

IASC Operational Policy and Advocacy Group (OPAG) Meeting

11 October 2022

Summary Record

INTRODUCTION

The Operational Policy and Advocacy Group (OPAG) of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee convened on 11 October. The OPAG co-chairs, Ms. Valerie Guarnieri and Mr. Geir Olav Lisle, welcomed participants and presenters and thanked the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) for hosting the meeting at the newly established Humanitarian Hub in Geneva. The co-chairs expressed their desire to better capitalize on the OPAG to support the IASC Task Forces and Entities Associated with the IASC by unblocking barriers and identifying solutions to some of the persistent challenges to the humanitarian system. They urged members to be ambitious, provide strategic leadership and focus on a few transformative deliverables in the remainder of the 2022-2023 mandate, and to make connections between the different IASC subsidiary structures on overarching issues of collective concern.

SESSION 1: IASC Task Force 1 on Centrality of Protection

In his introductory remarks, Mr. Lisle laid out the primary objectives of the first session, namely, to discuss the status of some of the key deliverables of Task Force 1 on Protection and identify the key issues the Task Force wishes OPAG to weigh in to and promote the protection agenda in the humanitarian system. He welcomed Ms. Lynn Hastings, the Deputy Special Coordinator, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in the Occupied Palestine Territories (oPt), who shared her reflections on protection needs and challenges in oPt and discussed how the IASC can better support in-country solutions to make protection central to the humanitarian response. He also warmly welcomed the co-chairs of Task Force 1 on Protection, Ms. Bernadette Castell-Hollingsworth and Ms. Erin Weir, as well as Ms. Victoria Metcalf-Haugh. Mr. Lisle recalled that in September, the IASC Principals discussed the recommendations of the Independent Review of the Implementation of the IASC Protection Policy.

Ms. Lynn Hastings started her presentation stressing the importance of the Centrality of Protection (CoP) in oPt: after 50 years of occupation, approximately 2.1 million people are in need of assistance and protection, the number of civilians killed is increasing with more than half of them being children and the situation is steadily deteriorating. oPt is experiencing the highest levels of violence since 2005 and the highest number of political detainees since 2008, and this situation is exacerbated by the regional context. International assistance continues to be delivered but solutions to the conflict, in particular the economic and political root causes, are not in sight; a lack of respect of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law and a vacuum of accountability persist. UN human rights actors and international NGOs are unable to operate within the territory and national NGOs face significant bureaucratic and administrative obstacles. Only one per cent of the population is currently able to exit Gaza when desired and more than 220 international staff cannot exit Gaza. She recalled that the Humanitarian Response Plan was focused on protection, including mental health and psycho-social support (MHPSS). Palestinians are in desperate need of protection, yet none of the suggested means of international protection are being implemented. The situation in oPt requires significantly greater international attention and awareness and would benefit from proactive collective advocacy and joint messaging. The Humanitarian Coordinator

called on the IASC Emergency Directors Group (EDG) to visit oPt and to seek dialogue with the Permanent Missions.

The co-chairs of Task Force 1 and Ms. Metcalfe-Haugh briefed the OPAG on the Task Force's priority areas of work, focusing on 1. developing and field-testing CoP indicators in support of Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) implementing the IASC Protection Policy; 2. taking forward the recommendations of the Independent Review of the Implementation of the IASC Protection Policy in collaboration with the recently appointed IASC Protection Champions; and 3. supporting the implementation of recommendations on advancing GBV prevention, risk mitigation and response.

Work on developing CoP indicators is about to start with consultations with field-based protection and non-protection actors; field testing is planned for early 2023. The goal is for Indicators to build upon and be embedded in existing processes. The Task Force will also focus on output indicators rather than outcome indicators, at this stage.

Taking forward the recommendations of the review, the Task Force plans to 1. share an action plan for endorsement by the IASC in Q1 2023; 2. develop an aide-mémoire to clarify key concepts and unpack what collective efforts on CoP mean for the humanitarian community; and 3. map measures already taken or planned by HCTs and clusters to address critical protection risks as well as identify remaining gaps.

The co-chairs requested OPAG's guidance on the focus of the third priority workstream, noting that GBV is just one of many protection risks faced by affected people. Following wide consultation the Task Force will strive to avoid duplicating existing efforts around GBV prevention and investment: they suggested collating existing recommendations, examining key trends and identifying gaps as well as the overall uptake of recommendations. In conclusion, clarity was sought on the incoming IASC Protection Champion's role vis-à-vis the different IASC structures, in particular OPAG and Task Force 1.

