

Information Note on the IASC Transformative Agenda

WHAT IT MEANS FOR FAO IN GENERAL, AND FAORS IN PARTICULAR

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) is a global humanitarian forum established in 1991 by a resolution of the United Nations General Assembly to bring together the main operational relief agencies from the United Nations, international components of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, the International Organization for Migration and international non-governmental organizations.

The IASC Transformative Agenda is an agreed set of recommendations aimed at making the humanitarian response system more efficient and effective.

FAO is committed to playing a full and effective role in humanitarian reform through the IASC. Our full engagement with the ERC-led Transformative Agenda is a key part of this commitment.

Until now, the Transformative Agenda process has focused primarily on global-level actions and decisions. This emphasis is now changing, and in 2012 the focus will be increasingly directed at the country level. At the IASC Principals meeting that took place earlier this year in New York it was recognized that all agencies – including FAO – have much to do in this regard. FAO is now moving in that direction.

In addition, the Transformative Agenda should not be seen in any way as separate to FAO's ongoing transformational process and indeed, it comes at a very good time for FAO.

The Transformative Agenda will contribute directly to strengthening our country operations and programmes – and strengthening our space in the multilateral architecture – to streamlining FAO procedures, to empowering the field and to integrating our emergency and development operations.

It will also contribute to our ongoing work to integrate our emergency and development work as we place increasing emphasis on building the resilience of vulnerable people and build upon FAO's strong comparative advantages to address food security along the emergency, early recovery, rehabilitation and development continuum.




The response to the Haiti earthquake and Pakistan floods in 2010 exposed a number of weaknesses and inefficiencies in the international humanitarian response. The Transformative Agenda aims to ensure that these shortcomings are addressed.

Governments, affected communities, humanitarian organisations, donors and the UN General Assembly itself have stressed the need for a more efficient and well-coordinated international response to major disasters.


We recognize that we need to focus not on the process of implementing change, but on the impact of change. Through the changes agreed, more lives will be saved, and we will all be more accountable for our actions.

Donors are watching this process very closely too. We – FAO – will be judged by how well we contribute to the Transformative Agenda, and I am certain that this will have positive resource

 Transformative Agenda

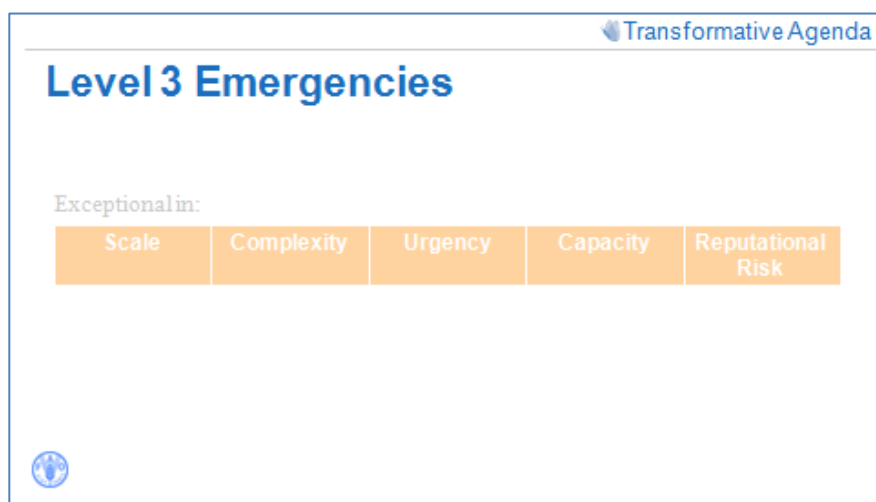
“In December 2011, the IASC adopted the Transformative Agenda.
It focuses on three key areas: better leadership, improved
accountability to all our stakeholders and improved coordination.
The impact of these changes, which we are now introducing, will be
more lives saved, faster.”

*-Valerie Amos,
 Emergency Relief Coordinator and
 Chair of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee*



implications if we are effective.

The Transformative Agenda consists of a set of concrete actions to transform the way in which the humanitarian community responds to emergencies. It focuses on improving the timeliness and effectiveness of our collective response through stronger leadership, more effective coordination structures, and improved accountability. For the first time, the IASC has agreed on how to respond together to major emergencies requiring a system-wide response. These are being called Level 3 emergencies and will be judged against 5 criteria.



