

HUMANITARIAN INFORMATION CENTRE IN PAKISTAN

JOINT REVIEW MISSION

REPORT

7 – 15 February 2006

United Kingdom Department for International Development

European Commission Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid – ECHO

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

United States Agency for International Development/Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance.

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The Review Team members would like to express their thanks to the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator in Pakistan and United Nations Country Team for their constructive engagement in the review process. Particular thanks are due to the outgoing and incoming HIC Managers and the staff of the Humanitarian Information Centre, all of whom provided the team with excellent support, advice and guidance throughout the mission. Their positive and spirited engagement in the review process is testament to their dedication to the cause of ensuring the relevance of information management to humanitarian response.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Humanitarian Information Centres (HICs) manage information to support the coordination of response to natural disasters and complex emergencies. As such, they provide a common service to the humanitarian community. Since 1999 13 HICs have been deployed to a variety of humanitarian emergencies¹. It is only in the last 2 years that HICs have been deployed to natural disasters; to Sri Lanka and Indonesia in response to the Indian Ocean earthquake/tsunami and more recently to the South Asia earthquake in Pakistan.

The health of each HIC is a reflection of the state of information sharing and management in a specific response. Although understanding the situation on the ground is something that the entire response community requires, as is indicated by the high expectations placed upon the HIC, sufficient priority is not given to develop information management capacity within all organisations responding to the crisis in order to have access to the information required to produce the “big picture”. Similarly, information management has not been addressed in the humanitarian reform agenda. The findings of this review confirm this state of affairs.

This was the first joint review of a humanitarian information centre involving the HIC’s three key donors, DFID, EC-ECHO and USAID, together with OCHA. It has been acknowledged that complementary funding mechanisms provide flexibility and appropriate resources to support HICs. In this case, EC-ECHO provides thematic funding to OCHA to strengthen its information management capacity across the Office, as well as geographical funding for individual HICs; DFID provides the HIC equipment module, funding for individual HICs, and staff secondments; and USAID/OFDA provides funding for the OCHA/FIS, an HIC Rapid Response Fund, technical assistance, and staff secondments. The Review Team notes that this joint review has been essential to enhance mutual understanding among OCHA and its donors and ensure that the HIC concept maintains its relevance in what is an ever-changing environment.

Based on this review, the decision to deploy the HIC was correct and timely. However, as at the end of January 2006 the Pakistan HIC had only partially fulfilled its potential due to a number of both internal and external factors.

Key issues which require attention at the strategic level are as follows:

- (a) Lessons identified in both the 2004 USAID/DFID evaluation of HICs and the 2005 OCHA/ECHO monitoring mission to Sumatra and Sri Lanka have been only minimally implemented. While recognizing that constraints prevented full implementation of these recommendations it is now imperative that OCHA turn these lessons learned into lessons applied.
- (b) The issue of analysis of information produced by the HIC for operational and strategic decision-support remains unresolved. While this is a product of the lack of clarity in the relationship between OCHA and the HIC it has a direct impact on the coordination function. OCHA needs to take ownership of the HIC concept and make full use of its potential. The HIC, when deployed, needs to ensure that it is relevant to the coordination and operational requirements of the situation.
- (c) Further, the HIC has not provided clarity on its common service role to the wider humanitarian community, nor clarified the mutual expectations and obligations of both the HIC and its stakeholders. The HIC needs to produce clear and concise materials which explain its role and function and what it needs in order to do its job. Improved outreach programmes to UN agencies and NGOs providing much greater clarity on the role of the HIC need to be put into place. This is an urgent priority if the HIC is to retain the confidence of its constituents.

¹ 1999 – Kosovo
 2000 - Eritrea, Sierra Leone
 2001 - Afghanistan
 2002 – Goma (Democratic Republic of the Congo), occupied Palestinian territory
 2003 - Iraq, Liberia
 2004 - Darfur (Sudan)
 2005 – Sumatra (Indonesia), Sri Lanka, Niger, Pakistan.

- (d) OCHA needs to take ownership of the cluster approach and make full use of its potential. The cluster approach needs to ensure that it is relevant to the coordination and operational requirements of the situation. The cluster approach has not incorporated information management practice as a key element of coordination and the implementation of this approach in this specific crisis has revealed new and significant challenges to the HIC's capacity to respond. This needs to be addressed through the ongoing humanitarian reform process.
- (e) Sole location at the capital level means that the HIC is disconnected from its key clients and providers. The HIC must deploy to the site of the response operation. It must also ensure that the work done in the field is synchronized with the development of applications/formats in other field offices and the capital.
- (f) Not all products have to be produced at the HIC. The HIC has options; the Geographic Information Support Team has GIS capacity to assist in data integration, cartography and analysis. Better use should be made of this and other available resources.

Coordination is about identifying gaps and avoiding duplication. All humanitarian stakeholders are responsible to ensure that information is given in a timely manner. OCHA has a central and unique role to play in providing leadership and coordinating the efforts of the international community. The reform of the humanitarian system provides a timely window of opportunity to ensure that better information management practice by all stakeholders ensures effective coordination. We should not lose this momentum. The necessary measures and systems must be put into place before the next natural disaster strikes.

