

**DFID Syria Crisis Unit,  
Humanitarian Programme Process Evaluation**

**FINAL**

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## Abbreviations

<b>ACAPS</b>	The Assessment Capabilities Project
<b>ACU/NC</b>	Assistance Co-ordination Unit/Northern Coalition
<b>CHASE</b>	DFID Conflict, Humanitarian and Security Department
<b>DAC</b>	Development Assistance Committee
<b>DFID</b>	Department for International Development
<b>UN-ESCWA</b>	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
<b>FCO</b>	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
<b>HMG</b>	Her Majesty's Government
<b>HQ</b>	Headquarters
<b>ICRC</b>	International Committee of the Red Cross
<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Person
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>IRC</b>	International Rescue Committee
<b>IRS</b>	Intervention Review Sheet
<b>KII</b>	Key Informant Interview
<b>MAR</b>	Multilateral Aid Review
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>MENAD</b>	Middle East and North African Department
<b>MOD</b>	Ministry of Defence
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>NLGI</b>	No Lost Generation Initiative
<b>NRP</b>	National Resilience Plan
<b>OCHA</b>	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>ODI</b>	Overseas Development Institute
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>RRP</b>	Regional Response Plan
<b>SCF</b>	Save the Children Fund
<b>SCS</b>	Senior Civil Service
<b>SCU</b>	Syria Crisis Unit
<b>SGBV</b>	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
<b>SHARP</b>	Syrian Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan
<b>SoS</b>	Secretary of State
<b>UKMIS</b>	UK Mission to the United Nations

<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNDSS</b>	United Nations Department of Safety and Security
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children Fund
<b>UNRWA</b>	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
<b>VFM</b>	Value for Money
<b>WASH</b>	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organisation
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Program

## Executive Summary

- i. This evaluation is not primarily focused on accountability, but on learning. It seeks to assist DFID to improve its response to the Syria crisis and how it responds to future challenges. The following summarises the findings and provides key recommendations.
- ii. **DFID’s strategic approach to the humanitarian crisis in Syria was consistent with the UK’s international obligations and own policy priorities.** It appears to have achieved its overall purpose and DFID has demonstrated considerable flexibility in practice (albeit this is not reflected often in its formal project documentation). DFID has worked well across Whitehall while sometimes having to fight to assert its humanitarian principles. DFID’s approach was not fully aligned with the *UK Government’s Humanitarian Policy 2011*, however (see Section Three for more detail). We note that DFID initially assumed that the crisis would follow a particular trajectory (towards regime change in Syria) and did not fully incorporate alternative outcomes into its planning.

No.	Level	Theme	Recommendation
1	SCU, MENAD and DFID	Strategic Alignment	<i>DFID should incorporate various possible future trajectories for Syria and the wider region in its strategy.</i>
2	SCU, MENAD	Strategic Alignment	<i>The strategy should be framed in terms of outcomes.</i>
3	SCU, MENAD	Strategic Alignment	<i>SCU and MENAD needs to develop a more clearly adaptive approach to programme management, as envisaged by DFID’s ‘End to End Review’ and new Smart Rules.</i>

- iii. **Grant allocation has broadly aligned with DFID’s geographical, sectoral and cross-cutting priorities** and allocations explicitly address the needs of some particularly vulnerable groups. Needs assessments, political priorities and opportunity for action all have had an influence on funding. DFID has now, appropriately, moved towards a model of longer term funding. DFID is increasingly building resilience into its programming but, appropriately, relief operations still dominate. Grant management has, however, emphasized the reported effectiveness of delivery more than the actual and verified effectiveness, economy and efficiency.

No.	Level	Theme	Recommendation
4	SCU, MENAD	Strategic Alignment	<i>DFID needs to focus more on the overall Value for Money of operations, and on the verifiability of this Value for Money.</i>

- iv. **The SCU has improved how it seeks to define and monitor results.** To the extent possible, the results of funded programmes aggregate into the overarching logical framework, which itself

could be significantly improved. A Theory of Change (ToC) exists but appears to have no obvious use in design or monitoring and evaluation, or as an early warning tool. Programmes often actively and innovatively engage with beneficiary communities, but this is not something that DFID does directly. Beneficiary involvement in reporting is improving. DFID's choice to hold partners to account for specifically *DFID-attributable results* only works, however, if DFID subsequently monitors progress in a manner that gives some assurance of the quality of that reporting. Although DFID staff conduct field monitoring on a limited basis, to date it has had no sure mechanism to verify its partner's results.

No.	Level	Theme	Recommendation
5	SCU, MENAD	UK Policy & Humanitarian Principles  Grant Allocation & Management Process	<i>The logframe and ToC should be revisited and more clearly set out, so that they can act as the foundation for the portfolio's design and M&amp;E processes.</i>
6	SCU, MENAD	UK Policy & Humanitarian Principles  Grant Allocation & Management	<i>Since resources are a constraint and workload high, DFID should consider moving towards providing as much as possible of its assistance as un-earmarked funds through organisations in which it has confidence, while retaining (limited) geographically-focused funding enabling local actions. This approach would alleviate some of the burden on staff to monitor a wide range of programmes.</i>
7	SCU, MENAD	UK Policy & Humanitarian Principles	<i>At the same time, DFID should develop its approach to third party monitoring in order to verify (possibly on a rolling sample basis, and possibly jointly with other key donors) the overall international response and its partner's results. This monitoring should support real time adaptive programming.</i>

- v. **DFID has been able to deliver in spite of considerable staffing constraints.** DFID has, however, been fragmented and the SCU has not sufficiently acted as a single unit. The current model, using a mix of contracted and permanent staff, as well as relying on staff with insufficient experience in DFID, needs improvement. Similarly, the operation and organizational structure in MENAD (with the current split of responsibilities between the two deputy directors) should be reviewed. DFID is not fully acting, or presenting itself, as 'one DFID', or as a single team.

No.	Level	Theme	Recommendation
8	SCU, MENAD and	Grant Allocation &	<i>DFID needs to create more coherence in its management structure and performance and</i>

	DFID	Management	<i>increase its core skill levels. More effort needs to be made to recruit and retain experienced programme managers.</i>
9	MENAD	Grant Allocation & Management	<i>While a matrix management structure is unavoidable, reporting and operations need to be as simple as possible. The current split across MENAD between staff working in the same countries between humanitarian and development (which is activity based) should be replaced by a structure that focuses on areas of work (institutions and geographies). This would then align more closely with how funding is managed through business cases.</i>
10	SCU, MENAD	Grant Allocation & Management	<i>Time needs to be invested managing all staff working in the same region as a unit, listening, and creating coherence.</i>

- vi. **Staffing and programme management are too focused on London.** DFID is not making decisions as close to the point of delivery as possible. Communication between the centre and periphery has not been good enough, with a consistent message of a dominance of top-down messaging rather than two-way communication. Programme staff do not spend enough time in country or meeting representatives of agencies that are responsible for grant implementation. The physical and operational distance between technical and programme staff is too large.

No.	Level	Theme	Recommendation
11	SCU and MENAD	Grant Allocation & Management	<i>Decisions should take place as close to the point of delivery as possible. DFID should seek to place as many staff as possible in the region and in country. Programme staff in particular; if they cannot be permanently placed in the region, they need to be more regularly cycled through.</i>
12	DFID MENAD	Grant Allocation & Management	<i>We were told that the key constraint to locating staff closer to the point of delivery was funding; this constraint needs to be addressed and funds allocated to allow staff to work more regularly close to the point of delivery.</i>
13	SCU and MENAD	Grant Allocation & Management	<i>Internal communication needs to be improved and particular obstacles, such as the lack of access to secure communications for contracted staff in the field, need to be overcome. A culture of top-down paper- and email-based communication needs to be challenged.</i>

14	MENAD	Grant Allocation & Management	<i>During our review, DFID agreed with our finding that the Programme Board should be less of a burden and its role and remit should focus on ensuring overall coherence and supporting delivery. We understand it has made changes consistent with this.</i>
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- vii. **DFID did not have a pre-existing model of how to operate or resource a response to a challenge like the Syria crisis.** As a result it made some poor initial decisions. DFID did not plan for the worst case or initially resource its management of the response sufficiently well. It is highly possible that the response to the crisis in the region provides an indication of what much of DFID's work will look like in the future.

No.	Level	Theme	Recommendation
15	DFID	Grant Allocation & Management	<i>DFID needs to corporately develop a clearer understanding of what an appropriate model should look like, (different from business as usual). This will require learning lessons from its response to the Syrian and other contexts (such as Iraq, Bosnia and the Balkans, Afghanistan, Congo).</i>
16	DFID	Grant Allocation & Management	<i>Ideally the model should identify triggers, establish the principle of 'planning for the worst and hoping for the best', and link the level and type of administrative resource required to the possible size and nature of the overall committed programme.</i>
17	DFID	Grant Allocation & Management	<i>Resourcing should take account of the increased burden of working across multiple sites and disciplines. Ideally this would result in an agreed outline plan that can be quickly operationalized in the event of future need.</i>



## Section 1. Introduction

### Background

- 1.1 What began as street protests against the Syrian government in March 2011 disintegrated into a violent civil war as the government used the military to crack down on protestors. The current conflict is a complex web of various factions fighting against the government and each other, with violent extremists taking control of large swaths of territory. The conflict has devastated the Syrian economy and social fabric. The UN estimates that there are nearly 11 million people in need of humanitarian assistance inside of Syria. Access in both government and opposition areas is limited, leaving an estimated nearly 4.6 million out of reach of aid. The territorial gains made by violent extremists groups over the last six months of 2014 further restricted humanitarian access.
- 1.2 The on-going conflict has resulted in massive population displacement, with a reported 6.45 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Syria. An additional 3.2 million Syrians have fled to neighbouring countries. The varying social and political realities in the host countries have contributed to the complex context in which humanitarian assistance is provided to affected populations. Some countries strictly limit the economic livelihoods and education opportunities available to refugees, while others actively work to facilitate refugee employment and provide other services. Turkey and Jordan focus their relief efforts around formal refugee camps; other governments have chosen to limit the construction of camps. In all countries, the majority of refugees live within host communities. These communities are often in the poorer areas of the countries and the influx of refugees has added additional pressure on already-overstretched services and struggling local economies.
- 1.3 Since its first grant in February 2012, DFID has been a leader in the international response to the Syrian crisis. Through its Syria Crisis Unit (SCU), it has committed £700 million to fund humanitarian assistance. At the beginning of the Syrian conflict, DFID did not have a presence in Syria and many of its neighbours because they were middle income countries and did not meet the threshold for DFID assistance. DFID does not currently have an office in Syria. Instead, the SCU, coordinates DFID's response from London, with some DFID staff (primarily Humanitarian Advisors) located in embassies and consulates in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan.

