

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

TOPIC A:

Implementing strengthened coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance



I. Introduction:

The research paper will cover the topic of the implementation of strengthened coordination for emergency humanitarian assistance. The demand for efficient humanitarian aid has increased due to the various humanitarian emergencies that have occurred in the last years. These include pandemics, armed wars, public health crises, economic collapses, political conflicts, and natural catastrophes. Such emergencies pose a threat to international peace and security and global development. Inefficiency, resource waste, and delayed assistance are all outcomes of coordination issues in international responses. Humanitarian aid has failed to meet the basic needs of affected people efficiently and equitably due to a lack of coordination between global organizations. Especially in cases of emergency, it is vital to develop a better framework for humanitarian assistance. Improved coordination efforts would help guarantee time-efficient delivery, effective utilization of resources, and comprehensive crisis management. By prioritizing initiatives that strive to improve cooperation between local communities, governments, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations, The UN can help ensure that ongoing and future emergencies can receive the necessary humanitarian assistance in the most efficient way possible (United Nations). ECOSOC's Humanitarian Affairs Segment is a platform that is trying to do just this. They bring together UN Member States, UN organizations,

humanitarian and development partners, the private sector, and affected communities to provide aid to countries in need. (“Coordinating Humanitarian Action | Economic and Social Council”)

II. Definition of Key Terms:

Humanitarian Assistance: Aid designed to save lives, alleviate suffering, and protect human dignity during crises.

- UN definition: "A coordinated, system-wide approach to humanitarian relief is essential in assisting quickly and efficiently to those in need" (United Nations)

Coordination: The organized collaboration between nations, NGOs, and the UN, to ensure that roles are clear and efforts are complementary rather than overlapping or conflicting.

Cluster Approach: A framework introduced by the United Nations to improve humanitarian response. It involves the collaboration between UN and non-UN organizations to manage different sectors of the humanitarian aid action, spreading accountability for the delivery of services across different agencies. (“Cluster Approach | UNHCR”)

Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC): A senior UN official responsible for coordinating international humanitarian assistance in emergencies. (“The Emergency Relief Coordinator | IASC”)

Capacity Building: Efforts to enhance the ability of local or regional entities to respond to emergencies effectively. (United Nations)

Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP): Ensuring that humanitarian responses address the needs and priorities of affected communities, incorporating their feedback. (“Accountability to Affected People (AAP) | UNHCR”)

III. Background information:

UN entities with a primary responsibility for delivering humanitarian aid:

- The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR)
- The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- The UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)
- The World Food Programme (WFP)
- The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
- The World Health Organization (WHO) → coordinates the response to humanitarian health emergencies.
- The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

Other Organizations/Stakeholders:

- NGOs and Civil Society Organizations: International Red Cross, Médecins Sans Frontières, CARE International.
- Governments and Regional Bodies: Host nations, donor states, and entities like the African Union (AU), the European Union (EU) and ASEAN.
- Private Sector: Companies providing logistics, technology, and financial support.

Global Emergencies:

In the last few years, the world has experienced an increase in global crises due to a variety of reasons. This has led to a demand for humanitarian aid superior to what the UN alone can provide. Problems like climate change have increased the frequency of natural, weather-related disasters (hurricanes, floods, droughts...). Additionally, prolonged armed conflicts in regions like the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa have led to the displacement of millions and a refugee crisis. In 2024 alone, the UN and partner organizations have provided \$46.4 billion in humanitarian aid assistance. It is estimated that this money has assisted 180.5 million people across 72 countries. The Middle East and North African region requires \$13.9 billion, the largest total for any region in 2024 and accounting for 30 percent of the Global Humanitarian Overview. (“Global Humanitarian Overview 2024 [EN/AR/FR/ES]”)

Current Humanitarian Crisis to Consider:

- Forced displacement and famine in the Palestine-Israel conflict
- Ukraine-Russia war
- Destruction and disease in Syria
- Gang violence in Haiti
- Disease, disasters, and mass displacement in Sudan
- Escalating conflicts in Myanmar
- Extreme weather events and earthquakes all over the world (“8 Crises the World Must Not Look Away from in 2024”)

Challenges in Humanitarian Assistance:

The Lack of cooperation between international groups results in competition and inefficiency when it comes to the provision of humanitarian assistance. This is the very problem the ECOSOC committee must try to solve, ensuring aid is provided to all those in need in the most effective way possible. Another problem that has confronted the UN and other organizations is the insufficient funding to meet escalating humanitarian needs. As more and more countries face conflict and crisis it becomes almost impossible to choose who is in more need of the limited resources that can be provided.

