

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE
WORKING GROUP

IASC Subsidiary Bodies
Needs Assessment Task Force
Work Plan for 2012

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I Narrative Summary

This workplan is subject to review and modification by the NATF as well as decisions to be taken at the 80th IASC Working Group meeting.

The IASC Task Force on Needs Assessment (NATF) was established in June 2009, to “harmonise and promote cross-sector needs assessment initiatives for consistent, reliable and timely data on humanitarian needs in complex emergencies and natural disasters to strengthen informed decision-making and improve humanitarian response”. These two years have seen a concentrated focus by the NATF on creating a vision of what constitutes a coordinated approach to assessments in humanitarian contexts, and translating this into a set of guidance and tools which are laid out in the IASC NATF *Operational Guidance for Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crises* (Provisional Version, October 2011) and Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) Manual (Provisional Version, October 2011).

During 2011 effort was dedicated to consolidating the views of UN Agencies, NGOs, donors and academia on these normative products and bringing them closer to the primary end users. To this end, the tools and guidance were tested to various degrees in different humanitarian crises, and lessons learned used to inform revisions.

The Operational Guidance and the MIRA call upon IASC member organizations to collaborate on a single assessment and analytical process in the earliest stages of an emergency in order to collectively define the scale and identify priority needs and interventions. This is done using a methodology which relies heavily on the views of key beneficiary community members.

The workplan outlined below for 2012 reflects a significant shift from conceptualization to implementation and moving. The NATF, thus, will focus on moving beyond outputs towards outcomes, emphasizing four key components: creating the **predictable capacity** in-country and through global surge mechanism that is necessary to implement a coordinated assessment approach in both protracted and new emergency contexts.

Similarly, experience has shown that preparedness is essential for an initial assessment of needs to produce both timely and quality data and lay the foundation for a coordinated approach to assessments and data harmonization throughout the lifespan of an emergency. In the absence of such agreed upon mechanisms, delays result while humanitarian actors negotiate roles and responsibilities and develop data collection tools and analysis plans. In such instances, the temptation to engage in unilateral data collection is overwhelming, which too often results in an array of information which cannot be harmonized and affords an incomplete vision of the

humanitarian situation. As such, the NATF will focus on ensuring **data and assessment preparedness** in a minimum of 3 to 5 countries during 2012, working with government partners and humanitarian country teams to support and strengthen existing in country capacities.

Inherent with the objectives of creating predictable capacity and strengthening existing country level mechanisms is a **programme of targeted capacity building**. As with any new guidance and products, information dissemination and awareness-raising are imperative to facilitate their use and application. While such work will remain a focus of 2012, through 4 NATF induction missions to field locations, a systematic and targeted approach to ensuring appropriate staff are sufficiently skilled and trained on the coordinated assessment will aim to increase the depth of knowledge. This will include identifying OCHA field staff in protracted conflict situations to serve the assessment coordination function, and providing them with the necessary information and training. And, links will be made with training for cluster coordinators to support their development of cluster capacity to provide the requisite staff. Similarly, in new emergencies, select partners within global surge mechanisms (including the CASPAR) will be targeted for intensive training. This is in alignment with the IASC Transformative Actions Rapid Response Mechanism where it is envisaged teams will be pre-trained at headquarters level.

In line with the Principles of Partnership, the NATF will also emphasize expanding and deepening engagement by actors who are not regularly involved in the NATF processes. To this end, specific attention will be paid to **increasing involvement of NGO partners and strengthening linkages between other ongoing initiatives in support of coordinated assessments**, such as the ECB Joint Needs Assessment (JNA) programme with which ACAPS has also been working in countries that include Indonesia, Bangladesh and Yemen. The NATF recognizes the importance of NGO partners and the need to ensure direct and close engagement in the rollout of the Operational Guidance for Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crises (Operational Guidance).

The rollout or implementation plan for the Operational Guidance and MIRA will proceed in conjunction with follow on normative work. The NATF has identified as important the **review and refinement of the Key Humanitarian Indicators** and looking in greater depth at the later phases of emergency on harmonizing assessment data; and how the various cluster monitoring systems can be brought together to support the Humanitarian Dashboard to serve as a more effective inter-cluster monitoring platform.

Finally, learning by doing is critical for further development of the coordinated assessment approach. In order to build a strong evidence base to underpin the Operational Guidance and associated tools, including the newly developed MIRA, a rigorous learning strategy will be developed and implemented in 2012.

II Workplan for 2012

Please see attached logframe template.

