

Joint Monitoring Mission
Australian Government Response to the Haiti
Earthquake of 12 January 2010

Field visit 11th – 18th September 2010

Draft monitoring mission report

Glyn Taylor (Team Leader), P.B.Gowthaman, Claire Sanford, Cathie Hurst

Executive Summary

The earthquake which struck Haiti on January 12th, was an exceptional event, estimated to have killed 220,000 people and caused the displacement of over 2,000,000. The earthquake's epicentre was close to Haiti's capital, Port au Prince and imposed a new set of acute challenges on its population. Seventy percent of Haitians were already reported to be living on less than US\$2 per day and indicators in Port au Prince for health, nutrition and food security, access to water and education were consistently very poor. The earthquake destroyed vital government infrastructure and staffing capacity as it did for the existing international aid community. The global financial response to the earthquake was no less exceptional, with over a billion US dollars reported through UN official channels.

For the international response community, the earthquake presented a comprehensive test. A growing body of literature on the earthquake and initial evaluations the humanitarian response to it noted a number of key challenges. These included genuine difficulties in adapting to the urban context, as well as a number of issues commonly found in such rapid onset disasters: poor leadership, a lack of engagement with local authorities and local response actors and issues with assessment and management of key data for decision making.

AusAID has provided a total of AUD\$24.5 million for the Haiti response, of which the first \$10.5 million of which forms the primary focus of the review. The initial 10.5 million was divided along the lines of AusAID's standing policy and partnership commitments:

- Aus\$3 million for Australian humanitarian actors (including secondments)
- Aus\$6.5 million towards the international response (UN and Red Cross)
- Aus \$1 million towards strengthening the regional governmental response (CARICOM – CDEMA)

The field visit, part of broader review by AusAid comprised an independent team leader and representatives from AusAID and ACFID. A field questionnaire was prepared in advance to cover issues of key importance to AusAID and broader issues in keeping with best evaluation practice. Interviews were held with all AusAID partners and field visits undertaken to sites where AusAID funded activities were ongoing. The review as a whole set out to evaluate the strategy of AusAID and the performance of its partners. AusAID was one of the first OECD donors to pledge and release money. The sheer scale of the total response and the limited role of Australian NGOs within larger federated NGO operations mean that drawing concrete conclusions above the level of outputs is very difficult.

AusAID partners have largely reported 100% of targets reached to date and much was undoubtedly achieved under genuinely challenging circumstances. The field visit served to confirm that AusAID partners shared the challenges reported in early system wide evaluations and other reports. Whilst reporting completion of outcomes and activities stated in project proposals and reports, most partners accepted the need for certain strategic adjustments and programme consolidation. For most, this included the adoption of what

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were described as ‘area based’ strategies; a lessening of focus on spontaneous settlements and more holistic approaches to vulnerability across communities.

Discussion around standards has focussed to date on technical and quantitative standards, despite the challenge of applying these in the urban context. A full assessment of qualitative codes and standards, particularly around partnership with communities was beyond the scope of this visit, but on balance, partners acknowledged weaknesses and these appeared to fall short of the genuine partnership with communities at the heart of Sphere and other Codes of Conduct¹.

Evaluation of humanitarian response beyond the level of outputs is a genuine challenge. Whilst most partners cited in house expertise in monitoring and evaluation, project proposals tended to have weak performance frameworks and efforts at monitoring and evaluation add up to little in terms of tangible measurement of results above output level. Internal reflection and ‘course correction’ are taking place through real time exercises and these are valued internally. Accountability to affected populations is an issue around which there is growing discussion and acknowledgment, again the extent to which this has resulted in genuine partnerships in this context is questionable.

Larger partners with global reach and genuinely global response capacities were able to launch responses at scale to their own satisfaction. Under extremely challenging circumstances, most were confident that bureaucratic and administrative issues had been well handled as ‘normal’ operational challenges. Most were positive about their human resource capacities overall. As per previous evaluations, very high staff turnover, caused in part by reliance on emergency rosters, was the most cited negative issue. AusAID funded secondees were very highly regarded. Most were positive about the efforts made to integrate the views of Haitian staff and about efforts to help them deal with the consequences of the earthquake. OCHA is a very visible player in an emergency of this nature. Despite what were described as heroic efforts by individuals within OCHA, it could not sustain a consistent complement of staff throughout the emergency phase.