Level 3 emergencies are exceptional in view of their scale, complexity, urgency, the capacity required to respond and the reputational risk to humanitarian organisations and responders if we don't get them right.

The IASC will meet within 48 hours of a sudden-onset emergency to determine whether it is a Level 3 emergency or not.

Level 3 emergencies are those that require a system-wide response and for those agencies directly involved, an organization-wide response, coordinated in our case, by FAO headquarters.



The designation of a Level 3 emergency will automatically activate a system-wide response to ensure we have the right leadership, coordination mechanisms and accountability framework.

For FAO, this will require the development of new Standard Operating Procedures – SOPs – to ensure that we can participate effectively in the humanitarian system response.

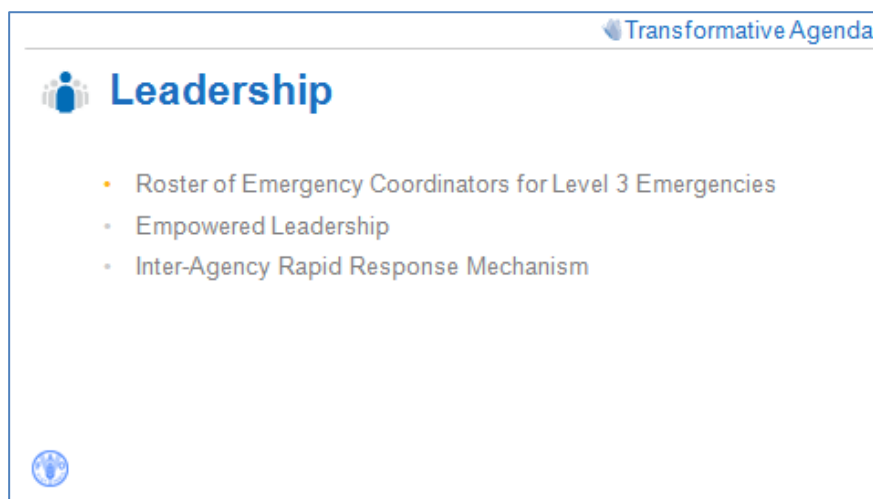
The process to develop SOPs is being taken forward through the Operational Arm by TCE, under the leadership of Laurent Thomas.

The development of SOPs will be a vital step to ensure that we fully “ready” and fit for purpose with regard to the Transformative Agenda.



The Humanitarian Coordinator (HC), the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) – including FAORs – country clusters and cluster lead agencies remain the prime actors supporting national response efforts. The Transformative Agenda seeks to further strengthen these actors.

Below are some of the actions associated with each of these pillars.



The IASC has established a pool of top-notch emergency managers with experience in managing large-scale emergencies who can be deployed as senior emergency coordinators in the case of a Level 3 emergency. This is the L3 HC pool. There are no FAO staff in this pool at the moment.


With "Empowered Leadership", the senior emergency coordinator/HC will have more authority to determine the overall strategy, the activation of clusters, the allocation of resources and advocacy priorities for a period of three months.


The decision to deploy a senior emergency coordinator from the L3 HC pool will be based on a review of existing capacity at field level. In some cases, the ERC will empower the existing RC/HC to lead the response without deploying a senior emergency coordinator from the L3 HC pool. In others, the ERC will choose a candidate from the L3 HC roster with relevant experience.

The Heads of Cluster Lead Agencies in the country will report directly to him/her on the achievements of cluster objectives, as outlined in the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) strategic statement/plan.


To make sure the coordination mechanisms function well, humanitarian organizations, including FAO will deploy pre-identified experts such as health coordinators, food security coordinators, etc.

The procedures specify that any such deployments must take into account existing capacity at field level, and aim to augment and support – rather than replace – this. In any major emergency, additional capacity is required in the early stages of the response. The Transformative Agenda makes this deployment more predictable by pre-identifying senior and experienced staff who are on stand-by through the Inter-Agency Rapid Response Mechanism (IARRM).

