

## IASC Operational Policy and Advocacy Group (OPAG) Meeting

27 January 2022

### SUMMARY RECORD

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#### INTRODUCTION

The Operational Policy and Advocacy Group (OPAG) of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) convened on 27 January 2022 to discuss IASC Strategic Priorities and transitioning to new structures for 2022-2023.

In their introductory remarks, the OPAG co-Chairs, Ms. Valerie Guarneri and Mr. Geir Olav Lisle, welcomed participants to the first OPAG meeting of 2022. Ms. Guarneri outlined that the meeting is an opportunity for OPAG members to gain a common understanding of IASC priorities and structures for 2022-2023, discuss the key issues that the new Task Forces should consider prioritizing during their term, and agree on working methods for the task forces and next steps for the Entities Associated with the IASC.

#### SESSION 1: IASC STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND TRANSITIONING TO NEW STRUCTURES FOR 2022-2023

Ms. Valerie Guarneri thanked IASC members for their contributions to the consultation process leading up to the adoption of the new IASC strategic priorities and structures for 2022-2023. She recalled that OPAG had an opportunity to discuss these in November 2021; now that the IASC Principals have formally agreed to these priorities and structures, it was important to ensure that everyone is on the same page in terms of knowledge and understanding of what these new priorities are and how the different structures are envisaged to take them forward. She invited Ms. Mervat Shelbaya, Chief of the IASC secretariat, to provide an overview of the endorsed priorities and structures and share insights into the transition process.

Ms. Shelbaya thanked OPAG co-Chairs and members for their support and contributions to date on the development of IASC priorities and structures. She discussed that the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) and IASC Principals agreed that the 2020-2021 strategic priorities (namely, operational response, AAP, collective advocacy, humanitarian-development collaboration and its linkages to peace, and humanitarian financing) remain relevant and continue to frame the work of the IASC for 2022-2023. The IASC Principals also committed to prioritize (i) preserving humanitarian space, (ii) making accountability to affected people a fundamental pillar of humanitarian response, (iii) ensuring Centrality of Protection remains at the heart of humanitarian response, (iv) mainstreaming gender equality and empowerment of women and girls across humanitarian action, and (v) addressing the impact of the climate crisis. In addition to these, the Principals agreed to a set of enabling priorities underpinning the work of the IASC, including localization (what more can be done to meaningfully include local actors and strengthen capacity exchange); an effective system to respond to the needs of IDPs, which will be further discussed and prioritized through an independent review overseen by the Deputies Group; humanitarian-development collaboration and its linkages to peace; and humanitarian financing -- through closer collaboration with the Grand Bargain around cash and quality funding, capitalizing on the Grand Bargain's more inclusive membership's comparative advantage. The ERC and IASC Principals also expressed their

wish for structures to be nimble, more focused and delivering results and impact in support of humanitarian operations.

In terms of IASC structures, Ms. Shelbaya noted that the IASC Principals have formalized the Deputies Group, which is expected to provide a strategic steer and deliver on critical systemic issues identified by the IASC including Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA); racism and racial discrimination; review of humanitarian coordination and response in the context of IDP settings; climate change; humanitarian financing; cash; and gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The new Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator and Chair of the Deputies Group, Ms. Joyce Msuya, is expected to take up her functions in mid-February.

Ms. Shelbaya noted the continued importance of the Emergency Directors Group (EDG) and the Operational Policy and Advocacy Group (OPAG). The EDG will continue to focus on supporting humanitarian operations and operational leadership. The IASC Principals requested that the EDG examines the IASC Scale Up Protocols and considers strengthening risk analysis and preparedness including through the Early Warning and Early Action Group. Over the last 2.5 years, OPAG, with the support of the IASC Results Groups, has produced a significant body of normative guidance and policy. For the next biennium, OPAG will focus on translating these guidance and tools into practice. Five new Task Forces will support OPAG in this endeavor, building upon the work of the Results Groups. These Task Forces will be operational as of 1 April, benefitting from current Results Groups co-Chairs' advice on priority deliverables.

