The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)

"As the only forum that facilitates coordination among international humanitarian actors, by bringing together UN agencies, the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, and NGOs, the IASC represents an important insider-outsider perspective and provides a unified voice for the sector. Its decisions have a global mandate, legitimacy and authority. If the IASC did not exist, it would have to be created."

- IASC Review 2014

Photo credit: UNHCR

What is the IASC and what does it do?

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) is a unique inter-agency forum involving the key UN and non-UN humanitarian partners. The IASC was established in June 1992 in response to United Nations General Assembly Resolution 46/182 on the strengthening of humanitarian assistance. General Assembly Resolution 48/57 affirmed the IASC's role as the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination of humanitarian assistance.

To improve the delivery of humanitarian assistance, including the protection of the rights of affected people, the IASC fulfils three main functions:

Policy: Produces system-wide policies, guidelines and tools to harmonize and achieve a better overall response.

Operational: Ensure a coherent and timely emergency response to major emergencies.

Advocacy: Agree on common messages, to jointly advocate for respect for the humanitarian principles and ensure support for the humanitarian work.

Which organizations form the IASC?

The members of the IASC are the heads or designated representatives of the UN operational agencies (FAO, OCHA, UNDP, UN-HABITAT, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, WHO). In addition, there is a standing invitation to ICRC, IFRC, IOM, OHCHR, the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs, the UNFPA, and the World Bank, as well as the NGO consortia ICVA, InterAction and SCHR. In practice, no distinction is made between "Members" and "Standing Invitees". The strength and added value of the IASC lies in its broad membership and is reinforced by inviting relevant non-IASC members to meetings and encouraging their participation in the subsidiary bodies and structures.

"The IASC has been a catalyst and a platform for important evaluations and significant reforms, as well as good joint policy development, which has had a positive impact on global-level coordination and operations on the ground. It launched the 2005 Humanitarian Response Review and subsequent reform process, which resulted in the clusters, a revitalised Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and improvements in field-level leadership."

- IASC Review 2014

IASC Priorities in 2014 and 2015

- Accountability to Affected Populations and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
- Humanitarian Financing
- Preparedness and Resilience
- Protection in Humanitarian Crises
- Revitalizing Principled Humanitarian Action

Key Principles of the IASC

- Decisions of the IASC will respect the organizations' mandates
- All organizations have an equal ownership of the IASC and its subsidiary bodies
- Overall Objective: to support effective humanitarian action
- Relevance to and input from field operations is critical
- Subsidiarity: decisions to be taken at the most appropriate level as agreed by IASC Principals
- Impartiality of the Secretariat
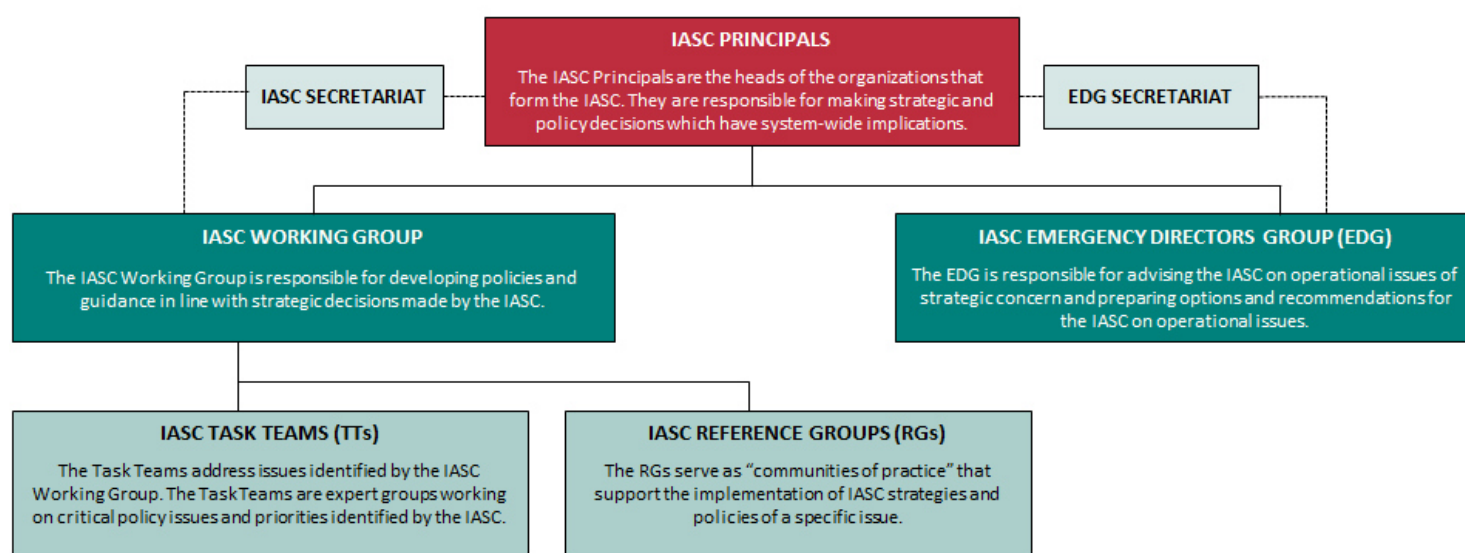
The Humanitarian Reform (2005)

Based on a review of the humanitarian response in Darfur, the IASC decided to implement a major **Humanitarian Reform** to ensure adequate response capacity, enhanced leadership, accountability, predictability and strong partnerships. The reform focused on three key areas:

- More adequate, timely, flexible and effective humanitarian financing, including through the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF);
- A strengthened Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) system, providing more strategic leadership and coordination at the inter-sectoral and sectoral levels;
- Implementation of the 'cluster approach' to build up capacities in gap areas.

The Transformative Agenda (2012)

The humanitarian responses to the Haiti earthquake and the Pakistan floods in 2010 exposed a number of weaknesses and inefficiencies in the international humanitarian response. The **IASC Transformative Agenda** focusses on the timeliness and effectiveness of the collective response. It aims to achieve stronger leadership, more effective coordination structures and improved accountability for performance and affected people. A key element of the Transformative Agenda is the Humanitarian System-Wide Level 3 (L3) Emergency Response. An L3 declaration activates a system-wide mobilization of capacity (leadership, staffing and funding) to accelerate and scale-up the delivery of assistance and protection.

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE (IASC)

IASC SECRETARIAT

IASC PRINCIPALS
The IASC Principals are the heads of the organizations that form the IASC. They are responsible for making strategic and policy decisions which have system-wide implications.

EDG SECRETARIAT

IASC WORKING GROUP
The IASC Working Group is responsible for developing policies and guidance in line with strategic decisions made by the IASC.

IASC EMERGENCY DIRECTORS GROUP (EDG)
The EDG is responsible for advising the IASC on operational issues of strategic concern and preparing options and recommendations for the IASC on operational issues.

IASC TASK TEAMS (TTs)
The Task Teams address issues identified by the IASC Working Group. The Task Teams are expert groups working on critical policy issues and priorities identified by the IASC.

IASC REFERENCE GROUPS (RGs)
The RGs serve as "communities of practice" that support the implementation of IASC strategies and policies of a specific issue.

Disclaimer: *The present organizational chart is based on the IASC Terms of Reference of February 2014. Please note, due to layout limitations, the hierarchies and/or reporting lines have been presented in a more simplified manner. The chart is subject to change depending on IASC decisions.*

Version as of 18 May 2015