DEC Syria Crisis Appeal 2013

Response Review: Final Report

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Preface

This report contains the findings of a review commissioned by the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) of the response to the Syria crisis by DEC member agencies. This is not an evaluation – though it has been informed partly by asking some basic evaluation questions about timeliness, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and connectedness. It does not attempt to assess impact, nor is it an enquiry into individual agency performance. It does, however, consider the overall question of whether the DEC appeal money is being well spent, and in that sense it has an accountability aspect. The main emphasis throughout is on learning, looking at the challenges faced by DEC agencies in their responses to the crisis, how they have addressed those challenges and what they have learned in the process.

There were strict limitations to the review process. It involved spending around ten days visiting the two largest refugee-hosting countries (Lebanon and Jordan) at a point around five months from the date of the DEC appeal. No travel within Syria itself was possible, for security reasons. The findings are therefore to some extent impressionistic, especially with regard to work inside Syria, and are not a substitute for in-depth evaluation. Nevertheless some clear patterns and lessons emerge. The Review was looking in particular for examples of good, reflective practice; organisational strategies that adapted to the changing context; sound need analysis and programme choices; effective implementation and monitoring; and consistent efforts to engage with and get feedback from beneficiaries. The report does not contain detailed recommendations, although some broad recommendations are contained in the conclusions.

Through their international 'families', the DEC member agencies represent a large proportion of the international relief delivery system; and the Review is therefore to some extent a review of the wider International NGO response to the crisis. Partly for that reason, it does not draw too strong a distinction between programmes funded with DEC monies and those funded from other sources. Inevitably the result is a predominantly INGO perspective, although it is located in the context of a wider UN-led international response. UN officials were consulted in the course of the Review, but governments and donors were not.

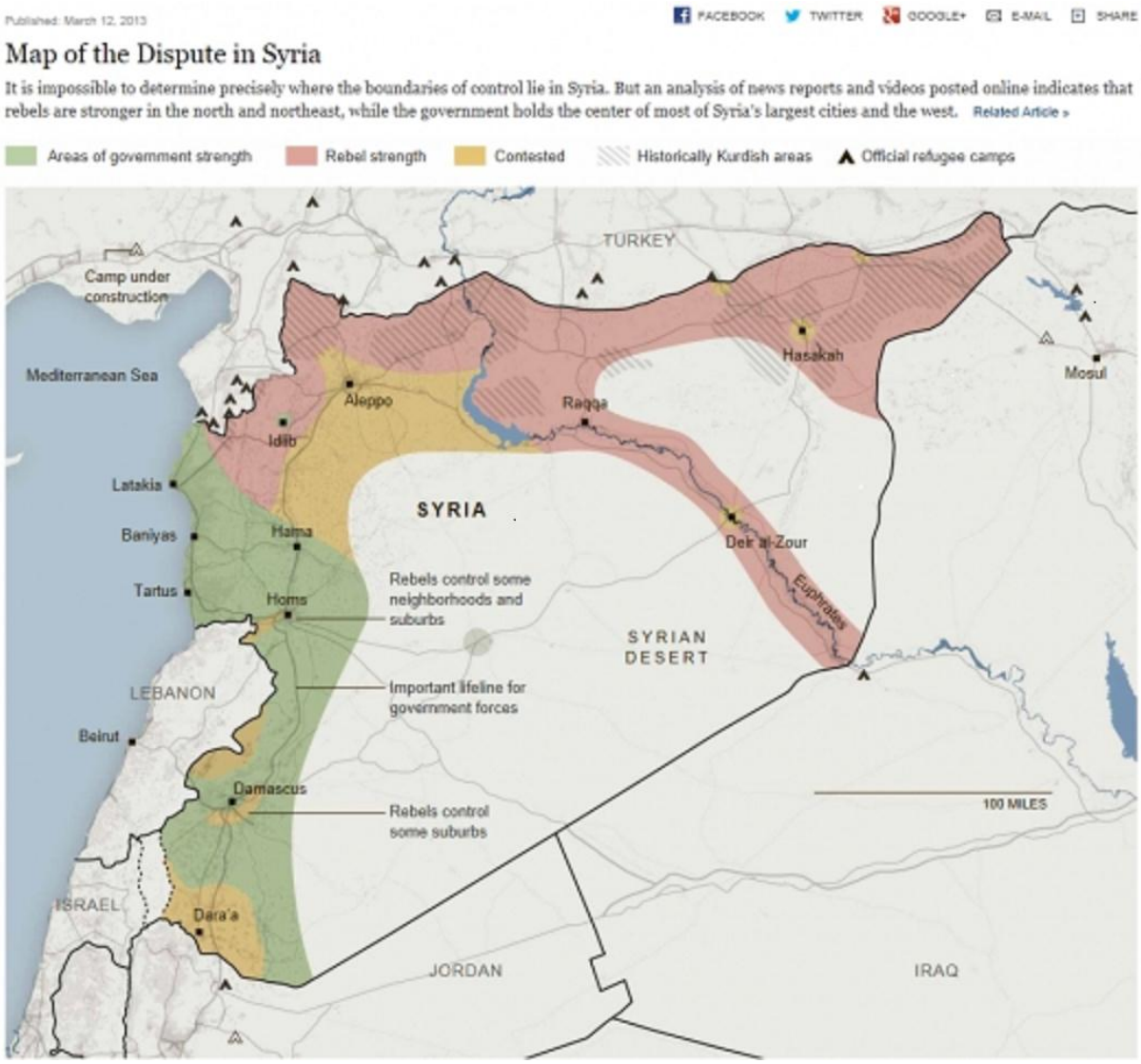
The author would like to thank all those who took the time to be interviewed, take part in roundtable discussions or act as guides to their field programmes. In particular he would like to thank the hosting agencies in Jordan (ActionAid) and Lebanon (Save the Children), as well as Islamic Relief for helping establish a conversation with agencies working from Turkey. Heartfelt thanks also go to Annie Devonport of the DEC Secretariat and Nabila Hameed from the DEC evaluation working group, who accompanied the consultant on the country visits, helped organise the schedule and provided much valuable advice.

The content and findings of the report remain the sole responsibility of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the DEC Secretariat or member agencies.

List of Abbreviations

ACAPS	Assessment Capacities Project
CBO	Community-based organisation
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DEC	Disasters Emergency Committee
ERF	Emergency Response Fund
EU	European Union
FSA	Free Syrian Army
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
INGO	International non-government organisation
IOCC	International Orthodox Christian Charities
JD	Jordanian Dinars
JHCO	Jordan Hashemite Charity Organisation
J-RANS	Joint Rapid Assessments of Northern Syria
MOPIC	Jordanian Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation
NFIs	Non-food items
RAIS	Refugee Assistance Information System
RRP	Regional response plan (for UN and partners)
SARC	Syrian Arab Red Crescent
SHARP	Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme

Regional map showing conflict areas in Syria



Source: New York Times, 12 March 2013

Executive Summary

Background and overview

1. This report contains the findings of a Response Review commissioned by the UK Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) Secretariat to consider the response to date by DEC member agencies to the Syria Crisis. The Review was undertaken in August 2013 – around four and a half months after the DEC appeal – and involved visits to the two main refugee-hosting countries, Lebanon and Jordan, as well as interviews with those agencies working inside Syria. The main purpose of the Review was a learning one, with a focus on the response to the situation of Syrian refugees and displaced people living outside camps, scattered among host communities in a variety of living conditions.

2. Overall, the Review found that DEC agencies were performing essential roles in all three countries, and appeared in most cases to be achieving a high degree of programme quality and effectiveness. It found a good deal of innovative and effective work, high levels of collaboration and a strong intention to adapt programme approaches to the context and to learn from experience; particularly in work with urban displaced and host communities in Lebanon and Jordan. Inside Syria itself, many of the DEC agencies have had to pursue untested and relatively high-risk forms of engagement and partnership in order to provide urgent assistance to grossly under-served and vulnerable war-affected communities. Although hampered by security and bureaucratic factors, DEC members have made substantial efforts to reach those who most need assistance – and appear to taking reasonable steps to provide such assistance impartially and accountably.

Despite the largely positive conclusions of the Review about the work of DEC members, significant concerns were identified about the length of time taken to scale up programmes; related lack of preparedness and delivery capacity; limited programme coverage in Syria; and a lack of concerted policy analysis and advocacy, particularly on protection issues. Although the external constraints are very real – including insecurity, bureaucratic hurdles, limited funding and partner capacity – the Review concludes that more could have been done by DEC members to tackle some of these factors and lay the foundations for a timely, scaled-up response.

Strategy, planning and roles

3. When the DEC appeal was launched on 21 March 2013, few agencies were ready at that point to scale up their responses – and many were still in the process of doing so at the time of the Review in August. Apart from the external constraints noted above, this slowness can be attributed to organisational inertia, cumbersome decision-making and an element of strategic ‘blindness’, together with a lack of emergency delivery capacity among DEC agencies and their partners. This was compounded by uncertainty about the course of the conflict in Syria, and also uncertainty about the availability of sustained funding, without which many agencies appeared (understandably) reluctant to commit to a scaled-up presence in the region.

4. In spite of these initial difficulties, the Review found that DEC agencies are now playing a vital and effective role in Jordan and Lebanon, complementing the work of the main UN operational agencies (UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF), both as implementing partners and as gap-fillers, particularly for the many refugees who remain unregistered and not officially

entitled to assistance. Besides providing essential income support in the form of cash and voucher programmes, particularly to support rent payment and food purchase, DEC members have supported a range of other services including WASH, shelter, health and education. Some gaps were still evident, notably in WASH provision for informal tented settlements and collective shelters in Lebanon.

Most DEC members are combining their material assistance with an encouraging emphasis on community mobilisation – and are increasingly taking account of the needs of host communities. Given the protracted nature of the refugee crisis, their response is likely to require a higher degree of *geographic focus* and *sectoral specialisation* in Phase 2, a more *targeted* approach to relief and a greater focus on medium-term '*bridging'* programmes to tackle the looming crisis of livelihoods, living space and basic services (including education). Ultimately this can only be achieved as part of a wider developmental effort.

5. Inside Syria itself, agencies are necessarily being opportunistic in their approaches as the conflict ebbs and flows, working across front lines and across borders in some cases, mostly supporting local partners. The partnerships formed by the faith-based agencies (Islamic and Christian) appear to have a significant advantage in this respect, being able to tap into pre-existing local networks to identify and respond to needs as they arise. The British Red Cross is supporting the work of the Syria Arab Red Crescent which is unique in the scale and reach of its operations. Oxfam is unusual in having a formal collaborative arrangement with the Syrian Ministry of Water Resources to conduct urgent water system rehabilitation, potentially benefiting many more people than might be achieved by other means. Given the limits of coverage through existing partnerships in Syria, new forms of partnership and joint venture (including with government ministries) should urgently be considered by DEC members in Phase 2 of the response.

Needs assessment and programme approaches

6. Outside the refugee camps in Jordan, the problem of identifying those most in need of assistance in the host countries is one of visibility: the families concerned are widely dispersed and they are mostly living in privately rented buildings in urban areas rather than in distinct settlements. CARE, with its previous experience of assisting Iraqi refugees in Jordan, has developed an impressive system of needs identification based on a combination of reception centres and outreach, together with a set of vulnerability criteria which has now been widely adopted (or adapted) by other agencies. Most agencies stress their role in helping inform refugees of their entitlements and options for support.

