IASC Humanitarian Financing Task Team – Meeting Notes
21 August 2015

Co-Chairs: Cecilia Roselli (ICVA), Darla Silva (UNICEF)

Agenda
1. Update on Objective 4 (OCHA/FTS)
2. Future of the Task Team in 2016 (co-chairs)

Other business
3. Update on Task Team co-chairs and secretariat
4. Reminder for inputs on donor conditions

1. Update on Objective 4

Nick Imboden, OCHA/FTS gave an update on cross-cutting Objective 4 in the Task Team's workplan: "Improve transparency through strengthening empirical knowledge base on funding flows." Three activities are listed under this objective: Activity 4.1 on synergies between the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) and the Task Team; Activity 4.2 on improving IASC reporting in the Financial Tracking Service (FTS); and Activity 4.3 on creating an online repository of humanitarian financing documents.

Activities 1 and 2 are linked. Expanding the IATI standard better to capture humanitarian financing data will lead to improved reporting to FTS. FTS will in future be able to pick up data in the IATI standard, and all aid agencies are encouraged to use IATI as the standard of reporting to FTS, and FTS will prioritize reports in the IATI standard. IATI is a common standard on how to report on financial flows and how to link financial flows to activities. The FTS database is being redesigned to be more flexible. It will be a flow-based architecture, which could include any kind of financial flow. Currently FTS is limited to recording only the first part of a contribution flow, from donor to first recipient; sub-grants are currently not recorded. FTS will add the capacity to show all funding flows but will only be able to do so if information is available/reported.

IATI provides a lot of flexibility but does not aggregate data into an overall, meaningful picture. FTS will help resolve this problem by bringing IATI flows together and interlinking them, with the FTS team curating the data. This will increase the usefulness of both IATI and FTS. In future, this could open the potential to aggregate funding flows all the way from donor to final implementing partner. FTS would also be able to link with other data initiatives.

IATI was first build primarily for development flows, linked to OECD/DAC standards. OCHA has now proposed a humanitarian extension for IATI and has drafted a blue print. OCHA proposes to convene a small technical working group with members of the Task Team and then share this with IATI. Some agencies have already expressed interest to work on the activities under Objective 4, others are welcome to join. A first meeting could take place in mid-September.

In addition to the parts of Activity 4.2 that are directly linked to Activity 4.1, OCHA has also developed a new FTS site, which is currently in a beta version. Mr Imboden presented the new site

(ftsbeta.unocha.org). The site includes a new guide that clearly describes the objectives of FTS, explains appeals and constraints, explains what data is not included such as remittances, and explains the process behind the scene. The new site includes visualizations of trends over time. In the coming weeks, it will be possible to export FTS graphs in other websites and post them on social media. HFTT members are invited to provide feedback on the new site (preferably through the online feedback feature), keeping in mind that it is a beta site and not a final version.

Ysabel Fougery, IFRC, said that IFRC was working to improve its reporting to FTS. The new FTS site will help with visualizations but will the underlying raw data still be available? Yes. Mr Imboden showed how raw data could be downloaded. The new FTS website does not yet cover all of the functionality of the old custom search but will in future. For now both the old website and the old custom search function are still available. Axel Bisschop, UNHCR, asked whether any discussions have taken place to improve the quality of the underlying data. Organizations track data in different ways and it can be difficult to link specific types of income to expenditures, especially for unearmarked funding. The FTS guide should be clear about issues that cannot currently be covered, and some of these issues can be removed from the list as functions are added to the site. Together with OECD/DAC data, which are two or three years old, FTS is the main source of information for humanitarian financing data. Mr Imboden said that the new database and site will help OCHA engage with new types of funding flows. OCHA will also work to build automatic data exchanges with the biggest agencies. OCHA will continue to ensure that the FTS team is well resourced. FTS will be clear about what it can and cannot do. OCHA realizes that data quality provides the biggest potential for improvement. Mr Bisschop suggested conducting a pilot study of a country by comprehensively mapping income and expenditure, as UNHCR has done for its own income and expenditure. It may be that less money is spent than received. Caroline Nichols, InterAction, asked about the risk of duplicating data, if several sources (e.g., a donor, a pooled fund, a UN agency, an NGO) report the same funding flow. Mr Imboden said that all types of organizations were encouraged to report funding and that the FTS team would make an effort to match reported funding to avoid duplication. Using IATI will help with this. For example, NGOs that implement projects for a UN agency could report their own but also the UN agency's project or contribution code. Matching reported funding will be a manual task. Rachel Criswell, World Vision, said that the Task Team had committed to using the IATI standard [and FTS] to ensure transparent reporting when recommending not to use the proposed Integrated Financial Accountability Framework (IFAF) in November 2014. Mr Imboden encouraged all organizations to start reporting to IATI but said that the IATI standard will be improved with the humanitarian extension. IATI is on standby to implement this extension as soon as the technical working group agrees to its blue print. Angela Hinrichs, FAO, asked whether there will be any changes for organizations reporting contributions with the new FTS database and site. Mr Imboden said that with the new website there are no changes. The new database will be launched in March 2016. Organizations can then decide to continue reporting in the same way as now or switch, for example, to the IATI standard. OCHA will discuss this with organizations bilaterally. Darla Silva, UNICEF and co-chair of the Task Team, said that there was sometimes a delay in showing data reported by organizations on the FTS website. It is important to manage expectations and improve the underlying data. Mr Imboden said the blue print for the IATI humanitarian extension could be shared with the Task Team to prepare for the mid-September meeting of the technical working group. Mr Imboden said he would look into delays in showing data on the FTS website; UNICEF and FTS agreed to bilaterally discuss details further. Mr Imboden said

sectoral data is only as accurate as the underlying data; it is difficult for FTS to estimate a sectoral breakdown if it is not reported. If reported data are incomplete, this creates more work and may lead to delays. Many issues should be mitigated once the new system is launched next March.

