

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE
WORKING GROUP

IASC Subsidiary Bodies

**Needs Assessment Task Force
Work Plan for 2012**

Date Revised: 4 June 2012

I Narrative Summary

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).

The IASC NATF *Operational Guidance for Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crises* (Operational Guidance) is the overarching policy document which defines how humanitarian actors will come together to collect, analyse and share information on needs in a coordinated manner throughout the life of an emergency. And, the MIRA enables IASC member organizations to collaborate on a single assessment and analytical process in the earliest stages of an emergency in order to collectively define the scale and identify priority needs and interventions. This is done using a methodology which relies heavily on the views of key beneficiary community members.

The work plan outlined below for 2012 reflects a significant shift from conceptualization to implementation and is in alignment with and intended to support the IASC Transformative Actions. The NATF, thus, will focus 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).

Inherent with the objectives of creating predictable capacity and strengthening existing country level mechanisms is a **programme of targeted capacity building**. As with any new guidance and products, information dissemination and awareness-raising are imperative to facilitate their use and application. While such work will remain a focus of 2012, through NATF induction missions to field locations, a systematic and targeted approach to ensuring appropriate staff are sufficiently skilled and trained on the coordinated assessment will aim to increase the depth of knowledge. This will include identifying OCHA field staff in protracted conflict situations to serve the assessment coordination function, and providing them with the necessary information and training. And, links will be made with training for cluster coordinators to support their

development of cluster capacity to provide the requisite staff. Similarly, in new emergencies, select partners within global surge mechanisms (including the CASPAR) will be targeted for intensive training. This is in alignment with the IASC Transformative Actions Rapid Response Mechanism where it is envisaged teams will be pre-trained at headquarters level.

Similarly, experience has shown that preparedness is essential for an initial assessment of needs to produce both timely and quality data and lay the foundation for a coordinated approach to assessments through the life of an emergency. In the absence of established systems and mechanisms, delays result while humanitarian actors negotiate roles and responsibilities and develop data collection tools and analysis plans. In such instances, the temptation to engage in unilateral data collection is overwhelming, which too often results in an array of information which cannot be harmonized and affords an incomplete vision of the humanitarian situation. As such, the NATF will focus on ensuring **data and assessment preparedness** in a minimum of four countries during 2012, working with government partners and humanitarian country teams to support and strengthen existing in country capacities.

Learning by doing is critical for further development of the coordinated assessment approach. In order to build a strong evidence base to underpin the Operational Guidance and associated tools, including the newly developed MIRA, a rigorous learning strategy will be developed and implemented in 2012. A lessons learned framework and independent review will serve as the conduit for collecting and analyzing information emanating from the application of the MIRA and Operational Guidance in field locations, which will be used to modify and update these documents prior to the IASC Working Group at the end of 2012.

Further, the NATF has identified as important the **review and refinement of the Key Humanitarian Indicators** and looking in greater depth at the later phases of emergency on harmonizing assessment data; and how the various cluster monitoring systems can be brought together to support the Humanitarian Dashboard to serve as a more effective inter-cluster monitoring platform.

III Key Expected Outcomes in 2012

As a result of the work plan described above, the following outcomes are among those envisaged:

- Inter-agency assessment support missions will be undertaken in a minimum of 4 emergency-prone countries. Missions will include a mapping of existing assessment capacities and tools, coupled with technical assistance and capacity building to develop preparedness plans.
 - NATF will implement a targeted plan for training and capacity building to ensure predictable in country capacity to undertake coordinated assessments, and to build global surge capacity to support OCHA and clusters in new emergencies, linking to the work of the IASC Rapid Response Mechanism.
 - NATF to implement a learning strategy to inform modifications to the MIRA and Operational Guidance and, more broadly, the coordinated assessment approach..
 - Key Humanitarian Indicators will be refined in consultation with the global clusters, to improve quality, appropriateness and measurability.
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II Work Plan for 2012

Goal*: Improved evidence-based decision-making in humanitarian contexts through application of IASC NATF coordinated assessment approach in field locations.

