

**INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE**

**SUMMARY RECORD AND ACTION POINTS**

Geneva, 5 December 2019

Host: The World Bank

**Working Breakfast: Hosted by Co-Chairs of the Global Humanitarian Donorship**

IASC Principals participated in a working breakfast hosted by the European Union and Switzerland, co-Chairs of the Global Humanitarian Donorship (GHD), to exchange views on the opportunities and potential risks for humanitarian action as a result of the UN Development System (UNDS) reform. The GHD co-Chairs welcomed the opportunity to engage with IASC Principals and noted that stocktaking and assessment of the UNDS reform rollout in the field is one of their priorities. In this regard, the meeting was an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the impact of the reform on country-level humanitarian leadership, coordination structures, particularly between the HCT and the UNCT, programming (including the linkages between the new generation of the UNDAF and the HRPs) and operationalizing the humanitarian-development nexus. They also welcomed hearing the views of IASC Principals with regards to preserving humanitarian principles and space in the context of the reform.

IASC Principals noted that it was too early to draw lessons on the impact of the Reforms on humanitarian action. They stated that, while it was important to discuss the changes that the Reforms might bring, it was also important to consider what would not change; specifically, to name a few examples, the role of the Humanitarian Coordinators (HCs) and their accountability to the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) would remain; similarly, the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) would continue to be the primary forum on the ground focused solely on humanitarian action. Furthermore, they highlighted that, while the humanitarian responsibilities of Resident/Humanitarian Coordinators (R/HCs) continued to grow as a consequence of increased humanitarian needs, more needed to be done to better identify and groom the right calibre of people to fulfil these critical leadership roles. This would be critical as it would benefit the humanitarian, development and peace pillars, not least due to the fact that most R/HCs are either dual or triple-hatted. Some headways have been made in this regard, including with more NGOs joining the ranks of HCs as well as IASC investment more in leadership, but it was recognized that more was needed – including by creating the right incentive system to encourage organizations to put forward their best to take on these leadership functions. Members agreed that a successful outcome of the reform hinged on the quality of people recruited to serve in leadership positions with the right competencies.

At the same time, concerns were expressed regarding the lack of engagement and information on the UNDS reform shared with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Furthermore, a number of representatives noted concerns regarding possible unintended consequences of the Reform which needed to be managed – including risks in compromising humanitarian principles linked with stronger accountabilities between the Resident Coordinators and the Governments.

Members also expressed the need to ensure a radically bottom-up approach to the Reform and noted that the methodology needed to be clearer and focused on how the changes would impact the lives of the most vulnerable people. Members also noted the need to focus more on outcomes and less on process as well as the need to communicate the progress and the positive changes that was already being witnessed as a result of the Reform. Donors were also called on to enhance coordination amongst themselves to better support humanitarian responses.

GHD co-Chairs concluded by sharing Members' views regarding the importance of the Reform and their full support to it. They announced that they would be initiating a survey in the Central African Republic, DRC, Iraq, Myanmar, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Ukraine, and Uganda to capture initial field impressions of the Reforms to support their advocacy efforts. They would share the outcomes of the survey with IASC members and welcomed the opportunity for a follow-up discussion.

### **Follow-up Actions**

- Systematically share information regarding the UNDS Reform with non-UN members of the IASC [OCHA].
- Arrange a follow-up discussion with the GHD co-Chairs on the outcomes of the survey on the impact of the UNDS reform on humanitarian operations [IASC secretariat, June 2020].
- Continue to invest in humanitarian leadership, including by attracting and equipping candidates with humanitarian experience to assume RC/HC leadership roles [OCHA and DCO].

### **Opening Remarks**

The Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Mark Lowcock, welcomed IASC members and thanked Mr. Mahmoud Mohieldin Senior, Vice President for the 2030 Development Agenda, UN Relations and Partnerships at the World Bank, for hosting the IASC meeting at the World Meteorological Organization headquarters in Geneva.

