Inter-Agency Standing Committee

87th IASC Working Group Meeting

FinalSummary Record

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Opening

In opening the meeting, ICRC’s Director-General, Yves Daccord, drew attention to the complex situation in which humanitarians find themselves in a rapidly changing world. He recognised that no organization, including ICRC, has all the answers in a context where increased fragility in terms of security, access, and acceptance, combined with threats such as kidnappings, increasingly challenge operations and require new thinking. He underscored the value of the IASC in seeking understanding and common ground among organizations. He called on the IASC Working Group (WG) to look forward, to think three to five years ahead, to consider critical scenarios and define strategies and a vision for the future. He challenged the WG to ‘unleash its energy’, to move from its current packed agenda, take the space and use its policy expertise and analysis to propose issues for the Principals’ attention.

The Chair of the IASC WG/DERC, Kyung-wha Kang, noted that the agenda reflected the many pockets of interest, but there was a need to ensure space for greater focus, nimbleness and flexibility. In discussion, the need to ensure an appropriate balance between addressing issues and concerns of direct relevance to field operations, and to ‘look forward’ and propose strategies to address issues on the horizon was highlighted. The WG *has* to be seen as relevant: if policy were seen to be only about paper, and not about operations, then it would lose value for operational organizations. It was suggested that the WG engage with the Emergency Directors Group (EDG) to see how policies are helping in the field and to look at the more intractable issues arising during EDG missions or at issues the EDG cannot explore in depth. The IASC Task Teams (TTs) should also feed into the issues upon which the WG wants to reflect, based on evidence and practice. The WG also should open itself up to input from groups outside the IASC and be more critical on issues.

Thanking ICRC, the Chair described the IASC as a community, with a broad reach that operates at many levels, more than a coordination framework. Using ad hoc meetings to address certain topics would free space for thinking about ‘game-changing’ issues in the main meetings.

Bridging the Relief to Development Gap

Neil Buhne, UNDP (facilitator) in opening the session noted the need to better use existing mechanisms, such as those for preparedness, early recovery, and transition from humanitarian coordination, and the need to change thinking in this area, as well as its relevance for other parts of the agenda. In presenting, Sandra Aviles, FAO, referenced the IASC Principals request from December 2013 to “identify the main obstacles to bridging relief and development actions through a review of efforts over the past several years with a view to identifying good practices.” In response, FAO and the World Bank (WB) convened 10 experts – a mix of aid practitioners from think tanks and academics from the humanitarian and development communities – to meet and discuss what it takes “to build poor people’s capacities to move out of vulnerability,” and to identify what is working well and what needs to change.

Daniel Kull, WB, shared outcomes of the expert meeting, noting it is not about filling gaps, but rather about changing the system, which is bigger than the IASC and humanitarian system alone. There is a need for a common and holistic understanding of context. Humanitarians tend to concentrate on triggers (i.e. focused on whether it is a sudden onset, slow-onset, L3s, etc.), instead of looking at “pre-conditions,” including risks, capacities, dynamics of change, actors, relationships, and political economy. The importance of genuine leadership and partnership, without a heavy structure, was emphasized. Currently, maximizing agency benefits (“pie-sharing”) is the focus, instead of common goals. Labour should be divided based on an unbiased assessment of competencies and capacity to deliver. Risk management requires shared responsibility and action, keeping affected persons at the centre. Currently, there are the distortionary effects of incentives, such as silo-ed financing mechanisms, which undermine innovation. There are also disincentives to innovate and take risks, despite considerable job security in UN agencies, unlike in the private sector. Sequencing is key with the potential for countries to “graduate” from humanitarian to development activities, but there is a lack of common standards and metrics to realize this shift. An approach to achieve principles, rather than to follow rules (which are a huge disincentive) should be adopted. The experts also found that there are many communication pathways that should be followed, but knowledge needs are not currently being met. An IMF Working Paper, [*Global Risks and Collective Action: What Can the International Community Do?*](http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/wp/2014/wp14195.pdf),shows that others are looking at the issue and the international community – both humanitarian and development – needs to follow suit.