INTRODUCTION

1. A review team, consisting of Sarah Telford from the UK Department for International Development, Montse Pantaleoni from the European Commission Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid – ECHO, Rhonda Davis Stewart from the United States Agency for International Development/Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance and Oliver Lacey-Hall from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs visited Pakistan between 7 and 15 February 2006.
2. Pre-agreed terms of reference highlighted the following areas of enquiry:
 - a. a review of the HIC concept since its initial development and the agreed IASC endorsed Terms of Reference (Feb 2003) with reference to the HIC Evaluation (USAID/DFID) of 2004 and the Humanitarian Response Review (2005);
 - b. examination of the extent to which the recommendations of the ECHO-OCHA Joint Monitoring Mission to Tsunami affected countries (April 2005) were implemented in the context of the Pakistan HIC deployment;
 - c. a broad review of the deployment, activities, relationships with stakeholders and proposed transition of the Humanitarian Information Centre in Pakistan, through semi-structured stakeholder interviews and a review of HIC products and services;
 - d. a wider review of the extent to which information management culture has developed in the humanitarian community (including Government and donors) in Pakistan, and a related assessment of the extent to which the implementation of the Humanitarian Response Review (particularly the “cluster” coordination framework) has impacted upon the development of an information management culture in humanitarian response.
3. The methodology adopted for the mission consisted of semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders (see Mission Programme at Annex 4) One two-day field trip was undertaken to Muzaffarabad. Due to prevailing security restrictions a planned mission to Mansehra and Battagram was cancelled.
4. A review of the terms of reference during the mission indicated that they required some revision on the basis of findings. Thus, this mission report is structured around three key areas. These are (i) the Pakistan deployment, (ii) the humanitarian information centre concept, (iii) the information management environment and the cluster approach to coordination.
5. The review team found that the recommendations stemming from the USAID/DFID Evaluation of HICs in 2004 and the joint ECHO-OCHA mission to HICs in Sri Lanka and Sumatra in 2004 remained only partially implemented, with key recommendations not addressed. The Review Team recognised that the absence of a Manager at OCHA’s Field Information Support Project in New York between May and November 2005, and the pressures for FIS in providing oversight management and support a total of six humanitarian information centres during 2005, had diverted attention away from ensuring implementation of the recommendations. However, the Review Team fully expects OCHA to now move forward rapidly on the implementation of the recommendations from this Review Mission, many of which are not substantially different from those identified in the USAID/DFID Evaluation and the joint ECHO/OCHA mission report.
6. This report aims to identify issues and areas where improvements can be made to future deployments of humanitarian information centres. Where corrective actions are applicable to the Pakistan HIC these have been addressed through OCHA’s management channels. The recommendations arising from the mission findings aim to be realistic. The table at Annex 1 lays out the recommendations, together with identification of the concerned action entity and a timeline.

7. The findings of the review team conclude that the decision to deploy the HIC to Pakistan was correct. While not always in a timely manner, the HIC has produced basic coordination tools², provided some technical support to cluster lead agencies and NGO partners, integrated available government and UN data, provided capacity building support for government and other entities, and developed a “MapPak” – a map CD-Rom which enables non-GIS computer users to access and generate thematic maps.
8. Offset against these achievements are a number of systemic, management and operational issues which can be applied, in most cases, more broadly to the Humanitarian Information Centre concept. After 13 HIC deployments since 1999 the team’s findings revealed that a partial lack of clarity remained on what the HIC is supposed to do and who is responsible for providing it with strategic guidance. The 2003 IASC agreed concept paper on the HIC (Annex 3), while a useful tool in terms of describing deployment modalities, does not sufficiently define the concrete role of the HIC in emergency response nor the respective roles of the HIC and OCHA. Further, the document was clearly written in the context of response to complex emergencies. This was the third HIC deployment to a natural disaster. It is clear that the modus operandi for natural disaster response differs considerably with that applied to complex emergencies. The different timelines and pressures between response to natural disasters and complex emergencies and the additional lack of clarity in this deployment related to the implementation of the cluster approach to coordination increased the challenges faced in Pakistan.
9. On the basis of the findings of the review team it is clear that a number of steps need to be taken to ensure that stakeholders understand the role the HIC plays. Further stakeholders need to better understand their role in making the HIC relevant and effective in emergency response. A number of these issues cannot be addressed at the start of each emergency, but rather need to be settled away from the emergency arena and mainstreamed into OCHA management structures, the inter-agency standing committee processes and the humanitarian reform. Finally, expectations need to be better managed both within the HIC and by its stakeholders.

PAKISTAN DEPLOYMENT

Findings:

- HICs, particularly in a rapid onset disaster, need a Technical Coordinator who is deputy to the HIC Manager. These are two full time roles that need to be filled if the HIC response is to be effective. Lack of a Technical Coordinator was a key problem in Pakistan.
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- Synergies between MapAction and the HIC were not clear during the first two weeks of the response operation while Map Action was in-country providing early mapping support to the UNDAC Team.
- Deployment of the HIC was timely, with good initial team deployed, but deployment times were too short leading to a high turnover of staff.
- Recruiting and retaining the right staff with appropriate skills and training is difficult for all elements of humanitarian response.
- While the initial staff surge was sufficient the initial start up phase may have benefited from additional staff being deployed to meet the overwhelming challenges faced by the HIC.
- The lack of trained roster candidates led to confusion on roles and responsibilities within the HIC and tensions developed over quality versus timeliness.
- The indecision on the part of the wider United Nations family on where to locate its coordination headquarters (initially in Islamabad, then in Muzaffarabad and finally returning to Islamabad) influenced the eventual location of the HIC and limited HIC presence in the hubs. The HIC ended up being too far removed from the field operation.

² Who What Where database, Contact Directory, Maps, standard list of place names.

