



2022 INSARAG Team Leaders and Technical Working Groups Meeting Summary

30 March 2022



Meeting Overview

More than 120 participants, 45 in person from over 20 countries and 82 connecting remotely, gathered for the annual International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) Team Leaders (TLs) and Technical Working Groups (WGs) Meeting in Doha, Qatar, from 6 to 11 May 2022 ([Participants list](#)). For the first time, the meeting was hosted in hybrid mode, with participants attending remotely as well.

The meeting was convened to discuss technical issues within the INSARAG Guidelines, discuss lessons learned from previous USAR operations, meetings, trainings, and exercises, and share updates and best practices to ensure that the INSARAG Network remains fit for its life-saving purpose in a constantly evolving response landscape. This year, for the second time, the meeting was opened to INSARAG Technical Working Groups, that met internally from 6 to 8 March, and presented their meeting proceedings at the TLs Meeting the following days, from 9 to 11 March. TLs received updates from the INSARAG Unit Head as well, and several other topics were discussed, including Flexible Response, National Accreditation, the first Light Team INSARAG External Classification (IEC), the Debrief of Haiti Earthquake in 2021, the First Responders Program V2.0, the UC Manual 2.0, the INSARAG Coordination Management System (ICMS), and virtual earthquake responses exercise during the pandemic.

The meeting was hosted by the Qatar International Search and Rescue Group (QISARG), supported by the Government of Qatar through the Internal Security Force – LEKHWIYA, and co-organized by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in its capacity as the INSARAG Secretariat.

[All the handouts are available here](#)

[All the presentations are available here \(Sessions recordings will soon be uploaded on the same page\)](#)

TL Meeting Day 1

Session 1 – Official Opening

The Qatari Authorities formally welcomed all participants.

Winston Chang, INSARAG Unit Head and Global Lead, warmly welcomed all the participants, both in-person and online, and congratulated them for the success of INSARAG over the past three decades in strengthening coordination to ensure more timely, effective and coherent response. The Unit Head expressed his appreciation for being able to meet INSARAG friends face-to-face after 27 challenging months.

The Unit Head encouraged all the participants to actively contribute to the meeting, with ideas, recommendations, and feedback. The frank and friendly peer review process is the base of the INSARAG methodology, and it is the way in which the network remains fit for purpose. The Unit Head also reminded the participants of the four strategic objectives, guiding the way forward: Strengthening quality standards and coordination; localizing frontline emergency response; advancing flexible assistance; enhancing preparedness and bolstering partnerships.

The Unit Head expressed his most sincere gratitude to the Government of Qatar, His Excellency Maj Gen Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Faisal bin Mohammed Al Thani, LEKHWIYA Commander and Under Sec Ministry of the Interior, and his team, the Qatar International Search & Rescue Group (QISARG), represented in the meeting by Brig Ibrahim Khalil Al Mohannadi, Director of Legal affairs LEKHWIYA, LTC Mubarak Sherida M M Al-Kaabi, Commander of Qatar's International Search and Rescue Group, and OCHA Geneva colleagues who have worked hard over the past few months to prepare for this important INSARAG event.

Session 2 - Introduction of Participants, Adoption of the Agenda

After the introduction of all the participants, Mr. Arjan Stam, supporting the Secretariat, briefly presented the agenda, which was subsequently adopted ([Meeting Agenda](#)).

Session 3 - INSARAG Global Updates and Key Developments, IEC/R Workplan Updates

The INSARAG Unit Head presented Global Updates, Key Development, and Updates on the IEC/R Workplan.

Global Updates included an overview of 2021 events (summarized by the INSARAG 2021 [Annual Snapshot](#)) and of 2022 events ([Calendar - March Version](#)), including the INSARAG Steering Group Meeting at HNPW.

Key developments included the assignment of INSARAG Regional Focal Points as a [Secretariat Representative to each WG](#), to support their work. WGs are the technical backbone of the INSARAG Methodology, and their work is crucial to maintain the high-quality standards for which INSARAG is globally renowned, therefore the Secretariat is supporting their work at the best of its capacity.