During the discussion, a number of critical issues to consider were identified, including ensuring both host and donor government buy-in for action and the need to work with donors that are also looking at this issue internally. Piloting a move to multi-year planning and planning around specific risks, instead of year-by-year plans, was suggested, as was the need to take the discussion to the field, and listen to the voices of civil society and affected populations. Engaging with regional IASCs could support this focus on the field. It was suggested that risk aversion was linked with reputational risk. More investment in both prevention and preparedness is required. Closing the gap between needs and financing, as well as the disconnect between different financing mechanisms, was suggested as a topic for Principals’ advocacy with donors. The USD 8 billion that the WB pledged to the Horn of Africa highlighted the need to find ways to get similar money for humanitarian responses. It was noted that the changing WB policy on dealing with conflict situations has led to more flexible funding windows.

**The differences internally between the humanitarian and development sides of multi-mandated organizations were noted, with a suggestion for Principals to provide good examples through bridging the divide within their own organizations.** A need to understand cultural and language differences of the humanitarian and development worlds was also highlighted. One suggestion was to agree common messages for agencies to take to the Chief Executive Board’s (CEB) discussion on humanitarian issues in the development agenda, taking place in March 2015. The WG would, however, need to consider the desired results from the CEB.

***Decisions:***

1. Identify one or two countries and develop a 10-15 year overall strategy based on a common understanding of risks, led by the government and supported by humanitarian and development actors (including the World Bank and climate change actors) with some committed donors with a view to scaling up programmes in a region or sub-region of one or two countries that have experienced protracted crises over a significant timeframe and demonstrate how multi-year humanitarian plans would dovetail with the longer-term strategy.
2. Pilot an (incremental) exit strategy for the humanitarian community in certain countries of the Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Senegal), which would include, inter alia, designing social safety net programmes, which potentially offer an effective bridge between humanitarian actors and government-led programmes.

***Action Points:***

1. Agreed to analyse existing incentives and disincentives to bridging the gap between humanitarian and development communities. (Action by: *IASC TT on Humanitarian Financing by June 2015*).
2. Requested the WG Chair to explore with the Chief Executive Board (CEB) secretariat the possibility of providing the summary note of the Experts Panel to the CEB as a background document for their March 2015 meeting when the discussion on embedding humanitarian issues into the development agenda of the CEB will take place. (Action by: *IASC WG Chair by 1 February 2015*).

Meeting Humanitarian Challenges in Urban Areas

Hansjoerg Strohmeyer, OCHA (facilitator), noted, in opening the session, that urban responses were a game-changer that challenged humanitarian operations. The Chair of the Reference Group (RG) on Meeting Humanitarian Challenges in Urban Areas (MHCUA), George Deikun, UN-Habitat, introduced the topic and draft paper for the IASC Principals, noting that the urban agenda is increasingly important for humanitarian organizations, as the world’s population becomes more urbanized and the potential for conflicts over resources is looming. Different regions and cities face different issues, such as urban violence in Latin America and the Ebola response in West Africa.

There is a feeling that the humanitarian community is still not “fit for purpose” to respond to urban challenges, while the outcomes of the IASC MHCUA strategy 2011 have been limited. Technical capacity is lacking early on in crises. Greater coordination with municipalities is needed and coordination modalities should look more at area-based interventions, rather than traditional sector responses. Communities need to be better engaged as part of response and local leadership needs to be given more attention. On the positive side, a number of new tools, policies and partnerships have been developed by IASC organizations, such as an increasing use of cash transfers. A few organizations are trying new approaches to address urban livelihoods, preparedness and resilience, but more needs to be done to be relevant in cities.

WG members expressed appreciation for the problem analysis outlined in the paper, but also called for increased emphasis on achievements. It was suggested that the Strategic Response Plans (SRPs) should be analysed for their inclusion of urban issues, where appropriate. The proposal for urban advisors on Humanitarian Country Teams (HCT) was not seen to fit the nature of the problem, with something more ambitious and less fragmented needed. It was suggested that a sectoral approach was needed, with the correct point of contact for advisors being the cluster level to influence those designing programmes.

The request for the RG to be reconstituted as a Task Team was seen as unnecessary. The RG was requested to revise the Action Plan, and to include a scoping to see what new manifestations of humanitarian response would be required in different parts of the world. On advocacy, the WG suggested to lead the advocacy itself and to prepare key messages for the Principals to feed into different processes, such as the Post-2015 conference and Habitat III.

