

Meeting Overview

More than 180 participants from over 90 countries and organisations working on urban search and rescue (USAR) gathered for the annual International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) Team Leaders Meeting in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE), from 16-17 October, 2015. The list of participants can be found in Annex A.

This meeting was hosted by the Ministry of Interior of the Government of the United Arab Emirates and organised by OCHA in its capacity as the INSARAG Secretariat located within the Field Coordination Support Section (FCSS) in the Emergency Services Branch (ESB) of OCHA Geneva.

Summary of Presentations and Discussions

(16 October 2015)

Official Opening

Lt. Col Mohamed Al-Ansari, UAE, opened the INSARAG Team Leaders Meeting, welcoming all the participants to Abu Dhabi. He wished them all a constructive and positive meeting and hoped they would enjoy their stay in his country.

Mr Jesper Lund, Chief of OCHA-FCSS and the Secretary of INSARAG, thanked the Government of the UAE for hosting the Team Leaders Meeting and joined in welcoming the participants.

He started by informing the participants of a number of projects that have been completed since the Team Leaders Meeting in Doha, Qatar one year ago. Firstly, a complete revision of the INSARAG Guidelines has now been endorsed by the Steering Group and will shortly be launched at the 2015 Global Meeting. Secondly, the First Responders Training Package has been completed and is now available through the insarag.org website. Thirdly, a revision of the INSARAG Earthquake Response Exercise Package is underway, two pilot exercises have taken place and the package should be completed by the end of the year.

He informed the meeting that a number of classification and reclassification exercises had taken place, interestingly including one in Armenia, which was where, 25 years ago, the experiences of the earthquake response led to the development of INSARAG. He reminded participants also of the large-scale response to the Nepal Earthquake in April.

Finally, Mr Lund looked forward to the activities and discussions of the meeting, which would include a review of the Nepal earthquake response as well as a briefing on new technologies and how these are being used in the disaster response environment. Finally, he referred to the context of the wider humanitarian community and the World Humanitarian Summit and the positive role that INSARAG can play. He urged participants to work constructively and whole-heartedly during the meeting, together making INSARAG 'fit for the future'.

Winston Chang introduced the agenda and the meeting adopted the agenda unanimously (see Annex B).

1. INSARAG Update and Year Ahead

Mr Winston Chang, Humanitarian Affairs Officer of OCHA-FCSS and the INSARAG Secretariat, introduced a series of updates about INSARAG events since the last Team Leaders Meeting in Doha, Qatar in September 2015.

First Responders Training Package

Mr Chang explained that this training package consists of a series of lesson plans and presentations aimed at teaching the basic skills required for a First Responder in a structural collapse environment. The package has 20 lesson plans and 24 presentations linked by 5 guidance notes. The package is now available through the web site insarag.org.

Earthquake Response Exercise Package

Mr David Dickson (Consultant OCHA-FCSS) informed the meeting about the on-going review and rewriting of the INSARAG Earthquake Response Exercise Package. He explained that the process started with a workshop involving all stakeholders and has progressed with two pilot exercises run in Mongolia and Chile. The new exercise package provides guidance for the planning, preparation and delivery of the event, as well as making it more inclusive for non-USAR response organisations. The package will be completed by the end of 2015, and will then be shared with the INSARAG community.

Chile Earthquake Response Exercise

Mr Sebastian Mocarquer (Chile) added information concerning the second pilot course held in Chile in September. He described the event as highly successful, being focused on 2½ days of small functional group workshops followed by 2½ days of exercise.

Update from the Training Working Group

Mr Sean Moore (TWG) briefed the meeting on the activities of the Training Working Group, explaining that the primary task was currently the development of a USAR Coordination Cell Course. Additionally, the group was focussed on the development of presentations and ad-hoc training aids to support the dissemination of the revised INSARAG Guidelines.

Update from the Medical Working Group

Dr Anthony Macintyre (MWG Chair) provided the meeting with an update from the Medical Working Group. Currently, the group are supporting the Guidelines Review Group (GRG). In addition, the MWG are in collaboration with the World Health Organisation concerning the development of International Medical Teams and with IFRC on unifying concepts related to the First Responder training.

2. INSARAG 2015 Guidelines Dissemination

On behalf of Ambassador Manuel Bessler, the Chair of the Guidelines Review Group (GRG), Mr David Sochor, member of the GRG and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, introduced the dissemination plan for the INSARAG Guidelines 2015, which were endorsed at the INSARAG Steering Group Meeting in February 2015.

He provided a brief overview of the structure of the new Guidelines and the process of their development. He informed the meeting that the Guidelines have started to be translated into other languages by the Member States. It is understood that the Guidelines are already available in Spanish, Arabic, Mongolian and Turkish. He supported the idea that translation should be a cooperative arrangement, in order to ensure that any differences in terminology are addressed. He announced that a transitional GRG would be proposed to assist in the process of conducting an annual review and provide feedback to the ISG. The next edition of the Guidelines is planned for 2020, the review process beginning in 2018.

Mr Peter Wolff, USAR Chief of Operations and Deputy Team Leader, German Federal Agency for Technical Relief, demonstrated some of the alternative technologies such as e-PUB books and smart phone applications through which the Guidelines can be accessed.

3. IEC and IER – Update

Mr Winston Chang provided the meeting with an update of the situation regarding the classification system and the impact that reclassification will have on the INSARAG network. The Secretariat is aware of the need to manage the workload of the future IER programme and this will be the subject of future discussion within the INSARAG network.

