

IASC News Update - March 2015

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Inter-Agency Standing Committee**News**

News and Highlights from the IASC Community

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Many families must resort to poor water sources for daily living. Chronic diarrhoea consequently affects over half of the children among some displaced communities. Credit: Yemen Humanitarian Team.

LATEST NEWS

Humanitarian crisis escalates in Yemen

As of 23 March conflict in Yemen escalated significantly. Clashes between Houthi fighters and other parties intensified mainly in the south. On 26 March, air strikes were launched targeting Houthi targets and military installations, affecting 13 of Yemen's 22

Governorates. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), escalating violence had by the end of March killed 361 people and injured 1,345 – many of whom are civilians. Displacement is increasing at a fast pace. There are immediate humanitarian needs (casualties, protection, WASH) but access has been severely constrained by ongoing clashes in the south and the unpredictability of air strikes in the north. Several organizations have evacuated or are in the process of evacuating their staff.

US\$3.8 billion pledged for the Syria crisis

International donors pledged 3,8 billion US\$ on 30 March at the Kuwait III conference in an expression of continued solidarity with the millions of children, women and men affected by the devastating crisis in Syria, now in its fifth year. This support comes as the appalling humanitarian situation inside Syria continues its downwards spiral: some 12.2 million people, including 5.6 million children, now need humanitarian assistance. An increase of twelve times as compared to the start of the crisis four years ago.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

- Emergency Response for Vanuatu after Tropical Cyclone Pam: HC appointed and Flash Appeal launched.
- 2015-2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction approved, setting targets and priorities for action.
- 88th IASC Working Group Meeting held in Rome on 10 and 11 March.
- New partnership in the Ebola-affected countries launched by WFP and WHO.



Vanuatu. Credit: Joe Lowry/IOM

Emergency Response for Vanuatu Tropical Cyclone Pam

Tropical Cyclone Pam struck Vanuatu on 13 March, causing widespread damage across all six provinces of the archipelago and affecting an estimated 166,600 people. The main humanitarian issues are lack of safe drinking water, insufficient access to food, need for emergency shelter and medical facilities and supplies as well as insufficient access to people in need. To support the Government in responding to the cyclone, ERC Valerie Amos designated Ms. Osnat Lubrani (current Resident Coordinator for Fiji with multi-country coverage in the region) as the new Coordinator for Vanuatu for the upcoming three months. A [Flash Appeal Emergency Response Plan](#) was launched on 24 March, seeking US\$29.9 million to cover the most immediate needs.

Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction

The [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#) for the period 2015-2030 was approved setting targets and priorities for action which will lead to a substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health. Food security and nutrition were considered as key elements in the road map for building resilience. As disasters increase food insecurity and malnutrition by destroying land, livestock, crops and food supplies, and with more than 80 per cent of hungry people living in disaster-prone areas and in degraded environments, the Sendai framework is a milestone in the international community's commitment to eradicate hunger and poverty.

88th Working Group Meeting

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on humanitarian challenges highlighting the unprecedented disrespect for human rights and international law worldwide, the need to keep holding governments accountable, to speak out for human rights and upholding the right to asylum.

Day 1 was devoted to discussions on terrorism and counter terrorism, with panel members from the UN Counter Terrorism Executive Directorate/Al Qaeda and Taliban Monitoring Committee, Harvard Law School Program on International Law & Armed Conflict, WFP, Concern Worldwide, NRC, OCHA and the UN. The discussions focused on outlining opportunities for humanitarians to enter the debate to safeguard humanitarian action and principles; key challenges and impacts of counter-terrorism measures on humanitarian action as well as good practices for humanitarian organisations to minimize risk and negotiating access. Practical action points were developed and taken forward.

Data Revolution was a next topic: opportunities and challenges of data analysis, in particular the linkages with the collective decision-making, legacy protection and duplication reduction, technology optimization, capacity challenges faced by government and partners that are excluded from digital revolution, lack of disaggregated data by sex and age and lastly the need for a common approach.