- Set-up time was affected by the need to load software once the HIC module had arrived in Pakistan.
- The introduction of the cluster system further confused how the HIC interacted with the humanitarian community.
- The HIC was seen as too passive in its data gathering and outreach.
- The humanitarian community was confused about the role of the HIC and the products and services they could expect to receive and what data and information inputs they were expected to provide to the HIC.
- Very little analysis was undertaken of available data collected and processed by the HIC. This is not a new phenomenon. There appears to be no entity within the humanitarian system specifically assigned to undertake such analysis, which is essential for effective humanitarian coordination.
- Administrative arrangements for local staff via UNDP, while good, remain an impediment to rapid recruitment. Further, contractual conditions for staff hired by OCHA during emergencies remain poor with staff generally hired under special service agreements.
- Lack of administrative support at the beginning of the operation detracted from the HIC Manager's ability to provide guidance of the HIC.
- Links to other common services (particularly the JLC) worked well later, but would have benefited from co-location throughout the response operation.
- The HIC's role in the initial rapid assessment process is unclear. Well coordinated assessment was also lacking in this operation, which is a chronic issue.
- A lack of procedures and formats for HIC product development weakened the capacity of the HIC to produce what was required.
- A lack of **standardized** data made it difficult to produce meaningful analysis.
- Lack of user surveys and other monitoring tools meant that it was difficult to measure the value-added the HIC can provide.
- Reliable maps were unavailable due to political sensitivities and security issues.
- Standard village lists were difficult to develop due to the mountainous terrain; people are dispersed and village boundaries are not clearly defined.
- The Government-issued list of village and place codes had severe errors leading to loss of trust in subsequent lists. This affected the HIC's credibility and hampered information management efforts.
- The HIC website was hacked.
- Internet connectivity between Islamabad and the hubs was variable, sometimes causing delays in data transfer.
- Too much reliance was placed on websites as an information conduit in an environment where connectivity in the field was poor.
- The HIC sometimes relies too much on 'high tech' solutions. When a low tech approach can produce a timely product the HIC should make use of it.

Recommendations:

(a) Pre-deployment Preparedness

- Computer software, data structures, manuals/guidelines/policies/TORs and standard templates need to be preloaded on computers.
- The HIC toolbox needs to be updated and less focused on examples of past products.
- Basic preparedness needs to improve in terms of product availability (e.g. MapPak, reference maps etc).
- A file transfer protocol (FTP) server needs to be included in the deployment module rather than relying on external ftp servers. This is particularly problematic when connectivity is poor as it often is in the immediate aftermath of an emergency.
- An HIC website should be established by OCHA New York as soon as an HIC is deployed. It should be populated from HQs with generic HIC materials. However links to empty parts of the website should be kept closed and hidden until data has been populated.
- A checklist of what is available outside the emergency arena needs to be made available to the HIC which covers the role and services of the Geographic Information Support Team (GIST), and technical and operational support from FIS New York.
- FIS needs to better set up linkages and procedures with partners. It should be clear that FIS will set up the Web Site, the GIST can provide surge capacity for data preparedness and that the University of Georgia will share and integrate the data.

(b) Deployment

- Discussions should be held with the Field Coordination Support Section, OCHA Geneva to ensure that IM capacity is routinely incorporated into UNDAC Teams.
- Information management staff deployed as part of the UNDAC team should advise the Humanitarian Coordinator on whether deployment of an HIC is warranted. Except in exceptional circumstances OCHA's management systems should await a request from the HC.
- A standby agreement or MoU needs to be concluded with Map Action to ensure (a) clarity on responsibilities, (b) agreement on standards, (c) handover from Map Action to either information management staff within the UNDAC Team or HIC if deployed.
- A product list and delivery timeline needs to be developed. (See Annex 2, which serves as a basis to develop this tool).
- HIC deployments should be primarily field based, with a small team based at the capital level.
- OCHA should consider "front loading" staff in natural disaster response in order to meet the large variety of needs at the onset of the emergency. Retrenchment can take place once the initial 'rush' is over.

(c) Human Resources

- A minimum of two HIC training courses should be held each year. The training curricula needs to be adjusted to ensure that staff clearly understand the realities of emergency work. Training also needs to link the specifics of each skill set to the overall role of the HIC.

- Induction materials need to be developed for deployed staff who may not have received training or for those needing a refresher course.
- Telephone or face-to-face briefings by FIS and Desk staff must be mandatory for all those being deployed.
- For the HIC it is essential that a well-trained, well-disciplined team of experienced staff are deployed at the onset of the establishment of an HIC (i.e. the second “wave” after the initial surge team has completed its work) and that they remain in situ for no less than three months, preferably six.
- Orientation and familiarization with the HIC should be mandatory for national staff. Staff meetings should be held on a regular basis at each location. Regular workshops involving all staff (whether capital or field based) should be held.
- A global MoU should be concluded between OCHA and UNDP, highlighting the emergency requirements related to recruitment of local staff.
- An Operations Support Officer must be deployed at the start of any HIC deployment. In cases where OCHA Geneva is unable to provide sufficient capacity to service the needs of both the OCHA Office and the HIC, FIS should make arrangements to deploy the required support.

(d) Operational Issues

- Analysis of HIC generated data needs to be undertaken. The issue of analysis, which has been debated since the inception of the HIC concept needs to be addressed institutionally, away from the emergency arena, preferably at the IASC Working Group Level.
- Agreement needs to be reached as soon as possible in each response operation by the proposed local level Inter-Cluster Working Group on Information Management with regard to:
 - The boundary of the affected area;
 - The administrative unit to be used for initial assessment purposes;
 - The administrative unit to be used for short- and medium- term planning purposes.
- Provision of telecommunications support, while exemplary for Islamabad and Muzaffarabad, was not good in other hubs. The IAET and OCHA’s communications surge capacity needs to ensure that all field locations are provided with connectivity as a matter of priority.
- Rough analysis of data and orientation products should be made available while work on refining data is ongoing. This requires a clear division of labour within the HIC.
- An online community of practice needs to be established for current and former HIC staff. (FIS/GIST/ITOS etc.)

THE HUMANITARIAN INFORMATION CENTRE CONCEPT

Findings:

- The HIC concept is not well understood by its stakeholders. The services it is expected to provide are multiple and often unrealistic.
- The institutional relationship with OCHA is weak and reliant upon goodwill on both sides to make the system work.
- Systems and processes within the HIC are weak. This, combined with high staff turnover, means that the processes and systems are reinvented each time staff rotate.

