

Evaluation of ReliefWeb

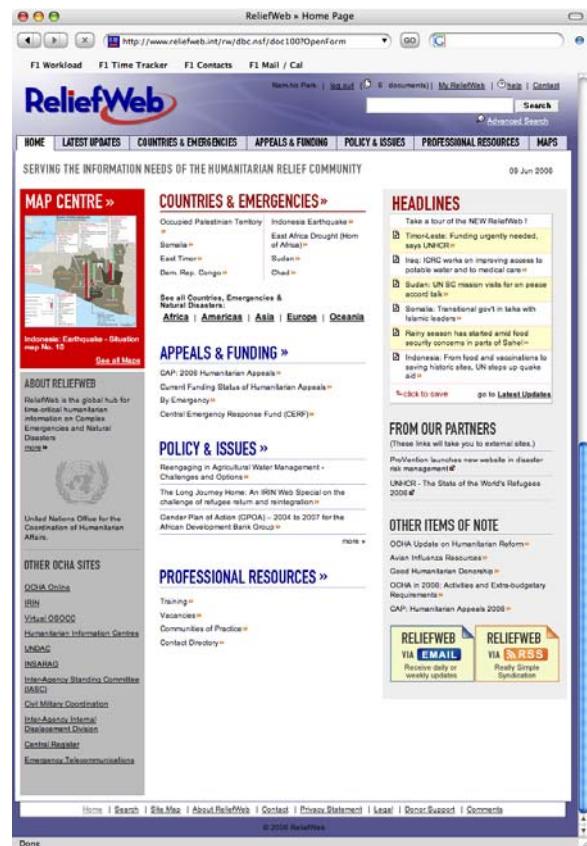


<http://www.reliefweb.int>

Prepared for Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, United Nations

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The opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, with the exception of Appendix H: Management Response Matrix

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Acronyms

CLG	Core Learning Group
DfID	Department for International Development
ECHO	Humanitarian Aid Department of the European Commission
FIS	Field Information Support / OCHA
HIC	Humanitarian Information Center
HIN	Humanitarian Information Network
HQ	Headquarters
HTML	Hypertext Markup Language
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IRIN	UN Integrated Regional Information Networks
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance
PDF	Portable Document Format
RSS	Really Simple Syndication or Rich Site Syndication
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Background

The evaluation was initiated by the United Nation's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA): i) to assess whether the ReliefWeb web site project meets the needs of its target audiences in an efficient and effective manner, in line with its mandate; ii) to provide accountability to donors, OCHA management and users; and iii) to provide clear recommendations and lessons learned for the future direction of the project and its products and services.

ReliefWeb is a ten-year old web site project that consolidates information from many sources about humanitarian emergencies and disasters. ReliefWeb was created in 1996 by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), growing out of a broad consensus in the early 1990s about the need for a clearinghouse for humanitarian information to enable decision makers in the field and at headquarters to make informed decisions. ReliefWeb was endorsed by the UN General Assembly in 1997 Resolution 51/194¹, and affirmed again in 2003 Resolution 57/153². The mandate of ReliefWeb is:

“...to strengthen the response capacity of the humanitarian relief community through the timely dissemination of reliable information on response, preparedness, and disaster prevention. This is accomplished by providing guaranteed access to time critical reports, maps and financial contributions to both decision makers at headquarters and to relief teams in the field.”³

The site has grown steadily in usage and functionality since its inception, and now provides a major repository of situation reports, policy documents, maps, information on relief contributions, training resources, job vacancy announcements, and other resources. The content on ReliefWeb can be accessed on the web site and via email alerts according to specific issues, countries and regions. In the past five years the use of ReliefWeb has grown from about 50,000 “page views” per average weekday to about 200,000. The number of subscribers to ReliefWeb's email alert services has grown from about 45,000 in 2003 to about 130,000 today. ReliefWeb is highly visible on the web, and is one of the most prominent sites on the internet today on issues of humanitarian relief.

ReliefWeb is run by a team of 23 individuals located in offices in three different time zones - New York, Geneva, and Kobe. This three-office approach enables ReliefWeb to track and post new information on a 24-hour cycle. ReliefWeb staff reviews hundreds of web sites and email alerts on a daily basis to collect information which is then vetted for quality and posted on ReliefWeb. In 2005 ReliefWeb staff posted an average of about 160 documents each weekday for a total of 39,000 documents for that year. Of these documents posted, some 80% were collected by ReliefWeb staff scanning the web, and the other 20% submitted to ReliefWeb by “content partners”.

¹ “The General Assembly...requests the Secretary-General to further develop ReliefWeb as the global humanitarian information system for the dissemination of reliable and timely information on emergencies and natural disasters, and encourages all Governments, the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and other relevant organizations, including non-governmental organizations, to support ReliefWeb and actively participate in the ReliefWeb information exchange, through the Department of Humanitarian Affairs.”

² <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/hlp.nsf/db900ByKey/GA57153?OpenDocument>

³ ReliefWeb Project Description – Draft Version 1,0 – Dec 18, 2005

ReliefWeb has regularly enhanced its services over the past ten years, most recently with the completion of a major redesign and improvements to site features in 2005. Previously, in 2001 ReliefWeb added email alerts to provide automated notification of new documents and job vacancies; in 2005 ReliefWeb also added RSS feeds (Really Simple Syndication) which allows web users and other web sites to track new information posted to ReliefWeb; and in 2006 ReliefWeb is undertaking enhancements to the technical infrastructure for the site.

The core operating budget for ReliefWeb is about USD 2,000,000 (2005), all of which is contributed by donors. In 2005 six donors contributed more than USD 200,000 each, including the USA, Japan, Norway, Sweden, ECHO, and UK. Over the life of the project a total of 13 countries have made contributions to ReliefWeb, with the USA the major founding donor and the largest overall contributor.

1.2 Evaluation Approach

The evaluation team used a combination of broad audience surveys, detailed in-person interviews, and its own expert review and judgment to assess the usage, value and success of ReliefWeb. It surveyed more than 1,300 ReliefWeb users working in more than 139 countries and about 80 “content partners” residing in 31 countries. It conducted about 50 face-to-face discussions with a total of more than 150 individuals across Nairobi, Geneva, London, Washington, Brussels and New York. These discussions also included phone-based interviews with groups of humanitarian workers at Regional Office locations in Dakar, Panama, Bangkok and Kobe. The evaluation team also used its expert judgment on the performance and operation of ReliefWeb, drawing on the team’s experience in building and managing web sites on international policy issues.

The major findings of the evaluation are presented here:

1.3 Users and Usage

ReliefWeb is generally reaching its target audience of humanitarian workers, and in particular decision makers, at UN agencies, NGOs and other international organizations, and governments. Users surveyed reported residing in 139 countries, with 33% of them working with International NGOs, 16% with UN agencies, 11% with governments, and 9% with National/Local NGOs. ReliefWeb is reaching and serving decision makers, with 29% of users reporting that they are working as a “program manager” or “senior manager/policy maker”. About 9% of users surveyed report being “Relief worker/field level” (and the proportion is likely higher). In terms of geographic focus, 37% of users surveyed report that the focus of their work is on issues in Africa.

The usage of ReliefWeb has grown strongly over the past ten years and shows good user loyalty. Overall site usage has increased in the past five years from about 50,000 page views per weekday to about 200,000. User loyalty is strong, with about 70% of the users surveyed reporting that they visit the site at least once a week – and this is consistent across NGO, government, and UN audiences. They also report using ReliefWeb more than they use web sites like BBC News, IRIN News, and AlertNet. Users report several valuable functions that ReliefWeb provides for them, namely:

- **A “one-stop shop” for humanitarian information**, to enable people to stay on top of the developments of the various organizations working in a region or a country.
- **The humanitarian perspective on situations**, going further than the typical media sources - to explore and explain the humanitarian implications of events.

- **A complete repository and archive of background information**, to support, for example, research in preparation for mission planning, or triangulating in writing a situation report.
- **Visibility to relief organizations**, sharing with peer organizations and with donors the work of relief organizations, and importantly, their smaller partners.

There are, of course, people not now using ReliefWeb across all types of organizations in the humanitarian sector. The evaluation team cannot quantify the size of this group, but describes here some typical characteristics of “non-users”:

- **National-level staff of governments and NGOs.** The non-users in these organizations may not be aware of ReliefWeb, may lack reliable and affordable internet access, and/or find it difficult to use an English-based web site like ReliefWeb.
- **International NGO staff at HQ or Regional Levels.** The non-users here in fact read ReliefWeb’s job vacancy emails, but rarely use the site for anything else, saying that it does not provide them anything special beyond what they can get elsewhere. They value getting information directly “from the source” and also from a wide range of views – beyond the UN and other major players.
- **Managers and Decision Makers.** These non-users are managers who suffer from information overload, and struggle to stay on top of all the information that flows their way. Earlier in their careers they used ReliefWeb regularly, but do not now have the patience to wade through all the information it provides, and so rely on their staff to send to them what is relevant.

1.4 Products and Services

“Job Vacancies” is the most popular service on ReliefWeb, receiving 35% of all ReliefWeb site traffic and a large share of all email subscribers. Because humanitarian jobs are often short-duration and urgent, the Job Vacancies listing and emails are widely seen as very valuable operational support for the humanitarian sector.

Other services on ReliefWeb that are highly valued include those which provide timely information – Latest Updates, Email Alerts, Headlines, and also Country Pages. The maps on ReliefWeb are also widely used and recognized as valuable.

Users report that additional services they would like from ReliefWeb include: analysis of situations to highlight what is most relevant and important; information on “who is doing what, where”; materials from National/Local NGOs; and content in languages other than English.

ReliefWeb users are generally satisfied that they can find what they are looking for on the site (60%), but there are some problems that hinder them. Users commented that the homepage layout does not provide enough timely information, that site performance is slow and unpredictable, and that some resources (especially maps) are slow to download. They also commented that the popular email alerts for Job Vacancies and other information are not organized in a useful manner.

In terms of the completeness of its coverage of specific issues, ReliefWeb does cover regional issues reasonably well, but its primarily English language-focus reduces its usage by regional audiences, according to users. The evaluation team also found that ReliefWeb provides little formal coverage of early warning issues.

1.5 User Perceptions of ReliefWeb Quality

ReliefWeb is viewed very highly by users in terms of the credibility and reliability of its information. 80% of users surveyed gave it a positive score for credibility and reliability. They appreciate the quality of the information posted and the fact that sources are very clearly cited. (See) ReliefWeb is also viewed highly for its neutrality and independence. Most respondents stated that ReliefWeb was timely in providing the humanitarian dimension of issues; some commenters were less positive, stating that ReliefWeb was not timely in comparison to news services like the BBC and AlertNet.

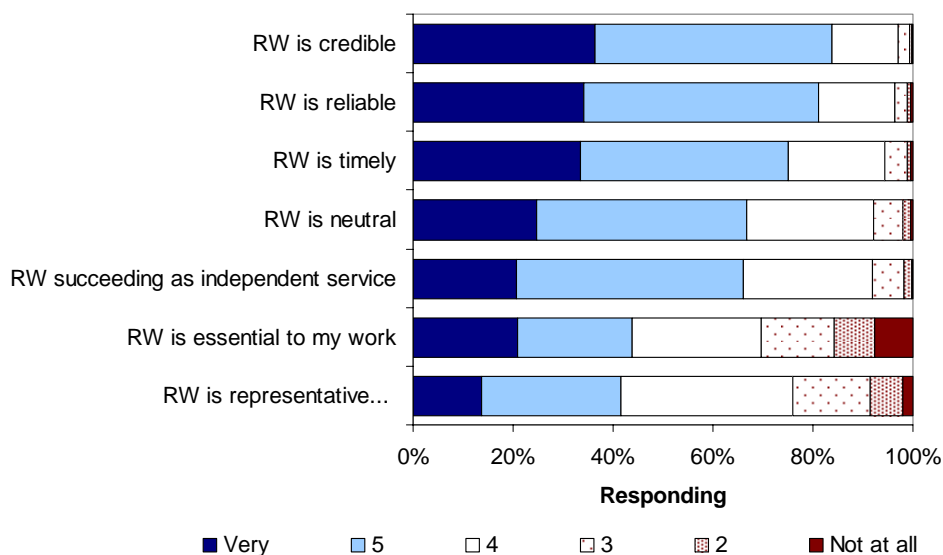


Figure 15: User Perceptions about ReliefWeb Content

ReliefWeb is not viewed as favorably for the representativeness of the information it provides. Only 42% of survey respondents rated ReliefWeb as positive for being representative of the “whole humanitarian community,” lower than the ratings of other quality characteristics. Many users noted that ReliefWeb represented well the traditional players in the humanitarian community - the UN agencies, large NGOs, and governments. However, they did not think ReliefWeb adequately included content from smaller NGOs, especially those at the national and local level and those working in languages other than English.

1.6 Partnerships

ReliefWeb depends almost exclusively on other humanitarian organizations for the content that it posts. In 2005 ReliefWeb posted 39,000 “response documents” to the site from 787 “content partner” sources, not counting other resources and job vacancies. This content comes from a range of news and humanitarian organizations, but disproportionately from a few large news services. In 2005, one third of all content came from four news media sources, and 50% came from the top 16 sources. The “content partner” relationship with ReliefWeb is largely passive, as ReliefWeb itself identifies and posts about 80% of the content on the site with little involvement of the partner. The majority of partners are not aware of the process and standards for publishing content to ReliefWeb, and ReliefWeb outreach to partners has been limited in recent years.

ReliefWeb content partners report strong value from having their materials on ReliefWeb, especially with regard to visibility in the humanitarian community and with donors. Partners report that they would be

more proactive in sharing content with ReliefWeb if they could see data on the level of user traffic to ReliefWeb and to their own content on ReliefWeb.

1.7 OCHA, ReliefWeb and Other Online Services

OCHA receives a lot of value from the service that ReliefWeb provides to OCHA staff – timely information on humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters. OCHA staff and UN staff are among the heaviest users of ReliefWeb across sub-audiences. OCHA is also a major source of content for ReliefWeb, ranking as the 7th largest. That content is, however, collected and posted by ReliefWeb staff, and OCHA staff does not generally see submitting content to ReliefWeb as a part of their job nor as something that will help them carry out their work.

There is some sharing of content between ReliefWeb and other OCHA projects, but the evaluation team sees scope for more. ReliefWeb staff manually collects and republishes a large amount of content every week from the IRIN News web site, an OCHA project. Also, ReliefWeb's RSS feed is used by OCHA online to provide dynamic content on some country pages. Other than that, there is only limited cross linking between the different OCHA sites including the HICs. ReliefWeb and other information providers could benefit from more aggressive integration of content to complement each others' strengths.

Outside of OCHA, ReliefWeb collects a large share of content from other humanitarian and news organizations. ReliefWeb's RSS feeds are also picked-up and republished up by a number of other web sites. ReliefWeb does not actively cooperate with its largest content sources to more actively (and automatically) share information or services online.

1.8 Management

Over the past six years of ReliefWeb's operations (2000-2005) the output of the site has expanded and its operations have become more efficient:

- Output has more than doubled, from 16,000 to 39,000 documents posted per year, while usage has grown more than four fold, to more than 200,000 page views per average weekday.
- Budgets have risen about 1/3, from USD 1,500,000 to 2,000,000, and staffing has increased from 6 to 10 permanent positions, and a current total team of 23 individuals.

The financial sustainability of ReliefWeb appears strong, with a growing core group of donors - six donors in 2005 who each gave at least USD 200,000. A majority of donors are positive about the service ReliefWeb provides and are likely to continue support for it. ReliefWeb has its budget requests fully funded in 2004 and 2005, but it did require considerable effort by ReliefWeb. Some donors are interested in seeing ReliefWeb focus its future efforts on serving regional and local level audiences, especially practitioners and field-level decision makers; they view ReliefWeb now as better serving headquarters-based staff. Some donors also recommend closer coordination of ReliefWeb and other OCHA online efforts.

The ongoing performance and growth of ReliefWeb is hindered by three related management factors – staffing, the content collection process, and the site technology. In terms of staffing, ReliefWeb currently has a staff of about 23 individuals; this now includes roughly eight to ten “non short-term” positions, about eight short-term positions, and from one to five interns. Because of the reliance on short-term and intern positions, ReliefWeb managers reported having to spend a substantial amount of time in recruiting and training staff – detracting from key needs such as building content partner relations and improving the technical infrastructure of the site. In terms of the content collection, the current process is labor intensive

with some 80% of the content being collected by ReliefWeb staff with little active content partner participation. “Content partner” relationships are generally passive and a critical area for improving the efficiency of the project and the representativeness of its content. In terms of the site technology, users are seeing performance problems that indicate shortcomings with the underlying technology of the site; the technology also hinders the ability of ReliefWeb to improve and enhance site features.

1.9 Mandate and Mission

ReliefWeb is generally fulfilling its mandate and mission, doing well at disseminating timely information on humanitarian issues, serving decision-makers at headquarters, and strengthening the humanitarian community response capacity. ReliefWeb is doing less well at disseminating information on preparedness and disaster prevention, disseminating quick-to-download maps, providing access to reliable financial information, and reaching and serving field-based humanitarian workers. Overall, ReliefWeb is meeting well its mission statement of “Serving the information needs of the humanitarian community,” though it could better serve the needs by addressing the shortcomings listed above. Finally, it is clear that ReliefWeb’s mandate and mission are still relevant and important today to the humanitarian community.

1.10 Recommendations

The evaluation team outlines here five major recommendations to improve the value of ReliefWeb to the humanitarian community; an overall vision for the value of its services, partnership growth, audience growth, improving its products and services, and strengthening the management capacity for the project.

1.10.1 Increase Value to Information Shared on ReliefWeb

An important theme over all the recommendations is that to increase the value of ReliefWeb it must become a more essential tool for decision-making at both headquarters and field levels. To do this ReliefWeb must build on top of its core content foundation to provide a layer of insights and analyses. Users greatly value this aggregation role that ReliefWeb plays and want it to continue. But decision-makers, in particular, express a need for insights to help them understand what is most relevant, what is most important, and what is most critical on an issue. This “framing of the issues” should be done by highlighting information from across the body of content on ReliefWeb to provide key insights for these decision-makers. (See Table 11 below.)


Increasing Value to User 	Aggregate Information	Mechanical	Screening
	Frame the Issue	Insightful	Highlighting
	Shape Response	Influential	Analyzing

Table 1 “Information Value” Strategies

ReliefWeb should, in the immediate term, increase its value to decision-makers by moving to provide services more consistently at this second level, either through editorial highlighting of “issues we’re watching this month”, or showing data on “most read documents this week,” or “where are the job postings this month?” ReliefWeb should expand its relationships with partners who can provide more analysis, and take advantage of OCHA’s analytic capacity to develop and post analysis.

1.10.2 Partnership Growth

ReliefWeb needs to expand the scope and the quality of its content partnerships. Expanded partnerships will help improve the value of ReliefWeb and user perceptions of its quality by enhancing the representativeness of its content. More active efforts by partners will also improve the efficiency of the ReliefWeb project.

- ReliefWeb should conduct more aggressive outreach and training to partners at the headquarters and regional level. This should include having a dedicated ReliefWeb focal point in regional offices to conduct outreach and promotion and ongoing partner relationship management.
- ReliefWeb should enlist content partners to be more proactive by providing them easy technical tools to manage their own content on ReliefWeb and data on the readership of their content.
- ReliefWeb should publish clearly defined policies and guidelines to inform users of editorial procedures and decision-making, and to share standards with content partners.
- ReliefWeb should play a leading role in the sector to expand content sharing by developing and using content standards for common humanitarian information. ReliefWeb should explore using “micro formats” for standard types of humanitarian content (situation reports, maps, jobs, etc). These have the potential to enhance the efficiency of ReliefWeb’s own content collection process, and also to enable wider sharing of ReliefWeb content across other humanitarian web sites. ReliefWeb can do this unilaterally and allow other organizations to build off of it.

1.10.3 Audience Growth

ReliefWeb needs better to reach non-users within its target audiences as well as those using only a very limited portion of the site. This will help ReliefWeb support underserved field audiences and become more essential in the humanitarian community.

- ReliefWeb should improve access to its content for people with slow internet access, by making the site perform more quickly and in text-only mode, by reducing the size of maps, and by making all resources accessible by email query.
- ReliefWeb should conduct stronger promotion of the services it provides, for example through home page features, or highlighting in the weekly Job Vacancy emails what is the latest content available on ReliefWeb.

1.10.4 Products and Services Improvement

ReliefWeb should extend the value of its products and services to benefit current users and also to help expand its user base. The recommended improvements to products and services are:

- ReliefWeb should provide users with the ability to customize how they get information from the site, such as the home page, region and sector pages, and email services.
- ReliefWeb should partner with specialized information services to incorporate automated news feeds or other information to ReliefWeb. This will reduce time spent on collecting information from some of the larger ReliefWeb content partners.
- ReliefWeb should improve the layout of email messages sent to subscribers to make them easier to browse, and to better direct users to more detailed information on ReliefWeb and partner sites.

- ReliefWeb should provide data to make it easier for users to understand the value of information on ReliefWeb. For example, this could include showing: “most read documents” on a topic, or showing a count of most recent content by region or topic.
- ReliefWeb should expand the multi-lingual content it provides on the site by inviting such materials from partners, and by enabling users to find content by “language” on the site.
- OCHA AIMB should more aggressively integrate its information management and online efforts, to promote, as a rule, interoperability between information systems (e.g. HICs, OCHA Online and OCHA country office websites, and others).

1.10.5 Management Strengthening

The ReliefWeb management systems and capacity need to be expanded in some critical ways. The benefit of doing this will be greater value to the humanitarian community through better site performance and expansion of new services:

- ReliefWeb should recruit a larger core of permanent staff and reduce its reliance on short-term (GTA) staffing for core functions. This is critical to allow ReliefWeb to make important long-term investments in expanding the value of its services.
- ReliefWeb should reduce the amount of staff time spent on routine content posting, through better content posting tools and expanded partner relations.
- ReliefWeb needs additional technical staff working full time on the project to make ongoing improvements to and innovations on the site.
- ReliefWeb should establish 365/24/7 technical support for its web server infrastructure.
- ReliefWeb and ITS should complete the planned 2006 technical improvements, and afterwards continue to evaluate how well the current platform will meet planned growth needs.

2. Introduction to the Evaluation

2.1 ReliefWeb History

ReliefWeb is an internet-based resource that serves the humanitarian relief community by consolidating a wide range of publicly available information about complex emergencies and natural disasters.

ReliefWeb seeks to be the world's leading online gateway to such information, providing updates 24 hours a day on ongoing emergency situations as well as maps, financial contribution information, humanitarian policy documents, professional training and development resources, job vacancy listings and more. ReliefWeb is designed to assist the international humanitarian community in effective delivery of emergency assistance by providing timely, reliable and relevant information as events unfold – while also covering "forgotten emergencies" and countries of concern.

ReliefWeb was launched in October 1996 by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) as a service to the humanitarian community at-large. There was a growing consensus in the early 1990s of the need for a centralized humanitarian information clearinghouse to help decision makers in the field and at headquarters to make better decisions, and this need was highlighted by the Great Lakes crisis. The UN General Assembly endorsed the creation of ReliefWeb in 1997 Resolution 51/194, encouraging humanitarian information exchange by governments, relief agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In 2003 Resolution 57/153, the General Assembly reiterated the importance of ReliefWeb to aid in information sharing for emergencies.

ReliefWeb usage has grown steadily since its inception. In the first year of operations, the site received just over one million hits. By 2002, ReliefWeb was receiving 1 million hits per week, and by 2005, shortly after the South Asia Tsunami disaster, the site received an average of 3 million hits per day. Email services started in 2001, increased to 45,000 subscribers in 2003, and to over 130,000 today.

The project operates from three offices in different time zones (New York, Geneva, and Kobe), allowing updating on a 24-hour cycle. The project is supported by a budget of around USD 2 million (2005), the bulk of which is supported by voluntary contributions by donors. Over its ten years ReliefWeb has been regularly enhanced and upgraded, including a major redesign of layout and services which was completed in January 2005.

With ReliefWeb's 10-year anniversary and the completion of the major 2005 redesign, OCHA decided it was a timely opportunity to review ReliefWeb's performance and future challenges and opportunities. OCHA commissioned this evaluation to address these issues.

2.2 Evaluation Purpose and Context

The broad questions the evaluation is intended to answer were defined by OCHA as to:

- Assess whether ReliefWeb meets the needs of the target audience in an efficient and effective manner and in line with its mandate;
- Provide accountability to donors, OCHA management and users;
- Provide clear recommendations and lessons learned in order to help determine the future direction of the project and its products and services.

The detailed issues identified by OCHA to guide the evaluation include:

1. **Mandate, Institutional Role and Partnerships:** Does the current version of ReliefWeb fulfill its mandate and its vision? Is the mission statement still suitable? What are ReliefWeb's relations with other information providers within the humanitarian community? Is ReliefWeb effectively used by other OCHA offices and does it bring value-added to OCHA's mission?
2. **Credibility, Trust, Independence:** What is the level of trust in and credibility of ReliefWeb? To what extent has ReliefWeb been able to protect its editorial independence? Is there a need for changes in ReliefWeb's principles and standards?
3. **Impact, Content and Quality:** Has ReliefWeb been able to effectively and efficiently provide timely, relevant and high quality information to its target groups? What has been the impact of ReliefWeb in assisting the international humanitarian community? Do organizations feel compelled to submit information to the site?
4. **Usership and Usability:** Do ReliefWeb's information architecture, interaction design and visual design meet target audience expectations and needs? What changes should be made to improve target audience experience? What gaps exist in information and analysis which may make target audiences' decision making more efficient?
5. **Products and Services:** How well do ReliefWeb products and services meet target audience needs? Are there any products or services that could be added or removed? What is the value-added of the current products and services?
6. **Future and Sustainability:** Is there scope for ReliefWeb to be further consolidated, expanded, or organizationally realigned? Is ReliefWeb's funding base sustainable and what other funding options could be drawn on? Are ReliefWeb locations appropriate and do they provide adequate coverage of emergencies and disasters around the world? Are the costs of running ReliefWeb in line with the outputs and impact? What is the status and prospect of the server infrastructure, information technology and support used by ReliefWeb?

2.3 Evaluation Team

In 2006 OCHA commissioned an external evaluation of ReliefWeb and selected a team of two consultants, Chris Wolz and Nam-ho Park. Chris Wolz is President/CEO of Forum One Communications (www.forumone.com) and has led internet strategic evaluations for clients including the World Bank / PovertyNet, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Council of La Raza, the Education Reform Initiative of the Supreme Education Council of Qatar, the Economic Research Service of the US Department of Agriculture and others. Chris also brings experience in international development, having worked four years in Nepal in water supply engineering and project evaluation for UNICEF, CARE, and the US Peace Corps. Chris has a degree in Civil and Environmental Engineering from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and a Master's in Public Policy from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. Nam-ho Park is Managing Director for User Experience at Forum One Communications and an expert at audience needs analysis and information architecture. He has consulted to the Center for Global Development, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Council of La Raza, the African Wildlife Foundation, and others. He has over six years of experience in information architecture, has served as an Adjunct Assistant Professor in digital design at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, and holds a Master of Architecture degree from Columbia University and a B.S. from Yonsei University, Seoul, Korea.

3. Methodology

3.1 Scope of the Evaluation

The scope of the evaluation is outlined in detail in the Inception Report (Appendix A), including several key themes, specifically:

- How well is ReliefWeb supporting the humanitarian community? Is the community using ReliefWeb, for what, and with what impact?
- What is the perceived quality of ReliefWeb as a source of valuable information?
- Do users perceive ReliefWeb as providing an independent viewpoint and credible information?
- What is the institutional role of ReliefWeb within OCHA? Does ReliefWeb bring added value to the mandate and mission of OCHA?
- How can the value and impact of ReliefWeb be improved?

3.2 Research Approach

The evaluation team used a combination of broad audience surveys, detailed in-person interviews, and its own expert review and judgment to assess the usage, value and success of ReliefWeb. The evaluation team surveyed more than 1,300 ReliefWeb users working in 139 countries, and about 80 “content partners” working in 31 countries. They conducted phone-based discussion groups with four groups of humanitarian workers at Regional Office locations in Dakar, Panama, Bangkok and Kobe. They conducted about 50 face-to-face discussions with a total of more than 150 individuals across Nairobi, Geneva, London, Washington, Brussels and New York. They also used their expert judgment in assessing the performance of ReliefWeb. The Inception Report provides a detailed description of the approach used, and is in Appendix A. In brief:

User Surveys: The evaluation team conducted two web-based surveys to collect input from two audience groups associated with ReliefWeb – ReliefWeb email subscribers, and content partners. The survey of ReliefWeb email subscribers asked subscribers about how they use ReliefWeb today, what they find valuable, what are their perceptions of ReliefWeb and how ReliefWeb could better support them in their work, among other questions. The voluntary survey consisted of 21 questions - multiple choice, 1-6 rating, and open-text - designed so that it could be completed within about 10 minutes. The team sent an email invitation (and two follow-up reminders) to a random sample of 13,000 of ReliefWeb’s current 130,000 email subscribers. A total of 1333 respondents completed the survey, a 10% response rate. The survey questions are listed in Appendix E.

The evaluation team also developed a survey for ReliefWeb “content partners” who were identified as representatives of organizations whose content or vacancies had been posted to ReliefWeb in 2005. The evaluation team sent the email invitation (and two reminders) to 1768 partners, and 72 responded, for a 4% response rate. The survey questions are listed in Appendix F.

In-Depth Interviews: The evaluation team conducted about 50 interview sessions with humanitarian professionals across a range of organizations and locations. In these sessions the team explored whether and how people use ReliefWeb and other information services, what are their perceptions about ReliefWeb, what are their information needs, and how ReliefWeb could be made more valuable to them in their work. The sessions generally lasted from 60 – 90 minutes, and generally included from one to four

individuals, with a few sessions having up to eight, 12 and 15 people. The evaluation team worked with OCHA and ReliefWeb staff to identify candidates for the interviews that represented a range of humanitarian organizations and professional roles, as discussed in the Inception Report (Appendix A). The evaluation team conducted the interview sessions in Geneva, Brussels, London, Washington, DC, New York, and Nairobi. The evaluation team facilitated the sessions using a standard interview script (see Appendix B).

Virtual Discussion Group Consultations: The evaluation team also conducted four virtual discussion groups via telephone with teams located in Dakar, Panama, Bangkok and Kobe. These sessions were conducted to broaden the geographic scope of the interviews. OCHA Regional office staff helped organize these sessions, each of which included a mix of four to eight humanitarian professionals from OCHA, other UN agencies, international NGOs, national/local NGOs, educational organizations, consultants and others. In these 60-90 minute sessions the evaluation team again used its standard interview script.

Overall, the evaluation team conducted about 50 interview (and discussion) sessions with about 150 humanitarian professionals, across these sectors:

Interviewees by Sector: 152 total	
NGO	34
Government	30
OCHA	26
Red Cross movement	24
ReliefWeb	18
Media	10
UN	9
Academic	1

Table 2 Evaluation Interviewee Breakdown

Management Research: The evaluation team conducted several in-depth discussion sessions with ReliefWeb managers and OCHA managers in New York and Geneva about ReliefWeb staffing, OCHA interactions with ReliefWeb, budget and funding issues, organizational issues, and technology infrastructure.

ReliefWeb Usage: The evaluation team collected from OCHA statistics from its web servers and content databases about the usage and composition of ReliefWeb.

ReliefWeb Performance: The evaluation team also used its expert judgment in reviewing the ReliefWeb site and how well it functions in comparison to current best practices for web sites.

3.3 Analytic Approach

The evaluation team relied on the several sources of information and analytic approaches to address the specific questions of this evaluation. In brief:

Data on ReliefWeb Utilization, Performance and Management: The evaluation team analyzed quantitative data about ReliefWeb utilization, performance and management to inform the findings. These objective data came from web servers and budget and staffing documents.

Data from Subscriber and Content Partner Surveys: The evaluation team collected and analyzed quantitative data on the responses of known ReliefWeb users – both subscribers and content partners.

These data provide a broad-base global perspective on how ReliefWeb is used and perceived by these known users. Respondents also provided in the surveys open-text comments about various issues which are used to illuminate the survey data.

The survey questionnaires were a combination of multiple choice, ranking and open-text questions. Many of the survey questions were based on a six-point rating scale (6=most positive, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1=most negative). The results are used to show the percentage of respondents who rated a positive score (rated 6 or 5), and the percentage of respondents who rated a negative score (rated 2 or 1) (see Figure 1 below.) Scores of 4 or 3 were generally not included in the analysis, in order to accentuate the positive and negative user perceptions.

