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Executive Director's Circular
(Office of the Deputy Executive Director)

Date:	08/07/2021
Circular No.:	OED2021/014
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Amends:	
Supersedes:	OED2016/011

WFP CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Purpose and scope

1. This Circular describes the principles, organization, and roles and responsibilities for the management of crises and critical incidents affecting WFP.[1] [2]

2. This circular conforms to established United Nations Security Management System (UNSMS) and the WFP Security Management Policy and Framework of Accountability.[3] Hostage Incident Management is outside the scope of this circular.

3. This is one of three Executive Director circulars that concern organizational resilience and should be read in conjunction with WFP Organizational Resilience Management System (ORMS)[4] and WFP's Business Continuity Management.[5]

4. This Circular is addressed to all WFP offices worldwide.

Introduction

5. Management of crises and critical incidents is a core element of the ORMS[6] and is part of an integrated framework for building and maintaining WFP's organizational resilience. In this context, resilience is the. The ORMS framework is illustrated in Annex 1.

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[1] Terms and definitions have been adapted from the UN Policy on the Organizational Resilience Management System (ORMS), Chief Executives Board, effective 18 January 2021, and the International Standard ISO22301
[2] This circular does not supersede or replace the responsibilities of functional areas to deal with incidents arising in their areas
[3] OED2017/007 WFP Security Management Policy and Framework of Accountability
[4] OED2021/013 WFP Organizational Resilience Management, which refers to the Policy on the Organizational Resilience Management System (ORMS), Chief Executives Board, UN, effective 18 January 2021.
[5] OED2021/015 WFP Business Continuity Management, which focuses on ensuring WFP critical business-processes keep functioning following a disruption.
[6] The UN Policy on the Organizational Resilience Management System (ORMS), Chief Executives Board, effective 18 January 2021.

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6. Management structures for WFP's emergency[7] response are governed by a separate protocol.[8]

7. A *critical incident* is an event, or series of events, where:
   a. WFP personnel, their eligible family members and/or associated personnel[9] are in danger of, or have suffered, serious injury or loss of life (or there is a serious threat to their health and safety); and/or
   b. there is (or is a likelihood of) significant loss of, or damage to, WFP's property, assets, or brand;
   c. there is an exceptional threat to WFP reputation or the ability of WFP to safely implement its mandate, including due to failure of core IT systems, critical vendor supply chains etc.

8. A critical incident becomes a *crisis* when by its nature, severity, or broader consequences, it:
   a. requires corporate support and/or a centralised response; or
   b. overwhelms the response capacity of a Regional Bureau (RB) and requires corporate leadership and coordination from Headquarters (HQ).

Principles

9. In managing critical incidents and crises, and without prejudice to the established functions of UN and WFP security officials as regulated in applicable security policies, the following principles should govern decisions of personnel with responsibilities for preparing and responding to critical incidents and crises:

   a) Priority of Safety and Security: All decisions and actions aimed at saving the lives and protecting the welfare of WFP personnel and eligible family members, and associated personnel (as well as WFP's assets and property) will be prompt, efficient and unhampered by uncertainties or confusion concerning roles, responsibilities or resources;
   b) Subsidiarity: Critical incidents will be normally managed where they occur with the support if needed of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) structures (Designated Official (DO)/Security Management Team (SMT));
   c) Respect of Security Management: The response procedures for a critical incident must be fully compatible and integrated with UN and WFP specific security arrangements;
   d) Ensuring continuity: During a crisis, the initiation and maintenance of an appropriate organizational response must be assured at all times, even if key focal points are not contactable or are incapacitated;
   e) Crisis communications: Priority will be given to communicating rapidly, effectively and transparently with relatives of employees, associated personnel, and partner organizations who are concerned about the welfare of their colleagues affected by the incident or crisis; and

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[7] WFP/EB.1/2005/4-A/Rev.1 "…emergencies are defined as urgent situations in which there is clear evidence that an event or series of events has occurred which causes humans suffering or imminently threatens human lives or livelihoods and which the government concerned has not the means to remedy; and it is a demonstrably abnormal event or series of events which produces dislocation of a community on an exceptional level"
[8] OED 2018/013 Interim WFP Emergency activation protocol for Level 2 and Level 3 Emergencies
[9] e.g. individuals working in WFP operations but provided by stand-by partners, other UN entities or NGOs.

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     f)   Clarity on Information Management: All relevant information will be systematically recorded, collated, analysed, and disseminated on a need-to-know basis, while protecting sensitive and personal information that should remain confidential/restricted in accordance with applicable policies.

