

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE
WORKING GROUP

IASC Subsidiary Bodies

Report on Needs Assessment Task Force (NATF)

Activities in 2011

[13 January 2011]

I Report on Activities Undertaken in 2011

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 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).

During 2011 effort was dedicated to consolidating the views of UN Agencies, NGOs, donors and academia on these normative products and bringing them closer to the primary end users. In support of this, the tools and guidance were tested to various degrees in different humanitarian crises, and lessons learned used to inform revisions which were subsequently endorsed for application in the field by the IASC Working Group in November 2011. Field-testing will inform final revision of the tools and documents which will be presented to the IASC Working Group at the end of 2012.

1.1 Achievements in line with the 2011 work plan

While the 2011 work plan heavily emphasized normative work and capacity-building, the reality of 2011 saw an added focus on application of the NATF *Operational Guidance* in various response and preparedness contexts.

Development of the MIRA, the approach to conducting joint, multi-cluster assessment during the earliest phases of an emergency to provide an initial vision of the situation as agreed upon by the humanitarian community, was a priority focus during 2011. The MIRA is based on lessons learned and experiences from UN Agencies, NGOs, donors and academia on needs assessments undertaken during humanitarian crises and reflects the consensus of the NATF on what constitutes best practice for coordinated assessments during the first 2 weeks of an emergency. The approach is articulated in the MIRA Manual (Provisional Version, October 2011).

The *IASC Operational Guidance for Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crises* serves as the overarching policy document which outlines the manner in which humanitarian actors

will work together in support of coordinated assessments throughout the lifespan of an emergency. This includes the MIRA (described above), and subsequent data collection and harmonization which is presented through a Humanitarian Dashboard, and linkages with recovery assessments. The Operational Guidance also lays out the necessary steps to ensure assessment preparedness and engagement with host governments, which feedback from field missions has emphasized as being of primary importance to ensuring the timely collection of quality data in emergency settings.

Implementation of this work was initiated through the deployment of assessment coordinators in Pakistan, Cote d'Ivoire, Libya, Sudan, Chad and Somalia; and preparedness missions which were undertaken in Mongolia, Papua New Guinea. Initial preparedness missions were also deployed to the Philippines and Afghanistan. Feedback and lessons learned from these deployments were used to inform initial modifications to the Operational Guidance and MIRA which were submitted to the 80th IASC Working Group in November 2011.

Linkages with key products in the humanitarian programme cycle were also reinforced, most notably the Consolidated Appeal (CAP). As part of the 2012 CAP cycle, Humanitarian Dashboards were produced for and included within every CAP. Similarly, efforts are underway to further articulate use of joint assessments and harmonized assessment data to inform CAP planning.

So as to ensure predictable capacity to provide coordination leadership on joint assessments and in harmonizing assessment information, OCHA and the NATF undertook capacity building programmes. The NATF, drawing upon the resources of ACAPS, hosted training on NATF guidance and products for CASPAR roster members in Chiang Mai, Thailand in March 2011. OCHA's Assessment and Classification in Emergencies (ACE) Project worked in partnership with OCHA's Information Services Section (ISS) to train 26 OCHA field staff, members of OCHA's Emergency Response Roster and Stand-by Partners on the NATF tools and guidance in Versoix, Switzerland in December 2011. The ECB project, supported by ACAPS, undertook assessment capacity building of national actors in Somalia as part of a coordinated assessment approach. And, linkages have been made with UNDAC and the International Humanitarian Partnership (IHP) to further extend the network of trained surge and support staff capacity.

1.2 Opportunities and constraints faced by the subsidiary body

While commitment and knowledge of the coordinated assessment approach are strong at the global level, the equivalent is not yet found at the field level. In the field, there remains a largely fragmented approach to assessments, insufficient information management capacity, limited implementation of established systems and protocols, and weak cluster-level data, which must be addressed in order to allow for further progress.

From the normative development and consensus-building at the headquarters level, the focus now shifts to establishing the necessary systems and foundations (preparedness) and building the necessary capacity at the field level to coordinate and implement the IASC vision on common assessments.

Where the ability to respond to an emergency exceeds the capacity of in-country actors to respond, the availability of predictable global surge capacity both from global clusters, OCHA, and stand-by-partners is of importance. Use of the MIRA and the Operational Guidance is a central focus and, thus, agreement on how OCHA and IASC organizations will ensure predictable capacity in an emergency to both implement the MIRA and also participate in cross-sectoral data consolidation, management and analysis remains a priority. Further, for those situations characterized as 'Level Phase III' mega-disasters, effort is placed on ensuring

appropriate and trained surge capacity is available through OCHA, global clusters and stand-by-partners. Efforts in 2012 will be focused on training cluster members at a global and country level to implement a coordinated assessment approach, with a particular emphasis on expanding collaboration with NGO partners.