***Action Points:***

1. Requested the MHCUA Reference Group to revise the paper for the December Principals meeting, including more positive elements and higher-level recommendations. (Action by: *Meeting Humanitarian Challenges in Urban Areas Reference Group, by 12 November 2014*).
2. Requested the RG to revise the Action Plan for the MHCUA Strategy for 2015-2017 and to include a scoping of potential new humanitarian responses that may be required (Action by: *Meeting Humanitarian Challenges in Urban Areas Reference Group, by 15 April 2015*).

IASC Review

Arafat Jamal, UNHCR (facilitator), noted that WG had an opportunity to see if there was a WG position to convey to the consultants for their report. Sara Pantuliano, HPG/ODI and leader of the team conducting the review gave a brief update on the progress to date. She noted that the primary goal of the session was to solicit WG views on the role and functioning of the Principals; how the WG sees itself and the various bodies in the IASC; the kind of interactions that could better support decision-making; and input relating to membership criteria. She noted the broad terms of reference. HPG/ODI will interview those both inside and outside the IASC, but with a focus on the Principals’ role. However, she noted that it is not possible to fully review the working of the Principals without considering the whole IASC structure. Without pre-empting the final outcomes, she noted that preliminary feedback had identified a need for a stronger supporting body. Concerns had also been raised about the overall set up, given that current structures seem to drag Principals into more technical and operational issues. Feedback had also included a range of proposals on structures, including doing away with the WG and going back to one mandated body – whether EDG or WG – and/or to have a much stronger secretariat at WG-level seniority. Some concerns had been expressed that two secretariats weaken the IASC.

During the discussion of the relevance of the IASC, and role of the WG in supporting the Principals, there was a request for clarification from the Principals on their expectations of the WG: should its role be to look at a future vision, as suggested by Yves Daccord, or to focus rather on developing strategies for policy? It was suggested that the emphasis of the report should be on strengthening the IASC as a whole, instead of its sub-components, recommending attention to the relevance of the whole IASC, and the functional modalities to support it. Otherwise, there is a risk of further fragmentation, instead of helping to set a strategic direction. The need for a common vision and agenda that pulls the WG, EDG, and Principals together was stressed and members emphasized the importance of links between the WG and EDG.

Reflecting on the challenge initially posed by Yves Daccord, the need for the WG to take more space to advise, and to stop waiting for direction from the Principals, was reiterated. The value of the IASC as a convenor and as the only entity with UN, NGO and Red Cross/Red Crescent participation, from its creation, was highlighted. It was also noted that, unless there is a change to Resolution 46/182, the IASC remains the guardian of principled Dunantian humanitarianism, which is important when talking about new actors that do not subscribe to the same principles. The lack of an external image for IASC was raised. Sharing figures and messages, collectively, on how many people IASC organizations have helped and the combined spend on humanitarian response could give a much stronger voice and profile to the Emergency Relief Coordinator or individual Principals in various forums.

In discussing membership, the lack of clear membership criteria – beyond “operational capacity” and adherence to humanitarian principles – was raised as a concern. Some members suggested that the IASC needs to be more inclusive and allow for the participation and voices of other actors, including operational NGOs, to come through. The role of regional IASC bodies, which are not formally linked, and how they interact with the IASC should be considered. The IASC is sometimes too focused on headquarters, even though the IASC community is much broader. It was suggested that equal ownership and a stronger sense of impartiality in running the IASC, may go some way in strengthening and getting more predictable and higher level participation in different bodies. While it was noted that extending membership too broadly could hamper effective functioning, a range of options might be explored, including additional seats for other actors, including States and communities affected by crises, private companies engaged in humanitarian action, as well as donors, on a rotational basis and/or ad hoc configurations of small groups of members to consider specific issues. It was stressed that membership also implies a commitment to appropriate participation and the factors that encourage consistency of attendance of Principals should be examined.

The Chair noted the range of views to feed into the reflection. Sara Pantuliano indicated that these would inform the options presented to Principals, including on formal structures and/or ad hoc configurations that can be adaptable to the issue or crisis and take account of different participation needs. The WG was invited to send further input to the team.

