2023 INSARAG Team Leaders and Technical Working Groups Meeting Summary

28 February - 02 March 2023

Meeting Overview

The annual International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) Team Leaders (TLs) and Technical Working Groups (WGs) Meeting took place in Singapore from 28 February to 2 March 2023. The meeting was hosted by the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) and co-organized by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). More than 137 participants from over 37 countries gathered for the event. (See participants list in Annex A).

The Team Leaders meeting was convened shortly after the Türkiye and Syria earthquakes, an unprecedented event in the 32-year history of INSARAG, where most of the teams in the network deployed and operated under the INSARAG system. This meeting presented a unique opportunity to conduct a "hot wash" and capture lessons learned identified from this response. The lessons learned from this TL meeting will be used in the After Action Review.

An update of INSARAG global activities was presented, along with an update on the status of the IEC/R system and the programs planned for the upcoming Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week (HNPW). An overview of the Light classification system was also presented.

The TL meeting provided an opportunity for the WGs, that met internally from 25 to 27 February, to provide updates to the participants on the status of their activities and to collect feedback and further inputs on potential areas they may be able to address.

The final version of the First Responder Package was also presented and is ready to be submitted to the INSARAG Steering Group (ISG) for endorsement (see the First Responder Package Annex B).

Due to the recent Türkiye and Syria earthquake response, the bulk of the meeting was dedicated to a review of the INSARAG network response to identify lessons and to determine how best to make improvements to the INSARAG coordination methodology and the system. This was conducted in a facilitated "hot wash" format to maximize the participants' input.

All the presentations are available here

TL Meeting Day 1

Session 1 – Official Opening

The Singapore Director of Operations, Assistant Commissioner Michael Chua formally welcomed all participants.

The First Secretary, of the Embassy of the Republic of Türkiye in Singapore, Mr Kozluklu, expressed his deepest gratitude to the TLs for helping Türkiye in the largest earthquake response in their history.

The INSARAG Unit Head and Global Lead Winston Chang warmly welcomed all participants and expressed his sincerest appreciation to the network for the rapid response and solidarity to the recent Türkiye and Syria earthquakes.

Session 2 - Introduction of Participants, Adoption of the Agenda and Group Photo

The agenda was introduced and adopted.

Participants were introduced and then proceeded for a group photo.

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Coordinate the global emergency response to save lives and protect people in humanitarian crises.
We advocate for effective and principled humanitarian action by all, for all.
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Session 3 - INSARAG Global Updates and Key Developments, IEC/R Workplan Updates, Light Team Quality Assurance Reference Group

Ms. Haruka Ezaki presented INSARAG global updates and key developments, including the INSARAG programs of the upcoming HNPW, where the INSARAG Steering Group (ISG) will be convened Updates on the IEC/R Workplan were presented by Mrs. Marie Mure. Key points included the increasing number of IERs in coming years, for which the network needs to consider a means of ensuring the sustainability of the system. Mr. Brad Commens gave an update on experiences from the four Light team classifications conducted to date.

Session 4 - INSARAG Working Groups Updates

The WG sessions were conducted using an interactive round-robin format. The outcomes of the sessions are:

Flexible Response WG (FRWG): Representing co-chairs: Ms. Jing Wang and Mr. Thomas Zeiter

- The concept paper on the global position of flexible response will be presented to the ISG. Capacities of USAR teams have been captured and described, and additional needs/capacities will be further addressed in separate WGs. OCHA should have an overview of all capabilities of INSARAG teams on the USAR Directory.
- The DACC concept is well advanced and describes how international engineers support national engineers on site who are making decisions about building occupancy. It is more logical that the establishment of an E-DACC is set up by UNDAC (not UCC) after the political decision to end search and rescue activities.
- To endorse the modified version of the Cultural Heritage document as an INSARAG Technical Guidance Note, and then a technical implementation guide will be developed as an attachment.

Recommendation 1:

The Global Position Paper is being finalised and will include an Annex on the Americas Position – the ISG will recommend the next steps, i.e. a new WG on Flood Response to be created. The Global Position WG will complete their work.
The Cultural Heritage Guidance Note is finalised and ready for endorsement by the INSARAG Steering Group in April 2023.
The DACC manual is still undergoing consultation.