II Status Update with Reference to Objectives Set in the 2011 Work Plan

Objectives	Activities	Focal point(s)	Timeframe	Status/Results
1. Finalize and disseminate provisional NATF Guidance and Tools (i.e. Operational Guidance, Dashboard and Indicators).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conduct orientations and use the NATF Guidance and Tools in a minimum of 4 countries, during preparedness and/or response. ▪ Revise NATF Guidance and Tools based on findings from consultations and use (2 inter-agency lessons learned exercises). ▪ Disseminate NATF Guidance and Tools at regional/national levels. ▪ Strengthen linkages between NATF Guidance and Tools and processes/products developed by other IASC Subsidiary Bodies, as relevant. 	NATF TG1 (Co-chaired by OCHA and WHO)	2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NATF package operationalized (to varying degrees dependant on contextual variables) in 5 response settings: Somalia, Pakistan, Libya, Cote d'Ivoire, and Sudan. ▪ NATF preparedness missions to Mongolia, Papua New Guinea and Philippines. ▪ Orientations on NATF Operational Guidance held in 5 countries: Thailand, Tunisia (Libya response), Cote d'Ivoire, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kenya (Somalia response). ▪ Operational Guidance revised based on initial feedback from ad hoc field application and provisionally endorsed by 80th IASC Working Group (November 2011).

2. Develop additional NATF tools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a tool and guidance for undertaking a preliminary scenario definition in the first 72 hours following a crisis. ▪ Develop a tool and methodology for undertaking a joint Multi-Cluster/Sector Rapid Assessment (MIRA) in the first two weeks following a crisis. ▪ Explore how innovative technologies and tools can be used for needs assessment work (hold a workshop on this topic). ▪ Harmonise the sectoral indicators with the work undertaken by the IASC Task Force on Information Management on Operational Datasets. ▪ Advise Reference Group on Meeting the Humanitarian Challenges in Urban Areas, on how to adapt NATF indicators for use in urban settings. 	NATF TG1 (Co-chaired by OCHA and WHO)	2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Developed and obtained provisional endorsement by the 80th IASC Working Group of the MIRA, the agreed approach to undertaking a joint assessment and situation analysis during the first 2 weeks of an emergency (this includes preliminary scenario definition). ▪ UN Habitat presented to NATF the Terms of Reference and plans for work on addressing humanitarian challenges in urban areas in 2012, and how it may be linked to the work of the NATF. ▪ Increased synergies with Operational Datasets were explored in 2011.
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<p>3. Develop additional capacity to undertake coordinated assessments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support, as required, the deployment of members from the CASPAR (NATF Coordinated Assessment Pool and Roster) on preparedness and/or response missions. Fine tune the modalities of CASPAR based on these experiences. ▪ Develop material for NATF training on Coordinated Assessments, based on the tools and guidance developed by the NATF. Adapt this training curriculum as needed, based on trainings and deployments of the CASPAR. ▪ In accordance with the NATF Capacity Building Strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Undertake 3 – 5 (tbd) NATF training on Coordinated Assessments, including at regional level, to further populate CASPAR. ▪ Develop short modules on needs assessment to insert into other trainings/material. ▪ Identify additional mechanisms and providers of NATF training on Coordinated Assessments in order to enhance the capacity of humanitarian actors to conduct coordinated and common assessments. 	<p>NATF TG2, Chaired by UNDP</p>	<p>2011</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The NATF supported the deployment of 9 individuals through the CASPAR, 6 OCH staff, 2 RedR and 1 MSB to Pakistan, Haiti, Afghanistan, Somalia, Cote d'Ivoire, Papua New Guinea, Mongolia, Chad, Libya, Cambodia and Philippines (inter-agency mission). ▪ 1 training for CASPAR members held in Chiang Mai. ▪ Initial training materials developed by ACAPS with input from NATF. ▪ NATF workshop held to identify components of revised capacity building strategy based on findings from initial deployments and training.
<p>4. Strengthen linkages with recovery-oriented assessments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop guidance to help harmonize emergency assessments with recovery-oriented assessments. ▪ Establish linkages between NATF tools (including indicators and Dashboard) and those used in the recovery phase. 	<p>NATF, with implementation by TG 1 and 2</p>	<p>2011</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ UNDP in the process of drafting an initial paper for discussion on the linkages between recovery-oriented assessments and the MIRA. ▪ Initial effort to transition Dashboard in early recovery context was attempted in Pakistan in early 2011.