

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE  
IASC WEEKLY MEETING

**Summary Note**

21 November 2007  
Geneva

**I Debriefing on the UNDP Contingency Planning Mission to Darfur  
in September-October 2007**

Mr. Pontus Ohrstedt (UNDP, Programme Specialist - Arab States, Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery) briefed participants on the key findings of the UNDP Contingency Planning Mission to Darfur, fielded between 26 September and 11 October 2007. The mission had the purpose of reviewing how UNDP Sudan can best fulfil its role in the current context by (i) assessing its current programme and operations and (ii) reviewing current management and operational capacity in Darfur with the aim of assisting in developing an appropriate programme strategy with a view to facilitate an eventual transition from relief to recovery.

In face of the ongoing peace-talks in Sirte and the planned deployment of UNAMID peace-keeping forces, a scenario analysis was conducted, mapping four different scenarios: (i) formal peace agreement and continued insecurity in various locations, but with opportunities for early recovery in less affected communities; (ii) partial peace and growing stability, resulting in increasing numbers of 'oases of stability'; (iii) 'outbreak of peace' among the majority of Darfur's stakeholders, but with lingering localised conflicts and stability; and (iv) collapse of current peace efforts and deteriorating security as a result of fragmentation of armed groups and rise of war-lordism. It is seen as important that a response strategy allow for reacting to any of these scenarios, but since scenarios (iii) and (iv) are seen as less likely, contingency planning efforts are focusing on preparing for scenarios 1 and 2.

These programming efforts should be based on partnership (i.e. joint programming) and include an expansion of rule of law and justice programmes, giving support to alternative and sustainable livelihoods, capacity building on natural resource management (with focus on the sectors land and water), an expansion of programmes targeted especially at reaching rural communities while ensuring a balance between responses for persons in IDP camps and marginalized population groups (especially Arab nomad communities), and maintaining a dialogue that will allow for conflict mitigation and management at multiple layers, i.e. local, national and regional. All contingency planning efforts need to be accompanied by strengthening the operational and institutional capacity and increasing UNDP's institutional presence and representation in Darfur by establishing a regional hub and two satellite offices.

On what was identified as a common misunderstanding about early recovery, it was pointed out that while recovery measures are undertaken *after* the humanitarian phase, *early* recovery should start at an earlier stage in the process and hence complement humanitarian interventions while also laying the basis for longer-term measures. This also implies that recovery interventions can be undertaken even in situations of displacement as long as they do not create structural incentives for the displaced persons to stay in the camps indefinitely or promote instances of non-voluntary and dignified returns. On the issue of forced returns, it was

mentioned that voluntary returns of a temporary nature are taking place, causing additional flows between camps and rural areas. Given this complexity of displacement and return flows, careful assessments of the local context are required prior to any humanitarian or early recovery interventions in rural areas in order not to facilitate forced returns or generate future conflicts between remaining and returning populations.

## **II Update on the Work of the Sub-Working Group on Preparedness and Contingency Planning**

Mr. Everett Ressler (UNICEF-EMOPS, Co-chair of the Sub-working Group on Preparedness and Contingency Planning) provided an update on the work of the IASC Sub-Working Group on Preparedness and Contingency Planning. On the background Mr. Ressler recalled that the SWG was set up to strengthen and mainstream inter-agency contingency planning processes and approaches across the UN system. One of the outcomes of the SWG's meetings is the quarterly Early Warning/Early Action Report, which results from an inter-agency effort to review the humanitarian situations in the world and to create links between the early warning systems of separate agencies. Covering some 70 countries in which new crises may arise or where changes are anticipated, the report has the purpose of serving as an early warning tool and to foster preparedness and early emergency response. The latest version of the report covering the period from October 2007 to February 2008 can be downloaded from [http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/content/documents/subsidi/swg\\_preparedness/IASC\\_EW-EA\\_Final\\_Report\\_Oct\\_-\\_Feb\\_2008.pdf](http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/content/documents/subsidi/swg_preparedness/IASC_EW-EA_Final_Report_Oct_-_Feb_2008.pdf)

