

**1: Update on Aceh, Indonesia**  
**(by Oliver Lacey-Hall, OCHA)**

Mr. Oliver Lacey-Hall has returned to Geneva after having spent 8 Months in Indonesia, including Aceh, and gave participants an update on the current situation in the country, focusing his briefing on the reconstruction efforts in Aceh.

The Government of Indonesia has formed the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency for Aceh and Nias (BRR), which is taking the lead in the reconstruction process. While less bureaucratic than the more established Government entities the BRR is partially hampered by the bureaucracy, which surrounds it, and is currently working in a relatively reactive mode, with limited capacity to plan and control the reconstruction process. In this regard Mr. Lacey-Hall highlighted the fact that proper legal basis (land entitlement, compensation, etc.) related to the reconstruction is still in its infancy and needs time to develop.. Overall there is a large gap between the funds received for reconstruction and the implementation capacity on the ground.

Coordination and sharing of data among UN agencies and the some 200 NGOs working in Aceh is overall relatively poor. Projects are being offered to individual villages with out any joint coordination by agencies and NGOs who offer assistance on an ad hoc and non-joined-up basis in general.

Mr. Lacey-Hall informed participants about the appointment of the new UN Recovery Coordinator for Aceh and Nias, Mr. Eric Morris, who will coordinate the work of the UN system and its partners in the humanitarian, reconstruction and disaster management preparedness areas in early September. The office of the new coordinator is a new initiative for the UN system in that it attempts to bring together all elements of the assistance programme together under one chapeau. It was emphasised that the IASC had agreed to the establishment of the office and further noted that there was an expectation on the part of the office that IASC partners will likely be asked to assist in staffing and resourcing it. The new Coordinator reports directly to the Resident Coordinator in Jakarta.

The discussion following the briefing focussed among other things on the effects of the newly signed peace agreement between the Indonesian Government and the Aceh rebels.

## **2: Niger (by Zuhail Ayoub (OCHA), Pino Annunziata (WHO) and Eric Laroche (UNICEF))**

Ms. Zuhail Ayoub (OCHA) briefed on the situation in Niger following a recent 6 weeks mission to the country

Upon displaying a series of photos taken in and around some of the therapeutic feeding centres in the country, Ms. Ayoub outlined a number of more chronic/structural causes for the present crisis, among others:

- The population growth, which is one of the most rapid in Africa, with the population doubling every 40 years and an average of 7 children per mother.
- Desertification: Agricultural lands have been halved over the last decades.
- Debt cycle: Farmers in Niger commit their future harvests at relatively low prices for export to northern Nigeria to get advance payments. When the hungry season hits Niger they are forced to buy the crops back at much higher prices.
- Cultural/religious tradition: 70-90% of the food available in a household is reserved for the male consumption, with the women and smallest children left with little food.
- Poor water and sanitation systems.

Apart from these factors, Ms. Ayoub mentioned that there is some tension between international development actors in the country on one side, and the humanitarian actors on the other in responding to and understanding the crisis.

Mr. Pino Annunziata (WHO) briefed on some of the health aspects of the crisis following a 3 week mission to the country.

Mr. Annunziata advocated for increased focus on the health aspects of the crisis, and underlined that in general people are not dying from starvation but from various communicable diseases. There is a cholera outbreak and the peak season for malaria, which is the main killer, is closing in. The dry season, starting in November, will likely see an increase in the cases of meningitis. The case mortality rate for the cholera is presently 10%, which is much too high compared to the normal maximum of 1-2%. Mr. Annunziata stressed that there is no evidence that the high mortality rate is linked to the malnourishment. For malaria there is the additional concern that for severely malnourished children the symptoms of malaria does not show. Therefore there is a need for rapid malaria test to be undertaken in the therapeutic feeding centres.

In general people in Niger have poor access to quality health care, with only 50% of the population having access to basic health care, often of an insufficient quality.

The system of health surveillance, which is in place in Niger, needs to be improved and better managed, to eliminate the delays in information and response.

Mr. Annunziata stressed the need for an increased international capacity in Niger and underlined that malnourishment can often be treated at the community level.

Mr. Eric Laroche (UNICEF) underlined the complexity of the crisis and stressed the need for improvements in water/sanitation and hygiene. Too few agencies are doing something in these areas.

A joint effort between UNICEF and WHO, with the setting up of a Centre for Disease Control, will seek to provide the necessary health and demographic data in the coming future.

The discussion following the three presentations on Niger focussed on the structural and cultural issues raised as well as the role of the Government of Niger, with and underlining of the need to strengthen its capacities.

**3: IASC Standard Briefing  
(by Marilena Viviani, IASC Secretariat)**

- This afternoon at 16.30 there will be the second meeting of the IASC Niger/Sahel Task Force, including an update from Ms. Yvette Stevens. The meeting is in Salle Viseo (video room next to C.3).
- Today at 09.00hrs (NYT) and 15.00 hrs (GT) the meeting/video conference will take place of IASC/UNDG Tsunami Task Force at conference **room C 3**.
- Thursday 1 September there is an HLWG meeting with the High Commissioner for Refugees at 16.00 in room IX of the Palais. The meeting is an introductory to EXCOM 2005.
- On Friday 2 September at 11.00 in room VII of the Palais there is an information meeting with members states on Niger and the Sahel Region. Agencies will get the opportunity to give a short update – those who wish to do so, are kindly asked to inform Jan Jaap van Halem in OCHA.
- From 5-7 September the IASC Working group will meet in New York.

Because of the WG, the IASC Weekly meeting next Wednesday, September 7, is cancelled. Next IASC Weekly meeting will be on 14 September.

**IASC Weekly Meeting  
31 August 2005  
List of Participants**



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