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HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS**

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REPORT OF THE EVALUATION AND GUIDANCE SECTION



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List of Acronyms

| | |
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| AG | Advisory Group |
| CERF | Central Emergency Response Fund |
| CHF | Common Humanitarian Fund |
| CLA | Cluster Lead Agencies |
| CR | Central Register of Disaster Management Capacities |
| CRD | Coordination and Response Division |
| ESB | Emergency Services Branch |
| EGS | Evaluation and Guidance Section |
| ERC | Emergency Relief Coordinator |
| ERRF | Emergency Relief Response Fund |
| FATA | Federally Administered Tribal Areas |
| FTS | Financial Tracking System |
| GEP | Gender Equality Policy |
| HC | Humanitarian Coordinator |
| HCT | Humanitarian Country Team |
| HQ | Headquarters |
| IA RTE | Inter-Agency Real Time Evaluations |
| IASC | Inter-Agency Standing Committee |
| IDP | Internally Displaced Person |
| IM | Information Management |
| IOM | International Organization for Migration |
| MRM | Management Response Matrix |
| MRP | Management Response Plan |
| MTT | Management Task Team |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| PDSB | Policy Development and Studies Branch (OCHA) |
| PHRP | Pakistan Humanitarian Response Plan |
| PIFERP | Pakistan Initial Floods Emergency Response Plan |
| PSEA | Protection against Sexual Abuse and Exploitation |
| SEA | Sexual Abuse and Exploitation |
| SMT | Senior Management Team |
| SOP | Standard Operating Procedure |
| SPU | Strategic Planning Unit |
| USG | Under-Secretary General |

1. Introduction

This report presents an overview evaluations commissioned by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) during 2009 and 2010. The report is structured as follows: Chapter 1 briefly describes the Evaluation Function in OCHA, outlines the evaluations conducted during the biennium, and includes a synthesis of their main common findings. Chapter 2 presents a brief summary of each of the evaluations conducted during 2009-2010. Chapter 3 describes the process to follow up on evaluation recommendations and provides examples of the use of OCHA evaluations and their findings to improve learning and performance. Finally, Chapter 4 summarizes OCHA's evaluation activities.

1.1 OCHA's Evaluation and Guidance Section (EGS)

The Evaluation and Guidance Section (EGS) of OCHA is entrusted with conducting evaluations that promote transparency, accountability and learning through systematic and objective assessments of the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of humanitarian interventions.

To ensure the transparency, independence and credibility of all evaluations conducted by OCHA, these are carried out by independent evaluation experts, and OCHA/EGS manages the process. All evaluations include a formal management response that addresses recommendations provided and identifies the entity that has the responsibility for their follow-up.

Evaluations undertaken by EGS/OCHA can be internally or externally mandated. Externally mandated evaluations are initiated at the request of the United Nations General Assembly, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee or the Emergency Relief Coordinator, and they include:

- Evaluations of thematic and country-specific performance of the humanitarian system as a whole, such as the evaluation of the cluster approach, the Haiti earthquake or Pakistan floods.
- Evaluations of common humanitarian financing mechanisms, such as the evaluation of the Emergency Response Fund (ERF).
- Joint Humanitarian Impact Evaluations.

Internally mandated evaluations are usually undertaken at the request of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, and they focus on OCHA's internal performance.

EGS/OCHA also conducts lessons-learned reviews, which collect findings and information in order to take them into account in future activities, planning and programming.

Finally, EGS/OCHA also includes a Guidance Management team that is in charge of developing internal policy guidance on the various aspects of OCHA's work. Policy guidance comes in the form of Policy Instructions, Standard Operating Procedures, guidelines, and handbooks.

1.2 Coverage of the 2009-2010 Report

The evaluations covered by this report include the following:

A. Inter-Agency Evaluations:

- IA RTE Response to Pakistan's 2009 Displacement Crisis
- Cluster Approach Evaluation Phase Two
- IA RTE Response to Typhoons in the Philippines
- IASC Review of Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)
- IA RTE Response in Haiti: Three Months After the Earthquake
- IA RTE Response to Pakistan's 2010 Flood Crisis

B. OCHA Specific Evaluations:

- OCHA Meta-Evaluation
- Review of OCHA Central Register
- Review of OCHA's Gender Equality Policy
- Evaluation of OCHA Response to Haiti Earthquake

1.3 Common findings to 2009-2010 evaluations

This section presents issues and findings that are common to all evaluations commissioned by OCHA during 2009-2010. They underline recurrent issues that need to be addressed to ensure greater effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and impact of OCHA activities. On the basis of these evaluation findings, the section presents general recommendations made by the evaluation teams to translate lessons into practice that will help OCHA deal with future challenges in a more effective manner.

