

Minutes of the IASC AAP PSEA Task Team Meeting, 15 February 2018

1. Presentation on development of Inter-Agency Guidelines on Programming with and for Young People in Humanitarian Settings

Katie Tong (Consultant on behalf of the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action)

Background:

Following the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in 2016, the compact for young people in humanitarian action was set-up. Approximately 15 organisations are involved in the compact which is led by UNFPA and ICRC. The compact has 5 core actions; action 1 is about programming (led by UNICEF and NRC); and a core deliverable is to produce a set of practical guidelines for how to work with young people in humanitarian settings. Rationale for the guidelines: 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10-25 in the world population; adolescents and youth are perpetually seen as a potential threat (male) or vulnerable (female); young people have specific multi-sectoral needs and significant capacities for contribution that are not currently fully harnessed; when failing to effectively reach adolescents and youth we lose a whole generation. In short, this is fundamentally about participation and meaningful engagement with young people.

Development of guidelines:

The development of guidelines started in September 2017 with a desk review and some meetings in Geneva. Between October and December approximately 40 key informant interviews were held with a range of colleagues from different organisations working at the global and field levels across different sectors. The core management team of the compact and a group of approximately 200 people will review the first draft of the guidelines and provide feedback.

If any members of the Task team would like to be added to the list of reviewers please let Tanya or Katie know (katie@katieongconsultancy.co.uk).

Feedback can be submitted until the end of March. A series of youth consultations will also happen around the world. Between April and May the feedback will be consolidated into the final draft. The launch of the guidelines is planned for August; between September 2018 and August 2019, the guidelines will be field-tested.

2. Presentation on Language Barriers and Challenges for Accountability

Ellie Kemp (Translators without Borders TWB)

TWB is a US-registered NGO whose goal is to remove the language barriers to knowledge. They work with a large network of volunteer translators around the world and provide simplification services. They also build language support capacity at the local level and raise awareness globally about language barriers. In their experience language barriers in humanitarian action are a critical obstacle for accountability. We all need to ensure less powerful and less multi-lingual people in communities can make their voices heard.

There is a connection between vulnerability and language. Speakers of minority languages often experience multiple layers of disadvantage e.g. income, nutritional status, technological, etc. Language can be seen as a proxy for vulnerability: for whether you can get to a safe place when the fighting starts, whether your crops are likely to fail in a dry year, whether your house can withstand an earthquake, etc. In Nigeria, when TWB tested comprehension of simple materials for IDPs and host communities in Borno State, they found that gender, education levels and mother tongue were the most significant predictors of reading ability in the 2 main local languages – Hausa and Kanuri. Only 9% of female minority language speakers without formal education understood the written material in these languages. Yet data from IOM indicates that over 90% of IDP sites in NE Nigeria are receiving information in Hausa or Kanuri - when there are 28 first languages in Borno State alone. In short, minority language speakers can be some of the most important people to reach and be accountable to - and some of the hardest – in humanitarian situations. Groups who can't speak the official national language or languages are often not able to receive information and less likely to be able to give their opinions on the risks they face or what they need. To note: aid organisations are less likely to employ people who speak minority languages, making this even more challenging.

Internews conducted research in Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh, that showed that minority language speakers were disadvantaged. Findings: 77% lacked the information to make decisions for their families; 62% were unable to speak to humanitarian workers and 73% self-identified as illiterate. Given this, what degree of accountability can we bring? The first step in learning is to work out what we don't know. In TWB's view the humanitarian sector is working with a 'blind spot' in terms of language. Language is absolutely essential for accountability to be effective and for any communications with communities. As a sector we do not routinely collect data on language or make it available in emergencies; without this type of information, organisations develop communication strategies on the basis of potentially unsafe assumptions.

To summarise, language is a significant barrier to accountability and to humanitarian action more generally. **There are a number of things we can do as a sector and within in our organisations:**

- **Collect and share data on language and format preference** – e.g. although most refugees in Turkey speak Arabic, there is a significant population of non-Arabic speaking refugees of various nationalities and languages.
- **Research on language** – e.g. findings in NE Nigeria showed that whilst the majority of people preferred to receive information in their mother tongue, most Fula speakers preferred communication in Hausa: these are practical details to base planning around.
- **Develop multilingual terminology resources** – e.g. In one location, a mine action worker told TWB that she had no way of knowing whether 'land-mine', 'IED' and 'UXO' were all being translated as 'bomb' in some local languages - which would be a serious barrier to effective mine education.
- **Simplify, translate and share core content** – into as many local languages as possible, making it freely available for others to use.
- **Train and support staff** – we often ask colleagues to translate/interpret without supporting them: training, guidance and resources can make a difference when a professional translator or interpreter is not available.