UNMEER and the Ebola Response

Rick Brennan, WHO (facilitator), opened the session providing an update on WHO’s reorganization to respond to Ebola and on the strategy in place to stop the transmission of the virus. The outbreak has affected every sector, including the economy, education, food security, and livelihoods. A massive scale up across the board has been necessary for the four pillars of the strategy, namely for disease surveillance and contact tracing; case management; safe burials; and social mobilization.

David Nabarro, UN Special Envoy on Ebola, provided an overview of the genesis of the crisis and current response, praising the collective endeavour to support the response. He noted that Ebola had flourished largely due to the funeral and healing practices in the countries affected. Controlling the transmission rate required getting communities to own the response, to change practices, and to isolate themselves if ill.

The UN system effort is brought together under a new structure, representing a completely different command and control model: a health mission modelled on a peacekeeping mission. Different UN entities are in charge of different activities. NGOs and IOM are running treatment centres, and there has been a massive surge of medical teams. Many UN entities have implants in the UN mission. The World Bank will announce a contribution to train, support and deploy international workers. The work to maintain essential services in the countries, broader than the Ebola response alone, is deemed crucial.

With the changes in people’s behaviours, along with the doubling of beds for treatment –supplementing MSF’s exceptional work – and improved contact tracing, disease surveillance and rapid response, the hope is that the rates will reduce by the end of the year. The fear remains that, if it spreads further in neighbouring countries or to other parts of the world, then there will be a global health crisis. Constant vigilance, even when success seems imminent, is required. The world is likely to conclude “never again” and may look at a global health programme that is ready to respond to this kind of health emergency in the future.

During the discussion, IASC organizations raised questions around: contingency planning in the region; preparedness; ensuring that human rights are central to the response; closing the coordination gaps between community-based structures and UNMEER structures; and plans to strengthen health systems in the longer-term. Concerns were raised that testing is still quite slow. Hindering the response is the lack of funding for safe burials and communication with communities and there is a need to call for more balanced funding between the different pillars of the strategy. Longer-term funding is also a concern. Several concerns were also raised about the duty of care to staff, and particularly treatment for national staff and the availability of medical evacuations. There are fears that insurance companies will start refusing treatment and there was a call for UNMEER to push for more consistent insurance policies that provide coverage. The risk of stigmatization of people returning from the region and the impact that would have on attracting staff was also raised.

In response, the Special Envoy noted that it is not just a health issue, given the other consequences for the communities and countries. There is also a need to focus on human rights in the response, particularly when it comes to quarantine. Getting treatment centres for staff – no matter whom they work for or where they are from – is a top priority. He asked the IASC to continue the pressure through their Principals with governments on the importance of duty of care. There are funds available through a foundation if insurance companies do not cover treatment costs. Five European countries now accept responders who need medical evacuation (on a case-by-case basis).

To date, civil-military coordination seemed to be working well within UNMEER, as the troops have been functioning in a non-militarized way. If troops were withdrawn too early, preserving stability would be impacted. A better job needs to be done on communications, highlighting that if there is aggressive and early treatment, the survival rate is 90%, and on pushing back against stigmatization, as the Secretary-General had done recently. The SG’s recent comments would be shared with the WG to inform advocacy. The Chair offered the WG as a forum for the Special Envoy to use in future.

Progress on IASC Priorities

The four IASC Task Teams (TTs) updated the WG on the progress made during 2014, as well as activities currently underway and planned for 2015.

**Preparedness and Resilience:**

Sikander Khan, UNICEF/WG Co-Sponsor, noted that the work on preparedness is currently more advanced than on resilience, which will gain more momentum next year. Tony Craig, WFP/TT Co-Chair, provided an overview of the work done including the development of Emergency Response Preparedness (ERP) guidance; the Common Framework for Preparedness endorsed by the IASC, UNDG and ISDR; the launch of the Index for Risk Management (INFORM) on 19 November; and a bi-annual Early Warning and Early Action (EWEA) Report that will link more closely with the three-monthly outlook completed by the EDG. The TT has further given input into the post-2015 DRR Framework. On the resilience side, Sandra Aviles, FAO, noted that the TT recruited a consultant who – together with development actors under the UN Development Group Task Team on Transitions – is developing principles and guidance, which should be completed in December.