OCHA 2009-2010 evaluations highlight the importance of adequate contextual analysis and coordinated needs assessments as essential elements for the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance. Despite their importance, some past emergency responses have been affected by weak context analysis and uncoordinated humanitarian needs assessments, which led to some activities ignoring the context and local players in emergencies. Moreover, a multiplicity of humanitarian needs assessments and limited consultations with the population reduce the capacity to respond, increase difficulties to coordinate and inform, and reduce opportunities for planning of recovery and development activities.

To ensure better emergency response, in the future, OCHA should ensure that a strong analysis of the context of the emergency and how the crises may evolve is conducted. Information should be collected on causes and parties involved in the crises, existing social structures, coping mechanisms, initiatives by affected population, available local capacities and civil society groups that can be involved in the provision of response and the support that can be provided to strengthen them. The analysis should consider both the rural and urban dimensions of the crises, and revise constraints that may affect the response, including security concerns.

To overcome these issues, OCHA should also advocate for joint needs assessments and consolidated analysis of data among the humanitarian community. It should promote the potential of the clusters to conduct joint needs assessments, to improve assessment methods and to avoid duplications. It should encourage needs assessments that ensure consultations with the broader affected population, including women, children, the disabled and elderly population, and that collect age and gender disaggregated data.

Evaluation findings also demonstrate that the cluster approach has had a positive effect on the quality of humanitarian response, reducing duplications and facilitating coordination between the international community and Governments. At the same time, several issues, such as weak inter-cluster coordination and coordination with existing government-led mechanisms have often undermined the sustainability of these achievements. To do better in the future, evaluations recommend that:

- OCHA clearly defines its role in the cluster system. It should also ensure an effective inter-cluster coordination system and at the strategic level, and establish clear linkages among the local and national levels.
- Effective cluster performance is ensured, by making sure trained full-time coordinators are assigned to the clusters.
- Cluster coordination with or support to existing national mechanisms remains essential, as it is the inclusion of local capacity into the relief, recovery and reconstructions phases, to increase the likelihood of longer positive effects.
- Attention to the local level increases. It is crucial to increase attention and resources for the cluster approach at the local level. Local languages should be used as working languages in the clusters, governments should nominate focal points to engage with the clusters, guidance on the interface between clusters and government-led coordination mechanisms should be provided, and clarity on the role, mandates and mechanisms of the clusters should be ensured among national and international actors.

Evaluations also coincide to point out that ensuring adequate funding that allows for a comprehensive humanitarian response is essential. However, emergency responses evaluated during 2010 had a varying degree of success in securing the necessary resources. To do better in the future, evaluations recommend the following:

- Ensure adequate assessment of resources. By properly assessing needs and existing local capacities, and bringing in additional resources (in the form of money, staff with the right skills and language abilities, goods and services) to support these capacities.
- The Flash Appeal should reflect the UN's capacity to work in an integrated manner and clearly outline critical gaps. It should also define adequate ways to link clusters and financing mechanisms. The preliminary Flash Appeal should focus on the most critical needs and life saving activities covering a 2 to 3 week period. In this, a smaller number of clusters should be rolled out and recovery activities should be combined to avoid fragmentation.

Another point on which all evaluations agree is that that OCHA's leadership on appeal and financing is crucial for mobilizing support. The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), Emergency Relief Response Fund (ERRF) and Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF) mechanisms have allowed for the fast deployment of resources at HQ level on the basis of the experience of sectors needs. Further, specialist staff sent by OCHA/Coordination and Response Division (CRD) to prepare sitreps has proven critical to provide first-hand information for donors, public, and the media. Daily key messages produced by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), combined with media stories from the field have also been found to be useful practices. These should be continued in the future.

Overall, strong leadership has been proven to be a key element in the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance. Absence of strong leadership translates into the absence of a central point for clearing of information, demands and decisions, which is essential for the efficient delivery of a coordinated humanitarian response. To improve the effectiveness of response to emergencies in the future, OCHA should:

- Ensure strong leadership at the country level, with the capacity to lead an appropriate response and the necessary support to conduct their work. A full-time Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) should be appointed in the country.
- Designate a senior leader as operations director with full authority and responsibility to command and control all necessary resources with the organisation.

OCHA 2010 evaluations also highlight the need for improved Guidance and Information Management (IM). The lack of institutional memory due to staff turnover affects the capacity to respond efficiently in situations of crisis. OCHA has made considerable progress in the area of guidance; however, continued efforts are needed.

To increase its effectiveness in the future, OCHA needs to ensure that its IM tools are useful to humanitarian actors that utilize them. For example, information in the 3Ws should be detailed enough to inform planning; Central Registry databases should be revised to ensure maximum utility. OCHA also needs to continue to develop guidance on critical areas of work, as well as to ensure the dissemination of existing one through new approaches and methods.