7. The choice of programmes by DEC members in Jordan and Lebanon has been informed by an analysis of vulnerabilities and gaps, particularly those left by the wider system of support coordinated by UNHCR. Most have identified support for rent payments as a key intervention, supported through conditional cash transfers; and more generally, the use of cash transfers (mostly unconditional) and physical or electronic vouchers are a feature of the response to those living outside formal camps. Much thought has gone into the design of these programmes, with close collaboration between UN agencies, INGOs and commercial actors (banks, retailers). This is the area of programming where innovation and learning is most apparent.

8. More traditional forms of aid delivery, including food distribution, are being used inside Syria itself. Here the use of cash transfers is controversial (mainly on accountability grounds) and certainly more complicated, though it is being considered by some agencies given the availability of functioning markets. The IOCC (partner of Christian Aid) is among those providing cash for work. There is a push to standardise interventions and avoid duplication in such areas as non-food items and 'winterisation' kits. But the real issue is one of coverage: none of those consulted felt that the scale of programming by local and international actors combined was yet close to meeting the needs of those affected.

Implementation, monitoring and accountability

9. Some of the biggest external constraints to programme implementation, apart from insecurity in Syria itself, have come from delays in securing registration, visas and programme approval. 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. Apart from these factors, the biggest reported constraint has been lack of delivery capacity, including recruitment and deployment of suitable staff by DEC members themselves and the limited capacity and experience of partners in emergency response. This has meant that in many cases, training staff and partners has been a necessary precursor to scaling up, resulting in substantial delays in implementation.

10. The monitoring of programmes is done by a variety of means. In Lebanon and Jordan, follow-up visits to beneficiaries' houses form an important part of the monitoring system, together with standard reporting formats for staff and partners. In Syria itself, agencies are heavily reliant on partner reports together with sporadic staff visits. Novel ways have been found of ensuring that funds committed are being spent as intended, including the use of photographs of project outputs and communication via social media to demonstrate progress. Nevertheless, many agencies are not able to meet their normal standards of monitoring and reporting in Syria, and some have had to re-define their bottom line requirements in this regard, in discussion with their donors. The DEC will need to consider whether its own requirements are met, making due allowance for the sensitivity of information as well as the difficulties of obtaining it.

11. On accountability to beneficiaries, DEC members appeared to be performing relatively well in Lebanon and Jordan, in both cases putting great emphasis on outreach and information dissemination. With regard to community mobilisation, the Review found a number of impressive examples (e.g. ActionAid in Lebanon) while noting that mobilisation could have come earlier in some instances. As for feedback, most of the agencies consulted and programmes visited had established mechanisms that included complaints and feedback boxes and telephone hotlines. Data on the use of these mechanisms were not available.

Perhaps inevitably, inside Syria itself agencies have struggled to ensure that their usual standards of accountability to beneficiaries are maintained. Beneficiary lists and entitlements cannot be published and feedback mechanisms are relatively weak. Yet based on what some of the faith-based agencies have achieved, there is scope for improvement here.

Coordination and partnership

12. The overall quality of inter-agency coordination (led by UNHCR in Jordan and Lebanon) was found to be reasonably good, although its highly centralised nature resulted in less effective field-level coordination than seen in some crisis contexts. DEC members participate actively in the sectoral Working Groups, co-chairing them in some cases; though the performance of these groups is said to be variable, largely dependent on those who lead and actively participate in them. Coordination with and through UNHCR in Lebanon and Syria has not always worked smoothly, but is reported to be improving over time. Between DEC members themselves, and INGOs generally, the Review found an impressive degree of collaboration, notably in the form of cross-referral of cases, but also in terms of harmonisation and standardisation of approaches. Coordination over work inside Syria itself was harder to gauge. To the extent that it happens from Lebanon and Turkey, it appears to be largely informal, ad hoc and confined to programme issues rather than policy or strategy.

13. The use of partnerships was widespread and accounts for the majority of programme delivery by DEC members both inside and outside Syria. Many of the partnerships are new and relatively untested, causing some concerns about accountability as well as about capacity to deliver in an emergency context. However, the majority of the partnerships considered during the Review appeared to be working well – including operational partnerships between DEC members themselves. In the case of Syria, the faith-based organisations and the Red Cross had the advantage of working through experienced and tested partners, while some of the secular organisations lacked established partners and were therefore rather more exposed. The use of pilot projects in Syria and elsewhere, particularly by Save the Children, was noted as a sensible approach to testing programmes and partnerships before scaling up.

Looking to the future

14. In all three countries the situation is likely to deteriorate before it improves, particularly if the conflict continues to displace more people. Already around one third of Syrians have been forced from their homes. Most of these remain displaced inside the country with little security and limited access to assistance. Recent events involving the use of chemical weapons in Syria have served to highlight what should already have been obvious: that this is a humanitarian crisis as much or more about security and protection as it is about assistance. While relief assistance is essential, it has to be combined with effective measures that allow families to find safety, including the option of seeking asylum. It is too late for the more than 100,000 already thought to have been killed in Syria, but the lives of many more are at risk.

Only a minority of those at risk can flee Syria or may want to – the most critical issues of protection and vulnerability therefore remain inside Syria itself. But unless conditions in neighbouring countries are such as to allow those fleeing conflict to find a viable place of refuge, many of those currently at risk will have their best chance of safety closed to them. This will require a major effort of international solidarity and donor support to the hosting countries, the burden on which is immense and unsustainable. Concerted advocacy by DEC members, based on their field-level experience, has been lacking to date but could make a significant contribution to making this happen. Meanwhile, ensuring access to essential goods and services as winter approaches is the immediate priority.

Syrian refugees in an informal tented settlement on wasteland in Amman, Jordan

1. Context and background to the Review

1.1 The history of the current crisis in Syria dates back to 2011 and a series of popular demonstrations against the government, widely interpreted as part of the so-called Arab Spring. The violence that followed has since developed into full-blown civil war, resulting in widespread death, destruction and human displacement. To date, it is estimated that over 100,000 people have been killed in the conflict, over 4 million people have been internally displaced, and over 2 million more have become refugees in surrounding countries. Some 6.8 million people inside Syria itself are said to be in urgent need of assistance.[1] The situation remains extremely volatile and is currently high on the international political agenda, the recent use of chemical weapons having triggered a renewed debate about the appropriate international response to the crisis. Yet there seems to be no prospect of an end to the conflict in the near future, either through military victory or through a peace settlement.[2] On the contrary, the immediate prospect is one of further violence and displacement.

The opposition forces comprise disparate elements, mostly Sunni Arabs but also Kurdish and other groups, all opposed to the Ba-athist (Alawite Shia) government of Bashar al-Assad. The more moderate and secular elements are grouped under the Free Syrian Army, while more radical Islamic groups like Jabhat al-Nusra (affiliated to Al Qaeda) are proscribed as terrorist organisations by the US and other governments as well as by the UN Security Council – and now regularly clash with the FSA. The fear of indirectly supporting such radical elements is one of the factors that has so far inhibited some Western governments from providing armed support to the opposition.[3] Meanwhile, the political and sectarian dimensions of the conflict shape the attitudes of ordinary men and women and also of civil society organisations, a complicating factor in the search for impartial humanitarian partners. This and other risk factors put a burden on agency due diligence in their choice of partners.

1.2 The **humanitarian aspects of the crisis** have attracted increasing international attention since the beginning of 2013, since when the numbers of refugees fleeing to neighbouring countries from Syria has increased dramatically. Many more have been displaced within Syria itself, and there are grounds for thinking that the poorest Syrians may simply not have the means to leave the country even if they wished to do so.[4] Those who remain in Syria are certainly the most vulnerable, the least protected and the least provided with assistance.

The humanitarian agenda therefore consists of two main parts: how to protect and assist civilians inside Syria itself, and how to ensure protection and assistance for those who have escaped the country or may seek to do so in the future. To this must now be added the growing need for assistance and basic services to be provided to the host communities in neighbouring countries. Increasing tensions are reported between host communities and refugees, the latter being entitled (once registered) to emergency assistance from

[1] See http://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/revised-syria-humanitarian-assistance-response-plan-sharp-january

[2] A date for the so-called 'Geneva II' peace conference has yet to be agreed at the time of writing, with diplomatic efforts concentrated on the decommissioning of the Government's stocks of chemical weapons.

[3] The sanctions regime imposed by the EU includes an arms embargo and financial sanctions.

[4] Many have family members in the army or militias and are reportedly staying in Syria to remain near them.

international agencies and access to basic state services.[5] In practice, those services – already overstretched – are struggling to cope with the growing demand. As one respondent said of Irbid Governorate in Jordan 'some towns have doubled in size'. In Lebanon, the pressure is even greater: refugees and returnees from Syria now represent around one fifth of the country's entire population. Inside Syria itself, where basic services and the economy as a whole have been massively disrupted, the funding requirements shown in the Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP) have doubled or tripled in key sectors between December 2012 and June 2013.[6]

1.3 Within the overall regional picture, context-specific factors have a major bearing on the humanitarian situation in each country. In **Jordan**, the border with Syria has effectively been closed since May 2013, putting at least a temporary stop to major refugee flows that occurred since January and closing off a vital escape option from southern Syria. This affects the humanitarian agencies' planning figures in Jordan. As one UNHCR official put it 'based on earlier flows, we were projecting 1 million refugees by the end of 2013; we currently [August] have around 540,000 registered or awaiting registration'. Of these, around 120,000 live in Zaatari camp, while the majority of the rest live outside camps – most having found shelter among host communities in urban rented accommodation. A new camp is being constructed in a remote location at Azraq, though as yet it is unclear to what extent this is intended to accommodate a new influx of refugees or a relocation of existing refugees.

In **Lebanon**, the situation is more fluid. The refugee influx together with the cross-border involvement of Hezbollah in the conflict in Syria has inflamed sectarian tensions in Lebanon, leading to violent incidents (including car bombs) in Tripoli, Beirut and elsewhere. The border with Syria remains open, although checks have increased.[7] Around 700,000 are thought to have fled into the country from Syria, including many migrant Lebanese workers forced to return home, as well as thousands of Palestinian refugees displaced from Syria. The refugees are living in extremely widely dispersed locations right across country, in a variety of living conditions. The Lebanese government has prohibited the formation of camps, though many are living in informal tented settlements or in collective centres. As in Jordan, the majority are living in rented accommodation of various kinds, including garages and unfinished buildings. Again as in Jordan, many are struggling to pay rent – although unlike those in Jordan, refugees in Lebanon are officially permitted to work. Wages are being forced down and the perception of many Lebanese is that the Syrian refugees are taking their jobs. Partly as a result, tensions are running high in many areas.

While many refugees in Lebanon and Jordan express the hope and desire to return home in the near future, there seems little prospect of this for the majority. In **Syria** itself, particularly in the contested areas from which many have fled or are trapped, the situation remains

[5] In the two refugee-hosting countries under consideration here (Lebanon and Jordan) the status of the refugees is an non-formal one ('asylum seekers') rather than full refugee status based on individual status determination or temporary protected status based on *prima facie* recognition of refugee claims. Neither Jordan nor Lebanon is party to the 1951 UN Convention on the Status of Refugees.

[6] The SHARP is a joint plan of action agreed between the Syrian Government, UN system and other humanitarian actors including INGOs and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. It was drawn up in December 2012 and revised in June 2013.

[7] This border has always been permeable and seasonal migration is common, e.g. of Syrian labourers to work in Bekaa valley. Many of these people are now trapped in Lebanon.

highly volatile. This is due both to the conduct of hostilities between government and rebels (with the support of their respective external backers), and to the high levels of criminal activity that have erupted in the wake of the conflict. Given low levels of access and coverage by humanitarian agencies, the day-to-day humanitarian picture remains uncertain. Most agencies are able to report (if at all) only on their own immediate project areas; and it is hard to get a joined up picture of the humanitarian situation. This Review was dependent on interviews and roundtable discussions with staff of international agencies working with partners inside Syria.

