

## **IASCI Final Report Summary:**

### **Professional Services in support to Information Management for the Flood/Cyclone Relief in Pakistan 2007**

<u>Executing Agency:</u>	International Agency for Source Country Information (IASCI)
<u>Geographical Coverage:</u>	Pakistan, Balochistan and Sindh Provinces
<u>Project Management Site:</u>	Islamabad, Pakistan and Vienna, Austria
<u>Project Duration:</u>	From 07 June 2007 until 30 September 2007

#### **1. Project Summary**

The Pakistan floods of 2007 devastated large swathes of rural Sindh and Balochistan Provinces in south-eastern Pakistan, destroying homes, crops and roads, and causing the temporary displacement of over 2.5 million people. The Government of Pakistan (GoP), through its newly-created agency the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), and with the help of the Army, launched a major relief operation, and the UN, with other members of the international humanitarian community and local NGOs, mobilised resources to help.

The decision was taken by the Inter-Agency Steering Committee Country Team in Pakistan (IASC CT) to launch a full scale humanitarian response. An application was made for the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), Clusters were set up and started work, a joint assessment was planned together with NDMA, and a Flash Appeal was announced and promoted.

In support to these endeavours, the IASC CT, through the Heads of Clusters, mandated the International Agency for Source Country Information (IASCI) to implement various initiatives, inter alia:

- a) Development of methodology, SOP and questionnaire for the Joint Rapid Assessment; Co-ordination of the Assessment Teams and field support in close co-ordination with UNRCO, UNDAC and NDMA; receipt, edition and release of final District-level assessment reports; establishment of a Re-imburement Mechanism for travel and other relevant costs of NGOs that participated in the Joint Rapid Assessment; validation and re-imburement.
- b) Establishing, facilitating and chairing the Inter-Cluster Information Management Working Group (ICIM WG); Chair six ICIM WG meetings; updating the CT HoC on ICIM recommendations on weekly basis;
- c) Development, financing and maintenance of the official Web Portal for Flood/Cyclone Relief (PFIC); training of Cluster Focal Points; development of User Manual; Help Desk facility; 3W data input for UN OCHA; regular uploading of documents;
- d) Design, presentation and regular revision of four project concepts: Hotspot Indicator System, and three different models for Information Management and Strategic Analysis

System (NDMA IMSAS). Following lack of funding through the Flash Appeal, the project proposal was forwarded by the UN Resident Coordinator to UNF with the request for a reallocation of funding of monies originally intended for IASCI activities in the earthquake-affected areas.

All above-mentioned activities were funded by a combination of UNDP and IASCI's internal resources; and can be considered as successfully completed.

On 12 September 07, IASCI was informed that a Joint UN project for Information Management Support had been developed by UN HABITAT in parallel to the concept developed by IASCI, as mandated by the Heads of Clusters.

On 24 September 07, IASCI was informed that no funding for Information Management would be forthcoming through or from any UN organization or UN-led initiative in addition to the funds already allocated to the Joint UN Information Management project.

Lack of financial resources led to the termination of all IASCI activities developed in support to the Cluster system (as listed above) on 30 September 2007. Upon request of the CT Head of Clusters, IASCI handed over the responsibility for the ICIM WG and the PFIC to UN HABITAT.

## **2. Activities**

End June 2007, IASCI was requested by the IASC CT, Head of Clusters, to provide information management support to the flood/cyclone relief process. IASCI was tasked to provide technical assistance in developing the methodology for a cluster-wide Joint Rapid Assessment (JRA) on the flood-affected areas of Balochistan and Sindh in support to the Flash Appeal.

On 02 July 2007, the first meeting of Cluster representatives took place at the IASCI office in Islamabad. At this meeting, the Clusters requested a quantitative approach, and IASCI compiled an extensive and complex questionnaire, based on the data/information collection requirements put forward by each of the Clusters (see [Annex 1](#)). Given the contradictions between the data requirements and the constraints/conditions on the ground, as well as the very limited time available, IASCI suggested, and the Heads of Clusters agreed to, a more feasible qualitative approach, utilising a semi-structured interview.

