms and resource mobilization efforts of humanitarian actors in country.

### **Key roles of the RC and HC**

#### **HRP Resource Mobilization and Advocacy**

- Keep an overview of funding requirements, unmet needs and the impact of insufficient funding.
- Collect intelligence, with support from the HCT and humanitarian partners, on donor priorities and funding mechanisms (to inform fundraising and advocacy efforts).
- Fundraise with donors, both locally and in capital cities, in close consultation with OCHA and the HCT.
- Based on needs identified in the HNO, trigger humanitarian funding mechanisms according to the scope and type of emergency.

#### **Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)**

- Lead a CERF application (carried out by the HCT and clusters) to be submitted to the ERC.
- In the event of a sudden-onset crisis or a significant deterioration in an existing emergency, request a CERF Rapid Response grant to provide seed money for life-saving humanitarian activities. If multiple emergencies occur in the same country during a short timespan, request multiple Rapid Response allocations.
- Provide a brief overview of how CERF and other resources will complement each other.
- Consult with OCHA and work with the UNCT/HCT for funding applications for a CERF Underfunded Emergencies grant.

### Country-Based Pooled Funds

- Lead processes at country level for establishing a CBPF; as custodian of the CBPF (on behalf of the ERC), decide the strategy for use of the Fund and ensure it delivers on its key objectives.
- Approve the CBPF Operational Manual, including accountability mechanisms and the risk management framework for the CBPF, and ensure these are properly implemented.
- Convene and chair in-country Advisory Board meetings (donors, UN agencies and NGOs).
- Ensure that the Advisory Board and strategic and technical review committee(s) function in accordance with the guidelines outlined in the Global Handbook for CBPFs.
- Make final decisions on projects recommended for funding, approve projects, sign agreements with implementing partners (UN agencies and NGOs) and initiate disbursements.
- Lead country-level resource mobilization for the Fund supported by the Advisory Board and OCHA country office, and in coordination with relevant OCHA entities at HQ.
- Ensure complementary use of CBPF funding with other funding sources, including CERF.

### Resource Mobilization and Advocacy

Funding for humanitarian aid has increased in recent years, but it has not kept up with the increase in requests. HRP are, on average, only 60 per cent funded each year. Advocacy and fundraising are therefore critical for an effective, fully resourced response.

Where an HRP or a Flash Appeal has been agreed, this and the HNO can serve as the basis for fundraising and advocacy. In some circumstances, the host country may prefer a Government appeal. If this is the case, it is important to ensure figures are coherent with those from the HCT.

### **Appeal mechanisms:**

- Flash Appeal: for acute needs for up to six months
- HRP: for protracted emergencies

### **Funding instruments:**

- CERF Rapid Response window: for immediate, life-saving assistance
- CERF Underfunded Emergencies window (if the country is selected by the ERC) for underfunded sectors
- CBPFs (if established)
- Emergency Cash Grants for immediate needs (usually do not exceed US\$100,000)
- CERF loan element: considered when a UN agency has received an official donor commitment but there is a delay in the transfer of funds

Resource mobilization strategies should be adapted for the different types of donors. Major donors are often keen on 'burden sharing' and broadening the donor base. Engaging with emerging donors and/or non-traditional donors requires a careful and sequenced approach – gaining their confidence and persuading them of the mutual benefits of contributing to humanitarian funding. RCs should be flexible and consider the different options, including non-financial partnerships or donor visibility opportunities. Where possible, the RC should aim for targeted and tailored resource mobilization, with a preference for unearmarked or softly earmarked funding. The RC should also carefully consider how to balance the financing requirements of the humanitarian response with funding that will continue to be required for longer-term development and peace interventions, which will ultimately facilitate the transition out of crises.

Key fundraising activities include visits to donor capitals, pledging conferences organized by OCHA headquarters (with carefully selected co-hosts), and briefings to donor groups in country. A number of pledging conferences are organized annually for specific crises or particular thematic areas.

## **Donor relations**

Strong donor relations are key to successful fundraising and advocacy. Relationships with donors should be established at national, regional and global (capital) levels, to provide a direct link between donors and in-country UN leadership. These relationships may take multiple forms, including bilateral engagements with local embassies, monthly or quarterly in-country donor meetings or briefings, and missions to regional donor hubs or global headquarters (New York and Geneva). RC missions can be organized jointly with a Government representative (such as a minister) – if applicable and in line with a ‘do no harm’ approach – or other members of the HCT. In addition, donors can undertake field missions either individually or as a group, such as with the OCHA Donor Support Group or as part of a group of donors representing a specific region or interest.

In some countries, donors may ask to join HCT meetings; in other cases, the RC may decide to set up a separate HCT forum to facilitate information sharing with donors. The RC office should maintain communication channels with the local embassies of donor countries as well as with OCHA headquarters, which supports system-wide resource mobilization, particularly through its Partnerships and Resource Mobilization Branch.

## **Donor stakeholder analysis and funding priorities**

It is important to have a solid understanding of individual donor priorities and funding or financing for the country/crisis in question. Analysis of donors can include information on funding trends, bilateral contributions, budgetary processes and limitations, and areas of donor interest or policy. Knowledge of donors’ positions on multi-year planning, humanitarian-development collaboration and sector priorities will enable more informed advocacy. An understanding of donor policies and priorities is key to soliciting humanitarian funding that is complementary to development aid.

An understanding of donor policies also contributes to effective resource mobilization. The RC should be familiar with the Grand Bargain commitments, discussions at the IASC and the discourse among the Good Humanitarian Donorship group. With recent efforts to improve anticipatory action, the RC can explore any antic-

ipatory financing that may be available nationally, regionally or globally. Sharing key updates with OCHA will enable system-wide resource mobilization by the ERC, the Deputy ERC and OCHA's leadership. The External Relations and Partnerships Section – part of OCHA's Partnerships and Resource Mobilization Branch – is particularly important in this regard.

### **Partnerships with the private sector**

The humanitarian community has formed many innovative partnerships with the private sector, leveraging its local and industry expertise to strengthen emergency preparedness and response. This has become more important as the number of people affected by humanitarian crises continues to increase. Partnerships with private sector organizations may be in the form of financial contributions or in-kind support, often linked to their presence in a given country. Support often increases after a sudden-onset emergency, particularly a natural disaster. Private sector engagement in humanitarian settings is often coordinated through structures such as the Connecting Business initiative (CBI), the UN Global Compact and, in some countries, private sector participation in the HCT or clusters. The RC should be familiar with UN guidelines on cooperation with the private sector and ensure due diligence is conducted before partnerships are agreed. UN agencies, NGOs and Governments generally have focal points for private sector partnerships and respective due diligence processes.

### **Pooled Funds Mechanisms**

The effective mobilization of funds for humanitarian response is an important component of the HPC. On the 'demand' side, HRPs serve to formulate specific proposals for funding and, as such, must accurately reflect the population's needs. Processes to access humanitarian financing mechanisms must therefore bring humanitarian actors together to ensure that the response is strategic, inclusive of relevant partners and targeted to meet the needs of all.

On the ‘supply’ side, financing tools such as CERF and the CBPFs<sup>63</sup> help bring funding to the emergency and disburse it in an effective, predictable and equitable manner. Since there is no single approach that fits the variety of emergency circumstances, the funds provide a diversity of ways in which funding can be accessed, enabling humanitarian actors to respond to a multitude of needs on the ground as they arise.

## OCHA Managed Instruments for Humanitarian Financing



### Portfolio of financing tools for different purposes

- ERC decision
- UN Agencies
- Global

\$1 Billion

Global

UN agencies (subgrant to NGOs)

Sudden emergencies, protracted crisis and loans

Prioritized humanitarian projects

HCT/Inter-cluster

Emergency Relief Coordinator (HQ)

Funding Target

Eligibility

Recipients

Allocations

Activities

Support to HCs

Approval

### Expertise and flexibility in different contexts

- HC decision
- UN Agencies and NGOs
- Country-level

15% of HRP funding

18 Countries

UN Agencies & NGOs

Sudden emergencies and protracted crisis

Highest-priority projects

Advisory Board

Humanitarian Coordinators (country level)

63 At the global level, the funding target for CBPFs has been defined as 15 per cent of the funding received for the HRP, using the previous year as the baseline value. This is aligned with the UN Secretary-General's Agenda for Humanity, which calls on donors to increase the portion of funding channelled through these CBPFs.

OCHA issues an Operational Handbook for CBPFs on behalf of the RC and endorsed by the Advisory Board to set the general direction and programmatic focus. It describes the scope, governance arrangements, objectives, allocation modalities and accountability mechanisms for each CBPF.

## **Reporting Financial Support and Pipelines**

In order to have an accurate picture of funding gaps – both in terms of amounts and sectoral deficiencies – donor intelligence on funding pipelines is critical. RCs should therefore encourage donors to report their financial support to the OCHA-managed Financial Tracking Service (FTS). This is important not only for informing requests for headquarters support for fundraising and advocacy, but also for improving transparency and accountability.

FTS is a centralized source of curated, continuously updated, downloadable data and information on humanitarian funding flows. Government donors, UN-administered funds, UN agencies, NGOs and other humanitarian actors and partners exchange data and information with FTS in order to provide visibility of their financial contributions to humanitarian activities; a timely and continuously updated picture of funding flows between donors (Government and private) and operational humanitarian actors (UN agencies, the Red Cross Movement, NGOs and CSOs); and timely monitoring of funding progress against HRP and appeal requirements. To ensure that UN agencies and NGOs are reliably reporting on their pipeline status, the RC can call on support from the FTS team in OCHA Geneva, OCHA country and regional offices, and the OCHA Donor Visibility Unit, based in New York.

## **Resources**

- [The CBPF Business Intelligence Portal](#) provides data on donor contributions and allocations
- [Policy Instruction on OCHA CBPFs](#)
- [Operational Handbook for CBPFs](#), October 2017
- [A Casement Lecture: Towards a Better System for Humanitarian Financing](#)
- [Overview of OCHA's humanitarian financing](#)
- [CERF website](#)



- [Financial Tracking Service \(FTS\)](#)
- [Global Humanitarian Overview Monthly Updates](#)

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## **CASE STUDY: COORDINATING FUNDING ALLOCATIONS FOR THE SYRIA CRISIS**

In February 2020, the CERF secretariat received two applications from Syria: a Rapid Response application to address conflict-related internal displacement in the north-west of the country, and an Underfunded Emergencies application to address the needs of other internally displaced populations, along with members of host and other affected communities.

