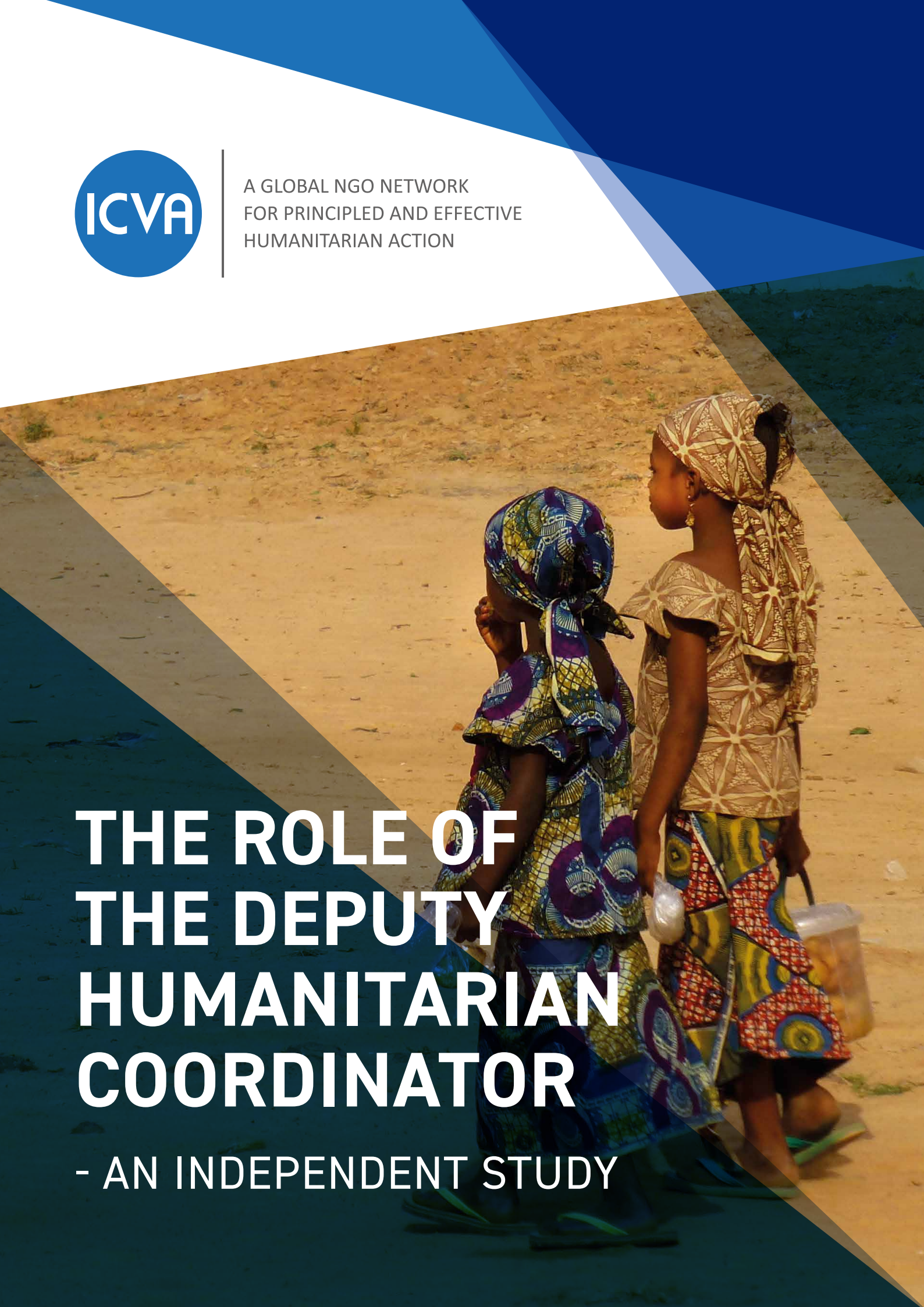




A GLOBAL NGO NETWORK
FOR PRINCIPLED AND EFFECTIVE
HUMANITARIAN ACTION

THE ROLE OF THE DEPUTY HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR

- AN INDEPENDENT STUDY



A study commissioned by ICVA.

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ACRONYMS

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
CRD	Coordination and Response Division, OCHA
DHC	Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator
DOCO	Development Operations Coordination Office
DRHC	Deputy Regional Humanitarian Coordinator
DSRSG	Deputy Special Representative to the Secretary-General
EDG	Emergency Directors Group
ERC	Emergency Response Coordinator
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HRA	Humanitarian Reform Agenda
L3 EMERGENCY	Level 3 Emergency
NON-WE OG	Non-Western European and Others Group
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
RC	Resident Coordinator
RHC	Regional Humanitarian Coordinator
SRS G	Special Representative of the Secretary-General
STAIT	Senior Transformative Agenda Implementation Team
TA	Transformative Agenda
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WE OG	Western European and Others Group

1

INTRODUCTION

This report presents an overview of recent Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator roles and perceptions of the role within the humanitarian community as well as best practices and lessons learned to inform and improve management of the Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator role.

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

This report presents findings from the Study on the Role of the Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator (DHC), commissioned by the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) and conducted by an independent research team.

Deputy Humanitarian Coordinators have been increasingly deployed in recent years to support the position of Humanitarian Coordinator (HC).

As the number of DHC positions has increased over recent years, so has interest in the position within the humanitarian community. The development of the role has been both incremental and organic and has responded to ongoing changes within the humanitarian coordination architecture. Deputy Humanitarian Coordinators have, as a result, been deployed in a range of contexts to serve diverse objectives, with a corresponding range of outcomes.

Study objectives:

- **To inform future collective discussion and decisions associated with the DHC role within the humanitarian coordination system.**
- **To highlight key issues and propose recommendations for the future management of the DHC role.**

Study methodology:

Review past and current DHC positions and explore stakeholder perceptions of which aspects of the role have provided added value to humanitarian responses. The study accepts the humanitarian coordination system as it is and takes a pragmatic approach to its recommendations, while looking at the larger system-wide dynamics that affect the role.

Based on feedback from study participants, the recommendations are those of the independent research team. They aim to foster further discussion within the humanitarian community.

This report aims to present an overview of DHC positions that have been deployed from the introduction of the Transformative Agenda (TA) in 2012 through the end of 2016. Rather than taking an evaluative approach, the study focuses on describing various perspectives from within the humanitarian community. The study was conducted from October 2016 through February 2017 and therefore does not take into account recent developments within the humanitarian landscape in 2017. The information is based on a literature review of 414 documents, interviews with 63 key informants and survey feedback from 288 respondents from across the humanitarian community, including NGOs, UN agencies, donor offices, the Red Cross Movement, DHCs and HCs.

While the study is not exhaustive, the objective is to make a first contribution to the literature on the DHC role and to stimulate further analysis, as well as future discussion and decision-making associated with DHC positions within the humanitarian coordination system.

This study also adopts a systems theory approach to understanding the function of the DHC as one role within a broader complex eco-system of 'people based' humanitarian coordination and decision-making. Analysis of complex responsive systems considers a range of communication, power relations, values and norms, and choices that interact.¹ From this perspective, the humanitarian system is defined not only by its structures, policies and functions but also significantly by diverse and interdependent actors who influence the system through their actions, behaviours and attitudes. The system, in turn, adapts in response to these human behaviours and choices. In other words, the DHC role is viewed as the result of changes in the humanitarian coordination system, but also as changing that system.

For a full explanation of research methods, including data collection methods, respondent group breakdown, scope and limitations, see [Annex 9.1](#)

¹ There is an abundance of literature on complex responsive systems, but see for example Stacey et al. 2000.

Scope of study:

The study covers the following DHC positions from 2012 to 2016.

Central African Republic	Oct 2015 to Mar 2016
Iraq	Feb 2015 to Jan 2016
Myanmar	Apr 2016 to Dec 2016
Nigeria 1	Apr 2015 to Sep 2016
Nigeria 2	Oct 2016 to Dec 2016
Philippines*	Nov 2013 to Jan 2014
Somalia	Feb 2012 to Feb 2013
South Sudan	Apr 2014 to Mar 2016
Sudan/Darfur	Jan 2015 to Aug 2015
Whole of Syria	May 2016 to Dec 2016

*Partial information.

Please note: This report does not consider recent developments in 2017.

Report structure/Quick guide:

Section 1: Introduction.

Section 2: Brief background on the DHC role in the humanitarian coordination system.

Section 3: Inception of the role, including justifications for the role and the designation process.

Section 4: Overview of DHC role, including profile attributes, core functions and key relationships.

Section 5: DHC empowered leadership: delegation of authority and accountability.

Section 6: DHC role lessons learned: Challenges, productive practices and perceived added value.

Section 7: Conclusions and key points of the study.

Section 8: Recommendations: How to manage the DHC role.

Annexes: Methodology and interview participants.

2

BACKGROUND OF THE DHC ROLE

References to DHC positions can be found in the literature as early as 1995² with deployments taking place sporadically throughout the early 2000s.³

Literature on coordination from this time period foreshadows discussions on the DHC role that are still ongoing: Issues of accountability; discussion on the appropriateness for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Head of Office and/or Heads of Agencies to deputise for the HC; and a lack of clarity between the roles of HC, DHC and OCHA Head of Office.⁴ In addition, there were also discussions regarding the overall structural coherence and efficacy of the system, including regarding the effects of multi-hatted positions on the delivery of humanitarian assistance and how to best support and deputise the HC.⁵

However, while some of the existential questions regarding both roles and systems are persistent, the DHC role today is largely the product of developments associated with the Humanitarian Reform Agenda (HRA) in 2005 and – more recently – the TA in 2012.

The current concern with empowered leadership and accountability within the TA is of particular relevance to this study.⁶

The solution to the problem [of multiple mandates] consists in improving the selection and training of the HCs and in providing adequate support (for instance through the appointment of a deputy Resident Representative for UNDP and/or of the Head of OCHA Field Office as deputy Humanitarian Coordinator).

—IASC Working group, 2002

The increased deployment of DHCs in complex humanitarian contexts can be seen as an organic adaptation within the humanitarian system to achieve the accountable and effective leadership envisioned by the TA.

While the HRA put into place the structures and systems of ostensibly more effective aid delivery, the TA is concerned with enabling these structures to deliver responsive, agile aid through empowered leadership, while maintaining mutual accountability within a densely populated multilateral aid landscape.

Viewing the DHC role within this humanitarian ecosystem – but also within this moment of time in the overall evolution of the role – is crucial to understanding the potential and the limitations of the role and guiding its future evolution.

² For a DHC role in Rwanda in 1995, please see: Daes, Erica-Irène, 1995. "The involvement or [sic] the United Nations System in Providing and Coordinating Humanitarian Assistance", Joint Inspection Unit. UN document reference: JIU/REP/95/9. [http://repository.un.org/bitstream/handle/11176/275987/JIU_REP_95_9-EN.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y]. For a DHC role in DRC in 1996, please see: IRIN, 29 November 1996. "Consolidated Great Lakes Report Update #2 (November 23-29, 1996)". [<http://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/consolidated-great-lakes-report-update-2-november-23-29-1996>]

³ For a DHC role in Angola in 2001, please see: "UN, 21 December 2001. "SECURITY COUNCIL, 56TH YEAR : 4444TH MEETING, FRIDAY, 21 DECEMBER 2001, NEW YORK: Situation in Angola". UN document reference: S/PV.4444. [http://repository.un.org/bitstream/handle/11176/31931/S_PV.4444-EN.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y]

For a DHC role in Iraq in 2003, please see: "Iraq: Phasing down and termination of the Programme pursuant to Security Council resolution 1483 (2003)". [<http://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/iraq-phasing-down-and-termination-programme-pursuant-security-council-resolution-1483>]





























































For a DHC role in Indonesia in 2005, please see: "Indonesia: Earthquake OCHA Situation Report No. 1". UN document reference: OCHA/GVA - 2005/0059. [<http://reliefweb.int/report/indonesia/indonesia-earthquake-ocha-situation-report-no-1-7>]






⁴ Wiles, Peter and Reindorp, Nicola, June 2001. "Humanitarian Coordination: Lessons from Recent Field Experience A study commissioned by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)", ODI. [<https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/4186.pdf>];



⁵ IASC, 2002. "Inter-agency Standing Committee Working Group, 49th meeting, 19-20 June 2002". [http://www.iasc.ch/system/files/legacy_files/ToR%20HC%20Issue%20Paper.pdf]

⁶ For more information on humanitarian coordination generally, please visit the website of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee: www.iasc.org; the ALNAP website: www.alnap.org, the ICVA website: <http://www.icvanetwork.org> and the Building a Better Response website: <http://www.buildingabetterresponse.org>

DHC OVERVIEW (GRAPH 1)

FACTOR	SOM	PHL	SSD	IRAQ	NIG 1	SUD	CAR	MYN	WOS	NIG 2
YEAR	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2016	2015-2016	2015-2016	2015-2016	2015-2016	2016-2017	2016-2017	2016-2017
DHC DEPLOYMENT DATES	02.01.2012 to 02.01.2013	11.01.2013 to 01.01.2014	04.01.2014 to 03.31.2016	02.01.2015 to 01.31.2016	04.01.2015 to 09.30.2016	08.01.2015 to present	10.01.2015 to 03.31.2016	04.11.2016 to present	05.01.16 to present	10.03.2016 to present
LENGTH OF DEPLOYMENT IN MONTHS	 12	 3	 24	 12	 18	 16*	 6	 8	 7*	 3*
LOCATION RELATIVE TO HC	DELOCATED	COLOCATED*	COLOCATED	DELOCATED	COLOCATED	DELOCATED	COLOCATED	COLOCATED	DELOCATED	SPLIT TIME
HC POOL STATUS										
RC POOL STATUS										
L3 STATUS*		11.14.2013 to 02.11.2014	02.11.2014 to 05.05.2016	08.12.2014 to present			12.12.2013 to 05.13.2015		01.15.2013 to present	
HC HATTING	RC/DSRSG/ HC	RC/HC	RC/DSRSG/ HC	RC/DSRSG/ HC	RC/HC	RC/HC	RC/DSRSG/ HC	RC/HC	RHC + HC	RC/HC
HUMANITARIAN CONTEXT	 COMPLEX	 NATURAL DISASTER	 COMPLEX	 CONFLICT	 COMPLEX	 COMPLEX	 COMPLEX	 CONFLICT	 CONFLICT	 COMPLEX
DEPLOYED FROM WITHIN OR OUTSIDE COUNTRY	NOT ALREADY PRESENT	NOT ALREADY PRESENT	ALREADY PRESENT	NOT ALREADY PRESENT	NOT ALREADY PRESENT	NOT ALREADY PRESENT	NOT ALREADY PRESENT	ALREADY PRESENT	NOT ALREADY PRESENT	NOT ALREADY PRESENT
DOUBLE HATTED DHC			PART OF TIME							
HOW DEPLOYMENT ENDED	Contract ended	Contract ended	Contract ended	Contract ended	Contract ended	Active	Post withdrawn	Active	Active	Active
REPLACED				 *		-		-	-	-
IF NO REPLACEMENT, WHY?	NEW HC DECISION	-	NEW HC DECISION	NEW HC DECISION	-	-	NEW HC DECISION	-	-	-
NOTES	-	-	-	*Post refilled then cancelled	-	*As of Dec 2016, ongoing position	-	*As of Dec 2016, ongoing position	*As of Dec 2016, ongoing position	*As of Dec 2016, ongoing position

 Central Africa Republic
 Iraq
 Myanmar
 Nigeria 1
 Nigeria 2

 Philippines
 Somalia
 South Sudan
 Sudan
 Whole of Syria Response

 No
 Yes

3

INCEPTION OF THE DHC ROLE: JUSTIFICATION OF THE ROLE AND THE DESIGNATION PROCESS

3.1 Justifications: What circumstances lead to a request for a DHC role?

3.1.1 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM MULTIPLE MANDATES

The most frequently cited reason for needing a DHC was to mitigate the effects of conflicts of interest created by a multi-hatted HC within an integrated mission environment. These cases broadly fell into two categories: 1) Cases in which the HC was perceived as inadequately prioritising his/her HC responsibilities, resulting in a neglected humanitarian hat and 2) cases where the HC was unable to neutrally fill the HC hat due to the nature of his/her other activities as Deputy Special Representative to the Secretary General (DSRSG) and/or RC.