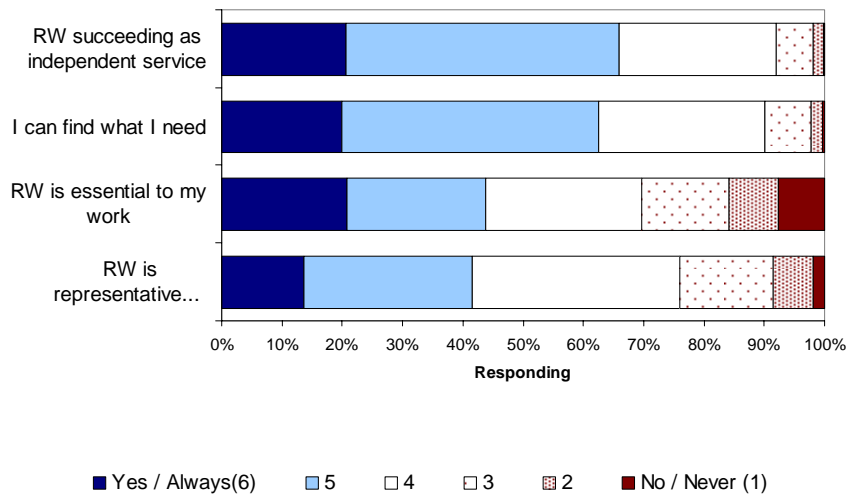


Figure 1: “ReliefWeb strives to be an independent humanitarian information service. Do you think it is succeeding?”

Information from Interviews: The evaluation team compiled (confidential) notes from the more than 50 interview sessions and virtual discussion groups. The information from these sessions was used to validate the survey findings and to add context and depth to findings from the survey. The findings from these interviews were very important to balance the user survey results with the views of non-users of ReliefWeb.

Expert Assessment: The evaluation team has also used its own judgment, drawing on its considerable experience in conducting web operations assessments and in building and running web sites. Where the evaluation team is basing a finding on its own judgment, this is made clear in the text.

3.4 Stakeholders

A number of individuals and organizations played key roles in supporting the evaluation, specifically:

- OCHA Evaluation Studies Unit (ESU): Associate Evaluation Officer Stig Kjeldsen provided guidance, direction and administrative support for planning, scheduling and executing the evaluation.
- OCHA/ReliefWeb senior managers: The senior staff of ReliefWeb advised the evaluation team and reviewed in detail specific elements of the evaluation process, specifically ReliefWeb

Coordinator Helga Leifsdottir, ReliefWeb Technical Project Manager Craig Duncan and ReliefWeb New York Managing Editor Sebastian Naidoo.

- Core Learning Group: OCHA ESU assembled a group of key stakeholders to serve a consultative role through the evaluation process. The CLG consulted with the evaluation team three times during the course of the review (in meetings or conference calls) and provided feedback at several stages of the evaluation. The CLG consisted of: Systems Analyst Tor Bothner (OCHA), ReliefWeb Technical Project Manager Craig Duncan (OCHA), Operations Coordinator Elizabeth Gilliland (OCHA), Section Chief Alta Haggarty (OCHA), Associate Evaluation Officer Stig Kjeldsen (OCHA), ReliefWeb Coordinator Helga Leifsdottir (OCHA), ReliefWeb New York Managing Editor Sebastian Naidoo (OCHA), Humanitarian Officer Montse Pantaleoni-Giralt (ECHO), First Secretary Shigeyuki Shimamori (Permanent Mission of Japan to the UN), and Development Officer Sarah Telford (DfID), as well as the evaluation team of Chris Wolz and Nam-ho Park.
- ReliefWeb / Geneva: Craig Duncan and Adrian Ciancio helped the evaluation team to contact and schedule meetings with a number of humanitarian professionals in Geneva.
- OCHA / ReliefWeb staff: Many other ReliefWeb staff in Geneva, Kobe and New York provided valuable support to the evaluation team.
- OCHA staff / Regional Offices: OCHA staff in Dakar, Bangkok, Panama and Kobe organized small groups of humanitarian professionals for telephone-based “virtual consultation” discussions.
- OCHA staff / Nairobi Regional Office: Belinda Holdsworth of OCHA/Nairobi helped organize meetings with a number of humanitarian professionals in Nairobi, May 25-28, 2006.
- Donors: The evaluation team met with representatives of a number of ReliefWeb’s donor governments, including Denmark, European Commission, Sweden, UK, and the USA. The evaluators had individual interview sessions with several of these donors. In addition, the US State Department/PRM organized an interview session with several of its staff in Washington DC; ECHO organized a day of meetings with staff of ECHO and other humanitarian organizations in Brussels; and DfID organized a day of meetings with DfID staff and other humanitarian organizations in London.
- Evaluation team: Chris Wolz and Nam-ho Park of Forum One Communications directed and executed the evaluation. They were supported with research and technical support by Brian Pagels of Forum One Communications.

In addition to the individuals listed above, the evaluation team met with a range of representatives of humanitarian organizations across OCHA, UN agencies, NGOs small and large, international organizations including the Red Cross movement, affected Governments, media services and others.

Review Consultations with OCHA: The evaluation team consulted closely with OCHA staff through the course of the project to ensure the focus of the evaluation was addressing OCHA’s interests. The specific stages of review consultations included: (i) Inception report - reviewed with OCHA/ReliefWeb team, and with CLG, (ii) subscriber survey - reviewed with OCHA/ReliefWeb team, (iii), content partner survey - reviewed with OCHA/ReliefWeb team, (iv) detailed interview session planning - in coordination with OCHA/ReliefWeb team and with input from CLG, (v) project updates - every 2-3 weeks, including highlights from completed surveys and interviews, (vi) draft Evaluation Report - review and comment, with OCHA/ReliefWeb and CLG.

4. ReliefWeb Usage

The mandate of ReliefWeb is stated as:

“...to strengthen the response capacity of the humanitarian relief community through the timely dissemination of reliable information on response, preparedness, and disaster prevention. This is accomplished by providing guaranteed access to time critical reports, maps and financial contributions to both decision makers at headquarters and to relief teams in the field.”⁴

And the ReliefWeb mission is:

“Serving the information needs of the humanitarian community.”⁵

For ReliefWeb to succeed in its mandate and mission, it needs to reach the humanitarian community, and then to provide the community with services that are valuable and used. The evaluation here considers who is using ReliefWeb, how the site is being used, and how specific site services are performing.

4.1 Key Questions

- Who is using ReliefWeb and how? Who in the humanitarian community is not using ReliefWeb and why not?
- Does ReliefWeb provide timely and relevant information to decision makers, humanitarian workers, and the people they are trying to help?
- What has been the impact of ReliefWeb according to its users?
- Does ReliefWeb provide coverage of: regional perspectives, early warning efforts, and policy issues?
- How are ReliefWeb's products and services used, and how could they be improved to increase value for the end users?

4.2 ReliefWeb Users

Reliefweb seeks to reach and serve the humanitarian community generally, but with several specific key audiences, including: 1) UN agency personnel (desk officers, humanitarian affairs officers, humanitarian/resident coordinators, field workers and senior managers); 2) NGO personnel (desk officers, field workers and senior managers); 3) Government officials (mission and HQ humanitarian focal points, disaster management officers, desk officers in operational agencies such as USAID). Overall, ReliefWeb seeks to reach and help decision-makers across these organizations make informed decisions. The evaluation team considers below which of these audiences ReliefWeb is reaching.

4.2.1 Users' Organizations and Roles

The subscriber survey shows that a large share of ReliefWeb users is indeed from its target audiences, with 42% coming from NGOs. As shown in Figure 2 below, 33% of survey respondents are staff members of International NGOs, with another 9% report being from “National and Local” NGOs. Respondents from ReliefWeb's other key audiences include 16% from UN agencies, and 11% from governments.

⁴ ReliefWeb Project Description – Draft Version 1.0 – Dec 18, 2005

⁵ ReliefWeb Project Description – Draft Version 1.0 – Dec 18, 2005

Interestingly, 5% reported being in the business sector (banking, medical equipment, manufacturing, service delivery, etc).

In terms of professional roles, ReliefWeb is indeed reaching decision makers. 30% of users surveyed reported being Program Managers or Senior Managers (see Table 3). Another important audience for ReliefWeb is field-level workers, and 9% of users surveyed reported being “Relief workers / field level” (and the 9% is probably an underestimate as some field-based respondents may have selected functional roles other than “Relief Worker”.)

Roles in Organization, Survey Respondents			
Program manager	16%	Relief worker, field level	9%
Senior manager / policy maker	13%	Human resources	3%
Researcher	12%	Information / Computer Technology	5%
Desk officer / analyst	10%	Other (student, IT, finance and administration, etc.)	37%

Table 3: Survey Respondents’ Roles

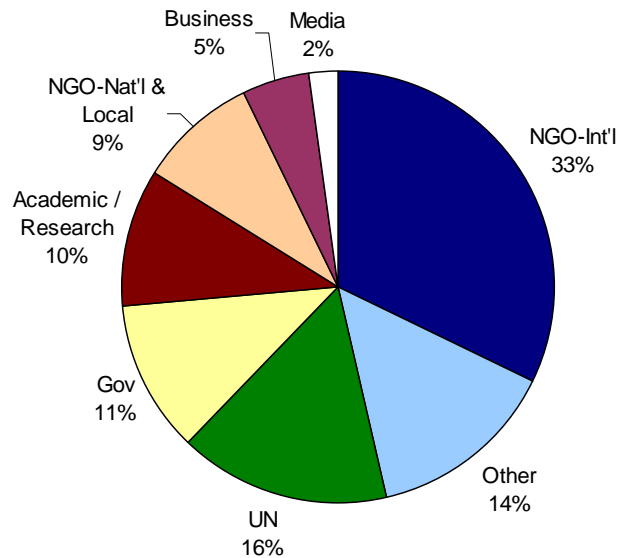


Figure 2: Survey Respondents by Organization

4.2.2 User Distribution

The geographic distribution of the users of ReliefWeb is broad – covering the globe and key areas of concern for relief work. Users surveyed reside in 139 different countries, including the top countries ranked in Table 4.

Table 4: Survey Respondents, Top Countries of Residence

Top Countries of Residence, Survey Respondents			
United States	11%	Indonesia	2%
United Kingdom	5%	France	1%
Kenya	5%	Serbia	1%
Canada	4%	Netherlands	1%
Afghanistan	3%	Nepal	1%
Sudan	3%	Zimbabwe	1%
India	3%	Spain	1%
DR Congo	3%	South Africa	1%
Germany	3%	Ethiopia	1%
Pakistan	3%	Belgium	1%
Italy	2%	Japan	1%
Switzerland	2%	Tanzania	1%
Australia	2%	Burundi	1%
Sri Lanka	2%	China	1%
Uganda	2%	Denmark	1%

The geographic distribution of respondents is fairly even, with about a quarter (25-28%) each residing in Africa, Asia and Europe. The Americas accounted for 19% and Oceania for 2% of the respondents (See Figure 3).

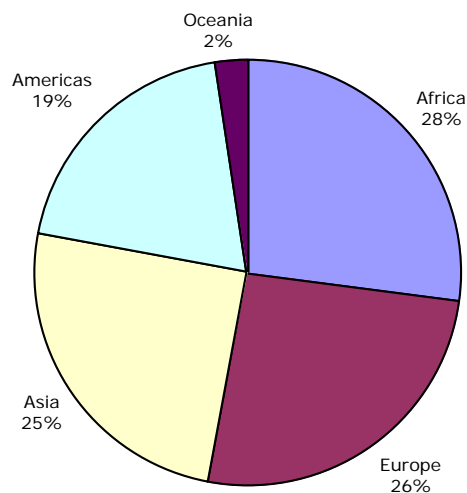


Figure 3: Survey Respondents, Country of Residence by Region

The geographic focus of the work of users surveyed is most strongly on Africa, with 37% reporting that as their region of focus. Next highest was the 29% reporting a global focus and 28% reporting an Asia focus.

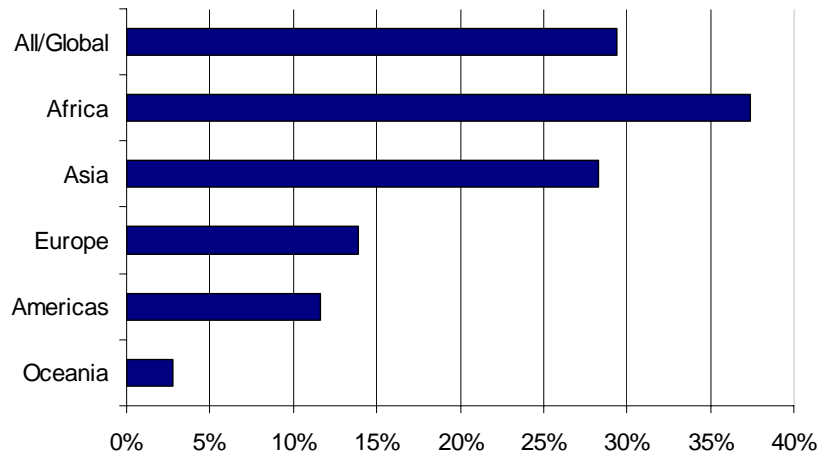


Figure 4: Survey Respondents, Geographic Focus of Work

There was some difference noted between audiences of various organization types:

- International NGO respondents show a higher focus on Africa, 45%, compared to the overall average of 37%.
- The National/Local NGOs focus, not surprisingly, more nationally and locally. Only 30% focus on Africa – less than the overall sample. However, a larger share than the average focuses on Asia (32%), Americas (18%), and Europe (17%). Only 22% have a Global Focus.
- For “Government” respondents, the dominant focus is “Global” – 35%, followed by Africa, 28%.
- For UN respondents, the focus of their work is 42% Africa, 26% Asia, and 26% global.

In terms of the age and gender distribution of respondents, the largest group of respondents - over 40% - is in the age range of 30-39. The respondents overall were 65% male, 35% female. Of specific subgroups, field workers were slightly younger as a group (51% in age group 30-39 years, and only 7% in 50-59 group) and Program Managers were slightly older, with only 14% in 20-29 group, and 47% in 30-39, and 25% in 40-49 group. The evaluation team does not have data from the wider humanitarian community to which to compare these data, but the information should be used in design/testing efforts.

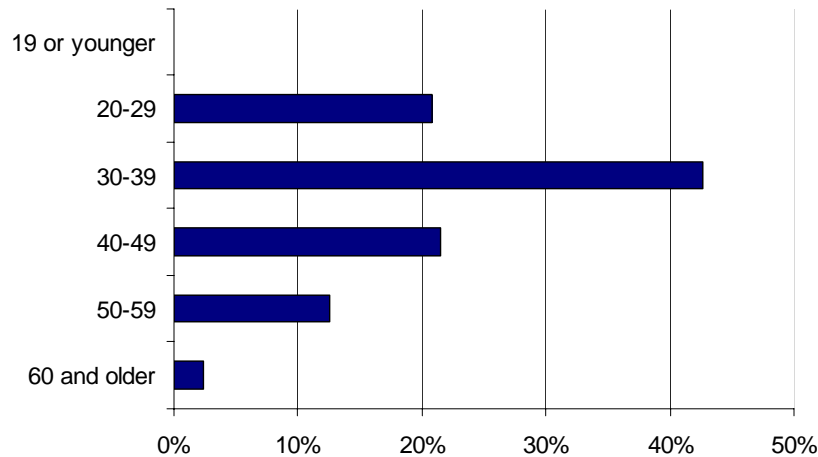


Figure 5: Survey Respondents, Age

4.2.3 Who is Not Using ReliefWeb?

There are, of course, some in the humanitarian community who are not using ReliefWeb for various reasons. Roughly one in five of the interviewed individuals reported using ReliefWeb very little or not at all. While this information cannot be used to quantify the share of humanitarian workers using or not using ReliefWeb, the insights and interests of these non-users are very valuable. The below “non-user scenarios” are intended to depict the characteristics and interests of humanitarian workers who are not now using ReliefWeb.

- **National-level staff of governments and NGOs.** These humanitarian workers are eager for information and new perspectives to help them in the work, as they are often not well connected with other humanitarian organizations. However, they do not use ReliefWeb. One reason is a simple lack of awareness that ReliefWeb exists, especially among people who do not use the web regularly. A related reason is the lack of reliable and affordable computers and internet access (or even reliable electricity for their computers) in many relief locations. A final reason is that ReliefWeb is largely in English, which makes it difficult for many non-native English speakers to use.
- **International NGO staff at HQ or Regional Levels:** These humanitarian workers have high speed web connections and track a wide range of information every day – from public and internal sources. They are aware of ReliefWeb, and dedicated readers of the weekly job vacancy emails, but they do not otherwise visit ReliefWeb. They do not see ReliefWeb as providing “anything special” beyond what they can find elsewhere on the web. They use information on a daily basis from a range of humanitarian organizations, deliberately seeking to balance the perspectives of the UN and other big humanitarian players with the views of other smaller organizations.
- **Managers and Decision Makers:** Many managers struggle with “information overload” – they receive more news, information and reports than they have time to review. Thus, they rely on a very few sources for information, including having their staff screen and feed information to them. Many are familiar with ReliefWeb and used it earlier in their careers, but they now report that they do not have the time to read the large amounts of content on ReliefWeb.

These non-user scenarios provide useful targets for ReliefWeb to keep in mind in seeking to improve the site.

4.3 Usage of ReliefWeb

ReliefWeb should see overall usage of the site grow if it is successful in reaching wider audiences and in engaging those audiences to make more use of ReliefWeb. In the short-term, the usage of ReliefWeb will rise and fall because of the unpredictable occurrence of emergencies and disasters, but in the long run, the overall trend for ReliefWeb usage should be upward. The evaluation team reviews below the usage of ReliefWeb.

4.3.1 Growth of ReliefWeb Usage

The usage of ReliefWeb has grown steadily over the past five years. The chart below shows data from ReliefWeb of “Average Weekday Page Views” for each of the past five years, displaying steady growth each year⁶, including strong growth in 2005.

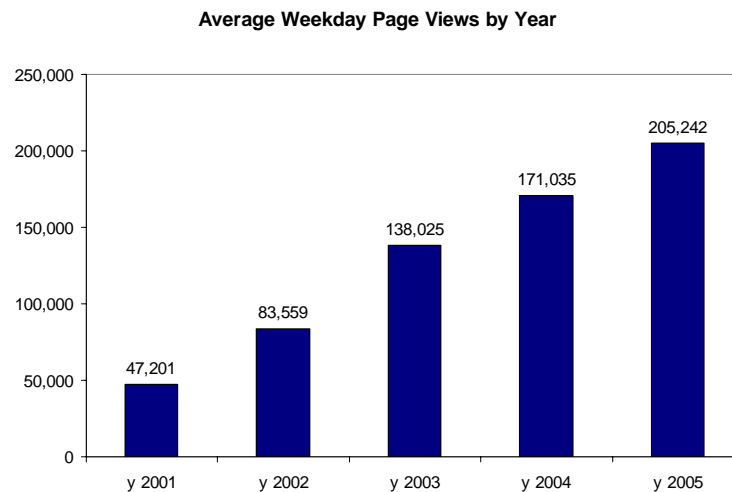


Figure 6: Average Weekday Page Views by Year

Another indication of the growth of the usage of ReliefWeb is shown in the comparative chart in Figure 7. This shows ReliefWeb usage growing over the past two years, more strongly than IRIN or the development information site “OneWorld”. ReliefWeb usage is about even with the trend for AlertNet. These data come from the www.Alexa.com service, which collects user behavior data from users of its search toolbar. These data are collected externally, and while not directly compatible with ReliefWeb’s own server statistics, these do provide a useful comparative view for web sites on related issues.

⁶ 2005 data estimated using 2004 data and 20% growth rate, reported by ReliefWeb in OCHA Annual Report.

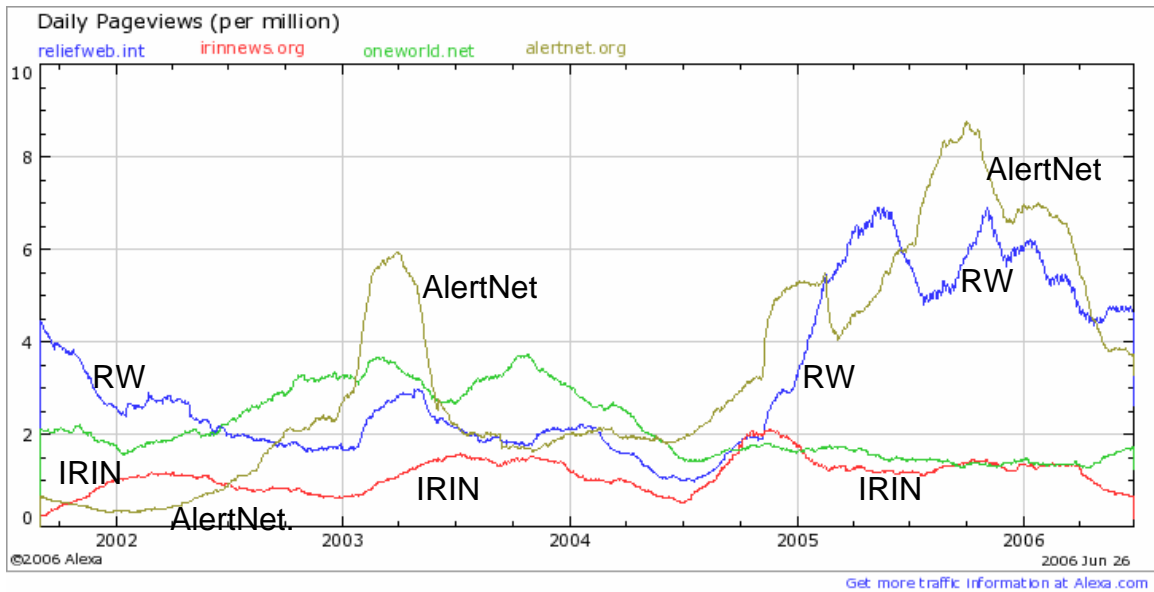


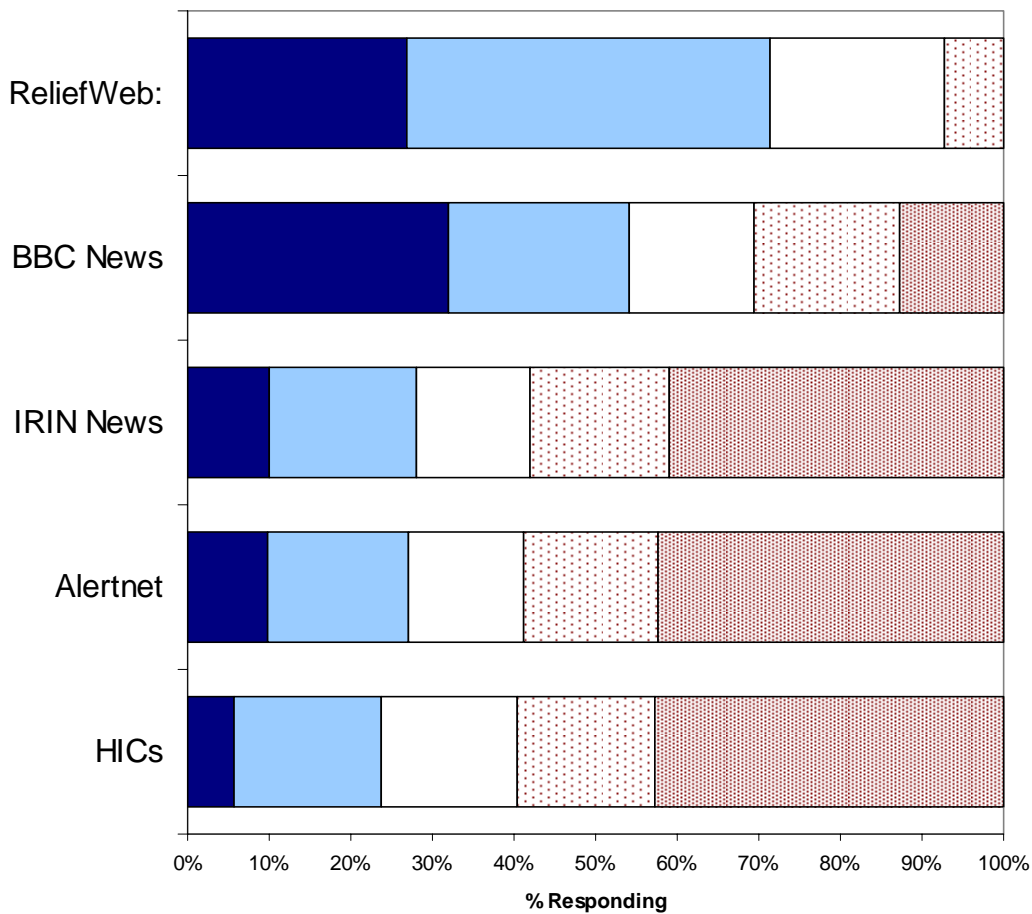
Figure 7 Estimated ReliefWeb usage, as indicated by Alexa.com metric of "Daily Page views per million", with ReliefWeb (blue), IRIN (red), OneWorld (green), and AlertNet (tan).

4.3.2 Frequency of Use, Comparison to Other Web Sites

The loyalty of ReliefWeb user is strong, with 72% of all users surveyed reporting that they visit the site at least once a week. Among sub-audiences, the percentage using ReliefWeb at least once a week is:

- 79% of UN staff users surveyed
- 77% of international NGO users
- 73% of government users
- 66% of national/local NGO users

These users report using ReliefWeb more frequently than they use other sites, such as IRIN (28% use at least once a week) or the BBC (54%). See Figure 8.



- Almost daily ■ At least once a week □ At least once a month
- ▨ Less than once a month ▩ Never used

Figure 8 How Often Respondents Report Using ReliefWeb and Other Web Sites

4.3.3 Online Prominence

Another indication of the level of usage of ReliefWeb is its prominence on the web in comparison to related web sites. This is because if ReliefWeb is heavily used, it is likely to be more widely cited and mentioned across other web sites, leading to higher prominence on search engines. To gauge online prominence, the evaluation team looked at several indicators of how well ReliefWeb compares to related sites on humanitarian information – links in from other web sites, search engine performance, blog links in, and overall page views.

Broadly, ReliefWeb is more prominent on the Google search engine than some other related humanitarian web sites, in terms of Google “links in” (the number of web sites that link to ReliefWeb according to Google, see Figure 9).

In terms of visibility across blogs, ReliefWeb is doing less well than AlertNet, comparable to ICG, and better than IRIN. Figure 10 below demonstrates the number of times ReliefWeb was mentioned on blogs, according to the Technorati blog search engine. Blogs are web sites set up using blog software, which publishes articles in a diary format and has technical features which connect a blog together with other blogs and blog search engines. The technology and the interlinking of blogs means that they are very effective at quickly disseminating information and ideas, thus raising the profile of that content on web search engines. Thus, even if a large share of a target audience (e.g. the humanitarian community) is not itself reading blogs, blogs are still an important part of building online prominence.

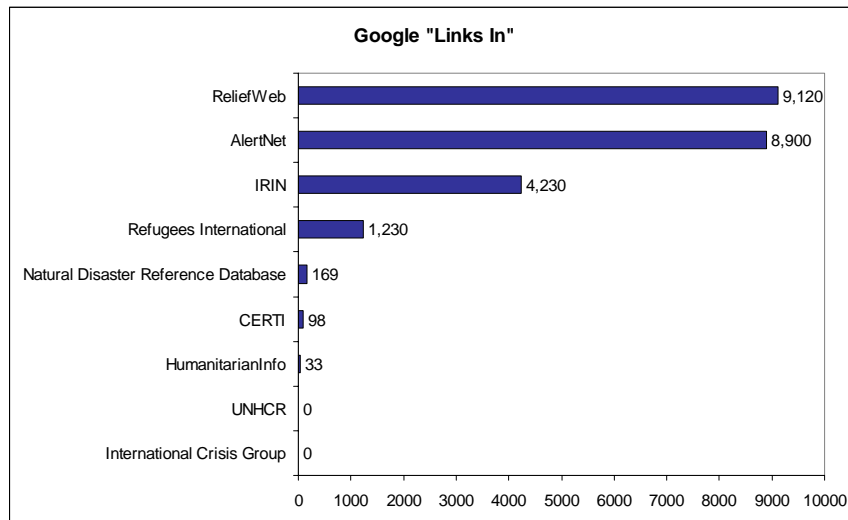


Figure 9 Google "Links In"

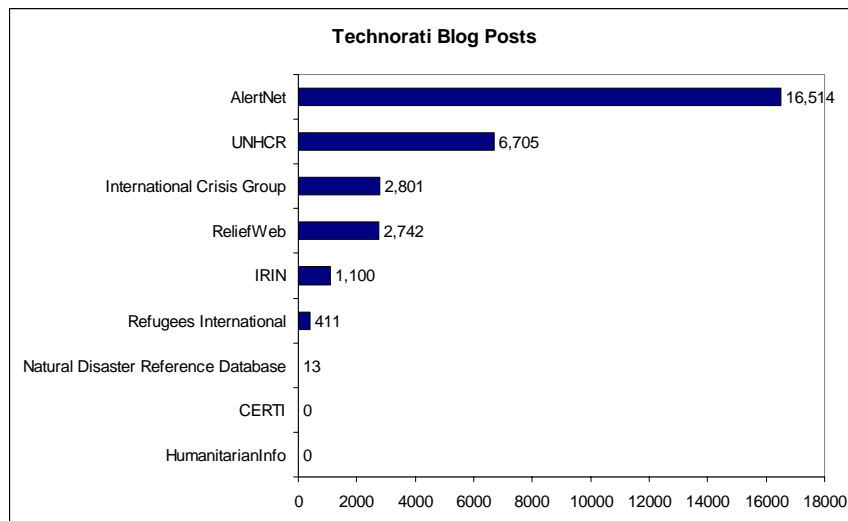


Figure 10 Technorati Blog Citations

ReliefWeb ranks highly on search engines on general key terms relating to its focus, but less highly on terms relating specific disasters. As shown in Table 5, ReliefWeb is the #1 site on Google if searching on “humanitarian relief”, but less prominent on other key terms such as “DR Congo” and “Pakistan earthquake.” The web sites of Wikipedia (an online encyclopedia), other news services, and specific NGOs rate higher on these terms. It is surprising that ReliefWeb is not more highly rated for these specific disasters, as ReliefWeb is an aggregator of information from many sources.

Search Engine Performance on Key Terms: Search on Google.com using selected key terms (6/22/06)
Humanitarian relief
1. ReliefWeb 2. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanitarian_aid : Wikipedia 3. http://bubl.ac.uk/LINK/h/humanitarianrelief.htm : BUBL LINK Catalogue of Internet Resources
Humanitarian crises
1. http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org : MSF 2. http://www2.spfo.unibo.it 3. http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog/LEAHUM.html : Harvard University Press book 4. http://www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/africa/05/12/sudan.crisis/ : CNN/Sudan 9. ReliefWeb
DR Congo
1. http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/cg.html : CIA FactBook 2. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Republic_of_the_Congo : Wikipedia 3. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/3075537.stm : BBC 8. http://www.irinnews.org : IRIN 17. ReliefWeb
Pakistan earthquake
1. http://www.pakquake.com/ : Blog on Pakistan Earthquake 2. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2005_Kashmir_earthquake : Wikipedia 3. http://www.islamic-relief.com/ : Islamic Relief 6. http://www.mercycorps.org/ : Mercy Corps 11. http://www.dfid.gov.uk : DfID 25. http://www.unhic.org : HIC for Pakistan Earthquake 29. ReliefWeb

Table 5 Search Engine Key Word Performance

4.4 ReliefWeb Products and Services

ReliefWeb's success in serving the humanitarian community depends on its providing products and services that provide great value to that community. The following section looks at key products and services offered by ReliefWeb, how they are being used, and their strengths and weaknesses.

4.4.1 Popular ReliefWeb Products and Services

The section of ReliefWeb that is most popular and most utilized is the job vacancies section, which gets over 35% of all traffic to ReliefWeb (See Figure 11). After vacancies, the sections getting the most traffic are the home page (around 6%), followed by My ReliefWeb, Latest updates, and Emergencies.