Mr. Lisle thanked Ms. Hastings and the presenters for sharing their reflections. The Chief of the IASC secretariat briefed on the protection-related discussions at the recent Humanitarian Coordinator retreat, where a need for greater collective advocacy on key protection needs was highlighted. Leadership also requires more support to identify key protection outcomes around which collective action could be rallied. She furthermore recalled that IASC Principals had recently appointed two Protection Champions with the intent to build momentum behind strengthening protection programming.

DISCUSSION

In the ensuing discussion, OPAG members welcomed Ms. Hasting's reflections and expressed their support for strengthening high-level collective advocacy around key protection needs in the face of significant violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, noting the key role of the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), IASC Principals and the EDG. OPAG members expressed their support for the Task Force 1 priority workstreams, which aim to provide practical tools and support to Humanitarian Coordinators and HCTs.

Members welcomed the development of an action plan to take forward the recommendations of the Independent Review, which must be endorsed by the IASC and taken forward by the new Protection Champions. They urged Task Force 1 to share a draft earlier in order to influence Principals' discussions in November. Members also welcomed the development of CoP output and outcome indicators which would allow the measuring of collective progress and impact; they noted indicators must build on existing protection programming in a variety of country-contexts, avoid

multiplication of indicators, and that opportunities existed to leverage the work of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle Steering Group (HPC SG); while some members noted that a one-year HPC provided insufficient space for strategic action. The aide-mémoire is expected to provide conceptual clarity, articulating the concept of protection in humanitarian programming, highlighting concrete examples and approaches which would be useful for country operations. Some members stressed that a review of the Global Protection Cluster was deemed critical. This review is currently underway.

Members also agreed it was important to collaborate across the IASC structures and with protection and non-protection actors and global and field-levels, including collaboration with human rights, peace and development actors, in taking forward the recommendations of the review. The role of leadership and in particular the strength and capability of Humanitarian Coordinators was deemed central to strengthening protection programming.

There were divergent views on the focus of the third priority workstream; while GBV was an important focus, Task Force 1 was requested to widen the workstream's focus to *leaving no one behind*. Some members highlighted further thinking was needed around risk and when collective advocacy was appropriate and when quiet diplomacy was more conducive, building on the experience of IASC members. It was suggested that local and national NGOs as well as local communities can play a critical role to foster change, also in terms of protection, and this should be capitalized on. Participants warned that Task Force 1 must avoid overburdening country teams, but also noted opportunities existed to collaborate with the clusters.

In reaction to the discussion, the Task Force 1 co-chairs thanked OPAG for its support and confirmed that the work on the indicators intended to focus on output and process but components for an outcome approach would be built in. The action plan will build in advocacy as a key component and methodology. They argued that any assistance the humanitarian community provided must be leveraged to reduce risk and provide protection for communities. They suggested Task Force 1 members should collaborate with other IASC Task Forces and that Task Force 1 would set aside dedicated time for inter-Task Force collaboration. They took note of the suggestion to broaden the focus of workstream 3 to *leaving no one behind*. In conclusion, they indicated that the planned review of the Protection Cluster was led by UNHCR and was outside the scope of Task Force 1.

The OPAG co-Chairs thanked the presenters and members for the strong discussion and noted the needs identified in oPt provided a mirror to what is important for field operations. They reiterated that the work of Task Force 1 needed to be focused and realistic, including robust advocacy on key protection concerns, that the indicators should be both output and outcome focused, and that in order to maintain focus and be outcome oriented, workstream 3 should maintain focusing on GBV in this reporting period. OPAG would welcome receiving both the indicators and the action plan for review and endorsement.

ACTION POINTS

1. Share draft Centrality of Protection output and outcome indicators for OPAG review and endorsement [**IASC Task Force 1 on Centrality of Protection**].
2. Underscore the role of the newly appointed IASC co-Champions on protection (UNHCR and InterAction) working on behalf of the IASC Principals to set the vision and priorities on the key areas of work that need to be prioritized to move the dial on protection, and welcome the Task Force's contribution and input into this process [**IASC Task Force 1 on Centrality of Protection**].

3. Strengthen protection analysis to support the system's advocacy efforts to reduce protection risks and violations [**IASC Task Force 1 on Centrality of Protection**].
4. Broaden the inclusion of local actors and strengthen collaboration with other relevant Task Forces [**IASC Task Force 1 on Centrality of Protection**].
5. Maintain the Task Force's focus on GBV and strengthening advocacy [**IASC OPAG**].

