

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This is one of a series of country missions to roll-out coordinated assessments at the country level and builds on the work of the IASC Needs Assessment Task Force (NATF) over the past four years and the current assessment practices in Tajikistan.
- 1.2. This concept note envisages:
 - A period of pre-mission engagement with the OCHA Regional Office for Caucasus and Central Asia (ROCCA) prior to the mission to establish the current assessment practices; levels of assessment capacity and agree on the post-mission roll-out plan.
 - A two and a half day mission which would include Coordinated Assessment and Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) awareness training for a wide audience (one day); a tabletop on the MIRA (one day) for a more technical audience and a roll-out planning workshop on the country's Assessment Preparedness Plan (half a day) to include field staff involved in assessments.
 - A two to three week period of post-mission 'follow up support' will be provided from headquarters staff to guide and assist the finalization of Tajikistan's assessment preparedness plan to be embedded in the country's contingency plan.

2. Background and rationale

- 2.1. The NATF was established in 2008 with the mandate to harmonize and promote cross-sector needs assessment initiatives for consistent, reliable and timely data on humanitarian needs in complex emergencies and natural disasters, to strengthen informed decision-making and improve humanitarian response. Among the products of this inter-agency body are:
 - 2.1.1. **IASC Operational Guidance on Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crises**, the overarching policy document which outlines the agreed approach by which humanitarian actors will work together to coordinate assessments throughout the life of an emergency.
 - 2.1.2. **Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) approach** to conducting joint, multi-cluster assessment during the earliest phases of an emergency to provide an initial vision of the situation as agreed upon by the humanitarian community. It is meant to provide the initial information fundamental to all humanitarian operations and actors to inform strategic decision making and should be followed, in later phases, by further in-depth sectoral assessments. The MIRA is composed of three fundamental elements: review of pre-and post-crisis secondary data, systematic collection of primary data using an agreed upon data collection form, and joint analysis. The MIRA is a "light" exercise, reflecting the human resource, financial and access constraints typical of sudden-onset emergencies.
- 2.2. The MIRA approach was developed based on a review of 10 years of best practice in assessments and was provisionally endorsed by the IASC in November 2011. During 2012, emphasis will be placed on learning lessons from utilizing of the MIRA approach in field settings, through feedback sessions, and simulations, and the approach further refined in late 2012 as necessary.
- 2.3. The first step in the simulation process is a table-top exercise scheduled to take place in Geneva from 25 to 27 June 2012 during which a one-day exercise will be followed by a one-day workshop to identify and analyse challenges arising during the exercise and identify ways in which the MIRA methodology or manual need to be adapted/amended. This first step aims to test the MIRA framework documents and methodology in a controlled environment, using assessment experts

that have not been involved in the MIRA development, to identify areas in which it can be strengthened.

- 2.4. The second step in the simulation process is a longer, field-based simulation to test the MIRA concept in a particular context (a system-wide sudden-onset natural disaster requiring a level 3 response) using field staff from that context.
- 2.5. Whilst the MIRA concept is primarily designed for use in sudden-onset natural disasters, the underlying principles of coordinated assessments (joint planning; common data collection methodology, tools and indicators; joint analysis and a joint report) are applicable in all disasters. Most of the assessments being undertaken around the world are not as part of a level 3 response and are often not subject to the same levels of urgency. Nevertheless there is a requirement to ensure all such assessments (both multi-sector and single sector) are coordinated and informing the decision making process such that programming is evidence-based. Tajikistan, a country prone to smaller-scale, slow or sudden onset, natural or complex emergencies, can benefit from the principles mentioned above.
- 2.6. *The country currently has a coordination structure to manage assessments and response during sudden onset disasters, the Rapid Emergency Assessment and Coordination Team (REACT). This body is co-chaired by the Chairman of the Tajik Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense (CoES) and the UN Resident Coordinator and represents five sectors. The team is currently updating its Inter-Agency Contingency Plan (IACP) with an assessment preparedness plan to be embedded in it. The last half-day of the workshop will feed into the revision of the IACP and generate a zero Draft Assessment Preparedness Plan for the IACP.*

3. Roll-out strategy

- 3.1. The aim of the roll-out is two-fold:
 - to enhance in-country capacity to undertake coordinated assessments within the country context, thereby enabling programming and appeals to be more evidence based, and
 - to field test the MIRA methodology and manual in a variety of scenarios and gather feedback to further enhance the products and further improve coordinated assessment practice.

