Inter-Agency Standing Committee

Ad Hoc IASC Working Group Meeting

Final Summary Record

26 June 2015

Audio/Video conference

# Opening

The Chair of the IASC WG, Kyung-wha Kang, DERC/ASG OCHA, welcomed participants to the Ad Hoc IASC WG and introduced the items on the agenda.

# Review of the IASC Gender in Humanitarian Action Policy Statement

UN Women presented on the review of the 2008 *IASC Gender in Humanitarian Action Policy Statement* highlighting some positive achievements, as for example the establishment of GenCap, the IASC Gender and Humanitarian Action Handbook, GBV (Gender Based Violence) Guidelines, eLearning course, establishment and rollout of Gender Marker (GM) which is now mandatory to use in the Humanitarian Program Cycle, GM tip sheets, and IASC Gender Alerts. The review also identified significant shortcomings:

Failure to develop the accountability framework originally prescribed in the policy has led to shortcomings in realizing the commitments to integrate gender equality and women’s empowerment across the work of the IASC – this is manifested by:

* + - Inconsistencies of integration of gender, age, diversity in the output of the IASC at different levels and no clear connection with the UN system-wide action plan on gender;
    - Gender considerations not having been mainstreamed into the recent reform processes, e.g. in the TA protocols;
    - Perceived downgrading of the Gender sub-Working Group to a Reference Group;
    - GM implementation inconsistent among the clusters and from one country to the next;
    - Lack of gender analysis and sex and age disaggregated data, e.g. in Humanitarian Needs Overviews.

The review also recommended for UN Women to become a full member of IASC.

WG members expressed broad support for the findings of the review, however also requested that the report presents more field resonance through concrete examples, field based analysis (also on impact analysis) and concrete time bound action oriented recommendations. The Chair and others remarked that the re-designation of the Sub-working group to a reference group was in no way a "downgrading" of the importance of gender to the IASC but rather an affirmation that the policy and key tools were now in place and that a centre of excellence was needed to support their implementation. UN Women highlighted that the issue was not downgrading but that by making the gender subsidiary body a Reference Group, it had removed the internal mechanism for managing accountability to the implementation of the principles in the policy.

The chair noted that the GRG had not been productive in making proposals that she as sponsor could take forward in the WG, and challenged the group to be more constructive and productive. This was confirmed by other WG members who confirmed the need for the group’s restructuring and strengthening by reviewing its co-chair arrangements and setting out a 2-year working plan, as was welcomed by UN Women.

Members stressed that an Accountability Framework should have already been developed and that the GRG should play a leadership role in taking this forward and fulfil an oversight role. Some members further reiterated that in the thinking about an accountability framework, what already exists should be considered and strengthened. Ensuring that gender marker was linked to the whole program cycle would be a starting point to strengthen accountability for gender. They also requested that the GRG identifies concrete transformational and achievable policy level recommendations on gender equality programming to the World Humanitarian Summit. There was overall agreement that IASC membership would not be reviewed at this point in time. On the issue of UNW membership in IASC, many noted that it would be inappropriate for the WG to reopen this issue when the Principals dealt with it and came to a conclusion just half a year ago. UN Women confirmed this was a recommendation and not the main purpose of the review.

UN Women stressed the importance of gender equality to the humanitarian community and welcomed the interest of agencies.

***Action Points:***

1. *WG members to send further comments on policy statement review to UN Women by mid July 2015.*
2. *The GRG to seek to strengthen gender messaging in WHS (in writing end of July 2015 and during consultations until March 2016).*
3. *Restructure and strengthen the Gender Reference Group including reducing the number of co-chairs to one UN agency and one NGO. GRG to develop a two-year work plan for consideration by the WG in October (submission of the proposal to WG by mid-September). The work plan needs to include: 1.) Development of an Accountability Framework taking into consideration other existing accountability frameworks (e.g. AAP) and the capacity to implement, 2.) Update of the policy in light of the review.* *3) Practical field-oriented activities. In light of the pending development of the Accountability Framework, a conversion into a time-bound task team could be considered.*
4. *October WG meeting to agree how to take the policy review further.*

# Presentation on the Inter Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) in South Sudan

Objective of the agenda item was to give WG members a chance to review preliminary findings of the IAHE in South Sudan in order to allow a sharpening of the final draft. UNICEF (as member of the management group) presented the preliminary findings of the IAHE, following a prior presentation to the HCT in South Sudan. Overall, the IAHE and WG members acknowledged the humanitarian response in South Sudan having had an impressive impact despite the extraordinarily complicated situation. Evaluators warned of the response having been concentrated in Juba and other regions receiving insufficient attention or, as in opposition areas, coordination structures being entirely absent (a shortcoming that has been recognized and is being addressed by the HCT) and leadership and accountability too diffused among various bodies.

The evaluation team commended the enormous collection of data however warned that it was insufficiently disaggregated and ineffectively used. The use of the Strategic Response Plan as a fundraising rather than planning document was questioned as was the absence of an inter-agency contingency plan prior to the crisis. Evaluators and WG members highlighted that an L3 status proved to be useful at the onset of a crisis mostly. Evaluators warned of the danger of the response becoming manipulated as humanitarian space is closing down and that adherence to the humanitarian principles and greater conflict sensitivity were critical. WG members in this regard highlighted that the IAHE needed to recognize the dynamics of an integrated mission. The evaluation team also warned that South Sudan was in danger of becoming a forgotten crisis. The presenter stressed that only a political solution would allow change and argued that humanitarians could do more to support peacebuilding efforts as a prerequisite for change (an argument that was disagreed with by some WG members).

WG members stressed the need for further consultations of the evaluation team in country. They also needed to give greater consideration to protection and clearly link to other evaluations (including the OPR). They requested to see the draft report with concrete recommendations.

***Action Points:***

1. *Before finalizing the report, evaluators to undertake further consultations at the country level individually with those agencies that have not been consulted sufficiently and collectively with the HCT in country.*
2. *Circulate draft report sent to WG and EDG by end of July for comments and final report with a management response matrix by the end of August 2015.*

# Nairobi Principals meeting

The Chair of the WG debriefed on the Nairobi Principals meeting. The Principals were expected to provide input by 30 June 2015 on draft minutes and action points and that the IASC Secretariat would take the action points forward.

# AOB

The Chair of the WG complimented the IASC Secretariat on the ECOSOC side event.

She noted the need to review IASC Task Team mandates.

The Chair congratulated George Deikun/UN-HABITAT on his work on urbanization.

She explained that the Secretary General’s report on the World Humanitarian Summit was to be drafted by a team organized by the Emergency Relief Coordinator and under the leadership of OCHA. Martin Barber has been brought on board as an adviser.

***Action Points:***

1. *Ensure comments to the IASC Principals summary record are provided before the deadline (30 June 2015).*
2. *IASC Task Teams to submit, to WG, analysis of their achievements and recommendations as to their future as soon as possible and no later than end of July 2015.*
3. *WG to assess the future of the IASC Task Teams based on their analysis and recommendations (pre-planning meeting September 2015, October 2015 WG meeting).*
4. *IASC Secretariat to contact WG members to identify a host for the next WG meeting and preferred dates and agenda items (second week of July 2015).*