INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE (IASC)
TASK FORCE ON INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Summary Note and Participants List

4 February 2009
Room S4/F3 (Palais des Nations), Geneva

1. The Chair, Brendan McDonald, OCHA's Field Information Services (FIS) Unit, New York, opened the meeting by thanking participants for their attendance and support for inter Agency/Cluster Information Management (IM).

2. The Chair outlined the agenda for the meeting, provided a background to Inter-Agency/Cluster IM efforts in 2007 and 2008. The substantive part of the meeting was a review of the IASC WG approved *Concept Note for the formation of the Task Force* and development of a process for implementing the required outputs. Prior to this discussion the TF briefly discussed the topic of needs assessments and the relationship to IM.

Needs Assessment and Information Management

3. Although the approved *Concept Note* outlined the relationship between IM and NA, some members of the TF expressed the need for greater clarity on the relationship and role of the TF in the NA process.[1] To this end, OCHA (Niels Scott, Chief, OCHA's Disaster and Vulnerability Policy Section) provided an update on the harmonisation of NA initiatives with reference to the assessments in Myanmar and Pakistan, as well as the initial findings from a recent workshop in Bangkok dealing with NA. Following the presentation participants shared their respective views on the possible linkage IASC TF on IM involvement in the issue of NA. The discussions highlighted that there was broad agreement of the need to move forward on the issue of NA, as well as an understanding that progress on NA required engagement of a variety of professional disciplines within the humanitarian sphere, including IM. OCHA indicated its intention to form a dedicated, informal group on Needs Assessments and to develop proposed TORs for the group. On the basis of the discussions it was agreed that the IASC TF on IM needed to systematically interact with the OCHA-led informal NA group to ensure IM systems adequately supported NA.

Action Points:

a. OCHA to share with the IASC TF on IM the draft TORs for the NA group within 10 working days.

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[1] In December 2008 the IASC WG endorsed the position that the conduct and design of needs assessments should primarily be the responsibility of the Clusters/Sectors and individual operational agencies. The technical expertise and knowledge in determining what the 'right question' should be asked in a need assessment, resides within each Clusters/Sector and operational agency. Notwithstanding this, the IASC WG recognized the potential of information management to improve the efficiency of needs assessments by improving the process by which individual agencies, clusters and the wider humanitarian community plan, collect, organize, use, control, store, disseminate, and dispose of information.

     b. IASC TF on IM to assign focal points to interact with the NA group: UNICEF and WHO [also representing WASH and Health Clusters].

     c. InterAction [IMAP] to share documentation on the "Survey Working Group"

Discussion - expected outputs of the Task Force

4. The TF discussed the expected outputs required of the TF and agreed on a process for their attaining them within an 18 month timeframe.

     i. Review of current Inter-Agency IM and implementation of the Operational Guidance Note on IM. The Chairman briefed on the forthcoming second cluster evaluation and stated that he had requested that IM be included in the evaluation in-line with the IASC WG endorsed *Concept Note*. This approach was seconded by the IASC Secretariat. Participants stressed that an all encompassing / full stakeholder view needed to be maintained in the review. It was also agreed that each Cluster/Sector should conduct a low-level internal review of how the *Operational Guidance Note on IM* was being applied within their respective Clusters and/or Agencies to help define the Terms of Reference for the Review. The TF members were asked to evaluate budget\costs within their given agencies to see what resources were available to support the review.

     Action Points:

       1. OCHA to make linkages with cluster evaluation team in order to incorporate IM into the cluster evaluation.

       2. A sub-group with the TF on IM sub-group is formed to steer the review process. Nominated TF members were: UNHCR, WFP, InterAction, UNICEF, UNDP and OCHA.

          a. Review to reflect all stakeholders (producers and users of information)

          b. Review to reflect experiences in recent emergencies (Myanmar and Gaza) in order to better synthesize lessons identified lending to future best practices

       3. TF members to review resources\both human and financial to support \ supplement the review.

       4. UNHCR volunteered to develop a template for structuring input on the application of the *Operational Guidance Note on IM* within each Cluster and/or Agency.

     ii. Update the Operational Guidance Note on IM. The TF agreed to defer discussion on this output until after the Review was completed.

iii. <u>Produce guidance and tools to implement the revised Operational Guidance on IM.</u> The TF agreed to defer discussion on this output until after the Review was completed.

iv. <u>Development of an online "toolkit" for field practitioners on how to implement the Operational Guidance Note on IM.</u> The TF was briefed that the intent of this output was to provide an online resource to provide a consolidation of available resources to support intra-Cluster/Sector and inter-Cluster/Sector programming, coordination, and decision-making. Members of TF noted that various IM toolkits were already used or being developed within their clusters\agencies and therefore agreed that it was important for each TF member to keep the TF informed of developments in this area. The Chair urged members to focus on IM tools only, rather than all tools available to the Clusters.

