

NATIONS UNIES
BUREAU DU COORDONNATEUR
DES SECOURS EN CAS DE CATASTROPHE



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14 July 1988

Dear Dr. Elo,

Please find attached a copy of the Final Report on the work of the UNDP/UNDRO Task Force, to which you contributed.

Your help was greatly appreciated, and I look forward to realizing the benefit of the joint effort in our future work together.

Very best regards,

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hans Einhaus', written over a horizontal line.

Hans Einhaus
Director and Deputy to the
Under-Secretary-General

Dr. Olavi Elo
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cc: Mr. Nissim Tal
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PREFACE

1. This Report has been prepared by the UNDP/UNDRO members of the Joint Task Force established pursuant to the Secretary-General's Report on the implementation of General Assembly Resolution 41/201 (A/42/234 and Corr. 1), endorsed by General Assembly Decision 42/433.
2. UNDP and UNDRO have met and reviewed matters which chiefly concern their relationship. This review is reflected in Parts A, B and summarized in D (Summary of Agreements and Recommendations).
3. Part C concerns aspects of the Report which affect other organizations and specialized agencies of the U.N. System. It is also summarized in Part D.
4. It is recognized that the review has resulted in agreements and recommendations for the most part bearing on arrangements which already exist but which do not appear to have been implemented effectively. It is UNDP and UNDRO's hope that the envisioned strengthening and clarification of these arrangements combined with a few new measures will bring about the desired improvements.
5. It will be noted that while in Parts A and B, reference is, as a rule, made to the UNDP/UNDRO Resident Representative, in Part C, reference is made to the Resident Co-ordinator of the Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations System. This is due to the fact that most of the responsibilities referred to in Parts A and B are, by written agreement between UNDP and UNDRO, operational functions carried out by the UNDP Resident Representative in his capacity as UNDRO Representative, while the functions referred to in Part C are of a co-ordinating nature and therefore very much in line with the general mandate of Resident Co-ordinators. At the same time, this is consistent with the terms of General Assembly Resolution 36/225.

JOINT UNDP/UNDRO TASK FORCE

TO IMPROVE CO-OPERATION FOR DISASTER RESPONSE,
MITIGATION AND REHABILITATION

FINAL REPORT

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JOINT UNDP/UNDRO TASK FORCE
TO IMPROVE CO-OPERATION FOR DISASTER RESPONSE,
MITIGATION AND REHABILITATION

FINAL REPORT

Part A - Introduction

1. Background

1.1 Recommendation 24 of the Group of High Level Inter-Governmental Experts. The Group of High Level Inter-Governmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations recommended that "the United Nations Development Programme should be requested to consider the feasibility of taking over the functions currently performed by the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator" (A/41/49, Recommendation 24)."

1.2 General Assembly Resolution 41/201. In its Resolution 41/201 of 8 December 1986, the General Assembly noted, inter alia, the "different nature and functions of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator and the United Nations Development Programme".

1.3 General Assembly Resolution 41/213. In its Resolution 41/213 of 19 December 1986, the General Assembly referred the Report of the Group of High Level Inter-Governmental Experts to the Secretary-General for implementation, subject to taking duly into account in the implementation of Recommendation 24, the provisions of General Assembly Resolution 41/201 of 8 December 1986 (General Assembly Resolution 41/213, paragraph 1, alinea g).

1.4 Secretary-General's Report on the Implementation of General Assembly Resolution 41/213. In his progress report on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 41/213 (A/42/234 and Corr. 1), the Secretary-General states: "With regard to Recommendation 24, the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator is being retained as a separate entity located in Geneva, but measures will be taken to improve its performance. The comprehensive review and assessment of existing mechanisms and arrangements for emergency assistance and co-ordination called for in General Assembly resolution 41/201 will provide a basis for specific recommendations both in this regard as well as for the co-ordination and rationalization of emergency humanitarian and special economic assistance programmes called for in Recommendation 23."

