

Remodelling Plan 2008 – Transition from AIMB to CISB

1. OCHA's Advocacy and Information Management Branch (AIMB) recently undertook two in-depth reviews of its core activities namely, the Information Management Review and the Strategic ICT Review both of which call for a more cohesive and common services approach to the work of the Branch. Based on these recommendations, and in line with the ERC's imperative for a 'fully fit for purpose' OCHA, AIMB took up the challenge in its June 2008 AIMB Retreat to meet the need for a 'fit purpose' Branch. This provided an opportunity to remodel the Branch in ways consistent with meeting the Office's strategic goals and objectives while implementing the recommendations of the IM Review and Gartner report. Following the Retreat, a working plan for remodelling was drafted and aligned to outcomes that reflected the need to accomplish 'tangible and visible benefits that deliver meaningful and measureable improvements'.

2. The new structure for the Branch reflects a streamlined approach to communication and information services. The provision of effective, quality services to all relevant partners at headquarters and in the field, requires the right person, at the right level, in the right role, in the right location.

3. One of the first changes was the selection of a new name for the Branch. In recognition that advocacy and information management are functions that should be undertaken across the organization, not just by the Branch or the ERC, it was agreed at the Branch Retreat that the Branch needed to have a title that better reflected its core function; the communication of information. Hence the new name: Communications and Information Services Branch (CISB). In fulfilling this function, the Branch provides a range of services to the organization that allows OCHA to better manage its information and to communicate it strategically to influence the policies or practices of key actors (i.e. advocacy).

4. CISB comprises of the Office of the Chief, Communication Services Section (the former enhanced Advocacy and Public Information), Information Services Section (former and expanded Field Information Service), ReliefWeb, IRIN, Web Services Section (a completely new section) and the Information Technology Services Section. Taking into account OCHA strategic priorities for 2009 and the new Branch's emphasis on service delivery in communications, sections within the Branch will have the following responsibilities:

4.1 Office of the Chief is comprised of the Chief of Branch, Deputy Chief, Senior Advisor for Information Strategy and Policy (new post), a Special Assistant to the Chief (new post), and administrative support. Notable changes in the functioning of the Office are: the Chief will undertake the CIO role and the strategic framework for ICT, and will have over-arching responsibility for internal processes and practices supporting the flow and management of information within OCHA. The Senior Advisor will assist the Chief of Branch to provide strategic oversight for all issues relating to ICT for the organization and lead its implementation through an appropriate governance mechanism; and the Special Assistant will support the Chief of Branch with cross functional work, including focus on monitoring and evaluation and will ensure proper coordination with other parts of OCHA. The roles of the secretaries will also change as administrative support functions will be centralized.

4.2 Communications Services Section (CSS): The remodelling is based on the premise that everyone within OCHA is responsible for advocating. The Section will

enhance advocacy through support with specific country, regional and global campaigns and visual products, including video and audio, strengthened overall humanitarian and crisis messaging, and training. There are three components to CSS:

4.2.1 The role of a newly configured and strengthened Public Information Unit is to analyze, write and package information for designated target audiences (the public via the media, policymakers, donors, affected states, etc.) to advance a humanitarian cause or argument, raise awareness of a crisis or condition, or support a UN-wide objective. The Unit will produce public information documents, such as Op-Eds, press releases, key messages and ERC speeches. The Unit will also be responsible for PI surge capacity.

4.2.2 The role of a newly configured and strengthened Advocacy Unit is to aggregate and utilize information “that better tells the story.” This will include the following: identification of issues/problems to be addressed; and solutions and strategies that will influence decision makers. The unit will work with partners to create action plans; coordinate development of information material for advocacy campaigns; and coordinate the implementation and monitoring of the plan.

4.2.3 The role of the Visual Media Unit is to strengthen OCHA’s communications and advocacy through the production of products using film, info-graphics, multimedia, and images to convey information.

4.3 Information Services Section (ISS) is responsible for strengthening the information management capacity of OCHA in both preparedness and response. The section will consist of three units:

4.3.1 Field Information Services Unit is to provide technical and operational information management and exchange to OCHA Field Offices and build sustainable inter-agency partnerships, tools and practices that directly contribute to the predictable exchange of information during emergencies.

4.3.2 Strategic Information Services Unit will support the development of OCHA’s organization-wide policy and standards for managing information to better serve decision making and effectively support inter-agency coordination in preparedness and response.

4.3.3 Reporting Services Unit’s objectives include strengthening OCHA’s reporting procedures and practices through development of guidelines, training, templates and systems for monitoring of good practices and structured feedback. Templates and guidance will be developed for OCHA’s core products such as situation reports, press releases, key messages and country profiles as well as internal products such as the Note to Management, Note to the USG, talking points and operational briefs.

4.4 ReliefWeb will be redesigned with a user centered approach and to a new platform. The section will work towards better framing the “time-crucial and important content” on the site to help users with the information overload. It will

continue to produce analytical mapping including humanitarian profile maps. ReliefWeb will also further enlarge its regionalization beyond New York, Geneva, Kobe, Panama, Nairobi to Bangkok.

- 4.5 Web Services Section is designing, co-developing (with ITS) and launching the OCHA Portal in two phases, beginning with the intranet in January 2009. The goals are to provide a more coherent OCHA presentation online; support enhanced advocacy, policy and coordination; improve internal information flow; and assist in the strategic management of OCHA's entire online presence.
- 4.6 Information and Technology Section will implement OCHA-wide ICT governance; issue policies, standards and associated processes to manage and use ICT. The section provides all IT infrastructure, tools and user support at HQ and provide technical guidance and second-tier support for field offices. It is responsible for inter-agency ICT collaboration, public-private partnerships relating to ICT as well as other ICT-related initiatives.
- 4.7 While continuing to maintain its editorial independence, IRIN coverage will be better aligned with OCHA in the coming year. OCHA's photo gallery will be housed by IRIN, which will work closely with the Branch on advocacy projects. Alongside IRIN's own multi-media services, CISB will further strengthen the Branch's capacity to produce video and films by placing a CISB – video film makers in Nairobi. While continuing its existing editorial coverage with a focus on quality, there will be an increase in multimedia output. IRIN's radio projects will focus on Afghanistan and Somalia and two additional countries will be considered.

(Last updated 21 January 2009)