III Key Expected Outcomes 2012

As a result of the workplan described above, the following outcomes are among those envisaged:

- Inter-agency data and assessment preparedness missions will be undertaken in a minimum of 3 to 5 countries. Missions will include a mapping of existing assessment

capacities and mechanisms coupled with technical assistance and capacity building (as appropriate) to develop assessment and implement assessment and data preparedness plans.

- NATF will produce and implement a targeted plan for training and capacity building to ensure predictable in country capacity to implement coordinated approach to assessments, and to build global surge capacity to support OCHA and clusters in new emergencies, linking to the work of the IASC Transformative Actions Rapid Response Mechanism.
 - NATF to develop and implement a learning strategy for the MIRA to inform any modifications and, more broadly, for implementation of the coordinated assessment approach, including an independent evaluation/review on which a report to the IASC WG will be based.
 - Key Humanitarian Indicators will undergo process of refinement in consultation with the global clusters where they will be reviewed for quality, appropriateness and measurability.
 - Efforts to actively cultivate closer linkages to NGO efforts in support of coordinated assessments will result in increased engagement and more equitable sharing of responsibilities in implementing the Operational Guidance.
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III Work Plan for 2012

Goal*: Improved evidence-based decision-making in humanitarian contexts through application of IASC NATF coordinated assessment approach in field locations.

Objectives*	Outputs and Activities*	Indicators (with targets)*	Assigned Focal Points	Timeframe
1. Institutionalise and building assessment capacity within OCHA and clusters to support a coordinated assessment approach through all phases of an emergency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement training package for OCHA staff on assessment coordination and assessment information management. Develop and provide training modules/package to global clusters and cluster lead agencies for inclusion in cluster coordinator trainings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 trainings within OCHA conducted by ACE-ISS on assessment coordination Training modules/package provided to cluster lead agencies and global cluster coordinators during 1st quarter 2012. 	NATF Technical Group 2, OCHA, ACAPS, Cluster Lead Agencies	November 2012

* A goal is a higher level, long-term result or change the group wants to achieve over a longer period of time. (Example: A more effective humanitarian coordination system.)

* Objectives are intermediate results or changes that need to be achieved during the workplan period in order to move closer to achieving the goal. (Example: Strengthened accountability to affected beneficiaries)

* Outputs are the tangible steps, services, and products provided by the group on annual basis to achieve its objectives. (Example: IASC's role on accountability to affected populations clarified.) Activities are actions that need to be undertaken to produce the outputs. (Example: Develop policy on accountability to affected populations for the Working Group's endorsement.)

* Indicators describe how the group intends to measure progress made towards stated outputs. Targets reflect the level of progress the group strives to achieve during the reporting period. (Example IASC policy on accountability to affected populations endorsed by target date. Target date: 30 September 2012)

2. Ensure predictable surge capacity within OCHA and the clusters to implement a coordinated assessment approach in new emergencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement training package for global surge mechanisms and standby partners, including CASPAR. Integrate training on coordinated assessment approach into training associated with IASC Transformative Actions Rapid Response Mechanism 		NATF TG 2, OCHA, ACAPS, IASC	
3. Strengthen partnerships with NGOs and NGO consortia engaged in coordination to increase collective ownership of coordinated approach to assessments and build on existing work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop platform for increasing engagement in and shared ownership of coordinated assessment work Work with ECB to develop stronger linkages between work of JNA and NATF. 		TG1, ECB, OCHA, ACAPS	
4. Rollout of Operational Guidance with a focus on MIRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparedness missions undertaken to identify existing capacities and mechanisms and provide technical assistance to develop the necessary plans – including roles and responsibilities – and tools. Implement coordinated approach to assessments in new emergencies, using MIRA approach as a framework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 to 5 preparedness missions undertaken resulting in assessment and data preparedness plans being in place. MIRA customized, as needed, and applied in all new emergencies. 	TG1, TG2, OCHA, ACAPS	
5. Building an evidence base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent review of NATF undertaken by mid-2011. Learning strategy for MIRA and, more broadly, implementation of coordinated assessment approach, developed and implemented. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent review completed and findings provided to IASC. Learning strategy developed and used to modify, as needed, MIRA approach. Findings reported back to IASC WG end-2012. 	TG1, OCHA	

6. Normative work on cross-sector assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Key Humanitarian Indicators refined in collaboration with global clusters.▪ Review of approaches to harmonizing assessment data with focus on existing cluster monitoring systems and how they may be better linked to the Humanitarian Dashboard to strengthen inter-cluster monitoring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Revised list of Key Humanitarian Indicators which are measurable and appropriate, whose function is clearly defined.▪ Strategy paper on data harmonization and monitoring	TGI	
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