Partners acknowledged the early release and receipt of funds by AusAID. Partners cited a number of benefits over and above the ability to spend quickly. These included the tendency of early funding to ‘lever’ more resources and to be able to engage in key human resource processes with confidence. Given the ultimately small proportion of funds from AusAID in this specific context, however, it is impossible to state that the funds carried any specific strategic influence.

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Section 1 - Methodology, scope and context. The 'Joint Monitoring Mission' is a key part of a broader review of AusAID response to the Haiti earthquake of January 12th. The review's terms of reference are at Annex A.

Whilst limited in scope and not intended to be a 'system-wide' evaluation, the joint-visit provided an important opportunity for AusAID and its partners in ACFID to view issues on the ground first hand and to make tangible links to the growing body of system wide evaluations, analysis and appeals². As discussed with AusAID and partners prior to the field mission, the methodology for the review had an element of internal 'tension' in that it straddled two discrete objectives: 'upwards accountability' (i.e. a review by a team including AusAID of the performance of its partners) and learning, in this case shared learning between AusAID and its partners. Discussions with NGO partners at headquarters level revealed some concern over this tension. Issues identified in the PFA evaluation exercise³ were revealed during conversations with headquarters staff. Specifically, there was some discomfort around the participation of ACFID partners in an evaluation process at a time when the 'partners' were engaged in ongoing competition for AusAID funding. On balance, however, partners were very positive about the exercise. In Port au Prince, no such concerns were evident and the field mission enjoyed a high level of cooperation and interesting and open discussions.

The field visit itself took place between 11th and 18th September 2010. The review team consisted of Glyn Taylor of Humanitarian Outcomes as an independent team leader; Cathie Hurst of AusAID; Claire Sanford and Balachandran Gowthaman of Save the Children Australia and Oxfam Australia respectively, representing the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID). The visit was supported ably by Unity Resources Group on behalf of HK Logistics.

The team undertook interviews with each recipient of AusAID humanitarian funding, as well as two secondees funded by AusAID and undertook field visits to sites where AusAID funded activities were identifiable and ongoing. In order to better place the AusAID response in context, the team also held a range of discussions with individuals from the United Nations and private sector. Discussions and conversations during field visits took the form of 'semi-structured' interviews, guided by a pre-agreed and structured set of questions. The questions targeted specific areas of interest of AusAID and were set within a broader range of issues and questions based around ALNAP's 'Draft shared evaluation framework for Haiti response'⁴. To encourage candour, discussions with NGO partners were held on a 'not for attribution' basis.

Background / context

The field visit took place exactly eight months after the earthquake of January 12th. The earthquake is estimated to have killed 220,000 individuals (including a significant proportion

² This report draws upon, amongst other sources; RTE; ALNAP Context Analysis; IASC report, OCHA briefing pack as well as a variety of documentation provided by AusAID partners.

³ Independent Review of the Periodic Funding Agreement for Disaster Risk Management (PFA), Dec 2009 – R. Turner and C. Bennett.

⁴ From 'Haiti Earthquake Response – Context Analysis', July 2010; Humanitarian Outcome for ALNAP.

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of the Haitian Civil Service); caused the initial displacement of approximately 2,000,000 Haitians (over 1,300,000 into more than 1,300 spontaneous settlements and over 600,000 into 'host' communities outside the worst affected areas).

The backdrop to the earthquake has also been widely reported.

- More than 70% of Haitians were living on less than \$US2 per day
- 86% of people in Port au Prince were living in slum conditions - mostly tightly-packed, poorly-built, concrete buildings.
- 80% of education in Haiti was provided in often poor-quality private schools, the state system generally provided better education but provided far too few places
- Half of people in Port-au-Prince had no access to latrines and only one-third had access to tap water.⁵
- At 72/1000, child mortality rates were extremely high (twice the regional average) and children were afflicted by high rates of stunting (affecting 22% of under-fives) and wasting (affecting 10% of under-fives).
- Between 28-38% of the population were considered acutely food insecure.
- 44% of seriously ill people were unable to access health services due to a lack of money for fees.
- 50-55% of children were not enrolled in school⁶

In short, the earthquake triggered the projection of an extraordinary global humanitarian reflex into a chaotic mix of new acute needs on top of a set of entrenched and chronic issues. Inevitably this situation of compounded vulnerability offered extraordinary challenges for the international humanitarian system and a comprehensive test for its reform initiatives. The situation was compounded by the loss of essential infrastructure and staffing capacity from both the government and international agencies.

