

oPt-HIC Newsletter

Issue 1: 19 May 2002

I. MISSION STATEMENT

A particular problem encountered when coordinating the response to any humanitarian emergency is the lack of timely, accurate and relevant information. In order to address this need, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has in recent years deployed Humanitarian Information Centres (HICs). Examples include the Humanitarian Community Information Centre (HCIC) in Kosovo, the HIC in Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Eritrea, Bosnia/Herzegovina, East Timor, and Islamabad to serve during the recent Afghan crisis.

The aim of the newly established *oPt-HIC* is to serve as a focal point for comprehensive and relevant information on the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. It will be a resource for decision-makers and operational organisations to facilitate the humanitarian response in country. It will also be a public information resource for the national and international community.

In addition to building an informed, holistic picture of the humanitarian needs vis-à-vis available resources, the *oPt-HIC* will pay particular attention to the humanitarian impact of closures and curfews on the affected civilian populations.

II. HOW THE *oPt-HIC* WILL OPERATE

- Currently, the *oPt-HIC* team is composed of a Liaison Officer, an Information Officer, a GIS Officer and a Database Manager.
- The *oPt-HIC* will seek to obtain relevant and timely information from sources operating on the ground (UN operational agencies, international and local NGOs, national and local authorities, etc). In addition, relevant information will be introduced through other public sources such as press releases, UN HQ documents, material submitted by international organisations, etc. Whilst such information may also be available through respective websites, agency sitreps, etc., the *oPt-HIC* will be a single, easily accessible, entity that can be used by anyone who needs to evaluate the widest possible range of humanitarian data and information. Whilst there will be an emphasis on humanitarian and emergency issues, the data available will also be relevant to, and will support, those actors who cover the longer-term development and institutional issues in the occupied Palestinian territory.
- Having collected material, the *oPt-HIC* will collate, analyse and disseminate information on the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, making it available to any and all interested parties. The *oPt-Hic* will support the work of OCHA as an information tool in the preparation of humanitarian updates and analyses. The compilation of sitreps will remain the responsibility of the OCHA Field Office.

III. SERVICES OF THE *oPt-HIC*

It is important not to try to do too much too soon. Therefore, we aim to start simply, but to develop quickly.

1. Immediate services of the *oPt-HIC* will focus on:

- Weekly, electronic ***oPt-HIC Newsletter***:
 - a) latest developments;
 - b) latest documents and reports;
 - c) announcements (e.g. meeting calendar);
- ***oPt-HIC webpage***, which will be launched within the next week, to provide access to:
 - a) background information on the country and the ongoing situation;
 - b) socio-economic baseline data on populations;
 - c) analysis of major humanitarian issues;
 - d) local contact information;
 - e) information on activities of operational organisations, including
 - “who is doing what where” by sector and geographical area,
 - analysis of sectoral and geographical needs and priorities;
 - f) maps;

2. In the longer-term, services are envisaged to include:

- Searchable database of all information previously received by the information centre
 - a) allowing the sharing of data electronically so that one consolidated picture can be built;
 - b) ability to answer ad-hoc customised queries promptly and comprehensively;
- Archive of documents

IV. HOW TO MAKE IT WORK

The success and usefulness of the *oPt-HIC* will largely depend on the cooperation of all the actors in the occupied Palestinian territory, especially in sharing information. We have already received tremendous support and enthusiasm from those that we have been able to meet – for which many thanks. We would ask that we be kept in touch with developments as closely as possible, and that you share any information as soon as you feel able. It is not our

intention to upstage anybody – we are here to support standardised information exchange and decision making at every level.

One of our early priorities is to make available a complete picture of who is doing what, and where, on the ground in the occupied Palestinian territory. Based on experiences elsewhere, we have developed a reply format which will meet our immediate needs with, hopefully, the least possible disruption to busy schedules. The form will be sent out, together with this announcement, to NGO coordinating bodies, such as AIDA and PNGOs, as well as Emergency Operation Rooms and LACC members. If you wish to call in and see us, the *oPt-HIC* is currently set up in the Training Room at the UNRWA Field Office in Jerusalem.

V. HOW TO CONTACT US

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GIS/ <i>oPt-HIC</i> webpage	hic6.opt@wavenet.unog.ch	02 5890 459
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