

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. EVALUATION OBJECTIVES, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The objectives of this joint UNICEF/DFID evaluation were to:

- Examine the relevance and timeliness of preparedness planning, early intervention and the 90-Day plan, as well as the effectiveness and efficiency of management and operational support;
- Extract lessons to help UNICEF enhance its preparedness and its ability to respond in a meaningful and effective way to emergencies.

Over a month-long period, the Evaluation Team visited Sudan, including Khartoum and the three Darfur states, UNICEF Regional Office (RO) in Amman, UNICEF New York headquarters (NYHQ), and conducted telephone interviews with additional key UNICEF and DFID staff and external stakeholders. A desk study, including a review of financial and supply records, was carried out before and during the mission. Two feedback workshops took place during the evaluation: one in Khartoum (3-4/11/04) and one in Geneva (19/11/04). The findings and recommendations of this evaluation will be integrated into a wider learning process within UNICEF and their application will strengthen DFID/UNICEF working relations.

2. DARFUR: THE CRISIS NOBODY WANTED

Although in early 2003, initial signals indicated that a crisis was developing in Darfur, the international community was distracted by other international events, including the Naivasha Peace process in Sudan and the Kassala Floods. As the crisis gradually escalated in Darfur and the number of IDPs and refugees continued to rise throughout 2003 and early 2004, affected populations began to assemble in camps. In mid 2004, OCHA estimated that approximately 2 million people had been affected by the crisis, including IDPs, refugees in Chad and resident populations across a vast area. The challenges facing the international community were, and continue to be, overwhelming.

3. THE UNICEF RESPONSE

Prior to the crisis, UNICEF was involved in Darfur through its regular programmes. The UNICEF response to the Darfur emergency comprised four phases.

Early phase: from March/April 2003 to beginning October 2003

UNICEF was among the very few agencies present in Darfur, and responded early with small-scale interventions. Government restrictions, limited resources and insufficient implementing partners have impacted UNICEF's capacity to respond.

Intermediate phase: from November 2003 to April 2004

Security conditions worsened and access to a widely dispersed population was severely restricted. At this point, only limited emergency funding was available for Darfur. The UNICEF Country Office (CO) provided some relief where access and resources permitted. Awareness started to grow at NYHQ and Regional Office (RO) of the developing emergency situation.

Development of a fully-fledged response: May to September 2004

UNICEF activated the corporate trigger on 20 May 2004¹, declaring Darfur an organisation-wide emergency. UNICEF's response had expanded significantly by June/July 2004.

¹ The Corporate trigger is a mechanism aimed at mobilizing the whole institution to meet the challenges of a large scale emergency. It implies that responding to this crisis takes precedent over most of the other priorities.

Stabilisation phase: October 2004 to present day

Now that operations are relatively well resourced, both in human and financial terms, UNICEF has begun to consolidate its activities. The recent nomination of a UNICEF Special Representative for Darfur, with authority in both Sudan and Chad, has also had a positive impact on the Darfur operation. The challenge facing humanitarian agencies now is to maintain momentum, reinforce coordination activities, improve the quality of the response and lay down a long-term strategic plan.

4. FINDINGS

UNICEF was one of the few agencies present in Darfur during the early stages of the crisis. The early warning signals raised by UNICEF field staff triggered a small-scale response in 2003. Over 2003 and during the first part of 2004, the early UNICEF response, along with that of other UN agencies, NGOs and institutional donors, was by and large inadequate. This was due to a combination of factors, some internal (both institutional and country-specific) and some external. Following the activation of the corporate trigger, all emergency UNICEF systems prioritised support to the Darfur response.

Response per sector

In all sectors, the timeframe presented in the Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies (CCC) was irrelevant, as it sets the planning process for a rapid-onset emergency whereas the situation in Darfur is best described as a slow onset, protracted crisis. Yet in the long run, most CCC sectoral targets were met.

Child Protection. UNICEF child protection interventions focused on three components: analysis and monitoring of the situation, creation of a protective environment for children and provision of assistance for the establishment of Children's Spaces. Collaboration between protection and education sectors was very positive. UNICEF should be commended for having been the first UN agency to address SGBV in the emergency and for assuming the lead role in this difficult and sensitive sector. Problems were encountered in the reporting and treatment of GBV cases.

