

**IASC's Operational Policy and Advocacy Group (OPAG) Meeting**  
19 May 2021

**TOPIC: AAP AND ICVIC**

**SUMMARY RECORD**

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**INTRODUCTION**

The Operational Policy and Advocacy Group (OPAG) of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) convened on 19 May 2021. The primary objectives of this meeting were to: (i) Reflect on the proposal for an Independent Commission for Voices in Crisis (ICVIC), and (ii) discuss what more the IASC can do to collectively address Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP).

**SESSION 1: USG OCHA'S PROPOSAL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ICVIC**

In his introductory remarks, the OPAG co-Chair, **Mr. Geir Olav Lisle** welcomed participants to the meeting, noting the significance of the AAP agenda and highlighted the need to do more to enhance collective accountability by among others, addressing the barriers identified in the ODI 2020 report. He reminded participants that the 29 April OPAG meeting agreed to further discuss the USG's proposal for the establishment of ICVIC. He added that this will also be an opportunity to discuss what more the IASC can do to enhance collective accountability to affected populations. He welcomed Mr. Yasser Baki to present the ICVIC proposal.

**Mr. Yasser Baki**, Senior Humanitarian Affairs Officer, OCHA, provided an overview of the ICVIC proposal, noting that this was a proposal for a pilot, and that no decision had been taken to launch ICVIC. He offered his presentation as an opportunity for the IASC to develop the proposal further and determine how to take it forward. Acknowledging the extensive work done by IASC Results Group 2, the Grand Bargain Participation Revolution, Ground Truth as well as initiatives by individual IASC member organisations, he noted that the ICVIC proposal is not intended to discourage or disparage these tremendous efforts but rather to complement on them. Further, he indicated that the ICVIC proposal is not intended to create a new global system nor is it intended to duplicate the existing systems, noting that it was not meant to be an ombudsman system or take complaints from the public. He noted that while the barriers and gaps on AAP are known, it is the collective action, bringing together the actors which is crucial.

Mr. Baki stated that the aim of the proposal is to facilitate behaviour change by decision makers and leaders, by changing incentives in the system to ensure they behave differently. The main outcome is to ensure a better appreciation of what people want and alignment with what is actually delivered. He emphasised the Commission's independence, with a suggested dotted line to the ERC to deliver an honest report. He welcomed feedback on how to change the incentives in the system, on independent evaluations and the alternative ways this could be managed. He acknowledged that this proposal was not aiming to solve every issue related to AAP, but to address the fact that the current status quo is not fit for purpose. He observed that the USG proposal has given global attention to AAP and urged the

OPAG to take advantage of this moment, develop the proposal and a package of ideas to give to the new ERC so he had options to move forward.

## DISCUSSION

Members welcomed the opportunity to discuss the ICVIC proposal, and thanked USG Lowcock for drawing attention to AAP in the final period of his tenure. They noted that the proposal triggers some important and necessary reflections needed in the humanitarian community. Members agreed on the overall analysis and the problem statement articulated in the proposal, and there was consensus that the system must do more and have more systematic approaches to accountability to affected populations.

Concerns were raised regarding the usefulness and timeliness of establishing such a Commission. Members cautioned on the risk of duplicating existing efforts and mechanisms, the need to better utilize tools and mechanisms already in place, including the IASC RG2 suite of tools on AAP, and the Grand Bargain Participation Revolution. They emphasized the need to give more attention to existing local and national mechanisms that capture the voices of affected people. They noted the critical work and good progress made over the years on AAP, through improving tools and systems. Members nevertheless acknowledged the limitations of the progress made to date and suggested there should be a redoubling of efforts. Members noted the need to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian response, to promote enhanced community engagement, and the collection and analysis of perception data. It was noted that while data was available, corrective action did not necessarily result, and more needed to be done to ensure improving this aspect of the system. Members cautioned on inclusion and participation relying on the most accessible voices rather than a wide spectrum of the community and advocated for participation of affected people in key humanitarian processes and decision-making bodies to be a metric of success. Suggestions were made to make better use of Inter Agency Humanitarian Evaluations (IAHEs) to support assessment of the responsiveness of the humanitarian system to the needs of the affected people. In addition, OPAG members proposed to support more reflection on the ODI paper on issues such as engagement with government and local NGOs. They also suggested there was a need for renewed strategic engagement with donors through the Grand Bargain, to secure flexible funding to build capacity, innovation, and adaptation in line with community feedback.

## CONCLUSIONS AND FOLLOW UP-ACTIONS

1. Build on existing structures and efforts to strengthen AAP including for the IASC to consider better utilizing Inter-agency Humanitarian Evaluations (IAHEs) and joint needs assessments to support monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian response to better capture the needs of the affected populations [**OCHA with the support of relevant OPAG members; IAHE Steering Group**].