Objectives*	Outputs and Activities*	Indicators (with targets)*	Timeframe
<p>1. Field-test and subsequently modify the NATF Operational Guidance and the MIRA</p>	<p>1A. Final Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for activating a coordinated assessment approach, including the MIRA, in response to a large emergency.</p> <p><i>I.A.1. Draft SOPs and share for consultation.</i></p> <p><i>I.A.2. Finalize SOPs and incorporate into MIRA Manual/Operational Guidance.</i></p> <p>1B. Final MIRA and Operational Guidance and Products</p> <p><i>I.B.1. Implement table-top simulation to test products and confirm common inter-agency understanding.</i></p> <p><i>I.B.2. Implement functional field simulation to test tools, process and products..</i></p> <p><i>I.B.3. Draw lessons from implementation of coordinated assessments to modify and finalize Operational Guidance and MIRA.</i></p>	<p>1A. SOPs endorsed by NATF</p> <p><i>I.A.2. Final SOPs incorporated into MIRA and Operational Guidance.</i></p> <p>1B. Final Operational Guidance and MIRA Manual submitted to IASC WG</p> <p><i>I.B.1 and 2. 1 table-top and 1 functional field-level simulation undertaken</i></p> <p><i>I.B.3.</i></p>	<p>Q 3</p> <p>Q 4</p> <p>Q 3</p> <p>Q 3-4</p>

* A goal is a higher level, long-term result or change the group wants to achieve over a longer period of time. (Example: A more effective humanitarian coordination system.)

* Objectives are intermediate results or changes that need to be achieved during the workplan period in order to move closer to achieving the goal. (Example: Strengthened accountability to affected beneficiaries)

* Outputs are the tangible steps, services, and products provided by the group on annual basis to achieve its objectives. (Example: IASC's role on accountability to affected populations clarified.) Activities are actions that need to be undertaken to produce the outputs. (Example: Develop policy on accountability to affected populations for the Working Group's endorsement.)

* Indicators describe how the group intends to measure progress made towards stated outputs. Targets reflect the level of progress the group strives to achieve during the reporting period. (Example IASC policy on accountability to affected populations endorsed by target date. Target date: 30 September 2012)

<p>2. Develop and maintain predictable surge capacity to implement IASC coordinated assessments approach, including the MIRA, in large-scale emergencies</p>	<p><i>2.A.1 Finalize NATF capacity development strategy and materials.</i></p> <p><i>2.A.2 Inter-agency assessment team members from cluster members, agencies and partners trained on IASC coordinated assessment approach.</i></p> <p><i>2.A.3. Clusters, lead agencies and OCHA to maintain rosters of trained and experienced surge assessment staff for deployment in large-scale emergencies. .</i></p> <p><i>2.A.4. IASC coordinated assessments training module provided to global clusters to incorporate into on-going cluster trainings.</i></p>	<p><i>2.A.1. Strategy and training materials finalized.</i></p> <p><i>2.A.2. 2 trainings for cluster and/or agency assessment experts and information management officers = 50 trained staff.</i></p> <p><i>2.A.3. Cluster roster inter-agency assessment team members and information managers identified, trained and available for deployment in large-scale emergencies; minimum 2 each per cluster.</i></p> <p><i>2.A.4. 4 global cluster trainings include IASC NATF modules.</i></p>	<p>Q2</p>
<p>3. Rollout of IASC coordinated assessment package, with focus on Operational Guidance and MIRA, prioritizing emergency-prone countries.^a</p>	<p><i>3.A.1. Training of Trainers in Operational Guidance and MIRA</i></p> <p><i>3.A.2. HCTs and government partners in prioritized countries introduced to IASC coordinated assessment package.</i></p> <p><i>3.A.3. At least four field support missions undertaken to support preparedness and capacity-building in CAP countries.</i></p>	<p><i>3.A.1. At least 15 persons capable of providing quality training on Operational Guidance and MIRA.</i></p> <p><i>3.A.2 IASC missions to 8 emergency-prone countries, priority given to those in line with Transformative Actions.</i></p> <p><i>3.A.3. At least 4 countries provided support via inter-agency assessment missions and longer term technical support which result in trained in country capacity to conduct inter-agency assessments and an assessment plan</i></p>	<p>Q4</p>

^a Prioritization will use the 2012 OCHA Global Focus Model as a platform.