4. Objectives

- 4.1. The overall objective for all roll-outs is to improve coordinated assessments within the country / context by:
 - i. raising awareness and orienting in-country decision-makers to the benefits of coordinated assessments, the Operational Guidance and MIRA / guidance, and
 - ii. enabling those coordinating and undertaking assessments to improve coordinated assessment practice in their country context, in order to result in evidence-based programming across the humanitarian community.
- 4.2. Specific objectives
 - i. Strengthen the country's system for the country's formation of an Assessment Working Group (AWG).
 - ii. Train the in-country team (the AWG) to lead and undertake both rapid inter-sectoral and in-depth sectoral, coordinated assessments as appropriate, to include:
 - maximising the use of secondary data
 - identification of appropriate levels of detail required in an assessment
 - guidance on designing and adapting a common data collection form

- how sector-specific analysis feeds into inter-sectoral analysis
 - how to undertake joint inter-cluster analysis
 - how to use assessment findings [e.g. in HAP, CAP, FA, programming etc.]
- iii. Develop a Roll-out Plan for the country.

5. Outputs

- 5.1. All interested persons conversant with the concept of coordinated Assessments; the Operational Guidance and MIRA methodology [20-25 participants].
- 5.2. AWG participants experience a 1-day assessment tabletop exercise and practise producing a PSD and implementing a MIRA in a Level 3 emergency setting [8 - 16 participants].
- 5.3. AWG participants experience a half-day strategic workshop tailored to the creation of zero Draft for Assessment Preparedness Plan to be included in their IACP [8 - 12 participants].
- 5.4. Gaps and weaknesses within the MIRA process are identified and fed back into the tools and guidance.
- 5.5. Gaps and weaknesses within the in-country coordinated assessments strategy are identified for revision of the IACP.
- 5.6. Action plan for improvement of the MIRA concept and manual.
- 5.7. Action plan for REACT and country AWG, including roll-out plan.

6. Content

- 6.1. **Coordinated Assessment and MIRA Awareness Training** – One-day in-depth look at the work of the IASC NATF on coordinated assessments including the Operational Guidance and MIRA approach highlighting the key aspects: value of systematic secondary data review; key common operational datasets; the Analytical Framework; the Community Level Assessment; and MIRA outputs. The session will highlight how, in practice, both rapid (community level) and in-depth (household level) assessments should be undertaken in a coordinated manner to facilitate joint analysis and result in a shared or common situational understanding to inform programming.
- 6.2. **Tabletop Exercise** – A one-day tabletop exercise based on a country-specific scenario of a sudden-onset natural disaster in which participants will work through key components of the MIRA. Details are in annex A.
- 6.3. **Strategic workshop** – a half-day workshop to identify how existing assessment practice could be modified to ensure maximum use of secondary data; greater coordination of sectoral analysis; joint inter-sectoral analysis; reporting formats and how assessments inform the HAP, CAP, FA etc. How assessment results are stored and made available for future use during protracted crises will also be considered. This workshop would consider both rapid, multi-cluster assessments and in-depth, single cluster assessments and will specifically be used to create a zero Draft of the Assessment Preparedness Plan to be included in the country's IACP.
- 6.4. **Follow-up support** – for two or three weeks after the mission, headquarters staff will work with the workshop focal in-country to assist the AWG in the roll-out process. The schedule for the roll-out and follow-up support will be in-country focal point and facilitators.

7. Participants

7.1. **Coordinated Assessment Awareness Training** – this first day is aimed at the Humanitarian Country team, Cluster Coordinators, Donors, relevant government officials and other actors responsible for commissioning or leading assessments. The first half of the day will be an overview and considered relevant for all with the second half of the day delving into the details of conducting a MIRA and relevant for the persons directly involved in the undertaking. There is a limit of 20-25 participants.

7.2. **Tabletop** – the tabletop should be attended by assessment experts from Tajikistan representing the sectors. Representatives from OCHA and the government should also be present. Between 8 and 16 participants of which 2-3 should come from each sector and a representative from the OCHA and UNDP offices.