## SESSION 2: STRENGTHENING COLLECTIVE ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS (AAP)

The IASC OPAG co-Chair, **Ms. Valerie Guarnieri**, welcomed participants to the second session of the meeting to discuss the aspirations of the IASC on AAP and how the IASC can make humanitarian action to be more collectively accountable to affected people, addressing barriers in achieving that and how they can be overcome. She noted that the ODI report flagged several clear gaps in AAP, noting that for instance 50% of the people surveyed in 7 countries said that the aid received did not meet their most important needs.

## **DISCUSSION**

Members noted the need for system-wide change, emphasizing that this starts with a better understanding of what the needs are. It was reiterated that engagement with communities should happen from the outset of the response and should be ongoing. They highlighted the role of joint needs assessment, as well as agency specific assessments to provide a collective sense of needs. The Joint Inter Agency Framework (JIAF) on needs assessments provides great potential to inform collective accountability processes, including through humanitarian response plans. It was proposed that the imperative for collective evaluation in terms of system-wide accountability was still unmet, and that the system's ability to target needs based on community engagement, localization, collective monitoring and evaluation and interoperability should be reinvigorated. In addition, there should be efforts to document and share good practices to better capture what is working. Members also noted that more work needs to be done tracking feedback data, as well as strengthening leadership commitment. They observed that where the feedback is included in the system, its impact on decisions is unclear.

Members noted some breakthroughs, including the introduction of cash-based assistance which has enabled people to make more choices. Another reflection of progress is having refugees and community representation on governing boards. However, it was acknowledged that representation can be problematic, since there tends to be focus on the most prominent or accessible people in the community, which causes challenges in terms of inclusion and the needs of the wider spectrum. It was acknowledged that there is good practice in including NNGOs and INGOs that provides examples and direction to follow; further, members noted there was scope for building on what Ground Truth Solutions and CHS Alliance and others have been progressing in recent years.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS**

1. Create a time-bound taskforce (1-2 months) to develop a proposal for the IASC to be more collectively responsive to the feedback of affected people. Taskforce to include local representative(s) **[WFP in collaboration with IASC members and with the support of the IASC secretariat]**

## **AOB**

The next OPAG meeting will be on 27 May 2021. This will provide an opportunity for a deep dive on humanitarian financing with a focus on funding flexibility and quality funding, as well as a review of progress by Results Group 5.

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**ANNEX: PARTICIPANTS LIST**

<b>OPAG Co-Chairs</b>	Mr. Geir Olav Lisle, Deputy Secretary-General, NRC
<b>FAO</b>	Mr. Daniel Donati
	Mr. Patrick Jacqueson
<b>ICRC</b>	Ms. Alexandra Boivin
<b>ICVA</b>	Ms. Mirela Shuteriqi
	Mr. Jeremy Wellard
<b>ICVA - ACBAR</b>	Ms. Lisa K. Piper
<b>ICVA – COAST</b>	Mr. Reza Chowdhury
<b>ICVA - FRD</b>	Mr. Azmat Khan
<b>IFRC</b>	Mr. Frank Mohrhauer
	Ms. Alexandra Sicotte Levesque
<b>InterAction</b>	Ms. Kate Phillips-Barrasso
<b>InterAction – Catholic Relief Services</b>	Ms. Emily Wei
<b>InterAction – Global Communities</b>	Ms. Pia Wanek
<b>IOM</b>	Ms. Angela Steiger
<b>OCHA</b>	Mr. Andrew Wylie
<b>OHCHR</b>	Mr. Roberto Ricci
<b>SCHR</b>	Mr. Gareth Price Jones
<b>SCHR - Christian Aid</b>	Mr. Michael Mosselmans
<b>SCHR – Save the Children</b>	Ms. Leah Finnigan
<b>SR on HR of IDPs</b>	Ms. Kim Mancini
<b>UNDP</b>	Mr. Peter Batchelor
	Mr. Hugh Macleman
<b>UNFPA</b>	Ms. Lene Aggernaes
<b>UN-HABITAT</b>	Mr. Filiep Decorte
<b>UNHCR</b>	Ms. Annika Sandlund
	Mr. Guido van Heugten
<b>UNICEF</b>	Ms. Meritxell Relano
	Mr. Charles Antoine Hofmann
<b>WFP</b>	Mr. David Kaatrud
<b>WHO</b>	Mr. Rudi Coninx
	MR. Kevin Babila Ousman
<b>World Bank</b>	Ms. Maria Dimitriadou
<b>Results Group 1 on Operational Response</b>	Mr. Andrew Wylie, OCHA
<b>Results Group 2 on Accountability and Inclusion</b>	Ms. Meritxell Relano, UNICEF
<b>GCCG</b>	Ms. Marina Skuric Prodanovic
	Mr. Wan Sophonpanich
<b>Presenter:</b>	
<b>Mr. Yasser Baki</b> , Senior Humanitarian Affairs Officer, OCHA	
<b>IASC secretariat:</b>	Ms. Mervat Shelbaya, Head, IASC secretariat