Finally, 17 years into the IEC/R system, most of the INSARAG Classified USAR teams are starting the 3rd and 4th Reclassification Cycle, with several new teams being classified every year. Therefore, the number of IEC/Rs that must be managed by the Secretariat is exponentially increasing. At current capacity, the Secretariat can manage 12 IEC/Rs per year. Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, there is a significant backlog of past IEC/Rs. For the upcoming year, as decided by the ISG in 2021, IECs and IERs long overdue will be prioritized. Leadership trainings for the IEC/R Cadre are being scheduled and will resume soon.

The exponential increasing of IEC/Rs is forcing the Secretariat and all INSARAG Members to consider the implementation of a potential lighter system for IER. The Secretariat is aware that this is a highly debated topic, and the issue will be raised at the ISG. No decisions have been taken thus far, and the network is invited to discuss methods to preserve the high-quality standards of IEC/Rs, while reducing the Secretariat and Classifiers workload. In any case, no reduction of quality will be accepted.

Session 4 - INSARAG Working Groups Updates

❖ Flexible Response (FRWG) - Co-Chair: Mr. Paul Baxter:

Mr. Paul Baxter presented the work of the three FRWG Sub-WGs.

Global Position: the difference between Beyond the Rubble and Flexible responses was discussed. For Flexible Response, talk on how such response could add new capacities such as water rescue was mentioned. A significant issue is the potential need for a classification or certification system for FLEX-R Teams.

DACC: the DACC Handbook is currently in development, and its format is being discussed. The DACC is divided in two groups: Engineering and Coordination. Key decisions so far: DACC guidance should be broad and not be specifically related to earthquakes and outputs should be as concise as possible.

Cultural Heritage Sub-Working Group: INSARAG and UNESCO should coordinate more efficiently to maximize the benefits of their partnership. A field guide for USAR operations at cultural heritage sites will be developed and include the INSARAG Technical Reference Library.

❖ Information Management (IMWG) - Co-Chair: Mr. Peter Wolff, Mr. John Morrison

Mr. Peter Wolff and Mr. John Morrison presented on the achievements and plans of the Information Management Working Group. The achievements involve the ICMS2.0 delivered to all teams, a secured long-term funding for ICMS, the creation of NAP accounts in Central/South America, regional trainings for USAR teams and support to the development of the UC Manual. The IMWG have been commended by Esri for the quality of their work. In the future, the IMWG aims to further develop technology such as an ICMS system for more people and share data with humanitarian agencies and new partners. The IMWG will develop a one-page ICMS guide for USAR teams.

❖ **Light Team Quality Assurance (LTQAWG) - Co-Chair: Mr. Brad Commens**

Mr. Brad Commens presented the updates, outcomes, and the recommendations of Light teams. During the last 2 years, LTQAWG completed a pre-exercise meeting for @fire IEC held on 28 Sep 2021. The First INSARAG Light IEC was completed between 21 and 24 Nov 2021, and the review report was sent to the INSARAG Secretariat on 28 Jan 2022. In the future, the LTQSWG will revert to the reference group to provide further information and clarify queries from Teams, Mentors and Classifiers.

❖ **Medical (MWG) - Representatives: Mr. Thomas Eckhardt and Mr. Trevor Glass**

Mr. Thomas Eckhardt and Mr. Trevor Glass presented the work of MWG. They first recalled the difficulty of mobility during Covid-19, which required teams to research and adhere to entry requirements of disaster impacted countries. Secondly, they highlighted the issue of requesting local permission to practice during USAR operations in foreign countries. Thirdly, it was stated that a Covid-19 Deployment Technical Reference note will soon be published to enhance the USAR working environment in SARS CoV2 Virus situation. Finally, the MWG shared work plans including ongoing Covid-19 monitoring, guidelines updating and meeting at the HNPW in May.