IEC/R Review WG- Co-Chairs: Ms. Annika Coll and Mr. Dewey Perks

- The need for, and the current format of the IEC process is not in question.
- There is a collective recognition and agreement regarding the positive effects of the IER process on USAR teams' quality assurance, sustainability, and team development.
- The views on what could be done to streamline the IER process are diverse and require more detailed discussion and consultation within the network.
- There should be more input in the IER process as far as real-time deployments are concerned (e.g. Türkiye). The "pre-greening" list can be expanded so the IER process can be shortened and more effective.
- The role of the Mentor requires further discussion. It is agreed that the role of the mentor is critical, and there should be more emphasis placed on their roles and responsibilities.
- The need to have well-trained classifiers is critical to the integrity of the IEC/R process.

Recommendation 2:

IER process must be reviewed to ensure the INSARAG network can meet the demands of current and future IERs, while concurrently maintaining the quality standards of the process.

Information Management (IMWG) - Co-Chairs: Mr. Peter Wolff

- The IMWG is looking at technology that makes data collection easier.
- It has been observed through field experience in Turkey that ICMS may not have met the expectations of various teams; its complexity has made it challenging to use effectively. It is suggested that there may be room for improvement in making ICMS more user-friendly.
- The IMWG requests feedback on:
  - ○ Worksite ID methodology (use team ID and building number rather than sector and building number).
  - ○ Information elements needed by teams to manage their work and coordinate among teams.

Recommendation 3:

The IMWG is currently reviewing the building identification labelling system with the intention of streamlining the current process.
The IMWG is reviewing current INSARAG forms to see what elements were used to reduce non-time critical information collection.

Medical (MWG) - Co-Chairs: Mr. Antony Macintyre and Mr. Hector Fuentes

The following three main themes resulted from discussions with the various groups:
1) Crush Syndrome: Considering the numerous cases seen in the recent Türkiye earthquake, crush syndrome was reinforced as critically important for USAR teams to be capable of addressing during the extrication of patients.
- The MWG has spent significant effort reviewing their protocol, last updated in 2019, to account for recent research. This will be posted on the INSARAG website as a technical reference note.
- All participants agree that there should be further socialization of the concepts of crush syndrome in the global community to prevent (as much as possible) uncontrolled extrications that result in detriment to the patients.
2) Amputations: Participants reaffirmed that amputations are procedures of absolute last resort during extrications.
- The MWG has spent significant effort reviewing their protocol, last updated in 2011 to account for recent experiences. This will be posted on the INSARAG website as a technical reference note.
- New technical approaches are highlighted in this document that may assist in preventing the need to ever conduct this procedure.
3) Mental well-being of USAR teams: All participants agreed that guidance for USAR teams would be helpful in addressing procedures for the mental well-being of USAR team participants. It was generally agreed that a technical reference note could be produced with high-level recommendations that could remain culturally appropriate and feasible for teams in the INSARAG family.

Recommendation 4:

The MWG will conduct a detailed review of technical guidance notes on crush syndrome and field amputations. They will develop a technical guidance note to address team member well-being.

National Accreditation WG (NAWG) - Co-Chair: Mr. Sebastian Mocarquer

The NAWG took the opportunity to update the team leaders on the progress achieved by the WG in the past year, including the updated technical guidance note endorsed by the ISG in 2022, after extensive network consultation, among other tasks. Also, future work and priorities were discussed, where the focus will be on the training of TSG/TSR rosters in the regional groups and documentation updates.

The NAWG updated the team leaders regarding the member states that have successfully undergone the IRNAP process in 2022 and those that are currently going through the IRNAP process.

The NAWG consulted the team leaders on the concept of transitioning the NAWG into a new working group dedicated to national capacity building with the following purpose:
- Adapt and localize the INSARAG coordination methodology and concepts to country contexts.
- Promote capacity development at the national and local levels.
- Actively encourage sharing of expertise and good practices amongst countries and organizations

The concept was supported by the team leaders to be presented for endorsement at the next ISG meeting in April 2023.

Recommendation 5:

> ***The NAWG will be renamed the Capacity Building WG and focus on localization by introducing the INSARAG coordination methodology and concepts tailored to country contexts, promoting capacity development at the national and local levels, and encouraging sharing of expertise and good practices amongst countries and organizations.***

Training WG (TWG) - Chair: Mr. Dewey Perks

The TWG used one slide to demonstrate what it is working on and asked participants to 'reprioritize' the work or to, better yet - add new ideas.

Requests were made to consider a "Logistics Course", with a focus on "proper base camp management." A second request was made to consider developing a course for new classifiers. INSARAG has stood by its position that it is the responsibility of the nominating USAR team to prepare a classifier using the following as examples:
- Member in good standing.
- Operationally qualified for the position.
- Has been deployed or has been on an exercise for this position at least once.
- Has been a member of their USAR teams EXCON.

