

Sub-Working Group on Humanitarian Financing

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Endorsed by the IASC Working Group on date

Date established: July 2009

End of mandate: Ongoing

Background

During the first half of 2009, several discussions took place within inter-agency bodies on a possible reconfiguration of the humanitarian financing consultation architecture in order to more adequately address issues in this fast changing area. These discussions occurred within the IASC Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) Contact Group, and in parallel, within the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) Inter-Agency Group and the CERF Partnership Task Force, in the context of determining the future of these groups. The aim of these discussions was to review the issues that required sustained attention and to rationalize the number of bodies in order to have a more effective, coherent and linked system of fora.

The outcome of this process was a proposal presented to the 74th IASC Working Group in July 2009 that called for the establishment of a broad-based group to “address issues regarding humanitarian pooled funds and broader humanitarian financing issues/trends”. It was proposed that this Group could fulfil the roles of the IASC GHD Contact Group, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) Inter-Agency Group and the CERF Partnership Task Force.

Purpose

The IASC Sub-Working Group on Humanitarian Financing seeks to address issues regarding humanitarian pooled funds as well as other humanitarian financing issues and trends in order to increase the efficiency of humanitarian funding to enable more effective humanitarian response. The Group aims to address a range of topics at the policy and operational levels. It also seeks to provide a platform to discuss a broad array humanitarian financing issues. This includes needs analysis, funding flows, donor trends and policies, mechanisms and tools as well as global challenges.

Further, the Sub-Working Group aims to help fill a gap in ensuring representation and engagement of the broader humanitarian community in relevant discussions. This Sub-Working Group thereby serves as a forum for timely and consistent inter-agency dialogue, information-sharing, and joint action on priority issues. The Sub-Working Group takes on the responsibility for issues related to “Good Humanitarian Donorship” and liaises with the GHD donors.

The Sub-Working Group has linkages with other bodies whose work touches upon humanitarian financing, such as the CAP Sub-Working Group which focuses on common strategic planning and related policy and the Pooled Fund Working Group¹. These technical groups do not report to the

¹The Pooled Fund Working Group was formed in 2007 by donors to discuss primarily the establishment and operation of CHF (since then it has expanded to include ERFs). This group serves as an advisory body and meets two

Sub-Working Group, but they interact and may hold joint meetings as needed on issues of mutual interest. Representatives of these technical groups form part of the Sub-Working Group's membership brief the Sub-Working Group as needed. These technical groups share the Sub-Working Group's strategic priorities and provide input for research and reviews that may be undertaken by the Sub-Working Group.

With the establishment of the Sub-Working Group on Humanitarian Financing, the CERF Inter-Agency Group was dissolved with all the issues covered by that body incorporated into the focus of the Sub-Working Group. In addition, the CERF Partnership Task Force was disbanded as was the GHD Contact Group.

The range of issues that the Sub-Working Group will address includes:

- Strengthening the operations of the CERF and country-based pooled funds through the provision of inputs on policies and practices;
- Harmonizing procedures and processes related to pooled funds and broader humanitarian financing processes with particular attention to minimizing transaction costs associated with pooled funding and humanitarian financing;
- Determining options to improve funding for all parts of the humanitarian programming cycle, with particular attention to preparedness and early recovery activities;
- Effectively engaging with the GHD Donor Group;
- Preparing and presenting salient topics and broader humanitarian financing policy issues to the IASC Working Group;
- Strengthening partnerships in the humanitarian financing arena².

Structure

The Sub-Working Group may form Task Teams as necessary to complete specific parts of its annual work plan.

Chair

The Sub-Working Group will be co-chaired by a Director-level staff member of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, New York. A senior Geneva-based Co-Chair serves to ensure strong linkages with Geneva-based organizations and to fulfil a liaison role with the GHD Donor Group³. The two co-chairs are appointed for one-year renewable terms.

times a year with interested or contributing donors and representatives from the IASC organizations to look at policies and progress of country-based pooled funds. .

