

Proposed Terms of Reference For an Inter-Agency Standing Committee Nepal

1. Introduction

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) was established in June 1992 in response to United Nations General Assembly Resolution 46/182 on the strengthening of humanitarian assistance. Its purpose is to serve as the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination relating to humanitarian assistance in response to complex emergencies and major natural disasters. The IASC is one of the main coordination tools of the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), together with the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA).

The primary objectives of the IASC are:

- **To develop and agree on system-wide humanitarian policies,**
- **To allocate responsibilities among agencies in humanitarian programmes,**
- **To develop and agree on a common ethical framework for all humanitarian activities,**
- **To advocate for common humanitarian principles to parties outside the IASC,**
- **To identify areas where gaps in mandates or lack of operational capacity exist,**
- **To resolve disputes or disagreement about and between humanitarian agencies on system-wide humanitarian issues.**

The work of the IASC is based on the following key principles:

- Respect for Mandates
The decisions of the IASC will not compromise members with respect to their own mandates.
- Ownership
All members have an equal ownership of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies.
- Subsidiarity
Decisions will be taken at the lowest appropriate level.
- Overall Objective
The ultimate objective of any decision should be that of improved delivery of humanitarian assistance to affected populations.
- Impartiality of the Secretariat
The IASC will be serviced by the Secretariat, which does not represent the interests of any member.

2. Membership

- According to the GA Resolution 46/ 182, the IASC should be composed of “all operational organizations and with a standing invitation to the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and the International Organization for Migration (when present in the country). Relevant non-governmental organizations can be invited to participate on an ad hoc basis”¹. It is considered important in Nepal to have those non-governmental organisations regularly attending the IASC-Nepal meetings.
- In practice, no distinction is made between the “Members” and “Standing invitees”. The strength and added value of the IASC lies indeed in its broad membership bringing together all key humanitarian actors.
- Regarding IASC membership, “operational” is defined as having the following characteristics²:

¹ GA Resolution 46/ 182, Article 38.

² Background document on the agenda item “Discussion on IASC Membership”, 47th IASC WG Meeting, 2001.

- Provision of humanitarian assistance: political protection or material aid
- Deployment of staff to assist affected populations with immediate needs
- The IASC overall objective is inclusive coordination, while maintaining a relatively limited number of “members” to ensure functionality and focus of the IASC. Membership is subject to a continuous review, and new members are accepted on a case-by-case basis.
- Non-member organizations with a specific expertise are encouraged to contribute to the subsidiary bodies that are in the area of their specialization.
- Organizations aspiring to become IASC members are normally advised to participate in the work of relevant subsidiary bodies to demonstrate their real commitment and potential contribution to the IASC.

IASC Members and Standing Invitees (as of October 2004)³

IASC Members

- Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)
- Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- United Nations Development Fund (UNDP)
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
- World Food Programme (WFP)
- World Health Organisation (WHO)

IASC Standing Invitees

- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)
- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
- World Bank
- 3 international NGOs from the Association of International NGOs, AIN
(ActionAid, Save the Children US and Terre des Hommes)
- 1 International NGO (not member of AIN): TBC

3. IASC Nepal

Following the Humanitarian Reform, countries with humanitarian coordinators (HCs) have been requested to establish IASC country teams.

3.1 The IASC Nepal

- The IASC Nepal is composed of the heads of the Emergency Programmes of the IASC agencies or their equivalent counterparts.
- It meets every four months or as necessary. It is chaired by the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC). Supported by OCHA, he/she is responsible for the preparation of issues, consultations and follow-up actions. In case the HC is not able to chair a specific IASC meeting, this function is delegated to the most senior participant of the IASC meeting. Seniority in this context refers to the experience within the IASC.
- The IASC Nepal has the responsibility for:
 - Making non-strategic policy and operational decisions

³ In the context of this document, the term “IASC Members” is used for IASC Members as well as for Standing Invitees.

- Establishing if necessary IASC Sector Working Groups and determining their specific Terms of Reference
- Considering and reviewing decisions proposed by ad hoc groups
- Submitting the annual report on the IASC and its activities for review to the IASC Principals and preparing the annual work plan
- Preparing options and recommendations for the IASC Principals Meeting on strategic policy issues and major operational issues concerning Nepal and of general interest
- If needed proposing agenda items concerning Nepal or of general interest for the IASC Principals meeting

The Chair of the IASC Nepal can call off a meeting if there are no substantive issues for discussion.

4. Sector Working Group (SWG)

4.1 Introduction

- The IASC Sector Working Groups (SWG) assists in developing policy or operational guidelines for humanitarian assistance in their field of expertise. They also serve as interface with rehabilitation and developmental processes. They usually focus on a particular policy issue but can at times also be specific for a certain emergency situation.

