

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE

AD HOC IASC WORKING GROUP MEETING ON THE TASK TEAM ON STRENGTHENING THE
HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT NEXUS IN PROTRACTED SETTINGS (HDN TT)

Final Summary Record

5 SEPTEMBER 2017

Opening remarks

Ms. Ursula Mueller, DERC and Chair of the IASC WG, welcomed members to a dedicated discussion on the New Way of Working (NWoW) with the objective of providing the Task Team on the Humanitarian-Development Nexus (HDN) with guidance on its role and workplan. She stressed that providing the HDN TT with guidance was a central aspect of the IASC WG's oversight and management role of IASC Subsidiary Bodies. She highlighted the timeliness of this discussion, as the New Way of Working is moving from policy to practice and is being institutionalized at the highest level as part of the Secretary General's reform efforts, noting in particular the establishment of a Principal-level Steering Committee (SC). It will be important for the IASC to identify how it can best support this SC, including how the IASC structures at different levels and its broader constituencies can inform the work of the SC. Progressing clearly-defined key tasks is important, despite the system currently being in flux, and ongoing discussions can benefit the strategic conversations at a higher level as the system evolves.

Ms. Mueller thanked the HDN, TT members and in particular UNDP and WHO as co-chairs, for its efforts in creating a common, working-level forum on the New Way of Working. There is a need for "more coherent coordination" around the NWoW across the UN and the wider IASC system, recognising that full discussion also requires engagement with key stakeholders residing outside the IASC. She highlighted relevant discussions in other *fora*, including in Istanbul and during ECOSOC HAS, which have helped shape the narrative on the NWoW. She welcomed the background papers and recent discussions within the HDN around the parameters of the NWoW, specifically as it relates to peacebuilding, the Secretary-General's Prevention Agenda and the Sustaining Peace Resolutions, and on its role in providing support to field-level structures. She noted that the HDN TT has rekindled its relationship with the UN Working Group on Transition, now reorganized under the UNDG Results Group on Sustainable Development and Sustaining Peace. She noted that the joint work agreed by those two bodies back in October 2016 might find a new home in this forum. Ms. Mueller referenced the survey of Resident Coordinators/Humanitarian Coordinators, conducted in July 2017, which provides an indication of the scope and the breadth of the task ahead, on the gaps in guidance and operational support required, and on the potential added value of the IASC Working Group (WG) and its subsidiary bodies.

The Chair introduced the **agenda**, which structured the discussion around: 1) What the Task Team is – its role and scope; 2) What the Task Team does – its workplan and the proposal to extend its life-span; and 3) Where the Task Team fits in – where it is positioned in relation to other relevant mechanisms and processes that are contributing to the overall formulation and operationalization of the NWoW. Ms. Mueller urged participants to be pragmatic in providing the HDN TT with the required guidance on its role, scope and workplan and its position within the broader workstreams on the humanitarian-development nexus, and on ensuring that operational field support is provided in a way that does not create multiple channels for requests and guidance.

The Task Team on the Humanitarian and Development Nexus in Protracted Settings (HDN)
Facilitated by: Ms. Ursula Mueller, DERC and Chair of the IASC WG

Sara Sekkenes, Co-Chair of the Humanitarian and Development Nexus Task Team, in her opening remarks, recalled that if greater impact, effectiveness and efficiency is to be achieved in the nexus of humanitarian-development work, and with the interoperability the UN SG wants, there is a need to work together. Seeking WG guidance on the HDN TT's scope and role, the Co-Chairs put forward a 'Statement of Intent' and a workplan based on inputs from TT Members. She highlighted the survey of Humanitarian and Resident Coordinators, mandated by the Working Group in April and conducted in July 2017, to ascertain the gaps in guidance and the operational support required. The findings were clear: while most RC/HCs are convinced of the need for a new way of working i) the understanding in Country Teams varies; ii) the parameters of the NWoW remain unclear; iii) and implementation is unequal. While the findings require further study, she stressed, there is a clear role for the Working Group to identify, redress and/or amend policy gaps. Clear, field-driven, and concerted inter-agency guidance could go a long way to give field colleagues the necessary flexibility and space for risk-taking. Enabling sustainable collaboration, and a system-wide approach, requires coherent support and guidance, providing Humanitarian Country Teams, especially in protracted conflicts, with clear messages and advice, in a form that is easily accessible. Ms. Sekkenes stated that solutions could only be provided collectively, and implementing the NWoW successfully depended on inclusion and broad-based ownership. The shared workspace now pursued by the HDN TT with the UNDG offers a platform that reaches across all of the relevant IASC organisations and beyond. Currently, it is the HC/RC functions that lead the rollout of the NWoW, depending heavily on the buy-in from NGOs, government, private sector, and civil society.