Defining Characteristics of the Haiti Earthquake and Response

The earthquake is the first modern disaster of such magnitude to affect a national capital, instantly debilitating local leadership, co-ordination, response and communication capacities. It also provided an unfamiliar and chaotic urban setting for external relief actors. Both the first major real time evaluation (RTE) report⁷ and IASC's 'six month progress' report⁸ applaud the scale of the humanitarian response and its successes, whilst pointing out a number of characteristic challenges within it. The RTE identified a number of underlying issues including:

⁵ Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC): Haiti Earthquake Facts and figures - <http://www.dec.org.uk/item/425>

⁶ 'Response to the humanitarian crisis in Haiti following the 12th January 2010 earthquake – Achievements, challenges and lessons to be learned'; July 2010, IASC.

⁷ 'Inter-agency Real Time Evaluation- 3 months after the earthquake'; August 31st 2010 - Groupe URD and GPPI.

⁸ 'Response to the humanitarian crisis in Haiti following the 12th January 2010 earthquake – Achievements, challenges and lessons to be learned'; July 2010, IASC.

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- weakness of humanitarian leadership
- limited collaboration between international actors and national institutions at both national and sub-national levels
- difficulties encountered in establishing an appropriate system for collecting and analysing data in order to provide decision makers with information in a timely manner⁹
- difficulties encountered by the humanitarian system due to the urban setting

The RTE notes strength in some of the individual coordination clusters but weakness in strategic thinking and leadership, two linked but distinct issues. The humanitarian system needs consistent capacity for cross cluster thinking, as well as a strong humanitarian coordinator who is able to make strategic decisions and willing to challenge entrenched agency interests when necessary. The IASC report also notes the weakness in linking humanitarian approaches to longer-term thinking.

In financial terms, the global response has been no less exceptional than the event itself. As early as March 23rd, US charities were reported to have raised over US\$850 million¹⁰. As the time of the field visit, the revised UN and partners ‘flash’ appeal of approximately \$1.49 billion was 70% funded¹¹ (i.e. a running pledge total of US\$1.04 billion).

The AusAID response in context

As noted above, the purpose of the review was to evaluate the response of AusAID; as well as the response of its operational partners. In seeking to analyse this particular response and extract lessons for AusAID and its partners it is important to recognise the exceptional nature of the event and to place it firmly within the context outlined above. Over the course of the response, AusAID has provided a small proportion of the overall international contribution. At the time of the field visit, AusAID’s response (against the UN appeal) was recorded in OCHA’s Financial Tracking System (FTS) at US\$8,552,365 or 0.8% of the running total. It also typically provided a relatively small proportion of each partner NGOs ‘federated’ response. AusAID provided grants of between Aus\$250,000 and Aus\$550,000 to NGO partners. Typically, the same partners raised and are planning to spend US\$50 million or more in their first years’ response. AusAID was, however, one of the quickest donors out of the block in terms of decision-making and in realising their pledge. NGO partners received formal, written notification of funding fifteen days¹² after the earthquake, an exceptionally quick turnaround for a donor government, even for humanitarian funding.

⁹ This is a common finding of RTEs and suggests that the humanitarian system as a whole routinely uses complete data sets of ‘collated and analysed data’ to make decisions. In fact, such data sets are rarely, if ever, available.

¹⁰ ‘Haiti Earthquake Response – Context Analysis’, p22. ALNAP –July 2010

¹¹ ‘Appeals and Funding’ -www.fts.unocha.org - this figure contains all pledges reported to OCHA through their Financial Tracking Service (FTS).

¹² From documentation provided by AusAID.

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AusAID has provided a total of AUD\$24.5 million for the Haiti response, the first \$10.5 million of which forms the primary focus of the review and was clearly allocated for emergency humanitarian response. The initial 10.5 million was divided as follows:

- **Australian NGOs – (principally under AusAID Periodic Funding Agreements (PFA))**
 - emergency assistance in priority sectors of health, water, sanitation, food, coordination and logistics: \$2.5 m (\$1.5m announced 14 January, a further \$1m announced 19 January)
- **RedR Australia** for deployment of Australian humanitarian experts to work with UN agencies: \$500,000 (announced 14 January)
- **International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies**
 - emergency relief activities: \$1 m (announced 14 January)
- **Office of Coordination for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)**
 - to support coordination and advocacy activities: \$1 m – announced 14 January
- **World Food Programme**
 - emergency food aid: \$4.5 m (\$1.5m announced 14 January, a further \$3m announced 19 January)
- **Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA),** an agency of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) - facilitation of movement of personnel and resources and emergency relief distribution: \$1 m (announced 19 January)