There was general consensus from the WG that resilience continues to be an issue to be further unpacked, and the guidance being developed was welcomed. Members also noted that there are a multitude of related initiatives in general and that a mapping of some of these processes and activities would help ensure alignment and avoid overlap.

**AAP/PSEA:**

Arafat Jamal, UNHCR/WG Sponsor, stated that the TT has been working on creating a culture of accountability. The challenge is building capacity and institutionalizing AAP/PSEA. Some of the procedures need to be simplified in order to make them operational. He noted that only five IASC organizations had responded to the letter from the ERC and the AAP Champion, Jasmine Whitbread, asking them to share progress made, challenges, and future plans and requested all IASC organizations to respond. The lack of active participation of TT members, despite having over 200 members on the mailing list was a concern. Issues of concern to the TT, including the connections between PSEA and AAP, would be discussed at the retreat on 21 November.

IOM noted that the PSEA Champion, William Swing, will announce at the upcoming Principals meeting that he will call a Senior PSEA Focal Points meeting in the first quarter of 2015. On the possibility of AAP coming out of the World Humanitarian Summit as a principle, caution was raised about opening up the package of humanitarian principles. If necessary, the Chair said the WG could revisit how the PSEA component is being addressed through the current TT structure if the work is being diluted.

**Humanitarian Financing:**

Melissa Pitotti, ICVA/TT Co-chair, noted that the issue of humanitarian financing underpins the work of the entire IASC. The TT has completed a review identifying NGOs’ challenges to access country-based pooled funds; completed a paper to identify good practices to accelerate CERF implementation; and commissioned a project on the future of humanitarian financing ([www.futurehumanitarianfinancing.org](http://www.futurehumanitarianfinancing.org) or @futureHF on Twitter). Feedback was sought from IASC organizations on the TT’s 2015 activities and a request made to alert the Co-Chairs to work being done related to financing to ensure a good overview when planning activities.

Members emphasized that the ever-widening gap between needs and funding and the current way of doing business is unsustainable. Humanitarian response and development should be brought together and more emphasis around risk management must take place, not only by donors, but also by national governments. It was highlighted that IASC actors are possibly missing out on the various funds being created around climate change, in particular those related to loss and damages. Lessons learned, such as in the case of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia money for Iraq, should be explored to identify improvements to avoid waste. Initiatives both to unlock more money, but also to better manage the money received, should be explored.

**Revitalizing Principled Humanitarian Action:**

Brian Tisdall, ICRC/WG Sponsor and Ingrid Macdonald, NRC/TT Co-Chair, noted that the TT is developing a toolkit on the impact of counter-terrorism measures on humanitarian response; a risk management survey was conducted to identify areas for possible harmonization of risk management practices; and a civ-mil decision-making tool is being developed. An integration paper was developed, which will enable the TT to support Integrated Assessment Policy (IAP) implementation by engaging HCTs and field colleagues. The TT requested guidance from the WG on dissemination of tools and guidance that exists to ensure implementation in the field; in bringing together work done by the various TT on risk management; and in engaging with HCTs.

During the discussion, the issue of disseminating the Guidelines on the Use of Armed Escorts was raised and queried what process the IASC has to ensure broad dissemination, suggesting the IASC potentially needs a more effective communication strategy. It was agreed that the emphasis should be placed on simplifying existing guidance and on implementation on the ground. The request made at the March 2013 WG for the TT to provide “a set of possible options, based on practitioners’ experience and case studies, for humanitarians, HCs, and HCTs working in integrated mission contexts to consider” was reiterated as still being desired. New guidance notes should be short and country teams should be given the flexibility needed to implement. The complementarity and overlap of work being done on risk management across the TTs was again emphasized. The challenge of the merging of two groups has had a diminishing impact on civ-mil issues.