Due to the highly complex operational environment in Syria, coordination is divided between Gaziantep, Turkey, for agencies conducting cross-border operations in the north-west region, and Damascus, for agencies responding to the situation in the rest of the country.

The HCs for both operations successfully coordinated their respective country-level CERF processes, while overseeing engagements between each HCT member agency, UN agencies implementing the allocations, and their respective partners. The two HCs achieved a high level of complementarity, not only between the two CERF allocations, but also with other humanitarian operations. The HCs also had to take into account the complex coordination overlay with the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan for the Syria crisis.

Critical success factors included a coherent strategic and operational vision and clear communication of priorities, grounded in close relationships with key operational partners, and an intimate and granular understanding of the situation on the ground.

## **COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY**

Effective communication and public information is an essential tool for advocacy and promoting collective action, especially in times of crisis. Public perception of the credibility of the humanitarian response is key to its level of success. As the chief spokesperson for the humanitarian response and a leading advocate for people in need, the RC is responsible for ensuring the development of a coherent and effective communications strategy.

## **Key roles of the RC and HC**

Act as chief humanitarian advocate and spokesperson for the emergency response:

- Identify and communicate with key media audiences in a tailored fashion.
- Brief national and international media regularly – both on and off record.
- Issue statements on key humanitarian issues such as protection and IHL.

Be a digital advocate for the humanitarian response:

- Engage in social media, in accordance with UN guidance.
- Share aid agencies' content to help reach broader audiences.
- Share quality content to build visibility.

Ensure effective inter-agency communication:

- Oversee coordinated inter-agency communication in support of clear HCT joint key messages.
- Ensure agencies have plans in place to communicate in crisis, including communications and advocacy strategies.

## **Developing an External Communications Strategy**

The RC is responsible for ensuring that priority issues and goals are clearly articulated and realistic. S/he should assume leadership and ownership of the messaging, act as the chief spokesperson for the humanitarian response and advocate on behalf of people in need, as appropriate. The RC is supported by a core public information team that is tasked with developing a crisis communications plan, including reputation management and agreed common messages.

In a sudden-onset emergency, a public information team should be established within 24 hours, in consultation with the HCT, and based on an existing contingency plan. The team is responsible for developing a succinct crisis communication plan covering the initial phase of the emergency and agreeing on who speaks to the media. If communication capacity is limited, the RC can request surge capacity from OCHA.

The RC works with the HCT, supported by the public information team, to develop key messages and Q&As on the crisis. Typically, OCHA will facilitate the process, either through the country/regional office or the Public Information Officer (PIO). The RC plays a key role in helping to expedite the process.

In consultation with the HCT, the RC needs to regularly assess the HCT's policies and posture in light of the changing situation. Key advocacy messages need to be revised accordingly and targeted to different constituencies (e.g. the local population, international media, donors). The public information team should have direct and regular access to the RC for necessary sign-offs.

It is important to ensure that adequate information on the status of the response reaches affected populations. This helps them to increase their understanding of relief efforts and allows them to inform the response, anticipate events and manage anxiety and expectations.

### **Developing key messages**

The purpose of key messages is to shape communications so that the HCT speaks with a unified voice in highlighting urgent needs and creating situational awareness. They also help to articulate how humanitarian partners can assist and acknowledge local capacities; advocate for further resources to respond; reiterate humanitarian principles; and defuse controversial issues. Messaging should not be the sum of all the mandates of HCT members, but rather strategic and prioritized in accordance with humanitarian needs and the proposed response. Key messages articulate the official position of the RC and the HCT. They are a valuable advocacy tool when communicating with external partners, such as the media, donors, regional entities, CSOs and the host Government. Key messages typically include Q&As and 'if-asked' guidance (not to be shared outside the UN) on difficult or controversial issues, including reputational challenges. Messages must be written in plain, everyday language without any jargon, abbreviations or acronyms, and kept short.

Key messages should be developed for new emergencies, major changes in existing emergencies or when strategic communication is necessary. The RC decides whether the situation merits key messages and signs off on them. These

can be developed by a public information team/PIO in consultation with the HCT and should be endorsed by the other heads of agencies in country. The RC can include OCHA and other agency headquarters in these consultations, if warranted.

### **UN Communications Group (UNCG)**

The UNCG is a common communications platform for the UN system. It aims to strengthen inter-agency cooperation on public information and communication, and to increase the media profile of UN activities at the national level. In an emergency, the group follows the 'Standard Operating Procedures for the UN system – communicating together in times of crisis'.

A UNCG is established in most countries where there is a UNCT. The United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) plays a supporting role as the UNCG secretariat. With its knowledge of the local media and other key constituencies, and its ability to address partners in their own language, the UNIC helps to enhance the work of the UNCG. If a UNCG has already been established in country, it will develop and implement a crisis communications strategy for the UN. In a disaster, OCHA works with the UNCG/UNIC to ensure the RC has a voice, and that humanitarian actors are represented.

It is important to remember that the HC represents the humanitarian community at large. NGOs and the Red Cross Movement are not represented in the UNCG; if RCs rely on the UNCG for communication support, they should ensure that links are established with non-UN humanitarian entities.

### **HCT Communication Working Group**

In a humanitarian crisis context, NGOs and the Red Cross Movement are an integral and essential element of the response and a key constituency of the HCT. OCHA includes these organizations in all coordination forums, including for communication and public advocacy. This is typically done through a Communication Working Group that reports to the HCT. The group's aim is to support awareness-raising on the humanitarian situation and needs, as well as support the mobilization of resources to respond. OCHA usually chairs the working group, respecting the

mandates of individual organizations. Some of the expected outputs include joint key messages, press conferences and media visits to affected areas.

### **Working with the Media**

The RC should engage regularly with the national and international media – both on and off record – to give interviews and hold press conferences following a significant newsworthy event (positive or negative), or to announce new initiatives or changes in the response posture. Inviting the media to accompany field missions is an effective way of highlighting the work of humanitarian organizations on the ground.

Whenever possible, the RC should strive to hold press conferences and briefings together with national authorities, and give select high-level interviews to clarify, inform and promote the actions of the HCT and advocate for people in need. If the RC cannot attend, he/she should designate a spokesperson: either a PIO or a member of the HCT and/or staff with local-language skills and communication experience. Spokespersons from the INGO and NGO humanitarian community and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, as well as civil-military coordination officers and other specialized staff, should be included where appropriate.

In sudden-onset emergencies, initial public lines should be available within a few hours. These can be very short if needed – simply to acknowledge that the UN system is actively monitoring developments and stands ready to support as required. It is important not to allow an information vacuum to be filled with misinformation.

The RC is also responsible for issuing regular press releases and/or official statements. In consultation with the HCT, he/she should agree on the HCT's position, key advocacy messages, basic reference data/figures and sources.

## **Developing a relationship with the media**

- A press release is useful for putting information on record. In a fast-moving situation, such as an emergency where many reporters are on site seeking information, a press conference may be more appropriate.
- In an evolving emergency, daily press conferences or briefings will help limit the number of requests for separate interviews.
- In addition to formal interviews and press conferences, consider off-record press briefings to provide background information.
- Always be prepared with the latest information, data and maps in case the media requests such information.
- Be prepared for constant scrutiny of every action you take and ensure the public information team monitors local and national media closely.
- Include senior public information officers in discussions and decision-making on the humanitarian response, especially regarding media and communication issues. Do not allow communication to become an afterthought.
- Using field staff, especially national staff, is often the best way of reaching out to the public. Ensure they are kept fully informed on evolving messaging and actively seek their advice on local perceptions of the messaging.
- Identify two spokespersons for immediate response, preferably one English/French speaker and one local-language speaker.
- National and local media, especially radio and social media, are important for conveying messages directly to the population and should not be overlooked.

## **Do's and don'ts when talking to the media**

- Agree in advance what the ground rules are: on or off record; topics; and how they will be used.
- Stick to the facts, do not speculate and do not allow yourself to be led.
- Avoid UN jargon.
- If you cannot answer a question, explain why, e.g. it is outside of your mandate. If you do not have the facts, offer to revert later with the information.
- Reiterate that all actions are geared towards assisting affected populations.
- Do not leave an information vacuum.

## UN media platforms

RCs can also use a variety of UN media platforms to communicate information:

- Noon briefings of the Office of the Spokesperson of the Secretary-General. This gives high profile to a crisis. It requires inputs from the field by 11.00 a.m. New York time.
- Media briefings Tuesday and Friday mornings in Geneva. RCs and HCT members regularly brief the UN-accredited international press corps directly through video link or phone. Briefings are made available as audio files and TV packages to broadcasters worldwide.
- UN News Centre ([www.un.org/News](http://www.un.org/News)). This provides news coverage of UN developments. It is updated throughout the day and synthesized into a daily print product called UN Daily News.

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### CASE STUDY: USING THE MEDIA TO BRING ATTENTION TO THE SYRIA CRISIS

In January 2020, at a time when north-west Syria had largely dropped off the radar of international media outlets, the Deputy Regional Humanitarian Coordinator (DRHC) for the Syria crisis, in close collaboration with OCHA, successfully brought the conflict back to the world's attention through a three-week, proactive media-engagement campaign.

Speaking on behalf of the broader humanitarian community, the DRHC provided regular updates to media outlets on the crisis, utilizing OCHA information products that were actively distributed and shared with journalists on his behalf. Working in close cooperation with the OCHA Regional PIO deployed on surge, the DRHC made himself available around the clock for a host of media opportunities, with OCHA proactively offering him up for exclusive interviews with high-profile media outlets including CNN, Al Jazeera, BBC, Sky News, Channel 4 News, the New York Times, Al Arabiya and the Washington Post. He worked closely with OCHA to make sure messaging was kept relevant and up to date to ensure continued interest from journalists. Key to the communication drive was the DRHC's consistent repetition of the same messages. His regular media engagements and updates gave the broader humanitarian community a much-needed voice, helping to raise millions of dollars in life-saving assistance.

## Social Media Advocacy

As a senior in-country representative of the UN, the RC has an important role in building the UN's reputation as a highly trusted source of humanitarian news and information, including on key advocacy areas. Using social media is an effective means of demonstrating that the UN is an open, responsive and accountable organization. The interactive nature of social media is also important for operational response, helping to inform better decisions and communicate with crisis-affected communities. As well as highlighting the UN's day-to-day work, social media platforms can be used to showcase the humanitarian community's achievements and help tell the story of people affected by crises.

