



**United Nations Office for The Coordination of
Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
UPDATE ON HUMANITARIAN
REFORM**

March 2006



Editorial Note

In recent years humanitarian organizations have become increasingly effective in saving lives, alleviating human suffering, and advocating for the rights of people in need. Nonetheless, there are considerable gaps in the ability of the humanitarian system to respond adequately to all humanitarian crises. Hence there is a need for the humanitarian community to provide more timely and predictable response to crises around the globe.

It is for this reason that the Emergency Relief Coordinator launched a comprehensive humanitarian reform process in 2005. This Bulletin is intended to provide information on the reform process and achievements to date.

Yvette Stevens
Assistant Emergency Relief Coordinator

Current Reform of the Humanitarian Response System



“ We now have a real opportunity to address some of the critical weaknesses of our humanitarian response system. These reforms will no doubt involve changes in the way we work but I trust that these changes will improve our ability to respond effectively to future crises.”

Jan Egeland, Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

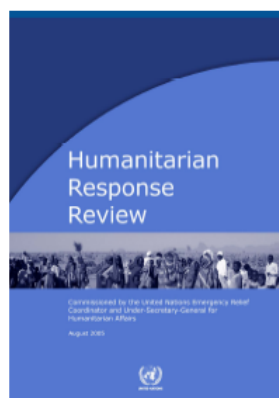
Why do we need to reform the humanitarian response system?

Over the past few years, the international response to humanitarian emergencies has demonstrated that the **present system does not always meet the basic needs of affected populations in a timely and predictable manner.** While the response varies from crisis to crisis, existing capacity levels are often insufficient to adequately meet key emergency needs in major crises.

In order to better understand and correct such deficiencies, the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), in 2005, commissioned an independent Humanitarian Response Review

(HRR) of the global humanitarian system.

What is the Humanitarian Response Review?



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The Humanitarian Response Review was intended to identify those factors that have hindered the speed and effectiveness of humanitarian response in the past, and to propose appropriate steps towards improving the timeliness and impact of future humanitarian interventions.

Four independent consultants between February and June 2005 undertook the review. Through customized questionnaires, face-to-face interviews, seminar discussions and review of background documents, consultants assessed the humanitarian response capacities of the United Nations Humanitarian Agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement and other key humanitarian actors such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

What are the main findings and recommendations of the Humanitarian Response Review?

The recommendations presented in the report clearly address identified needs to promote:

- A global vision of the necessary reforms and a shared plan of action for the improvement of the system in a reasonably short timeframe.
- Accountability, in particular towards people in need.
- The establishment of appropriate mechanisms to measure results, on which a consensus can be built between humanitarian organizations, donors and recipient countries.
- Preparedness across the system, including but not exclusively, at the level of the international humanitarian organizations matched to appropriate political and financial support.
- Interoperability within and between the UN system, the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, and NGOs.

How are the reform recommendations being translated into action?

The Humanitarian Response Review recommendations gave further impetus to the humanitarian reform process championed by the Secretary-General. A three-pronged **Humanitarian Reform Programme** aimed at improving the predictability, timeliness, and effectiveness of humanitarian response has been adopted.

To this end, the reform programme includes the following inter-related

components, which should be seen as a package: strengthening humanitarian response capacity, strengthening the Humanitarian Coordinator System and ensuring predictable funding.

Strengthening Humanitarian Response Capacity through the Cluster Approach

The challenge of strengthening humanitarian response capacity

The report of the Secretary-General on ‘Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations’, which was considered at the 60th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in 2005, identified significant capacity gaps in water and sanitation, shelter, camp management, and protection.

Various studies and evaluations suggested the mapping of response capacities of national, regional, and international actors; the strengthening of response capacities, in particular human resources; applying benchmarks to measure performance and improving coordination. Likewise, the Humanitarian Response Review recommended a system-wide adoption of a lead organization concept, which encourages the effective use of expertise and technical know-how of mandated organizations in the areas of particular concern, where major gaps in response capacity had been identified.

In 2005, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) comprising United Nations Humanitarian Agencies, the

Red Cross Movement, NGOs and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reviewed and welcomed the establishment of nine clusters¹ where significant gaps in humanitarian response had been noted. This led to the development of the cluster approach with a dedicated cluster lead organization.

What is a Cluster?

A cluster is a group comprising organizations and other stakeholders. Each cluster has a designated lead, working in an area of humanitarian response in which gaps in response have been identified. These areas include some traditional relief and assistance sectors (water and sanitation, nutrition, health, emergency shelter; service provision (emergency telecommunications, logistics) and crosscutting issues (camp coordination, early recovery and protection). Clusters are organised at both field and global level.

What is the Cluster Approach?