SESSION 2: IASC Task Force 2 on Accountability to Affected People

Ms. Guarnieri introduced the second session recalling that Accountability to Affected People (AAP) is an IASC priority and an issue that has challenged the humanitarian community for some time, but where there is a strong system-wide commitment, shared by the Emergency Relief Coordinator, to make progress. Laying out the objectives, she asked the co-chairs of IASC Task Force 2 on AAP to challenge OPAG and identify how OPAG can support the Task Force to overcome any challenges or obstacles. She welcomed the co-chairs taking stock of the pilots and country-based workshops on Collective AAP and updating OPAG on the use of the tools, including the Collective AAP Framework, Community Feedback Mechanisms and the Results Tracker. She thanked Task Force 2 for focusing their work on supporting the field and country-level applicability of the tools.

The IASC Task Force 2 co-chairs, Ms. Tanya Wood, Mr. Jesse Wood and Ms. Sicotte-Levesque (standing in for Mr. Frank Mohrhauer), reported on general progress of the Task Force 2 with a focus on the Collective AAP Framework, Results Tracker and Feedback Mechanism workstreams. They provided highlights on the impact and main outcomes of the four country-led workshops on AAP which they indicated demonstrated proof of concept for the Collective AAP Framework. The TF2 co-chairs recommended that the Collective AAP Framework and other tools be made available to be adapted in operational contexts with IASC-supported expertise. They emphasized that it is important to establish these tools and approaches and strengthen their contextualization and adaptation at country level in support of the country-based humanitarian leadership and operational coordination. The presenters highlighted that in all four contexts the IASC Collective AAP Framework was effective as a catalyst and template for developing action plans and had stimulated discussions and recommended action around the phases and elements of the HPC.

Ms. Tanya Wood briefed OPAG on how the Results Tracker was being used as a framework for monitoring collective accountability. Field testing had been conducted in Ethiopia, Lebanon, Bangladesh, Gaziantep (cross-border response) and Somalia. Country teams had concluded that insufficient consolidated evidence on the quantity, quality and performance of Collective AAP activities was available and that the Results Tracker was a positive step in bringing this information together at a global and a local level, adding value for planning, implementing and monitoring Collective AAP. Going forward, the Task Force proposes to move to a process of co-creation, adapting tools in collaboration with in-country inter-agency colleagues, including AAP Focal Points, information management staff and other inter-agency personnel; support country actors to develop Collective AAP planning and implementation, and use the momentum to support collective planning and implementation for Collective AAP. The co-chairs requested OPAG members to request their country staff dedicate time and resources to identify evidence and feed into the Results Tracker and commit to an annual review process with local and global stakeholders to ensure the Results Tracker remains relevant and applicable. Ms. Sicotte-Levesque then proceeded to outline the main challenges with collective feedback mechanisms and how they are being addressed.

In conclusion, the co-chairs indicated that OPAG could support Task Force 2 by committing their organisations to collectively piloting and testing tools and approaches and consolidate learnings

from different contexts to inform the Task Force 2-led inter-agency learning process. They requested OPAG to make the Collective AAP Framework widely available, as an adaptable framework to be contextualized by HCTs. They also requested support for country teams to identify relevant indicators to monitor collective AAP for country planning and implementation and the continued improvement of global AAP monitoring and reporting based on feedback from country experiences. Lastly, the co-chairs sought a commitment from OPAG members to ensure enhanced country-level leadership to help strengthen accountability supported by an inclusive, well-resourced system. They requested support for the continued country-led adaptation and learning that feeds into global policy and any other recommendations on taking this work forward at country level.

Ms. Guarneri thanked the co-chairs for their presentation and the efforts to ground the work in engagement at the country level. She queried if there was an opportunity to field-test the various tools simultaneously in the same countries – a suggestion that received support from OPAG members – while being cognizant of tools and approaches developed at country level. She furthermore requested clarity on how the engagement at country-level had led to adaptation of the Collective AAP Framework.

DISCUSSION

In the ensuing discussion, OPAG members commended Task Force 2 for their ambitious and important work in support of Collective AAP and welcomed its prioritization of working at the country level. They called for providing support to this agenda by fully investing in members' in-country teams. Participants highlighted that Task Force 2 was successful in generating an evidence base and feedback from affected people to influence a change in programming. Participants suggested other Task Forces might wish to emulate the Task Force 2 methodology of using country-level workshops to contextualise and make the work relevant for other workstreams. It was stressed that the Collective AAP Framework was central for the HPC, noting the Framework and other tools should be made widely available. Participants noted that currently there was momentum and leadership to make progress on this important issue. One member suggested that AAP become a key metric for the performance of Humanitarian Coordinators, HCTs and the in-country leadership of all IASC members. Some, however, also expressed concern that resources and systems were insufficient which could jeopardize maintaining this momentum.