Respondents across groups consistently viewed the DHC role as an attempt to relieve and/or mitigate the tension between the mandates of a multi-hatted HC and, in some cases, the lack of humanitarian independence necessary to operate effectively and safely.

Given the inherent competing demands of multi-hatted positions, HCs must often choose which functions to prioritise. Where multi-hatted HCs were not prioritising HC duties, respondents were critical of their underperformance, as well as of needing a DHC for this reason. Others took a more pragmatic view, stating that while a DHC compensating for an HC who is perceived as underperforming is not ideal, it's better than not having a DHC role at all. Yet another view was that, as it is not an accredited position, the HC hat is the only one that can be fully delegated.

There was a lot of pressure on the HC — who had a peacekeeping role — because s/he wasn't totally neutral vis-à-vis the Government. It became impossible to manage this incoherence.

—DHC respondent

When triple hatted HCs don't prioritise the HC hat, that's not the system's fault. It's not an inherent weakness. It's a decision and sometimes a very intentional one.

—NGO respondent

Both UN and non-UN respondents made a direct causal link between the integrated mission era and the DHC position, remarking that the DHC position derives largely from an unfinished discussion about the relationship between development, peace building and humanitarian activities within the larger humanitarian community and the impact of integrated approaches and missions on humanitarian activities.

3.1.2 GEOGRAPHIC DISTANCE: EXTENDING THE PRESENCE OF THE HC

The second most frequently cited and least controversial reason for needing a DHC was to provide a proxy HC presence in humanitarian responses where there was a geographic split between the centre of operations (often in a capital location) and secondary locations (in geographically distinct or politically/militarily distinct areas). In these cases, the DHC was often de-located from his/her HC counterpart on a part-time or full-time basis.

The necessity for a DHC to establish or maintain a proxy HC presence was viewed as justified in two situations: 1) Where the HC was unable to travel to secondary sites, due to perception concerns or security issues and 2) Where the HC needed to maintain a presence and portfolio of activities primarily in the capital sphere.

In certain cases respondents mentioned the need for an empowered senior leadership profile in a secondary location. This justification was sometimes related more to having technical and/or coordination expertise for improved coordination of operations.

3.1.3 HUMANITARIAN EXPERTISE AND HC WORKLOAD: EXPANDING THE CAPACITY OF THE HC

A secondary set of justifications arise from a need to expand the capacity of the HC, by either complementing the HC profile with specific humanitarian expertise or relieving the HC's workload.

Where there was an unanticipated change in the context, multi-hatted HCs without extensive humanitarian experience often requested the deployment of a DHC to manage a new or scaling up response.

In countries where the HC workload was already high and focus stretched across multiple mandates, a need to relieve the HC's workload was also cited as a justification for a DHC. This issue was purely related to the impossibility of fulfilling all functions simultaneously rather than a conflict created by the multiple hats.

It should be noted, however, that the necessity to relieve an overstretched HC's workload has been a supportive or secondary justification, not one that's been used in the absence of other justifications.

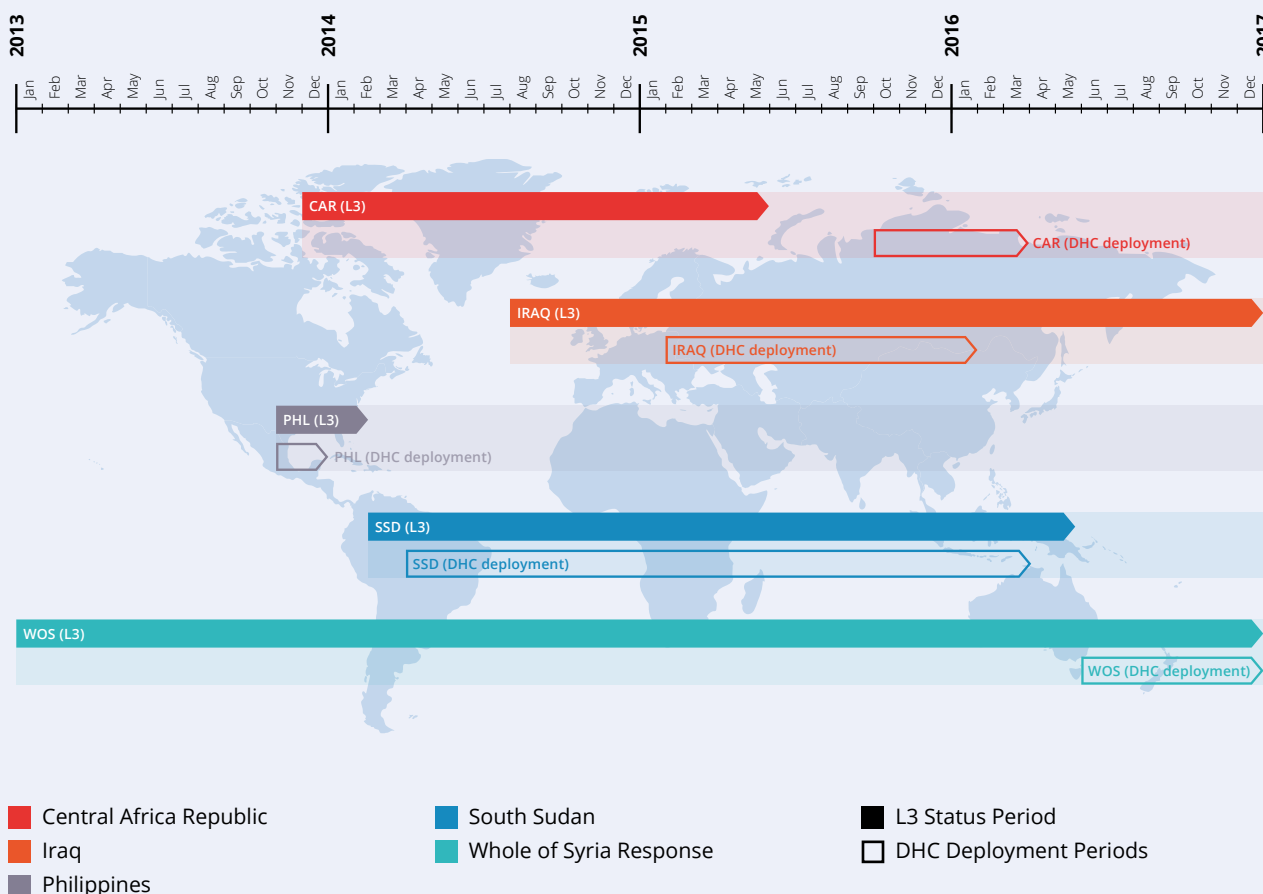
The HC often has to choose between putting more time into HC functions or more time into RC functions. There is a tension between the two functions that often leads to less time and/or interest dedicated to HC work. In cases where the HC has four hats, the situation is even more exacerbated.

—UN respondent

The DHC is an artificial response to unclear and competing priorities in the UN political landscape.

—NGO respondent

L3-DHC COMPARISON TIMELINE (GRAPH 2)



3.1.4 RESOURCE MOBILISATION IN A LEVEL 3 EMERGENCY

A request for a DHC has often accompanied the resource mobilisation phase of an operational surge or scale-up following the declaration of a system-wide Level 3 (L3) emergency. However, not all L3 contexts have had DHCs and not all DHCs have been attached to L3 contexts.


There were varying perspectives regarding whether a DHC role should be systematically deployed as part of an L3 scale-up. Some participants suggested that the DHC should be a fixed feature of all L3 responses, while others questioned the utility of this approach. As L3 emergencies were often accompanied by a context change, requiring stronger and more independent humanitarian leadership to support the operational scale-up, this topic was closely linked to HC workload, the competing mandates of multi-hatted HCs and geographic co-location.

Again, this justification was generally a supportive or secondary justification, usually linked to other factors.

3.2 DHC designation process: How do stakeholders perceive the process?


Several aspects were considered in looking at the designation process: Which actors requested and/or advocated for the DHC position; who was consulted; the designation time frame and significant deployment delays. While participants often described the process of bringing a DHC into a response as an open recruitment process, this is in fact a designation process and respondent perceptions were sometimes skewed by this misunderstanding.

It should be noted that, while the initial request comes from the HC, the decision to make the request often comes after advocacy by other stakeholders, such as donors, NGOs or Heads of Agencies. In some cases, the HC's request comes after a Peer2Peer (formerly STAIT) or other high-level mission has made a recommendation. While these are considered peer processes, they seem to have influenced the creation of several DHC positions.




There were updates on the process, but the designation process is owned by HQ with feedback from people in the field.

—UN respondent



The NGO community as a whole doesn't care what the view on the ground is for field NGOs. There was no place for the operational NGOs' voice in the process. There is no structured input as envisioned in IASC — it's ad hoc and carries very little weight. In the end, operational UN agencies ended up [undermining] implementing NGOs by dragging out the designation process, which was really bad for NGOs and the response as a whole.

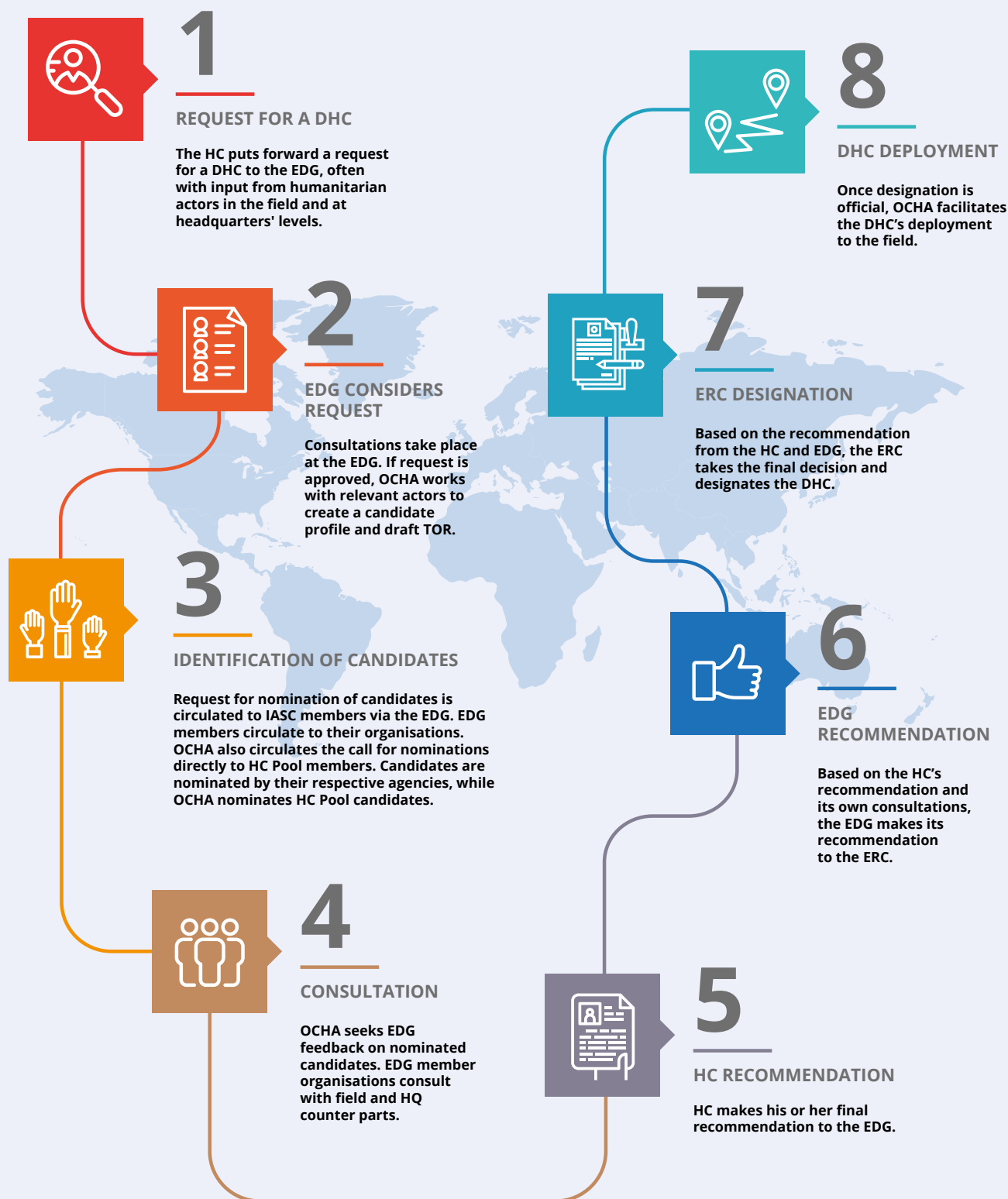
—NGO respondent



NGOs end up feeling disenfranchised and feel that the process is fully separate from NGOs — it's entirely UN owned and operated. We see our inputs go into the system, but none of them come out.

—NGO respondent

DESIGNATION PROCESS (GRAPH 3)



Unlike an open recruitment process, a designation process seeks to identify qualified candidates within the humanitarian community to be designated as DHCs in a short term capacity, as needed.

3.2.1 CONSULTATION IS PERCEIVED AS INSUFFICIENT, PARTICULARLY BY ACTORS LOCATED IN THE FIELD

Despite acknowledged efforts by NGO consortia and OCHA to solicit feedback as part of the DHC designation process, many NGO and some UN respondents reported a perceived lack of consultation. This view becomes stronger the further an actor is from the nucleus of decision-making. Less than 25% of survey respondents agreed/strongly agreed that the process was sufficiently consultative. Away from the Emergency Directors Group (EDG) and OCHA power centres, perceptions are even poorer. It is strongest among non-UN respondents, who feel very much outside looking in at what is perceived as a UN-owned process. This correlates to a weaker understanding of the coordination architecture generally, including familiarity with the DHC role and its functions.

3.2.2 THE STEPS OF THE DESIGNATION PROCESS ARE NOT ALWAYS CLEAR TO STAKEHOLDERS NOT INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS

While relatively clear within the EDG and OCHA spheres, the designation process comes across as markedly less coherent, and often misunderstood, outside these immediate power centres.

Respondents at both field and headquarter levels from UN and non-UN groups described the process of identifying candidates in a wide variety of ways, with no consistent narrative about how candidates are actually identified. Many inaccurately described the process, while others described it as “inscrutable” and “distant from field operations”. The process was cited as lacking transparency and functioning like a “fraternity” or a “gentlemen’s club”.

While many non-UN actors perceived the designation process as indecipherable or inaccessible, this lack of clarity exists within the UN system as well. DHCs themselves admitted not understanding how certain aspects of HC pool management worked or, in several cases, even knowing for sure whether they had been officially added to it.

Notably, there was a strong perception among stakeholders – including those within the UN – that being part of the HC pool was a requisite to becoming DHC, and that the majority of DHC roles had been recruited from the HC pool. In reality, however, 40% of the DHC positions included in the study came from outside the HC pool.

The designation process in the end is just a testing ground for the usual UN agency politics. So NGOs are consulted, but the final decision depends on which UN Agency is the strongest and puts up the biggest fight.

—NGO respondent

Consultation has always been part of it, but the TA empowered the process to be more flexible and to allow for more nuanced management of the role.