1.4 The **international humanitarian response** to date (September 2013) has been slow. While the recent spike in international political interest has triggered an increase in aid pledges, figures compiled by the UN show that committed funding for the current regional response plan (RRP5) is currently running at only 43%.[8] An Emergency Response Fund for Syria has also been established and is open to local and international NGOs amongst others.[9] UNHCR has taken the lead role coordinating international humanitarian efforts at country level in refugee hosting countries. It coordinates the work of Sector Working Groups outside Syria; while OCHA coordinates Clusters within Syria itself. While cross-region coordination has been weak to date, the appointment of a new regional Humanitarian Coordinator should help to remedy this.

1.5 The **DEC appeal** was launched on 21 March 2013, after some weeks of discussion between member agencies and the broadcasters. To date it has raised GBP 20 million (USD equivalent 32 million), which compares quite favourably with other conflict-related DEC appeals. DEC members had planned to spend an unprecedented 92% of their first allocation within 6 months, but re-budgeting has reduced this to 83% with the balance being held over for Phase 2.

1.6 The **DEC Response Review** took place during August 2013. Conducted by an independent consultant, with support from the DEC Secretariat, it involved travel to Jordan and Lebanon and interviews or roundtable discussions with all DEC members active in those countries together with some of their partners. Some field visits were also undertaken to visit projects being implemented by DEC member agencies and partners, including visits to Zaatari camp, and project sites in Mafraq, Balqa and Amman in Jordan; and to Bekaa valley together with Tripoli and surrounding areas in Lebanon. These included some brief, informal discussion with project beneficiaries and community groups. Roundtable discussions were held with DEC members in each country to get feedback on the initial findings; including a roundtable with agencies running programmes in Syria out of Beirut, and a teleconference with those agencies doing the same from Turkey. Finally, a feedback workshop was held in London at which the provisional findings of the Review were discussed.

[8] See http://www.unocha.org/crisis/syria, accessed 17th September 2013 (FTS figures). According to the same source, funding for the response inside Syria (through the SHARP) was running at 47%. Figures from the same source as at 14 October 2013 were 51% funded (RRP) and 56% funded (SHARP).

[9] As at 1st June 2013, USD 28.7 million had been allocated from a pot of $47.3m, leaving a balance of $18.5m available for the period June-December 2013. The ERF funds responses throughout the region, and the grant ceiling has now been increased to $500,000. The priorities are life-saving work and filling critical funding gaps. So for example, OCHA reports 'In response to urgent life-saving needs in Hama and emerging disruption of the Damascus urban and rural water supply systems, the Emergency Response Fund (ERF) has approved an Oxfam project to reach 382,375 people in urgent need of clean and safe water.' Syria Humanitarian Bulletin Issue 33.

2. Agency strategies and planning

2.1 Context and overview

While most agencies date the beginnings of the humanitarian crisis to 2012, few scaled up their activities before early 2013 when the major exodus of Syrian refugees to neighbouring countries began. As so often, it took the mass external displacement of people to trigger an international humanitarian response. Given the many obstacles to working inside Syria this is perhaps understandable, and it partly reflects the availability of funding. What is less understandable is how little prepared most agencies were to respond to mass refugee flows. Thus when the DEC appeal was launched on 21 March 2013, few agencies were ready at that point to scale up their responses – and many were still in the process of doing so at the time of the Review in August. More generally, it took time for organisations to wake up to the scale of the crisis and to re-think their strategies accordingly.

2.2 Agency decision making and strategy formulation

The issue of agency decision-making processes, and how these shaped the timing and form of responses to the crisis, emerged most clearly in discussion of the draft findings of the Response Review with agency representatives in London.[10] Putting detail on this would require work beyond the scope of this Review, but it seems that for the majority of DEC agencies, organisational awareness of the emerging scale of the crisis took several months to translate into organisational re-prioritisation. As one member representative put it 'We knew from August 2012 that the situation would deteriorate and we could have prepared. There was an organisational reluctance to commit to a longer-term, scaled-up presence in the region.' Many had only a small developmental presence in the region, and existing priorities and programme assumptions appeared to dictate organisational thinking. To use the jargon, for many agencies this was neither 'in area' nor 'out of area', but somewhere in between. Agency thinking appeared to get trapped in this middle ground.

There are parallels here with agency responses to slow-onset crises more generally, such as the recurrent food crises in the Horn of Africa and Sahel regions. Systems and capacities seem to be largely geared around rapid-onset responses where the trigger is clear, forcing the organisation to make a decision. The lack of an obvious external trigger in the Syria case, at least before the mass outflows of refugees in early 2013, meant that agencies failed to act decisively. Similarly, agency surge capacity seems largely designed for cases where local capacities are clearly overwhelmed; but this may take months to emerge in a slow-onset crisis, resulting in major delays in building up the necessary response capacity.

A related factor in decision making in this case, as so often, appeared to be the unpredictability of funding to support a scaled-up presence. Particularly for the smaller agencies, this is a real conundrum: building up a significant presence costs a great deal of money, particularly in a region where costs are so high. Without the assurance of continued programme funding to justify such a presence, scaling up poses a significant institutional risk.[11]

[10] Roundtable meeting at DEC offices, London 6th September 2013

[11] Feedback at the London roundtable, 6th September 2013

Some of the larger agencies sent assessment missions to the region in late 2012, although this did not result in immediate strategic re-prioritisation. However, as a World Vision representative in Jordan pointed out, 'In November/December 2012 there were 200 - 300 refugees a day coming across. In January this went up to 2000 a day'. This near ten-fold increase in rate of flow of refugees in a month was not predicted and was arguably not predictable – although increased refugee flows certainly were. Yet even after it became apparent that these increased flows were going to continue through 2013, it took time for agencies to grasp the scale of the crisis and of the response that they would be required to make. Meanwhile, the scale of the humanitarian crisis inside Syria itself had already been apparent for some time, but concerns about security, access and accountability as well as delivery capacity and bureaucratic difficulties (registration, visas) presented major obstacles to scaled-up response. Many agencies are still in the process of trying to overcome those obstacles – see following sections. Agency approaches to working inside Syria have been characterised by a strong element of opportunism.[12] For many, this has been the 'art of the possible'. Few had established programmes or partners in the country prior to the crisis, with the exception of some of the faith-based organisations like Islamic Relief and Christian Aid (the latter working through IOCC). New partnerships have been forged by many, with all of the attendant risk and uncertainty that this brings. Most planning was necessarily short term and CARE stressed that flexibility had to be built into all of its longer-term planning. Most agencies report using scenario planning of some kind, most following the 'most likely' contingency established as part of the RRP5 consultation process.[13]

More generally on the question of clarity of strategy, those interviewed in the field talked more about programmes and their rationale than about overall strategy. Some agencies had explicit (written) strategies for the overall regional response although many of these were still in process of being written (August 2013). The regional strategies were supplemented by country-level plans, though some (like Medair, partner of Tearfund) were planning on a regional basis. Most agencies are still in 'crisis planning' mode based on a 6-month timeline, though most also report being in the process of defining rolling 2-3 year regional strategies. Some, including CARE and Save the Children, were still in the process of re-defining the status of the crisis within their organisations (e.g. by declaring it a 'Category 1' emergency) at the time of this Review; although these agencies were also amongst the first to respond. There is no doubt that uncertainty about the course of the conflict in Syria and the related situation in neighbouring countries makes planning difficult. Most felt it was too early to define exit and transitional strategies for current programmes, though funding was limited and this might dictate when programmes closed.

2.3 At the country level, particularly in Jordan and Lebanon, there is a debate about the appropriate focus of agency strategy. In Jordan, CARE made a conscious decision in Jordan not to work in Zaatari camp on the grounds that many others were doing so, and that their previous experience with Iraqi refugees meant that their added value lay in working on the (bigger) problem of urban refugees. They were criticized at the time for this, but the decision was a rational one. Oxfam, with their WASH expertise, decided they would work in Zaatari as well as with the dispersed refugees, but did so initially only on a relatively small scale. They are now scaling up that work at UNICEF's request.

[12] Comment at pre-mission briefing session with agency representatives, London [date]

[13] For a more fully-developed set of current scenarios, see the recent paper from ACAPS at http://www.acaps.org/reports/downloader/scenarios_september_2013/53/syria

For CARE's representative in Jordan, there is perhaps too much attention on emergency response and contingency planning in Jordan, and not enough on the medium and longer term. 'My concern is the deterioration of the situation of urban refugees'. Many are concerned about a generation of children not being educated, with the attendant possibility radicalisation or criminalisation of young people. 'The refugees, particularly those from Homs, are gradually realising they may be here for long haul'. One major problem that agencies face in evolving their strategies in this direction in Jordan is that refugees are not officially allowed to work, and the Government is not willing to permit programmes on livelihoods and vocational training for refugees. Here, as in Lebanon, the unwritten assumption is that the refugees will return home in the near future. Anything else is politically unpalatable.

An informal tented settlement of Syrian refugees in Bekaa valley, Lebanon

3. Needs assessment and programme approaches

Introduction and context

3.1 Given the overall context described above, how are agencies making their more detailed assessment of need and targeting their assistance? In Jordan and Lebanon, the majority of those needing assistance are refugees living amongst urban host communities. This raises an obvious problem: how to identify priority needs among a largely 'invisible' and dispersed population? The problem is compounded by the fact that there are significant needs within host communities themselves and within other migrant populations. The term 'host communities' is potentially misleading: only around 7% of refugees are thought to be actually living with host families. The rest are living mainly in rented accommodation of various kinds within existing communities but are largely isolated from those communities, having little social interaction either with locals or with each other. Women confined to the home and families with elderly and disabled members, who are often those most in need of assistance, can find themselves particularly isolated. Meanwhile in Syria itself, access restrictions and the rapidly changing situation (particularly in contested areas) mean that many of the most vulnerable are thought not yet to have been identified at all.

'Macro' and 'micro' needs assessment

3.2 Few of the DEC agencies had conducted formal (e.g. survey-based) needs assessments in their areas of operation. Some had participated in or were planning situational assessments relating to specific aspects of the crisis: so example, Save the Children and Oxfam were part of the multi-agency Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis in Lebanon.[14] But as one observer put it 'assessments are fragmented, uncoordinated and not shared'. Although few agencies were able to share formal needs assessments for their programmes in Lebanon and Jordan, they had to varying degrees carried out consultations and context analysis as a basis for their work. CARE's baseline assessments of Syrian refugee vulnerabilities and Oxfam's multi-sectoral assessment of refugees in host communities[15] were both published and were acknowledged to have helped inform the wider humanitarian response, as had the joint UN-led assessments and the assessments made by the sectoral Working Groups.

For Syria itself, agencies report having been quite heavily reliant for their initial interventions on the picture provided by the multi-agency, multi-sector Joint Rapid Assessments of Northern Syria (J-RANS I and II) conducted in January and April 2013; and on the monthly analysis of secondary data produced by the Syria Needs Assessment Project.[16] These lack the detail required for programme design, but have been widely used as frameworks within which to consider the proposals and analysis coming from local partners, and as a basis for programme proposals to donors.[17] Otherwise the available information about humanitarian needs tends to be confined to agency project areas and heavily dependent on information

[14] See http://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-emergency-market-mapping-and-analysis-emma-executive-briefing-analyses

[15] CARE *Baseline Assessment of Community Identified Vulnerabilities among Syrian Refugees living in Amman.* (December 2012) *and in Irbid, Madaba, Mufraq, and Zarqa* (April 2013). Oxfam *Integrated Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Host Communities Emergency Food Security and Livelihoods; Water, Sanitation and Hygiene; Protection* (March 2013).

