INTER–AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP
56th MEETING

11-12 February 2004
Auditorium
WFP Headquarters, Rome

CAP: Report of the Workshop on Needs Assessments for the CAP
(Geneva, 1 & 2 December 2003)

Circulated: 30 January 2004

Introduction

This report on the workshop on needs assessments for the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) details the background to the workshop, its objectives, work undertaken and results achieved, and outlines the steps to be taken in 2004. The report has three annexes: i) a list of participants (a balance of some fifty professionals of both a policy and technical nature representing donor, UN, Red Cross, NGO, and academic organizations); ii) the assessment framework; and iii) the assessment matrix.

Background

Following recommendation 17 of the 2002 plan of action to strengthen the CAP, i.e. to develop standardised guidelines for joint assessments…to strengthen the programming aspects of the CAP, UNICEF and WHO commissioned work on behalf of the IASC to elaborate a framework and matrix for needs assessments. (The work complemented several recommendations from the needs assessment study, "According to Need," carried out by the Overseas Development Institute in 2003.)

The work, carried out by Gignos, included: a review of the 2002 consolidated appeals in order to understand how needs were measured during the assessment phase and used in the Common Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP); a compilation of existing needs assessment guidelines and relevant parts of international law; the elaboration of a framework for the collection, analysis and presentation of data; and a draft needs assessment matrix.

The CAP Sub-working Group (CAP SWG) of the Inter-agency Standing Committee (IASC) agreed to hold a workshop to discuss the framework and matrix, refine both, and come to agreement on how to fulfil recommendation 17.

Workshop Objectives

The objectives were to:

*   come to a consensus on the assessment framework;

*   consolidate the indicators in the assessment matrix;

*   agree on different processes to collect and analyse the required information and prepare pilots in Burundi, DR Congo, and Bolivia.

Workshop Agenda and Results

The Chair of the IASC Working Group, Ross Mountain, opened the workshop, making three points. First, the IASC seeks to provide the best assistance and protection possible for people in need; second, he called on participants to emerge from the workshop with a framework within which needs assessments can take place and a matrix of indicators describing the severity of the situation in a given emergency; third, that participants agree on where and how to test the workshop's results.

The First Secretary of the Swedish Mission to the UN in Geneva, Mikael Lindvall, briefed participants on the outcome of the "International Meeting on Good Humanitarian Donorship," held in Stockholm in June 2003. He made particular reference to the item six of the principles, which donors adopted, i.e. to allocate humanitarian funding in proportion to needs and on the basis of needs assessments. In order to do this within and across emergencies, he noted, donors expected a concrete framework from aid agencies. He called on participants to work towards results during the workshop.

The Overseas Development Institute's Senior Research Fellow, James Darcy, welcomed the work carried out by UNICEF and WHO on behalf of the IASC and noted that the humanitarian system increasingly needs to act together and impartially. The aim of the workshop, he stated, was not to seek perfection but a framework and matrix that were based on evidence and judgement and "good enough" to enable agencies to work together, better. He welcomed the presence of academics, NGOs, the Red Cross Movement (both ICRC and IFRC), UN agencies, and donors.

Piero Calvi-Parisetti, who led the Gignos work on the assessment framework and matrix, presented the results. He emphasised that it was not about redesigning the way in which individual agencies conduct needs assessments, rather to find a common approach to assessments so that programme planning could be based on a common platform of information. He highlighted that the framework is a way of organising information, showing that different areas of concern are interdependent. The matrix, he underlined, required refinement based on the agency expertise present at the workshop.

The Chair of the CAP SWG and moderator of the workshop, Toby Lanzer, thanked the four opening speakers for their remarks and invited participants to work over the next two days in a transparent and constructive spirit. The agenda, he explained, gave much scope for discussion in plenary and work in specialised groups. The idea was that the first session be dedicated to discussing the fundamentals of having a framework, and that group work begin thereafter. (In the event, the first discussion was very participatory and the Chair extended it to take up most of the first day so that all present could express their views and discuss them in plenary.) He opened the plenary by asking participants, "Is the logic behind the framework sound and are any of its components fundamentally wrong?"