Having no advisory capacity on the ground in Haiti, the AusAID response unfolded more or less directly in keeping with its existing humanitarian policy agreements and partnership frameworks. The policy expresses the desire to support in three ways:

- to deliver rapid and effective Australian humanitarian action – (in this case through Australian NGOs and Red R);
- to enhance the capacity of partner countries and regional bodies to prepare for and respond to humanitarian crises – (in this case through Caricom and CDEMA); and
- to support strong and responsive international humanitarian action – (in this case through support to IFRC and the UN)

It has to be noted that at their core, in this specific context, the implementation of NGO and Red Cross operations was dominated by international partners (usually led by North American and European based affiliates). Notwithstanding some advisory input by Australian branches, there was very little that was identifiably Australian about the implementation of operations. Partners handled the funding according to their internal procedures. In some cases, this meant a specific set of fully 'earmarked' activities; identifiable throughout as being those funded by AusAID. Others, to a greater or lesser extent treated the funding as un-earmarked and 'fungible' i.e. part of a larger 'pot' of programme funding.

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In summary, AusAID, having projected its financial influence further than usual, had a relatively small visible footprint in Haiti. This was due to the sheer scale of the response and the extensive funding which followed (from private sources, American and European donors amongst others) and also the domination of North American and European NGO affiliates in implementation.

Section 2 - The Field Visit

The reflections below combine views expressed by AusAID partners in field interviews, in telephone interviews with AusAID partners at their Australian headquarters, as well as from final and interim reports provided to AusAID in relation to their specific project funding. The questions outlined in bold are taken directly from the TOR for the review.

Over and above the issues outlined in Section 1, several key issues dominated discussions at the time of the field visit, notably:

- The impending Presidential elections and a prevailing sense of ‘political vacuum’ in the run up; notably the absence of clear decisions on recovery planning and land issues
- The impending peak of the monsoon/hurricane season and the need to rapidly reach agreement on contingency planning and preparations
- The first set of project approvals by the Haiti reconstruction commission.

Effectiveness: To what extent are the stated objectives of the Australia-funded responses of each agency being met?

Three of the six NGO partners have completed all AusAID funded activities. Each of these agencies reports, by and large, 100% completion of activities and outputs¹³. The remaining agencies report good progress notwithstanding ongoing processes of refining strategy and the possible need to seek amendments in some areas. Both UNDP and WFP, the UN partners given operational funding, reported having fully completed activities that utilised this money.

As a starting point, the NGO proposals were relatively weak in their construction of measurable performance frameworks. The AusAID Emergency Response Proposal (ERP) template has deliberately light requirements, asking only for the expected ‘activities, outputs and outcomes’. In a number of instances, ‘outcomes’ were expressed as activities or outputs. Where outcomes were stated, no measurable performance criteria were presented. Reports also focus heavily on activities and outputs (this issue is explored under monitoring and evaluation below.)

The almost uniform achievement of 100% of targets on paper, therefore, skates over a number of issues, some common across rapid onset emergencies, others related to the defining characteristics of the Haiti response:

Targeting

All of the AusAID partners operating in multiple sectors described themselves as undergoing a period of reflection. The process of deciding on their original project locations in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake was described as challenging by all actors.

¹³ These are generally expressed as quantities distributed or attendance rates at centres established using AusAid funding.

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Whilst most had ongoing activities in Haiti prior to the earthquake, these tended to be focused outside of Port au Prince. This meant that new interventions in heavily affected areas often had no established partnerships or ongoing relationships with local authorities on which to draw.

The better functioning clusters, especially WASH, were described as playing an important role in allocating geographical areas for intervention or at the very least in de-conflicting between agencies. The strength of ‘vertical’ cluster structures at the national level still appears stronger overall than area specific coordination. In some cases, this appears to have had the effect of dispersing NGOs focus along sectoral lines. For example, one partner described how the allocation and internal decision process in the earthquake’s early aftermath had resulted in WASH activities spread over a number of sites, differing from where other inputs were focussed and reducing an overall sense of attachment to the camp communities. Accordingly, most partners described themselves as going through a process of geographical ‘consolidation’, reducing the overall number of sites.

