IASC Sub-Working Group on Preparedness
Geneva, 29 June 2011
Minutes of the meeting

Co-chairs: WFP and UNICEF.
Participating agencies: CADRI, FAO, ISDR, OCHA, OHCHR, UNDP, UNHCR, UNSIC, WHO, WMO, WB/GFDRR, IOM, IFRC, ICRC, CARE International, OXFAM, World Vision International, IASC Secretariat.

I. Publication on success stories in inter-agency preparedness and debriefing on the SWG side-event at the Global Platform on DRR (presentation by WFP)

- The first publication of the SWG, *Preparedness: Saves Time, Money and Lives*, was launched at a special side event of the Global Platform on DRR in May, with speakers from Ghana and Tajikistan as well as resource persons from Nepal Red Cross Society, Emergency Capacity Building project. The publication collects selected best practices in inter-agency preparedness and calls for a better coordinated comprehensive approach, especially vis-à-vis national and local actors. The publication was requested by the IASC Working Group back in July 2010 to document good practices with regional networks. A discussion on how the SWG could better capture good preparedness practices in a systematic way would be welcomed in due course.
- When compared to the 2009 Global Platform, the 2011 edition had an improved focus on preparedness, including a high-level round-table where multi-hazard preparedness and national capacities were discussed alongside the lessons of pandemic preparedness. The Global Platform underscored that disaster preparedness is a crucial part of holistic disaster risk reduction and agencies should promote and follow this approach. However, the inclusion of conflict/emergency aspects of preparedness inside the DRR context was seen problematic.

II. Five-country initiative in strengthening national preparedness (presentation by UNICEF and UNDP/BCPR)

- The original request to develop the five country initiative (hereinafter Initiative) was made by IASC Working Group meeting of July 2010 and was further elaborated by the revised IASC Principals paper on Building National Capacity for Preparedness which calls agencies to strengthen global inter-agency coordination to provide better support to country efforts for preparedness capacity development, support country leadership and activities, establish flexible and inclusive inter-agency coordination methods at the country level, as well as advocate for preparedness funding.
- In Ghana, the Five-Country Initiative started through the Strategic Partnership for Preparedness (SPP) with Regional actors in April 2010 under the lead of OCHA, has so far supported a simulation to test government and inter-agency preparedness, initiated work through CADRI and national/regional actors to develop an action plan on DRR with a pillar on developing national capacities for preparedness that also

builds on the results of said simulation and preceding capacity assessment. There is currently no dedicated country-based technical team to develop the action plan and support the RC, but UNDP will look for a possible secondment of a National Disaster Risk Advisor.

- Nepal has requested support for the review of planning assumptions for a major earthquake in Kathmandu as well as formulation and testing of national contingency plan. To date, the Initiative has harnessed the support of the Global Risk Identification Programme (GRIP) in developing a proposal for reviewing planning assumptions for country team endorsement, and started seeking a secondment to support the formulation of the national contingency plan. The Initiative will also request the RC to establish a special in-country technical team as the counterpart of the SWG.

- In Uganda, support is needed to test government and inter-agency preparedness plans and to provide a National Disaster Risk Advisor to join the development of a plan of action to support the recently approved DRR policy, as well as strengthen assessment preparedness and funding for preparedness. The NDRA deployment and request for Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS) support are currently in the pipeline. A country-level technical team was recently established under WFP leadership.

- Haiti was recently identified by the IASC Principals as the fourth country of engagement. Discussions are currently under way with OCHA members of the HCT to support a government emergency simulation in July while official contact engagement with the HC is pending.

- The structure of the Initiative needs to be strengthened at HQ, regional and national level by establishing teams and operational modalities (e.g. fortnightly conference calls, other meetings to structure engagement and address technical challenges). Similarly, strengthened communication around the Initiative and what it can achieve and deliver is needed, also to manage expectations (especially vis-à-vis the IASC Principals, who would be inclined to already propose additional five countries in 2012).

- The SWG also needs to begin drawing lessons from the initial engagement and start developing a more structured framework and process for developing national capacities in emergency preparedness. As a result of the pilot the SWG could develop new inter-agency tools such as the third generation simulation package which tests both government and inter-agency preparedness, produce inter-agency guidance for building national and local capacities, develop training modules for RC/HCs, or strengthen agencies' involvement in CADRI to strengthen its capacity to address capacity development.

Action Points
➢ Interested SWG members to form a working group to establish strengthened coordination structure, and develop and implement a six-month engagement plan
➢ SWG to develop an Initiative information brochure to facilitate external communication.

III. Inter-agency capacity to support emergency simulations and trainings (presentation by UNICEF and UNSIC)

- In the past two years, humanitarian preparedness efforts have focused increasingly on developing the emergency preparedness of national governments, with the use of so-called 'third generation' simulations (after agency- specific and inter-agency exercises, respectively for first and second generation). Recent examples include Ghana (with a strong link to the SWG five-country initiative) amongst others. So far government feedback has been positive and appreciative. The drive is now increasingly towards the third generation approach, including a need to revise the IAES manual and adjust all material to reflect government needs.
- Over last six years, over 70 people have entered the IAES roster and could help conduct a training of trainers. Half of the 22 graduates of the late-2010 IAES Training have already facilitated an inter-agency simulation. The next training will tentative take place in October and will utilize previous graduates.
- The upcoming preparedness tracker would serve as repository for all IAES material. IASC has already collaborated with ECB by having two consultations to ascertain how respective rosters, trainings and material could be shared.

