**NATF MIRA Capacity Development Strategy**

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**INTRODUCTION**

This strategy outlines how the IASC Needs Assessment Task Force’s (NATF) will build awareness of, and capacity to, implement a coordinated assessment approach in humanitarian contexts. It is based on lessons learned from recent training or field experience with coordinated assessments, including the work of ACAPs, the Emergency Capacity Building Project (ECB), OCHA, operational agencies and clusters in Philippines, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Haiti, among others.

The strategy identifies key stakeholders who require varying levels of knowledge about the NATF’s main outputs, including the IASC Operational Guidance on Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Contexts (OG), the Multi-cluster Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) and the Standard Operating Procedures for activating a MIRA in a Level 3 (L 3) Emergency. Capacity Development (CD) includes a variety of training, simulation and knowledge building activities to increase awareness, develop required skills and learn lessons on coordinated assessments.

**BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

The NATF was established in July 2007 with a mandate to improve coordination of assessments, in particular cross-sectoral assessments, to provide a concise and robust understanding of emergency needs as a crisis unfolds. Subsequently, the IASC Transformative Agenda adopted in December 2011 called for a strengthened role for coordinated needs assessment to underpin a more systematic approach to developing evidence-based, accountable strategic plans at the initial stage of a humanitarian response. The adoption of this Transformative Agenda required a reprioritization of the NATF’s 2012 workplan, with the first priority to ensure that IASC members are ready to undertake initial assessments in the event of an L3 emergency. These reform priorities are therefore reflected in this CD strategy, which in 2012 focuses on Phases 0-3.

Two outputs of the NATF, mentioned above, are intended to support humanitarian actors in achieving these objectives. First, the IASC OG (Provisional Version dated 1 February 2011) provides the broad policy framework for coordinating assessments over five phases, ranging from preparedness (Phase 0) to early recovery (Phase 4). It outlines how humanitarian actors have collectively agreed to work together in coordinating assessments throughout the life of an emergency. The preparedness phase should include an appraisal of the capacity of agencies, sectors and government partners to conduct coordinated assessments, and identification of related capacity development needs. Second, the MIRA (March 2012 pilot version) is a joint assessment method designed for use in the first two weeks of an emergency. The aim is to produce a Preliminary Scenario Definition (PSD) within the first 72 hours (Phase 1) and a MIRA Report after the first two weeks (Phase 2) to support the development of the humanitarian strategic plan. It is a joint exercise based on secondary data analysis (SDA) and community level assessments (CLA), which is typically coordinated by OCHA in conjunction with cluster/sector representatives.

Field application of these products has been limited to date. The 80th IASC Working Group agreed to the roll out of the IASC OG and the MIRA throughout 2012, with a view to field-testing and improving these tools. This calls for a concerted effort to build awareness and skills for implementing the MIRA and Coordinated Assessments, as a core element of the IASC’s broader endeavour to improve the performance of humanitarian country teams.

The purpose of this strategy is to outline the “who, what, when, and how” of capacity development for conducting coordinated assessments using the IASC OG and the MIRA, based on the diverse roles, responsibilities and needs of the various stakeholders. It also identifies the overall objectives, expected outputs and associated costs of the Capacity Development activities, and who is primarily responsible for which tasks. This strategy is limited to inter-agency/cluster training specifically related to the outputs of the IASC OG and the MIRA. Although training on general assessment skills is required within the humanitarian system, the NATF’s remit on training is specifically limited to rolling out and familiarising stakeholders with these outputs.

**OVERALL OBJECTIVES AND OUTPUTS**

The overall objectives and outputs of this strategy are linked to the NATF’s 2012 Workplan objectives 2 and 3. They build upon the outputs of for Objective 1 in the Workplan, to field test and finalize the MIRA process, tools and outputs for an L3 emergency via training/simulation exercises).

Objective 2: Develop and maintain surge capacity on MIRA/NATF Operational Guidance implementation for both L3 and large emergencies.

Objective 3: Roll-out final MIRA and Operational Guidance in prioritized emergency-prone countries.

More specifically, the main sub-objectives for 2012 are to develop sufficient surge capacity and enable country staff to work together as a team to produce the two main MIRA outputs for Phases 1 and 2 – the PSD and MIRA report.

**TARGET AUDIENCE**

The strategy seeks to ensure that all relevant stakeholders attain an appropriate level of knowledge and skills on coordinated assessments, by defining the relationship of different stakeholders to the MIRA and what kind of CD activity is appropriate for each group. Two main groups of stakeholders are targeted for CD (see Annex I for Capacity Development matrix):

* *Decision-makers* who are the likely requesters and users of the coordinated assessment outputs: Humanitarian Coordinators; national government counterparts; UN Country Team members; UN and NGO Heads of Office/Country Directors; Global and Country-level Cluster Coordinators, and Cluster Lead agency non-technical staff.
* *Implementers* of the assessment, including both country level and "global surge" level actors who will fill the four main functional roles: (1) Assessment Coordinator, (2) Assessment Technical Expert, (3) Information Management (IM) Expert and (4) sectoral experts. These will include staff from a wide range of organizations (UN agencies, NGOs, government partners).

**PROPOSED CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES AND LEVELS**

A range of capacity development activities is required, including simulation and/or training workshops at different levels (from short orientation sessions to full-scale technical trainings) and lessons learning exercises. These activities and materials will need to be adapted to the specific audience and country.

