

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP

20 June 1997

Item 5. Update on CETI

Report to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group on the Crisis Environments Training Initiative

The Crisis Environments Training Initiative (CETI) is just completing its first two years of existence. CETI began its work with the mandate from the IASC/WG to focus on "needs in support of field coordination in complex emergencies". It is a welcome opportunity now to present the results of the past two years of work to the IASC/WG for review and to open discussions about options for the future.

As can be seen from the background information annexed to this report, this group has sought first to build on established training materials of proven quality and to adapt them for inter-agency use. One example of this is the material on Contingency Planning which originated in UNHCR and was adapted for use in inter-agency fora. In the area of Stress Management, a comprehensive needs assessment was undertaken to determine what role, if any, CETI should play in this field. The results as reflected in the consultant's report, recommend little in the way of materials development and challenge us to expand the delivery of programmes based on existing knowledge.

In cases where training concerns arise but materials are not in existence, new initiatives have been taken. The work in Humanitarian Principles spearheaded by UNICEF, and the work on Conflict Transformation and Media Relations training contracted under DMTP are examples of this approach.

CETI brings added value to the humanitarian training community through its inter-agency nature, fostering improved communication and team building. One concrete expression of cooperation is the "Inventory of Training Materials and Activities for Humanitarian Assistance" which can be accessed on the Internet. Plans are now under way to expand this tool through a sophisticated calendar function, a down-loadable library of emergency-related training materials and reference works, a roster of trainers, and a "list serve" function to facilitate group communication via e-mail.

As we begin to plan our future ventures, it is perhaps good to remember how this initiative was viewed from its beginnings. The Summary Record from the DMTP Inter-Agency Consultation of 2 May 1995 records the following:

Regarding the newly-proposed sphere of activity in complex emergencies it was agreed that the challenge will be to define the areas in which training is to be offered, even if policy decisions are not all in place. Training activities of this sort can clearly be a bridge between policy makers and field users. It was stated that it is important, too, to build system-wide with the initiatives that have been taken already by individual agencies, e.g. in stress management training. Finally in this area, it was agreed that the best approach may well be to share common practices first in a pragmatic manner, leading possibly in due course to policies being better clarified in the process.

Advancing inter-agency work in a period of policy uncertainty has indeed proved to be difficult. This has particularly affected development of the training materials on Inter-Agency Coordination. Numerous letters, telephone calls and personal appeals resulted in only the barest trickle of comments on earlier drafts of this material. Some representatives to CETI meetings insisted that these materials should be put into use, even when policies are unclear, because coordination takes place and can be improved through training regardless of whether all issues are settled. Others could not agree to build consensus along these lines.

Representatives to CETI meetings come to the group with differing expectations. Agencies with large training programmes in place hope to gain materials which have been certified as inter-agency approved which they can then use in their well established programmes. On the other hand, agencies and organizations whose involvement in crisis environments is relatively new or too small to support the elaboration of training schemes look to CETI to produce more than training materials alone. It is up to the IASC/WG as a forum to decide then what scope our activities should undertake.

Membership:

At present our membership is parallel to the IASC/WG. Because CETI concerns are of a more technical nature, outside experts have been invited on a regular basis to make contributions in specific areas of concern. Further, to ensure consistency of message in the field of humanitarian training, several significant training institutions could be usefully included in CETI work on a regular basis. Similarly, regional organizations aligned with the UN system also could be usefully considered for involvement on a regular basis.

Activities:

Development of training materials will remain a constant in CETI work. In question is the degree to which CETI should be involved in the development of inter-agency training programmes on topics of common system concern. A Training of Trainers has been under discussion for over a year. A cadre of trainers drawn from CETI members could be trained to

implement training programmes on an inter-agency basis. To increase system capacity, this could be carried out with the understanding that these trainers would be made available for inter-agency training events for an agreed period of time annually. Recently, pilot workshops have been held to test training materials in several subject areas. At CETI VII it was decided to hold two pilot workshops to bring desk and field officers with responsibility for the same region together to upgrade their knowledge and to support network building in areas vulnerable to crisis. A new initiative -stress management training - has been proposed, and CETI is working with UNSECOORD to plan a training of trainers for Personal Security Awareness.

Responsibilities:

At present, many training needs go unmet due to the lack of an oversight mechanism which can ensure delivery of training where it is most needed. CETI could serve this function by acting as an information centre and as a focal point to identify needs and find appropriate responses through its network. Also in question is whether CETI should have a certification function for training materials and programmes to ensure quality and the inter-agency nature of the presentations.

Attachments:

Statement of Purpose for CETI

Background Information on CETI, including the Action Matrix