### Purpose of this study

- 1.4 This is a *process evaluation* of DFID's humanitarian response to the Syria crisis. It comments on DFID's management performance and identifies areas for improvement. DFID commissioned this evaluation to consider its work from February 2012 to June 2014, in order to help guide future strategy and programming decisions. Its primary audience is the members of DFID's Syria Crisis Unit and managers of the Middle East and North African Department. It assumes knowledge of DFID's approach and programme.
- 1.5 This report does not address the outcomes or impact of DFID's work nor the performance of DFID's implementing partners; instead, it focuses on the process and structure of DFID's response. It seeks to identify whether DFID's management choices have been the right ones, given the complex context of the Syria crisis and the UK and DFID's strategy.
- 1.6 We understand that DFID will be commissioning a comprehensive evaluation of its Syria programme in collaboration with other donors. This will address the quality of portfolio performance and outcomes and provide the basis for assessment of value for money.

### Scope and approach

- 1.7 This evaluation is not primarily focused on accountability, but on learning. It seeks to assist DFID to

improve its response to the Syria crisis. While it was undertaken by an independent team, the approach has been to be both critical and supportive, in order to assist DFID improve its delivery. The key themes it addresses are summarized below in headings taken from the Terms of Reference (see Annex A for the TOR);

- The relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the DFID 2012/13 Syria Humanitarian Strategies and the two business cases.
- The extent to which the Humanitarian Programme has been informed by *Saving Lives, Preventing Suffering and Building Resilience: The UK Governments Humanitarian Policy 2011* and confirms to the good humanitarian donorship principles.
- The extent to which the grant portfolio adequately contributes to the delivery of the strategy and responds to the complexity of the crisis.
- The ability of the programme to address cross-cutting issues set out in the business case focusing on violence against women and resilience.
- The effectiveness and efficiency of the grant allocation and management process.

1.8 An evaluation framework was agreed with DFID. The framework integrates OECD-DAC Criteria of Evaluation for Humanitarian Aid and the OECD-DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance. These were also combined with DFID's own policy priorities for Humanitarian Assistance and the questions in the TOR.

### Methodology

1.9 The evaluation team primarily employed a qualitative methodology consisting of a desk review of DFID and HMG documents and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders. The desk review consisted of DFID policy, programme planning, strategic documentation and external literature. While the team had open access to DFID's OFFICIAL SENSITIVE documentation, material graded SECRET and above was not made available. Literature relevant to the portfolio and specific programme documentation was reviewed. The key informant interviewees were identified through a purposive sampling strategy in which DFID identified key respondents, consisting of:

- HMG staff in Beirut, Amman, Ankara and elsewhere in the region.
- Implementing partner and delivery agency staff in Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, and Turkey with the possibility of staff in their global headquarters, as necessary and relevant.
- Staff from relevant agencies in the host governments in Lebanon and Jordan.
- Other relevant third party stakeholders who are engaged in humanitarian response in Lebanon and Jordan, possibly throughout the wider region.

1.10 The evaluation team conducted 78 in-person and remote interviews during the course of this evaluation (see Annex C). All information collected from interviewees was treated in confidence. The information provided from the documentation and in these interviews was compiled and synthesized according to the evaluation framework. From that, the evaluation team drew the evidence for the findings that are put forward in this report.

## Findings

### Section 2. Strategic alignment

#### The relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of DFID's strategic approach

*The strategic approach was broadly relevant*

- 2.1 The UK government's strategic approach to the Syrian crisis was put forward in its 2012/2013 Syrian Humanitarian Strategy. The strategy was further articulated in two business cases; the first from March 2012 into 2013, the latter (for 2013-15) becoming live in March-April 2013. The strategy is summarized below;

*Figure 1: Summary of the strategic objectives of the UK humanitarian response and DFID's activities*

<b>Objective One: Support effective international response</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Push the humanitarian response up the political agenda.</li><li>• Encourage long term, predictable, flexible funding.</li><li>• Scale up delivery.</li><li>• Improve UN leadership and coordination.</li><li>• Work with humanitarian actors, donors, and the national coalition to improve coordination, funding, and access.</li><li>• Encourage a broader development response to the crisis inside Syrian and the region.</li></ul>
<b>Objective Two: Increase support to needs of people in Syria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide long term predictable funding to the UN-led response inside Syria to respond to emergency protection and assistance, including addressing the needs of women and children.</li><li>• Scale up the cross-border effort to ensure aid reaches those in hard-to-reach areas, including opposition controlled and contested areas.</li><li>• Expand support to emerging governance structures.</li><li>• Provide Technical Assistance to the ACU/NC to support their efforts to facilitate increased assistance into Syria.</li></ul>
<b>Objective Three: Strengthen support to countries supporting Syrian refugees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide long-term predictable funding to the UN-led response in the region to meeting emergency needs and build resilience.</li><li>• Increase work with national and local structures and actors to help stabilise the environment and deliver programmes.</li><li>• Push for a broader development response in Syria's neighbors and consider the case for bilateral support.</li><li>• Use other instruments to support stability.</li></ul>

- 2.2 The strategy was broad. Its objectives allowed for a wide range of responses and actions. Arguably this was practical in that it allowed a high degree of flexibility, but did not provide specific direction. We note that the objectives are phrased in terms of inputs and activities; what DFID will do, not what it hopes to achieve in terms of outcomes or outputs. We note also that some objectives have modest (and, perhaps appropriately, ill-defined) aspirations; 'to improve' co-ordination, to 'encourage' long term predictable funding, to 'push the humanitarian response up the political agenda'.

*A coordinated approach...*

- 2.3 DFID's Syria Strategy is explicitly and clearly embedded in HMG's overall Syria Strategy of April 2013. On occasion, DFID anchors its stance and action in wider HMG policies or legal advice, or takes a step back if other parts of HMG may stand better chances to achieve progress. Staff reported a high level of engagement with DFID's work across Whitehall. Individual ministers and officials meet regularly with colleagues at strategic (e.g. National Security Council), technical (e.g. government economists) and operational level (e.g. FCO-DFID and other agency meetings). Co-ordination appears effective on operational issues. We found no examples of other parts of HMG blocking DFID in its achievement of its objectives or pushing it to not stick to its humanitarian principles.

*...that occasionally needs defending*

- 2.4 There is a strong perception among SCU staff that DFID does not appear to have been consistently assertive in driving the cross Whitehall response to Syria. We heard how much time has been spent being reactive to external concerns and priorities (from No. 10, Cabinet Office and FCO). The high level of political interest in DFID's response means DFID spends much time (in the words of staff) 'feeding the [Whitehall] machine', answering questions from other parts of HMG on its work. Given the nature of the crisis, this appears to be unavoidable (and needs to be recognized in resourcing). At the same time, and in spite of a context where it has often been forced to be reactive, DFID has been able to achieve some notable successes in mobilizing other departments, including the FCO, to achieve tangible results. There is some evidence that individuals in other departments in Whitehall do not fully understand and own the principles of humanitarian response; DFID staff reflect that this is unsurprising. DFID staff rightly see their role as advocates for the UK's humanitarian policy. In the case of FCO, DFID has found itself having to clearly set out humanitarian principles (notably over the FCO's desire to identify cross border aid into Syria as from the UK) and respond to lobbying requests for UK aid to be used for particular purposes and to support particular groups in Syria. This, again, has consumed SCU HQ staff time.

*A strategy in line with the UK's international obligations*

- 2.5 The strategy is consistent with the UK's commitment to the international humanitarian architecture e.g. the objective to improve the UN's leadership and co-ordination. While DFID has achieved some success, in practice the UK has often found it difficult to achieve this aim, raising questions (in hindsight) about the practicality and appropriateness of the way it has sought to do so. The outcome of DFID's work with others to encourage a UN regional coordinator position and a comprehensive regional strategy has been disappointing (see para 3.9).

*A strategy that assumed the crisis would follow a particular trajectory*

- 2.6 We note the initial underlying assumption in the strategy (and the UK's overall position) that there would be a transition out of war to increasing stability ('we will support emerging governance structures' etc.). This has not taken place. The progress of the crisis has not been linear towards a single replacement for the Assad regime. It has been unpredictable and complex, involving many territories and other conflicts (such as in Iraq). The strategic approach was not initially crafted to include options that took account of this complexity. We note, however, that operational planning and programming with partners has been highly sensitive to changes in the situation on the ground and often explicitly recognizes the need for contingency planning. DFID report that it undertook scenario planning on a regular basis.
- 2.7 For a significant period, however, DFID's strategic position appeared to assume (and the UK appeared to desire) that the conflict would be limited, a new regime would be put in place and that displacement of refugees would be temporary. As a result, DFID did not want to commit long term staff resources to the crisis. We note that management staff in the Middle East and North African Department (MENAD) (and possibly senior management in DFID) have changed their position on the

crisis as it has developed, recognizing it is now protracted with no clear end in sight. The crisis in Syria is indivisible from the challenges of the region. The programme is now in a period of transition, from being focused on humanitarian actions to a blended response, particularly in Jordan and Lebanon, including a more traditional development agenda. DFID's strategy, however, does not yet clearly articulate what this shift might mean for its engagement.

*A strategy requiring updating*

- 2.8 Programming has had a very high degree of flexibility in practice, including sensitivity at the activity level to different possible scenarios. This has, arguably, been ahead of DFID's written strategy. We are aware that the Syria humanitarian strategy has been reviewed periodically, but note that it has not, on paper at least, changed fundamentally. The strategy did not fully incorporate the iterative development of adaptive programming, rather it articulated broad objectives in the two umbrella business cases that allowed multiple activities to take place within them (each activity being specified with its own Intervention Review Sheet, or IRS). Indeed, the first business case was built cumulatively, aggregating interventions.

