INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE
TRANSFORMATIVE AGENDA REFERENCE DOCUMENT

1. Concept Paper on 'Empowered Leadership'

*This series of reference documents has been produced by the IASC Working Group
and serves as guidance on implementing the Transformative Agenda in Level 3 emergencies*

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This paper clarifies what is meant by the concept of 'empowered leadership' during the initial 3-month period following the declaration of a Level 3 (L3) emergency.[1]

I   What empowered leadership means

The IASC recognizes that the affected State holds the primary responsibility to care for victims of disasters and other emergencies, including the coordination and implementation of humanitarian assistance to meet their needs, as recognised in GA Resolution 46/182. The IASC member agencies are committed to supporting these efforts, and ensuring that adequate and empowered leadership is in place to coordinate the international community as a contribution to this response. In large-scale, system-wide emergencies, empowered leadership within the international system is needed for the immediate response to ensure that:

- as a first priority lives are saved, and people get the assistance and the protection they need; and

- as a second priority the effects of the crisis on human development are to be contained.

This paper is focused on empowered leadership by the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC)[2] but the HC can only be effective as a leader in an L3 emergency if the others within the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) recognise that leadership role and are empowered to meet their own responsibilities, and if actors within the humanitarian architecture abide by their already defined commitments, roles and responsibilities.[3]

While the existing tools an HC has may be adequate for many situations, especially if used by a skilled HC working together with an effective HCT and strong national partners, for L3 emergencies, the tools available to an HC must be strengthened to permit:

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[1]   A 'Level 3' is a major sudden-onset humanitarian crisis triggered by natural disaster or conflict which requires system-wide mobilization and response, as determined collectively by the IASC Principals under the leadership of the Emergency Relief Coordinator.

[2]   The definition of empowered leadership 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 humanitarian response (on a longer-term basis), or to a Senior/Emergency HC deployed from the L3 HC roster for a temporary period. Note that in a UN mission context, the ERC will confirm with the UN Secretary-General the relationship between the 'empowered' HC and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG).

[3]   One of the priority responsibilities of the HC is the convening of the HCT in the immediate aftermath of a crisis onset. Where a HCT does not already exist, the HC is responsible for the immediate establishment of a representative HCT as per agreed procedures and guidance.

1. The HC to *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. The HC to have *quick access to all key information* on the nature of the crisis, the needs, and the response, in order to lead the HCT in the development of a common analysis of the situation and priority needs, as well as to better coordinate the use of that information for advocacy and for a better response.

3. The HC *to better support the accountability* of all partners for the overall response, including for results, performance and to affected populations, together with the HCT, including through the HC-ERC compact.

II   What is needed for the HC to be empowered and effective:

For the HC to be an empowered and effective leader, he/she needs the following *set of tools, some of which are new, and some of which are modifications to existing tools:*

1. <u>In setting priorities and planning</u> an HC with empowered leadership would:

   a) Lead the HCT in the preparation of a strategic statement to be produced within 5 days of the crisis and take responsibility for delivering on the initial strategy. Develop a Strategic Response Plan within 30 days of declaration of the level 3 emergency. Liaise with the Government to ensure they are involved to the extent possible in the development of the plan.

   b) Approve cluster strategies and objectives in line with the agreed strategic priorities, with input from the HCT.

   c) Approve indicators for the cluster plans, based on the strategic response plan, and cluster strategies.

   d) Approve the projects that are to be funded by the initial 'L3' allocation of funds from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), based on the strategic statement, needs assessments, and HCT recommendations, and where possible after a rapid consultation with national authorities.   Subsequently approve the projects to be included in the Flash Appeal.

   e) Be accountable to the ERC for the above (and through new mechanisms being developed, to the HCT)

2. <u>In leading overall cluster coordination</u> an HC with empowered leadership will:

   a) Recommend to the ERC within 72 hours of the crisis, which existing coordination mechanisms will need to be strengthened and which clusters established.[4] The recommendation is linked to the priorities determined in the strategic statement, and is done in consultation with the HCT. The ERC transmits the proposal to IASC Principals for approval within 24 hours, before endorsing the HC's recommendations.

