
IASC Results Group 3 – Collective Advocacy

1 June 2021

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Summary Record

IASC Results Group 3 on Collective Advocacy met 1 June 2021 to discuss (i) non-state armed group engagement; (ii) Suggested OPAG action points for IASC re NSAG engagement; (iii) update on famine prevention efforts; iv) Update from the climate change group, inc. World Humanitarian Day (WHD), COP 26, and Climate and Environment Charter (ICRC); v) update from the counterterrorism sub-group.

Action points

- **RG3 co-chairs to reach out the RG1 co-chairs to ensure linkages between the work on NSAG and BAI.**
[ACTIONED]
- **RG3 co-chairs and IASC secretariat to extend the comments deadline on the NSAG document**
[ACTIONED]
- **IASC members encouraged to plan WHD partner events for the week around 19 August, possibly with a deeper dive on particular themes, in line with agencies' mandates.**

Non-state armed group (NSAG) engagement, inc. suggested OPAG action points (RG3 co-chairs)

- Presenting the highlights of the draft IASC lessons learned and best practices report on NSAG, the RG3 co-chairs noted that approaches remain often ad hoc with **few agencies having a clear and sustained NSAG engagement strategy**, yet lack of engagement may have adverse humanitarian consequences for populations living in areas under NSAG control. Agencies that have an engagement strategy are often reluctant to share it due to sensitivities. As a result, it is challenging to compile best practices in terms of engagement with NSAGs.
- NSAG engagement could be constrained by legal, operational and organizational challenges. **Legal challenges** are due to: i) humanitarian actors not necessarily being aware of the legal humanitarian framework enabling such engagement, e.g. the Geneva Conventions; ii) host state authorities being opposed to such engagement in some contexts; iii) the proliferation of COTER measures with some non-state armed groups being designated terrorists. **Operational challenges** pose: i) the lack of a systematic engagement strategy; ii) the lack of coordination of engagement across humanitarian actors; the taxation and other bureaucratic and administrative impediments imposed by some NSAGs. **Organizational challenges** include management request frontliners to engage without clear guidance or redlines, which may result in a preference for indirect engagement with frontliners asking community leaders to engage with NSAG, as well as in increased staff stress levels, implying the need for adequate duty of care.
- **Recommendations** at the **legal level** may involve: i) legal guidance presenting the legal basis of engagement with NSAG, and legal implications of NSAG engagement and CT measures, by drawing inter alia on the [NRC toolkit](#); country-specific guidance taking into account national legislations and contexts, particularly where NSAG engagement is criminalized at the national level; mapping of domestic CT laws and provisions relating to engagement with NSAG listed as terrorist organizations;

collective advocacy to ensure that humanitarian engagement with NSAG is safeguarded and not criminalized, in line with the [ICRC publication](#) in March 2021.

- At the **operational level, recommendations** may include: ensuring that **humanitarian leadership is empowered** to engage with NSAG; promoting a consistent humanitarian leadership across all humanitarian operations where engagement with NSAG required; adequate resourcing of humanitarian coordination mechanisms with dedicated expertise to coordinate engagement with NSAG; promoting shared analysis, joint approach and greater transparency through regular peer exchanges.
- From an **organizational perspective**, recommendations may involve: clear policies and guidance governing NSAG engagement, inc. accountability of leadership of organization; dissemination of policies and guidance across the organization; organization-wide NSAG engagement strategy, with engagement at multiple levels; decision-making processes for humanitarian negotiations to clarify when and how to compromise and how to decide on redlines; clear role and responsibilities who to engage on behalf of the organization and at what level (incl. risk analysis, and careful consideration of national and international staff risks and capacity); regular trainings for engaged staff; appropriate duty of care and support for negotiators.
- As for the structure, the **target audience** is first and foremost the IASC leadership, and the added value of an IASC document represents its ownership by the entire IASC membership, thereby facilitating a common way forward.
- Geneva Call commented that engagement and humanitarian actors' capacity gaps had also been highlighted in consultations around the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS). Since 2016, progress had been noted with some organizations developing guidance and policies and trainings. While all recommendations seemed relevant, a priority may be to create a space to review already available resources, e.g. the [2005 UN humanitarian negotiations manual](#); and field exchanges, such as one in DRC organized by the protection cluster co-chairs (NRC/UNHCR) at that time.
- In terms of Geneva Call's ongoing initiatives, Geneva Call and NRC were establishing an online platform on NSAG engagement and CT measures. In cooperation with the **Geneva Academy**, Geneva Call and other partners, also started a research project on analyzing NSAG practices and interpretations of IHL in terms of protection, healthcare and access, with two case studies published in March 2021 on the [National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad in Mali](#), and the [FARC-EP in Colombia](#). This project also aims to provide operational guidance to enhance NSAG engagement.
- OCHA noted that the recommendations resonated with OCHA's own analyses, noting that OCHA's role in NSAG engagement is to ensure a coordinated approach to such engagement. In terms of OCHA's roll-out of its access minimum package, half the number of OCHA offices that have an access presence also have an access strategy, which may or may not address the issue of NSAG engagement. In over 80% of OCHA offices, there is an Access Working Group where NSAG discussions would take place.
- In terms of refining the recommendations, OCHA and UNHCR noted that the IASC NSAG document could bring to the fore **the role of NGOs, including local ones**, in NSAG engagement and their expertise in terms of actors' mapping and context analysis, not least because of the prevalence of protracted crises. To this end, building inter-agency trust to share such information - in view of eventually adding value to all humanitarian organizations, e.g. by providing an accurate, complete and up-to-date context

analysis, including NSAG engagement entry points was key. In response to the query by the LNCO OHARA Foundation from Nigeria, on how the IASC document could be shared with local actors, and on how feedback may be handled regarding appropriate NSAG engagement in different parts of a country, the RG3 co-chairs affirmed that this critical point of NSAG engagement being often undertaken by local actors will be reflected in the IASC paper.