*A strategy that was only partially needs based*

- 2.9 At the highest level, DFID has responded to changes in need by, in the first two years at least, rapidly and significantly scaling up funding. Programming decisions have been infused with UK political priorities and (notably recently) with DFID administrative necessity. Such decisions are often justifiable, but care needs to be taken. DFID planned to divide funding between support for both inside and outside Syria. While this division of UK aid might appear to be the most neutral approach, and is thus defensible it is not necessarily responsive to the greatest need. We are not able to confirm, therefore, that it was fully consistent with the OECD/DAC definition of *relevant*.
- 2.10 The UK government's participation in the No Lost Generation Initiative (NLGI) has been particularly contentious within the SCU. It has, we heard, also been unpopular with several partners, who see it as a politically motivated decision that has moved funding from more urgent programme priorities. Other external respondents saw it as a bold and appropriate decision. We note that decisions based on political or administrative requirements are legitimate, but need clear explanation.
- 2.11 DFID seeks proposals for funding from delivery agencies as the basis for its programming. These agencies typically based their proposals on needs assessments. The use of needs assessments is explicitly covered in DFID's IRS template. The available information about humanitarian needs tended to be confined to agency project areas and heavily dependent on information received from partners on the ground. Agencies were also reported to be reluctant to share their own assessments on security grounds, though some interviewed indicated this may actually be caused by institutional territoriality. We saw many examples of DFID staff (particularly the humanitarian advisers) constantly engaging with agencies on the updating of their analyses to ensure that needs were responded to.
- 2.12 We have not seen detailed conflict analyses that link to the strategy. These may exist at a higher level of security clearance than that of the team. We are aware of regular cross-Whitehall briefings on the security situation in the region at senior and more operational levels. DFID headquarters staff participate in these briefings. We have heard how such briefings may influence the programming choices made by DFID. We note that many DFID contracted staff (who represent DFID in country as advisers) have varying degrees of security clearance and also may not be party to detailed conflict analyses.
- 2.13 Nonetheless, there has been ample evidence that DFID bases its funding decisions on documents such as RRP, which base themselves on various types of needs assessments conducted by a range of stakeholders. DFID contributed financially to some of these assessments, and occasionally pro-

actively identified new areas that require an assessment. We note, however, that agencies' estimates can differ widely. For example, "[...] there is no accurate figure for refugee numbers in Istanbul UNHCR conservatively estimates above 50,000, and NGOs working there quote 100,000 possibly many more."

- 2.14 The link between needs assessments and plans are clear in terms of sector and geographical focus, but not in terms of percentages. For instance, we have not seen strong evidence underpinning the impact weighting of 15% to WASH and 20% to health, rather than vice versa.
- 2.15 The quality and use of evidence has improved over time, but this remains a difficult area, and DFID regularly highlights the needs for a "renewed focus on needs assessment: where feasible, we have encouraged partners to include needs assessment explicitly in their programmes (UNRWA, FAO, UNICEF, WHO, FAO)." DFID is willing to make a considerable investment in better needs assessments: for instance there has been a £2.5m allocation to an undisclosed agency, ESCWA, UNRWA and IOM to 'Deepen Needs Assessment'. We note that DFID intends to commission third party assessments to support its analysis and monitoring and evaluation of its delivery in future.

*A strategy that appears to be effective*

- 2.16 The strategy has achieved its overall purpose; to support the provision of the immediate humanitarian response with funds in a timely manner. We find that the UK Government, through DFID, has generally (though not exclusively) provided its support to programming effectively, particularly in the context of a complex humanitarian emergency. Almost all internal annual reports indicate a pattern of (within the constraints of the context) positive delivery. Using the objectives and activities set out in Figure 1 on page 4, we can find consistent evidence of action (or attempts at action) against all the objectives and activities set out.

### Section 3. DFID's approach and UK policy priorities

- 3.1 This section considers the extent to which the Syria Humanitarian Programme has been informed by *Saving Lives, Preventing Suffering and Building Resilience: The UK Government's Humanitarian Policy 2011* and confirms to the good humanitarian donorship principles (see Annex D).
- 3.2 The UK government spelled out its humanitarian policy in 2011 in *Saving lives, preventing suffering and building resilience: The UK Government's Humanitarian Policy*. This policy had seven key points that themselves broadly align with Good Donorship Principles.
1. *Strengthen anticipation and early action*
  2. *Build resilience to disasters and conflict.*
  3. *Strengthen international leadership and partnership.*
  4. *Invest in research and innovation.*
  5. *Improve accountability, impact, and professionalism.*
  6. *Protect civilians and humanitarian space.*
  7. *Reinforce the UK's capacity to respond.*
- 3.3 The first business case is explicitly embedded in DFID's Humanitarian Policy, but not all seven of the above goals appear prominently in DFID's plans and operational documents. This section explores the extent to which DFID's response to the Syrian humanitarian crisis has aligned with the good donorship principles broadly and the seven points of UK humanitarian priorities more specifically.

*Anticipation and early action could be strengthened further*

- 3.4 Anticipation and early action were not possible in the early stages of the Syrian conflict. The international community failed to anticipate the extent to which the Arab Spring (the catalyst for the original protests against the Syrian government) would reconfigure the region's political and social landscape. Nor did the international community anticipate the intensity or the length of the conflict in Syria.
- 3.5 For DFID, the lack of a presence in Syria and the wider region restricted its ability to anticipate and prepare for early action. This contributed to DFID (and other agencies) having to 'play catch up' with the crisis. DFID was one of the first responding agencies, however. The SCU has not consistently anticipated or forward planned throughout its work. We found several examples of DFID staff regretting not having planned and acted in a sufficiently timely manner (ranging from arranging funding for winterization to writing business cases at the appropriate time).
- 3.6 While regular risk management is in place and updated on a monthly basis, we note other tools such as scenario planning and long-term diarisation of activity were not being regularly used. These might have enabled more anticipation of, and planning for, future requirements.

*DFID is increasingly building resilience into its programming, but relief operations still dominate*

- 3.7 While attention to resilience has increased, support for it remains secondary to relief operations. There is evidence that DFID implementing partners are mainstreaming resilience into their programming. Several implementing partners view DFID as a champion for resilience planning. We saw evidence of DFID working with other donors to ensure that appropriate funding is allocated for resilience efforts. Despite this, resilience programming could be improved. Resilience does not appear prominently in DFID's own overviews of projects and partners, but individual projects often include capacity building elements. DFID is also reported to be open to longer-term development projects and is a strong proponent of stabilization programmes.
- 3.8 DFID (in common with the wider international community) is in the process of reframing its response to the Syria crisis from one of pure humanitarian action to one more fully integrated with traditional development activities. We note that DFID is not yet clear what this might mean for its programming, management or staff. Several implementing partners mentioned that more clarification about DFID's approach to resilience building and future intentions was needed. They also requested clarity about the funding available for resilience.

*DFID has sought to strengthen international leadership, with mixed results*

- 3.9 Strengthening the international response has been a key focus of DFID throughout this crisis, but its efforts have seen mixed results. In both of its business cases, DFID explicitly recognizes that the international humanitarian response to the Syria crisis is led by the United Nations. DFID has also been one of the most vocal advocates for coordinated humanitarian efforts in other international venues, actively working to put the Syrian crisis on the agenda of the G8 Summit and lobbying for the July 2014 UN Resolution (UNSCR 2165) that permits limited cross-border humanitarian assistance. DFID successfully suggested the creation of a High Level Working group on the crisis.
- 3.10 The UK also lobbied for a comprehensive regional strategy and the appointment of a single UN regional coordinator, but the first incumbent has recently left the post after being unable to improve overall co-ordination of the international response. At the regional and country levels, DFID has been an active member of key coordinating working groups, consistently being one of the key donors lobbying for greater collaboration between the various stakeholders in each country. Despite DFID's strong efforts, the success of its approach has been limited due to circumstances and elements that are arguably beyond its control. In addition, not all stakeholders prefer to work with and through the UN.

- While improving, a lack of role clarity remains among the international community*
- 3.11 Issues remain around the capacity and role of some of the UN agencies to lead a coordinated response and key questions of leadership and role, specifically between UNHCR and OCHA. A constant message from almost all DFID, UN and other agency staff interviewed was that while this was improving, the issue remains unresolved. It is beyond the scope of this evaluation to determine the extent to which the UN coordination and leadership has been dysfunctional and uncoordinated. We have no evidence to indicate this general view is wrong, however.
- DFID has not prioritised investments in research and innovation*
- 3.12 In the first stages of DFID's activities (to early 2014) this aspect of the humanitarian response was neglected, as the efforts to provide life-saving support to Syrian refugees and IDPs was the highest priority. Staff reflect this is largely because research and innovation were seen as a 'luxury' during the initial period of implementing the response; they were under extreme pressure, and (they note) working in the context of underfunded appeals. DFID staff respondents noted, however, that constraints were not only financial; 'it's the lack of brain space' one said. Others noted the lack of time to address the topic, given other priorities.
- There are many aspects of the international response that are creative and innovative*
- 3.13 However, as the crisis continued technological innovation in particular played a key role in partner organisations' programming. We found several examples. In Jordan, iris scanning is used to improve registration data. Throughout the region, e-cards are being increasingly used for cash transfers for food, as are physical or electronic vouchers to those living outside formal camps. Software has been developed specifically for this response that checks that the reported data match likely usage of medicines and supplies. We did not see evidence that DFID has played a key role in developing these technological innovations and, while funding them (for instance through IRC and WFP in the case of e-cards), this has not formed a priority for overall programming. External respondents did not provide examples of DFID coming up with innovative technical ideas, albeit they noted the intellectual challenge and quality of DFID staff.
- Learning from elsewhere is being used to influence DFID's programming*
- 3.14 We saw how DFID uses evidence from experiences elsewhere in the world, and DFID staff members sometimes recommend looking at such evidence. We also saw examples of DFID's partners using evidence from elsewhere in the world to inform project design. There is also evidence of learning within the Syrian experience itself (e.g. DFID sometimes moves to different partners, and even different types of partners, on the basis of its learning.)
- While good examples of learning exist, it is not systematic*
- 3.15 We have found evidence of individual staff producing papers at their own initiative to disseminate learning in country or to other agencies. In one country case this was particularly effective having a positive impact on DFID's status and influence with a wide variety of stakeholders. It took place, however without the full recognition of, or impact on DFID, colleagues. We have not seen evidence that suggests that there is coherent *systematic* and *institutional* learning within SCU (albeit DFID reports it holds annual learning events in MENAD). We note that some Programme Board papers attempt to summarise learning on some particular themes. We have not found evidence that DFID consistently encourages other stakeholders to learn, or that learning from the Syria crisis is applied to other operations. Indeed, the lack of effective communication within the SCU team (see Section Six) appears to militate against effective internal learning.
- DFID and SCU has improved how it seeks to define and monitor results*
- 3.16 Project design and reporting requirements were less than consistently rigorous during the initial period of the response. DFID corporately uses nested hierarchies of targets (with project logframes as the lowest level) that consolidate to define the performance of its programmes. As noted above,



the Syria portfolio developed opportunistically and in collaboration with UN and other agencies, and links between project work and DFID's overall logframe were not always explicit (albeit the RRP and SHARP do identify overall targets). There is evidence that since 2013 DFID has been much more rigorous in designing project logframes that are explicitly aligned with DFID's overall logframe. DFID incorporated the overall logframe into its IRS format, improving project design and coherence. To assist with the increase in its focus on the quality of logframes it has also published clear guidance on what is to be expected. The new approach of individual institutional business cases is also explicitly increasing the clarity with results are defined. DFID has recently allocated a full time staff member to M&E related work who has started improving the reporting and monitoring processes. We note, however, that when the No Lost Generation Initiative (NLGI) Business Case was first presented to the Programme Board as late as July 2014 it did not have a clear logframe, clearly defined results nor did it include how performance would be monitored.