Recommendation 6:

> ***The INSARAG First Responders Training Package is finalised and is ready for INSARAG Steering Group endorsement in April 2023.***
> ***The IEC/R Leadership Course is postponed. This course will now take place in 05 – 08 June 2023.***

Transitional Guidelines Review WG- Co-Chair: Mr. David Lewis

- The formation of the new 2025 GRG
- Members of the T/GRG & new GRG have a Work Group that they are the point of contact into.
- The overwhelming consensus of all was that the Guidelines were fit for purpose and well structured.
- There was discussion around the term "Guideline" and whether the Guidelines should be renamed "Directive" to show that they are not something that a team can choose to follow but must follow.

Recommendation 7:

> ***The WG will transition to the Guidelines Review Group 2023-2025 and include some current TGRG members. All WGs will nominate a liaison member to the GRG.***

Session 5 – First Responders Package

Mr. Peter Goxharaj, from THW, presented the finalized version of the First Responders Training Package, on behalf of the TWG, which is now ready to be submitted to the INSARAG Steering Group in April 2023 for endorsement.

Session 6

Most INSARAG classified teams deployed to the Türkiye and Syria earthquakes. Due to the enormous geographical distribution of destruction, while teams may have been aware of what was going on in their sector, very few teams had a consolidated overview of the entire response. Therefore, prior to starting the hot wash, time was taken to set the stage and provide an overview from the time the earthquake occurred through to the end of the search and rescue phase and demobilization.

To achieve this, the following was presented:

- Earthquake response timeline
- USAR Coordination and UNDAC
- INSARAG Coordination Management System (ICMS)
- National response – AFAD
- National response – Akut and GEA
- RDC and demobilization
- Syria earthquake deployment and redeployment

The purpose of this session was not to identify good practices or challenges but rather to provide a consolidated overview of what happened and what took place from the initial government response to the establishment of international response coordination. The opportunity for detailed discussions was scheduled for Day 2.

Following the delivery of the overview, participants were introduced to the six thematic discussion topics for the hot wash the following day, as follows:

- USAR Coordination
- Information Management, including ICMS
- Localisation
- IEC/R Compliance
- Logistics Expectations
- USAR Operations

Participants were also introduced to Padlet, a software system used during the hot wash to capture participant inputs.

TL Meeting Day 2

Session 7 - Discussions on Technical Topics in Breakout Sessions

Day 2 was allocated to conduct the six sessions of the hot wash. Each session was scheduled for one hour and was facilitated by members of the WGs and was conducted in a round-robin. The outcome of the discussion was presented on Day 3.

TL Meeting Day 3

Session 8 - Plenary Discussions and Summary of Key Outcomes from the hot wash

8.1   USAR Coordination

Findings:

- INSARAG has the correct building blocks in its USAR Coordination system.

- The methodology allows for flexibility.
- There is a need to continuously revise the coordination tools.
- Pre-assigning sector coordinators that had not yet arrived in the area caused some confusion.
- The link between UN OCHA and LEMA at the national level is important.
- The role of UNDAC in USAR operations is unclear.

Recommendations:

- More training is necessary.
- Training should include a variety of scenarios to develop skills in building coordination mechanisms and planning assignments.
- When possible, sprout all SCCs from the UCC.
- Clarify terminology in UC Handbook regarding coordination of sectors versus coordination of teams.
- Network members must take ownership of the USAR coordination system and show initiative.
- Conduct an inquiry into the feasibility of creating UCCs by selecting and training suitable country combinations.
- LEMA contacts are vital; consider delivering multi-level LEMA outreach programs.
- Clarify and strengthen the role of UNDAC in USAR operations.

8.2 Information Management

Findings:

- Generally, ICMS is a useful tool. IMWG is pushing forward to make it more effective and efficient. The IMWG is always open to new ideas.
- Connectivity issues arose in the field, especially in the initial days.
- Lots of data to capture, especially in large-scale disasters. The focus must be the urgency of rescue work versus filling in forms.
- Many teams conducted ASR3 and ASR 4 before ARS1 and ASR2. Reality has shown that the sequence of first filling in forms is different from the reality.
- Many teams only used the VO. It is challenging to extract relevant information from the VO due to the quick turnover of information.
- There is a need for more training on ICMS.

Recommendations:

- Telecom partners to deploy as support to ICMS onsite.
- Identify timely and crucial data needed for coordination. Details can come later. Use of low bandwidth messages.
- Unique Worksite ID should be delinked from the sector. Call Signs allocations for non-classified teams.
- Simplified collection of data encourages greater use, for both classified and non-classified teams.
- Is there a need for a monitoring function on VO? More training is required.