Evaluation findings also conclude that national actors and affected population should be sufficiently involved in the provision of humanitarian assistance. This can be accomplished through the following:

- Ensuring the inclusion of national actors, affected population as well as local capacity into the relief, recovery and reconstruction phases.
- Clusters should ensure the use of participatory and community based approaches in sectoral needs assessments, analysis, planning, monitoring and response, and include affected populations in their activities. Meetings with affected population to analyze how the response may affect people and develop mitigation strategies should be held.

- Humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should revise their security restrictions to allow staff to circulate and make contact with the local population whenever possible.

2. Evaluation Activities in OCHA during 2009-2010

The following section summarizes inter-agency and OCHA specific evaluations completed in 2009 and 2010. Inter-Agency Real Time Evaluations (IA- RTE) are supported, managed and used by a variety of international organizations in the early implementation stages of a humanitarian emergency operation. OCHA specific evaluations are just that, evaluations of only OCHA's role and activities.

2.1 Inter-Agency Evaluations

2.1.1 IA RTE of the Humanitarian Response to Pakistan's 2009 Displacement Crisis

The IA RTE of the Response to Pakistan's 2009 Displacement Crisis is the eighth of its kind conducted for the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). Following the September 11 attacks on the United States and subsequent international presence in Afghanistan, there was an overspill of re-emerging Afghan Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters into the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in Pakistan. The Government of Pakistan mobilized the army to reassert its sovereignty in FATA. Pakistan's military sought to create free-fire zones in areas controlled by militants. As a result, a large scale displacement ensued as FATA populations were instructed by the military to leave, especially in the Swat valley.

The IA RTE concluded that the overall response was successful, especially because there was no large-scale death or disease outbreak. The response incorporated some innovative features like a rapid registration and verification system for distributing cash assistance. The innovative system, however, did not transition into a more accurate, category-based targeting of the affected population. Lack of needs assessments and even fewer joint needs assessments further hindered the efficient provision of assistance. Needs assessments consultations were conducted mostly with males, while the needs of women and children were often not taken into consideration. Although a good level of funding was achieved during the relief period in 2009, donations in 2010 did not remain at that level, to allow meeting the recovery needs of returnees or the continued Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

The IA RTE of the IDP Crisis in Pakistan illuminated several areas for improvement, as Pakistan has already experienced multiple emergencies and its environment suggests future emergencies are likely. Existing programmes need to be regularly assessed to better target and provide to all those in need, rather than just to those who are registered. Moreover, the evaluation highlights some of the difficulties of providing humanitarian assistance in a context in which the Government is both a party to the conflict and the gatekeeper for humanitarian assistance.

2.1.2 Cluster Approach Evaluation Phase Two

As part of the efforts to reform emergency humanitarian assistance, the cluster approach was implemented in 2005. It is a system of sectoral coordination in priority areas of response. Each cluster is led by a guiding organization responsible for coordinating global and country level responses, strengthening global preparedness and acting as a provider of last resort.

Following the 2005 introduction of the cluster approach by the ERC and IASC, IASC requested the cluster approach's implementation be evaluated in two phases. Finished in 2007, Phase 1 concentrated on the implementation of the cluster approach. Phase 2 was completed in 2010, assessing the outcomes produced by the cluster approach from a country-level perspective. The cluster approach at its onset required large investments by donors, while substantiated conclusions could not be made until the clusters were active for a few years. Thus, Phase 2 provides insight to donors and humanitarian actors as to the overall success of the cluster approach.

The evaluation concluded that the cluster approach has significant potential to streamline humanitarian responses and fundamental opposition to it has mostly been eliminated. More specifically, it has been successful in reducing duplications and identifying gaps in humanitarian assistance, improving the ability of humanitarian actors to learn (via peer review mechanisms and enhanced technical and normative discussions), increasing partnership between UN agencies and other international humanitarian actors and improving the planning and quality of proposals for major funding appeals to name a few.

The cluster approach has encountered and continues to encounter several shortcomings. Some of the predominant challenges are the inefficient analyses and use of national and local coordination and response mechanisms, inefficient inter-cluster coordination and coordinators have not completed adequate facilitation training. Although it is streamlining humanitarian response, the cluster approach may also threaten humanitarian principles like financial independence.

The Phase 2 Evaluation addresses the aforementioned challenges with six thematic recommendations. For example, the clusters can avoid duplication by identifying local and national partners with existing preparedness, response and coordination mechanisms. Also, cluster lead responsibilities and the roles at all levels need clarification. To ensure ample follow-up, the IASC Task Team on Coordination was instructed to appoint a coordinator for each recommendation and subsequently develop a management response plan (MRP).

2.1.3 IA RTE of the Humanitarian Response to Typhoons Ketsana and Parma in the Philippines

In the third quarter of 2009, three typhoons struck the Philippines in succession. In the Philippines, considerable resources are dedicated to capacity and disaster management. However, given the magnitude, sequence and impact of the typhoons, the Government reached out to the international community for assistance.