Members applauded the inclusiveness of Task Force 2 pointing out its increased and diverse membership and broad collaboration with relevant stakeholders. One participant suggested strengthening involvement with country-level clusters in implementing and adapting the Collective AAP Framework at country levels; others noted a need to bring in development actors and activities in light of the protractedness of crises and the impending food crisis. A query arose on data management and the need to not just generate but also action data.

Regarding the work on Community Feedback Mechanisms, several members suggested it was important to reinforce interoperability including linking with the Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) agenda, ensuring mechanisms were embedded in programming and moving beyond listening to bringing about real change. One participant saw opportunities for making better use of technology, while Task Force 2 co-chairs stressed tools needed to be simple enough for use by all. Some members called for greater alignment with Task Force 1's protection agenda and bringing out the inclusion aspect in the work of both Task Force 1 and Task Force 2.

Ms. Shelbaya recalled the IASC statement on Collective AAP and informed that in November, Ground Truth Solutions was to present a report to the IASC Principals on community perceptions on the work of humanitarian partners. She drew participants' attention to the experience in Haiti. She queried what more the IASC could do as a system and which changes needed to be seen, noting the AAP workshops had shown that there continues to be a disconnect between what people

were asking for and what the humanitarian system supplies. She cited the ERC's call for stepping away from formulaic accountability and correct a humanitarian system that had become too rigid and absorbed in its own tools. Ms. Guarnieri picked up the call for applying future thinking to the work around AAP. One member speculated if humanitarians were prepared to advocate for sustainable solutions and people-driven development.

In conclusion, Ms. Guarnieri thanked presenters and participants and summarised key action points. She asked the work to move beyond the original pilot countries and stressed that to shift the system, the work needed to evolve beyond the identification and testing of tools.

ACTION POINTS

1. Report on the lessons and recommendations from the first four field tests of the tools and ensure that the tools are adjusted to reflect field feedback. Ensure that AAP tools (AAP Framework, Results Tracker and Community Feedback Mechanisms) are field tested in the same countries [**IASC Task Force 2 on AAP**].
2. Share lessons learned from Ukraine on the CFMs to inform future field testing [**IASC Task Force 2 on AAP**].
3. Make the Collective AAP Framework and other tools available for use and adaptation at the country level [**IASC Task Force 2 on AAP**].
4. Strengthen links with other IASC Task Forces [**IASC Task Force 2 on AAP**].

SESSION 3: GLOBAL CLUSTER COORDINATION GROUP (GCCG)

Mr. Geir Olav Lisle welcomed the presenters and recalled OPAG had asked the GCCG to strengthen their support to the field and play a stronger role in informing IASC policy.

The GCCG chair, Ms. Marina Skuric-Prodanovic, briefed OPAG on the objectives of the GCCG: 1. Provide support to country-based clusters; 2. Contribute to learning and capacity building; 3. Raise awareness and contribute to high level advocacy; 4. Contribute to or draft relevant tools and guidance; 5. Information management; and 6. Contribute to thematic or cross cutting issues as required. In line with OPAG's request, the GCCG is in the process of finalizing the appointment of an NGO co-chair and is collaborating closely with other IASC structures and mechanisms beyond the IASC.

Mr. Dher Hayo, Global CCCM Cluster Co-Coordinator, noted that the existing four Scale Up operations had put significant pressure on the humanitarian system overall, in particular the clusters and the GCCG. In 2022, the GCCG had provided direct or remote support to country operations in South Sudan, Ukraine, Somalia, Libya, Pakistan, Iraq and Lebanon, and had also monitored the capacity and performance of clusters. The GCCG had recently shared an annual global mapping of IASC coordination structures and cluster capacity, as well as of technical working groups. The findings show that clusters have been steadily under-resourced despite significant and increasing expectations being placed on them. Findings also show that HCTs have made progress in terms of the representation of local actors. Less progress however has been achieved in terms of localising cluster leadership.

The presenters requested for OPAG to advocate for global clusters to also be consulted and play a role in the upcoming IASC review of coordination structures in IDP settings, and for OPAG to

provide leadership for the humanitarian system to shift towards more meaningful power sharing with local actors. They also requested OPAG to follow up on the findings of the 2021 mapping of coordination structures. Ms. Skuric-Prodanovic and Mr. Hayo furthermore appealed to the IASC to support the process when defunct clusters need to be discontinued. Opportunities exist to learn from the recent transition in Iraq.

DISCUSSION

In the ensuing discussion, OPAG members expressed their support for reviewing and deactivating defunct clusters and holding humanitarian leaders to account for taking the necessary steps. They also noted that considerations around and planning for exit strategies was a vital component of any cluster activation process. One member stated clusters should only be deactivated once humanitarian needs had reduced and when development actors were poised to step into a more pronounced role.