- 3.17 Staff report that results consolidation continues to be a challenge because there is a legacy of not-perfectly-designed projects. This issue has been addressed, in part, by being (as one staff member noted) 'rather ruthless' and approaching partners that already had contracts signed with the request for a new logframe (using 'staff changes' as an 'opportunity' to re-open dialogue). This seems an approach that, in most, has been acceptable for partners.

*However, DFID made its work harder by seeking directly attributable results*

- 3.18 The SCU identifies that monitoring results remains a challenge. We note, however, that instead of funding unrestricted percentages of appeals, DFID has often opted to fund specific projects, partly because this would allow for closer monitoring of progress. This has made its work harder.

- 3.19 The approach of identifying DFID attributable results is only sensible if DFID subsequently monitors progress in a manner that gives some assurance of the quality of that reporting. DFID depends heavily on self-reporting by funded agencies. DFID has accepted partners' reports and added their figures onto DFID's database without independent sample-based verification (albeit there has been some partial and unsystematic verification by SCU team members in the field). While we support the SCU's move to third party monitoring, we are not convinced that DFID's decision to seek directly attributable results for the majority of agencies was fully appropriate or proportionate in the context of the Syria crisis, given DFID's resourcing limitations and the proven track record of most of its partners. It would have been more efficient to seek to provide core funding where possible and then claim the *contribution* to results of trusted agencies (as with the ICRC and WFP examples). In practice (and given hindsight) this would have made no difference to many of the results reported. It would also have reduced the SCU's administrative burden. We note also that, in a context of high uncertainty such as the Syria crisis, identifying and then reporting against ex-ante targets is inherently problematic and time consuming. While partners report they value DFID's support for improving results, we also note that aid effectiveness principles on harmonization and reducing the burden of reporting also do not appear to have consistently influenced DFID's decision-making and activities. Consequently, the SCU appears to have made its workload higher than it could have been.

*Beneficiary involvement in reporting is improving*

- 3.20 DFID does not have a system in place for collating feedback from beneficiary communities. DFID's partners often do have such engagement systems and processes, however. This seems to have been a consequence of their standards, not because of DFID's initial encouragement. We were struck that DFID respondents seldom raised the issue of beneficiary engagement, unless prompted.

- 3.21 We note that the topic is now in DFID's corporate mind. The 'Guidance for structured meeting' for annual partner reviews has an outline that contains five items of which one is 'Discuss DFID and partner perspective on reporting and beneficiary participation.' Beneficiary engagement is part of the IRS template, and includes both the 'identification, development and delivery of the project' and

the presence of a 'complaint/feedback mechanism.' We cannot verify the quality of feedback taking place, but the IRs suggest that both types of engagement are common. We found examples of creative beneficiary feedback through SMS, twitter and Facebook. Some partners (for instance Save the Children) have community engagement teams that work with community focal points.

*DFID has sought to protect civilians and the space for humanitarian action*

- 3.22 This has been a key focus of DFID's approach from the beginning of the crisis. At the strategic level, DFID has been an advocate for civilian protection and has lobbied for humanitarian access in both government and opposition controlled areas in Syria. It has lobbied with host governments for appropriate responses to the needs of refugees in their specific contexts. At the programming level, there are targeted protection activities. The first business case identified that 10% of funding would be earmarked for protection issues. Funds have been allocated (through UNFPA specifically under the first business plan), but the number of beneficiaries reached appears to a lower proportion than other activities (see Figure 2 below). Other programming (for instance UNICEF) indicates that DFID has funded activities and employed its influence to increase humanitarian space and highlight the need to protect of civilians in Syria and throughout the region.

*DFID has been better at building its partners' capacity to respond than its own*

- 3.23 This evaluation did not come across evidence of sustainable capacity building within DFID. Instead, 'capacity' has been defined as 'staffing' and often not DFID but Crown Agents' staffing through the CHASE-contracted Operational Team. DFID reports, however, that each staff member has learning objectives and development goals and that provision has been made for training and development. In addition, DFID has also had annual MENAD learning events. If capacity to respond is defined as coordination across the government, then there were concerted efforts to improve the wider British government approach. DFID staff hold weekly 'lobbying meetings' with FCO and participate in regular strategy meetings across Whitehall that include the FCO, No 10, Cabinet Office, MOD and others under the direction of the National Security Council. Likewise the relationship between DFID technical staff, such as economists, working in close operations with other government agencies has reportedly been good.

## Section 4. The adequacy and scope of the portfolio

- 4.1 This section assesses the extent to which DFID's grant portfolio seeks to contribute to the delivery of the UK humanitarian response strategy in Syria and responds to the complexity of the crisis. We can make no meaningful assessment of the adequacy of the outputs or outcomes of the programme independently from the planned comprehensive evaluation.

*The portfolio responds generally to the complexity of the crisis*

- 4.2 The scope of the portfolio is broadly responsive to the complexities of both the crisis and the operational realities within the countries in which it is implemented. Within Syria, DFID supports both the UN-led response and organisations that have access to areas that prove difficult for the UN to reach. There is evidence of DFID funded activities in Syria also addressing gaps in the overall response and DFID consistently seeks to ensure that needs are not left unmet; for example, in Lebanon the government resisted the development of refugee camps, resulting in a refugee population that is embedded in host communities. DFID staff in country have led the discourse about how to respond to this challenge. In Turkey, DFID encouraged and supported WFP's initial efforts to work with the government to provide food assistance to the camps. In the portfolio's cross-border activities, DFID remains highly flexible, allowing partners the necessary space for changes in approaches and priorities as the situation demands (such as reprogramming to accommodate changes in the number IDPs arriving at the Syrian side of the Syria-Turkish border). In March 2013, Jordan and Lebanon hosted similar percentages of Syrian refugees (31% and 32%, respectively). By a

year later (March 2014) Lebanon’s share of refugees was 38%, Jordan’s 22%. Turkey was now hosting 25% of the total number of Syrian refugees. DFID has shifted funding from Jordan to Lebanon in response to this change.

*The geographic distribution of the portfolio aligns broadly to the distribution of people in need*

4.3 50% of DFID’s portfolio supports humanitarian assistance delivered in Syria. The UN identifies there are close to 10 million Persons of Concern throughout the region as a result of this crisis, 70% of them in Syria. DFID’s approach approximates to the overall burden, with the caveat that true figures subject to considerable debate. The UK’s decision to split funding half in and half out of Syria seems defensible.

*DFID’s allocation is consistent with countries’ relative burden*

4.4 Figure 2 summarises the comparative overall burden of need with DFID’s allocations.

*Figure 2: Comparison of location of UN Persons of Concern and DFID’s allocation of funding*

	Number of Persons of Concern	Percentage of Total Persons of Concern	DFID allocation by Country	Share of DFID Syria Portfolio
Syria	6,973,348	70.1%	£298.8m	50.1%
Lebanon	1,169,846	11.8%	£123.5m	21.1%
Jordan	612,737	6.2%	£119.1m	20.3%
Turkey	832,508	8.4%	£24.2m	4.1%
Iraq	217,886	2.2%	£18.1m	3.1%
Egypt	138,937	1.4%	£2.3m	0.4%
Total	9,945,262	100%	£586m	100%

We note that relying primarily on a country’s proportion of overall persons in need is an inadequate metric. Numbers are contested. The approach also does not accommodate the relative proportion of those in need in the host population nor does it take account of the context in which refugees live. Jordan’s share of the overall burden is less than Turkey’s; however, refugees make up a greater proportion of its population. Lebanon’s relative and proportionate burden is significant (with risks to future instability). It seems appropriate, given these issues, that the countries under the most pressure receive a significant proportion of the overall funding. We note, however, that while Egypt has a very small number and proportion of Persons of Concern, they are currently experiencing some of the most difficult and precarious conditions of the five countries. Following the transition of government in 2013 authorities began cracking down on the Syrian refugee population. As a result, needs are dramatically increasing although numbers are not.

*The need for a rapid response defined the choice of funding partners*

4.5 There is very limited evidence that the initial partner selection was based on past DFID experience. Rather, the evidence points to the fact that DFID funded partners who either had an international mandate or had a presence in the region. Choices were opportunistic, albeit principled and the initial selection was probably sensible; DFID used UN agencies and NGOs that fulfilled criteria of coherence with UK objectives and capacity to deliver. Given the priority for delivery, this approach is likely to have been the most efficient in the short term. We note, however, that the first business case grounded DFID’s choices of implementing partners in three key documents: the Multilateral Aid Review (MAR which is partly based on DFID’s previous experience with implementing partners), the list of RRF-qualified NGOs, and Central KPMG due diligence reports on civil society organisations. We have not seen evidence that these fundamentally influenced the selection of partners. For example, both the FAO and IOM received very poor scores in the MAR. OCHA faces challenges with poor cost control, which impacts its VfM performance. Regardless, all three organisations were selected as implementing partners.

4.6 Subsequent decisions on the continuation, increase or termination of funding have broadly been based on impressions of performance, but it seems that these really are *impressions*; for instance DFID writes (about Lebanon) that “performance across the portfolio is variable and typically subjective rather than evidence based.” DFID has not renewed funding for programmes that were performing well, such as the partnership with an undisclosed agency in Syria and made a decision to discontinue a programme that was an integral part of an undisclosed agency’s community-outreach activities in Jordan.

*The choice of partners may not have fully accommodated the wider UK strategic objectives*

4.7 One DFID respondent noted that DFID’s choice of partners were all international. They noted that by not engaging fully with the UK based Syrian and regional diaspora in the provision of assistance, DFID may have missed an opportunity to underpin domestic actions that prevent violent extremism. We have no view whether this is, or is not, a credible opinion and are not able to judge whether such an approach would have had the suggested impact. We saw no evidence, however, that this option, or its implications, had been discussed in detail.

## Section 5. Cross-cutting issues

5.1 This section discusses the extent to which DFID’s grant portfolio addresses the cross-cutting issues arising in this crisis, in specifically vulnerable and socially marginalised populations.