### **Session 1: Horizon Scanning [PRINCIPALS ONLY]**

The IASC discussed key humanitarian crises with the objective of building a shared understanding and approach to address the specific challenges confronting the system to respond effectively to the urgent humanitarian needs on the ground. Their discussions specifically focused on the following crises: Syria, Sudan, Venezuela, Afghanistan, Nigeria and the Sahel Region.

*(Note: A readout of this session will be shared separately)*

### **Session 2: Prevention from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and Sexual Harassment (SA)**

Mr. Filippo Grandi, High Commissioner for Refugees and IASC Champion on PSEA and Sexual Harassment emphasized that, while the role of the IASC Champion was focused on advocacy and raising further awareness and attention to PSEA/SHA, the coordination efforts

around PSEA/SHA remained with the IASC. He thanked Ms. Henrietta Fore, UNICEF Executive Director and former IASC Champion on PSEA and Sexual Harassment for her role in promoting capacity and awareness at country level. He briefed on his priorities which centred around: bolstering prevention, expanding safe spaces, and promoting a respectful use of authority.

On prevention, Mr. Grandi stressed the need to promote further clarity on PSEA and sexual harassment, noting that, from his field missions, he was surprised to discover that colleagues were not clear as to what constituted abuse. At the same time, he stressed that potential victims needed to be made aware of what their rights were should boundaries be crossed. Against this backdrop, he underscored the importance of raising further awareness and conducting more training with ethics, oversight and operational managers. The ability to effectively communicate with affected people was also highlighted as a priority and, in this regard, Mr. Grandi informed that UNHCR was providing US\$ 200,000 in funding to enable partners to develop communications material tailored to the various local contexts. The funds would be managed through ICVA.

To expand safe spaces, Mr. Grandi stressed the need to address peoples' fears and make it easier to report. He noted the need to do better at addressing barriers to reporting and protecting victims and witnesses, the need for leaders to create a safe space, which in turn creates confidence that leaders were taking this issue seriously. He underscored that zero-tolerance to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment must be led from the top and could not be delegated. Equally as important, zero-tolerance should be substantiated by sanctions and disciplinary measures, to have credibility.

Regarding the promotion of respectful use of authority, Mr. Grandi explained that we all have power, whether young or old, national or international, men or women. He continued by stating that we were at the crossroads of all these power fault lines and needed to manage them through authority, which is based on respect and dialogue, not power.

Mr. Grandi requested that a session should be dedicated at the upcoming IASC Principals meeting to discuss and better understand power dynamics within IASC organisations. He also encouraged IASC Principals to either individually or jointly raise awareness on PSEA and sexual harassment on missions to the field. As an example, he would travel on a joint visit with Ms. Natalia Kanem, UNFPA Executive Director, to South Sudan where PSEA will feature as an important thematic issue. Mr. Grandi referred to a forthcoming inter-agency training package for partners and encouraged contributions to design and adapt context-specific and culturally appropriate communication material. He also highlighted the importance of a designated senior staff within each organization to coordinate all activities both internally and externally and encouraged agencies to follow this model and to identify a senior focal point to work on these initiatives together.

In the ensuing discussion, members were informed that InterAction has a \$2 million grant that includes a large fund for NGOs to tackle PSEA. As the challenges continue to be systemic, rather than embarking on crisis management, it would be useful to reflect on how better address culture change and what it means to be a survivor-centred rather than legal-centric approach. A suggestion was made to dedicate a future IASC Principals session on culture change. UNICEF highlighted that despite having a staff composition which approaches 70% female in Headquarters, the organization continues to address imbalance of power across all offices. Members were also informed of progress in implementing the IASC Acceleration Plan,

developed under Executive Director Fore's Championship, including deployment of PSEA coordinators in the field; only 3 positions currently vacant out of 36 countries.