Overall, the evaluation found that the international response to the typhoons enhanced national response mechanisms. However, it also uncovered two predominant issues that prevented the international and national responses from functioning at their full potential. Firstly, existing national response mechanisms were not fully considered by international relief actors. Secondly, the Filipino Government's response prioritized certain clusters, and this impeded a fully coordinated response.

Most often, joint needs assessments catered to the information needs of individual organizations, instead of following a common approach. To better improve effectiveness and efficiency of needs assessments, the IASC, Humanitarian Country Team and cluster leads should focus their efforts on joint needs assessments.

The Flash Appeal was inflated, and didn't properly identify critical gaps in the ongoing response. Accordingly, while there was enough funding for the initial international response, it tapered off after the first three weeks. The divisions of labour and standard operating procedures (SOPs) need to be clearly defined between the organizations at the international, regional and national levels to increase donor willingness. Division of labour in terms of who does what, where, when, with whom and how can also aid in the functioning of clusters. In the response to the 2009 typhoons in the Philippines, the cluster approach was valuable, but national and international actors did not sufficiently understand the roles, mandates or mechanisms of the clusters.

2.1.4 IASC Review of Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) by UN, NGO, IOM and IFRC Personnel

In 2002, UNHCR completed a report examining the prevalence of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) in West Africa, documenting allegations against 40 agencies. The involvement of a UN or NGO worker in any SEA is a direct violation of the principles protecting vulnerable people in the field being aided by said NGOs or the UN. The report garnered worldwide attention, highlighting the need for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA).

From 2002 to 2004, the IASC Task Force on PSEA worked to establish a coherent set of policies applicable to all agencies. A Plan of Action on PSEA in Humanitarian Crisis established six core principles to be incorporated into codes of conduct and staff rules and regulation of IASC member organizations. IASC concluded its work to create definitive PSEA policy in 2004. However, as reflected in the review, establishment of a policy has not translated into managerial and staff understanding and acceptance of PSEA. As a result, an IASC Working Group commissioned a review of PSEA in July 2009.

In general, HQ's are not providing clear directives on PSEA to the field or with adequate guidance and training, and managers are not being held accountable. Similarly, effective personnel awareness-raising and complaints mechanisms are not in place. There is little monitoring or sharing of good practices at the field level.

The review recommended that the IASC resume its leadership, focusing on the implementation of PSEA policies, however the focus still remains on agencies to

carry out PSEA obligations. In particular, agencies need to scale-up PSEA and actively review their progress every six months. The review includes several recommendations to be completed at headquarters (HQ) level, by IASC, by the UN in partnership with NGOs, International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Red Cross/Red Crescent movement and at field level.

PSEA needs to be embedded in the accepted ethical behaviour of humanitarians. After its inception and until 2010, the IASC Working Group has been successful only in creating comprehensive PSEA policies. Now, the policy must be mainstreamed throughout the humanitarian community.

2.1.5 IA RTE of the Humanitarian Response in Haiti: Three Months after the Earthquake

On January 12, 2010, Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince and its surrounding areas were ravaged by an earthquake of magnitude 7.0 on the Richter scale, killing an estimated 230,000 people¹. The disaster was compounded by the chronic and widespread poverty and high vulnerability to future natural disasters in Haiti. Unique challenges arose for actors like the United Nations because they were both victims of the disaster and actors in the response. In light of the earthquake's exceptional devastation, the IASC launched a RTE to best inform decision-makers at country and HQ levels, and examine the learning structure.

The response to the earthquake in Haiti included a swift provision of aid. Cluster coordination and the availability of resources such as money, military assets and staff were assembled rapidly. However, the quick set up did not translate into reliable results. Similar to other humanitarian responses, in Haiti there was limited collaboration between international humanitarian actors and national institutions, weak humanitarian leadership and quick turnover of relief staff.

The RTE included key recommendations for complications at the country level including adjusting the response to better accommodate the urban setting, expanding the geographical response area to include rural Haiti, better inclusion of clusters in the government structure and thorough analysis of any negative side effects (for example, affect on local economy). Also, as evidenced by the successful results observed in the water sector, existing local capacities should be incorporated into relief, recovery and reconstruction where appropriate because it increases the likelihood of longer-term positive effects.

The IA RTE sought to draw lessons and allow corrections to be made in real time, improving the response. The evaluation concluded that the aid system was not ready to face the challenges ahead, especially the possibility of future disasters without the aforementioned recommendations.

¹ Government estimate from February 2010 (estimates of the number of dead vary)

2.1.6 IA RTE of the Humanitarian Response to Pakistan's 2010 Flood Crisis

In July 2010, massive floods began in Pakistan, following heavy monsoon rains that lasted more than 8 weeks. The flash floods evolved into an immense disaster affecting directly or indirectly, 78 of Pakistan's 121 districts.