1.5 Recommendation to Establish a UNDP/UNDRO Task Force. In his Report A/42/657 on implementation of Resolution 41/201 in which he reviewed and assessed existing arrangements for emergency assistance and co-ordination, the Secretary-General reaffirmed that UNDRO was retained as a separate entity in Geneva. Given however the complementary responsibilities of UNDRO and UNDP with respect to the response to disasters and emergencies, rehabilitation and the resumption of development, the Secretary-General recommended that a "joint UNDP/UNDRO task force be established to work out improved modalities of co-operation. Other organizations of the system should be invited to join this task force, as appropriate." The General Assembly endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendations in Decision 42/433.

1.6 Agreement between UNDP and UNDRO on the Task Force. In December 1987 UNDP and UNDRO reached agreement on a common course of action to implement paragraph 21 of the Secretary-General's report. The date of the first meeting was set for 13 January and the Task Force would conclude its work within three months.

2. Scope of the Report. A Report of the Secretary-General (A/38/202), submitted to the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session identified three types of emergencies in which the UN system could be involved:

(a) Those disaster situations "which fell clearly within the competence of one of the United Nations organizations or specialized agencies and for which that organization was primarily responsible". For example FAO, WFP, UNHCR, WHO and UNICEF have clearly defined emergency programmes for which they alone are responsible. This category could cover the cases where one agency could handle a task alone, or in practical co-operation with others, or in the formal role of lead agency;

(b) Natural disasters and other disaster situations in which "aspects" fell outside "the specific mandate of a particular ... agency, involved more than one organization and necessitated the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator playing a co-ordinating role for the United Nations system as a whole;

(c) "... in exceptional circumstances, there might be disasters and emergencies of such magnitude or complexity that special arrangements would be needed to co-ordinate, mobilize and deliver emergency relief".

With the exception of measures related to UNDRO's 'information clearinghouse function', the provisions of this report refer to disaster situations in the second category in which 'aspects' fall outside 'the specific mandate of a particular agency' or 'involve more than one organization' "

3. The UNDP/UNDRO Task Force

3.1 Composition. It was decided that the Task Force should comprise up to three staff from each organization and an observer from the Office of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation. Other organizations of the United Nations System would be associated at an appropriate stage once matters concerning the relationship between UNDP and UNDRO had been addressed. The concept of rotating chairmanship was agreed to.

3.2 Terms of Reference. Terms of reference were decided on at the first meeting and are included in Annex A.

3.3 Summary of Issues. The issues were: measures to strengthen the relationship between UNDP and UNDRO; institutional capacity and skills, relief coordination and management; assessment of relief needs; Situation Reports (SITREPS) and information management; emergency grants; disaster preparedness, prevention and the UNDP Country Programming and project formulation process; rehabilitation and reconstruction. The issues discussed and consequent agreements are elaborated in Part B.

3.4 Schedule of Activities Two sets of meetings were held between UNDP and UNDRO: 13 and 14 January; 10, 12 February and 2 March. A meeting at which other organizations of the United Nations System would participate was scheduled for 29 and 30 March 1988 in Geneva. The Task Force would conclude its work with the submission of its final report shortly thereafter.

4. Results of the UNDP/UNDRO Task Force. The work of the Task Force will result in:

- agreements reached on substantive aspects of the co-operation between UNDP and UNDRO and on procedures to improve it;

- a revised set of instructions in the form of a new entry to the UNDP Programme and Projects Manual;

- a brief memorandum of understanding or agreement between UNDP and UNDRO;

- a standing mechanism for consultation between UNDP and UNDRO;

- a report of the Task Force which will be reflected in the Secretary-General's submission to the 43rd session of the General Assembly.

Part B - Discussion on the UNDP/UNDRO Co-operative Arrangements and Agreements Reached on how to Improve them.

5. History of the UNDP/UNDRO Relationship.

5.1 Representational Role of the UNDP Resident Representative. The importance of the representational role at the field level of the UNDP Resident Representatives as UNDRO Representatives has been recognized since the founding of UNDRO by General Assembly Resolution 2816 (XXVI) of 14 December 1971 (Annex B) which included reference to the envisaged disaster-related responsibilities of the UNDP Resident Representatives. Successive and increasingly detailed instructions on "the role of UNDP Resident Representatives in respect of pre-disaster planning and disaster relief" have been issued by UNDP in agreement with UNDRO in 1974, 1979, 1982, and 1983 (See Annex B for the most recent of these).