❖ **National Accreditation WG - Co-Chair: Mr. Sebastian Mocarquer**

Mr. Sebastian Mocarquer presented the work of the National Accreditation WG. He pointed out that the NAWG was formed in 2020 after ISG endorsement. The main aim of NAWG is to collate, review and prepare documents and technical guidance for INRAP and promote the exchange of experiences in the application of National USAR accreditation processes. The work of NAWG was divided in two parts, the first was the analysis of the existing NAP and IRNAP, which received great interest from the INSARAG network. The second phase started in May 2021 and will end in Aug 2022, this phase will include the development of the IRNAP Technical Guidance Note, the update of the IRNAP Checklist and the development of the IRNAP Training.

❖ **Training WG - Chair: Mr. Dewey Perks**

Mr. Dewey Perks presented the updates for the Training WG. He shared the arrangement of the Monthly Virtual Meetings and the cross pollination in activities with other WGs. The TWG is facing two specific problems, time management and lack of travel. The key focus for 2022 will be on UC training (help NAWG), UC manual revisions, and the Leadership Training hosted by Iceland.

❖ **Transitional Guidelines Review – Co-Chair: Martin Evers**

Mr. Martin Evers presented the updates for the Transitional Guidelines Review Group. He reminded all of the ToR of the T-GRG, supporting stakeholders, encouraging implementation and translation, reporting to governing bodies and identifying issues. The T-GRG is also being tasked to produce a Guidance Note on bilateral response, avoiding unclarity when teams deploy under their brand name in another capacity than USAR. He also remarked that the T-GRG is only responsible for the consistency, terminology, and proper administration of the Guidelines. Hence, the content of the work should be guaranteed by the WGs. Finally, Mr. Evers explained the new structure of the INSARAG documentation as per the Guidelines 2020 and requested the WG's to collate their documents likewise.

Session 5 - Panel Discussion on Outcomes of First Light IEC for @fire, German NGO Team and Two IERs for Swiss Rescue and PUI

Session 5 was moderated by Solveig Thorvaldsdottir, Management Classifier for PUI at the INSIEME 2021 Exercise.

Part 1: Experiences from the INSIEME Exercise

Panelists for Session 5:

1. Thomas Zeiter, Project Manager of INSIEME 2021 and Desk Officer of SwissRescue Team.
2. Philippe Dardant, UCC Coordinator from PUI France.
3. Johannes Gust, Head of Staff and Team Leader of @fire.

Thomas Zeiter, project manager of INSIEME 2021, illustrated the challenges of organizing a triple exercise with more than 600 participants, multiple stakeholders and during a global pandemic. The importance of close cooperation between

EXCON and OCHA and having strict control of the exercise were the lessons learned. The critical issues for the exercise were due to Covid-19 regulations for people coming from more than 30 countries and the intense time schedule of classifiers.

Philippe Dardant described the details of PUI engagement in INSIEME, on the UCC side. He also presented lessons learned and suggestions to improve the exercise site. A video showcasing PUI's recent operations worldwide was shown to the public.

Johannes Gust presented the German NGO USAR Team @fire, the first Light Team to complete the IEC process. Challenges encountered in the process were also discussed, mostly related to Covid-19 travel restrictions and to the peculiarity of light teams. Namely, packing light equipment and knowing one's own limits during work periods, as there is limited support from other team members compared to medium and heavy teams.

Part 2 focused on the specific features, advantages, and disadvantages of Light Teams,

Panelists:

1. Johannes Gust, Head of Staff and Team Leader of @fire.
2. Petr Vodicka, IEC Team Leader for @fire
3. Cristophe Debray, LTQAWG members and Classifier Rep. for @fire.
4. Brad Commens, Co-Chair, LTQAWG

Johannes Gust remarked the importance of multi-training for light team members, and that it is useful for light team members to provide all USAR functions with a reduced number of personnel. He also highlighted the risk of reduced operational capacity when team members are assigned to UCC/RDC cells.

Petr Vodicka, on behalf of the IEC Team, presented the IEC Team/Classifiers feedback for @fire. He commended the strong team spirit and the tangible support from the sponsor organization. He suggested to implement shorter and different deployments for the next Light IECs, to better demonstrate the flexibility of light teams. He also suggested to prolong exercise time from 36 to 42 hours, however this suggestion was disputed during the subsequent discussion.