The following methodology developed by IASCI was accepted (see [Annex 2](#)):

- Tighten focus on *Rapid* and *Joint* assessment aspects of this exercise.
- Mobilize sufficient human, logistical and financial resources to complete the following within one week:
  - o Jointly design semi-structured interview questionnaire;
  - o Mobilize Multi-Cluster Teams, composition TBD;
  - o Complete interviews with Provincial and District level officials as well as relief agencies active in the affected areas (preferably in collaboration with Federal authorities) by Friday, 13 July 07;
  - o Provide full geographic coverage (14 districts);
  - o Each cluster to draft 3-4 page chapter of rapid assessment by Monday, 16 July 07.

Upon request of the UNRCO, IASCI forwarded on 04 July 07 their suggested Information Management Components under cross-cutting section of the Flash Appeal (see [Annex 3](#)).

While IASCI continued to develop and fine-tune the JRA methodology and collate the questionnaire/check list for all clusters, on 06 July 07, IASCI was informed by UNRCO that UNDP had funding available to financially support IASCI's technical support.

On 07 July 06, UNDP accepted IASCI's proposal (see [Annex 4](#)) and signed a contract for a one month duration to cover the services provided under the JRA.

The same day, the methodology, field guidelines, consolidated questionnaire and assessment team work-plan was accepted by all stakeholders (see [Annex 5](#)). The JRA started the next day with permanent technical support provided by IASCI.

Eight road teams and two helicopter teams were formed, including one cluster representative (UN or NGO) per team, as well as UNDAC and NDMA representatives. The 10 teams covered 20 flood-affected districts by interviewing district officials, local agencies and, where possible, cross-referencing the findings with interviews held at focal group discussions with local communities and affectees. The fieldwork took place between 9 and 14 July. The formatted and edited district profiles were shared with all interested parties on real time basis. UNDAC together with IASCI summarized the district profiles.

The foreseen cluster specific analysis of the district profiles, allowing "hot-spots" to be identified, did not take place as not all clusters submitted their analysis reports.

### **3. Outputs**

In line with its contractual obligations, IASCI carried out, amongst others, the following activities and provided services and deliverables, respectively:

#### **A. Joint Rapid Assessment**

- Development of Methodology for the Joint Rapid Assessment. Development and adjustment of questionnaire/ checklist in close co-ordination with the Cluster Group members, UNRCO and NDMA (see [Annex 5](#)).
- Co-ordination of 4 Preparatory Meetings with all Cluster members interested in the development of the survey work. Ongoing and parallel co-ordination and liaison works with UNRCO and NDMA.
- Co-ordination of all field operations of the Assessment Teams (composed of Cluster member participants), with the political and logistical support of, and in liaison with, UNRCO and NDMA. Provide field-supervision where and when necessary. IASCI conducted a field support mission between 11 and 13 July 07.
- Receive, edit and share the draft reports provided by the Assessment Teams with the clusters for comments, observations and guidance. Provide feedback to the teams based on this mid-assessment review.
- Receive, edit and share all final Assessment Teams Reports with UNRCO for further distribution and discussion. Please refer to [Annex 6](#) as an example of field work co-ordination. All 20 district profiles and progress reports have been shared with all stakeholders near real time on a 24/7 basis.
- Compile, format and release the Final Assessment Report. Please refer to [Annex 7](#), final Joint Rapid Assessment Report. The report has been distributed to all stakeholders and was uploaded, together with all individual district profiles, on the PFIC Portal.
- Establishment of a re-imbusement mechanism for NGO assessment participants. The participating NGOs were duly informed by IASCI about the reimbursement

mechanism through an announcement on the PFIC website as well as through all Cluster Heads, who were kindly requested to inform all NGOs in their cluster that participated in the joint assessment. Management and Administration of the Reimbursement Mechanism. Validation, approval and financing of NGO Claims as above. (see [Annex 9](#)).