***Action Points:***

1. Requested the IASC Task Teams to prioritize their activities for 2015, indicating clear time lines and target dates for completion of activities. (Action by: *All IASC Task Teams by 31 December 2014*).
2. Requested the IASC Task Teams to shorten their updates to one page, highlighting key achievements, to enable reporting to the Principals in December. (Action by: *All IASC Task Teams by 19 November 2014*).
3. Requested the Task Team on Preparedness and Resilience to map the various activities being carried out on resilience. (Action by: *IASC Task Team on Preparedness and Resilience by 28 November 2014*).
4. Requested the IASC secretariat to compile the list of questions and advice sought by Task Teams for further reflection by the WG. (Action by: *IASC secretariat by 14 November 2014*).

Applying L3s in Slow-Onset and Protracted Crises

Kate Halff (SCHR) presented the guidance on “Applying the System-wide Emergency Activation to Slow Onset and Protracted Humanitarian Crises with Explanatory Note.” The document aims to clarify what L3 declarations are trying achieve in these crises. Following discussion of the note by the WG and EDG, the EDG has already used it when considering activation for Iraq. The explanatory note further clarifies WG comments received, but does not change the substance of the original guidance, which is that the IASC should not only analyse the five criteria for an L3 declaration, but also review the gaps and the existing capacity in-country. The IASC should only activate an L3 system-wide response if it will make a difference in the effectiveness of the response. Objectives should be clearly defined at the onset of the activation and the IASC should decide which protocols are needed. The decision to end activation should be made once the stated goals have been achieved, even if the crisis continues. Donors should have a clear understanding of what the IASC aims to achieve with the declaration.

Several IASC organizations endorsed the note and made a few additional comments, including noting that the key is the connection between early warning and early action. In terms of context analysis, the political economy should also be considered. WFP felt that the paper muddies the water and detracts from the “purest view” of what an L3 means, which could lead to different understandings. WFP felt that there was no need for additional guidance, but that the existing guidance should be adapted to the context as it was intended, regardless of the nature of the crisis. UNICEF called for more clarity on L3 criteria, particularly around exiting and deactivation and was concerned that the paper would result in more questions for the system, including around activation procedures and time frames. UNICEF also suggested that there could be some work with the EDG to look at the criteria, as during the discussions on extending L3s, it was clear that there are no criteria. Kate Halff noted that the paper was originally developed to respond to particular concerns raised in March 2014. Since then, there had been considerable developments and new precedents set around L3s.

Many were concerned that L3 declarations are now being used for political reasons to convey the seriousness of the crisis, and not to declare the level of the response, as originally intended. Declarations are now being used to compete for attention with other L3 declarations. It should be made clear that deactivation does not imply that all the tools that come with an L3 are lost or that attention should be diverted. It was suggested that perhaps the extension of an L3 should be considered a system failure, given that the L3 declaration and responses are meant to ensure appropriate scale-up and response. Others cautioned against that perception. There were mixed views on whether donors should be asked to clarify what their position should be in an L3, with concerns that this would automatically prioritise L3s for them.

A few organizations said that it would be useful to have a system-wide categorization of L2 and L1 crises. Such categories could help trigger greater investments and preventive measures as L3s are partly overused, as it seems the only way to respond to donor pressure for scaled up response.

The Chair concluded by proposing to share the paper with the IASC Principals as a WG contribution to help decision-making on L3 activation in slow-onset and protracted emergencies.

***Action Points:***

1. Agreed to share the “Applying the System-wide Emergency Activation (‘L3 activation’) to Slow-Onset and Protracted Humanitarian Crises with Explanatory Note” with the IASC Principals as a contribution to inform their decision-making and work on L3 activation in slow-onset and protracted emergencies. (Action by: *Chair of the IASC WG by 20 November 2014*).

Priority: Protection

Louise Aubin, UNHCR/Global Protection Cluster Coordinator (facilitator), recapped that the “whole of system” review is intended to be a transparent, independent process. Following finalization of the terms of reference, a competitive tender process was held to identify the consultants. Norah Niland, Co-lead of the consultancy team, noted three phases for the review: a literature review, a series of interviews and an online survey; the development of an inception report; and field case studies. The aim is to provide practical and operational recommendations.