² The July 2009 IASC Working Group meeting agreed that a group of humanitarian agencies would provide a separate report on humanitarian financing partnership issues. Any direct discussion or action on partnership issues within the IASC Group on Humanitarian Financing would be informed and guided by the outcomes of this report.

³ In coordination with the Chair of the soon-to-be dissolved GHD Contact Group, and subject to discussion with the GHD Co-Chairs.

Participation

Participation is open to interested IASC organizations. Membership is expected to be at the senior adviser level. Representatives to the Sub-Working Group may be supported by technical staff members, particularly in support of the implementation of specific objectives in the work plan. Experts and donors, such as the GHD Co-Chairs, may be invited as observers to provide technical input or to discuss certain relevant issues.

Operational NGOs which have firsthand experience with humanitarian financing mechanisms are encouraged to participate. NGO consortia continue to represent the wider NGO community at meetings and ensure the dissemination of relevant information.

The Sub-Working Group will bring together on an equal basis NGOs, UN entities and other international organizations. Participants from cluster lead agencies will be expected to represent both their agency and their respective cluster, given that the Group will look at broader financing issues in an effort to improve overall humanitarian action.

Secretariat

OCHA functions as the secretariat of the Sub-Working Group and, under the direction of the Co-Chairs, coordinates the substantive implementation of the Sub-Working Group's work plan. With information provided by representatives to the Group, the secretariat prepares the work plan and an annual progress report to the IASC Working Group, convenes regular meetings and provides venue arrangements, drafts and distributes the agenda and minutes, monitors progress of the implementation of the work plan and action points from meetings, maintains an email distribution list, prepares materials for distribution to the Group, facilitates the flow of communication, and updates the Group's webpage on the IASC website.

Meeting Schedule and Agenda

The Sub-Working Group will convene 10-12 times per year via video/telephone link. If necessary, additional meetings may be held on specific issues. An annual face-to-face meeting will be held if necessary.

A rotating agenda is used to ensure discussion topics are grouped together around specific areas of focus, allowing relevant stakeholders to participate as appropriate. This means that issues related to CERF, for example, will form one agenda/meeting.

Work plan

The Sub-Working Group prepares an annual work plan based on the standard template, prepared by the IASC Secretariat, which includes specific objectives, prioritized activities, indicators, and deadlines. Focal points are identified for each activity listed in the work plan, and are accountable for ensuring the implementation of the specific tasks and for progress reporting on a regular basis. Work plans should be submitted to the IASC Secretariat by the deadline (usually end of October) for the IASC Working Group to review, and subject to agreement, endorse before the end of the year prior.

Reporting and Public Information

The Sub-Working Group provides an annual report to the IASC Working Group against progress toward meeting the objectives of the work plan. This annual report should be prepared in accordance with the standard template and is due by the deadline (usually end January), in order for the IASC Working Group to take stock of progress and performance of the group. Each subsidiary body is also required to submit a brief progress update (2-3 paragraphs) to the IASC Secretariat by the deadline (usually end of October) for consolidation and presentation to the Working Group before its November meeting.

The Sub-Working Group maintains a webpage on the IASC site, and will post regularly all relevant meeting notes, background papers and other documents on that site.

IASC Products

The Sub-Working Group will ensure that any IASC products developed by the group are in line with the IASC guidelines on product development available from the IASC Secretariat.

Relationship to the Working Group

The Sub-Working Group prepares background papers and recommendations on salient topics and broader policy/operational issues in support of effective field-based action at the request of the IASC Working Group or Principals. The Sub-Working Group can propose agenda items for the IASC Working Group via the IASC Secretariat as part of the agenda setting process.

The IASC Working Group will review the performance and relevance of the Sub-Working Group periodically. At that time, the mandate and the continuation of Sub-Working Group will be assessed. The IASC Secretariat supports the IASC Working Group in monitoring the performance of IASC subsidiary bodies.