Recognising the key issues at stake outlined by field colleagues and given the lack of clarity that prevails, the TT proposed its function as an interagency forum for convening, presenting and validating views of and approaches to the strengthening of the humanitarian-development nexus. Building on the progress made so far and activities undertaken through the IASC/UNDG Joint Plan of Action, the HDN TT would contribute to 1) shaping a common IASC understanding – collecting field practice, sharing information on initiatives and coordinating a shared narrative through establishing an open source platform, 2) develop and transmit operational tools and guidance as relevant and required, including work towards defining collective outcomes and associated accountability mechanisms, and 3) provide field support, when requested, by mapping available support from HDN TT members, transparently sharing all requests for individual or collective engagement.

Rudi Coninx, Co-Chair of the Humanitarian and Development Nexus Task Team noted the document presented represents a 'line of best fit': a way forward that navigates and accommodates different points of view and approach within the IASC, some of which have generated tension in the past. He called for a constructive approach to ensure that the NWoW does not turn into *New Ways of Working*, and to ensure impact in the field.

Reviewing issues of concern, on '**substance versus process**', Mr. Coninx highlighted the impact of the SG's ongoing reform and other relevant global processes on the narratives of the NWoW and the humanitarian-development nexus. He stressed the HDN TT's eagerness to contribute to the Secretary-General's reform process, and to support field-based colleagues through the provision of tools and guidelines that support achievement of collective outcomes in different contexts. The HDN TT had opted for a substance-driven workplan, indicating that the outputs would require much of 2018 to be concluded and sought extension of its mandate by the IASC WG to end 2018. Despite suggested caution over planning beyond 2017, the HDN sought to maintain momentum. At the same time, it was understood that the HDN TT would review its workplan alongside the progression of relevant

global processes, not least the Secretary-General's reform programme and establishment of the new Steering Committee.

On **field support**, he noted the issue had been contentious: for some, technical support by the TT was seen as crucial, for others the value of the TT was seen rather as a normative hub. The co-chairs had sought to respect both views, positioning the TT as a neutral conduit for capturing activities of IASC members to ground the NWoW in practice and streamlining collective communication transparently. As clarified in a recent HDN TT meeting, technical support to the field through collective missions, and/or in cooperation with the UNDG, would be based on individual agency deployment on behalf of the Task Team and at the request of Country Teams. The HDN TT did not propose offering technical field support itself or to become an operational body, given that it has no such independent capacity or resources. Multi-stakeholder – interagency, and other types of joint missions can certainly be envisioned under a joint UNDG-IASC umbrella, with the composition of such missions dependent on the availability, interest and willingness of member agencies/orgs, and field demand.

On the **double vs triple nexus**, Mr. Coninx noted that, in articulating the nexus, various agencies and entities include peace, while the Secretary-General seeks to empower RC/HCs to support peacebuilding. At the same time, some saw the triple nexus as putting core humanitarian principles and humanitarian space at risk. The HDN TT proposal focuses on the *double* (humanitarian-development) nexus, and getting this right first. He called, however, for pragmatism, noting that the HDN TT alongside the IASC Reference Group on Principled Humanitarian Action (PHA) and informed by field views, could work together to articulate a common IASC position on how humanitarian work relates to peacebuilding.

He noted that the proposal opts for a **collective approach over individual agency mandates**. The Co-Chairs have sought to be neutral, without giving preference to an individual agency view. This recognises that coherent implementation of the NWoW must be done collectively, with one voice, thus avoiding confusion at field level. Ongoing consultation with all IASC constituencies and external partners is deemed essential, in particular to ensure the broad support of NGOs, the Red Cross system and the UNDG.

In discussion, WG members appreciated of the quality of the documentation provided and the neutral and energetic role of the HDN TT co-chairs. They expressed appreciation for the **survey**, which, although requiring further analysis and with some differing interpretations of the findings, helps identify the role for the HDN TT and the WG. The findings on humanitarian leadership and the current lack of formalised guidance- were referred, noting the need to reinforce the expectation that the NWoW is a system-wide approach.