*There is evidence of DFID’s programming seeking to protect the vulnerable*

5.2 We saw evidence that DFID pays attention to some particularly vulnerable categories (e.g. victims of SGBV) and this influences the design of programmes (e.g. female outreach workers to deal with limited mobility of certain groups of women and girls). The SCU has created an ‘access portfolio’ and has several gender focal points giving responsibility to individual staff to monitor these issues. It seeks to disaggregate data related to vulnerable groups. DFID has issued guidance on how they could incorporate indicators related to these groups into their reporting.

*DFID has effectively addressed the specific needs of women and girls*

5.3 The needs of women and girls, some of the most vulnerable in this crisis, are addressed by both mainstreaming into programming and through individual programmes that address specific issues. We found that DFID’s partners have incorporated targets for women and girls where relevant. DFID-funded programming is also responsive to the sensitivities of working with women and girls in this context, using female outreach workers in response to limited mobility of certain groups of women and girls.

5.4 DFID pays a significant amount of attention to the issue of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) in this conflict. Its business cases mention the issue of SGBV, as do many of DFID’s operational documents. The SGBV programmes that DFID supports are both preventative (where possible) and post-hoc, which involves providing services and counselling to survivors of SGBV. There are dimensions to SGBV that go beyond the conflict. In Egypt, for example, nearly all SGBV cases are related to domestic violence rather than violent conflict. Domestic violence is also a common problem within the host population, but only Syrian refugees are eligible for shelter and financial support that UNHCR provides to victims of SGBV.

*DFID portfolio includes programmes that support people with disabilities, but it could do more to mainstream activities targeting this group*

5.5 DFID’s portfolio includes programmes that support, either directly or indirectly, people with disabilities. A good example of this type of programming is the provision of cash payments to families with people with disabilities in Syria (families had previously received stipends from the

government) by one undisclosed NGO partner. They also sponsored a home that was used as a place for physical therapy. We note that more information about the number of people with disabilities affected by this crisis and their needs is necessary for more targeted programming.

*DFID could further prioritise support to Palestinian refugees*

- 5.6 The issue of Palestinian refugees has a political and ‘bigger picture’ dimension that is related to the overall stability in the region. We note this is part of the complexity of the crisis, where not only Syrian refugees are affected; we understand that DFID’s view is that forcefully lobbying for the Government of Jordan to open its border for Syrian Palestinian refugees would have implications beyond their safety. In addition to supporting UNRWA’s regional General Fund, DFID has also given UNRWA £25.5m to support cash and other services to Palestinian refugees in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. Despite this financial support and advocacy efforts, it is notable that neither were highlighted in interviews with DFID staff during the evaluation period. We found little significant discussion of this issue in DFID’s documents (for instance in Programme Board papers). While staff have subsequently informed us they recognize that Palestinian refugees are a ‘special case’ and contact between DFID and UNRWA is regular, we suggest that DFID remains vigilant in ensuring the unique needs of this particularly vulnerable group remain a priority.

## Section 6. The effectiveness and efficiency of the grant allocation and management process

- 6.1 This section focuses on how SCU and MENAD has managed the Syria humanitarian programme. Challenges within DFID’s management were the main concern of DFID respondents, with some external partners also reporting issues. We note that, for DFID’s partners, experience was polarized; they were either positive or highly negative. This is unusual for evaluations of DFID’s work.

*Grant allocation appears to work effectively*

- 6.2 DFID’s appears to have based its grant allocation decisions on staff analysis. Decisions are broadly in line with geographical and sectoral priorities, but there are no specific pre-defined formulae (such as used in other organisations like ECHO). This is a flexible approach, but one which could be further refined if further specificity is required. However, we are not convinced that, given the multiple pressures and the rapidly shifting context, a formulaic approach would work. As described above (albeit without data from a third party impact assessment) the portfolio appears broadly defensible and appropriate (noting the debates about funding of the NLGI).
- 6.3 There were few reports of significant grant allocation problems from partners, albeit DFID’s own programme staff report (in some cases) they were sometimes late in making payments due to what they describe as workload constraints. We also note that, generally, DFID has delivered well in spite of the considerable internal management challenges that it has experienced. This is a testament to the commitment and efforts of the staff in the SCU.
- 6.4 We heard concerns about DFID not being sufficiently clear about its future intentions for funding. Notably, staff within SCU were more vocal about this than the partners interviewed. DFID intended (we heard from SCU staff) to reduce the provisional allocations for some organisations. Several partners expressed frustration over the lack of clarity of funding, particularly for seasonal activities that require extensive planning, like winterisation efforts. However, we found that many partners understood that donor funding can change and, whilst hard, they often deal with budget uncertainties. For UN agencies funded on an annual basis (and for some of the NGOs interviewees) this issue was seen to be no more relevant for DFID than for any other bilateral funder.

*DFID has sought to move to more multiyear funding, which is more efficient*

- 6.5 In the early days of the response, most funding was based on the shorter term humanitarian programme funding with a three or six month funding cycle. While short-term funding works well in emergencies, as the conflict continued and humanitarian crisis intensified, the short term funding proved ineffective and inefficient. It meant that implementing partners could not plan or retain experienced staff. It also increased the workload, as programme staff were obliged to spend increasing amount of time drafting repeated proposals and programme extensions, in addition to managing delivery.
- 6.6 Conversely, multi-year funding is meant to reduce transaction and administration costs – and this is no doubt the case if managed proportionately. Multi-year funding is particularly attractive for NGOs, as is illustrated by the DEC review, which noted that “Although funding is widely reported as a constraint, this appears to relate more to the predictability of future funds than the availability of current funds.” Conversely, it does not appear to make much difference for UN agencies as their grants management systems typically cannot deal with multi-year funding agreements.
- 6.7 A June 2013 study confirmed that multi-year funding strengthens efficiency and ensures value for money (VfM). The shift towards the more predictable two-year funding cycle is one of the positive aspects of the UK’s response according to many of its implementing partners, particularly NGOs. The multi-year funding has also increased efficiency by permitting the implementing partners to design and implement longer term programming that can address the issues of resilience that are taking center stage as the crisis becomes protracted.

*Grant management has focused on reported delivery*

- 6.8 In the initial phase, reports lacked rigour and often failed to provide disaggregated data (partly because DFID did not actually require much disaggregation). Moreover, the absence of third party verification means that significant discrepancies between reported and actual delivery may not have been noticed. Lastly, reports did not always address issues of economy and efficiency in sufficient detail – or indeed at all. We note that in the latest business cases, expectations of VfM have been more clearly set out (consistent with the general trend across DFID). This, in combination with clearer templates and a gradual stabilization in parts of the response, has enabled DFID staff to hold partners more clearly to account for spending, timeliness of delivery, value for money and clarity on results. We found evidence that this has improved the reported quality of partners’ delivery (albeit the earlier comments on verification of results apply, see paragraph 3.15).

*The overarching logframe and Theory of Change need to be revisited*

- 6.9 The SCU theory of change (ToC) is much like a logframe summary in ToC format. It does not accommodate the non-linear nature of parts of the humanitarian response; does not provide insight in the envisioned interventions; and does not distinguish between short, medium and long term outcomes (and instead uses the logframe concepts of outputs, outcomes and impact). It has no obvious use in design or monitoring and evaluation, or as an early warning tool, and it adds no value to the logframe. This logframe serves as the foundation of SCU’s work. This logframe should have been developed with more care than it has been;
- Indicators do not always cover what they need to cover (e.g. the ‘number of refugees registered by UNHCR’ is not a good indicator of ‘lives saved, suffering reduced, dignity maintained and resilience promoted’).
  - Some outcome indicators are really output indicators.
  - In the year two annual review arts of the logframe dealt with uncertainty and data paucity by using reported reality as milestones. Such milestones are not real milestones, and are inevitably achieved. This does not represent good practice.

- 6.10 *The business case model needs to be revisited*  
During 2014 SCU decided to change its approach to approving and reporting its work. It moved away from having large umbrella business cases for the overall response (with individual activities funded and managed through Intervention Review Sheets, as is practice in CHASE). It is in the process of replacing these with individual Business Cases that relate to the institutions DFID funds (meaning it plans to move from two to around 30 business cases for the current portfolio). This is rational from the perspective of DFID's corporate reporting systems, which are not able capture and report on results with sufficient refinement (done at business case level). It also means that each business case and reporting has to conform to corporate standards, which is appropriate given the scale of funding. The move comes, however, with costs.
- 6.11 The transition has taken considerable staff time. It is not clear that the staffing implications of the transition and future operation were accommodated, albeit that, on paper at least, 30 business cases alone for the current staffing does not look out of line with other DFID departments. Most of these business cases, however, will cover funding of activities in more than one country. Our view is that DFID's administrative burden increases exponentially for each new territory and team involved. As a result, the SCU may find it hard to manage this new approach with current resourcing and certainly will have to improve its communication and team-working.
- 6.12 The planned model could be made more workable. For instance, we are not convinced that all business cases need to be fully detailed; where possible DFID could seek to provide non-earmarked funding for organisations it trusts, with a lower threshold of scrutiny for approvals and claiming contributions. This would be in line with aid effectiveness principles and DFID's commitment to work where possible through the international system. It is also consistent with the approach of the new Smart Rules, where heads of department are able to define their risk appetite. We also think that, not least because of the need for flexibility, responsiveness (and influence) funding that is specifically allocated for particular territories may continue to be required. We note that many technical and programme staff remain skeptical about the how workable the new business case model is and report that consultation about the decision was limited. It is also clear that, given the rapid pace of change in the region, the benefits of detailed pre-planning is limited; DFID does not, however, yet have corporate systems or behaviours that enable fully adaptive programming (albeit the new Smart Rules intend to put this in place).
- 6.13 We discussed the move to the new business cases with DFID's partners. An institutional funding model works for some, particularly those who are themselves organized regionally (for instance WFP and UNICEF have regional offices and funds flow from their HQ to regions to the country offices). For others, whose primary contact was with humanitarian advisers in country, they wished to ensure this primary relationship was maintained and that the move did not mean that decision-making would be distant from the point of delivery.
- Information management is unwieldy and standard DFID systems are not fit for purpose*
- 6.14 Information management of DFID's grants is complex. A single 'Regional Allocation Table' in Excel contains information on all funding approved internally. It shows individual grants, by country, split up in both financial years and calendar years. It indicates whether or not grants account to UN appeals, whether announced publically and whether part of the 'lost-generation initiative'. It also identifies the tranche the budget comes from. Together, this information captures how each grant is managed and reported on (from a financial perspective). We note this system is bespoke because DFID's corporate system (Aries) is inadequate for the reporting and management task required. DFID's corporate systems are based on the DAC/OECD codes, which are insufficient. We also note that because the Syria crisis is a political priority, Ministers need to be able to make announcements at opportune moments, which tend to be more specific than the DAC codes would accommodate. Such announcements subsequently need to be tracked for accountability purposes. It appears that

only one staff member fully understands the Regional Allocation Table, which is an obvious risk. We note it would be useful to combine the Regional Allocation Table and the results database, but that this would be even more complex.