Critical Incident Management

10. WFP operates a decentralised decision-making process, as outlined in section 14 below, which promotes a flexible response to changing situations. Responses to critical incidents will normally be managed where they occur:
    - by the Country Director (CD) in a Country Office (CO)
    - by the Regional Director(s) (RD) in an RB, in a CO that is co-located with an RB, or when a critical incident has regional or cross-regional implications;
    - by the responsible director/manager in WFP Offices and other non-HQ locations; and
    - by the Chair of the Corporate Crisis Management Team at HQ.

11. All WFP personnel are required to report security/safety incidents and/or changes in the security/safety environment that have or may have an impact on employee safety and security through their individual line manager. Personnel with security responsibilities in the field beyond those applicable to all WFP personnel are required to report incidents or changes that may have a security/safety impact on WFP employees, property, assets, organization or operations according to current corporate guidelines following established reporting lines.[10]

12. Once notified, the Director of Security will, where necessary, escalate relevant issues to senior management via the Notification Matrix[11] and assist in coordinating WFP's response internally and through the mechanisms of UNSMS.

13. Roles and Responsibilities:

    a. **Regional Directors** (RDs) are responsible for:

    - appointing and chairing the Regional Bureau Crisis Management Team (RB-CMT);
    - ensuring Country Directors appoint Country Office Crisis Management Teams; and
    - alerting the Chair of the Corporate Crisis Management Team when a critical incident is likely to become a crisis.

    b. **Country Directors** (CDs) are responsible for:

    - appointing and chairing the Country Office Crisis Management Team (CO-CMT);
    - alerting the Chair of the RB-CMT when a critical incident is likely to become a crisis or have regional implications; and
    - participating in UN Country -level response through the UNCT and SMT.

Crisis Management

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[10] OED2017/007 WFP Security Management Policy and Framework on Accountability
[11] Group email used to inform selected people when a serious incident occurs

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14. A crisis will be managed by the Chair of the CORP-CMT. The Chair:
    a. takes on the role of crisis manager, assuming overall accountability for the effort to respond to and manage the crisis
    b. calls meetings of the CORP-CMT to request its support and attribute responsibilities as required
    c. promptly communicates definition of roles and actions to be taken
    d. declares the initiation and conclusion of a crisis, and
    e. appoints a crisis coordinator and alternates as needed to assist in managing the crisis.

15. Response activities should be implemented at the lowest effective level of authority.[12] In the field, the response should be implemented by the Chair of the CO-CMT, with the RB-CMT and/or CORP-CMT playing a supporting role. In exceptional circumstances, such as incapacitation of the field leadership or when the scope of the crisis extends beyond the capacity of the UN presence in the field, the RB-CMT and/or CORP-CMT shall assume greater response implementation responsibilities.

16. Should a crisis affecting Rome HQ render the Chair of the CORP-CMT (and their alternates) incapable of managing the response, the Chair of the CORP-CMT, or Officer-in-Charge, Rome, may request that a Regional Director temporarily assume the role of Chair of the CORP-CMT, supported by his/her RB-CMT. In the absence of the CORP-CMT-Chair or their alternates, the most senior Regional Director may temporarily take on the role of Chair of CORP-CMT, after conferring with the Designated Official for Rome and/or the Secretary General.

17. Roles and Responsibilities

    a. **The Executive Director** has responsibility for the implementation of the UN Organizational Resilience Management System Policy, of which Crisis Management is a core element.[13]

    b. **The Deputy Executive Director (DED)** is the Chair of the CORP-CMT and approves the Corporate Crisis Management Plan (CORP-CMP).[14]

    c. **The Chair of the Organizational Resilience Management Group** is responsible for the preparation and maintenance of the CORP-CMP. The Corporate Business Continuity Management team, which reports to the Chair, provides operational and substantive support to the CORP-CMT.

    d. **Members of the Corporate Crisis Management Team** are senior managers who can mobilise the necessary resources required to best respond to a crisis. Members advise the Chair of the CORP-CMT and implement his/her decisions. Membership at the time of writing this circular is listed in Annex 2. This may change over time, upon the discretion of the Chair of the CORP-CMT, to reflect the evolving structure of the Organization.[15]

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[12]The UN Crisis Management Policy, 19 March 2018 stipulates that "crisis response activities should be implemented at the lowest effective level of authority, with Headquarters playing a supporting role".
[13] Policy on the Organizational Resilience Management System (ORMS), Chief Executives Board, UN, effective 18 January 2021.
[14] The Crisis Management Framework was first established under OED2012/013. The Corporate Crisis Management Plan can be found on WFPgo and in the e-Guide's section on Business Continuity.
[15] An updated list of Corporate CMT members is maintained in the Corporate BC Plan.