5.2 Implementation of the Representational Role. The UNDP Resident Representatives have acted for UNDRO in the field in a variety of disaster-related activities (relief, prevention, preparedness). Ad hoc consultations have occurred between UNDP and UNDRO in different ways: visits of UNDP Resident Representatives to UNDRO in Geneva, UNDRO's participation in regional and global meetings of UNDP Resident Representatives, discussions at UNDP and UNDRO headquarters on specific issues.

5.3 Strengthening of the Representational Role. Since 1982, following the passage of General Assembly resolution 36/225 (17 December 1981) (Annex B) on strengthening the capacity of the United Nations System to respond to natural disasters and other disaster situations, the UNDP Resident Representatives' responsibilities with respect to disasters have also reflected their role as Resident Co-ordinators of the Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations System as indicated in the UNDP Administrator's letter of 20 July 1982 (Annex C).

5.4 Association with Respect to Disaster Mitigation. As far as joint UNDP/UNDRO disaster mitigation activities are concerned, UNDRO has been implementing UNDP-funded prevention and preparedness projects as a sub-contractor or associate agency since 1981.

6. Issues Relating to the Present Co-operation between UNDP and UNDRO and Modalities Agreed to for its Improvement.

6.1 Nature of the Issues. In its work the Task Force reviewed the present co-operation between the two organizations, with respect to arrangements between the two headquarters and between headquarters and the field. The issues discussed were of three types: conceptual, institutional and substantive.

6.2 Conceptual Issues.

6.2.1 The UNDP/UNDRO relationship and the United Nations System in disaster mitigation and response. The Task Force agreed to summarize the functions of the UNDP/UNDRO mechanism with respect to disaster response and mitigation as follows:

6.2.2 The aim of the United Nations System's efforts. The efforts of the United Nations System as a whole aim to assist governments of disaster-prone countries to strengthen their disaster management capacities so as to develop self-sufficiency in disaster mitigation and in disaster response. When national capacity and resources are insufficient to meet disaster mitigation and disaster relief needs following a disaster, the United Nations System aims at ensuring that resources from outside the country are made available to complement national efforts. While organizations and specialized agencies of the UN system will provide assistance within their respective mandates, the UN Resident Co-ordinator should be the focal point in the country for mobilization efforts in this field.

6.2.3 The Concerted Nature of the United Nations System's Response to Disaster. An in-place mechanism capable of providing a speedy, accurate and co-ordinated response to disasters is needed. Rapid reporting to UNDRO by the UNDP/UNDRO Resident Representatives on the occurrence of a disaster accompanied by initial damage assessment, however tentative, is required, followed by regular and systematic reporting. The United Nations System should strive to come up with a consolidated assessment of emergency requirements. The UNDP/UNDRO Resident Representative should be the focal point for the collection of information on such assessments which would be carried out by individual agencies or organizations of the UN system. To the extent feasible, the headquarters of the specialized UN agencies will be consulted on the assessment reports or parts thereof in their areas of competence.* These consolidated assessments will be diffused through UNDRO to appropriate entities of the international community, and could form the basis of appeals for funds.

6.3 Institutional Issues

6.3.1 Nomination of UNDP Resident Representatives in disaster-prone countries. The Task Force recognized the key responsibilities of the UNDP Resident Representative, as UNDRO Representative, especially in the often complex and sensitive situations attending major disasters. This implies special recognition of the disaster-proneness of certain countries, and consequent understanding by the UNDP/UNDRO Representative of how to deal with disasters and related issues. UNDRO agreed to advise UNDP systematically on the disaster-proneness of countries, and UNDP agreed to take this aspect into consideration in the appointment of UNDP Resident Representatives to these countries.

6.3.2 UNDRO letters of appointment for UNDP/UNDRO Resident Representatives. In order to formalize the UNDP Resident Representatives' responsibilities and authority as UNDRO Representatives, the Task Force agreed that the UNDP Resident Representative would receive a letter from the Disaster Relief Co-ordinator on appointment.

6.3.3 Briefing of UNDP Resident Representatives by UNDRO. The Task Force considered that existing arrangements to inform the UNDP Resident Representative of his disaster-related responsibilities were not adequate. It was agreed that a more systematic briefing procedure would be established for UNDP Resident Representatives when on Agency visits in Geneva - especially those newly assigned to disaster-prone countries. Similarly the Director of the UNDRO Liaison Office in New York would meet with UNDP Resident Representatives visiting UNDP Headquarters. Whenever possible, the briefing procedures would be extended to Deputy UNDP Resident Representatives.