8.3 Localisation

8.3.1 Mobilisation Phase

Findings

- Request for international assistance was swift. However, different channels were used for deployment, including directly with AFAD, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the EU Mechanism, or in response to the VO post.
- Number of RDCs and location seemed insufficient compared to the different entry points into the affected region.
- Briefings to arriving international USAR Teams from LEMA were not consistently provided.

- Team assignment to sectors was done by multiple channels, including LEMA, UCC, OCHA or members of the public.

Recommendations

- Develop more guidance for the procedures for receiving international teams into the country, including the establishment and support of RDCs.
- Review the need to develop host nation support guidance for member states.
- Consider a platform for sharing best practices among member states.

8.3.2 USAR Operations

Findings

- Initial coordination was challenging with LEMA but improved with time and when the UCC was established.
- ASR1/2 and sectorization at the onset by LEMA was not feasible due to the scale of EQ.
- Structural and victim marking were not used, nor were other tracking methodologies due to social and cultural issues.
- LEMA was not present at all SCCs.
- National response structure or authority varied amongst sectors (AFAD, Governor, MFA).
- There were differing experiences with the use of heavy machinery.
- Strong logistical support from LEMA to USAR teams' operations.

Recommendations

- Provide enhanced guidance to member states on incorporating USAR coordination principles into national disaster preparedness and response plans, including USAR assessment.
- Develop recommendations or best practices for managing the first stages of sudden onset disasters with widely spread impact where national systems are overwhelmed.

8.3.3 Demobilization

Findings

- No declaration of the end of the USAR operations phase was made.
- Differing channels for offering donations from USAR teams.
- No beyond-the-rubble activities were accepted.

Recommendations

- Consider elaborating guidelines for member states on the process of declaring the end of the rescue phase or determining demobilization strategies when the end of the USAR phase is not declared.

8.4   IEC/R Compliance

Findings:

- In general, the IEC/R process is suited to prepare classified USAR Teams for EQ response operation, but there were different views. However, nobody contested the IEC/R process.
- International coordination was a challenge (RDC/UCC/SCC).
- Marking, ASR Levels and shoring did not take place as trained.

Recommendations:

- More emphasis should be placed on international coordination in IEC/Rs. Teams should show understanding of the importance and relation between RDC, UCC and SCC (i.e. invite other teams to participate in IEC/R the exercise).
- IEC/R pre-greening and possible extension of upcoming IERs.
- IEC/R WG should analyse all information provided by TLs in this session to improve the IEC/R system or allocate to the responsible WGs.
- The first proposed solutions should be ready to be forwarded to upcoming ISG in April 2023.

8.5 Logistics Expectations

Findings:

- Initial information on logistics in VO and initial briefing at RDC was insufficient but became better in the following days.
- Some teams arrived at airports that had no RDC but were supported by AFAD.
- Logistic shortcuts Top 5: Water, Fuel, Transport, Timber, Interpreters
- Self-sufficiency of the non-classified teams was rarely existing, and some classified teams had to support them.
- Some teams solved logistic problems via their embassies.

Recommendations

- Logistic training is needed, especially regarding air transport and dangerous goods.
- A logistic field handbook for downloading should be available.
- It should be mandatory that the logistics person in RDC and UCC/SCC is a skilled logistician.

8.6 USAR Operations

Findings

- The size and scale of the incident were contributing factors to prerational issues.
- For the first few days, teams were conducting live rescues across many sites.
- Difficulty for teams to capture information on rescues in the early days.
- Most teams reported after 3-5 days, then a "normal" USAR tempo set in.
- USAR incidents are not linear.
- Timeliness of providing important safety/security information to teams.
- Many issues with Worksite Markings.
- All teams had translators and commented on how useful they were.
- All teams commented on the cooperation of other teams and AFAD.
- Teams also assisted with other Humanitarian actions.

Recommendations

- A review of Worksite forms is required to ensure they meet the needs of USAR teams.
- The development of a Rapid Clearance/Deployment form
- The development of a system/App that will allow critical information to be passed to all teams immediately.
- A review of how an IEC/R is scripted. Consider teams going straight into ASR 3, then back to ASR 1 & 2, which is reflective of events in Türkiye.

Session 9 - Closing Discussion in Plenary

The Secretariat (Haruka Ezaki and Winston Chang) summarized the key outcomes from the WGs, and the initial discussions from the Türkiye-Syria Earthquakes agreed by the TLs group as follows:

9.1 Working Groups (WGs) recommendations to the ISG

- **FRWG** - The Global Position Paper is being finalised and will include an Annex on the Americas Position – the ISG will recommend the next steps, i.e. a new WG on Flood Response to be created. The Global Position WG will complete their work. The Cultural Heritage Guidance Note is finalised and ready for endorsement by the INSARAG Steering Group in April 2023. The DACC manual is still undergoing consultation.

