

**INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP
53rd MEETING**

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**Iraq: Inter-Agency Contingency Planning and Response:
A Concept Note on a Proposed Review**

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Background:

Unanimously adopting resolution 1441 (2002) on 8 November 2002, the Security Council instructed the weapons inspectors to resume their work within 45 days, and also decided it would convene immediately upon the receipt of any reports from inspection authorities that Iraq was interfering with their activities.

As it became clearer and clearer that Iraq would not be able to fully satisfy some Security Council Members and that a war may be imminent, UN aid agencies started working on plans for food, shelter and medical aid in talks in Geneva on 14 January. At the time it was feared that a US-led attack on Iraq could cause 500,000 civilian casualties and spark a flood of refugees,

On 27 January, the Security Council heard formal briefings by the heads of the weapons inspections programme in Iraq on the first 60 days of their work, fulfilling a requirement of resolution 1441 (2002), on which the inspections are based. On 28 January, the Bush administration expressed support for a new UN resolution on Iraq, calling it desirable but not mandatory before launching military action. In February, Security Council members met to discuss a draft resolution co-sponsored by Spain, the UK and United States that would have the UN decide that Iraq “has failed to take the final opportunity afforded to it in resolution 1441,” acknowledging that Iraq “has been and remains in material breach” of its disarmament obligations and gave the country a last chance to comply.

On 20 March 2003, the US and UK led a “coalition of the willing” on an invasion of Iraq, after giving Saddam Hussein 48 hours to leave the country or face consequences. Led by OCHA, the UN and its partners immediately proceeded to develop a Flash Appeal based on the contingency planning. This flash appeal was to provide a six-month response and cover all humanitarian requirements of the Iraq crisis and was launched on 28 March 2003.

Before the conflict erupted in Iraq, UN agencies put together a comprehensive preparedness plan¹. There were 940 international and 3,400 national staff of the Oil for food Programme already in Iraq (around 700 staff were deployed to neighboring countries or in the region before the war). Food and medical supplies were pre-positioned in and outside the country. Mechanisms to coordinate the activities of humanitarian agencies, including comprehensive logistics plans, were in place.

The UN agencies and Country Teams agreed on the preliminary planning figures on the basis of a “medium impact” scenario. Based on this scenario, it was estimated that:

- Approximately 10 million people could potentially become food insecure
- Less than 50 % of the population would have access to clean water
- Access to services, e.g. health would be severely curtailed and critical shortages would be experienced in essential drugs and medical supplies
- Between 600,000 and 1,45 million asylum seekers and refugees could attempt to cross international borders to seek refuge and protection in neighboring countries
- Approximately 2 million people may be internally displaced by a military conflict².

In mid-December 2002, donors had been approached with an initial request of \$37.4 million for a minimum level of preparedness. In mid-February, the initial request was revised to a total of about \$120 million. The unwillingness of many Member States that were opposed to military action to fund preparedness measures resulted in limited response to these requests. In the absence of a Security Council resolution authorizing war, and with peace still a possibility, response to this appeal was meager. On the eve of the conflict on 19 March, the UN had received only \$34 million³.

Led by OCHA, the UN and its partners proceeded at the same time to develop a Flash Appeal based on the contingency planning that was to be issued immediately after the beginning of a war. This Flash Appeal for about \$2.2 billion for a six-month response to cover food and non-food aid for the Iraq crisis and was launched on 28 March 2003. As the events unfolded in Iraq it soon became clear that the medium case scenario of the contingency planning did not occur, in particular regarding internal and outward population movements. A revised Humanitarian Appeal for Iraq was presented to donors on 23 June 2003 for a total of \$ 259 million.

After international staff⁴ were evacuated on 17 March 2003 - 48 hours before conflict erupted many of the 3,400 UN local staff continued to carry out their duties and did what they could to bring relief to the civilian population. Since the first air strikes over

¹ On 18 February 2002, the IASC Reference Group on Preparedness and Contingency Planning (IASC-RG) met in Cairo.

²) See above

³) The Secretary-General, Statement to the Security Council (19 March 2003)

⁴ International staff in Iraq from the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the United Nations Office of the Iraq Programme and United Nations agencies, programmes and funds implementing the Oil for Food Programme.

Baghdad on 20 March, the ICRC has remained present in the capital. The sub-delegation in Basra in the south of the country has also stayed open, run by national staff until 29 March, when it was reinforced by a team of 4 expatriates who had been withdrawn to Kuwait shortly before the start of the conflict.

