

**INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE-WORKING GROUP
50th MEETING**

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Conference Room 9, United Nations Headquarters New York

IDPs: Update on the work of the IDP Unit
Terms of Reference: Senior Inter-Agency Network on Internal Displacement

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Background

In July 2000, the UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) decided that there should be increased efforts by all concerned agencies and governments to improve the assistance to and protection of internally displaced populations at the field level. To this end, the IASC established a Senior Inter-Agency Network on Internal Displacement, comprising senior focal points in all concerned organizations. The Network was mandated to carry out reviews of selected countries with internally displaced populations, and to make proposals for an improved inter-agency response to their needs.

A Special Coordinator on Internal Displacement was appointed within the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), to chair the Network. He reported to the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC). OCHA served as the Secretariat of the Network. All members and Standing Invitees of the IASC were invited to appoint Senior Focal Points to the Network at their headquarters to ensure participation in, and follow-up to the review process.

From October 2000 the Network undertook a series of country reviews, including in Ethiopia and Eritrea, Burundi, Angola, Afghanistan and in Colombia.

The Network was also tasked with making proposals for future inter-agency approaches to strengthen the international response. In April 2001, the Network's Special Coordinator presented a report to the ERC on ways to strengthen the international response to internal displacement. In particular, he recommended strengthening the response capacity at the headquarters level by establishing a small, non-operational unit within OCHA with core staff seconded by the IASC agencies. This recommendation was endorsed by the Secretary General¹ and the Unit for Internal Displacement began its activities in January 2002.

Notwithstanding the creation of the Unit, the IASC² decided that the Network should continue to exist as an inter agency support and advisory mechanism for the Unit on Internal Displacement. However, in light of the establishment of the Unit, the terms of

¹ In May 2001

² In November 2001

reference of the Network require a re-evaluation.

The Role of the Unit on Internal Displacement

The Unit aims to promote system-wide improvements in the response to internal displacement, and, provide targeted support to specific country situations, particularly in the following areas of work:

- **Field Support and Missions:** in close collaboration with its various partners, the Unit encourages greater emphasis on protection of IDPs, undertakes targeted field visits to provide assessment and guidance in situ, and lends its support to resource mobilization efforts for IDP activities.
- **Protection of Internally Displaced Persons:** based on the widespread concern about the insufficient protection for internally displaced persons, the Unit created a “coalition” of like-minded actors interested in working together to improve protection at the country level as well as ensure a more predictable and efficient institutional response.
- **Training/Capacity Building:** based on the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, a basic course on Internally Displaced Persons has been developed. This training is provided to IASC actors in selected countries and aspects of the training have also been integrated into existing training initiatives of individual UN agencies and NGOs.
- **Advocacy and Public Information:** Targeted campaigns will contribute to increase awareness on the plight of IDPs, and serve as tools to improve their welfare. Additional public information tools include the Unit’s website and the publication of a thematic volume examining internal displacement challenges.

The Role of the Network

In discussions with the Network, two important areas have been identified where the Network should play a role. The Network should:

1. Act as an advisory and consultative body on issues of internal displacement, and,
2. Function as a conduit for information-sharing between the Unit on Internal Displacement and the respective agencies.

ii) Advisory/Consultative Function

The Network will serve as the inter agency advisory group for the Unit. It will provide guidance on setting priorities and it will bring new concerns to the Unit’s attention. In this connection, the Network will be called upon to:

- ❖ Advise on the activities of the Unit;
- ❖ Support inter agency field missions and training and capacity building activities, as and when appropriate;
- ❖ Review arrangements for inter-agency coordination;
- ❖ Promote the development of inter-agency policies on internal displacement.

A major focus of the Unit’s activities is enhancing the accountability of the international community, vis à vis the IDPs. Network focal points will be responsible for promoting follow up within their agencies of recommendations stemming from the

Unit and other relevant inter agency missions, studies and evaluations. The Network will also review and promote follow up to the recommendations stemming from the reports of the Representative of the Secretary General on IDPs.

Network members will also be invited to focus on specific thematic issues, such as training or protection, and to collaborate in a series of initiatives in this regard. In such cases ad hoc sub-working groups will be established, i.e. the training advisory group and the protection coalition. Participation to such sub-working groups will be open to all interested and concerned Network members. The sub-working groups will report to the Network on their activities.

ii) Liaison/Information Function

Members of the Network will also have the primary responsibility for liaising with their respective agencies and disseminating information and documentation on the work of the Unit to their agency. Likewise, the members will be expected to provide the Unit with information on their Agencies' activities and concerns regarding specific IDP situations, especially at the field level.

The Network will also continue to maintain a formal liaison with the IASC-WG.

Participation and Working Method

In order to fulfill the above-outlined roles, the Network should continue to comprise senior-level officials designated by the various IASC agencies because of their experience, expertise and interest in IDP issues. To be effective the Network should have, to the extent possible, continuity in membership.

The Network shall meet on a regular, possibly monthly, basis. Responsibility for calling meetings, setting agenda and reporting on meetings will rest with the Unit on Internal Displacement. However, extraordinary meetings may be called at the request of members of the Network to address critical issues.

Proposed Action/Decision by the IASC-WG:

The IASC-WG is requested to endorse the Terms of Reference of the Senior IDP Network