Key findings from the Report on the "Future of Humanitarian Financing" prepared by CAFOD, World Vision and FAO under the work plan of the IASC Task Team on Humanitarian Financing were endorsed by the WG and will be submitted to the High-Level on Humanitarian Financing. The report highlights main challenges such as a demand for humanitarian funding that exceeds the supply due to the limited number of donors, a financial architecture that creates huge inefficiencies, and a system that is not effectively connected to other aid flows, for instance remittances or development aid.

A joint IASC approach towards the WHS, feedback to the Philippines Evaluation, the Whole of System protection review and the United Nations and NGOs security collaboration framework "Saving Lives together" were also discussed and taken forward. The request for an Ad Hoc Working Group meeting on the review of the 2008 IASC Gender Equality in Humanitarian Action Policy Statement was approved.

WFP-WHO Partnership in Ebola-affected countries

WHO and WFP launched a new partnership in the Ebola-affected countries of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The arrangement combines the logistics strength of WFP with WHO's public health expertise to help get the current Ebola outbreak down to zero cases in West Africa. WFP and WHO will combine their expertise in more than 60 priority districts and prefectures. WFP will provide logistical support to WHO, such as computer equipment, phones and stable internet connectivity, so that disease 'detectives' have the resources they need to share information critical to tracking and stopping the virus. WFP also manages the fleet of rugged vehicles carrying WHO social anthropologists and epidemiologists to isolated villages. The partnership is a learning opportunity for the future, informing the capacities to launch joint operations during large scale emergencies. The platform also establishes an alert and response infrastructure for future crises.

IASC EVENTS IN MARCH

IASC events are organized on an ad hoc basis by the IASC secretariat in Geneva and New York

Area C of the West Bank: The role of Humanitarian Assistance in the Context of Forcible Transfer

20 March, Geneva: Mr. Itay Epshtain, Project Manager of the West Bank Protection Consortium, Norwegian Refugee Council, provided a comprehensive overview of the challenges faced by humanitarian agencies in the Area C of the West Bank. Aiming at the protection of Palestinians in the West Bank by providing humanitarian assistance to communities facing and having experienced individual and mass forcible transfer. Itay also elaborated on the peculiarities of the normative aspects of the humanitarian assistance within the occupied Palestinian Territory, such as the conceptualization of forcible transfer and the policies and practices of humanitarian actors in relation to forcible transfer in Area C.

Briefing on Establishing Inter-Agency Community Based Complaints Mechanisms

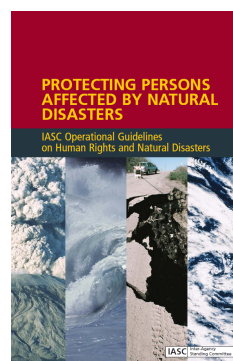
24 March, New York: a briefing by Ms. Tristan Burnett, the Global Project Coordinator from the Prevention from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Pilot Project on establishing Inter-Agency Community Based

Upcoming Events

Geneva, 15 April (tbc): Meeting with the Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria.

Geneva, 22 March (tbc): Briefing by the Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator in Sudan on the humanitarian and security situation in Darfur.

PRODUCT OF THE MONTH



Protecting Persons Affected by Natural Disasters - IASC Operational Guidelines on Human Rights and Natural Disasters

Complaints Mechanisms was held and coordinated by the International Organization for Migration, involving most of the agencies involved in the IASC Accountability to Affected Populations Task Team. The project was launched first in Ethiopia through International Medical Corps (IMC) and UNHCR and then in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) through Save the Children. The project focuses on victim assistance, complaint follow up, prevention and lessons learnt. A series of focus groups were held with different vulnerable groups within the community to understand what methodology would work best for this group. It was decided to use suggestion boxes, male and female focal points, referrals from GBV workers and referrals from refugee incentive workers. The project will finish by December 2015 and Lessons Learnt will be compiled and shared with the Humanitarian Coordinators. A workshop is planned at the end of the year to look at any tools or documents produced.

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Other developments of interest in the humanitarian field include the following:

OCHA released the [2014 Humanitarian Overview entitled "Fragmented Lives"](#) for the occupied Palestinian territories on 26 March. The report concludes that humanitarian needs are driven by practices related to Israel's prolonged occupation and recurrent escalations of armed conflict.

