

Summary Record

IASC Results Group 1 - Operational Response

22 April 2020

IASC Results Group 1 on Operational Response met on 22 April 2020 to discuss (i) key results and decisions of the OPAG virtual meeting held on 30 March; (ii) reprioritization in light of the impact to the COVID-19 response; (iii) an update of ongoing workstreams; and (iv) OPAG reporting timelines.

The below captures action points agreed and a brief summary.

Action Points

- Members to provide feedback to the draft “IASC Interim Guidance on Localization and the Covid-19 Response” by 8 May with Ms. Victoria Stodart (victoria.stodart@ifrc.org) from IFRC, with copy to Mr. Yasin Samatar (samatar@un.org) from the IASC secretariat.
- WHO, OCHA and Interaction to bilaterally discuss how best to support addressing bureaucratic impediments in COVID contexts and share the progress with the wider Group.
- Leads of the Bureaucratic and Administrative Impediments (BAI) and Centrality of Protection workstreams to get guidance from co-Chairs on how best to engage with the GHRP analysis cell and Joint Analysis Working Group to discuss how they can support BAI and protection issues in light of COVID-19.
- All subgroup leads to share feedback to the draft progress report with the IASC secretariat focal points (Mr. Yasin Samatar samatar@un.org and Ms. Jione Park jione.park@un.org) by 6 May.

OPAG VIRTUAL MEETING

Co-Chairs briefed that the primary objectives of the OPAG virtual meeting on 30 March were to discuss (i) how the OPAG could step up efforts to support the IASC’s response to COVID-19 and (ii) the resulting impact of COVID-19 on priority areas of work assigned to the IASC Results Groups.

The OPAG requested all Results Groups to further consider and revert on the priority areas of work as follows: (i) activities/deliverables that will be postponed, (ii) activities/products that can still be delivered, and (iii) new deliverables that will need to be prioritized in support of the COVID-19 response. As for Results Group 1, the OPAG highlighted localization, bureaucratic administrative impediments and protection as areas that require heightened support in light of COVID-19. The OPAG also agreed to maintain the fast-track endorsement of Interim Guidance documents with a view to filling key gaps with additional timely guidance, among others, considering the high demand for support from the field.

REPRIORITIZATION IN LIGHT OF COVID-19

Co-Chairs invited leads of the three workstreams highlighted by the OPAG for reprioritization in light of COVID-19 (namely localization, bureaucratic administrative impediments and protection) to share initial thoughts on how COVID-related concerns can be addressed in their respective work, while being realistic in terms of capacity.

Localization: Interim Guidance on Localization (led by IFRC)

IFRC shared that the “IASC Interim Guidance on Localization and the Covid-19 Response” was developed under the leadership of IFRC and UNICEF. It was noted that the document drew upon the guidance developed by the Grand Bargain Workstream 2 on Localization, which was published before COVID-19 but was still relevant to the COVID situation. IFRC also highlighted that various colleagues had been consulted, including the co-Chairs of Results Group 5 on Humanitarian Financing who provided inputs on the funding portion of the document. IFRC requested members’ feedback on the draft by 24 April (deadline extended to 8 May).

UNFPA seconded the need for streamlining the feedback process, noting the importance of aligning the document with the messages that Results Group 5 was developing to promote funding flows to local actors. UNFPA further expressed concerns over the feasibility of the recommendations highlighted under the partnerships and duty of care sections of the guidance.

With regard to the “Draft Framework for better engagement with local government in humanitarian operations”, which is meant to complement the Interim Guidance on Localization and the Covid-19 Response, UN-HABITAT shared that consultations with various stakeholders took place, including with local governments. This was an action specifically required by IASC Principals at their meeting on 5 December 2019. The consultation process continues, despite the disruptions due to COVID-19.