Countries facing political conflicts are also failing to collaborate to ensure they are both able to gain humanitarian aid by limiting access to affected populations in conflict zones. This has worsened conflicts such as the Palestine-Israel war by denying non-military areas necessary items including food, water, and medicine. Additionally, the inadequate inclusion of local stakeholders in the planning and execution of aid limits its effectiveness. Member nations should prioritize communication and collaboration with affected people, especially through the AAP, to create humanitarian frameworks that can address the issue at hand without worsening the conflict.

UN's approach to Humanitarian Aid:

The UN strives to collaborate with various partners, including local humanitarian country teams, to identify potential risks to humanitarian operations and any issues that may limit their effectiveness. The UN believes humanitarian principles should serve as the foundation for developing effective strategies to mitigate risks of negative perceptions of aid delivery that may hinder its acceptance and access in a country. (“Humanitarian Principles | UNHCR”)

The UNHCR prioritizes consistent and transparent communications with affected communities regarding the humanitarian crises they are experiencing and how various partners can assist in providing aid. The ECOSOC council prioritizes the creation of unique, community-based approaches to providing humanitarian aid. By considering age, gender, and diversity differences, the UN engages with affected populations to ensure their participation is meaningful. This is something not all other organizations do, and the UN encourages this approach to avoid ineffective assistance. (“Humanitarian Principles | UNHCR”)

To provide useful humanitarian assistance, the UN monitors and evaluates its humanitarian responses and communicates with other groups. Each June, the ECOSOC council gathers to discuss and agree on how to best tackle the most recent and pressing humanitarian concerns. Interactive panel discussions and side events share the latest information on current opportunities and challenges. (“Coordinating Humanitarian Action | Economic and Social Council”)

The UN values collaboration between all member nations and other humanitarian assistance groups. When providing support to non-UN security forces such as police and border officials, the UNHCR must adhere to humanitarian principles, human rights standards, and inter-agency guidelines, including the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy. Furthermore, where appropriate, the UN promotes familiarity with the international normative legal framework to maintain ethical and effective humanitarian interventions. (“Humanitarian Principles | UNHCR”)

The UN also utilizes the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) for rapid financing of all humanitarian aid projects. (“Home | CERF”)

IV. Timeline of Events

1945: Formation of the United Nations, emphasizing international peace and security, including emergency response. (“Past Events | Economic and Social Council”)

1946: Formation of ECOSOC → tasked with the promotion of international economic and social cooperation, including in humanitarian aid projects. (“Past Events | Economic and Social Council”)

1948: ECOSOC and the General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and established the framework for humanitarian aid to ensure human rights are upheld in emergencies. (“Past Events | Economic and Social Council”)

1965: ECOSCO plays a major role in the creation of the UNDP, indicating humanitarian aid with long-term goals. (“Past Events | Economic and Social Council”)

1991: UN General Assembly → Resolution 46/182, establishing new foundations for humanitarian coordination and strengthening the position of the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (UN General Assembly).

2000: ECOSOC integrates humanitarian aid into the Millennium Development Goals, promoting emergency responses that prioritize sustainable development objectives. (“Past Events | Economic and Social Council”)

2005: ECOSCO oversees the implementation of the cluster approach under the Humanitarian Reform Agenda. (“Past Events | Economic and Social Council”)

2016: World Humanitarian Summit calls for a more effective and inclusive humanitarian system, emphasizing the "Grand Bargain" commitments. (“Past Events | Economic and Social Council”)

2020: The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates the critical need for global health and humanitarian coordination, exposing gaps in equity and resource allocation. (“Past Events | Economic and Social Council”)

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