

**INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE  
PRINCIPALS MEETING**

**9 December 2004**

**9.30 – 13.00 hrs**

**Room I, Palais des Nations, Geneva**

**A Briefing Note on  
Nutrition and Mortality Baseline Data in Emergencies and Crises**

**Circulated: 7 December 2004**

**The purpose of this Note** is to inform the Principals about a meeting and request support for the continued process as outlined in this note.

An informal meeting was held with senior managers from agencies with nutrition program to 1/ review matters arising from recent nutritional and mortality surveys in Darfur and to discuss concrete action for next round of surveys as regards Darfur and 2/ to explore the interest in and support for an effort to establish a systems wide effort to put mechanisms in place to ensure that we acquire the required baseline data for program management and measuring progress, at the initial stages of an emergency, and that these data are available to the entire community. The working process should make use of resources and methods available to the humanitarian response system.

**General points on Darfur discussion.**

Participants agreed that they should work together to support the establishment of a regular program of assessments in Darfur. These would be undertaken under the leadership of the Humanitarian Co-ordinator (HC) by the UN country team and partner humanitarian NGOs working together - if possible in close co-operation with local and national authorities. Existing nutrition and health co-ordination mechanisms would be utilized to agree a joint approach - utilizing the combined logistical and technical infrastructure currently at the disposal of the agencies, and adapting current best practice to take account of security and other constraints.

Given the obvious linkage between Darfur and Chad and the need to have data on both sides of the border to improve planning and coordination, it was agreed that mortality and nutrition surveys using similar methodologies and questions should occur on the Chad side of the border as well as within Darfur.

**Agreed conclusions for the general approach.**

1. In a specific crisis all humanitarian actors (UN, NGO, local and national authorities, donor entities, and civil society) need **reliable quantitative information on food and health security, nutritional status and mortality patterns (and rates)** obtained as early as possible, and updated in a systematic fashion at regular intervals. The emphasis in such early assessments should be on securing as comprehensive coverage of the affected population as possible, though shortages of personnel, together with logistic, security and other challenges may limit the extent to which this is possible in practice.

2. Ideally all humanitarian actors would have the opportunity of participating in the conduct of assessments. The process would be **as inclusive as possible**.

3. Humanitarian actors working in the specific crisis situation would be encouraged to meet in order to agree, then revise (as necessary) **the strategy for assessments** - why they are being done (ensuring that the focus is primarily programmatic), what information is being obtained, from whom, where and when, by whom, how and with what frequency, and which methods are to be used for analysis, interpretation, sharing with interested parties within the at risk population, presentation, and - if appropriate - dissemination.

4. The humanitarian actors would **need to use a service** that (a) interprets the nutrition and health information obtained through surveys and surveillance, and (b) establishes the implications of this information for those implementing humanitarian responses.

5. **Protocols** would be established at the local and national level for the validation and public dissemination of nutrition and health information about at risk populations so that (a) information, once disseminated, is owned collectively by the UN country team together with (ideally) organizations of the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, NGOs and the national authorities, and (b) the mode of dissemination empowers those working at the heart of the crisis, enabling them to be more effective.

6. **Securing resources:** the humanitarian actors involved in a particular crisis would set up a system through which the prompt and regular collection of reliable food, nutrition, health and mortality data, and the production of information on a continuing basis, is made possible through resources being made available as and when needed (so that lack of funds cannot be used as an excuse for delayed action). It is likely that within IASC and related mechanisms, these same actors will advocate strongly for evidence-based humanitarian responses, and will call for dedicated funding of assessments.

**Action Points:**

UN Country Team will implement regular nutritional surveillance and mortality rate assessments among affected populations in Darfur as a critical contribution to the management of the humanitarian response program.

The principal sources of technical advice to the Humanitarian Co-ordinator will be WFP (food security), UNICEF and WHO (nutritional surveillance) and WHO (health security and mortality).

These technical advisory agencies will establish a service to provide continuous interpretation of available health, nutrition and mortality data on the Darfur crisis in conjunction with the Humanitarian co-ordinator and the stakeholders (UN, NGO and local and national Government).

If IASC principals agree standard procedures for information collection and interpretation during humanitarian crises should be developed under the auspices of the IASC.

Technical staff from concerned UN system and NGO humanitarian agencies – will take the lead in developing this proposal during early 2005.

It was proposed and agreed that a larger meeting which includes UN, NGOs and other actors with expertise in the sector or nutrition and health should be held in late January 2005 subject to practical arrangements.

That further, use be made of planned international meetings on nutrition in the first half of 2005, to create a collaborative resource for the better coordination of and use of expertise.

Proposals would be reviewed by the IASC working group and then submitted to the IASC Plenary.