4.2 Criteria for establishing Sector Working Group

The number of SWGs should reflect the capacity of the IASC membership to meaningfully participate in each group

To endorse new SWGs, a threshold requirement of 2/3 of the IASC members is needed

The deadline for the SW Group to establish its Terms of Reference is one month after its creation or revival.

4.3 Membership

- All members of the IASC are invited to participate in the SWGs. In practice, membership depends on agencies' expertise, resources and interest.
- Non-IASC members wishing to participate in, and contribute to, the work of the IASC are particularly encouraged to engage in those SWGs where they can provide an added-value to the projects through their expertise.

4.4 Chairpersonship

- IASC SWGs are chaired by agencies according to expertise and foreseeable contributions to the work of the subsidiary body.
- They can also be co-chaired by two agencies.
- The IASC SWG makes the decision about the chairing/co-chairing organisation.

4.5 Funding

- Members of the SWGs are requested to support the work of the group financially and to include it into their respective organization's work plan (participation in joint interagency assessment, convening meetings, preparation of background documents and their distribution, etc.).

4.6 Inter linkages

- Links between the various IASC SWGs are strongly encouraged and promoted. For this purpose, and to mark the beginning of the annual planning cycle, a meeting of all the chairs and co-chairs of the IASC SWGs is convened by the IASC Nepal at the beginning of each year (or at the creation of SWGs).

4.7 Reporting

- IASC SWGs report to the IASC Nepal, which oversees their work.
- OCHA supports the work of the SWGs.

5 Guiding Operating Principles

5.1. Decision Making Procedure

- The IASC Nepal endeavors to take all decisions by consensus.
- In instances where there is no consensus but there is a convergence of views among a majority of IASC members, a special decision making procedure will apply.
- Decision making in case of unanimity:
 - On matters pertaining to the implementation of agreed coordination arrangements, the HC will decide on the basis of the convergence of the majority.
 - On other important matters, the HC will refer to the ERC for a decision.
 - All decision will be taken in full respect of the mandates of individual IASC Nepal members.

5.1 Development of the IASC Nepal Work plan

- To facilitate the yearly activities of the IASC, an annual work plan is established after thorough consultation with IASC Nepal members to determine key areas of focus.
- Even though the work plan is set annually, it must be seen in a multi year context.

5.2 Agenda Setting for IASC Nepal Meetings

- The agenda of meetings reflects the actual situation of the country and addresses issues of concern as expressed by members. Transparency in the agenda setting is a key element of the IASC process.
- An urgent agenda item may be suggested by any member for either a scheduled meeting or an extraordinary meeting in consultation with the chairperson. The member proposing the agenda item should provide the substantiating information such as key dates and expected outcomes.
- Specific Criteria for inclusion in the IASC Nepal agenda:
 - An agenda item should be an issue which requires a decision, recommendation or advice. The IASC Nepal is not considered to be the platform for simple information sharing.
 - Issues that cannot be resolved in other fora or bilaterally between agencies should be brought to the IASC Nepal.
 - Issues should be relevant for the majority of IASC Nepal members.
 - Issues should be formulated in a manner that leads to decisions or recommendations or advice.

5.3 Background Documents

- The responsibility for the preparation of background papers lies with all members. The agency proposing an agenda item is assigned the responsibility for background documents.
- Papers will be submitted to OCHA that acts as secretariat, for circulation not less than 7 working days prior to a meeting except in cases of extreme urgency. Agenda items can be removed from the agenda by the IASC Nepal members due to the late submission of background papers.

- Papers will be expected to include a summary of the issues and options, including proposed recommendations for the consideration of the IASC Nepal.

5.4 Summary Records, Action Points

- All formal meetings of the IASC Nepal are minuted; action points and summary records are produced by OCHA.
- The action points agreed at the meeting should as far as possible indicate deadlines and responsibility for implementation.
- Draft action points are issued within 48 hours of the meetings and circulated to IASC Nepal members for their comments.

5.5 Follow-up Mechanism

- OCHA follows up on the implementation of decisions and action points, to which members committed themselves.
- OCHA reports on progress on a regular basis to the HC and the ERC.

5.6 Dissemination of IASC Products and Advocacy

- The SWGs and members are responsible for the dissemination of IASC policies and guidelines. This includes the provision of sufficient funding for dissemination purposes.

5.7 Outreach

- The outreach of the IASC Nepal is intended to strengthen the effectiveness of humanitarian advocacy and to share IASC policies with humanitarian and other relevant actors.
- A second pillar of the IASC Nepal outreach is to increase the awareness of the IASC as a mechanism and of its products, within the aid community in country.

**OCHA, Nepal,
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