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One Agency asked that agency field assessments be cleared by respective headquarters.

6.3.4 Despatch of UNDR0 Delegates in Disaster Situations. The Task Force agreed that the normal procedure for despatching an UNDR0 Delegate to the field would be for UNDR0 to consult with the UNDP/UNDR0 Resident Representative. In cases of major sudden disasters the concurrence of the UNDP/UNDR0 Resident Representative would be assumed unless the Resident Representative informed UNDR0 to the contrary. Under these circumstances UNDR0 would notify the UNDP/UNDR0 Resident Representative in advance of the Delegate's arrival.

6.3.5 Status of UNDR0 Delegates. In order to provide additional and specialized assistance to the UNDP/UNDR0 Resident Representative following a disaster, within the UNDP Office the UNDR0 Delegate would normally report direct to the UNDP/UNDR0 Resident Representative; assistance needed by him could come from any part of the UNDP office. The Delegate's interaction with the government, local governmental and non-governmental donor representatives, and UN system offices would always occur in the name of the UNDP/UNDR0 Resident Representative.

6.3.6 Increased physical/technical capacity to exchange information. For the purpose of making full use of information held in respective data bases, UNDP and UNDR0 agreed to exploit further the on-line electronic information system between the two organizations - both between headquarters, and between headquarters and the field. Similarly the data-bases or networks of other organizations should be linked, exploited and developed to the common benefit (see Part C).

6.3.7 Personnel Secondments. The Task Force considered the systematic secondment of staff between UNDP and UNDR0 as desirable to strengthen understanding of respective policies, procedures and practices. This should include assignments of UNDR0 staff to field offices in disaster-prone countries and of UNDP staff to UNDR0.

6.3.8 Participation of UNDR0 in Global and Regional Meetings of UNDP Resident Representatives. In order to ensure maximum exchange of information on disaster-related matters, UNDR0 will liaise direct with UNDP Regional Bureaux concerning arrangements for its participation in regional meetings of UNDP Resident Representatives. Whenever possible, advantage would be taken of such occasions for UNDR0 to bring together, before or after the regional meeting, UNDP Resident Representatives of disaster-prone countries for consultation on disaster-related matters. Participation of UNDR0 in global meetings of UNDP Resident Representatives will continue to be arranged direct between the two organizations.

6.3.9 Programme and Projects Manual (PPM) Guidelines and UNDP/UNDR0 Disaster Management Manual. The Task Force considered that the present guidelines (UNDP/PROG/FIELD 110 Rev. 1 of 12 October 1983) should be replaced to provide clearer and more comprehensive guidance to UNDP staff with respect to disaster management. It was agreed that new guidelines would be issued and included within the UNDP PPM, and notably in a UNDP/UNDR0 Disaster Management Manual to be prepared (see para 6.4.2.7).

6.4 Substantive Issues

6.4.1 Relief.

6.4.1.1 In-country Co-ordination. The Task Force reviewed existing instructions and practices concerning relief co-ordination in the field and reached agreement that these practices and arrangements should be considerably reinforced to reflect the following:

6.4.1.1.1 Co-ordination Responsibilities. The chief responsibility for the co-ordination of both national relief and international relief within a country rests with the government of that country. The UN Resident Co-ordinator provides co-ordination support activities which complement the government's efforts, either in consultation with, or in direct support, of the focal point in the government for disaster relief.

6.4.1.1.2 The Quality of Response. The Task Force, in reviewing the experience of the two organizations, concluded that qualitative improvements to international disaster response could be brought about through greater rigor in exercising the existing procedures. In particular, the Task Force urged that: UNDR0 appeals or requests for international assistance should be based on sound and regularly adjusted assessments of needs (derived from information provided by the government, United Nations organizations and other agencies); tighter and more accurate reporting of these needs; and systematic and up-to-date recording of contributions balanced-off against relief requirements.