It is a renewed effort to fill identified gaps in humanitarian response, to ensure accountability with strengthened leadership and clearly defined roles and responsibilities and, to bolster coordination and synergy of efforts. As an approach it is intended to improve the predictability, efficiency and effectiveness of emergency preparedness and humanitarian response capacity.

What do we want to achieve?

The cluster approach is being developed at two levels. The aim at the **global level** is to strengthen

system-wide preparedness and technical capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies by designating Global Cluster Leads who are responsible for ensuring predictable and effective inter-agency responses within the particular sectors or areas of activity concerned.

At the **country level**, the cluster approach also serves to strengthen the coordination and effectiveness of humanitarian action by mobilizing clusters comprising agencies, NGOs and non-UN organizations to respond in particular sectors or areas of activity, where gaps have been identified - each cluster having a clearly designated lead. It is intended to ensure the involvement of national and local institutions and the full utilization of available resources.

What are the specific roles and responsibilities of the Clusters?

The Cluster functions at the **global level** include: up-to-date assessments of the overall needs for human, financial, and institutional capacity; reviews of currently available capacities and means for their utilization; links with other clusters, including preparedness measures and long-term planning, standards, best practice, advocacy, and resource mobilization; taking action to ensure that required capacities and mechanisms exist, including rosters for surge capacity; and training and system development at the local, national, regional, and international levels.

Cluster Leads at the **country level** are responsible for: predictable action within the cluster for analysis of needs, addressing priorities, and identifying gaps in the cluster area; securing and following-up on commitments from

the cluster to contribute to responding to needs and filling the gaps; ensuring that activities within a cluster are carried out and that mechanisms are in place through which the cluster, as a whole, assesses its performance. Cluster Leads also act as providers of last resort.

At all levels, cluster leads have mutual obligations to interact with each other, and are accountable to the Emergency Relief Coordinator globally and to Humanitarian Coordinators at the country level.

How are we moving forward?

- ***Implementing the Inter-Agency Standing Committee decision***

Based on the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) decision, the cluster approach will be applied to all new major disasters as appropriate. For existing emergencies, the cluster approach is being implemented in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Liberia and Uganda.

- ***Learning as we go along***

Currently, coordination in the South Asia Earthquake Response in Pakistan is being undertaken “in the spirit” of the cluster approach. An inter-agency evaluation is ongoing and will provide lessons for future implementations of the cluster approach. What has clearly emerged from the Pakistan experience and from inter-agency missions to DRC, Uganda and Liberia is the importance of **flexibility** for successful implementation of the cluster approach at the country level. In

principle, the cluster leadership approach should be applied to all areas, but this will need to be tailored to specific country circumstances. Country level clusters may not necessarily replicate the global cluster arrangements. In all instances, the key principle is ensuring that country-level clusters **address all identified key gaps in humanitarian response** and that critical gaps are not neglected simply because they are not part of any global cluster.

- ***Ensuring technical preparedness at global level to support country operations***

The nine global clusters have started implementing the approach agreed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. Having undertaken the gap and capacity assessments at global level, they have elaborated work plans ultimately intended to address the gaps identified in order to ensure the provision of appropriate technical support to the field:



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Camp Coordination and camp management – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) are the Co-Cluster leads for conflict-generated and natural disaster IDPs respectively. Participants in this cluster-working

group include OCHA, United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and others. Unlike in other clusters, the working group had to define and refine the concept of Camp Coordination first, thereby looking at the scope and purpose of this cross-cutting cluster, and considering the generic roles of national governments, the international community and non-governmental partners. The working group aims to map Camp Coordination capacities worldwide and to set the foundations for a viable and sustainable response mechanism. For that to happen, the Camp Coordination Cluster aims to broaden its membership and bring together major players that enhance competence, experience, and capacities in the cluster. It will be working on standard setting, including the development of guiding principles, and, the mobilization of resources to effectively manage the cluster at a global level (including stand-by capacities) and to respond to new emergencies as well as existing Internally Displaced Persons situations.



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Early Recovery – With United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as Cluster Lead, the Early Recovery Cluster has 18 member agencies from both humanitarian and developmental communities. “Early Recovery” has been defined as a multi-dimensional process –including the reintegration of displaced people- that

aims at stabilizing human security in its economic, livelihoods, governance, social and security dimensions and at laying the basic foundation of a transformation process that integrates risk reduction at the very early stages of humanitarian action. The objective of this cluster is to improve the predictability, timeliness, effectiveness, and efficiency of humanitarian and development-related action from the early phases of the humanitarian response to a crisis. Its priority areas of focus are to strategically plan recovery from very early stages of a crisis and to develop joint programming in key priority sectors where the impact of development programmes needs to be accelerated. The cluster, while requiring dedicated attention and strengthening in its own right, will also make every effort to integrate and mainstream early recovery across all the clusters and sectors.