#### B. Inter-Cluster Information Management Working Group (ICIM)

- Establishment and Chair of Inter-Cluster Information Working Group (ICIM WG) (see [Annex 12](#), Terms of Reference for ICIM Cluster Focal Points).
- Representation of ICIM at all Cluster/HOC Meetings (see [Annex 13](#) as example).
- Conduct of seven ICIM WG meetings, Chair, drafting minutes, Focal Point Co-ordination (see [Annex 18](#), minutes).

#### C. Pakistan Flood Information Centre (PFIC)

- The Development of the Web Portal for Flood/Cyclone Response (Pakistan Flood Information Centre - <http://pfic.webexone.com>). Please refer to [Annex 8](#) (screenshot).
- Financing and maintenance of Web Portal for 25 Members/Cluster Focal Points, Data storage, Full Text Research Facility, Mailboxes.
- 24/7 maintenance and administration of Web Portal through Web Administrator.
- Three training sessions for PFIC Users.
- Development and publishing of comprehensive user manual for PFIC site (see [Annex 11](#)).
- Uploading of backlog documents (under Google group) for and on behalf of UNRCO.
- Updating 3W database in support to UN OCHA.
- Closing of PFIC Site and handover (see [Annex 19](#), [Annex 20](#)).

#### D. Information Management

- Development of a Hotspot Indicator Concept (see [Annex 14](#)), and three Information Management and Analysis Project Concepts for consideration of HOC/UNRCOP/NDMA (see [Annex 15](#), [Annex 16](#), [Annex 17](#)).

### **4. Conclusions and Recommendations**

#### A. General

- In line with the global Cluster approach, facilitating and supporting effective information management has been a recognized responsibility and priority agenda item at all Country Team Heads of Cluster (CT HoC) meetings since the cyclone and floods impacted Sindh and Balochistan in June 2007.
- In response to this requirement, the CT HoC mandated the International Agency for Source Country Information (IASCI) to develop and implement: a) the co-ordination of a Joint Rapid Assessment (JRA), b) the establishment of an Inter-Cluster Information Management Working Group (ICIM) and c) the Information Management Web Portal (PFIC). In addition, the CT HoC tasked IASCI to propose and present a series of

other IM-related initiatives, leading up to the development of adequate Early Warning and Information Management and Strategic Analysis systems (NDMA-IMSAS).

- It can be concluded that the corresponding initiatives, primarily funded by UNDP (together with IASCI's own resources) have been successful. IASCI has met all objectives and provided deliverables and services in full accordance with the contract and its three amendments.
- Nevertheless, lessons were learned that are valuable for comparable exercises in the future:

#### B. Joint Rapid Assessment

- Taking the Rapid Assessment character of the initiative into account, the JRA provided relevant and evidence-based needs-assessment information to a) support the formulation of the Flash Appeal, and b) assist in the mainstreaming of relief efforts.
- The following constraints and shortcomings were identified:
  - o Almost total lack of agreed-upon baseline (denominator) information seriously hampered the analysis of the actual needs assessment
  - o IM awareness/capacity at the cluster level: the Cluster Heads/Focal points had no clear view on the limitations and requirements for undertaking such a rapid assessment.
  - o Field work co-ordination: the two (NDMA-led) helicopter teams did not follow the agreed-upon methodology and were practically unable to deliver meaningful data due to the limited time on the ground and commensurate lack of access to adequate informational resources.
  - o Lack of commitment at the clusters: the foreseen cluster specific analysis of the district profiles, allowing "hot-spots" to be identified, did not take place as few clusters submitted their analysis reports.

#### C. Inter-Cluster Information Management Working Group (ICIM)

- The ICIM WG, facilitated and chaired by IASCI, proved to be an efficient tool to enhance the IM capacities and co-ordination of the cluster system. The WG members agreed that the ICIM WG is a favourable tool to facilitate cross-cluster working relationships, information sharing and joint analysis.
- Nevertheless, not all clusters shared this view. The ICIM experienced a lack of commitment of the clusters vis-à-vis adopting the Terms of Reference of the Cluster IM Focal Points. Secondly, not all cluster Focal Points attended the ICIM WG meetings regularly, including: Health, Food/ICT, WASH, Education, Protection, Communication, Nutrition, and Gender (cross-cutting).