Members were briefed on the SCHR Misconduct Disclosure Scheme (with 14 signatories to date), in which agencies committed to systematically check former employers and divulge information about misconduct of former employees. To date, more than 1800 candidates have been screened and 10 persons prevented from employment. More organisations were needed to join the scheme to effectively prevent abusers from employment in the sector. PSEA activities need resourcing and should be considered as core costs. Members were also informed about the production of a draft policy by OHCHR on a human rights approach to sexual exploitation and abuse.

The OCHA investigations fund, has begun allocating grants for NGOs in need of resources to conduct investigations, ICVA offered to help pilot the interagency training package for partners and a suggestion was made that IASC members approach philanthropic boards to receive additional resources for PSEA. Members were informed that the World Bank had operationalized its Code of Ethics and WHO noted an increase in awareness following enforcement of mandatory training. While members supported the promotion of a common tracking and referral system, and despite good community reporting mechanisms, it was noted that many victims may still not report due to fear of social stigma or loss of employment. Members highlighted the need to support local and national responders improve their capacity to put systems in place for safeguarding.

With regards to the case in the Central African Republic, NGOs asked how the IASC could respond as a community rather than saying that the specific NGO involved is not doing enough. It would be useful to focus on collective efforts going forward. Mr. Grandi highlighted a good practice from UNHCR's experience, where information about misconduct cases and the resulting disciplinary measures taken are published twice a year. This brought transparency and showed organizational commitment to accountability.

**The IASC Principals agreed on the following:**

- Endorse the recommendations outlined by the IASC PSEA/SHA Champion, namely:
  - Hold a session on values, culture and attitudes with IASC Principals [IASC secretariat, June 2020]
  - Make IASC commitments more visible by advocating and communicating strongly on PSEA and sexual harassment, in particular on field missions [IASC Principals]
  - Facilitate the sharing of good practices and resources on improving workplace culture [IASC members].
  - Develop an inter-agency training for partners on protection from sexual misconduct [IOM in collaboration with IASC members]
  - Establish a PSEA community outreach and communications fund [UNHCR and ICVA]
- Promote and communicate on efforts the humanitarian system is taking to address sexual misconduct, inter alia to publicize the achievements of the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme and encourage additional partners to subscribe to the Scheme. [IASC Principals]

### **Session 3: Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) in Humanitarian Crises**

Dr. Mike Ryan, Executive Director, Health Emergencies Programme of the WHO, noted that, in conflict settings, one in five persons lives with some form of mental health condition. He stated that, mental health, which is a cross-cutting issue, was crucial to the overall social and economic recovery of individuals, societies, and countries after emergencies. He stressed the critical role that Governments, policymakers and humanitarian responders must play together to address mental health needs. He acknowledged H.E. Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of the Netherlands, for championing the issue, including through the organization of the Amsterdam Conference and the commitments that followed. He highlighted the good work being carried out by the IASC Reference Group on MHPSS, co-chaired by WHO and IFRC, particularly in supporting the operationalizing of the 2007 MHPSS Guidelines. He called for MHPSS to be better reflected in Humanitarian Needs Overviews (HNOs), Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) and Refugee Response Plans, including with requisite indicators and dedicated budget lines. He noted that the IASC MHPSS Reference Group was in the process of developing a monitoring and accountability framework. He explained that an inter-agency MHPSS Minimum Services Package in Humanitarian Settings is in development.

IFRC noted that over 66,000 Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers around the world were working on MHPSS – however, that was not sufficient to meet the significant needs on the ground. Members highlighted the need for funding as well as better tracking of data on funding to MHPSS activities, particularly on the UN’s Financial Tracking Service (FTS). They noted that addressing MHPSS at the earliest phase of the emergency was necessary to avoid affected people suffering from long-term and more permanent mental health conditions. Members also noted the need for the outcomes of the Amsterdam Conference to be followed through.

