

**IASC Weekly Meeting  
2 February 2005  
Notes**



**1: Update on the humanitarian situation in Nepal: Focus on children**  
(by Suomi Sakai, UNICEF Representative in Nepal)

Ms. Suomi Sakai, UNICEF Representative in Nepal, gave a briefing on the humanitarian situation in Nepal and particularly focused on children. Since she had left the country, the situation has changed as the King has dismissed the Prime Minister and declared the state of emergency. Although it might not have changed significantly for the people, concerns were expressed over a possible deterioration of the situation.

The priority for UNICEF in Nepal is to continue its ongoing programs in spite of the conflict between the Maoist rebels and the Nepalese government. The health programs are believed to be able to continue largely unaffected by the conflict. The organisation has experienced a success in vaccinations against measles and the distribution of vitamin-A. Out of a targeted group of children of 9,4 million between the age of 9 months and 15 years, all except for approximately 120.000 in remote districts have been reached.

More problematic is the state of education. Generally, the Nepalese education system is dominated by a hierarchical caste system excluding many children from proper education. As Maoist rebels are believed to have abducted about 12.000 schoolchildren and detained for one day up to a week, many parents fear to send their children to school. The majority of the children return, but these abductions constitute a serious problem. Those who to stay with the Maoist run the risk of being used as child soldiers.

Another problem is that many schools are being used by especially the rebels because of their often strategic placement.

Both the Maoist rebels and the government army are believed to use child soldiers.

About 70% of the country's territory is effectively under Maoist control. In many districts the state's authority does not reach beyond the HQ of the local officials, especially not during night.

Working in cooperation with the Nepalese Human Rights commission and through a network of national human rights NGOs there has been communication with high level representatives of the Maoist rebels concerning access, for instance in connection with the measles vaccinations. In all but a few instances UNICEF has had unhindered access to rebel territory and has even on several occasions been offered help by the rebels concerning distribution.

UNICEF is considering using the NGO network in connection with efforts of strengthening primary school education.

**1.1 Update on the current Situation**  
(by Merete Johanson, OCHA Geneva)

~~The King of Nepal has dissolved the Government of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba with immediate effect and has appointed another Council of Ministers~~

~~under his own Chairmanship. He has also declared a State of Emergency assuming direct power for the next 3 years. The King suspended various Articles of the Constitution, essentially dealing with civil liberties.~~

- All telephone links, both landlines and mobile phones, were cut yesterday. Satellite telephones ~~and telephones linked to the VSAT Telenor service used by some UN agencies in the UN House~~ are functioning. It is expected that landline and mobile communication will be restored later this evening. The international airport has reopened.
- The local media have been instructed to broadcast no political news except messages disseminated by the National Security Council. ~~It is not known when these restrictions will be lifted.~~
- ~~Businesses remain open and traffic and people are moving apparently normally on the streets, although armored vehicles are patrolling the streets of Katmandu and there are long lines at grocery stores and gas stations.~~
- UN SG has issued a statement of concern about suspension of civil liberties, imposing a state of emergency and the dissolution of government.
- Louise Arbor, High Commissioner for Human Rights, has also expressed concern and requested the King to live up to his commitment to human rights, democracy and multiparty rule.
- US, UK and India issued statements expressing their concern ~~and calling the events in Nepal a setback for democracy.~~

### **Security**

- The Security Management Team (SMT) will meet daily for the next few days, and has advised all staff that UN offices in Nepal will work normally during normal hours unless advised otherwise. ~~In her communiqué, Diana Russler recommends that all non-essential missions to Nepal be postponed.~~
- The SMT will evaluate the situation on a daily basis and share further updates.
- The SMT has also instructed all staff that the UN has no comment whatsoever to make on His Majesty's proclamation.
- The current Field Security Coordination Officer (FSCO) will leave on reassignment to the Philippines as soon as the airport reopens. The new FSCO-designate is currently in New Dehli. OCHA will contact UNDSS in order to expedite the deployment of the FSCO.
- It is expected that on 2 February SMT will discuss the question of staff safety and movements. For the moment, there is no indication that staff needs to be concentrated in the capital. SMT might want to ask them not to travel around too much until it becomes clear whether the authorities will introduce any new internal security measures, and how they might be enforced. At this stage, the Resident Coordinator (RC) doubts that they need to envisage evacuation of staff from the country.

### **Next Steps**

- At this stage, it is recommended not to designate immediately a Humanitarian Coordinator (HC). From discussions with the RC, DPA and OHCHR there are concerns that if a HC were designated, it would be seen as linked to the current declaration of the state of emergency and would be wrongly perceived by the Nepalese King? (politicization of HC functions). Jan Egeland, USG/ERC will be consulted on this issue the same day, Wednesday, 2 February.
- On 3 February, the USG/ERC will discuss with the OCHA Donors Support Group in New York the deteriorating situation in Nepal.
- The visit of Dennis McNamara, Special Adviser of the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator on Internal Displacement and Director of the Inter-Agency Internal

Displacement Division, was scheduled for end February and will probably go ahead unless the situation deteriorates significantly.

