

IASC's Operational Policy and Advocacy Group (OPAG) Meeting
29 April 2021

SUMMARY RECORD

INTRODUCTION

The Operational Policy and Advocacy Group (OPAG) of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) convened on 29 April 2021. The primary objectives of this meeting were to: (i) review the **Collective AAP Framework and Results Tracker** and discuss additional actions needed to achieve a step change to translate policy into action, (ii) discuss the **status of RG2 priorities for the remainder of 2021** and agree on a way forward.

SESSION 1: ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS (AAP)

In his introductory remarks, the OPAG co-Chair, **Mr. Geir Olav Lisle** welcomed participants to this OPAG meeting. He noted that despite IASC commitment and progress on Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP), the perception that the humanitarian system was falling behind on its commitments to AAP persists. Highlighting the good work of Results Group 2 on Accountability and Inclusion, he noted the progress made in terms of turning policy into action. Regardless of this progress, communities continued to report that aid does not align sufficiently with their needs and a recent research by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) highlighted existing barriers to achieving AAP commitments. He noted this session would review the Collective AAP Framework and Results Tracker developed under the auspices of RG2 as key building blocks to bring the system closer to collective accountability to affected people.

Ms. Bernadette Castel-Hollingsworth, co-chair of Results Group 2 on Accountability and Inclusion, provided a general overview on work around AAP. She agreed that much progress had been made by integrating AAP into humanitarian programs that started shifting power dynamics, ensuring affected people were at the center of the response. She noted that opportunities arose from the increased appreciation for why AAP is a fundamental prerequisite for effective humanitarian action. However, barriers and challenges to achieving AAP, particularly at the operational level, persist. Key systemic challenges include lack of common understanding of AAP, lack of leadership buy-in, lack of access to predictable funding, insufficient coherence with local practices, amongst others.

She noted that RG2 tried to address these challenges, striving to be as inclusive as possible through ongoing consultations with different organizations and stakeholders, working towards sustainability beyond the life-span of RG2, building on existing structures and mechanisms, and learning from affected people.

Ms. Rachel Maher provided an overview of the key elements of the Collective AAP Framework. She underlined that the Framework aimed to address some of the barriers to implementing collective AAP that were identified by humanitarian leaders during an OCHA led, Peer 2 Peer workshop in December 2019. First, the need for consistent, systematic and integrated AAP at all decision-making and

operational levels, including in planning processes. Secondly, the need for effective and consistent communication about what AAP aimed to achieve and third, the need for tools to enable a culture change around AAP. Ms. Maher explained that the revised version of the Frameworks maintained the core intention and structure that had been developed over the past two years: setting five Outcomes and Actions that are aligned to the phases of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) and enabling humanitarian leaders to operationalize their commitments on AAP through a country level action plan. More specifically, she noted that its overarching objective was to improve the quality, accountability and effectiveness of the humanitarian architecture in support of local and national systems, to deliver a more responsive and people-centred approach to humanitarian action. She observed further that the Framework was built around core commitments that were linked to practical steps on AAP, such as PSEA, inclusion and other cross-cutting themes. In terms of the structure, the first Outcome related to Evidence, needs assessment and analysis, while Outcome 2 was about planning and participation and Outcome 3 about resource mobilization. Finally, Outcome 4 focused on implementation and monitoring, and the final Outcome on operational review and evaluation. Ms. Maher concluded that the Framework would be rolled out throughout the second half of 2021 in consultation with humanitarian leaders responsible for developing a country-level action plan on AAP, while following a pilot phase and evaluation that will be further refined by December 2021.

Mr. Gergey Pasztor, CHS Alliance, briefed on the Results Tracker. He explained that the Tracker was an indicator set for monitoring collective accountability against the nine commitments of the Core Humanitarian Standard. Mr. Pasztor noted that to minimize the burden on field actors around data collection, it relied on existing indicators, and results would be visible through a dedicated online dashboard powered by Microsoft Power BI. The Results Tracker was designed for country-level primary users, including country-level leaders (HCs and HCTs), AAP technical actors and others. He explained that the data aimed to provide the means to advocate with donors and local actors, and the tracker should be used in parallel to other tools such as the portal and the service directory to facilitate a holistic approach. Moreover, results can be filtered by country or CHS commitments. As a next step, the indicator set will be developed further in line with the CHS Commitments and there will be two more rounds of indicator results revisions on the basis of country-level piloting of the Results Tracker. Mr. Pasztor concluded that a final Results Tracker was anticipated for end of 2021.