*Effectiveness and efficiency were hampered by DFID and partners' capacity constraints*

- 6.15 DFID originally did not have a presence in this largely middle-income region due to its policy of targeting low-income countries. While DFID was one of the first movers to respond to the crisis, their lack of presence affected the initial effectiveness (and arguably efficiency) of the strategic response. This was not only a DFID characteristic. We saw several reports mention that implementing partners had slow starts. It took time for the international response to organize and for implementing partners to build the capacity to deliver programming. Few donors and agencies began to respond until early 2013, when the massive displacements and exodus of refugees from Syria began.

*The initial decision to locate the programme in MENAD created problems*

- 6.16 The initial decision to locate the response to the Syria crisis in MENAD led to inefficiencies. DFID had three choices when it decided to respond to the Syria crisis; 1. Let CHASE manage it, 2. Set up a dedicated unit under an SCS lead (as now), or 3. Give responsibility to MENAD (as it did initially). We agree with the consistent message from most DFID respondents that the decision to give MENAD initial responsibility and to then scale up the response did not prove satisfactory.
- 6.17 It would, with hindsight, have been preferable to create a dedicated unit from the first, resourced with experienced staff, led by a member of the SCS. This would have required reprioritization within DFID, which is hard to do. We found that DFID senior management did not respond with sufficient boldness or timeliness to the challenge of the Syria crisis. DFID only decided to set up a Syria Crisis Unit in May 2013; its head (a Deputy Director) came into post in July 2013. Prior to this point it had (incrementally) programmed £141 million. In May 2013 DFID took the key decision to significantly increase spending and approved an additional £300 million plus £90 million contingency. Again, in hindsight, it appears it would have been better to commit resources for a 'worst case' scenario initially, with the plan to reduce inputs if they were not required. DFID increased its administrative resourcing behind the decisions to increase its programme spend, creating persistent deficits in staffing levels to cope with tasks. Our view is that DFID should have planned for the worst-case scenario.

*DFID corporately does not yet have a clear idea how it should respond to a crisis like Syria*

- 6.18 DFID was not, and remains not, sufficiently ready to manage a blended crisis at scale i.e. a regional conflict in middle income countries that does not fit within its standard delivery models of either a) traditional development, b) working in fragile states or, c) sudden onset disaster. The Syria crisis is a different paradigm. The lack of a clear template or agreed corporate position on what structure, staffing and resources are required hampered decision-making at all levels in DFID. MENAD and SCU have undertaken an iterative process of making submissions for staffing and resources that has often resulted in lengthy delays. We note that, with increasing and persistent instability likely, DFID will almost certainly be called on to respond to similar crises in the future and suggest it develops a clearer view of how to rapidly put in place a fully capable resource.

*The staffing model has proved difficult*

- 6.19 The decision to manage from within MENAD, bringing in technical staff through DFID's contract with Crown Agents (CHASE's Operational Team, OT) had several impacts. It arguably created two internal 'tribes' with different sets of experience, expectations (and terms and conditions). The non-DFID contractors were the personnel with the most experience and knowledge. Most non-OT staff (the majority of whom were based in London) had no experience of managing a rapidly changing emergency response. They lacked the explicit and tacit knowledge required. This created, and can



still create, inefficiencies. Given the Syria crisis has been the largest humanitarian response that DFID has ever committed to, it is surprising that more experienced staff were not put in place. We heard that DFID does not have sufficiently flexible staffing and resourcing mechanisms; it is notable that staffing and administrative resource constraints still limit what DFID will do in the Syria response. This appears, however, to be (as one respondent put it) a case of ‘the tail wagging the dog’.

- 6.20 In addition, because DFID’s commitment of internal resources have consistently been behind need, this led to a dependence on temporary and contracted staff (notably recent graduates on DFID’s graduate entry scheme), increasing the management challenge and decreasing efficiency. In particular the SCU found it hard to recruit experienced programme managers. As a consequence, those appointed worked particularly hard and learnt on the job. They did not have developed networks or strategies to overcome institutional barriers, nor the judgement based on experience on how to achieve objectives, nor the knowledge of what to leave and what to do. We heard evidence of them often dealing with the urgent and immediate demands of managers (for instance providing information for board papers) rather than more important tasks such as making payments to partners. Their inexperience and lack of seniority led to an inability to push back against technical and management staff and we are aware of poor prioritisation, overwork and undue stress. Individual staff have not been sufficiently assisted to overcome such challenge, although this is now improving. We note the skill set of managing a large-scale humanitarian response is different from what the ‘normal’ civil servant part of DFID is used to. We found that those parts of the SCU that are primarily engaged with working with Whitehall appear to function comparatively effectively and efficiently.

*The lack of effective team building has been a deficit*

- 6.21 We observed that the SCU still does not work as a single team; in particular tensions appear to exist between advisory and staff with regional responsibilities at HQ, as well as between HQ and field staff. It was notable that staff in country offices had a clearer sense of common purpose than those in London. Given the complexities of the task, it does not appear that there has been enough purposeful sharing and creating of common views. While DFID reports that programme staff have met weekly since 2013, the staff themselves reported that more sharing and mutual learning was required as they were not confident that common approaches were being taken across the unit. Some staff (the humanitarian advisers) have been more effective in creating common understandings. There appears to have been little or no space created for real time rapid feedback learning in order to improve delivery.

*The management culture is too focused on activities in London*

- 6.22 This lack of active and engaged team building appears to go along with a management culture where desk-based analysis and paper writing (which is time consuming) are the default culture (‘feeding the machine’). This culture was significantly influenced by the creation of the Programme Board. The Programme Board was put in place to provide assurance to DFID senior management and the SoS when funding was increased. In practice, we heard from many staff and saw clear evidence from minutes that the Programme Board consumed disproportionate resources, creating structural delays in approval processes and removed some decision making from field staff. It has been more interventionist than strategic. Many staff noted the programme board had had a ‘sclerotic’ effect and few if any were able to point to it having positive impacts on delivery. While we agree that strategic direction and assurance are important, we could find no evidence of the Programme Board adding value proportionate to the time and resources it has consumed. The creation of the Programme Board also worked against the aid effectiveness principle of taking decisions close to the point of delivery as possible.

6.23 We agree with the view that as low as possible a proportion of staff should be stationed in London and that the quality of delivery would be improved if time in the field is maximised. Unfortunately, we heard that managers wish to increase the number of London-based staff in order to overcome workload pressures. By having the majority of the SCU staff in London, concerns of Whitehall and HQ necessarily become more immediate and dominant. We are concerned this will not increase the effectiveness and efficiency of delivery. We understand that there are resource constraints to placing more staff in the field, but this appears to be a false economy. We heard evidence that the lack of sufficient overall administrative resourcing has meant that programme activities that DFID could fund have not, and are not, being undertaken. This seems hard to defend given the political priority of the Syria programme.

*The structure and allocation of tasks within the Middle East, Humanitarian, Conflict and Stabilisation Directorate is problematic*

6.24 The implementation of the current structure of MENAD and the SCU works against effectiveness and efficiency. Having two deputy Directors in the Middle East, Humanitarian, Conflict and Stabilisation Directorate, one covering (nominally) the humanitarian response to the crisis (as Head of the Syria Crisis Unit) and the other covering DFID's work in the same countries (under the heading of Head of MENAD) is not working efficiently. In practice, there is no longer a clear boundary between humanitarian and non-humanitarian activities in the region. However, the structure has resulted in an artificial split between humanitarian and non-humanitarian actions in the same location, with different reporting lines back to London (NLGI is, for instance, under the head of MENAD even though it aims to work with those affected by the crisis).

6.25 We heard a consistent message that this can be difficult for staff to work within. While staff knew who they reported to, the structure can be a source of tension in the field and in HQ where it is not clear if the two deputy directors have consistent or common aims. Operationally this also means that DFID is not presenting itself as 'one DFID' to partners; some partners interviewed were confused by who did what and why they now found themselves having two sets of DFID staff to meet individually, who never met with them jointly.

6.26 It should be noted that MENAD and the SCU's matrix structure adds considerably to the complexity of tasks. Our view is that a matrix structure is unavoidable given the need to work across the region and in particular territories. However, managing this structure is considerably more resource and time intensive than would be a comparatively sized single country DFID programme. Because activities take place over many countries, consultation is essential. It should be noted that each additional person or office to be consulted increases the number of communication links exponentially. This needs to be factored into the staffing and administrative resourcing model. The complexity is increased because SCU and MENAD work with organisations that have multiple points of engagement with DFID; at country and regional level and through UKMIS in NY and in Geneva.

*Communication is poor and needs to be prioritised*

6.27 While communication generally needs to be improved, that between London and the field requires particular attention. The basic infrastructure is inadequate; not all field staff are able to access stable or secure virtual conferencing facilities, so find it hard to participate. Communication is, for field staff at least, predominantly top down. Their remoteness and the culture in the SCU for the centre to dominate discussions means effective mutual exchange of information can be constrained. Staff in London are not (and admit they are not) aware of some key actions that field staff undertake, nor what they are achieving. This is common issue elsewhere in DFID, but appears to be enhanced in the Syria crisis by the dominance of many political and HMG focused concerns.

*Decision making could be improved*

6.28 At the same time, a culture appears to have grown in the SCU that many people have to be consulted; many feel they need to contribute their views to decisions. Often this does not proportionately add value and consumes too much time. DFID should seek to streamline decision-making, consulting appropriate staff meaningfully when necessary. This may mean redefining roles. One respondent was explicit; in their many years of engagement with DFID, the SCU had been the worst example of management they had seen. Many other (permanent and contracted) staff reflected a similar view; that there were significant deficits in the management of the SCU. They had three main criticisms; poor communication, an over reliance on paper and desk based analysis, both leading to poor decision-making. We agree that all three issues need to be addressed.

*Effectiveness has been affected by some ill-timed and reactive funding*

6.29 Lack of foresight and forward planning within DFID has hampered effectiveness and efficiency. One example of this was the various realignments and budget uplifts for winterisation in Syria. The most problematic of these was SCU's agreement to provide winterisation funds of £5 million in December 2013 to an NGO, following an appeal by its CEO. This was too late for effective planning. As a result, the NGO were unable to deliver on time.