The traffic patterns show that most visitors to the vacancy section are not coming via the home page or other pages, but likely directly from links in the job vacancy emails or direct links or “bookmarks” to the vacancy section; many of them are also not leaving the vacancy section to explore other parts of the site. The evaluation team believes that this illustrates that ReliefWeb has a great opportunity to use the vacancy section and emails to encourage users to explore other areas of ReliefWeb.

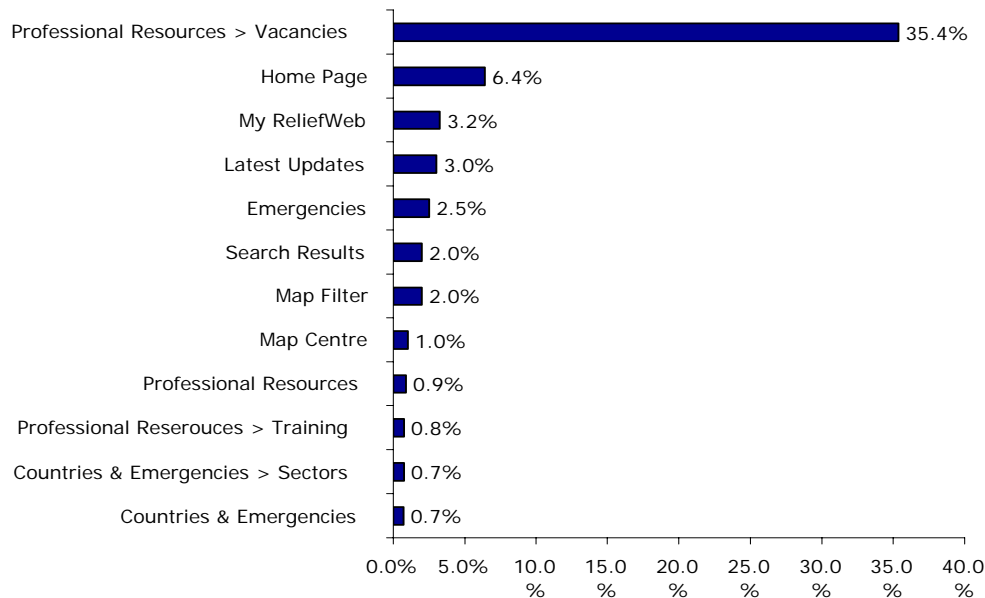


Figure 11: Most visited pages as percentage of overall traffic (ReliefWeb Stats for Q1-Q3 2005)

Another measure of the popularity of the vacancy section is shown in data on email subscriber preferences. Figure 12 shows that Vacancies is the most popular option selected by email subscribers. Other popular options include Country Updates, Training, and Emergency Updates, among others.

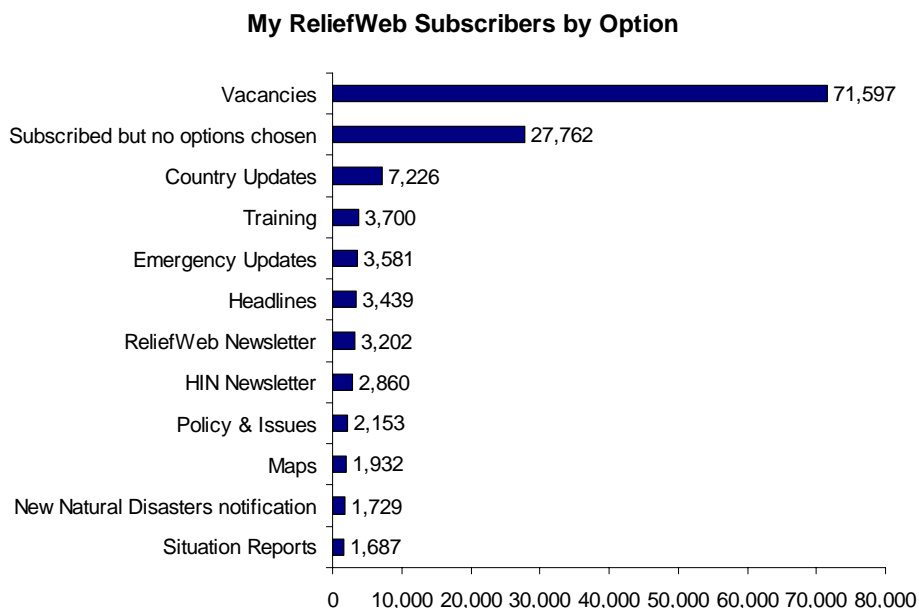


Figure 12: Options selected by “My ReliefWeb” subscribers in 2005

The most useful services to users on ReliefWeb, according to users surveyed, are listed in Figure 13 in ranked order. 76% of respondents said that the Vacancies are useful to them (rated 6 or 5). Other high marks were for time-sensitive content, specifically Latest Updates, Email Updates, Headlines, Country Pages and Maps.

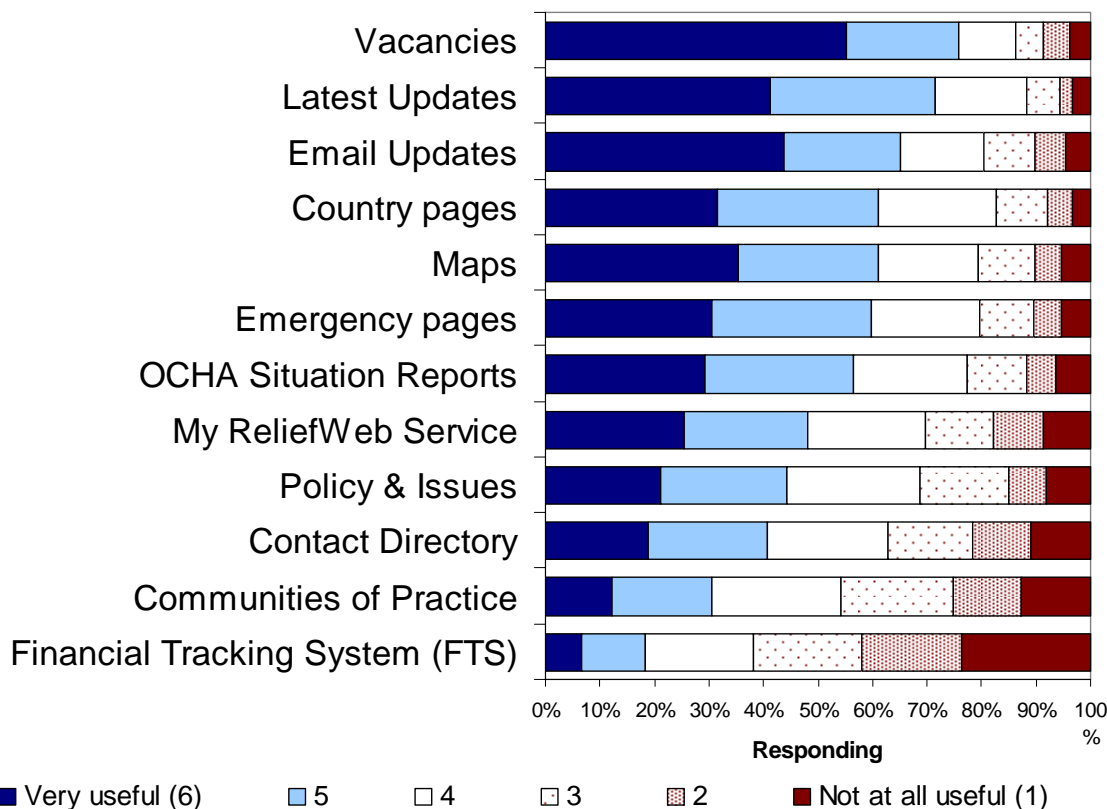


Figure 13 "How useful to you are these current services on ReliefWeb?"

Apart from the Vacancies, what is common to most of the highly valued services is that they provide timely information about an issue or a location. For example, a typical comment on how humanitarian workers rely on ReliefWeb for such time-sensitive information is:

When I was covering Afghanistan I would check ReliefWeb on a daily basis to see if anything happened - things that would not be important to the BBC. [Desk Officer, Donor Government]

The lowest number of users rated the RSS Feed and FTS as useful. The use and value of these are discussed below, but in brief, RSS is not understood or used by many, and FTS is intended for only a small audience.

4.4.2 Job Vacancies

Again, the Vacancies section on ReliefWeb is the most popular section of the site, and it is also a valuable service to the humanitarian community. The Vacancies section gets about one third of all traffic to the ReliefWeb site, and a "useful" rating from a substantial 76% of users surveyed (see Figure 13). The humanitarian workers interviewed stated widely that they use and depend on the ReliefWeb Job Vacancies, both as workers and as employers.

The ReliefWeb Vacancies section and emails are of such strong value to the humanitarian community because of the constant operational challenge of finding staff for, typically short-term, humanitarian assignments. ReliefWeb helps with this operational problem by providing a consolidated listing for job opportunities and the associated weekly email summary.

Many humanitarian workers also had suggestions for how Vacancies could be made more valuable. The primary comment voiced was that the organization and format of the emails should be improved, such as to organize them by country, professional skill, or even alphabetically. The web site listing provides that kind of breakdown, but the email list of vacancies is not organized in any apparent manner. One HR manager commented:

The [Vacancies] email update is very confusing and very long. It is a very very big email. Organize it by NGO in alphabetical order or by country maybe. It may be helpful to post emergency positions separately... [HR Manager, HQ]

Managers and Human Resources staff of International NGOs state that they post their vacancies to ReliefWeb because of ReliefWeb's reach and from past experience of getting good responses from highly qualified applicants. ReliefWeb helps them find good candidates, for example:

95% of our vacancies are filled through ReliefWeb. [HR Manager, international NGO, HQ]

We put about 1/4 of our vacancy postings on ReliefWeb. For many vacancies, we know who we want, so we don't post those. For each on ReliefWeb we receive about 70 applicants, so it's a problem screening them. But ReliefWeb gives us the possibility. [Manager, international NGO, HQ]

Several managers interviewed also spoke about reviewing the vacancies section regularly to help them track activity within the humanitarian sector – who is hiring and where - such as this comment:

I use RW vacancies to track which NGOs are hiring and where, to get a sense of trends. [Senior Manager, international NGO, HQ]

The several HR managers the evaluation team interviewed all commented on shortcomings of the Vacancies – that the link to the Vacancy section is not easily found on the ReliefWeb home page, and that the search engine does not effectively search the Vacancy section. They commented that the vacancy email listings are long and poorly organized. They also stated that the tool they use to post their vacancies to ReliefWeb has limited functionality, because it does not allow them to manage/modify their other current postings and does not provide them with an email confirmation when the vacancy is posted⁷. One typical comment was:

Vacancies search is hard to use. It's too hard for people in the field (on dialup) to use.... [HR Manager, HQ]

4.4.3 Latest Updates

The Latest Updates service was given high marks in terms of usefulness, with 71% of subscriber survey respondents rating it a 6 or 5 (see Figure 13), second only to Vacancies. The Latest Updates top-level web page is also ranked fourth in the list of most trafficked pages, according to server statistics (see Figure 11).

⁷ The online Vacancies form does provide an automated email confirmation upon submission, but apparently not (always) upon the posting of a specific item, according to some interviewees.

ReliefWeb generally received high marks for providing timely humanitarian information to its users, with over some 75% of respondents ranking it a 6 or a 5 in terms of their perception to the “timeliness” of ReliefWeb (See also more in-depth discussion on ReliefWeb timeliness in 5.3). One interviewee expressed this as follows:

If something happens, [ReliefWeb] will not be the first place I go. I would go to BBC News. But for ongoing emergencies - ReliefWeb. [Desk Officer, International NGO, HQ]

4.4.4 Map Services

The Map Center provides Maps from ReliefWeb and other organizations, with detailed information on borders and situations and activities on the ground. Maps are one of the top five utilized services on ReliefWeb according to server statistics (see Figure 11). Map Services are also a highly valued resource with 61% of subscriber survey respondents rating it 6 or 5 in terms of usefulness. At least half of the many interviewees reported that they use and appreciate the maps on ReliefWeb, using them for research, planning, to track the activities of other organizations, and more.

However, the sizes of the map files are often very large and thus extremely time consuming to download, especially for users who do not have a broadband internet connection. A sizeable minority of users surveyed and interviewees complained about the long time needed to download maps, for example:

Please make information available in as few as Kilobytes as possible. Downloads are slow. If you are in Congo or Sudan, it's a challenge. In Burundi, maps can take an hour to download. [Manager, international NGO]

One interviewee suggested that it may be useful to have smaller “sketch maps” that are easier to download.

4.4.5 Country and Emergency Pages

Country pages and Emergency pages are regarded by the subscriber survey respondents as useful, with about 60% of users surveyed giving them a positive review. Actual usage data for these services are not clear since the pages are disbursed across many individual countries and emergencies pages. A majority of interviewees expressed that when they use ReliefWeb, it is to find information on a country or an issue, and so the country-specific presentation is valuable. A typical comment was:

If I need stats for a proposal, I'll do a search under a country, to see what has come up recently under latest updates. [Program Officer, international NGO, HQ]

4.4.6 Email Updates

The email updates are rated as valuable by some users, but are unknown to a large set of users. 65% of users surveyed rated email updates as useful. However, the evaluation team found that a majority of individuals interviewed do not subscribe to ReliefWeb Email Updates (apart from Vacancies) and many are not unaware of the service. The few who do subscribe to Email Updates said they use it to get updates on countries and emergencies they are covering. A representative comment from an email subscriber mentioned the concern that the emails are hard to read and they could be better formatted for quick scanning for relevant content:

All topics [in the email] should be an outline so you don't have to scroll through everything. Show what is contained within the email. I don't like to start right in the text. There may be something

interesting four paragraphs down, but I am busy and may not be aware of that. It needs to call out, "There really is something interesting in here for you." [Manager, International NGO, HQ]

4.4.7 My ReliefWeb

"My ReliefWeb" service provides a "clipping" service for content, management of shortcuts to frequently viewed content and access to email subscription preferences. The page is visited enough to be listed in the top 10 most visited pages at 3.2%. (See Figure 11, listed as "ReliefWeb Page"). Close to half of respondents of the subscriber survey viewed it as being useful (rated 6 or 5). However, in the interviews, only a small handful of interviewees stated that they have used it; and many of those who have used it found it difficult to use.

4.4.8 Search

About a third of subscriber survey respondents stated the search engine needs improvements. The biggest complaint from the interviews was that it was either slow or often results did not return the document they knew was in the system. Many stated that it is quicker to search on Google to find something on ReliefWeb. Some representative comments include:

In the search engine, I could not find anything on "World Water Day", which was today. But then I found it on the homepage, but not in the search engine. [Desk Officer, Donor Government, HQ]

ReliefWeb could use a proper search engine - it's an obstacle course getting to the information I need. [Manager, OCHA]

4.4.9 Financial Tracking

The Financial Tracking Service (FTS) was ranked relatively low in the subscriber survey for its usefulness, with only about 18% scoring it positively. (While FTS is not managed by ReliefWeb, it is hosted within the ReliefWeb web site and so is considered in this evaluation.) OCHA provides the FTS for a small and targeted audience who needs financial contribution information, so a low level of usage is not a concern. However, interviewees who are aware of FTS and who do use it regularly expressed frustration that information provided on FTS is often inaccurate or slow in keeping up with contributions. Several representative comments include:

When you use FTS you feel you are on loose ground – the information is not correct. [Desk Officer, Donor Government, HQ]

FTS is useless, the information is not up to date and complete. The challenge is how to get the info. They blame the agencies, and agencies blame the donors. From a donor's perspective, FTS is an extremely powerful tool. The system must be improved, but many of the donors are not proactively putting the data on it. [Staff, Government/Donor, HQ]

When UN in Thailand came to do a review of flash appeal funds – FTS and (other the key source) did not match. [Staff, OCHA]

4.4.10 RSS

ReliefWeb launched the RSS feeds in early 2006, and it is so far little utilized. The RSS feed was ranked low in usefulness, with subscriber survey respondents giving it relatively poor marks. RSS is unfamiliar to the vast majority of ReliefWeb users, judging by comments in the detailed interviews. But in the experience of the evaluation team, most general web users are also unfamiliar with RSS feeds.

The RSS will be valuable for some users who know how to take advantage of it, in particular more technically savvy users who may be important in humanitarian information coordination. Further, the cost to keep the RSS feed on the site and functioning should be low and so worth continuing.

4.4.11 Unique Value of ReliefWeb Products and Services

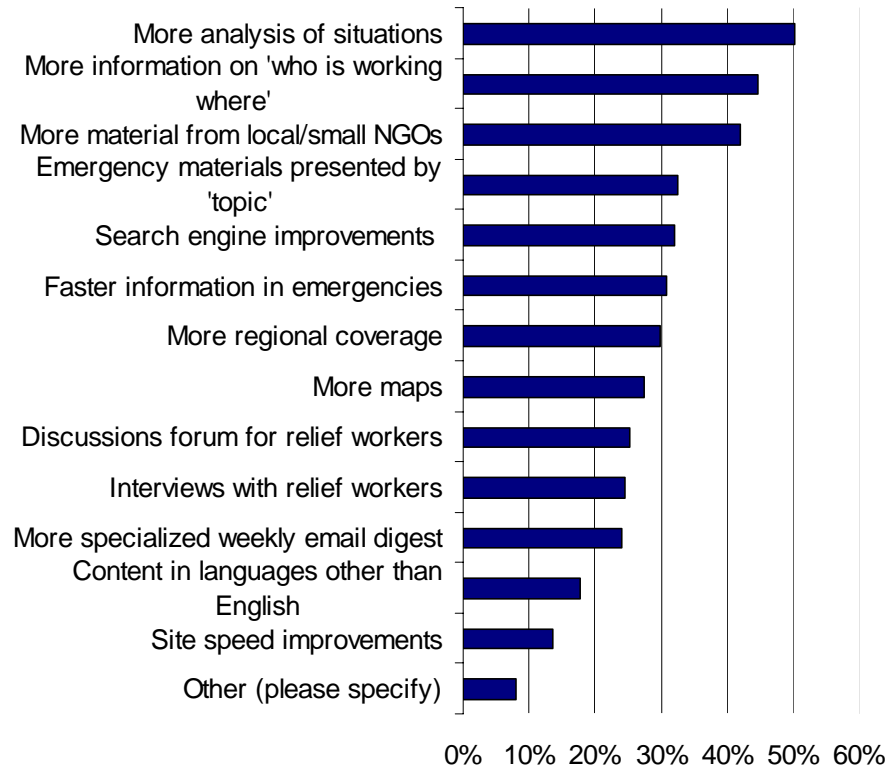
Looking broadly across the survey and interviews, the evaluation team summarizes here its sense of what users see as the unique value of ReliefWeb:

- **ReliefWeb is a “One-Stop Shop”:** The benefit of ReliefWeb to many is the fact that ReliefWeb collects together in one place much of the content and services that meet the needs of humanitarian professionals. The phrase or concept of “One-Stop Shop” was mentioned often.
- **ReliefWeb provides the humanitarian perspective to a given situation:** Many interviewees commented that they go to news media for breaking news, but they come to ReliefWeb to see the humanitarian perspective on the situations.
- **ReliefWeb provides a repository for background information, and acts as a historical research archive:** Many view ReliefWeb as a reliable source for less time-sensitive background information on a situation or a country. It is seen to provide the context around current situations. Because ReliefWeb retains a large archive of content, it is viewed also as repository for historic information on humanitarian relief responses.
- **ReliefWeb provides visibility to organizations and their activities:** ReliefWeb is consumed across the whole humanitarian community from donors to relief workers, so publishing information to ReliefWeb is seen as a method to increase the visibility of an organization and bring attention to its activities.

4.4.12 Gaps in Coverage

Some gaps in coverage of ReliefWeb services were identified when the subscriber survey asked respondents to rate areas where ReliefWeb needs to improve its services, content or performance (See Figure 11). The overall results show that the top improvements ReliefWeb can make are show in Figure 14, and include:

- More analysis of situations (50%)
- More information on “who is working where” (45%)
- More material from national/local NGOs (42%)



Percentage of all Respondents

Figure 14 Respondent Views on ReliefWeb Improvements

Even the improvements rated the lowest still got enough votes to indicate some substantial interest – at least among 14 – 24% of the respondents: Site speed improvements (14%), Content in languages other than English (18%), and More specialized weekly email digest (24%). Sub audiences showed some differences in the way that each prioritized improvements to ReliefWeb:

- National/Local NGO scores, however, show some distinct differences. They ranked more materials from NGOs like themselves as the top improvement.
- The Government scores for the top three are: More analysis of situations (56%), More information on who is working where (42%), and Faster information in emergencies (35%).
- The UN scores for the top three are very comparable to the Government scores: More analysis of situations (54%), More information on who is working where (44%), and Faster information in emergencies (37%).

The evaluation team examined these survey recommendations and interviewee comments in more detail:

More Analysis of Situations: There is strong interest among ReliefWeb users for more “analysis” to help them understand what is most important across all the available information and how to interpret that. Over half the users surveyed expressed that “More analysis of situation” would be an improvement to ReliefWeb that would benefit them in their work. This view was also reflected in the interviews, where a sizeable minority of interviewees stated that they typically have enough basic “information”, and what they

really need is “analysis.” This is a need that ReliefWeb could fill. It is less clear, however, how ReliefWeb would provide this.

ReliefWeb today does not now devote a section of the site specifically to “Analysis”, and ReliefWeb staff stated in discussions that analytic content is hard to come by and may not be readily available from current content partners. ReliefWeb staff does not now have the capacity or the analytic expertise to develop its own analyses of issues and situations. A representative comment from OCHA and ReliefWeb staff on this is:

(Yes,) if you are a decision maker you want analysis. There was talk that whether ReliefWeb should provide more analysis. This would require a totally different staffing and purpose. [OCHA Desk Officer]

Some small number of respondents in the NGO community also stated that they would not look to ReliefWeb and OCHA for analysis of situations, but would rather receive it from other sources. A representative comment is:

People will be skeptical if UN was producing analysis, especially in the NGO community. Maybe if it is added to the mix, they can do it, but there are other organizations that do it better. ICG does the fullest analysis. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch do a good job from their own perspectives. [Program manager, international NGO, HQ]

A view expressed by a number of NGO and OCHA managers is that ReliefWeb could provide analytic content in either of two ways, or both. ReliefWeb could take advantage of the analytic abilities of the wider OCHA staff to develop (or repackage) analytic content for ReliefWeb. ReliefWeb could also seek out and aggregate analytic content from sources outside of OCHA, perhaps building relationships with a new cadre of content partners. An OCHA staff comment on this was:

ReliefWeb needs to link to sources who provide analysis, but not ReliefWeb. [Senior Manager, OCHA, HQ]

More Information on “Who is doing What, Where”: Close to half of ReliefWeb users surveyed stated that “More information on “who is doing what, where” (W3) is a need and they would like ReliefWeb to provide more of this. This was echoed in interviews with regional and field level humanitarian workers.

Users stated this need and desire for more W3 information even though ReliefWeb provides some W3 information today. ReliefWeb provides links on country and issue pages to the web sites of organizations which have recent content posted on ReliefWeb regarding those countries and issues. ReliefWeb also provides lists of the latest documents on ReliefWeb from those organizations. OCHA’s Humanitarian Information Centers (HICs) do provide W3 information at the location of emergencies, and ReliefWeb often will link to that.

A new OCHA initiative is underway to provide a set of online information management tools to support the work of OCHA Regional/Field Office location, including a W3 database on the Office web sites. However, this W3 database has not (yet) been designed to support re-publishing of content to ReliefWeb, according to the staff of FIS.

More Material from National/Local NGOs: There is interest among ReliefWeb users for more content from national/local NGOs, to include information and perspectives not now on ReliefWeb. Of users surveyed 42% see “More materials from local/small NGOs” as an improvement to ReliefWeb that will benefit their work. This was third highest in a list of all improvements. This figure was substantially higher and highest priority for National/Local NGO respondents, 58% of whom saw this as a gap in ReliefWeb.

Many of those interviewed also concurred that National/Local NGOs were not being adequately represented:

The national NGOs have reports but these are not represented. It is more the international humanitarian community. National NGOs viewpoints are very important and this is not represented on ReliefWeb. [Staff, UN Agency, HQ]

We don't get the view of local NGO, and beneficiaries. [Desk Officer, NGO, HQ]

A benefit of expanding coverage to include these perspectives is to balance the concerns that ReliefWeb is only serving the “UN and large western NGOs” point of view. A representative comment was:

It is important to round the circle on information [by including information from local NGOs] and that way the information will be more trusted. [Senior Manager, International NGO, Field]

There will be challenges in getting more content from National/Local NGOs. Many of those groups stated that they do not have the staff or budget for expanding their communications work. Many work in areas that have poor communications, and often lack even basic email or internet connectivity. Also, one or two interviewees expressed the concern that some National/Local NGOs allegedly have political biases that are reflected in the information they provide.

Content in Languages other than English: About 18% of users surveyed stated that content in languages other than English would be a priority. National/Local NGOs ranked it a little higher at 23%. This is relatively low, compared to other priorities, however, the evaluation team also heard from many interviewees who stated that non-English language content would make ReliefWeb much more valuable to them. Many interviewees from National/Local NGOs stated that because ReliefWeb was largely in English, it was difficult for them and many non-native English speakers to use the site and to participate by sending in content. These NGOs, for whom English is not their first language, expressed that they often lack the resources and the time to translate documents into English. Some representative comments:

Most of the Spanish [-speaking] agencies produce material in Spanish. If each agency can contribute in their own language, it would be useful. To write in English takes time. If you are in the field you don't have time or energy to write in English. [Manager, International NGO, HQ]

For smaller NGO's language is a barrier. Government, NGO's smaller groups in civil society are left out. They don't know ReliefWeb exists - it is a question of outreach [Desk Officer1, Panama]

ReliefWeb does today include some content in French or Spanish, however, those resources are not organized on the site by language, and so there is little awareness of the non-English content.

4.5 ReliefWeb Coverage

ReliefWeb seeks to meet important needs of the humanitarian community for regional information, for early warning information, and for information on policy issues. The evaluation considers here insights from users surveyed and interviewees about its coverage of these issues.

4.5.1 Regional

ReliefWeb's coverage of region-specific information is seen by current site users as generally adequate. However, some users surveyed stated that more content in languages other than English would improve regional coverage and regional usage of Reliefweb. Of current users surveyed, 49% stated that the

Regional pages on ReliefWeb were useful (6 or 5 rating), a sizeable share. Related to this statistic, 30% of users surveyed stated that “More regional coverage” would be a valuable improvement.

Some ReliefWeb users interviewed at regional offices in Dakar and Panama expressed general satisfaction with the regional coverage on ReliefWeb, but also a strong interest in having expanded language coverage of the site. They said that expanding the language coverage is critical to serve the humanitarian community in their regions, and also to better engage smaller National/Local NGOs. Two representative comments of how language is related to the regional usage and coverage of ReliefWeb are:

35 Countries speak Spanish. We need a link in Spanish... There needs to be a site developed for Latin America [Desk Officer2, Panama]

ReliefWeb also needs to balance country interests with its presentation of regional information. One advantage of ReliefWeb's regional coverage is to provide a more global view of issues that do not stop at national borders. On the other hand, however, ReliefWeb needs to ensure that the regional coverage does not overlook specific national situations, such as noted by this comment, typical of many of the regional-based interviewees:

There was "West Africa" (on ReliefWeb) as if West Africa was a country by itself and treated like a block. The situations in each country are different. [Desk Officer, Dakar]

4.5.2 Early Warning

There is little content today on ReliefWeb that is overtly about early warning issues, namely about two documents posted in 2006 and two in 2005⁸; these resources are longer-term planning/policy documents about early warning issues. ReliefWeb staff report that they do informally select content to post to ReliefWeb to highlight issues of growing concern, but this is more to provide “pre-positioning” ReliefWeb than early warning information. Overall, while early warning information is not a key part of ReliefWeb, it could be, as evidenced by this statement from an OCHA Manager:

“Early warning” is still in its infancy, not just for ReliefWeb, but everywhere. It is something ReliefWeb can be better at. It could be a major role for ReliefWeb. [OCHA Manager]

Only a few interviewees had any comments on ReliefWeb and early warning issues, and these comments generally stated that ReliefWeb did not offer much, such as this individual:

Early warning signs are not on ReliefWeb, but they should be... There is information available (on the web) but it is scattered and not in usable format. Local-level NGOs often know months before others recognize it when an area is slipping into a critical (e.g. drought) situation and how to cope. [Program Manager, International NGO, Regional Office]

ReliefWeb staff report that ReliefWeb cannot post information about emergencies or disasters until the United Nations has formally recognized the crisis. This procedure can and has meant that ReliefWeb has had to wait some time after the onset of an event before it can post information which it has collected. ReliefWeb staff report that they follow that procedure, but seek to anticipate potential crises and aid the response effort if/when it is needed by selecting and posting information onto ReliefWeb about issues of growing concern.

⁸ See <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/doc207?OpenForm&query=3&cat=Early%20Warning>

4.5.3 Policy Issues

ReliefWeb has available a wide range of materials on policy issues, including more than 100 documents in 2006 alone. Some recent examples⁹:

- Reducing the Risk of Disasters – Helping to Achieve Sustainable Poverty Reduction in a Vulnerable World, DFID Policy Paper, Mar 2006
- Predictable funding for humanitarian emergencies: A challenge to donors, Oxfam, Oct 2005
- Preventing Genocide and Mass Killing: The Challenge For The United Nations, William A. Schabas, Minority Rights Group, Mar 2006

About 40% of ReliefWeb users commented that the “Policy & Issues” section on ReliefWeb was valuable for them, a strong minority.

4.6 Conclusion

ReliefWeb is successfully reaching a large audience of humanitarian professionals around the world at NGOs, UN agencies, international organizations, governments and other organizations. These are the key target audiences for ReliefWeb. More specific information about these users of ReliefWeb includes:

- **A large share of the audience work for NGOs – more than 40%**
- **Program managers and policy makers constitute 29% of users**
- **“Field workers” are 9%, and probably more, of users**
- **Users are geographically spread – coming from 139 countries and about evenly spread across the regions of Africa, Asia, Americas and Europe**
- **Many users have their professional focus on Africa, totaling 37% of respondents**

There are also non-users of ReliefWeb among its target audience groups – people who do not use ReliefWeb because they do not know of it, they cannot readily access it, they find the site difficult to use because it is mostly in English, they do not think ReliefWeb is unique, or they feel they do not have time.

The usage of ReliefWeb is growing steadily, at some 20% a year recently, and 70% of users surveyed report using ReliefWeb on at least a weekly basis. This usage is more frequent than their usage of BBC News, IRIN News, AlertNet and others. ReliefWeb is an important source of information for all the sub-audiences evaluated, including for OCHA and other UN staff.

ReliefWeb is reasonably prominent on the web on the general issue of “humanitarian relief,” but less prominent than comparators on related topics. ReliefWeb is less prominent on blogs than are some other humanitarian information and news services.

ReliefWeb provides a suite of services that are valued by the humanitarian community. The most utilized and valued services include the Job Vacancies listing and emails, as well as Latest Updates, Headlines, Country and Emergency pages, and Maps. The Job Vacancies section accounts for a large share of ReliefWeb traffic – 35% overall.

⁹ See <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/doc205?OpenForm>

Among its users ReliefWeb is perceived as having several unique values: Providing “a one-stop shop”; providing the humanitarian perspective on situations; providing a repository and archive; providing visibility to relief organizations.

Respondents indicated their interest in additional types of products and services such as more analysis, “who is doing what, where” information, more materials from National/Local NGOs, and content in languages other than English.

ReliefWeb is covering regional issues reasonably well, but its primarily English language-focus hampers it in reaching many users at the regional level and in collecting (non-English) content for those users. ReliefWeb provides little formal coverage of early warning policy and planning issues, though some coverage of issues of growing concern.

5. User Perceptions of ReliefWeb Quality

The ReliefWeb project seeks to provide high quality information for the humanitarian community that is credible, balanced, and reliable. The evaluation surveyed users about their views on these and other “quality” factors.

5.1 Key Questions

- What are users’ perceptions of the quality of information on the site? Do users trust the information on ReliefWeb? Do they see the content on ReliefWeb as credible and reliable? Do they see it as timely and neutral?
- Do users view ReliefWeb overall as an independent information service? Do they perceive ReliefWeb as providing an independent viewpoint within the UN and external to the UN? To what extent has ReliefWeb been able to protect its editorial independence?
- Do users see ReliefWeb as representative of the whole humanitarian community?
- What is user perception of the quality and value-added of ReliefWeb products?
- Do users perceive ReliefWeb as being based on principles and standards? What do users think are those standards, and are they seen as adequate?