The study [An Act of Faith Humanitarian Financing and Zakat](#), undertaken by the Global Humanitarian Assistance Programme, aims at providing an overview of innovative sources of faith-based giving, and Islamic funding in particular.

The ["Home Sweet Home"](#) Report on housing practices and tools that support durable solutions for urban IDPs, was launched in collaboration between IDMC and MIT Displacement Research and Action Network.

IASC SUBSIDIARY BODIES

Recent Developments

Humanitarian Financing Task Team (HFTT): The study undertaken by the "Future of Humanitarian Financing" initiative will be launched at the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment in June. At

Upcoming events

WEBINAR: Task Team on Accountability to Affected Populations, including Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (TT AAP / PSEA): On 16 April, the IASC Senior Transformative Agenda Implementation Team (STAIT), supported by the

the HFTT meetings in March, an update was provided on the status of the Secretary General's High-level Panel on Humanitarian Financing. The Task Team also discussed WFP's evaluation of the use of pooled funds as well as the results of study on the return on investment for emergency preparedness undertaken jointly by WFP and UNICEF. Furthermore, the strategic [Study on the Added Value of a Reformed Central Emergency Response Fund](#) (CERF), which examines whether CERF should increase its funding target and the [Review of The Potential for Assessed Funding for the Central Emergency Response Fund](#) were presented.

Global Protection Cluster Task Team on the Protection Priority (GPC TT PP): The Task Team is currently finalizing the Whole-of-System of Protection review which is expected to be finalized by the end of April. Following the Whole-of System of Protection review, an overarching IASC Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action would be developed. A dialogue with the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) and the Human Rights Up Front is being sought, ensuring mainstreaming protection across all main WHS thematic areas.

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Reference Group: Since the "[IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support \(MHPSS\) in Emergency Settings](#)" were published in 2007, they have been disseminated widely and have been translated into several languages including Arabic, Chinese, French, Japanese, Nepali, Spanish and Tajik. The recent review '*How are we doing?*' looks at the awareness, utilization, and institutionalization of the Guidelines within

Task Team on AAP/PSEA, will hold a [webinar](#) entitled "Accountability to Affected People – Taking Account, Giving Account and Being Held to Account – Buzzwords or Benefits for People in Crises?". For all those interested in how we can make the humanitarian system work better for people affected by disasters and humanitarian emergencies, this webinar will focus on exploring what changes we should expect in humanitarian operations as a result of greater accountability to affected people. Furthermore, a [Helpdesk](#) to share knowledge and information on AAP/PSEA will be launched during this webinar which will be conducted in two 90-minute sessions at 9:00 and 15:00 GMT respectively.

To learn more and to register, please send an email to

transformativeagendawebinars@un.org.

Upcoming Meetings

1 April: Gender Reference Group

9 April: Reference Group on Meeting Humanitarian Challenges in Urban Areas

13 April: Task Team on Accountability to Affected Populations and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

15 April: Task Team on Humanitarian Financing

16 April: Senior Focal Points Meeting on the Protection From Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

28 April: Task Team on Revitalizing Principled Humanitarian Action

28 April: Brown-bag meeting

specific agencies; the mainstreaming and integration of the Guidelines across the humanitarian system, and perceptions of any gaps or changes in the relevance and utility of the Guidelines.

Accountability to Affected Populations: Opportunities and challenges to deliver on our commitments

Preparedness and Resilience: The formulation of the UNDG/IASC Guiding Principles on Resilience has been going on since 2014 under the leadership of the UN Working Group on Transition (UNWGT) and the IASC Task Team on Preparedness and Resilience (TTPR), co-led by UNDP, OCHA and FAO. The principles will engender greater partnership and coherence between humanitarian and development actors to promote resilience to all forms of conflict and natural disasters.

For more information or to join the groups, please visit the IASC Subsidiary Bodies [webpage](#).



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The IASC was established under General Assembly Resolution 46/182 (1991) as the primary inter-agency coordination mechanism for humanitarian action in complex and major emergencies. It is a unique forum which brings together UN operational agencies and other humanitarian organizations and is supported by the IASC secretariat. Email: iasccorrespondence@un.org

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