- Links to external information providers, and particularly the GIST, are unclear and need to be better defined. The role of the GIST needs to be improved through reinvigoration of its policy role.
- The new cluster system provides an opportunity for a more structured information environment. This will allow the HIC to thrive and improve its relevance and effectiveness to humanitarian response and also improve data management and coordination.
- The HIC is viewed as a common service but its management by OCHA and related strategic direction are confused.
- The issue of analysis of data requires resolution (see above).
- Monitoring of the use of the HIC needs to be better institutionalized and more regular.

Recommendations:

(a) The relationship with OCHA

- FIS should draft a terms of reference on the respective roles of OCHA and the HIC to be shared with OCHA's operational managers (i.e. CRD and ESB), which will, *inter alia*, clarify the relationship while maintaining the common service identity of the HIC.
- OCHA needs to reprofile the emergency response toolbox³ so that it is a system, rather than a collection of separate tools with separate response mechanisms. OCHA needs to put into place a system to make this work. (i.e. one stop shop for response tools).
- Analysis of collected data must be undertaken. The HIC will undertake basic data analysis. Operational and strategic analysis needs to be addressed, with OCHA taking the lead and providing the resources for this activity.
- Information management training needs to be mainstreamed into Humanitarian Coordinator, OCHA Emergency Field Coordination Training, Civil-Military Coordination Training, UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team training and others, including future cluster lead agency training.

(b) Physical location of the HIC

- The HIC will prioritise deployment to the field, whilst ensuring sufficient backstopping, representation and provision of products and services at the capital level. Where possible the HIC should co-locate with OCHA and other humanitarian common services in all locations while remaining physically accessible to the wider humanitarian community.

(c) Managing Expectations

- Expectation management must be addressed through clear initial pre-deployment documentation provided to the manager of the emergency response operation (see UNDAC example) to ensure that s/he has a clear understanding on what the HIC will be able to provide in terms of support, and what the HIC requires in order to fulfill its potential.
- Outreach materials need to be pre-loaded and printed in order to enable the HIC to publicise its products and services once it has established its presence in country.

³ HIC, UNDAC, CMCoord, USAR, IHP, IAET, JLC, UNHAS, OCHA surge capacity.

- The HIC is and remains a common coordination support service. Its products are available to the entire humanitarian community, in line with the priorities set (See Annex 2). However, in phase 2 and beyond priority for customized services will be given to those stakeholders who provide required information and data to the HIC.
- The HIC must aggressively seek out data and act as the driving force for data and information sharing. Modalities for this need to be agreed outside the emergency environment with IASC agencies and other stakeholders.
- The HIC must regularly monitor its performance against a set of key indicators and monitoring tools. FIS New York should ensure that such surveys are undertaken and the results compiled at Headquarters.
- In order to ensure essential data collection at the outset of an emergency the HIC should aim to undertake primary data collection if required during the first two weeks of the response focusing only on key locations and facilities. Concurrently it will focus on secondary data collection.
- The issue of HIC transition remains contentious. The review team proposes that for natural disaster response the lifespan of the HIC should match that of the relief phase, generally no more than six months. Thereafter the HIC should hand its data over to the relevant government or UN entity and close down or, if requested, maintain a presence, but funded and supported by recovery/reconstruction agencies and donors.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT ENVIRONMENT AND THE CLUSTER APPROACH

Findings:

- Information management is not given sufficient priority by the humanitarian community and has not been addressed in the humanitarian reform agenda.
- At the most fundamental level a culture of information sharing does not exist among humanitarian actors.
- Information management expertise is enormously variable within the clusters, agencies, donors and other organisations. Within this context common services are unable to support coordination to their full potential.
- The health of the HIC is a reflection of the state of information sharing and management of a specific response.

Recommendations:

(a) Linkages to the IASC and the Humanitarian Reform Agenda

- The Inter-Agency Standing Committee should establish an ad hoc IASC Working Group or Task Force on information management as a matter of priority and no later than by early April 2006 with terms of reference agreed by early May. The Group should have a limited lifespan and clear work plan, with the aim of ensuring that IASC members jointly agree on how to address the need to mainstream an information sharing and information management culture into humanitarian action. In this process due note should be taken of the ongoing humanitarian reform process.
- On the basis of agreements reached in the proposed ad hoc IASC Working Group on Information Management OCHA should formulate draft guidelines on standards and requirements for information sharing for (a) cluster lead agencies and other stakeholders at the operational level and (b) for donors to share with their implementing partners.

- The issue of rapid needs assessment needs to be agreed at the IASC level, with IASC agencies agreeing on a template format, supported by a robust database, for use in initial rapid assessments at the outset of an emergency. It is proposed that the technical (i.e. database) and operational (i.e. resulting template) elements of this should be included in the terms of reference of the above-mentioned working group.
- A best practices in information management in clusters document is to be developed within 9 months by the IASC Working Group or Task Force.

(b) Donor Action

- Donors should convene a workshop to examine best practices in information management in emergency response on the basis of the document produced by the IASC ad hoc Working Group or Task Force on Information Management.

(c) Operational Level

- A local level inter-cluster information management working group should be established every time an HIC is deployed. This should be composed of qualified IM focal points representing their respective clusters and should be chaired by the HIC Data Coordinator. It is proposed that generic terms of reference be developed by OCHA with support from USAID.