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<p>4. Build an evidence base to inform lessons learning and refinement of the NATF tools and guidance.</p>	<p><i>4.1.</i> Develop learning framework and strategy for collection and absorption of lessons learned from testing, training and rollout of IASC coordinated assessment package.</p> <p><i>4.2.</i> Consultant contracted to draw lessons from the implementation of the IASC coordinated assessment approach, to inform modifications to MIRA and Operational Guidance.</p>	<p><i>4.1.</i> Lessons learned framework and strategy developed.</p> <p><i>4.2.</i> Lessons learned from field missions, and trainings fed into lessons learned review.</p>	<p>Q 2 Q 2</p> <p>Q 3-4</p>
<p>5. Effective communication strategy to provide targeted information and updates to key stakeholders (i.e. NATF members, partners, donors) and wider community, on work of the NATF.</p>	<p><i>5.1.</i> Develop NATF communications strategy</p> <p><i>5.2.</i> Communication products, tools and guidance are made available. Timely posting of IASC coordinated assessment outputs.</p> <p><i>5..3.</i> NATF newsletter disseminated regularly.</p>	<p><i>5.1.</i> NATF communications strategy presented to NATF for feedback and finalized.</p> <p><i>5.2.</i> Functioning platform live and populated with IASC coordinated assessments tools, guidance and assessment reports.</p> <p><i>5.3.</i> Monthly newsletter produced and disseminated. Quarterly update produced and disseminated.</p>	<p>Q 2-4</p> <p>Q 2-4</p>

6. Continued normative work on cross-sector assessments	6. Revising and Updating the Key Humanitarian Indicators 6.1. Key Humanitarian Indicators revised to reflect current best practice on indicator development 6.2. Indicators presented to HCT's CAP countries through CAP Guidance for inclusion in 2013 CAPs.	6.1. Revised list of Key Humanitarian Indicators completed. 6.2. CAP 2013 Guidance revised to include key Humanitarian Indicators.	Q 3
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Annex 1: IASC Capacity Development Approach on Coordinated Assessments

IASC Capacity Development Approach on Coordinated Assessments

A. INTRODUCTION

This strategy outlines how the IASC will build awareness of, and capacity to, implement a coordinated assessment approach in humanitarian contexts. It is based on lessons learned from recent training and field experience with coordinated assessments, including the work of ACAPs, the Emergency Capacity Building Project (ECB), OCHA, operational agencies and clusters in Philippines, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Haiti, among others.

The strategy identifies key stakeholders who require varying levels of knowledge about the IASC Needs Assessment Task Force's (NATF) guidance, including the IASC Operational Guidance on Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Contexts (OG), the Multi-cluster Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) and the Standard Operating Procedures for activating a MIRA in a Level 3 (L 3) Emergency. *Capacity Development (CD) includes a variety of training, simulation and knowledge management activities to increase awareness, develop skills and learn lessons on coordinated assessments.*

B. OVERALL OBJECTIVES AND OUTPUTS

The objectives and outputs of this strategy are closely linked to the following objectives of the revised NATF 2012 Work Plan:

Objective 2: Develop and maintain predictable surge capacity to implement IASC Coordinated assessments, including the MIRA, in large-scale emergencies.

- Approximately 50 experienced cluster , agency and partner staff familiar with MIRA and coordinated assessment process, tools and outputs
- Clusters/agencies/OCHA maintain active rosters of cluster and agency surge staff ready to deploy for L3 or large emergency assessments; and
- On-going cluster trainings to include components on final MIRA and coordinated process and tools (at least 4 clusters)

Objective 3: Roll-out of IASC Operational Guidance and MIRA in prioritized emergency-prone countries^b

- Training of Trainers conducted to build the skills of at least 15 persons capable of providing quality training on Operational Guidance and the MIRA.
- HCTs and government partners in 8 prioritized countries receive inductions on the Operational Guidance process and outputs, including the MIRA;
- Agency, partner, cluster staff able to undertake coordinated assessments, including the MIRA, and produce outputs in at least 4 emergency-prone countries through trainings; and
- At least 4 prioritized country teams have developed assessment plans for implementing a coordinated assessment approach

In sum, the main objectives for 2012 are to develop sufficient surge capacity and enable country staff in priority emergency-prone countries to work together as a team to implement a coordinated assessment approach.