Typically, partners also claimed to be looking at moving attention away from support to populations in camps to ‘area based’ strategies: the provision of services across whole communities rather than specific support to spontaneous settlements. Most stated that they were trying to address a perceived ‘pull factor’, possibly created by ongoing assistance to camps¹⁴. This proposed shift is in keeping with the comments of those in coordination positions, including OCHA staff. The current Humanitarian Co-ordinator (HC) characterised the actions of internationals as a ‘*classic humanitarian response*’ in that it was self-contained, working largely outside of government systems¹⁵ and reliant on imported resources, both material and human. He suggested that the response should have switched at an earlier stage to ‘*community based approaches*’, serving whole populations and geographic sections within the city, as opposed to focusing on spontaneous settlements.

It also reflects the broader issue of targeting, discussed with the majority of partners. At the core of the issue is the challenge of targeting amongst fluid urban populations with ‘compounded’ vulnerabilities. After the earthquake, many feel that the most obvious ‘vulnerability’: displacement, identified often only through presence in a spontaneous settlement, was overused as the major criterion for assistance, leading to an imbalance of assistance towards those in ‘camps’. The IASC report notes both the irrelevance of the term ‘directly affected’ by the earthquake given the reach of its impact and also the difficulty of separating out ‘acute’ vulnerabilities caused by the earthquake given the backdrop of chronic issues.

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The field visit provided only a snapshot of current issues but the problems of targeting clearly still remained. Typically, there was still a focus on spontaneous settlements and in many cases systems did not appear particularly nuanced and able to pick up on specific vulnerabilities below community level. This function was being played by camp committees

¹⁴ One source cited that the biggest problem with returns were land and tenancy issues which meant that the prospect, however, slim of a transitional shelter, free from rent and other exploitative practices was keeping people in camps, as much as any assistance that was being received.

¹⁵ Whilst this was also a common view, partners and individuals present at the time of the earthquake expressed genuine difficulties in finding functioning government counterparts in the aftermath of the earthquake.

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in most instances, often in partnership with an international agency playing the camp management role. Whilst camp committees always described themselves as elected from within the communities themselves, the extent to which they could represent all facets of the community and the quality of that representation was not always apparent.

Conclusion

Partners by and large report 100% of targets achieved. Both the RTE and IASC reports stress that even when engaged in exercises which are purposefully critical, it remains important to acknowledge how much was achieved under genuinely challenging circumstances. AusAID partners certainly made a valuable contribution to the totality of an enormous international response, providing water, sanitation, education and protection. The field visit served to confirm that partners faced challenges around the targeting of inputs that were reported in early system wide evaluations. Most described themselves as being in a process of reflecting on targeting and overall strategy. For those involved in multiple sectors, this commonly included the adoption of 'area based' approaches; a lessening of focus on spontaneous settlements and more holistic assessment of vulnerability across communities.

Do the Australia funded responses meet best international practice in humanitarian response, humanitarian accountability as well as internal minimum standards?

When asked about standards and accountability frameworks, the majority of partners referred solely to Sphere, especially quantitative standards¹⁶. Inevitably this led to a series of honest discussions around the application of such standards in this context. Specifically partners recognised the challenge of applying mainly quantitative indicators in an urban setting where, by broad agreement, populations are mobile and fluid. There was little reference to other standards or Codes of Conduct¹⁷. Two partners mentioned HAP International (Humanitarian Accountability Project) standards and internal audits against HAP standards.

Typically partners stated that they had been in '*full response*' or '*life saving*' mode and had reached '*the six month mark*' before embarking on reflection on standards. One partner stated honestly that having had such a massive programme expansion and hiring many staff with no NGO experience, an enormous effort was required to explain the very basics of humanitarian principles and practices, in addition to the fundamentals of their specific agency approach.

¹⁶ Sphere, since its inception, has aimed to promote an overall approach to relief, which it describes as 'a philosophy of action that listen(s) and respond(s) to the opinions of people affected by disasters'. But Sphere itself recognises that its broad approach is prone to reduction: '*Many agencies claim to work "to Sphere standards", by which they mean little more than observing the quantitative indicators in the Sphere Handbook*' (see 'About us'; The Sphere Project: <http://www.sphereproject.org/content/view/91/58/lang.english/>)

¹⁷ Including the ACFID code of conduct – although arguably the implementing partners on this case would be unlikely to use that as a primary point of reference.

UN and other international partners

In keeping with established relationships and accountability arrangements¹⁸, AusAID made contributions against broader appeals to the Red Cross, UNDP, WFP and OCHA.