—UN respondent

To be a DHC, you have to be validated as an HC. If you are in an NGO at a senior level, you don't necessarily have the experience for this. DHC is very strongly UN in character — so it's really only accessible to those already in the UN system.

—NGO respondent

3.2.3 LACK OF HC POOL DIVERSITY IS PERCEIVED AS A LIMITING FACTOR

Diversification has long been the subject of the humanitarian reform agenda and those actors close to the process feel progress has been made, even if incrementally. Further from the centre of these efforts, however, there is a persistent perception that lack of diversity in the HC pool is a constraint on attracting qualified DHC candidates. Feedback from across subgroups focused on three areas of diversity issues: Non-UN candidates, gender and nationality.

The majority of feedback centred on the lack of non-UN candidates in the HC pool. OCHA respondents described collaboration between NGO consortia and UN actors to attract more NGO candidates into the pool, including adapting materials for external dissemination and outreach to NGOs on the HC and DHC selection processes. However, they also cited a low response from NGO counterparts.

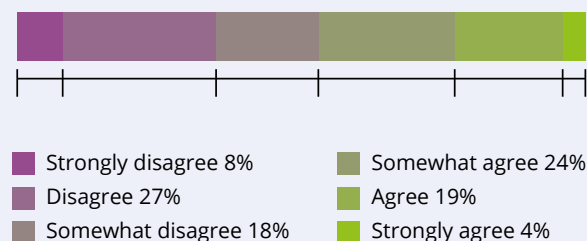
Interestingly, various actor groups describe the same set of obstacles to increasing the number of non-UN candidates, although from different perspectives: Senior NGO staff don't always see their experience as compatible with the UN recruitment system; not having previous UN coordination experience is misperceived as a weakness, or even a disqualifying factor, and NGO staff don't have the option of holding onto their positions during leaves of absence, resulting in little long term job security when applying for DHC positions.

Respondents across institutional and gender subgroups also noted the lack of gender parity in the designation of HCs and DHCs, describing the system as a "male mafia" and a "boys club". As of September 2016, the HC pool was dominated by male candidates, with females accounting for only 30%. Women comprised 26% of deployed HCs and 17% of DSRSG/RC/HC positions.⁷ While separate numbers are not kept for DHC positions, the small sample of DHC roles included in this study includes 2 female and 8 male DHCs; at 20%, the proportion of female DHCs would be roughly reflective of the overall HC pool.

Nationality diversity was slightly more balanced, at least when deployment is taken into consideration. While the HC pool was comprised of 68% members from Western European and Others Group (WEOG) countries, with only 32% from non-WEOG countries, 44% of HCs and 42% of DSRSG/RC/HCs actually deployed were from non-WEOG countries.⁸ For the DHC positions, feedback from respondents indicated that diversity of nationalities was at least partially due to some host governments' preferences for non-Western DHCs. Others, however, felt that there was still strong Western bias within the system, with the centres of power and decision-making being primarily dominated by WEOG countries.

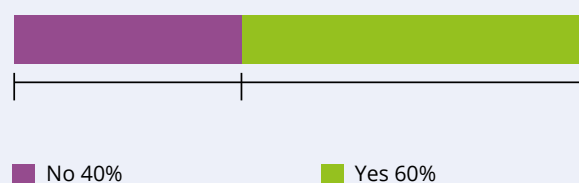
SUFFICIENCY OF CONSULTATION (GLOBAL SURVEY)

The process of selecting and confirming the DHC allowed for sufficient consultation within the humanitarian community.



HC POOL MEMBERSHIP (DHC SURVEY)

DHCs: I was a member of the HC pool at the time I was designated as DHC.



The gender balance issue hasn't been addressed adequately. It's still a boys club.

—NGO respondent

Gender balance is terrible. The male mafia is still alive and kicking.

—NGO respondent

⁷ "Humanitarian Coordinator Information Products", IASC, September 2016.

⁸ Ibid.

3.2.4 THE SELECTION OF DHC CANDIDATES IS SOMETIMES VIEWED AS LACKING TRANSPARENCY

Respondents who viewed the process as lacking in transparency tended to highlight a limited choice in candidates and the role of the HC in the designation process. This is strongly tied to the misunderstanding that DHCs are selected through an open recruitment, rather than a designation process.

Where there was only one candidate, or clearly unqualified candidates, the process was described as “pre-decided” or “a rubber-stamping exercise”. Where HCs were seen as handpicking the candidate, respondents felt the process should take into consideration a broader range of views. These respondents would prefer a process that spreads ownership to at least the HCT, involving them more actively in the designation process.

The study, however, clearly showed that a trusting and productive HC-DHC relationship is critical to the success of the DHC position. With few exceptions, where HCs proactively requested and personally chose a DHC, the outcome was positive.

In all cases, the DHCs designated by the Emergency Response Coordinator (ERC) were those recommended by the HC to the EDG. To date, the EDG has opted to support the HC’s decision, even if absolute transparency is compromised. Many respondents recognised that this approach is preferable to one that broadened ownership of the process. Some went as far as identifying absolute transparency as a potential negative factor in the designation process, with one NGO respondent stating: “If the process was totally transparent, it would slow things down too much”.

The relationship between the DHC and HC is of primary importance — nothing else matters if this isn’t in place. So HCs picking their DHCs makes sense and the HC pool becomes irrelevant. On the other hand, if we rely on only the RC/HC being happy with the DHC in situations where the DHC is compensating for an RC who has no humanitarian experience, then it can really negatively affect the humanitarian response.

—Donor respondent

3.2.5 STAKEHOLDER ADVOCACY PLAYS A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THE DESIGNATION PROCESS

In addition to requests for DHCs coming directly from HCs, other stakeholder groups can play a strong role in the creation of a DHC role. NGO and donor advocacy efforts have been pivotal in opening several DHC positions. This usually results from a concern regarding the conflict of interest represented by multiple hats, as well as strong views that humanitarian leadership should have a robust operational expertise, with the implied consequences for humanitarian accountability. While NGO advocacy extended to supporting specific candidates, donor advocacy focused on supporting the opening of the role generally, but stopped short of supporting specific candidates.

UN humanitarian agencies also had a strong influence on the designation process, but here respondents narrated the negative effects of inter-agency competition and political jockeying, with agencies tending to act according to partisan interests by backing candidates from their own agency or ‘allied’ agencies, or blocking candidates from ‘rival’ agencies. This sometimes manifested in outright interference and attempted derailment of the designation process. Several HCs and DHCs also recounted how a candidate’s home agency played a role in the HC’s final decision, seen by the HC as “buying insurance” against home agencies by bringing their staff into the HC’s office.

3.2.6 DESIGNATION AND DEPLOYMENT TIMEFRAMES VARY GREATLY, WITH MIXED VIEWS

Designation and deployment timeframes varied considerably – from several days to several months – as did perceptions of what constituted an acceptable delay. 35% of survey respondents expressed agreement/strong agreement that the time it took for the DHC to arrive in the country was satisfactory, 29% ‘somewhat’ agreed; whereas 35% expressed some degree of disagreement.

Some DHCs reported smooth deployment processes and, in some cases, expedited administrative processes facilitated rapid deployment. Other DHCs and many non-DHC respondents perceived the designation process as too bureaucratic or politicised and deployment times too long, given the nature of the emergency. They cited an expectation that a DHC would arrive quickly, given that the mobilisation of resources under an emergency scale-up is supposed to be accelerated. Delays were sometimes related to internal administrative bureaucracy and, in other cases, to the availability of the DHCs themselves.

In at least one case, respondents from across all stakeholder groups held very critical views of designation processes co-opted by internal UN politicking, causing unnecessary extensive delays and a breakdown of goodwill during an important scale-up period. They felt that this discredited the process and distracted from humanitarian delivery priorities.

3.3 DHC role continuity: How is the DHC role ended or stood down?

Another area of mixed practice and low understanding was how DHC roles end. No consistent narrative emerged from respondent feedback and actual practice also seems irregular. Of the ten cases considered for this study, six deployments had ended as of December 2016. Two of these DHC positions were replaced: one was followed by a temporary replacement through the end of the L3 (in the single natural disaster context included in the study) and the other by a long-term DHC. In the four cases where the DHC was not replaced, this decision reflected the arrival of a new HC and new priorities and/or circumstances where it was no longer considered necessary or desirable to have a DHC role.

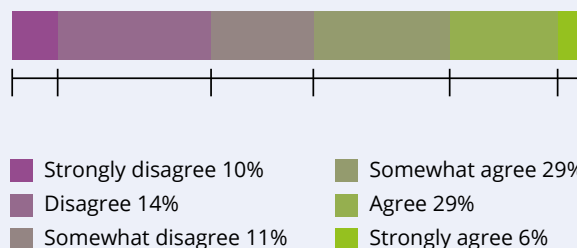
This is consistent with the fact that DHCs are generally requested by HCs, but seems inconsistent with the idea of the DHC as part of a surge capacity that is then stood down when the surge is complete. However, in some cases, while the position was discontinued at the end of an existing contract, the deactivation of the L3 status played a secondary role.

By the time the DHC got there, it was almost too late to be very meaningful. The surge had already happened and was on track.

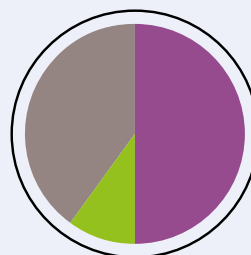
—NGO respondent

DEPLOYMENT DELAY (GLOBAL SURVEY)

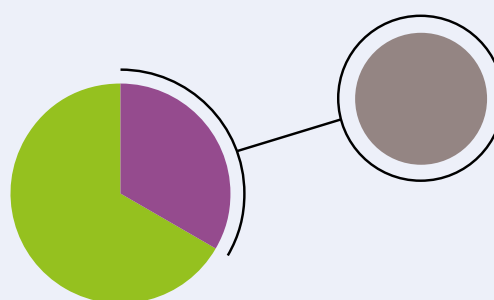
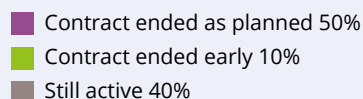
The time it took for the DHC to arrive in the country was satisfactory.



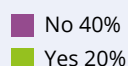
CONTINUITY OF THE DHC ROLE (DHC SURVEY)



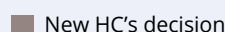
How did your deployment end?



Was the DHC role replaced?



Why was there no replacement?



4

OVERVIEW OF THE DHC ROLE: PROFILE ATTRIBUTES, CORE FUNCTIONS AND KEY RELATIONSHIPS

4.1 DHC profile attributes: Which DHC profile attributes are most valued by stakeholders?

DHC and non-DHC respondents were asked to give feedback on DHC profiles. Clear patterns and preferences emerged on profile attributes that were considered to be a good match and/or highly valued.

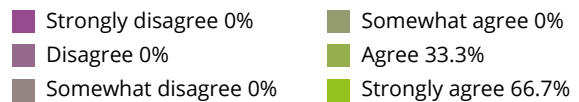
The majority of both DHC and non-DHC respondents expressed some degree of agreement that the profiles of individual DHCs were generally a good match for the position they filled.

Respondents expressed strong appreciation for DHCs with a UN background. Those with previous OCHA experience were seen as having the requisite understanding of the mechanics of humanitarian coordination, as well as being neutral and non-partisan within the UN inter-agency landscape.

Non-UN backgrounds were also seen as valuable. DHCs with previous backgrounds with NGOs, donor offices, governments and the Red Cross Movement were seen as offering added value by coming from 'outside' the system. These DHCs were perceived as functioning within the UN landscape as independent and neutral actors. NGO respondents found it both pragmatically useful and politically reassuring to have a DHC who understood NGO operations and principles as a counterpart within the coordination system.

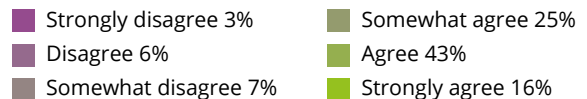
PROFILE SUITABILITY (DHC SURVEY)

My profile is a good match for the position I filled.



PROFILE SUITABILITY (GLOBAL SURVEY)

The profile of the DHC was well suited to challenges s/he faced.



When asked to identify which specific attributes had proved useful in humanitarian operations, respondents across stakeholder groups were in general in agreement. The following profile attributes are presented in order of how often they were mentioned.

4.1.1 INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

The most widely mentioned profile attribute across respondent groups was interpersonal skills. A strong set of interpersonal skills emerged as a value-defining skillset that seemed to a) supersede the importance of other skillsets but also b) be capable of mitigating other weaknesses in the situation. Interpersonal skills were described as “a strong commitment to collaborative work”, “being inclusive”, “bringing people together”, “building trust”, “being focused on relationships” and “being a problem-solver”.

DHCs who were commended for exceptional interpersonal skills seemed to have two things in common: They possessed a strong competence for internal and external communications and they prioritised communication within their work activities. These DHCs invested a significant amount of time in actively seeking out and engaging stakeholder groups, strengthening existing relations and repairing them where necessary.

This was particularly appreciated by UN agencies that had experienced poor relations with the HC’s office, integrated mission counterparts and sometimes OCHA Heads of Office. It was also markedly appreciated by NGOs who felt they now had an advocate within the coordination system.

Conversely, criticality of interpersonal skills as an overarching competency is evident in cases where interpersonal skills were lacking, despite a strong set of other competencies. As one HC respondent stated: “His/her competencies were a good match, but it never really worked”.

The DHC was effective because s/he was able to function as a neutral, third party that wasn’t loyal only to the UN, but to the general humanitarian community constituency.

—UN respondent

It just really comes down to individuals and team work. S/he unlocked the potential of the team. All they can do is bring the best out of the resources they have.

—UN respondent

The DHC was a really good listener — in a context where everyone was talking, this was really valuable.

—UN respondent

PROFILE ATTRIBUTES (GRAPH 4)

- Strong interpersonal relationship capacity
- Extensive humanitarian experience
- Extensive inter-agency coordination experience
- Leadership style focused on proactive decision making
- Strong technical knowledge of humanitarian operations
- Leadership style focused on consensus
- Previous political/diplomacy experience
- Senior position within home organisation/agency
- Previous experience working in context of assignment



4.1.2 SENIOR LEADERSHIP PROFILE

Seniority and length of experience were seen to have a direct impact on the extent to which a DHC was accepted by humanitarian community peers and to what extent the DHC fully occupied the empowered leadership mantle. The aspects of a senior leadership profile considered the most valuable, however, varied between respondent groups. UN actors highly valued seniority within the UN grade system, for two reasons. Firstly, DHCs holding more senior grades to those of Heads of UN Agencies and OCHA Heads of Office served as a regulating influence on UN inter-agency competition. Secondly, but perhaps linked to the first reason, scepticism among UN agencies on the added value of a DHC seems more likely to be mitigated if the DHC is a senior colleague from the same hierarchical system.

Non-UN respondents, on the other hand, tended to emphasise extensive humanitarian experience as the most valuable aspect of a senior leadership profile, strongly emphasising an empowered decision-making capacity for the technical aspects of coordination.


4.1.3 EXTENSIVE OPERATIONAL HUMANITARIAN EXPERIENCE AND COORDINATION EXPERTISE

Respondents identified extensive humanitarian experience with a specific coordination expertise as the third most appreciated skillset – the majority of these remarks highlighted the value of ensuring the integrity of the humanitarian response mechanisms. Within the DHC respondent group, this profile attribute was ranked as the single most useful.

These comments were raised in contexts where coordination expertise had been previously missing in the senior leadership group. In some cases, this was due to a previous DHC lacking a strong coordination background, and in others, to an HC who was foremost perceived as an RC and seen as either not having the necessary experience to lead a humanitarian operation, not prioritising HC activities or out-rightly undermining humanitarian activities. The arrival of a DHC with strong coordination skills was then considered as a turning point in the response effectiveness.


