

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE
TRANSFORMATIVE AGENDA REFERENCE DOCUMENT

3. Responding to Level 3 Emergencies: What 'Empowered Leadership' looks like in practice¹

November 2012

When disaster strikes, empowered and accountable leadership is a prerequisite to an effective humanitarian response.

Following the adoption of the IASC Transformative Agenda, Humanitarian Coordinators (HC)² will be empowered to lead the response to any Level 3 (L3) crisis for an initial period of three months.³ Speed in decision-making is essential. To be effective, the HC must be empowered to make timely decisions in the following key areas: setting overall priorities; allocating resources; monitoring performance and dealing with underperformance.

The HC will lead the international humanitarian response in consultation with national authorities and the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT). However, while the style of leadership exercised in even the most pressing circumstances must be consultative, in the first three months of a Level 3 crisis the HC will need to exercise considerable judgment to enable swift decision-making. This decision-making ability will be supported through enhanced accountability to the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), who will require more regular briefings from the HC during this period.

Within 5 days of the crisis, the HC will:

- provide the ERC with a *simple and strategic statement* outlining the scale and scope of the crisis and an initial prioritization for the response;
- recommend to the ERC the *optimal cluster configuration* for the response (i.e. which clusters will need to be activated or strengthened).

Within 7-10 days of the crisis, the HC will:

- finalize a *Flash Appeal*; having the final say on what projects are included/excluded for presentation to the IASC Principals;

¹ This paper supplements the longer paper on Empowered Leadership endorsed by the IASC Principals in April 2012.

² This applies to anyone responsible for HC functions during the initial 3-month period of an L3 response, whether it is an existing Resident Coordinator who has been assigned HC responsibilities, or to a new HC deployed to lead the response

³ The IASC Principals may decide to extend the period of 'empowered leadership' beyond three months on a case-by-case basis.

- lead the process to allocate at the country level the ERC's *L3 initial CERF allotment* of US\$10 million to 20 million⁴ and send an official CERF request to the ERC.

Throughout the initial period of the response, the HC will be empowered to:

1. *take decisions* on behalf of the HCT in circumstances where there is no consensus, and where a delay in making a decision could have a serious effect on the welfare of people for whom the humanitarian operation exists.
2. *Act as the primary focal point* for the operation as a whole⁵ in dealing with senior government officials such as a President, a Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance, and the National Disaster Management Authority, and in leading the HCT in donor coordination meetings. HCT members would join the HC in such meetings according to the topic, while maintaining and building on their own relationships with government and civil society partners and donors.⁶
3. *Confirm with agencies that they would share with the HC public statements/press releases* they make in support of their work, for his/her information (not clearance), shortly ahead of their release. This would apply to information provided either by an agency as Cluster Lead or by an agency in its own capacities.
4. *Ensure to the extent possible that messages are commonly agreed* by the HCT to give a collective view of the scale of the crisis and strategy to address it.
5. *raise HCT member and cluster lead performance issues* with HQs of the relevant organizations;

The HC will be accountable to the ERC for the management of an effective and well-prioritized response.

⁴ The ERC will approve an initial CERF allotment to the affected country of US\$10 million to 20 million, depending of the scale of the disaster, within 72 hours of the crisis.

⁵ Noting that in emergencies which involve refugees, the UNHCR representative has the mandate to prepare for, lead and coordinate the refugee response.

⁶ This would not prevent Heads of Agency meeting with senior government officials, but ideally should be done in consultation, and preferably together with, the HC.