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e. **Regional** and **Country Directors** are responsible for establishing and chairing RB-CMT and CO-CMT for their offices and participating in the UN country-level response (UNCT/SMT).

f. **Members of Regional Bureau and Country Office Crisis Management Teams** are chosen by their Chairs from among their direct reports who manage areas that would be engaged in preparing for and responding to a critical incident or crisis. The size and composition of the team are at the discretion of the Chair and depend on the local context and size of operations.

Crisis Management Team

18. A CMT advises its Chair (or alternate, as appropriate) and implements decisions taken by the Chair, concerning preparation for and response to an evolving local critical incident or crisis. It ensures accelerated and coordinated decision-making. Its responsibilities include:

a. assessing situation and ensuring common awareness
b. defining priorities
c. issuing clear directions
d. liaising with other key stakeholders
e. requesting support from the CORP-CMT, and coordinating with it, in the case where a critical incident located outside HQ is likely to, or has, become a crisis; and
f. providing support, in the form of guidance, resource mobilization and directions, to a "lower" level CMT in case of need.[16]

19. The Chair of a CMT calls its meetings. The frequency and location of meetings will be at the discretion of the Chair.

20. A CMT will have two designated alternate Chairs. They are the Deputy Chair and his/her alternate, to ensure that a CMT can meet in response to an evolving critical incident or crisis in the absence of two of its leading members. The alternates are encouraged to attend all meetings of the CMT to ensure seamless leadership transition in case of need. The CMT will meet at least twice annually to review its preparedness to respond effectively to an evolving critical incident or evolving crisis. Such preparedness meetings may occur in the form of table-top exercises or simulations, which in turn may involve exercising downstream elements including business continuity and other contingency plans. Such exercises at the United Nations Security Management Team (UNSMT) level are requirements of the United Nations Security Management System (UNSMS) policy.[17]

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[16] For example, in the case of a crisis originating in a Country Office location, the relevant CO-CMT and RB-CMT will have been invoked by their respective Chairs to ensure a coordinated request for support to the CORP-CMT, and a coordinated capacity to implement corporate decisions, based on a common situational awareness and strategy.
[17] United Nations Security Management System, Security Policy Manual

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21. The membership of a CMT may be supplemented by its Chair, according to the nature of an incident or crisis. If a member is unavailable, her/his designated alternate or Officer-in-Charge will attend.

Crisis Management Plan

22. The Corporate Crisis Management Plan is maintained by the Business Continuity Manager, reviewed by the Chair of the Organizational Resilience Management Group and approved by the DED. The plan includes:

    a. specific preparation requirements including a description of relevant roles and responsibilities;
    b. operational procedures for crisis preparedness, first response and management;
    c. a maintenance and exercise regime, in which key elements of crisis management are rehearsed to provide opportunities to update the crisis management plan on the basis based on lessons-learned;
    d. annexes with additional necessary information to support the effective preparation for, and management of, a crisis; and
    e. inclusive review and lessons learned process.

Exceptions and review

23. The Executive Director may make exceptions to the provisions of this Circular as deemed appropriate under the circumstances.