For more information see:

- TWB glossaries: <http://app.translatorswb.org/>
- <https://translatorswithoutborders.org/rohingya-refugee-crisis-response/>
- <https://translatorswithoutborders.org/twb-response-nigeria/>
- www.translatorswithoutborders.org

or contact:

ellie@translatorswithoutborders.org

Points raised

- For the Task Team, TWB has included questions on language into the menu of AAP needs assessment questions in recognition of the importance of identifying affected people's preferred way of communicating and receiving information. (*Coordinator*)
- The issue of language is a highly charged one and can have protection consequences for affected populations. Understanding the historical or political background related to language use and why a population speaks a particular language or does not speak the majority language is important before reasons for it. We therefore need to find the best way, as TWB is doing, to communicate, but there are larger accountabilities to populations of concern that we need to consider when doing so. (*Co-Chair - Preeta*). Agreed by TWB that in any needs assessment or review of language, there needs to be a protection and rights-based approach.

3. Discussion on request for exceptional PSEA meeting

A couple of member agencies have requested an exceptional PSEA meeting; in this part of the meeting we will discuss what an exceptional meeting should cover. Secondly, we will look at media implications and how to deal with any requests, including any requests that go to the Task Team. (*Coordinator*)

How can the Task Team move forward? Ideas for an exceptional meeting:

- *ARC*: ARC had requested an exceptional meeting in response to what has been happening over the last week and before that. Over the last years, since the CAR events, the Task team was established and this is a watershed moment for us and we need a response to this. Arguably, this group is the most well-versed on this topic and we should not be silent right now; the Task Team should be strengthened. We should take advantage of this moment right now.
- *IOM*: Suggestion that an ad-hoc call would need to be soon; DG Swing expected to do a statement on Monday (19 February) on behalf of IOM. But our way forward should include a discussion on this in the event that he would speak on behalf on the IASC as champion for PSEA. Two possibilities: Task Team could come up with common messages and/or recommendations for increased action.
- *Co-Chair – (Mamadou)*: Important to have a collective response on this; our codes of conduct have not reached the expectations that people on the ground should expect; the problem is what needs to be done and implementation on the ground in terms of accountability; we have good documents etc. but the problem is implementation; we also need to have conversations with donors.
- *UNICEF*: This is a good time to look at operational gaps in the field in terms of operationalisation as well as having some kind of statement from DG Swing on behalf of the collective work; especially around strengthening community-based complaints mechanisms and measures; including a call to action on practical steps.
- *Independent (Lucy Heaven-Taylor)*: If we looking at messaging - there is lots of discussion around issues that have come up over and over again over the years – e.g. having a humanitarian passport etc. We need to avoid re-hashing some of these issues and look at what we have already learnt as a group in our messaging.
- *Co-Chair (Preeta)*: In summary:
 - There is a sense that the Task Team should say something about what needs to be done better/differently
 - Need some very high level messaging - perhaps DG Swing's message could speak more to the efforts at the collective level as well as on behalf of IOM.
 - DG Swing has been a consistent champion at the inter-agency level at key points in time over the last few years, regardless of whether this has hit the media or not. Having an ad hoc call on Friday (tomorrow) before he sends a message on Monday is fine but we need to know in advance if he will be likely to speak on behalf of the Task Team. IOM to confirm today if he would be interested in delivering a collective message.
 - If DG Swing is prepared to speak on behalf of the collective about some of the work the Task Team – we should focus our energies here rather than having multiple sets of messages.
- *UNICEF*: To flag - the 4th quarterly report of the UNSG on SEA allegations involving UN Agencies will be released on Tuesday. The special measures report will also be released at some point (date TBC); possibly one week after.
- *Co-Chair (Preeta)*: Does anyone have updates from NY on plans from the UN SEA WG? UNICEF to provide further updates in the ad hoc call.
- *IFRC*: Can the Task Team collect and report on number of cases of SEA collectively? (*Co-Chair – Preeta*): This is not the role of the Task Team. The Task Team's role is to provide support to field operations and partners in terms of strengthening their systems and their responses.
- *IMC*: One of the things we should look at down the line is a conversation about how we approach this as a community. Could the Task Team take leadership to try and re-inforce our collective efforts not just as members of the Task Team but with Governments for dialogue to re-inforce our collective efforts and prioritise this issue. (*Co-Chair – Preeta*): The sensitisation of donors around accountability (more broadly) as well as PSEA specifically is part of the Task Team's role; including bringing them on board to support areas that do work, understand when it doesn't work and why and having that dialogue; including how the donor's incentivise or dis-incentivise a focus on accountability more broadly and actions that will have systemic and sustainable impact in terms of PSEA. This would be welcomed and it is a good opportunity for them to talk to us again now to get their feedback. The Task Team could definitely play this role.
- *UNHCR*: Without pre-empting the discussion we are about to have on the future of the Task Team, to follow on what we have been talking about and channelling donor efforts to support this, there is a need to echo the issue of implementation. The Task Team is uniquely placed in terms of the capacity it has in that it is inter-agency with capacity through the PSEA networks that are being established; we should galvanise efforts around the operational gaps, including strengthening the capacity of feedback systems. We have the helpdesk, which responds to questions, but could take a concerted effort to