Minister Kaag, who was a guest participant, shared her determination to continue to advocate for MHPSS, including working with WHO, and working on MHPSS outputs to be adopted by the World Health Assembly. She commended the work of the IASC, particularly the work on the IASC Guidelines on MHPSS in Humanitarian Crises and announced that she would be building a secretariat to support follow-up on the outcomes of the Amsterdam Conference. She thanked the Emergency Relief Coordinator for having included MHPSS in the Global Humanitarian Overview (GHO) and requested that it be featured more prominently in future. She commended the work being done to establish the inter-agency Minimum Services Package.

#### **The IASC Principals agreed on the following:**

- Endorse recommendations outlines in the background document, namely:
  - Treat MHPSS as a cross-cutting issue that has relevance within health, protection, nutrition, education and CCCM sectors/clusters, in all emergencies. [IASC members]
  - Reflect MHPSS indicators in relevant planning documents and establish dedicated budget lines, as well as specific MHPSS codes within financial tracking systems. [OCHA]
  - Support for the creation of and the work of country-level MHPSS Working Groups in all migration, refugee and humanitarian contexts as crosscutting groups. [IASC members]
  - Continued support to the work of the IASC MHPSS Reference Group, in coordination with other relevant bodies and international fora. [IASC Members]

- Protect and promote mental health and wellbeing of staff and volunteers facing extreme stressors, including trauma, hostile environments and chronic stress. [IASC Members]
- Finalize the inter-agency Minimum Service Package for MHPSS [WHO, UNICEF, UNHCR in coordination with IASC members].

#### **Session 4: Grand Bargain – IASC Collaboration**

IASC Members welcomed H.E. Ms. Sigrid Kaag, the Eminent Person for the Grand Bargain and Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of the Netherlands. In her briefing, Minister Kaag highlighted the need to collectively work on the commitments of the Grand Bargain, capitalizing on the comparative advantages and complementarities between the IASC and the Grand Bargain. She highlighted that, in line with the GHO 2020 which was recently launched, humanitarian needs continued to grow while the resource base remained the same or, in some cases, have declined. As such, the current resource-constrained environment called for efficiencies and better collaboration around issues such as cash, reducing the reporting burdens on organizations, and promoting more flexible, un-earmarked multi-year funding. She also underscored the need to better engage with affected populations by working on their behalf and under their leadership. Equally important was to enable robust joint needs assessment which better informed the response and working more with local actors. She noted the importance of cash programming and stated that the coordination aspect of it was critical; however, she indicated that this remained the “Achilles heel” of the system and that clarity was urgently required. She called for the IASC commitment and leadership on these areas.

ICRC, Chair of the Grand Bargain Facilitation Group, highlighted four areas of focus, namely: (a) strengthening collective accountability – by advancing localization, quality of partnerships (including capacity building and engagement with youth, women, etc.); (b) cash coordination – with inclusive participation, including of local actors; (c) scaling up of the 8+3 reporting template; and (d) the participation revolution. Finally, ICRC noted that it was critical to maintain the political momentum including by channelling resources to areas of work where progress was needed and moving the Grand Bargain from policy to practice.

Regarding cash, Members referred to the joint cash statement signed by UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP and OCHA and the progress being made towards establishing a common cash system which would enable cash assistance to be provided through an interoperable system based on common data sets. They recognized the need to be more inclusive and engage with key actors, including IFRC, NGOs and donors. More broadly, they spoke of other inter-agency initiatives to promote efficiencies and effectiveness, including the UNHCR-WFP co-chaired UNDS Reform initiative referred to as the ‘Business Innovation Group’ around streamlined procurement, fleet management, office space, among others, with the potential of significant cost savings. Member noted that, while important partnerships had been established, including with the private sector, better integration of technologies, such as blockchain, could contribute to improved efficiencies and accountability measures.

A point was made regarding the multiplicity of data centres and the need to ensure coherence. Emphasis was placed on the need for harmonized reporting, the simplification and harmonization of cost classification, as well as sharing risk equally among UN and NGOs. On the localization, a strong call was made for more systematic and stronger engagement with local governments and called for the IASC to adopt a framework for better engagement with

local Governments. Many Members called for an increase in flexible and “quality” funding, noting more recent developments that have reversed progress achieved over the past several years by several donors.