The RC's office can use a wide range of social media platforms to promote its message. It is important to follow the UN social media guidelines and to consult with the HCT – to avoid any unwanted consequences for operations or relations with the Government and key partners.

### Being a Digital Advocate on Humanitarian Issues

Studies show that people are more likely to engage with content and messages when they come from someone they know, rather than from a company or an organization. When staff share content, click-through rates are twice as high compared to when their organization shares the same content. Individuals can bring a unique, personal view to humanitarian issues that corporate channels cannot. Staff who regularly share quality content can build visibility and position themselves as thought leaders in their industry. By sharing humanitarian messages, you can help raise awareness about the humanitarian issues in the country you work in. It also provides a valuable opportunity to engage with people in the country in which you serve.

### Resources

- [Standard Operating Procedures for the UN system](#) – communicating together in times of crisis
- [Step-by-step guidance on how to be a Digital Advocate](#)



- [United Nations Secretariat guidelines for the personal use of social media](#) (2019)
- The essential guidebook for senior leaders of the UN Secretariat contains [useful guidance on leveraging social media](#) (p. 154)

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### **CASE STUDY: ‘LIFE WITH DIGNITY’ – DEVELOPING A COMPELLING NARRATIVE FOR AN OPT ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN**

The situation in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) is one of a protracted protection crisis marked by widespread violations of IHRL and IHL. However, Palestinians living in oPt have not gained the attention they deserve.

Humanitarian advocates often either overwhelm their targets with too many disparate messages and demands, or they present an overly pessimistic picture. Dominant narratives are negative, associated with images of terrorism and violence, and tend to discourage engagement and action. It is important, therefore, to ‘flip’ the narrative and focus on the tangible impact on people’s lives. ‘Life with Dignity’ is a cross-sectoral UN and NGO communications campaign. Through solution-focused communications and coordinated international advocacy centred around relatable, compelling individual stories, UN and NGO partners aim to generate empathy for the lives of ordinary Palestinian women, men and children, and mobilize action to change policies and practices. Rather than agencies leading their own individual campaigns, the strategy envisages a coherent, cross-sectoral, coordinated approach. This entails multiple UN entities and NGOs pushing the same messages at the same time to the same audiences. The aim is to change the way in which agencies communicate, with a greater emphasis on highlighting shared values and experiences; amplifying Palestinian voices; presenting compelling, relatable individual stories that illustrate the practical impact of rights violations and lack of protection; addressing misconceptions; and highlighting the successes of humanitarian and protection partners. The campaign aims to be purposeful – clearly articulating the need for change, and signposting specific actions that can be taken by individuals, organizations and Governments.

## WORKING TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

While the immediate priority in any emergency is to address urgent humanitarian concerns, the coordination of the international response should, where possible, build on and complement existing national and local capacities, as well as wider development and peacebuilding efforts. This allows for more collaborative approaches to reducing needs, risks and vulnerability, responding to protracted crises, and managing transition processes with national authorities and development partners. In practice, this means working in collaboration with development and peace actors, promoting a more localized response, and striving for durable solutions for refugees and IDPs.

### Key roles of the RC and HC

#### Humanitarian-Development-Peace Collaboration

- Determine, in consultation with the Government and key stakeholders from all three pillars, whether there is an interest in working collaboratively to address the underlying drivers of risk and need, and, if so, whether it is an opportune time to do so.
- Ensure decisive leadership and strong capacity to support a collective outcomes process.
- Support and advocate for shared analysis among humanitarian, development and, where relevant, peace actors to create a shared understanding of priority needs, risks and vulnerabilities (for instance, through the HNO/CCA) to define priority areas.
- Ensure that collective outcomes are unpacked and translated into planning and programming to achieve these outcomes over a three- to five-year period.
- In consultation with the Government, key implementing agencies/organizations and bilateral donors, lead the development of a financing overview to outline the most appropriate funding for programmes and activities for specific collective outcomes.

- Lead on the development of a collective monitoring and evaluation process that, as far as possible, builds on existing arrangements.

### **Localizing the response**

- Ensure representation of national NGOs, particularly women's groups, in the HCT, based on a transparent and inclusive selection process led by the national NGO constituency.
- Encourage national NGOs, particularly women's groups, to participate in cluster meetings, and ensure cluster leads take responsibility for including NGO perspectives in cluster meetings and processes.
- Advocate for support from donors and partners to develop programmes to strengthen the institutional and operational capacities of local and national NGOs, based on needs determined by NGOs themselves.
- Promote regular discussion of humanitarian principles and standards between national and international actors to help create shared understanding.
- Encourage UN agencies and international NGOs to engage in partnership with local and national NGOs based on mutual respect and the Principles of Partnership, not simply as implementing partners.
- Support the important coordination and advocacy work of national NGO networks, and advocate donors for resources to support these networks.
- Use CBPFs as an important source of direct, flexible funding for local and national NGOs, and implement support processes to ensure more local and national NGOs are eligible to access pooled funds.

### **Durable solutions for IDPs**

- Lead the development of strategies for durable solutions in consultation with national authorities.
- Foster humanitarian-development-peace collaboration to implement durable solutions strategies.
- Work with the HCT, ICCG and clusters (including the protection, shelter and camp management clusters) to ensure that IDP concerns are adequately reflected and addressed in cross-cluster coordination.

## **Advancing Humanitarian, Development and Peace Collaboration**

In line with the 2030 Agenda, leaving no one behind and ending needs by reducing risks, vulnerabilities and drivers of conflict is a shared commitment of the UN and the IASC. Reducing the impact of protracted crises requires meeting immediate needs and investing in the medium to long term to reduce the vulnerabilities and risks affecting communities and wider economic and governance systems – contributing to sustainable development and sustained peace.

Important progress has been made in operationalizing closer humanitarian, development and, where relevant, peace collaboration in the field. Best practices have shown that RC leadership is key to bringing partners around a joint vision for collaboration, and for initiating the process of articulating collective outcomes across the various planning frameworks and overseeing their operationalization, including their implementation and financial resourcing. The RC, in close collaboration with the Government, needs to act as the main driver in leading and building consensus, and creating buy-in with the main stakeholders around collective outcomes. This can be achieved through convening and facilitating early inclusive consultations and by providing a clear time frame for this process. For additional information, please refer to the OCHA draft document, *Operationalizing Collective Outcomes: Lessons learned and best practices from and for Country Implementation* (see resources below).

As part of global efforts to connect key humanitarian, development and peace actors, the UN established the Joint Steering Committee to Advance Humanitarian and Development Collaboration (JSC). The JSC, which is a UN internal mechanism, serves as a platform for addressing bottlenecks and providing operational and policy support to UN country leadership in crisis settings, including through targeted missions to countries and remote support. The JSC is co-chaired by the ERC (as Head of the IASC) and the UNDP Administrator (as Vice-Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group).

Working closely with RCs and UNCTs, the JSC has supported HDPC discussions in eight priority countries: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Ethiopia, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia and Sudan. The JSC supported RCs and country teams in carrying out

joint analysis, leading to the identification of priority areas and the articulation of and programming towards collective outcomes in a number of these countries.<sup>64</sup>

In June 2020, the IASC Principals endorsed the UN-IASC Light Guidance on Collective Outcomes, with a focus on situation analysis, funding and financial strategies, and effective coordination initiatives. It highlights seven key steps and questions that can help guide the creation and delivery of country-level collective outcomes.

It is important to keep in mind that this approach should be encouraged in practically all contexts where there are annual HRPs. Collaboration needs to be enabled and encouraged while ensuring the preservation of humanitarian space and respect for humanitarian principles. In some situations of acute armed conflict, where ensuring development gains is simply not possible, HDPC may indeed be deprioritized. Caution must be maintained where the national development priorities set by the Government are at odds with the humanitarian imperative of providing assistance and protection on the basis of need, independent of ethnicity, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinion. In these instances, the RC needs to adequately leverage the development planning tools and peacebuilding programming to redress this gap.

## Resources

- [IASC Results Group 4 on Humanitarian-Development Collaboration](#) provides normative support to country operations
- [Operationalizing Collective Outcomes: Lessons learned and best practices from and for Country Implementation](#)
- [UN-IASC Light Guidance on Collective Outcomes](#)
- Website of the [Joint Steering Committee to Advance Humanitarian and Development Collaboration](#), including country examples of collective outcomes processes
- IASC-endorsed paper on [Exploring Peace within the HDPN](#)

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64 Other key multi-stakeholder forums include the IASC Results Group on Humanitarian-Development Collaboration and the OECD International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF).

## **CASE STUDY: IMPLEMENTING HDPC IN CHAD**

In 2017, the Government, in collaboration with humanitarian and development actors and donors, defined six collective outcomes to be achieved by 2019, captured in a three-year strategic framework and plan (2017-2019). The collective outcomes link the HRP with the UN Development Assistance Framework, the World Bank Country Partnership Framework, the National Development Plan and the Government's Vision 2030 – the first step towards operationalizing the New Way of Working in Chad. The collective outcomes cover food security, nutrition, health and basic social services.

Following the finalization of the 2017-2019 Strategic Plan, the UNCT drew lessons learned to inform the development of a road map for addressing persisting challenges – notably, limited Government leadership and ownership. The road map further strengthens joint analysis and complementary planning for the upcoming reviews and new iterations of the HRP, UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and National Development Plan, in line with the revised collective outcomes. The Common Country Assessment will help to align the forthcoming UN Cooperation Framework with collective priorities across humanitarian, development and peace programming in Chad. There is growing agreement that these agreed collective priorities have helped to align programming and integrate peacebuilding efforts in development and humanitarian interventions. This, in turn, has improved impact and programme delivery on the ground – something that the new RC has prioritized in three regions (Lake, South and East). The food security sector, for example, has been extremely effective in incorporating resilience-building in its interventions – thanks also to World Bank and EU funding.

Chad has expanded its peacebuilding efforts with eight ongoing projects funded by the Peacebuilding Fund (US\$18 million), helping to strengthen the contribution of UN programmes to peace and conflict prevention (e.g. community engagement in natural resource management, youth participation in community-based conflict-management mechanisms, and support for pastoralist communities along border areas).

Despite the innovative approaches to collaboration, financing remains a challenge. Chad still suffers from a persistent lack of humanitarian and development funding, despite expressed buy-in from major donors. Government leadership

and capacity, particularly at local level, require strengthening to enhance the impact of collaboration and the provision of basic services.