4. Fit for the Future

Mr Jesper Lund briefed the meeting on aspects of the concept of “Fit for the Future” that will be discussed at the upcoming Global Meeting. This will include the ‘Abu Dhabi Declaration’ that will provide a platform for INSARAG’s involvement in the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit. He stated that the Global Meeting will be presented with plans for more regional ownership and will discuss the future of the ‘Beyond the Rubble’ concept as well as capacity-building and inclusiveness with teams that are currently not part of the INSARAG system.

5. Nepal Earthquake - Lessons Learned Exercise

Mr Jesper Lund introduced a session that examined and discussed the key observations that were made following the Nepal earthquake. He explained that the objective of the workshop was to share information, points of view and perspectives on some critical areas of response. This will allow the participants to reflect on the shared best practice and standards and take the lessons learned back to their own organisations.

Mr Steffen Schmidt (consultant for OCHA-FCSS) briefed the exercise that was based on the findings of a study into the USAR response to the Nepal Earthquake. The exercise focused on key areas of the response to the disaster in Nepal, these being: Mobilisation, establishing RDC (Reception Departure Centre), UCC (USAR Coordination Cell) Operations and Demobilisation.

The exercise commenced with the **Mobilisation** phase and then focussed on the **USAR Operations** phase. A summary of the discussions is contained in Annex C.

The meeting closed for the day at 17:00.

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6. Exercise Wrap Up

The Team Leader’s Meeting continued with the Exercise, focussing on **USAR operations and coordination** and finally the **Demobilisation** phase, including aspects of the ‘Beyond the Rubble’ actions.

Mr Steffen Schmidt then updated the meeting on the work he is doing as part of a desk review of the response to the Nepal Earthquake. His work highlighted the fact that Nepal is one of the most researched countries in respect of disaster preparedness but little of that information was used in the pre-planning that went on at the onset of the disaster. Some of the findings of his research were as follows:

- More than 60% of the USAR teams arrived after the request to stand down was received.
- The quality and quantity of information coming from the UCC varied according to staffing.
- The lack of a good internet connection resulted in access to electronic forms being very limited, this in turn resulted in difficulties in coordination.
- Some INSARAG classified teams responded not as their classified status and this caused confusion in the coordination efforts.

The meeting thanked Steffen Schmidt for the design and preparation of the exercise. He, in turn, expressed his

thanks to the TWG and all the facilitators who assisted in the running of the exercise. A summary of the discussions is contained in Annex C.

7. INSARAG e-Forms: KoBo Platform

Mr Peter Wolff, USAR Chief of Operations and Deputy Team Leader, German Federal Agency for Technical Relief, introduced an update on the electronic format of the INSARAG forms and of information management. The information management platform is termed KoBo and is used extensively by OCHA. It allows the building of forms and surveys, the collection of data and the analysis and processing of information. KoBo is multi-platform (Android, IOS etc.) and is also multilingual in its operation. Mr Wolff demonstrated a number of functions of the KoBo platform.

8. KOBO Platform: Direct Observation

Mr Marcus Elten, Humanitarian Affairs Officer, Coordinated Assessment Support Section of OCHA Geneva, introduced the concept of direct observation for undertaking assessments in order to gain an initial picture of the impact of a sudden-onset disaster. The driver for improving data collection and management is the knowledge that current practices miss opportunities for gathering information, particularly in the early stages of a disaster. He concluded with a request that INSARAG consider incorporating the assessment forms on the KoBo platform as part of its operating methodology, thereby making the information gathered of use to the wider humanitarian response.

9. INSARAG and the International Organization for Migration – Possibilities for Partnership

Mr Albrecht Beck, Global CCCM Civil Protection Specialist, International Organization for Migration (IOM), introduced a proposal for partnership between INSARAG and the IOM. He explained that the benefits of such a partnership would benefit the needs of the affected population whilst not impacting greatly on existing USAR core activities. He informed the meeting of the work and responsibilities of the IOM and suggested that INSARAG could assist in terms of data collection, assessments, logistics and capacity-building projects.

10. Development and Chairman's Summary and Closing Statements

Mr Yosuke Okita, Humanitarian Affairs Officer of OCHA-FCSS and the INSARAG Secretariat, summarised the Team Leaders Meeting and asked for comment on the Chairman's Summary.

There were a number of comments concerning the IER programme and the way forward. Mr Pekka Tiainen (EUCP) reminded the meeting the EU teams could use the MODEX exercises to undertake their IEC/R. Mr John Cawcutt (Australia) stated that we need to be cautious in changing what has proved to be a successful system of review. Mr Peter Goxharaj (Germany) warned the meeting of the continuing financial impact of IERs in a period where many budgets were being cut or reduced. Mr John Denny (Australia) felt that INSARAG should be more aspirational in its approach to standards, looking to improve the minimum standards where possible. The meeting felt this was an area that should be the subject of future discussion within the INSARAG network.

Mr. Shigenobu Kobayashi (Japan) then offered to host the next Team Leaders Meeting in September (tbc) 2016. The participants unanimously welcomed this offer.

Mr Yosuke Okita then introduced the closing statements.

Ambassador Manuel Bessler, the Chair of the GRG, began by thanking all participants for their constructive and active participation and the hosts for providing such an excellent venue. He confirmed that the complexity of the Guidelines, with three distinct volumes, is because of the need to provide guidance at different levels within the INSARAG network, at political, strategic and operational levels. He considered that the Guidelines are unique in

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the field of humanitarian response and that teams need to be proud of them, to train to them and also to follow them when on deployment.

