

**INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP
57th MEETING**

**16-17 June 2004
Room XII
Palais des Nations, Geneva**

Iraq: REVISED Update on the Review of the Inter-Agency Contingency Planning

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The SRSWG a.i. and Humanitarian Co-ordinator for Iraq chaired a meeting on contingency planning for humanitarian assistance for Iraq (including sub-regional considerations) in Amman on Tuesday 1 June. The meeting, which was facilitated by the Inter Agency Standing Committee Sub-group on Contingency Planning, brought together regional and country level representatives of the UN, NGO, ICRC and IFRC.

The meeting focussed on critical factors and assumptions which may shape the humanitarian situation over a 3 to 6 month planning period, as well as strategic objectives and operational issues to enhance emergency preparedness.

SPECIFIC ISSUES DISCUSSED:

Potential Scenarios

- Analysis of critical factors, potential scenarios and likelihood
- Scale and nature of humanitarian needs
- Security and access
- Regional considerations

Co-ordination and operations: capacities and constraints

- International and national staff
- Civil – military relations
- Working with the Iraqi authorities
- UN, Red Cross/Crescent, NGOs, Contractors – roles and relations
 - ‘Remote control’ co-ordination mechanisms
 - Common services

Other Issues:

- Public information strategies
- Advocacy
- Human rights and the protection of vulnerable groups
- Funding

PRELIMINARY OUTPUTS

The group reached preliminary consensus on planning parameters and issues/gaps for priority action. There was consensus that the political and security situation in Iraq is extremely fragile, and that humanitarian risk and response planning should be continuously reviewed over the coming period. For immediate planning and emergency preparation, the group agreed to focus on

dealing with a potential multiplication of flash-points or 'hot-spots' of conflict in urban centres around Iraq. Humanitarian consequences could include:

- Interruption of public services (health services, utilities, education) and/or the public food distribution system
- Restricted public access to hospitals etc due to contiguous presence of conflict parties.
- Restricted humanitarian access to affected areas (security, agreement of conflict parties)
- Population movement

It was agreed that Agencies should review and/or develop their assessment and monitoring capacities, and assistance delivery mechanisms for this potential situation. Inter-agency co-ordination also needs to be consolidated to develop common approaches and sharing of resources where appropriate, to ensure information flow, and to address shared issues in a co-ordinated manner.

FOLLOW-UP RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE MEETING:

1. Draft a preliminary report on contingency planning, including current structures and preparedness levels, issues of consensus, and identified gaps.
2. Develop operational 'best practices' for humanitarian response, taking into account lessons learned from recent experience (eg Fallujah), and the capacities and constraints of different organizations under the prevailing security situation.
3. Develop strategies to strengthen capacity and structures (ie deliver 'best practices' above) in the areas of assessment and monitoring, information flow and co-ordination.
4. Analyse in greater detail (sub-national/'hot-spot') potential humanitarian needs (sectors) and beneficiary numbers.
5. Finalize and initiate implementation of a communications strategy.
6. Convene a second meeting in mid-June to review progress, changes to the situation, and to include HQ and further regional perspectives.

Follow-up items above require considerable input at Agency/sector level as well as inter-agency level.

For each sector/agency:

- review recent experience (e.g. Fallujah response), and take stock of successful aspects and difficulties.
- review monitoring and assessment capacity on-the-ground in Iraq, including at local level (particularly urban centres).
- review potential humanitarian needs and beneficiary numbers, including at local level (particularly urban centres).

At inter-agency level:

- develop/consolidate inter-agency information flow and co-ordination mechanisms
- compile and analyse agency/sector capacities, constraints and approaches to develop common strategies where appropriate, based on shared 'best practice' experience.
- plan and prepare for common or multi-sectoral issues (e.g. IDPs, common services)

FOCAL POINTS:

Mr. Everett Ressler (UNICEF, IASC sub-group)

Mr. Carlo Scaramella (WFP, IASC sub-group)

Mr. Bernard Kerblat (UNHCR, IASC sub-group)

Mr. Thierry Delbreuve (OCHA/UNAMI Senior Humanitarian Affairs Officer)

Second background document on the agenda item of Iraq (Revised)

Mr. Marcel Grogan (OCHA/UNAMI Humanitarian Affairs Officer) groganm@un.org
Mr. Jamie McGoldrick (OCHA Geneva)