## **Localizing the Response**

Localization is a process of accountability, planning, resourcing and partnership strengthening that aims to ensure humanitarian action is led and implemented as locally as possible, and only supported by complementary international actors where necessary. The focus of the RC and other humanitarian stakeholders should primarily be on supporting national systems to ensure assistance reaches those populations most in need, working wherever possible with local partners including communities themselves, civil society, NGOs, Red Cross/Red Crescent National Societies and other domestic organizations. In countries that have an effective disaster management authority and established preparedness and response systems, this support function may be limited to specific technical or sectoral engagement.

However, humanitarian operations often take place in contexts of instability and insecurity, or where national or local authorities may be a party to conflict, have implemented policies that restrict needs and rights-based approaches, or do not have effective mechanisms in place. Supporting localization can be more difficult in these settings, where humanitarian actors need to demonstrate their independence, impartiality and neutrality to retain their credibility, maintain access and deliver assistance. This calls for a more contextual and balanced approach.

In contexts where the Government is a party to conflict, the international humanitarian system is often mandated to operate. However, in all cases, local and national actors still play an important role. The RC will need to carefully consider the relationship of this system with the Government, de facto authorities, non-State groups and other local actors. Situations of conflict, intercommunal violence, displacement and fragility require conflict-sensitive analysis of the roles of various local, national and international actors. It is both possible and necessary for international and national actors to collaborate in these contexts. For all actors, an approach based on recognition of and adherence to humanitarian principles is fundamental to enabling the humanitarian system to function effectively in meeting priority needs.

The humanitarian community often views localization in terms of how the international humanitarian response can capitalize on the added value national and local organizations can bring in increasing the reach and effectiveness of humanitarian action. This includes support in establishing access and presence in insecure environments; providing contextual awareness and analysis of complex situations; and understanding the needs of affected people and how best to meet them.

In recent years, since the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit and the Grand Bargain, there has been a strong focus on the localization of funding, particularly commitments by donors, including UN agencies and INGOs, to channel funding as directly as possible to local and national actors, both governmental and non-governmental. Challenges around upholding these commitments and ensuring more direct funding flows to national and local actors continue to be discussed at global and national levels.

Localization should also be about strengthening international investment in local organizations and establishing more equal, principled partnerships<sup>65</sup> between international and local actors based on mutual respect. Continued advocacy and support for localization from the RC is important for ensuring progress on localization and maintaining strong relationships with and between national and international humanitarian stakeholders.

RCs are encouraged to genuinely include national and local NGOs and Red Cross/Red Crescent National Societies in key coordination mechanisms, including the HCT. Engaging a diverse range of NGOs in strategic discussions can help ensure that the subtleties of the context and national considerations are taken into account by the leadership of humanitarian operations. This approach to localization is embedded in the IASC HCT Terms of Reference. National membership of the HCT should be complementary to international membership, with transparent criteria based on operational relevance and demonstrated evidence of delivering principled humanitarian assistance in operational contexts. Representation should be selected by local and national NGOs themselves through existing networks or collective processes, with support from OCHA or the RC office if required.

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<sup>65</sup> See p. 50 for details on the Principles of Partnership.



The RC and HCT are also expected to encourage national NGOs to actively participate in the cluster system, as well as ensure cluster coordinators meaningfully include national NGOs in cluster meetings, planning sessions and humanitarian operations. Similarly, cluster lead agencies should be encouraged to support and mentor national NGO actors to take on co-coordinator roles alongside international cluster coordinators.

Ensuring local representation at the operational level (clusters) and strategic level (HCT) is a minimum requirement for localizing humanitarian operations. Active participation and deeper engagement can be encouraged by holding HCT and cluster meetings in the local language (or using interpretation services) and translating all key documents.

### Resources:

- IASC Guidance on Local and National Actor Participation in HCTs (forthcoming 2021)
- [Grand Bargain Guidance Notes on Localization](#)
- [Technical Guidance: Gender and the Localization Agenda](#)

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## CASE STUDY: SUPPORTING PRINCIPLED LOCAL ACTION IN THE SYRIA CROSS-BORDER RESPONSE

Since the Syria conflict began in 2011, cross-border operations have been used to deliver assistance to parts of the country that cannot be reached from Damascus. National and local NGOs as well as de facto authorities have been at the forefront of these operations.

The Deputy Regional Humanitarian Coordinator (DHRC) has dedicated seats to Syrian NGOs in the HCT, ensuring their representation is based on a transparent and inclusive election process led by the national/local NGO constituency. The participation of national NGOs in clusters was encouraged and incentivized through the appointment of national NGO co-coordinators in a number of clusters, the establishment of dedicated observer seats for Syrian NGOs in the ICCG and the provision of simultaneous translation technology. The majority of funding provided by the CBPF (the Syrian Cross-Border Humanitarian Fund)

has been directly channelled through local NGOs to support the front-line delivery of assistance.

The leadership of the Turkey cross-border operation has taken steps to build the institutional and operational capacities of national and local NGOs (including staffing) to help them navigate the intricacies of the international humanitarian system and manage projects. An inter-agency Partnership Working Group was established to promote the implementation of Partnership Principles and coordinate training between organizations and clusters through a common platform. Contextualized training modules in Arabic on Sphere Standards and Quality and Accountability were designed through an inter-agency approach, and pools of Syrian trainers were established to deliver the training inside Syria.

Under the DRHC's leadership, the HCT designed and endorsed contextualized guidelines to steer engagement with non-humanitarian local actors and supported the roll-out of related training. The HCT also established joint operating procedures to ensure that humanitarian organizations deliver assistance in a principled manner while engaging with parties to the conflict.

In 2017, the HCT endorsed the 'Principles of engagement of humanitarian organizations with Civilian Administration Entities', which outlines a clear operational approach to principled humanitarian engagement in conflict settings (where links to de facto local authorities often blur the lines regarding humanitarian principles).

- [Peer 2 Peer Localization Support Note](#)

## **Developing Durable Solutions for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons**

### **Durable solutions for refugees**

Once refugee status has been determined and immediate protection needs are addressed, refugees may need support to find a long-term, durable solution. UNHCR, the lead agency for refugee response and coordination, promotes three durable solutions for refugees as part of its core mandate: voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement.

There is no hierarchy of durable solutions. Rather, an integrated approach that combines all three solutions, and is implemented in close cooperation with countries

of origin, host States, humanitarian and development actors, as well as the refugees themselves, usually offers the best chances for success. Enabling refugees to become self-reliant pending the realization of an appropriate long-term solution is an important first step towards achieving any of the three durable solutions. Working towards solutions can also reduce the need for irregular onward movements.

In light of the increasing volume of global forced displacement, there is a need to think beyond traditionally available solutions, as stipulated by the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). In addition to the 1,400 pledges made by States and stakeholders, the Global Refugee Forum saw the launch of several initiatives envisioned by the GCR. Designed to build the capacity of States, foster collaboration with a diverse range of stakeholders and include refugees as agents of change, each initiative focuses on a specific area where greater burden and responsibility sharing is needed to develop better solutions for refugees. They include:

- [Asylum Capacity Support Group \(ACSG\)](#)
- [Three-Year Strategy on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways](#)
- [Global Academic Interdisciplinary Network \(GAIN\)](#)

### **Complementary pathways**

Complementary pathways are safe and regulated avenues that complement refugee resettlement, and by which refugees may be admitted into a country and have their international protection needs met while they are able to support themselves to potentially reach a sustainable and lasting solution. The pathways not only offer refugees alternatives to resorting to irregular means and dangerous onward movement, but they can also facilitate the acquisition and retention of skills that can help refugees attain a sustainable solution in the future.

Complementary pathways are not meant to substitute the protection afforded to refugees under the international protection regime, including through resettlement, but rather complement it and serve as an important expression of global solidarity and international cooperation and a contribution to more equitable responsibility sharing.

Complementary pathways for admission may include one or a combination of the following:

- Humanitarian admission programmes, which provide people who need international protection with effective protection in a third country.
- Community sponsorship of refugees, which allows individuals, groups of individuals, or organizations to directly engage in refugee admission efforts by providing financial, emotional, social and/or settlement support to help newly arrived refugees integrate in a third country.
- Humanitarian visas, which are often used to admit people who need international protection into a third country, where they are given the opportunity to formally apply for asylum.
- Family reunification for family members, including those for extended family members.
- Labour mobility schemes, by which a person may enter or stay in another country through safe and regulated avenues for purposes of employment, with the right to either permanent or temporary residence.
- Education programmes, including private and community- or institution-based scholarships, traineeships and apprenticeship programmes.
- Other safe and regulated avenues distinct from those mentioned above may be used to admit refugees into third countries.

A particular feature of complementary pathways is that refugees can access them directly, making use of publicly available information and existing administrative mechanisms, thus securing their own solutions. This is already happening without the help of humanitarian actors. Each year, refugees and people eligible for international protection use existing avenues that are not designed with refugees in mind to move across borders. However, others who could be eligible to do the same are sometimes prevented by legal, administrative and practical barriers.

Complementary pathways should be part of a progressive approach to solutions, with ongoing protection and continuous advancement towards greater enjoyment of legal, civil, political, economic, cultural and social rights for refugees benefiting from possible opportunities in third countries.

**Resources:**

- [New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants of 19 September 2016 and its annexed Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework \(CRRF\)](#)
- [Global Compact on Refugees](#)
- [UNHCR, Complementary Pathways](#)
- [UNHCR, Complementary Pathways for Admission to Third Countries – Key Considerations, April 2019](#)

**Durable solutions for IDPs**

The USG/ERC has the mandate to coordinate the assistance to and protection of affected populations, including IDPs, in line with UN General Assembly resolution 72/182. The ERC's central role on IDPs was highlighted by the UN Secretary-General in his 1997 UN Reform, and it has since been reiterated by numerous UNGA resolutions on IDPs. To exercise this mandate, RCs have the responsibility and accountability for IDPs at country level. This entails working closely with the HCT, clusters (including the protection, shelter and camp management clusters) and partner agencies to address issues around internal displacement. Since the roll out of the UN Reform, RC leadership and commitment has to be delivered (operationalized) through other entities.

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### **Definition of Internally Displaced Persons as per the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement:**

“Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.”

More specifically, UN Secretary-General Policy Committee Decision No. 2011/20 establishes priorities and responsibilities to enable conditions for durable solutions for IDPs and for refugees returning to their country of origin. This Decision designates the RC to lead the development of strategies for durable solutions in

consultation with national authorities. The Decision also designates a coordinating role to country-level clusters for early recovery and protection, where activated, and a technical role to UNDP and UNHCR. As a complement to the Decision, UNDP and UNHCR, together with the Global Protection Cluster, developed preliminary guidance for RCs on the preparation of durable solutions strategies, which was complemented by the Durable Solutions in Practice Guide (2017).