Ms. Megan Gilgan (UNICEF) briefed participants on the 'IASC Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Guidelines for Humanitarian Assistance', which have been endorsed by the 69<sup>th</sup> IASC Working Group on 5 November 2007. The revision of the guidelines, which results from a participatory approach to ensure that all agencies actions were included, was triggered by the humanitarian reform process on the one hand and a need to include good practice and lessons learned that had accumulated since the roll-out of the first version of the guidelines in 2001 on the other. The guidelines are intended to be applicable to emergency situations in "clusterised" and "non-clusterised" countries and indicate a process by which agencies can agree on a common systematic approach when preparing for emergencies. The main issues addressed are complementarities of different levels of planning and cooperation of humanitarian country teams in order to create overarching frameworks that will guide preparedness and humanitarian response. Currently, the SWG is developing a strategy for dissemination and distribution of the guidelines and – as requested by the 69<sup>th</sup> IASC Working Group – the SWG will focus its work during the first quarter of 2008 on developing (i) training modules that can be integrated into existing training initiatives (such as those for RCs/HCs and country teams to facilitate the integration of the normative guidance provided by the guidelines in their preparedness and contingency planning), and (ii) an online toolkit including templates that will be easy to use and more quickly adaptable than the guidelines whenever new developments may make it necessary.

## **III Bangladesh - Briefing on the Current Humanitarian Situation Following the CIDR Cyclone**

Mr. Jean Verheyden (OCHA-GCMS) provided participants with an update on the current humanitarian situation in Bangladesh following the category IV cyclone 'Sidr' that hit the country on the evening of 15 November 2007. The Government of Bangladesh estimates that the current death toll is at 2,408 people and that more than one million families or four million

persons have been affected by the cyclone. These figures are expected to increase significantly as more information becomes available from on-going needs assessments.

Whereas the current focus of the relief assistance is on food, clean water supply, diarrhea treatment, and shelter, the longer-term perspective requires support in terms of rehabilitation of livelihoods, infrastructure, health and educational services, and increased shelter capacity.

On the initial response, Mr. Verheyden noted that the Government's early warning and preparedness measures, which were activated prior to the cyclone and included the evacuation of approximately 3.2 million people, greatly reduced the humanitarian impact of the disaster. Good preparedness measures were also provided by the many NGOs on the ground. Given these preparedness measures, assessments based on the current search and rescue phase suggest that the scope of the disaster is not as big as initially feared. These assessments, including joint Government, UN and Red Crescent assessments, are ongoing, and results are expected to arrive Wednesday 28 November 2007.

As its main coordination body, the Government has established the Disaster Emergency and Response Group (DERG), which apart from the Government include UN agencies, Red Crescent, INGOs and local NGOs, just as WFP is supporting the DERG. Clusters are established for food (WFP), shelter (IFRC), health (WHO), WASH (UNICEF), and early recovery (UNDP), but these have not yet been formally activated.

On the potential flash appeal, Mr. Verheyden explained that discussions are still ongoing. While the Government welcomes international assistance, no agreement has been reached on the issuance of a flash appeal, hence a "Cyclone Response Plan" or a "National Action Plan" with some mention of funding requirements are being considered instead.

On the issue of humanitarian financing, CERF grants amounting to USD 8.75 million have been allocated for project partners in Dhaka, including NGOs, for nutrition, water, sanitation, food, agriculture, and non food items, and further requests are in the pipeline for an additional USD 5.6 million for shelter and health. Moreover, the IFRC Appeal, which was issued on 16 November 2007, has been well supported so far, and altogether there is a picture of strong donor support, through bilateral donations, the Red Cross, and the UN, amounting to USD 50 million.

As regards civil-military coordination, the Bangladesh Ministry of Defense is supporting the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management, just as two US ships are scheduled to arrive on 23 and 26 November respectively for logistical support and each will stay for 3 days.

Finally, Mr. Verheyden welcomed all partners to exchange views on the best way forward and to provide information on needs assessments, views on launching a public appeal, and response capacities at [verheyden@un.org](mailto:verheyden@un.org).

#### **IV AOB**

Ms. Louise Johannsen (IASC Secretariat) kindly reminded participants to contribute to the improvement of the IASC Weekly Meeting by filling in the survey before the deadline on Friday, 23 November 2007.

Moreover, Ms. Ute Kollies reminded participants of the meeting with the EU Special Representative on Sudan Thursday, 22 November 2003.

## Participants

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