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[4]   The activation of clusters should only be recommended when there is an identified gap in the enabling environment warranting their activation and when justified around an identified need. Support of pre-existing, or the development of new, national mechanisms for sectoral coordination should be the priority.

b)   Advise Cluster Lead Agencies on cluster performance issues, with the Cluster Lead Agency taking the necessary action.[5] If there are issues with the performance of the Cluster Lead Agency in fulfilling its functions as per the agreed ToRs, the HC will advise the ERC on the situation, who will then take action with the Global Cluster Lead Agency.

c)   Constitute a smaller group of agencies, where necessary, for more regular consultations, ideally those with cluster lead or co-lead responsibilities within the HCT. NGO representatives should be included in this consultation.

3. <u>In leading advocacy and relationships with national authorities and with donor and other partners</u> an HC with empowered leadership will:

a)   Coordinate and lead the elaboration and implementation of a common strategy to secure access to enable the delivery of humanitarian assistance. In most instances, the HC will lead the advocacy activities on behalf of the HCT, or s/he may engage other agencies if they are better placed to do so.

b)   Act as the primary focal point for the operation as a whole[6] 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.[7]

4. <u>In ensuring adequate information and monitoring of the response</u> an HC with empowered leadership will:

(a)   Agree with HCT members at an early stage in the response the mechanisms and frequency with which information on agency and cluster activities will be made available to the HC (and/or OCHA). Cluster Lead agencies will remain responsible for the content of the information provided.

(b)   Ensure that OCHA and cluster staff engaged in information management collaborate effectively to process and analyse the large volume of information generated in an L3 emergency, to systematically ensure that the HC can engage in informed decision-making.

(c)   Ensure that this information is assembled daily by OCHA, in its support function to the HC, in a brief for members of the HCT.

(d)   Confirm with agencies that they will 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 applies to information provided either by an agency as Cluster Lead or by an agency in its own capacities.

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[5]   Noting that the RC/HC has selected Cluster Lead Agencies in consultation with the HCT based on the agencies' coordination and response capacity as well as the location and extent of their operational presence and/or ability to increase this, and that these have clearly-defined responsibilities as per the agreed ToRs.

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

[7]   This would not prevent Heads of Agency meeting with senior Government officials, but ideally should be done in consultation with the HC.

      (e)   Agree with all operational humanitarian partners the mechanisms through which they will provide monitoring information to the HC and the relevant Cluster Lead Agency. This information would include needs assessment results, progress towards agreed indicators in the strategic statement, and information on the use of humanitarian funds.[8]

5. <u>In leading humanitarian funding strategies</u> an HC with empowered leadership will:

      a)   Lead the process of developing the Flash Appeal within 7-10 days of the event.

      b)   Determine CERF funding priorities based on the strategic statement, including approving projects to be funded by the immediate L3 CERF allocation of $10-20 million.

6<u>. In aiming for strengthened accountability</u> an HC with empowered leadership will:

      a)   Hold Cluster Lead Agencies accountable for ensuring the key tasks outlined above are implemented to ensure the overall response is effective and timely; and in particular hold them accountable for regularly reporting on progress and achievements made towards cluster objectives and their commitments as per the strategic statement.

      b)   Hold OCHA accountable for its support to the HC function, and ensure the direct reporting line between the OCHA Head of Office and the HC is strengthened, with OCHA systematically sharing all relevant communications with HQ with the HC.

      c)   Report on functions and responsibilities for the duration of the 'empowered leadership' period. In addition, through procedures being developed, the HC's performance would be regularly monitored.

In all the above cases, where decisions have to be made during the 'empowered leadership' period, it is preferable that decisions are made by consensus within the HCT. However, the HC would be the final arbiter when no consensus can be reached.

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[8]   In line with the agreed monitoring framework developed in consultation with the HCT for the overall response