Pakistan is a disaster hotspot for two primary reasons. Firstly, Pakistan is frequently exposed to natural disasters such as floods, droughts and earthquakes. The natural disasters are compounded by conflicts on several fronts. For example, Pakistan is a frontline U.S. ally in the war on terror. This evaluation was the ninth IA RTE, and the fourth IA RTE in Pakistan. However, the humanitarian community did not appear to take stock of lessons learned from previous evaluations.

The evaluation highlighted several imperative findings. The floods created an environment in which disease outbreak and food crisis were probable, but the response succeeded in preventing both. Although the floods response was generally well funded, the UN did not manage to spend large amounts of it. This (along with other issues) has lead donors to question the UN's effectiveness, efficiency and accountability in this response. In order to reduce the uncertainty, the UN should draw a reprioritized Pakistan, monitoring and sharing results in an accountable and transparent fashion.

Also, there was no clear representation of the outstanding needs in Pakistan. The needs assessments should follow common criteria so humanitarian partners can better prioritize interventions. Similarly, recovery and rehabilitation policies and strategies have been neglected. The Pakistan Humanitarian Response Plan (PHRP) was not aptly funded or focused on, and the response has functioned primarily as a relief effort with the funds from the Pakistan Initial Floods Emergency Response Plan (PIFERP).

As the response moves towards recovery and reconstruction, the decision making process should be embedded in existing government structures. The evaluation recommended that a matrix is created on the lessons learned from recent IA RTE and Government of Pakistan evaluations in order to foster institutional learning. The matrices should systematically follow up on earlier recommendations and clearly divide labour and responsibilities between the Humanitarian Community and Government of Pakistan.

2.2 OCHA Specific Evaluations

2.2.1 OCHA Meta-Evaluation

OCHA has completed 45 evaluative reports since 2004. The meta-evaluation was comprised primarily of a quality assessment of each evaluation report against six quality criteria and an overview of recurrent findings and recommendations. The six criteria the reports were tested against were objectivity, the link between findings and conclusions, the link between conclusions and recommendations, stakeholder

consultations, use of evaluation criteria and acceptance. More specifically, the evaluation provided insight as to what performance areas require management attention and should be included in the next OCHA Strategic Framework (2010-2013).

The meta-evaluation was constrained for two reasons. Firstly, many reports were completed prior to OCHA's Strategic Framework 2007-2009. This proved problematic when recurrent findings, conclusions and recommendations were categorized according to the elements of the Strategic Framework. Consequently, the evaluation required using sizeable amounts of judgement when categorizing recurrent findings etc. Secondly, it was not feasible for the evaluation team to measure the current status of all findings or to follow-up on all the recommendations.

The evaluation concluded that over 90% of findings and recommendations raised by assessed reports were pertinent to the 2007-2009 Strategic Framework. The only cross-cutting issues that emerged repeatedly in the included reports but not in the Strategic Framework were gender, capacity building and monitoring/results-based management. The evaluation also included recommendations to OCHA outside the content of reports. The recommendations are matched to the Strategic Framework's objectives, addressed to their respective branches or divisions and include suggested priority ranking.

2.2.2 Review of OCHA Central Register of Disaster Management Capacities (CR)

In response to UN General Assembly Resolution 62/92², OCHA commissioned an external review to assess the value added and user satisfaction of the OCHA Central Register of Disaster Management Capacities (CR). The review detected that as it functions now, the CR does not bring additional value to the work of the broader humanitarian emergency assistance community and its respective offices.

The CR was created by OCHA in 1992, following a General Assembly request to "establish a central register of all specialized personnel and teams of technical specialists, as well as relief supplies, equipment and services available within the United Nations system and from Governments and intergovernmental and NGOs that can be called upon at short notice by the United Nations"³. The CR was established as an online tool containing eight directories. Three are comprised of relevant contact persons, and the remaining five are of specific disaster management assets. The CR was expected to serve as a communal directory comprised of user-generated content, accessible by entities providing and acquiring emergency assistance resources. UN agencies, governments, intergovernmental and NGOs are required to first register with the CR. In order to function efficiently and effectively, the CR needs to be updated with relevant, up-to-date and appropriate information regularly by registered users.

² Paragraph nine, GA resolution A/RES/62/92 "International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development".

³ GA Resolution A/RES/46/182 adopted on 19 December 1991.

The review concluded that the CR was used as it was intended on limited occasions, but not often enough to become an integral part of disaster management. Several shortcomings were detected throughout the directories, including out-of-date or incomplete information, irregular contribution of information, the CR being an unknown directory within the humanitarian emergency assistance community and existence of alternative directories or systems. The evaluation concluded that only three directories are actively managed and relevant, signalling an absence of overall management by OCHA.

Given the CR's limitations, countries in need of emergency assistance have used bilateral relations, regional mechanisms and appeals to source emergency assistance. Similarly, entities providing emergency assistance such as governments, NGOs and UN agencies frequently rely on their own mechanisms, existing relationships and networks rather than the CR. The evaluation recommended that OCHA senior management should consider the future of the CR and assess its role in today's emergency assistance processes.