The question generated an active discussion during which many comments were made by NGOs, the Red Cross Movement, UN agencies, and donors. In sum, participants concluded that:

*   The idea of having a framework is sound.

* Each category in the framework is an issue of concern, not a need *per se*; the matrix provides indicators which help to describe each category. While the framework shows interdependence between categories, it does not imply causality between them.

* Protection and human rights are overarching issues, which are to be addressed in and of themselves, as well as being directly relevant to each issue within the framework.

* The framework provides a useful way for organisations to organise information by region or vulnerable group, in a transparent manner and, thereafter, plan a prioritised humanitarian response to crises.

* The framework allows users to compare need within countries by presenting standardized information.

* The framework calls on users to apply evidence and judgement and allows them to consider information over time, paying attention to trends and risks.

* The framework provides possibilities for standardizing monitoring and evaluation.

Working groups were then established to enable participants to look at specific parts of the assessment matrix. Participants chose which aspect of the matrix they wished to discuss and group work took place on most of the second day of the workshop.

The latter part of the workshop's second afternoon was dedicated to rapporteurs from each working group providing the plenary a summary of the work conducted, including indicators which were maintained, others which were modified, discarded, or new ones added. All participants were provided the opportunity to comment on the results presented by each working group.[1]

The primary conclusions of the work on the assessment matrix were:

* The matrix serves a very useful purpose, providing a platform of transparent and consistent information which agencies can use when planning their programmes.

* The matrix should be piloted in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and a non-CAP country, i.e. Bolivia.

Steps Ahead
One of the working groups at the workshop was invited to make recommendations on the principles which should underlie the use of the framework and assessment matrix, as well as looking at how both could be tested at the field level. The group's report in plenary was warmly welcomed and included the following main points.

Principles
• Objective presentation of data, based on full transparency

---

[1] Rapporteurs followed up during the two weeks following the workshop to ensure that all views expressed were given due consideration, before finalizing the respective parts of the matrix for which they had assumed responsibility. The organisers of the workshop then collated all of the working groups' output to establish a new matrix (attached).

- Objective identification of target groups
- Include donors and partners at all steps to improve trust and confidence
- Use of most recent data as agreed within sector coordination groups
- Ensure temporal compatibility of data
- Full sourcing of data, which should be updated twice a year
- Must have common minimum data set e.g. demographics, georeferencing, metadata
- What is reflected in the matrix can be limited by a lack of data

Modalities for implementation
- The Humanitarian Coordinator, supported by the CAP working group at the country level and UN headquarters, should oversee the pilot process.
- The IASC country team and donors should define regions and groups based on the context analysis of the crisis in question.
- Sector groups gather available data and analyse results.
- Sector groups identify data gaps and the process to fill them.
- Carry out needs analysis (narrative summary).
- IASC country team prioritises needs (based on available information and tools) and develops an appropriate response strategy for CAP (narrative summary).
- Matrix compiled by CAP WG for IASC and donors group.

It is envisaged that the framework and matrix will be piloted in Burundi during the first quarter of 2004. A donor and IASC mission from headquarters would visit Burundi to explain and establish the pilot process, possibly by holding a workshop in the capital in early February. A small inter-agency team could then be deployed to assist the IASC country team with data collection and the development of information-sharing mechanisms or sector level workshops, if necessary, during February. One consultant could assist the IASC country team to develop modalities for matrix completion and how to use the data in overall analysis. Following the mid-year review of the consolidated appeal, a workshop could be held to analyse the pilot and prepare for DRC.

Proposed Actions/Decisions by IASC-WG:
- IASC WG members welcome the work carried out by the IASC CAP SWG, thanking in particular UNICEF and WHO for their leadership on this issue. IASC WG members commit themselves to ensuring that their field representatives in Burundi and DRC participate fully in the needs assessments pilots in Burundi and DRC.

Prepared by: CAP Unit/OCHA