Nicolas Rost, OCHA/CERF and Task Team secretariat, gave an update on Activity 4.3. Over the past months, ReliefWeb has updated missing documents to its humanitarian financing sub-site, which, as agreed, will function as the repository. A list of tags for these documents still needs to be finalized. Further details will be shared with the Task Team by email once available.

Action   Task Team members to express their interest to participate in the IATI technical working group

Task Team members to provide comments on the new FTS beta website

2. Future of the Task Team

Ms Pitotti said that the Task Team should agree on a proposal to the IASC Working Group and Principals. The co-chairs have drafted a one-pager on the future of the Task Team, which is open for comments and discussion. The IASC and Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative are interested in the continued work of the Task Team, and the Task Team's future work could be further linked to the High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing, the IASC Task Team on Principled Humanitarian Action, and the IASC group on Accountability to Affected People.

Anne Street, CAFOD, asked whether the overall IASC architecture, with task teams and reference groups, would remain in place in 2016. Tanja Schümer, IASC secretariat, said it was premature to answer this question. The Working Group will meet in October and the Principals in December. The Working Group will discuss what has been achieved, what has worked and what has not. The Principals will decide on the future architecture of the IASC in December, although details may still have to be figured out after December. The task teams should provide concrete inputs to guide this discussion by the Working Group and Principals.

Ms Pitotti summarized the feedback received from Task Team members who said that the Task Team should focus its discussions on issues that are not discussed elsewhere, and should not duplicate discussions that take place elsewhere.

Ms Silva said the Task Team should agree on a specific focus and not try to do everything. It should not be limited to information sharing. Julian Srodecki, World Vision, said that humanitarian financing will continue to be an important issue for the humanitarian community. Given the complexity system and the dynamic environment, new issues will certainly come up. The Task Team could, for example, further work on making the financing system more effective for local and national actors. Ms Nichols said that the IASC has appreciated and received well the work of the Task Team but moving forward some aspects of the Task Team's work may not be IASC priorities. Therefore the Task Team might consider becoming a Reference Group so that we can pursue work that is important and benefits from both NGO and UN inputs but not be tied to IASC priorities. Ms Schümer said that if the Task Team did not want to formulate concrete objectives and outputs then it would be more appropriate to transform it into a Reference Group. Ms Fougery said that several important

IASC teams had stopped working in the past and that the Humanitarian Financing Task Team should continue to exist. Ms Criswell encouraged closer links with other Task Teams.

Ms Schümer said that there would not a decision across the board for all task teams, but the Principals would likely make a decision for each Task Team and Reference Group. The Working Group only expects a one-pager from the Task Team, not a detailed workplan. Mr Rost said that the current workplan of the Task Team will likely be implemented by year-end. Thus, an extension to complete the workplan will likely not be necessary. Ms Silva said that transforming the group into a Reference Group is an interesting option as it would provide more flexibility to adjust its plan during the year. Mr Bisschop said that sharing information via the Task Team was important because there are so many humanitarian financing initiatives underway (e.g., the High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing, the World Humanitarian Summit), even if this was not the main objective of the Team. The original objective of the predecessors of this group was to provide updates on CERF, country-based pooled funds, and other funds. Ms Schümer said that if policy recommendations are not sufficiently picked up by the WG and Principals, then the Task Team should highlight this, and try to formulate more concise, coherent policy guidance.

Ms Pitotti said that the co-chairs would take the feedback into account and revise the one-pager accordingly. It will be shared with the whole Task Team by email, together with the proposal to transform the Task Team into a Reference Group.

Action   Co-chairs to share revised one-pager on the future of the Task Team for comments

Co-chairs to submit one-pager to IASC secretariat by mid-September

Other Business

3. Update on Task Team co-chairs and secretariat
Ms Silva said she was moving on to a new position in UNICEF. Task Team members should express their interest if they would like to act as co-chair for the next two months. Mr Rost said he was moving on to a new position and that the CERF secretariat will continue to cover secretariat support to the Task Team.

Action   Task Team members to express interest in interim co-chair position

4. Reminder for inputs on donor conditions
Mr Rost and Gemma Glorioso, WFP, reminded all Task Team members to submit comments on the draft key messages on donor conditions and to provide key examples of how donor conditions have hindered humanitarian work by the end of August.

Action   Task Team members to submit inputs on donor conditions

Participants

Location	Name	Agency
New York	Michael Jensen	OCHA/CERF
	Nicolas Rost (secretariat)	OCHA/CERF
	Darla Silva (co-chair)	UNICEF
Geneva	Axel Bisschop	UNHCR
	Laura Calvio	OCHA/FTS
	Cinzia Faiella	UNHCR
	Ysabel Fougery	IFRC
	Nick Imboden	OCHA/FTS
	Melissa Pitotti (co-chair)	ICVA
	Raquel Santos Garcia	FAO
	Tanja Schümer	IASC secretariat
By phone/Webex	Rachel Criswell	World Vision
	Gemma Glorioso	WFP
	Angela Hinrichs	FAO
	Shannon Howard	WFP
	Paulette Jones	WFP
	Jordan Menkveld	IOM
	Zu Mian	Mercy Malaysia
	Julian Srodecki	World Vision
	Anne Street	CAFOD