Training/Simulation will encompass the following topics/learning objectives and expected duration:

* ***Awareness Raising – 1-2 hours*:**

This is for non-technical staff including donors, to provide a broad understanding of the MIRA and OG and to cover the process and outputs. It will demonstrate the value of the MIRA and OG and the MIRA’s links to strategic planning. These materials would be provided to clusters for incorporation into their own cluster/agency specific trainings and guidance (to complement existing guidance).

* ***Understanding Respective Roles in MIRA Process – 1-2 hours*:**

This is again for non-technical staff but geared toward decision-makers. The training will focus on process, responsibilities of different actors and links with decision-making. This would include the Assessment Framework, SOPs of requesting and organizing the MIRA, what information can be expected by what time, how the MIRA links to the Strategic Plan and CERF/FA or other fundraising tools, and the importance of preparedness activities.

* ***Technical Capacity to Conduct/Support MIRA – 3-5 days*:**

The entire MIRA team would participate in a joint simulation/training, although for selected sessions. Different modules/exercises would be targeted to staff likely to undertake the different functions:

* + *Coordination skills:* Aimed at Assessment Coordinators, this will review the roles/responsibilities of the coordinator/coordinating agency vis-à-vis other actors, including establishing an Assessment and Information Management (AIM) working group, collating/supporting SDA, providing administrative and logistical support, facilitating the final inter-sectoral analysis, linking the MIRA outputs to other tools (e.g. Humanitarian Dashboard). It will also familiarize potential coordinators with the tools used in the MIRA (e.g. SDA, purposive sampling, and conducting community level assessments).
  + *Assessment Technical Expert skills:* This is for experienced assessors/potential assessment technical experts and sectoral experts. This group needs to fully understand the MIRA Framework, the Investigation Form and its five modules to ensure they can customize the form and select/adapt the most appropriate modules, supervise the primary data collection and analysis activities and analyse the data.
  + *Information Management skills:* Geared toward Information Management Experts this will demonstrate how existing IM systems or databases can be adapted for use with the MIRA, and how information from existing datasets (e.g. Common Operational Datasets) is incorporated.

Following the targeted exercises, the MIRA team will participate in a simulation followed by an extensive debriefing.

Lessons-learned and feedback from these activities will be provided to the NATF to ensure that guidance and tools are updated at the end of 2012, and that capacity development materials are updated accordingly.

**RESPONSIBILITY/GOVERNANCE**

All members of the IASC have responsibility for ensuring that their staff are appropriately trained in coordinated assessments, and that staff proposed for the different types of simulation/training exercises have the required profile, technical skills and responsibilities and can be available for deployment. In addition, these capacity development activities should be configured into on-going cluster workplans (including cluster training and preparedness). However, the IASC NATF is responsible for ensuring that the training material and content is of a high quality and standard.

**PRINCIPLES**

Key principles guiding this strategy are that:

* All materials and activities should be based, to the extent possible, on practice rather than theory, to ensure that participants participate in a coordinated assessment approach with a good understanding of the key concepts and methods proposed by the NATF.
* The technical training on the MIRA is configured for staff with some assessment experience and should be focused on disseminating information about these new tools/guidance rather than teaching basic assessment skills.
* The IASC training should complement agency/cluster specific training so that practitioners will have different opportunities to engage in the NATF’s outputs.
* Trainers should be well acquainted with the IASC material and should offer the training as a means of disseminating the IASC guidance and tools (even when their personal views on the material may vary).

**ANNEX 1: Capacity Development Matrix**

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| **NATF Workplan Objectives 2 & 3** | | | | | | |
| **Type of Training/Simulation** | **Level** | **Specific Objective** | **Target Audience** | **Capacity Development Method** | **Focal Point** | **Indicative budget** |
| 1. Awareness Raising for decision-makers and users | Global / Regional | Understand: • overview of process & outputs • value of OG & MIRA tools  • MIRA links to strategic planning | Cluster Leads, regional actors, agencies, INGOs/NGOs, donors | Promotional video TBD  PPTs/Webinars (max 2 hours) tailored as required | OCHA  Global Cluster Cells | $200,000 (assuming this will cover cost of all participants and may be held in regions.) |
| Country | HC/RC; HCT; Government | NATF members | $40-50,000 per country |
| 2. Understanding respective roles in MIRA Process | Global / Regional | Clear understanding of:  • own/others' roles and responsibilities • activation SOPs | Global Cluster coordinators, Cluster Lead agencies, Agency Heads, regional actors | 1-2 hour PPT module - (delivery modality according to function - delivery through cluster training events, delivery by Webinar, on-line mini-course, etc) | OCHA NATF members | See Global / Regional cost above |
| Country | HC/RC; HCT; Government | Simulations and Preparedness missions using above modules | NATF members | See Country cost above |
| 3. Technical Capacity to conduct or support MIRA as part of the NATF Operational Guidance | Global / Regional | Fully understand MIRA approach and tools. Ability to work as a cross-sectoral team to conduct SDA, develop assessment plan, adapt Investigation Form and produce and disseminate outputs | Surge Members (CASPAR and Sectoral Experts) | Two 3-5 day Team training workshops | OCHA ACAPS | See Global / Regional cost above |
| Country | Cluster coordinators, assessment coordinators, technical experts and information management experts | Simulations and Preparedness missions using above modules | NATF members | See Country cost above |