Inter-Agency Standing Committee

**IASC SUBSIDIARY BODies**

Needs Assessment Task Force (NATF)

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The IASC Task Force on Needs Assessment (NATF) was established in June 2009, to “harmonise and promote cross-sector needs assessment initiatives for consistent, reliable and timely data on humanitarian needs in complex emergencies and natural disasters to strengthen informed decision-making and improve humanitarian response”. These two years have seen a concentrated focus by the NATF on creating a vision of what constitutes a coordinated approach to assessments in humanitarian contexts, and translating this into a set of guidance and tools which are laid out in the IASC NATF *Operational Guidance for Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crises* (Provisional Version, October 2011) and *Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment* (MIRA) Manual (Provisional Version, October 2011).

## Key Achievements against Work plan Targets

The 2012 NATF work plan reflected a significant shift from developing and obtaining agreement on concepts to applying them in field settings while aligning with the IASC Transformative Actions. The NATF, thus, focused on moving beyond outputs towards outcomes, emphasizing five key components: creating the predictable capacity in-country and through global surge mechanisms that is necessary to implement a coordinated assessment approach in both protracted and new emergency contexts (with specific attention paid to L3 emergencies); facilitating assessment preparedness; implementing a learning strategy to inform modifications to the MIRA and Operational Guidance, and refining the Key Humanitarian Indicators in consultation with the global clusters to improve their quality, appropriateness and measurability.

Key achievements during 2012 were:

* A final capacity development strategy and set of materials was developed and utilized in 2012. At the global level, in addition to 2 trainings for cluster representatives (see below under Section 3), 3 trainings were also held for OCHA staff, 4 trainings for UNDAC roster members, 1 training for stand-by partner roster members.
* Field support missions (some inter-agency, some single agency) were provided to nine countries which include Sudan, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Yemen and the Philippines to aid in customizing and implementing the coordinated assessment approach and MIRA in setting characterized by protracted crises. Missions were followed by on-going remote technical support. In the Philippines, a field mission in January to implement a MIRA after Tropical Storm Washi was followed by remote technical support in November/December after Tropical Storm Bopha.
* Preparedness missions were undertaken in Indonesia, Colombia, Papua New Guinea and the Pacific Islands, to undertake a mapping of existing assessment capacities and tools, followed by technical assistance in the development of assessment preparedness plans, mechanisms and tools, and training/capacity building for in-country actors. Most recently, these preparedness activities were utilized in the Pacific Islands during the November storms.
* A communications strategy was development and implemented for the NATF, which resulted in the activation of the IASC NATF website (<http://assessments.humanitarianresponse.info/>) which serves as a platform for regular updates on the work of the NATF and a central location from which to access assessment tools, guidance and reports.
* An independent lessons learned review was commissioned to take stock of and reflect upon iformation from application and use of the Operational Guidance and MIRA in field settings from 2011 – 2013. The consultant undertook a desk review and key informant interviews, and subsequently provided recommendations which will guide an update to the MIRA and Operational Guidance.

## Challenges faced in 2012

* Demand for in-country and remote technical support for application of the coordinated assessment support was overwhelming, and sometimes exceeded the supply of available staff and financial resources. Efforts to draw upon stand by partner rosters aided in providing some of the requested assistance as did country-level capacity building exercises.

## Any outcomes of your Subsidiary Body in relation to the Transformative Agenda in 2012

* Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for activating a coordinated assessment approach, most notably a MIRA, in response to a MIRA were developed and approved.
* Two trainings were held for cluster representatives to prepare them for deployment to undertake a MIRA in both L3 and non-L3 contexts.
* NATF representatives participated in two of the Transformative Agenda missions, to South Sudan and the Sahel, where coordinated assessments were identified as a priority area for assistance.

## Outstanding work of your Subsidiary Body requiring the attention of the IASC Working Group in 2013

***Please list issues requiring the IASC Working Group’s attention***

* The revised and updated MIRA and Operational Guidance will be completed by 31 March 2013.
* Efforts to revise the Key Humanitarian Indicators are underway with the global clusters engaged in a review and consultation process. A revised list of indicators is scheduled to be available by 31 March 2013.
* Through field implementation and systematic review of lessons learned, some additional activities have been identified as priorities for further strengthening coordinated assessments, most notably (a) developing guidance on modifying the MIRA for conflicts and protracted crises and (b) continued support to Global Cluster Coordinators and global cluster lead agencies in establishing and maintaining rosters of individuals will the appropriate knowledge, skills and training to effectively participate and/or lead coordinated assessments.

Prepared by:

NATF, January 2013