take more action as we have the machinery and the skills in place as there is something obviously not working in the system. In addition to statements and conversations with donors, we need to look at actions in the responses.

Agreed Action:

(Co-Chair – Preeta): There will be an ad hoc exceptional meeting tomorrow (Friday 16 February), including to discuss messaging if the DG Swing is open to speak on behalf of the Task Team.

For any media queries to the Task Team:

IASC Secretariat Geneva: The IASC does not have any dedicated communications people in the Secretariat so have been advising colleagues to refer journalists to the relevant agency spokespersons. Notes from the call will be shared with the ERC's office and if there is further guidance, they will inform us. *(Co-Chair - Preeta)* – Member Agencies will be willing to take calls related to their organisation; but in the role of co-chair for this body, are we to understand that we can refer queries to the Task Team to New York? Can the Public Information people in NY take questions? *IASC NY:* The secretariat was in touch with the ERC's spokesperson to seek guidance; for the time being if individual agencies are receiving media requests they should be referred to their individual communications people. They are seeking further clarity on this issue. *(Co-Chair – Preeta)* To re-iterate, this is normal procedure; the issue is around questions that are coming to the Task Team; feedback on this specifically is required from the IASC.

4. Discussion on future of the Task Team

Where we are from the IASC perspective:

IASC NY (Nuhad Hussein Saeed Al Alfi): On 5 February the IASC Deputy Directors met in Geneva. One of the agenda items was to discuss the work of the Subsidiary Bodies. They agreed to recommend to the Principals that the AAP/PSEA Task Team continues. This recommendation has gone to the Principals and they are waiting to hear back from them. *(Coordinator):* Understanding is that the Deputies are not in a position to actually endorse this; this needs to happen at the Principals level; when is this likely to happen? *(IASC NY)* – It has been recommended to the Principals for endorsement but the time-frame is unclear; it is not foreseen to take long.

(Coordinator): Just so everyone is clear the current mandate of the Task Team runs until 31 March; therefore the question is would we expect to hear back before that time? This is very important in terms of resource implications; it's going to be very hard for any Agency to allocate resources to a coordinator's post without a fixed idea/endorsement that the team will actually survive and for how long. *(IASC NY):* This is fully understood but can't speak for the Principals and how long this will take but can only tell us that the issue has gone to them and they do understand the importance of resolving this quickly. According to previous decisions, endorsement has happened fairly quickly.

(Co-chair Preeta): Not sure what this means – a week; two days and not sure if a time-frame was shared with the Principals within which to respond, but to re-iterate the coordinator's point, it is getting very close to the wire now and even impacts our discussion on how some members want to have more of a discussion on PSEA and the possible messaging from DG Swing; if in a month's time the Task Team is closed up this does colour the discussion a bit. *(IASC NY):* Will wrap this up by saying that they do understand the importance of getting this done quickly, and understand that the Subsidiary Bodies want concrete answers; they are following it very closely to ensure it is fast-tracked and that the Subsidiary Bodies do receive an answer in a timely manner.

UNHCR update on co-chair role:

(Co-Chair-Preeta): The coordinator has discussed with some colleagues so it shouldn't come as a big surprise. UNHCR will be stepping-down as co-chair of the Task Team and opening up that space for another agency. The two co-chairs have discussed this and there are two elements to this: (1) to identify another agency that can pick it up for the next period of the Task Team's life, whatever that ends up being; we will hear shortly from the IASC on this and (2) in their view, the role of the coordinator is absolutely critical in terms of taking the work forward in a very concrete, practical, operations oriented manner and to running this Task Team in a way that is responsive, operations-focused and strongly coordinated so that everyone is feeling the same ownership of the work of the Task Team regardless of whether they are co-chairs or otherwise. This last point is so critical because we all own the work equally and the

coordinator has helped us stay this way so whoever picks this up next would need to continue to support the coordinating function at a level that really does deliver something for the larger collective.