5.2 Credibility, Reliability, and Neutrality

The key quality factors evaluated in this assessment are credibility, reliability and neutrality. ReliefWeb strives to meet these standards on a daily basis. Before considering these factors, here are some standard definitions of the factors:

cred-i-ble: capable of being believed; trustworthy.

re-li-a-ble: capable of being relied on; consistently dependable in character, judgment, performance or result.

neu-tral: not aligned with or supporting any side or position in a controversy.¹⁰

ReliefWeb standards are outlined to help it achieve high quality across these factors. ReliefWeb first seeks to select “content partners” and content from those partners that will provide credible and reliable information and a neutral perspective on humanitarian issues. ReliefWeb then uses an extensive set of internal guidelines to ensure that high quality information is selected for posting to the site.

Among these three factors, the credibility of information on ReliefWeb is seen as its strongest characteristic. In the user survey and interviews the vast majority of individuals (e.g. 84% of users surveyed) gave a positive rating to the question “Overall do you think the content on ReliefWeb is...credible”. See Figure 15 below.

¹⁰ Webster’s College Dictionary, Random House, 1991

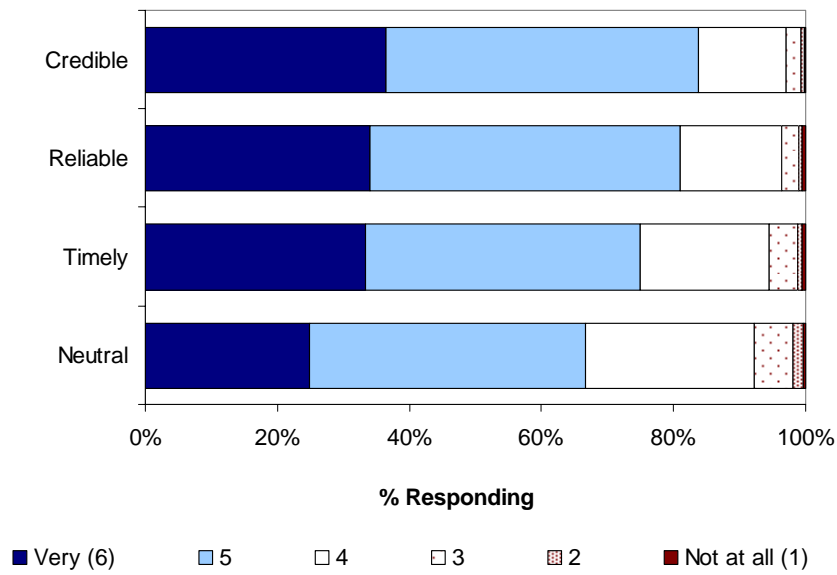


Figure 15: User Perceptions about ReliefWeb Content

About half of the interviewees stated that the credibility of ReliefWeb is enhanced by its policy of clearly identifying the sources for all information it posts, allowing users to exercise their own judgment. There were only a few cases where users commented about information on ReliefWeb being of questionable credibility, and even in these cases the users appreciated being able to see the sources.

Among sub-audiences, Academic/Researchers were most positive about the credibility of ReliefWeb (90% rated 6 or 5), while the lowest rating was from National/Local NGOs (80%).

The neutrality of ReliefWeb is viewed less positively than credibility and reliability. About 67% of users surveyed had a positive view of the neutrality of ReliefWeb, relatively less than the positive scores for other factors. In discussions, a substantial minority of interviewees stated that the information on ReliefWeb was not neutral because it was not fully representative of the humanitarian community. While this lack of representativeness does not necessarily indicate a lack of neutrality, these interviewees made that connection. Some typical comments from interviewees concerned about ReliefWeb’s neutrality are:

The perception out there is that these webpages are international and western motivated and biased. [Senior Manager, International NGO, Field]

(ReliefWeb is) not seen as neutral, instead more UN and government oriented. But it is trying to be (neutral). [Desk Officer, Donor Government, HQ]

5.3 Timeliness

Timeliness is a key part of the mandate of ReliefWeb, and ReliefWeb invests a lot of staff effort into providing new content five or more days a week, 24 hours a day. ReliefWeb staff mobilizes whenever a crisis occurs to post information from its sources in a rapid manner – often very shortly after information has been posted elsewhere on news or other web sites. ReliefWeb also seeks to disseminate information in a timely manner with the use of email alerts and RSS feeds.

Overall, ReliefWeb is seen by users as very timely in providing humanitarian information. About 75% of users surveyed rated ReliefWeb a positive (rated 6 or 5) for being timely, and many interviewees

complimented ReliefWeb on the timeliness of the information it posted about the humanitarian implications of issues. For example:

ReliefWeb is more timely and comprehensive than more specialized but slower services like FEWSNet (for food security). [Manager, international NGO, Regional office]

When I was covering Afghanistan I would check ReliefWeb on a daily basis to see if anything happened - things that would not be important to the BBC. [Desk Officer, Government/Donor, HQ]

On the other hand, a large number (about half) of interviewees view ReliefWeb as not timely when compared to news media services (e.g. many cited BBC News, AlertNet, and AFP as more timely places to find information on a breaking situation.) These commenters view ReliefWeb as a useful second source for information – once they have heard the initial news about a crisis. Some representative comments are:

By the time I see the headline in the ReliefWeb email I've already seen it somewhere else. [Desk officer, international organization]

If you expect ReliefWeb to be news agency, then it is not timely. But if you use ReliefWeb mainly for background information, I think the information is timely. [Program Manager, OCHA]

Every morning I go to BBC to see what's new in a specific region... it is much more user friendly and appealing than ReliefWeb. Then to get the humanitarian perspective I use ReliefWeb [Desk Officer, Donor Government, HQ]

OCHA staff and others described that one constraint to the timeliness of content on ReliefWeb is that ReliefWeb is not able to post information about some developing crises until the UN has formally acknowledged the situation. A representative comment, from a Donor government staff person, is:

ReliefWeb only has information on a crisis once an appeal is launched. [Desk Officer, Government/Donor, HQ]

Finally, the evaluators asked survey respondents: “If ReliefWeb could be enhanced to be more timely or more reliable which would you chose?” This tradeoff may be realistic because focusing on providing more timely information could impact the reliability of the information. The answers from users to this question were about a draw, about even. By a small margin interviewees preferred more reliability, while surveyed users had a slight preference for timeliness. This comment from a donor was representative of the view of many that ReliefWeb needs to do both:

ReliefWeb needs to be both timely and reliable. It needs to track when a situation occurs, when people are in high risk of death. It needs to pick it up and then track the response. Everything else is fluff. (And) if they need more resources, they should say something about it. [Manager, Government/Donor, HQ]

5.4 Independence

ReliefWeb strives to be an independent information service for the humanitarian community. It does this by collecting information from a wide range of organizations. It also does it in smaller ways, such as by downplaying its connection with OCHA and the UN in the design of the site.

Overall, ReliefWeb users do view it as an independent information service, with a majority of interviewees and 66% of users surveyed responding positively (rated 6 or 5) that ReliefWeb is succeeding as an

independent service. In Figure 16 below, the respondent ranking of independence is more positive than its representativeness. Some typical comments include:

I am surprised how independent this news service is as the UN and the NGO community tends to be much more ideologically biased. It does very well. [Survey respondent, NGO, UK]

ReliefWeb is pretty independent of the UN... I'd give it a 5 out of 6 in terms of independence. [Desk officer, Donor Government, HQ]

People see it clearly as a part of the UN. One tends to believe that ReliefWeb selects content. I don't know how... but it is still independent. [Manager, International NGO, HQ]

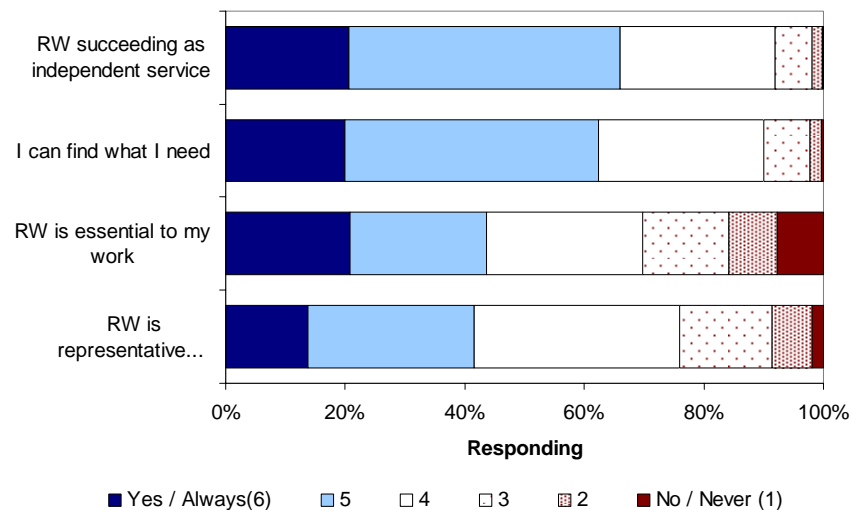


Figure 16: User Perceptions of ReliefWeb

Small shares of commenters were negative about the independence of ReliefWeb. Many commented that ReliefWeb was not sufficiently independent because the content on the site overly represents the views of the UN and other big players. Most did not state that any of the content on the site was inappropriate, rather just that it was not a balanced selection of content from the humanitarian community. Some typical comments are:

ReliefWeb does a better job of getting UN stuff out. It's an advertisement for the UN. I wish they had more non-UN stuff. [Program manager, NGO, HQ]

ReliefWeb is not critical of the UN.... (for example) I have never seen anything critical of the WFP in Africa. [Desk Officer, Government/Donor, HQ]

Among sub audiences, Government employees were slightly more positive than the average for independence and representativeness; National/Local NGOs were slightly more negative about independence, and UN staff most negative about representativeness.

5.5 Representativeness

A key factor in the quality and value of ReliefWeb is whether users see information on ReliefWeb as representative of the totality of the humanitarian community. While not a specified part of the ReliefWeb mandate, it is a key factor for consideration in this review.

Overall, user views on the representativeness of ReliefWeb content were less positive than their views of its independence, with only 42% giving it a positive score for representativeness (see Figure 16). This is the lowest score of any of the quality factors. Feedback from interviewees confirmed this general view, and provided two perspectives on its representativeness:

ReliefWeb is representative: These commenters said that ReliefWeb provides a good collection of information about the activities of major humanitarian players, UN agencies, large international NGOs, international organizations, and donor governments. These commenters appreciate the strong value of collecting together in one place this body of information from these key players. A sample of these comments:

It is more a representation of what the big players do. [Staff, International NGO, HQ]

It's not UN centric. It seems pretty egalitarian, but it is the big NGO's. You don't see Kenyan NGO's. [Senior Manager, NGO, Field]

ReliefWeb is not representative: These commenters said that ReliefWeb is not representative because it does not include information from the smaller and more National/Local NGOs, and it is seen to not accept languages other than English. In discussing smaller NGOs, commenters noted that many valuable humanitarian players either did not know about ReliefWeb or did not have the staffing resources (i.e. communications staff) to develop information to be posted to ReliefWeb.

Government, NGOs smaller groups in civil society are left out. They don't know ReliefWeb exists - it is a question of outreach. [Staff, UN Agency, Field]

There is huge amount of NGOs working in India on various different humanitarian issues but hardly any are present in ReliefWeb. [Survey respondent – Researcher, NGO, India]

Overall, ReliefWeb would be seen as more credible and trusted if it provided information from a broader base of sources. Commenters also noted that a broader base of sources would also improve the quality of the information on ReliefWeb:

If ReliefWeb doesn't represent the local/small NGOs, who will do it? [Desk officer, OCHA, Field]

Local NGOs live in the society and knows subtle things that go on. [Staff, IRIN, HQ]

The lack of representativeness of ReliefWeb is partly due to organizations not knowing that they could submit content to ReliefWeb, or how to do so, as noted in these comments:

It would really take me only an additional 10 minutes to clean up our assessments for public consumption (but I never have thought to do so). [Senior Manager, International NGO, Field]

If ReliefWeb is UN heavy because they are not getting things from (our partner) NGOs, I can fix that in a heartbeat - we can send something out to the communications folks (in our partner NGOs). [Senior Manager, International NGO, HQ]

5.6 Conclusion

The content on ReliefWeb is viewed very positively in terms of its credibility and reliability, both because the information is seen as high quality and because the sources of information are clearly identified; users appreciate being able to see the sources and use their own judgment about information quality.

Users view the information on ReliefWeb as generally neutral, but they rate this less positively than for the other two quality factors. This is due to views of a minority of users that the content on ReliefWeb is overly focused on information from the UN and large international organizations and NGOs, and does not represent the full perspective of the humanitarian community.

ReliefWeb is successful at providing humanitarian information in a timely manner, according to the views of its users. In comparison to online news services like the BBC or AlertNet, however, some users view ReliefWeb as not as timely. Users were split over whether ReliefWeb should seek to become more timely or more reliable.

ReliefWeb is generally seen as successful in providing an “independent information service” – rated strongly on this by a majority of users surveyed and interviewed. The independence of ReliefWeb was rated relatively stronger than the representativeness of ReliefWeb. In terms of editorial independence and independence of undue influences on the site by the UN or others, users view ReliefWeb positively.

The independence of the site is, however, compromised because of the perception that the content on the site is not representative. Commenters perceive that the site has disproportionate coverage of UN and large NGOs, and not enough of smaller and more local organizations.

Finally, ReliefWeb faces a significant challenge in the representativeness of its content. ReliefWeb is seen as representing well the traditional core of the humanitarian community, the large UN agencies, NGOs, international organizations, and government organizations. ReliefWeb is not seen as including the perspectives of National/Local NGOs and organizations who work primarily in languages other than English. This shortcoming also affects users’ views of ReliefWeb’s independence and neutrality.

6. User Experience

ReliefWeb has grown considerably over the course of the last 10 years with numerous incremental improvements to enhance how the site performs for users, including a major redesign completed in January 2005. This evaluation examines the current quality of the “user experience” across ReliefWeb – that is, how easy and efficient it is for visitors to do what they want on ReliefWeb. This is not a detailed usability study or user test of the site, but rather a quick review of user experience issues raised in the audience research and the evaluation team’s own survey of the site. Some other usability issues are discussed in the context of specific services on the site, in Section 4.4 ReliefWeb Products and Services.

6.1 Key Questions

- Do ReliefWeb’s information architecture, interaction design and visual design meet user needs?
- What changes should be made to improve user experience?
- What is the overall satisfaction level of ReliefWeb user experience?

6.2 Usability of ReliefWeb Services

Users surveyed and interviewed reported that they were generally able to find what they were looking for on ReliefWeb, though they cited a number of shortcomings with the site. 62% of respondents gave a positive rating to the question “I can find what I need on ReliefWeb” (See Figure 16), and detailed interviews confirmed that most users are able to find what they are looking for on ReliefWeb. For example, a great many users regularly use the Country pages or Emergency pages to get an overview of information on the topic of their concern.

Some of the common concerns about the user experience raised by two or more of the interviewees are discussed here. This listing is not necessarily representative of general shortcomings of site usability, but should be a useful starting point for further research:

- **Home Page Layout:** A number of users interviewed expressed dissatisfaction with the ReliefWeb home page. (This group was a minority of all users - but more than about 1 in 10 of those interviewed.) To many of these, the homepage is seen as overwhelming or intimidating. To others, the home page layout is not helpful to them finding what they want. Several users commented that they found a site like the BBC home page easier to use. The evaluation team also finds that the ReliefWeb home page is far less valuable than it could be, as it now is largely static text with limited new or highlighted content. The yellow blocks on the home page diagram in Figure 17 show the amount of space devoted to new and timely content, specifically maps and Headlines.

Some representative comments about the layout include:

*The visual layout of the information was a little frightening when I went for the first time.
[Manager, donor Government, HQ]*



Figure 17 ReliefWeb Home Page- Content Area for Maps and Headlines

ReliefWeb is not attractive - visually. I have to really look hard and there are too many things. A much more appealing site is the BBC. The BBC uses blocks, while ReliefWeb has lines. The blocks are much easier to understand. [Desk officer, donor government, HQ]

- Too many clicks to get to country page: Some interviewees commented that there needs to be a faster way to navigate directly to the country or emergency pages from the homepage without navigating through all the in-between pages.
- Dates of documents: The dates on documents are the dates when they were posted to ReliefWeb. A few interviewees mentioned it maybe helpful to show the document date.
- More instructions / descriptions: A handful of interviewees expressed that it may be helpful to have more instructions across the site and on the email sign-up page. One interviewee suggested having something like a “Beginner’s guide to ReliefWeb”.
- Clear links to HICs: When HIC web sites exist for a region, links to these sites should be displayed more prominently on the country pages for countries these HICs serve. Interviewees stated that these links already exist, but were hard to see and were not displayed consistently across all countries within the region the HICs serve.

6.3 Access to ReliefWeb

Many humanitarian workers in field or regional locations still do not have, or cannot afford, fast and reliable access to the internet. While this access is improving year by year, it is still a challenge for many potential users of ReliefWeb. Interviewees identified that those who are most affected are relief workers in the “deep field” with slow dial-up internet access or access over satphone, and National/Local NGOs who cannot afford computer equipment or the relatively high cost of internet connections. Many National/Local NGO’s are only beginning to have email access and often access the internet at “cybercafes” which charge high access rates considering local income. A quote from a national NGO consortium illustrates the challenge, and the opportunity:

Even electricity is unstable and computers are expensive (outside of Nairobi). In Nairobi, they use cybercafes. In rural areas, the connection is bad and internet access is expensive. About 40% [of 4,000 members] have internet access, about 25% regularly. By the end of the year, over 50% of our members should be using email. [Staff, Local/National NGO, Field]

The interviewees raise issues around the challenge of slow internet access in the field:

- Downloads of large files, especially maps, take too long in the field: Many interviewees in the field expressed frustration with the large files such as maps. Interviewees, even in regional offices of UN agencies and NGOs with high-speed internet connections, expressed that it takes a very long time to download large maps. As a test, the evaluation team downloaded a 2 MB map file at the offices of the National NGO Council of Kenya, a national umbrella organization for NGOs in Kenya, and it took more than 20 minutes.

Please make information available in as few as K's as possible. Downloads are slow. If you are in Congo or Sudan, it's a challenge. In Burundi, maps take an hour to download. [Senior Manager, International NGO, field]

I used to be in HQ and I didn't use to worry, but now that I am in the field, I think that maps are too big and take too long to download. [Staff, UN Agency, field]

- Low bandwidth / Text-only versions of ReliefWeb: A few interviewees raised concerns on behalf of those users who may be located in the “deep field” using dial-up or satphones, or accessing ReliefWeb from regions with poor internet connectivity. They suggested a low-graphics site or text-only versions for ReliefWeb to allow users in these situations to access information.

If ReliefWeb is to be used in the field more, we need a version that is easier to access by satphone. [Senior Manager, Government/Donor, Field]

ReliefWeb is a one-stop shop. They need it all in one place. ReliefWeb is accessed by people from satphones with pathetic information pipelines, who will find it difficult to access multiple sites. Default should be a low graphic site, text based. ReliefWeb also needs to work well on dial-up connections. [Manager, International NGO, HQ]

6.4 Information Architecture

Only a handful of interviewees, mostly donors, raised issues with the information architecture of ReliefWeb. They commented that the UN and the humanitarian community is pressing forward adopting the “cluster approach” to improve coordination among humanitarian actors, and ReliefWeb should reflect this new system in its information architecture; it does not now reflect the cluster approach.

There is a feature [on ReliefWeb] to look at sectors. That is going in the direction of the clusters approach, but sector is not the clusters approach. [Senior Manager, Government/Donor, Field]

6.5 Conclusion

More than 60% of users report that they are generally able to find that they are seeking, however improvements are still necessary to improve the quality of user experience on the site. Challenges still exist for those who are accessing ReliefWeb from remote locations or low-bandwidth connections. In particular, it is important that ReliefWeb become easier to use for users with low-bandwidth connections, an essential step in increasing participation and usage of ReliefWeb by National/Local NGOs.

7. Partnerships

ReliefWeb is dependent upon other organizations for the content that is posted on the site, either by organizations directly submitting their content to ReliefWeb or by ReliefWeb gathering and posting content itself. The evaluation team has examined how ReliefWeb uses partnerships with other organizations to add content and value to ReliefWeb, content partner perceptions about collaborating with ReliefWeb, and what would encourage partners to participate more proactively.

7.1 Key Questions

- How many organizations actually contribute to ReliefWeb? Do organizations feel compelled to share information on ReliefWeb? Do partners feel that ReliefWeb has reached a critical mass?
- Does ReliefWeb enable a range of humanitarian relief organizations to support and actively participate in ReliefWeb?
- Do partners see that ReliefWeb plays a role in ensuring high quality standards in humanitarian information?

7.2 Current Partner Participation

The total number of “response documents” posted in 2005 was about 39,000, some 160 a day on average coming from 787 sources. ReliefWeb reports that the total number of “information sources” for the site is about 2,509, with about 1,212 of them “response document” sources, and the other 1,297 sources for other content - maps, policy documents, training materials and job vacancy information, etc.

The response documents posted in 2005 came from an array of humanitarian players – media, NGOs, UN agencies, governments and others.

Figure 18 below shows the share of content by sector, with media, NGOs and UN being the top three. Media alone is responsible for more than 1/3 of the content on the site. (The NGO category was not divided into International and National/Local NGOs here, which may be worth further study.)

Figure 18: “Response Documents” Posted on ReliefWeb in 2005, by Source Sector

There is a “long-tail” to the distribution of these content partners, with a small number contributing a large share of the content, and a large share contributing only a small proportion of the content. 43% of the content came from the top 10 sources and 50% from the top 16 sources. 75% of the 2005 content came from only 77 sources. About 220 sources had only one or two documents posted in 2005.

Table 6: ReliefWeb “Response Document” Content Posting Data for 2005

Top Ten ReliefWeb Sources in 2005	Numbers of Documents Posted on ReliefWeb in 2005	Source Sectors
1. Agence France-Presse	4,533	Media
2. Integrated Regional Information Networks	3,194	Media
3. Reuters	2,062	Media
4. Xinhua	1,501	Media
5. UN News Service	985	UN
6. Deutsche Presse Agentur	981	Media
7. UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	975	OCHA
8. International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC)	930	Red Cross Movement
9. UN Children’s Fund	708	UN
10. UN High Commissioner for Refugees	706	UN
Count of Sources	Cumulative Content Posted in 2005	Proportion of 2005 Content
Top 10 sources	16,575	43%
Top 16 sources	19,582	50%
Top 77 sources	29,342	75%
(All) 787 Sources	38,919	100%

Of the current 1,212 document sources for ReliefWeb, only 787 had document content posted in 2005, and so around 515 had no content posted. ReliefWeb staff report that many of the 1,212 are regional/local sources who only contribute in the event of a local emergency. While the distribution is skewed to a small number of large sources, there are many organizations in the middle that have a sizeable number of documents posted to ReliefWeb in 2005, such as this sample list:

- Government of Pakistan: 391 documents shared in 2005
- Action by Churches Together International: 214
- Refugees International: 148
- Prague Watchdog: 74
- Tzu Chi Foundation: 56
- Terre des hommes: 30
- Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional: 19

7.3 Partner Content Posting Process

The ReliefWeb content posting process is largely dependent upon ReliefWeb staff seeking and posting new content. On a daily basis ReliefWeb staff review hundreds of web sites and email newsletters to select content to be formatted and posted to ReliefWeb; ReliefWeb also uses some automated tools to scan selected web sites on a daily basis.

Only about 20% of content posted to the site is submitted by content partners; 80% of content is found and selected by ReliefWeb staff, according to ReliefWeb staff. Most ReliefWeb content partners do not

use, and do not understand the posting process. Only 40% of partner respondents gave a positive reply that they understand the ReliefWeb process for posting, and that they understand “ReliefWeb’s ‘standards’ for content sharing.” (i.e. for getting content posted to ReliefWeb.) Only 20% of the respondents gave a positive score to the statement that they had been in contact with a ReliefWeb staff member in the past 12 months.

One content partner did comment that her/his content was rejected by ReliefWeb. This was not noted as a widespread problem by others, but this example does show the inefficiency and the problem of ReliefWeb’s friends– its content partners – not understanding its standards:

Every time I have submitted an article to ReliefWeb, it has been rejected. However, ReliefWeb regularly takes and publishes - seemingly of its own free will - articles from our website, to my great surprise and pleasure. And every time ReliefWeb does this, our partners and managers applaud loudly. I am very happy that ReliefWeb does this, but do find this a rather confusing working method... perhaps it would be simpler if ReliefWeb simply took the articles I submitted in the first place..? [Communications, NGO, HQ].

7.4 Content Sharing Standards

ReliefWeb’s “standards” for content sharing are not well promoted or understood. The standards for what ReliefWeb will post to the site are not available in full on its web site. There are partial statements on the site, such as the text on the “Contact” page of ReliefWeb that states ReliefWeb “...welcomes the submission of emergency response documents and maps, policy and reference documents, humanitarian employment and volunteer listings, and humanitarian assistance training opportunities.”¹¹ ReliefWeb does have some information available on priorities for sharing content on training, policy, and vacancies, but this information is very general and does not give guidance on what is and is not acceptable¹². The ReliefWeb site does say that the ReliefWeb “Editorial Policy” and “Terms of Service” are “[under development]”¹³ There is no information on ReliefWeb about its policies for sharing emergency response documents and maps.

¹¹ <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/hlp.nsf/db900ByKey/Contact?OpenDocument>

¹² ReliefWeb Policy and Issues Section Policy, Procedures and Disclaimer:

Publication of Policy and Issues documents is a free service to the international humanitarian community. These documents are posted according to the ReliefWeb mandate, which is to serve the information needs of the humanitarian relief community. Due to resource constraints, listings are accepted and published according to the following priority system:

- 1. Documents pertaining to the humanitarian sector, that are submitted by regular ReliefWeb information exchange partners, which include over 2000 humanitarian organizations that regularly submit reports, maps, or vacancies for posting on the ReliefWeb site.*
 - 2. Documents pertaining to the transition from relief to development in countries which are currently covered or have been recently covered by ReliefWeb.*
- ReliefWeb reserves the right to refuse publication of information that does not meet the criteria mentioned above, or is deemed to discriminate on the basis of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.*

¹³ <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/hlp.nsf/db900ByKey/Help?OpenDocument>

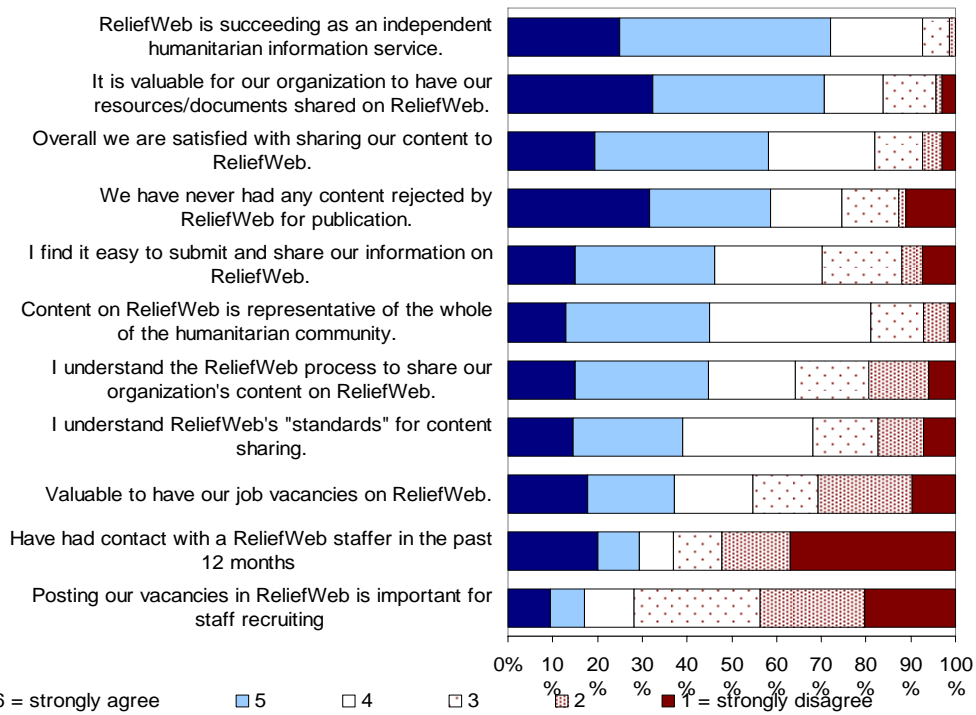


Figure 19: Content Partner Perceptions

7.5 Partner Perceptions of Value

Partner respondents rated the greatest benefits of having their content on ReliefWeb as: raising the visibility of their organization (40%), better coordination with others (25%), and increased impact (25%). See Figure 20 below:

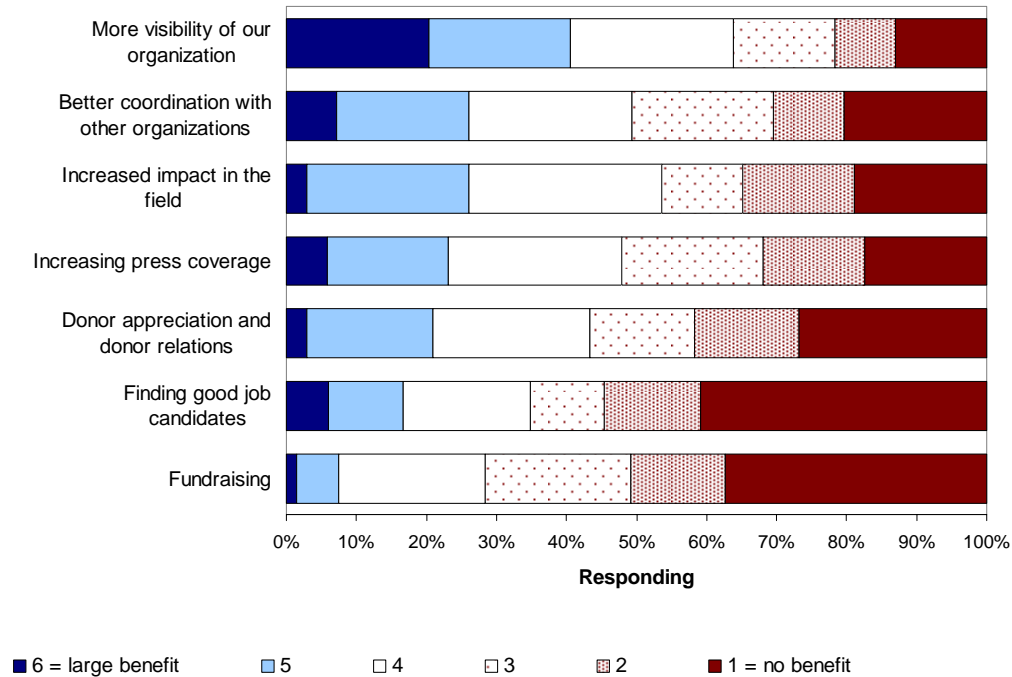


Figure 20: Partner Views on Benefits of Posting on ReliefWeb

Some of the content partners surveyed were quite positive about sharing their content on ReliefWeb. The most noted benefit was the visibility of being seen on ReliefWeb. For example:

- ReliefWeb often publishes stories from our website online, and this has often been remarked upon/commended by our partner organisations in the field. They feel that being referred to on ReliefWeb featured articles gives them greater credibility. [Communications, NGO, HQ]*

The survey respondents did not include any HR professionals, thus, the evaluation team discounts the significance of the low score for “Finding Good Job Candidates” in Figure 20.

7.6 Expanding Partner Participation

The participation of content partners could be dramatically increased, the evaluation team concludes, with more active outreach, clear standards, tools for partners to manage their own content, and data reports on content viewing to partners.

