

**INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE-WORKING GROUP  
51st MEETING**

**25-26 November 2002**

**WHO Headquarters, Geneva  
Room M505**

**Agenda Item: Review of the Work of the IASC Subsidiary Bodies: Reference  
Group on Preparedness and Contingency Planning**

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Progress Report

This report provides a brief update of the work conducted by the RG since the IASC-WG 49<sup>th</sup> meeting on 19-20 June 2002.

## **1. Main activities undertaken**

### **RG Technical support activities**

Since June, special attention has been given to support inter-agency preparedness efforts with a view to a potential crisis in the Middle East. This process, which builds on initial work undertaken by the main UN humanitarian operational agencies in the field, has brought together UNICEF, WFP, UNHCR as well as UNDP, WHO, IFRC, ICRC, IOM, in nearly all the countries in the sub-region.

The RG has conducted field missions to Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Turkey and Iran. These missions were instrumental in:

- reinforcing coordination among the main UN humanitarian operational agencies, as well as between these and other IASC members;
- facilitating contacts with national authorities;
- identifying opportunities and key operational gaps; as well as,
- Facilitating the strengthening the existing preparedness levels and capacities.

Follow-up missions are in the process of being undertaken to Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Iraq.

Further to the above, an informal IASC meeting was organised in Versoix, Switzerland, in October, to share information and advance on joint preparedness activities. Ad hoc meetings were also held with individual IASC members in Geneva, Rome and New York.

### **Training and facilitation exercises**

In line with RG strategy to use existing emergency response and crisis management training opportunities to facilitate the dissemination of inter-agency contingency planning techniques, since June 2002 the following has taken place:

- UNDMTP developed and incorporated a contingency planning module in their regular training programmes for UNCTs. It is expected that this will facilitate awareness building and the mainstreaming of initial concepts and capacities among UN field staff.
- Action is still required to discuss how other training initiatives or projects, and notably the EWPM project, can also incorporate contingency planning modules.
- OCHA and UN agencies staff have collaborated in implementing the following:

UNCT facilitation exercises

- Republic of Congo

Regional workshops/training and/or facilitation:

- Great Lakes Region - (Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda, DRC, Tanzania)
- West Africa sub-region (Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea, Ivory Coast)

Complementary to the above, OCHA has developed a trial training module for the IASC Inter Agency Contingency Planning Guidelines that can be used for training and facilitation purposes. This module has been tested in two regional workshops as well as in a workshop for OCHA officers. Based on lessons learnt in these trials, the module will be reviewed and changed to better suit the needs of UN Country Teams. The ideal duration for the workshop is two days.

**Interagency guidelines field testing**

Field-testing of the *Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Guidelines for Humanitarian Assistance* is on-going including thorough training and facilitation events and initiatives. The wide dissemination of the guidelines has facilitated their adoption as a common reference tool by UN humanitarian and IASC partners. However, more field testing is required to inform a thorough revision of the guidelines, which is expected to take place during the first half of 2003.

**Contingency Planning lessons learned paper**

The on-going field-testing is also resulting in the generation of lessons. An initial draft paper has already been produced for internal use, highlighting both methodological and organizational aspects that can be revised or improved. The RG feels however that additional lessons can be drawn in particular from the on-going work on Middle East preparedness, and therefore suggests that a lessons learned paper, initially expected to be presented at the November 2002 IASC-WG meeting, will be presented at a next session of the IASC-WG.

**Interagency repository of Joint contingency plans**

OCHA is conducting some testing for the possible establishment of an interagency contingency plans repository on the IASC website. The main constraining factor is to establish a secure medium for the documents which would ensure the necessary degree of confidentiality, if so required. Any progress on this matter will be reported at the next IASC-WG meeting.

## **2. Planned activities for the first part of 2003**

The following main activities are planned for implementation during the first half of 2003:

- Continue to act as IASC-WG focal point for inter-agency preparedness and contingency planning
- Continue to provide technical assistance and support selected situations and preparedness initiatives and facilitate inter-agency preparedness planning processes including through support missions
- Continue to foster and facilitate the mainstreaming of preparedness and contingency planning capacities;
- Conduct a stock-taking exercise and providing feed-back to participating agencies and the IASC-WG (mid 2003);
- Revising the contingency planning guidelines in light of experience and current practice (mid 2003);
- Explore innovative approaches that can help enhance the efficiency of the UN system and IASC partners in early warning, and facilitate the mainstreaming of new capacities including closer linkages between early warning and preparedness
- Facilitate the harmonisation of calendars and the strengthening of sub-regional preparedness frameworks;
- Continue technical discussions with other institutional actors and partners to facilitate the sharing of knowledge as well as the co-ordination and harmonisation of methods/plans.

A detailed work plan will be submitted at the next IASC-WG meeting.