UNDP described in some detail the internal allocation of AusAID funding¹⁹, having taken the decision to allocate AusAID funds to areas out side of Port au Prince, towards an overarching objective of ‘anchoring’ IDPs from the capital in areas not directly affected. UNDP described the process of selection of local and international partners in collaboration with local government counterparts for a number of small-scale community works, under the ‘Cash for Work’ scheme. As with NGO partners, detailed reporting against activities and spend showed a very high rate of project completion. More broadly, UNDP described its own process of reflection, switching away from activities branded as ‘Cash for Work’, and looking at area based initiatives, particularly in support of micro-enterprise.

WFP also described full utilisation of AusAid funds, specifically for the purchase of ‘367 tonnes of Plumpy’nut²⁰, a 30 day supply for 82,000 children’ as part of their broader Emergency Operation (EMOP). WFP representatives were extremely positive about the AusAID funded secondments, through Red R. In particular, they cited the contribution of technical staff, who had assisted the whole international effort through helping to set up the expanded UN log-base which acted as the home for coordination and response efforts in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake.

At field level, OCHA staff would not normally be able to distil the effects of a single donors un-earmarked funding, as was the case in Haiti. OCHA’s overall performance in Haiti has come in for some criticism within the various evaluations of Haiti and interviews during the field trip reinforced certain themes: OCHA’s inability to provide consistent and adequate human resources for its own efforts and for its limitations in driving strategic thinking for the whole humanitarian response (not least in its support function to the Humanitarian Coordinators office.) In this instance it seems fair to say that whilst early funding of coordination is necessary and AusAid money was gratefully received, OCHA was hampered by systemic staffing issues which quick funding alone could not address.

CDEMA (Caribbean Disaster Management Agency)

The team held a meeting with an AusAID funded secondee from CDEMA, a senior disaster management specialist from a neighbouring Caricom government. Currently working as a technical adviser within the Directorate of Civil Protection, the secondee presented a truly impressive range of plans and policy documents that had been produced since the earthquake, including an updated Disaster Management Programme.

¹⁸ Usually retrospective reporting at programme level, as well as financial reporting.

¹⁹ Not part of the initial humanitarian allocation.

²⁰ A ‘ready to use’ food for the treatment of malnutrition

Conclusion

Discussions within the various clusters appear to have emphasised technical standards and have had success in adapting quantitative and in some cases technical standards for the Haitian context. During interviews most partners emphasised quantitative standards, particularly adapted Sphere standards, and the challenges of meeting these. A fuller assessment of more qualitative codes and standards, particularly around partnership with communities was beyond the scope of this visit. On balance, partners acknowledged by and large that they had been in ‘response mode’ thus far. Whilst many had instigated feedback mechanisms, the snapshot from that the visit that the visit provided indicated these fall short of the genuine partnership with communities at the heart of Sphere and other Codes of Conduct²¹.

What was the contribution of AusAID funding to the effective implementation of the activities?

As noted above, partners utilised AusAID funds with a different degrees of internal earmarking. Most agencies could identify the specific activities and outputs which had been allocated to AusAID funding. Given the relatively small proportion of funding coming from AusAID, partners had few strong opinions on the strategic importance of AusAID funds²².

Other than those who had received the smallest proportions of programme funding from AusAID, however, partners recognised and appreciated both the speed of decision-making and cash disbursement by AusAID. The importance of early funding was acknowledged by a number of partners as providing more than a simple injection of cash but also: a sign of confidence that served to attract other funds and allowing for early and concrete recruitment processes for key technical staff.

There was also an overall perception of AusAID as a flexible donor²³. For those who had yet to fully utilise AusAID funds, there was a view that AusAID would be willing to hold an honest discussion about emerging strategies and priorities and the potentially reallocation of funding. This stood in contract to certain other larger donors, who were more rigid in insisting that activities and priorities should hold as originally set.

Conclusions:

²¹ The challenges of working in the urban context of Port au Prince were highlighted during a visit to the ‘Corailles’ camp, a totally planned ‘transitional’ camp and an anomaly in the context. Here, with a stable population and planned layout, relationships between established agencies and the camps residents were very well developed.

²² This effect is also, in part, the result of high staff turnover reducing the institutional memory of the use of AusAID money.