Partners responded that a lack of time and lack of organizational commitment were the biggest factors keeping them from sharing more content with ReliefWeb. The survey asked content partners what was hindering them from sharing more information with ReliefWeb, and 40% said “There is nothing keeping me from sharing more content.” Some 25% - 35% noted constraints of not having time or not having the

role assigned to a staff person. A comment from a user surveyed illustrates one perspective on these common issues:

...(T)he main problem for a small NGO like us is that there is nobody in charge of sharing the information, the language is English (I am not sure if it is possible to use our language: Spanish), and we are overloaded with the daily work. But I strongly believe that not only for our NGO but for the rest of donors and organizations it would be good to know what we are doing and where. If it is possible: could you please send me the procedure for sharing our information though ReliefWeb? Thanks [Desk office/analyst, NGO, Field]

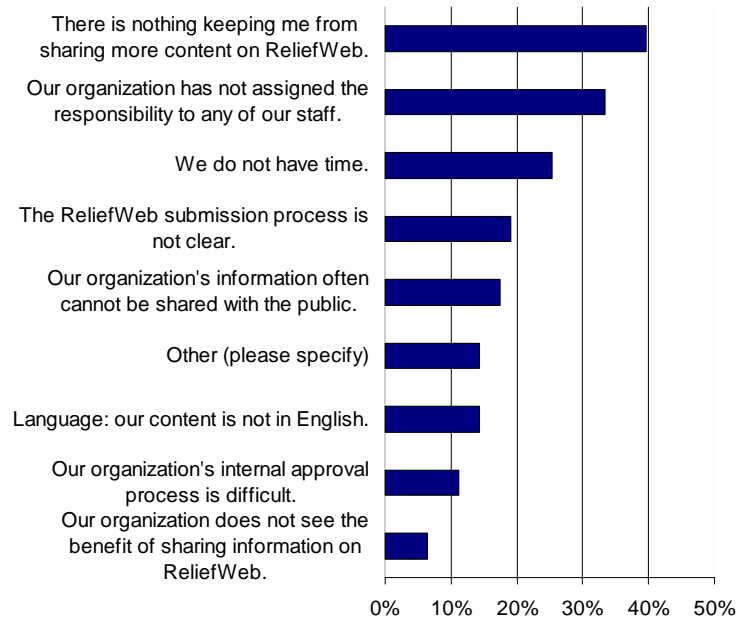


Figure 21: Partner Responses on What Keeps Them from Sharing More Information with ReliefWeb

Content partners would be willing to share more information on ReliefWeb if they could get data on the readership of ReliefWeb (60%) and on the readership of their own content on ReliefWeb (50%). Also, 56% stated that more information on whether ReliefWeb is read by a by a large number of donors would encourage them to post more content. (56%)

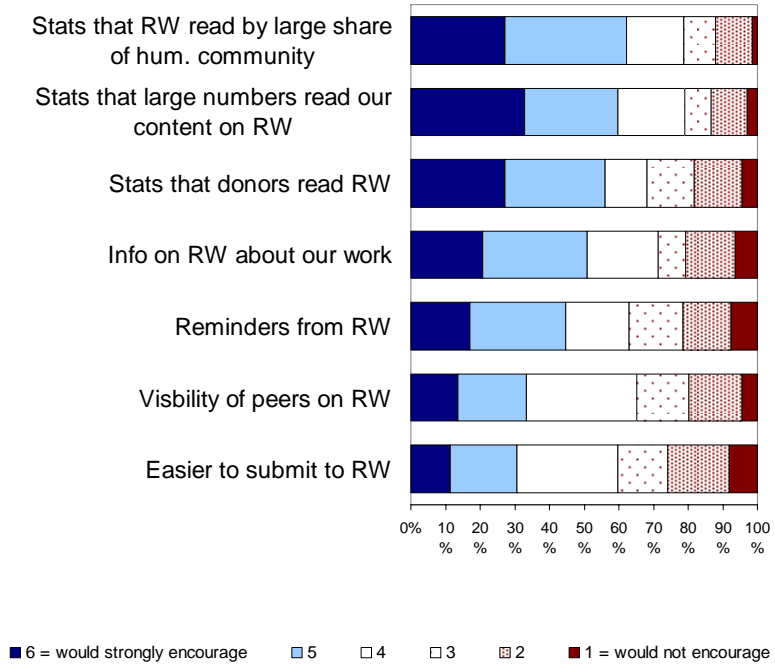


Figure 22: Partner Responses to Question: “What would most encourage you to share more documents/resources on ReliefWeb?”

7.7 Conclusion

ReliefWeb is dependent upon a small number of sources for a large share of its content. Four news sources - AFP, IRIN, Reuters and Xinhua contributed 1/3 of the content on ReliefWeb in 2005. 16 sources, including UN agencies and governments, provided 50% of all content in 2005.

The “content partner” relationship with ReliefWeb is very passive – with ReliefWeb collecting and posting most content from organizations without the partners’ direct involvement. Only about 20% of the content that is posted on the site is actively submitted to ReliefWeb by organizations.

Most survey respondents indicated that they have a weak understanding of the ReliefWeb process for submitting content and ReliefWeb’s standards for which content it will post. The evaluation team also found that the ReliefWeb standards for content posting are not completely available on the web site.

Content partners do see the value of having their content on the ReliefWeb site, primarily for the visibility it gives them in the humanitarian community. The biggest constraints to partners sharing more content with ReliefWeb were reported to be their own time and resources. Content partners would be more eager to post information on ReliefWeb if they could see data on how many people view ReliefWeb and their own content on ReliefWeb.

Overall, the participation of content partners could be increased with more active outreach to partners, clear standards for information posting, expanded tools for partners to manage their own content, and data reports to partners on content visibility.

On the question of whether ReliefWeb plays a role in ensuring high quality standards in humanitarian information, the evaluation team did not receive enough partner feedback to address the issue.

8. OCHA and ReliefWeb

The evaluation team examines here the institutional role of ReliefWeb within OCHA, specifically how OCHA uses ReliefWeb, how OCHA contributes to ReliefWeb, ReliefWeb's connections with other OCHA services, and how ReliefWeb helps supports the work and mission of OCHA.

8.1 Key Questions

- Is ReliefWeb effectively used by OCHA staff and offices, especially in the field?
- What are the institutional roles of ReliefWeb within OCHA? What are its relationships with OCHA? Does ReliefWeb contribute to OCHA's mission?
- Does ReliefWeb overlap with other OCHA online services? Does ReliefWeb complement or support those services?

8.2 OCHA Use of ReliefWeb

Overall, OCHA clearly gets a lot of value from ReliefWeb, with OCHA staff using ReliefWeb more than the average ReliefWeb users. Users surveyed from UN organizations (including OCHA) are the heaviest audience of users, with 79% visiting at least on a weekly basis, versus 66% for National/Local NGO audiences. In the interviews and discussions with OCHA staff this message of strong usage of ReliefWeb was repeated, and no OCHA staff members were unaware of ReliefWeb. OCHA field staff use ReliefWeb more than headquarters staff, perhaps because headquarters staff report already having access to many sources of information.

Within OCHA there are also some who use ReliefWeb little if at all. In particular, some managers and more experienced staff report both being overloaded with information, and relying on only a few sources, of which ReliefWeb is not one. Some typical comments of heavy and not-heavy users include:

- *I use ReliefWeb to research background materials, troll through library of documents. I like it better than IRIN because I can access the sources. [OCHA staff, Field]*
- *People are so information overloaded. If you are doing research, [ReliefWeb] may be good. If you are a decision maker you don't want to know all the (garbage); if you are a decision maker you want analysis. That's why you would go to ICG. ReliefWeb is a document repository. [OCHA staff, HQ]*

8.3 OCHA Contributions to ReliefWeb

In 2005 ReliefWeb posted some 975 response documents from OCHA to the site, making OCHA the seventh largest content contributor. However, in interviews and discussions few OCHA desk officers or managers reported any direct experience contributing content to ReliefWeb, apart from OCHA's public affairs staff. The sense of the evaluation team is that most OCHA staff does not see it as a part of their job to contribute information to ReliefWeb. ReliefWeb is not seen as a core vehicle or service in how most OCHA staff conduct their work in coordinating humanitarian activities.

8.4 ReliefWeb and OCHA's Mission

OCHA's mission is to mobilize and coordinate effective and principled humanitarian action in partnership with other actors, and ReliefWeb does support this in several ways. ReliefWeb directly supports mobilization and coordination of relief efforts through the publishing of its own maps which provide critical information for coordinating efforts. ReliefWeb publishes the Consolidated Appeals Processes (CAP); these appeals directly lead to organizations getting funding for critical work. ReliefWeb also directly supports efforts through providing a gateway to the Financial Tracking Service (FTS), which houses information about appeals and funding commitments.

Apart from these services, the main body of content on ReliefWeb is seen by users as helping with coordination in only an indirect manner. The information on ReliefWeb is generally not seen as directly aiding the coordination of relief efforts. Some typical comments on this include:

- *On a daily basis, our coordination mechanism is not impacted by the activities of ReliefWeb. But at the HQ of an NGO, or in a donor capital, there may be an indirect impact. [Program Manager, OCHA, Field]*
- *ReliefWeb itself does not [help make better decisions], but ReliefWeb combined with other information does. Especially in the initial part of a disaster, when we have our own information coming in from the field, but looking at ReliefWeb, we can see what others are doing, and inform the field. [Program Manager, NGO, HQ]*

8.5 Conclusion

OCHA receives a lot of value from the service that ReliefWeb provides to OCHA staff – timely information on humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters. OCHA staff are heavy users and report receiving great value from ReliefWeb's services.

OCHA contributes a significant amount of content to ReliefWeb, although most OCHA staff do not see sharing content on ReliefWeb as a part of how they carry out their jobs. Most of the OCHA content on ReliefWeb is collected and posted by ReliefWeb staff.

Finally, ReliefWeb does indirectly help OCHA in furthering its mission to coordinate humanitarian efforts, through the information provided on ReliefWeb about the activities of various relief organizations.

9. ReliefWeb and Other Online Services

In the ten years since ReliefWeb was started, several other online services on humanitarian issues have arisen in OCHA and outside of OCHA. These provide valuable services for the humanitarian community, but also compete with ReliefWeb for the attention of the humanitarian community. The evaluation team considers here the relationship and coverage between ReliefWeb and these other services and how they could cooperate to benefit ReliefWeb, the other services, and the humanitarian community.

9.1 Key Questions

- What relationships has ReliefWeb built with other information providers and the humanitarian community for information sharing and advocacy?
- To what extent does ReliefWeb overlap with HICs and OCHA online and other information sources? What is ReliefWeb's value-added to other OCHA services?
- Is there scope for ReliefWeb to be further consolidated, expanded or, alternatively, merged with other information services?

9.2 Other Online Services: Coverage and Cooperation

ReliefWeb depends greatly on other online information services for its core content, including AFP, IRIN, AlertNet, Xinhua and others listed in Table 7 below. These services are distinct from ReliefWeb in that they produce original news, and ReliefWeb surveys and republishes their content that it sees as relevant for the humanitarian community. Again, as described above, the involvement of these “partners” is fairly passive, with ReliefWeb manually collecting and posting the content it selects. With these news services ReliefWeb does not have any other cooperative arrangements, such as for more automated republishing of content between sites, or for the cooperative development of shared online services between ReliefWeb and the partner.

Selected Online Information Services	Numbers of Documents on ReliefWeb in 2005 from Service	Cooperation: -Linking from ReliefWeb -Linking to ReliefWeb (-Other?)
Agence France-Presse http://www.afp.com	4,533	NA NA
IRIN: Integrated Regional Information Networks. http://www.irinnews.org	3,194	Link list, and periodic highlight of IRIN reports Link to ReliefWeb
AlertNet: Reuters Foundation http://www.alertnet.org	3,194	NA NA
Xinhua www.xinhuanet.com/english/	1,501	NA NA
UN News Service www.un.org/News/	985	NA NA
OCHA Online http://ochaonline.un.org/	975	Link list on ReliefWeb Link to ReliefWeb Automated content listing from ReliefWeb on DRC page.
UN High Commissioner for Refugees http://www.unhcr.org/	706	NA NA

HICs: Humanitarian Information Centers http://www.humanitarianinfo.org	Some content posted, but numbers NA	NA. Some HICs link to ReliefWeb
Virtual OSOCC http://ocha.unog.ch/virtualosocc	NA	Link list on ReliefWeb Link to ReliefWeb

Table 7 ReliefWeb integration with other information services

For OCHA online and the HICs, the cooperation between them and ReliefWeb includes manual interlinking, some ad hoc manual republishing of ReliefWeb content (e.g. ReliefWeb maps getting picked up and republished by HICs) and some use by the other sites to republish ReliefWeb content using ReliefWeb's live RSS feed (in particular for the OCHA online page for DRC.)

In terms of other cooperation between ReliefWeb and other web sites, there are a dozen or so web sites that take advantage of the ReliefWeb RSS feed to republish ReliefWeb's content on a specific topic or country. The RSS technology allows them to do this without the approval or involvement of ReliefWeb.

The degree of coverage and cooperation today, and the potential seen by the evaluation team, are discussed in more detail here for ReliefWeb and several other services:

- **IRIN:** IRIN is an OCHA news service with a journalistic and advocacy focus in developing and publishing humanitarian content. While it has a very different approach, there is a lot of overlap in their audiences. "IRIN's principal role is to provide news and analysis about sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia for the humanitarian community."¹⁴ ReliefWeb selects and republishes about 60 or more IRIN items each week.

There are many opportunities for closer integration of IRIN and ReliefWeb, which the evaluation team thinks would benefit both sites. This cooperation could begin at a modest level – increased cross promotion (e.g. showing the Latest IRIN feature on ReliefWeb home page, or promoting ReliefWeb's Job Vacancies on IRIN), and extend to more automated and interconnected services, such as a co-branded Q&A service, automated publishing of IRIN content to a section of ReliefWeb's home page, and others.

One aspect of more automated cooperation could be ReliefWeb and IRIN (and others) developing and using common data standards. Common data standards, or micro-formats allow various web sites to publish content using a single standard, and then to make tailored re-use of that content. Micro-formats use extended XML technology to provide a more extensive organization and presentation of common types of data (more extensive, for example, than RSS feeds.) For example, IRIN and ReliefWeb could both publish specific types of content to their own sites, but also select and share content from the other, such as interviews, pictures, news about organizations and more¹⁵.

A strong advantage of the usage of micro formats is that many other content producers and publishers can adopt and make use of them. This will greatly expand beyond ReliefWeb and its partners the possibilities for sharing and exchange of humanitarian information, and can play a

¹⁴ <http://www.irinnews.org/aboutirin.asp>

¹⁵ Information about micro formats at <http://microformats.org/about/>, and <http://www.edgeio.com/view/faq>, and at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microformat>

role in fostering greater cooperation. In this way ReliefWeb can play the role of standard setter to foster information sharing and exchange far beyond what ReliefWeb can do on its own web site.

- **OCHA Online:** This is the “corporate” web site for OCHA, with information about OCHA’s various programs. OCHA online has at least one example of dynamic republishing of ReliefWeb content on its DRC pages. OCHA online could benefit from increased cross-promoting of ReliefWeb, and increased usage of RSS to showcase what is new on ReliefWeb.
- **HICs:** The Humanitarian Information Centers provide in the immediate months following a natural disaster or emergency a hub for local-level information collection and dissemination via the web. The kind of information developed and published by the HIC’s - Who is Working and Where, local level coordination meetings and details - is of special interest to the local level players. Many users of ReliefWeb, however, have also expressed interest that some of that information be available during and after the immediate crisis on ReliefWeb.

HICs and ReliefWeb should explore cooperation to benefit ReliefWeb users in the period when a HIC is running, as well as when the HIC has closed. This live cooperation could be more proactive interlinking/sharing of content such as W3 and early situation reports. ReliefWeb could even give the HIC staff tools to allow them to directly publish information to ReliefWeb. This “live” cooperation could also be accomplished through the use of micro format standards for this information.

- **OCHA Offices Information Systems:** OCHA’s FIS is working to provide OCHA field offices around the world with an expanded set of tools for managing resources and knowledge for their offices, for managing databases of W3, and for building and managing their own web sites. Some of this information will not be publicly available, but some of it could and would help further the OCHA coordination mandate. These information tools have not (yet) been designed to be interoperable with ReliefWeb, to allow, for example, the dynamic republishing of content to or from ReliefWeb.

ReliefWeb and FIS should cooperate closely to take advantage of this new information effort at the OCHA office level to make available on ReliefWeb that information which can be made public. Even if that information is published on the OCHA office public web site, it will still be valuable to the humanitarian community to have the information also available on ReliefWeb.

Closely related to these issues, ReliefWeb does coordinate periodic discussions among the “Humanitarian Information Network”¹⁶ which seeks to improve humanitarian information quality and sharing. The evaluation did not assess the focus or impact of this group. The HIN may be a good venue for ReliefWeb to promote micro format standards, although the beauty of such standards is that ReliefWeb can implement them unilaterally, and other organizations (whether part of the HIN or not) can freely contribute their own content or re-use content from others using the micro format standards.

¹⁶ More on the HIN: <http://www.reliefweb.int/hin/>

9.3 Conclusion

ReliefWeb now relies on other humanitarian information providers for all of its content, and with those sources has formal “content partner” relationships. ReliefWeb supports some modest cooperation with other information services by providing its content via RSS feeds. Apart from that, however, ReliefWeb does not today actively cooperate with other providers in information sharing or for advocacy, including not with other OCHA services.

ReliefWeb and other information providers could benefit from more aggressive integration of efforts to play to each others’ relative strengths. This integration could be done at a modest level through manual cross promotion of each others’ services and content. This integration could be done in a more valuable manner through the development and usage of common data standards – known as micro-format. This could enable ReliefWeb and its partners to more readily share content, but also enable many other players to publish and share humanitarian information.

10. Management

The success of ReliefWeb in reaching and serving the humanitarian community depends in part on the successful management of its staff resources in three offices, its technical infrastructure, and its financial support.

10.1 Key Questions

- Is ReliefWeb adequately staffed and managed to meet its objectives?
- Are locations appropriate and adequate to cover global emergencies and disasters? What is ReliefWeb's capacity to expand beyond its current three-office system?
- What is the status of the information technology and support used by ReliefWeb? What is the status of ReliefWeb's server infrastructure?
- Are the costs of running ReliefWeb in line with the outputs and impacts? How does ReliefWeb's cost effectiveness measure against other similar systems? Does ReliefWeb provide value for money?
- What is the status of ReliefWeb's funding base and is funding support sustainable?

10.2 ReliefWeb Staffing

ReliefWeb currently has a staff of about 23 individuals; this fluctuates periodically, but now includes roughly eight to ten "non short-term" positions, about eight short-term positions, and from one to five interns. Table 8 shows the breakdown of non short-term positions by office location.

Table 8: ReliefWeb "Non Short-term" Positions

ReliefWeb Staffing	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Non short-term positions	6	8	8	9	10	10	10
Geneva	4	4	4	5	5	5	5
New York	2	2	2	2	3	3	3
Kobe	0	2	2	2	2	2	2

Sources: OCHA Annual Reports

Roughly half of ReliefWeb's staff effort goes into its core "production" work - gathering and posting content and developing and posting maps. About another ¼ of staff time goes into tasks related to the direct management of the web site - handling IT issues and partner relations. Time for tasks that may be investments into ReliefWeb's future – special initiatives and strategic planning – receive about 15% of staff time. And the final ~11% goes for staff management and OCHA management issues (some from "Strategy/Planning"). These numbers are based on ReliefWeb staff estimates and recollections, and may not be accurate, but provide a rough snapshot. See Table 9 below.

Table 9 ReliefWeb Staff Effort Distribution

ReliefWeb Staff and <u>Approximate</u> Work Task Allocation (Percent) May 2006 (Source: ReliefWeb Staff)	Content Gathering	Staff + Admin Mgmt.	Special Initiatives	Partner Relations	Site Management	IT	Map Services	Site Strategy / Planning
Total FTEs (Number)	10.9	2.6	2.5	1.9	1.8	1.6	1.1	0.9
Percent of Current FTEs (%)	47	11	11	8	8	7	5	4
NEW YORK (% FTEs)	460	120	100	95	80	20	85	40
Cartographer (% of time)	5	25	15	15	5	5	25	5
Cartographer	20		15	10			50	5
Coordinator		40	15	10	5	5	5	20
Information Assist.	75		5	5	10		5	
Information Manager	60		10	20	5	5		
Information Manager	30	10		20	35			5
Intern #1	90		10					
Intern #2	90		10					
Managing Editor	10	40	20	10	10	5		5
Online Editor	80	5		5	10			
KOBE (% FTEs)	355	50	45	15	20	10	0	5
Information Assist. (% of time)	70	10	5	5	10			
Information Assist.	90		10					
Intern #1	90		10					
Intern #2	90		10					
Managing Editor	15	40	10	10	10	10		5
GENEVA (% FTEs)	270	85	105	75	80	125	20	40
Cartographer (% of time)	10	5	10	10	10	30	20	5
Information Assist.	70	5	5	5	10			5
Information Assist.	50	15	10	10	10			5
Information Manager	40	10	10	20	15			5
Intern	80		10		10			
IS Assistant	10	5	15		10	55		5
Managing Editor	10	20	30	20	15			5
Office Manager/ Tech Manager		25	15	10		40		10

The organization of ReliefWeb staff is illustrated in the below “organigram” developed by ReliefWeb.



RELIEFWEB ORGANIGRAMME



Because of limitations with OCHA on non short-term positions, ReliefWeb has had to expand its use of short-term positions to support the growth of the site. These positions are less desirable for job candidates than permanent positions, making the recruiting process more of a challenge. These positions require a substantial share of senior manager time for recruiting and training, about 40% of the time of some senior staff. The evaluation team concludes that the time required for these tasks detracts from senior staff time for future investments such as source development and broader partner relations, enhancements to the IT infrastructure, and strategic and technical planning.

10.2.1 ReliefWeb Offices

ReliefWeb has its staff and operations in three offices in Geneva, New York, and, since 2001, Kobe. This three-office arrangement allows ReliefWeb to collect and post content to ReliefWeb on a 24-hour basis and it allows ReliefWeb to have each of the three offices focus tracking the content from organizations within their neighboring regions. The three locations also provide ReliefWeb with important contacts in the humanitarian community - in New York with the UN Secretariat, In Geneva with UN and other key humanitarian players, and in Kobe with Japanese and other relief operations and Asian contacts.

One drawback to the three office arrangement is that two of the offices are located in “northern” headquarters settings (Geneva and New York) that are distant, geographically and culturally, from locations of many recent complex emergencies. This is mentioned as a drawback especially because of the concern voiced by many ReliefWeb users that the site does not provide adequate coverage of National/Local NGOs; these organizations typically do not have much of a presence in New York or Geneva.

The evaluation team does not believe that ReliefWeb now has the capacity to expand beyond the three offices. The staffing level appears barely adequate to manage the site at its current content and activity level, and to complete an ongoing upgrade of its technology. If it were to seek to expand its operations or shift offices, then additional staff would be needed.

10.3 ReliefWeb Technical Infrastructure

The technical infrastructure of ReliefWeb needs to support the day to day demands of its users, which can increase dramatically in a crisis, as well as to support the ongoing enhancement and expansion of the site services. The evaluation team did not conduct a detailed technical audit of the ReliefWeb technology infrastructure, but does provide here a review based on interviews with ReliefWeb and OCHA staff.

The ReliefWeb technical infrastructure supports a complex content management service for a heavily used web site. However, users and the managers of the site report performance problems that indicate weaknesses with this technical infrastructure. Further, the support capacity does not seem adequate for the maintenance and expansion of such an important global information service.

Many interviewees and survey respondents (a large minority of users contacted) complained about the slow speed of the site, and specifically about the speed of the filtering operations, such as clicking on a Country link to display the available resources (and which requires various database queries to run.) These users also widely commented that the search engine was slow. Some commenters also stated that the site seems to perform more slowly now than before the January 2005 relaunch (noted by about one out of every ten interviewees.) These performance problems indicate deeper problems with the web site infrastructure, such as the operation of the underlying databases and servers.

Some shares of users also complained that the site was not available for periods of time, such as this representative comment:

*ReliefWeb goes down too often. It must not go down at all. It needs to be taken seriously.
[Program manager, donor Government]*

The site also has performance problems that affect the work of ReliefWeb staff. ReliefWeb staff report occasional delays in newly posted content appearing on the web site - hours or even a day from when a piece of content is posted to when it is visible to the public. ReliefWeb staff report that this is due to the database replication function between the several Notes/Domino databases that underlie the ReliefWeb web site.

To address these performance problems ReliefWeb is undertaking a set of technical enhancements to the site in 2006, and for which it has budgeted about USD 500,000. ReliefWeb has not been able to address these performance problems with its existing staff capacity, so it has hired a contractor to perform these improvements.

Industry “best practices” for supporting such a global information service generally include monitoring and managing the web servers on a round-the-clock basis, and monitoring and managing the web site databases and other web software on a regular basis. While the evaluation team did not map out the roles played by all the involved organizations, several potential problems should be examined in more detail:

- 24/7 server infrastructure coverage: The ReliefWeb technical infrastructure is supported by the UN’s Information Technology Service (ITS) and also ReliefWeb’s own Geneva staff. The server infrastructure for such a service should be monitored by systems administrators on a 24/7 basis, and a systems administrator should be available 24/7 to identify and solve performance problems that arise. The support arrangement for the ReliefWeb servers does not appear to include 24/7 monitoring and staff availability. Many world-class web sites utilize commercial data center services¹⁷ which can provide this 24/7 coverage and staffing.
- Web technical staffing: A service as important as ReliefWeb should have full time technical staff for daily/weekly troubleshooting and pro-active improvements to the functioning of the web site. Relief Web has historically had to depend upon periodic contractor support for enhancements to the site.

10.4 Financial Management and Sustainability

10.4.1 ReliefWeb Funding

ReliefWeb has been funded entirely by donor funding since it was started in 1996, as shown in Table 10. In the past five years funding has grown from around \$1 million to close to \$2 million a year. In 2006 funding is about \$2.5 million, which includes \$0.5 million for a special IT enhancements project. Overall, the growth trend, including the 2006 core budget, has flattened out in the past three years.

In its early years the USA was the primary ReliefWeb funder, but more recently the number of total donors has increased, and the number who contributed more than \$200k in a year rose to six in 2005.

¹⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Data_center

ReliefWeb was able, through a lot of work – according to ReliefWeb staff, to fund its full requested budget in 2004 and 2005, but not for all preceding years; the funding success for 2006 is as yet unclear.

Table 10: ReliefWeb Funding Income

ReliefWeb Funding History: 1,000s of USD											
Donors	Total to Date	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
USA	3,868		681	500	375	375	375	355	380	427	400
Japan	1,836							381	405	350	350
Sweden	1,740	100	72		179	137	197	158	186	200	314
Norway	1,088					168		178	209	215	319
U.K.	945	174			124			100	200	100	247
ECHO	945			59						497	311
Switzerland	361		361								
Canada	329					329					
Finland	288	145	143								
Denmark	165				60	49	57				
Netherlands	101							50			51
Italy	62	62									
Austria	34	9	9	8	8						
Total Income	11,762	0.49	1,265	567	746	1,059	629	1,223	1,380	1,789	1,992
Income Growth per Year		---	258%	45%	132%	142%	59%	194%	113%	130%	111%
# Donors over 200k		0	2	1	2	2	1	2	4	5	6

Source: Data from ReliefWeb

10.4.2 Donor Perceptions

The evaluation team conducted interviews with individuals at five of ReliefWeb’s donor organizations to assess their views on the performance of ReliefWeb and their support of it. The donor interviewees were generally very positive about the mission and the record of ReliefWeb in serving the humanitarian community. Many of the individuals reported that they used it on a regular basis. Some representative comments include:

I have been a user since the beginning accessing it on dial up. I visit it once a day to look at latest updates to see what is going on, to look for specifics and information on developing crises.

[Program manager, Donor]

If it didn’t exist, we’d have to invent it tomorrow. [Desk Officer, Donor, Field]

In terms of the future direction for ReliefWeb, several donor program managers expressed strong interest in seeing ReliefWeb improve its relevance and value to “operational” staff at the regional and local level. Some representative comments are:

As it is now, (the target audience for ReliefWeb) is the desk officers in Headquarters. It should be expanded to be the operation people in the field – the decision-making field. [Program manager, Donor]

It has to be a data network, like UHF networks we used to have in the field, which connect practitioners first... (ReliefWeb should) focus more on the essentials: serving practitioners with information on humanitarian crises and the response to them. [Program manager (2), Donor]

These donors suggested several different tactics to accomplish this, including a strong focus on the regional/field level practitioner, providing more information for and from regional/field-based organizations, and ensuring that ReliefWeb is fast and usable for slow-bandwidth users.

One donor suggested that ReliefWeb should have staff on the ground at the regional level, as is done with HICs, in order to have a strong focus on serving the regional and local organizations.

Several donors also expressed concern that OCHA's different online information activities are uncoordinated– such as HICs, ReliefWeb, and the new Field Information Support services being developed for OCHA regional offices. One comment on this is:

HICs and ReliefWeb are tools that have taken on their own lives and are disjointed. And now OCHA is struggling to set up their own humanitarian information management systems (for regional offices). All these things are going in parallel and are not linked. ReliefWeb is the best thing they have and they should build on it. [Program manager, Donor].

10.4.3 Financial Sustainability

In terms of financial sustainability, the data in Table 10 indicate that the support base for ReliefWeb is growing broader, with an increase to six donors contributing USD 200k+ in 2004 and 2005. Further, a majority of donors were positive about continuing financial support for ReliefWeb, such as this comment:

We will continue to support it (ReliefWeb). There is proportionally better support for coordination. There is strong donor support for coordination in the field. [Desk Officer, Donor, HQ]

More than one of the donor representatives also indicated that they would be open to increasing funding for ReliefWeb if it presented a compelling plan. For example:

My impression is that they get the money they ask for. I don't think resources are a problem - we will be willing to increase our contribution if needed. [Program manager, Donor]

10.5 Conclusion

In terms of management metrics, over the past five years (2000-2005) ReliefWeb:

- **Output has more than doubled, from 16,000 to 39,000 documents posted per year (though much of this increase was in 2004-2005).**
- **Usage has grown more than four fold, from less than 50,000 average page views per week-day to more than 200,000.**
- **Budgets have risen about 1/3, from USD 1.5 to 2.0 million.**
- **Staffing has increased from 6 to 10 non short-term positions.**

These data indicate that ReliefWeb has been successful at becoming more cost-effective in delivering its services. (The evaluation team is not able to comment on how cost-effective ReliefWeb is compared to other services.)

The ongoing performance and growth of ReliefWeb is hindered by its staffing situation – specifically ReliefWeb’s need to rely greatly on short-term positions. With only about 10 of 23 positions now “non short-term” positions, ReliefWeb managers must spend a substantial amount of time in recruiting and training the non-permanent staff. This reduces the time that Relief managers would like to invest in partner relations, improving technical performance, marketing ReliefWeb and other valuable long-term improvements.

ReliefWeb’s three offices provide 24 hour coverage and key connections with headquarters of major relief organizations around the world. The location of offices in New York and Geneva is valuable for headquarters-level connections, but does not help ReliefWeb with connections and contacts with national and location humanitarian players. In terms of expanding its offices, ReliefWeb does not now have the staff capacity to expand beyond its three locations and maintain its current level of service.

The technical infrastructure of ReliefWeb has some performance problems which are affecting users’ experience on the site. Users are experiencing problems with the speed and availability of the site, while site managers have to deal with lags in content posting due to system performance. The technical support staffing and 24/7 coverage of ReliefWeb is not adequate for such an important and widely used service.

The major donors for ReliefWeb are generally pleased with the service ReliefWeb provides to the humanitarian community, and positive about continuing their funding support. Some donors are interested in seeing ReliefWeb focus its future efforts on serving better regional and local level audiences, especially practitioners and field-level decision makers; they view ReliefWeb now as better serving headquarters-based staff. Some donors would also like to see closer coordination between OCHA online information services.

11. ReliefWeb Mandate and Mission

The evaluation addresses here the questions of how well ReliefWeb is fulfilling its mandate and mission, and how appropriate both are today. The ReliefWeb mandate is stated as:

“...to strengthen the response capacity of the humanitarian relief community through the timely dissemination of reliable information on response, preparedness, and disaster prevention. This is accomplished by providing guaranteed access to time critical reports, maps and financial contributions to both decision makers at headquarters and to relief teams in the field.”¹⁸

Related, the ReliefWeb mission is:

“Serving the information needs of the humanitarian community.”¹⁹

11.1 Key Questions

- Is ReliefWeb fulfilling its mandate? Is ReliefWeb satisfying its mission?
- Are the mandate and mission still appropriate and relevant today?