He felt that a lot of the work that INSARAG has done for years such as devising Guidelines, setting minimum standards, allowing peer review, other sectors of the humanitarian sector are only just starting to develop. Therefore INSARAG has a lot to offer the humanitarian sector in the coming years.

Mr Jesper Lund, Chief of OCHA-FCSS and the Secretary of INSARAG, stated that the Team Leaders are an important link between the operational and political levels within INSARAG and that their continued participation is a vital contribution to the INSARAG network. He went on to thank the INSARAG Working Groups for their work over the last year.

He confirmed that the exercise was designed to foster communication, information sharing and reflection amongst the participants and he thanked Steffen Schmidt for the exercise design and delivery. Mr Lund also said that lessons continued to be learned from the Nepal response, including the role of Light USAR teams working in such an environment. He felt that this might lead to some standard setting for Light Teams and he welcomed the approaches he had received from representatives from such teams during the meeting.

Mr Lund then took the opportunity to introduce members of the FCSS team to the meeting before introducing Ambassador Toni Frisch, thanking him on behalf of the Team Leaders for his work and support during his term as the INSARAG Global Chair.

Ambassador Toni Frisch, the INSARAG Global Chair, concluded the meeting by stating that INSARAG had always been a partnership between the strategy makers and the operational people – the Team Leaders as well as the UN team in Geneva. He felt proud that it had developed into a worldwide network that was always needs driven, never resources driven and always professional.

Annex A – List of Participants

Country	Organization	Name	Title	E-mail
Algeria	Civil Protection	Merizek Keffous	SIG	Keffous_m@yahoo.fr
Armenia	Ministry of Territorial Administration	Artavazd Davtyan	Deputy Head	Davtyan.artavazd@gmail.com
Armenia	Ministry of Territorial Administration	Nelan Charchyan	911 Operator	ncharchyan@yahoo.com
Australia	NSW	Gregory Wild	Assistant Director	Gregory.wild@fire.nsw.gov.au
Australia	QLD	Andrew Short	Chief Superintendent	Andrew.Short@qfes.qld.gov.au
Australia	QLD	John Cawcutt	Acting Assistant commissioner	john.cawcutt@qfes.qld.gov.au
Australia	QLD	Kevin Walsh	Chief Superintendent	kevin.walsh@qfes.qld.gov.au
Australia	QLD	Stephen Smith	Chief Superintendent, Director	StephenA.Smith@qfes.qld.gov.au
Australia	NSW	Paul McGuiggan	Assistant Director	paul.mcguiggan@fire.nsw.gov.au
Australia	NSW	John Denny	Assistant Director	john.denny@fire.nsw.gov.au
Austria	Federal Ministry of interior	Mirjana Jakopec	Civil Servant	Mirjana.Jakopec@bmi.gv.at
Austria	Federal Ministry of interior	Caroline Fellingner	National Focal Point	Caroline.Fellinger@bmi.gv.at
Austria	SARUV	Thomas Nesensohn	Deputy Head	thomas.nesensohn@saruv.at
Austria	AFDRU	Markus Bock	Senior Instruction Officer, Team Leader	markus.bock@bmlvs.gv.at
Bangladesh	Bangladesh Fire Service	Ali Ahmed Khan	Brigadier	dgfire_service@yahoo.com
Belarus	Ministry of Emergency Situations	Ruslan Salodkin	Chief	tdn17gt@yandex.ru
Belarus	Ministry of Emergency Situations	Dzmitry Tkachuk	Chief	tdn17gt@yandex.ru
Belgium	B-FAST	Nicolas Tuts	Colonel - Unit Chief Civil Protection	nicolas.tuts@ibz.fgov.be
CEPREDENAC	CEPREDENAC	Roy Barboza Sequeira	Executive Secretary	rbarboza@sica.int

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Chile	National Fire Service	Sebastian Mocarquer	Staff Sistema Nacional de Operaciones	smocarquer@gmail.com
Chile	Bomberos De Chile	Alejandro Artigas	National Operative Focal Point	alejandro.artigas@cbs.cl, puntofocalnacional@bomberos.cl
Chile	USAR Chile	Raul Bustos		rbustos@bomberos.cl
China	CISAR	Bibo Peng	Medical Team Leader	pengbibo0610@sina.com
China	CEA	Zhao Ming	Director-General	zhaom@csb.sina.net
China	CEA	Xiaoxia Du	Deputy Director	dux_x_bj@126.com
Consultant	Consultant	Ted Pearn	Consultant	tedpearn@acornswinsor.fsnet.co.uk
Consultant	DART Solutions	Trevor Glass	Managing Director	Trevorglass00@gmail.com
Consultant	Consultant	Joseph Bishop	Consultant	jabishop@gmail.com, jabishop49@hotmail.com
Consultant	Consultant	Arjun Katoch	Consultant	arjunkatoch@gmail.com
Consultant	Consultant	Terje Skavdal	Consultant	Terje.Skavdal@nca.no, tskavdal@hotmail.com
Costa Rica	Cuerop General de Bomberos	Luis Fernando Salas Sanchez	Director Operativo	lsalas@bomberos.go.cr
Czech Republic	Ministry of Interior	Roman Francl	Fire Officer	Roman.Francl@grh.izscr.cz
Czech Republic		Vladimir Vlcek	Deputy Chief Fire Officer	vladimir.vlcek@hzsmk.cz
Denmark	DEMA	Jacob Bolwinkel	Head of Rescue, Captain	jeb@brs.dk
Denmark	at fire	Irakli Richard West	Team Leader	i.west@at-fire.de
Egypt	IDSC	Aly Abdellatif Abdelsamie Haredy	Director	aliharedy@idsc.net.eg
El Salvador	Cuerop General de Bomberos	Jose Joaquin Parada	Director General	jjoaquinpj@yahoo.es
Estonia	Rescue Board	Priit Laos	Head of the Northern Rescue Centre	priit.laos@rescue.ee
Finland	CMC Finland	Ville-Veikko Pitkanen	Training Officer	ville-veikko.pitkanen@cmcfinland.fi
Finland	European Commission	Pekka Tiainen	Policy Officer	Pekka.tiainen@ec.europa.eu
France	PUI	Philippe Dardant		phil.dardant@wanadoo.fr
France		Berengere Defaye Noblet	Management	bebe.defaye@gmail.com