- In the UN Strategy Paper on Nepal (discussed earlier at ECHA), the UNCT identified two scenarios and the current events are unfolding according to a worst-case scenario. At the field level, it has been agreed to speed up preparedness work within the UNCT and to come up with an updated inter-agency contingency planning. OCHA had already strengthened its presence with one Norwegian Refugee Council secondee in addition to the Humanitarian Affairs Officer.

## **2: Briefing on IDD Mission to Colombia**

(by Bjorn Pettersson and Mark Cutts, Inter-agency Internal Displacement Division)

Mr. Mark Cutts, Chief of IDD's Field Response Section and Mr. Bjorn Pettersson, Human Rights Advisor in IDD, gave a briefing on their recent mission to Colombia.

The mission, which was led by Mr. Dennis McNamara, Director of IDD, took place from 17 – 27 January. At the same time, the Humanitarian Action Plan II (HAP II) was negotiated between the Colombian Government and the UN. Challenges were mainly related to explicit mentioning of the armed conflict and the humanitarian crisis. Also, the previously agreed human rights focus of the Plan is now being rejected by the GoC. The HAP II, which will inevitably be discussed at the Meeting on International Cooperation in Cartagena from 3 - 4 February, has been prepared in cooperation with the Colombian Government and the UN, but is ultimately meant to serve as government plan.

Regarding IDPs, Mr. Cutts mentioned their high level of right-awareness. Generally, they do not request assistance from international humanitarian agencies but rather from their own national government. Relating to this, Colombia's very well developed legal (Law 387) and institutional framework, including presidential decrees and Constitutional Court sentences on IDPs, was highlighted.

Also, UNHCR's activities in Colombia focused on capacity building, including support to the national IDP legislation, policy and general response to the displacement situation.

On the inter-agency level, further coordination and better division of labour within the UN Country Team could improve the response. Not always are developed policies followed by all agencies. Following the ERC's mission to Colombia in May 2004, ECHA approved an increased OCHA presence to reinforce coordination.

Mr. Pettersson particularly looked at the three issues IDP figures, prevention and solutions.

Concern was expressed over the certainty of the GoC IDP figures. While the government states a decrease in IDPs of 37% compared to 2003, this information is challenged by an NGO informing about an increase of 38,5% since 2003. As the government figures are based on the official registration of IDPs, it has been recommended to redefine the registration standards and to include the displaced persons that are currently not granted an official IDP status, including displacement caused by intra-urban movement or fumigations on coca farms.

With 780 new IDPs every day (according to CODHES), prevention becomes of great importance. In order to identify possible Human Rights and Humanitarian Law violations and to prevent displacement, an Early Warning system has been established. The Early Warning system run by the Ombudsman's Office should be fully utilized. The procedures for using it should be reviewed, with serious

consideration given to the possibility of abolishing the inter-institutional early warning committee (CIAT), widely recognized to be impeding the timely issuance of early warnings.

As solution for the long lasting IDP crisis, the government promotes the return of those displaced. Although return might be possible in some cases, the UN does not see it as the overall solution. UNHCR is currently preparing a report on the possibilities of return, which could serve as a basis for discussion and further action. In many cases, integration becomes a crucial concept for IDP populations. As most IDPs come from rural areas, land presents a key factor for the integration of IDPs – and equally plays an important role in prevention.

Following the briefing, it was questioned what had practically been done regarding the integration of IDPs.

The discussion also touched upon the access to basic services, in particular the lack of access to health services. Although humanitarian agencies have access to most areas, access of the communities to the basic services remains problematic.

Participants also discussed the UN Secretary General's Special Advisor and the suspension of his "good offices" in Colombia.

Please find attached to the notes an open letter to all the states, bodies and institutions at the donors' table for Colombia by MSF.

### **3: IASC Standard Briefing** (by Kirsi Madi, IASC Secretariat)

- IRIN has extended its Central Asia coverage to Nepal. Please share this information with your colleagues. Reports can be accessed from the IRIN web site or via its e-mail service (<http://www.irinnews.org/subscriptions/AsiaSubsLogin.asp>). The service is free and all IRIN articles and photos can be freely reprinted provide the IRIN Copyright is respected. To share information on Nepal or other Central Asian countries with IRIN please contact the IRIN Central Asia office at [irinasia@irinnews.org](mailto:irinasia@irinnews.org) or telephone +90 312 454 1177 / 75.
- The IASC TF on Assistance for Tsunami affected communities will meet on Wednesday, 2 February at 17h00 in Room 3 of the Palais des Nations.
- On Friday, 4 February, the meeting of the IASC TF on Assistance for Tsunami affected communities will exceptionally start at 16h30, as Ms. Margareta Wahlstrom, UN Special Coordinator for Humanitarian Assistance to Tsunami-Affected Communities, will be joining the TF meeting.
- After the first scheduled meeting had been postponed, the IASC Reference Group on the Humanitarian Response Review will now meet for the first time on Thursday, 3 February from 11h00 to 13h00 in Room H-3 of the Palais des Nations in Geneva. As already mentioned in the original invitation, the consultants conducting the review will attend the meeting.
- An information meeting on the Humanitarian Response to the Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami will take place on Friday, 4 February, at 11h00 in Room XIX in the Palais des Nations.

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List of Participants**



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