4.1.4 RELATIONAL FACTORS: ACCEPTANCE AND COMPLEMENTARITY

Interviews and survey data revealed two additional noteworthy non-profile DHC attributes, which speak to the importance of how the role fits into the existing humanitarian community – particularly the senior leadership group – in a given response. While a pattern of desirable attributes clearly emerged from the research, two factors were generally present: How the DHC profile affected the acceptance of the role within the community and to what extent there was complementarity between the DHC profile and the profiles of key counterparts.



What we want in a DHC is what we are missing in the HCs — who are either not interested in humanitarian responses — or whose mandates are so wide as to need a separate dedicated humanitarian capacity.

—NGO respondent



[The DHC role] is the last bastion of the idea that you can be independent at a high level.

—DHC respondent

4.1.5 ACCEPTANCE OF THE DHC ROLE IS INCREASED THROUGH BROADER OWNERSHIP OF THE ROLE

Where DHC profiles were highly valued, this was partially an outcome of how those attributes positively contributed to acceptance of the role within the community. Attributes valued by stakeholders led to an increased sense of overall credibility and collective ownership of the role, thus directly increasing its acceptance. This occurred even among respondents who remain sceptical of the role's general legitimacy within the system.

DHCs who adopted a strong and respected liaison role within the community, those who had a reputation for strong senior leadership and those who brought robust experience in humanitarian delivery with technical coordination skills, were seen as credible and authoritative, allowing them more space, and sometimes more autonomy, within the humanitarian architecture, to be effective.


Likewise, stakeholder groups were more likely to be supportive of the role when they felt invested in, identified with or shared a common institutional culture with the DHC.

4.1.6 COMPLEMENTARITY WITHIN THE HUMANITARIAN LEADERSHIP GROUP INCREASES THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE DHC ROLE

A second relational factor, which can be described as complementarity between roles, is how the DHC profile complements the profiles of senior leadership already in place, particularly the coordination leadership molecule comprised of the HC and the OCHA Head of Office, and – to a lesser extent – the UN Heads of Agency group.


Complementarity was described as a defining factor in situations where a DHC's added value was in question; where there was a perceived overlap in the DHC and OCHA Head of Office roles; or where the DHC was not seen as having sufficient authority and/or credibility to effectively coordinate UN Heads of Agencies.

Respondents suggested that the profile of OCHA Heads of Office be taken into consideration by the EDG in the DHC designation process, to ensure complementarity between these two roles. It was felt that a more open discussion about Head of Office capacity by the EDG could inform the choice of DHC, but that at times these conversations were avoided out of deference to OCHA leadership.




The success of the role is personality-driven. It depends on the composition of the current country team and how dynamic they are.

—DHC respondent



Sometimes you need a DHC of a certain personality type to balance out an HC of a different personality type.

—HC respondent



It's less about having a defined TOR and it's more about having a good understanding between Head of Office and DHC and HC.

—NGO respondent

4.2 DHC Key functions: What are the core functions of a Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator?

In order to clearly understand how planned functions of the DHC roles compared with the functions they actually spent time on, DHC respondents were asked to indicate the level of priority of each planned function compared to the level of priority those functions actually took in their day-to-day workflow.

Overall, the most frequent functions that DHCs performed were often those that a multi-hatted HC is not always able to sufficiently perform, due to conflicts of interest. From a purely functional perspective, many DHCs are performing the core humanitarian duties of a stand-alone HC.

Functions that took up the most time were those generally linked to protecting humanitarian space. This is consistent with feedback that DHCs were highly valued for their independence from non-humanitarian activities and their role in protection advocacy that was otherwise not carried out. Protection advocacy, however, fell down the priority list compared to other demands on time.

It is notable that supporting the OCHA Head of Office took up more time for DHCs than was reflected in their planned priorities. This was fifth on the list of high/essential priorities, but came in second on the list of functions DHCs 'always and often' spend their time on. This could be linked to the potential for overlap between the roles and the perception that the DHC role is sometimes used to compensate for OCHA underperformance.

Representing the HC in geographically remote locations was both a planned and actual high priority function for nearly 80% of the DHCs. Given that 50% of DHCs in the study were co-located in the same location as the HC, this would indicate that even for those DHCs, representing the HC outside of the capital area is an important function.

While over half of DHCs rated the humanitarian programme cycle activities as an essential or high priority, only about one third always or often spent their time on this function, with over half indicating it 'sometimes' required their time. For some DHCs, this sphere of activities was where they met with the most resistance from Heads of Agencies over budgeting priorities. Some said they were unable to fulfil their functions due to Agency infighting and/or not having sufficient authority to adequately steward the process.

Finally, nearly half of DHCs listed development activities as a medium planned priority, with over half identifying them as a low priority or not a priority. However, these activities took DHCs more time than anticipated, with over one-fifth saying that they 'always' or 'often' required their time. This could be linked to contexts where there is a strong development agenda being guided by the HC/RC that ends up affecting the priorities of the DHC. It is also consistent with stakeholder perceptions that in these contexts, humanitarian priorities are sometimes distorted by development priorities.

PLANNED LEVEL OF PRIORITY VS. TIME SPENT (GRAPH 5)

FUNCTIONS BY PLANNED PRIORITY		FUNCTIONS BY ACTUAL TIME SPENT	
Protection advocacy	Essential and High Priority	Supporting OCHA Head of Office	Always and Often Requires my Time
Representing the HC in geographically delocated areas		Representing the HC in geographically delocated areas	
Access negotiations		Access negotiations	
Humanitarian representative delinked from Mission	Medium Priority	Protection advocacy	Sometimes Requires my Time
Supporting OCHA Head of Office		Humanitarian representative delinked from Mission	
Public spokesperson		Intercluster-HCT liaison role	
Humanitarian programme cycle	Low and Not a Priority	Public spokesperson	Rarely and Almost Never Requires my Time
Civil-military engagement		Civil-military engagement	
Intercluster engagement		Pooled funding allocations	
Security coordination	Not Part of my Work at all	Security coordination	Not Part of my Work at all
Pooled funding allocations		Intercluster engagement	
Intercluster-HCT liaison role		Humanitarian programme cycle	
Development-related activities		Development-related activities	

4.3 DHC network: What are the key relationships within the Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator network?

DHCs were asked to describe four aspects of the key relationships in their network: the hierarchical nature of their relationships with other coordination counterparts; the frequency of contact with these counterparts; which functions they were performing in these relationships and whether the level of support from each counterpart was sufficient to perform their functions; a direct reporting line and frequent contact with the HC was assumed.

When characterising the nature of their relationships with various counterparts, a wide variety of perceptions emerged regarding the direct and indirect relationships in the DHC network. 25% of DHCs reported a 'direct reporting line' to ERC counterparts; DHCs also indicated direct reporting lines to the OCHA Head of Office, to UN Heads of Agencies and to the host government. Half indicated an indirect reporting line to OCHA Coordination and Response Division (CRD) counterparts, while the other half indicated functional collaboration or informal communication or consultation relationships. This varying set of relationships within the DHC network is consistent with the *ad hoc* nature of the role.

Looking at how frequently DHCs interacted with the counterparts in their network, unsurprisingly, many had frequent contact with OCHA Heads of Office. Regular contact with donors was also reported with a few DHCs reporting daily contact or more, and nearly 70% indicating weekly or bimonthly contact. Close to 70% of DHCs interacted with NGO representatives on a daily basis. Over half reported daily or more contact with Heads of Agencies, but another 45% indicated only weekly or bimonthly contact. Out of country contact with EDG, ERC and OCHA CRD counterparts tended to be less frequent, falling into the weekly/biweekly or monthly category.

DHC interactions with OCHA Heads of Offices focused on coordination-related functions, then advocacy and representation related functions and sometimes access and security related functions. Interactions with Heads of Agencies, NGO representatives and Donors tended to focus primarily on advocacy and representation related functions, then coordination-related functions and sometimes access and security related functions.

Interactions with counterparts from the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and with governmental and non-governmental authorities focus firstly on advocacy and representation related functions, then on access and security related functions and, less frequently, on coordination-related functions.

Finally, interactions with EDG, OCHA CRD and ERC counterparts were related to a mix of coordination-related and advocacy and representation related functions and less frequently related to access and security related functions.

DHCs were also asked to indicate whether the level of support they received from their key relationships was sufficient to fulfil the DHC role. DHCs indicated the strongest overall collaboration with NGO and donor counterparts. The reported tensions in some cases with OCHA Heads of Office were visible, with one-third expressing dissatisfaction with the level of support. This could be linked to feedback from respondents regarding a lack of clarity between the DHC and OCHA Head of Office roles.

Slightly less satisfactory levels of support were reported by SRSG office counterparts as well as OCHA CRD, EDG and ERC counterparts. Overall, however, these seemed to be relatively few cases.

5

DHC EMPOWERED LEADERSHIP: DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

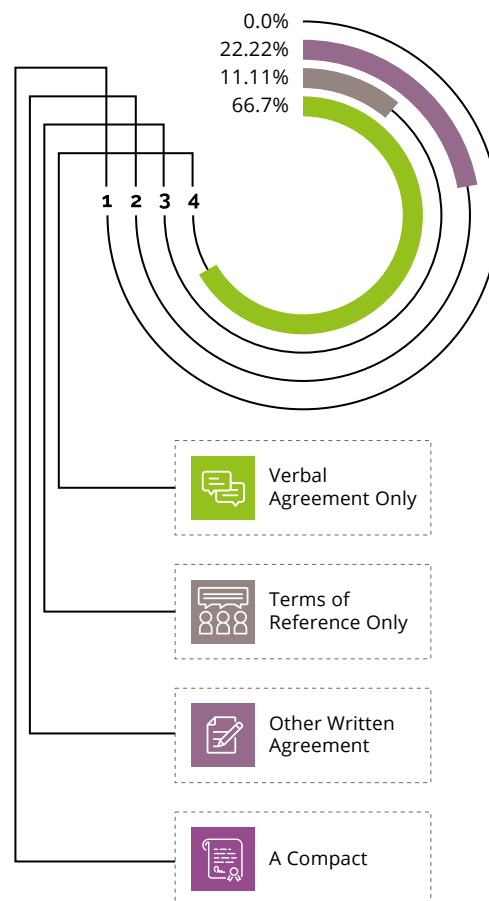
5.1 How is authority delegated from the Humanitarian Coordinator to the Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator?

In principle, the DHC Terms of Reference (TOR) and an agreement – sometimes in the form of a DHC-HC compact – between the HC and the DHC on objectives and outcomes are intended to be the primary means of agreeing on a division of labour and arranging delegated authority. A DHC's TOR is based on a standard system-wide template that is closely linked to that of the HC. The agreement between the HC and the DHC should be based on the HC/ERC compact, which is an agreement “spelling out agreed objectives and planned outcomes, and what each can expect from the other”.⁹

5.1.1 ARRANGEMENTS REGARDING DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY ARE LARGELY INFORMAL AND OFTEN UNCLEAR TO DHCs AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

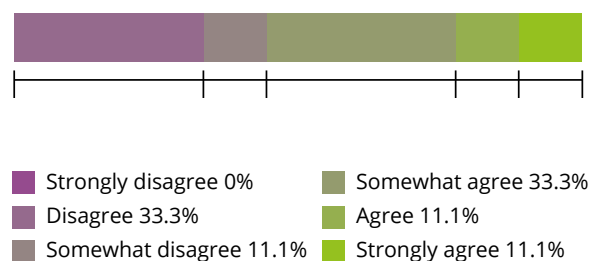
The study found formal agreements to be generally underused. DHC TORs were, with few exceptions, left very vague, with few context-specific adaptations made to the standard TOR template. Compacts or Compact-based agreements were rarely used, if at all. In two-thirds of the contexts included in the study, DHCs reported only having verbal agreements in place. The remainder had some form of alternative written agreement and/or used the TOR as the guiding agreement.

PRIMARY FORMS OF AGREEMENT (DHC SURVEY)



CLARITY OF DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY ARRANGEMENTS (DHC SURVEY)

The agreement with the HC regarding delegated authorities is clear.



⁹ For more information, please see the standard HC TOR at: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/node/297>


The lack of clear formal and/or written agreements was evident as nearly half of DHC survey respondents disagreed to some extent that there was a clear arrangement with their HC counterpart regarding how authority was delegated, with only about 20% agreeing or strongly agreeing that the HC-DHC arrangement was clear.

DHCs cited the following contributing factors: not having a clear set of guidelines, including vague TORs; agreements that changed too frequently to make any meaningful progress toward their achievement; and inadequate communication regarding the DHC's set of functions at times impeded their fulfilment.

The strongest agreements between DHCs and HCs tended to emerge in contexts where the two positions were de-located, with the DHC often operating as a *de facto* stand-alone HC within a distinct functional and/or geographic territory.

Some HC respondents indicated that having clear agreements in place was key to an effective division of labour, while others remarked that having a broad TOR allowed for optimum flexibility. This *ad hoc* approach seems, however, to have left DHCs susceptible to unproductive and often demoralising fluctuations in their ability to fulfil their functions and created perception issues within the DHCs network. In certain cases, this manifested itself in DHCs being perceived by stakeholder respondents as serving the non-humanitarian interests of a multi-hatted HC. In other cases, it left the fulfilment of the DHC role entirely dependent on the relationship with the HC, meaning DHCs have been rendered ineffective when their relationship with the HC has deteriorated.

Again, the risks and advantages of the role's elasticity are equally present: the *ad hoc* nature and flexibility of the delegation agreements can be an asset, but, in certain cases, risk neutralising the effectiveness of the role and with implications for accountability, as discussed below.



There were no written agreements — just lots of different trials and approaches. But in the end, it always got washed away by short-term pressures of the context. So it ended up being a very ad hoc, day-by-day approach. A verbal agreement could have been enough with a more stable relationship.

—DHC respondent

5.1.2 DIVISION OF LABOUR ARRANGEMENTS ARE A PRODUCT OF CONTEXT AND PERSON SPECIFIC FACTORS

The division of labour between DHCs and HCs varied from context to context, as well as within DHC deployments when HCs changed.

This division seems to be dependent on several factors, including the multi-hatted nature of the HC role; geographic distribution of the response; the two personalities involved; the role of the OCHA Head of Office; and, to a certain degree, personal preference.

Where the HC was multi-hatted, there were generally two types of arrangements: Firstly, near total outsourcing the HC activities to the DHC, whereby the DHC acted as a *de facto* stand-alone HC, albeit under the ultimate authority of the HC. Secondly, a division of labour that took into account the political nature of the HC role and sought to differentiate the purely humanitarian tasks from the more political ones, often in an attempt to firewall humanitarian activities against the consequences of an integrated mission or approach. In both cases, the HC tended to keep all high-level representation duties tied to his/her accredited position with the government. The exception tended to be on humanitarian-specific issues, particularly access, which would often involve the DHC. With a few exceptions, the DHC tended to adopt a posture facing the humanitarian community, and the HC the host government, the integrated mission components and development actors.

In cases with secondary geographic locations, the division of labour was pragmatically decided according to the geographic demands. The HC tended to focus more on capital level contacts, with the support of the DHC, where possible, on specific humanitarian issues, and the DHC managed relationships at all levels in the secondary location.

In the third set of cases, where the DHC and the HC were co-located, with the HC still actively occupying the HC hat, the arrangements were less clear and division of labour and portfolios were often mixed and generally determined according to the strengths and preferences of the two positions. However, HCs still largely occupied the political sphere, with a Mission- and government- facing posture, with DHCs still occupying a primarily humanitarian operational space.

In all three sets of cases, where HCs didn't honour the original agreements, DHC and non-DHC respondents reported confusion in how external relationships – particularly with governments and governing authorities – were handled. This was the case in both co-location and de-location scenarios.