2.2.3 Review of OCHA's Gender Equality Policy

In 2005, OCHA created its Gender Equality Policy (GEP). The policy serves as an umbrella for gender mainstreaming, empowerment of women and girls, implementing and advocating on behalf of the human-rights based approach, prevention and response to gender-based violence, protection from sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian personnel, and gender balance. OCHA also created a dedicated Senior Gender Specialist position in 2006.

A review of the GEP was undertaken to assess its performance thus far. The review evaluated OCHA's efforts to establish gender mainstreaming policies, reflect upon the GEP's relevance, and provide evidence for future revisions to the policy. OCHA has made significant progress in promoting gender equality by creating tools to be used at the HQ and inter-agency levels. Interagency tools include the IASC Gender E-Learning, Gender Equality Toolkit, Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action, Gender Markers, and PSEA Review.

However, the review highlighted that knowledge of the GEP within OCHA is very limited. As reflected in the review, OCHA staff did not think that gender mainstreaming was a priority for the Senior Management Team. Gender mainstreaming was also neglected at the field level due to lack of knowledge and limited staff time available to dedicate to gender mainstreaming. The GEP remains largely a set of guiding principles.

Logically, further implementation of the GEP will need additional resources. The review recommends OCHA first strengthen gender mainstreaming via existing systems, especially during a time of fiscal constraint. Other recommendations include areas to consider in revision of GEP, provisions of training on gender and integration of gender to OCHA's strategic plans and processes.

2.2.4 Evaluation of OCHA Response to the Haiti Earthquake

The devastating earthquake that struck Haiti's capital in January 2010 crushed much of the city, including scores of government and UN officials and critical government infrastructure. As a result, the international community launched a massive response. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs declared the earthquake a, "corporate response," in which all Branches, Sections and Units committed staff as necessary in addition to carrying out core activities. An evaluation was commissioned in line with OCHA's Evaluation Strategy for 2010-2013, which calls for an evaluation of every declared corporate emergency. The evaluation was OCHA specific.

Despite the UN system being gravely impaired, it was still able to deliver a swift humanitarian response. More specifically, the CERF and the Flash Appeal were rapidly prepared and launched by OCHA HQ three days after the earthquake. The appeal was subsequently and quickly funded by donors. Other resources such as military assets and staff deployments were also part of the massive mobilization effort facilitated and supported by OCHA. In addition, OCHA aided rapid cluster coordination at the onset of the crisis.

Coordination and leadership were challenges from the beginning in the chaotic circumstances where much of the local capacity had been destroyed or disrupted, and thousands of humanitarian and faith-based organisations arrived on the scene to provide relief to the affected communities. According to the evaluation, OCHA needs to better explain how and when to transfer responsibilities from the clusters to the government.

Despite these findings, OCHA had a significant role in the response to the earthquake that challenged the entire humanitarian response system.

3. OCHA's Policy Instruction and Guidance on Evaluations

During 2009 and 2010, OCHA developed and approved a Policy Instruction on Evaluations, as well as common Guidelines to follow up to evaluation recommendations.

3.1 Policy Instruction: Evaluations

In June 2010, a policy instruction for evaluations was approved by Emergency Relief Coordinator and Under-Secretary General (USG) for Humanitarian Affairs, John Holmes. The policy seeks to strengthen the institutional framework for the conduct of evaluation activities by OCHA and to establish a common understanding and approach to the function.

The scope of the policy reflects the unique mandate of OCHA as an inter-agency coordination entity. Two types of evaluations are conducted by OCHA at the corporate level. First, internally-mandated evaluations are specific to OCHA and are undertaken at the request of the ERC. These evaluations focus on internal

performance issues. The other type is externally-mandated evaluations which are mandated by bodies external to OCHA such as the UN General Assembly or the Inter Agency Standing Committee and are managed by OCHA's central evaluation function. These evaluations are often of an inter-agency nature requiring a highly collaborative approach to planning and management. External evaluations typically focus on policy and performance issues related to the humanitarian system as a whole.

The policy instruction covers several topics vital to OCHA. These topics include: guiding principles for evaluation within OCHA, internally-mandated evaluations, OCHA participation in externally-mandated evaluations and the application of lessons learned from evaluations. In addition there are policies for the independence of the evaluation function, transparency, disclosure and dissemination of evaluation reports and institutional framework and management accountabilities.

The roles of the Strategic Planning Unit (SPU), Policy and Guidance Management System, Staff Development and Learning, Evaluation Advisory Groups (AG), OCHA Staff, Country and Regional Offices and Evaluation Function as a whole are outlined as they relate to evaluation.