During the discussion, the scope of the “system” was discussed. The review will focus on the humanitarian arena and how humanitarian actors – both old and new – interact with others to ensure recommendations that are realistic and actionable. In looking at the case studies, the team was encouraged to look at a variety of different contexts. Also, looking at the different sectors and actors that can contribute to protection outcomes, beyond just protection-mandated actors, was seen as important. Practical recommendations particularly for Health Clusters, was requested, given that the Ebola response has revealed new issues and protection concerns.

It was also suggested that the team look at the various protection standards to see how they are being used. To what extent do teams get support – both political and practical – to implement global guidelines? The need to closely assess the findings and recommendations of the UN’s Internal Review Panel Report, as well as the Human Rights Up Front Action Plan, in terms of its relevance to the humanitarian community, was also underscored. In relation to protection training, it was suggested that a mapping of the processes would be useful, although admittedly a huge undertaking. The study could look at how international organizations and international NGOs connect with human rights NGOs and whether it is a two-way process. Over the last 10 years, certain themes and processes have been pushed in protection, such as IDP protection, protection in health care, and child protection. It would be useful to ask whether pushing those themes/issues led to a more professional response or to other protection issues, like torture, being neglected. The importance of maintaining a focus on protection outcomes and how different actors and sectors, including those not primarily focused on protection issues, can contribute to these was underlined. The role of the protection cluster, its functioning, its scope of work, and how its work could be improved, were also raised as areas of focus for the study, as well as the effectiveness of the protection response in L3 responses. Preparedness for protection was another potential area of focus. The protection of physical assets in urban areas was raised, given the implications for livelihoods.

The GPC Coordinator highlighted that several donors have provided funding, helping ensure the independence of the review. She requested IASC organizations to indicate how they would engage with, and support, the review, particularly in the country case studies.

The Chair of the WG finally noted that the International Law Commission is working on a possible treaty on the *Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters*. IASC organizations and the WG will be approached to provide comments on the draft articles. A discussion on this topic should take place at a later date.

Working Group Brainstorming Session

The Chair facilitated a brainstorming session to find working modalities to take up the challenges posed by Yves Daccord. A number of suggestions emerged. While there are very interesting initiatives taking place in different areas, not all need to be included in formal agendas, and not everyone needs to be systematically involved. Smaller groups could work on issues, keeping the broader group informed. The plenary WG meetings could also be divided into parallel sessions of different topics. There is a need for the WG to become more nimble: to identify issues to provide some quick policy thinking and to suggest ways forward, without being focused on what has to go to the Principals.

The WG could be viewed as the brain trust of the humanitarian community, tackling issues. But it should not be a locked brain trust: having discussions with other actors, such as the private sector, donors, States, and colleagues from the field could encourage greater innovation. Learning from the World Economic Forum’s ways of operating was suggested, which might also require an investment in the secretariat. It was cautioned that the WG not become preoccupied with policy, but focus more on operational relevance. The WG could focus on issues based on feedback from the field where a gap is seen. Looking three to five years ahead, the WG could identify the issues to look at and sequence them, while also allowing inclusion of ad hoc issues that arise.

The impression that discussions held at the WG must result in decisions or action points often prevents important issues from being discussed early on. Instead of having meetings with pre-formulated agendas and background documents, identifying topics that can be thought through together was suggested. Making better use of Ad Hoc meetings and groupings of members to address issues in a more flexible way and using different means of technology were also recommended. Convening an annual retreat of the WG was also proposed as a way to step back from the regular agenda of the IASC and to consider broader issues of interest/concern within the humanitarian sphere.

The Chair noted that the IASC is a community that should make the most of its diversity of interests. There is a lot of work being done under the rubric of the IASC, which needs to be captured to help brand the IASC, which an empowered secretariat could facilitate. The Chair welcomed secondments to the secretariat, if the WG wishes to strengthen it.

***Decisions:***

1. In order to enable broader thinking on issues of concern, WG discussions should not necessarily be focused on action points, recommendations, or decisions.
2. External actors should be invited to join WG discussions on particular topics to encourage innovative thinking.

