

## IASC PRINCIPALS AD HOC MEETING

### SOUTH SUDAN AND CASH TRANSFERS IN HUMANITARIAN CONTEXTS

4 May 2016

#### Final Summary and Action Points

##### Summary of Discussions:

The IASC met to review the designation of the system-wide Level 3 Emergency (L3) Response for South Sudan, as well as to discuss the findings of the Cash Strategic Task Group. The South Sudan Humanitarian Country Team's (HCT) proposal on deactivation of the system-wide L3 'surge' designation and accompanying measures to maintain the visibility of the crisis and consistency of the international response was endorsed. While the majority of participants were in favour of deactivating the L3 surge mechanism in South Sudan, several participants raised concerns regarding the severity of the food security and nutrition crisis in the country and the precariousness of the political situation. Consequently, a few IASC members noted that they would retain their internal L3 protocols to maintain a scaled-up operational posture. Discussion on the findings of the Strategic Cash Task Group reviewed the evidence-base underpinning existing cash-based programming in the field, determining that further evidence on the multi-purpose use of cash is needed. In closing, the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) thanked IASC Principals for their support not only in chairing and moderating roundtables at the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), but also for their anticipated support for the announcements of plenary sessions on behalf of the UN Secretary-General.

##### South Sudan

*On the review of the L3 response in South Sudan, the following key issues were highlighted:*

- With an assessment that the humanitarian scale-up enabled through the L3 surge response had been successful in meeting its established benchmarks within the remit of the HCT, the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) requested that the L3 be deactivated provided that a number of requested measures were enacted. These measures included: continued protection against poaching of humanitarian staff for other emergencies; commitment of agencies to the prioritization of the response in spite of deactivation; fast-tracking of procurement, human resources and other internal mechanisms; conduct of high-level visits by the principals; promotion of media attention on the situation and continued high-level advocacy; support for an appeal from the ERC for urgent funding; and a request that the Emergency Directors Group (EDG) review the situation in six months given the fluidity of the situation.
- The ERC acknowledged the impressive progress made against the established benchmarks, indicating evidence of the significant scale-up in capacity required to transition the response out of L3 surge status, although concerns about the capacity to deploy assistance into the deep field persisted.
- Welcoming recent political progress towards the implementation of the peace agreement, it was noted that the cessation of hostilities had enabled the provision of assistance and access to some of the most difficult areas. However, the dispersal of violence in the country had actually increased with low-intensity conflict prevalent in a greater number of places across the country. In addition, food insecurity was widespread with 3.9-4.1 million estimated in need of food assistance pending the results of an ongoing Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) exercise. Key challenges in the provision of humanitarian assistance persisted, namely insecurity, bureaucratic impediments impinging on the pre-positioning of supplies, and the passage of restrictive legislation

governing the presence of nongovernmental organizations. South Sudan, meanwhile, faced challenges in mobilizing funding due to donor fatigue with the 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan only 23 per cent funded thus far (US\$302 million out of \$1.29 billion).

*In support of the decision to de-activate the L3 in South Sudan, the following was cited:*

- WHO shared that it would send two missions to South Sudan in the near-term: one focused on the operationalization of the health response and capacity consolidation strategy drafted in November, and one dedicated to expanding disease early warning information, including nutritional data. WHO had recently conducted one health cluster mission assessing ways to further strengthen national and subnational coordination capacity. WHO will assess its internal G3 status and continue to prioritize its response to this crisis.
- UNHCR said that it was deploying a senior-level mission to South Sudan to design a strategy to address the new refugee outflows to Sudan, DRC and CAR. UNHCR further noted that it faced a negative funding situation and proposed that South Sudan be highlighted as a priority concern at the WHS to support resource mobilization efforts.
- UNDP noted that the plan to transition out of L3 status exemplified best practice and should become the norm for other L3 responses. UNDP said the progress on the political front presented an opportunity to fast-track dialogue and prioritization on early recovery initiatives.
- IOM noted that it would retain its L3 protocols throughout the rainy season.