**The IASC Principals agreed on the following:**

- Continue to make progress on cash and facilitate engagement of IFRC, NGOs and donors [WFP, UNHCR and UNICEF facilitated by OCHA].
- Establish a framework to strengthen engagement with local Governments [UN-Habitat].
- Continue engagement with the Grand Bargain and step up implementation of commitments [IASC Principals].

**Session 5: Impact of Counter-Terrorism Measures on Humanitarian Action**

Mr. Sam Worthington, President and CEO of InterAction, briefed on how the IASC can maximize efforts to mitigate the growing impediments that counter-terrorism measures have on humanitarian action, including by capitalizing on respective agencies’ comparative advantages. He mentioned the recent example of the proposed listing of Al-Shabaab under the Al Qaida and ISIL sanctions regime as well as discussions around Security Council Resolution 2462, which required a concerted effort to mitigate the negative impact of such measures on humanitarian action. He also mentioned that counter-terrorism measures affected humanitarians in different ways including their engagement with Non-State Armed Groups. He suggested a number of recommendations (highlighted in the follow-up actions section below) for consideration by IASC Principals.

Members thanked InterAction for their work in this area. They flagged the importance of documenting and showcasing examples where impacts to humanitarian action and human rights were taking place, especially contexts where counter-terrorism measures were also affecting women, children and other vulnerable populations. Impacts to IDPs was also noted, particularly when they face challenges declaring themselves as such fearing being labelled as part of counter-terrorism programming. Members stressed the need to highlight impacts from broad legislation that was often used in a pretextual way to stifle dissent or engagement by human rights defenders or other groups on the ground. This required the close collaboration between humanitarian and human rights actors to showcase examples of impacts, including ways in which legislation can be used counter-productively and harm rights. The importance of community engagement, specifically between displaced and host communities was also highlighted as a crucial area of engagement.

There was broad agreement on the need for a coordinated and coherent collective approach at the national and international level to address the impact of counter-terrorism measures and that engagement must focus on Member States. A call was made for a strong collective role for RC/HCs and HCTs to coordinate with Member States on the ground, as well as a more concerted role for OCHA in this regard.

Members expressed their support for the work being carried out through the IASC subsidiary bodies in engendering a collective approach to mitigating effects brought on by counter-terrorism measures. They stressed the importance to integrating external expertise in IASC discussions, including by engaging with the UN counter-terrorism structures or the UN sanctions regimes. It was also mentioned that, while it was important to document and

showcase the impacts of counter-terrorism measures, other measures, including bureaucratic impediments and certain compliance policies, also impact humanitarian action, and this should be documented as well. OCHA's engagement with Member States and UN Sanctions Committees was highlighted, with a commitment to continue engaging strongly in this regard.

**The IASC Principals agreed on the following:**

- Advocate for standing humanitarian exemptions in counter-terrorism measures. [OCHA in collaboration with IASC Members]
- Provide guidance to and ensure leadership by Humanitarian Coordinators and Humanitarian Country Teams to engage actors locally to address the impact of counter-terrorism measures. [OCHA]
- Humanitarian organizations continue to deepen efforts to document the negative effects and make an evidence-based case. [IASC Result Group 3]
- Engage proactively in open and sustained dialogue with Member States to raise awareness on concerns and work toward practical solutions, including in Security Council resolutions, donor agreements and domestic legislation. [IASC Principals]
- Engage the UN counter-terrorism architecture (the Counter-Terrorism Committee and its Executive Directorate, the Office of Counter-Terrorism, Sanctions Committees) by increasing the involvement of humanitarian actors in discussions around counter-terrorism as a matter of practice. [OCHA]
- Support IASC subsidiary bodies on their counter-terrorism work to create a space for dialogue, coordination and collective action. [IASC Members]

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