***Action Points:***

1. The Chair will share a paper reflecting the suggestions raised and how these may be taken into account in the organization of WG meetings in 2015 (Action by: *WG Chair, by 15 December 2014*)

Gulf State Engagement

Due to time constraints, the discussion on Gulf State Engagement was postponed. FAO suggested that the FAO, World Vision International and CAFOD initiative on humanitarian financing futures, which will focus, inter alia, on Gulf engagement, could inform a future WG discussion of this issue.

World Humanitarian Summit

The discussion on the WHS was postponed to an Ad Hoc WG meeting, to be proposed by three IASC organizations from different constituencies. In preparation, and to see how the IASC could better engage with various WHS processes, a mapping will be developed.

***Action Points:***

1. Undertake a mapping of various WHS processes of concern and relevance to IASC organizations. (Action by: *FAO and OCHA by 20 November 2014*).

Closing Report from the HPC Steering Group, and Activity-Based Costing

Andrew Wyllie, OCHA, presented the activities of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) Steering Group (SG), as well as the recommendations related to taking forward the activity-based costing (ABC) study.

The HPC SG worked on developing the **HPC Reference Module 2.0** and ensuring coherence of its related technical guidance. The preliminary response plan (“flash appeals”) guidance and the MIRA guidance are still being finalized. The Emergency Response Preparedness guidance is almost complete. The WG was asked to consider how the learning and best practice related to the HPC can be gathered and shared.

**Activity-Based Costing (ABC)** is focused on the needs of affected populations, instead of the needs of organizations, so aims to ensure more credible and transparent budgeting. A study conducted on the ABC found that there was not enough documentation of the methodologies to see how the figures were compiled. Nine countries are now applying the ABC approach. The WG was asked to consider the recommended next steps proposed by the HPC SG on the ABC study and the approach.

*On the gathering lessons and sharing best practice around the HPC*, concerns were raised during the discussion about the lack of inclusiveness of the HPC SG and the need for any new group/ consultation to be more inclusive. Comments were also made about the good work done by the HPC SG, which while not intended to be fully representative, brought together members who contributed based on their experience and not as agency representatives. It was suggested that gathering lessons and best practice should be owned by the WG and the EDG. Others questioned whether a group needed to be established under the auspices of the WG. Members raised the point that the work on tools and gathering best practice needs to be done at the technical level, but the final quality review has to ensure broader inter-agency buy-in. The processes need to be differentiated, ensuring a quality review function.

There was no consensus that the WG should establish a formal IASC group to collect lessons learned and finalize outstanding tools. OCHA, therefore, agreed to convene an inter-agency group and invite organizations to join. The group would define its own terms of reference and how it would take tools forward for a quality control. The Chair suggested that quality control, and higher level endorsement, be through the EDG. The need to distribute quickly the final version of the HPC Reference Module 2.0 was reiterated, following the circulation for electronic endorsement in September. It was noted that consensus on some final elements of text are being discussed by UNHCR and OCHA.

*In relation to activity-based costing*, it was suggested that there was a need to look at the problem to be addressed, as concern was expressed over ABC’s value-added. Many noted that more details were still required on ABC, given the complexity of the issue. That nine HCTs were using ABC came as a surprise to several, with more information requested. There was broad agreement that the approach should not be encouraged at this point.

***Decision:***

1. HCs/HCTs should refrain from switching to an activity-based costing approach until there is clarity on why this approach has been proposed and more data is gathered from countries already utilizing it, as well as other possible methodologies to address any issues within the existing Strategic Response Plan guidance.

***Action Points:***

**Humanitarian Programme Cycle Reference Module**

1. OCHA to convene, through an open invitation, an inter-agency group to finalize outstanding HPC tools and identify good practices related to the HPC Reference Module Version 2.0 and its related tools. (Action by: *OCHA by 28 November 2014*).

**Activity-Based Costing**

1. Agreed to establish an inclusive inter-agency group to consider the problem statement for introducing activity-based costing and explore other possible costing methodologies. (Action by: *OCHA by 28 November 2014*).
2. Requested OCHA and the global clusters to proactively collect information in the current planning cycle from those countries applying the activity-based costing approach. This information should be provided to the inter-agency group to inform their discussion. (Action by: *OCHA and Global Clusters, on-going until end of 2015*).

Any Other Business

**Next WG Meeting**

* 10-11 March 2014, in Rome. FAO offered to host.