

**INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP
55th MEETING**

12-13 November 2003

**IFRC Headquarters, Geneva
Auditorium (Basement)**

**IASC TF on Human Rights and Humanitarian Action: Background Note
(revised)**

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Introduction

The Taskforce comprises OCHA, OHCHR (Chair), UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, WHO, ICVA and, as standing invitee, the ICRC. It meets on a quarterly basis through video-conference between Geneva, New York and Rome. The Taskforce operates under the overall guidance of the IASC, on the development of strategies and initiatives to enhance the integration of human rights into humanitarian action. While the members of the Taskforce have consistently focused on producing specific outputs, the members also feel that the Taskforce serves as a useful and unique inter-agency forum for information sharing and doctrine development on these issues.

Activities in 2003

In 2003 the activities of the Taskforce have mainly been focused on dissemination of its products. Due to a number of circumstances, including departure of previous members and arrival of new ones as well as difficulties in obtaining funds for a number of projects, the implementation of a number of tasks has been delayed and will be carried over to the 2004 workplan.

During the year the Taskforce continued through its members the dissemination of the compendium of field-practices on the promotion and protection of human rights through humanitarian action entitled *Growing the Sheltering Tree* which has been published in both hard-copy and CD-Rom versions, and is also available at the *Protecting Rights Through Humanitarian Action* web-site hosted by ICVA (<http://www.icva.ch/cgi-bin/browse.pl?doc=HRHA>)

Following the approval by the IASC of the document entitled “Frequently Asked Questions on International Humanitarian, Human Rights and Refugee Law”, the Taskforce has also devoted efforts to the dissemination of this document. It is available on a number of web-sites, including the IASC web-site www.humanitarianinfo.org/IASC.

The Taskforce has also agreed on Terms of Reference for a consultant to prepare draft guidelines for Humanitarian Coordinators on human rights and humanitarian action.

Workplan 2004 – Before the IASC Working Group for approval

- UN Reform - Action 2

In the context of Action 2 of the UN Secretary-General's reform programme to strengthen UN human rights related action at the country level, the Taskforce will seek to provide active input to this process. Possible outputs in this context include delivery to country teams of IASC-agreed tools for humanitarian workers in the field; a review and refinement of the CAP SWG training tools on human rights used in CAP training workshops; drafting of a concept paper on human rights measures of humanitarian risk/vulnerability. It is understood that individual members and standing invitees will participate with adequate financial and human resources as agreed in the context of the Action 2 process, in order to implement these activities¹.

- Continued dissemination of the products produced by the Taskforce, including the printing of the FAQ.

- Guidelines on human rights and humanitarian action for humanitarian coordinators.

A consultant will be recruited with funds provided by OHCHR to prepare the draft guidelines for subsequent endorsement by the IASC.

- Human rights and humanitarian action – Publication and Workshop

The Taskforce will organise an expert seminar which would serve to discuss the interface between human rights and humanitarian action. A publication would subsequently be issued.

- Dilemmas of humanitarian work- publication

The Taskforce will on basis of a questionnaire to be developed by UNHCR collect information from the Taskforce members on the interest in and on the possible scope, format and objectives of a research on dilemmas with regard to human rights which humanitarian workers often face in their field work. Based on the feed-back to be received, this may lead to a publication complementing the FAQs and the Growing the Sheltering Tree publications.

- Mapping exercise on agencies policies and initiatives on mainstreaming human rights into their humanitarian work.

Following the workshop on human rights and humanitarian action the Taskforce will proceed to collect information on how the humanitarian agencies and organisations have sought to integrate human rights in their work with a view to identifying gaps and recommend appropriate measures. This exercise would also address the issue of protection.

Geneva 3 November 2003

¹ While the Action 2 process is essentially a United Nations process, it is understood that the active participation and advice of non-UN members and standing invitees of the IASC will be essential for a successful implementation of the Secretary-General's reform programme.