Cristophe Debray, also on behalf of the IEC Team, presented the challenges encountered when evaluating new light teams using the mindset of medium and heavy teams. Specifically, it should be reminded that Light IECs should be focused on the capability and requirements for a Light USAR team, not on the specific tools used for USAR operations or the variations from Medium and Heavy teams

Brad Commens presented the LTQAWG review of the @fire IEC and compiled a list of lessons learned. Key points: some tasks were more difficult than expected from the checklist; UCC dedicated personnel should be considered outside the exercise team, as a single person for UCC is not sufficient for a functioning UCC; two-working periods is barely enough to clear the whole checklist; finally, the IEC Team should be composed of only 6 classifiers and should include one person with light team experience to guide the other classifiers.

Session 6 - Debrief on 2021 Haiti Earthquake

Session 6 was moderated by Sebastian Mocarquer. The panel involves four presenters:

1. Maj. Welter Chagas, Battalion Chief at Minas Gerais Environmental Emergencies and Disaster Response Fire Department - lecture on Brazilian Multidisciplinary 2021 Mission to the Republic of Haiti (earthquake followed by tropical storm Grace).
2. Silvia Ballén, Expert for the National Search and Rescue Program, National Unit for Disaster Risk Management (UNGRD), USAR COL-1 Team Liaison Officer, UNDAC Focal point – Colombia
3. Tracey Reed, Deputy Chief of Special Operations for the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department, the United States, and William Vannoy, Battalion Chief at Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department.

Major Welter Chagas shared Brazil's rescue experience during the Haiti Earthquake. As an official mission of Brazil, they first requested diplomatic arrangements and Brazilian presidential decree. After getting to the field, they liaised with various authorities such as Haitian government focal point, Protection of Haiti, UN OCHA, and UNDAC. Mr. Chagas emphasized the importance of a national Flexible Response Team suitable to deploy and the importance of the multidisciplinary aspect, such as floods, landslides, etc.

Ms. Silvia Ballén, UNDAC focal point Colombia, shared the humanitarian assistance experience of the USAR Colombia Team, which had 8 days of field operations in Haiti. She indicated that flexible response is a strategic and important component of the INSARAG Methodology, as humanitarian assistance.

Tracey Reed shared the USA-01 experiences in Haiti. She elaborated on two lessons learned from the mission. The first lesson dealt with transportation challenges. Given limited road travel, their team faced trouble reaching certain terrains due to serious infrastructure damage. As a solution, they used helicopters as the main form of transportation. New challenges ensued such as flight schedule configurations and unexpected medical evacuations. The second lesson dealt with the Humanitarian Assessments. She urged the necessity for teams to be able to compile humanitarian assessments as a non-core skill for USAR teams.

William Vannoy described multiple factors that impacted the initial assessments of the Haitian earthquake, such as tropical storm Grace, transportation and emphasized the importance of early development of summary humanitarian infographics for better communication to help to transit humanitarian efforts.

Session 7 - First Responders Program V2.0

Mr. Peter Goxharaj presented on the topic of developing a First Responders Training (FRT) V2.0, alongside the current FRT designed for professionals, that builds the resilience and capacity of local communities.

Based upon the 2016 United Nations World Humanitarian Summit slogan: “As local as possible,” Mr Goxharaj articulated that the FRT V2.0 would be tailored to local communities using the INSARAG Methodology for timely rescue, especially in rural areas. The training would be written in local languages with heavy use of pictures, making it easy to understand and account for potential minimal education. Additionally, the FRT V2.0 proposes field tests that expose where additional resources are needed, for example physical training equipment such as boots, helmets, and their sizing. The timeline for the FRT V2.0 final draft is planned for January 2023.

To conclude, Mr Goxharaj briefly highlighted the potential of conducting virtual FRTs, without the practical exercise, to expand access to those unable to attend or travel to larger trainings.