Members underscored the criticality of meaningful power sharing in humanitarian decision making processes as a key component of localisation. They concurred with the presenters that progress had been made at regional or state levels, but little meaningful change was forthcoming at national level despite rhetorical support for and investment in the concept of localisation. HCs play a critical role providing the leadership required to build momentum behind sharing leadership functions with local actors. OPAG members furthermore noted it was a collective responsibility investing in the capacity of local actors, which has been insufficient so far. Members requested a more up-front dialogue with donors around risks, which was a condition for more effective collaboration with local actors. Members took note of the fact that global clusters are sometimes required to also provide support to operations where no clusters are formally activated (e.g. most recently Pakistan). One member suggested donor funding might need to be conditional upon effective power sharing with local actors. Alternatively, identification of and agreement on a concrete target for local participation and leadership of local actors in humanitarian coordination and decision-making structures could be useful. The OPAG co-Chairs stated clusters had an opportunity to lead meaningful change in localising the humanitarian response. The ongoing IASC review of coordination structures in IDP settings is expected to provide further learning on what more must be done to shift power sharing towards more meaningful localisation of humanitarian coordination structures.

Members welcomed the global coordination mapping exercise, which they noted the IASC must make better use of going forward. Members noted further clarity was needed on ways of working in contexts in which sectors and clusters were working side by side. There was broad agreement that opportunities must be sought to simplify coordination structures to improve efficiencies. OPAG members welcomed the GCCG co-chairing arrangement.

In conclusion, the OPAG co-Chair thanked the GCCG for having strengthened their role providing in country support and urged the GCCG to reinforce its efforts to move IASC policy and tools to action.

ACTION POINTS

1. IASC Task Force 5 on Localisation to review the findings of the annual coordination mapping and identify concrete action required to bring about a meaningful shift towards increased local participation and leadership of humanitarian coordination structures [**IASC Task Force 5 in collaboration with GCCG**].

2. Engage with the IASC on cluster deactivation of defunct clusters; gather lessons learned on transition from contexts such as Iraq and others [**GCCG with EDG and other IASC entities**].
3. Continue prioritizing support to country teams and processes, including translating IASC policy to action and share an update on work in these areas [**GCCG**].
4. Review continued association of the Entities Associated with the IASC beyond 2023 [**OPAG, Q3 2023**].

SESSION 4: IASC HPC SG

In her introductory comments, Ms. Valerie Guarnieri requested the Chair of the HPC SG, Mr. Andrew Wyllie, to present on the HPC SG's work with a focus on the HPC review, discuss the role of the group contributing to IASC guidance and provide concrete support to operational partners; she also recalled that OPAG had requested the HPC SG to ensure that any tools/policies developed by the group and expected to be implemented by the IASC were reviewed and endorsed by the OPAG.

Mr. Wyllie noted that the HPC SG's ToRs were reviewed in 2021 with membership extended to local NGO representatives. The group functions as a forum to discuss strategic issues related to the HPC and, while it does not have a formal workplan, its areas of focus for 2022/2023 are HPC reform, monitoring and localization.

Mr. Wyllie highlighted that the HPC was much more than the Humanitarian Needs Overviews (HNOs) and Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs): the HPC is at the centre of coordination, partnership, collective accountability and monitoring. However, the process has become time-consuming and has placed an outsized burden on operational teams at the expense of delivering on the actual response. He noted that the ERC and operational partners have expressed a desire to make the HPC simpler and lighter. Initial consultations have taken place with IASC partners and HPC SG members with a plan for a gradual reform. In the short term, quick wins such as shortening narratives, emphasizing a good enough approach and prioritizing consultations with affected people for HNOs and HRPs are being prioritized. In the mid-term, the HPC SG would review global standards for consolidation, introduce the Joint Intersectoral Analysis Framework (JIAF) 2.0 as a nimbler and flexible tool, review costing methodologies, and limit the number of indicators for monitoring. A recent study on costing suggested that costing methodologies were not used uniformly across humanitarian contexts. In the long term, the HPC SG would explore opportunities for structural changes including simplifying the coordination architecture, planning cycles and development of integrated HPC guidance by building upon existing initiatives such as the recently commissioned Independent Review of the IASC's Response to Internal Displacement.

Mr. Wyllie furthermore informed that a challenges to inter-agency collective monitoring at global, regional and national levels being identified. Some of these challenges were around outdated IASC guidance, non-standardized data systems, and lack of resources. A working group would be established to tackle these issues and propose solutions under the guidance of the HPC SG. In addition, the HPC SG is developing a briefing note on localization with a focus on how to better integrate localization in the context of the HPC, anchored in the recent IASC Guidance on Strengthening Participation, Representation and Leadership of Local and National Actors in IASC Humanitarian Coordination Mechanisms. The briefing note includes recommendations on encouraging local and national NGO participation in needs assessments, response planning and monitoring as well as NGO reporting into the Financial Tracking System.

