



FAO actions to implement the IASC Transformative Agenda (December 2012)

Background

Humanitarian and emergency operations to support livelihoods, food security and food and livestock production have grown significantly during the past decade to a point in which they represent nearly half of all extra-budgetary resources received in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

FAO is committed to being fully prepared for timely and effective humanitarian assistance and livelihood protection in all humanitarian crises, including those mandating a Level-3 emergency response. The Transformative Agenda provided a significant impetus to effect changes in existing emergency procedures and deepening the extent of the changes through the Organization.

An FAO Action Plan has been prepared for each of the 55 TA action points; each point has been assigned a priority level for how it relates to the specific needs of FAO. The plan is monitored on a quarterly basis and implementation is overseen by the Deputy Director-General (Operations), who also serves as FAO's IASC Principal. FAO Country Representatives and field offices have received a brief on the Transformative Agenda that specifically details what means for them as Country Representative and how it will affect our operations in countries.

Since 2009, with the assistance of one of its major donors, FAO has systematically carried out After-Action Reviews of its operational responses to major emergencies. This has led to the identification of a number of areas where improved and more effective preparedness and response procedures would directly result in better outcomes for our beneficiaries. The Transformative Agenda has had the effect of catalyzing work that was in a nascent phase or pending action.

In parallel with implementation of the Transformative Agenda and the upgrading of emergency preparedness and response, FAO has undertaken a radical change in its business model towards a programme that is strongly country-driven. An integrated emergency / development programme will be the standard approach and emergency preparedness and resilience will figure strongly in the new model.

High risk countries, often in protracted crisis, will be reinforced in terms of staffing and resources. In 2013 FAO will enhance the capacity of regional and country offices to prepare for and respond to Level-1 and -2 emergencies.

FAO's actions toward implementing the Transformative Agenda

Some specific actions that have been undertaken by FAO to implement the Transformative Agenda include the following:

Director-General Bulletin

A Director-General Bulletin is being finalized for issuance which describes references the Transformative Agenda and formalizes FAO's declaration and response protocol for Level-3

emergencies. A high level working group drafted the bulletin and the declaration and response protocol are corporately owned and endorsed.

The Bulletin aligns FAO internal processes with those of the international humanitarian community in the event of Humanitarian System-Wide Activation while retaining the ability for the Organization to fulfill its mandate of food security and livelihood support.

Of importance for FAO was the assignment of accountabilities and responsibilities and a defined Chain of Command for the duration of a Level-3 Declaration. The role of the FAO Representatives and their relation to the Humanitarian Coordinator, Resident Coordinator and UN Country Team/Humanitarian Country Team has been clarified.

The Operational Guidelines for Level-3 Emergency Guidelines articulate processes, linkages, organizational structures and decision-making functions across the Organization for: Surge capacity; Fast track procedures; and, Building and sustaining organizational capabilities.

The Director-General's Bulletin and accompanying *Operational Guidelines for Level-3 Emergency Responses* are expected to be released shortly, and will serve as the policy foundation for the detailed *FAO Handbook for Emergency Response* (below).

FAO Handbook for Emergency Response: Standard Operating Procedures

The FAO Handbook for Emergency Response provides detailed guidance on mechanisms and support for all FAO personnel involved in Level-3 emergency response. The handbook complements existing procedures used by the Organization and links to core FAO documents, tools and template used in emergency response activities.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) will be the procedural foundation for the FAO Handbook for emergency response, enhancing FAO's role of protecting, restoring and improving the livelihoods of affected populations. To date, 26 SOPs have been developed across 7 functional areas. The procedures were developed in a consultative process with voluntary working group of approximately 30 FAO headquarters-based and decentralized colleagues. The SOPs are founded based on best practice and multiple evaluations of FAO's work in emergencies.

Table 1. FAO SOP Functional Areas

FAO SOP Functional Areas

- Alert, readiness and declaration
- Surge capacity
- Corporate support services
- Logistics
- Programming
- Communications
- External liaison

Completion of the draft FAO Handbook for Emergency Response is expected by 31 January 2013 and a final version is expected by April, 2013. A capacity development and roll-out plan is completed, of which the handbook will be the foundation, and will commence in the second quarter of 2013.

Emergency needs assessment

The critical role of needs assessment in the aftermath of an emergency has received significant additional recognition and investment since December 2011. FAO is developing the *Multi-phased Needs Assessment Toolkit*, in line with the IASC Level-3 timeline. A needs assessment Standard Operating Procedure has been completed and is now being incorporated into the *FAO Handbook for Emergency Response*, which will ensure FAO's participation in inter-agency needs assessment processes.

Although FAO has a good technical capacity, it has not always been systematically applied to its needs assessment during emergencies or well linked to the call for resources. As a consequence, needs assessments are of variable quality and the influence and profile of food security and livelihoods can suffer, with negative consequences for disaster affected populations.

To address this, FAO is working with partners such as WFP and NGO's to develop tools and indicators which will become the core of a more standardized and predictable food security needs assessment process at country level for four phases of assessment:

Phase I: Initial 72 hours after a disaster event, to correspond with the launch of the Flash Appeal

Phase II: Up to 1 month after a disaster event, to correspond with the revised Flash Appeal

Phase III: Up to 4 - 12 weeks after a disaster event for more detailed operational planning

Phase IV: Recovery / transition phase from 3-12 months after a disaster, in conjunction with PDNA and PCNA processes.

