


FROM THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE

CF/EXD/2011-001

21 March 2011

FOR ACTION

To: Global Management Team Members
Deputy Regional Directors
Representatives and Assistant Representatives
Directors: Brussels and Tokyo
Deputy Directors, New York
Headquarters Section Chiefs, New York Headquarters

From: Anthony Lake 
Executive Director

Subject: UNICEF's Corporate Emergency Activation Procedure

We have learnt a number of lessons from past emergencies, especially the need for a clear chain of command. This Executive Directive is issued in order to strengthen our capacity to respond immediately and effectively to a Level 3 Emergency (i.e. large scale emergency – see definitions in annex). It outlines the chain of command and operating procedures to be activated in the event of a Level 3 emergency.

Relevant divisions are requested to streamline, simplify and finalize other standard operating procedures (SOPs) applicable to Level 3 by 30th April 2011. EMOPS will oversee this exercise and will report to the Executive Director.

A. APPLICATION CRITERIA

The Corporate Emergency Activation Procedure applies to a **Level 3 emergency**, either a **sudden-onset emergency** or a **significant and rapid deterioration of an ongoing complex emergency**.

The determination of a Level 3 Emergency is made on the basis of: scale; urgency; complexity; capacity; and reputational risk to UNICEF and/or the UN.

B. STEPS TO ACTIVATION

In case of an emergency and in accordance with the Core Commitments for Children (CCCs), the Country Office (CO) and Regional Office (RO) are expected to respond immediately to the needs of children. Within 18 hours of receiving the initial report on the extent of the emergency, the EMOPS Director:

- consults relevant Regional Director(s) (RDs), key UN and IASC partners, and DEDs;
- presents his/her assessment of the Level of the Emergency to the Executive Director;
- recommends activation or not and the duration of application.

The Executive Director:

- within 3 hours of receiving the recommendation from the EMOPS Director, decides whether to apply the Corporate Emergency Activation Procedure and if so, issues a Global Broadcast declaring Level 3, including a single chain of command;
- specifies the period of application (not more than 3 months);
- informs key partners and the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC).

C. MEASURES PUT IN PLACE BY ACTIVATION

- i. The Executive Director appoints a Global Emergency Coordinator (GEC). The GEC will usually be the EMOPS Director. However, in some circumstances, the Executive Director may decide to appoint someone else, if deemed appropriate.
- ii. A single chain of command with clear delegations of authority, including mobilization of corporate capacities in support of the emergency response is instituted. As necessary, an Emergency Management Team (EMT) will be established to support and advise the GEC.
- iii. An Immediate Response Team (IRT) is named by the GEC and deployed to affected country(ies), or regional hub (in case of a multi-country emergency) on a ‘no regrets’ basis. Deployment of the IRT and the RD will take place within 48 hours. Length of stay of individual IRT members will depend on the needs.
- iv. In exceptional circumstances, the Executive Director may decide to implement the ‘step aside’ procedure and replace the UNICEF Representative. The decision will be made on the recommendation of the RD, in consultation with the head of the IRT and GEC.
- v. Operating Procedures and list of core tasks for the first days of the emergency are implemented immediately.

C1. Accountabilities and Decision-Making at HQ/RO in support of response

The GEC is responsible for:

- Overseeing a single chain of command for the mobilization and coordination of all required support from HQ and RO including logistics towards the response in country;
- Deciding the appropriate composition of the IRT and the initial period of deployment;
- Deploying experienced staff to support the response in country for a period of up to three months;
- Overseeing the implementation of SOPs and relevant key tasks.

The GEC reports directly to the Executive Director during the first month after the onset of a crisis, and after that reports to the DED responsible for emergencies. He/she has direct access to RD(s), DEDs and ED to resolve any bottlenecks.

C2. Corporate Capacities to be mobilized in support of the Emergency Response

The Emergency Management Team (EMT) is comprised of the CO key staff, relevant RD(s) and HQ Division Directors or their delegated representatives. Unless otherwise decided, it will be chaired by the GEC. The EMT will be used by the GEC to ensure effective implementation of HQ division SOPs and a fully coordinated and speedy corporate response. Meetings will be held on an “as needed” basis.