## DISCUSSION

In the ensuing discussion, OPAG members expressed appreciation for the overview provided by the IASC secretariat. Some members noted that some of the Entities Associated with the IASC (such as the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations Steering Group (IAHE SG) and the Global Clusters Coordination Group (GCCG) had already revised their Terms of Reference (ToRs)/ways of working to bring about an increased focus to systematically implement recommendations stemming from inter-Agency Humanitarian evaluations and reinforce their field support. They also argued it was important to have clarity on the future of Associated Entities and avoid re-opening discussions from the end of last year. Some members inquired about how the Deputies Group would organize itself and take forward the priorities outlined by the IASC Principals. There was agreement that some priorities such as PSEA were currently being addressed by several entities and that it would be useful to have one workplan under the Deputies Group, aligned with the priorities of the PSEA Champion. Finally, several members noted the importance of ensuring strong working relations and linkages across IASC structures including between the OPAG, Principals and Deputies, in particular around collective advocacy. Members agreed to revise the wording in the draft ToR around 'leaving no one behind', a principle underpinning all IASC action.

The IASC secretariat welcomed OPAG members' feedback, acknowledging the positive steps taken by some IASC Results Groups and Associated Entities to translate policy and learning into action including through field support, however that there was tremendous opportunity to do more. The IASC secretariat clarified that the Deputies Group's ways of working were issue specific and that, as required, the Deputies Group would capitalize on the IASC members' expertise and/or create dedicated and time-bound technical groups to deliver specific items. Likewise, PSEA will be addressed as an IASC-wide priority; a multi-year workplan is currently being developed which would lay out roles and responsibilities of the various structures. Finally, the IASC secretariat noted advocacy was a cross-cutting issue of relevance to all IASC structures, as shown by the series of Principals' statements and EDG engagement to elevate

select humanitarian contexts for the Principals' attention. This would be further clarified in the Task Forces' terms of reference.

Ms. Guarnieri thanked OPAG members and the IASC secretariat for the discussion. She noted that the IASC was not looking to have permanent structures such as Task Teams or Results groups but aimed to move key systemic issues forward through time bound concerted efforts.

## **ACTION POINTS**

- 1) N/A

## **SESSION 2: BRAINSTORMING SESSION ON PRIORITIES FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE NEW TASK FORCES**

Mr. Geir Olav Lisle, the OPAG co-chair, noted that the Deputies Group asked OPAG to lead the transition from Results Groups to the Task Forces. A key element of this transition was to ensure Task Forces are set up for success with clearly articulated priorities and working modalities. He thanked IASC members, Results Group and Associated Entities' co-chairs for their leadership and contributions to the IASC over the past two and half years. He highlighted that the IASC had delivered a significant body of guidance, policies, and tools of value to field operations covering a wide array of issues including on PSEA; mitigating the impact of counter-terrorism legislation on humanitarian action; addressing bureaucratic and administrative impediments to humanitarian action; strengthening leadership and representation of local actors in humanitarian coordination, operational guidance on Collective Outcomes, good practice on implementing humanitarian-development collaboration and its linkages to peace, on gender; Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support), and data responsibility amongst others. He noted that the Task Forces would greatly benefit from the experience and advice of current Results Group Co-Chairs. He invited co-chairs to share their views on (i) items/ongoing workstreams that should be picked up by Task Forces, and (ii) other deliverables that should be prioritized by the new Task Forces. These suggestions would form the basis for Task Force workplans, which would be reviewed and endorsed by OPAG.

All Results Group Co-Chairs presented on their suggested priorities for the new Task Forces.

On Task Force 1 covering Bureaucratic and Administrative Impediments (BAI) and COTER, RG1 and RG3 co-chairs noted that their respective RGs have developed foundational guidance and tools for use by Humanitarian Country Teams on bureaucratic and administrative impediments and counterterrorism measures. Therefore, Task Force 1 needs to consider how to support implementation and absorption of these guidance notes and tools, linking up with other IASC entities. They suggested that Task Force 1 should function as a coordination platform to address operational issues emerging from humanitarian emergencies, focus on practical advocacy and impact by piloting the tools developed by RG3 in select operations and further socialization the IASC guidance notes and tools. Finally, given linkages between the issues of humanitarian financing and addressing the impact of COTER legislation and bureaucratic impediments on the humanitarian response, they suggested to explore how these linkages can be utilized across IASC structures. In terms of working modalities, they suggested Task Force 1 might work through two separate, but closely related, groups, one on BAI and one on COTER.