[16] A joint initiative of MapAction and the Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS) started in January 2013.

[17] On the conduct and use of needs assessment in Syria and the wider region, see the ACAPS paper 'Needs Assessments Lessons Learned' at http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php or the ACAPS website.

received from partners on the ground. Few have been able to conduct either baseline surveys or needs assessments as normally understood. Agencies are also reported to be reluctant to share their own assessments on security grounds, though some of those interviewed felt there was an element of territoriality to this behaviour.

3.3 Within the more general problem of needs assessment is the particular issue of identifying those with priority needs as a basis for targeting assistance. One answer to the problem of the invisibility of refugees in urban contexts, noted above, is to get those in need of assistance to identify themselves. This is at the centre of the system established by CARE, a development of the approach adopted in their response to the Iraqi refugee influx over the previous few years. It involves establishing reception centres to which refugees can come for registration. Those presenting themselves in this way are assessed according to pre-defined vulnerability criteria (see Annex); and based on this, households are given a vulnerability 'score' which determines their entitlement to assistance (including emergency cash for the most vulnerable), or else 'case management', advice and possible referral to other agencies or services. CARE report having at first been overwhelmed by the numbers seeking assistance in this way; and this influenced the way in which vulnerability thresholds were set for relief entitlements.

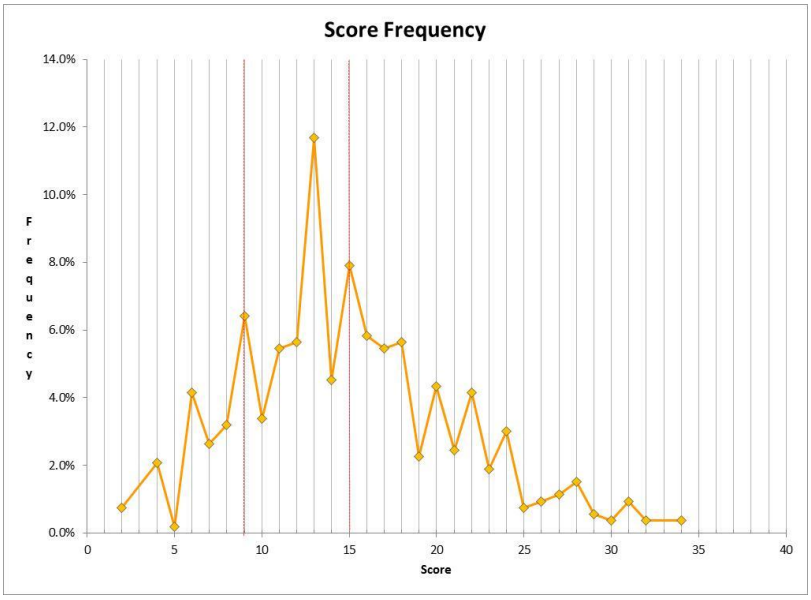
On the face of it, the effectiveness of such a system in identifying those in need depends on the people in question (or their relatives) presenting themselves at the reception centre. But CARE staff make no assumptions about this, and invest considerable efforts in outreach – as do all of the DEC agencies who work on this model. Age UK, working with Handicap International as their operational partner in Jordan, have established a system of disability and vulnerability Focal Points at existing reception centres, combined with an outreach programme that includes home visits. Word of mouth communication by refugees themselves, often using mobile phones, appears to result in high levels of awareness about what support is available and from whom. But the agencies also operate a semi-formalised referral system – making referrals to each other and to government services – which seems to work well and is one of the more obvious strengths of the response, particularly in Jordan.

3.4 With regard to vulnerability criteria, these are clear enough at the top and bottom ends, but as one respondent said 'It's the middle rank of vulnerability that is the challenge'. One agency reported that it was being forced to squeeze standards and tighten criteria because of lack of funding. Others (including CARE in Jordan) felt that it was important to leave the criteria as they were. If the result was a funding deficit, this should be used to try to leverage the required funds from donors. Islamic Relief has developed its own weighted vulnerability scoring system, with an emphasis on household income; and is unusual in conducting door to door assessments in their areas of operation.

In both Jordan and Lebanon, there was pressure to response to the (very real) needs of vulnerable host communities as well as refugees. Save the Children in Lebanon reported that they were targeting as much as 40% of their assistance to vulnerable Lebanese communities. For ActionAid the figure was around 30%. Action Aid reported using a participatory approach to identifying priority needs among the Syrian refugees. 'The refugees themselves do the prioritising. At first they said that everyone was vulnerable, so it has taken time to get buy in for more defined criteria'.

BOX: Vulnerability criteria and response decisions[18]

The Vulnerability Scorecard designed by CARE Jordan (see Annex 2) forms one part of a case management decision-making framework, based on an approach first adopted by the agency in its response to the Iraqi refugee influx into Jordan. This approach and the related system of vulnerability criteria have been widely adopted by other agencies, using their own variations according to organisational priorities. This involves allocating a vulnerability 'score' to particular criteria, and then calculating the total score for the applicant in question. As the graph below shows, the 15 point ('extremely vulnerable') threshold for emergency cash assistance represents the approximate mean score for cases seen by CARE and so entitles about half of those seen to be assisted in this way. Those scoring between 9 and 14 points are classified as 'very vulnerable' and receive case management by CARE. Those scoring fewer than 9 points are given advice or referred as appropriate to other service providers.



On this system, some categories of vulnerability (women at risk, severe injury) automatically qualify the applicant for emergency cash assistance, but for most applicants this entitlement is based on cumulative vulnerability factors. The cash assistance provided is mostly in the form of a one-off payment. The CARE approach is designed to tackle immediate vulnerabilities such as urgent health needs or debt payments.

The following examples of Syrian refugee cases seen by CARE illustrate how the scoring system applies in practice:

"Umm Karim", assessment score 13, *"Very Vulnerable"* Umm Karim is a 41 year old woman who is heading a household with no means of support. She has demonstrated a mild medical condition. She entered Jordan Dec 25/2012 and has registered with UNHCR. Umm Karim is receiving CARE service level case management at the Amman centre.

"Abu Ahmed", assessment score 34, *"Extremely Vulnerable"* Abu Ahmed is a 41 year old disabled man living in a large multi-family household with children under the age of 2. Elderly family members are living with Abu Ahmed. He is not registered with UNHCR. He entered Jordan Mar 15/2013. Abu Ahmed is receiving CARE case management and has received emergency cash from the Amman centre.

[18] Based on data from 'Case analysis of vulnerabilities among Syrian refugees', CARE document – June 23, 2013

Findings of needs assessment

3.5 All of the agencies consulted in Jordan reported the same expressed priorities from the Syrian refugees who sought their help: namely help in paying rent, with food, health, etc. some way behind. The income gap was said to be growing as the informal labour market (the only work open to refugees) becomes saturated and police clamp down on those without permits. Many agencies stressed the goal of helping prevent people from having to resort to negative coping mechanisms such as prostitution or child labour. This was true also in Lebanon. Here, refugees are entitled to work but wages are being driven down as more and more people flood the jobs market. The perception amongst many local people is that the refugees are taking their jobs.

As to other needs, access to basic services was reported to be limited, although registered refugees in both Jordan and Lebanon are officially entitled to access state-provided health care, education etc. Certainly those services are over-stretched. UNICEF is leading a campaign to get refugee children back to school, and there is a proposal to run 'second shifts' in existing facilities. Many agencies expressed their concern about the medium and longer term effects of refugee children not being educated. But this is not just a supply problem – demand is variable, particularly among those Syrians who come from rural areas (e.g. in Dar'a). Attendance at the available school facilities in Zaatari camp is said to be low.

The incidence of bullying and harassment of refugees appears to be high, one of the factors acting as a deterrent to attending school. Gender-based violence (domestic or otherwise) was not registered as a major problem, although there may be significant under-reporting for social reasons. Psycho-social problems were widely reported – not surprising among families who have lost their homes and (in many cases) lost relatives in the conflict. The trauma associated with forced displacement is itself very great. On top of this, depression is a real problem, particularly for women trapped in the home. Most urban refugees find themselves socially isolated, both from the local community and from each other. The tradition of reciprocal hospitality is a strong one; but many are too ashamed to have visitors when they feel so unable to offer hospitality in their new circumstances.

Programme choice and design

3.6 The choice of programmes by DEC members has been informed by an analysis of vulnerabilities and gaps, particularly those left by the wider system of support coordinated by UNHCR. Most have identified support for rent payments as a key intervention, given the proportion of household income involved, the inflation of rents (particularly in Jordan) and the limited income-raising opportunities available to refugees. Rent payment is supported through conditional cash transfers, though the mechanisms vary: some pay direct to landlords, others to tenants. Interestingly, according to one respondent 'around half of all the recipients of cash for rent asked for it be paid directly to the landlord, so as to protect the funds and safeguard the family shelter. Some agencies also help in negotiating rents.

More generally, the use of cash transfers (mostly unconditional) and physical or electronic vouchers (e.g. for food, water) are a feature of the response to those living outside formal camps, although in Lebanon the government is resistant to straight cash transfers. A great deal of thought has gone into the design of these programmes, with close collaboration between UN agencies, INGOs and commercial actors (banks, retailers). In particular, arrangements negotiated with the banks have allowed beneficiaries to be given ATM cards

with a credit limit rather than physical cash or vouchers. The intention is to give refugees the flexibility to identify their own needs and minimise the inconvenience and loss of dignity that can attend more traditional forms of food and non-food distribution. In this the agencies appear to have been largely successful, the result being much appreciated by those refugees consulted in the Review. This is probably the area of programme design where innovation and learning is most apparent, and there is much to be learned from this experience that may be relevant in similar situations elsewhere.

More traditional forms of aid delivery, including food distribution, are being used inside Syria itself. Here the use of cash transfers is controversial (mainly on accountability grounds) and certainly more complicated, though it is being considered by some agencies given the availability of functioning markets.[19] Donors are reported to be nervous of supporting cash transfers in a war zone, though they have done so in extreme circumstances elsewhere (e.g. Somalia 2011). More generally, there is a push to standardise interventions and avoid duplication in such areas as non-food items and 'winterisation' kits. But the real issue is one of coverage: none of those consulted felt that the scale of programming by local and international actors combined was close to meeting the needs of those affected. That said, some agencies (particularly the faith-based ones) felt that in the areas in which they were able to operate, the needs of the most vulnerable – including the elderly, disabled and female-headed households– were increasingly being identified and met.

3.6 Finally on the question of programme approaches, all of the DEC members have stressed community mobilisation as a central feature of their approach. CARE's model in Jordan resembles that of a 'citizen's advice bureau'; and ActionAid make a point of stressing active citizenship as a central feature of their approach. One example of this approach is ActionAid's formation of small 'circles' in Bekaa valley in Lebanon comprising a mix of Syrian refugees and local people. Assisted by a facilitator, these groups are given civic skills training and encouraged to identify and take up issues on their own behalf. A more general approach has been the establishment and facilitation of peer support groups among the refugees, something that also helps tackle the psycho-social issues noted above.

In Zaatari camp, Oxfam puts particular stress on the involvement of beneficiaries in the design and maintenance of community wash blocks. The initial failure to do so led to the widespread practice of deconstructing these facilities and using the materials to make private household latrines and other structures. More generally, Zaatari is an example of an infrastructure designed without input from those who would live in it, with the result that refugees have largely re-designed it to suit their purposes (see photo below). These lessons appear to have been learned in the construction of Azraq camp, built on a similarly vast scale; although the remote location of the new camp raises questions about its suitability.

