

Evaluation summary

Introduction

In January 2007, UNHCR issued a document titled 'Policy framework and implementation strategy: UNHCR's role in support of an enhanced humanitarian response to situations of internal displacement'. The primary purpose of this document was to set out the key principles and objectives guiding UNHCR's engagement with internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the context of the UN's humanitarian reform process, and in particular, within the new institutional arrangements known as the Cluster Approach.

This real-time evaluation (RTE) report is one of a series which seeks to analyse and assess UNHCR's initial experience in the implementation of the Cluster Approach, with the aim of identifying lessons learned and effective practices which may be drawn upon as that approach is rolled-out to other operations. The evaluation process also provided an early opportunity to review field operations in the light of the IDP policy framework referred to above, together with UNHCR's policy paper on 'The Protection of IDPs and the Role of UNHCR', issued in February 2007.

The countries selected for evaluation are those in which the Cluster Approach was first activated (Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Somalia and Uganda), together with Chad, where a 'cluster-like' arrangement was in place at the time when the first RTE was undertaken.

Evaluation process

This evaluation report is based on a mission to Uganda undertaken from 11 to 18 June 2007. The evaluation team consisted of three UNHCR staff members: Claire Bourgeois (IDP Advisory Team), Jeff Crisp (Head, Evaluation and Policy Development Service) and Neill Wright (Senior Coordinator IDP Operations). The team visited IDP locations and held consultations with beneficiaries in Gulu, Kitgum, Pader and Liria districts, as well as at Kiryandongo refugee camp in Masindi.

In both Kampala and northern Uganda, meetings were held with a wide range of stakeholders, including UNHCR staff, representatives of national and local government, the IASC and UN Country Teams, the NGO community and the International Committee of the Red Cross. Workshops on the humanitarian reform process were conducted for UNHCR staff in both Kampala and northern Uganda, and initial findings and recommendations from the evaluation were presented to UNHCR personnel and other stakeholders immediately prior to the mission's departure from Uganda. Those recommendations are summarized below.

Recommendations

Operational strategy

- UNHCR and the humanitarian community must acknowledge the profound problems that continue to affect northern Uganda, recognizing that an operational strategy based on the assumption of a full and speedy return of IDPs to their home sites will be neither appropriate nor effective.
- In accordance with analysis presented by the Emergency Relief Coordinator to the Security Council, UNHCR and the humanitarian community must adopt an operational strategy that gives equal and simultaneous attention to IDPs in mother camps, new sites and home sites.
- Additional efforts should be made to gain a fuller understanding of IDP patterns of movement, needs, intentions and aspirations. In addition to an expanded profiling process, wider consultation with beneficiaries is needed, based on the principles of Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming.

The Cluster Approach

- Renewed efforts are needed by all Clusters to improve the coverage and consistency of the humanitarian operation and to ensure that minimum standards are met.
- UNHCR Kampala and the Global Shelter Cluster should identify and seek to fill the gaps that exist in the area of shelter.
- Immediate steps should be taken to train relevant personnel in the art of facilitation, focusing on the need to ensure that Cluster meetings are kept to a minimum and that they are brief and action-oriented.
- UNHCR, OCHA and other members of the IASC Country Team should review and enhance the approach currently taken to the issues of information management, inter-cluster coordination and cross-cutting humanitarian issues.
- UNHCR should strive to ensure that the accountability mechanisms incorporated in the Cluster Approach are activated when necessary, so as to ensure that cluster leadership responsibilities are fully and effectively exercised.

UNHCR staff and structure

- UNHCR should ensure that all staff members in Uganda are familiar with the contents of relevant policy and guidance documents relating to IDPs, the Cluster Approach and the broader process of humanitarian reform.
- The Office should strive to ensure that new IDP operations deploy a critical mass of experienced personnel, that staff turnover is limited and that new and junior employees receive appropriate induction training.

- UNHCR should review both the number and nature of the staff currently deployed in Uganda so as to ensure that the Office can effectively discharge its responsibilities towards IDPs and refugees.
- Staff members deployed in operations where the Cluster Approach has been activated should receive dedicated training and support in the area of cluster facilitation.
- UNHCR personnel should refrain from any actions that call into question the commitment of the Office to an enhanced inter-agency humanitarian response.
- Further efforts should be made to ensure that the UNHCR programme in Uganda is effectively integrated, so as to avert the risk of a structural gap between the IDP and refugee components of that programme.

Protection Cluster

- Drawing upon experience from Uganda and other countries, UNHCR should develop a closer working relationship with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in IDP situations, working in close association with ICRC and other agencies with protection mandates.
- UNHCR and the Protection Cluster in Uganda should document and analyze the 'freedom of movement' initiative undertaken in Uganda, so as to identify lessons learned from the experience and to assess its applicability in other IDP situations.
- UNHCR should ensure that the impact of the operational activities undertaken by the Protection Cluster is effectively monitored, recorded and reported to donors.
- The Office should ensure that UNHCR's involvement in operational protection activities is discussed by the Protection Cluster, so as to define and place a limit on the initiatives that UNHCR is able to support.
- As the IDP operation in Uganda evolves, the Protection Cluster should give increased attention to the related issues of land disputes and access to justice, including civilian policing, ensuring that these issues are approached in a gender-sensitive manner.
- UNHCR and the IASC Country Team should examine and strive to implement the recommendations of the recent Women's Commission report, 'Listening to youth: the experiences of young people in northern Uganda', especially those relating to the issues of education, livelihoods and cultural activities.

Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster

- CCCM activities in Uganda must be adequately resourced, extended to all locations and undertaken in close cooperation with local authorities and established coordination mechanisms.

- The CCCM Cluster should elaborate upon the notion of ‘viable communities’ so as to define the concept more precisely, to establish benchmarks for the attainment of this objective and to assess the applicability of the concept to other IDP situations.
- There is a continued need for the development and dissemination of the CCCM strategy, supported by effective cluster leadership and field staff training.
- In the context of the UNHCR staffing review proposed by this evaluation, special attention should be given to the deployment of sufficient personnel in the areas of community services, logistics, programme and administration.

National and local authorities

- Greater efforts are required on the part of the humanitarian community to ensure the engagement of national and local actors in countries where the Cluster Approach is activated.
- In the specific circumstances of Uganda, such a strategy should include the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding between the IASC Country Team and the government on IDP issues; additional local capacity-building efforts; the development of district level IDP plans; the introduction of new registration requirements for international NGOs; and new efforts to ensure the engagement of local NGOs and CBOs.

Sustainable solutions

- Given the scale of the IDP problem in northern Uganda and the absence of development and reconstruction activities, donor states should continue to provide generous support to humanitarian activities in the area.
- Donor states should also use their influence to ensure that northern Uganda is effectively incorporated in the country’s development plans and programmes.
- The IASC Country Team should encourage and assist the authorities to finalize the Peace, Development and Reconciliation Programme for the north of the country and to fully implement Uganda’s national IDP policy.
- The Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator and IASC Country Team should ensure that the activities of the Early Recovery Cluster are commensurate with the challenge posed by the evolution of the IDP operation in northern Uganda.
- UNHCR should ensure that it is not drawn into early recovery activities that lie beyond the mandate, competence and resources of the Office.
- In view of the fluidity of the situation in northern Uganda, UNHCR should exercise considerable caution in developing an ‘exit strategy’. There is a particular need for the Office to examine the practical application of the benchmarks that have been established in relation to durable solutions for IDPs.