6.4.1.2 Assessment of Disaster Impact and Relief Needs

6.4.1.2.1 Consolidated Assessments. The Task Force highlighted the importance of sound assessments regularly revised in function of evolving relief needs as a basis for effective national and international response. In this connexion, the Task Force recommended that there be a consolidated assessment of relief needs comprised of the assessments made by organizations of the UN System, and others as appropriate, of areas of their specific concern. This consolidated assessment should provide the international community with a clear, rapid and consistent picture of the priority components of the needs. The focal point for the co-ordination of this consolidated assessment is the UN Resident Co-ordinator. Inputs from other organizations of the UN System should be provided, for example, from FAO for agriculture and overall food supply/demand, from WHO for health, from UNICEF for drinking water supply, shelter, nutrition and supplementary feeding, from WFP for emergency food and logistics, from UNHCR where refugees are a component of a larger emergency within the scope of this report, from UNESCO for physical structural assessments after earthquakes, and from the government, as well as from donors and NGOs.

6.4.1.2.2 Guidelines for Assessment. The Task Force recognized that a standard methodology for simple initial assessment of impact and definition of needs was lacking within the UNDP/UNDR0 mechanism and to a certain extent within governments themselves. It was agreed that UNDR0 would develop appropriate guidelines in consultation with the concerned UN organizations, and taking into consideration existing methodologies. It was recommended that the UNDP/UNDR0 Resident Representatives share these with government counterparts.

6.4.1.3 Information Management. The Task Force recognized the vital importance of sound information management at both the national and international levels in assuring effective and efficient international response to disasters. It recognized that given time and distance factors

and the number of entities involved that this was a complex process. The UNDP/UNDRO mechanism can capitalize on a variety of technical and organizational means by which to rationalize the process - in particular to ensure that a single and progressively adjusted picture is available to all interested international entities and to the government concerned, in order to decide on their respective responses. These means include information/co-ordination meetings at national and international levels, and the active use of established means of communications, telephone, facsimile, telex, radio, electronic mail, etc. The Task Force recommended that opportunities and capabilities for rational and rapid information exchange should be exploited to the maximum, and the process as a whole subject to regular review, evaluation and development.

6.4.1.3.1 The Function of UNDRO SITREPS. The Task Force recognized the capacity of the UNDRO/UNDP mechanism to disseminate, both at the international and at the national levels, important information which could be shared commonly among all international respondents to a disaster. UNDRO SITREPS could be the major vehicle by which to do this in an orderly and systematic way. These SITREPS, sent out rapidly to multiple addressees from Geneva, comprise sections on evaluation of a disaster situation, its impact, and assessment of damages and relief requirements of the affected population, on national and international relief activities and programmes, and on pledges and contributions. SITREPS underscore, on a continuing basis, the evolution of a situation and outstanding relief needs.

6.4.1.3.2 SITREPS: Information Received from UNDP/UNDRO Resident Representatives. The sources of information available to UNDRO in the preparation of SITREPS are various but the UNDP/UNDRO Resident Representative is held as the most significant contributor and the one on whom the prime responsibility for independent and comprehensive reporting remains. In this respect the UNDP/UNDRO Resident Representative is expected to report immediately to UNDRO with whatever details are available. This reporting involves a judgment regarding the magnitude of a disaster and the UNDP/UNDRO Resident Representative's estimate of the national capacity to respond. Initial reports should follow in a regular and systematic manner. These should provide information of increasing detail and quality. Information should be given as to whether or not the government has requested international assistance, or the launching of an international appeal, as soon as this is known.

6.4.1.3.3 SITREPS: Systematic Reporting. Initial information from the UNDP/UNDRO Resident Representative to UNDRO should be followed by regular and systematic reporting. This should be based on multisectoral input from the United Nations Disaster Response Team, and other locally acquired information. To this, UNDRO at the Headquarters level may add information received from additional sources, in particular UN system organizations. The Task Force emphasized the importance of UNDRO clearly identifying in its SITREPS the source of information on the extent of damage and on needs estimates. This requires the UNDP/UNDRO Resident Representative to make the necessary distinctions in reporting to UNDRO. To the extent feasible, the headquarters of the specialized UN agencies will be consulted on the assessment reports or parts thereof in their areas of competence.*

* One Agency asked that agency field assessments be cleared by respective headquarters.