Action Points:

1. OCHA to make inventory of toolkits on the HRSU website before the next meeting.

2. Clusters are to add/delete from the inventory as appropriate.

3. UNHCR is to share a list complied toolkits with OCHA for distribution to the TF.

v. <u>Development of an improved inter-agency web-platform to support and manage the exchange of operational information in emergencies, taking into account relevant existing web platforms and avoid duplication of existing agency web based resources.</u> The TF agreed to defer discussion on this output until after the One Response presentation at the end of the meeting.

vi. <u>The design and delivery of inter-cluster information management training to Cluster/Sector members.</u> This output is to be developed as an integral component of the Cluster/Sector Lead Coordination Training (individual cluster and inter-cluster) to allow for a common standard of understanding and expertise and is to promote the 'Train the Trainer' approach. The Chair informed the TF of an OCHA initiative with UNITAR to develop Inter-Agency / Cluster IM Distance Learning and called on members of the TF to share information on relevant IM training initiatives before next meeting. UNHCR, who has a major IM distance learning module Operational Data Management Learning Programme (ODMLP), would also provide an update on this module to the TF. It was agreed that a TF sub-group should be established to undertake the substantive work required to achieve this output.

Action Points:

1. The agencies\clusters will look at different training initiatives and report back to the TF in the 2nd quarter of 2009.

2. UNHCR to share information on the Operational Data Management Learning Programme (ODMLP) with the IASC TF on IM.

3. IASC TF on IM to form a sub-group that will work on the training initiative. The composition of the group will be: OCHA, UNHCR, and IFRC.

vii. <u>As required update or create new information management solutions to meet unforeseen gaps arising from the inter-agency review of information management efforts.</u> The TF agreed to defer discussion on this output until after the Review was completed.

viii. <u>List of the minimum set of data and information that will be consistently shared between Cluster/Sectors and OCHA in emergencies</u>. OCHA stated that it had already committed, through the *Operational Guidance Note on IM,* to provide an inventory of relevant common Cluster/Sector data sets, including population data disaggregated by age and sex, in emergencies.[2] Building on this commitment, the Chair suggested that Clusters investigate within their Clusters to identify if they would be in a position to predictably provide minimum set of data or information in an emergency. UNICEF stated that this was beyond the remit of the TF and therefore the output should only focus on common datasets, not cluster specific datasets. WHO commented that there were risks of conflating too much into the discussion of minimum data sets and therefore the TF should prioritise the datasets of most relevance to the field, including P-codes.[3] The UNGIWG Secretariat also mentioned that a major component of the UN Spatial Data Infrastructure Project global initiative was to identify core datasets through the UNGIWG working group. The project is project on an 18 month rollout.

<u>Action Points:</u>

1. UNGIWG secretariat to inform the TF on internal works in progress and identify potential areas for collaboration.

2. The next TF meeting is to discuss minimum common datasets.

3. The Geographic Information Support Team is to be engaged accordingly.[4]

4. Prior to the next TF meeting, OCHA to circulate relevant documents regarding minimum common operational datasets and P-codes.

ix. <u>Specific guidance on information management and linkages to early recovery and transition is to be provided.</u> The TF agreed to defer discussion on this output until after the Review was completed.

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[2] **Minimum Common Operational Datasets.** Political/Administrative boundaries (Country boundaries, Admin level 1, Admin level 2, Admin level 3, Admin level 4, 1:250K): Populated places (with attributes including: latitude/longitude, alternative names, population figures, classification) Settlements 1:100K – 1:250K: Transportation network Roads; Railways 1:250K: Transportation infrastructure; Airports/Helipads Seaports, 1:250K: Hydrology; Rivers, Lakes, 1:250K: City maps, Scanned city maps, 1:10K..

[3] For more information on P-Codes see: http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/IMToolBox/web/08_DS.html

[4] GIST: https://gist.itos.uga.edu/

x. Framework developed for monitoring effectiveness of the Operational Guidance Note on IM. The TF agreed to defer discussion on this output until after the Review was completed.

Oneresponse.org web platform

5. OCHA provided the TF with an update on the development of an improved inter-agency web-platform – provisionally called *OneResponse* - to support and manage the exchange of operational information in emergencies. This initiative takes into account relevant existing web platforms and avoids duplication of existing agency web based resources.

6. Patrick Gordon [OCHA FIS] and Gisli Olafsson [GSA - Disaster Management - Technical Advisor, Microsoft Corporation] presented the OneResponse.info web platform. The demonstration walked through the setup of the web portal and explained its linkages with the cluster community and its planned rollout in future emergencies. In the subsequent discussions UNICEF [WASH] suggested clarification was required regarding the roles and responsibilities for the Clusters Leads for the website.

7. The projected rollout date for the site [i.e. 'ready for web'] is 20 March 2009. Prior to rolling out the site selection of a pilot country was necessary, as well as provision of technical training for relevant Cluster/Sector and Agency focal points.

Action Points:

a. Cluster members are to explore the web platform and provide feedback to Patrick Gordon [gordon2@un.org]:

    i. Web address: https://g2qa.origo.is
   ii. User Name: vm\ocha
  iii. Password: Qwerty123

b. OCHA to organise technical for the Clusters on the web platform.

c. Demonstration countries for rollout to be determined by OCHA, in consultation with Global Cluster/Sector Leads.