The policy instruction provides an overarching framework of the principles, roles and management accountabilities for evaluation within OCHA. The policy anticipates the following results:

- Greater understanding of the effects of humanitarian intervention on the lives of women, men, girls and boys affected by disasters.
- Improved relevance, definition and implementation of key objectives, strategies and policies related to humanitarian coordination.
- Better resource allocation efficiency within OCHA and across the humanitarian system.
- Improved integration of evaluation as a tool for supporting learning and operational decision including a more rigorous approach to the identification of lessons learned and strengthened longer-term application of lessons learned.
- Enhanced results reporting and accountability at all levels.

Lastly, the policy instruction includes OCHA's Evaluation Strategy for 2010 through 2013. The strategy includes detailed plans for the key areas of internal and system-wide evaluations, evaluation capacity building measures and follow up and use of evaluations. Evaluation activities provide only a limited value added if they are not used in the sense of implementing recommendations and making conceptual use of key findings to strengthen policies and other related decision making processes. More specifically, OCHA seeks to improve the design for tracking evaluation follow up, especially at the level of individual evaluation recommendations which have been accepted or partially accepted by management for implementation. All key areas are included in a timetable detailing OCHA's planned activities for 2010-2013.

3.2 OCHA Guidelines for Management Response and Follow up to Evaluations

To better enhance OCHA's profile as a learning organization, new OCHA Guidelines for Management Response and Follow-up to Evaluations were approved on March 16, 2011 by the ERC/USG Valerie Amos. The purpose of the guidelines is to identify good practices and operating principles for effective follow up to evaluation recommendations and the development of appropriate action plans. In line with OCHA's evaluation policy, compliance with the six-step procedure described in the Guidelines is mandatory. The Guidelines are designed for OCHA-managed evaluations, not joint evaluations.

The Guidelines are intended to aid in the implementation of OCHA's Policy Instruction on Evaluations. Timely integration of learning is important because it prevents recurrent evaluation findings and recommendations. The steps included in the Guidelines explain how to create a MRP, including when each step should be completed by and with whom. After an analysis of best practice across UN agencies, OCHA designed its MRP in a matrix format, requiring feedback from implementing parties to each recommendation (accepted, partially accepted or rejected) as well as a list of actions that the responsible unit(s) commits to taking action on within a fixed period of time. As per the Guidelines, OCHA shall establish a default period of two years from tracking and reporting on the implementation of follow up actions to ensure the costs do not outweigh the benefits.

OCHA's Strategic Planning Unit (SPU) will assume responsibility for tracking and reporting on the implementation of all planned follow up actions. Evaluation MRPs will become part of OCHA's planning and monitoring systems. The recommendations will be translated into outputs and indicators, and implementation will be monitored by Management Task Teams (MTTs) performance frameworks.

4. The use of Evaluation Findings in OCHA

To ensure the usefulness of evaluation activities conducted by OCHA, EGS/OCHA has been making important efforts to ensure the appropriate follow-up to evaluation findings and recommendations. Together with the development of the Management Response Process described in the previous section, EGS/OCHA strives to collect findings and lessons learned from evaluations and disseminate them throughout the various areas of work of the Department. The use of evaluation findings to improve OCHA's learning and performance is exemplified in this chapter.

4.1 OCHA's Strategic Framework

The 2009 OCHA Meta-Evaluation was conducted with the objective to identify recurrent findings, conclusions and recommendations of recent humanitarian evaluations undertaken or relating to OCHA's work, and to assess the quality of management practices for follow-up to evaluation recommendations. An important

objective of the meta-evaluation was to feed into management planning by providing a better understanding and insight of performance areas requiring management attention.

The evaluation has therefore been useful in assisting the development of the 2010-2013 OCHA Strategic Framework. Most of the meta-evaluation findings correlated to the 2007-2009 Strategic Framework, providing evidence that the challenges faced by OCHA are already being recognized. Moreover, most of the recommendations from the meta-evaluation have been built into the 2010-2013 Strategic Framework.

In recent years, OCHA has also developed a more structured approach to strategic planning and guidance throughout the organization. In order to improve overall performance and consistency of processes, the Department has created guidance on a number of critical topics, ranging from field operations to integration. In this process, recommendations from evaluations, after-action reviews and best practices collected through evaluations and studies highlighted a number of recurrent issues crucial to improved performance. These have also helped to identify priority areas for improved organizational development and learning in the coming years.

OCHA has also established MTTs to further drive the implementation of the Strategic Framework. The MTTs provide a practical mechanism to bring HQ, regional and country offices in the Department together around each strategic objective to plan and monitor performance. They help to strengthen accountability, ensure organizational coherence, integrate learning from evaluations and promote innovative approaches to OCHA's work.

4.2 OCHA's Central Register of Disaster Management Capacities

Another example of learning through evaluations is the 2009 Review of OCHA's Central Register of Disaster Management Capacities. This evaluation recommended that managers of the OCHA units directly responsible for the individual directories meet under the leadership of OCHA's Emergency Services Branch (ESB) to reconsider the future of their respective directories. According to ESB staff, after the evaluation, each directory was reconsidered by ESB and decisive action was taken, as recommended in the evaluation. Some directories were altered – for example, the Military and Civil Defence Assets Directory was transformed into a list of relevant focal points instead of a list of military and civil defence assets.

