

**INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP  
59th MEETING**

**21-22 November 2004  
UNHCR Headquarters, Geneva**

**TF on Strengthening Field Information Management: Final Report**

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**I. –II. Origins of the Task Force / Overall objectives**

During the 54th meeting of the Inter–Agency Standing Committee Working Group, WHO and OCHA were tasked to draw up TOR for a time-limited Task Force on Strengthening Field Management Capacities in Support to Coordination, building on lessons learned in Iraq and other major crises. Establishing this task force, UN agencies recognize that better information management will improve their delivery of humanitarian assistance, and that further investment and enhanced collaboration in strengthening capacities in this area are required.

**III. Progress to date**

The Task Force was formed in October 2003 and held its only meeting in December 2003, at which a workplan was agreed and endorsed at the 56<sup>th</sup> IASC-WG meeting. The workplan included specific outputs to be completed, including a *Desk Survey on Humanitarian Information Management in recent crises*, recommendations on best practice, and an agreed inter-agency metadata standard.

The survey was undertaken but with a limited number of responses. In general, the following findings were found, some contradictory (these results are based on only 33 results, 24 from OCHA and FAO):

1. Results indicate that staff and skills were generally sufficient;
2. However, respondents also said that one of the key impediments to effective IM was the lack of qualified staff;
3. Respondents stated that information was generally being well shared;
4. But, information-sharing mechanisms require strengthening;
5. The highest priority needs are for IM coordination and analysis;
6. The most appreciated products are sectoral reports and analysis;
7. There are serious concerns about data quality.

Work on best practices has not been undertaken and steps towards a metadata standard include only the distribution of a paper by OCHA on the subject, for which some comments were received.

There has been very limited input from Task Force members and competing priorities have kept the co-chairs from investing more time on this group. Additionally, the

Background document on agenda item: TF on Strengthening Field Information Management

establishment of this Task Force has in fact duplicated much of the work of another inter-agency body, the Geographic Information Support Team (GIST), in existence since 1997 and to which almost all Task Force members are also part.

**Proposed Actions by the IASC WG members:**

- Endorse the proposal of the co-chairs of the Task Force to allow existing inter-agency mechanisms (GIST) to continue as the main forum for discussion of topics related to information management.

Prepared by: TF on Strengthening Field Information Management, November 2004