This work will develop minimum common standard indicators and survey methodologies for those different stages which can be used by and for FAO regional and country offices and partners. The tools will be integrated with the Food Security Cluster and multi-cluster level tools (i.e. Mira) as well as provide a gateway to more detailed FAO / agriculture sector assessments.

Accountability to affected populations

The Transformative Agenda provided the impetus for FAO to take a lead amongst IASC members in acting on the Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) decisions and commitments through an in-house project to integrate AAP across all policy and practices, whether humanitarian or development.

AAP has been reflected in components of the standard operating procedures and in the *FAO Handbook for Emergency Response*. A guidance note has been issued on AAP in emergencies and FAO is now incorporating its commitments into relevant statements and policies such as the CAP guidance 2013, Project Cycle guidelines, and Emergency Response Planning. A specific section on AAP is included in the FAO partnership agreement with World Vision International; this will eventually be done for other partnerships as well.

FAO is assessing its strengths and gaps through country visits carried out in Cambodia and West bank Gaza strip where affected populations and partners were directly consulted. The outcomes include visits reports, recommendations and lesson learnt country specific

support and follow up plans. In Pakistan a FAO-led joint mission with WFP and the gFSC served as a trial IASC application. AAP planning has been undertaken for Syria.

FAO is implementing Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse throughout all levels of the Organization and is participating actively in the IASC Task Force. FAO's commitments to Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) provides the entry point and overarching framework for mainstreaming Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in the organization's policies and programmes.

The FAO work plan for 2012-14 builds on suggestions and good practices put forward by the 2010 Global Review on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. It follows the IASC minimum operating standards on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, articulated around Standards; Engagement with local populations; Prevention; and Response.

To date, FAO has: Appointed a senior PSEA focal point; Integrated a clause on PSEA in FAO Letters of Agreement and in Service Contracts; drafted a Director-General Bulletin for implementation of 'Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse' (to be completed by end of 2012); revised its Administrative Circular to guide staff on what to do when faced with SEA cases (to be completed by end of 2012); carried out PSEA training as part of the "Humanitarian support to food security and livelihoods through capacity building, regional and country level interventions for high priority countries". A pilot workshop will be conducted with FAO's Somalia team in December 2012.

FAO Emergency guidance notes

FAO is producing guidance notes on thematic and cross-cutting issues affecting its work in humanitarian and transition settings. The notes are aimed at FAO staff and partners to guide the application of FAO policy, knowledge-base and good practices in emergency and transition settings.

FAO field staff, including those with new responsibilities, will receive basic knowledge and guidance allowing them to integrate these issues into programming exercises, to incorporate FAO language and priorities into funding narratives, and to facilitate informed participation in partner and donor discussions. Each note points staff to more detailed guidance and resources.

Three guidance notes have been completed and are now being disseminated:

- Supporting displaced people and durable solutions
- Mainstreaming gender in emergencies
- Accountability to affected populations

Two more notes are near completion: Transition programming; and, Cash-based transfer programming in emergencies.

Other notes underway or being considered are: Food-based nutrition in emergencies; Food security response analysis; Safe access to fuel or alternative energy in emergency settings; Needs assessment; and, HIV/AIDS.

Financing for emergency preparedness and response

FAO members recently approved the opening of a new window in FAO's Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities (SFERA) to ensure that emergency preparedness and response capabilities are adequately funded for Level-3 emergency response.

The preparedness component of the new window includes costs required to ensure the Organization's readiness to respond to Level-3 emergencies. This will support capacity assessment of regional and country offices; capacity building; participation in interagency emergency training; certification in key competencies for emergencies; annual simulations to test emergency preparedness; and, a Global Emergency Response Roster. The level of resources allocated under this sub-window will be USD1.7 million.

The response component will facilitate funding of FAO's immediate response actions on a 'no-regrets' basis. The Organization will prepare for three Level-3 emergencies per year. Based on USD 500,000 per Level-3 event per year, the level of resources allocated under this sub-window will be USD 1.5 million per annum.

Support to the global Food security cluster

FAO co-leads the gFsc with WFP. Together FAO, WFP and Interaction served as champions of the Coordination pillar of the Transformative Agenda and guided development of the Coordination Reference Module which provides guidance to country cluster on how they should operation.

During 2011 and 2012, the gFsc has trained cluster coordinators and information managers of which more than 200 are now included in a gFsc and FAO roster.

An SOP on FAO's role in the gFSC is being incorporated into the *FAO Handbook for Emergency Response*.

FAO Global Emergency Response Roster

FAO has committed to the rapid mobilization, reassignment or physical deployment of personnel to ensure that adequate capacities are in place during the critical phases of emergencies that threaten agriculture, food and nutrition security or food safety. A Global Emergency Response Roster is developed and will improve the identification, training, management and deployment of qualified personnel from across the Organization for such rapid mobilization.

Conclusion

It is not an understatement to say the Transformative Agenda focus on leadership, coordination and accountability has had a significant impact on FAO. There was much work to be done to strengthen and update FAO's emergency programme to reflect current best working practices. The TA added impetus and institutional commitment to expand and complete the initiatives described above.

It is expected that FAO capacity to work effectively at the Organizational level and in collaboration with lasc partners will be significantly enhanced beginning in 2013 and into 2014.