DISCUSSION

In the ensuing discussion, OPAG members expressed appreciation for the work of the HPC SG and stated their broad support for the HPC reform. They reiterated calls to lighten the HPC and shortening analysis and planning documents. They highlighted the importance of consulting affected populations, particularly women and girls, as part of the HPC. Further, there were requests to clarify how multi-year planning and visibility of local and national NGOs could be improved in the Financial Tracking System. Some members inquired about the HPC Steering Group picking up issues that arise in the JIAF 2.0 discussions that are outside the scope of the JIAF such as people in need (PIN) figures being applied systematically without prejudice to funding considerations and whether the HNOs should include projections of needs (i.e. whether the number of people in need [PiN] should include a current and a forecasted estimate) . Members requested the HPC SG's costing review to be shared with OPAG for review. Other members indicated their work on strategic results noting the opportunity for cross-fertilization and encouraged the HPC SG to quickly identify cross-cutting issues that can be improved in the HPC, such as including localization targets in the HRP. OPAG members inquired how the HPC reform will link up with the IDP review.

The OPAG co-chairs appreciated the presentation's focus and welcomed the participation of local NGOs in the HPC SG, however also requested a better gender balance in the HPC SG. The co-chairs furthermore inquired how the new cash coordination model will impact costing methodologies and requested clarity on where the humanitarian actions as captured in the HRPs end versus needs that should be identified under the Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, particularly in light of the recent Joint Steering Committee review.

Mr. Wyllie thanked OPAG members for their support and constructive feedback. He acknowledged that cross-cutting issues could be further consolidated and packaged within the HPC and proposed to report back to OPAG in due course. On cutting the bloat, he noted the importance of leadership to guide decision making and keeping processes and documents focused. In relation to JIAF and determination of the PIN figure, Mr. Wyllie highlighted the ERC's message to Humanitarian Coordinators noting that this figure should be based on needs as opposed to other considerations. Further, he noted that the HPC SG would soon share the costing review report with OPAG with suggestions on the way forward, potentially suggesting a new methodology. On multi-year strategies, Mr. Wyllie discussed the need for good practice which currently did not exist. In conclusion, Mr. Wyllie referenced good working relations with the Development Coordination Office and the agreement to unpack humanitarian and development programming cycles. This was work in progress and would facilitate a more joined up analysis and inform immediate and mid-term response planning. Finally, Mr. Wyllie discussed plans to improve knowledge management to ensure learning across contexts and between teams.

ACTION POINTS

1. Share the costing review report with OPAG for comment **[HPC SG]**.
2. Share the briefing note on localization with OPAG for information and endorsement **[HPC SG]**.
3. Explore opportunities for mutual learning on monitoring and strategic results **[HPC SG with support from WFP]**.
4. Share a proposal on how cross-cutting issues (protection, gender, age and others) can be better presented and packaged within the HPC **[HPC SG]**.

5. Keep OPAG informed on the review of the HPC [HPC SG].

SESSION 5: MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHO-SOCIAL SUPPORT (MHPSS) REFERENCE GROUP

Ms. Guarneri warmly welcomed the co-chairs of the MHPSS Reference Group and highlighted the collegiality and networking capacity within their group and the successful way in which they elevated the system's attention to mental health and changed policy to practice. She reminded that Mental Health Day had taken place the day before and that the Covid-19 pandemic had put the spotlight on mental health. She invited the MHPSS co-chairs to challenge OPAG to help lift obstacles and barriers to their work.

Dr. Carmen Valle-Trabadelo, Senior Advisor in IFRC's Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support and co-chair of the MHPSS RG, provided an overview of the constituency and field focus of the group, which now counts 63 members and supports 58 in-country Technical Working Groups, many of which are led by local organizations and/or the local government. 36 surge deployments have taken place since 2020, thanks to a roster of more than 285 experts. The translation of MHPSS products, with the help of country-based teams, into several other languages has facilitated the connection between the global and the field level on MHPSS issues. Dr. Fahmy Hanna, Technical Officer in WHO's Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse and co-Chair of the MHPSS RG, provided insights into their capacity building and global mainstreaming initiatives, such as the drafting of additional guidance, soon to be presented to OPAG members for review and endorsement, including a Minimum Service Package for more predictability, the establishment of a Help Desk to support the roll-out of their new Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, and advocacy efforts through several high-level events. He used Ukraine as a practical example of their support work to countries, where they mapped MHPSS initiatives, translated resources, responded to requests for coordination, information and technical support, deployed surge capacity and assisted national and local partners to reinstate the local Technical WG.