From UNHCR's side, we have in OFADEC a very strong partner as co-chair whose organisational principles and mission is very accountability focused; similarly we hope that the UN co-chair who picks this up and supports the coordinator function will be similarly placed to bring a wealth of experience that is very operational to the work of the Task Team. With that in mind, a note has been written to the Deputy ERC (chair of IASC WG) informing her of UNHCR's thinking in this respect. A response has been received; the way forward is for her to inform the WG who would then reach out to agencies to request the next co-chair. Thoughts are welcome. Between now and the end of March we would like to be as responsible as possible in terms of a transition.

Discussion:

Interaction: Does that mean that the coordinator and the co-chair roles will be open? (*Co-Chair Preeti*): This means that UNHCR would not be the second co-chair. OFADEC would continue for some time, although they are looking to step down as well. UNHCR has financed the coordinator's role for the last few years on its own so of course would expect that any agency that steps up in the co-chair role would also finance the coordinator going forward. This would be the strong recommendation, given the experience, to make this Task Team as worthwhile as possible.

(Co-Chair-Mamadou): Would like to repeat what has been said; in terms of allowing others to have the chance to do this. It is the right time for OFADEC to also step-down; a lot of work has been done in the Task Team and there is still a great need for the Task Team in terms of providing support.

IOM: Has been working on this for so many years and right now, with all that is happening, it is crucial that we still have a group that can go forward; so strongly thank UNHCR and OFADEC for their leadership and hope that someone will take over quickly. Also, the handover is so crucial to ensure the continuity; the coordinator brings that and investment in this role is needed especially if we are to engage with donors. Thanks to all for the support.

(Coordinator): One thing would like to get from the group is ideas around the transition and handover; if anyone has any thoughts on how this can be handled in a responsible way, I would be very grateful. There is no time to discuss this now, but please do get in touch.

IOM: Some kind of learning from the tenure would be useful as we move forward. Agreed by co-chair that the learning and key issues going forward will be part of the handover.

IASC Secretariat Geneva: To echo the words of the Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator (DERC); 'you have made an enormous contribution to the work of the Task Team and wider IASC; unless there is room to discuss this decision, the IASC Secretariat will inform the IASC WG to seek nominations for new co-chairs.'

Final comments around ad hoc PSEA meeting:

(Co-chair – Preeti): Whilst it is important that PSEA colleagues join the meeting scheduled for tomorrow (Friday 16 February), it is really important that the broader issues of accountability are situated in this discussion on PSEA, especially if we are going to take this forward with donors. It is the operational context and broader operational response that is so key for us to address when we talk about protection from SEA.

5. Next Meetings

- PSEA specific meeting: Thursday 8 March
- AAP/PSEA meeting: TBD pending transition to another co-chair

List of Participants

Organisation	Name
IASC AAP PSEA TT Co-Chair	Preeta Law
IASC AAP PSEA TT Co-Chair	Mamadou Ndiaye
IASC AAP PSEA	Tanya Axisa
IASC	Katja Laurila
IASC NY	Nuhad Hussein Saeed Al Alfi
American Refugee Committee	Colleen Striegel
CDAC	Sarah Mace
IOM	Alexandra Hileman
IOM	Smruti Patel
FAO	Erin O'Brien
FAO	Andrea Duechting
GENCAP	Merrin Waterhouse
GENCAP	Deborah Clifton
GOAL	Frederic Baele
GPPI	Mark Bui
HIAS	Devon Cone
IFRC	Alexandra Sicotte-Levesque
Independent	Lucy Heaven Taylor
independent	Matthew Severnty
Interaction	Ramon Broers
IMC	Brandon Berrett
IMC	Mary Pack
IRC	Marie-Emilie Dozin
MedAir	William Anderson
Translators without Borders	Ellie Kemp
UNHCR	Michelle Ndhlovu
UNHCR	Rekha Menon
UNICEF	Katie Wepplo
USAID	Limnyuy Konglim
WFP	Maria Alvarez
WFP	Marina Angeloni
WHO	Evan Drake
World Vision	Shirley Lo
World Vision	Elie Gasagara
Youth Compact	Katie Tong

Apologies for any mistakes in the above table