

# INSARAG External Support and Validation process for national USAR team accreditation processes



## 1. Antecedentes

- 1.1. Since 2005, INSARAG has an external USAR team classification process, which establishes verifiable operational standards and which constitutes an example of how a peer review mechanism can provide an added value in the preparedness and response to disasters. The process, known as IEC, is designed for teams that have the mandate and institutional support for responding internationally. They have the support of the national authorities of their respective country through the INSARAG focal point. The IEC is an independent, verifiable and voluntary process that has received unanimous acceptance by the INSARAG community. The main objective of the process is to provide countries affected by disasters with an additional resource, with proven quality and capacity according to international standards
- 1.2. INSARAG does not classify national teams, as this is a responsibility of the national authorities in each country. A national USAR team accreditation system allows for the establishment of common national minimum standards, based on experience, local needs and risk scenarios of each country.
- 1.3. Since 2003, and particularly in the Americas region, a series of initiatives have been discussed, analyzed and developed aimed at establishing a process whereby USAR teams should achieve some basic recommended standards in order to be called National USAR teams.
- 1.4. In 2011, and following a global consultation process, the new chapter G on establishing a national urban search and rescue capacity was incorporated in the INSARAG Guidelines. In paragraph G3.5, this version of the Guidelines of 2011 already encourages countries to *"adopt (at the appropriate level) the INSARAG organizational and operational guidelines for capacity building of national USAR teams as a target achievement for its national USAR teams and to adopt appropriate processes for the confirmation of achievement of these standards"*.
- 1.5. The updated INSARAG Guidelines 2015 include a complete manual on strengthening national and local capacity building (Vol. II, Manual A) and goes as far as recommending countries to establish an national USAR team accreditation mechanism to allow a country to "manage, monitor and establish the same standards officially and adhere closely to the INSARAG standards and guidance in developing its USAR national response systems". The Guidelines recommend a process that was designed in a workshop carried out in Chile in 2014 and which incorporates many of the lessons learned in the Americas region in the past few years.
- 1.6. The INSARAG Guidelines 2015 make the difference between the classification – a process amongst peers, designed by the INSARAG community for the verification of the achievement of the standards for teams with an international deployment mandate; and the accreditation, un process which is by definition at the national level through which the achievement of national standards is certified by an accrediting entity, in other words the competent national authorities.
- 1.7. Globally and particularly in the Americas region there is extensive experiences with accreditation processes of national USAR teams, some developed jointly, some individually by countries and institutions. In general, all have preserved a similar structure, both in terms of processes and in terms of standards, closely linked to the methodology developed by INSARAG.
- 1.8. The INSARAG Américas Regional Group presented a proposal to the INSARAG Steering Group in 2016, who in turn requested the Regional Group to lead the initiative to "design a peer revision/certification process of national USAR team accreditation processes, which

confirms to the requesting country that it is complying with the minimum standards for national USAR team accreditation processes". The Regional Group was requested to consult with the other Regional Groups in 2016 in order to present recommendations to the Steering Group in 2017.

- 1.9. The Americas Regional Group, under the leadership of Colombia, organized a workshop to further elaborate and refine the proposal. The workshop took place from 7 to 9 May in the Red Cross Training Center in the region of Quindío, Colombia, hosted by the Government of Colombia, and had the participation of 22 representatives from the following 11 countries: Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Paraguay, Peru, Venezuela and from OCHA/ INSARAG Secretariat.
- 1.10. In the following part, the proposal is being presented as result from the workshop and the work undertaken since then, as action points from the workshop.

## 2. Propuesta : crear un Proceso INSARAG de Apoyo y Validación Externa de los procesos nacionales de acreditación USAR



Figura 4: Marco de respuesta USAR de INSARAG

2.1. The USAR response framework of INSARAG shows a structure, which aims to ensure **interoperability** between different levels of USAR response and determines that "*it is vital that working practices, technical language and information are common and shared through all levels of the USAR response framework*" (INSARAG Guidelines, Vol I, 2.1). Therefore, the standards developed for the accreditation of national teams **must be aligned with** the INSARAG methodology

and therefore should be recognized within this same framework.