20th February 2006

Annex 1

Summary of Recommendations - Table and Implementation Timeline

Area of Enquiry	Recommendation	Action by	Timeline
1. PAKISTAN DEPLOYMENT			
(a) Pre deployment Preparedness	(i) Computer software, data structures, manuals guidance, policies, terms of reference and standard templates to be pre-loaded onto computers.	FIS New York	By end-April 2006
	(ii) The HIC toolbox needs to be updated	FIS New York	By end-April 2006
	(iii) Basic preparedness needs to improve in terms of product availability (development of MapPak, reference maps etc)	FIS New York/GIST	
	(iv) An ftp server needs to be included in the deployment module.	FIS New York/DFID	For next HIC deployment
	(v) An HIC website should be established by OCHA New York as soon as the HIC is deployed.	FIS and ITS New York.	For next HIC deployment
(b) Deployment	(i) Insertion of information management capacity into UNDAC Teams as and when required.	FIS New York and FCSS Geneva	By end-March 2006
	(ii) Procedures put into place for IM staff deployed as part of the UNDAC Team to advise HC on HIC deployment.	FIS New York	By end-March 2006
	(iii) Standby agreement or MoU with MapAction to ensure (a) clarity on responsibilities, (b) agreement on standards, (c) handover from MapAction to either IM staff or HIC if deployed.	FIS New York	By end-2006
	(iv) Development of product list and timeline	FIS New York	For inclusion in HIC Toolbox (End-April 2006)
	(v) Inclusion of requirement for the HIC to be deployed to the site of the response in SOPs	FIS New York	For inclusion in HIC Toolbox (End-April 2006).
	(vi) Front loading of staff for natural disaster response when an HIC is deployed with retrenchment after the initial "rush" is over.	Chief AIMB and Chief IAS	To be determined
(c) Human Resources	(i) Two HIC training courses to be conducted each year.	FIS New York and DFID	May and September 2006
	(ii) Training curricula needs to be adjusted.	FIS New York	Ongoing (continuous improvement process).
	(iii) Induction materials to be developed for staff who have not been trained or who need refresher	FIS New York, SDTS Geneva (to include in OCHA training)	Ongoing – aim by mid-2006
	(iv) Telephone or face-to-face briefings by FIS and Desk staff prior to deployment.	FIS New York, CRD New York and Geneva	Immediate
	(v) Lengthen assignment length to minimum of three months, preferably six	FIS New York, FSS Geneva	Begin process immediately – timeline not yet known.
	(vi) Orientation and familiarization with HIC should be mandatory for all national staff, with regular staff meetings and regular workshops.	FIS New York	For inclusions in HIC Toolbox (End-April 2006)
	(vii) Global MoU to be concluded with UNDP highlighting emergency requirements related to the recruitment of national staff	FIS New York with AO Geneva and EO New York	Begin process immediately – timeline not yet known.
	(viii) Admin Officer or Operations Support Officer to be included at the start of every deployment with the capacity to service the needs of OCHA and HIC	AO Geneva	Immediate for FIS. To be discussed with AO

Area of Enquiry	Recommendation	Action by	Timeline
(d) Operational Issues	(i) Agreement to be reached on who does analysis of HIC processed data	FIS New York	To be determined – depends on when the IASC Working Group is formed.
	(ii) Review of IAET and OCHA support for IT to OCHA and HIC outside Islamabad.	ITS New York/Geneva	Following receipt of paper from IT staff in Islamabad.
	(iii) Put into place clear division of labour between those working at the front end of the emergency on publishing immediately available data and those who are working on longer-term data requirements and standards.	FIS New York	For inclusion in the HIC Toolbox (End-April 2006).
THE HUMANITARIAN INFORMATION CENTRE CONCEPT			
(a) Relationship with OCHA	(i) FIS New York to draft a terms of reference on the respective roles of OCHA and the HIC which will, inter alia, clarify the OCHA/HIC relationship while maintaining the common service identity of OCHA	FIS New York	For inclusion in the HIC Toolbox (End-April 2006) .
	(ii) OCHA needs to develop a one-stop-shop for emergency tools.	OCHA SMT	To be determined (if recommendation accepted by SMT).
	(iii) Operational and strategic analysis needs to be addressed, with OCHA taking the lead and providing the resources for this activity.	OCHA CRD	To be determined (if recommendation accepted by CRD).
	(iv) Information management training needs to be mainstreamed into OCHA's training courses and for Humanitarian Coordinators.	FIS New York and SDLS Geneva	Ongoing.
(b) Physical Location of the HIC	(i) HIC to prioritise deployment to the field, co-located with OCHA and other common services while remaining accessible to the wider humanitarian community	FIS New York, in consultation with CRD, JLC and others.	Immediate
(c) Managing Expectations	(i) Development of clear documentation to be shared with Emergency Response Manager on HIC role, function and operational requirements.	FIS New York	For inclusion in the HIC Toolbox (End April 2006)
	(ii) Outreach materials to be pre-loaded and printed for immediate dissemination upon arrival.	FIS New York	For inclusion in the HIC Toolbox (End-April 2006).
	(iii) Limit access to products and services to those who provide data in Phase II	To be determined – requires inter-agency agreement.	
	(iv) Improve synergy between HIC as information processor and cluster-lead agencies as providers of information	FIS New York	To be determined – depends on when the IASC Working Group is formed.
	(v) Improvement in ongoing surveying and M and E of HICs	FIS New York	For inclusion in the HIC Toolbox (End-April 2006)
	(vi) Inclusion of primary data-collection activities in HIC TORs for natural disasters.	FIS New York	For inclusion in the HIC Toolbox (End-April 2006)

Area of Enquiry	Recommendation	Action by	Timeline
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT ENVIRONMENT AND THE CLUSTER APPROACH.			
(a) Linkages to the IASC and the Humanitarian Reform Agenda	(i) Establishment of an IASC ad hoc Working Group or Task Force on Information Management.	OCHA SMT	As soon as possible.
	(ii) Formulation of guidelines, standards and requirements for information sharing for (a) cluster lead agencies and other stakeholders at the operational level and (b) donors to share with their implementing partners.	OCHA FIS	To be determined – depends on when the IASC Working Group is formed.
	(iii) Development of common standards (or identifying ways to make current systems compatible) for rapid needs assessment	IASC ad hoc Working Group on IM.	To be determined – depends on when the IASC Working Group is formed.
	(iv) A best practices in information management in clusters document to be formulated within 9 months	IASC ad hoc Working Group on IM.	To be determined – depends on when the IASC Working Group is formed.
(b) Donor Action	(i) Workshop for donors to examine best practice in information management.	Donors	To be determined but no later than November 2006.
(c) Operational Level	(i) A local level inter-cluster working group on information management to be convened at the start of each emergency response.	TORs to be developed by FIS and USAID	For inclusion in the HIC Toolbox (End April 2006)