- **IEC/R** – The IER process must be reviewed to ensure the INSARAG network can meet the demands of current and future IERs, while concurrently maintaining the quality standards of the process.

- **IMWG** - The IMWG is currently reviewing the building identification labelling system with the intention of streamlining the current process. The IMWG is reviewing current INSARAG forms to see what elements were used to reduce non-time critical information collection.

- **MWG** - The MWG will conduct a detailed review of technical guidance notes on crush syndrome and field amputations. They will develop a technical guidance note to address team member well-being.

- **NAWG** - The NAWG will be renamed the Capacity Building WG and focus on localization by introducing the INSARAG coordination methodology and concepts tailored to country contexts, promoting capacity development at the national and local levels, and encouraging sharing of expertise and good practices amongst countries and organizations.

- **TWG** - The INSARAG First Responders Training Package is finalised and is ready for INSARAG Steering Group endorsement in April 2023. The IEC/R Leadership Course is postponed. This course will now take place in 05 – 08 June 2023.

- **TGRG** - The WG will transition to the Guidelines Review Group 2023-2025 and include some current TGRG members. All WGs will nominate a liaison member to the GRG.

9.2 Six key WGs takeaways and lessons from the Türkiye-Syria Earthquakes response from the TLs Meeting

The facilitators of the session reported on the first priority action point from their topic discussion.

- **USAR Coordination**: The relation and cooperation between USAR and UNDAC operations during a mission are crucial and must be clarified and strengthened.
- **Information management**: ICMS is changing coordination, and we must review the collected data to see how we can further improve efficiency and effectiveness for operations.
- **Localization**: Provide enhanced guidance to member states on incorporating USAR coordination principles into national disaster preparedness and response plans, including USAR assessment.
- **IEC/R compliance**: The importance of RDC/UCC/SCC operations must be enforced in the IEC/IER process.
- **Logistics Expectations**: Logistical knowledge in the teams can be strengthened by improving Logistics TORs in the guidelines and specialised training to be introduced.
- **USAR operations**: The design of a new App/Form that allows teams to quickly submit relevant information would be beneficial to speed up information sharing and coordination of the operations.

Breakout Discussions detailed are in the Padlets platform in Annex C.

9.3 Team Leaders Meeting 2024 Announcement

Following extensive discussions and endorsement received from all Americas Region delegates present, the representative from the Republic of Ecuador has announced the intention to host the 2024 Team Leaders Meeting, to be run in conjunction with the WG meetings. The INSARAG Secretariat and Network have warmly received this offer and are anticipating the event, with the exact date to be announced at a later stage.

9.4 Announcements by Member States

9.4.1   The representative from Tunisia announced they would be honoured to host the 2025 Team Leaders Meeting.
9.4.2   The International Search and Rescue Dog Organisation (IRO) has developed a National Mission Readiness Test.
9.4.3   This year, two events will be held in Finland in June 2023 and Chinese Taipei in October 2023. The exact dates are available at www.iro-dogs.org
9.4.4   The Team Leader group recognized and thanked Peter Goxharaj for his significant contribution to the INSARAG family for many years and wished him well in his retirement.

9.5 INSARAG Calendar

The INSARAG Calendar is updated monthly. Participants are encouraged to visit www.insarag.org to ensure they are referencing the latest version of the INSARAG Calendar.

9.6 Closing Statements

The INSARAG Secretariat expressed thanks and appreciation to the SCDF for their tremendous support and hospitality throughout the meeting, acknowledging the efforts and importance of the work being carried out by the WGs, and expressed its thanks to the WG members sponsoring agencies. Thanked the meeting facilitators for their support during the event and all the international teams present for their ongoing commitment and dedication to the INSARAG network and reiterated its thanks for their unprecedented demonstration of solidarity during the Türkiye and Syria earthquakes response.

SCDF thanked the INSARAG Secretariat for its support as well as all those in attendance for their valuable contributions during the WG- and TL meetings.

9.7 Meeting Feedback

Participants were encouraged to complete two electronic surveys to provide their thoughts on the TL meeting and to have an opportunity to share feedback with GEA Türkiye on the earthquake response.

+++++++++++++Drafted by the INSARAG Secretariat in consultancy with the Team Leader and WGs 2023 +++++++++++++