11.2 ReliefWeb’s Mandate

The evaluation team addresses the question of how well ReliefWeb is fulfilling its mandate by breaking it down into separate elements. For each element the evaluation team provides an overall assessment drawing on the audience research and the team’s own judgment, with the evaluation team’s rating for success in satisfying each element, using this scale:

- 6: very strongly satisfy – could not be better
- 5: strongly satisfy
- 4: generally do satisfy
- 3: somewhat/sometimes satisfy
- 2: generally do not satisfy
- 1: do not at all satisfy – failure

The discussions below also mention how ReliefWeb could improve its performance to become a “6 out of 6” on each element.

***Through the timely dissemination of reliable information... on response
...By providing guaranteed access to... time critical reports***

Rating 5 out of 6, by the evaluation team

ReliefWeb is successfully providing humanitarian information that is seen as timely and reliable.

ReliefWeb could improve its performance here in several ways, including expanding its coverage of information from national/local NGOs to provide their perspectives on humanitarian situations. ReliefWeb could also improve its timeliness by enabling content partners to post information more directly to

¹⁸ ReliefWeb Project Description – Draft Version 1.0 – Dec 18, 2005

¹⁹ ReliefWeb Project Description – Draft Version 1.0 – Dec 18, 2005

ReliefWeb, giving them tools to manage their own content. ReliefWeb could also establish partnerships with major news services to automatically publish their own selected topics, improving timeliness and efficiency.

Through the timely dissemination of reliable information... on preparedness, and on disaster prevention

Rating 2 (out of 6)

ReliefWeb provides very few resources about disaster preparedness and disaster prevention. On the ReliefWeb site there are about seven documents on “Disaster Preparedness” from the past 12 months²⁰, and about seven documents (and some of them the same) on “Disaster Prevention and Mitigation” from the past 12 months²¹. ReliefWeb does include a listing of about a dozen upcoming training/course opportunities on these topics²². There are probably other resources on ReliefWeb of value to professionals working on these issues, but they are not readily findable if searching using the ReliefWeb site organization and terminology.

By providing guaranteed access to... maps

Rating 4 (out of 6)

ReliefWeb provides a wide array of maps on humanitarian issues, both developed by ReliefWeb’s Map Center and by other content partners. For example, ReliefWeb has posted about 100 maps from various sources already in the first six months of 2006. Users report greatly valuing the maps on the site, but there is a major “access” problem because of the large size of the map files. About half of the map files are more than 250 kilobytes (kb) in size, and some of them are 1 Megabytes (MB) and larger. Such large files can take some users many minutes to download, effectively putting some maps out of reach of many of its target audiences in regional offices or the field.

ReliefWeb could improve access to maps and the value of the maps by making them more accessible to users on slow internet connections. Some users suggested smaller, simpler “sketch maps” that could be quick to download.

By providing guaranteed access to... financial contributions

Rating 3 (out of 6)

The Financial Tracking System is hosted within the ReliefWeb site, though it is not managed by ReliefWeb (but by OCHA). FTS is a sophisticated database of information on appeals and contributions for humanitarian activities. The FTS provides a full set of tools to query the database for appeals and contributions by a number of dimensions. The FTS however is regarded by many users as not credible and usable because the data in the system is often not up to date and/or incorrect. While the FTS is only intended for, and used by, a small share of the humanitarian community, many of those users have strong negative impressions of the FTS.

²⁰ <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/doc207?OpenForm&query=3&cat=Disaster%20Preparedness>

²¹ <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/doc207?OpenForm&query=3&cat=Disaster%20Prevention%20and%20Mitigation>

²² <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwt.nsf/doc209?OpenForm&query=3&cat=Disaster%20Prevention%20and%20Mitigation>

The FTS could be made more valuable by ensuring that the information in it is timely and accurate, through some combination of OCHA staff outreach to donors, and quality control of the information on FTS.

...to decision makers at headquarters

Rating 5 (out of 6)

ReliefWeb today is succeeding as a valuable service for headquarters-based humanitarian workers. Workers at this level appreciate the global overview of information on ReliefWeb and they do not suffer from bandwidth problems and can take full advantage of large files such as maps.

ReliefWeb does not, however, meet all the needs of decision-makers at the headquarters level. Many report being interested in insights, analysis, and recommendations about issues. They do not have the time or interest to screen all the information from everyone working on an issue, but rather want help - they want intelligence - to keep them on top of the issue and to know what is important.

ReliefWeb could be more valuable to decision-makers in headquarters (or anywhere) by providing insights and intelligence and analysis of humanitarian issues. This can be done by collecting and sharing this specialized information from content partners, by having ReliefWeb staff who can provide valuable “filtering” of information, and by having more automated services that indicate what is happening and where (on ReliefWeb and around the world).

...to relief teams in the field

Rating 4 (out of 6)

ReliefWeb’s value to teams in the field is tied to whether ReliefWeb provides them resources they need and whether the resources are accessible by them. Relief workers in the field report valuing ReliefWeb alerts about new response documents and headlines on specific topics or countries; the job vacancies are also extremely valuable. Of less value to some field workers, because of their limited bandwidth, is content on the ReliefWeb site, and in particular, maps. Also lacking for field workers is information from smaller national/local NGOs, and information on “who is working where”.

ReliefWeb can increase its value to Relief Workers in the field by making the site easier to use by low bandwidth users, by expanding its email services, by making “light” versions of maps, and by expanding its content from national/local organizations and on “who is working where” at the regional and local level.

Strengthen the response capacity of the humanitarian relief community

Rating 5 (out of 6)

ReliefWeb does strengthen the response capacity of the humanitarian community primarily through providing an information exchange – a comprehensive and timely repository of information on how different organizations are viewing and responding to events. It also provides materials on professional development and policy issues – relevant for capacity building. In addition, a key service it provides is the jobs vacancy service on the ReliefWeb site and email service – which helps employers and potential employees find each other.

All of the possible enhancements discussed here and in the report above can help better strengthen the response capacity of the humanitarian community – including making ReliefWeb more accessible to the field, expanding the representativeness of the content on ReliefWeb, including more insights and intelligence for decision makers, and others. A critical factor in any of these enhancements will be the

capacity of ReliefWeb's staff. ReliefWeb must seek to work more in partnership with humanitarian organizations in running the ReliefWeb service.

To succeed in better fulfilling its mandate, ReliefWeb should become more of a joint effort – with the staff steering and guiding, and contributions coming from many players. This is a very different model than the current approach, but the one that will best further this mandate.

11.3 ReliefWeb's Mission

The mission of ReliefWeb is "Serving the information needs of the humanitarian community." As discussed in the section above and elsewhere in this report, ReliefWeb is meeting well the needs of the humanitarian community for information about humanitarian response activities, about the work of major humanitarian actors, about career opportunities, and more. It certainly could do better, and this report outlines many activities to improve, but ReliefWeb is meeting many important information needs today.

11.4 Conclusion

ReliefWeb is fulfilling well its mandate to disseminate timely information on humanitarian issues, to serve decision-makers at headquarters, and to strengthen the humanitarian community response capacity.

ReliefWeb is doing less well at disseminating information on preparedness and disasters prevention, at disseminating quick-to-download maps, at providing access to reliable financial information, and in reaching and serving field-based humanitarian workers.

Overall, ReliefWeb is meeting well its mission statement of "Serving the information needs of the humanitarian community," though it could better serve the needs by addressing the shortcomings listed in the above paragraph.

Finally, through many discussions with humanitarian professionals it is clear to the evaluation team that this mandate and mission is still relevant and important today. ReliefWeb will need to continue to listen to its users to shift to meet their changing needs, and to complement other available information services. However, its broad mandate and mission are still critical to the humanitarian community.

12. Recommendations

The evaluation team outlines here five major recommendations to improve the value of ReliefWeb to the humanitarian community; overall vision, partnership growth, audience growth, improving its products and services, and strengthening the management capacity for the project.

12.1 Increase Value to Information Shared on ReliefWeb

An important theme over all the recommendations is that to increase the value of ReliefWeb it must become a more essential tool for decision-making at both headquarters and field levels. To do this ReliefWeb must build on top of its core content foundation to provide a layer of insights and analyses.

Currently, most of ReliefWeb’s efforts are directed to the screening and aggregating of information. ReliefWeb also provides some framing of issues through the featuring of selected materials, but this is limited. Users greatly value this aggregation role that ReliefWeb plays and want it to continue, but many also want more. Decision-makers, in particular, express a need for insights to help them understand what is most relevant, what is most important, and what is most critical on an issue. This “framing of the issues” should be done by highlighting information from across the body of content on ReliefWeb to provide key insights for these decision-makers. The next step in increasing value to decision-makers is to provide analysis of issues – views and perspectives on complex events to help to shape the response, to influence how the humanitarian community works. (See Table 11 below.)


Increasing Value to User 	Aggregate Information	Mechanical	Screening
	Frame the Issue	Insightful	Highlighting
	Shape Response	Influential	Analyzing

Table 11 “Information Value” Strategies

ReliefWeb should, in the immediate term, increase its value to decision-makers by moving to provide services more consistently at this second level, by expanding its framing of key issues. This framing can be “human powered”, such as an experienced editor compiling a list of “critical issues we’re watching this month.” It can also be computer generated, such as “most read documents this week,” or “where are the job postings this month?”

In preparation for moving to provide more analysis of key issues, ReliefWeb will need to build relationships with partners who can provide such analysis (which may not be readily available), as well as to tap into OCHA’s analytic capacity and provide that on ReliefWeb.

12.2 Partnership Growth

ReliefWeb needs to expand the scope and the quality of its content partnerships. Expanded partnerships will help improve the value of ReliefWeb and user perceptions of its quality, by enhancing the representativeness of its content. More active partners will also improve the efficiency of the ReliefWeb project (staff time per document posted), allowing investment into other high value efforts.

- ReliefWeb should conduct more aggressive outreach and training to partners at the headquarters and regional level, to encourage active participation in ReliefWeb. This should include establishing ReliefWeb advocacy functions with OCHA branches and divisions.
- OCHA should designate a dedicated ReliefWeb focal point in regional offices to conduct outreach and promotion, as well as ongoing partner relationship management. This focal point should be responsible to improve coverage of current gap areas, including local and national NGOs, and to build connections at the country level within selected organizations (e.g. OCHA FOs, UN agencies, NGOs, governments).
- ReliefWeb should enlist content partners to be more proactive by providing them easy technical tools to manage their own content “portfolios” on ReliefWeb. ReliefWeb should also provide partners with incentives to contribute through automated reports of the growth and readership (i.e. page views) of their portfolio on ReliefWeb.
- ReliefWeb should publish clearly defined policies and guidelines to inform users of editorial procedures and decision-making, and to share standards with content partners.
- ReliefWeb should play a leading role in the sector to expand content sharing by developing content standards for common humanitarian information. ReliefWeb should develop and use “micro formats” for standard types of humanitarian content (situation reports, maps, jobs, etc). These micro formats are “open application interfaces” (APIs) that allow more automated aggregation of information and dissemination of information. This has the potential to enhance the efficiency of ReliefWeb’s own content collection process, and also to enable wider sharing of ReliefWeb content across other humanitarian web sites. ReliefWeb can do this unilaterally and allow other organizations to build off of it.

12.3 Audience Growth

ReliefWeb needs better to reach non-users within its target audiences as well as those using only a very limited portion of ReliefWeb content and to better promote the range and value of content on the site. This will help ReliefWeb become more essential in the humanitarian community, and better support the work of underserved target audiences - field-based humanitarian workers and decision-makers.

- ReliefWeb should improve access to its content for people with slow internet access, by making pages lighter, by making server queries faster, by providing “sketch” versions of maps, by making all resources accessible by email query, by publishing ReliefWeb’s archives to print or CDs, by providing a text-only version of the site, etc.
- ReliefWeb should conduct stronger promotion of the valuable services it provides, for example through home page features, or highlighting in the weekly Job Vacancy emails the latest new content on ReliefWeb.

12.4 Products and Services Improvement

ReliefWeb should extend the value of its products and services to benefit current users and also to help expand its user base. The recommended improvements to products and services are:

- ReliefWeb should provide users with the ability to customize how they get information from the site, such as the home page, region and sector pages, and email services.

- ReliefWeb should partner with specialized information services to incorporate automated news feeds or other information to ReliefWeb. This will reduce time spent on collecting information from some of the larger ReliefWeb content partners.
- ReliefWeb should improve the layout of email messages sent to subscribers to make them easier to browse, and to better direct users to more detailed information on ReliefWeb and partner sites.
- ReliefWeb should provide data to make it easier for users to understand the value of information on ReliefWeb. For example, this could include showing: “most read documents” on a topic, or showing a count of most recent content by region or topic.
- ReliefWeb should expand the multi-lingual content it provides on the site by inviting such materials from partners, and by enabling users to find content by “language” on the site.
- OCHA AIMB should more aggressively integrate its information management and online efforts, to promote, as a rule, interoperability between information systems. This can be done at a basic level through expanded interlinkages between sites, but should include services that enable more automated sharing of content across various OCHA sites – e.g. HICs, OCHA Online and OCHA country office websites, and others.

12.5 Management Strengthening

The ReliefWeb management systems and capacity need to be expanded in some critical ways. The benefit of doing this will be better service to target audiences through better site performance. Greater capacity will also enable ReliefWeb to invest staff time in initiatives that will deliver more value to the humanitarian community.

- ReliefWeb should recruit a larger core of permanent staff and reduce its reliance on short-term (GTA) staffing for core functions. This is important to reduce management time spent on time-consuming recruitment and training of short term staff, and allow ReliefWeb to build the longevity and capacity of ReliefWeb staff. This is critical to allow ReliefWeb to make important long-term investments in expanding the value of its services.
- ReliefWeb should reduce the amount of staff time spent on routine content posting through technical solutions and expanded partner relations (described above).
- ReliefWeb needs expanded technical staff dedicated to and working full time within the project. This is critical to allow ongoing improvement, enhancement and innovation on ReliefWeb.
- ReliefWeb needs comprehensive 365/24/7 support for its technical infrastructure. It is a common best-practice for sites as large, global, and time-critical as ReliefWeb, to have round-the-clock monitoring, and, as needed, troubleshooting of infrastructure-level issues.
- ReliefWeb and ITS should complete the planned 2006 technical improvements, and afterwards continue to evaluate how well the current platform will meet planned growth needs.

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13.2 Appendix B: Interview Script

13.3 Appendix C: Log of Interviews

13.4 Appendix D: Interview Distribution

13.5 Appendix E: Public Survey

13.6 Appendix F: Content Partner Survey

13.7 Appendix G: Terms of Reference

13.8 Appendix H: Management Response Matrix

=end=

EVALUATION OF ReliefWeb

Appendix



<http://www.reliefweb.int>

Prepared for Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, United Nations

By Forum One Communications
Chris Wolz
Nam-ho Park
2006 v2

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Appendix A: Inception Report

INCEPTION REPORT

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
Evaluation of ReliefWeb

March 28, 2006

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1. OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The ReliefWeb web site (www.reliefweb.int) was started in 1996 with the mandate from the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) to be a “global humanitarian information system for the dissemination of reliable and timely information in emergencies and natural disasters...” and to help improve the sharing of information across national authorities, relief agencies, and other relevant actors.¹

The UN’s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has guided the development of ReliefWeb over the past ten years to include today a wide array of information about emergencies and natural disasters drawn from many sources. The content and services currently available on ReliefWeb include, among others: 24 hour updates on emergency situations, headline news, various reports and documents, maps, contribution data, links to other organizations and services, and training and career resources for humanitarian professionals.

The purpose of this evaluation of ReliefWeb is to i) assess whether ReliefWeb meets the needs of the target audience² in an efficient and effective manner and in line with its mandate; ii) to provide accountability to donors, OCHA, and users; and iii) to provide clear recommendations and lessons learned in order to help determine the future direction of the project and its products and services.

In this evaluation we will review the current performance of ReliefWeb assessing factors including its relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, coherence and sustainability. We will seek to understand the usefulness of the site for the target audience of humanitarian professionals across UN agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and governments – including donors. We will evaluate how these professionals are using ReliefWeb, what are their perceptions of the service and how ReliefWeb could help them be more effective in their work. We will also evaluate future opportunities for ReliefWeb and related issues of site strategy, staffing, technology, funding and sustainability.

The scope of the evaluation will include, in brief:

- Baseline analysis of the status of ReliefWeb, the scope of its content and services, the level of utilization and other factors.
- Audience analysis of users of ReliefWeb and target audiences for ReliefWeb: We will seek to collect survey feedback from at least 1,000 ReliefWeb users through email and web questionnaires. We will collect additional information through detailed interviews and discussion groups with humanitarian professionals across organizations OCHA, UN agencies, NGOs and governments in New York City, Washington DC, Geneva, Brussels, London and Nairobi. We will also conduct three consultations “virtually” with Regional Hubs in Dakar, Bangkok, and Panama.
- Analysis of ReliefWeb performance, challenges, and opportunities including workshop sessions with the ReliefWeb management team.
- Final analysis and recommendations report.

¹ UN Resolution 51/194/13. Also see Resolution 57/153/10.

² Target Audience: the international humanitarian community, including 1) UN agency personnel (desk officers, humanitarian affairs officers, humanitarian/resident coordinators, field workers and senior managers); 2) NGO personnel (desk officers, field workers and senior managers); 3) Government officials (mission and HQ humanitarian focal points, disaster management officers, desk officers in operational agencies such as USAID).

We list here several key factors in this evaluation:

- **Hard to reach audiences:** The key target audiences for ReliefWeb are decision makers and their staffs working on humanitarian issues at OCHA, UN agencies, NGOs, governments and other organizations. These audiences are located around the world and thus, hard to reach. Therefore, we have designed an evaluation approach based on global email and web surveys and detailed interviews and discussion groups with a sample of humanitarian professionals.
- **Stakeholder involvement:** The key stakeholders for ReliefWeb include the staff of OCHA, other UN agencies, large and small NGOs, governments and ReliefWeb information providers. We will involve all these groups in the evaluation through the surveys, interviews and discussion groups.
- **Time period:** The evaluation will commence February 16 and we will deliver to OCHA a Draft Evaluation Report by May 22. We will complete the Final Evaluation Report within two weeks of a review workshop with OCHA in New York, planned for June 7.
- **Evaluation factors:** The factors we will use in this evaluation include ReliefWeb's relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, value-for-money, client satisfaction and sustainability. A key overriding factor will be how well ReliefWeb supports humanitarian decision makers in their work.
- **Geographic areas covered:** We will seek to collect a global perspective from ReliefWeb users through the global email and web surveys, and through the selection of organizations and locations for the detailed consultations.
- **Limits of the evaluation:** This evaluation has broad objectives but a finite schedule and scope. We will thus be selective in the issues we address and the data collection activities we undertake. The possible limitation of this approach may include:
 - We will focus our Baseline Analysis on selected portions of the current site, which will be approved by the Project Team, and on data that OCHA can readily provide us about site usage.
 - We will focus our direct consultations in the Audience Analysis on a selected number of individuals and organizations.
 - Qualitative assessment: We will rely heavily in this assessment on qualitative input from stakeholders about ReliefWeb's status, performance and future opportunities. We will also collect some quantitative information about user perceptions and site performance, but much of our analysis will rely on qualitative information and our own professional judgment.
- **Evaluation Project Risks:** Some potential project risks include:
 - **Expansion of scope:** We will be flexible to consider additional factors and questions that arise during this evaluation, but need to do so within the fixed scope and schedule of this project. We will consult closely with OCHA in prioritizing additional issues that arise.
 - **Scheduling of consultations:** We will make strong efforts to consult with key stakeholders during the information collection stage of this evaluation, but may not reach all of the desired individuals or organizations due to schedules and availability.

2. ISSUES TO BE STUDIED

We summarize here the key issues and questions that we will address in this evaluation. In the following section “3. Methodology”, we outline how we will address these questions.

The key issues that we will study include ReliefWeb’s:

1. Mandate, Institutional Role and Partnerships
2. Credibility, Trust, Independence
3. Impact, Content and Quality
4. Usership and Usability
5. Products and Services
6. Future and Sustainability

For each issue we provide in the charts below a listing of:

- A short statement providing more detail on the focus of the issue
- The specific questions to be answered
- The performance criterion we will use to address the issue
- The Audiences we will consult through those activities, which will include:
 - OCHA staff
 - UN staff (other than OCHA)
 - NGO staff, large organizations
 - NGO staff, small organizations
 - Governments, including donors, others
 - Partners who are information providers for ReliefWeb, and
- The Activities we will use to answer each question, which will include:
 - Expert analysis, desk study
 - Email and web survey of ReliefWeb users
 - “Discussions”, here meaning both interviews and discussion groups

1. Mission: Mandate, Institutional Role and Partnerships

It is critical for the future development of ReliefWeb to be rooted in a clear review of the primary mission and objectives of ReliefWeb and how well it is achieving those today. We will assess how well ReliefWeb fulfills its mandate as stated in 1997 Resolution 51/194 and 2003 Resolution 57/173. We will answer this through the collection of stakeholder views on ReliefWeb performance and quantitative Expert analysis on data about the scope of ReliefWeb efforts. Sample questions are detailed in the chart below:

	Issues / Questions	Performance Criterion	Audiences							Activity		
			OCHA	UN	NGO-L	NGO-S	Gov.	Partners	Donors	Expert	E-survey	Disc.
1	Mandate, Institutional Role and Partnerships											
	<i>Does ReliefWeb fulfill its mandate as stated in 1997 Resolution 51/194 and 2003 Resolution 57/173?</i>	<i>Stakeholder perceptions and qualitative expert analysis on data about the scope of ReliefWeb efforts.</i>										
1.1	Does ReliefWeb foster the "dissemination of reliable and timely information on emergencies and natural disasters"?	(a) Volume and timeliness of information dissemination (b) Stakeholder views	x	x	x	x		x		x	x	x
1.2	Does ReliefWeb enable a range of organizations to support and actively participate in ReliefWeb?	(a) Scope and trends in partner contributions (b) Partner and non-partner views		x	x	x	x	x		x		x
1.3	Does ReliefWeb improve coordination of humanitarian relief? Does ReliefWeb bring valued-added to the mandate and mission of OCHA?	(a) Stakeholder views	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
1.4	How could ReliefWeb better fulfill its mandate?	(a) Stakeholder views	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
1.5	Do users view ReliefWeb as independent and representative of the humanitarian community? What are users' views of influences over presentation, architecture and content on the site?	(a) Stakeholder views			x	x	x	x	x		x	x
1.6	To what extent does ReliefWeb overlap with HICs and OCHA online and other information sources? What is ReliefWeb's value added to other OCHA services?	(a) Consultant comparison (b) Stakeholder views	x							x		x
1.7	Is ReliefWeb effectively used by other OCHA offices, especially in the field, and does it bring value added to OCHA's mission? What is the institutional role of ReliefWeb and its relationships within OCHA?	(a) Usage stats for OCHA staff (b) OCHA staff views	x							x		x
1.8	What is the institutional role of ReliefWeb and its relationships within OCHA?	(a) OCHA staff views	x							x		x
1.9	What relationships has ReliefWeb built with other information providers and the humanitarian community for information sharing and advocacy?	(a) Partner views	x					x				x
1.10	Is the ReliefWeb mission statement still suitable?	(a) Stakeholder views	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x

2. Credibility, Trust, Independence

We will address the issue of whether ReliefWeb is seen as credible, trustworthy and independent by its users. We will answer this by seeking to answer the below questions through the collection of stakeholders' views about ReliefWeb.

	Issues / Questions	Performance Criterion	Audiences						Activity		
			OCHA	UN	NGO-L	NGO-S	Gov.	Partners	Donors	Expert	E-survey
2	Credibility, Trust, Independence										
	<i>Is ReliefWeb seen as credible, trustworthy and independent by its users?</i>	<i>Will answer through collection of stakeholder views on ReliefWeb.</i>									
2.1	Do users trust the information on ReliefWeb? Do they see it as credible?	(a) Stakeholder views			x	x	x	x	x	x	x
2.2	Do users perceive ReliefWeb as providing an independent viewpoint within the UN and external to the UN?	(a) Stakeholder views			x	x	x	x	x	x	x
2.3	Do users see ReliefWeb as representative of the totality of the humanitarian community?	(a) Stakeholder views			x	x	x	x	x	x	x
2.4	Do users perceive ReliefWeb content as being based on principles and standards? What do users think are those standards, and are they seen as adequate?	(a) Stakeholder views			x	x	x	x	x	x	x
2.5	To what extent has ReliefWeb been able to protect its editorial independency?	(a) Stakeholder views			x	x	x	x	x	x	x

3. Impact, Content and Quality

We will evaluate the impact ReliefWeb is having in reaching and helping humanitarian professionals and decision makers by seeking to answer the questions listed below.

	Issues / Questions	Performance Criterion	Audiences						Activity			
			OCHA	UN	NGO-L	NGO-S	Gov.	Partners	Donors	Expert	E-survey	Disc.
3	Impact, Content and Quality											
	<i>What kind of an impact is ReliefWeb having in reaching and helping decision makers and humanitarian workers? Does its content and services portray regional perspectives, cover countries of concern and forgotten emergencies, and key policy issues?</i>	<i>Stakeholder views on ReliefWeb performance, and qualitative analysis of online prominence of ReliefWeb.</i>										
3.1	Is ReliefWeb prominent on the internet, compared to other sources on relief issues?	(a) Quantitative assessment of comparative online prominence	x	x	x	x	x		x			
3.2	Does ReliefWeb provide timely and relevant information to decision makers, humanitarian workers and the people they are trying to help?	See 1.1	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	
3.3	What has been the impact of ReliefWeb according to its main users/target groups?	(a) Stakeholder views	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	
3.4	How well do ReliefWeb products and services meet user needs?	(a) Stakeholder views	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	
3.5	What are users perceptions of the quality of information on the site? Of the quality of information user have submitted themselves?	(a) Stakeholder views		x	x	x	x	x		x		
3.6	How do users see the role of ReliefWeb in ensuring high quality standards in humanitarian information?	(a) Stakeholder views	x	x	x	x	x					x
3.7	Do organizations feel compelled to share information on ReliefWeb? Do they see that it has reached a critical mass?	(a) Stakeholder views						x				
3.8	Does ReliefWeb portray regional perspectives?	(a) Stakeholder views	x	x	x	x	x					x
3.9	To what degree does ReliefWeb support early warning efforts through its coverage?	(a) Stakeholder views	x	x	x	x	x					x
3.10	Does ReliefWeb adequately cover and raise awareness of policy issues?	(a) Stakeholder views	x	x	x	x	x					x

4. Usership and Usability

We will evaluate whether ReliefWeb's information architecture, interaction design and visual design meet user objectives, and suggest how the site could be improved to better meet those objectives. The detailed questions we will seek to answer are detailed below. As part of this we will conduct an expert review of the navigation and information architecture of ReliefWeb based on industry best practices. We will also assess stakeholder views on how well ReliefWeb content and services meet their needs.

	Issues / Questions	Performance Criterion	Audiences						Activity			
			OCHA	UN	NGO-L	NGO-S	Gov.	Partners	Donors	Expert	E-survey	Disc.
4	Usership and Usability											
	<i>Do ReliefWeb's information architecture, interaction design and visual design meet user objectives, and how could the site be improved to better meet those objectives?</i>	<i>Will assess stakeholder views on performance of ReliefWeb content and services to meet user needs. Will also conduct expert usability survey of ReliefWeb to identify potential improvements, based on industry best practices.</i>										
4.1	Do ReliefWeb's information architecture, interaction design and visual design meet user objectives?	(a) Stakeholder views		x	x	x	x	x			x	x
4.2	What changes should be made to improve user experience? How do users find ReliefWeb with respect to: text readability, document format (HTML, PDF), clicks to resources, download time, submission tools, content organization on complex emergencies versus natural disasters, content organization on countries, use of language on the site, and multi-lingual content.	(a) Expert usability survey of sections of the site with respect to industry best practices (b) Stakeholder views	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
4.3	What are user perceptions of the quality of available information with respect to the ability to make informed decisions?	(a) Stakeholder views		x	x	x	x	x			x	x
4.4	What gaps exist in information, analysis, and other derived products, and how to fill the gaps to improve decision making?	(a) Expert review (b) Stakeholder views	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
4.5	How can information better serve the needs and help improve the quality and efficiency of humanitarian assistance?	(a) Expert review (b) Stakeholder views	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x

5. Products and Services

We will evaluate the overall value of ReliefWeb products and services and how they can be improved to benefit ReliefWeb's key stakeholders. The questions we will seek to address are listed below.

	Issues / Questions	Performance Criterion	Audiences						Activity				
			OCHA	UN	NGO-L	NGO-S	Gov.	Partners	Donors	Expert	E-survey	Disc.	
5	Products and Services												
	<i>What is the overall value of ReliefWeb products and services to users and how could the products and services be improved?</i>	<i>Stakeholder views on value of ReliefWeb content and services to meet user needs. Expert review of site navigation and information architecture.</i>											
5.1	Which ReliefWeb products and services are users aware of?	(a) Consultant review of site usage (b) Stakeholder views		x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x
5.2	Are all of ReliefWeb's services relevant to the user community?	(a) Consultant review of site usage (b) Stakeholder views		x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x
5.3	What is user perception of the quality of ReliefWeb products? What is the value-added of current products?	(a) Stakeholder views		x	x	x	x	x			x	x	
5.4	Which products could be improved or added to enhance value for users?	(a) Consultant review of site services (b) Stakeholder views		x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x
5.5	Is ReliefWeb technology in line with standard and current "state-of-the-art" information technology?	(a) Consultant review of site services									x		
5.6	What is the overall satisfaction level of the ReliefWeb user experience?	(a) Consultant review									x		

6. Future and Sustainability

Drawing together the analyses and conclusions in the previous tasks, we will work with OCHA to define the opportunities and priorities to guide ReliefWeb for the coming years. We will assess whether ReliefWeb has a sound foundation to meet its objectives in terms of staffing, funding, and technical infrastructure. We will evaluate whether ReliefWeb is cost-effective and a good value for the investment. We will look at potential risks for the future success of ReliefWeb. We will answer these questions through subjective consultant judgment, by considering user comments on value, and by collecting OCHA staff inputs on funding, staffing, and technical infrastructure.

	Issues / Questions	Performance Criterion	Audiences							Activity	
			OCHA	UN	NGO-L	NGO-S	Gov.	Partners	Donors	Expert	E-survey
6	Future and Sustainability										
	<i>Does ReliefWeb have a sound foundation to meet its objectives, in terms of staffing, funding, and technical infrastructure. Is ReliefWeb cost-effective and a good value for the investment?</i>	Consultant evaluation and recommendation, drawing on user comments on value and collecting OCHA staff inputs on funding, staffing and technical infrastructure.									
6.1	Is there scope for ReliefWeb to be further consolidated, expanded or, alternatively merged with other information services? Does association with the UN help or hinder ReliefWeb effectiveness?	(a) Views of OCHA, users, information providers, donors	x	x	x	x		x	x		x
6.2	What is the status of ReliefWeb's funding base and is it sustainable?	(a) Expert survey of funding levels and sources (b) Views of OCHA, donors	x						x	x	x
6.3	Is ReliefWeb adequately staffed, funded and managed to meet its planning and delivery objectives? Are ReliefWeb locations appropriate and adequate to cover global emergencies and disasters? What is ReliefWeb's capacity to expand and beyond its current three-office system?	(a) Expert review of staffing levels and trends (b) Views of OCHA and information providers	x					x		x	x
6.4	Is there a potential for ReliefWeb to reduce reliance on donor funding? What other options of funding could be drawn on?	(a) Expert survey of funding levels and sources (b) Views of OCHA, donors	x		x			x	x	x	x
6.5	What is the status of the information technology and support used by ReliefWeb? What is the status of ReliefWeb's server infrastructure?	(a) Expert survey of IT infrastructure (b) Views of OCHA ReliefWeb IT managers	x							x	x
6.6	Are the costs of running the ReliefWeb in line with the outputs and impact? How does ReliefWeb's cost effectiveness measure against other similar systems such as AlterNet?	(a) Expert comparison of ReliefWeb costs vs. other services like AlterNet (b) Views of OCHA, AlterNet staff, other information providers	x					x		x	x
6.7	Does ReliefWeb provide value for money?	(a) Expert review								x	x

3. METHODOLOGY

We provide here a description of the methodology we will use to study the issues listed above and develop our findings and recommendations. In more detail:

Project Management and Communication

We will use deliberate project planning and management to help ensure close project coordination with OCHA and the final success of this evaluation.