7.2.1. *Desired profile of participants:*

- Currently performs a senior assessment or programme-related function in their respective agency/organisation/cluster.
- Experience in participating/leading an inter-agency needs assessment.
- Knowledge of needs assessment tools, protocols and processes.
- Significant experience in humanitarian emergencies, including experience leading multi-disciplinary, multinational teams in complex environments.
- Experience leading multi-sectoral, multi-agency assessments is a plus.

7.3. **Strategic Workshop** – the workshop should include assessment experts from Tajikistan representing the sectors. Representatives from OCHA and the government should also participate along with staff from regional-offices if possible. Between 8 and 12 participants.

7.3.1. *Desired profile of participants:*

- Responsible for planning and / or leading multi-sector or single sector assessments.
- Knowledge of needs assessment tools, protocols and processes.

8. Timings

8.1. Dates for the assessment mission are:

1.1.1. Preparatory work: 22 June-27 August

1.1.2. Mission: 27-31 August

1.1.3. Workshop: 28-30 August

1.1.4. Follow up support: 3-23 September

8.2. The programme for the mission is as follows:

Timing	Content
Prior to training & 27 August	Preparatory Work
Day 1 a.m.	Coordinated Assessment Awareness Training
Day 1 p.m.	MIRA Training
Day 2	Tabletop
Day 3	Strategic Workshop: Assessment Preparedness Plan

Post training	Follow-up support as required / agreed
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1.1. The proposed programme for workshop is as follows:

Time	Tuesday 28 August	Wednesday 29 August	Thursday 30 August
08.45-09.00	Introduction to Workshop	Review of Previous Day	Introduction to Day's Work
09.00-11.00	Introduction to Operational Guidance on Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crises Introduction to Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) Methodology	MIRA Tabletop Exercise: Initiating the MIRA	Assessment Preparedness Plan: xxx
11.00-11.30	<i>Coffee service</i>	<i>Coffee service</i>	<i>Coffee service</i>
11.30-13.00	The MIRA Framework Secondary Data Analysis	MIRA Tabletop Exercise: Secondary Data Collection	Assessment Preparedness Plan: Assessment Preparedness Plan: Next Steps
13.00-14.00	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Lunch</i>
14.00-15.30	Primary Data Collection: Sampling	MIRA Tabletop Exercise: Community Level Assessment	Workshop Ends
15.30-16.00	<i>Coffee service</i>	<i>Coffee service</i>	
16.00-17.30	Primary Data Collection: Key Informant Interviews / Direct Observation Primary Data Collection: Questionnaire design Wrap-up	MIRA Tabletop Exercise : Logistical Issues & MIRA Report MIRA Tabletop Exercise: Wrap-up	
19.30-22.00	<i>Dinner</i>	<i>Dinner</i>	

Annex A

MIRA Tabletop Exercise

Unit	Title	Elements
1	Setting the Scene: A Disaster Strikes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reflect on existing preparedness mechanisms such as assessment coordination body, agreed rapid assessment questionnaire, data preparedness, level of existing assessment capacity, repositories of key secondary data (especially Common Operational Datasets). ✓ Disaster strikes. ✓ Activation of Assessment and Information Management Working Group (AIM WG) to undertake a MIRA.
2	Phase II: Secondary Data Analysis (SDA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Collecting and collating data: From where, and how? ✓ Identifying 'good' data ✓ Roles and responsibilities ✓ Applying the Analytical Framework ✓ Cluster and inter-cluster analysis ✓ Identifying information gaps
Understanding of Preliminary Scenario Definition (PSD)		
3	Phase II: SDA, continued, and Community Level Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Identifying objectives and scope of community level assessment: what data to collect and where? ✓ Designing a data collection tool ✓ Methodology ✓ Sampling ✓ Logistics ✓ Identification and training of investigators ✓ Team functions: balancing continuing SDA and fieldwork ✓ Data management
Understanding of Assessment Plan and Data Collection Tool		
4	Joint Analysis of Primary and Secondary Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Applying the Analytical Framework ✓ Cluster-level analysis ✓ Inter-cluster analysis ✓ Identifying cluster and strategic priorities
Understanding of MIRA Report and findings for presentation to Humanitarian Country Team.		