[19] Some are already doing so. For example, IOCC, the partner of Christian Aid, is doing cash for work inside Syria.

A well-stocked fruit and vegetable stall in Zaatari refugee camp, Jordan. Note the use of breeze blocks taken from communal wash facilities in order to construct the shop.

4. Programme implementation and monitoring

Introduction

4.1 The implementation and monitoring of the programmes by agencies and their partners has been complicated by different factors across the three contexts under consideration here: Jordan, Lebanon and Syria itself. Some of the issues of programme *relevance* and *connectedness* were considered in the previous sections. Here we are concerned more with the delivery issues of *timeliness, effectiveness* and *efficiency* – and more generally with what agencies have learned in the process of implementing and monitoring their programmes to date.

Constraints to implementation

4.2 Some of the biggest external constraints to programme implementation, besides the prevailing insecurity in Syria itself, have come from delays in securing registration, visas and programme approval. The latter has been a particular issue in Jordan, where programmes using international funds require approval by the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC). Many programmes are reported to have been delayed for three months or more pending this approval. It seems likely that capacity in Ministry has not kept pace with the volume of proposals since the major refugee influx began in January 2013. Resolving this bottleneck should be a key advocacy objective, both with the Government and with donors. In Syria itself, applications for registration with the Government have taken even longer to process, and few have been granted.[20] Meanwhile it has proved difficult to obtain visas for staff travel, and there are severe restrictions on travel within the country. Many areas, particularly those which are militarily contested, are simply inaccessible to most international agencies. There is a high degree of reliance on partner organisations, including the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and IOCC, for access to areas on both sides of the conflict.

4.3 Besides bureaucratic delays, the biggest reported constraint has been lack of delivery capacity, including recruitment and deployment of suitable staff by DEC members themselves and the limited capacity and experience of partners in emergency response. Most of the agencies that had established partnerships before the crisis did so with development partners, who had little or no experience in emergency response – which requires quite different skills and modes of operating. This has meant that in many cases, intensive training of staff and partners has been a necessary precursor to scaling up, resulting in substantial delays in implementation. All agencies have reported trouble in recruiting and retaining local staff, for whom there is great competition (particularly given the higher wages offered by the UN agencies). Some of the agencies working inside Syria are heavily reliant on partners working on a voluntary basis, paid minimal incentives; though this model is likely to become less sustainable as time goes on.

There is no shortage of educated, willing and able workers. Merlin reports higher than expected in-country specialist capacity in Syria in the medical sector, though again many lack experience in emergency medicine. They therefore put an emphasis on training nurses and paramedics. Islamic Relief, likewise, were conducting trainings with six local NGOs in disaster management, monitoring and evaluation, and application of the Sphere minimum

[20] Difficulties and delays in securing government registration are also reported to have hampered relief operations in Turkey, both within Turkey itself and cross-border into northern Syria.

standards; while Save the Children are conducting Arabic-language training of trainers on Sphere in Amman. Some agencies reported having Syrian staff able to work across borders from Turkey and elsewhere.

4.4 One major practical problem facing agencies working inside Syria concerns the transfer of funds and goods into the country. Prevailing international sanctions regimes place severe restrictions on the ability to transfer funds via the Syrian banking system, and there are more general rules applying to the import of goods. As one experienced NGO staff member at headquarters level commented: 'Although entities on the list are mostly state institutions and individuals linked to the regime, the international banking industry is risk averse and takes the view that they won't engage in any business related to Syria. The only exception is where… the cost of undertaking due diligence is more than met by the profit - a purely commercial decision'. [21] This risk aversion extends to transfers made to partners working inside Syria but based in neighbouring countries. The DEC Secretariat, through its Finance Director, has played an important role in negotiating with the banks on this issue.

4.5 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. The spending patterns of the agencies suggest that many have had initial difficulty spending the funds available and have had to invest more time than anticipated on preparatory measures. DEC members had planned to spend an unprecedented 92% of their first allocation within 6 months, but re-budgeting has reduced this to 83% with the balance being held over for Phase 2. On average, agencies have to date (after 5 months) reported expenditure of only around 29% of their originally planned DEC expenditure in Phase One. They still expect to achieve the 83% expenditure target by the end of the first 6 months. There is some lag in accounts which explains some of the current shortfall, and some large one-off programme elements (e.g. food distributions in Syria) scheduled to happen towards the end of Phase 1. Apart from that, the issues raised above – including the delay in MOPIC approvals and scale-up issues – account for the lag in expenditure.

Effect, effectiveness and efficiency

4.6 Are the DEC agencies being effective in their responses to the crisis? Put another way, are their chosen interventions achieving the objectives they set themselves? This is a hard question to answer in any generalised way. The nature of this Review was such that it could do little more than pose this question to the agencies themselves, and ask 'how do you know?' For some, it appears that the successful delivery of outputs coupled with generally positive feedback from recipients was taken to answer the question. Given the nature of some of these outputs – cash, vouchers, non-food items – this may not seem an unreasonable approach. More specifically, if the objective is (say) to ensure that refugees can pay their rent, then checking that the rent does indeed get paid is one means of measurement. But it provides a potentially misleading and only partial answer to the question of effectiveness, let alone wider effect. Recipients may feel obliged to give a positive response when questioned, and understanding effect and effectiveness demands probing deeper. Unless something is known about what contribution such outputs are making to the overall household economy, and how they are being used, then these questions cannot be properly answered.

[21] Personal communication to the author

In the first phase of the response, the 'output delivery + feedback' approach has tended to dominate. But most agencies seem now to be trying to look beyond the delivery of outputs, and are developing more sophisticated indicators of effectiveness and effect – including the potential for interventions to cause harm. In that respect, some (for example CARE Jordan) are particularly concerned to ensure that people's current reliance on cash transfers does not undermine their ability to cope in the medium term. On this subject, a respondent at a roundtable discussion in Amman made an interesting observation. Talking about their programme goals, and taking account of the protracted nature of the crisis, they said 'we see this as an investment rather than a product'. This 'teach a man to fish' philosophy, more familiar in a developmental context, is not out of place in a protracted crisis of this kind. Helping equip people to face an uncertain and challenging future, as well as to survive in the immediate present, is surely warranted in the context of the Syrian crisis – however difficult it may be to persuade the authorities (and perhaps people themselves) that this is essential.

4.7 *Efficiency* is also hard to gauge in an exercise of this kind. The cost of programming in this region is unusually high, both because of the cost of living and the dispersed nature of the target population. Most of the programme costs and overheads involved appear to be an inevitable result of these factors, although some efficiency savings might be made through greater specialisation and geographical focus. Arguably there are too many agencies implementing a range of small scale projects across multiple sectors. The distribution of cash rather than commodities does not in itself appear to save money, particularly since the cash has to cover retail rather than wholesale prices, and the benefit of tax and duty waivers on commodities is lost. Indeed the overall cost of this approach appears (counter-intuitively) to be higher than commodity-based assistance, even when reduced logistical costs are taken into account.[22] Yet there is also little doubt that it adds greatly to the value of assistance provided in terms of flexibility and convenience.

Programme monitoring

4.8 The monitoring of programmes is done by a variety of means. In Lebanon and Jordan, follow-up visits to beneficiaries' houses form an important part of the monitoring system, together with standard reporting formats for staff and partners. Some pre-existing partners were reported to have found the switch to emergency programmes difficult, including monitoring. But in terms of monitoring of inputs and outputs, agencies appeared able to meet their basic requirements. Most reported using Sphere standards as their benchmark for monitoring programme quality, though the indicators have been adapted to the particular contexts involved. In Zaatari for example, agencies reported that they were 'exceeding Sphere standards' – meaning that they were working to higher thresholds than set out in the Sphere indicators, for example on the quantities of clean water available to each person daily. For work on cash, agencies had drawn on the best practice work of the Cash Learning Partnership.

As noted above, monitoring of impact (or effect) is more challenging, partly because of the lack of clear baselines. Progress on this aspect of monitoring should be expected in Phase 2 of the response.

[22] Interview with WFP representative in Amman.

4.9 In Syria itself, agencies are heavily reliant on partner reports together with sporadic staff visits. Novel ways have been found of ensuring that funds committed are being spent as intended, including the use of photographs of project outputs and communication via social media to demonstrate progress. Nevertheless, agencies are not able to meet their normal standards of monitoring and reporting in Syria, and have had to re-define their bottom line requirements in this regard, in discussion with their donors. The DEC will need to consider whether its own requirements are met, but the Review concluded that DEC members were making reasonable efforts to comply with basic accountability requirements. Due allowance should be made for the sensitivity of information about target communities, location and partners, although this should not be taken to excuse a lack of reporting against objectives.

An ActionAid-sponsored circle of young women (Syrian and Lebanese) in Bekaa valley, Lebanon

5. Working together: coordination and partnerships

Coordination

5.1 Here as in any crisis context, coordination between humanitarian agencies is essential to ensure that gaps are filled, duplication avoided and a reasonable degree of consistency of standards and programme approaches is maintained. The overall quality of inter-agency coordination in Jordan and Lebanon was found to be reasonably good, as far as it was possible to judge in a brief visit. Sectoral working groups had been established, as well as a Humanitarian Country Team and INGO forums. There had clearly been some problems between UNHCR and the INGOs, particularly in Lebanon, but this relationship appeared to be improving. The INGOs had been critical of UNHCR for what they perceived as the slowness of the registration process for Syrian refugees, leaving many without formal entitlement to assistance over several months. There was also some concern that UNHCR had a conflict of interest in its dual role as general coordinator (including chairing several sector working groups) and its operational role, in which capacity it allocated donor funds and entered programme delivery contracts with INGOs.[23]

One further concern noted during the Review was the relatively centralised nature of coordination in Jordan and Lebanon. Decision making is largely confined to Amman and Beirut, resulting in less effective field-level coordination than seen in some crisis contexts. The question of regional coordination also seems to be one of developing concern, which the appointment of a regional UN Humanitarian Coordinator may help to galvanise.

5.2 DEC members participate actively in the sectoral Working Groups, co-chairing them in some cases; though the performance of these groups is said to be variable, largely dependent on who leads them. DEC members are also actively involved in the INGO Forum in Jordan and Lebanon. Between DEC members themselves, and INGOs generally, the Review found an impressive degree of collaboration, notably in the form of cross-referral of cases, but also in terms of harmonisation and standardisation of approaches. This was particularly notable in the harmonisation of vulnerability criteria, and the work in Jordan appeared particularly strong in this respect.

There is an evident need for improved inter-agency coordination for the response inside Syria. To the extent that it happens from Lebanon and Turkey, it appears to be largely informal, ad hoc and confined to programmatic issues rather than policy and strategy. But the problem also exists at the sectoral level. As one member agency respondent noted in relation to shelter and NFI coordination : ‘The kind of issues we are facing include: a working group chair having limited availability for coordination (doing it on top of their day job); lack of support to the chair for administration and information management; lack of an agency having a clear and widely recognized mandate for sector coordination; the need to find innovative ways to coordinate in a context where much of the information is confidential; and a lack of coordination at donor level resulting in lack of clarity on global needs, gaps and capacities.’ One solution being considered is the recruitment of full time coordinators to be seconded into the working group. This depends on the donors being willing to provide the

[23] For its part, UNHCR Lebanon was frustrated by what they saw as ‘negativity’ on the part of some INGOs, as well as a lack of reporting through the coordination structures.

funding and more generally to apply pressure on agencies to engage with sector working groups.

5.3 This question of coordination with government ministries was raised in particular in Jordan. Here, as noted above, the requirement to get MOPIC approval for programmes using foreign funds has been a particular cause of frustration, because of the length of time taken to process applications. A further element in this bureaucratic challenge concerns the need to coordinate activities relating to Syrian refugees with the Government's preferred Jordanian aid agency, the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organisation (JHCO), although this was not reported to be a major constraint.