On Task Force 2 on the Centrality of Protection, RG1 has made significant progress on several fronts in the past two and half years. Some of this work is anticipated to come to fruition after RG1 will conclude its work in March and would need to be taken forward by the new Task Force; this includes the ongoing review of the implementation of the IASC Protection Policy (with the final report expected in the next few

months) and the required follow-up in form of a Management Response Plan. Task Force 2 would also want to take forward the development of Centrality of Protection indicators in conjunction with the review. Once the review is completed, the Task Force will need to consider how to articulate and address other aspects of the Centrality of Protection, including PSEA. RG2 recommended that PSEA priorities included in the RG2 workplan are consolidated into a single IASC PSEA workplan, that foresees linkages to the Task Forces 2 on Centrality of Protection and Task Force 4 on localization. Noting the lack of a natural home for advocacy in the new IASC structures, co-chairs recommended ensuring that all Task Forces and IASC structures mainstream advocacy in their work. Further, RG3 emphasized the importance of developing advocacy notes on key protection risks and threats or implementation gaps based on trends across crisis contexts, with clear recommendations and follow-up actions and with external stakeholders. Finally, roundtable discussions could be utilized to explore key trends, gaps and dilemmas linked to implementation of Centrality of Protection at the regional/global levels or protection outcomes that need to be achieved at broader level.

On Task Force 3 on Accountability to Affected People (AAP) priorities, some deliverables from RG2's current workplan would need to be picked up, including field-testing of AAP tools (Results Tracker, AAP framework, and set of guidance on collective Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms). Furthermore, RG2 has committed to holding consultations over coming months on a "simple referral tool for sensitive complaints", requiring the involvement of a diverse set of experts going beyond the realm of RG2. RG2 members also suggested the new Task Force 3 on AAP considers prioritizing the following: (i) the importance of being inclusive of affected people in all their diversities, by fostering people-centered approaches, through a shift in power or a change of culture; (ii) tackling the challenges with complaints and feedback mechanisms, including funding, data-sharing and lack of inclusivity, (iii) mapping and analyzing what barriers exist within the humanitarian architecture, which render the system unable to absorb feedback, (iv) shifting focus from policy development to validating or improving relevance and usability of existing guidance by engaging with practitioners and increasing the participation of affected people in all their diversities, (v) moving towards more genuine engagement and participation from communities by going beyond complaints and feedback mechanisms, and (vi) leveraging RG2's current membership and including local and non-IASC members. In addition to the above, RG2 suggested that the new Task Force will want to build upon RG2's and the current OPAG AAP Task Force's recommendations to develop and implement Country Level AAP Action Plans and synthesizing lessons learned from field testing and refining AAP tools. Finally, the importance of clarifying how Task Forces will ensure "leaving no one behind" was stressed.

On Task Force 4 on localization priorities, RG1, RG3 and RG5 advised that the new Task Force builds upon the foundational work already undertaken by RG1 through the IASC guidance on strengthening representation and leadership of local and national actors in coordination mechanisms. Socialization and absorption of the guidance should be a critical priority as should the continued inclusion and leadership of local actors in IASC structures. There were suggestions to establish strong linkages with the Grand Bargain workstream on localization and avoid duplications.

On Task Force 5 on Humanitarian-Development Collaboration priorities, RG4 noted that it has delivered a significant body of work and results including by creating a conducive environment for frank exchanges on sensitive issues on the nexus, guidance and tools on good practices, maintaining a community of practice and starting a podcast series. A recent RG4 survey on future priorities suggests that the focus should be on (i) peace in the nexus in particular in terms of safeguarding humanitarian principles, (ii) guidance for practitioners in different sectors on how to implement the nexus in collaboration with the global clusters, (iii) delivery of basic services with a nexus lens which is a key concern in protracted

humanitarian contexts, (iv) developing mutual accountability, shared results and progress monitoring across the nexus, and (v) considering displacement and nexus approaches beyond durable solutions. The Community of Practice and continued linkages with INCAF and OECD would be key to maximize policy impact. Finally, RG4 advised that the new Task Force could also consider addressing nexus financing in particular with a focus on operational aspects of the nexus and how to sequence financing.