5.1.3 AUTONOMOUS OPERATIONAL SPACE ENABLES SUFFICIENCY OF AUTHORITY

Over half of DHC respondents indicated some level of agreement that they had sufficient authority to fulfil their responsibilities, despite the perception of unclear agreements with the HC.

There was no direct correlation between the form and clarity of the agreement, and the sufficiency of the delegated authority DHCs perceived they had. However, there was a clear correlation between DHCs who were de-located from their HC counterparts – and therefore had a distinct geographical and functional sphere within which to operate – and perceived sufficiency of authority. This is also the case where clear agreements were lacking. To a lesser degree, there is a correlation between DHCs co-located with their HC counterpart, but having a clearly delegated authority agreement and perceived sufficiency of delegated authority. Finally, co-located DHCs without a clearly delegated authority agreement are most likely to report having insufficient authority to fulfil their role.

Within the larger community, there seemed to be some inconclusive views on the sufficiency of delegated authority, which is likely the result of lack of visibility on the inner workings of the DHC-HC agreements. Respondents highlighted that the division of labour between the DHC and HC roles wasn't clear to them, often creating confusion and miscommunication about who was responsible for what. Respondents recounted that in some instances there was competition between the two roles and/or that the HC actively dismissed and/or undermined the authority of the DHC.

Throughout the stakeholder feedback, sufficiency of authority is tied to the concept of autonomous operational space. For DHCs acting as *de facto* stand-alone HCs, this was seen literally as operational territory in which they engage and act with relative autonomy on a clear set of tasks that are often defined by the limitations of the operational space itself.

If you don't delegate enough, the role doesn't serve its intended function, but if you delegate too much of the HC role, you may as well have a stand alone HC.

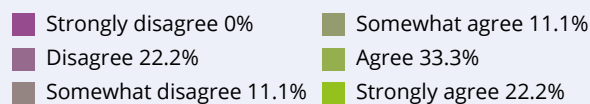
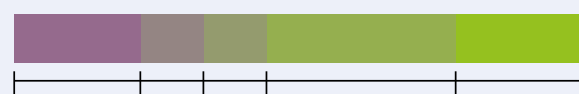
—NGO respondent

The HC's interpretation of the TOR was different from everyone else's interpretation. For the HC, the DHC was there to deal with the nitty-gritty that s/he couldn't get into, but all decisions were still his/hers to make. For the NGO community, the DHC was present at all meetings and knew all the details of the response, and we would take decisions collectively.

—NGO respondent

SUFFICIENCY OF AUTHORITY (DHC SURVEY)

I had sufficient delegated authority to fulfil my responsibilities.




A second form of operational space, however, was a non-physical one, created by the transmission/extension of empowered leadership. Even in co-location scenarios, where a formal agreement on delegation of authority was lacking, DHCs were more likely to report having sufficient authority to be effective where HCs actively carved out a functional space within which DHCs could operate autonomously. Moreover, in some cases, this transmission of empowered leadership seemed more important than a formal agreement about how to use it. A formal agreement doesn't always confer legitimacy on the tasks therein, but where legitimacy is present, a formal agreement is of secondary or little importance. This is illustrated by the counter example of DHCs who had clear agreements with the HC, but not necessarily the perceived authority to fully occupy that functional space.

Across the board, regardless of what kind of agreements were in place, the authority of DHCs to carry out their work depended largely on how much effective operational space they had to exercise this authority. Although written or verbal agreements play a constructive role, delegation of authority happens primarily and most effectively through an authentic transmission of empowered leadership.

Issues of authority and autonomy were again seen in a somewhat less granular manner by non-DHC/ non-HC actors, who had less visibility on the mechanics of delegation and who were more focused on their consequences. Greater DHC authority and autonomy was generally seen in a positive light, often because this also meant increased independence. Given the operational focus of many of the DHC positions, DHCs with increased authority and autonomy were perceived as able to proactively problem-solve, make decisions and generally be more effective.


In some cases, the authority and autonomy of DHCs were seen as diminished by an overly controlling HC, leaving the DHC with very little independence. Similarly, in cases where the DHC had been authorised to carry out certain tasks, but lacked the acceptance or autonomy to do so, this manifested in very pragmatic ways for stakeholders, including being unable to effectively work with Heads of Agencies on funding allocations, effectively lead HCT meetings and take operational coordination decisions.

In these cases, respondents tended to see the DHC role as a limiting, rather than an enabling factor, adding an extra layer of bureaucracy to processes. As will be discussed below, this was strongly linked to a perception of diminished added value.




We often felt that [the DHC's] role was not taken seriously by the HC and was often challenged in a very public manner.

—NGO respondent




The most important thing from the NGO perspective is that the HC empowers the DHC as his/her representative so that NGOs feel confident speaking to the DHC instead of the HC.

—NGO respondent




[Limitation of authority] is inherent in the coordinator position. But this isn't going to change. The Agencies are simply not going to cede space to HCs or DHCs. There's a limit to what HCs and DHCs can accomplish within the coordination system — you're a humanitarian coordinator, not a humanitarian commander.

—HC respondent



Sometimes it's hard to determine who is calling the shots. The DHC is in a leadership role, but can't direct, can only lead discussion, and this slows down the humanitarian cycle.

—HC respondent



The DHC gets instructions from the HC to downplay humanitarian issues as these are seen as contrary to his/her more political role as RC to support the Government.

—NGO respondent

5.2 What accountability issues arise from delegating authority to a DHC?

5.2.1 DIVISION OF LABOUR BETWEEN THE DHC ROLE AND THE OCHA HEAD OF OFFICE ROLE IS OF PRIMARY CONCERN AMONG NON-DHC, NON-HC ACTORS


The view from outside the DHC and HC respondent groups tended to notably focus on an entirely different relationship nexus. The most frequent topic of feedback from non-DHC and non-HC respondents involved the division of labour between the DHC and the OCHA Head of Office rather than between the DHC and the HC. The range of concerns included: That in many cases it wasn't always clear what the difference between the two roles was; that there was functional overlap between the two roles; and that, in some cases, this created competition or other conflicts between the two.

There were divergent views regarding the extent to which the OCHA Head of Office role and DHC role hold inherently, or just situationally, overlapping mandates based on differing views of OCHA's role within the coordination architecture.

Some respondents considered the DHC and OCHA Head of Office roles as fundamentally different. In this view, the OCHA Head of Office role was seen as largely administrative, focusing on OCHA internal operations and the mechanics of coordination, but not taking a strong leadership or strategic role. The Head of Office fills a strictly secretariat function and the DHC an empowered leadership role. The two positions are complementary, not overlapping.


Other respondents saw the roles as duplicative and felt that, given the presence of a strong and empowered Head of Office, a DHC should not be necessary. In this view, the OCHA Head of Office should be providing the necessary operational oversight, as well as the leadership, to work directly with the HC to support his/her functions.

In reality, the role of personality and relationships once again seem to be strong, albeit not definitive, factors in how the OCHA Head of Office and DHC interact. OCHA Heads of Office and DHCs that possessed strong communication skills and a commitment to collaborative work seem to have rendered their roles effective, even when the parameters of the DHC role weren't totally clear. Where this was not the case, OCHA Heads of Office and DHC respondents reported highly conflicted relationships, at times, and other stakeholder groups reported tensions and confusions arising from a lack of clarity between the two roles.




There isn't an inherent overlap. The Head of Office should be focused on managing coordination services. The DHC should focus more externally facing and relationship building on the strategic level.

—HC respondent




If you don't delegate enough, the role doesn't serve its intended function, but if you delegate too much of the HC role, you may as well have a stand alone HC.

—NGO respondent




The HC didn't get along with the Head of Office, so s/he ended up delegating things to the DHC to create some distance. Then a Head of Office came in that s/he liked and she no longer delegated to the DHC, but instead to the Head of Office.

—UN respondent



The HC's interpretation of the TOR was different from everyone else's interpretation. For the HC, DHC was there to deal with the nitty-gritty that s/he couldn't get into, but all decisions were still his/hers to make. For the NGO community, the DHC was present at all meetings and knew all the details of the response and we would take decisions collectively.

—NGO respondent



The HC didn't want anything to do with humanitarian affairs, so s/he was happy to have someone to outsource the HC hat to.

—DHC respondent

5.2.2 DESPITE CONCERNS REGARDING HIERARCHICAL ACCOUNTABILITY, DHCs ARE GENERALLY VIEWED AS INCREASING HUMANITARIAN ACCOUNTABILITY

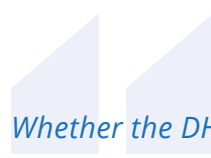
DHC and HC respondents tended to raise concerns about how the HCs *hierarchical* accountability is affected positively or negatively by the DHC role. Much of this feedback centred on whether the DHC role extends or dilutes the empowered leadership envisioned in the TA. Other stakeholder groups, however, tended to focus on how the DHC role impacts *humanitarian* accountability within a response.

In a few cases, HCs felt that DHCs did not fulfil their responsibilities to the HC adequately, despite the HC being ultimately held responsible for the activities of the DHC. They cited a lack of communication and reporting, and, in a few cases, the perception that the accountability line travelled from the DHC directly to ERC or OCHA CRD counterparts, bypassing the HC entirely. Other HC respondents cited situations where the DHC acted with more accountability toward their “home agency” than toward the HC to whom they reported. Others suggested that there should be specific accountability mechanisms for DHCs, similar to those for HCs.

Non-DHC and non-HC respondents suggested that the presence of the DHC tended to increase the accountability of the humanitarian response itself by providing a buffer between the response and integrated mission constituents.


The DHC is often perceived as serving as a bulwark against the contaminating effects of an integrated mission. This is particularly the case where a multi-hatted HC is seen as neglecting the HC mandate, or is openly hostile toward humanitarian actors and activities. It is also the case where the DHC acts as a *de facto* stand-alone HC, or the HC is also engaged in overtly political and/or military activities in his/her capacity as RC and/or DSRSG. The DHC is then seen as actually ensuring the accountability of the HC to his/her humanitarian coordination responsibilities.

Respondents acknowledged that while this outsourcing of HC responsibilities is not ideal and comes with certain compromises to hierarchical accountability, given the realities of the humanitarian coordination landscape, it is preferable to the HC responsibilities being unfulfilled or poorly fulfilled. Interestingly, respondents seem to suggest that in order to accomplish a level of empowered leadership envisioned by the TA, a weakening of hierarchical accountability lines is necessary to ensure greater humanitarian accountability.




Whether the DHC and OCHA Head of Office roles complement each other or conflict is up to the individuals involved. It can be, but it doesn't have to be. There's enough for everyone to do.

—HC respondent




The DHC role sometimes actually ensures accountability where there are concerns that the HC is not fully upholding humanitarian principles. S/he ensures distinction and independence.

—NGO respondent



A DHC is in a better position to be neutral for advocacy and negotiations. They can be accepted by authorities and the humanitarian community more than a HC who is also a DSRSG.

—HC respondent



On the one hand, things were getting done, but on the other hand, it felt like the HC disengaged from humanitarian activities.

—Donor respondent

5.2.3 STAKEHOLDER VIEWS ARE MIXED REGARDING REPORTING LINES BETWEEN THE HC'S OFFICE AND OCHA

Another frequently mentioned topic was perception of unclear and/or parallel reporting lines between the HC's office, in-country OCHA offices and OCHA headquarters offices.


Feedback centred around two main issues: DHCs who reported directly to out-of-country counterparts and the established policy of Heads of Offices reporting directly to OCHA headquarters offices.

Several DHCs described reporting directly to/being accountable to OCHA CRD or ERC level leadership. This accountability line was often of a supportive nature and coincided with DHCs functioning as *de facto* stand-alone HCs. The DHCs generally described this reporting arrangement as positive, although in several cases they cited a perceived lack of support for their role. While the majority did not comment, some HCs had critical feedback regarding these arrangements, citing being circumvented and sidelined.

The second issue seems to have been more widely contentious, with many respondents having a negative perception of the parallel reporting lines whereby OCHA Heads of Office and HCs both report directly and independently to OCHA CRD in New York. The critical view was that it allows Heads of Office to circumvent the HC's office and does not give the HC adequate control over in-country coordination.


Other respondents were in favour of the arrangement, citing that HCs still have a sufficient amount of control and can work directly with OCHA CRD in New York to resolve any issues that can't be resolved in the country. Examples where this has worked successfully were given. Moreover, they cited the need to protect OCHA and the OCHA Heads of Offices from unwarranted interference by HCs, particularly those juggling multiple mandates that potentially compromise the fulfilment of OCHA's mandate. This perspective views the parallel reporting lines as a 'safety valve' for OCHA.

It should also be noted that for many non-UN respondents the issue of reporting lines was an internal UN bureaucratic distraction, remarking that the focus should be less on the mechanics of hierarchical arrangements and more on building productive relationships. Once again, interpersonal skills and personality emerge as important mitigating factors when structural tensions are present.




From a structural perspective, the reporting lines in OCHA are difficult. But like everything, it comes down to relationships to overcome the structural flaws. So on paper, it's problematic, but in reality it tends to work out or not work out depending on the people involved.

—NGO respondent




It's always a bit of an odd situation. I always consider that the HC is who I report to in the country, but in reality my line management is CRD. The main thing is to not create problems that aren't there. If there's good collaboration with the HC and DHC, then it doesn't come up because it doesn't matter. The important thing is to make sure the HC knows you're there to support him/her and that there's open communication and open-mindedness.

—UN respondent



OCHA's role is to defend humanitarian principles, the HC is more accountable to government in an integrated mission. OCHA needs a certain independence from the political agenda.

—UN respondent



From the NGO perspective, you need a DHC that can build relationships. Reporting lines are effectively irrelevant. No one in the response reports directly to the HC, so why should OCHA? The HC is there to coordinate actors that don't work for them. So regardless of reporting lines, the HC and the DHC have to be able to form those relationships that create functional reporting and communication.

—NGO respondent




6

DHC ROLE LESSONS LEARNED: CHALLENGES, PRODUCTIVE PRACTICES AND PERCEIVED ADDED VALUE

6.1 What are the primary challenges for the Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator Role?

This section gives an overview of the key challenges faced by DHCs, as presented by the DHCs themselves, their HC counterparts and the wider community. Many of these challenges are discussed in more detail elsewhere in the report. They are mentioned in order of frequency of feedback.

CHALLENGES, PRODUCTIVE PRACTICES AND ADDED VALUE COMPARISON (GRAPH 7)

 CHALLENGES FOR THE DHC ROLE	 PRODUCTIVE PRACTICES FOR THE DHC ROLE	 ADDED VALUE OF THE DHC ROLE
MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED THEMES.		
Issues related to delegation of authority	Strong investment in interpersonal relationships	A strong technical focus on humanitarian operations
Managing interpersonal relationships	Physical proximity to humanitarian operations	Humanitarian leadership that ensures the impartial delivery of humanitarian aid
Managing inter-agency politics	A strong focus on humanitarian operations	DHC that functions within a distinct geographical area
Issues related to integrated mission dynamics	Demonstrating empowered leadership	DHC that invests in interpersonal relationships
Inconsistent levels of support from OCHA	Ensuring humanitarian independence of aid delivery	DHC that provides additional and/or independent advocacy capacity

6.1.1 UNCLEAR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, INCLUDING INEFFECTIVE DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY, CAN NARROW THE DHC'S FUNCTIONAL SCOPE

The most frequently noted challenge across respondent groups is related to the clarity of the DHC role, including delegation of authority and accountability.

Where the DHC struggled to find a clear set of functions to fill, the role was perceived as competing with the HC and/or OCHA Head of Office role, rather than complementing them.

In some cases, managing external relationships was difficult due to a lack of clearly delegated authority, creating confusion among external stakeholders, or limiting the DHC's capacity to problem-solve. Contextual circumstances, such as poor relationships between the government and UN entities, posed a problem in other cases.