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France	7th Civil Protection Battalion	Philippe Brugere	Commanding Officer	philippe.brugere@interieur.gouv.fr
France	Civil Protection	Christian Baroux	National FP	christian.baroux@interieur.gouv.fr, christian.baroux@hotmail.com
France	UIISC 1	Stanislas Rouquayrol	Commander	stanislas.rouquayrol@interieur.gouv.fr
France	PUI	Magali Jeanteur	Medical Team Leader	mjeanteur@gmail.com
GCC		Adel bin Khalifa		
Germany	THW	Peter Wolff		peter.wolff04@gmail.com
Germany	Fire	Johannes Gust	USAR Project Manager	j.gust@at-fire.de
Germany	ISAR	Mareike Illing	Project Coordinator	mareike.illing@isar-germany.de
Germany	ISAR	Daniela Lesmeister	President	mareike.illing@isar-germany.de
Germany	ISAR	Michael Lesmeister	CEO	mareike.illing@isar-germany.de
Germany	ISAR	Maria Bockmann		
Germany	THW	Ulf Langemeier	Team Leader	ulf.langemeier@thw.de
Germany	THW	Peter Goxharaj	Senior Program Officer	Peter.goxharaj@thw.de
Germany	partner of at fire	Sascha Wahlster	Senior Manager IB&S	Sascha.wahlster@gdels.com
Germany	IOM - Geneva	Albrecht Beck	Global CCCM Civil Protection Specialist	abeck@iom.int
Guatemala		Sergio Roberto Garcia Cabanas	INSARAG Operational Focal Point	scabanas@conred.org.gt
Honduras	COPECO	Dolan Josue Castro Cortes	Director	dolanjosue@yahoo.com
Iceland	ICE SAR	Hjalmar Orn Gudmarsson	Team Leader	hjalmar@iav.is
IFRC	IFRC global first aid reference centre	Pascal Cassan	Head	pascal.cassan@ifrc.org
IRO (Canada)	IRO	Silvie Montier	Vice President	casdda@hotmail.com
IRO (UK)	IRO	Christopher Mark Pritchard	Spokesperson for Deployment	chris.pritchard@iro-dogs.org
Japan	MFA	Shigenobu Kobayashi	Emergency Relief Coordinator	shigenobu.kobayashi@mofa.go.jp

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Japan	JICA	Makoto Yamane	Director	Yamane.Matoko@jica.go.jp
Japan	JICA	Mariko Harada		Harada.Mariko@jica.go.jp
Japan	JICA	Tsukasa Katsube	Advisor	Katsube-Tsukasa.2@jica.go.jp
Japan	JDR	Yusuke Shichijo		y.shichijou@soumu.go.jp
Japan	Tokyo Fire Department	Yoshio Hagimori	Battalion Chief	tfdinfo2@tfd.metro.tokyo.jp
Japan	TICS	Yayoi Shirai	Interpreter	
Japan		Junichi Inoue	Medical Working Group	inoue.jun1@ymail.com
Jordan	Civil Defence	Marwan Bader Ahmad Alsmeiat	Director	civild@nic.net.jo, rescue_dpt@cdd.gov.jo, marwan-sumiat@hotmail.com
Jordan		Hashem Mohammad Obeidat	Focal Point	hashemobeidat18@yahoo.com
Kazakhstan	KAZEMERCOM	Vladimir Tsoy	Team Leader	roso_alm@emer.kz
Kazakhstan	KAZEMERCOM	Dmitry Beskorovayev	Rescuer	roso_alm@emer.kz
Lebanon	UNDP	Sawsan Bou Fakhreddine	Chief Technical Officer	3011203@gmail.com
Malaysia	National Security Council	Abd Rahim Abd Aziz	USAR Commander	rahimaziz8@yahoo.com.my
Maldives	NDMC	Umar Moosa Fikry	Senior Program Officer	umar.fikry@ndmc.gov.mv
Maldives	MNDF	Mohamed Ibrahim	Commander	trgcoord@mndf.gov.mv, mi.mndf@hotmail.com
Mexico	Ministry of Interior	Ricardo De La Cruz	General Director of Civil Protection	rdelacruz@segob.gob.mx
Mexico	Ministry of Interior	Víctor Alonso Aznar Osornio	Director of Sectorial Concertation	vaznar@segob.gob.mx
Morocco	Civil Protection	Zineddine Ammoumou	Director	zinneddine2@gmail.com
Morocco	Civil Protection	Aziz Amzil	Deputy Head	Aziz.amzil@gmail.com
Morocco	Civil Protection	Hassane Lamrabet	Head of Service	Lamrabet.hassane@hotmail.com
Nepal	Ministry of Home Affairs	Binod KC	Joint Secretary	binodkcnepal@gmail.com
Nepal	Ministry of Home Affairs	Rameshwor Dangal	Joint Secretary	dangalrr@hotmail.com