On other priorities, co-chairs noted that the IASC might want to consider the following in addressing the climate crisis: (i) scaling up climate action in humanitarian work in terms of mainstreaming resilience and adaptation, and (ii) coordination of advocacy and policy engagement with climate change processes (COP 27). The current RG3 sub-group on climate change could potentially offer technical support to the Deputies Group. Concerning advocacy on famine prevention and response, RG3 expressed a willingness to continue this work under the IASC in collaboration with the High-Level Task Force on Preventing Famine and in support of the Deputies Group. Finally, RG5 noted as humanitarian financing is now under the purview of the Deputies Group, there is a need to clarify what aspects will be advanced and in what format. Practically, RG5 suggested that close linkages with the Grand Bargain would be useful for the IASC given their work on similar work streams and to advance concrete IASC action on this issue. Likewise, innovative finance may be considered by the Deputies Group as an area of focus, including in climate crisis discussions. They expressed concern that issues around strengthening quality funding and the simplification and harmonization of funding do not have natural homes in the new IASC structures, apart from informing the work of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle Steering Group.

## DISCUSSION

Members expressed broad appreciation of the IASC Results Groups' work and Results Group Co-Chairs' leadership over the past two and half years. They noted the importance of striving for operational impact through Task Force deliverables, ensuring advocacy is integrated across Task Force workplans and working modalities, leveraging engagement with non-IASC stakeholders including the Grand Bargain, INCAF and local and national NGOs, and enhancing linkages across IASC structures to deliver impact over the next two years.

On recommended priorities for Task Force 1, OPAG members expressed support to the priorities outlined on preserving humanitarian space through translating policy to action by socializing and increasing the absorption of recent IASC guidance on bureaucratic and administrative impediments and COTER. Members agreed that advocacy on addressing bureaucratic and administrative impediments as well as COTER should be priorities building upon the work done by RG1 and RG3. They inquired whether bureaucratic and administrative impediments and counter-terrorism will be merged or would continue to function separately.

On suggested priorities for Task Force 2, OPAG members expressed support to the priorities outlined on Centrality of Protection. They noted that advocacy should be an integral part of the workplan of Task Force 2, while also considering elements of protection programming. Given the Secretary-General's Agenda for Human Rights, there was a call to utilize the IASC Protection Policy review findings to develop an agenda for protection for the humanitarian sector. Some members recalled that IASC Principals expressed interest in including gender-based violence under this workstream.

Concerning Task Force 3 priorities, members expressed broad support and noted that AAP is high on the ERC's and IASC Principals' agenda. The coming months will be critical to launch AAP tools across humanitarian operations and refine them. Likewise, an annual report on AAP to the Principals, which will discuss barriers to AAP and views captured from affected communities will be prepared. It was noted that

the new AAP Task Force should consider individual agencies' commitments on AAP at field level and mobilize Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators as well as Humanitarian Country Teams around AAP. Finally, while welcoming the shift towards roll-out and implementation of tools, some members cautioned that the new Task Force should not become a default help desk and called for greater synergies between the AAP Task Force and data protection work that OPAG may wish to advance in the future considering the recent revelations about beneficiary data being stolen. As with other Task Forces, advocacy will need to be mainstreamed in the deliverables and workplan of Task Force 3.

Regarding priorities of Task Force 4 on localization, members welcomed the direction proposed with a focus on implementation and absorption of the guidance, noting that there is need to shift power and turn rhetoric into practice. They called for maintaining the inclusivity in membership gained through RG1's localization sub-group, increased linkages between the IASC and Grand Bargain on localization including by mapping who is doing what, and strengthen equal partnership, capacity exchange and meaningful engagement in coordination structures as areas of priorities. Members agreed that local actor engagement including as co-chairs would be critical for the IASC to demonstrate its approach to localization but also through ensuring that actors who will be critical in implementation such as clusters are included in the membership. Finally, there were recommendations to identify how to measure progress towards implementation of localization commitments and consider building upon RG5's work on funding vis-à-vis local actors.