24. This Circular shall be subject to periodic review and adjustments, as appropriate, at least bi-annually.

Effective Date
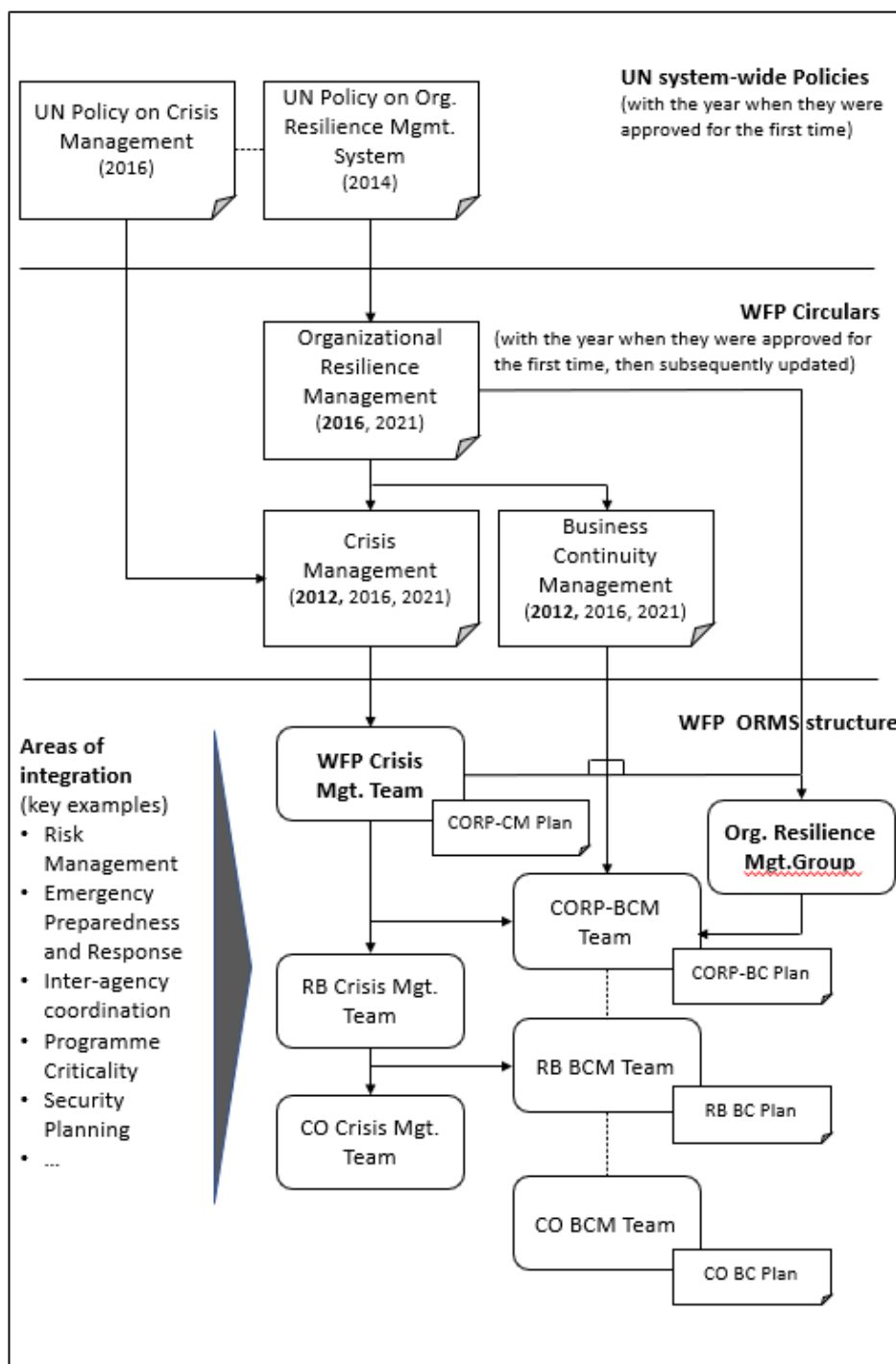
25. This Circular takes immediate effect.

> **Annexes:**
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> 1. Framework for the application of ORMS in WFP
> 2. Membership of the WFP Crisis Management Team

David M. Beasley
Executive Director

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Annex 1. Framework of the application of ORMS in WFP

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Annex 2. Membership of the Corporate Crisis Management Team

The Corporate Crisis Management Team (CORP-CMT) is chaired by the Deputy Executive Director.

The Assistant Executive Director and Chief Financial Officer is the Deputy Chair of the CORP-CMT. The alternate to the Deputy Chair is the Chief of Staff.

Membership of the CORP-CMT is divided into two groups:

- Members of the "core" group are called to all meetings of the CORP-CMT and represent functional areas that must be involved in the preparation and response to any evolving critical incident or crisis.
- Members of the "on call" group are called to meetings depending on the nature of the incident or crisis. This is because not all incidents or crises involve their functional areas.

All members must designate an alternate in case they are not available to attend a meeting.

"Core" membership

- Deputy Executive Director (Chair, CORP-CMT)
- Assistant Executive Director, Resource Management & CFO (Deputy Chair, CORP-CMT)
- Chief of Staff (alternate deputy Chair, CORP-CMT)
- Chief Information Officer
- Director, Communications, Advocacy and Marketing
- Director, Corporate Finance
- Director, Human Resources
- Director, Legal Office
- Director, Management Services
- Director, Security
- Director, Staff Wellness
- Chair, Organisational Resilience Management Group

"on call" membership

- Chair of the affected region's Crisis Management Team
- Chair of the affected country's Crisis Management Team
- Director/Head of affected office
- Senior Director of Operations
- Director, Corporate Planning and Performance
- Director, Emergency Operations
- Director, Enterprise Risk Management
- Director, Public Partnerships and Resourcing
- Director, Programme - Humanitarian and Development
- Director, Supply Chain Operations
- Chief, HQ Security

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Others may attend upon request of the Chair, depending on the nature of the critical incident or crisis. After consultation with the CMT, the Chair may invite other senior staff to become members of the team, reflecting WFP's evolving processes, organization and priorities.