Education. Education is one of the 'success stories' of the Darfur operations. Over 240,000 children were taken care of in schools erected with support from UNICEF. The sector benefited from strong in-house expertise and from the recently published "Guidelines for education in emergency" (May 2004). Climatic conditions caused damage to temporary classroom materials, prompting a widespread need for repairs.

Water and Environmental Sanitation (WES). Water and Sanitation was a critical sector in the response. UNICEF's WES Section was not adequately prepared and had only a limited number of partners. Inappropriate technical choices in the early stages of the emergency significantly reduced the impact of UNICEF's response. The NYHQ WES section has been weakened over the years and it is no longer able to play a significant supportive role for field operations. WES teams stepped up interventions during implementation of the 90-Day Plan. At the end of the 90-Day plan, UNICEF and partners were providing drinkable water to 832,000 people and had constructed 28,000 latrines. These achievements, in conjunction with a large-scale hygiene campaign, contributed significantly to reducing the risk of epidemics. At the time of the evaluation, the status of services, i.e. number of functioning latrines/hand pumps, etc. was not known. Quality problems and maintenance issues indicated that a sustained effort in this sector is still required.

Health and Nutrition. The vaccination campaign implemented in Darfur and Eastern Chad was relatively successful, with 2,023,000 children vaccinated. However, the window of opportunity created by this vaccination campaign was not utilised for other programmes due to security restrictions. UNICEF was one of the main suppliers of drugs and medical equipment to over 100 health facilities run by NGOs and the Ministry of Health (MoH).

UNICEF supported a wide range of programmes for the management of malnutrition through various means, including the provision of specialised products and support to micro-nutrient deficiency. The significant decrease in malnutrition rates can be attributed to a combination of factors, including the

distribution of WFP food aid, high resilience levels amongst IDPs, WES interventions, improved control of most diseases and UNICEF/NGO nutrition interventions.

Management of the Emergency Programme

UNICEF staff has approached the response with dedication and commitment but their ability to respond was hampered by ineffective preparedness measures. The period from November 2003 until June 2004 was particularly difficult and frustrating. The Naivasha Peace process, constraints imposed by the Government of Sudan (GoS), insecurity and UN security regulations and lack of funds hindered UNICEF's and other agencies' capacity to deploy staff in the field and to access affected populations. Additionally, UNICEF operations were severely constrained by the lack of implementing partners in Darfur. Whilst UNICEF's efforts have visibly been gathering momentum, monitoring, reporting and overall sector-based analysis could have been improved. As a result of this situation, questions were raised regarding UNICEF's capacity to report adequately.

Despite the existing chain of responsibility, UNICEF Regional Office (RO), NYHQ Emergency Operations (EMOPS) and Programme Funding Office (PFO) were unable to play a strong advisory role and counsel the CO when necessary. Furthermore, offers of strategic advisory support were often not taken up by the CO.

Field offices struggled to obtain necessary operational equipment. Some offices have only recently become fully operationally equipped.

Resource mobilisation

Financial resources were slow in arriving, despite the early mobilisation of the Emergency Programme Fund (EPF) and, subsequently, the Central Emergency Reserve Fund (CERF). Prior to the declaration of an organisation-wide emergency, identification and strategic deployment of human resources was sluggish and insufficient personnel has proved to be one of the most significant constraints in the UNICEF response in Darfur. However, throughout June-August 2004 staffing levels greatly increased and this has already had a positive impact on UNICEF's coordination role, monitoring capacities and overall credibility amongst partners.

Coordination

UNICEF participated fully in United Nations Country Team (UNCT) meetings and assessments throughout the crisis. However, relations between UNICEF and other agencies (Office of the UN Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) and OCHA) became strained. UNICEF undertook the responsibility of coordinating several sectors - child protection, education, water and sanitation, as well as certain aspects of health and nutrition - yet did not have sufficient technical expertise to ensure effective coordination until July-September 2004. As the number of NGOs deployed in the region rose, so did UNICEF's coordination role become increasingly crucial.

Cross-border issues

Chad and Sudan Country Offices did not develop a joint operational strategy until the nomination of the UNICEF Special Representative for Darfur. Reintegrating the Darfur programme into the country programme remains a challenge for the future.