Return of international staff begun in force: the first UN international staff returned to southern Iraq on 23 April and to Baghdad on 1 May (the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq led a team of senior UN officials across the border from Jordan into Iraq to re-establish a permanent presence of international personnel in Baghdad for relief operations).

As of 9 May, 250 staff had arrived. UN agencies are undertaking needs assessments with priority to water and sanitation, assistance to vulnerable groups, the electricity supply, mine action, health, and primary education. Speed of return has been dependent on both UN assessment of security and US declaration of 'permissive environments' in areas of need. Aid is flowing into Iraq in increasing volume: however, security remains an issue and continues to hinder humanitarian assessments and deliveries (widespread looting and high level of criminality in urban areas). The UN is indeed concerned about vulnerable groups such as ethnic or religious minorities and IDPs (with special focus on women and girls). The protection of civilians will be a priority that cuts across agencies' responsibilities.

Proposal:

There is immense interest within and outside of the United Nations to review the performance of the humanitarian community in preparation to the war as well as during and after the war. OCHA is therefore submitting two proposals for IASC-WG consideration with the intention of obtaining IASC agreement for one of the two options.

Option 1: A review of the UN's contingency planning for Iraq

The Iraq CP exercise has significantly raised the profile of inter-agency contingency planning and may well have set the tone for future CP exercises. While most participants feel that the CP was mostly a successful exercise, some have also indicated that there are areas that require improvement. A thorough review of the entire process, its related outputs and how CP has affected the response would allow the IASC-WG to learn from the experience and incorporate key lessons into future contingency planning.

The IASC-WG may wish to commission an external review of the timeliness, appropriateness, relevance and effectiveness of inter-agency contingency planning for Iraq.

This review should allow the IASC working group to fine tune future contingency planning and therefore result in action-oriented recommendations to the Agencies involved.

Option 2: A review of the IASC agencies' performance before, during and immediately after the Iraq war.

This would constitute a comprehensive review of the preparedness and contingency planning and the humanitarian response following the Iraq war. The review would examine the timeliness, appropriateness, relevance, and effectiveness of the response by the humanitarian agencies during an 18-month timeframe (January 2002 – June 2003). This exercise would seek to evaluate the performance of all agencies so as to gain a full picture and focus on planning, assessment, resource mobilization (including the flash appeals), coordination (inter-agency, civil-military), policy and implementation issues.

Review Management:

The IASC working group should consider two options for implementing either review:

- a. Form a small review management group from among the IASC WG to manage the review on behalf of the working group. This would be undertaken by a team of external consultants selected through an international bidding process. It is important that the team is credible and considered independent.
- b. Call for the establishment of an inter-agency evaluation review group to manage this review – under the overall guidance of a “lead evaluation unit” to be selected from participating agencies (IASC review model). This option would allow for full IASC-WG participation but would permit an independent and objective management of the review and would most likely gain more credibility with stakeholders external to the IASC.

Review Consultants

Option 1 (Contingency Planning): This would require the expertise of one senior consultant with expertise in contingency and preparedness planning. The position will be advertised on the reliefweb and through ALNAP.

Option 2 (Response evaluation): This review should be undertaken by an external team of 3 consultants with thorough experience of evaluating humanitarian action, contingency planning and regional experience. The positions will be advertised on the reliefweb and ALNAP.

Review Methodology

While the selected consultant will be asked to develop the method, the reviews will have the following components:

1. Desk review (5 days)
2. Semi-structured interviews in person or via teleconference with key informants in IASC agencies (headquarters, regional offices and UN Country Teams in surrounding countries), donors, and military contingency planners. The

- consultant would also be expected to visit Geneva, New York, Washington, D.C. and Rome. (10 days)
3. A field visit to Baghdad, Basra and Jordan (Turkey, or Iran (?)) to interview key informants from Agencies, embassies and key staff from the Interim Authority. (15 days)
 4. Report writing (5 days)
 5. A debriefing session to the IASC working group meeting in November 2003 that will discuss the findings and recommendations made by the review report (1 day)

Timing and Duration of the Review

It is proposed that the review will take place as soon as possible (depending on the availability of the consultant) for an estimated duration of 35 working days (Option I) and 50 working days/consultant for Option II.

Review Funding:

To be provided by participating agencies. A proposal could also be submitted to interested donors.

It is estimated that Option I would cost around US\$ 40,000 and Option II around \$ 150,000.

Proposed Action Points/Decisions by IASC-WG:

- Agreement on the concept and way forward for an inter-agency review of Iraq contingency planning and response.

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