Apart from the need to clear bureaucratic hurdles, the most significant questions concerning government ministries concern the potential for partnerships with these bodies (see below).

Partnerships

5.4 The use of partnerships was widespread and accounts for the majority of programme delivery by DEC members both inside and outside Syria. Many of the partnerships are new and relatively untested, causing some concerns about accountability as well as about capacity to deliver in an emergency context. However, the majority of the partnerships considered during the Review appeared to be working well – including operational partnerships between DEC members themselves. In the case of Syria, the faith-based organisations and the Red Cross had the advantage of working through experienced and tested partners, while some of the secular organisations lacked established partners and were therefore rather more exposed. The use of pilot projects in Syria and elsewhere, particularly by Save the Children, was noted as a sensible approach to testing programmes and partnerships before scaling up.

5.5 Inside Syria itself, agencies are working in both government-controlled and rebel-controlled areas, as well as across front lines and across borders in some cases. Almost all are working through local partners. Much of this work is still in the process of being scaled up or negotiated. The partnerships and working relationships with local bodies forged by the faith-based agencies (Islamic and Christian) including Islamic Relief, World Vision, CAFOD and Christian Aid appear to have a significant advantage in this respect, avoiding some of the bureaucratic hurdles that face other agencies and being able to tap into pre-existing local networks to identify and respond to needs as they arise. Likewise, the British Red Cross, through the International Federation of Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies, is supporting the work of the Syria Arab Red Crescent which is unique in the scale and reach of its operations. The successful partnership between Plan UK and Warchild (for work inside Syria) points to the value of pre-established organisational partnerships between INGOs that have already been tried and tested in other contexts.

Oxfam is unusual in having a formal collaborative arrangement with the Syrian Ministry of Water Resources to conduct urgent water system rehabilitation in areas destroyed in the conflict. This arrangement has yet to prove itself in practice, and carries certain risks, but also the prospect of benefiting many more people than might be achieved by other means. One respondent from another DEC member suggested that agencies should be encouraged to have more such collaborative agreements with ministries that provide basic services, citing Iraq as an example of where such arrangements had been effective in the past.

5.6 Little information was available to the Review concerning the remote management of programmes inside Syria, or the management of the 'remote' relationship with partner organisations. Concerns about security and confidentiality of information partially account for this information gap; but it is suggested that this is an area where there is considerable scope for further enquiry and evaluation, particularly given the many new and untested partnerships involved.

The heavy emphasis placed by agencies on capacity building of partners raised the question of whether this was an adequate approach to quality assurance in a remote management context. Certainly there has been a high degree of reliance on skills training and the application of minimum practice standards. But for some of those interviewed, their confidence in their partners' ability to deliver remained an open question; and this affects judgements about 'bottom line' accountability requirements.

One theme that emerged in this context was the importance of regular communication and face to face meetings with partners either inside Syria or in neighbouring countries. Most of those consulted among DEC members felt that they had a sufficient degree of 'proximity' to be confident in both the partnerships and the programme concerned. As noted above, this was particularly true of the faith-based agencies. But the Review draws no particular conclusions on this issue.

A collective shelter for Syrian refugees in a disused shopping mall near Tripoli, Lebanon

6. Accountability and learning

Introduction

6.1 Some of the issues relating to programme monitoring and financial accountability are noted above, and agencies have adopted a variety of means to try to satisfy their own and their donors' requirements. For example, Save the Children is doing its own procurement for work inside Syria as a way of minimising the fiduciary risks involved in working with untested partnerships. Some unanswered questions remain over accountability for programme delivery and financial accountability for work inside Syria itself, which it was largely beyond the scope of this Review to address. This requires further consideration, not least by agencies themselves. We note here, however, that the faith-based organisations in particular report high levels of compliance with standard reporting and accounting procedures by partners inside Syria. In other words, it should not be assumed that standard accountability requirements are unachievable.

Beneficiary accountability

6.2 Accountability to beneficiaries was considered under the headings of information and transparency; community involvement; and the establishment of feedback and complaints mechanisms. With regard to information, the DEC members appeared to be performing well in Lebanon and Jordan, in both cases putting great emphasis on outreach and information dissemination. With regard to community mobilisation, the Review found a number of impressive examples while noting that mobilisation could have come earlier in some instances, particularly in Lebanon. In Zaatari camp in Jordan, the failure to engage the community in the planning of WASH installations had led to inappropriate designs which the refugees subsequently dismantled and adapted for their personal use. Oxfam was now leading efforts to involve communities from the outset in the construction and maintenance of new facilities. Lessons were reported to have been learned from this experience in the construction of the new camp at Azraq, the design of which is the subject of extensive consultation – at least with agencies which have relevant experience from Zaatari.

The sale of non-food items by refugees, including items from 'winterisation kits' distributed in late 2012 and early 2013, suggested some lack of consultation and a lack of coordination between distributing agencies – as well as strengthening the case for cash distribution. As for feedback, most of the agencies consulted and programmes visited had established mechanisms that included 'post box' message systems and telephone hotlines that people could call. Data on the use of these mechanisms were not available. Less conventionally, ActionAid has established accountability committees among its target population, pointing to the scope for more dynamic processes of engagement and feedback.

6.3 Perhaps inevitably, inside Syria itself many agencies have been unable to ensure that their usual standards of accountability to beneficiaries are maintained. Beneficiary lists and entitlements cannot be published and feedback mechanisms are relatively weak. That said, IOCC (partner of Christian Aid) reported that it conducted satisfaction surveys among those that it assisted, made follow-up phone calls on a sample basis, and invited beneficiaries to attend feedback sessions. They also conducted home visits. This suggests that even within Syria, the scope for active engagement with target communities is greater than sometimes suggested.

Learning and evaluation

6.4 The extent to which DEC members have developed learning mechanisms in relation to the Syria crisis response is variable. Some have a relatively systematic approach to iterative learning, for example. CARE conducts quarterly internal reviews. Save the Children has conducted a Real Time Review of its responses in Jordan and Lebanon, and is planning a post-hoc evaluation of the overall response. But as one observer remarked, in the context of such a fast changing situation, this may not be enough. Better mechanisms for real-time review and learning are required, feeding directly back into programme and strategy. Staff turnover and the quality of briefing de-briefing were factors in the quality of such learning.

6.5 In particular, the Review concluded that DEC Members should consider what 'non-standard' mechanisms may allow them to reflect on and evaluate the effectiveness of their programmes inside Syria in real time. This may include the use of Syrian individuals or partner organisations whose role is specifically related to (and confined to) this task. Such a role, distinct from programme implementation, might allow agencies to get a more objective picture of programme effectiveness and relevance than is possible based on implementing partner reports alone. It may also provide a partial answer to the problem of trying to evaluate programmes in a context that does not allow international evaluators to travel freely or safely. So too may be the use of Lebanese or other non-Syrian nationals who are able to travel relatively freely to Syria.

7. Conclusions

Context

7.1 This is not a humanitarian crisis of the kind found in contexts like DR Congo or Somalia, in which already very poor communities displaced by conflict and natural hazards find themselves living in conditions where they are exposed both to violence and to high risk of infectious disease, malnutrition and premature death. It is much more akin to the Balkans conflicts of the 1990s in former Yugoslavia and Kosovo, where the primary humanitarian concern was also the protection of civilians from violence, but where the need for assistance arose mainly from the loss of homes, assets, livelihoods and services by communities that had previously been relatively prosperous and had reasonably good access to basic services. The destruction of homes and basic infrastructure, and the collapse of the Syrian economy, combined with the threat of violence, has left millions of Syrians both highly vulnerable in the present and facing a very uncertain future. While the most vulnerable are those inside Syria itself, conditions for the refugees in neighbouring countries are hard and getting harder. Not only have they lost their homes, with no immediate prospect of return; they are in many cases traumatised, are finding themselves increasingly unwelcome in their host countries and in an increasingly precarious economic situation.

International assistance in host countries, while it has been slow and sometimes patchy, is providing a vital lifeline for hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees as well as to many in host communities. Apart from the immediate humanitarian imperative, the continued availability of such assistance is a key factor in maintaining the option of effective sanctuary both for existing and potential refugees. But this also requires international assistance to the hosting states for whom the burden of service provision, together with growing political tensions, is rapidly becoming unsustainable. To date, such assistance has been far too little.

General conclusions

7.2 In assessing the contribution of DEC members to the humanitarian effort in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, the Review has had regard to the DAC evaluation criteria together with the question of timeliness of response – which is where many agencies score least well. Overall, the Review found that DEC agencies were performing essential roles in all three countries, and appeared in most cases to be achieving a high degree of programme quality and effectiveness. The Review found a good deal of innovative and effective work, high levels of collaboration and a strong intention to adapt programme approaches to the context and to learn from experience – which was already evident in the modification of existing programmes and preparations for the next phase. In particular, much is being learned about programming with urban displaced and host communities in the relatively developed but increasingly overstretched and pressurised towns and cities in Lebanon and Jordan. Inside Syria itself, although hampered by security and bureaucratic factors, DEC members have made substantial efforts to reach those who most need assistance – and appear to taking reasonable steps to provide such assistance impartially and accountably.

7.3 While the Review's overall conclusions about the performance of DEC members were positive, some significant concerns were also identified concerning:

- the length of time taken to scale up programmes;
- a related lack of preparedness and standing capacity;
- the limited coverage of some existing programmes, inside and outside Syria;

- some accountability concerns relating to work in Syria;
- a lack of concerted policy analysis and advocacy, particularly on protection issues.

While some agencies had well-established programmes by the time of the Review, others were clearly playing 'catch-up' in terms of both operations and strategy. This reflects a wider slowness on the part of the whole humanitarian community, including the failure to provide adequate winter support to refugees in late 2012. There are mitigating circumstances relating to specific organisational capacity issues as well as some major external constraints – including insecurity, bureaucracy, limited funding and partner capacity, and the speed with which the refugee crisis grew in 2013 – though the Review concludes that more could have been done by DEC members to overcome some of these factors.

Strategy, planning and roles

7.4 The volatility of the Syrian conflict, and the uncertain consequences for surrounding countries, makes planning very challenging. The massive and relatively sudden increase in refugee numbers since the beginning of 2013 may not in itself have been foreseeable, but a major increase in refugee numbers could have been foreseen and planned for. The delay in gearing up responses is partly attributable to a lack of humanitarian delivery capacity (DEC agency and partner) as well as to bureaucratic obstacles. But it also involved an element of strategic 'blindness' about the nature of the emergent crisis and a related lack of preparedness. One major factor in this appears to be agency decision-making processes that are cumbersome and subject to a high degree of organisational inertia. As witnessed in the Horn of Africa food crisis of 2011, agencies struggle to re-define strategy and change direction in the timeframe required to react to a major slow-onset or 'emergent' crisis. This relates in part to the difficulty that agencies and their partners have of shifting from a 'developmental' to a 'humanitarian' mind-set, or of more effectively combining the two.

Recommendations:

- Agencies should reflect on their internal decision-making processes and consider how these could be better adapted to the requirements of 'emergent' crises of this kind. The failure to achieve a timely re-orientation of agency priorities can result in delays of months to the response.
- A more strategic approach to programming in Syria should be expected to emerge in Phase 2 of the response. In the refugee hosting countries, agencies should consider a more geographically focused response, working in fewer sectors and with a more targeted approach.
- In the refugee hosting countries, agencies should consider a greater focus in Phase 2 on medium-term 'bridging' programmes to tackle the looming crisis of livelihoods, living space and basic services.