C. TARGET AUDIENCE

The strategy seeks to ensure that all relevant stakeholders attain an appropriate level of knowledge and skills on coordinated assessments, by defining CD activity appropriate for each group. Two groups of stakeholders are targeted:

- **Decision-makers** who will request and use coordinated assessment outputs: Humanitarian Coordinators; national government counterparts; UN Country Team members; OCHA, UN agency and NGO Heads of Office/Country Directors; donor representatives; global and country-level Cluster Coordinators; and Cluster Lead agency non-technical staff.
- **Implementers of coordinated assessments**, including both country level and "global surge" level actors who will fill the four main functional roles:
(1) Assessment Coordinators, (2) Assessment Technical Experts, (3) Information Management (IM) officers and (4) sectoral assessment staff. These will include staff from a wide range of organizations (UN agencies, NGOs, government partners).

D. CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

^b Global Focus model will be used as a reference to determine countries.

A range of capacity development activities is required, including training workshops at different levels (from short orientation sessions to full-scale technical trainings), simulations and lessons learning exercises. These activities and materials will be adapted to the specific audience and country situation. Training will encompass the following topics/learning objectives:

1. ***Awareness/Orientation targeted to decision-makers – 2-3 hours:*** The aim is to provide a broad understanding of the IASC Guidance (coordinated assessments and the MIRA) with a focus on process, responsibilities of different actors and links with decision-making. This will include: the Assessment Framework, SOPs for requesting and organizing the MIRA, what information can be expected in what timeframe, how the MIRA links CAP, flash appeal and CERF/CHF requests; and the importance of preparedness activities. Materials will be provided to global cluster cells for incorporation into their own cluster/agency specific trainings and guidance. .
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2. ***Emergency Inter-agency Assessment Team members targeted to implementers– 3-5 days:*** The individuals designated by their agencies to participate in interagency assessments would participate in a joint workshop, although for selected sessions, different modules/exercises would be targeted to staff likely to undertake the different functions:
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 - 2.1. ***Coordination*** Aimed at Assessment Coordinators, this will review the roles/responsibilities of the coordinator/coordinating agency vis-à-vis other actors, including in establishing an Assessment and Information Management (AIM) working group, collating/supporting SDA and producing the PSD, providing administrative and logistical support, facilitating the final inter-sectoral analysis, linking the assessment outputs to the other tools (e.g. Humanitarian Dashboard). It will also familiarize potential coordinators with the tools used in the MIRA (e.g. SDA, purposive sampling, and conducting community discussions).
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 - 2.2. ***Assessment team members:*** This is for experienced assessors who will be tasked with ensuring the overall technical quality of the assessment. This group needs to fully understand the Coordinated Assessments and MIRA Frameworks, the Investigation Form and its five modules to ensure they can customize the form and select/adapt the most appropriate modules, supervise the primary data collection and analysis activities; analyse the data.
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 - 2.3. ***Information management:*** Specific training modules or sessions may be required to clarify how existing IIM systems or databases need to be adapted for use with the MIRA, and how information from existing datasets (e.g. Common Operational Datasets) is incorporated.
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Trainings and inductions have already been carried out in a number of contexts. ACAPS has provided training on the MIRA to UNDAC members whereas OCHA is providing training and awareness-raising for its staff and for decision-makers. Thus, a substantial amount of training material is already available that will be further adapted for different audiences.

Lessons-learned and feedback from all trainings, based on standard evaluation forms, will be provided to the NATF to ensure that guidance and tools are updated at the end of 2012, including capacity development materials.

RESPONSIBILITY/GOVERNANCE

All members of the IASC have responsibility for ensuring that their staff are appropriately trained in coordinated assessments, and that the staff proposed for the different types of training have the required profile, technical skills and responsibilities. In addition, these capacity development activities should be configured into on-going cluster workplans (including cluster training and preparedness).

PRINCIPLES

Key principles guiding this strategy are:

- All materials and activities will be based on practice rather than theory, to ensure coordinated assessment practitioners have a good understanding of the key concepts and methods proposed by the NATF;
- The technical training on coordinated assessments is configured for staff with some assessment experience and will be focused on disseminating information about these new tools/guidance rather than teaching basic assessment skills;
- The IASC training will complement agency/cluster specific training so that practitioners will have different opportunities to engage in the NATF's outputs; and Trainers should be well acquainted with the IASC material (and preferably have participated in a coordinated assessment) and should offer the training as a means of disseminating the IASC guidance and tools.