Session 8 - Key Improvements UC Manual V2.0

Ms. Kira Chebakova and Ms. Solveig Thorvaldsdottir discussed key improvements to the UC Manual V2.0 that occurred over 2021. They detailed that the changes came from inputs from the INSARAG WGs, USAR Teams and the Secretariat. Ms. Thorvaldsdottir relayed that the changes were more structural in nature to accommodate added information and to improve flow. The UC Manual V2.0 is now seeking additional input from the INSARAG community to complete draft number three.

TL Meeting Day 2

Session 9 - Discussions on Technical Topics in Five Sessions

The five sub-sessions were organized as listed below, please see Session 10 for the summary of the discussion.

1. ICMS (IMWG):
2. Flexible Response (FRWG)
3. INSARAG Recognised National Accreditation Process (NAWG)
4. UC Manual V2.0 (in two parts) (TWG, IMWG)

TL Meeting Day 3

Session 10 - Plenary Discussions and Summary of Sessions in Session 9

1. **ICMS** (IMWG): The INSARAG Coordination Management System (ICMS) was presented to the participants, which then discussed key strengths and weaknesses of the ICMS and provided suggestions for further improvements.

Teams feel they have sufficient experience to be proficient, although more training would be welcome, such as a half-day ICMS refresher before EREs. Progress tracking for ASR2 might be necessary, if it does not overburden the teams, when no USAR worksites are available.

- Key points from the discussion: A system showing cleared sector and tracking teams is under construction, in this way USAR Teams will be able to see where they have been and where they worked.
2. **Flexible Response (FRWG)**. Many of the participants (85%) agreed with the modular concept of Flex-R Teams and are in favor of INSARAG supporting Flex-R teams across the three regions. The vast majority also affirmed to be working according to specific standards regarding Flex-R activities that their own team could perform. However, the issue is still quite contested and strongly opposed by some members, therefore, stronger strategic guidance has been requested by the Secretariat.
 3. **INSARAG Recognized National Accreditation Process (NAWG)**. The NAWG, through the Secretariat, will circulate three documents for consultation and endorsement at the 2022 ISG:
 - IRNAP Technical Guidance Note v2.0
 - IRNAP Checklist v2.0
 - Change record for reference
 4. **UC Manual V2.0 (in two parts)** (TWG, IMWG). The UC Manual V2.0 was presented and discussed, it was reminded that the UC Manual is not a standalone document, but it's based on the INSARAG Guidelines. The UC sub-WG will review the comments collected during the discussions, those who wish making further comments should contact the Secretariat in the next two weeks (deadline: March 28th). The UC Manual will be ready to be presented in May at the ISG, and a sponsor for its publication is currently needed.
 - Key points from the discussion: the possibility of a specific UCC classification was raised for further discussion in the future.

Session 11 - Experiences in Virtual INSARAG Exercises (ERE, UCC, ERSIMEX, others)

The Session was moderated by Joseph Kaleda, and the panel was composed by:

1. Mr. Peter Wolff, Co-Chair, IMWG, INSARAG Team Leader and Mentor, UCC/USAR EXCON Support on UN and EU level.
2. Ms. Haruka Ezaki, member of the INSARAG and UNDAC Secretariat and INSARAG Regional Focal Point for Asia-Pacific
3. Mr. Li Li, China National Earthquake Response Support Service Logistician, UC Staff, UNDAC member, FRWG member, IEC/R Classifier

Mr. Peter Wolff presented the advantages of virtual education and training applied to USAR operations, with a specific focus on virtual reality and digital USAR environment. Ms. Haruka Ezaki presented her experience in virtual exercise in 2021, including 4 ICMS training sessions, UC training in the Russian Federation, SIMEX in Peru and 3 ESIMEXs as part of UNDAC Refresher Courses. Mr LiLi presented on his experience in China's SIMEX 2021, with over 440 national and international participants.