Needs assessment, programme approaches

7.5 While little in the way of formal, survey-based needs assessment has been carried out by DEC members – at least in a form that can be shared and compared with other data – individual agencies have shown initiative in conducting and making public studies into refugee and host community vulnerability. This serves as a real contribution to informing to the wider humanitarian effort. The identification of specific beneficiaries has been achieved

by a combination of 'self-identification' at reception centres, outreach campaigns and home or site visits. While this appears to have been largely effective in identifying the most vulnerable, particularly those not otherwise served by the UN-led assistance programmes, some concerns remain that some of the most vulnerable of all (especially those confined to their homes through disability or care responsibilities) may not yet be visible.

Of even greater concern is the identification of those who remain at risk inside Syria, where access for needs assessments is highly restricted and where the situation changes from week to week in some areas. The main issue here appears to be one of coverage: none of those consulted felt that the scale of programming by local and international actors combined was adequate to meet the needs of those who require assistance, the numbers of whom are put at 6.8 million. Data on coverage are scarce, however, so this remains a speculative conclusion.

As to programme approaches by DEC members, much innovative use of cash transfers and vouchers in the refugee-hosting countries was observed. While the distribution of non-food items has been necessary and arguably appropriate in some contexts, it has led to considerable levels of redundancy and inefficiency in the aid effort – evidenced by the sale of 'winterisation' and other household items by refugees. More positively, most agencies are putting an emphasis on community engagement and mobilisation, including the formation of peer support groups to help overcome the problem of social isolation, and the encouragement of refugees to identify and advocate for their own priorities.

Recommendations:

- More formal sector-based needs assessments are required in refugee hosting countries in order to better target assistance and identify gaps, particularly given the pressure on available aid funds. This should be a priority in Phase 2 of the response.
- Given what is known about the coverage of existing assistance programmes in Syria, it must be assumed that many of those in greatest need have not yet been identified, let alone assisted. Better coordinated needs assessment and surveillance systems will be required to tackle this issue as the crisis continues.
- Community mobilisation efforts should be extended in Phase 2, where possible bringing host and refugee communities together. This relationship is key to the viability of these countries as places of effective sanctuary.

Implementation and monitoring of programmes

7.6 Besides bureaucratic delays and insecurity in Syria and Lebanon, the biggest reported constraint to implementation has been lack of delivery capacity, both staff capacity within DEC members themselves and the limited capacity and experience of partners in emergency response. Most of the agencies that had established partnerships before the crisis did so with development partners, who had little or no experience in emergency response. All agencies have reported trouble in recruiting and retaining local staff. All of this suggests that the necessary thinking and capacity was not in place to prepare agencies for the rapidly escalating regional crisis of 2013.

Although funding is reported as a constraint, the spending patterns of the agencies suggest that many have had initial difficulty spending the funds available and have had to invest

more time than anticipated on preparatory measures. The constraint appears to relate more to the predictability of future funds than the availability of current funds. This suggests that the necessary understanding between donors and agencies has yet to be achieved, although this may now be changing. Some donors (including DfID) are now asking agencies for 2-3 year proposals. As to efficiency, most of the programme costs and overheads involved appear to be an inevitable result of the high cost of living in this region and the dispersed nature of the target population, although some efficiency savings might be made through greater specialisation and geographical focus.

In terms of monitoring of inputs and outputs, agencies appeared able to meet their basic requirements. Monitoring of impact (or effect) is more challenging, partly because of the lack of clear baselines. Progress on this aspect of monitoring should be expected in Phase 2 of the response. In Syria itself, agencies are heavily reliant on partner reports together with sporadic staff visits. While novel ways have been tried of ensuring that funds committed are being spent as intended, many agencies are not currently able to meet their normal standards of monitoring and reporting in Syria, and have had to re-define their bottom line requirements in this regard, in discussion with their donors. The DEC will need to consider whether its own requirements are met, but the Review concluded that DEC members were making reasonable efforts to comply with basic accountability requirements. Due allowance should be made for the sensitivity of information about target communities, location and partners, although this should not be taken to excuse a lack of reporting against objectives.

Recommendations:

- DEC members should review their preparedness measures, including standing capacity and partnership arrangements, in order to better respond to similar future crises. This includes future contingencies relating to the current crisis.
- The DEC should consider whether current monitoring and reporting approaches for work inside Syria are adequate in the changing circumstances, and consider what measures may be required to strengthen them.

Coordination and partnership

7.7 The overall quality of inter-agency coordination was found to be reasonably good, although overly centralised in Jordan and Lebanon. Between DEC members themselves, and INGOs generally, the Review found an impressive degree of collaboration, notably in the form of cross-referral of cases, but also in terms of harmonisation and standardisation of approaches. The work in Jordan appeared particularly strong in this respect, and there is much to learn from this. Coordination over work inside Syria appears relatively weak. It is largely informal, ad hoc and confined to programmatic issues rather than policy and strategy.

The use of partnerships was widespread and accounts for the majority of programme delivery by DEC members both inside and outside Syria. The majority of the partnerships considered during the Review appeared to be working well – including operational partnerships between DEC members themselves. In the case of Syria, the faith-based organisations and the Red Cross have made good use of experienced and tested partners, while some of the secular organisations lacked established partners and were therefore rather more exposed. The use of pilot projects in Syria and elsewhere, particularly by Save the Children, was noted as a sensible approach to testing programmes and partnerships before scaling up. More generally, DEC members appear to be adopting appropriate ‘due

diligence' approaches to the choice of partners and related accountability issues, a matter of particular sensitivity in the current context.

Recommendations:

- Coordination of international agency work inside Syria should be expected to strengthen in Phase 2, even allowing for the sensitivities related to many of these programmes.
- Given the limits of coverage through existing partnerships in Syria, new forms of partnership and joint venture (including with government ministries) should urgently be considered in Phase 2 of the response.

Accountability and learning

7.8 Some of the issues relating to programme monitoring and financial accountability are noted above. We note here that the faith-based organisations in particular report high levels of compliance with standard monitoring and reporting procedures by partners inside Syria. So it should not be assumed that standard programme accountability requirements are unachievable.

Accountability to beneficiaries was considered under the headings of information and transparency; community involvement; and the establishment of feedback and complaints mechanisms. With regard to information, the DEC members appeared to be performing well in Lebanon and Jordan, in both cases putting great emphasis on outreach and information dissemination. With regard to community mobilisation, the Review found a number of impressive examples while noting that mobilisation could have come earlier in some instances, particularly in Lebanon. As for feedback, most of the agencies consulted and programmes visited had established mechanisms that included 'post box' message systems and telephone hotlines that people could call. However, data on the use of these mechanisms were not available.

Perhaps inevitably, inside Syria itself agencies have been unable to ensure that their usual standards of accountability to beneficiaries are maintained. That said, IOCC (the partner of Christian Aid) reported that it conducted satisfaction surveys among those that it assisted, made follow-up phone calls on a sample basis, and invited beneficiaries to attend feedback sessions. Here too, it should not be assumed that good practice cannot be maintained.

Regarding monitoring and evaluation, there is a notable gap in the evaluative evidence concerning the effectiveness and relevance of interventions inside Syria. New ways of tackling this issue are urgently required.

Recommendations:

- DEC members should review in Phase 2 their expectations about the level of accountability ('up' and 'down') that can be achieved in relation to their work inside Syria.
- Members should consider what 'non-standard' mechanisms may allow them to evaluate the effectiveness of their programmes inside Syria in real time. This may include the use of Syrian individuals or partner organisations whose role is specifically related to (and confined to) this task.

Looking ahead

7.9 In all three countries the situation is likely to deteriorate before it improves, particularly if the conflict continues to displace more people. Already around one third of Syrians have been forced from their homes. Most remain displaced inside the country with little security and limited access to assistance. Recent events involving the use of chemical weapons In Syria have served to highlight what should already have been obvious: that inside Syria this is a humanitarian crisis as much or more about security and protection as it is about assistance. In the conflict over the Former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, agencies tended to mis-characterise the humanitarian picture as being essentially about access for aid delivery. While relief assistance is essential, it can be no substitute for effective measures to allow families to find safety, including the option of seeking asylum. It is too late for the more than 100,000 already thought to have been killed in Syria, but the lives of many more are at risk. Only a minority of those at risk can flee Syria or would want to – the most critical issues of protection and assistance therefore remain inside Syria itself. But unless conditions in neighbouring countries are such as to allow those fleeing conflict to find a viable place of refuge, many of those currently at risk will have their best chance of safety closed to them. This will require a major effort of international solidarity and donor support to the hosting countries, the burden on which is immense and unsustainable. Concerted advocacy by DEC members, based on their field-level experience, could make a significant contribution to making this happen.

Meanwhile, those who been able to find sanctuary in Lebanon and Jordan face an uncertain future with no clear prospect of return. Numbers have for the moment stabilised in Jordan with the closure of the border; but pressure of numbers may force Jordan to accept more. In Lebanon the numbers continue to grow. In both cases, the demand on living space, jobs and services is already overwhelming and is causing growing tension and instability, particularly in Lebanon. Relief services are providing an inadequate substitute for social welfare provision, but will need to continue to do so unless and until more structural solutions are found. Most immediately, there is an urgent task to provide assistance to those facing the winter in makeshift shelter with poor sanitation, as well as inadequate protection from the cold and (in Bekaa Valley) potential floods.

In light of the above, there appears to be less concerted policy analysis and advocacy by DEC members than might be expected on the regional picture as a whole and on the crisis of civilian and refugee protection in particular. This is not to say that that the DEC is the right forum for such advocacy, but the Review concluded that member agencies could help present a more clear-sighted analysis of the humanitarian problem and the range of potential solutions. The situation in Syria is the most critical in this regard, but the situations in Jordan and (particularly) in Lebanon are themselves becoming critical, and these are also crises of protection in their own way. Protecting rights and entitlements in the face of economic, political and social pressures becomes a humanitarian agenda when the threat to human security and basic welfare itself becomes acute.