²³ Only one partner disagreed with this perception; on the basis that a very small proportion of overall programme funding, earmarked internally for specific programme inputs, was unhelpful. On balance, this comment probably reflects equally on internal structures and procedures for fundraising and grant management.

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Partners acknowledged the early release and receipt of funds. A number of benefits cited, over and above the ability to spend quickly. These included the tendency of early funding to 'lever' more resources and to be able to engage in key human resource processes with confidence. Given the ultimately small proportion of funds from AusAID in this specific context, however, it is impossible to state that the funds carried any specific strategic influence.

Efficiency: What issues have arisen which impacted on the ability of the programme to deliver its objectives: human resource, contextual, bureaucratic? How were these handled?

Timeliness, cost effectiveness and bureaucratic issues

AusAID funding was agreed and released quickly, utilising established emergency procedures and with the clear aim of facilitating a timely humanitarian response. Although partners report high levels of success at project completion, few of the success criteria (outputs or activities) listed in proposals were time bound (other than within the overall project timeframe). Project completion reports cite some significant delays: in procurement; in the time taken for co-ordination mechanisms to allocate or agree geographical areas and for cluster and government to agree standards, particularly around construction of temporary structures (including transitional shelters).

When asked about costs and bureaucratic issues, two were raised consistently: vehicle rental and customs delays. Steeply rising costs for accommodation and vehicle rental as demand outstrips supply are common phenomena in emergencies. In this case, the high cost of rental vehicles was reportedly drawn out by delays at customs for the importation of new vehicles. The issues of internal bureaucratic or management challenges e.g. deciding on management and partnership arrangements between NGO affiliates from different countries came to the fore in internal evaluations, less so in conversations as part of this exercise.

Human Resources

Most partners reported being able to recruit sufficient number and quality of staff. As a general (and predictable) rule, larger agencies with global reach and experience in rapid onset emergencies were better able to take advantage of rosters and other emergency recruitment procedures to bring in staff. As noted above, high turnover of staff was perceived to be more of a negative issue than timeliness of recruitment per se. As noted above, the recruitment of staff from French speaking countries (especially West and Central African programmes) has been heavily utilised. Arguably, the influx of staff accustomed to dealing with rural contexts, more 'classical' patterns of displacement and organised camps exacerbated some of the technical issues discussed above.

As above, OCHA received AusAID money specifically for human resource issues, but its challenges in this respect were highly visible to all partners. These are themes consistent with other country contexts (and commonly cited by OCHA staff and its most fervent supporters.) Partners in this case cited heroic efforts on the part of individuals who were

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heavily exposed for long periods by OCHA's inability to field an adequate complement of staff throughout the response.

Partners reported varying degrees of early integration of their Haitian staff in defining and shaping responses. A number of respondents across the partners stated that Haitian staff had been heavily affected by the earthquake and had been unable to play a major role in shaping the early response. Others stated that Haitian staff had worked 'from day one'. In the absence of a survey of Haitian staff, it is hard to form a clear opinion. On balance, there was a sense that the current managers of AusAID partners felt that there could have been better utilisation of the skills and knowledge of Haitian staff at the outset.

Most partners expressed some degree of satisfaction with the process of supporting their Haitian staff through bereavement, loss or other effects of the earthquake. Typically material assistance such as temporary accommodation and meals had been provided. In some cases, partners had provided counselling support, in some cases providing a permanent staff member to play this role.

Conclusion

Larger agencies with global reach and genuinely global response capacities were able to launch responses at scale to their own satisfaction. Under extremely challenging circumstances, most were confident that bureaucratic and administrative issues had been well handled as 'normal' operational challenges. Most were positive about their human resource capacities overall. As per previous evaluations, very high staff turnover, caused in part by reliance on emergency rosters, was the most cited negative issue. Most were positive about the efforts made to integrate the views of Haitian staff and about efforts to help them deal with the consequences of the earthquake (in the absence of a survey of Haitian staff, it is impossible to verify these views).

Rising costs and delays, also identified in internal evaluations were described as problematic by NGO partners, but overall that these were 'normal' operational hurdles and that they had been handled as such. Rising costs for vehicle rentals were cited most often as problematic.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Are Australian funded agency systems for identifying and integrating lessons for humanitarian activity sufficiently robust?

The majority of agencies made reference in project proposals to strong, in house capacity for monitoring and evaluation. As above, the use of such expertise was not strongly evident in the construction of performance frameworks within the proposals, nor in reporting. During the field visit, all partners honestly assessed their M+E systems to be '*work in progress*' and predominantly focussed on tracking activities and outputs. UN partners were no better able to identify success at the strategic level. In both reporting and in conversation, very high-

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level indicators such as ‘the lack of disease outbreaks²⁴’ were routinely cited as indicators of success by UN and NGO partners.