Bureaucratic and Administrative Impediments (BAI) (led by InterAction and ICVA)

InterAction shared a progress update on the following ongoing deliverables: **(i)** Document and map bureaucratic impediments and restrictive NGO Law provisions in major global humanitarian crises (*completed in December 2019*); and **(ii)** Develop normative guidance for HCs and HCTs to contribute to mitigating effects of bureaucratic impediments on humanitarian operations (*ongoing*) - *As a steppingstone to the guidance, the BAI subgroup has been conducting a deep-dive on selected countries since February.*

It was noted that, as a result of COVID-19 and the need to be sensitive to the difficulties faced by field colleagues in COVID contexts, the BAI subgroup was obliged to reduce the number of country case studies from 12 to 5, now focusing on Myanmar, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Venezuela and Yemen. As the case studies are an essential ingredient to feed into the guidance, the timeline for the final product remains uncertain at present. ICVA asked for members’ prudence to restrict the access to the mapping of bureaucratic impediments and restrictive NGO Law provisions, especially with governments, as it contains sensitive information for operating partners.

WHO suggested capitalizing on the wealth of data it has collected on border restrictions imposed as a result of COVID-19 to examine the impact of COVID-19 on BAI issues. WHO and OCHA agreed to take the lead on this, separately from the ongoing work. Members also stressed that the scope of work surpasses the Group’s domain and suggested plugging into the Scale Up protocols and/or GHRP process. OCHA proposed linking the Group’s work into the Joint Analysis Working Group (co-chaired by WHO and OCHA) and stressed the timeliness to demonstrate the Group’s relevance to support the OPAG and EDG for the COVID-19 response.

Centrality of Protection (CoP) (led by InterAction and OCHA)

InterAction shared a progress update on the following ongoing deliverables: **(i)** Provide relevant protection inputs in advance of the IASC Principals horizon scanning session as well as the EDG’s Annual Review of Operations on critical protection concerns and required actions in selected countries - *Inputs*

were provided for the Principals' horizon scanning on 5 December 2019, while inputs will be provided on ad-hoc basis for future Principals discussions. The subgroup will prepare inputs as planned for the EDG ahead of the 2021 AOR; (ii) HCs and HCTs in 10 selected countries to undertake reflection and exchange of lessons learned on implementation of the core requirements of the IASC Protection Policy. The critical lessons and issues emerging from these reflections will be distilled in a 2-page paper and inform agreed, specific and measurable indicators on the centrality of protection in practice - Several countries provided feedback, including Afghanistan, Colombia, CAR, Iraq, Cameroon and Myanmar, noting that this was a valuable exercise. The work continues as planned but will slow down in light of COVID-19, with the protection indicators to be developed in Q3; and (iii) Commission a review of the IASC Protection Policy in 2020 - A ToR for the review was developed, which lays out methodologies and scope of the review. The subgroup is currently finetuning the ToR with the view to circulate the final draft with the Group and OPAG by Q2 and commission the study by end 2020.

The CoP subgroup further shared anticipated protection implications of COVID-19, including around armed conflicts, cyber-attacks, coercion by security forces, discrimination against certain religious or ethnic groups, and stigmatization attached to health workers. Given that GPC is focusing on coordination around protection programming and services, the CoP subgroup will aim to avoid duplications but look at systemic risks, including on those affecting the most vulnerable. While it was still unclear on how to take this forward, the subgroup would aim to build basic CoP framework to be embedded in GHRP. The CoP subgroup plans to have a further discussion with broader stakeholders, including experts on digital risks and social media.

WHO offered to provide access to its COVID-related database. Members also noted that addressing protection concerns in COVID contexts should go beyond the Group's realm and suggested to connect with the Joint Analysis Working Group. GPC suggested linking up with the joint operational framework, developed by health and protection clusters. UNICEF recommended capitalizing on the ERP guidance on COVID-19, which is currently under review and includes certain elements on protection risks.

UPDATE – Strengthening the IASC EWEA Analysis & Revision of ERP guidance (led by WFP)

WFP shared an update on the “strengthening the IASC EWEA analysis” workstream that the expert group met in April for the next iteration of IASC Early Warning and Early Action Analysis, which includes COVID-related risks and identifies high risks (including, locust swarms in East Africa, Haiti and Mozambique), medium risks (including Afghanistan, Pakistan and Somalia), as well as preparedness actions for the EDG's consideration.