ANNEX 1 List of those consulted

Jordan

Guillaume Zerr	Handicap International, Emergency Head of Mission
Marcus Skinner	Age UK, Policy Adviser
Kate Washington	CARE UK, Emergency Team Leader for urban response
Amber Savage	CARE Jordan
Miriam Lopez	Medair, Project Coordinator
Kristine Jensen	World Vision, Regional HEA Coordinator
Tessa Gough	World Vision, WASH specialist
David Hassell	Save the Children International – Co-Director of Programmes
Paulette Hassell	Save the Children International – Co-Director of Programmes
Syma Jamil	Oxfam GB, Humanitarian Programme Coordinator
Ruba Jayyousi	Islamic Relief Acting Country Director
Jeff Silverman	Oxfam GB, Public Health Programme Coordinator
Killian Kleinshmidt	UNHCR – Head of operations, Zaatari camp
Jonathan Campbell	UN World Food Programme [title?]
Alex Tyler	UNHCR, Senior Inter-agency Coordinator
Ahmed Al Damrawi	ActionAid, Regional Director
Hanaa McDady	ActionAid, Zaatari Field Coordinator
Tamdour Abu Soud	Islamic Relief

Lebanon

Ester Ruiz de Azua	Save the Children, Operations Director
Marie Melki	Save the Children
Hadia Ghadban	ActionAid, Project Coordinator
Helen Tirebuck	Oxfam GB, Programme Coordinator
Zulfiqar Ali	Oxfam GB, Public Health Programme Coordinator
Lara Ghaoui	World Vision Humanitarian and Emergency Affairs Manager
Aline Rahbany	World Vision
Elias Ayoub	World Vision
Hanna Swidorn	World Vision
Haifa Ungapen	Christian Aid – consultant in Lebanon
Boris Aristin	Merlin
Mohamed Elwaei	Islamic Relief Head of Mission
Mateen Hassan	Islamic Relief Programme Manager
Soha Menassa	Catholic Relief Services
Philippe C	UNHCR
Lynne Miller	WFP
Christina Blunt	OCHA
Luciano Calestini	UNICEF

Syria programme

Melinda Young	Oxfam GB, Syria crisis response manager
Claude Isakov	Save the Children International
Ken Baker	IOCC
Roy Azar	IOCC
Jen Connet	Warchild, Holland

Soha Menassa	CRS
Thomas Russell	British Red Cross
Catherine Whybrow	Merlin
Louise [ ]	Merlin
Haifa Ungapen	Christian Aid – consultant in Lebanon
Mohamed El Wael	Islamic Relief Head of Mission
Oliver Filler	Save the Children International
Phillida Strachan	World Vision International

Participants at DEC London roundtables:

Agency	**Attendee 25th July 2013**	**Attendee 6th September 2013**
ActionAid	Sarah Hughes	Dave Twydell Emergencies Funding Manager Rosie Oglesby Humanitarian Accountability Coordinator
Age UK	Amandine Allaire	-
BRC	Ellie Matthews DRSO	Ben Webster Disaster Response Programme Manager
CAFOD	Alan Thomlinson	Alan Thomlinson Emergency Programme Manager - Syria
CARE	Rachid Boumnijel Interim Emergency Response Team Leader	Chloe Day Emergency Programme Coordinator - Middle East
Christian Aid	Máiréad Collins Coree Alvarez-Steadman	Máiréad Collins Middle East Emergency Programme Officer – Syria Crisis Appeal
Concern	Bob Ruxton	-
DEC	Frances Crowley	-
Islamic Relief	Ahmed Moghazy	Sharar Mahyub Desk Officer Middle East
Merlin	Lizzy Berryman	Lizzy Berryman Head of Emergencies Richard Cobb Evidence and Impact Advisor
Oxfam	Kwok Lee	Kwok Lee Humanitarian Desk Officer
Plan UK	Helen Richards	Helen Richards Programme Officer, Disaster Risk Management Unit
SCUK	Sharon Bedaysee Finance and Grants Advisor	Kieran King Humanitarian Response Officer
Tearfund		Abigail Wardlaw
World Vision	David Bell	David Bell Emergency Programme Officer
Response Review Team		
DEC	Annie Devonport	Annie Devonport
Consultant	James Darcy	James Darcy
	Nabila Hameed	Nabila Hameed

Annex 2 The CARE Vulnerability Scorecard

Refugee case vulnerability is by CARE using the following Vulnerability Scorecard:

	Criteria	Value
Health	Disability	6
	Demonstrated severe medical condition	15
	Demonstrated mild medical condition	2
	Psycho-social disorder / trauma	3
Household	Elderly (60+) without family support	9
	Elderly (60+) with family support	6
	More than one family in household,with no income or only one source of income	6
	One family with no source of income or support	2
	More than 5 members in family	5
	Single-parent household (children under 15)	5
Women	Female-headed households	4
	Pregnant women and nursing mothers	4
	Women at risk of SGBV	15
Children	Children under 2 years of age	4
	Children at risk (child labour , GBV)	3
	Unaccompanied minors	15
Housing	Threats related to place residence	3
	Documented risk of eviction	15
Legal	Documented debt over 500JD	2
	Not receiving UNHCR/NGO assistance (includes: new arrivals not yet registered, refugees on waiting list for registration, newly registered refugees but not receiving assistance)	5

A case is assigned to a vulnerability category based on its total vulnerability score:

Total Score	Vulnerability Category	% of Cases	CARE Services
0 - 9	Vulnerable	19.4%	Information
10 – 14	Very Vulnerable	30.7%	Case Management
15+	Extremely Vulnerable	49.9%	Emergency Cash

ANNEX 3 Terms of reference for the Response Review

SYRIS CRISIS APPEAL - RESPONSE REVIEW
TERMS OF REFERENCE - UPDATED

1. Introduction

More than two years of conflict in Syria have caused over 70,000 deaths and rendered an estimated 4 million people in urgent need of humanitarian assistance, including 2.3 million IDPs. Infrastructure has been and continues to be destroyed including the destruction of hospitals, schools and homes. Normal life has completely broken down as people living in rebel held, Government controlled and contested areas are all affected.

People continue to flee across the borders into neighbouring countries and into North Africa. The latest figure put the number over 1.2 million with over 200,000 awaiting registration. This number is increasing every week. The population of refugees in both Jordan and Lebanon is around 450,000 people in each with 140,000 in Iraq.

The DEC launched an appeal to the public on March 21st after lengthy discussions with stakeholders. At the time of writing £13 million has been raised by both the DEC and member agencies. £5.4 million was allocated in the first funding round using the DEC formula which aims to provide the largest agencies with greater resources. Agencies are required to budget for between 30% - 100% of their allocation for the first 6 months. In this appeal 92% of funds have been budgeted for use in Phase 1. This reflects the scale of needs and the limited availability of institutional funds.

DEC Member Agency Programmes

All DEC 14 Member Agencies are responding to this crisis in one or more country. There are 10 programmes within Syria; 7 within Jordan; 3 in Lebanon and 1 in Iraq. The focus of this response review will be confined to Syria, Jordan and Lebanon.

Due to the sensitivities and security concerns, further details of DEC member agency programmes and funding will be made available to the consultants on signing the Contract of Agreement with the DEC.

2. Objectives of the DEC RESPONSE REVIEW:

To provide an overview of the response so far; identify gaps, priority areas and unmet needs from a geographic and sectorial perspective in order to inform Phase 2 plans.

To review Member Agencies' response to the crisis in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon against DAC criteria (excluding impact as it is too soon to assess this)

Given the context and challenges of the operating environments specific questions are:

Jordan and Lebanon

It will be important to visit the formal camps in Jordan and informal settlements in Lebanon but the focus of the review should be on the response supporting those in the urban areas and lessons that may be learned. It would be desirable to take a case study approach to examine in more depth the issues of meeting the needs of urban refugees.

1. How successfully have agencies' assessments enabled them to identify the most vulnerable and target the limited resources to meet these needs? Considerations should include specific vulnerable individuals such as elderly; disabled; women headed households and children as well as the identification of refugees in urban areas in need of support.

2. To what extent have beneficiaries been engaged at each stage of the intervention in terms of input and feedback? How have agencies adapted their accountability practices and complaints mechanisms to the context?

3. How are agencies addressing the challenge of community tensions arising from the large influx of refugees into Jordan and Lebanon?

Syria

4. What innovations or new systems have agencies developed to enable them to monitor their programmes within Syria?
5. Accountability – what processes have agencies employed for the selection of beneficiaries?

All countries

6. How are agencies that work through partners ensuring that accountability and other standards are being adhered to, particularly where these are relatively new?

7. How are agencies addressing the issue of coordination and what leadership are they demonstrating with regards to the challenges?

8. How robust are the processes that agencies have taken to identify the key risks to a quality disaster response and implemented suitable mitigating actions.[24]

3. Timing and Resources:

The field mission should take place ~~in early June~~ after Ramadan and Eid el Fitr in August 2013, from 12th onwards with a view to providing a draft report by the first week of September at the latest in order that the findings can inform DEC member agencies' phase 2 plans.

A meeting with members in UK prior to the field work will enable some of the Syria based programmes to be discussed. A further 3 days may be taken prior to departure for the review of agency plans and to make contact with Members' head offices. We expect the field mission to be a maximum of 12 days in the Region

A further 5 days after the fieldwork may be taken for report writing. Time should be allowed for a workshop in the UK after the first draft of the report has been prepared in order to take account of feedback.

The team leader will be supported by a representative from a DEC member agency and a member of the DEC secretariat staff.

4. Field Coordination:

One DEC Member Agency will be responsible for helping to coordinate the field mission in each country; Jordan [ActionAid], Lebanon [Save the Children] and Turkey [Islamic Relief], offer appropriate logistical support. They will be able to answer the consultants' questions. DEC Members, where appropriate, will ensure that key partner agencies meet the consultants and ensure the work funded by the DEC is open for scrutiny.

The lead agencies will organise two meetings of the DEC Agencies [or partners] in both Jordan & Lebanon; one at the start of the mission and one at the conclusion, to feedback finding. The first meeting will enable the Consultant/s to facilitate a review exercise; enable discussion on the cumulative coverage and impact of the DEC response; and on the specific issues outlined above. In addition to providing feedback, the final meeting could be used to identify any programme, policy, or advocacy issues that need attention and determine whether agencies are willing and able to take them forward.

[24] Consolidated risk assessments will be made available along with Member Agencies' Risk Registers.

5. COVERAGE

Geographic: field work in Jordan and Lebanon covering refugees in the urban areas and in camps. Remote access to Syria will be from Antakya, Beirut and London.

It is not the intention that all agencies will be covered by the mission. Following a review of previous DEC RTEs it was agreed that this mission should provide an overview of the response to date with a focus on fewer agencies in greater depth. At the time of writing the specific agencies have not been identified.

6. Other Coordination:

The DEC Secretariat will

- Indentify a lead agency for each country to provide field coordination ✓
- compile contact information in UK and Syria [where possible] Jordan and Lebanon [In progress]
- Make available Member Agency programme plans, budgets and risk registers

The consultant/s will arrange own visa, insurance and travel to the area.

7. Report:

The Consultant will be responsible for delivery of a draft report and Executive summary written in English and submitted 10 days following finalising the fieldwork. This will be shared with Member Agencies and a meeting of representatives set up at the DEC office in London with the consultant/s to discuss the findings prior to finalisation of the text.

The report must be confined to the specific objectives of the mission and should not be more than 25 pages for each country, including an executive summary. A map of the members' operations should be included in an appendix – with care and consent concerning detail on Syria due to security concerns. It is the intention of the DEC that the report will be published so a glossary of abbreviations and terms should be included. Appendices providing commentary on individual agencies' performance are welcome where appropriate but as not all agencies' programme will be reviewed this is not essential.

Recommendations should be based on empirical evidence gathered during the course of the mission, prioritised and limited to 10 key points. This mission is not a commentary on the overall international relief effort, but a timely snapshot of the efforts and behaviours of DEC members. The report should avoid generalisations or speculation as to the possible role of the DEC in current or future emergencies. If other issues do arise, discussion with the Secretariat will determine how they should be addressed.

FONT: the report should be provided in Ariel 11 to ensure accessibility.

The response review findings are those of the author and will be made available to the members as such. Any communication on the findings will make it clear that the report reflects the opinions of the authors alone and not the DEC Secretariat or its members. It is intended that the report will be made available on the DEC and ALNAP websites.

8. Consultant Profile

Consultants should be confident they are able to obtain the necessary visas to enter the countries and move around without inordinate delays.

Selection will be made against the profile outlined, the elements set out below as evidenced in the submission and the strength of the methodology presented, in particular propositions for remote access to Syria.

Key skills and abilities for the team:

Essential

- Previous experience in the evaluation of humanitarian programmes, including methodologies for engaging with affected populations
- A sound understanding of the context prevailing in the Middle East
- A good understanding of the DEC and appreciation of the Accountability Framework
- A sound knowledge of Humanitarian Principles, Red Cross Code of Conduct and Sphere standards
- An appreciation by the bidder of key constraints on the use of Sphere standards and the Red Cross/NGO code
- Clear written English

Desirable

- Previous experience of working in the Middle East and particularly Jordan, Lebanon and Syria