ICVA is pleased to present its report “The Role of Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator – an Independent Study”, the result of a one-year independent study aiming to inform future collective discussion and decisions associated with the Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator (DHC) role within the humanitarian coordination system.

The report and its executive summary highlight key issues captured through this study and propose recommendations for the future management of the DHC role.

Amongst them, ICVA would like to highlight the following:

i) **The DHC role is a powerful tool in supporting principled and effective humanitarian aid**
   The study found that while the role of the DHC has evolved organically and has often been managed in an ad hoc manner, it is often perceived by humanitarian actors as bringing strong added value to a humanitarian response. The DHC role is a powerful tool in supporting principled and effective humanitarian aid across challenging coordination landscapes when used to address context-specific needs.

ii) **The DHC role as a flexible tool for a context based approach**
   The flexibility of the DHC’s role is a primary strength that should be preserved. While a desire for more clarity or standardisation is understandable, efforts to further standardise and/or regulate the role could result in the loss of its current advantage of adaptability. DHC roles should not be standard features in coordination structures, but be evaluated case-by-case, taking into consideration a context specific approach and best practices from previous DHC deployments.

iii) **A fully empowered DHC is often a sign of a robustly empowered HC**
    The study found that a DHC position can either weaken or amplify an HC’s empowered leadership. The role is most effective in situations where the HC clearly communicates arrangements for delegating authority and helps the DHC carve out a clearly defined sphere of operations. Where the HC does not actively extend empowered leadership, or the DHC does not fully inhabit this aspect of the role, leadership is potentially diluted or stymied. A fully empowered DHC is therefore often a sign of a robustly empowered HC.

iv) **The DHC role as a possibility to ensure a focus on humanitarian response within the broader frame of the “New Way of Working”**
    Where there is a DHC position, humanitarian actors often perceive an increase in the level of independence of aid delivery. DHC functions and activities contribute to increasing and maintaining humanitarian space, acting as a buffer between humanitarian and non-humanitarian activities. Within the broader frame of the “New Way of Working”, in countries with high humanitarian needs, the DHC is a pragmatic way to ensure a focus on humanitarian response, without undermining the overall coherence of the New Way of Working’s approach.
v) **The DHC role is associated with increasing cohesion among humanitarian actors in a response**

The DHC is often favourably associated with increasing community cohesion, including increased trust with donors. DHCs that placed a strong emphasis on interpersonal relationships are highly valued for playing a critical convening role and promoting the collective work of humanitarian actors. However, while a DHC’s role could result in stronger NGO engagement with the system, the potential for NGOs to interact with the DHC role is still under-exploited.

Building on this study’s outcomes, ICVA will look at:

- Disseminating broadly its conclusions and recommendations
- Sharing its expertise in discussion around the DHC role
- Developing a special note on the DHC role to HCs, DHCs, NGOs, donors, UN and other key humanitarian stakeholders
- Working with the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the Emergency Directors Group (EDG), the Humanitarian and Support Leadership Unit (HLSU), and OCHA to increase the efficiency of the DHC role.

ICVA hopes that this study will be useful to the entire humanitarian community. In the end, the success of the DHC role relies on community-wide investment in supporting DHCs and HCs.

**Download the documents from the ICVA website**
https://www.icvanetwork.org/resources/role-deputy-humanitarian-coordinator-independent-study

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**Executive Summary**

**Full Report**

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