WFP further briefed that the “IASC interim guidance focusing on Emergency Response Preparedness (ERP) to the COVID-19 Pandemic” was developed by the Preparedness, Early Action and Readiness subgroup, co-Chaired by UNICEF and OCHA with WFP. Following the fast-track endorsement approach, the guidance was shared with the Principals for a quick review by 23 April. It was noted that the revision of the general ERP guidance was put on hold for now.

OHCHR pointed out that the real challenge is how to provide meaningful protection analysis at country level, while abundant work is being done at global level, and further suggested considering the connection between nexus and protection in mid/long term. UNICEF added that the ongoing GHRP revision process provides a window of opportunity to influence and shape protection concerns, noting that the current iteration is rather biased towards displaced people.

UPDATE - Developing a Joint System-wide Operational Guidance on Data Responsibility (led by OCHA Centre for Humanitarian Data, UNHCR, IOM)

OCHA Centre for Humanitarian Data shared that a desk/literature review was underway to compile other initiatives working on similar guidance, as well as a public survey on expectations of the guidance. Key results were published on the [Center's blog](#). The initial draft of the Operational Guidance was developed in late March and the review of the draft will be carried out over the next weeks. A revised draft will be shared with the wider Group by the end of May for feedback with the view to finalize the document in the Fall for review and endorsement by the OPAG/Principals.

The Centre further shared that an "[FAQ on Data Responsibility in the COVID-19 Response](#)" was developed to support field colleagues working with data in the COVID-19 context, which continues to be updated on a rolling basis. Top risks highlighted in COVID contexts included gaps in dealing with sensitive data, particularly non-personal types; modelling needs to adhere to humanitarian principles; and the use of surveillance measures in a responsible way.

UPDATE - Strengthening Humanitarian Leadership (OCHA, UNDP, UNHCR, ICVA, IOM)

OCHA shared a brief update on the following ongoing deliverables: **(i)** Update the "Introduction to Humanitarian Action – A Brief Guide for Resident Coordinators (2015)" - *The update of the Handbook continues but will shift its focus on areas most relevant to the COVID-19 response, including for RCs performing HC functions. OCHA will make ready relevant elements online for RCs, rather than waiting till the whole book is finalized;* **(ii)** Convene an inter-agency advisory team to support the development of and contribution to the 1st RC Induction Briefing held since the implementation of the reinvigorated RC system - *Completed as the briefing was held on 11-14 Nov 2019, where a half day was committed to discussing humanitarian aspects;* **(iii)** Strengthen linkages with DCO on aspects related to leadership and the development system reform - *The subgroup continue to prioritize areas such as outreach to NGOs, of particular relevance to RCs;* **(iv)** Review and provide guidance on the roles and accountabilities of DHCs - *This will be postponed, given that it's closely linked to the HC retreat which has been postponed till later in the year. Guidance and support will continue to be provided to new and sitting DHCs on an individual basis;* **(v)** Develop a communication and outreach campaign in support of broadening, deepening and diversifying the pool of candidates for inter-agency senior field coordination leadership functions - *This was already addressed during 2019's annual call for the HiPo and the HC Pool, which saw better gender, geographical and functional balance. In view of COVID, 2020's HiPo and HC pool process will be conducted virtually with the original timeline given the expectation that there will be increase in need for leadership support.*

AOB

The co-Chairs reminded members that the next OPAG meeting was scheduled to take place on 28-29 May, while the IASC secretariat would soon share an update on the format and agenda given the impact of COVID-19. All subgroup leads were requested to share the progress updates of their workstreams per the template provided by the IASC secretariat by 24 April.

The Group's next meeting will take place on **18 May 2020** from **15:30 to 17:00 pm GVA / 9:30 to 11:00 am NY** with further details to be circulated by the IASC secretariat.