Among their key asks to OPAG, the co-chairs requested support to achieve greater integration and mainstreaming of MHPSS into other IASC workstreams. They suggested this could be done through increased collaboration of MHPSS RG members with IASC Task Forces, participation in the review of IASC deliverables or joint missions. They also called for IASC Members to get involved in country-level MHPSS coordination schemes and pleaded for more stability in the IASC structures, to be able to concentrate on substance rather than on processes.

DISCUSSION

In the ensuing discussion, OPAG Members congratulated the MHPSS RG co-chairs and expressed strong support for the group and its asks, including the continued association with the IASC through 2023. They echoed the need to foster integration with Task Forces and the GCCG, and the IASC secretariat confirmed that action was being taken to link up the MHPSS and GRG as standing invitees to the various Task Forces. Concerning interaction at field level, it was mentioned that MHPSS has been addressed in the Humanitarian Coordinators Handbook since 2021, but a need remained to integrate MHPSS RG and its work into local coordination structures through relevant clusters. Several members confirmed the importance of the work of the MHPSS RG for their country offices, and that the formulation of a joint position and the translation of many products into local languages were highly valued. A challenge that was highlighted was the need to move away from the perception that the MHPSS needs of affected people can be met through the health system alone or by specialized NGOs, and that instead, all humanitarian workers should be trained on how to deal with MHPSS issues to avoid doing harm. The MHPSS RG was encouraged to consider

further opportunities for engagement, such as in peacekeeping operations or Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR).

Ms. Guarneri reiterated the full support of the OPAG to the MHPSS RG. She invited the MHPSS co-chairs to consider collating and sharing learning on best practice in a follow up discussion.

The MHPSS co-chairs confirmed that the group collates learning throughout and would welcome sharing this with OPAG and other structures. In view of the importance of the topic, a guidance note on basic skills for humanitarian workers had already been launched during the Covid-19 pandemic, which could also be used in other contexts. They confirmed that the group has been working on MHPSS related issues in DRR and that a knowledge product for peacekeeping contexts was in the pipeline for the first quarter of 2023.

ACTION POINTS

1. Capture and share with OPAG best practices on better linking policy to practice applicable across other workstreams [**MPHSS RG**].
2. Mainstream MHPSS considerations into the HPC and other inter-agency initiatives, such as joint PSEAH or other missions [**OPAG Members**].
3. Finalize the integration of representation from the MHPSS RG and the GRG into the membership of the Task Forces and of the GCCG [**IASC Secretariat**].
4. Contribute to reviewing documents prior to IASC endorsement [**MPHSS RG**].

OPAG FORWARD AGENDA AND WAYS OF WORKING

The OPAG co-chairs started the discussion by noting that the challenges the humanitarian system faces were getting greater, more complex, and even more inter-connected and there was a need to step up. They reiterated their desire to take stock, reflect on the OPAG's ways of working and refocus discussions to be substantive, responsive to operational priorities and forward-looking, but also provocative, stimulating debate as well as better capitalising on the collective brainpower to identify and action solutions. They highlighted OPAG's role in offering guidance and providing leadership to resolve dilemmas, make hard choices and overcome any barriers. They requested participants to table and frame substantive issues requiring OPAG leadership. They furthermore noted that in the future, progress updates and product reviews would be done electronically. The Chief of the IASC secretariat reinforced the co-chairs suggestions, noting OPAG would want to support the IASC Task Forces to focus and bring to fruition priority areas of work. Whenever possible and relevant, the IASC secretariat would bring in field leadership perspectives and operational experience.

DISCUSSION

OPAG members appreciated a reflection on OPAG's ways of working and future agenda and suggested dedicating time to reflect on key strategic or operational issues that are of collective concerns and that require OPAG's attention. This includes a reflection on ongoing efforts towards reforming aspects of the humanitarian system or issues that require reaching out to key stakeholders beyond the IASC. They concurred it was timely to move away from a process heavy approach, compounded by the logistical limitations brought about by Covid-19 restrictions. While it was important for OPAG to support the IASC Task forces to focus and deliver on their priority areas

of work, members suggested OPAG would want to empower Task Force co-chairs to identify when it was necessary for OPAG to review and comment on their work. OPAG could do more to identify and communicate what needs to be done better or more effectively within the IASC and beyond. It must also ensure TF priorities are informed by operational needs and in support to operational leadership.