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### **Definition of Durable Solutions to internal displacement (IASC Framework on durable solutions for IDPs):**

“A durable solution is achieved when IDPs no longer have any specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination on account of their displacement; it can be achieved through: return, local integration, settlement elsewhere in the country.”

Further guidance is provided by the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. These are a set of 30 principles reflecting IHL, IHRL and refugee law. They are an important tool for ensuring IDPs’ needs are taken into account in the response by humanitarian and development actors, and they offer a checklist of the rights that are generally violated in the context of internal displacement. In line with the 2030 Agenda and the principle of ‘leaving no one behind’, RCs and HCs are expected to encourage programmes and activities that contribute to the conditions conducive for safe, dignified and comprehensive solutions for IDPs, including (where relevant) for refugees returning from countries of asylum, and to advocate for IDPs’ access to civil documentation and their housing, land and property rights as well as their inclusion in national services, such as education, health, livelihoods, and social and economic services.

#### Resources

- [IASC Framework for Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons](#)
- [Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons](#)
- [Durable Solutions – Preliminary Operational Guide](#)
- [Durable Solutions in Practice](#)

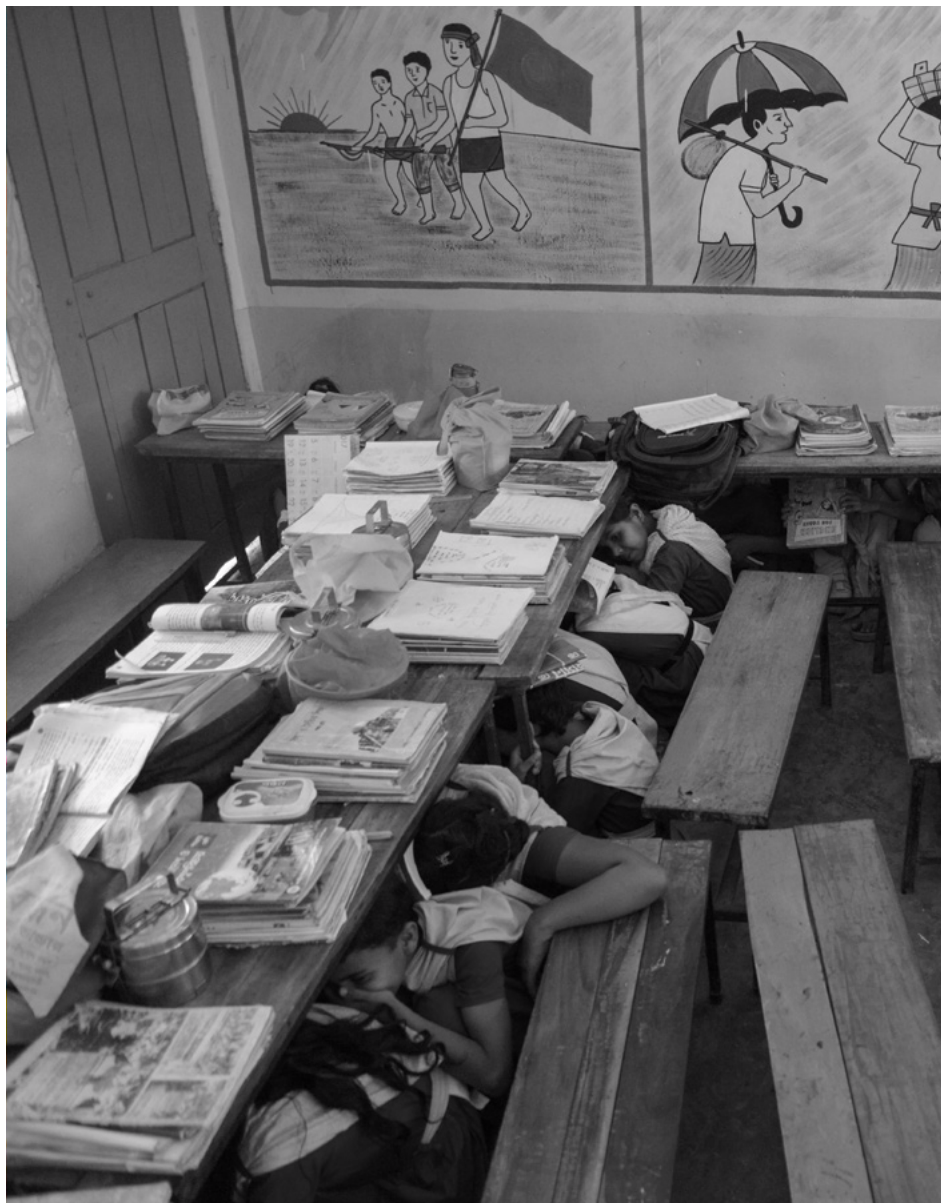
- [UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement](#)
- [Policy Committee Decision 2011/20 on Durable Solutions](#)
- [Guidance on achieving collective outcomes for internal displacement](#)
- Joint OCHA-UNHCR [Note on coordination in mixed situations: Coordination in Practice](#) (2014) provides guidance for coordination in situations where an HC has been appointed and a UNHCR-led refugee operation is also under way
- OCHA-UNHCR [Summary Conclusions on Protection and Internal Displacement](#) (2014) detail the HC's responsibilities on IDPs as well as OCHA's role in supporting the HC
- Policy on [UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement](#) (2019)
- The [Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs](#) can provide advice to Governments and HCTs/UNCTs on country and thematic issues related to internal displacement
- [ProCap](#) can support the definition of strategies on internal displacement, including for developing durable solutions

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### **CASE STUDY: WORKING TOWARDS DURABLE SOLUTIONS FOR IDPS IN SOMALIA**

The [Somalia Durable Solutions Initiative](#), launched by the UN in 2016 and led by the Federal Government of Somalia, is a collective framework aligned to the National Development Plan that aims to support the capacity of Government at federal, State and local levels to provide durable solutions for IDPs, returning refugees and their host communities.

Despite important progress in planning, programming and coordination, there has been limited impact on the lives of the huge number of IDPs. Given the rapid rate of urbanization, proposed solutions include urban interventions that provide IDPs and returnees with safety, adequate housing (with security of tenure) and access to basic services – and that are linked to labour markets and other livelihood opportunities.



Education in emergency programme supported by UNICEF at Jamalpur. Students performing an earthquake-safety drill during the class. 2020, Jamalpur, Bangladesh. Photo: UNICEF/Parvez Ahmad



**CHAPTER C:****COORDINATING PREPAREDNESS AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION****ENHANCING EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

Being prepared to respond quickly, appropriately and effectively to an emergency is a core responsibility of humanitarian leadership. The UN Resident Coordinator (RC) plays a key role in coordinating inter-agency readiness to respond to potential crises in support of national preparedness efforts. The aim, ultimately, is to anticipate – not wait for – humanitarian crises.

**Key roles of the RC and HC**

- Provide strategic leadership on emergency preparedness across all relevant agencies.
- Ensure agency heads are committed to providing staff and resources to support the processes for preparedness and anticipatory humanitarian action.
- Ensure the Emergency Response Preparedness (ERP) approach is participatory from the outset, and that its application is practical, flexible and adapted to the context and available capacities.
- Lead country teams (UNCT/HCT) in identifying gaps in preparedness.
- For country teams with limited capacity, prioritize which actions they will implement with their existing resources, and communicate gaps to regional and global levels for additional follow-up and support.
- Ensure risk analysis and monitoring are key to dynamic and responsive preparedness and anticipatory approaches.

**Emergency Response Preparedness (ERP) Approach**

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) adopted the ERP approach in 2015 as the agreed method to ensure readiness to respond to potential crises that require coordinated action from the humanitarian community in support of national

response. The aim is to increase the speed, volume, predictability and effectiveness of aid delivered after the onset of a crisis.

The ERP provides an internationally agreed framework that allows country teams to analyse and monitor risks, take actions to enhance preparedness, and flag gaps in capacity to the regional and global levels so that the right support can be mobilized. Heightened readiness will increase the volume and speed of aid in the crucial first weeks of an emergency. It can also increase the value for money of humanitarian action by ensuring that scarce resources are directed towards the most urgent needs and reach people in time.

At the global level, IASC members have endorsed the ERP and are committed to being adequately prepared to respond to emergencies. This accountability covers their specific agency roles and their cluster lead roles, where these exist.

In countries where IASC humanitarian coordination structures are in place, the RC, working with the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and country-level clusters/sectors, should lead the ERP process. S/he is also responsible for ensuring that the response readiness efforts of relevant organizations are inclusive and coordinated.

In countries where IASC humanitarian coordination structures are not in place, the RC should work with the UN country team and national authorities to implement the ERP. The RC should encourage the input and participation of IFRC and NGOs, including women's and youth-led organizations active in country, to ensure that their humanitarian capacities and expertise are recognized and that they can contribute fully. In-country coordination mechanisms may need to be expanded for this purpose.

In refugee situations, UNHCR, in accordance with its responsibilities, will lead the refugee preparedness and response in close coordination with WHO, the RC/HCT, Governments and other actors. In countries covered by refugee and migrant response plans, the existing inter-agency platform will continue. The Joint UNHCR-OCHA Note on Mixed Settings<sup>66</sup> remains applicable, as it lays out the respective roles and responsibilities of the RC and the UNHCR Representative as well as the practical interaction of the IASC's and UNHCR's refugee coordination

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66 Joint UNHCR-OCHA Note on Mixed Settings, OCHA/UNHCR, 24 April 2014

arrangements, to ensure that coordination is streamlined, complementary and mutually reinforcing.

### The ERP in practice

The ERP approach is designed to ensure that the humanitarian community in a given country has a shared and up-to-date understanding of risks, and a joint plan for enhancing preparedness. The ERP approach is intended to be:

- **Realistic.** It must consider existing capacities and constraints.
- **Practical.** It should focus on needs and operational capacity: what we have, how to bridge gaps and how to reach people with assistance.
- **Flexible.** Country teams should prioritize preparedness actions considering the risks they face and the capacity and resources available to them.
- **Coordinated.** All cluster/sector responses should be in alignment and complementary with existing national policies.<sup>67</sup>
- **Localized.** Closely linked to existing local capacities and resources.<sup>68</sup>

The ERP approach has four main components:

1. Risk analysis and monitoring
2. Identifying and prioritizing humanitarian interventions
3. Review of existing response capacities
4. Filling identified preparedness gaps through the use of the Minimum and Advanced Preparedness Actions: a set of activities that every country team should review and implement, where needed, to implement the required level of response readiness.