The issue of double hatting was seen as problematic in cases where a Head of Agency was designated as DHC while still working for his/her own agency. Respondents who raised this issue felt that it resulted in blurred lines of accountability, potentially creating conflict between the priorities of the DHC's home agency and those of the HC's office, thus compromising the real and perceived neutrality of the DHC role.

6.1.2 MANAGING INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS, PARTICULARLY THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR, IS PERCEIVED AS A KEY CHALLENGE

For the larger non-DHC respondent groups, managing interpersonal relationships was seen as a key challenge for the DHC. Many acknowledged that this challenge was due in part to the nature of the DHC role, which is inherently limited in authority and often serves as a central clearing house for information, complaints and criticism. In extreme cases, this can mean that the DHC "serves as a punching bag for everyone" whereby "everything that goes wrong is their fault".

Most of the examples mentioned related to a difficult DHC-HC relationship. In nearly all cases where the DHC-HC relationship started off as contentious or deteriorated over time, DHC and other respondents said this created irretrievable losses in the efficacy of their role. It is interesting to note that while DHCs and HCs often described their mutual relationship as bilateral, it was perceived in very public terms by other stakeholders as having effects that were often felt within the immediate humanitarian community and sometimes beyond. The characteristics of the bilateral DHC-HC relationship therefore clearly have strong multilateral effects.

CRD shouldn't be squeamish about defining the roles and making clear a transparent division of labour and spheres. This shouldn't be left to just the HC and the DHC, because it affects everyone in the humanitarian community.

—NGO respondent

When the DHC was excluded from interacting with government, s/he focused more on operations — but then ended up interfering too much in OCHA's sphere.

—UN respondent

Double hatting in this case means that DHC is more of a function than a role.

—UN respondent

Because the HC and the DHC didn't get along, they were sometimes on different pages. So communication was sometimes unclear.

—Donor respondent

6.1.3 NAVIGATING INTER-AGENCY POLITICS IS THE SINGLE BIGGEST CHALLENGE, ACCORDING TO DEPUTY HUMANITARIAN COORDINATORS


Among the DHC respondent subgroup, the difficulty of managing inter-agency politics was cited as being the single most challenging aspect of their role. According to DHC, HC and Head of Agency respondents, the issues seemed to be less the individual relationships and more the overall low acceptance of the DHC role within the Heads of Agency group, as well as their role in managing infighting between agencies.

Difficult relations between DHCs and Heads of Agencies were also visible to other respondent groups. These tensions were partially attributed to institutional cultures that resist the concept of strong coordination. This sometimes manifested in a blanket rejection of the DHC role and at times an outright subversion of a specific DHC role. Respondents across subgroups perceived that Heads of Agencies often acted to defend their own sectorial territory against what they saw as coordination overreach and that the DHC role and OCHA counterparts are often caught up in this dynamic.

There was also consistent feedback that inter-agency politicking around the DHC role often impeded the DHC's ability to fulfil his/her functions, and at times the smooth functioning of the response. DHC respondents even reported sometimes receiving direct or veiled verbal threats from Heads of Agencies. Heads of Agencies were also perceived by respondents as more likely to resist or undermine DHCs from rival agencies. Conversely, they reported that DHCs were sometimes not accepted by Heads of Agencies if they came from outside the system, as they were seen as not sharing the UN institutional culture. This issue also interfered with OCHA's ability to fulfil its coordination role, thus further affecting administration of the DHC role. Heads of Agencies also reported frustration in their relationships with DHCs, as the position sometimes added a layer of bureaucracy between them and the HC. Others perceived that DHCs had been inappropriately directive in their coordination role. In a few cases, Heads of Agencies felt that the DHC was overly allegiant to his/her own home agency, putting his/her neutrality in question.


6.1.4 ISSUES RELATED TO INTEGRATED MISSION DYNAMICS

Another frequently cited challenge, by both DHCs and other respondents, was managing integrated mission dynamics. DHCs felt the influence of the conflict of interest between HC mandates when DHC humanitarian responsibilities came into friction with the HC's other mandates. For example, DHCs reported that it was sometimes difficult to advocate to the Government and to UN military entities regarding protection or humanitarian space concerns, given the overlapping mandates of the HC. In these cases, the DHC described being left in the untenable position of carrying out HC advocacy responsibilities that were in opposition to the DSRSG positioning.




Dealing with high ranking UN officials was the biggest challenge — harder than dealing with government or military counterparts. At both the international and in-country level, this was the hardest part of the job.

—DHC respondent



Heads of Agencies generally don't want a strong OCHA or other strong leadership above their Agencies. This is why they push to have a UNDP roster and not an OCHA roster.

—UN respondent



It was my job to advocate for protection of civilians and humanitarians and this put me at odds with the [UN military presence], because I was basically in a position of having to tell them to do their jobs.

—DHC respondent

6.1.5 LEVELS OF SUPPORT TO DHCs FROM OCHA CAN BE INCONSISTENT

Among a subset of the DHC subgroup, there was feedback that administrative, logistical and leadership support from OCHA for the role was at times inconsistent or insufficient. These comments generally fell into two categories: Insufficient administrative and/or logistical support and insufficient leadership and management support. DHCs with a direct link to an OCHA headquarters office seemed to have more positive feedback about the level of support to perform their role, while other DHC respondents recounted feeling cut-off from headquarters and not knowing whom to contact when they had questions or needed support. This point is reinforced by DHCs who reported that in the absence of direct logistical support from OCHA – such as transportation, accommodation and office resources – they would use the resources of their home agency, with those who didn't have a home agency unable to benefit from these backup resources.

Several DHCs reported not knowing what to expect from the role and felt unprepared when arriving in the field. OCHA's administrative support role was not always clear and in several cases, tensions between the DHC and OCHA staff led to decreased support to the DHC role by OCHA offices in the country.

However, the main issue seems to be consistency, not systematically weak support. The reports of insufficient support are offset by DHCs who rated OCHA's level of administrative, logistical and leadership support very highly and who felt they had direct attention from very high levels.

Internal Mission dynamics were not always conducive to fulfilling the role. The HC was the public voice of the response, but this was often in conflict with the DSRSG responsibilities, particularly regarding external perceptions.

—DHC respondent

There's a feeling of not belonging to any agency — it's easy to feel as if you're casting about. There is no "home agency" for DHCs, and therefore, no institutional support or network to guide the role — no access to training, ways to socialise new ideas, participate in a DHC/HC community.

—DHC respondent

Because the UN is a state-centric system, the RC role will always be oriented toward the needs and desires of the host government. This always creates tension between the HC and the RC hats, because it's two different approaches to working with the government.

—NGO respondent

6.1.6 THE INFLUENCE OF DEVELOPMENT ACTORS ON THE HUMANITARIAN COORDINATION SYSTEM


Respondents familiar with the complexities of the humanitarian coordination system, particularly those with a historical perspective, cited the structural implications on the DHC role resulting from the evolving relationship between the RC hat and the HC hat. The tension between these two hats reflects macro-level divergences between humanitarian and development modalities and institutions. Some respondents suggested that the DHC role is a direct result of these differences.

Respondents cited the fundamentally different approaches between development actors and humanitarian actors at both the HQ level and in humanitarian response sites. This was generally viewed as manifesting itself primarily in how each set of actors engages with the government – with the more cooperative approach of development actors often at odds with the humanitarian modality of neutrality toward governments in order to protect the delivery of humanitarian assistance and those who provide and receive it.

At the headquarters level, respondents viewed this as a struggle for power over the position of humanitarian assistance within the larger development landscape.


At field level, respondents felt that these power dynamics were also playing out, often visibly fraying the seam between humanitarian and development sectors within integrated missions. Respondents cited the material and logistical arrangements in which the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) provides administrative support for OCHA offices in the field, resulting in a perceived unwarranted sense of ownership over OCHA and its activities. This was also seen as playing out between UNDP and OCHA at the level of the Development Operations Coordination Office (DOCO)¹⁰, manifesting as power-sharing arrangements that often impacted humanitarian political and operational space within the system.

Participants who brought up issues related to diversification of the HC pool often made a link between the limitations of the pool and UNDP ownership of the RC system, with the frequent perception that as long as the HC role was managed from a development perspective, it would be fundamentally compromised as an effective humanitarian leadership role.




A DHC role is brought in when UNDP and OCHA don't agree on how to manage the RC/HC role.

—HC respondent




The UN is a servant to nations, nations that don't want to be embarrassed in the larger community by humanitarian crises at home. Governments align themselves with UNDP, because they know that UNDP won't call them out on their crises. This is fundamentally counter to humanitarian practice. UNDP overseeing the RC function means that there can be no independent humanitarian action within the UN.

—DHC respondent



It's a very perverse system — we are using development metrics to qualify for a distinctly humanitarian role.

—DHC respondent



The view of humanitarian aid by development and the impact of this view on the system of recruiting HCs cannot be understated. It's not a system that is concerned with producing RC/HCs that are competent humanitarian leaders.

—DHC respondent

¹⁰ The DOCO is the secretariat of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and serves as a top-level coordination forum for the various UN bodies providing development and humanitarian assistance. For more information: <https://undg.org/>

6.2 What are the productive practices and the perceived added value of the Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator Role?

Respondents were asked for feedback on perceived operational and strategic added value in both the surveys and interviews. They were also asked to give specific examples.

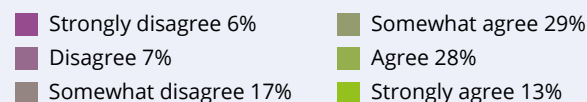
70% of respondents expressed some extent of agreement that the DHC role provided strategic added value; 82% expressed some extent of agreement that it provided operational value, and 70% expressed some extent of agreement that a DHC role had positively impacted their own organisation's engagement with the coordination system.

From the descriptive answers in the surveys and interviews, several key themes emerged, which are again presented in order of how frequently they were mentioned.

While respondents mentioned a wide range of examples, they were overwhelmingly consistent in two messages: The added value of the DHC role is at its highest when it focuses on operations and the DHC role can play a strong role in increasing and/or ensuring the integrity of a humanitarian response, particularly in integrated missions.

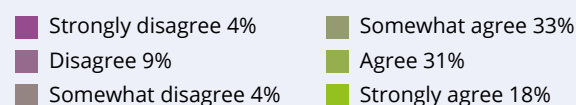
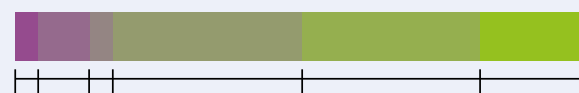
DHC STRATEGIC ADDED VALUE (GLOBAL SURVEY)

The DHC role provided a strategic added value to the response.



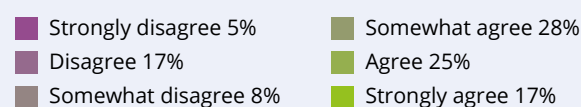
DHC OPERATIONAL ADDED VALUE (GLOBAL SURVEY)

The DHC role provided an operational added value to the response.



DHC'S IMPACT ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (GLOBAL SURVEY)

The DHC role positively impacted my organisation's engagement with the humanitarian coordination system.



6.2.1 A STRONG TECHNICAL FOCUS ON HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS

Both interview and survey participants responded overwhelmingly positively to DHCs who were perceived as having operational credibility and who focused on the mechanics of improving delivery. They were seen as clear in their purpose and of high added value.

One of the most appreciated DHC functions was improving cluster functioning and/or playing a role in strengthening links between the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and the inter-cluster body. Respondents cited cases where DHCs played a strong role in increasing both the technical functioning of the inter-cluster body and the accountability within the clusters, by reducing UN Agency-cluster clientelism, thus giving the cluster leads more independence from individual agency agendas. Empowering cluster leads and serving as a ballast against excessive UN Agency influence was often associated with improved coordination outcomes.

Respondents often saw a DHC's involvement in the humanitarian programme cycle and funding allocation activities as contributing strategic leadership and/or valuable seniority to the processes and producing better outcomes. In other cases, DHCs were credited with improving the link between humanitarian needs and appeal products.

DHCs with a strong operational role seem to have also had a positive influence on increased information sharing among actors, playing a key 'information clearing house' role.

6.2.2 INDEPENDENT HUMANITARIAN LEADERSHIP THAT ENSURES THE IMPARTIAL DELIVERY OF HUMANITARIAN AID


The added value of having a leadership role solely dedicated to humanitarian activities was widely recognised; this was the second most mentioned productive practice across respondent groups. This seems to derive inherently from the fact that the DHC is a) one step removed from the consequences of an integrated mission and/or multiple-hatting and b) tends to have a humanitarian background that humanitarian actors find more credible and easier to engage with, due to shared operational modalities.

Respondents described these characteristics as creating a firewall of principled leadership between humanitarian operations and non-humanitarian activities. At times this manifested as serving as a link to a multi-hatted HC who was not perceived as neutral. This point was underscored by respondents who recounted that, in some cases, once DHC roles had been discontinued, HC decisions reflected RC and DSRSG priorities, rather than those of the humanitarian community.

In yet other cases, DHCs were seen as an implementation-savvy liaison for both NGOs and UN agencies because of a shared operational language. They perceived certain DHCs as understanding the demands of humanitarian delivery, managing humanitarian security and negotiating access, based on a shared set of principles, particularly in cases where the HC was not perceived as understanding these aspects of humanitarian operations.


They were also appreciated for their role in advocating and negotiating for humanitarian access, which was seen as contributing to the expansion and/or preservation of humanitarian space.

The correlation between a DHC role and donor confidence merits elaboration. Having a DHC in place was at times perceived as leading to increased funding, due to increased donor confidence in the credibility of the response. This seems to be driven by several factors, including increased information sharing, a general strengthening of donor relations, and the positive perception by donors that the response was in good 'operational hands' and that aid would be delivered in a manner consistent with donor principles.




The DHC role is a way to focus activities back on population and avoid compromises of integration.

—UN respondent



Humanitarians expect a high level of distinction from the Mission, and this can turn into a critical and eventually negative relationship. The DHC gets caught in the middle and becomes the champion of the negative.

—UN respondent



Having a DHC in a humanitarian operation creates donor confidence, which keeps money coming in.

—Donor respondent

6.2.3 STRONG INVESTMENT IN BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

A strong commitment to communication and relationship building was the single most frequently cited productive practice. DHCs who prioritised meeting individually with a wide range of stakeholders and spent a significant amount of time in “listening mode” were well regarded for their ability to build strong bilateral and multilateral relationships within the humanitarian community and beyond. Donor respondents strongly appreciated communicative DHCs who were forthcoming with updates.


NGO respondents expressed appreciation for DHCs who sought out their views and represented their interests within the coordination system. This is consistent with the strong relations that we see between DHCs, donors and NGOs as presented in section 4.3.

In many cases, the DHC was perceived as playing the role of NGO ombudsman, acting as a trusted trouble-shooter within a system that NGOs don’t always feel is accessible. This seems to have had the effect of empowering NGOs to be more engaged in the system, as feedback from the survey indicates. Respondents recounted cases where NGOs actively engaged in the role to effectively push to have their concerns taken into consideration. DHCs sometimes actively consulted stakeholder groups for feedback on their role, on expectations and on priorities.

Respondents interpreted this as increasing ownership and acceptance of the role. Feedback from Heads of Agency respondents indicated that DHCs who took a proactively communicative and inclusive approach toward UN agencies were more likely to overcome scepticism toward the role.


In other cases, DHCs focused on repairing deteriorated relationships between the HC and stakeholder groups, creating a stronger sense of coherence among the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and/or HCT bodies. The increased exchange of updated contextual information between stakeholder groups was another benefit of a strong communications role played by DHCs.