#### D. Pakistan Flood Information Centre (PFIC)

- IASCI developed the PFIC Web Portal in response to the lack of adequate information co-ordination capacity at the IASC CT level. In order to rapidly respond to the urgency of the issue, IASCI selected an off-the-shelf solution (web office) and customized it to the specific requirements of a publicly accessible, dynamic web portal.

- Especially in the beginning, the portal was highly welcomed by all interested stakeholders to establish a cluster specific online data library of all relevant documents, maps, etc produced in the context of the flood relief. A “Help Desk” was established by IASCI to assist all users to find the right documents, contacts or information on a demand driven basis.
- The joint calendar function facilitated the co-ordination of the clusters on central and hub level to a significant extent.
- However, IASCI observed that the number of documents made publicly available on PFIC decreased significantly during the month of September; Clusters were starting to lack the earlier enthusiasm in using this tool in an adequate fashion to upload their documents, meeting schedules, etc.
  - o As the primary reason, the ICIM WG identified the shift of activities and meetings away from Islamabad and towards the field, especially the hubs in Sindh and Balochistan.
  - o While having earlier on recognized the need to develop/shift most data gathering and information management operations to the field, the ongoing lack of funding of the ICIM WG and PFIC in support of this requirement proved extremely counterproductive. Due to a lack of relevant and timely capacity in the field, momentum was lost – and could not be regained as the relief efforts continued to decentralize and then shift to early recovery.
  - o The duplication of effort regarding the posting of materials on the PFIC, and its simultaneous distribution through tools such as Google Groups was also discussed by the ICIM WG.
- As the Chair of the ICIM WG, IASCI recommended the Cluster Heads to either:
  - o retain the gate-keeping responsibility of the Cluster Heads in Islamabad, taking extra efforts to collect and upload relevant data from the hubs,
  - o shift the main responsibility to the Cluster hubs, or
  - o to shut the PFIC Web Portal down.
- On 29 September 07, IASCI handed over the management of the PFIC to UN-Habitat. The system is still up and running, but the IASC CT Clusters are making little use of this tool. IASCI recommends the IASC CT to close the web portal and to make the data library available to NDMA as an institutional memory and online reference source.

#### E. Information Management

Continuing debates about timely, reliable data collection and good quality information, or rather the lack of it, has been a major feature of this response. Most actors, including donors as well as the Government of Pakistan, have mentioned it as a key-inhibiting factor.

- As mandated by the IASC CT Heads of Clusters, IASCI developed various IM concepts, taking into account and responding to:
  - o the necessity to directly address the real constraint on the primary building block of any IM effort (namely, obtaining direct, systematic and timely data from the field operations themselves);
  - o the shifting nature of the intervention (from Islamabad to the provinces; from rapid response to early recovery);