The ERP approach was designed to be flexible and practical, with a focus on outcomes rather than process. Implementation of the ERP will therefore differ in each country. The approach is considered to be implemented when the following are achieved:

- Risk analysis is conducted, and the risks identified are monitored regularly.

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<sup>67</sup> Including health policies on the COVID-19 response.

<sup>68</sup> Taking into consideration limited movement and interaction given the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Key actions to enhance preparedness/response readiness are identified, and prioritized actions are implemented.
- Gaps that cannot be addressed through in-country capacity are communicated to the regional and global levels.

### **Links with anticipatory action**

The ERP approach and anticipatory action are very much two sides of the same coin. In simple terms, the ERP's primary focus is on identifying the most appropriate response activities for a given crisis and ensuring that operational readiness is in place to implement these activities, whereas the focus of anticipatory action is on identifying the most appropriate activities that can mitigate against the potential impacts of a crisis, and ensuring that operational readiness is in place to implement these activities. At the country level, the process for developing both response readiness and anticipatory action is very similar and complementary. Anticipatory action is being included as a standard element of the ERP approach going forward – something that has been welcomed by partners and through independent research.<sup>69</sup>

### **The role of national Governments in the ERP**

The responsibility to be ready to respond to humanitarian emergencies rests primarily with national Governments. The ERP is intended to complement national preparedness efforts and guide the work of humanitarian organizations to respond if and when national capacity is lacking. National institutions and local organizations, including women's groups, should be included in the ERP process as much as possible.

### **Links with the Humanitarian Programme Cycle and Humanitarian-Development Collaboration**

The ERP approach is an important component of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC). The analysis and monitoring of risks should be part of the inter-agency

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<sup>69</sup> A key recommendation in ODI's April 2019 paper *Anticipatory humanitarian action: what role for the CERF?* was to build on the success of the ERP approach.

Humanitarian Needs Overview and related response plans. That said, the ERP approach is first and foremost an operational tool to ensure that country teams have concrete systems in place to respond to needs quickly as they arise.

> See p. 120 for details on the Humanitarian Programme Cycle.

Humanitarian response readiness provides a key operational link between humanitarian and development partners at the country level. This link is twofold: firstly, faster and more effective response reduces human suffering, protects hard-won development gains and enhances resilience; secondly, the ERP focuses on risk and, as such, provides an important platform for humanitarian and development partners to engage in analysis of not only the humanitarian response readiness requirements, but also the long-term prevention-and-mitigation activities for addressing the identified risks. In countries that do not have a Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), the ERP approach is one of the main platforms for enhancing collaboration with development actors.

## Resources

- [Interim ERP Guidance, 2020](#)
- [ERP Guidelines, 2015](#)

## Index for Risk Management (INFORM)

[INFORM](#) is a global, open-source risk assessment tool for humanitarian crises and disasters. It is a collaboration of partners led by the IASC Reference Group on Risk, Early Warning and Preparedness and the European Commission. INFORM develops methodologies and tools for use at the global level and also supports their application at subnational level. The INFORM model is based on risk concepts published in scientific literature and envisages three dimensions of risk: hazards and exposure, vulnerability and lack of coping capacity.

INFORM is developing a suite of quantitative, analytical products to support decision-making at different stages of the disaster management cycle – specifically prevention, preparedness and response.

- The **INFORM Risk Index** helps to analyse the generalized risk of a crisis based on structural conditions.
- The **INFORM Severity Index** objectively measures and compares the severity of humanitarian crises and disasters globally. It can help develop a shared understanding of crisis severity and ensure all people affected get the help they need.
- **INFORM Warning** intends to support decisions around preparedness, early warning and early action. It can be used to provide analysis of indications of elevated risk, emerging crises or crisis triggers.

## Anticipatory Action

Today, we can predict with growing confidence the occurrence and humanitarian impact of shocks such as extreme climatic events and communicable disease outbreaks. In these cases, neither the shock nor the way a crisis will unfold should surprise us. Data can facilitate the decision to trigger the release of pre-arranged finance for pre-agreed interventions that mitigate the impact of such shocks before they happen. By taking this anticipatory approach – using evidence of risk instead of suffering – we can better protect and save more lives, make the money go farther and protect hard-won development gains. Above all, an anticipatory approach is more dignified.

Anticipatory action is taken ahead of a high-risk and high-probability shock, and before humanitarian needs manifest themselves, to mitigate the predicted humanitarian impact. An anticipatory action framework combines three components:

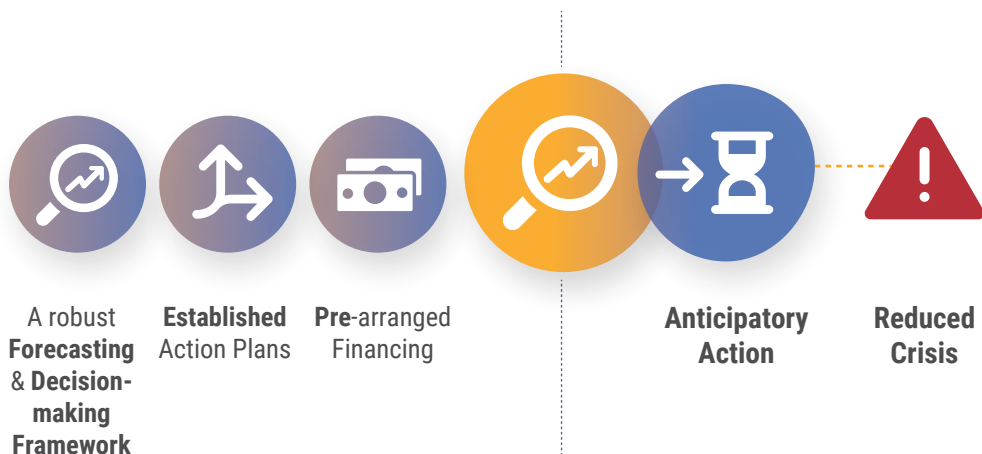
- Robust forecasting embedded in a clear decision-making process (the model)
- Pre-agreed action plans that can fundamentally alter the trajectory of the crisis (the delivery)
- Pre-arranged finance (the money)

When the selected forecast exceeds an agreed threshold – say a given probability or indicator of severity – the default decision will be to release pre-arranged finance for the implementation of ‘pre-agreed’ actions to minimize delay and mitigate the impact of the predicted shock.

## Resources

- [Evidence base on anticipatory action](#)

### What does anticipatory action look like?



## INTEGRATING DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Disasters related to natural or human-made hazards are increasing in frequency and intensity, many of them exacerbated by climate change. Disaster risk reduction (DRR) aims to protect the livelihoods and assets of communities and individuals from the impact of such hazards. The RC is responsible for working with Governments – in collaboration with humanitarian and development actors – to limit the negative impacts of these events by addressing the underlying drivers of risk, and building the capacity of people exposed to these hazards to anticipate, adapt and recover.

## Key roles of the RC and HC

- Ensure country team cross-sectoral support to national Governments and local authorities for the development of national and local DRR strategies.
- Ensure that the HRP is risk-informed, e.g. by including DRR experts in planning discussions and adopting DRR as a standing item on country team and cluster meeting agendas.
- Facilitate a multi-stakeholder, multidimensional risk analysis to explicitly incorporate risk drivers in needs assessments and analysis.
- Identify opportunities to strengthen humanitarian-development collaboration through DRR, particularly in protracted crises. This includes advocating for the systematic inclusion of DRR targets and indicators in collective outcomes and multi-year HRPs.
- Ensure that the evidence base for the Common Country Analysis includes information on climate and disaster risks – including related analysis in Humanitarian Needs Overviews and Humanitarian or Refugee Response Plans, Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessments and Post-Disaster and Post-Conflict Needs Assessments.
- Lead the development of a risk-informed UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.
- In collaboration with the country team, map and address gaps in UN implementation capacity for disaster risk programming, including by drawing on the wider UN system and regional capacities, and revisiting country team configuration.

Reducing disaster risk is fundamental to reducing humanitarian needs and achieving sustainable development. Every \$1 invested in risk reduction and prevention can save up to \$15 in post-disaster recovery.<sup>70</sup>

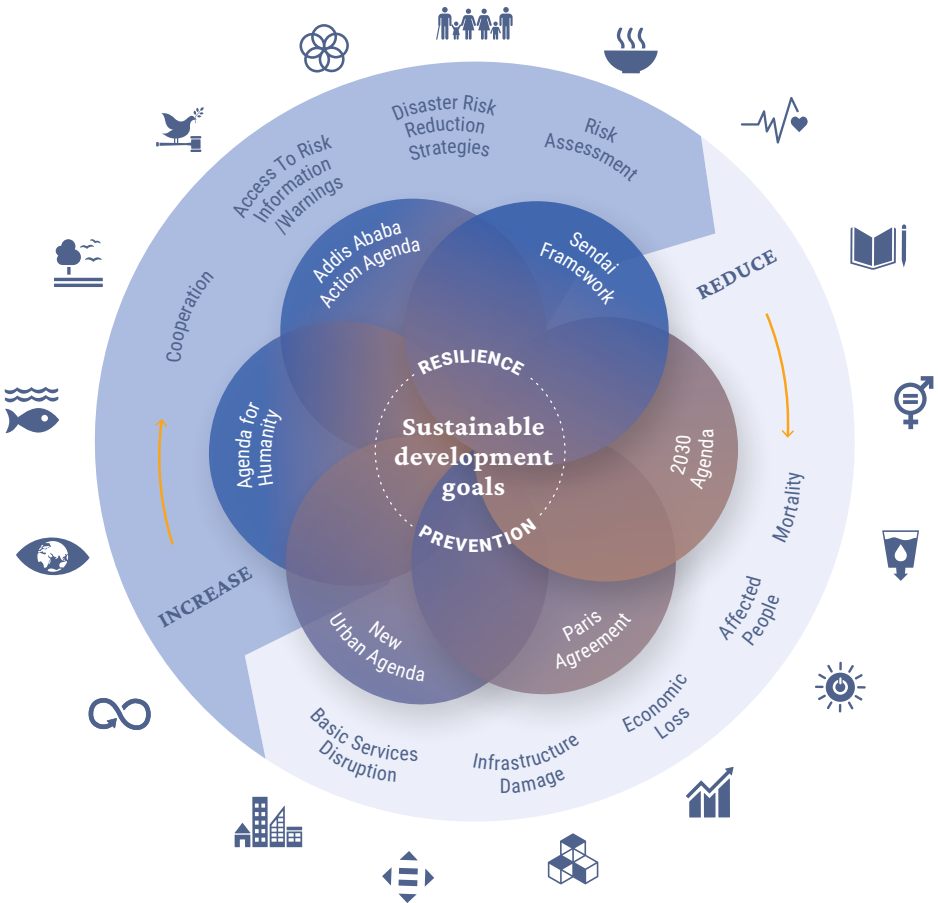
In many humanitarian contexts, populations are impacted by a combination of conflict, civil strife and disasters emanating from natural and human-made hazards, which are often fuelled or exacerbated by climate change. It is becoming increas-

<sup>70</sup> Shreve and Kelman (2014) Does Mitigation Save? Published in the International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction



ingly clear that we need to think and act differently about disasters: shifting the focus from picking up the pieces post-disaster to risk-informing development (see figure below). Investing in DRR measures can help to build vulnerable communities' capacity to prevent, resist, absorb, adapt, respond to and recover from disasters – alleviating some of the pressure on the mounting demand for humanitarian aid. This requires collaborative approaches: working across sectors as well as between and within institutions. Enhanced DRR is also essential to ensure that no one is

### Risk-informed Sustainable Development



left behind. To protect the most vulnerable groups, all levels of society should be engaged in prevention, risk reduction and risk management measures.