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Netherlands	USAR NL	Arjan Wessel Stam	Team Leader	Arjan.stam@brandweer.vrh.nl
Netherlands	USAR NL	Robert Merkx	Team Leader	robertmerkx@home.nl
Netherlands	USAR NL	Thomas Eckhardt	Medical Manager	Thomas.eckhardt@vrh.nl
New Zealand		Gavin Travers	National USAR Manager	gavin.travers@fire.org.nz
New Zealand		Paul Burns	Team Leader USAR	paul.burns@fire.org.nz
New Zealand		Kenneth	National Operations Manager	Ken.cooper@fire.org.nz
Nigeria	NEMA	Mohammed Sani Sidi	Director-General	sidisani@yahoo.com
Nigeria	NEMA	Owan Vincent Erim	Search & Rescue Deputy Director	v_owan@yahoo.co.uk
Nigeria	NEMA	Idris Abubakar Mohammed	SA - DG	kazura12003@yahoo.com
Nigeria	NEMA	Akiode Saheed Ao	Head, ERM Operations Office	akiodesao@yahoo.com
Nigeria	NEMA	Lawal Semirah	Planning Officer	sameerahlawal@yahoo.com
OCHA consultant	Consultant	David Dickson	Consultant	david.dickson@civillience.com
OCHA consultant	Consultant	Puniamorthy Rmasamy	Consultant	Puniamorthy7@gmail.com
OCHA consultant	Consultant	Steffen Schmidt	Consultant	exchaosordines@gmail.com
OCHA Geneva	FCSS	Jesper Lund	Chief FCSS	lund@un.org
OCHA Geneva	FCSS	Winston Chang	Humanitarian Affairs Officer	changw@un.org
OCHA Geneva	FCSS	Yosuke Okita	Humanitarian Affairs Officer	okitay@un.org
OCHA Geneva	FCSS	Lucien Jaggi	Humanitarian Affairs Officer	jaggi@un.org
OCHA Geneva	FCSS	Christophe Schmachtel	Humanitarian Affairs Officer	schmachtel@un.org
OCHA Geneva	FCSS	Abdul-Majid Rafihi	Humanitarian Affairs Officer	rafihi@un.org
OCHA Geneva	FCSS	Stefania Trassari	Humanitarian Affairs Officer	trassari@un.org
OCHA Geneva	FCSS	Hanako Kataoka-Hafiz	Programme Assistant	kataoka-hafiz@un.org
OCHA Geneva	FCSS	Marlisa Delfin	Team Assistant	delfin@un.org

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OCHA Geneva	FCSS	Sarah Howe	Consultant	howes@un.org
OCHA Geneva	OCHA GLO	Markus Elten	Humanitarian Affairs Officer	elten@un.org
OCHA GLO	OCHA GLO	Nishad Neyyapadath	Humanitarian Affairs Officer	Neyyapadath@un.org
OCHA GLO	OCHA GLO	Manzoor Khoso	Humanitarian Affairs Officer	Khoso@un.org
OCHA Philippines	OCHA Philippines	Maria Agnes Palacio	National Disaster Response Advisor	palacio@un.org
OCHA ROAP	OCHA ROAP	Markus Werne	Head of Office	werne@un.org
OCHA ROAP	OCHA ROAP	Sebastian Rhodes Stampa	Deputy Head of Office	rhodesstampa@un.org
OCHA ROAP	OCHA ROAP	Samantha Orr	Humanitarian Affairs Officer	orrs@un.org
OCHA ROMENA	OCHA ROMENA	Nihan Erdogan	Humanitarian Affairs Officer	erdogann@un.org
Oman	Civil Defence	Mohammed bin Hmound Al-Mahmoudi	Head of Search and Rescue Team	Moh.mahmoodi@hotmail.com
Oman	Civil Defence	Amer bin Sulaiman Al-Kayoumi	National Search and Rescue Team Officer	Amer996@hotmail.com
Pakistan	Rescue 1122	Muhammad Farhan Khalid	Deputy Director	dr.muhammadfarhan@yahoo.com
Pakistan	Rescue 1122	Muhammad Ahsan	Assistant Director	ahsaneo@gmail.com
Palestine	Civil Defence	Colonel Owda Younis		pal_cdd@pcd.ps
Palestine		Capt. Hanan Bouzia		
Panama	SINAPROC	Omar Smith Gallardo		omarsmith33@gmail.com
Paraguay	Volunteer Fire Department of Paraguay	Ernesto Valdez	USAR Chief	
Peru	Cuerop General de Bomberos	Jorge Alejandro Terrones Cano	Captain	terrones@gmail.com
Poland		Mariusz Feltynowski	Deputy Head	mfeltynowski@kgps.gov.pl
Poland		Marcin Kedra	Head of Section	mkedra@kgps.gov.pl
Romania	General Inspectorate	Vlad Petre	Deputy Team Leader	petrev@mai.gov.ro
Russia	EMERCOM	Olga Proshina	Chief	prolg@rambler.ru
Saudi Arabia		Abdullah Mohammd S Alqahtani	K9 Officer	Starr-999@hotmail.com