- the future role and responsibility of the Cluster system;
  - the responsibility and capacity of the Clusters to provide co-ordinated and relevant information to the NDMA,
  - the willingness and ability to tackle the very limited funding and human resources made available for field-based IM.
- Contradictorily, the IASC Country Team, however, never embraced information management as an integral function, and as a result lacked the necessary commitment to pursue a viable and integrated overall IM strategy (i.e. from the crucial data obtainment process, through verification, then strategic analysis and finally systematic distribution) for the flood relief efforts in Balochistan and Sindh.
  - A more robust and structured IM approach would have undoubtedly supported the decision-making process of primary stakeholders, Cluster Members and Donors. It would also have gone a substantial way in supporting more effective coordination with the Government of Pakistan. In particular by providing the recently established National Disaster Management Authority with the type of informational support it undoubtedly required - and had been repeatedly requesting from the Cluster system.
  - The Clusters clearly and at an early stage recognized the importance of, and thereafter repeatedly prioritized, viable IM capacities. Indeed, it was on this basis that IASCI was mandated to develop and implement the above-mentioned systems. On the other hand, in this instance, the Clusters also had insufficient decision-making power and influence over financial resources to realize their IM priorities.
  - In stark contrast to their stated aims, donors did not understand the key importance (to the point of financing) of adequate data-gathering and information management capacities in all complex humanitarian interventions, and especially disaster response/mitigation. The information management projects included under the Flash Appeal remain unfunded to date.
  - Three months into the flood response, the Heads of Clusters agreed between themselves that the UN Country Team would take a decision on IM funding and implementation. This resulted in a late decision of the UN CT to in essence reverse the previous decisions of the CT HoC regarding existing information management proposals. Instead the UN CT approved a UN (HABITAT) led data collection/dissemination and related mapping exercise. In the end, and largely in response to repeated requests from NDMA for information, a fragmented and partial IM “fig-leaf” was applied.
  - In line with views expressed by other leading NGOs and NGO groupings previously, IASCI feels that in this instance the overall opaque decision-making process regarding mandates and resource allocation within the related UN-led Country Team, Cluster and Flash Appeal processes will have a strongly negative effect on the universality (from a participatory point of view) - and possibly the eventual utility - of the global Cluster System.
  - Building on the IASCI concepts developed in response to the identified needs, IASCI recommends the IASC CT as well as the UN CT continue exploring means of supporting the development and implementation of a realistic and comprehensive management information strategy and system throughout Pakistan. Such a disaster risk mitigation and response would respond to the requirements of the NDMA and would require support from independent and specialist organizations that understand the role that IM can play as fundamental efficiency tools.

- In line with the National Disaster Risk Management Framework, IASCI recommends developing an IM system capable of recording (inventorising) disaster response resources available within different departments at district, provincial and national levels. Updated in a timely and regular manner this resource would allow authorities to mobilize the resources and deploy them in affected areas at the time of disaster.

In conclusion, IASCI wants to thank UNDP for the financial support and co-operation during the implementation of this service contract. IASCI remains committed to support UNDP, the IASC CT, and the UNCT in Pakistan and elsewhere in their endeavours.

IASCI remain on standby to return to Pakistan and to implement or support any strategy that meets the professional standards of our organization.

### ***IASCI, 29 October 2007***

#### **Annexes:**

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| <a href="#">01. Cluster Forms Summary</a>                            | <a href="#">12. ICIM Working Group Focal Point ToR 19-07</a>                              |
| <a href="#">02. Joint Assessment Discussion Points</a>               | <a href="#">13. ICIM WG Memo to Heads of Clusters 05-09</a>                               |
| <a href="#">03. Flash Appeal Template</a>                            | <a href="#">14. IASCI Concept: Rapid Response Network<br/>22-07</a>                       |
| <a href="#">04. IASCI Proposal (initial)</a>                         | <a href="#">15. IASCI Concept: Information Analysis and<br/>Strategic Monitoring Unit</a> |
| <a href="#">05. Joint Rapid Assessment Methodology</a>               | <a href="#">16. IASCI Concept: Pilot Phase IM and Analysis<br/>Unit</a>                   |
| <a href="#">06. Joint Rapid Assessment Status Report<br/>(14-07)</a> | <a href="#">17. IASCI Concept: NDMA IMSAS Project 23-09</a>                               |
| <a href="#">07. Joint Rapid Assessment Report (20 Districts)</a>     | <a href="#">18. Minutes of ICIM WG Meetings</a>   |
| <a href="#">08. PFIC Screenshot</a>                                  | <a href="#">19. IASCI Memo to Heads of Clusters 26-09</a>                                 |
| <a href="#">09. NGO Overview</a>                                     | <a href="#">20. PFIC Handover Memo 29-09</a>  |
| <a href="#">10. Heads of Clusters Meeting Minutes 06-11</a>          |   |
| <a href="#">11. PFIC User Manual Version 1.0</a>                     |   |

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