The review also suggested OCHA to consider whether the Major Donors of Emergency Humanitarian Assistance Directory was necessary, given the existence of the Financial Tracking System (FTS). The objective of the directory was to provide data on national and international organizations regularly responding, by contributions in-kind or in cash to the appeals for international assistance launched by the affected countries. As a result of the evaluation recommendation, the directory was integrated into FTS.

Also as a result of the evaluation, ESB decided to discontinue some of the CR directories. For example, the Advanced Technologies for Disaster Response Directory (ATDR) and the Contact Points for Disaster Response (Contact DR) were never fully supported by Member States, and subsequently discontinued. ESB's use of the

evaluation has helped enhance CR's tools, and serves as an excellent example of how OCHA is utilizing evaluation recommendations.

4.3 Turning Lessons into Action

As discussed in previous sections, during 2010 EGS/OCHA identified key lessons learned from evaluations conducted in the Department. Consequently to that, a Senior Management Team (SMT) meeting was convened to outline the actions OCHA intends or has begun to take to translate lessons learned into practice.

OCHA has identified the importance of coordinated contextual analysis and needs assessments in providing an effective response to humanitarian crises. To further improve needs assessment and strong context analysis, OCHA has led the development of the Humanitarian Dashboard and coordinating efforts with other UN agencies. The Dashboard is a platform to consolidate, in real-time, and communicate humanitarian needs assessment and other key information from across sectors to better inform decision making.

Similarly, the SMT recognized that OCHA's humanitarian financing instruments have proven extremely valuable in allocating resources, but can be further enhanced with proper review of needs and existing local capacities.

Having acknowledged that strong leadership remains an important aspect of humanitarian response and that in some responses during 2010 OCHA was not able to deploy experienced leaders or there were gaps in leadership, OCHA has recently taken the necessary steps to ensure strong and stable top leadership in Libya, and has begun developing a comprehensive human resources strategy to attract the right talent and skill sets needed. The strategy will be completed by the end of 2011.

In addition to better needs assessments, context analyses, and strong leadership, OCHA is working to create even preparedness among humanitarian actors. To address this, OCHA will pilot an approach measuring the impact of preparedness work on response outcomes. More specifically, OCHA will identify measurable deliverables more frequently and consistently. Preparedness also hinges on IM. Existing guidance hasn't been sufficiently disseminated and understood. In 2011, OCHA will use existing OCHA inter-agency policy and guidance to develop performance frameworks at the Country and Regional Office level.

The Cluster Evaluation Phase Two provided recommendations to further improve the implementation of the cluster approach. This is an important evaluation for OCHA, given its a critical role in the success of inter-cluster coordination. In line with the Guidelines for Management Response and Follow Up, a MRP was designed by OCHA's Senior Management Team (SMT), which reviewed the recommendations directed at OCHA with three roles guiding their decisions. These roles include: providing guidance and an appropriate normative framework, ensuring OCHA's own capacity and defining the humanitarian architecture and the accountability between the component parts of the architecture.

4.4 Follow-up to IA-RTEs recommendations

According to the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) approved *IA RTE Procedures and Methodologies*⁴, the ERC as the chair of the IASC, and the HC of the country in which the IA RTE is carried out are the overall owners of the IA RTE process and deliveries. They are therefore responsible for ensuring a management response to the recommendations, including actions from the Cluster Lead Agencies (CLA) and partners of the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT).

Currently, the RTEs completed in 2009 and 2010 are at varying stages of follow up. In the case of the RTE to Pakistan's 2010 Flood Crisis, the evaluation team visited Pakistan twice. During the second visit workshops with key stakeholders were held to validate and prioritize recommendations presented in the draft report. The recommendations have been assigned to the organizations responsible for their subsequent implementation. Similarly, the HCT has nominated Focal Points and established working groups to implement action plans on recommendations and to draft an MRP. Initially following the 2009 evaluation, the HCT did not have the capacity to develop a management response matrix (MRM) because of the flood crisis. In both cases, the HCT has taken responsibility for the recommendations, as per the *IA RTE Procedures and Methodologies*.

5. Conclusion

The previous pages describe the efforts that OCHA has been making to develop and support its evaluation function. Important milestones, such as the Development of the OCHA Policy Instruction on Evaluations and the Guidance document on the Follow up to Evaluation recommendations, have been achieved. Continued efforts are also being made to integrate evaluation findings and lessons into OCHA's Strategic Planning, and the planning of new crises and emergencies. OCHA intends to continue these efforts in the future, to ensure the dual objective of evaluations –accountability and learning – help all its components perform at its best in the future.

⁴ IA RTE Procedures and Methodologies Developed by the IA RTE Support Group, 16, July 2010.