Annex 2Core Products and Timelines for Humanitarian Information Centres⁵

Timing	Core HIC Activities	Comments
Phase 1 – Week 0 – Week 2	<p><u>KEY ACTIVITIES</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ HIC Office established and running smoothly at capital level (inc ftp server), where possible co-located with OCHA/UNDAC. ▪ HIC sub-offices in all field locations established alongside OCHA offices ▪ National staff hired and briefed on roles and responsibilities ▪ Orientation provided to all stakeholders on the role of an HIC in emergency response ▪ HIC Website established and regularly updated. ▪ Establishment of working group on information management with generic ToRs adapted to local situation, chaired by Data Coordinator at capital level and by HIC staff at field offices. ▪ Links established with relevant government counterparts (census bureau, statistics bureau etc – needs definition). ▪ HIC staff conduct quick assessment of key locations and facilities to obtain GPS coordinates if not conducted by others. ▪ All front of house staff able to respond to enquiries related to critical operational information, or to redirect enquiries to those who can answer if the information centre cannot. ▪ Keep FIS New York focal point informed of developments (phone/email sufficient) particularly relating to institutional issues with OCHA (lack of clarity on roles etc) and needs to be directed to key partners and, in particular, the GIST. <p><u>DELIVERABLES</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Schedule of Coordination Meetings ▪ Who what where database (W3) ▪ Contact Directory (all actors) ▪ Pre-disaster population numbers broken down by administrative sub-division or urban centre. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Operations Officer deployed to establish HIC offices and recruit national staff. ▪ IT support staff deployed either from OCHA HQs or SRSA. ▪ Operations Officer to organize workshop for all staff (Capital and field) ▪ Hic Manager to attend UNDMT, Cluster Heads and Cluster Meetings in capital. Replicated in the field. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Generic W3 database to be used ▪ Generic Contact Directory to be used. ▪ GIST and other data support mechanisms to provide if available.

⁵ This table is based on the “Identification of Target Groups and Information Products” table produced in 2002.

Timing	Core HIC Activities	Comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rough estimate of affected population (IDPs, Refugees, affected). ▪ Assessment repository established (survey of surveys). ▪ Reference maps and atlas available from ITOS ▪ HIC Kiosk established and providing basic products including generic "What is an HIC leaflet", base data and data collection templates. ▪ Ability to give good on-the-spot briefings to humanitarian managers and visitors ▪ Briefing pack available with core HIC products and additional information provided by OCHA and Cluster Lead agencies. ▪ Daily weather forecast (if applicable). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ GIST and other data support mechanisms to provide if available ▪ HIC folders (1000) to be included in module.
Phase II – Week 2 – Week 6	<p><u>KEY ACTIVITIES</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regular internal HIC meetings (involving staff from capital and field) in place. ▪ Reorientation of HIC with greater clarity on division of labour. ▪ Aggressive outreach to clusters to source data, working closely with other entities that require data (e.g. JLC). ▪ Continued visibility of HIC through all available sources. ▪ Ongoing partnership building with national institutions including universities and others that may be able to support HIC development. ▪ Weekly report to FIS New York. <p><u>DELIVERABLES</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data (even if very rough) made available in form presentable for gap analysis to be conducted and support to OCHA/clusters in interpretation of data if needed/viable. ▪ Common place codes that serve as unique identifiers of geographical position either obtained from Government counterparts or, if not available, put into place by HIC. ▪ Set of common sub-national boundaries (4/5 level) administrative boundaries available and agreed by information management working group. 	<p>Attend cluster meetings, general coordination meetings and sell.</p> <p>Demonstrate how data can be used to inform planning.</p> <p>Work with host nation and UNGWIG, to not overlap national boundaries development.</p>

Timing	Core HIC Activities	Comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commonly used names of administrative units of towns/settlements (gazetteer) in the affected area sourced and available. ▪ Establishment of coordination mechanism flow chart. ▪ Operational and strategic maps (including those supporting gap analysis) ▪ Consolidation of needs assessments in survey or surveys repository. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ GIST and other data support mechanisms to provide if available.

Annex 3

IASC Approved Humanitarian Information Centre Concept Paper (February 2003)

Humanitarian Information Centres (HIC) support the delivery of humanitarian assistance through the provision of information products and services.

Humanitarian Common Service

1. HICs are a Humanitarian Common Service (HCS), defined by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group (IASC-WG) as a support function to facilitate efforts of IASC organisations and the larger humanitarian community, administered by one or more organisation(s) and authorised by an established inter-agency process, and in each specific situation requested by the HC/Country Team.
2. In all likelihood when an HIC is present other HCSs are as well. In this case co-location should be undertaken where feasible and activities must be very closely coordinated to ensure no overlaps, particularly with the UN Joint Logistics Centre.

Background

3. Accurate and timely information is crucial to the effective provision of humanitarian assistance. For example, strategic and operational decision making and prioritisation require accurate and timely information on the humanitarian situation; Information concerning the needs of affected populations and the capacities and locations of humanitarian actors is critical for coordination. Quantifiable information on the conditions and needs of affected populations – collected and updated on a regular basis and in a consistent format – is required for analysis and the identification of trends.
4. Developed at field level to meet recognized needs in collaborative information exchange, HICs aim to ensure that individuals and organizations at both the operational and strategic level have access to the benefits of information management (IM) tools to assess, plan, deliver, coordinate and monitor humanitarian assistance.
5. Nine HICs (until recently, with differing names) have been deployed or developed locally since 1999, providing significant lessons learned and creating a body of experience that has defined the current HIC minimum standard of products and services. With a single exception, OCHA has taken the lead in establishing all HICs, with varying levels of input from other partners.