Communication and Advocacy

At end 2003 and in February 2004, UNICEF issued strong statements with regards to the growing violence affecting children and women in Darfur. Later, the CO adopted a communications policy with a fundraising and visibility perspective, as opposed to advocacy. Opportunities to disseminate UNICEF advocacy and programme activities via Arabic-speaking media were not pursued, despite the strategic

importance of circulating UNICEF messages in the region and the impact this could have had on both advocacy and fundraising.

DFID-UNICEF relations

Criticisms voiced by DFID at HQ and country level were coupled with targeted support (financial, HR, in-kind) to assist UNICEF in improving its response. The procurement process suffered significant delays as a result of inappropriate technical choices and incorrect specifications issued by the CO. Both partners should examine the added-value of DFID procuring on UNICEF's behalf.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The conclusive judgments on the UNICEF response to the Darfur crisis, with a special focus on the 90-Day Plan, have been summarised according to the OECD/DAC evaluative criteria.

Relevance. The sectors of intervention (child protection, education, WES, health and nutrition) were extremely relevant to the Darfur crisis, while the operational strategies and timeframe were in many instances less so. In 2003 and early 2004, Sudan was confronted with a series of emergencies which placed the CO under extreme pressure. This hampered CO's ability to appreciate the nature or magnitude of the crisis, which in turn weighed heavily on the shift from a development approach to a fully-fledged emergency response.

Effectiveness. The very early response in 2003 with initial provision of supplies from the contingency stockpile was effective, even though limited. Activities carried out over the period from November 2003 to May 2004 were far less so. Until the corporate trigger was activated, UNICEF recruitment processes could not support the emergency response. UNICEF was heavily reliant on external surge capacity, a risk for an institution with both operational and normative roles. Additionally, certain technical choices significantly limited programme effectiveness.

Efficiency. In the absence of operational partners, the use of private contractors (in June 2004) in drilling and latrine construction to meet increased targets proved cost-effective, although quality issues later became apparent. The June 2004 participatory field workshops significantly raised the implementation rate. Standby arrangements with certain institutional donors (for example, DFID) and NGOs are very efficient mechanisms, although there is a risk that UNICEF's corporate image may suffer. Attempting to mainstream emergency relief into development programmes at the expense of the emergency response capacity should be avoided.

Impact. After months of difficulties, the activities of UNICEF and its partners finally started to have an impact in most sectors of intervention during the 2004 rainy season. Achievements include better access to water, improved nutritional status, higher enrolment rate in schools, etc. However, relatively weak monitoring systems, limited UNICEF's capacity to measure progress and assess impact. Continuing violence against women and children seems to indicate that the initial UNICEF advocacy has, like many other similar efforts, been largely ignored.

Coordination and coherence. UNICEF's initial performance in coordination does point to a global weakness in UNICEF emergency coordination capacity (see Appendix 7). The lack of leadership on protection issues in the UN system made the articulation of child protection activities with the rest of the protection sector more complicated. Internal coordination between the different stakeholders within the UNICEF structure has not always been optimal. Chad and Sudan coordination is still at its early stage. The recent nomination of a UNICEF Special Representative for Darfur and Eastern Chad and the establishment of a dedicated team should ease the burden on the CO.

Sustainability

Whether sustainability is prioritised in Darfur operations is likely to depend on how situation evolves. There are three likely scenarios: firstly, the situation continues to deteriorate with increasing demand for

emergency relief; secondly, the status quo is maintained and interventions will, broadly speaking, focus on care and maintenance; or thirdly, the situation stabilises creating ad-hoc requirements for rehabilitation. Expansion of the programmes to as yet inaccessible areas, support to non-IDP affected populations and quality control represent key challenges. The relatively high level of assistance provided to IDPs will make it more difficult for them to return to their villages, underlining the importance of routinely providing support to host communities. Certain issues, such as the importance of a response with a longer-term outlook, of ensuring a degree of sustainability and of taking the fate of the resident populations into account, did not receive sufficient attention during the early phases of the operation. Planning an exit strategy, programme stabilisation and a post-emergency strategy are nevertheless recommended good practice.