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Saudi Arabia		Mohammed Abdullah Altamimi	Planning Officer	m20-21@hotmail.com
Saudi Arabia	SASART	Humoud Suliman H Alfaraj	Team Leader	hsf_25@hotmail.com
Singapore	SCDF	Young Ern Ling	Deputy Director	LING_Young_Ern@scdf.gov.sg
Singapore	SCDF	Chew Keng Tok		CHEW_Keng_Tok@scdf.gov.sg
Singapore	COSEM	Mohammad Sukaimi Bin Ali	Consultant	sukaimi@cosem.org.sg
Singapore	COSEM	Nadarajan Subhas	Senior Consultant	subhas@cosem.org.sg
Slovenia	Civil Protection	Domen Torkar	National Focal Point	domen.torkar@urszr.si
South Africa		Lazarus Makola	Fire Chief	tshepomak@joburg.org.za
South Africa		Musiwalo Moses Khangale	Focal Point	MosesK@ndmc.gov.za
Spain	UME	Domingo Exposito Alvarez	ESP Team Leader	dexpalv@et.mde.es
Spain	ERICAM	Annika Eriksson	Team Leader	annika.coll@madrid.org
Sri Lanka	Army	Ekanayake Ambanpola	Major General	dcos@army.lk
Sri Lanka	Navy	Princely Liyanage	Director	princely@dmc.gov.lk
Sweden	MSB	Lars-Goran Uddholm	Team Leader	lars-goran.uddholm@sbff.se
Sweden	MSB	Cecilia Uneram	Deputy Team Leader	cecilia.uneram@svbf.se
Sweden	MSB	David Norlin	Advisor	sedavid.norlin@msb.se
Switzerland	SDC	David Sochor	Chief Rapid Response	david.sochor@eda.admin.ch
Switzerland	SDC	Mario Simaz	Programme Officer	mario.simaz@eda.admin.ch
Switzerland	FDA	Frederic Wagnon	Head of SHA	frederic.wagnon@vtg.admin.ch
Switzerland	SHA	Manuel Bessler	Ambassador	manuel.bessler@eda.admin.ch
Switzerland	SDC	Toni Frisch	INSARAG Global Chair	toni.frisch@eda.admin.ch
Turkey	AKUT	Belit Tasdemir	Deputy Team Leader	belittasdemir@akut.org.tr
Turkey	AFAD	Haluk Onay Erten	Team Leader	Haluk.Erten@afad.gov.tr

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Turkey	AFAD	Kemal Kocak	Team Leader	kemal.kocak@afad.gov.tr
Turkey	AFAD	Fatih Ozer	Head of Department	fatih.ozer@afad.gov.tr
Turkey	AKUT	Dundar Sahin	Director of Institute	dundar@akutonline.com
Turkey	GEA NGO	Umut Dinçşahin		umut@gea.org.tr
Turkey	GEA NGO	Erkan Ibrahim Ataker		erkan@gea.org.tr
UK	SARAID	Christopher Hurley	Operations Director	kris.hurley@saraid.org.uk
UK	SARAID	Simon Woodmore	Medical Team Manager	Simon.woodmore@sky.com
UK	SARAID	Paul Incedon	Team Leader	paul.incedon@saraid.org.uk
UK	SARAID	Rob Davis	Team Leader	rob.davis@avonfire.gov.uk
UK	SARAID	Gary Francis	National Director	gary.francis@saraid.org.uk
UK	UK ISAR	St. John Stanley	Logistics Manager	Stjohn.stanley@westsussex.gov.uk
UK	UK ISAR	Dave Ramscar	Chief	Dave.ramscar@lincoln.fire-uk.org
UK	UK ISAR	Sean Moore	National Coordinator	smoore@fireresilience.org.uk
Ukraine	Mobile rescue	Sergii Lavrynenko	Head	lavrinenko@mns.gov.ua
US	USA-1	Jason Ryan Jenkins	Deputy Chief	Jason.jenkins@fairfaxcounty.gov
USA	USAID/OFDA	Dewey Hindman Perks	Chair of TWG	dperks@ofda.gov
USA	Fairfax	Scott Schermerhorn	Logistics Manager	scott.schermerhorn@fairfaxcounty.gov
USA	Fairfax	Michael Schaff	Programme Manager	Michael.schaff@fairfaxcounty.gov
USA	Fairfax	Charles Warren Ryan III	Deputy chief	chuck.ryan@fairfaxcounty.gov
USA	USAID	Sarah Potts	Field Coordinator	spotts@usaid.gov
USA	USA 2, LA	John Boyle	Task Force Leader	John.boyle@fire.lacounty.gov
USA	USA 2, LA	Herb Giovanni Marroquin	Medical Specialist	Herb.marroquin@fire.lacounty.gov
USA	USA 2, LA	Patrick Rohaley	Task Force Leader	Patrick.rohaley@fire.lacounty.gov