*Other factors outside DFID's control constrain efficiency and effectiveness*

6.30 There are numerous examples of gaps in delivery and difficulties caused by the complexity of the crisis and conflict. While inhibiting delivery, these factors are inevitable and we saw consistent evidence of DFID staff seeking to achieve in spite of the constraints. It is not only the nature of the crisis that can constrain effectiveness; host governments can also impact on effective and timely delivery of assistance. In Jordan, several activities have been delayed as a consequence of the Government of Jordan not granting timely permission. In Lebanon, uncertainties of governance have also inhibited some aspects of delivery. We saw consistent evidence of DFID staff working to overcome obstacles such as these.

## Section 7. Conclusion

7.1 DFID's management of its response to the Syria crisis could, with hindsight, have been considerably better. In 2012 DFID did not have a pre-existing model of how to operate or resource a response to a challenge like the Syria crisis. As a result it made some poor initial decisions that have had an effect on the department's ability to respond. In spite of this, DFID's Grant allocation appears to work effectively and during 2014 DFID has moved the programme onto a more stable footing, with a longer-term focus and more multi-year funding. As part of this new phase, DFID is increasingly building resilience into its programming though, appropriately, relief operations still dominate. DFID has also improved how it seeks to define and monitor results. Beneficiary involvement in reporting is improving. DFID's choice to hold partners to account for specifically *DFID-attributable results* only works, however, if DFID subsequently monitors progress in a manner that gives some assurance of the quality of that reporting. To date it has had no sure mechanism to verify its partner's results.

7.2 Management challenges remain, however. DFID has been fragmented and the SCU has not sufficiently acted as a single unit. The current model, using a mix of contracted and permanent staff, as well as relying on staff with insufficient experience in DFID, needs improvement. DFID is not fully acting, or presenting itself, as 'one DFID', or as a single team. Administrative requirements have made delivery harder and inappropriately limit programme choices. The centre of gravity, in staffing and in operations, is too focused on London; DFID is not making decisions as close to the point of delivery as possible.

## Annex A. Terms of Reference



**Title:** DFID Syria Crisis Unit, Humanitarian Programme Process Evaluation ToR

### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 DFID seeks an evaluation team with HMG baseline clearance and extensive experience in the evaluation of humanitarian programmes in fragile and conflicted-affected states (FCAS), to undertake a process evaluation of DFID's Syria crisis humanitarian programme which is a significant component of the DFID Syria Humanitarian Strategy.
- 1.2 The core purpose of the process evaluation is to assess DFID's performance and identify areas for improvement. The evaluation will focus on the performance of DFID and look at the performance of partners in so far as it pertains to the performance of DFID. Therefore, this evaluation has a limited focus which is reflected in the budget and time available to complete the exercise.
- 1.3 The evaluation will be used to help shape future DFID Syria humanitarian programme management.
- 1.4 The evaluation will serve to both hold DFID to account and serve as an opportunity to learn for this and future humanitarian programming.
- 1.5 DFID are exploring the possibility of future evaluations of the humanitarian response being conducted in partnership with other donors. Whilst this evaluation may inform such a process, the remit of future evaluations is not the purview of this ToR.

### **2. Objectives**

The aim of this evaluation is to:

- 2.1 Assess the extent to which the Humanitarian Programme has been informed by: Saving lives, Preventing Suffering and Building Resilience: The UK Governments Humanitarian Policy 2011 and conforms to the good humanitarian donorship principles.
- 2.2 Assess the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the DFID 2012/13 Syria Humanitarian Strategies and the two business cases.
- 2.3 Assess the extent to which the grant portfolio a) adequately contributes to the delivery of the strategy, and b) the extent to which the grant portfolio responds to the complexity of the crisis.
- 2.4 Assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the grant allocation and management process (e.g. grant management and human resource management) with a focus on VfM and targeting and a consideration of multi-year funding.

- 2.5 Assess the ability of the programme to address cross-cutting issues set out in the business cases focusing on violence against women and resilience.
- 2.6 Identify lessons and evidence-based recommendations on how to improve this DFID response and future DFID responses.

### **3. Recipients/Audience**

- 3.1 The immediate recipient of this assignment will be DFID Syria Crisis Unit, but the findings may also be of interest to: DFID MENAD Department, DFID CHASE and the following British Embassies/Posts engaged in the Syria crisis: Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt. It may also be of interest to other donors active in the Syria humanitarian response, DFID partners and the public. DFID will be responsible for the communication of the final report to interested stakeholders.
- 3.2 Due to the sensitivities of the crisis, aspects of the evaluation will remain confidential for security / ethical reasons – but this will only be where safety may be compromised if information were to be in the public domain. Therefore, a restricted version of the report will be shared with the relevant stakeholders listed in 3.1. In accordance with our commitment to transparency, a non-restricted version will be published on the DFID website.

### **4. Scope and Methodology**

- 4.1 The evaluation will focus on the performance of DFID rather than the performance of their partners.
- 4.2 Evaluation providers should demonstrate how their proposed methods will:
  - Conform to OECD-DAC Criteria of Evaluation for Humanitarian Aid –
    - Relevance/appropriateness
    - Connectedness
    - Coherence
    - Coverage
    - Efficiency
    - Effectiveness
    - Impact (to the extent that it is relevant to the process focus of this evaluation)
  - Do No Harm and be conflict sensitive.
- 4.3 The performance of a selection of partners will be reviewed to the extent that it informs objectives 3 and 4 of this ToR.
- 4.4 It is anticipated that the methodology outlined in the approach will involve a UK based document review, interviews with London and field based staff and a selection of partners and other stakeholders. It is likely to include field visits to Lebanon and Jordan (the largest recipients of UK humanitarian aid for the Syria crisis outside of Syria).
- 4.5 The Syria Humanitarian Crisis is taking place in a complex political, geographical and humanitarian environment which presents a number of challenges to the evaluation of the humanitarian response including: the scale and the non- disclosure of certain

partners. The process of the evaluation reduces the impact of these challenges. The evaluation will respect the nondisclosure of certain DFID partners.

**4.6 Timing:** Co-ordination with the evaluations commissioned by other partners, and the DFID internal annual review of the programme, will be important, to ensure that the response is evaluated at the appropriate scale, with minimal burden on humanitarian workers and beneficiaries. The whole process from design to reporting is expected to take no longer than 3 months including short breaks in the contract to allow DFID to provide feedback. The exact timing will be agreed at the contract award stage but a start date in June is desirable with a final report deadline in September.

**4.7 Datasets:** The evaluator will primarily draw from DFID internal datasets that track funding allocations and results and a selection of partner reports. They may also consult public UN data sets on the level of need, funding and capacity to respond (primarily set out in the appeal documents listed in the annexes but also on UN FTS).

## 5. Deliverables

5.1 There are three proposed phases of the evaluation contract:

Phase	Step
1. Design	Submission of approach including a methodology and work plan
	DFID feedback
	Submission of final approach paper
2. Implementation	Desk review and UK based interviews
	Field based
3. Reporting	Draft report including restricted annex
	DFID feedback on draft report including restricted annex
	Final report including restricted annex

**5.2 Design:** The evaluation provider is responsible for designing the approach, working closely with the DFID Syria Humanitarian Programme evaluation steering committee to ensure that the framework meets DFID's needs and standards. The evaluation provider will include a set of questions to be answered that address the objectives through the lens of the OECD-DAC Principles of Evaluation for Humanitarian Aid. The approach paper will also outline the structure of the report.

**5.3 Implementation:** Implementation will take place in London, Jordan and Lebanon and include a literature review and series of interviews.

**5.4 Reporting:** The report will address the objectives. The main body of the report will be no longer than 30 pages with a restricted annex no longer than 20 pages. In addition there will be a 2-4 page executive summary. Clear instructions will be given by DFID as to what information should be restricted. DFID will retain the copyright for the reports produced as deliverables of this contract.

## **6. Skills and qualifications**

6.1 The evaluation will be undertaken by a small DFID baseline security cleared team, comprising the following:

- Strong team leader, with track record of team management and delivery of high quality evaluations.
- Evaluators with both qualitative and quantitative skills, experienced in evaluating response to complex humanitarian emergencies where sexual and gender based violence is a factor.
- Strong background in Humanitarian policy and practice, and experience of the political economy of fragile and conflict-affected states. Experience of working in complex and fragile Humanitarian contexts, with appropriate skills.
- Languages: Arabic desirable.
- The team should ideally be gender balanced and include a mix of international and national consultants.

## **7. Duty of Care**

7.1 The Evaluation provider is responsible for the safety and well-being of their personnel and third parties affected by their activities under this contract, including appropriate security arrangements. They will also be responsible for the provision of suitable security arrangements for their domestic and business property. All duty of care, transport, translation and logistical support, office space, and insurances will be the responsibility of the evaluation supplier.

7.2 DFID will share available information with the Supplier on security status and developments in-country where appropriate. DFID will provide the risk assessment matrix for identified intervention regions.

7.3 All evaluation supplier personnel will be offered a security briefing by the British Embassy/DFID on arrival in Jordan and Lebanon. All such personnel must register with their respective embassies to ensure that they are included in emergency procedures. A copy of the DFID visitor notes which the supplier may use to brief their personnel on arrival.

7.4 The evaluation supplier is responsible for ensuring appropriate safety and security briefings for all of their personnel working under this contract and ensuring that their Personnel register and receive briefing as outlined above. Travel advice is also available on the FCO website and the evaluation supplier must ensure they (and their Personnel) are up to date with the latest position.

7.5 This procurement will require the evaluation supplier to operate in some conflict-affected areas (please refer to the risk matrix). Travel to some zones within the region will be subject to travel clearance from the UK government in advance. The security situation is volatile and subject to change at short notice. The evaluation should be comfortable working in such an environment and should be capable of deploying to any areas required within the region in order to deliver the contract (subject to travel clearance being granted).