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (Sendai Framework) provides a global road map towards a resilient, sustainable future, setting out the case for risk-informed development. It marks a clear shift in focus from disaster response towards integrated and anticipatory disaster risk management. Sendai Framework Priority Action 4 specifically advocates for “enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to ‘Build Back Better’ in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction” and to “facilitate the link between relief, rehabilitation and development”. Similarly, the UN Secretary-General’s Prevention Agenda highlights the need to “support the development and implementation of national DRR plans that address growing challenges of climate change, environmental degradation, urbanization and population growth”.

## **Supporting National Governments**

As set out in the Sendai Framework, each Member State has the primary responsibility to prevent and reduce disaster risk, including through international, regional and bilateral support. Many countries have increased their capacity to implement DRR since the adoption of the Framework in 2015, but it is clear that DRR is still not sufficiently considered across a wide range of sectoral policies and investments, and is yet to be fully integrated in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.<sup>71</sup>

At the country level, strong leadership from the RC is essential for enhancing cooperation with the Government to facilitate the implementation of the Sendai Framework, in coherence with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Paris Agreement and other applicable instruments. This includes:

- Ensuring country team cross-sectoral support to national Governments and local authorities on the development of national and local DRR strategies, as per Sendai Framework Target E – Substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020 – incorporating

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71 Report of the UN Secretary-General on the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 (A/75/226)

links to climate risk and actions aimed at reducing humanitarian needs and the risk of disaster displacement, as well as building resilience through DRR.

- Leading country team collaboration with the Government for the integration of DRR in sustainable development planning, programming and budgets at all levels (national, local, sectoral, etc.). This includes facilitating policy support to promote the consideration of disaster risk and its drivers<sup>72</sup> in trade-off decisions between development pathways.<sup>73</sup>
- Guiding UN joint support for strengthening national capacity for DRR.
- Advocating for multisectoral, multi-stakeholder coordination mechanisms for DRR (e.g. national DRR platforms or similar coordination mechanisms) that span humanitarian, peace and development sectors and ensure links to SDG platforms.
- Ensuring country team support to coherent monitoring of the Sendai Framework and DRR-related targets and indicators for SDGs 1, 11 and 13.<sup>74</sup>
- Advocating with key stakeholders to raise awareness of the Sendai Framework and DRR.
- Advocating for domestic resource mobilization as well as helping Governments to unlock funding for DRR and identify wider financing opportunities to reduce risk, including through engagement with the private sector.

## Scaling up DRR in Humanitarian Action

Strong leadership from the RC is critical for scaling up DRR and resilience in humanitarian action. The growing focus on humanitarian-development-peace collaboration provides new opportunities to reduce existing and emerging disaster risks. Building resilience to shocks and hazards – including through early warning and anticipatory action, social safety nets, resilient livelihoods, targeted action for women and girls, and forecast-based financing – can be an efficient and cost-effective way of placing countries in crisis on a path to prevention and sustainability.<sup>75</sup>

72 Underlying drivers include poverty, inequality and environmental degradation, among others.

73 Global Sustainable Development Report 2019.

74 SDG 1 – End poverty in all its forms everywhere; SDG 11 – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable; SDG 13 – Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

75 Report of the UN Secretary-General on the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 (A/75/226).

The UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), in collaboration with humanitarian partners and in partnership with OCHA, has developed guidance on *Scaling up DRR in Humanitarian Action*, in the form of a practical checklist. The recommendations below are an excerpt, highlighting concrete actions relevant to the RC, framed around the stages of the HPC:

> See p. 120 for details on the Humanitarian Programme Cycle.

### **Needs Assessment and Analysis**

- Guiding a country team analysis of risk drivers in multisectoral Post-Disaster Needs Assessments.
- Facilitating a multi-stakeholder, multidimensional risk analysis to explicitly incorporate risk drivers in needs assessments and analysis (for use as an advocacy tool for support and funding, and to influence programme decision-making).
- Facilitating the pooling of data from across humanitarian and development sources to inform joint analysis, planning and programming.

### **Strategic Planning**

- Advocating for and leading the development of a risk-informed HRP. This could involve, for example, including DRR experts in planning discussions and adopting DRR as a standing item on country team and cluster meeting agendas.
- Ensuring that the HRP targets the most at-risk populations in hazard-prone areas, particularly those who are impacted by recurring disasters/protracted crises, and those who may be left furthest behind.
- Promoting the inclusion of stakeholders outside the humanitarian system in the development of the HRP to ensure resilience and recovery actions are embedded in national/local systems. Where there is already strong Government engagement in DRR, the HRP should reinforce these strategies and activities.
- Identifying opportunities for strengthening humanitarian and development collaboration through DRR, particularly in protracted crises, including

advocating for the systematic inclusion of DRR targets and indicators in collective outcomes and multi-year HRP. Joint actions could include, for example, enabling forecast-based financing to strengthen social safety nets, to help build resilience.

- Preparing for risk-informed recovery and 'Building Back Better', including through ensuring the HRP lays the foundation for recovery and reduces future vulnerability. Examples include ensuring risk-tolerant reconstruction, using a resilience lens when relocating houses, schools and other community structures from hazard-prone areas, and integrating forecast-based financing cash distributions within maturing social protection systems, to enable faster recovery.

### Resource Mobilization

- Working with the country team to compile and communicate the DRR evidence base for potential funding opportunities. This includes the use of information management products, such as analyses of damage and losses, to incentivize investment in DRR and early action.
- Promoting the inclusion of DRR in humanitarian information management processes, platforms and products, such as situation reports, humanitarian dashboards and 3W/9Ws matrices.<sup>76</sup> This ensures that these tools reflect projections for multi-year planning periods, and promote the integration of data on disaster losses into humanitarian analysis and recovery planning.

### Response Monitoring

- Ensuring that DRR-related targets and indicators are articulated and monitored in the HRP, in multi-year plans or in frameworks for collective outcomes. This can include reduction in disaster-related deaths, disaster-affected populations, population movement data, etc.
- Ensuring that reviews and evaluations consider the success of programmes on the basis of the extent to which risk has been reduced and considered in

<sup>76</sup> 3W matrices describe Who does What and Where. In many countries, 9Ws reflect actions across the peace, humanitarian and development communities. OCHA provides a useful overview of types of assessments and documents.

programming. Documentation processes, including after-action reviews, are good for capturing lessons and promoting ongoing learning at country level.

## **Integrating DRR in UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and Common Country Analyses (CCA)**

The Cooperation Framework and CCA are the UN's primary tools for helping Governments integrate DRR in sustainable development policies – in line with the Sendai Framework, the SDGs, the Paris Agreement and other relevant instruments. Through the Cooperation Framework, the UN can play a critical role in ensuring that development practices and investments strengthen resilience, reduce existing risks and avoid creating new ones. The Cooperation Framework can help strengthen national DRR strategies and leverage the multi-stakeholder approach put forward by the Sendai Framework.

A climate- and disaster risk-informed Cooperation Framework can help to integrate risk management practices and support an all-of-society approach to crisis prevention. The new Cooperation Framework guidance (August 2020) emphasizes the need for country teams to ensure that disaster risk is addressed effectively as a central part of analysis and programme design.

The RC plays a critical role in providing in-country leadership on integrating DRR throughout the Cooperation Framework cycle, including by:

- Ensuring the CCA/Cooperation Framework team has the required capacities to:
  - conduct an inclusive assessment of disaster risks to development, with data disaggregated by income, sex, age, disability and other nationally relevant factors.
  - identify and analyse climate and disaster risk created by development choices in different sectors.
  - use geospatial technologies to analyse and present climate and disaster risk.
- Ensuring the evidence base for the CCA includes information on climate and disaster risks, including related analysis in Humanitarian Needs Overviews and

Humanitarian or Refugee Response Plans, Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessments and Post-Disaster and Post-Conflict Needs Assessments.

- Ensuring that the CCA incorporates early warning information, particularly on climate and disaster risk, and risk management capacities. This can help the country team take action within its development programming to prevent later crises.
- Ensuring the inclusion of climate and disaster risks and governance and risk management capacities across different elements of the CCA: economic transformation analysis, social exclusion analysis, environment analysis, governance and institutional capacity analysis, and humanitarian-development-peace nexus analysis.
- Ensuring that the country team shows disaster- and climate change-related risks/assumptions for each outcome in the results framework.
- Leading the country team in mapping and addressing gaps in UN implementation capacity for disaster risk programming, including by drawing on regional capacities and the wider UN system, and revisiting country team configuration to address gaps as needed.
- Ensuring the country team has access to regional DRR guidance and support through the UN regional collaborative platforms, including issue-based coalitions and peer support groups.
- If required, establishing a thematic risk and resilience group under the country team, ensuring sufficient breadth of expertise.
- Initiating dialogue between the Government, the country team and partners to identify opportunities for joint DRR programming and action, and collective approaches across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

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## **CASE STUDY: A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND DRR IN BANGLADESH**

To operationalize humanitarian-development cooperation in Bangladesh, the RC's Office uses the Strategic Preparedness for Response and Resilience to Disaster (SPEED) approach, adapted from the Rapid Response Approach to Disasters in Asia-Pacific (RAPID) – a lighter, flexible approach to disaster preparedness developed by the OCHA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. The approach is in line with the global policy guidance for both the Sendai Framework and the Agenda for Humanity, and it incorporates UNDRR guidance on DRR mainstreaming and the IASC ERP guidelines.