C3. Immediate Response Team (IRT)

An IRT, led by a senior manager, is deployed immediately upon activation for up to 3 months. Members will have been pre-selected and trained as teams.

The Regional Director will accompany the IRT leader upon initial deployment to help determine IRT roles and responsibilities.

The IRT's role is to support the Country Representative (CR) and his/her team in the response.

Based on the working methods agreed with the RD and the CR, the IRT team leader reports to the GEC with the CR and RD kept informed. After the initial phase, unless there is a "step aside" or other arrangements, the IRT team leader reports to the Country Representative.

Final length of the IRT members' deployment will be recommended to the Executive Director by the RD and GEC based on an assessment of needs.

Depending on specific needs, the IRT could include experts in Communication, Security, ITC, Supply /Logistics, HR, Performance Monitoring and Reporting and Programs. It should comprise no more than 5 – 7 experts. Cluster leadership staff will be deployed separately.

C4. Leadership of the response at Country Level

Immediately upon activation, the Executive Director convenes RD(s), GEC, and DEDs, for an initial assessment of the capabilities in place in CO. On the basis of the RD's recommendation, the ED decides whether the country office leadership has to be changed.

If the current CR is confirmed, the RD and CR define the working methods between IRT members and current CO team.

If 'step aside' is invoked, the IRT-leader or the RD temporarily leads the response at the country level until the new senior designated official arrives.

C5. Operating Procedures (activated automatically)

UNICEF procedures related to emergencies should be simplified and streamlined to enable an effective response (e.g. HR, procurement, PCA). In key sectors, a brief standardized list of key tasks to be performed in an emergency will be developed, guiding the response at HQ and in country. Where such SOPs exist, they will be updated; others will be developed.

Sectors covered by such procedures include, at minimum: Resource Mobilization, HR (including staff support), Financial Management, ITC, Communications, Coordination, Supply and Logistics, Security, Humanitarian Advocacy.

D. DEACTIVATION

The Executive Director will deactivate the procedure for a specific emergency via Global Broadcast. The GEC and RD define a specific 'exit strategy' in the weeks prior to the deactivation of the level 3 emergency.

ANNEX – KEY DEFINITIONS

Emergency: A situation that threatens the lives and well-being of a population and requires extraordinary action to ensure their survival, care and protection (UNICEF PPPM 2009, and CCCs as per CF/EXD/2010-02, 2010).

Complex Emergency: A humanitarian crisis in a country, region or society where there is total or considerable breakdown of authority resulting from internal or external conflict which requires an international response that goes beyond the mandate or capacity of any single agency and/or the ongoing UN country programme (IASC, 1994).

Levels of Emergency Response:

- Level 1: the scale of the emergency is such that a Country Office can respond using its own staff, funding, supplies and other resources, and the usual RC/HQ support.
- Level 2: the scale of the emergency is such that a Country Office needs additional support from other parts of the organization (HQ, RC and COs) to respond and that the RO must provide leadership and support.
- Level 3: the scale of the emergency is such that an organization-wide mobilization is called for.

This determination that an emergency represents a "Level 3" is to be made on the basis of:

- Scale (either size of affected areas, number of affected/potentially affected women and children, number of countries affected);
- Urgency (importance of population displacement, intensity of armed conflict);
- Complexity (multi-layered emergency, multiple affected countries, presence of a multitude of actors, lack of humanitarian access, high security risks to staff, etc.);
- Capacity (low national response capacity, weak/fragile state, needs outweigh the capacity of CO and RO to respond);
- Reputational Risk (media and public attention and visibility, expectations on UNICEF by donors, the public, national stakeholders and partners).

No regrets principle: The organization will prefer to err on the side of deploying more capacity and mobilizing more resources in support of the response even if this proves to have been unnecessary after the fact.

Immediate Response Team (IRT): Comprised of mostly internal but also, possibly experts who have extensive and recent experience in emergencies, the IRT is deployed in support of the country level response. Its members will be trained together and pre-committed to deployment for up to 3 months.