 Transformative Agenda

 **Coordination**


- Strategic Use of Clusters
- Simplified Cluster Management
- Minimum Commitments for Participation in Clusters
- Strengthening NGO Representation in the Humanitarian Country Team




The activation of clusters will be more strategic, less automatic and limited in time. Clusters should only be activated if the HC and HCT deem it necessary. They should focus on results, and not on process.


Clear and concise reference documents are being produced to make it easier to manage clusters.

Ensuring that the NGO community is represented at the HCT and can influence the decisions is also crucial.

 Transformative Agenda

 **Accountability**

- Common Humanitarian Programme Cycle to Achieve Collective Results
- Assessment, Strategic Statement, Resource Allocation, Implementation, Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation
- Common Performance and Reporting Framework
- Accountability to Affected People



IASC Principals agreed on the use of common tools to manage each phase of the humanitarian cycle programme, from needs assessments to reporting.

An initial strategic statement will be developed within the first five days of a Level 3 emergency based on a commonly defined scenario and initial rapid multi-cluster needs assessments. This strategic statement will establish the response priorities, identify “who does what,” and form the basis of the Flash Appeal that will be launched within the first 10 days of a Level 3 emergency, and be revised after 30 days. This Flash Appeal will trigger disbursement of funds from the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF).

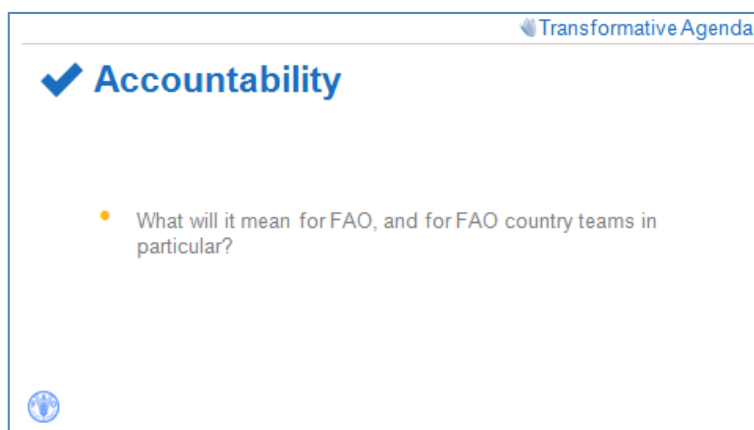


Speed is key to getting people the aid they need as rapidly as possible. While it will be challenging to produce a strategy so quickly, the initial strategic statement does not need to be detailed. It will provide the overall vision and priorities for the response.

Results will be measured against a commonly-agreed monitoring and reporting framework.

Real-time evaluations will be timelier and more targeted to allow the HCT to make any corrections required.

In 2011, the IASC Principals confirmed the fundamental importance of accountability to affected



people. They agreed to integrate it into their policies and operational guidelines.

FAO's accountability will be linked to how we perform as part of the Humanitarian Country Team. You as the FAOR will have to lead FAO's participation and contribution to the HCT, closely supported by your Emergency Coordinator and emergency specialists throughout the Organization.

Enhanced leadership is an evolving concept. Some agencies are more comfortable than others with the idea. As you can image, the crucial question relates to "authority" and "accountability". In all cases, your primary accountability is to the Director-General, and FAO in general, but we will have to recognise that we/you are also increasingly accountable to the HCT and the populations affected by disasters.



FAORs will be expected to be fully responsible for, and accountable for, leadership within the Humanitarian Country Team as well as the functioning of the FAO-WFP Food Security Cluster and implementation of FAO emergency/rehabilitation activities.

In addition, where relevant, FAORs and/or Emergency Coordinators appraisals may include views of the Humanitarian Coordinator

To conclude, FAO is forming a pool of P5 level or higher for rapid response as emergency or cluster coordinators to support country offices when needed.

FAO Country Offices will be expected to manage, with WFP, the Food Security Cluster (when activated). Of course, support is provided from the global Food Security Cluster unit which is housed at WFP and staffed with staff from FAO, WFP and other partner organizations.

And finally, implicit in FAO's commitment to the Transformative Agenda is improved programme quality and delivery in our own emergency/rehabilitation activities, a key part of the integration process.

There is much to be done as regards the Transformative Agenda, and it implies a lot more responsibility – and accountability – for FAORs and others in our Decentralized Offices. But like everything else, there is no turning back.