*The following concerns and caveats to deactivation were noted:*

- WFP noted that the food security crisis was expanding to the southwest and northwest of the country, precipitating the refugee outflows that UNHCR had documented. While WFP said it would not stand in the way of deactivation, it said it did not support it and would retain internal L3 mechanisms as an agency to ensure that its response remained commensurate with the severity of food security concerns. WFP also requested that, given the divergent views expressed, there be no development of common external messaging from the IASC on the deactivation to avoid signaling the de-prioritization of the crisis.
- UNICEF supported WFP's position and questioned whether deactivating at this stage would be premature, especially ahead of the rainy season. UNICEF argued that internal communications should reflect the distinction between surge and consolidation to carefully manage messaging and avoid any perceived de-prioritization.
- FAO underlined that it was very concerned about the acute food security situation, citing a cereal deficit of 300,000 tonnes in 2016 and would retain internal L3 protocols for fast-tracking.
- InterAction noted its grave concern on the repressive climate facing civil society actors.
- OCHA voiced concerns that the insecurity and harassment facing aid workers could actually intensify in the current political climate and emphasized that advocacy on the protection of staff must be prioritized as integral to any messaging.

### **Action Points:**

*The IASC Principals agreed to:*

1. Deactivate the IASC L3 surge designation for South Sudan and transition to the consolidation of the surge capacity that the L3 had yielded. (**Action by: IASC Principals, effective immediately**)
2. Request the EDG to monitor consolidation of the surge capacity that the L3 yielded and to review progress in six months to ensure that the response remains commensurate with the prevailing situation. (**Action by: EDG immediately and with review by November 2016**)

3. Implement measures proposed by the HC and HCT following the deactivation, in particular: protection against poaching of staff for other emergency responses; retention of fast-tracking human resource, travel and procurement processes; fundraising and advocacy detailing key roles and milestones for specific actors; prioritization within the CERF Rapid Response window; circulation of a letter to Member States calling for urgent funding by the ERC; and the development and promulgation of disciplined and measured messaging in support of advocacy efforts on the situation. **(Action by: IASC Principals, ERC by May 2016)**
4. Promote and/or undertake high-level visits to South Sudan in 2016, and support regular media attention and high-level advocacy on the humanitarian situation and response, including in the context of the WHS, to avert any perceived de-prioritization of the situation. **(Action by: IASC Principals by end 2016)**
5. Develop a set of “if asked” messages for use only as needed to avoid any perceived conflation of the deactivation of internal L3 surge mechanisms with a downgrading of the crisis, while noting that there should be no proactive public communications. **(Action by: EDG by May 2016)**

### **Cash Transfers in Humanitarian Contexts**

*In reviewing the findings of the Strategic Cash Task Group, the following was highlighted:*

- Principals broadly welcomed the findings of the report of the Strategic Cash Task Group. Findings confirmed considerable innovation by some agencies is taking place and that opportunities already exist to significantly scale up. Noting considerably different levels of cash assistance reached by different agencies, IASC Principals acknowledged the need to scale the use of cash, viewing cash as a modality of assistance rather than an end in and of itself.
- Findings suggested that further work is needed in some areas such as health or nutrition, where the evidence is very limited on the efficacy of multi-purpose cash-based programming but also of other cash transfer modalities, whereas the evidence-base on the use of cash was viewed as mostly available in the food sector. In this regard, WHO’s indication that further work in health would be launched in collaboration with key stakeholders was welcomed. More coordinated needs assessments and response analyses, which are being discussed under the Grand Bargain, would also facilitate such a scale-up.
- IASC Principals were invited to consider country-level opportunities to pursue cash at scale, as well as to share good practices with Colin Bruce of the World Bank from their respective entities for integration in a finalized report.
- The importance of interoperability and protecting data sources, including through developing consumer data mechanisms drawing from standard practice in the private sector, was highlighted.
- The group noted the several options for coordination that were reflected in the report, and agreed that, where feasible and effective, the use of cash should be anchored within existing coordination mechanisms.
- The ERC said that the IASC should convey a common message that the use of cash transfers as a modality to create opportunities and extend assistance merits further exploration to develop an evidence-base, but that this must be based on country-level experience, draw upon a contextual analysis of markets and be foremost people-focused.

### **Action Points:**

*The IASC Principals agreed to:*

1. Share further information on good practices and innovative uses of cash-based programming to Colin Bruce of the World Bank to support finalisation of the Strategic

Cash Task Group's report and to include greater focus on multi-purpose, not only sector-specific, cash transfers. **(Action by: IASC Principals by 20 May)**

2. Convene a follow-up discussion on cash, including the implications of WHS and the Grand Bargain discussions for the findings of the Strategic Cash Task Group, in the context of the June Principals meeting. **(Action by: IASC Principals by 7-8 June)**
3. Discuss possible follow-up actions in the June Principals meeting to carry forward the recommendations of the report of the Strategic Cash Task Group. **(Action by: IASC Principals by 7-8 June)**

*IASC Secretariat, 5 May 2016*