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Emergency Shelter – UNHCR is Cluster Lead for complex emergencies and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) has offered to provide leadership for natural disasters. Involvement of the non-UN actors in the cluster has been strong and has included IFRC, IOM, NRC, Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Care International, CARE and Catholic Relief Services (CRS), representing three NGO Consortia represented at the IASC - International Council of

Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR), InterAction. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is also participating in the discussions. The cluster working group aims to improve effectiveness and predictability of service provision by (a) strengthening of stockpiles of shelter and related non-food items, (b) developing an emergency shelter strategy, guidelines and tools for assessments, intervention and monitoring, (c) increasing the number of qualified professionals available for rapid deployment.



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Emergency Telecommunications – OCHA is the process owner, UNICEF and the World Food Programme (WFP) are service providers for common data services and common security telecommunications services, respectively. Participants in the cluster-working group include the United Nations Department of Peace-Keeping Operations (DPKO), UNHCR, United Nations Office for Satellite Technology (UNOSAT), the World Health Organization (WHO), ICRC, IFRC, NetHope, and Telecommunications Sans Frontières (TSF). Effort to involve the private sector is underway. The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster aims to provide clearly defined services to ensure timely, predictable, and effective inter-agency telecommunications to support humanitarian operations in

emergencies. This includes inter-agency telecommunications infrastructure and services, covering both data and security communications, which are essential for the efficient and effective operations; standard, interoperable Information and Communication Technology (ICT) platforms and procedures to avoid duplication and ensure cost effective services; and transition to the post-emergency reconstruction.



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Health - WHO leads the Health Cluster Working Group. Participants include Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), OCHA, UNICEF, UNDP, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNHCR, WFP, ICRC, IFRC, ICVA, Inter-Action, IOM, SCHR, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons (RSG on HR of IDPs), the United Nations Office of The High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Health Cluster. The Cluster actively promotes NGO participation and has been joined by nine NGOs that specialize in health or are major humanitarian health players: Association of Medical Doctors of Asia (AMOA), Africa Humanitarian Action (AHA), International Emergency and Refugee Health Branch, National Center for environmental Health (NCEH), the United States Center for Disease Control (CDC), International Center

for Migration and Health (ICMH), International Medical Corps (IMC), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Medical Emergency Relief International (Merlin), Terre des Hommes, and World Vision International (WVI). The priorities of the Health Cluster are set out in the twenty-point Joint Initiative to Improve Humanitarian Health Outcomes. There are, in addition, some relatively neglected sub-sectoral areas especially in relation to mental health and psycho-social support, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), HIV/AIDS, women's health and mass casualty management. Health Cluster partners are addressing these areas.



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Logistics – The Logistics Cluster working group is led by WFP and participants at the global level include IOM, WHO, UNHCR, UNICEF, OCHA, the United Nations Joint Logistic Center (UNJLC), UNFPA, ICRC, IFRC World Vision International (WVI), Care, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Save the Children (SC), and FAO. The Cluster Working Group aims to improve surge capacity, speed and effectiveness of humanitarian response ensuring better logistics preparedness and response, and facilitating improved inter-agency interoperability through the pooling of resources.



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Nutrition – UNICEF is the Cluster lead agency. WHO, UNHCR, WFP, FAO, UNICEF, UNFPA and OCHA, IFRC, ICRC, Action contre la Faim (ACF), Save the Children, SPHERE, participate in the working group. The Cluster is actively encouraging participation by key Emergency Nutrition NGOs as well as particular bilateral agencies that are actively involved in Emergency Nutrition activities. The Cluster working group aims to improve the predictability, effectiveness and accountability of humanitarian action in Nutrition. It has developed its work plan around key gaps it has identified in the area of Nutrition such as Coordination, Emergency Preparedness and Response Triggers, Assessment, Monitoring and Surveillance, Capacity Building, and Supply.



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Protection: The Protection Cluster Working Group, chaired by UNHCR, enjoys the participation of a large number of IASC and non-IASC members. Participants include: OCHA, UNICEF, OHCHR, WFP, United Nations Mine Action Service

(UNMAS), DPKO, RSG on HR of IDPs, ICVA, SCHR, Inter-Action, ICRC, IRC, NRC, Terre des Hommes, DRC, IOM, Save the Children, WVI, UN-HABITAT, UNDP, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), Women's Commission, UNFPA, IFRC and International Medical Corps (IMC). The Working Group has identified nine key areas where protection gaps have existed in humanitarian response, and has determined focal point responsibilities among participants to ensure predictability in future protection responses. The framework established by the Working Group is designed to be flexible and easily adapted for implementation at the country level, while also taking a proactive approach to ensure inclusion of all "protection actors", including international and national NGOs.