The inclusive nature of the group was welcomed, with members stressing the value of, and urging the HDN TT to further strengthen, collaboration with NGOs, development actors (including those not already associated with the IASC and other development financial institutions), and agencies outside the IASC, including smaller agencies. While elements of operationalizing the NWoW are related to current UN reform agendas, the potential implications for non-UN local actors were noted. It was suggested that the **value** of the TT itself, distinguishing it from the UNDG SDSP RG, can be in both bringing core humanitarian considerations to the fore, promoting spaces for actors from the humanitarian and development spheres to meet at the technical level, and in supporting non-UN actors' understanding of the broader range of conversations, mechanisms and processes associated with the NWoW.

IASC WG members promoted **links with other bodies, including greater collaboration with and between IASC Subsidiary Bodies**, and suggested the TT to strengthen information-sharing, work

on building synergies and complementarity. Specific recommendations included holding substantive dialogue with the RG on PHA (particularly on developing a common position around the peace element), engaging with the RG on MHCUA, the Task Team on Humanitarian Financing and with the Gender Reference Group (GRG). The GRG has been discussing the HDN, and a link with its small sub-group led by Oxfam was suggested. The need to clarify linkages between the (HDN and Humanitarian Financing) TT work and the Grand Bargain was also noted. It was recommended that the TT engage with actors/mechanisms on IDPs, such as the Joint IDP Profiling Service (JIPS), who – given the work already on durable solutions for IDPs and noting the particular relevance of the NWoW in protracted crises - could inform on relevant tools and guidance.

Some members of the WG welcomed HDN TT's work being **field-focused and field-driven**, stressing that HDN TT work learn from, and be inspired, by what is happening in the field, promoting learning from field best practices, and replicating them elsewhere. There is a need to move from conceptual and political discussions to a field-focus and implementation in practice, capitalising on the appetite that RC/HCs have shown for this, and encouraging their innovation. It was stressed that guidance to the field has to be joined-up (in its humanitarian and development aspects), and the need for *practical* guidance around the interoperability of planning processes, and developing shared data spaces (supporting proposed activity 2.1 on creating an open source platform of operational tools) was highlighted. Noting the importance of bringing the HPC/emergency response protocols up-to-date (proposed activity 2.5), caution was urged against a process-heavy review. One suggestion was that the TT focus less on providing guidance *per se*, but rather **field support** in facilitating context-specific discussions with country teams. Some WG member stressed that responding to requests for field support is not primarily the function of the IASC TT, and that members have already in place specific means of responding to field support requests that need to be considered. Provision of such support could take advantage of existing mechanisms, such as the P2P, although there is a need to clarify its linkages with the Working Group, where relevant as a preference to deploying multi-agency support missions, or other mechanisms that could capture the system-wide need for policy coherence and operational efficiency on the ground. It was suggested that promoting the NWoW in the field is both a technical issue, and a management one: not only do field colleagues need the appropriate tools and resources to implement the NWoW, but also the *incentives* to do so. At the same time, WG members cautioned about creating new bureaucratic approaches or structures.

A number of members suggested a need **for greater clarity on terminology and concepts**, and the potential for the HDN TT to play a pedagogic role, providing ideas and recommendations to help shape the conversation. They reflected that some activities in the workplan (explicitly referencing 1.2: developing key messages and common narrative on the HDN, and 1.5: articulating collective outcomes) would support this. The TT was seen to have a role to play in building understanding of what the NWoW means for *humanitarian* actors. It could also go beyond this to better understand what is meant by **collective outcomes**, i.e. what the term itself means, how to progress from a shared understanding of needs to a small number of (5-6) actionable collective outcomes, and how to monitor them, including measuring impact and progress.

On the conceptual side, some members highlighted the reality and value of varying approaches to the NWoW, questioning whether there is only one NWO, or whether it should be understood as a concept rather than a template. Others noted that the NWO has a specific definition that is articulated in the Commitment to Action and subsequent documents, quick clarify its elements and what makes it distinct from other approaches, while allowing for flexible implementation according to context. At the same time, the *spirit* of working together – including through individual mandates - towards collective outcomes should remain the same and was stressed. In this sense, the NWO should encompass both working collectively through different mandates towards a single collective outcome, *and* working collectively to fulfil the mandate of a single agency. Both the Chair and WG members reiterated the need to respect **individual agencies' mandates** while, in the spirit of

collaboration, working pragmatically towards collective outcomes for the benefit of response that moves beyond assistance and toward measurable impact. Where there are many agency positions, the TT has the potential to play a role in facilitating consultation on what the *collective* position is on issues such as the HDN or the NWoW.