In terms of planning, we have developed this Inception Report document to serve as a detailed research plan for the project. We have reviewed this report with OCHA and made changes and adjustments to the approach based on OCHA's recommendations.

In terms of management, we will work closely with an OCHA/ReliefWeb Project Team in planning and executing this evaluation. We will communicate with this team regularly, including bi-weekly email status updates. This team includes:

- Stig Kjeldsen, Project Manager, Associate Evaluations Officer
- Helga Leifsdottir, ReliefWeb Coordinator
- Sebastian Naidoo, Managing Editor, ReliefWeb New York
- Craig Duncan, Office Manager ReliefWeb Geneva.

We will also seek the input of “Core Learning Group” (CLG) at key stages of the project to collect their input. The CLG includes:

- Consultants
 - Chris Wolz
 - Nam-ho Park
- OCHA
 - Alta Haggarty, Deputy Chief of Advocacy and Information Management Branch
 - Helga Leifsdottir
 - Craig Duncan
 - Sebastian Naidoo
 - Tor Bothner, Systems Analyst, Information and Communications Technology Section, Geneva
 - Elizabeth Gilliland, Operations Coordinator, Field Information Support Unit
 - Stig Kjeldsen
- Donors
 - Shigejuki Shimamori, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Japan to the UN
 - Sarah Telford, DFID
 - Montse Pantaleone, ECHO

We will use our online project management tool, “ProjectSpaces” (www.projectsaces.com), to support our communication and coordination with the Project Team and the CLG.

Activities:

- Project Kick off meeting with OCHA/ReliefWeb Project Team (February 16-17)
- Develop and review Inception Report with Project Team and CLG (March 9-10)
- Bi-weekly project status emails for Project Team
- Consultation with CLG at key stages of the project
- ProjectSpaces extranet for Project Team coordination

1) Baseline Analysis

We will conduct a baseline analysis of the current scope of the site’s content and services, the information architecture and navigation, the overall quality of the user experience on the site, the online prominence of the site and other factors. We’ll also assess ReliefWeb staff views on the performance, challenges, and future opportunities of ReliefWeb.

Activities

- ◆ Background review of OCHA provided materials on site strategy, redesign, usage, etc.
- ◆ Initial ReliefWeb staff survey: Email survey and orientation discussions with ReliefWeb staff in New York, Geneva and Kobe.
- ◆ Content and services analysis: Survey of the site to characterize the type of content across the site, by topic, by function, and format.
- ◆ Expert review of navigation and information architecture: Assess the top-level pages of ReliefWeb and key sections of the site.
- ◆ Site traffic assessment: Review ReliefWeb-provided data about trends in visits, usage, etc.
- ◆ Current search engine performance: Evaluate the functionality of the search engine.
- ◆ Online prominence: Assess how prominent is ReliefWeb on the web on key issues.

2) Audience Survey and Analysis

We will conduct a detailed assessment of the views of key stakeholders for ReliefWeb through a broad-based email and web surveys and in-person interviews and discussion groups in NYC, Washington DC, Geneva, Brussels, London, and at the regional hub in Nairobi. We will also conduct three virtual discussion groups with individuals working at regional hub locations of Dakar, Panama and Bangkok.

The key audiences we will seek to consult with, and their perspectives, as listed in the chart below. (In that chart, “Issues” include “ND” natural disasters, and “CE” complex emergencies.)

Audience and Perspectives Matrix		Issues		Organization Level		Organization Perspective		
		ND	CE	HQ	Regional Hubs	UN	Gov’t	Other / NGO
All audiences will be covered in ReliefWeb user email and web surveys. In addition, in-person consultations will be conducted:								
OCHA staff	Consultations in NYC, Geneva, Regional Hubs	X	X	X	X	X		
UN staff – other than OCHA	Consultations in NYC, Washington DC, Geneva, Regional Hubs	X	X	X	X	X		
NGO staff, large organizations	Consultations in NYC, Washington DC, Geneva, Regional Hubs	X	X	X	X			X
NGO staff, small organizations	Consultations in NYC, Washington DC, Geneva, Regional Hubs	X	X	X	X			X
Governments: including donors and others	Consultations in Geneva, Brussels, London, Washington DC,	X	X	X	X		X	X
Partners (for content)	Consultations in NYC, Washington DC, Geneva, Regional Hubs	X	X	X	X	X		X

Email and Web Survey of ReliefWeb Audiences

A key part of this evaluation will be a survey of ReliefWeb users around the world about their views on ReliefWeb. This survey will focus on how humanitarian professionals use ReliefWeb today, what they find valuable, what are their perceptions of ReliefWeb, and how ReliefWeb could better support them in their work, among other questions. The information from this survey will provide us with a core foundation for understanding ReliefWeb. We will complement these survey results with subsequent targeted interviews and discussion group consultations.

We will conduct this survey in several parts:

- 1) Email survey of ReliefWeb Subscribers: We will send the survey to a sample large enough to collect at least 1,000 responses. We'll determine the final size of the sample in consultation with the Project Team.
- 2) Web survey of "heavy ReliefWeb users": We will develop a "pop-up" survey that will appear on the web site for known heavy users of the site. ReliefWeb has identification information on around 1,600 of these heavy users.
- 3) Email survey of ReliefWeb partners: We will send a unique email survey to ReliefWeb's list of current partners, who total around 2,500.

The three versions of the survey will have many common elements, but with differences to capture unique audience issues and perspectives. Each survey will be around 20 questions so that respondents can answer them in less than ten minutes. We will develop and review these surveys with the Project Team before we launch the surveys.

Interviews and Discussion Group Consultations:

We will design and lead up to about 20 individual interviews and about 20 small group discussions with key stakeholders for ReliefWeb. These consultations will be conducted in-person with individuals working for organizations in NYC, Washington DC, Geneva, Brussels, and London, and Nairobi. Our approach for these sessions includes:

- Select interview or group discussion candidates in consideration of audience matrix (see above) and in consultation with OCHA project staff, the CLG, and also the Interagency Standing Committee.
- Interviews will focus on one individual, while group sessions might include from three to six people.
- Each session will be approximate 60-90 minutes.
- Script: We will develop and use a script for the sessions to ensure consistent coverage of key questions. The script will include some questions especially for several specific audiences.
- Preparation: We will ask participants to complete a pre-discussion questionnaire to help us understand their general usage and views of ReliefWeb.
- Confidentiality: We will inform participants at the beginning of each session that their detailed views will be kept anonymous to encourage open and honest sharing of feedback, and that views expressed will not be shared beyond the group.
- Facilitation: In each session we will generally have two interviewers, one to facilitate and one to take notes of highlights. We will also record the audio of each session for our own reference.
- Analysis: We will analyze the results of each consultation to identify stakeholder views on the various questions and possible suggestions to improve ReliefWeb. We will prepare a summary of highlights across issues and organizations as part of background materials for the final report.
- Follow-up: As needed we will follow-up with selected individuals to clarify or complete their comments.

Virtual Discussion Group Consultations:

We will design and lead three group discussions with OCHA Regional Hub offices in Dakar, Panama, and Bangkok, and also Kobe. These will be conducted via email and phone conference:

- We will define participants in consultation with OCHA at Regional Hub offices.
- We will seek to have from six to eight individuals, across OCHA, UN agencies, NGOs and government organizations. We may split each Regional Hub consultation into two sessions based on the size.
- Each session will be approximately 60-90 minutes on conference call.
- Preparation: We will ask participants to complete a pre-discussion questionnaire to help us understand their general usage and views of ReliefWeb.
- The session analysis will be conducted similar to the other discussion groups, described above.

Overall, the discussion group sessions we have or are working to schedule are listed below. We will schedule individual interview sessions to complement this listing and fill in key perspectives.

Planned Discussion Group Sessions (as of March 19, '06)

New York City, NY

1. ReliefWeb Managers, NYC
2. OCHA Content Partners and Contributors
3. Users of ReliefWeb among UN and NGO offices (Desk Officers, Analysts)
4. State Missions to the UN (humanitarian affairs officers)

Washington DC

5. Governments: Donors such as US State Department/PRM
6. NGO Users of ReliefWeb, Interaction, Refugees International, CARE, etc.

Geneva

7. OCHA Staff and Managers
8. Other UN Staff, UNHCR, UNICEF, others
9. NGO Community, ICVA, IFRC, IRC, others.
10. Governments: Guatemala, and Donors such as Denmark, Sweden

London

11. Governments: Donors such as UK's DfID
12. NGO community: IMC, Islamic Relief, Refugee Councils, Oxfam, Save, others.

Brussels

13. Governments: Donors such as ECHO
14. NGO community

Nairobi

15. OCHA
16. UN agencies
17. NGO community
18. Governments

Virtual Consultations

19. Dakar, Senegal
20. Bangkok, Thailand
21. Panama City, Panama
22. Kobe, Japan

3) Strategic Opportunities and Priorities

We will draw on the findings of the Baseline Analysis and Audience Analysis to identify potential areas for ReliefWeb to better serve decision makers in the humanitarian community. We will identify approaches to increase the value of ReliefWeb to these key audiences through the following:

Activities

- ◆ Strategy Workshop: “Blue-sky” Opportunities and Priorities. We’ll facilitate a session with New York and Geneva OCHA staff to explore examples of online opportunities to enhance the value of ReliefWeb. In this session we will seek to define key new services to further OCHA’s work and desired metrics of success for ReliefWeb in years 1, 2 and 3.
- ◆ Prioritization discussion: We’ll facilitate a conference call with OCHA staff to develop a final prioritized listing of ReliefWeb services, ranked by cost, impact, etc.

4) Operational and Budget Issue Evaluation

We’ll work with ReliefWeb staff to understand the key technical and operational aspects of the site management and to define problems that may slow the improvement of ReliefWeb. We’ll also assess budget levels to ensure they are aligned with the sites goals and growth.

Activities

- ◆ Technical infrastructure survey: We’ll interview ReliefWeb technical staff to understand key issues and challenges of the current infrastructure. We’ll also conduct our own survey of the technical performance of the ReliefWeb site, from the perspective of a public user interacting with the site.
- ◆ Operational/organization workshop: We’ll meet with ReliefWeb staff to survey the current workflow process, organizational roles, and shortcomings for both of these. This will not be a complete mapping of all the roles and all the processes involved in ReliefWeb, but just of the core publishing and site management functions.
- ◆ Budget allocation: We will review with OCHA the budget expenditures for ReliefWeb to identify where best to improve site performance. We’ll evaluate possible improvements to the allocation of resources and staff to better meet ReliefWeb business needs, and discuss in one session with OCHA staff.
- ◆ Sustainability: We will include in our recommendations our ideas for enhancing the sustainability of ReliefWeb, considering funding sources, staffing/responsibility allocation, partnerships, etc. We’ll facilitate one discussion session with ReliefWeb staff about sustainability issues.

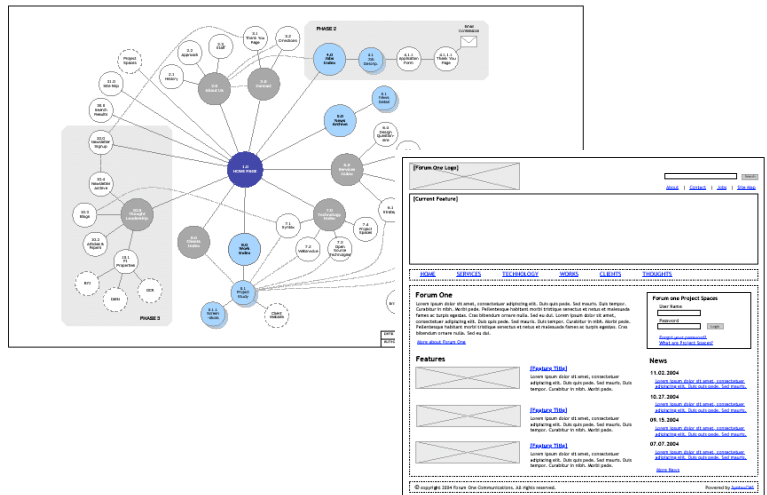
5) Recommendations: Strategy, Services, Structure and Implementation

We will answer the main questions listed in this document and present our recommendations for how ReliefWeb’s value to the humanitarian community could be improved. We will structure our recommendations in terms of:

- ◆ Strategy: What should be the top-level goals and metrics of success for ReliefWeb?
- ◆ Services: What are the services that ReliefWeb should build in the near term and longer term and for whom?
- ◆ Structure: How should the ReliefWeb site be structured to be of most value to its users? We’ll include a recommended revised site map and up to three (3) wireframes to summarize our recommendations about site services and site structure.

We will present these final findings and recommendations in a meeting with ReliefWeb in New York on June 7.

See example of site map and wireframes:



Forum One: Example Site Map

4. SCHEDULE

The evaluation will be completed in 17 weeks, commencing February 16. A Draft Evaluation Report will be delivered to OCHA by May 22. We will complete the Final Evaluation report within two weeks of a review workshop with OCHA in New York, planned for June 7.

Task	Weeks															
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	*	
Date: week of	Feb 13	Feb 20	Feb 27	Mar 6	Mar 13	Mar 20	Mar 27	Apr 3	Apr 10	Apr 17	Apr 24	May 1	May 8	May 16	*	
Project Planning / Inception Report																
1) Baseline Review: -Desk study -Consultations with ReliefWeb staff																
2a) Audience Analysis / Discussion groups -NYC Discussion groups -Washington DC Discussion groups- -Geneva and London Consultations -Regional Hub virtual discussion groups -Field consultation – Hub - Nairobi																
2b) Audience Analysis / Email and Web Surveys																
2c) Audience Analysis / Interviews																
3) Strategic Opportunities and Priorities																
4) Operational and Budget Issues Evaluation																
5) Recommended Strategy / Report -Draft Evaluation Report -Workshop and final Evaluation Report (to be completed 2 weeks after Workshop session with OCHA NY.)																

=End=

Appendix B: Interview Script

ReliefWeb Evaluation: Interview Script		
	answers 1 = not at all/weak -- 6 =extremely well / excellent	
	question	answer format
1	date	date
2	time	time
3	location	select
4	interviewer	cw or np
5	form of interview - indiv. Or group	l or g
6	Session name	
7	PARTICIPANTS - Background / Profile	
8	KEY HIGHLIGHTS - SUMMARY	
9	Summarize highlights	
10	Followup needed?	
11	RW Usage	
12	How often do you RW? What do you use it for?	daily,
13	comment?	open
14	Do you subscribe to RW emails?	y/n
15	Which topics?	open
16	How often do you read the emails?	daily,
17	comment?	open
18	Do you use RW RSS?	
19	Do you visit HIC, IRIN, OCHA online? How often and for what?	open
20	What are other web sites you use and why?	open
21	What do you see as the value of RW compared to these other sites you use? What do you go to	
22	Overall assessment	
23	How vauable is RW to you in your work?	1-6
24	Does RW help improve coordination of humanitarian efforts?	1-6
25	What is the single greatest value of RW?	open
26	Perceptions about RW Credibility	
27	Do you TRUST the information you see on RW?	1-6
28	Is information on RW Timely?	1-6
29	Is information on RW Relevant?	1-6
30	Does RW provide a neutral viewpoint?	1-6
31	comment?	open
32	Is ReliefWeb representative of the whole humanitarian community?	1-6
33	comment?	
34	Do you know what are standards for which information gets posted on RW?	open
35	How should those standards change?	open
36	RW and Content from (potential) Partners	
37	Do you or your organization submit *job vacancies* to RW?	y/n
38	Do you or your organization submit *other content* to RW?	y/n
39	why or why not? What value do you get or what holds you back?	open
40	Products and Services	
41	What products and service have you EVER USED? Headlines Maps FTS Issues & Policies Country Pages Vacancies My ReliefWeb Email Updates	

42	What products and service are MOST VALUABLE to you? Headlines Maps FTS Issues & Policies Country Pages Vacancies My ReliefWeb Email Updates	
43	Which of these improvements would be most valuable for you? -make it easier to use - better search etc -content improvements - additional content that it does not now have - eg more timely content, or more of existing content types (eg maps?) -better services - vacancies, my RW, filtering, finding.... -better tools for outreach - email, RSS, others -integration with other sites or services	
44	What is the overall satisfaction level of the ReliefWeb products	1-6
45	comment?	
46	Usability	
47	Is RW easy to use?	
48	how to improve?	
49	RW Coverage	
50	Does ReliefWeb provide good coverage of different regions, issues, topics?	open
51	Perceptions about RW Impact and Quality	
52	Does RW enable you to make better decisions? How so?	1-6
53	example	
54	How well do ReliefWeb products and services meet user needs?	1-6
55	How would you rate the quality of the information on the site?	1-6
56	Benchmarking RW	
57	Does RW fulfill its Mandate to foster the "dissemination of reliable and timely information on emergencies and natural disasters"?	1-6
58	comment?	open
59	Is this ReliefWeb mission statement still suitable?	1-6
60	comment?	open
61	Other comments?	
62	Final comments	
63	Comments on 2005 redesign?	
64		

Appendix C: Log of Interviews

Log of ReliefWeb Evaluation Interviewees			
Organization	Location	Name last	Name first
ACT	GVA	Long	Callie
ACT	GVA	Padre	Steven
Action Aid	LON	?	Marion
AlertNet	LON	Jones	Mark
Armenian Rescue Service	GVA	Manukyan	Anahit
Armenian Rescue Service	GVA	Mkhitaryan	Sergey
Bangladesh, Ministry of Food and Disaster Management	GVA	Sarker	Adbdul Rashid
Belgian Red Cross	BRU	Standaard	Oliver
Brazil - Federal Fire Department	GVA	Florindo	Helon Vieira
CARE	NRB	Maxwell	Dan
Christian Aid	NRB	Wathome	Steve
Concern Universal	NRB	Gerard	MCCarty
Danish Mission	GVA	Berling-Rasmussen	Asser
DFID	LON	Bullpit	Mark
DFID	LON	Gregory	Sally
DFID	LON	Hannan	Rowshan
DFID	LON	Telford	Sarah
DFIF	LON	Mansfield	Simon
ECHO	BRU	BOYER	Frederic
ECHO	BRU	DROUET	Lea
ECHO	BRU	Ekelof	Lisbeth
ECHO	BRU	Gallissot	Laurent
ECHO	BRU	Hiel	Marc
ECHO	BRU	KOULAIMAH	Andrea
ECHO	BRU	Luchner	Johannes
ECHO	BRU	Menendez	Javier
ECHO	BRU	Pantaleoni-Giralt	Montse
ECHO	BRU	PFEIFFER	Thomas
ECHO	BRU	Vicente-Vila	Patricia
ECHO	NRB	Heffinck	Johan
ECHO	NRB	Witteveen	Bart
Geneva Int'l Centre for Human Demining	GVA	Orifizi	Davide
Government of Guatemala	GVA	Arroyave-Prera	Carlos Jose
IAWG	NRB	Chebert	Elizabeth
ICRC	GVA	Van der Vort	David
IFRC	GVA	Nielsen	Flemming
IFRC	BRU	Toussaint	Genevieve
IFRC	NRB	Valdimarson	Omar
IMC	LON	Shissler	Tracy
Merlin	LON	Attfield	Georgina
Interaction	DC	Poteat	Linda

Interaction	DC	Semmes	Rebecca
Intersos	GVA	Feci	Damas
IRC	GVA	Albery	Silvia
IRC	GVA	Bowman	Christian
IRC	NRB	Thomkons	Kate
IRIN	NRB	Bidder	Mark
IRIN	NRB	Bidder	Mark
IRIN	NRB	Hassan	Yusef
IRIN	NRB	Hecht	David
IRIN	NRB	Nyaga	John
IRIN	NRB	Sarr	Olu
IRIN	NRB	Some	Jane
IRIN	NRB	Tunbridge	Louise
Kenyan Gov	NRB	Abidikadir	Fatuma
Lebanese Civil Defense	GVA	Salkanni	Nabil
MSF	LON	Sanders	Susan
NGOCouncil	NRB	Akecth	Luke
NGOCouncil	NRB	Mwaro	Vivian
NGOCouncil	NRB	Olwedo	Fred
NGOVoice	BRU	Schick	Kathrin
NGOVoice	BRU	van Moortel	Gilles
Northern Aid	NRB	Abdi	Abdullahi
Norwegian Refugee Council	BRU	name1	name1
NRB UN	NRB	name	
NRB UN	NRB	name	
NRB UN	NRB	name	
NRB UN	NRB	name	
NRB UN	NRB	name	
NRB UN	NRB	name	
OCHA	NRB	Ali	Luluwa
OCHA	GVA	Ayoub	Zuhal
OCHA	GVA	Byrs	Elizabeth
OCHA	DC	Carden	David
OCHA	NRB	Cooper	Jeanine
OCHA	GVA	Cue	Wendy
OCHA	NRB	Di Lorenzo	Amanda
OCHA	NRB	Dickinson	Lucy
OCHA	GVA	Gentilioni	Fabricio
OCHA	NRB	Holdsworth	Belinda
OCHA	NRB	Julliand	Valerie
OCHA	NRB	Kittinya	Jacob
OCHA	NRB	Lazzarini	Phillippe
OCHA	GVA	Meier	Michael
OCHA	Telecon - Panama	name	max
OCHA	Telecon - Panama	name	marie-louise
OCHA	Telecon -	name	isabelle

	Panama		
OCHA	Telecon - Panama	name	elio
OCHA	Telecon - Bangkok	name	amanda
OCHA	Telecon - Bangkok	name	philip
OCHA	Telecon - Bangkok	name	dan
OCHA	Telecon - Bangkok	name	maude
OCHA	Telecon - Kobe	name	sohel
OCHA	Telecon - Kobe	name	Anil
OCHA	Telecon - Kobe	name	Masanori
OCHA	Telecon - Kobe	name	Akiko
OCHA	Telecon - Dakar	name	katy
OCHA	Telecon - Dakar	name	Ndiaga
OCHA	Telecon - Dakar	name	Alious
OCHA	NRB	Ngabirano	Michael
OCHA	GVA	Spaak	Marie
OCHA - FIS	NYC	Lacey-Hall	Oliver
OCHA - RW Managers	NYC	Duncan	Craig
OCHA - RW Managers	NYC	Forseth	Rune
OCHA - RW Managers	NYC	Haggarty	Alta
OCHA - RW Managers	NYC	Hennigsen	Jeff
OCHA - RW Managers	NYC	Hennigsen	Jeff
OCHA - RW Managers	NYC	Leifsdottir	Helga
OCHA - RW Managers	NYC	Leifsdottir	Helga
OCHA - RW Managers	NYC	Naidoo	Sebastian
OCHA - RW Managers	NYC	name	Eva
OCHA / RW	GVA	Bohl	Virginie
OCHA / RW	GVA	Ciancio	Adrian
OCHA / RW	GVA	Duncan	Craig
OCHA / RW	GVA	Kapur	Sumeet
OCHA / RW	GVA	Segura Gomez	Leyri
OCHA / RW	GVA	Vognild	Eva
OCHA Finance	NYC	Angulo	Maria-therese
ODI	LON	Muller	Thomas
Oxfam / Kenya	NRB	Mursal	Mohammed
RCK	NRB	Marireo	Patrick
Red Cross	DC	Amin	Minal

Red Cross	DC	Brady	Sardrav
Red Cross	DC	Burkhart	Cristine
Red Cross	DC	Chalopwe	Scott
Red Cross	DC	Cohen	Michael
Red Cross	DC	Corl	Tom
Red Cross	DC	Grover	Elena
Red Cross	DC	Herink	Chris
Red Cross	DC	Howard	Rachel
Red Cross	DC	Mahoney	Marissa
Red Cross	DC	Matthews	Greg
Red Cross	DC	McDonough	Stephanie
Red Cross	DC	Meenan	Mike
Red Cross	DC	Mlade	Nicole
Red Cross	DC	Muller	Maria
Red Cross	DC	Oko	Michael
Red Cross	DC	Pulfrey	Christine
Red Cross	DC	Reynes	Julie
Red Cross	DC	Sapalio	Jessica
Red Cross	DC	Sundsmo	Kaorli
Red Cross	DC	Weaver	Bethany
Red Cross	DC	Weeks	Patricia
Reuters	NRB	Gumuchian	Marie-Louise
Save	GVA	Cecchetti	Roberta
Swedish Mission	GVA	Lindvall	Mikael
Tunisian - Regional INSARAG Antenna	GVA	Dhafer	Ramzi
Tunisian - Regional INSARAG Antenna	GVA	Saluma	Ben Amor
UNDP - Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme, Disaster Management Information Center	GVA	Ahmed	Tasdiq
UNHCR	GVA	Creach	Xavier
US State Dept / Humanitarian Information Unit	DC	King	Dennis
US State Dept / PRM	DC	Colley	Eileen
US State Dept / PRM	DC	Eisenhower	Peter
US State Dept / PRM	DC	Gorjance	Mary
US State Dept / PRM	DC	Wills	Gina
WorldVision	GVA	Getman	Tom
WorldVision	NRB	Asante	Edwin

Appendix D: Interview Distribution

1. ReliefWeb Evaluation

1.1. Distribution of Interviews and Virtual Discussions

	Location of Session	BRU	DC	GVA	LON	NRB	NYC	Virtual	Total Individuals in Sessions
Sector	Session Name								
Gov	Danish Government			1					1
	DFID				4				4
	Gov Users / GDACS			8					8
	Guatemala - GVA 1			1					1
	Sweden - GVA 1			1					1
	ECHO- DO 1	3							3
	ECHO - DO 2	1							1
	ECHO – Policy	4							4
	ECHO - DEVEX and RELEX	2							2
	ECHO - Mgmt	1					2		3
	Kenyan Government						1		1
	DFID						1		1
	US State / PRM			4					4
Gov Total	14 sessions	11	4	11	4	4			34 individuals
NGO	ACT			2					2
	De-mining			1					1
	IMC				3				3
	Interaction		2						2
	Intersos			1					1
	IRC			2					2
	NGOs/London – various				3				3
	Save			1					1
	WorldVision			1					1
	NGOVoice	4							4
	Refugee Consortium of Kenya						1		1
	World Vision						1		1
	NorthernAid						1		1
	NGOCouncil/ Kenya						3		3
NGOs / Nairobi– various						4		4	
NGO Total	15 Sessions	4	2	8	6	10			30 individuals
OCHA	OCHA – GVA DO 2			1					1
	OCHA - GVA DO 1			4					4
	OCHA – GVA PIO			1					1
	OCHA - Early Warning		1						1

Appendix E: Public Survey

ReliefWeb User Survey

[Exit this survey >>](#)

We need your feedback to help us improve ReliefWeb www.reliefweb.int

The UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has hired an independent evaluation team to conduct this survey to evaluate how well [ReliefWeb](#) is performing and how best to improve its value.

We would appreciate your assistance in this evaluation by completing this survey, which should take you about 5 minutes. If you have any questions about this survey, please contact the evaluation team, Forum One Communications, by email at reliefweb@forumone.com.

Information privacy: We value your privacy. The detailed information you provide here will be reviewed and used solely for the purpose of this evaluation by the independent evaluation team, and we will share only anonymous results with OCHA.

1. What type of organization do you work for?

- Non-Governmental Organization (International)
- Non-Governmental Organization (National/Local)
- Government
- United Nations
- News & Media
- Academic & Research Institution
- Other (please specify)

2. What is your role in your organization?

- Desk officer / analyst
- Researcher
- Relief worker, field level
- Human resources
- Senior manager / policy maker
- Program manager
- Other (please specify)

3. What country are you currently working in?



4. What is the geographic focus of your work?

- Africa
- Americas
- Asia
- Europe
- Oceania
- All/Global

5. What is your age?

- 19 or younger
- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60 and older

6. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

7. How often do you visit ReliefWeb?

Almost daily At least once a week At least once a month Less than once a month

Visit ReliefWeb:

**8. How often do you visit the following web sites?**

	Almost daily	At least once a week	At least once a month	Less than once a month	Never used
IRIN News	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Alertnet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
BBC News	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Humanitarian Information Centers (HIC)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. What other web sites do you use regularly for your work?



10. How useful to you are these current services on ReliefWeb?

	Very useful 6	5	4	3	2	Not at all useful 1
Email Updates	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Vacancies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Regional pages	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Emergency pages	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
"My ReliefWeb" Service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communities of Practice	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Contact Directory	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Country pages	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
RSS Feed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Headlines	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Policy & Issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Financial Tracking System (FTS)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
OCHA Situation Reports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Maps	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Latest Updates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. Are you able to find easily what you need on ReliefWeb?

	Always 6	5	4	3	2	Never 1
Can find what I need on ReliefWeb:	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

12. How essential is ReliefWeb to your work?**13. What is a typical example of how you use ReliefWeb?****14. Overall, do you think the content on ReliefWeb is:****15. If ReliefWeb could be enhanced to be more timely, or more reliable, which would you chose?****16. Do you consider Reliefweb representative of the whole humanitarian community?****17. ReliefWeb strives to be an independent humanitarian information service. Do you think it is succeeding?**

18. Any comments on ReliefWeb as an independent information service?

19. How often does your organization contribute the following content to ReliefWeb?

	Very regularly 6	5	4	3	2	Never 1	Do not know
Emergency response documents	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Policy and reference documents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Job vacancies	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Training opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Maps	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

20. Which of the following improvements or new services on ReliefWeb would most benefit you in your work?

(Select top 3)

- More information on 'who is working where'
- Site speed improvements
- More specialized weekly email digest
- Discussions forum for relief workers
- Interviews with relief workers
- More maps
- Content in languages other than English
- Search engine improvements
- Faster information in emergencies
- More regional coverage
- More analysis of situations
- Emergency materials presented by 'topic'
- More material from local/small NGOs
- Other (please specify)

21. Do you have other suggestions on how to make ReliefWeb more valuable to you in your work?

We appreciate your feedback. Thank you very much.

[Submit My Responses >>](#)

Appendix F: Content Partner Survey

ReliefWeb Survey: for Content Partners

[Exit this survey >>](#)

We would like your feedback as a "Content Partner" to help us improve ReliefWeb www.reliefweb.int

The UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has hired an independent evaluation team to conduct this survey to evaluate how well [ReliefWeb](#) is performing and how best to improve its value.

Your organization has had documents/resources published to the ReliefWeb web site. We wanted to ask you a few questions about your experience in sharing content on ReliefWeb as a "Content Partner".

This survey should take you less than 5 minutes. If you have any questions about this survey, please contact the evaluation team, Forum One Communications, by email at reliefweb@forumone.com.

Information privacy: We value your privacy. The detailed information you provide here will be reviewed and used solely for the purpose of this evaluation by the independent evaluation team, and we will share only anonymous results with OCHA.

1. What type of organization do you work for?

- Non-Governmental Organization (International)
- Non-Governmental Organization (National/Local)
- Government
- United Nations
- News & Media
- Academic & Research Institution
- Other (please specify)

2. What is your primary role in your organization?

- Relief worker, field level
- Communications
- Senior manager / policy maker
- Desk officer / analyst
- Human resources
- Program manager
- Researcher
- Other (please specify)

3. What country are you currently working in?

4. What is the geographic focus of your work? (select all that apply)

- Africa
- Americas
- Asia

- Europe
- Oceania
- All/Global

5. For each category, rate the benefit to your organization of sharing materials on ReliefWeb in the past 12 months.

(6-1 rating: 6 = large benefit, 1 = no benefit)

	6 = large benefit	5	4	3	2	1 = no benefit
Increased impact in the field	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Increasing press coverage	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Finding good job candidates	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Better coordination with other organizations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Donor appreciation and donor relations	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
More visibility of our organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fundraising	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

6. Can you give a specific example of how sharing documents/resources on ReliefWeb has benefited your organization?

7. Please indicate your views on these statements: (6-1 rating: 6 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree)

	6 = strongly agree	5	4	3	2	1 = strongly disagree
We have never had any content rejected by ReliefWeb for publication.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

I understand the ReliefWeb process to share our organization's content on ReliefWeb.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have had contact with a ReliefWeb staffer in the past 12 months, either by email, phone or in person.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
The content on ReliefWeb is representative of the whole of the humanitarian community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ReliefWeb is an important part of meeting our staff recruiting needs.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
I find it easy to submit and share our information on ReliefWeb.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I understand ReliefWeb's "standards" for what content is shared on the web site.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Overall, we are satisfied with sharing our content to ReliefWeb.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is valuable for our organization to have our resources/documents shared on ReliefWeb.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
ReliefWeb is succeeding as an independent humanitarian information service.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is valuable for our organization to have our job vacancies shared on ReliefWeb.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

8. Is there anything that is keeping you from sharing more information from your organization on ReliefWeb?

(select all that apply)

- Language: our content is not in English.
- Our organization's internal approval process is difficult.
- We do not have time.
- Our organization does not see the benefit of sharing information on ReliefWeb.
- There is nothing keeping me from sharing more content on ReliefWeb.
- The ReliefWeb submission process is not clear.
- Our organization's information often cannot be shared with the public.
- Our organization has not assigned the responsibility to any of our staff.
- Other (please specify)

**9. What would most encourage you to share more documents/resources on ReliefWeb?
(6-1 rating: 6 = would strongly encourage, 1 = would not encourage)**

	6 = would strongly encourage	5	4	3	2	1 = would not encourage
If we could see statistics that ReliefWeb is read by a large number of donors.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
If we could have more information on ReliefWeb about our organization's work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If it was easier to submit information to be shared on ReliefWeb.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
If we were regularly reminded to submit information to ReliefWeb.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If we saw that similar organizations were sharing their content on ReliefWeb.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
If we could see statistics that our organization's content on ReliefWeb was read by a large number of users.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If we could see statistics that ReliefWeb is read by a large number of people in the humanitarian community.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

10. Do you have any other questions or comments about sharing your organization's information on ReliefWeb?

We appreciate your feedback. Thank you very much.