INSARAG Team Leaders Meeting 2015

Chairman's Summary

16-17 October, 2015 Abu Dhabi UAE

USA	USA 2, LA	Bryan Wells	Rescue Team Manager	Bryan.wells@fire.lacounty.gov
USA	MWG Chair	Anthony Macintyre	Chair of MWG	macintyr@gwu.edu
USA	USA 1	Richard Andrew Roatch	Deputy Chief	richard.roatch@fairfaxcounty.gov
USA	UAE / EST LLC	Irfan Ismail	Junior Associate	irfan.ismail@r4-inc.com
USA	UAE / EST LLC	Patrick Ryan	Senior Associate	pryan@r4-inc.com
USA	UAE / EST LLC	Shawn Crockett	Senior Associate	sjcrockett@r4-inc.com
USA	UAE / EST LLC	David M Lewis Sr.	Senior Associate	dlewis@r4-inc.com
USA	USA 2, LA	Troy Flath		
WHO	WHO	Rudi Coninx	MWG	coninxr@who.int
Zambia	Air Force	Peter Kavuma	Colonel	peterkavuma@hotmail.com

Annex B – Team Leaders Meeting Agenda

Friday, 16 October

8:00 – 9:00 Registration of Participants

9:00 – 9:30 **Official Opening**

Lt.Col. Mohamed Al-Ansari, United Arab Emirates

Mr. Jesper Lund, Chief Field Coordination Support Section and INSARAG Secretariat, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

9:30 – 10:00 **Introductions of Participants and Adoption of the Agenda**

Mr. Jesper Lund, Chief Field Coordination Support Section and INSARAG Secretariat, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

10:00 – 10:15 **Group Photo**

10:15 – 10:45 Tea/Coffee Break

10:45 – 11:15 **INSARAG Update and Year Ahead**

Mr. Jesper Lund, Chief Field Coordination Support Section and INSARAG Secretariat, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Mr. Winston Chang, Humanitarian Affairs Officer, Field Coordination Support Section and INSARAG Secretariat, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

11:15 – 12:00 **INSARAG 2015 Guidelines Dissemination – Next Steps in Implementation**

Mr. David Sochor, Chief Rapid Response, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

Mr. Jesper Lund, Chief Field Coordination Support Section and INSARAG Secretariat, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

12:00 – 13:30 Lunch Break

13:30 – 13:45 **Nepal Earthquake Lessons Observed – Team Leader Exercise Introduction**

13:45 – 15:00 **Team Leader Exercise: Alert and Mobilization**

15:00 – 15:30 Tea/Coffee Break

15:30 – 17:00 **Team Leader Exercise: Operations**

18:00 Optional Event: Visit to Sheikh Zayed Mosque

Saturday, 17 October

9:00 – 10:30 **Team Leader Exercise: Operations**

10:30 – 11:00 Tea/Coffee Break

11:00 – 12:30 **Team Leader Exercise: Demobilization**

12:30 – 14:00 Lunch Break

14:00 – 14:30 **Team Leader Exercise Wrap Up**

14:30 – 15:15 **INSARAG e-Forms: KoBo Platform**

Mr. Peter Wolff, USAR Chief of Operations and Deputy Team Leader, German Federal Agency for Technical Relief

15:15 – 15:45 **KoBo Platform: Direct Observation**

Mr. Marcus Elten, Humanitarian Affairs Officer, Coordinated Assessment Support Section, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

15:45 – 16:15 Tea/Coffee Break

16:15 – 16:45 **INSARAG and the International Organization for Migration – Possibilities for Partnership**

Mr. Albrecht Beck, Global CCCM Civil Protection Specialist, International Organization for Migration

16:45 – 17:30 **Development of Chairman's Summary and Closing Statements**

Mr. Jesper Lund, Chief Field Coordination Support Section and INSARAG Secretariat, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Ambassador Toni Frisch, INSARAG Global Chair

Ambassador Manuel Bessler, Ambassador and Delegate for Humanitarian Aid, Head of the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and Incoming INSARAG Global Chair

End of INSARAG Team Leaders Meeting

Annex 'C'

Summary of Discussions: Nepal Earthquake Lessons Observed Exercise

During the Team Leaders Meeting held in Abu Dhabi on the 16-17 October 2015, the participants undertook a 'command post' style exercise based on the findings of a study into the USAR response to the Nepal Earthquake. The exercise focused on key areas of the response to the disaster in Nepal, these being: Mobilisation, RDC and UCC Operations and Demobilisation.

The meeting participants were divided into groups that balanced experience, classified teams and language and were presented with a series of questions and challenges relating to each phase of the disaster. The objective of the workshop was to share information, points of view and perspectives on some critical areas of response. The intention was to allow the participants to reflect on shared best practices and standards and take the lessons observed back to their own organisations. A summary of the discussions can be found below:

Mobilisation

Conduct pre-deployment research to facilitate informed decision-making

- Critical Questions - can we arrive in 48 hours - is the airport open - can we get landing access
- Is there a bilateral agreement, what is our Government's relationship with the affected country
- Religion and culture of the affected country – may impact on what can be brought in
- Impact of disaster – casualties, extent and scale of the damage, total area affected
- Type of building stock and types of structural collapse
- Safety and security situation, climate and current weather

Contribute information to increase the collective knowledge base of responders

- Information sharing platforms – VOSOCC, GDACS, Reliefweb, CECIS
- Information gathering platforms – news & media sites, social media (Twitter etc.), Government sites (travel and health advice), Google, Wikipedia, Google Earth
- Direct contact and sitreps – LEMA, OCHA, embassies, consulates and other actors in the field
- Previous missions – any reports or information
- UNDAC members (national) – personal experience or contacts

Advise on deployment decisions using sound rationale

- Has LEMA or the Government requested assistance?
- Has the RC Office issued a statement?
- Is UNDAC deploying – are other teams from the same region deploying?
- Distance – access – survivability – cost effectiveness

Reception Departure Centre

Construct an RDC plan in accordance with INSARAG and OSOCC methodology

- Location should be signposted, coordinate with LEMA/Security, after customs and immigration (if operating) and in a safe area
- 3 x personnel as per Guidelines and trained in their roles
- Dedicated cache – tent, beds, communications, laptops, chairs, generator
- Outputs – location (coordinates), situation reports, safety and security brief, culture and local customs brief, BoO coordination
- Facilities – if possible add value to the RDC by providing as many facilities/services as possible for the incoming teams, such as toilets, food, access to fuel, transport, a phone, rest areas, weather forecast, a

security briefing, medical gases, maps and a route to the OSOCC, etc.