Session 12 - Closing Discussion in Plenary

During the closing session in plenary the following topics were discussed:

1. The improvement of the Search component in USAR operations. Some teams wish to improve their searching capabilities. To improve the search component, it was asked to consider it as a cross-cutting issue by WGs.
2. The USAR NL App will expire soon, please contact the Netherlands to unlock access to the new version.
3. The **IEC Leadership course (TL/DTL/Mentor)** will not happen before Jan 2023.
4. New events should be communicated to the Secretariat, in consultation with Regional Chairs, so they can be included in the Regional Workplan for 2022.
5. The INSARAG Calendar 2022, March Version, was displayed.

In addition, the following **outcomes** were endorsed by Team Leaders:

1. The **IRNAP Technical Guidance Note/Manual** is recommended for endorsement at the ISG 2022, and following regional workshops planned for all 3 regions (Americas 5th Apr; Asia-Pacific 6th Apr; AEME, 7th Apr) before the ISG 2022 in May.

2. The **UC Manual V2.0** is recommended for endorsement at the ISG. UC V2.0 Training of Trainers (ToT) Course will take place in Iceland in September 2022, after the ISG endorsement.
3. The **First Responders Program (FRP) V2.0** is recommended for endorsement at the ISG 2022.
4. The **LTQA WG will transition to LTQA RG** (Light Team Quality Assurance Reference Group)
 - a. The LTQAWG is to be retired as a working group and will become a Reference Group until the Light Team Concept is well understood across the network.
 - b. This group will retain the current active membership of the LTQA WG.
5. The **ICMS** will be supported for 2022-24 (3-years) by the network and will be incorporated into the UC Training.
6. **Flexible Response:**
 - a. The **Global Position** on Flexible Response sub-WG will present a progress update at the ISG 2022. The survey results on Flex-R teams will be analyzed and will include a recommendation to consult all INSARAG teams from the USAR directory as a first step.
 - b. The **DACC Manual** is still being developed in consultation with the network, progress updates will be presented at ISG.
 - c. The **Cultural Heritage** – the Flexible Response sub-WG on CH has summarized the feedback of the existing Guideline to the Cultural Heritage and integrated a primary recommendation into the Manual. The basic principle of the existing cultural heritage draft Guideline is endorsed by the group, and its structural modification, following the INSARAG Guidelines, would be the next step.
7. The **Transitional Guidelines Review Group** will develop and consult on a draft Guidance Note on “Bilateral Response to Affected Countries” and share an update at the ISG 2022 including plans for the GRG 2023 - 25.
8. Regarding work done by the **MWG**:
 - a. USAR Teams are encouraged to refer to the Joint Statement issued by INSARAG MWG and the WHO EMT regarding “**Field Operations during times of Covid-19 Outbreak**”
 - b. In line with the WHO EMT requirements, USAR are requested to **seek permission to deliver clinical care** when deployed into a foreign country. The MWG has produced a generic letter that can be customized and used for this purpose.
 - c. The MWG has produced an updated “**Covid-19 Deployment Technical Reference Note**”, which will be uploaded in the Technical Reference Notes section on www.insarag.org
9. The INSARAG Network will be consulted on a **revised IER system** to tackle the exponential increase of IERs by 2025 – IEC/R Review WG.
10. WG members who are **overwhelmed by workload** or are not able to commit due to a change in circumstances are encouraged to inform the Secretariat.
11. To be fit for the future it is necessary to investigate how the **organization, mandate and staffing of WGs** can be improved. Creation of an official document with ToR for joining WG, a stricter selection process and have a ISG platform to present to Policy Focal Points the importance of WGs.

Announcements:

12. The **MWG** will meet during the HNPW-ISG in 9-13 May in Geneva. Meetings with WHO EMTs will occur in the same week.
13. The **IMWG** will meet during the HNPW-ISG in 9-13 May in Geneva
14. The next **WG/TL Meeting** 2023 will be hosted in the Asia Pacific (according to the regional rotation scheme). As of now, Singapore has shown interest in hosting the meeting.

15. Based on experience from the first Hybrid TL meeting, the INSARAG Secretariat will start **preparing the agenda at an early stage** in combination with presenters and moderators.

+++++Drafted by the INSARAG Secretariat+++++