[SUMBIT MY RESPONSES >>](#)

Appendix G: Terms of Reference

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
Terms of Reference
Evaluation of ReliefWeb (18-01-2006)

1. Background

ReliefWeb aims to be the world's leading on-line gateway to information on humanitarian emergencies and disasters. In addition to providing 24 hour updates on all ongoing emergency situations, including documents, maps and contribution tables, ReliefWeb is also a major repository of humanitarian policy documents, and provides professional resources such as training, vacancies and contact directories. Designed specifically to assist the international humanitarian community in effective delivery of emergency assistance, it strives to provide timely, reliable and relevant information as events unfold, while ensuring that "forgotten emergencies" and countries of concern are also represented.

ReliefWeb was launched in October 1996 by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) as a service to the humanitarian community at-large. While the concept of an information clearinghouse for humanitarian information evolved from a broad consensus in the early 1990s, the Great Lakes crisis highlighted the need for a centralized repository of humanitarian information to enable decision makers in the field and at headquarters to take informed decisions.

Recognizing the importance of time-critical and reliable humanitarian information before and during emergencies, the UN General Assembly endorsed the creation of ReliefWeb in 1997 Resolution 51/194 (See Annex 2.i) encouraging humanitarian information exchange by governments, relief agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In 2003 Resolution 57/153 (See Annex 2. ii), the General Assembly reiterated the importance of information sharing in emergencies through ReliefWeb.

ReliefWeb usage has grown steadily since its inception. In the first year of operations, the site received just over one million hits. By 2002, ReliefWeb was receiving 1 million hits per week, and by 2005, shortly after the South Asia Tsunami disaster, the site received an average of 3 million hits per day. Email services started in 2001, increased to 45,000 subscribers in 2003, and to over 70,000 in 2005.

The project maintains three offices in three different time zones (New York, Geneva, and Kobe) to update the web site around the clock. The total budget for the project is USD 2 million (2005), the bulk of which is supported by voluntary contributions by donors.

Mindful of the growing information overload in today's cyber world, ReliefWeb recently went through a two-year long user-centred redesign in order to address the continuing needs of target audiences to find necessary and relevant information as quickly as possible. The new site was officially launched at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (18-22 January 2005) in Kobe, Japan.

With ReliefWeb approaching its 10-year anniversary and with the 2005 design platform operational for over six months, OCHA decided it was a timely opportunity to review ReliefWeb's past and current performance as well as future challenges.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the evaluation is to i) assess whether ReliefWeb meets the needs of the target audience¹ in an efficient and effective manner and in line with its mandate; ii) provide accountability to donors, OCHA management and users; iii) provide clear recommendations and lessons learned in order to help determine the future direction of the project and its products and services.

3. Scope and Key Issues

The evaluation will review the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, coherence and sustainability of the ReliefWeb information system.² The evaluation will look at ReliefWeb as a whole and its current products and services, taking into account their development over the last 10 years. In particular, it will seek to obtain an understanding of the usefulness and usability to the site's target group of humanitarian professionals and decision makers, including donors, UN and non-governmental agencies, and governments.

The key issues listed below (and in Annex I) should be addressed during the evaluation. Questions related to each issue are for reference purposes only and may serve as a basis for reformulations by the evaluation team to more closely meet the purposes of the evaluation.

3.1 Mandate, Institutional Role and Partnerships:

Does the current version of ReliefWeb fulfill its mandate (see Annex II.i-ii) and its vision? Is the mission statement still suitable? What are ReliefWeb's relations (and overlap if any) with other information providers within the humanitarian community (HICs, OCHA Online and external providers)? Is ReliefWeb effectively used by other OCHA offices and does it bring value-added to OCHA's mission?

3.2 Credibility, Trust, Independence:

To what extent has ReliefWeb been able to protect its editorial independence? What is the level of trust in and credibility of ReliefWeb? Is there a need for changes in ReliefWeb's principles and standards?

3.3 Impact, Content and Quality:

Has ReliefWeb been able to effectively and efficiently provide timely, relevant and high quality information to its target groups? What has been the impact of ReliefWeb in assisting the international humanitarian community in effective delivery of emergency assistance and how can it further assist the humanitarian community? Do organizations feel compelled to submit information to the site?

3.4 Usership and Usability:

¹ **Target Audience:** the international humanitarian community, including 1) UN agency personnel (desk officers, humanitarian affairs officers, humanitarian/resident coordinators, field workers and senior managers); 2) NGO personnel (desk officers, field workers and senior managers); 3) Government officials (mission and HQ humanitarian focal points, disaster management officers, desk officers in operational agencies such as USAID).

² The main DAC evaluation criteria, as laid out in the DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance (www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation).

Do ReliefWeb's information architecture, interaction design and visual design meet target audience expectations and needs? What changes should be made to improve target audience experience? What gaps exist in information and analysis which may make target audiences' decision making more efficient?

3.5 Products and Services (See Annex II.iii):

How well do ReliefWeb products and services meet target audience needs? Are there any products or services that could be added or removed? What is the value-added of the current products and services?

3.6 Future and Sustainability:

Is there scope for ReliefWeb to be further consolidated, expanded, or organizationally realigned? Is ReliefWeb's funding base sustainable and what other funding options could be drawn on? Are ReliefWeb locations appropriate and do they provide adequate coverage of emergencies and disasters around the world? Are the costs of running the ReliefWeb in line with the outputs and impact? What is the status and prospect of the server infrastructure, information technology and support used by ReliefWeb?

4. Methodology

The evaluation method will be designed by the consultant team in close cooperation with the client. As part of the selection process, the short-listed team-leader candidates will be requested to submit a 'Note of Approach'. Among other things this note will provide an outline of the methodological approach envisaged. It is suggested that the consultants apply a participatory approach to developing the recommendations. This could be done through a workshop with relevant staff (ReliefWeb, FTS, AIMB, etc), where the consultants present the data analysis and findings and jointly develop recommendations with the participants. It is anticipated that the evaluation will be undertaken in three parts:

- i.** A first phase including briefings in New York and Geneva, a literature review, the full development of an evaluation design and detailed work plan, the drafting of interview questions, web and email surveys, and conduct of initial interviews. During this period the consultant team will submit an Inception Report detailing the approach and work plan.
- ii.** A second phase of data collection, including the conduct of in-depth interviews, usability tests, focus groups and surveys of the various stakeholder groups. This phase would include a field visit (for example, to Sri Lanka).
- iii.** A third phase of data analysis (surveys, interviews, etc.) and cross-validation; follow-up interviews, consultation and triangulation on initial findings; workshop on findings and development of recommendations; report writing.

Consultants shall follow the norms and standards for evaluation established by the United Nations Evaluation Group (the two documents are available from the website of the OCHA Evaluation and Studies Unit: <http://ochaonline.un.org/esu>).

5. Indicative Schedule

The evaluation is to start ultimo January, 2006, and will run over a period of approximately 14 weeks.

Task	Consultant A & B
i. Desk Study, survey design and initial interviews. New York and Geneva. ii. 25%	Consultant A – 10 days Consultant B – 10 days A total of 20 working days.
ii. Data collection, in depth interviews, focus groups, etc. (incl. field trip)	Consultant A – 20 days Consultant B – 10 days A total of 30 working days
iii. Data analysis, draft report, workshop, etc.	Consultant A – 15 days Consultant B – 5 days A total of 20 working days
Finalization of report; Debriefing: New York	Consultant A – 8 days Consultant B – 2 days A total of 10 working days
Total # of days	Consultant A – 53 days Consultant B – 27 days A total of 80 working days

6. Team Composition

The team will consist of two consultants with the following profiles:

Consultant A will act as team leader and should have strong analytical skills; the ability to clearly synthesize and present findings and draw practical conclusions; a proven track record in managing and conducting evaluations; fluency in English including excellent writing skills; sound experience with humanitarian assistance (including field experience) and editorial policy issues; in-depth familiarity with existing humanitarian issues, including information management issues.

Consultant B will act in a technical role using experience with information systems, the web publishing media, database technologies, and with expertise in devising, executing, analyzing and presenting surveys and interviews.

Both consultants should have the capacity to work collaboratively with multiple stakeholders. Previous work experience with the UN would be helpful.

7. Management Arrangements

7.1 The team will report to OCHA's Evaluation and Studies Unit (ESU).

7.2 OCHA's Evaluation and Studies Unit will assign an evaluation manager to oversee the conduct of the evaluation. His/her responsibilities are to: 1) provide guidance and institutional

support to the team, especially on issues of methodology; 2) facilitate the team's access to specific information or expertise needed to perform the assessment; 3) monitor and assess the quality of the evaluation and its processes; 4) help organize and design the final learning workshop; 5) make recommendations to management on the acceptance of the final report and disseminate the final report; 6) ensure that a management response is given to the final report and subsequent follow up happens, and 7) ensure final travel authorization, booking of tickets and arrangements for processing and disbursement of all payments (including remuneration and Daily Subsistence Allowance) are made.

7.3 ReliefWeb will 1) ensure that all stakeholders are kept informed (possibly through the establishment of a core learning group); 2) provide technical support to the evaluation team; 3) assist in gathering all relevant background information, and 4) setting up all relevant appointments including coordinating/organizing the field visit of the team.

9. Reporting Requirements

An **inception report** outlining the proposed method, key issues and potential key informants for the evaluation, will be required. A format for the inception report will be provided by the OCHA Evaluation and Studies Unit.

The final output of the consultancy will be an **evaluation report**, which shall contain the elements specified in the document on standards for evaluation (pp.17-23) developed by the United Nations Evaluation Group (available at: <http://ochaonline.un.org/esu>). The report shall contain a short executive summary of up to 2,000 words and a main text of no more than 15,000 words, both including clear recommendations. Annexes should include a list of all persons interviewed, a bibliography, a description of the method used, a summary of survey results as well as all other relevant material.

The quality of the evaluation report will be judged according to the UNEG Evaluation Standards and the ALNAP Quality Proforma (www.alnap.org/pdfs/QualityProforma05.pdf). The evaluation reports will also be submitted to ALNAP for inclusion in the regular meta evaluation process that rates the quality of evaluation reports.

The final report will be publicly available through Relief Web and OCHA Online

The draft report is due on 1 May 2006 and final report on 15 May 2006.

All copyrights will remain the property of OCHA.

10. Payments

The consultant will be paid in three installments: 20 per cent of the payment upon acceptance of the inception report and 40 per cent of the payment upon submission of the draft report. The remaining 40 percent will be paid upon acceptance of the final report. OCHA reserves the right to reduce the final payment should the report not be fully satisfactory or should the submission experience significant delays within the control of the consultants.

11. Estimated Budget

The funds are to be allocated from ReliefWeb budget / ECHO thematic funding. (The positions are subject to funding).

12. Use of Results

Evaluation results will be used primarily by OCHA to improve services provided by ReliefWeb. To this end, ESU will ensure that a management response (through a Management Response Matrix) will be developed with clearly stipulated actions proposed for each recommendation, the timeline envisioned and the responsible unit.

ANNEX I

i. Mandate, Institutional Role and Partnerships:

Does the current version of ReliefWeb fulfill its mandate as stated in 1997 Resolution 51/194 and 2003 Resolution 57/153 (See Annexe II.i-ii)? Does ReliefWeb help improve coordination of humanitarian relief? How could it do a better job at fulfilling its mandate? What is the institutional role of ReliefWeb and what are its relationships within OCHA? What is the perception by users with regard to the influences over the presentation, architecture and content on the site and is the site considered independent and representative of the totality of the humanitarian community? To what extent does ReliefWeb overlap (or not overlap) with HICs and OCHA Online and other information providers? Is ReliefWeb effectively used by other OCHA offices, in particular in the field? What relationships have been built regarding information-sharing and advocacy with information providers and widely within the humanitarian community? What is its value added to other OCHA services?. Does ReliefWeb bring value-added to the mandate and mission of OCHA?

ii. Regional and Thematic Dimensions:

Is ReliefWeb able to portray appropriately a regional perspective of humanitarian situations? What is the degree to which ReliefWeb is supporting early-warning efforts through coverage of countries of concern and forgotten emergencies? Does ReliefWeb adequately cover key policy issues? How effective is ReliefWeb in raising awareness of key issues?

iii. Credibility, Trust, Independence:

Do users perceive ReliefWeb as an independent service? To what extent has ReliefWeb been able to protect an independent viewpoint within the UN and external to the UN? Is there a perception among users that what is seen on ReliefWeb is based on principles and standards? What would users say are those principles and standards? Is there a need for additional principles or standards?

iv. Impact, Content and Quality:

Has ReliefWeb been able to effectively provide timely and relevant information to decision makers, humanitarian workers and the people they are trying to help? What has been the impact of ReliefWeb according to its main users/target groups? How well do ReliefWeb products and services meet user needs? What are users perceptions of the quality of information found through the site? What are users perceptions of the quality of information they submit themselves? How do users see the role of ReliefWeb in relation to ensuring the high quality standards in humanitarian information? Is it perceived that ReliefWeb has reached a critical mass and do organizations feel compelled to submit information to the site?

v. Usership and Usability:

Do ReliefWeb's information architecture, interaction design and visual design meet user objectives? What changes should be made to improve user experience? Is the text on the site easy to read? Do users prefer full text of a document or HTML links or PDF? How many clicks are users ready to make to find what they are looking for? How long will users wait to download a page into a browser window? How do users find submission of documents and maps for publication on the site? How do users find the arrangement of complex emergencies and natural disasters? How do users find the arrangement of Countries of Concern? Are users able to understand the languages used on the site? Do users want to see a greater number of documents in other languages? Considering that ReliefWeb attempts to be a neutral information broker, what are the user perceptions of the quality of available information with respect to the ability to make informed decisions? What gaps exist, in information, analysis, and other derived products which may make decision making easier and more efficient? How can information better serve the needs and help improve the quality and efficiency of humanitarian assistance?

vi. Products and Services (See Annex II.iii.a-e):

Which ReliefWeb products and services are users aware of? What is the perception by users regarding the quality of ReliefWeb products? Are all of ReliefWeb's services relevant to the user community? Do users perceive that information on ReliefWeb is accessible, accurate and reliable? Are there any products that are not as successful or are there any products that could be added? What is the value-added of current products? Is ReliefWeb technology in line with state-of-the-art information technology? What is the satisfaction level of the ReliefWeb user experience?

vii. Future and Sustainability:

Is there scope for ReliefWeb to be further consolidated, expanded or, alternatively merged with other information services? Should ReliefWeb remain a UN information service or become independent? What is the status of ReliefWeb's funding base and is it sustainable? Is ReliefWeb adequately staffed, funded and managed? With its current staffing arrangements is ReliefWeb capable of meeting its planning and delivery objectives? What is ReliefWeb's capacity to expand and beyond its current three-office system? Is there a potential for ReliefWeb to reduce reliance on donor funding? What other options of funding could be drawn on? What is the status of the information technology and support used by ReliefWeb? What is the status of ReliefWeb's server infrastructure? Are ReliefWeb locations appropriate and provide adequate coverage of emergencies and disasters around the world? Does ReliefWeb provide value for money? Are the costs of running the ReliefWeb in line with the outputs and impact? How does ReliefWeb's cost effectiveness measure against other similar systems such as Alertnet?

ANNEX II

i. Excerpt from Resolution 51/194/13:

“The General Assembly...requests the Secretary-General to further develop Reliefweb as the global humanitarian information system for the dissemination of reliable and timely information on emergencies and natural disasters, and encourages all Governments, the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and other relevant organizations, including non-governmental organizations, to support Reliefweb and actively participate in the Reliefweb information exchange, through the Department of Humanitarian Affairs”.

ii. Excerpt from Resolution 57/153/10:

“Commends the Emergency Relief Coordinator and his staff for their activities in emergency information management, and stresses that there is a need for national authorities, relief agencies and other relevant actors to continue to improve the sharing of relevant information related to natural disasters and complex emergencies, including on disaster response and mitigation, and to take full advantage of United Nations emergency information services, such as ReliefWeb and the Integrated Regional Information Network”.

iii. Site Sections, Features, Services, Communities:

a). Site Sections

1) Latest Updates 2) Map Centre 3) Financial Tracking 4) Policy documents 5) Vacancies 6) Training 7) Contact Directory 8) Communities of Practice 9) Country and Emergency hub pages 10) Emergency Archives 11) Who's working pages 12) Regional pages 13) Sectoral information

b). Site Features

1) My ReliefWeb 2) Filter Tool 3) Search 4) Advanced Search 5) Country downloads

c). Subscription Services

1) Email, 2) RSS

d). Communities

1) HIN

iv. ReliefWeb's information providers:

UN and IO, Governments, News and Media, NGOs, Academic and Research, Others (corporates and rebel groups etc.)

Appendix H: Management Response Matrix

Evaluation of ReliefWeb (July 2006)

Management Response Matrix (MRM)

15 September 2006

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS TO OCHA ¹	MANAGEMENT RESPONSE AND ACTION TAKEN OR TO BE TAKEN	Responsible Branch /Unit	Time frame Expected by [month/year]												
<p>Recommendation #1 – Increase Value to Information Shared on ReliefWeb</p> <p>An important theme over all the recommendations is that to increase the value of ReliefWeb it must become a more essential tool for decision-making at both headquarters and field levels. To do this ReliefWeb must build on top of its core content foundation to provide a layer of insights and analyses. Users greatly value this aggregation role that ReliefWeb plays and want it to continue. But decision makers, in particular, express a need for insights to help them understand what is most relevant, what is most important, and what is most critical on an issue. This “framing of the issues” should be done by highlighting information from across the body of content on ReliefWeb to provide key insights for these decision-makers. (See Table 11 below.)</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">Increasing Value to User ↓</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Aggregate Information</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Mechanical</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Screening</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">Frame the Issue</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Insightful</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Highlighting</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">Shape Response</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Influential</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Analyzing</td> </tr> </table> <p><small>Table 11 “Information Value” Strategies</small></p>	Increasing Value to User ↓	Aggregate Information	Mechanical	Screening		Frame the Issue	Insightful	Highlighting		Shape Response	Influential	Analyzing	<p>Management agrees this recommendation: The RW concept will be reframed by increasing editorial presence, analytical capacity, and multi-lingual content on the site.</p>	<p>AIMB/RW (also see below under specific items.)</p>	<p>AIMB/RW to draft profiles, amend current ToRs to implement in phases during 2007</p>
Increasing Value to User ↓	Aggregate Information	Mechanical	Screening												
	Frame the Issue	Insightful	Highlighting												
	Shape Response	Influential	Analyzing												

¹ Recommendations 1, 2.2, 5.1, 5.3 also got additional approval from OCHA’s Senior Management Team during its meeting of 10 November 2007

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS TO OCHA ¹	MANAGEMENT RESPONSE AND ACTION TAKEN OR TO BE TAKEN	Responsible Branch /Unit	Time frame Expected by [month/year]
<p>1.1 • ReliefWeb should, in the immediate term, increase its value to decision-makers by moving to provide services more consistently at this second level, by expanding its framing of key issues. This framing can be “human powered”, such as an experienced editor compiling a list of “critical issues we’re watching this month.” It can also be computer generated, such as “most read documents this week,” or “where are the job postings this month?”</p>	<p>This is already happening through “disaster shortcuts” and “Headlines” and enhancement through auto-generated functionality already started through metrics work (GVA input required here on current status of web analytics).</p>	<p>RW/ITS</p>	<p>1 year to Dec 2007 for implementation and testing.</p>
<p>1.2 • In moving to provide more analysis of key issues, ReliefWeb will need to build relationships with partners who can provide such analysis (which may not be readily available), as well as to tap into OCHA’s analytic capacity and provide that on ReliefWeb.</p>	<p>Identification of current and new sources performing relevant analyses –rewrite ToRs for information managers, P&I focal point to arrange for contacts with current sources and pursue agreements with potential sources. This is a strategic project, requiring qualified content manager and addition of new competencies to current TORs.</p>	<p>RW</p>	<p>To be pursued as part of 1.1 and 2.2 for testing by end of 2007.</p>
<p>Recommendation #2 – Partnership Growth</p> <p>ReliefWeb needs to expand the scope and the quality of its content partnerships. Expanded partnerships will help improve the value of ReliefWeb and user perceptions of its quality, by enhancing the representativeness of its content. More active partners will also improve the efficiency of the ReliefWeb project (staff time per document posted), allowing investment into other high value efforts.</p>	<p>Partners need stronger involvement in the info-sharing process and make interfaces more accessible and provide automated services for partners to contribute content. Promotion with content partners will also have to take place in a more strategic and proactive way.</p>	<p>RW/ITS</p>	<p>Q2 2007</p>
<p>2.1 • ReliefWeb should conduct more aggressive outreach and training to partners at the headquarters and regional level, to encourage active participation in ReliefWeb. This should include establishing ReliefWeb advocacy functions with OCHA branches and divisions.</p>	<p>RW has ongoing programme of outreach through “source development” with content partners and the HIN symposia/workshops. Strengthening of the current process and a parallel process, both of which will require resources, should be set up for stronger “in-reach” programme to encourage OCHA sections and units and regional offices to</p>	<p>RW and OCHA Branch Chiefs</p>	<p>Strengthening of current partnerships and “In-reach” programme to be integrated into workplanning in Sept and plan for putting into practice and completed by end of</p>

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	advocate for RW info-sharing.		year 2007.
2.2 • OCHA should designate a dedicated ReliefWeb focal point in regional offices to conduct outreach and promotion, as well as ongoing partner relationship management. This focal point should be responsible to improve coverage of current gap areas, including local and national NGOs, and to build connections at the country level within selected organizations (e.g. OCHA FOs, UN agencies, NGOs, governments).	<p>Management agrees and has endorsed the following action: creation of regional RW nodes, and oversight by RW editors or project manager to increase and maintain the scope and quality of content partnerships.</p> <p>This effort should further link with the recommendations at 2.1 regarding partnership growth (advancing the HIN and source development) and 4.5 expanding multi-lingual content.</p>	RW / ITS / OCHA Branch Chiefs	To be integrated into workplanning for 2007 and ToR references drafted by end of year 2006.
2.3 • ReliefWeb should enlist content partners to be more proactive by providing them easy technical tools to manage their own content “portfolios” on ReliefWeb. ReliefWeb should also provide partners with incentives to contribute through automated reports of the growth and readership (i.e. page views) of their portfolio on ReliefWeb.	<p>RW site already provides content portfolios for each partner, and this aspect should be highlighted more in contacts with partners, and perhaps editorially on home page through, for example, a “featured partner” slot.</p> <p>Technical project team to look into feasibility of enhancing this section by including partner-specific automated reports on growth and readership.</p>	RW / ITS	<p>Editorial discussion and request for implementation by end 2006.</p> <p>Feasibility of automated reports to be completed by end Q2 2007.</p>
2.4 • ReliefWeb should publish clearly defined policies and guidelines to inform users of editorial procedures and decision-making, and to share standards with content partners.	Consolidate current policies and finish policy-related actions from Managing Editor retreat (inc. finalise principles, and complete policy guidelines. Involve PDSB. Some consultancy time may be envisaged for finalization of the guidelines.	RW / PDSB to seek	End Q1 2007.
2.5 • ReliefWeb should play a leading role in the sector to expand content sharing by developing content standards for common humanitarian information. ReliefWeb should develop and use “micro formats” for standard types of humanitarian content (situation reports, maps, jobs, etc). These micro formats are “open application interfaces” (APIs) that allow more automated aggregation of	Applications and necessary platforms to be considered by ITS, RW technical project team to look at feasibility. What is needed is a more robust server architecture to handle an increased data load. If content is widely syndicated, that multiplies ReliefWeb’s responsibility to provide a service that is 100% reliable.	RW / ITS	End Q2 2007.

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<p>information and dissemination of information. This has the potential to enhance the efficiency of ReliefWeb's own content collection process, and also to enable wider sharing of ReliefWeb content across other humanitarian web sites. ReliefWeb can do this unilaterally and allow other organizations to build off of it.</p>			
<p>Recommendation #3 – Audience Growth</p> <p>ReliefWeb needs better to reach non-users within its target audiences as well as those using only a very limited portion of ReliefWeb content and to better promote the range and value of content on the site. This will help ReliefWeb become more essential in the humanitarian community, and better support the work of underserved target audiences - field-based humanitarian workers and decision-makers.</p>	<p>RW and APIS to work together on a communications strategy for reaching underserved audiences and identify targets among them.</p>	<p>RW Advocacy /</p>	<p>Start implementation during 2007</p>
<p>3.1 • ReliefWeb should improve access to its content for people with slow internet access, by making pages lighter, by making server queries faster, by providing “sketch” versions of maps, by making all resources accessible by email query, by publishing ReliefWeb's archives to print or CDs, by providing a text-only version of the site, etc</p>	<p>Receiving info is already possible through My ReliefWeb service but subscriptions are possible only through Internet.</p> <p>Technical project team to look into feasibility of improved access by all the suggested means, and resources should be allocated in workplan to allow for this.</p>	<p>RW / ITS</p>	<p>Start Oct 2006, implement during 2007</p>
<p>3.2 • ReliefWeb should conduct stronger promotion of the valuable services it provides, for example through home page features, or highlighting in the weekly Job Vacancy emails what is the latest new content on ReliefWeb</p>	<p>Identify high traffic areas and use them to promote other services.</p> <p>Managing Editors to look at where such cross fertilization would be optimized and technical project team to implement.</p> <p>There is already the functionality to send general broadcast emails to all subscribers.</p> <p>The 2007 technical workplan will include the better integration of content between Vacancies, Training and Policy</p>	<p>RW / ITS</p>	<p>Start Oct 2006, implement during 2007</p>

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<p>Recommendation #4 – Products and Services Improvement</p> <p>ReliefWeb should extend the value of its products and services to benefit current users and also to help expand its user base. The recommended improvements to products and services are:</p>	See below.		
<p>4.1 • ReliefWeb should provide users with the ability to customize how they get information from the site, such as the home page, region and sector pages, and email services.</p>	<p>Upgrade My ReliefWeb, building on feedback from usability studies, to create a fully customizable interface. Customization of shortcuts on the Home Page is planned. Users will have the option of using RW default shortcuts, setting their own, or a combination that includes some RW recommendations as well as their own choices. Monitoring the usage of this feature permits valuable insights into user preferences.</p>	RW / ITS	Implement during 2007.
<p>4.2 • ReliefWeb should partner with specialized information services to incorporate automated news feeds or other information to ReliefWeb. This will reduce time spent on collecting information from some of the larger ReliefWeb content partners.</p>	<p>A semi-automated and selected process is proposed starting with discussion with services. What will be important is that news feeds as selected are maintained in place in the information hierarchy.</p>	RW / ITS	By end Q1 2007.
<p>4.3 • ReliefWeb should improve the layout of email messages sent to subscribers to make them more easy to browse, and to better direct users to more detailed information on ReliefWeb and partner sites.</p>	<p>This is a specific action which could be completed with minimum effort as soon as possible.</p>	RW	By end October 2006
<p>4.4 • ReliefWeb should provide data to make it easier for users to understand the value of information on ReliefWeb. For example, this could include showing: “most read documents” on a topic, or showing a count of most recent content by region or topic.</p>	<p>To look into in conjunction with 1.1 and 2.3, a phased approach looking at what info would be most needed by partners. Hardware requirements to provide for any such enhancements in real time can prove expensive and should be factored into any</p>	RW / ITS	In phases, see 1.1 and 2.3 to Dec 2007.

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<p>4.5 • ReliefWeb should expand the multi-lingual content it provides on the site by inviting such materials from partners, and by enabling users to find content by “language” on the site.</p>	<p>response.</p> <p>ITS and RW technical project team to add “sort by Spanish and French” functionality to filters where the content already exists.</p> <p>Further to 2.2, RW to encourage process of linking regional initiatives into RW system</p>	<p>RW / ITS</p>	<p>Filter enhancement by Q1 2007.</p> <p>Regional initiatives to be moved forward during 2007.</p>
<p>4.6 • OCHA AIMB should more aggressively integrate its information management and online efforts, to promote, as a rule, interoperability between information systems. This can be done at a basic level through expanded interlinkages between sites, but should include services that enable more automated sharing of content across various OCHA sites – e.g. HICs, OCHA Online and OCHA country office websites, and others.</p>	<p>There is some thinking around the establishment of a common platform for all OCHA’s web-based that would facilitate stronger inter-operability. ReliefWeb has been developed on the basis of a user-centred approach using common data standards. The advantage of this approach is that it permits exchange and interoperability while not requiring a single system and its attendant customization. It is also increasingly the current industry option as well.</p>	<p>AIMB</p>	<p>Contingent on outcome of IM Review 2007</p>
<p>Recommendation #5 – Management Strengthening</p> <p>The ReliefWeb management systems and capacity need to be expanded in some critical ways. The benefit of doing this will be better service to target audiences through better site performance. Greater capacity will also enable ReliefWeb to invest staff time in initiatives that will deliver more value to the humanitarian community.</p>	<p>See items 5.1 to 5.5 below.</p>		
<p>5.1 • ReliefWeb should recruit a larger core of permanent staff and reduce its reliance on short-term (GTA) staffing for core functions. This is important to reduce management time spent on time-consuming recruitment</p>	<p>Management agrees and will take the following measures: Current GTA posts should become project posts to help reduce high turnover, breaks in service.</p>	<p>EO</p> <p>RW</p>	<p>End of 2007.</p> <p>End of 2007</p>

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and training of short term staff, and allow ReliefWeb to build the longevity and capacity of ReliefWeb staff. This is critical to allow ReliefWeb to make important long-term investments in expanding the value of its services.	All project posts and permanent posts should be stabilized. RW Information Management capacity created in or through, or transferred to, regions (See also 2.2).		See 2.2.
5.2 • ReliefWeb should reduce the amount of staff time spent on routine content posting through technical solutions and expanded partner relations (described above).	See technical items: 2.3, 2.5, 4.2 Spider function is central feature of project that starts mid September 2006. Content managers will work with consultant to plan spider's range and activities. See partner growth items: 2.1, 2.2	RW / ITS	See related items See related items
5.3 • ReliefWeb needs expanded technical staff dedicated and working full time within the project. This is critical to allow ongoing improvement, enhancement and innovation on ReliefWeb.	Technical improvement and innovation specifically by and for ReliefWeb, with support from ITS, to ensure the project operates on an optimal platform.	RW / ITS /	June 2007
5.4 • ReliefWeb needs comprehensive 365/24/7 support for its technical infrastructure. It is a common best-practice for sites as large, global, and time-critical as ReliefWeb, to have round-the-clock monitoring, and, as needed, troubleshooting of infrastructure-level issues.	Management agrees. ReliefWeb system to be enhanced, with support from ITS, to ensure reliability, redundancy and scalability of the platform.	RW / ITS	By end Q1 2007
5.5 • ReliefWeb and ITS should complete the planned 2006 technical improvements, and afterwards continue to evaluate how well the current platform will meet planned growth needs.	RW and ITS to provide status update as part of mid-year review. In line with current ITS project to review the system architecture and advise on best hardware configuration, RW and ITS to look into required improvements in the context of recommendations contained herein (e.g. more devolved, more automated system, stronger analytical and editorial areas and more robust search functionality).	RW & ITS	By end Q2 2007.

END