In addition to strengthening individual relationships, this approach built stronger inter-relationships between stakeholder groups, by playing a convening role that was viewed favourably by respondents who experienced a strong added value that was associated with various aspects of the DHC’s role in increasing community cohesion among humanitarian stakeholders.




DHC represent an independent humanitarian capacity to NGOs. The HC is quite political and can't be non-political. NGOs trust the DHC role in a way they can't trust the HC.

—NGO respondent




NGOs strongly invested in the DHC role and successfully demanded accountability on advocacy and other issues in ways that you don't see very often.

—NGO respondent



S/he advocated on behalf of NGOs, especially NGOs that were vulnerable and needed protection and support.

—NGO respondent



As operations scaled up, the politics came back. Agencies stopped collaborating and we just started doing our own thing. Without strong leadership at the top, there wasn't cohesion, just a group of people acting independently.

—UN respondent

6.2.4 PHYSICAL PROXIMITY TO HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS

The added value of DHCs permanently stationed in distinct geographic locations was not the most frequently mentioned, but it was the least controversial. Across the board, respondents clearly saw the added value of DHCs in humanitarian responses in secondary activity sites. In the words of one HC: “Everything s/he does is of added value, because it wouldn’t get done properly otherwise.”

There was also a favourable view of DHCs who were based in capitals, but spent considerable time visiting field sites. DHC proximity to the site of humanitarian operations was viewed as best practice. In certain cases, the DHC presence gave a sense of solidarity to aid staff in remote areas, and clearly had the desired effect of extending the proxy presence of the HC. These DHCs were considered more credible than those who were not based in secondary locations or who did not spend significant time where humanitarian activities were taking place.


In other cases, this was seen as providing needed senior leadership and elevating the visibility of humanitarian activities in secondary locations. Respondents reported that coordination and funding efforts become more coherent and effective under the dedicated attention of a physically present DHC.

6.2.5 DEMONSTRATING EMPOWERED LEADERSHIP

DHCs who assumed a clear empowered leadership role were also regarded as having a particular added value, characterised by a capacity to ‘get things moving’. Respondents gave examples of how, in some cases, DHCs effectively extended the reach of the HC’s empowered leadership. In others, DHCs filled the empowered leadership vacuum left by HCs who were perceived as underperforming in their HC activities or neglecting and/or undermining humanitarian activities out of deference to their RC and DSRSG mandates.


Respondents cited instances where DHCs served as a strategic senior figure within the coordination leadership. At times, DHCs were perceived as capable of effectively addressing power dynamics within the UN landscape, including territorial disputes between agencies, disputes within the inter-cluster and HCT bodies and internal tensions with UN military entities. DHCs perceived as non-partisan – usually by virtue of not being seen as a representative of a home agency – were viewed favourably.

Empowered leadership took a more operational form, including empowered decision-making related to emergency responses, funding allocations and humanitarian programme cycle processes. In these instances, respondents mentioned the clear added value of having a senior person who was empowered to make decisions involved.



The DHC role is always very valued from the NGO perception, because the DHC is usually more operationally experienced, or they are tasked with more operational involvement and they are closer to the field and delivery. This can really help NGOs with their implementation by giving them leadership and advocacy.

—NGO respondent



I saw my job as an architect of a plan: I focused on security, information management, practical coordination and resource mobilisation. I developed a ‘critical path’ on how to sequence our actions to accomplish the scale-up that was necessary.


—DHC respondent

6.2.6 DHCs WHO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL AND/OR INDEPENDENT ADVOCACY CAPACITY

Another distinct area of added value was advocacy on otherwise neglected issues, particularly related to protection and Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP).


While the more operational access negotiations were also appreciated, advocacy on protection and AAP were seen as adding particular value, because they often helped fill a vacuum in high-level advocacy on these issues. Respondents identified this gap as another outcome of multi-hatted HC roles: In contexts where HCs preferred not to do protection advocacy out of deference to host governments or other authorities, DHCs filled this gap. Cases were also cited where the DHC actively brought AAP into internal strategic and operational planning processes, pushing coordination actors to incorporate its principles.

In other cases, the DHC was seen as playing a significant role in leading advocacy efforts that raised the profile of the crisis, raising awareness with government entities and within the international community.




The DHC should be the voice of the people — facing toward and listening to affected people and representing their needs to the system.

—NGO respondent




Now we have more leverage to do advocacy and speak out more publicly. Because now we have an outlet via the DHC, which we didn't have before.

—NGO respondent



Independent humanitarian representative: For a context that would be better with a stand-alone HC, we've basically achieved that with the DHC role.

—DHC respondent



Having a DHC is an opportunity to balance an insufficient HC capacity or an HC not willing to engage in humanitarian issues. Not ideal, but a major improvement, and the best situation possible given the parameters.

—NGO respondent

6.2.7 DHCs WHO COMPENSATE FOR SYSTEMIC WEAKNESSES

The DHC role as a compensatory “patch” or mitigation measure was a crosscutting theme across participant responses that merits further elaboration. Many respondents candidly acknowledged the reality that the DHC role sometimes serves as a compensatory mechanism for systemic weaknesses. Evaluations of these weakness fell into two categories: DHCs deployed to compensate for perceived HC underperformance or a missing humanitarian skillset and DHCs deployed to compensate for perceived OCHA Head of Office weaknesses.

While views were split as to whether this arrangement was ideal, respondents tended to agree on the ultimate added value of DHCs in these cases. Those who felt the arrangement was acceptable generally prioritised the need for short-term adjustments over longer-term structural improvements.


Respondents generally cited the larger systemic causes of these two weaknesses as the outstanding conclusions on two long-term, ongoing, discussions within aid communities: The contested inherent value of integrated missions and contrasting views on OCHAs fundamental role within coordination.

For those who see OCHA’s role as more empowered and proactive, a DHC is a necessary, but undesirable, compensation for a set of functions to support the HC’s empowered leadership that the OCHA Head of Office should be fulfilling. Likewise, for those who challenge the inherent benefit of integrated missions, but see no other way to defend the independence of humanitarian assistance against their effects, a DHC is a necessary, but undesirable, compensation.

Among those respondents perceiving a minimal or total lack of added value in a DHC role, criticism focused on the costs of the role, in both immediate financial and long-term systemic terms.


For some respondents, the overall benefits of having a DHC role outweighed the considerable financial costs of a DHC position. Others felt that the role represented unacceptable costs to the empowered leadership of the HCs themselves.

Yet other respondents perceived the DHC as a compensation for systemic weaknesses and suggested that allowing these compensation mechanisms to concretise around the system’s flaws, rather than addressing the flaws themselves, would lead to larger costs to the long-term coherence of the system.



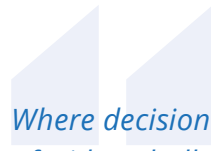
DHC is not a set role that looks the same across contexts — it should be a complementary role. It depends on the strengths and weaknesses of the other parts of the coordination system. The DHC role should be tailored to fit the needs, not deployed as a one size fits all solution. It should fill gaps.

—NGO respondent




For every positive contribution to a better humanitarian coordination system a DHC makes, it comes at a cost of an HC who doesn’t have those powers.

—DHC respondent



Where decision-makers in the system are afraid to challenge the system itself, then weaknesses are created, then exacerbated and finally addressed through putting on another corrective layer.

—NGO respondent



The DHC role is a sneaky workaround for the problem of multi-hatted HCs — but it’s disingenuous because it isn’t dealing with reality. It’s not fair on the DHC who does all the work without formal recognition. Maybe the system will catch up with reality eventually.

—NGO respondent

7

CONCLUSIONS: KEY POINTS OF THE STUDY

The humanitarian system is a geographically-disperse, modality-diverse and constantly shifting constellation of jointly motivated, but often disharmonious, actors. Nevertheless, the view of the DHC role which emerges is perhaps more organically rational than it may appear from any one perspective within the humanitarian system. Within this complex system, the DHC role has adapted in response to systemic and situational forces in a way that has managed to protect the core motivation of the system itself: Deliver aid as effectively as possible to as many people as possible.

This happens in a disjointed manner with many unintended and undesirable consequences. However, given the considerable constraints, the study found that DHC roles can bring a strong added value to the coordination system generally, and to particular responses, specifically. The DHC role is a powerful tool for supporting principled and effective humanitarian aid across challenging coordination landscapes when well implemented, and under the right circumstances.

To summarise the findings presented in this report, the DHC has been solicited to protect humanitarian space in integrated mission environments; to extend the presence of an HC in responses with

geographically split response sites; to expand the expertise of the HC and as part of the resource mobilisation aspect of an L3 scale-up.

But in many cases, the DHC has also been used to compensate for an HC or OCHA Head of Office that is perceived as underperforming, a justification that has less support across the humanitarian community, suggesting that the role has also taken on a mitigation character.

The role seems to be most effective when the DHC focuses on the technical aspects of humanitarian coordination and delivery; in situations where there is a clear delineation of geographic and/or functional space and a clear transmission of empowered leadership by the HC; when there is a high level of acceptance of the role within the humanitarian community; in situations where humanitarian space needs to be protected and independent humanitarian representative de-linked from a message, and when the DHC invests in strong relationships and plays a convening role in the humanitarian community.

With this in mind, this report offers a few final observations on the key points that emerged from the study.

7.1 DHC roles are often perceived as bringing a strong added value to a humanitarian response

Across the study, the potential of the DHC role to add value to a humanitarian response – while not always manifested – is patently present. The survey results clearly showed most humanitarian actors who have worked with a DHC perceived both a strategic and operational added value, with the DHC also being associated with positively affecting their organisations' participation in the coordination system.

The role seems to be most effective in specific circumstances: When the DHC focuses on the technical aspects of humanitarian coordination and delivery; where there is a clear delineation of geographic and/or functional space and a clear transmission of empowered leadership by the HC; when there is a high level of acceptance of the role within the humanitarian community; where humanitarian space needs to be protected by a dedicated humanitarian representative de-linked from a message and when the DHC invests in strong relationships and plays a convening role in the humanitarian community.

7.2 DHC roles are often positively associated with preserving humanitarian space and improving principled delivery

Humanitarian actors often perceive an increase in the level of independence of aid delivery where there is a DHC position. DHC functions and activities contribute to increasing and maintaining humanitarian space and the role acts as a buffer between humanitarian and non-humanitarian activities.

7.3 The DHC role should be considered as a work in progress within a humanitarian coordination system that is also evolving

The DHC role has evolved and adapted organically in response to system-wide demands for greater efficiency, effectiveness and accountability associated with the TA and the HRA, and it continues to evolve in response to field level operational realities of particular humanitarian situations. As such, it represents an opportunity to creatively address weaknesses within the in-country humanitarian coordination system, where they exist.

While the TA and the HRA contain the guiding principles of empowered leadership, accountability and coordination, and as such attempt to provide users of the frameworks with a set of tools and systems, they are largely linear and non-adaptive frameworks within a complex and adaptive ecosystem of humanitarian coordination. Everything they aim to accomplish becomes a point of negotiation, including the DHC role.

Underpinning any consideration of the DHC role, a few macro-level trends should be considered.

The normative frameworks for humanitarian action are both imperfect and subject to constant improvements. The HRA is ongoing and incomplete and as such provides a useful, but incomplete, aspirational set of goals on how to provide better aid. The DHC role is reflective of both the aspirations and the limitations of the current system.

Likewise, the implementation of the TA is still in progress: The next generation of practice improvements envisioned in the TA have not yet fully been disseminated and/or incorporated into current humanitarian practice.¹¹

There is an ongoing conversation about the inherent benefits of integrated missions, although at present the political will to continue the conversation is absent. The role of the DHC as an independent humanitarian representative is both an outcome of that ongoing discussion and an influencing factor.

The position of humanitarian assistance within the larger development landscape is shifting. The DHC role will continue to be affected by the macro-level trends of the interplay between humanitarian assistance, development and peace building. The relationship between these three communities and their institutions will continue to change, as will the ideas on the extent to which these three priorities and activities should be linked or integrated. The current re-thinking on the development-humanitarian nexus and “new way of working” continues to influence the need for the DHC role and its functions.

These macro-level trends account for constant change within the system, while allowing its participants to accept the system for what it is at any given moment.

7.4 The DHC role provides many of the humanitarian leadership functions of a stand-alone HC

The DHC role represents both costs and benefits, and has in many ways emerged as an organic response to the humanitarian coordination system need for a dedicated humanitarian leadership capacity, independent from non-humanitarian activities. Despite the inherent limitations of the deputy function, the study demonstrated that DHCs often fill the space of a stand-alone HC role, albeit under the authority of the HC: DHCs are the highest level of leadership dedicated to strictly humanitarian activities; they play a central coordination role between humanitarian and non-humanitarian actors; increase the humanitarian accountability of the response and contribute to donor confidence in the response.

¹¹ For recent additions to this body of literature please see the following two publications:

Darcy, J. (2016) “Synthesis of key findings from Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations (IAHEs) of the international responses to crises in the Philippines (Typhoon Haiyan), South Sudan and the Central African Republic”. Report Commissioned by the Steering Group for Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations, New York, July 2016. Available at: [<http://www.alnap.org/pool/files/iahe-synthesis-11jan2017-lores.pdf>].

Krueger, Susanna; Derzsi-Horvath, Andras; Steets, Julia (2016), “IASC Transformative Agenda A Review of Reviews and Their Follow-Up”. Submitted by the Global Public Policy Institute on behalf of the INSPIRE Consortium. Available at: [<http://www.gppi.net/publications/humanitarian-action/article/iasc-transformative-agenda-a-review-of-reviews-and-their-follow-up/>].

7.5 The DHC role is associated with increasing cohesion among humanitarian actors in a response

The DHC was often favourably associated with increasing community cohesion, even among stakeholders that expressed varying degrees of disappointment in and/or scepticism toward the role. DHCs that placed a strong emphasis on interpersonal relationships were highly valued for playing a critical convening role and promoting the collective work of humanitarian actors.

7.6 Further formalisation of the role carries both benefits and risks

The adaptability of the DHC role can be both its weakness and its strength. While a desire for more clarity or standardisation is natural, the consequences of codifying the role should be carefully considered. Efforts to further do so could result in the loss of its current advantage of adaptability. Furthermore, if the role were to be institutionalised, the system would likely adapt again to create another flexible role.

Nevertheless, efforts to improve the functioning of the role could be made while still maintaining its flexible nature. Improvements should focus on clarification over codification and should take into account the organic and interpersonal potential of the role, in addition to its routine and functional aspects.

7.7 Systemic weaknesses at country level can be mitigated by the DHC role, but risk being concretised

While the DHC role can be a pragmatic and effective short-term solution to mitigate weaknesses in country coordination mechanisms, it should primarily focus on bringing added value to a humanitarian response, not on perpetuating problems needing to be otherwise addressed. Delegation of HC responsibilities to a DHC should not result in the wholesale outsourcing of the HC portfolio. This undermines the role of the DHC and the HC, and the credibility of the RC system.

Where systemic weaknesses are acknowledged, steps should be taken to address the underperformance of the HC hat: underperforming HCs should be replaced, not propped up by an additional position. There are indications that such efforts have increased in recent years, with corresponding adjustments to the HC pool. If this is so, from a systems change perspective, the remaining cases serve as a 'truth-window' that reveal how the system continues to adapt. Multi-hatted HCs who don't fully assume responsibility or who actively undermine humanitarian activities will increasingly become an endangered species. In the meantime, however, the risk remains that the DHC becomes permanently associated as a mitigation measure serving the system, rather than as a position with independent added value that serves the humanitarian response and its beneficiaries.

7.8 Emphasis belongs on transmitting empowered leadership rather than the mechanics of delegating authority

Many of the same situational factors to create empowered leadership for the HC are also necessary for the DHC. The TA envisions "empowered leadership" within the context of an L3 as enabling the HC to a) make timely decisions; b) have quick access to information and c) support the accountability of response partners.¹² In reality, the tools necessary to enable empowered leadership are often managed by the DHC, particularly one who is focused on the operational aspects of a response.