Objective of Document

6. The objective of this concept document is to establish an agreed understanding amongst humanitarian partners on the characteristics and activities expected of a Humanitarian Information Centre, as well as its deployment, management and accountability structures and mechanisms.

Management and Accountability

7. The IASC-WG has endorsed OCHA as the steward of HICs. By this it is meant that OCHA has the responsibility, on behalf of and in consultation with its partners, to:
 - continue to develop the concept of the HIC, including training, advocacy, and representing HICs e.g. inter-agency or technical meetings;
 - carry out the deployment of new HICs, according to agreed criteria;
 - provide operational support to HICs during the emergency phase.
8. In the field all HCS report to the Resident or Humanitarian Coordinator (R/HC). In practice, in all previous instances, the R/HC has delegated the oversight of the HIC to others; where one exists to the OCHA Head of Office. While not prejudging future decisions it is assumed that the many demands placed on an R/HC during an emergency will ensure that this practice will continue.
9. As a rule, a local steering committee will be established as early as possible by the HIC Manager, preferably chaired by the R/HC. Membership of the committee should ideally number no more than 10

members and include the key stakeholders of the country's humanitarian community, reflecting the membership of the IASC plus donors and, where appropriate, the national government.

10. The steering committee will play the critical role in defining the priorities and strategy for the HIC, including approving its workplan. This will be the key mechanism through which partners on the ground ensure the HIC's priorities reflect those of the humanitarian community. Members of the steering committee will also be expected to act as advocates in the wider community on issues related to information management, including data standards, collection, analysis and dissemination.
11. OCHA remains accountable for the effective management and performance of HICs due to the risks associated with assuming financial responsibility for the projects and the obligations inherent in establishing stand-by arrangements. Opportunities for input into the overall direction of the HIC concept as well as specific country operations will be made through the local steering committee, the existing Geographic Information Support Team (GIST) network and regular reporting to the IASC-WG.

Deployment

12. Unlike natural disasters, most complex emergencies do not have a fixed 'start date', increasing the difficulty of implementing rigid deployment procedures. However, experience has helped identify three conditions that, when they exist, have made an HIC deployment appropriate:
 - A rapidly changing humanitarian operational environment;
 - A large number of new humanitarian actors entering the operational area;
 - A poor or degraded communications network.
13. When these conditions come to exist in an emergency environment, or look likely to occur, OCHA will engage the Resident or Humanitarian Coordinator (R/HC) and the UN Country Team (UNCT), ensuring awareness of the HIC concept and deployment mechanisms. If an HIC request is forthcoming, OCHA will engage with donors and other partners – using pre-existing inter-agency mechanisms - to ensure that adequate financial, human and other resources exist to support a deployment.
14. In situations where the need for an HIC is uncertain, OCHA or one of its partners will carry out an assessment to determine if a deployment will be necessary. The key components of this assessment will be an evaluation of the already existing IM capacity in the country and the requirements of the operational partners for HIC type products and services.
15. OCHA has negotiated standing agreements with donors and other partners for the rapid implementation of HICs. An HIC emergency deployment fund is made available to OCHA on an annual basis by OFDA and equipment is on stand-by with DFID. However, both of these mechanisms must be approved on a case-by-case basis, which necessitates a time delay of at least several days. OCHA has also taken advantage of its stand-by partner arrangements (e.g. DFID, SRSA) for emergency staffing deployments for HIC start-up.
16. If an HIC deployment is likely or imminent, OCHA will utilize the network created by the GIST, which includes most of the key operational agencies and donors, to solicit input on plans and support for the HIC (personnel, financial, equipment, space, data etc.). This mechanism will also be used to keep headquarters focal points regularly informed of ongoing activities.
17. The initial priority activities, size and make-up of the HIC will be set through consultations with partners at the headquarters and field level, particularly the R/HC and UNCT.
18. In most cases OCHA's Field Information Support Project will deploy staff to lead the initial establishment of the HIC, incorporating any support available from partner organizations and stand-by arrangements. For reasons of financial accountability, OCHA senior management will need to approve the deployment plan.

Characteristics

19. While all HICs deployed will by necessity (e.g. already existing capacities, physical space, security etc.) have some differences, the following characteristics are a minimum expectation of an HIC:
 - A **physical space** where the humanitarian community can share and access information resources;
 - A **provider of information products and services** to the humanitarian community;

- A **focal point for data collection** and dissemination;
- An **advocate** for improved information-sharing and data standardisation in the humanitarian community.

Additionally, an HIC:

- Is a **common resource** of the humanitarian community;
 - Is **an integral part of the co-ordination structure**, seeking to avoid duplicating existing initiatives and maximizing resources;
 - **Works in full coordination with specialized agencies** to support, if required, sector-specific work;
 - Is **service-oriented** and **demand-driven**, serving the operational and strategic information needs of clients – as defined by them.
20. The HIC is a resource for the entire humanitarian community and is not the property of any single individual or agency. All data and information products are the collective property of the HIC partners – not the property of the HIC - under the guidance of the R/HC and the steering committee.
21. The HIC will not normally be involved in primary data collection; rather it serves as an information exchange platform, providing a neutral service for the collation, processing, analysis and dissemination of data. The HIC's role in analysis will usually be limited to processing and presenting data in such a way as to make it usable for decision makers, who need to add the relevant context and technical expertise.