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Water, Sanitation and Hygiene: With UNICEF as cluster lead the working group members include ACF, InterAction, ICRC, IFRC, IRC, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), MSF Belgium, OXFAM, Register Engineers for Disaster Relief (RedR), UNHCR, WFP and WHO. The Cluster working group encourages participation by bilateral donors, key learning and specialized institutions, representatives from high-risk countries and the private sector. The group aims to improve humanitarian water, sanitation and hygiene response in emergency situations and beyond by creating competency with operational

mechanisms for wider capacity development, preparedness, predictability and response capability. Its implementation plan has eight strategic outcomes focusing on assessment of sector capacities, strengthening surge capacity, training and orientation, strengthening coordination, developing supply assistance, standard setting and performance indicators, monitoring and advocacy and resource mobilization.

Strengthening the Humanitarian Coordinator System

Strengthened humanitarian coordination in the field is central to the whole reform process. This requires:

- Engaging the broader humanitarian community, particularly NGOs, who are amongst the major providers of humanitarian assistance in all reform efforts.
- Strengthening the capacity and knowledge base of humanitarian coordinators and improving the overall humanitarian coordinator system.

What is being done?

- Promoting the setting up of inclusive Inter Agency Standing Committee Country Teams engaging the broader humanitarian community including NGOs.
- Development of field coordination systems through use of clusters but also through

the more proactive use of the Common Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP) as a strategic planning instrument.

- An initiative to strengthen the Humanitarian Coordinator system through

-Training - A Resident Coordinators " Humanitarian Coordination orientation workshop (2,5 days) offered to all Resident Coordinators. So far 30 Resident Coordinators have attended.

-Annual Humanitarian Coordinator's meetings to strengthen the skills and awareness of the serving Humanitarian Coordinators.

-Creation of a pool of pre-certified experienced candidates that could be deployed at short notice.

- A long-term Humanitarian Coordinator strategy being developed in order to address critical issues of Humanitarian Coordinator selection, training and the provision of tools and support services.

A great deal has been achieved since the Emergency Relief Coordinator first launched this reform process. Steps have been taken to put in place the basic building blocks of a modernized humanitarian system. In 2006 the Inter Agency Standing Committee will ensure that these reforms work well and work to the advantage of the beneficiary population.

Ensuring predictable Funding: The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)

An important landmark decision for OCHA and the humanitarian community

There are many situations in which crises and the scale of suffering can develop rapidly and where there is insufficient time to go through a detailed appeals process. Therefore, predictable amounts of money are needed to cover these start-up costs.

On December 15th the General Assembly passed a resolution that **Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)**.

The old CERF had US \$50 million, but it was only a loan facility and relatively modest in size. A lot of the potential users, the UN agencies and IOM, established a modernized were reluctant to take these loans, especially in cases of so-called neglected emergencies, because they were not sure if they were going to be able to pay it back.

The goal of the Fund is simple: within 72 hours, provide aid workers with sufficient funding to jump-start lifesaving relief operations when most lives are on the line.

The Central Emergency Response Fund is a cash-flow mechanism, under the authority of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, to allow for an immediate response to an emergency. The CERF may be used at the very outset of an emergency—and, in exceptional cases, during later phases—to help

humanitarian agencies with cash-flow problems before donor contributions are available.

The CERF grant facility would have US\$ 500 million and will be funded from additional voluntary contributions. OCHA will administer the upgraded CERF and disburse CERF loans and grants within 3-4 days to initiate immediate response capabilities.

A portion of the grant facility will need to be replenished on a regular basis through an annual donor pledging conference. Donor funding is needed to develop the grant facility. The expansion must not come at the expense of agency budgets or CAP funding. Up to 1/3 of the grant facility may be used to provide timely funding for life saving programmes in countries identified as neglected emergencies.

To date, about **US\$ 173 million has been pledged** to the Fund with at least another US\$40 million in the pipeline. The UK made an early pledge of US\$70 million, making it the Fund's largest donor

The updated CERF will be officially **launched on 9 March 2006** in New York. The potential lifesaving benefits of such a Fund are clear. Full transparency and stringent management oversight are the sine qua non of our work, and this Fund will be no exception. The Fund will benefit from both internal and external management audits, as well as audits from every U.N. agency that draws on it. All financial pledges and expenditures will be tracked on a publicly accessible Web site, providing donors with maximum visibility for their contributions.

At the country level, an Emergency Relief Fund (ERF) is envisaged, as a small and flexible trust fund at the field level, which will be under the direction of the Humanitarian Coordinator. Its purpose is to provide a facility to meet critical gaps in funding at the local level and would be primarily drawn on by operational NGO's and other operating partners of the United Nations.

More information can be found on Relief Web, OCHA on-line, and IRIN websites:

www.reliefweb.int
<http://ochaonline.un.org>
www.irinnews.org

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