

ERC Directive to Humanitarian Coordinators¹ on Internal Displacement

This guidance responds to the action point, included in the [IASC's Management Response](#) to the [2024 Independent IDP Review of the Humanitarian Response to Internal Displacement](#), for the ERC to issue a directive to Humanitarian Coordinators spelling out their leadership responsibility on IDP issues. It is to be read in conjunction with the recently developed IASC-UNSDG Solutions Guidance.

Advocacy

The RC/HC must engage with States, and non-State parties to conflicts where relevant, to ensure IDP protection, support, and inclusion in national laws, policies and plans, including in non-government-controlled areas.

- RC/HCs are accountable for advocating for governments to take up their responsibilities for providing IDP protection and support, addressing the protection and environmental risks that drive internal displacement, and resolving internal displacement, in line with applicable international and national laws and frameworks, as the primary duty bearers for their displaced citizens/residents. Advocacy must include pressing duty bearers to: take proactive measures to prevent new conflict- or disaster-driven displacements; ensure government-led response and solutions efforts are centred on the preferences of displaced people and any movements are carried out in a safe, dignified and voluntary manner; mobilize supportive government leadership and whole-of-government approaches to develop and implement national legislation and policies, in line with the [Guiding Principles](#); and implement measures to ensure IDPs participation in all aspects of public affairs without discrimination.
- RC/HCs are accountable for ensuring principled humanitarian action that reflects the [centrality of protection](#), reinforcing HCT understanding of protection as a shared responsibility, and ensuring approaches to IDP protection and assistance are appropriately tailored for IDPs in government- and non-government-controlled areas. (For more information, please see the [updated IASC IDP Protection Policy](#))

Strategic Vision

The RC/HC must ensure integration of IDP-specific needs and priorities into Humanitarian Needs and Response Plans (HNRPs) wherever relevant, and national development plans when feasible, to ensure humanitarian assistance lays the groundwork for solutions and facilitates Humanitarian-Development-Peace collaboration.

- RC/HCs are accountable for ensuring the design, planning and coordination of humanitarian responses consider the specific priorities and needs of IDPs, in all their diversities. Planning must be centrally informed by consultations with IDPs and other displacement-affected communities.
- In the delivery of humanitarian assistance, RC/HCs are accountable for ensuring a well-coordinated, comprehensive, multi-sector response to displacement. Humanitarian response should be aimed at addressing IDPs' most severe needs, while, whenever possible, being sensitive to the drivers of displacement, strengthening the resilience of IDPs and connecting to longer-term development and peace efforts to advance durable solutions.

¹ While the current Directive is addressed specifically to Humanitarian Coordinators (HC), in the absence of a HC designation, Resident Coordinators (RCs) remain accountable for the coordination of humanitarian responses. Thus throughout the document, RC/HCs rather than just HCs are addressed.

- RC/HCs are encouraged to articulate a joint multi-year HCT/UNCT strategic approach towards internal displacement and embed such a strategic approach in existing country-level strategies, in particular the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP), unless the RC/HC deems it useful to have a stand-alone strategy. (See Box)

Considerations when developing a Strategic Approach to Addressing Internal Displacement

- Strategic approaches should centre on engagement with IDPs and displacement-impacted communities to identify their priorities and preferences, be rooted in the specific protection needs of affected people and be aimed at advancing durable solutions from the outset of a humanitarian emergency.
- Strategic approaches should identify short-, medium- and long-term investments required to support pathways to solutions.
- Where appropriate, strategic approaches should prioritize working with and through national and local governments, support IDPs to participate in the planning and solutions led by their government, address the needs of urban IDPs, and feature flexible assistance modalities, such as the increased use of multipurpose cash, and prioritization of programs that support livelihoods, land and housing, education, and access to documentation.
- Strategic approaches should transition as soon as the conditions are right into a Government Solutions Strategy supported by the UNCT/HCT.

For further details on what should be included, please see also IASC/UNSDG Solutions Guidance

Coordination

The RC/HC must design the humanitarian coordination architecture according to the context and is responsible for ensuring optimal humanitarian-development-peace collaboration to support early solutions, whilst maintaining a principled humanitarian response.

- To ensure sub-national coordination is fit for purpose, the RC/HC has the authority and responsibility to arrange the sub-national coordination system according to the context and the demands of the response², in consultation with the HCT and Cluster Lead Agencies³ (CLAs) in contexts where clusters may be activated.
- RC/HCs are responsible for ensuring that context-appropriate coordination arrangements enable optimal humanitarian-development-peace collaboration and coordinated leadership from the outset.

Mutual Accountability

The RC/HC must ensure that IASC members operate in line with existing commitments.