DISCUSSION

Members expressed their appreciation for the Collective AP Framework and Results Tracker as key building blocks towards more systematic and predictable collective approaches to community engagement and AAP. They thanked RG2 for driving this **important work, of translating policy into action**. They noted that the tools should be used to enable the practical and operational shifts needed to foster system-wide, collective approaches to community engagement. The tools would support humanitarian leaders and field practitioners to deliver country-level people-centred responses, strengthen regional and country office capacity to coordinate interagency efforts fostering collective, coherent and predictable approaches on AAP.

Members suggested that innovative approaches to tackling digital barriers to interagency complaints and feedback mechanisms be considered and called for the inclusion of community assessments, to better capture needs of the most vulnerable, and to broaden the scope of the Accountability Framework beyond the HPC, to include different contexts and diverse actors. Suggestions were also made to review and adapt the Results Tracker to enhance data disaggregation, to capture who was left behind and why. Members emphasized the need to address barriers such as language and to adapt the tools to country-specific contexts. Further noting that the collective AAP framework should be able to support national and local systems that represent the voices of the community. It was also highlighted that the Results Tracker would capture the progress on AAP, should be practical in terms of reporting requirements and allow for country-specific adaptability. Members appreciated the connection of the collective AAP Framework and Results tracker with the Grand Bargain commitments, as well as the links to localization.

Members referred to USG Mark Lowcock's recent announcement on the need to further strengthen the humanitarian system to be more accountable to affected populations, including his proposal for the establishment of an Independent Commission for Voices in Crisis (ICVIC). While members welcome the attention to AAP brought forward by the announcement, and the overall support to the diagnostic, concerns were raised regarding the usefulness of establishing such a Commission. Specifically, members noted the critical work and good progress made over the years around AAP and that careful reflection on what more needs to be done to ensure further progress is made, building on existing efforts and structures and ensuring coherence of work on AAP across the system, was underscored. As such, they suggested a separate OPAG discussion to look into these issues in further detail.

CONCLUSIONS AND FOLLOW UP-ACTIONS

1. Update the AAP Collective Accountability Framework and the Results Tracker based on the feedback received at the OPAG meeting **[RG2]**; OPAG members to share any additional feedback on the AAP Framework and the Results Tracker **[OPAG members, 14 May 2021]**
2. Hold a workshop with the HCs consulted on the Collective AAP framework in December 2019 to advise on the utility of the AAP Collective Accountability Framework and the Results Tracker and revise tools accordingly prior to piloting them **[RG2]**
3. Pilots of both the AAP Collective Accountability Framework and the Results Tracker to commence asap to allow time for the refined tools to be endorsed by the OPAG and the IASC Principals before the end of the year **[RG2 June/July 2021]**
4. Aim for a discussion at the OPAG on the final draft of both tools in November ahead of endorsement by the IASC Principals in December **[OPAG, November 2021]**
5. Hold a separate discussion on ICVIC and broader AAP issues (beyond the two tools being developed) **[OPAG, 19 May 2021]**

SESSION 2: RG2 WORKPLAN- PROGRESS UPDATE

The IASC OPAG co-Chair, **Mr. Geir Olav Lisle**, welcomed participants to the second session of the meeting focusing on the RG2 progress update by thanking RG2 for their continuous important work and contribution to the IASC. He invited the RG2 co-Chairs to reflect on the status of delivering on other RG2 priorities for the remainder of 2021.

Ms. Merixtell Relano, co-Chair Results Group, provided an overview of the status of delivery of RG2 priorities. She noted that in addition to the Collective AAP Framework, the Results Tracker, the Accountability and Inclusion Portal and Service directory were expected to be rolled out during 2021. She explained the Portal development process, which reflects lessons learned and best practices. She noted that as at March 2021, 70 organizations had signed up to the service directory and more than 20,000 users accessed it. RG2 also started working on complaints and feedback mechanisms (CFMs) to involve communities, promote enhanced utilization and strengthen comparability of the data captured within CFMs. This should improve organizations' ability to conduct collective analyses.