Several made reference to beneficiary feedback mechanisms or tools in one form another, either currently in use or under development. Several partners had undertaken, or were currently participating in real time evaluations, either as in-house or collaborative exercises. Whether public or internal documents, the majority of these exercises were aimed at internal reflection and learning (which one respondent described as ‘*course correction*’.)

Any discussion of evaluation in this context has to come with some strong caveats. Measurement above output level in any humanitarian setting is a real challenge, especially given the challenge of attributing positive changes in the lives of affected populations to a single project or programme under these circumstances. There are few positive models or experiences on which to draw and agencies are charged with managing multiple accountability frameworks for multiple donors with different time frames.

Conclusion

Caveats and challenges notwithstanding, in house expertise in monitoring and evaluation is regularly cited in project documentation and a topic on which every partner was readily willing to engage. For all of the familiarity with the subject, efforts add up to very little in terms of tangible measurement of results above output level. For NGO’s upwards accountability continues through its traditional system of multiple donor reporting, largely focussed on outputs and activities with few time markers below ‘project completion’ (for UN partners, accountability standards is less direct, usually coming in the form of retroactive reporting at programme level.) Internal reflection and ‘course correction’ are taking place through real time exercises and these are valued internally. Accountability to affected populations is an issue around which there is growing discussion and acknowledgment, again the extent to which this has resulted in genuine partnerships in this context is questionable.

Sustainability: Do programs have an appropriate exit strategy and / or link to jointly constructed long term or early recovery plans?

Several of the key characteristics of the Haiti response add to the challenge on this specific issue. ALNAP ‘lessons from previous earthquakes’ state that the recovery process rather than the response per se has been the biggest challenge in other major earthquakes. It cites the artificial distinction between relief and recovery in natural disasters. This point is a constant source of debate and in Haiti, there is no doubt that a major humanitarian response was required and that the government was unable to either provide or effectively lead it. This does not diminish the fact that no overarching framework for recovery has been presented, either by the central government, or by the international system acting in support of it. The functioning of the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission (responsible for oversight of the Haiti Reconstruction Fund) is beyond the scope of this report. Clearly, however, senior staff within with UN humanitarian system and NGOs felt that they had no clear entry point for engaging with recovery planning at this stage.

²⁴ Both WHO and the ALNAP paper on lessons from previous earthquakes pointed out that disease outbreaks are not common characteristics of earthquakes.

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On top of this, the early recovery cluster was regularly described as the least functional and as having been non-functional for several weeks. The cluster was reportedly handed over ‘prematurely’ by UNDP to the government but is apparently due to be re-started. Its remit included many of the challenging issues. As above, in the absence of clear and strategic leadership for the humanitarian response, compounded by a lack of a clear framework for early recovery, humanitarian agencies are inevitably left in an uncomfortable ‘limbo’ state. Meanwhile, with up to five years of funding already secured, most partners are planning internally for their own programme activities.

Some localised initiatives were reported as functioning better. Leogane and Jacmel were cited as areas where government at the local level was engaged with issues, and even at a limited scale had allocated land for transitional housing. A key factor for the international system, in this respect, is the ongoing lack of coordination system in Port au Prince which mirrors government structures i.e. in other regions of Haiti, international systems Western ‘departement’²⁵ has no separate coordination from national level.

Conclusion

Internally, partners are strategising and drawing up long-term plans, given the availability of funds for up to five years. They are operating, however, in the absence of an overarching framework for recovery.

Gender Equality

Prior to the earthquake, Haiti was a difficult context in which to work on gender issues. The absence of legal framework and support services to address violence against women had been a pressing issue and background levels of gender-based violence consistently reported to be high.

While some practical gender considerations – prioritising women headed households, separate latrines/bathing space for women and men etc were reported – there does not appear to have been a strategic approach to integrating gender equality consideration in the response. As part of their programme consolidation and revision of strategy, partners indicated greater sensitivity to gender considerations and better gender integration in the livelihood recovery efforts in the future.

²⁵ Haiti is divided into ten-sub national administrative regions or ‘departements’. ‘Departement Oest’ contains Port au Prince, as well as the heavily affected areas of Leogane and Carrefour.