In discussing the **Triple Nexus and engagement on peace**, Working Group members agreed the primary focus on the *double* nexus, and that this should include achieving better humanitarian outcomes through better preparedness and risk management in development phases. Some stressed, however, the value of also including the peace element in discussion where possible and appropriate, and in repeating similar initiatives such as the retreat with the HDN TT/Transition group retreat. While the explicit and programmatic entry points on peace/peace-building should be approached carefully, and the “Statement of Intent” was perhaps too limited on the humanitarian role in preserving humanitarian space, it was noted that there should always be room for strong conflict sensitivity, rooted in conflict analysis. Suggesting a discreet, pragmatic approach towards the peace element, it was noted that humanitarian actions and delivery of humanitarian outcomes, can also constitute a contribution to peace.

Placing the work of the TT in context, the genesis of the NWoW at the WHS was recalled, and it was recognised how far this concept has come since that date to become a key element of the Secretary-General’s forward looking agenda. IASC Working Group members sought clarification on the terms of reference of the new **UN Steering Committee (SC)**, in order to better understand its proposed role, scope and mandate. It was noted that the proposal for this committee benefited from the Principals-level structure and processes supporting the famine response, and was born out of a need for a more joined-up approach to policy guidance at the highest level. WG members expressed their concern that the system does not create an additional structure without substantive and technical grounding, and asked that, once formulated, the ToRs be shared so that WG members could propose how the WG itself and its subsidiary bodies can help ensure coherence at the technical level. It was recognised that there are limits to what the TT can do, that it cannot work in isolation from this broader agenda and the Steering Committee, which will provide the strategic direction for UN agencies on the HDN/NWoW. Clear messaging and incentives for change at the highest level are necessary to make the NWoW a reality. Noting concerns on the ensuring an appropriate forum and voice for the IASC in relation to the Steering Committee, the DERC stressed that, given the proposed co-chairmanship of the Steering Group by the ERC and UNDP Administrator, there is a clear entry point for IASC through its relationship to the ERC. She encouraged the Working Group members to make suggestions on how the IASC can support and inform this new structure.

In discussion on the final endorsement of the Workplan/extension: One WG member proposed a caveat on proceeding with the full detailed ‘Statement of Intent’, the Workplan of the TT and extending the timeline of the TT, by one member of the Working Group, pending the formulation and details of the UN Steering- Committee, and the potential direction and decisions in relation to development reform. Current language in the final ‘statement of intent’, i.e. on ‘validating the views’ and ‘coordinating shared initiatives’ may need to be nuanced to reflect complementarity with other workstreams, the work of the UN Steering Committee, and a collaborative rather than directive approach. Several members also noted that they would like to provide written inputs to the workplan, statement of intent and related documents to ensure that they reflect the WG discussion, before moving forward with endorsement. There was, however, broad agreement from the majority of WG members that it was important to move ahead TT workplan and maintain it as a forum to engage with non-UN actors for whom the UN SC is not the entry point. The majority agreed that this will help build the common understanding, and assess the implications, of how humanitarians fit into the broader picture. Even after the Workplan is amended and endorsed until end of 2018, flexibility must be retained for the WG to review and provide strategic re-direction to the TT, with suggested quarterly reviews, in light of the establishment of the UNSC and developments in the global system. The TT

should only continue where it adds unique and distinct value in relation to other forums, including any that may be developed to support the UN SC.

At the conclusion of the discussion, members highlighted the value of holding dedicated discussion on key normative issues at the Working Group level and, while the TT progresses technical issues, stressed the WG's own role in providing strategic direction and oversight.

The Working Group, agreed:

- To endorse the HDN TT's Statement of Intent and Workplan, pending consultation with WG members to illicit proposed amendments as suggested during the discussion particularly on clarifying the limited role of the TT in field support, and requested the HDN TT Co-Chairs to make the necessary revisions. *Action by: HDN co-chairs to consult and re-submit the revised Statement of Intent and Workplan to the IASC Working Group for endorsement (by 6 October 2017).*
- To extend the mandate of the HDN TT until December 2018 for implementation of the approved workplan, with periodic review by the IASC Working Group to suggest amendments in the light of relevant developments, including the establishment of the Steering Committee. *Action by: IASC Working Group to undertake an initial review of the endorsed HDN Workplan by 31 December 2017, and establish the timetable for subsequent reviews as necessary.*