

Minutes of IASC Task Force Meeting, South Asia EQ
Tuesday, 3rd January 2006

1) Regular update from agencies on progress and concerns regarding the implementation of the “90 Day Winter Plan”

- **Update on recent weather deterioration (OCHA):** As reported in more detail in the last SitRep (no. 30), the heavy rains and snowfalls of the last few days had a serious impact on the conditions of the affected population, particularly of those below 5000 feet, and on the operations as such. In some places, the snow caused tents to collapse. Some camps were partially flooded. The weather conditions strongly impacted on air transport. Today, the weather is much better, yet, the temperature is dropping.
- **UNHCR:** The first phase of winterisation in the camps has been completed, meaning that additional plastic sheetings, blankets and mattresses have been distributed. The second phase is currently starting, which includes the distribution of kerosene stoves. Mass information campaigns are organized at the same time on how to properly use the stoves. Some NGOs like MSF have also already distributed kerosene stoves. In sum, a total of 365 planned and organized camps with a population of 176,000 people have been covered as far as the first phase is concerned. It is as of yet difficult to know more about the coverage in regards to the second phase.
- **UNICEF:** One of the main priorities are winter clothes. An estimated 1 million children are in need of such winter clothes. UNICEF is concerned about the lack of air transportation in particularly to provide NFIs to the affected areas.
- **WHO:** The deterioration of the weather conditions is affecting the spread of acute respiratory diseases. WHO, UNHCR and Islamic Relief are closely monitoring the situation in the IDP camps. The outbreak of water-borne diseases in Muzaffarabad has been brought under control. The cluster of hepatitis cases is under monitoring but it can deteriorate with environmental and weather conditions getting worse. It was highlighted once again that the need for appropriate shelter is crucial as this prevents a lot of the health problems to surface. In Muzaffarabad, about 30% of the primary health care activities are supported by NGOs and this is similar in other locations. More implementing partners are needed as an essential part of the primary health care system is supported by them.

2) Update on the possibility of NATO assets being left behind and on the further use of these assets (WFP)

- The two main NATO assets under discussion for possible extension in Pakistan were the French fuel farm and the 3 German helicopters. As for the French fuel farm, it is reportedly confirmed that an agreement was reached between the French authorities and the Pakistani Government to transfer ownership and management of the fuel farm to the Pakistani Government. The 3 German helicopters will reportedly remain until at least early February but they are not expected to remain very much longer. Helicopter fleet: With the 3 German helicopters (Chinooks), the total number of helicopters currently managed by UNHAS and flying is **25** (4 US Chinooks, 14 MI8, 2 MI26, and 2 Kamov helicopters). As of 8th January, 2 additional helicopters (MI8) will be contracted by WFP for UNHAS. Except for the helicopters that are expected to leave, e.g. the German ones, the UNHAS managed fleet is expected to remain in country until the end of the operation (currently: 31 March), provided that funds are available.
- As for the concern expressed by UNICEF on the availability of air transport for NFIs (particularly warm clothing), WFP reassured everyone that this is indeed considered as a top priority. However, one of the current bottlenecks in this regard is the rapidity of the packing of kits, which include various NFIs. These kits need to be made as quickly as possible as the helicopters stand ready to transport them.

3) Briefing on the pipeline tracking system for NFIs (WFP)

- A 2-track method has been applied over the last few weeks: Firstly, it consisted of the gathering of as much data as possible from NGOs and agencies on what they bring in. This was done through a mode of questionnaires and spreadsheets. And secondly, 2 staff from JLC have been closely working with WHO in order to take advantage and learn of the WHO- used tracking system. It is a special software (the Logistics Support System (LSS)/ Supply Management System (SuMa) designed by WHO for the use of everybody. The first report is expected to be received on 5 January.

4) DSS update

- There has been no major security incident and agencies are commended for their efforts to comply with the MOSS standards. Currently, there are 19 security officers in Pakistan. DSS has just executed their 4th rotation of security officers. By 15 February, 24 security officers are expected to be on the ground. Arrangements are currently being made for the deployment of security officers for a period of 3 to 4 months in order to provide better continuity. Discussions are ongoing with the Pakistani Government to provide drivers' training as well as survival training in the cold weather conditions.
- Two elements are causing **particular concern**: 1) the question of escorts in the NWFP. DSS is concerned about the language used by actors on the ground in the negotiations about the necessity or not of these escorts. It is a duty of the Government of Pakistan to provide the adequate security to the aid workers and the Government's decision is made on the basis of a threat that they have evaluated. Whether it is a real or a perceived threat does not make any difference and we need to respect the host Government's decision. INGOs are also recommended to have these escorts. In response to a question on what the threat actually is, DSS mentioned that the Government cannot be expected to provide the complete rationale of their decision but, generally speaking, the threat, aside from being environmental, is also based on criminality, extremism and sectarianism. DSS expressed a major concern about the fact that a UN Area Security Coordinator for Mansehra (from an agency) has negotiated a draft agreement with the local authorities on the 'non-provision of security'. In addition to being quite the opposite of the mandate to actually ensure that security is provided, the negotiation of this sort of agreement is the responsibility of the Designated Official. 2) The second element of concern is the recommendation to relocate the camp in Battagram. The recommendation from the security point of view is to relocate it, however it appears that as a result of the cluster meetings, it was decided not to follow this recommendation as it would take too much time from the actual operation. DSS is concerned that this decision was made on the basis of an insufficient analysis of the situation but, in the end, the Designated Official is the one accountable for the security of staff.
- Overall, DSS however pointed out that the operation is running reasonably well from the security point of view. Now, it is time to consolidate the achievements on the ground: 1) to ensure that MOSS compliance is respected everywhere; 2) to identify any gaps in the system.

Follow-up Action point: DSS is kindly requested to provide the accurate information in writing on the above-mentioned concerns to all members of the IASC TF.

5) AOB

- **Real-time evaluation of the cluster process (OCHA):** The questionnaire on the approach for the RTE was sent to the Evaluation Officer of the various agencies but not much feedback has been received as of yet. The mission is meant to be relatively small and practically oriented. Apart from having agencies participate, it was also suggested to have a participant from the SPHERE project. As for the timeline, the mission should last for about one to two weeks at the end of January/ beginning of February.

Follow-up Action point: Questionnaire to be sent out also to all members of the IASC TF with the request to provide feedback as soon as possible on the following issues:

- 1) On the overall approach of the mission.
- 2) On participation by agencies (who wants to participate?) and on who should take the lead of the mission. Agencies are kindly requested to take into consideration that the participants should be of mixed background, i.e. participants with field experience, HQ experience and also evaluation experience.
- 3) On some independent external participation.

- **Planning for post-Flash Appeal period:** It is not clear yet what will happen after the 6 months covered by the Flash Appeal. This question should receive more clarity after the visit of the Special Envoy, former President Bush, to the region mid/ end January (possibly from 15 to 17 January) as the terms of reference of the Special Envoy are precisely to mobilize the international community's assistance.

NEXT IASC TF MEETING: Monday, 9th January 2006, 15:30 GVA time