

## **THE HUMANITARIAN RESET EMPOWERING HUMANITARIAN LEADERSHIP**

Empowering country level humanitarian leadership is a center piece of the humanitarian reset and covers decentralizing decision-making, contextualizing coordination structures and processes, and localizing the response.

This document summarizes the recommendations required to fully realize HC empowerment.<sup>1</sup> Implementation is unlikely to be uniform as there are recommendations readily implemented under the leadership of the USG for OCHA, others that require humanitarian systems transformation, and reforms linked to the UN80 initiative.

### **1. Contextualized Coordination Mechanisms**

The international humanitarian cluster system is deployed systematically because of its predictability but the system is blind to context and sidelines local capacity and systems. It is imperative that the coordination mechanism be rooted in the context to enhance effectiveness.

- a. HCs and HCTs, are empowered to assess and determine the type of decentralized coordination structure required at the country level based on existing coordination structures and the needs of affected communities. These mechanisms are tailored to the specific context, led by local actors wherever possible and supported by OCHA. This approach to coordination requires understanding of the context/political economy, involvement of national/local governments (where feasible) and affected communities. Area based coordination is often cited as an example.
- b. The IASC adopts a customized deployment model for the clusters, to complement, not overtake, local structures, deployed following a request by the HC in consultation with the HCT. Introduce a 'sliding scale' approach to deploying international humanitarian systems—ranging from minimal support in capable contexts to full deployment in collapsed systems. The consultations evidenced widespread dissatisfaction with the clusters, focusing on overwhelming international leadership, issues of language, and lack of results.
- c. A single coordination model that is area-based and under the leadership of the Humanitarian Coordinator, integrating the RRRM and HRNP planning and coordination processes.

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<sup>1</sup> These recommendations have been identified during extensive consultations with Humanitarian Coordinators, National NGOs, International NGOs and various UN entities. They do not reflect consensus but trends in the discussions.

## **2. Localized Planning**

The humanitarian sector is about people and engaging with the communities; currently the international humanitarian system is overly focused on planning processes.

Simplify the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC): Replace the paper-heavy HPC with a streamlined, outcome-focused process that reflects real-time needs and gaps:

- a. Decentralize operational planning: Empower regional and local actors to lead planning processes, with national-level consolidation for appeals and strategic alignment, with oversight by the HC and HCT, supported by OCHA.
- b. Standardize and rationalize data collection: Establish a unified data collection framework overseen by the HC and OCHA, in consultation with national authorities and national NGOs. Data to be collected based on actual operational needs and gaps.
- c. Under the authority of the HC, streamline and consolidate humanitarian appeals/fundraising processes. Currently, there are multiple agency-level appeals (UNICEF HAC, UNHCR RRP and separate cluster appeals) that often contradict or do not align with the HCT supported HRNP or related appeals/plans.

## **3. Enabling Funding**

To unify the humanitarian response and to drive localization, avail funds to the HC that operate under his/her authority in coordination with an advisory board, incorporating local actors and communities.

- a. Scale up and facilitate access to pooled funding for frontline responders: Increase the volume and flexibility of pooled funds (e.g., CERF, CBPFs) to 50% with a focus on reaching those closest to affected populations, including but not limited to local NGOs.
- b. Earmark funds for localization strategies: Allocate a fixed percentage of pooled funds to support capacity building, leadership development, and institutional strengthening.
- c. Promote direct donor funding to national/community-based organizations: Encourage donors to shift from traditional funding models to direct partnerships with national organizations, reducing intermediaries and increasing efficiency:
- d. Address politicization of aid: Use pooled funding and needs-based allocation to counteract donor-driven biases. Where necessary, decline funding that undermines humanitarian principles.

## **4. Coherent Humanitarian Leadership**

One of the persistent challenges to leadership is an inadequate overview of humanitarian action; it is challenging for an HC to oversee and guide the response as institutions behave individualistically weakening the cohesion and coherence of the response. It is also essential that OCHA invest in the next generation of humanitarian leaders.

- a. Implement the recommendations from the “Standing Alone, Standing Out” women’s leadership initiative with a focus on ensuring an interagency and UN secretariat system that provides integrated, flexible and structural lifecycle support to HC leadership.
- b. Strengthen the HC’s public and diplomatic role: Position the HC as the primary spokesperson for the humanitarian community and the main interlocutor with senior government officials and diplomatic missions.
- c. Ensure unified leadership and accountability: Require all UN entities involved in the response to report operationally to the HC, enhancing coherence without altering administrative lines.
- d. Establish flexible operational platforms: Under the authority of the HC, create country-specific operational teams (e.g., HCTs, Emergency Cell) composed of key humanitarian actors, with membership determined by relevance and capacity, not institutional affiliation.
- e. Manage high-level visits strategically: Ensure that visiting UN senior officials and related dignitaries engage with the HC to maintain coherence and avoid parallel messaging.
- f. Reinforce OCHA HoO’s support role as lead advisors to HCs on humanitarian and coordination issues.

## **5. Public Accountability Mechanism**

Overall accountability in the humanitarian sector is weak and does a disservice to the communities. Accountability must be strengthened and include the communities.

- a. Create national civil society advisory boards: Establish advisory groups composed of diverse local actors to provide regular input to the HC and humanitarian leadership.
- b. Institutionalize community dialogue: Facilitate regular, inclusive forums where affected communities can share feedback and influence decision-making. Prioritize marginalized voices.
- c. Conduct community-led assessments: Implement structured evaluations of the international response led by local communities, with findings feeding into strategic planning and performance reviews.
- d. Link leadership performance to accountability: Integrate community feedback and advisory board input into the performance assessments of HCs and Heads of OCHA offices.