Functions

22. Based on previous experience, the results of the 2002 Symposium on Best Practices in Humanitarian Information Exchange, and the recently completed independent evaluation of HICs, the core functions would normally include:
- Provide a range of **information products and services** such as GIS, database development, website maintenance for dissemination etc. as the context dictates;
 - **Promote**, and develop where necessary, **data standards**;
 - Collect, maintain and make available a range of **data sets** from all sources, processing and disseminating this data as appropriate to support humanitarian operations;
 - As required and possible, **provide technical support** and advice to improve the information management capacity of the humanitarian community, particularly at the sectoral level;
 - **Engage with local actors** to support and improve existing information infrastructures, particularly government counterparts.

Post-Emergency Phase

23. In addition to its close working relationship with all members of the humanitarian community, the HIC must engage reconstruction and development actors as early as possible and ensure that all activities undertaken will be compatible with future development needs so as to best ease transition, if that is required.
24. While OCHA is responsible for managing HICs on behalf of its partners during the emergency phase, most of them endure long beyond pure relief efforts have ended. Of the nine HICs that have been created over the past five years OCHA is only currently involved in three; two have closed and four continue under different management (local NGO, government or UNDP managed).
25. From its inception, an HIC's strategic planning must include development of an exit or transition strategy. The strategy will be based on existing needs and capacities in the field, although it is understood that financial and other concerns will always play a part. The R/HC and the HIC Manager, in consultation with OCHA and the steering committee, are responsible for deciding when and how the project should be transitioned or terminated.

Joint Review of the HIC and IM Environment in Pakistan 6th – 16th February

Mission Programme

Monday 6th February		Islamabad
4.00	Internal Team Meeting	Location tbc
Tuesday 7th February		Islamabad
8.00	Attend General Coordination Meeting	OCHA Conference Room
9.30	Internal Team Meeting	OCHA Conference Room
11.30	Planning meeting with Nic Parham and & Melanie Mason (Outgoing and incoming HIC Managers)	OCHA Conference Room
2.00	Meet Humanitarian Coordinator and Chief, OCHA Pakistan	UNDP - Abu Diek to attend
3.00	Meet Federal Relief Commission	Prime Minister's Office
4.00	Meet ERRA (cancelled)	ERRA Offices
Wednesday 8th February		Islamabad
8.00	Internal Review Team Meeting	OCHA Conference Room
9.00	Meet OCHA staff	OCHA Conference Room
11.00	Meet HIC staff	OCHA Conference Room
12.30	Lunch	
2.00	Meet World Health Organisation	OCHA Conference Room
4.00	Meet UNJLC – Brian Isbell	WFP Afghanistan Office
6.00	Internal Review Team Meeting	OCHA Conference Room
7.30	Dinner with invited NGOs	Cinnamon Restaurant
Thursday 9th February		Battagram / Mansehra
8.00	Internal Review Team Meeting	OCHA Conference Room
9.00	Meet World Food Programme	Michael Jones – WFP, 2, St 2, F8/3
10.30	Meet Andrew MacLeod, former Cluster Coordinator and now Recovery Advisor to the RC/HC	UNDP
12.30	Lunch	
2.00	Meet Jamie McGoldrick, Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator	OCHA Conference Room
3.30	Meet Barnaby Jones, Deputy RR UNDP (Operations)	OCHA
5.00	Meet Kirsten Zaat, OCHA Area Coordinator, Mansehra	OCHA
7.00	Internal Review Team Meeting	OCHA
Friday 10th February		Muzaffarabad
8.00	Depart to Muzaffarabad	
	Security Briefing	DSS
10.00	Field Visit to IDP Camps and Camp Management Office in Muzaffarabad.	
1.00	Internal Review Team Meeting	
5.00	Meet HIC staff	OCHA
Saturday 11th February		Muzaffarabad
10.30	Briefing and discussion on HIC	OCHA Office (Nic Parham)
4.00	Meeting with UNICEF	OCHA Office
5.00	Meeting with UNHCR	UNHCR Office
6:00	Meeting with IOM	OCHA Office
7.00	Meeting with OCHA Staff	OCHA Office
Sunday 12th February		Muzaffarabad / Islamabad
9.00	Meet local NGOs	UN Camp Meeting Room
10.30	Meet PakMil - Col Qaiser, Commander of logistics	PakMil Base Muzaffarabad
11.30	Meet ICRC – Andre Paqaet (Head of sub delegation)	ICRC office

12.30	Meeting with SC-UK – Francesca Petrecca	UN Camp
1:30	Lunch	
2.00	Depart for Islamabad	Report helipad at 1.45
3.30	Arrive Islamabad	
Monday 13th February		<i>Islamabad</i>
8.00	Internal Review Team Meeting	HIC office
9.30	Meet shelter cluster coordinator	OCHA Conference Room
11.00	Internal Review Team Meeting	OCHA Conference Room
12.00	Lunch	
1.00	Attend Watsan Cluster meeting	UNICEF Office
3.00	Meet with Tim Pitt, Cluster Coordinator	OCHA Conference Room
4.00	Meeting with invited NGOs	OCHA Conference Room
6.00	Attend Heads of Clusters meeting - observe	
7:30	Dinner with Donors	Marriot Hotel
Tuesday 14th February		<i>Islamabad</i>
8.00	Attend General Coordination Meeting – present findings	OCHA Conference Room
9.30	Meet RealTime Evaluation of Clusters members	HIC office
12.00	Internal Review Team Meeting	OCHA Conference Room
3.30	De-brief with HIC staff	OCHA Conference Room
5.00	Draft Report	HIC Office
Wednesday 15th February		<i>Islamabad</i>
8.00	Attend DMT – present findings and dialogue with CT	OCHA Conference Room
9.30	Internal Review Team Meeting (Report Draft)	HIC Office
2.00	De-brief with OCHA and HC, DHC	RC/HC Office
3.30	De-brief with Nic & Melanie	HIC Office