

62nd IASC WORKING GROUP

RETREAT on “Better Humanitarian Response”

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**Capacity Building of Emergency Response at Regional and National Level:
*Planning and Preparedness at Local, National and Regional Level***

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Problem Statement

The World Disasters Report 2004 recognised that most lives are saved by friends and neighbours, and that disaster affected people have a capacity of to pull together and not give up when a disaster strikes. Local and regional response clearly provides a major and significant part of the overall crisis response, particularly in natural disaster situations. Furthermore it can be clearly demonstrated in Bangladesh, Cuba, Mozambique, the Philippines and elsewhere that local and national disaster preparedness pays. Last years floods in Nepal and Bangladesh confirmed again the value of community based disaster preparedness

The Humanitarian Response Review team recognised in their report that their review did not represent the full humanitarian global response capacity particularly since local and regional capacities in recipient countries or regions had not been reviewed. It identified three “pillars” in the international response system – the UN system, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the NGOs. An alternative analysis might define three levels of response sequenced and prioritised in the following way:

- **local response** by the affected communities in some cases including volunteers from the national Red Cross/Red Crescent society, CBOs and local NGOs;
- **national response** by national governments, regularly including national military forces, fire departments, etc and frequently supported by national Red Cross/Red Crescent societies and national NGOs; and
- **international response** supported by the UN system (including IOM), external governments, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the NGOs and on occasions by external military forces.

The IASC WG agreed, at the Ad hoc Meeting on 12 August, on the need for further discussions on local and national capacities. It has however already begun to address the need for strengthening local, national and regional planning and preparedness through the IASC WG Task Force on Natural Disasters (TFND) which was disbanded in June 2005 with its specific tasks completed. The TFND initiated the establishment of a set of

“minimum standards” of disaster response preparedness (DRP) measures for the UNCT to use for monitoring its capacities in this regard and proposed the promotion of the concept of IASC In-Country Teams. In addition the Kobe Conference follow-up process, the Hyogo Framework for Action, will also help to address the need for strengthening local, national and regional planning and preparedness but again is focussed on natural disasters.

A range of other initiatives have also addressed regional, national and local capacities. These include UNDP and OCHA supported work with SADC in Southern Africa, the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative of the Stability Pact for South East Europe (involving UNDP, OCHA, IFRC, NATO and national disaster management organisations), SOPAC’s programme in the Pacific to link the strengthening of local and national capacity, etc. There are many more.

Process and Actions Required by IASC

The Humanitarian Response Review Report identified the need to promote:

- A global vision of the necessary reforms and a shared plan of action for the improvement of the system in a reasonably short timeframe;
- Preparedness across the system, including **but not exclusively**, at the level of the international humanitarian organizations matched to appropriate political and financial support.
- Accountability, in particular towards people in need, bearing in mind the necessity for a balanced and sufficient, including financial need based, response.

The IASC WG now has an obligation to balance the international response focus of the Humanitarian Response Review with an analysis of capacities and needs for preparedness and response at the local, national and regional levels. Such an analysis should lead to the identification of approaches and actions that IASC members can take to further strengthen these capacities.

Proposed Actions by the IASC-WG

- That the IASC WG establish a small Task Force with a limited period of operation (three months) to develop a clear plan of action for developing a review/analysis of capacities and needs for preparedness and response at the local, national and regional levels and the identification of approaches and actions that IASC members can take to further strengthen these capacities. The Task Force should present a document along these lines to be reviewed and ratified at the November 2005 IASC WG Meeting;
- That the ERC allocate funding to ensure that the necessary studies for the review/analysis of capacities and needs for preparedness and response at the local, national and regional levels is undertaken.