

3. Methodology

3.1 Scope of the Evaluation

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

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

3.2 Research Approach

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 2 Evaluation Interviewee Breakdown

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

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

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

3.3 Analytic Approach

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

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

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

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

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

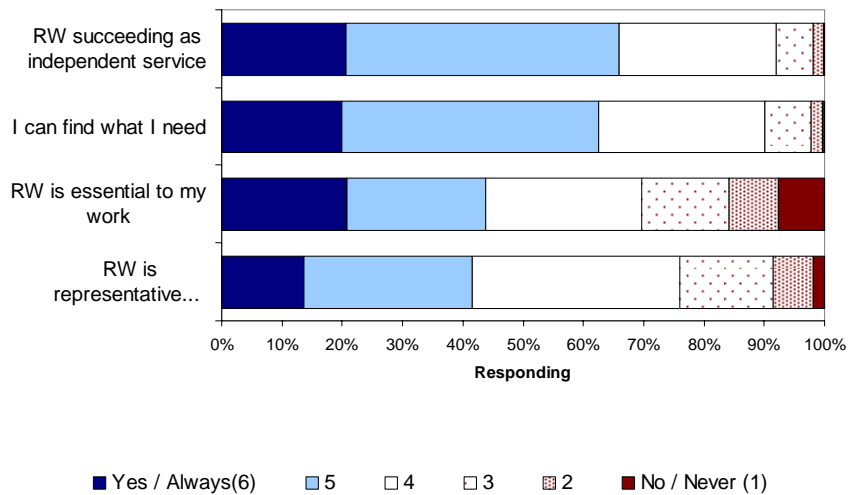


Figure 1: “ReliefWeb strives to be an independent humanitarian information service. Do you think it is succeeding?”

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

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

3.4 Stakeholders

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

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

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

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

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

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