- OCHA noted that another aspect that could be fleshed out was regarding **risks of maneuvering with bureaucratic and administrative impediments (BAI)**, in terms of this being one of the reasons for agencies' sensitivities regarding the sharing of practices. In addition, exploring to which extent NSAG engagement may provoke government-imposed BAI, such as in Syria, Turkey, and Sudan may also be important for advocacy messaging with Member States, e.g. by drawing on the legal framework for NSAG engagement. Furthermore, some recommendations may also be targeted towards engaging Member States, especially in terms of messaging in response to applied pressures.
- ICVA referenced the parallel ongoing work by RG1 on taking forward four case studies on bureaucratic and administrative impediments, noting that the **case studies in Afghanistan and Nigeria had also given rise to the increasingly bureaucratic nature of impediments posed by NSAG**, although the primary focus was on BAI imposed by the government.
- UNHCR highlighted the importance of **accountability** in the context of empowered leadership. In terms of **HCT coordination**, the different steps could be outlined, e.g. risk analysis, pros/cons of NSAG engagement, and how and for which purpose NSAG needed to be engaged.
- In view of the upcoming review of the IASC structures, IOM highlighted the need for a clear ask to the OPAG in terms of taking NSAG engagement forward in the IASC. The RG3 co-chairs expressed agreement for tabling at the OPAG the importance of a sustained dialogue within the IASC, as well as by linking the IASC with other key actors working on NSAGs engagement. IASC secretariat commented that clear agency leads, possibly leads with an operational footprint, may be key, in order for the issue of NSAG engagement to progress at the IASC level.

Update on famine prevention advocacy efforts

- OCHA provided an update on the communications strategy of the **High-level Task Force on Preventing Famine**, noting the slight increase of the funding ask to \$1.6bn dollars for the 5 countries/contexts at risk (Burkina Faso, southern Madagascar, north-east Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen – with needs on the rise in Ethiopia as well). IASC members were encouraged to share their related initiatives with OCHA, who would add them to the [trello board](#).
- ICVA briefed that the Geneva-level Member States briefing was to take place on 29 June, possibly featuring country-level NGO speakers. One aim was to also catalyze feedback from Member States on the G7 compact, and efforts by G7 members to rally other Member States around this pledge.
- As for **upcoming events**, RG3 members referenced the forthcoming Principals meeting on Ethiopia; on southern Madagascar a forthcoming joint letter by WFP, FAO, UNICEF; a Geneva-level Member States briefing by WFP and FAO the following week; a IASC briefing on famine prevention on 15 June; the 22 June [ECOSOC side event on transition focusing on famine prevention](#); and the 24 June ECOSOC famine prevention side event organized by WFP and FAO in coordination with partners, aiming to include voices from the field.

- RG3 members **underscored the difficulties around resource mobilization** in 2021, and the importance of linking up communication and resource mobilization approaches, in line with the HLTF's resource mobilization strategy.
- In the context challenges around tracking funding flows on famine prevention efforts, the RG3 co-chairs referred to need for further clarity regarding which pledges represent new resources and which pledges are not.

Update from the climate change group, inc. World Humanitarian Day (WHD), COP 26, and Climate and Environment Charter (IFRC)

- On **WHD**, OCHA noted the conceptual challenges the climate theme posed for humanitarian workers. First, the digital campaign will target a younger, less specialized audience, and will focus on the human race, putting the most vulnerable on the map to avoid leaving them behind. Second, the partner events will target a more specialized audience, having a deeper dive on various subjects (e.g. anticipation, anticipatory action, greening of operations, localization). Third, the climate content captured in the trello board will explain the impact the climate emergency has on people in vulnerable situations, and what solutions people have to address these issues. Outreach may include Principals' op-ed. Lastly, a parallel mini-campaign will be on aid worker security which will be based on the statistics from Humanitarian Outcomes.
- IFRC briefed that the **Climate and Environment Charter** was adopted on 20 May by the ICRC and IFRC leadership, and is now [opened for adoption](#) by other organizations in its official languages (English, French, Spanish), with an open-ended timeframe.
- While there will be a **dedicated website** to enable organizations to sign up and to serve as resource hub. Organizations can meanwhile sign up by sending an email to climatecharter@icrc.org. Organizations will commit to communicate their individual targets within one year of signing the Charter.
- Around ECOSOC, there will be a **joint Movement launch of the Charter**, and the Charter and organizations who have signed up will be presented during a session of the COP26 in November.

Update from the counterterrorism sub-group

- The COTER co-chairs updated that most of the outputs were being finalized and that going forward, the work was to focus on implementation. Outputs included the HC guidance on CT measures (being finalized); the mapping of the CT architecture, the elements around evidence collection efforts, e.g. InterAction's Resource Library, and the IASC CT Database; as well as solutions paper outlining possible advocacy solutions to mitigate the impact of CT measures on humanitarian action, mostly at New York level.
- At the forthcoming COTER meeting on 4 June, discussion will focus on the emerging issue of beneficiary screening.