

## Operating Centres – Re-establishing Predictable Humanitarian Response

### Problem Statement

Almost nine months after the beginning of the crisis, the response still has characteristics of an early phase of a response. It is felt that whilst there needs to be some flexibility in the current response, it is limited in its predictability, not maximizing its potential effectiveness, nor in a resource constrained environment, is it maximizing its efficiency - both for affected people as well as for the humanitarian community.

- Responses often not integrated (multi-sectoral) - limiting the degree of impact for populations
- Limited linkages and understanding of populations and needs limits specificity of response
- Scattered response – currently Logistics cluster is going to over 60 locations (excluding WFP)
- Locations are often close together – potentially duplicating assistance to the same population
- Responses are often not regular or predictable in different locations
- Limited protective nature of humanitarian presence as not consistent
- Scattered unpredictable response limits involvement of national NGOs/CBOs

### Purpose

The (re)establishment of the humanitarian community in strategic field locations to cover defined catchment areas. An established presence and sustained multi-sector response means improved predictability, effectiveness, and efficiency of the response with better results for affected people<sup>1</sup>:-

### More Effective

- Better and more consistent information, analysis, and understanding of needs communities to design more appropriate responses according to specific needs and context
- Improved ability to systematically plan and implement a more **specific, targeted and integrated response** for **greater impact** of response
- Better community **relations and accountability** to affected people for improved and continuous access, **minimizing risks** for both communities and humanitarian organisations, as well as a better **understanding of vulnerability**
- **Improved** access to and **targeting** of response to the most vulnerable
- Potential for **increased protection** through consistent presence, appropriate and 'do no harm' responses
- Provides a greater opportunity for humanitarians to mobilize outwards from centres to affected populations, or for populations to approach 'point in time' assistance/responses
- Agreeing key operational centres from which outreach can be made

### More Predictable

- Agreed collective vision to ensure an integrated multi-sector response area
- More focused response on a regular basis; more consistent response for affected people
- Establishing flight schedules, accommodation, and other support to humanitarians where needed
- Agreed approaches to type of and structure of presence; response with fuller assessment of risks and compromises this brings

### More Efficient

- Less scattered response enabling targeting with multi-sectoral response with existing resources
- Reduction in number of locations served logistically; more efficient use of resources – common services, regular flight services to a smaller number of locations (currently more than 60 locations being served by logistics cluster)
- Minimizing duplication of interventions through agreed areas of operation

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<sup>1</sup> The Leer response is noted where a multi-sectoral response to malnutrition has had significant results

## Criteria for Selection of Operating Centre

Small inter-sectoral, inter-agency groups will meet to review and propose optimal locations based on an agreed set of criteria which will include:-

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| Number of and acute nature of need; displacement                                    | Radius of access to affected people                                       | Risks to population; ability to implement and 'do no harm' |
| Ability to negotiate consistent access  | Socio-cultural and conflict analysis                                      | Risks to humanitarian community                            |
| Physical and logistical access constraints to set-up – flooding, water availability | Ability to mitigate risks related to Aid as an instrument in the conflict | Wet season/dry season appropriateness of operating centre  |
| Ability to share assets between implementing organisations                          | No overlap with existing operating centres                                | Ability to carry out longer term work                      |

Consideration and coordination on locations to be used by WFP will also be included

### Key Points

- **Operating centres are a strategic concept.**
- **Operating centres are not a new process.** In many instances they build on and support further what is already happening in some areas, but attempt to bring a **more systematic and predictable** approach to existing humanitarian response.
- **Challenges to current means of operating** can be more effectively coordinated and addressed
- **Uses existing resources** and funding to work more strategically, effectively and efficiently and will be complemented or start-up support through other mechanisms eg outreach through satellites from operating centres or rapid response mechanisms
- **Operating centres are flexible to context.** In some locations physical infrastructure support and common services may be required. In others some infrastructure may be present and some implementing organizations have the capacity to set up on their own. Context will dictate the 'lightness' of operating centres. New locations may require more detailed assessment/forward teams to establish appropriateness as an operating centre
- **Coordination mechanisms** around the operating centres will need to be agreed depending on architecture
- **Security plans/processes same as other locations** - allows for coordinated establishment of evacuation plan and other security management the same as in any location

### Proposed Initial Next Steps

1. ICWG, HCT and NGO Form approval of concept
2. Inter-sector/Inter-organisational mini-groups (including national NGOs), supported by logistics and conflict analysis capacity to review the 3 States for locations which may be appropriate as operating centres
3. Assessment of current multi-sectoral/integrated response capacity in proposed locations
4. Assessment of need for physical support infrastructure
5. Review need for location assessments and forward teams