In conclusion

The difficulties experienced by UNICEF in its management of the Darfur crisis have raised some questions about the agency's capacity to deliver and coordinate emergency operations. The quality of the relationship between DFID and UNICEF has suffered to a certain extent, despite clear improvement in UNICEF's performance from June 2004 onwards. However, this evaluation exercise proves that both parties are committed to restoring confidence levels.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following table summarises the main recommendations of the evaluation.

Table 1: Main recommendations

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNICEF	
Recommendations to enhance UNICEF Emergency Response Capacity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CCCs should be revised, especially the timeframe, which is not adapted to slow onset crises and protracted conflicts 2. UNICEF should continue to improve its early warning and preparedness system by strengthening OPSCEN and EMOPS Geneva, creating an ERT, boosting its surge capacity and developing standard operational procedures. 3. UNICEF should strengthen RO and EMOPS roles in their guidance role to CO. 4. The creation of a dedicated emergency team at CO level should be compulsory procedure in times of emergency. 5. UNICEF should continue to develop and promote strong advocacy tools regarding children in war and SGBV. 6. WES NYHQ emergency staffing capacity should be increased urgently. WES NYHQ should ensure the WES Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan of Action 2004-2005 targets are financed and met. 7. The question of whether UNICEF should become operational in circumstances where there is a lack of partners should be explored further.

Operational recommendations for the management of Emergency Programme	<p>8. Greater attention should be paid to systems aimed at monitoring the crisis situation and how operations are running, as they provide essential information for programme management.</p> <p>9. The importance of sector and inter-agency coordination should be acknowledged with an appropriate level of resource allocation.</p>
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CURRENT DARFUR OPERATION	
General recommendations	<p>10. CO should further explore means of gathering information on inaccessible areas. CO should continue to ensure that all major planning exercises include Zonal Offices as well as partners.</p> <p>11. Focus on quality should be supported by an overall improvement of monitoring and reporting systems.</p> <p>12. A follow-up multidisciplinary evaluation exercise to assess progress should be included in 2005 Action Plan.</p>
Cross-border issues	<p>13. The CO should continue to regularly update contingency planning on a cross-border basis. Significant energy has still to be invested in the Chad/Sudan coordination.</p> <p>14. CO should ensure that joint planning meetings between technical sectors are held regularly for information exchange and identification of cross-sector synergies.</p>
SECTOR-BASED RECOMMENDATIONS	
Child protection	<p>15. Child Protection should be integrated into the overall protection coordination system.</p> <p>16. CO and Protection Section should ensure that protection concerns are integrated into preparedness planning and assessments.</p> <p>17. Emergency coordinator and Protection Section should ensure that protection is integrated into existing sector intervention plans.</p> <p>18. CO and Protection Section should engage in dialogue with AU troops on child protection, SGBV and HIV/AIDS, in order to reduce the risk of improper behaviour (as per evaluations in Guinea, Sierra Leone, Cambodia, etc.)</p>
Education	<p>19. ZO and Education Section should define a set of criteria for the location of temporary classrooms in order to relieve or avoid raising tensions between IDP and host communities.</p> <p>20. CO and Education Section should be more involved in seeking a practical solution to the teachers' salary issue.</p>
Water and sanitation	<p>21. Schools should be provided with adequate health and WES support</p> <p>22. The CO WES and Supply Sections should monitor the quality of hand pump supplies.</p> <p>23. CO WES should examine requirements for maintenance and repair of existing water and sanitation systems, including, where relevant, the social organisation that would be responsible for undertaking these activities.</p>

Health	<p>24. Information on the options for the design of a regularly updated primary health kit should be disseminated to NGOs and other partners.</p> <p>25. Health Section should a) develop a strategy for monitoring health economics in order to reduce the risk of system abuse, for example, IDPs having to pay for drugs and medical care, and b) strengthen its capacity to advise the government and the affected population when the situation has become sufficiently stable to return to a cost-recovery system in healthcare.</p>
Nutrition	<p>26. UNICEF's position in the nutrition sector has to be strengthened at all levels, including HQ and RO.</p> <p>27. HQ should press for systematic UNICEF involvement in inter-agency missions related to nutrition. A senior in-house nutritionist should be assigned to these missions in order to retain a leading role.</p>
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE UNICEF/DFID PARTNERSHIP	
	<p>28. Diversified and coordinated mechanisms to ensure a good dialogue with DFID should be established, with the PFO retaining its prominent role.</p>