On priorities of Task Force 5 on Humanitarian-Development Collaboration, members broadly agreed on the priorities presented by RG4 co-chairs. They noted the importance of practical collaboration between Task Force 5 and the GCCG and welcomed the suggested work on basic services through the nexus approach particularly in conflict settings and/or where such services are not provided by authorities. Members also suggested that Task Force 5 should consider the recommendations of the High-Level Panel on IDPs as well as the Secretary-General's Action Agenda when considering priorities on nexus and durable solutions. Members recommended that a networked approach is utilized to properly interface with the Joint Steering Committee, INCAF, the World Bank, and the Global Network against Food Crises.

On other priorities, members welcomed the recommendations and agreed that advocacy should be mainstreamed across all Task Forces. The Deputies Group would play a critical role both on the climate crisis and advocacy on famine prevention. Some members cautioned that the IASC Principals were ultimately undertaking significant advocacy efforts and there will need to be clarity on what is elevated to the Deputies Group versus the IASC Principals. Members also agreed on the need to tackle humanitarian financing issues in a predictable manner in the IASC structures. They amplified the need for close synergies with the Grand Bargain on humanitarian financing. Finally, some members cautioned that the Deputies Group had a significant number of priorities, and a realistic approach was needed to genuinely drive forward the required change in the system.

## **ACTION POINTS**

- 1) Building upon feedback provided by OPAG and RG co-chairs, draft a workplan for IASC Task Forces for OPAG and Task Forces consideration **[IASC secretariat]**
- 2) Ensure advocacy is mainstreamed across all Task Force workplans and working modalities **[IASC secretariat]**

## **SESSION 3: IASC STRUCTURES: TASK FORCES AND ENTITIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE IASC**

Ms. Valerie Guarnieri stated the session's objective was to agree on the ToR and the working modalities of the new five time-bound OPAG-led Task Forces, as well as their linkages with other IASC structures. Ms. Guarnieri invited Ms. Mervat to provide an overview of the Task Force ToRs and co-chairmanship arrangements.

Ms. Shelbaya briefed on the expectations on and ways of working of the future Task Forces and their co-Chairs, as well as the received expressions of interest to co-chair future task Forces received up to date. As shared in the draft ToRs, Task Forces are expected to build upon good practices and lessons learned emanating from the Results Groups; however, they are asked to strengthen established good practice regarding inclusivity, collaborating with relevant platforms and partners beyond the IASC, ensuring field relevance and moving from policy to practice. In keeping with current modalities, each Task Force will have two Co-Chairs at Director level, appointed for two years reflecting the timeframe anticipated for the implementation of the IASC Strategic Priorities 2022-2023. Co-chairing arrangements will reflect the diversity of the IASC with balanced representation between UN and non-UN organizations as well as other diversity considerations. Task Force membership will build upon the inclusiveness of RGs by ensuring continued participation of non-IASC members, local and national NGOs and bringing out voices from the field but also other entities who will be critical to implementation, including clusters. Task Forces will be accountable to OPAG with regular reporting on progress. Their priorities will be defined, agreed upon and endorsed by OPAG with a clear focus on field impact and addressing barriers to addressing systemic issues.

Ms. Shelbaya noted that a number of organisations expressed their interest in co-chairing Task Forces. The deadline for nominations might need to be extended to accommodate additional applications based on feedback received from the membership. In terms of the process for identifying co-chairs based on nominations received, she outlined two transparent options; (i) the IASC secretariat to propose the OPAG co-Chairs options based on discussed criteria, or (ii) an OPAG vote on nominations received.