The SPEED approach consists of four key components: impact analysis, priority actions, institutional capacity and action plan. A DRR lens is integrated across all four.

The Humanitarian Coordination Task Team (HCTT), co-led by the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief and the RC's Office, coordinates disaster preparedness, response and recovery interventions based on the SPEED approach. The HCTT Workplan 2020 includes three main focus areas, one of which is 'promoting DRR mainstreaming in humanitarian action'. Other key actions include:

- Supporting coordination with development-focused coordination platforms
- Activating a Private Sector Working Group
- Supporting regular analysis and monitoring of country risk in partnership with existing development-focused coordination platforms
- Applying the INFORM Risk Index at local level
- Promoting engagement on Forecast-based Initiatives<sup>77</sup>

The HCTT supported the Government of Bangladesh in responding to Cyclone Amphan in May 2020 through the development of an HCTT Response Plan. It included a strategic objective to 'Reduce vulnerabilities and restore the safety, dignity and resilience of the most vulnerable populations'.

[Handbook – Humanitarian Coordination and Collaboration in Bangladesh, 2020](#)

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<sup>77</sup> This includes forecast-based action linked to social protection. This working group is led by Bangladesh Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the German Red Cross.



## Resources

- UNDRR is the focal point within the UN system for DRR and resilience-building. Through its regional offices, UNDRR works with RCs and UNCTs to strengthen policy coherence, improve data collection and analysis for better decision-making, build DRR capacity and leverage advocacy opportunities. For a full overview of UNDRR's support to RCs and UNCTs, see the [UNDRR Briefing Pack for RCs \(UNDRR 2020\)](#), including contact information for UNDRR regional offices.
- [Scaling up disaster risk reduction in humanitarian action: Recommendations for the Humanitarian Programme Cycle \(UNDRR, October 2020\)](#)
- [Integrating Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework: Guidance Note on Using Climate and Disaster Risk Management to Help Build Resilient Societies \(UNDRR 2020\)](#)
- [Words into Action Guidelines: Developing National DRR Strategies \(UNDRR 2019\)](#)
- [Words into Action Guidelines: Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response \(UNDRR 2020\)](#)
- [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030](#)
- [United Nations Plan of Action on DRR for Resilience \(2016\)](#)
- [UNDRR Global Education and Training Institute](#)
- UNDRR manages the world's only DRR knowledge platform, [PreventionWeb](#)
- [CADRI Partnership](#): Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative is an inter-agency partnership providing support to RCs and UNCTs for in-country development of national DRR capacities.
- [Global Assessment Report 2019](#)
- [International Recovery Platform](#)



Medical team at the epidemiological treatment centre in Fann Hospital. 2020, Dakar, Senegal.

Photo: ALIMA/Sylvain Cherkaoui

## CHAPTER D:

## RESPONDING TO A HEALTH CRISIS IN A HUMANITARIAN SETTING

### Background

In addition to major humanitarian crises driven by natural disasters or conflicts, infectious disease events, including outbreaks, can trigger a humanitarian system-wide Scale-Up activation (see p. 128 for more details on emergency declarations). Responding to a health crisis in complex humanitarian settings brings distinct challenges for humanitarian actors, as evidenced from previous responses to major health events. Guidance and policy of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) for humanitarian action and leadership includes agreed protocols for health emergencies – notably for the Ebola response and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following the response to the Ebola outbreak of 2014-2016 in West Africa, the IASC developed standard operating procedures for infectious hazards to ensure that appropriate measures are in place to respond to future outbreaks. These reflect the critical link between IASC mechanisms and WHO responsibilities under International Health Regulations (IHR). The assessment of infectious disease events and the consultation and decision-making processes on activation and deactivation criteria and procedures are outlined in [the IASC Protocol for the Control of Infectious Disease Events \(2019\)](#). It states that:

*“In the event of a multi-country, regional or global infectious disease event (e.g. a ‘pandemic’), response measures, **including in particular the leadership model and inter-agency/inter-country coordination arrangements** and CERF allocation, will be adapted, expanded and strengthened as appropriate. **In addition, a leadership and coordination model for contingency and preparedness planning for multi-country, regional or global infectious disease events pandemic should be established.**”*

In summary, the designation of a Scale-Up response to an infectious disease event is issued by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), in close collaboration with the WHO Director-General and in consultation with IASC Principals as well as,

potentially, principals of other relevant entities. The Scale-Up is based on both an analysis of the IASC's five criteria (scale, complexity, urgency, capacity and risk of failure to deliver at scale to affected populations) adapted to meet IHR criteria, and WHO's formal risk assessment of the event.

As stated in the Protocols of 2019, for all public health events assessed as high or very high risk at regional or global levels, and/or when WHO declares an internal corporate emergency, the WHO Director-General will notify the UN Secretary-General and the ERC through a memo issued within 48 hours of completion of the assessment. This will include details of the situation analysis, risk level at country/regional/global levels, initial country-level response and coordination efforts (including IASC engagement), and a WHO assessment of the need to discuss a system-wide scale-up response.

### **Leadership structures for responding to infectious diseases**

WHO will provide the UN Secretary-General and the ERC with a draft statement of public health strategic priorities, a proposed response structure and the major activities required to control the infectious event. This initial recommendation will be the basis for guiding further discussions and decisions by the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), Emergency Directors Group and IASC Principals.

The IASC Principals will decide on the most appropriate leadership model at country, regional and HQ levels to support national authorities, taking into consideration pre-established resources (e.g. the Humanitarian Coordinator Pool, the WHO Incident Managers Roster).

As soon as possible, but no later than 12 hours after receiving it, the ERC will share the draft statement of public health strategic priorities and proposed response structure with the HCT and the HC – or where there is no designated HC, with the UN country team via the RC.

Based on the specificity and technical implications of the infectious disease, the IASC will also decide on:

- The overall in-country mechanism to ensure coordination and links across the humanitarian system in alignment with national structures and processes, and the roles and responsibilities of each agency at country, regional and global levels.

- The activation of clusters in response to the specific infectious hazard and the necessary control measures, as well as humanitarian needs.
- The composition of surge capacity deployments (based on the nature of the infectious hazard, the response required and existing capacity at country level) and its interface with national coordination structures.
- The period during which the measures triggered by the Scale-Up activation should be in place (up to six months).
- Other specific arrangements including appropriate staff safety, security, protective measures, medical assistance and, in extreme cases, medical evacuation, including of responders.

### **Leadership structures for COVID-19 response**

The COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented global health emergency with immediate consequences for countries in the midst of a humanitarian crisis. The outbreak has exacerbated current humanitarian needs and operational challenges in many countries and created new humanitarian caseloads in others. A massive global scale-up was required to respond to the immediate health needs resulting from the pandemic to ensure continuity of service for pre-COVID-19 needs, and to address the associated humanitarian and socioeconomic impacts on vulnerable populations – with a focus on reinforcing a localized approach where possible.

Following the declaration of a global pandemic, the IASC issued guidance specific to the COVID-19 virus: [Activation of the IASC System-Wide Scale-Up Protocols Adapted to the Global COVID-19 Pandemic \(April 2020\)](#). These are tailored protocols that build on the IASC Scale-Up activation for infectious diseases, reflecting the role of WHO and its Director-General and Member States under international health regulations, and the importance of non-IASC organizations and technical expertise in responding to infectious disease events.

#### **Resources:**

- [IASC resources for COVID-19](#)
- [IASC COVID-19 resources relating to accountability and inclusion](#)



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OCHA Infographic Training. 2017, Geneva, Switzerland. Photo: OCHA/Joel Opulencia

## ANNEXES

### LIST OF ACRONYMS

#### Acronyms

AAP	Accountability to Affected People
CADRI	Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative
CBi	Connecting Business initiative
CBPFs	Country-Based Pooled Funds
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CCE	Community Communication and Engagement
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CHS	Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability
CLA	Cluster Lead Agency
CMCS	Civil-Military Coordination Service
COD	Common Operational Data sets
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CVA	Cash and Voucher Assistance
CWG	Cash Working Group
DHC	Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DRHC	Deputy Regional Humanitarian Coordinator
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ERC	Emergency Relief Coordinator
ERP	Emergency Response Preparedness
FMA	Foreign Military Assets
FTS	Financial Tracking Service
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GCM	Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
GCR	Global Compact on Refugees
GEEWG	Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls
GHP	Global Humanitarian Platform
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HCHR	High Commissioner for Human Rights
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HDPC	Humanitarian, Development and Peace Collaboration
HDPN	Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
HPC	Humanitarian Programme Cycle
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICCG	Inter-Cluster Coordination Group
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

IHL	International Humanitarian Law
IHR	International Health Regulations
IHRL	International Human Rights Law
IM	Information Management
IMO	Information Management Officer
IMU	Information Management Unit
IMWG	Information Management Working Group
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
INFORM	Index for Risk Management
INSARAG	International Search and Rescue Advisory Group
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRL	International Refugee Law
ISCG	Inter-Sector Coordination Group
JIAF	Joint Intersectoral Analysis Framework
JEU	Joint Environment Unit
JSC	Joint Steering Committee to Advance Humanitarian and Development Collaboration
LGBTI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
NEAR	Network for Empowered Aid Response
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OSOCC	On-Site Operations Coordination Centre
PCA	Programme Criticality Assessment
PIO	Public Information Officer
PSEA	Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
RC	Resident Coordinator
RCO	Resident Coordinator's Office
RPM	Response Planning and Monitoring Module
SBPP	Stand-By Partnership Programme
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
UNCG	United Nations Communications Group
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDAC	United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDIS	United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNIC	United Nations Information Centre
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
USG	Under-Secretary-General
WHO	World Health Organization
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit
WPS	Women, Peace and Security



## RESOURCES

### GUIDANCE, REFERENCES AND SUPPORTING SERVICES

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- Accountability and Inclusion Resources Portal – An accessible repository of accountability and inclusion tools, guidance, policies, standards and advice  
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- IASC Guidelines for and about Youth in humanitarian settings, [forthcoming]
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child  
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