- Issues – radio frequencies, mapping, cultural brief, transport, fuel, liaison, translators, sectorisation

The participants of the Team Leaders meeting recognised the importance of immediate establishment of the RDC to the benefit to the operation as a whole and the importance of 'selling' the RDC to teams and responders from outside the INSARAG system, explaining the benefits of being involved in the process. The participants also felt that all incoming teams should know what an RDC is and it should be something a team is looking for on arrival. It was something that should be included in 'universal' disaster awareness training so that all teams to know what RDC is and how it should be set up.

Advise on preparations for navigating country entry requirements

- Team fact sheet
- Personal manifest (hard copy) – passport, issue/expiry date, gender, visa, immunisation certificate/records, 4 extra photos
- Rabies inoculation record, medical certificates for canines, passport or ID chip
- Dangerous goods certificates
- Equipment manifest, controlled drugs including medicines for canines
- Medical (right to practice) certification
- Communications - radio frequencies vhf/hf/uhf, satellite communications

USAR Operations and Coordination

Apply and interpret ASR levels consistent with INSARAG methodology

- Team Leaders need to be aware of the various levels at which coordination takes place – Strategic level - UCC level – Sector level – Team level. To get a true situational awareness, the UCC will need to be aware of what is going on at all levels.
- The revised Guidelines have parts that are intended for field use and teams need to get used to referring to the Guidelines whilst conducting operations – they should not be left behind when teams mobilise.
- ASR does not mean anything to the local responders and cannot be easily translated.

Apply and interpret markings consistent with INSARAG methodology

- The meaning of the INSARAG markings are not obvious to local responders or to teams coming from outside the INSARAG system – is there a way of providing translation or help in understanding?
- Only worksites where there are viable live rescues need to be marked.

Conduct sectorisation of a disaster area and assign USAR teams to sectors

- The main choice is to use geographic areas or the areas pre-determined by the LEMA – therefore it is vital to get an early answer from LEMA to the 'sectorisation' issue.
- Any sectorisation needs to be undertaken at the soonest possible moment in operations and the plan should be publicised and all made aware, including teams outside of the INSARAG system.
- It's only with a common situational awareness that proper coordination can take place.

The meeting recognised the vital role of the OSOCC to the coordination of operations and the importance of 'selling' the OSOCC to teams and responders from outside the INSARAG system, explaining the benefits of being involved in the process. OSOCC awareness was something that should be included in 'universal' disaster awareness training so that all teams to know what an OSOCC is and the benefits of being involved.

Demobilisation

Discuss potential actions following the issuance of a stand-down

- Complete demobilisation plan.
- Send demobilisation forms to OSOCC (UCC).
- Complete equipment manifest including dangerous goods and drugs.
- Identify equipment and supplies that could be donated.
- Arrange transport, both in-country and flights.
- Take care of our own team, providing a defusing or debriefing service.
- Undertake discussions with the LEMA to identify any local needs for donation or assistance.
- Identify local partners that can assist in the provision of humanitarian support.
- Consider press and media statements for home consumption.
- Request if the team's own government or sponsor would like the team to stay longer and what to do with equipment (based on own team's recommendations) as there maybe a political 'requirement' to stay.

Identify factors that influence engagement in beyond the rubble activities

- Good communication with the Cluster System when trying to assess what additional 'beyond the rubble pile' work is required and what the organisation can offer e.g., medics, structural engineers.
- Early offer of assistance through the OSOCC, once the decision to stay in country has been made, detailing other capabilities (e.g., engineers, building assessments, medical, humanitarian, WASH, coordination, communication, body recovery, etc.).
- The ability to synchronise with LEMA, to find out what the needs are and to undertake an early general needs assessment.
- Consideration to for the team management to stay on a few days at the embassy or consulate to brief incoming organisations.
- An awareness that the local community can continue to be affected by aftershocks or further damage, so needs can change.
- The positive psychological aspects of continuing support to the affected community, which includes the local emergency responders.
- The ability to assist with 'heritage issues' such as UNESCO sites – providing support and advice for local authorities.
- The importance of the spirit of generosity which the USAR teams approach the affected community and the impact on it's future – this is one of the fundamental principles that drives the teams.
- The range of activities beyond the rubble that the teams can offer and can get access to through support from the sponsoring governments and organisations. For example, assessment of the humanitarian needs, structural engineering, water purification, psychology support, donation of tents, generators, water purification, etc.

Recognize the importance of and use for post-mission reports

The meeting gave examples of a number of issues as to why post-mission reports are not regularly completed:

- No feedback after submitting the report – black hole of FCSS!
- No one person in the team is made responsible to complete the report – not chased by FCSS
- No perceived value in submitting report
- Unwilling to be openly critical of others and also perceived reluctance on behalf of FCSS to be critical of teams