

**INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP
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**Review of Emerging Crisis Situations: IASC Sub Working Group on
Preparedness and Contingency Planning-Issues for Consideration, June 2004**

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This Report raises for consideration of the IASC WG issues related to inter-agency early warning and contingency planning arising from work of the IASC Sub Working Group (SWG) on Preparedness and Early Warning, as part of its 2004 workplan.

1. Preface

In line with the mandate of the SWG, representatives of IASC agencies have continued to work together to perform the following main functions during the first half of 2004:

- Acting as the IASC-WG focal point for inter-agency preparedness and contingency planning;
- Providing technical assistance and advise, to support inter-agency preparedness planning processes through a range of initiatives, including support missions;
- Fostering and facilitating the mainstreaming of preparedness and contingency planning capacities among IASC partners;
- Exploring innovative approaches to enhance the efficiency of the UN system and IASC partners in early warning, and facilitating the mainstreaming of new capacities including closer linkages between early warning and early action;
- Facilitating the harmonisation of calendars with regard to preparedness and contingency planning activities;
- Continuing technical discussions with other institutional actors and partners to facilitate the sharing of knowledge as well as the co-ordination and harmonisation of methods/plans.

2. Issue – Enhancement of inter-agency early warning systems

A process of discussing how to improve the Early Warning – Early Response systems has been on-going among the SWG members. Consultation among members has lead to enhanced sharing of agency specific briefs and reports (i.e., WFP's daily EW developments, UNHCR's monthly Hot Spots, UNICEF Briefs), analysis of specific situations and scenarios, as well as a continued sharing of knowledge about systems, processes, and lessons learned.

A growing consensus has emerged through such consultations about the need for individual agencies to continue investing in strengthening their respective Early Warning and early response systems and tools, so as to enhance the collective capacity of IASC partners and further strengthen coordination and operational links among them. Various agencies are developing new early warning and early response systems. As part of a review process of its own EW processes and capacities, UNHCR conducted an informal survey of existing systems and mechanisms among IASC partners, an exercise was supported by key IASC stakeholders.

One of the outputs is a summary matrix describing in general terms the current systems in place among IASC partners (see annex 1).

A second IASC SWG organized inter-agency consultation on *Early Warning - Early Response* was organized in Rome in June 2004, hosted by WFP. Recent developments of agency specific early warning systems and products, currently in use and in development, were reviewed and opportunities considered for ways to develop more robust inter-agency early warning mechanisms. Among the main output recommendations emerging from this consultation are the following :

- That agencies/SWG members share more consistently EW information, including internal reports or briefs, so as to allow a more regular flow of information and analysis on current and emerging crises among SWG members;
- That a quarterly EW brief for the IASC WG and Emergency Preparedness/Response Managers be piloted starting from the next IASC WG meeting, including identification and prioritization of situations of concern which would require augmented and more concerted preparedness efforts by IASC member agencies;
- That the SWG establish and pilot a common IASC EW website platform to facilitate access to and sharing of EW information. It is envisaged that the platform will build on systems and mechanisms already established by some agencies and partners, it will ensure that such systems are efficiently linked together, and it will allow the development of alert systems and incident notification tools that will permit the timely dissemination of news and information on new events/disasters.

3. Issue – Enhancement of inter-agency contingency planning support

The IASC SWG continues to function as a forum to work collaborative on ways to support preparedness and contingency planning efforts by agencies and at the inter-agency level. In light of the need to enhance capacities to meet current global needs the following point of action was agreed by members of the SWG:

- To strengthen IASC SWG capacity to deliver technical assistance support, furthering the development of new systems and approaches, as well as in ensuring quality and standards control, SWG members agreed in principle on the need to bring forward the SWG experience by building more capacity within the group and by establishing mechanisms that will ensure that the SWG is able to perform its functions in the most efficient manner. To this end, SWG partners initiated discussions of a possible joint project aimed at creating a collaborative humanitarian early warning and emergency preparedness mechanism. The development of a specific project proposal is under way and will be submitted to the next IASC-WG for endorsement.

As point of note,

in addition to on-going sharing of information and problem-solving, two main activities in particular were undertaken since November 2003 by the IASC SWG related to inter-agency contingency planning.

- **West Africa**

As anticipated last November, the SWG has been providing assistance to the UNCTs and regional offices in West Africa to facilitate the preparation of a West Africa Coastal Inter-agency humanitarian contingency planning exercise for the region. Assistance was provided through two separate meetings and facilitation exercises, held respectively in Abidjan and Dakar (November 2003 and February 2004).

These exercises brought together Regional Directors and Desk Officers, RC/HCs and UNCT staff, as well as selected D-SRSGs, from Guinea, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia as well as Ghana, Burkina Faso, and Mali. The exercises helped identify and delineate as part of a common framework some key strategic and operational concerns and issues related to humanitarian preparedness and contingency planning in the region requiring follow-up at regional and UNCT level.

- *Iraq transition*

In preparation for the new transitional situation in Iraq, the IASC SWG was requested by the SRSG a.i. to support the start up of an exercise aimed at enhancing humanitarian preparedness planning for Iraq. In that context, the SWG facilitated a one day meeting on the subject held in Amman on 1st June (report under finalization). The meeting brought together key IASC actors and stakeholders, other NGOs and partners, as well as representatives from UNAMI and UNSECOORD. The meeting allowed partners to share information, views and analysis, as well as to identify initial planning scenarios and common issues which could inform preparedness action by individual agencies. Issue of common concern and requiring follow up action in the area of coordination, capacity, information sharing, and operational preparedness were also identified. A follow-up meeting is being planned for mid-June in Amman as the UN country team and key non-governmental partners work to enhance preparedness and contingency planning.

Informal consultations between agencies continue on countries and situations of concern which may require enhanced support for inter-agency contingency planning (such as to two example above). With linkages to other mechanisms such as the Framework Team, other situations (e.g. Nepal, Chad-Sudan, Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria) are being monitored by SWG members.

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