On anti-racism and discrimination, RG2 will seek to integrate resources into the portal and service directory and where possible look to identify indicators for the Results Tracker. In terms of PSEAH, Ms. Relano highlighted that the PSEA System Review is underway, as well as the Survey monitoring IASC PSEA country-level framework and the update the global Dashboard. Ms. Relano noted that the 2021 round of the Community Outreach and Communication Fund, a project run by UNHCR and ICVA, will be opened for applications in May.

DISCUSSION

Members expressed their appreciation for all efforts and initiatives of the RG2 working group. Their contribution to improving the performance and quality of assistance particularly in the systemic work on AAP, protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and racism and racial discrimination. Members noted the importance of mainstreaming anti-racism and anti-discrimination efforts across the Results Groups as well as, ensuring a system wide enhancement of prevention of sexual abuse and improvement of SEA victim assistance. Members expressed supporting in promoting the development of tools for safe, inclusive and accessible feedback mechanisms and the prevention of racism and racial discrimination. Members called for greater emphasis in on disability and inclusion work.

CONCLUSIONS AND FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS

1. Step up efforts to socialize the Service Directory and Portal (IASC secretariat can support by organizing a webinar on this) and OPAG members to share internally within their organizations and with their networks [**OPAG members**]
2. Finalise ongoing work on Community Feedback Mechanisms, ensuring the need for coherence with other processes and tools already in existence, and brief the OPAG (**RG2**).

AOB

The next OPAG meeting will be on 27 May 2021(subject to confirmation by the IASC Secretariat). This will provide an opportunity for a deep dive on 1) humanitarian financing with a focus on funding flexibility and quality funding, and 2) on engaging with Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) with a focus on the RG3 compilation of lessons learned and identification of best practices.

ANNEX: PARTICIPANTS LIST

OPAG Co-Chairs	Mr. Geir Olav Lisle, Deputy Secretary-General, NRC
FAO	Mr. Patrick Jacqueson
ICRC	Ms. Alexandra Boivin
ICVA	Ms. Mirela Shuteriqi
	Mr. Jeremy Wellard
ICVA - ACBAR	Ms. Lisa K. Piper
ICVA – COAST	Mr. Reza Chowdhury
ICVA - FRD	Mr. Azmat Khan
IFRC	Ms. Alexandra Sicotte Levesque
InterAction – Global Communities	Ms. Pia Wanek
IOM	Ms. Angela Steiger
OCHA	Mr. Rein Paulsen
OHCHR	Mr. Roberto Ricci
SCHR	Mr. Gareth Price Jones
SCHR - Christian Aid	Mr. Michael Mosselmans
SCHR – Save the Children	Ms. Leah Finnigan
UNDP	Mr. Peter Batchelor
	Mr. Hugh Macleman
UNFPA	Mr. Ingo Piegeler
UN-HABITAT	Mr. Filip Decorte
UNHCR	Ms. Annika Sandlund
	Mr. Guido van Heugten
UNICEF	Ms. Meritxell Relano
WFP	Mr. David Kaatrud
	Mr. Gian Carlo Cirri
WHO	Mr. Rudi Coninx
	Mr. Kevin Ousman
	Mr. Aiman Zarul
Results Group 2 on Accountability and Inclusion	Ms. Meritxell Relano, UNICEF
GCCG	Ms. Marina Skuric Prodanovic
	Mr. Dher Hayo

Presenters:

Ms. Meritxell Relano, co-Chair Results Group 2 on Accountability and Inclusion, Director, Office of Emergency Operations, UNICEF

Ms. Bernadette Castel-Hollingsworth, co-Chair Results Group 2 on Accountability and Inclusion, Deputy Director, Division of International Protection, UNHCR

Ms. Rachel Maher, AAP Focal Point, IASC secretariat

Mr. Gergey Pasztor, Head of Strategic Planning and Development, Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) Alliance

IASC secretariat: Ms. Mervat Shelbaya, Head, IASC secretariat