Members expressed their appreciation for the OPAG co-chair facilitation of the group, urging each other to be more up front and engaged in debate on issues of key concern and around which OPAG leadership is sought; this would engender confidence in a transparent, inclusive and action-oriented process. They also concurred that all discussions needed to land on clear decisions, summarized and communicated at the conclusion of any meeting, or provide clear actionable feedback to the asks of presenters; that it was OPAG's role to support Task Forces in overcoming barriers and challenges and to consistently provide a strategic steer; that it was the role of members to action decisions and to contribute to socializing IASC policy and tools with field-based leadership, staff and partners. Presenters were to be requested to at all times to table concrete recommendations and asks and to refrain from sharing information at the meeting which could be shared ahead of time. Some members suggested OPAG to explore how it links to other IASC structures, in particular the IASC Principals, Deputies and the EDG and requested greater clarity on how structures outside of the IASC, such as the inter-agency Advocacy and Communications Team, link to OPAG.

Members welcomed bringing the voice and experience of field leadership to OPAG discussions, including but not exclusively that of Humanitarian Coordinators, which offered an opportunity to reflect on how OPAG might better support field operations. Members reiterated their wish to refocus on supporting field operations, adapting IASC policy and guidance to local context as relevant and to refrain from further adding to the vast existing body of IASC guidance. It was noted that the IASC secretariat had ensured that each IASC guidance or tool has a short summary and provides clarity on what leadership is meant to do and where they can get more information; this information is online and is currently being translated into other languages.

In terms of future agenda items, individual members suggested to refocus on strengthening early warning and early action, humanitarian financing and data security.

In conclusion of the discussion, the OPAG co-Chair, Ms. Valerie Guarnieri, confirmed OPAG needed a safe space for discussion on cross-cutting or strategic issues, including ongoing efforts at system-wide reform. OPAG would continue to bring in the voice of the field. OPAG would also fulfil its obligation to provide the Task Forces with the necessary strategic steer and support. Mr. Lisle furthermore committed to being even more ambitious and using consultation with field leadership to ensure OPAG provides leadership that facilitates focused, simple but effective technical work of relevance and benefit to operational partners.

ACTION POINTS

1. Schedule a follow up virtual discussion on OPAG's role and future strategic normative focus [**IASC secretariat**, Q4 2022].
2. Dedicate time to reflect on key strategic or operational issues that are of collective concerns and that require OPAG's attention in future OPAG discussion [**IASC secretariat**].
3. Consistently bring the voice of operational partners and leadership to OPAG discussions, including non-IASC partners [**IASC secretariat**].

4. Promote electronic endorsement of workplans and documents where appropriate [**IASC secretariat**].

CHAIRS' CLOSING REMARKS

Mr. Lisle drew attention to the impressive compilation of policy outputs shared over the past three years, which was a stark reminder of the strong body of work the IASC has completed and which reinforces OPAG's objective to focus the IASC's endeavours on supporting the field in contextualizing and implementing IASC policy in an effort to strengthen the humanitarian response. He also highlighted the recent revamping of the IASC website and the sharing of summaries for key operational IASC products to strengthen accessibility and use of IASC guidance in operational settings. Product summaries take no more than 2.5 minutes to read; and print- and mobile-friendly versions are also available on the [IASC website](#).

Ms. Guarnieri closed the meeting by thanking presenters and the OPAG for their constructive engagement and support and NRC for hosting the meeting. The next OPAG meeting is scheduled for **29 November**.

ANNEX: PARTICIPANTS LIST

OPAG Co-Chairs	Ms. Valerie Guarnieri, Deputy Executive Director, Programme & Policy Development Department, WFP Mr. Geir Olav Lisle, Deputy Secretary General, NRC
FAO	Mr. Patrick Jacqueson
ICRC	Ms. Alexandra Boivin
ICVA	Ms. Mirela Shuteriqi
ICVA - Concern Worldwide US	Mr. Kirk Prichard
ICVA - Humanitarian NGO Forum Colombia	Mr. José Luis Barreiro
ICVA – Somalia NGO Consortium	Ms. Nimo Hassan
ICVA - Tamdeen Youth Foundation, Yemen	Mr. Jameel Abdo
IFRC	Mr. David Fisher
InterAction	Ms. Sarah Fuhrman
InterAction – Catholic Relief Services	Ms. Emily Wei
InterAction - NRC	Ms. Cecilia Roselli
IOM	Ms. Angela Staiger
OCHA	Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham
OHCHR	Mr. Roberto Ricci
SCHR - Christian Aid	Mr. Michael Mosselmans
UNFPA	Mr. Ingo Piegler
UN HABITAT	Mr. Filiep Decorte
UNHCR	Ms. Sara Baschetti and Ms. Eva Garcia Bouzas
UNICEF	Mr. Charles-Antoine Hofmann
WFP	Mr. David Kaatrud
WHO	Mr. Kevin Ousman
IASC secretariat	Ms. Mervat Shelbaya