OCHA Reporting Initiatives

8. OCHA (Kirsten Mildren, OCHA's Reporting Unit) briefed the TF on OCHA efforts to standardize the organization's core information products and improve the quality of its reporting. Of relevance to the TF was the OCHA Situation Report, which was extensively reviewed through a study by UC Berkeley, which interviewed donors, global cluster leads and staff in the field and at headquarters. Based on its recommendations and further internal consultations a draft template, standard operating procedure and guidance was developed. OCHA Situation Report will now only be issued for acute emergencies and are formatted to cover cluster activities. During the 2nd quarter of 2009 the draft template and procedures governing the use of the new reporting process will be tested. Feedback from the global cluster leads and clusters at field level is welcomed. Additionally, a process needs be agreed and established for clusters to provide information to the Situation Report. WFP and the Logistics Cluster

commended the reporting initiative and requested to make sure that the clusters-sectors-agencies are to be included in future trainings. It was agreed that this warranted a dedicated workshop to discuss and agree on this process, preferably to be held in March or early April.

9. OCHA also briefed the TF on the development of a 'Cluster Reference Sheet'; an internal product designed to raise the level of understanding of clusters for OCHA staff. Internal OCHA feedback on the initial drafts [Health and WASH Clusters] indicated that they were a useful aid in defining cluster operations and terminology and would enable better reporting from OCHA.

10. WHO expressed a strong objection to the 'Health Cluster Reference Sheet' on the grounds that OCHA field staff should not report anything other than what the clusters are providing. WHO also indicated that there were many inaccuracies in the sheet that could cause confusion and misunderstandings at the field level. Although UNICEF welcomed any initiative by OCHA to improve its reporting of clusters; however they also had some concerns on the content in the Cluster Reference Sheets and felt it went beyond OCHA's role. Most of the TF stated that more clarity on the purpose of the cluster reference sheets was needed. OCHA noted the concerns of the TF and reiterated that the intent of the sheet was to assist OCHA staff better understand the role of each Cluster.

Action:

a. OCHA to circulate the draft OCHA Situation Report template to TF members.

b. A reporting workshop will be organized to develop the strategy and supporting processes on how Clusters/Sectors will provide information to OCHA Situation Reports.

c. OCHA to suspend further production of extant Cluster Reference Sheets and consult with Global Cluster Leads on development of alternative product.

Conclusion

11. The Chair proposed that the next meeting will take place in approximately one month in Geneva.

12. A draft work plan based upon inputs from this meeting to be drafted by OCHA prior to the next meeting.

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BMcDonald
Manager
Field Information Services Unit
OCHA

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List of Participants:

IASC Organization	Name	Cluster Sector	Title/Function
FAO	Mr. Oliver Perrais **dialing in**	Agricultural	Information Manager, Emergency Operations and Rehabilitations Division
IFRC	Mr. Niel Bauman **dialing in**	Emergency Shelter	IM Consultant
OCHA	Mr. Brendan McDonald		Manager, FIS
	Mr. Patrick Gordon		Information Management Officer
	Mr. Erik Kastlander		Information Management Officer
	Mr. Philip Chinnici		Information Management Officer
	Ms. Yukiko Yoshida		Humanitarian Affairs Officer, IASC
	Mr. Niels Scott		Senior Policiy officer
	Ms. Alexis Hoskins		Senior Advisor
	Ms. Caroline Teyssier	Emmergency Telecoms	Project management Officer, ITS
OHCHR	Ms. Li Fung	Protection	Human Right Officer
UNAIDS	Mr. Thobias Bergmann	Cross-cutting	Technical Officer Humanitarian Response
UNDP	Mr. Julio Serje	Early Recovery	Program analyst
UNHCR	Ms. Kimberly Roberson	Prot/CCCM/ES	Chief of Section, Field Info & coord Section
	Mr. Khassoum Diallo	Prot/CCCM/ES	Senior Statistician, Field Info & Coord Section
	Ms. Shelley Gornall **dialing in**	CCCM	Operations Data Management Specialist, FICS
	Ms. Elin Asgeirsdottir	Protection	Protection Adviser
	Mr. Peter Joshi		Associate Emergency Management Officer, FICS
UNICEF	Ms. Ziki Karpinska **dialing in**	Education	Conflict and Education Research Group, University of Oxford
	Ms. Heidi Peugeot		Emeergency officer
	Ms. Jean McCluskey	WASH	WES Emergencies Adviser, WASH Cluster Coordination
WFP	Ms. Marianne Ward	Logistics	Chief, operational Reportin
WHO	Mr. Nevio Zagaria	Health	Co-Chair of WG on Tools and Guidance
ICVA	Ms. Kate Halff	Health	Head of Internal Displacement Monitoring Center
InterAction	Mr. Joseph Donahue **dialing in**	InterAction	Chief Executive Officer, iMMAP
Guest [Microsoft]	Mar. Gisli Olafsson		Technical Advisor
	Ms. Claudia Toth		Communications Dir.