The study found that a DHC position can either weaken or amplify an HC's empowered leadership. The DHC role is most effective in situations where the HC makes a tangible effort to transmit that power to the DHC by clearly communicating arrangements for delegation of authority and by helping the DHC carve out a clearly defined sphere of operations. Even in situations where agreements regarding delegation of authority are informal or lacking, DHCs who have a clearly defined remit can still be effective. Where the HC does not actively extend empowered leadership to the DHC or where the DHC does not fully inhabit this aspect of the role, the leadership of the DHC, and thus the HC, is potentially diluted or stymied. In other words, a fully empowered DHC is often a sign of a robustly empowered HC.

¹² IASC Committee, "Concept Paper on 'Empowered Leadership'", March 2014. < https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/legacy_files/Empowered%20Leadership%20-%20revised%20March%202014.pdf >

7.9 Contested views of OCHA's role have significant implications for the DHC role

Across respondent subgroups, the perception of OCHA's in-country role remains unclear and contested. It varies from a non-operational Secretariat role that supports the HC and the HCT to a more overt leadership role that is similar to that occupied by the DHC. Regardless of which is the dominant view, the study found that, to be effective, the DHC's scope of activities must take into consideration OCHA capacity on the ground. Clearer communication and better understanding of the respective roles of the OCHA Head of Office and the DHC would help to ensure complementarity between the two. On-going internal OCHA reforms might ultimately contribute to such clarification. The recent functional review of OCHA and the subsequent Change Management Process currently being developed will be important factors to consider in future management of the DHC role.

7.10 The success of the DHC role relies on community-wide investment in supporting DHCs and HCs

To be effective, the DHC role requires widespread support that involves cooperation from the UN humanitarian community, donors and NGOs alike. Internal dynamics such as inter-agency politics and low acceptance of the DHC role are a fundamental challenge to its success, depriving humanitarian actors and responses of the potential added value the role can bring. While OCHA plays a primary role in supporting DHCs and HCs, a lack of support from other actors can easily undermine the effectiveness of the role and offset efforts made by OCHA.

It is also clear, from a comparison of the study countries, that when the DHC role is functioning at its best, it relieves pressure on not only the HC, but other actors as well – adding breadth and depth to the humanitarian response. This creates a compounding effect: When the system recognises the value of the role, the DHC has the freedom to add yet more value within that system.

In this sense, the added value of the DHC role is not an individual endeavour, nor does it belong solely to the HC position it supports – it is a community asset that should be supported by community-wide investment. To the extent that there are improvements to be made, those issues should be addressed. To the extent, however, that humanitarian actors pursue institution-specific agendas at the cost of the success of the DHC role, they deprive other actors of its benefits as well as themselves.

7.11 The potential for NGOs to engage with the DHC role is under-exploited

The study exposed a range of NGO concerns about their perceived role in the coordination system. While these concerns are based on concrete structural inequalities within the UN coordination system, NGOs don't always take advantage of existing opportunities. NGOs should consider the benefits of increasing their own sense of empowerment rather than waiting for the system itself to cede space to them. In many cases, the DHC role offers a substantial added value for NGOs as operational implementers. Participant feedback shows that engaging proactively with DHC positions may represent a source of untapped potential.

The DHC role also offers a viable entry point into the HC system for NGO staff and a topic of reflection within the NGO community should be how to proactively support the diversification of the HC pool.

8

RECOMMENDATIONS: HOW TO MANAGE THE ROLE IN THE FUTURE

Given the potential added value of the DHC role, this report makes the following recommendations aimed at increasing the effectiveness of the DHC role. Recommendations are based on accepting the current system as it is, while also assuming that the system will continue to change over time. The recommendations incorporate feedback from study participants, particularly DHC feedback.

8.1 Make systemic adjustments to optimise the DHC role, without overly institutionalising it

Even as the DHC role continues to evolve, shaping the role and how it's managed to maximise the potential benefits, while minimising the potential risks, will amplify the role's effect within the system for all actors. These approaches assume that the DHC is a communal asset benefitting all actors.

- Avoid institutionalising the DHC role across the humanitarian coordination system. The role's flexibility is a fundamental strength and should be preserved. DHC roles should not be standard features in coordination structures, but be considered case-by-case, taking into consideration best practices from previous DHC deployments.

- Prioritise contexts that clearly benefit from the DHC role: sudden onset emergencies (including, but not limited to, L3 contexts); contexts with geographically or politically distinct humanitarian activity sites; contexts where humanitarian space is compromised and those where poor relationships within the humanitarian community impede effective delivery of aid.
- Ensure that the DHC role is approached as a community-wide investment in empowered leadership. This should result in the DHC acting within a clearly defined autonomous functional space to amplify the HCs leadership, but should avoid filling and/or duplicating OCHA's functions.
- Consider deploying a DHC role to responses where there is lack of cohesion within the humanitarian community, to refocus and increase collective action.
- Continue the practice of the DHC request coming from the field level, with collective ownership as the goal. HQ level bodies, including OCHA and NGO consortia should manage processes in a way that avoids giving the false impression that the role is imposed on HCs or responses generally.

8.2 Increase understanding and acceptance of the role within the humanitarian community (and beyond) with the goal of creating a clearer understanding of the role and a shared set of expectations

The success of the DHC role relies, at least partially, on its acceptance. All relevant actors involved should clearly communicate internally on how to engage with the role and externally build a shared set of expectations among humanitarian actors and relevant external actors.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) members should develop a set of communication materials targeting relevant actors to increase understanding and acceptance of the role, including:

- Communications targeting HCs on the added value of the role.
- Communications targeting current and future DHCs regarding the potential added value of the role and best practices.
- Clear communication on the role of the DHC for the humanitarian community at global level and within the deployment context. This should include extensive communication and consultation during the designation process, particularly among those in the field and/or NGO counterparts, to foster early acceptance of the role in potential deployment countries.
- Clear communication on the role of the DHC for non-humanitarian actors.
- Thematic practice guidance for DHCs and their interlocutors, for instance on the DHC role in the context of the “new way of working”, how to best work within integrated missions and effectively conduct advocacy related to protection of civilians or accountability to affected people.
- Similarly, NGOs, Donors, UN agencies and other stakeholder groups should prepare guidance on working with a DHC, including what to expect from the role and how to effectively engage with the role. NGOs should also identify DHC engagement opportunities and strategies within their organisations and collectively. At the HQ level, this could include policy level advice on best practices for engaging DHCs effectively, and, at the field level, coordinated advocacy efforts to engage the DHC on NGO concerns.

8.3 Clarify roles, responsibilities and accountability to the extent possible

While the flexibility of the DHC role should be preserved, it is essential to clarify the parameters of each DHC deployment, taking into consideration the specificities of each deployment, including existing humanitarian leadership within a response.

- HCs should clearly transmit empowered leadership to the DHC by a) clearly agreeing on the scope of the DHC’s activities with the DHC and clearly articulating the role to the DHC’s counterparts and b) ensuring the DHC has a clear functional sphere in which to operate autonomously. Even if agreements remain informal, in-country stakeholders should know what the DHC’s role is, particularly as it relates to other roles. HCs should invest in the acceptance and legitimacy of the role through an inclusive in-country designation process and clarify the scope of activities once the DHC is deployed.
- Under the leadership of the HC, and with support from the EDG and OCHA, the HCT should improve specificity of DHC TORs. While these can remain flexible in scope, they should be specific to the context where the DHC will be deployed, taking into account the known challenges, systemic weaknesses and unmet objectives of the response, to achieve the greatest potential added value. The HCT and the EDG should consider complementarity between roles as part of the designation and TOR development process, including consideration of OCHA Head of Office capacity when deploying DHCs, in order to ensure a clear distinction between roles. Where necessary, OCHA should seek to clarify the reporting relationships between in-country OCHA offices, HQ OCHA offices, the DHC and the HC. Where relationships and reporting lines reflect established policy, concerns and/or confusion should still be taken seriously and addressed as and where they arise.
- Double hatted DHC should be avoided, in order to prevent conflicts of interest, real or perceived.
- DHCs should be evaluated using accountability procedures, while respecting the DHC’s reporting relationship to the HC. A collective approach taking into account feedback from across stakeholder groups and aiming to manage DHCs as a collective resource should be the goal.

8.4 Reinforce processes for the identification and designation of DHC candidates

While many contextual factors support the success of a DHC role, the EDG, with the support of OCHA, should focus on identifying desirable DHC candidates and facilitating a timely and transparent designation process. A diversity of candidates with the right balance of hard and soft skills, who are identified in a clear and communicative manner, are more likely to gain the acceptance of the community during the designation process, resulting in increased effectiveness once deployed.

- Continue to improve the diversity and the humanitarian capacity of the HC pool, with an emphasis on identifying and deploying non-UN and female DHCs. OCHA and NGO consortia should increase their efforts to communicate with NGOs and potential NGO candidates about the HC Pool. OCHA should consider creating a pathway to collective leadership positions, including DHC positions, for non-UN candidates.
- Consider essential soft skills such as interpersonal skills and leadership capacity of equal importance, in addition to extensive humanitarian and coordination expertise.
- Find a workable balance between transparency and leadership team cohesion in the designation process. While it is paramount for an HC to trust and choose his/her deputy, ownership should be broadened to ensure adequate acceptance. Sensitise humanitarian actors on the nature of a designation versus an open recruitment process to set realistic expectations.

8.5 Expand and deepen DHC support and learning efforts

Given the increased deployment of DHCs, OCHA, EDG, NGO Consortia, Peer2Peer and other relevant bodies should:

- Create a distinct 'corps' of DHCs within the framework of the existing HC pool, to address factors particular to the DHC role, such as the relatively short deployment time required compared to HCs, as well as unique talent development considerations.
- Ensure all DHCs receive a DHC induction, as well as pre and post deployment briefings with the HC, the EDG, OCHA counterparts, donors and NGO representatives. Written 'lessons learned' briefs should be encouraged after each DHC deployment and shared with relevant counterparts.
- Prepare written guidance on what to expect for first time DHCs; including best practices, lessons learned and how to interact with various stakeholder groups.
- Create a dedicated space for exchange amongst DHCs on good practices and experiences.
- Peer2Peer, EDG and other inter-agency entities should also evaluate how to best support the DHC role and its functions.
- Acknowledging the tensions inherent within multi-hatted missions, the EDG should prepare guidance to support HCs and DHCs in this aspect of their roles.

9

ANNEXES

9.1 Methodology

9.1.1 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The study used a mixed methods approach, employing the following data collection methods:

A systematic literature review: This included relevant evaluations and reports as well as resources from a wide range of operational stakeholders that document the processes linked to the DHC role. 414 documents were reviewed.

Interviews with key stakeholders from across the humanitarian community: The majority of interviews were conducted remotely via Skype or telephone. A total of 63 people were interviewed.

Online surveys: Two surveys were conducted via Survey Monkey: A global survey for all humanitarian community stakeholders and a targeted pre-consultation survey for DHC participants. 288 participants completed the global survey and 9 DHCs completed the DHC survey.

The research team consisted of one lead researcher and two part-time researchers based in the US and the UK.

Below is a breakdown of interview and survey respondents by respondent subgroup.

HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY GROUP

RESPONDENT GROUP	SURVEY RESPONDENTS		INTERVIEW RESPONDENTS		REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE
UN	108	38%	21	45%	35%
NGO	141	49%	19	40%	50%
RCM	9	3%	1	2%	5%
Donors	14	5%	4	9%	5%
Experts	16	6%	2	4%	5%
	288	100%	47	100%	100%

DHC+HC GROUP

DHC	9	–	10	–	–
HC	–	–	6	–	–
TOTAL SURVEYS	297		TOTAL INTERVIEWS	63	

9.1.2 LIMITATIONS

Availability of information: The study relied almost exclusively on first hand reports from study participants and internal documents. Potential biases and gaps in the analysis may emerge in cases where there were insufficient respondents or information.

Availability of respondents: While every effort was made to include all DHCs and HCs in the study countries as well as a full range of other humanitarian actors, 10 out of 11 DHCs were available and only 4 HCs were available. Similarly, efforts to reach national actors in field locations were largely unsuccessful, mostly due to limited access to communications.

Level of specificity: In order to protect the confidentiality of participants, a level of specificity has been used that does not risk revealing individual participants' feedback. In some cases, this limits the report's ability to cite specific examples.

Prior knowledge and exposure: The report assumes a basic level of knowledge and exposure to the humanitarian coordination architecture, especially around decision-making and leadership. The study therefore does not provide overarching historic or explanatory background on these aspects.

9.1.3 CONFIDENTIALITY

All interviews were conducted on a not-for-attribution basis. Surveys were conducted anonymously and interview respondents had the choice of being listed in the annex. To give a direct voice to respondents, anonymised quotes have been included in the report, but in order to protect confidentiality all pronouns have been changed to 's/he' and small, unsubstantial changes have been made to remove any references to specific contexts or situations.

9.2 List of interview participants

	FIRST	LAST	AFFILIATION
1	Munir	Al-Safiedin	UNICEF
2	Aimee	Ansari	CARE
3	Dominik	Bartsch	UNHCR
4	Elizabeth	Bellardo	OFDA
5	Marco	Boasso	IOM
6	Mark	Bowden	OCHA/UNDP
7	Jonathan	Brooker	OCHA
8	David	Carden	OCHA
9	Luiza	Carvalho	OCHA/UNDP
10	Mark	Cutts	OCHA
11	Clare	Dalton	ICRC
12	David	Derthick	IOM
13	Kasper	Engborg	OCHA
14	Aine	Fay	Concern Worldwide
15	Colette	Fearon	Oxfam
16	Ivo	Freijsen	OCHA
17	John	Ging	OCHA
18	Francois	Goemans	OCHA
19	Raphael	Gorgeu	ICVA
20	Thomas	Gurtner	OCHA
21	Kate	Half	SCHR
22	Belinda	Holdsworth	IASC
23	Yves	Horent	DfID
24	Marta	Kasubaska	INGO Forum Myanmar
25	Christopher	Kaye	WFP
26	Kevin	Kennedy	OCHA/UNDP
27	Andrew	Kent	OFDA
28	Sikander	Khan	UNICEF
29	Kilian	Kleinschmidt	-
30	Anais	Lafite	DfID
31	Toby	Lanzer	OCHA/UNDP
32	Susan	Lautze	FAO
33	Bruno	Lemarquis	UNDP
34	Chris	Lockyear	ACF
35	Peter	Lundberg	OCHA
36	Amy	Martin	OCHA
37	Lisa	Monaghan	NRC
38	Terry	Morel	UNHCR
39	Ivor	Morgan	Medair
40	Panos	Moumtis	Peer2Peer (formerly STAIT)
41	Andrea	Noyes	OCHA
42	Eugene	Owusu	OCHA/UNDP
43	Dina	Parmer	Turkey NGO Forum
44	Yannick	Pouchalan	ACF
45	Gareth	Price-Jones	Care
46	Mohammed	Qazilbash	Mercy Corps
47	Ramesh	Rajasingham	OCHA
48	Severine	Rey	HLSU
49	Sheri	Ritsema	OCHA
50	Mathieu	Roquette	SIRF
51	Marta	Ruedas	OCHA/UNDP
52	Chiara	Sacardi	ACF
53	Domenico	Scalpell	WFP
54	Ed	Schenkenberg	HERE
55	Julien	Schopp	InterAction
56	Drake	Ssenyange	Nigeria NGO Forum
57	Manisha	Thomas	Independent Consultant
58	Suzanna	Tkalec	Caritas International
59	Sebastian	Trives	OCHA
60	Heli	Uusikylae	OCHA



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