- 2.2. It is desirable that the national accreditation processes form an integral part of the INSARAG process equally to the INSARAG External Classification process for international teams. This is with the purpose of ensuring interoperability and appropriate interaction between the national and international response capacity.
- 2.3. To this effect, it is suggested to establish a homogenization of national USAR standards, leaving the required space for national adaptation.
- 2.4. It is not desirable nor feasible that INSARAG takes on the responsibility to accredit or classify the huge amount of national USAR teams. This remains the sole responsibility of the national authorities as again validated by the INSARAG Guidelines 2015.
- 2.5. However, there is a role for the INSARAG community in promoting the national USAR capacity strengthening in line with the INSARAG Guidelines and ensuring at the same time the complementarity of the international response.
- 2.6. The purpose of the present proposal is to provide a general framework for the advisory and national USAR team capacity building work in the INSARAG community with the aim to culminate in a validation process of national USAR team accreditation processes.

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- 2.7. The INSARAG Guidelines in their current version already provide a minimum standard applicable to national teams, see Vol. II, Manual A, Annex C. However, it is felt that Annex C is not sufficiently explicit with regards to the differentiation of the standards applicable for light teams; and other aspects are also found to be requiring some improvement.
- 2.7.1. Based on the original proposal, the Annex C of Vol II, Manual A of the INSARAG Guidelines was revised and updated with the aim of providing more explicit guidance on the different standards applicable to light, medium and heavy teams, as well as the requirements on the national disaster management system (LEMA) with regards to the activation and coordination procedures for the national response. See 01\_Annex C\_updated**
- 2.8. The current INSARAG Guidelines also provide a very general guidance on the establishment of a national USAR team accreditation process – however, they do not provide specific directions nor tools for its implementation at national level.
- 2.8.1. Therefore, the proposal includes a series of suggested minimum criteria and steps for the national USAR accreditation processes. On the one hand, it is suggested that this list serve as guidance to national authorities who are in the process of establishing a national USAR team accreditation process. On the other hand, it is expected that this list be used as a checklist for the external validation process. The detail of the external validation process and the evaluation/validation method still need to be developed. See 02\_List of criteria and steps for the national USAR team accreditation process.**
- 2.8.2. At the same time, the proposal includes a series of supporting documents which national teams shall complete in order to prove that they are achieving the national standards, which in turn should be based on Annex C. A series of 14 documents is suggested which are directly linked to Annex C. Additionally, standard formats are being proposed as practical implementation tool for these documents although it is clear that there may be significant variations from one country to another. See 03\_List of supporting documentation**
- 2.9. It is desirable for the INSARAG community to provide some kind of recognition for national USAR teams which have demonstrated their commitment and response capacity in accordance with the INSARAG Guidelines. It is a way of concretely showing and living up to the basic value of “inclusiveness” of INSARAG and to promote national capacity strengthening
- 2.10. However, by not “classifying” nor “accrediting” national USAR teams as this is the responsibility of the national authorities, it is suggested that together with the support and advisory work that is being provided through INSARAG to national systems, an external validation process be established by INSARAG of the national USAR team accreditation processes.
- 2.10.1. Therefore, the proposal includes general criteria and principal steps for the suggested INSARAG external validation process of national accreditation processes. See 04\_Criteria and steps for the external support and validation process.**
- 2.10.2. At the same time, the proposal includes a suggested recognition patch which national authorities – once their process is validated – would have the faculty to hand out to their national teams. See the proposals below:**

**2.10.2.1. Option 1:**



**2.10.2.2. Option 2:**



**2.10.2.3. Option 3:**



## 3. Next steps

- 3.1. Present the proposal to the Americas Regional Group and the other Regional Groups as well as the Team Leaders meeting, including through tele/videoconferences.
- 3.2. Obtain comments and feedback until 10 October 2016. All comments to be sent to William Alfonso Tovar ([william.tovar@gestiondelriesgo.gov.co](mailto:william.tovar@gestiondelriesgo.gov.co)) in Colombia and the Secretariat ([insarag@un.org](mailto:insarag@un.org), [schmachtel@un.org](mailto:schmachtel@un.org)).
- 3.3. Presentation of the final proposal to the Americas Regional Group from 16-18 November 2016 for its validation and presentation to the INSARAG Steering Group in 2017.