## DISCUSSION

OPAG members welcomed the draft ToRs for IASC Task Forces but cautioned that Task Forces should not turn into help desks. They expressed support for a short extension of the nominations deadline (to Tuesday, 1 February 2022) noting a desire to move forward quickly. Expressing their confidence in the IASC secretariat, members supported option 1, in which the IASC secretariat is to propose the OPAG co-Chairs with options on co-chairmanship arrangements based on the discussed criteria for final discussion and decision-making by the OPAG. It was also agreed that the IASC secretariat will share the selection criteria before the recommendation of co-chairmanship arrangements takes place. Finally, there was agreement that at least one local or national organization should co-chair the localization Task Force and that inclusivity was an obligation to the success of all Task Forces.

Members also requested more time to review the draft ToRs of the Task Forces. Some members inquired whether local NGOs that are not part of the three NGO consortia could nominate themselves. It was clarified that indeed they could nominate themselves to become Task Force co-chairs as the IASC was trying to become more inclusive of local NGOs, which might not be able to become members of the three NGO Consortia.

## ACTION POINTS

- 3) Incorporate OPAG members' feedback on Task Force ToR and share with OPAG **[IASC secretariat]**
- 4) Share nominations to co-chair Task Forces **[OPAG members by 1 February]**
- 5) Provide the OPAG with selection criteria for co-chairs of Task forces, and, on the basis of such criteria, share Task Force co-chairmanship suggestions for OPAG's consideration **[IASC secretariat]**

## **AOB**

OPAG will reconvene to discuss the Principals' suggestions on the ways of working of the Entities Associated with the IASC and conclude the arrangements for the new Task Forces.

OPAG co-chairs thanked the members for their constructive engagement and support.

## **ACTION POINTS**

- 6) Reconvene OPAG to discuss the Entities Associated with the IASC **[IASC secretariat]**



**ANNEX: PARTICIPANTS LIST**

<b>OPAG Co-Chairs</b>	Ms. Valerie Guarnieri, Assistant Executive Director, WFP Mr. Geir Olav Lisle, Deputy Secretary-General, NRC
<b>FAO</b>	Mr. Patrick Jacqueson
<b>ICRC</b>	Ms. Anna Chiapello
<b>ICVA</b>	Ms. Mirela Shuteriqi
<b>ICVA – ACBAR</b>	Ms. Lisa K. Piper
<b>ICVA – IMC</b>	Ms. Mary Pack
<b>ICRC</b>	Ms. Anna Chiapello
<b>IFRC</b>	Mr. Frank Mohrhauer
<b>InterAction</b>	Mr. Julien Schopp
<b>InterAction – CRS</b>	Ms. Emily Wei
<b>InterAction – Global Communities</b>	Ms. Pia Wanek
<b>IOM</b>	Ms. Tristan Burnett
<b>OCHA</b>	Ms. Wafaa Saeed
<b>OHCHR</b>	Mr. Roberto Ricci
<b>SCHR</b>	Mr. Gareth Price Jones
<b>SCHR – Save the Children</b>	Ms. Leah Finnegan
<b>SCHR – Christian Aid</b>	Mr. Michael Mosselmans
<b>SR on HR of IDPs</b>	Ms. Kim Mancini
<b>UNDP</b>	Mr. Peter Batchelor
<b>UNFPA</b>	Ms. Jennifer Miquel
<b>UN-HABITAT</b>	Mr. Filiep Decorte
<b>UNHCR</b>	Ms. Annika Sandlund
<b>UNICEF</b>	Ms. Meritxell Relano
<b>WFP</b>	Mr. David Kaatrud
<b>WHO</b>	Mr. Rudi Coninx
<b>World Bank</b>	Ms. Maria Dimitraou

**RG co-chairs**

**Mr. Julien Schopp**, co-Chair RG1 on Operational Response  
**Ms. Bernadette Castel-Hollingsworth**, co-Chair RG2 on Accountability and Inclusion  
**Mr. Michel Anglade**, co-Chair RG3 on Collective Advocacy  
**Ms. Shoko Araki**, co-Chair RG3 on Collective Advocacy  
**Ms. Marta Valdes**, co-Chair RG4 on Humanitarian-Development Collaboration  
**Ms. Rachel Scott**, co-Chair RG4 on Humanitarian-Development Collaboration  
**Mr. Jeremy Rempel**, co-Chair RG5 on Humanitarian Financing

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