- 7.6 The evaluation provider is responsible for ensuring that appropriate arrangements, processes and procedures are in place for their personnel, taking into account the environment they will be working in and the level of risk involved in delivery of the Contract (such as working in dangerous, fragile and hostile environments etc.). The evaluation provider must ensure their personnel receive the required level of training and complete a UK government approved hostile environment training course (SAFE) or safety in the field training prior to deployment.
- 7.7 If evaluation provider tenderers are unwilling or unable to accept responsibility for security and duty of care as detailed above, bids will be viewed as non-compliant and excluded from further consideration.
- 7.8 Acceptance of responsibility must be supported with evidence of capability and DFID reserves the right to clarify any aspect of this evidence. In providing evidence tenderers should consider the following questions:
- a) Have you completed an initial assessment of potential risks that demonstrates your knowledge and understanding, and are you satisfied that you understand the risk management implications (not solely relying on information provided by DFID)?
  - b) Have you prepared an outline plan that you consider appropriate to manage these risks at this stage (or will you do so if you are awarded the contract) and are you confident/comfortable that you can implement this effectively?
  - c) Have you ensured or will you ensure that your staff are appropriately trained (including specialist training where required) before they are deployed and will you ensure that on-going training is provided where necessary?
  - d) Do you have an appropriate mechanism in place to monitor risk on a live / on-going basis (or will you put one in place if you are awarded the contract)?
  - e) Have you ensured or will you ensure that your staff are provided with and have access to suitable equipment and will you ensure that this is reviewed and provided on an on-going basis?
  - f) Do you have appropriate systems in place to manage an emergency / incident if one arises?

## **8. Logistics and Procedures**

- 8.1 The evaluation provider will not be required to deploy on a permanent basis. The evaluation work-plan will detail exactly how long the provider is required to be in-country. At the contract award stage a key DFID liaison point will be confirmed.
- 8.2 The evaluators are expected to spend time in areas of Jordan and Lebanon that are approved for travel by the FCO.
- 8.3 The evaluation providers are asked to provide details on the ethical issues they expect to face (including potential risks to interviewees) and mitigating measures that they will apply to this task. DFID's Ethics Guidelines are annexed to this ToR.
- 8.4 The Syria programme team, with regional offices, will be responsible for ensuring access to DFID staff and documents, and giving guidance on preliminary contacts within agencies. However, DFID staff will not be able to make arrangements, supply visas or transport or provide logistical support.



## **9. Proposed Governance, reporting and contracting arrangements**

### *Evaluation Steering Committee (ESC)*

- 9.1 The evaluation provider will be accountable to the Evaluation Steering Committee (ESC). The ESC is made up of UK based and field based members of the Syria Humanitarian Programme. The Steering Committee will provide advice and guidance and will ensure the quality of the evaluation, and every effort will be made to manage the evaluation in accordance with the consensus based decisions of the Steering Committee. The Chair of the Steering committee will have the final say.
- 9.2 The terms of reference for the ESG will be shared before the evaluation provider signs the contract with DFID.

### *Contracting*

- 9.3 The initial contract will have a break clause between the design phase and implementation phase, and between the draft report and final report steps of the reporting phase. This break will allow DFID to provide feedback.
- 9.4 A Management Response will be prepared and signed-off by DFID senior management.
- 9.5 Quality Assurance: External quality assurance of the ToR and Final Draft Report will be commissioned. The team will be able to access the templates used for QA, to guide the presentation and use of evidence.

### *Budgets and payments*

- 9.6 The maximum budget for the evaluation is £100,000 including all expenses and VAT.
- 9.7 An initial payment of up to £20,000 will be made following the approval of the approach paper and upon receipt of an invoice. The final payment will be made once the final report has been approved by the external quality assurance team commissioned by DFID.

## **10. Ethical Standards**

- 10.1 The evaluation team will be required to provide assurances that the proposed evaluation will comply with DFID's Ethical Principles and Standards (attached).
- 10.2 The sensitivity of the situation requires approaches that go beyond usual research ethics of other areas of social research (e.g., confidentiality, problems of disclosure, and the need to ensure adequate and informed consent). Key points to be considered include:
- The safety of respondents and the evaluation team is paramount and monitored closely.
  - Information gathering and documentation must be done in a manner that presents the least risk to respondents and the evaluation team, is

methodologically sound, and builds on current experience and good practice.

- Protecting the confidentiality of individuals is essential to ensuring the safety of respondents and data quality.
- Anyone providing evidence about violence must give informed consent before participating in the evaluation.

## 11. Background

### *DFID Syria Humanitarian Programme*

- 11.1 DFID's Humanitarian response to the Syria crisis started in February 2012 and is now providing aid to people affected by the conflict in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt. The UK is a leading donor to the humanitarian response and is allocating funding to partners at pace so the data on our programme is regularly updated. Our logframe (see annexes), annual review of the programme and latest DFID Syria Humanitarian Programme Summary, are essential reading and provide information on the budget, partners, sectoral focus and performance. The intervention logic is articulated in two business cases and the Syria strategy. The business cases were written as a response to rapid onset humanitarian emergency and include a concise theory of change. For security reasons these documents are restricted and will only be available to the selected evaluation provider. However, for the purpose of the prospective evaluation provider formulating their expression of interest in these terms of reference, the programme summary and annex documents provide sufficient background.
- 11.2 We expect the programme to increase further in response to escalating needs. It is essential that any DFID support is well coordinated with other actors, is targeted on priority areas based on assessed humanitarian need and is effectively monitored to maximize its impact. DFID has deployed 6 Humanitarian Advisers to the region to monitor and assess the humanitarian situation.
- 11.3 The response is in three strands, each with specific constraints to overcome:
- Supporting the Damascus-based operations of UN agencies, the Red Cross Movement and INGOs that have been sanctioned / approved to operate by the Government of Syria
  - Supporting operations into contested areas of Syria
  - Supporting the response to refugee needs in neighbouring countries.
- 11.4 The key anticipated outcome is to alleviate critical humanitarian needs amongst conflict-affected populations in Syria and the region. Assessing need is complex, but as the situation is evolving and changing constantly, needs are changing swiftly, and escalating beyond the Humanitarian system's current capacity to respond. DFID's understanding of the needs is based on the UN appeals, Red Cross appeals, undisclosed NGO partner assessment of Northern Syria and in depth analysis by field based and London based humanitarian advisors. For an understanding of the context Evaluation providers are advised to read the two UN appeal documents listed in the annexes (SHARP 2013 and RRP 2013).
- 11.5 Working closely across HMG in London and the region is essential to delivering our DFID and shared HMG objectives on Syria. DFID has a very close working relationship with other Government departments, particularly FCO and MoD in London, the British Embassies in Amman, Beirut and Ankara and the Syria British Office in Beirut. The work of

the team is fast paced and requires both proactive engagement and rapid response to events on the ground and Whitehall and multilateral coordination processes.

### *DFID's Humanitarian Strategy for Syria*

11.6 DFID's Humanitarian Strategy for Syria has the following core objectives:

- Supporting an effective international response to the crisis
- Increasing our response to the needs of people inside Syria
- Strengthen our support in countries hosting Syrian refugees

### *Policy Framework – HMG Humanitarian Policy (2011)*

11.7 Saving Lives, Preventing Suffering and Building Resilience: The UK Government's Humanitarian Policy was published in 2011, following the Humanitarian Emergency Response Review, and the initial UK Government Response.

11.8 The complex nature of the ongoing political, conflict and humanitarian situation in Syria is recognised as a particularly challenging environment for delivery of humanitarian commitments.

11.9 Saving Lives set out UK policy both in rapid, onset emergencies, and outlined how the UK would deal with complex, chronic humanitarian situations. It established seven goals for improving the effectiveness of UK humanitarian support, as below:

- Strengthen anticipation and early action in response to disasters and conflict
- Build the resilience of individuals, communities and countries to withstand shocks and recover from them
- Strengthen international leadership and partnerships
- Protect civilians and humanitarian space
- Support improvements in accountability, impact and professionalism of humanitarian action
- Invest in research and fund innovations, and
- Reinforce the British government's own capacity to respond to humanitarian crises.

11.10 More significantly, within the context of a highly complex humanitarian emergency, the government's Humanitarian Policy set out the following key principles, which are aligned with best practice internationally:

- Provide aid according to need and need alone, in line with the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence.
- Follow Good Humanitarian Donorship principles and best practice, and encourage others to do likewise.
- Work multilaterally and with other partners to expand the donor base for humanitarian action and greater burden sharing.

- Strengthen our commitments to be transparent and accountable to beneficiaries, and encourage our partners to do likewise.

## **12. Annexes – Essential Reading**

Essential reading in response to the tender

- 12.1 [Saving lives, Preventing Suffering and Building Resilience: The UK Governments Humanitarian Policy 2011](#)
- 12.2 [Annual Review 2012/13](#)
- 12.3 [DFID Ethics Principles for Research and Evaluation](#)
- 12.4 [SHARP 2013](#)
- 12.5 [RRP 2013](#)
- 12.6 List of restricted documents

Note: The following documents are restricted to can only be shared with the winning tenderer:

Business cases 1&2

DFID Syria Humanitarian Strategies 2012 and 2013

Risk Matrix assessment matrix for Lebanon and Jordan

## Annex B. Documents Cited in the Main Report

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WFP IRS of EMOP 200339 and EMOP 20043

## Annex C. List of interviewees

Restricted annex.

## Annex D. Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles

- Strive to ensure that funding of humanitarian action in new crises does not adversely affect the meeting of needs in ongoing crises.
- Recognising the necessity of dynamic and flexible response to changing needs in humanitarian crises, strive to ensure predictability and flexibility in funding to United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and to other key humanitarian organisations
- While stressing the importance of transparent and strategic priority-setting and financial planning by implementing organisations, explore the possibility of reducing, or enhancing the flexibility of, earmarking, and of introducing longer-term funding arrangements.
- Contribute responsibly, and on the basis of burden-sharing, to United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeals and to International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement appeals, and actively support the formulation of Common Humanitarian Action Plans (CHAP) as the primary instrument for strategic planning, prioritisation and co-ordination in complex emergencies.
- Request that implementing humanitarian organisations fully adhere to good practice and are committed to promoting accountability, efficiency and effectiveness in implementing humanitarian action.
- Promote the use of Inter-Agency Standing Committee guidelines and principles on humanitarian activities, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the 1994 Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief.
- Maintain readiness to offer support to the implementation of humanitarian action, including the facilitation of safe humanitarian access.
- Support mechanisms for contingency planning by humanitarian organisations, including, as appropriate, allocation of funding, to strengthen capacities for response.
- Affirm the primary position of civilian organisations in implementing humanitarian action, particularly in areas affected by armed conflict. In situations where military capacity and assets are used to support the implementation of humanitarian action, ensure that such use is in conformity with international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles, and recognises the leading role of humanitarian organisations.
- Support the implementation of the 1994 Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief and the 2003 Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies.
- Support learning and accountability initiatives for the effective and efficient implementation of humanitarian action.
- Encourage regular evaluations of international responses to humanitarian crises, including assessments of donor performance.
- Ensure a high degree of accuracy, timeliness, and transparency in donor reporting on official humanitarian assistance spending, and encourage the development of standardised formats for such reporting.