

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE
AD HOC IASC WORKING GROUP MEETING

Summary Record and Action Points

11 MAY 2016
10:00-12:00 NY / 16:00-18:00 GVA
S-1525 NEW YORK / ERCC GENEVA

Inter-agency Humanitarian Evaluations (IAHEs) were introduced as part of the IASC's Transformative Agenda as the final component of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle, and are mandatory for all L3 emergencies. IAHE activities are overseen by the Inter-Agency Steering Group, chaired by OCHA and composed of the IASC members' heads of evaluation functions. IAHEs aim to assess the extent to which the collective objectives of the Humanitarian Response Plan are met and to aid learning from the inter-agency response.

Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) of the Response to Conflict in South Sudan

Kyung-wha Kang, Chair of the Working Group

The Chair of the WG, Kyung-wha Kang explained that the IAHE Steering Group approved the final report of the evaluation and the ERC shared it with the Principals for endorsement. The objective of the meeting is to take note of the recommendations and agree on an action plan to address the global level recommendations. Country level recommendations are directed towards the HCT and HC. The IASC secretariat will manage the development and monitoring of the management response matrix.

A key conclusion of the South Sudan evaluation is that the interagency humanitarian response made a significant contribution to relieving the crisis, saving thousands of lives, and preventing famine and major public health catastrophes. These successes were achieved despite great challenges and within a highly complex operational environment. The effectiveness of the collective response must continue to be strengthened, despite the deactivation of the L3 status.

Victoria Saiz-Omenaca, Officer in Charge, Evaluation Unit, OCHA Koorosh Raffii, Senior Evaluation Specialist - Humanitarian, UNICEF

The presenters outlined the objectives of the IAHE in South Sudan and introduced the evaluation team and management structure. They explained the scope of the field research conducted and the applied methodology, including maximum consultation with affected people despite the complex environment. The IAHE faced serious constraints and logistical difficulties, contributing to significant delays in completing the process. Some recommendations nevertheless remain valid.

The interagency humanitarian response in South Sudan made a significant contribution to relieving the crisis and averting a major catastrophe. But there were areas of concern including:

- A need for better linkages between needs assessment, planning and response, generating and utilizing results-focused data;
- Not all OPR findings have been addressed sufficiently;

- The response fell short of accessing some people in hard to reach areas, marginalizing those affected populations in difficult to access locations where responses remained ad hoc and informal.
- Limited investment in livelihood response;
- Limited cooperation with national NGOs and missed opportunities in building national capacity;
- Weak human resource capacity to strengthen systems, deliver higher level strategic analysis and monitor the quality of the response;
- Timely activation of the L3 status, however slow upscale in terms of operational capacity with insecurity and widespread looting as a contributing factor;
- Leadership and coordination between HCT and ICWG and field locations were deemed weak, the HCT was deemed insufficiently strategic;
- The impact of the Rapid Response Mechanism was found to be limited, due to a lack of appropriate staff;
- The implementation of the HPC in country (translation into results for affected people) and the monitoring of the response were too weak;
- A need for stronger monitoring of how the AAP and HPC are implemented at the field level.

The evaluation recommended a review of the HPC and greater differentiation between rapid onset and protracted emergencies. Participants pointed out that much has already been done and continues to be done to strengthen and adapt the HPC to various operational environments. On the evaluators' recommendation on the L3, its recent deactivation by Principals was noted, as well as their call for the consolidation of the L3 surge gains, for which the EDG has been tasked.

During the ensuing discussion, participants queried the continued validity of some of the recommendations given that the report was released one year after it was undertaken. They requested further details on the objectives and viability of some of the recommendations, e.g. around strengthening preparedness, prevention and livelihood interventions, and around ensuring flexibility across relief, resilience, development. Greater differentiation was requested on proposed response modalities (cash is only one option) and recommended coordination structures. The comparative advantages humanitarians could bring versus other actors on contributing towards conflict resolution were questioned, and whether these should be part of the humanitarian mandate. One of the presenters noted that the HCT did not feel it was their mandate to address non humanitarian issues. One representative noted it would be beneficial to undertake further thinking on the long term strategic direction. Another stated that it would be useful to revive the dialogue between the humanitarian leadership and the mission on the PoC sites.

Follow-up Action:

1. The management response plan (MRP) to be finalized and lead agencies to take forward implementing global recommendations. (IASC secretariat in cooperation with OCHA/SPEGS – May 2016)
2. Recommend to the HC and the mission to ensure dialogue and close coordination in developing short, medium, and longer-term solutions/plans to the PoC sites.
3. WG, in collaboration with the EDG, to identify system-wide human resources challenges in undertaking L3 surges and ways to overcome them. (IASC secretariat, in consultation with the EDG secretariat, to propose a time frame for this discussion)

Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation of the Response to the Central African Republic's Crisis 2013-2015

Andrew Lawday, Senior Independent Evaluator/Team Leader IAHE CAR

The humanitarian response in the Central African Republic (CAR) was found to have made a strong contribution to the protection of civilians and relieving the crisis in the country, saving many thousands of lives, despite the very challenging context. However, according to the evaluation team, the response did not live up to the higher aspirations of the humanitarian community. In terms of scale and targeting, the humanitarian response was insufficient: needs were not met and some vulnerable groups were excluded. Sectoral results were uneven and at times poor. IDPs, which did not congregate in IDP sites, went largely unassisted. Chances were missed to build a national response capacity to prepare for future crises and develop solutions. The response struggled to deliver results identified in the response plan and the HPC process failed to increase effectiveness. The performance management framework was deemed inadequate. The leadership was undermined by weaknesses in the coordination structures. Finally, the humanitarian response inadequately involved affected populations.

The IAHE put forth recommendations around five key areas: Improving strategy and performance, mobilizing capacity, enabling leadership, strengthening process, and defining accountabilities.

During the ensuing discussion, participants noted the ongoing refinement of the HPC process. One called for further refinement within the evaluation between early action and preparedness. Recommendations around global resource challenges and *vis a vis* accountability/AAP were found too generic. Some members stressed that humanitarians need to be careful about what accountability responsibilities they can accept. Others also stressed the importance of recognizing the tarnished image of international actors in the country due to the lack of accountability for sexual violence by peacekeepers.

Follow-up Action:

1. Finalize the management response plan (MRP) identifying agreed and rejected recommendations and lead agencies to take forward implementing global recommendations and circulate for comments. (IASC secretariat in cooperation with OCHA/SPEGS – May 2016)
2. Disseminate updated information on the HPC. (OCHA PSB – May 2016)

AOB, Summary of Action Points and closing remarks

The Session on the Syria CALL Evaluation Synthesis and Gap Analysis (ESGA) and the discussion on the suggested Disability Charter were postponed to the next WG meeting due to a lack of time. The Chair called members' attention to ongoing work being undertaken to draft a synthesis report of existing IAHE findings, which would be shared with the Working Group when completed. The Chair of the IASC WG put forward the suggestion to hold a Working Group meeting in June 2016, shortly following the WHS and the Principals meeting.

Follow-up Action:

1. Send out a doodle calendar to assess availability of Working Group members for a meeting after the WHS. (IASC secretariat - 14 May 2016)
2. Disseminate information on the Disability Charter. (IASC secretariat – May 2016)