Action Points:
➢ Proceed with the development of third generation emergency simulation approach.

IV. Preparedness tracker/repository (presentation by UNSIC)

- UNSIC presented the pandemic preparedness tracker (hereinafter PIC tracker) to highlight its potential and suitability as the SWG preparedness tracker. The PIC tracker allows activities and functions such as monitoring and tracking of UN and national readiness (minimum preparedness actions, self-assessments), repository of preparedness information (guidance resources, plans, communications material), calendar of events (both forward-looking and information archive), incidence tracking and reporting. Similarly, the SWG preparedness tracker should act as repository of SWG material such as IACP Guidelines and contingency plans, IAES material as well as other guidance material as a starting point.
- The architecture of the PIC tracker is open source and available for free for developing the SWG preparedness tracker. The PIC tracker architecture also allows better technical flexibility than HEWSweb, the latter which was selected as the most suitable site for preparedness repository at March meeting of the SWG. It was confirmed that the HEWSweb server cannot currently host the preparedness tracker due to technical limitations, but close linkages should be ensured between HEWSweb and SWG tracker.
- OCHA indicated its interest to take over the management and hosting of the current PIC tracker which it is currently hosting and adapt this into the SWG preparedness tracker (pending approval of OCHA senior management).

Action points:
➢ OCHA to lead the development of the preparedness tracker based on the PIC tracker architecture and present the prototype version at the next SWG meeting.

- OCHA, UNICEF, WFP and UNSIC to form the development group and as a first step agree on the objectives and modalities of the preparedness tracker.

V. Thematic discussion on prioritizing investments in preparedness through country classification: presentation of OCHA Global Focus Model and discussion on agency methodologies (presentation by OCHA)

- OCHA's Global Focus Model was developed to help the organization's HQ and Regional Offices identify priority countries. GFM is used in annual work/cost-planning and reviewing any gaps in field coverage. It also provides a baseline of country knowledge and assists advocacy efforts and allocation of CERF funding.
- The purpose of GFM indicates which countries are relatively more at risk from an emergency, have relatively poor capacity to meet the needs of affected populations and where those effects are likely to be severe due to vulnerability. The model comprises sixteen indicators in three categories, of which all but one are based on global quantitative data. The categories reflect normal risk terminology, measuring hazards, vulnerability and capacity. Indicators and sub-indicators within each category capture broad factors related to underlying risk, such as susceptibility to sudden-onset disasters, conflict displacement, epidemics. A fourth additional category is specific to humanitarian issues, and seeks to reflect issues that would affect OCHA's involvement in a country. Indicators under this category measure, inter alia, the presence of the cluster approach, use of international appeals (including CERF), the presence of a Humanitarian Coordinator and cluster lead agencies. The combination of the indicators produce the focus rating for each country, helping to prioritize allocation of resources and preparedness investments.
- UNICEF has developed a similar tool which leads to a similar classification and is close in the countries that are scored. The tool is used to guide UNICEF Regional Offices to develop targeted capacity development programmes for priority countries. WVI reported using a similar internal tool in strategic decision-making.

VI. Update on HEWS and Early Warning Early Action Report (presentation by WFP)

- The revised HEWS site has now been operational for 100 day and reaches 700 visits per day (up 169% from 2010). It is currently used most actively by actors based in the US, UK and Australia but also in countries such as China and the Philippines. In terms of next steps by end of 2011, HEWS will have country pages using of country-based information sources, an integrated seasonal hazards calendar, a section on drought, a daily briefing page and various improvements that will help the SWG and scientific community to inputs early warning information.
- Beta testing of HEWS II will continue until mid-July, preceded by user trainings and regular focal point discussions. Funding is now being sought for 2012. It was reminded that HEWS II continues to have a low profile as it is currently at a volatile, evolving phase where the final format, objective and outcome are still work in progress.

- The review meeting of 28 June discussed the Early Warning Early Action Report, its usefulness, format, process and audience, concluding by acknowledging the importance of the Report, but also stated that it is far from optimal in its current format and would require an overhaul. Highlighted concerns included the time-consuming nature of the process, insufficient translation of early warning into early action, limited use to country offices, small returns compared to investments and uncertainty over the ultimate audience. In terms of users, the Report influences CERF allocations to under-funded emergencies, both the current and preceding ERCs and NGOs appreciate the Report and it has traditionally been discussed and followed up by the Emergency Directors Meetings. The meeting recommended reviewing the Report and developing Terms of Reference for the consultant who will undertake the task that will include as crucial element interviews of key senior decision-makers and their needs and recommendations. Discontinuation of the report as such should also be an option. WFP and OCHA were assigned to co-lead the review process. So far WFP and UNICEF have announced readiness to fund the process and other SWG member agencies were encouraged to follow suit. Review results and recommendations should be presented at the next SWG meeting if possible schedule-wise.

Action Points:
➢ WFP and OCHA to develop the ToR, guide the consultancy and facilitate the review process.

VII. Any Other Business

No other business was raised for discussion.