- The RC/HC is ultimately accountable to people in need of humanitarian assistance.
- In line with the [IASC Guidance on the Cluster Coordination at Country Level](#), the RC/HC has the authority to designate Cluster Lead Agencies in each country, in consultation with the HCT and global Cluster Lead Agencies (CLAs),⁴ on the basis of their coordination and response capacity,

² This might include coordination arrangements other than - and/or complementary to - clusters, including area-based coordination arrangements that facilitate a collective response to community priorities

³ Consultation with Global CLAs should naturally also include Global AoR leads, as relevant.

⁴ Consultation with Global CLAs should naturally also include Global AoR leads, as relevant.

operational presence, and ability to scale up.⁵ Similarly, in instances where the initially designated CLA in that country is not performing, the RC/HC has the authority to re-assign the CLA role, in consultation with the HCT and endorsement of the EDG.

- The RC/HC must ensure mutual accountability for performance of Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) and Clusters for IDP protection and assistance, including through cluster performance monitoring (CCPMs), Inter Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) Performance Reviews, Peer-to-Peer (P2P) Reviews, the annual operational reviews carried out by the Emergency Directors Group (EDG), and real-time escalation of cases of under-performance from Humanitarian Coordinators to the EDG and, if necessary, the IASC Principals.
- In line with [IASC Standard ToRs for Humanitarian Country Teams](#), the RC/HC is accountable for ensuring HCT Compacts are in place. HCT Compacts should be appropriately monitored, regularly updated and, in line with commitments in the Management Response to the IDP Review, should reflect the specific priorities and needs of and appropriate response for IDPs, as appropriate.
- If the ERC considers the RC/HC to be unable to fulfil his/her humanitarian coordination responsibilities (in accordance with UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182), in consultation with the IASC, the ERC may appoint a Deputy HC and or Regional HC to support humanitarian coordination functions.⁶ In exceptional cases, the ERC may appoint a separate HC.

⁵ See the Cluster Coordination Reference Module, 2015 p.10

⁶ Pg. 26 of the [Humanitarian Coordinator Handbook](#).

Annex: Resources and existing guidance to support RC/HCs

Advocacy:

- Additional support to carry out advocacy can be found with the newly established Solutions Champions group, the Special Rapporteur for the Human Rights of IDPs, the [IDP Protection Expert Group](#) (IPEG), and the newly created Solutions Hub.
- The RC/HC can further utilize national and international human rights mechanisms, IASC Advocacy Pilots, EDG visits, and other UN High Officials, IASC Joint Statements to amplify protection advocacy efforts.

Strategic Vision:

- Durable Solutions Working Groups which comprise relevant humanitarian, development, peacebuilding and human rights actors can support the development of the Strategic Approach. OCHA and DCO the RCO should be engaged to ensure appropriate alignment with and embedding into existing strategies and coordination structures. UNDP, UNHCR, and IOM have also committed support of their country offices, in their roles as Solutions Champions.
- Annual “pivot” discussions (as described in Section 3.2 of the Solutions Guidance) can facilitate determination of the appropriateness of moving towards more development- and government-led approaches.

Coordination:

- Annual Humanitarian Architecture Reviews, [called for by the IASC Principals in the IASC Transformative Agenda](#) and described on page 35 and 37 of the [IASC Guidance on Cluster Coordination at Country Level, 2015](#), can be used to identify whether the existing structure is fit-for-purpose.
- [OCHA/UNHCR Joint Letter on Mixed Settings](#)

Mutual Accountability:

- Cluster and/or agency performance issues should be escalated in real-time to the EDG, and if necessary, to the IASC Principals, as highlighted in [the IASC Transformative Agenda Chapeau & Compendium of Actions](#): “Mutual accountability will be enhanced within and between the HC, HCT members, Cluster Coordinators and other cluster partners, based on a clear, concise, time-bound and results-oriented strategy to deliver. Individual roles and responsibilities in contributing to the collective humanitarian response will be clearly outlined and can then be better communicated to all stakeholders, including donors. This will minimize misunderstandings and create transparent and realistic expectations with regard to the commitments of the HC, HCT members and Cluster Lead Agencies (specifically in their role as “Provider of Last Resort”). Implementation of the plan will be monitored, enabling feedback on the performance of both the HC and the HCT members,”
- [Guidance Note on Using the Cluster Approach to Strengthen Humanitarian Response](#), 2006: “In cases where stakeholders consider that a sector lead at the country level is not adequately carrying out its responsibilities, it is the responsibility of the Humanitarian Coordinator to consult the sector lead concerned and, where necessary, also the Humanitarian Country Team. If necessary, based on these consultations the Humanitarian Coordinator may propose alternative arrangements.” -pg. 10
- [HC Handbook](#), 2024: “Where country-level actions are not proving fruitful, the HC may also request to brief the EDG on key challenges, including CLA accountabilities ... In cases where a CLA is not adequately carrying out its responsibilities, consult the Country Director/representative of the agency/organization concerned to avoid the need to propose alternative arrangements.” -pg 61