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## Abbreviations

<table>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFSU</td>
<td>Administration Field Support Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>AO</td>
<td>Administrative Office</td>
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<td>ASB</td>
<td>Administrative Service Branch</td>
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<td>CAP</td>
<td>Consolidated Appeal Process</td>
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<td>CERF</td>
<td>Central Emergency Response Fund</td>
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<td>CHF</td>
<td>Common Humanitarian Fund</td>
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<td>CMCS</td>
<td>Civil-Military Coordination Section</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRD</td>
<td>Coordination and Response Division</td>
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<tr>
<td>DAC</td>
<td>Development Assistance Committee</td>
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<td>DRR</td>
<td>Disaster Risk and Reduction</td>
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<td>ELSU</td>
<td>Emergency Logistics Support Unit</td>
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<td>ERC</td>
<td>Emergency Relief Coordinator</td>
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<td>ERF</td>
<td>Emergency Response Fund</td>
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<td>ERRF</td>
<td>Emergency Relief &amp; Response Fund</td>
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<td>ES</td>
<td>Evaluation Section</td>
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<td>GenCAP</td>
<td>Gender Standby Capacity</td>
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<td>HC</td>
<td>Humanitarian Coordinator</td>
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<td>HRF</td>
<td>Humanitarian Response Fund</td>
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<td>IASC</td>
<td>Inter-Agency Standing Committee</td>
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<td>IFRC</td>
<td>International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies</td>
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<td>IRIN</td>
<td>Integrated Regional Information Networks</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCDA</td>
<td>Military and Civil Defence Assets</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>non-governmental organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>OCHA</td>
<td>Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs</td>
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<td>OIOS</td>
<td>Office of Internal Oversight Services (United Nations)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ProCAP</td>
<td>Protection Standby Capacity</td>
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<tr>
<td>ROWCA</td>
<td>Regional Office for West and Central Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMT</td>
<td>Senior Management Team</td>
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<td>TA</td>
<td>Transformative Agenda</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>UNEG</td>
<td>United Nations Evaluation Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNMISS</td>
<td>United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan</td>
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<td>USG</td>
<td>Under-Secretary-General</td>
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I. Introduction


The main objective is to present highlights from OCHA’s evaluation work in 2011 and 2012. Evaluation topics are presented in table 1 below.

The report is structured as follows: Section II provides an overview of OCHA’s evaluation system; section III presents highlights, key findings and lessons synthesized from all OCHA evaluations in 2011 and 2012; section IV provides more detailed findings from OCHA’s 2011 and 2012 internal evaluations; section V presents details on some of the follow-up to previous evaluations; section VI discusses OCHA’s role in building partnerships for the evaluation of humanitarian action; and section VII provides a brief outlook of the evaluation function for 2013 and 2014.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Type</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Externally mandated evaluations</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Inter-Agency Standing Committee Real-Time Evaluation Haiti, Phase 2 (2011)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Inter-Agency Standing Committee Real-Time Evaluation on Pakistan Floods (2011)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Inter-Agency Standing Committee Real-Time Evaluation Horn of Africa regional response (2012)</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>Evaluation of OCHA’s Regional Office for West and Central Africa (2012)</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>Evaluation of OCHA’s Role in Civil-Military Coordination (2012)</td>
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II. OCHA’s Evaluation Function

Current policy framework

Evaluation is vital in order to implement OCHA’s “managing for results” agenda. The goal of OCHA’s evaluation function is to generate institutional and systemic learning, leading to improved organizational practice for OCHA, the United Nations and the humanitarian system.

Reflecting its unique mandate as a coordination entity, OCHA conducts evaluations not only to assess the relevance and impact of its coordination activities, but to help coordinate evaluation activity for the entire humanitarian system.

In 2010, the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) approved a new evaluation policy framework to govern the conduct of OCHA’s evaluation activities. The policy framework seeks to instil a rigorous, systematic approach to conducting evaluations in OCHA and identifying lessons learned for the organization’s benefit.

Evaluations play an important role within the organization by helping to build a body of cumulative evidence to support policy development, management accountability and continuous learning. Evaluations also help to strengthen OCHA’s guidance and performance reporting systems. OCHA’s Evaluation Policy is closely aligned with the United Nations Norms and Standards for Evaluation, which the UN General Assembly endorsed in 2012.

Under the current policy framework, evaluations in OCHA fall into two major categories:

- **Externally mandated evaluations** are initiated at the request of bodies external to OCHA, such as the United Nations General Assembly or the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). They typically focus on policy and performance issues related to the humanitarian community. These reports are subject to full public disclosure and are published on OCHA online, OCHA’s public website.

- **Internally mandated evaluations** are specific to OCHA. They focus on institutional performance issues and are undertaken at the ERC’s request. These reports are used for internal purposes and are not subject to full disclosure.

III. Highlights, findings and lessons for OCHA from all biennium evaluation reports

This section presents a synthesis of evaluation results based on key highlights and broad themes that emerge from the biennium evaluation set. It includes results from internally and externally mandated evaluations. Findings are synthesized in relation to OCHA’s performance in the five core organizational functions: coordination, humanitarian financing, information management, advocacy and policy development.

Given the inter-agency character of OCHA’s evaluation function, many evaluation findings from the biennium relate to the broader collective results of the humanitarian system and are not necessarily exclusive to OCHA’s performance in its core functional areas. Insofar as inter-agency evaluations of humanitarian response focus on large emergencies, performance and issues that emerge may not be generalizable to all emergency contexts. Conditions, for example, may differ in the case of smaller-scale humanitarian emergencies, which are presently not covered by any systematic inter-agency evaluation procedures.
General findings

Seen in their entirety, the biennium evaluations confirm a picture of OCHA as a critical actor in the humanitarian system—one whose role remains highly relevant to a wide range of actors. The organization implements its mandate in a highly complex environment, and the biennium evaluations underline how OCHA's overall effectiveness in coordination is significantly influenced by the goodwill of humanitarian agencies to coordinate their efforts. The broad picture is one of important coordination gains that have been achieved through the implementation of reforms, many of which have been led by OCHA. The trajectory for coordination is generally headed in an upward direction. Cluster coordination in particular has undergone significant improvements in terms of sectorial coverage and joint planning, while pooled humanitarian financing instruments have strengthened coordination at the country level.

The biennium evaluations also reveal that OCHA continues to struggle in significant areas. Evaluations continue to point to critical weaknesses in the strategic realm, which are seen to be caused by many factors including a dearth of senior-level staff at critical moments in key positions, as well as a lack of strategic vision that goes beyond tactics and process. Leadership gaps remain one of the strongest cross-cutting themes within the evaluation set, and this concern is reflected within the IASC’s Transformative Agenda (TA).

At a broad level, OCHA faces certain structural challenges. For example, the evaluations revealed significant weaknesses in OCHA’s relationship with UNDP, most notably in preparedness, recovery and pooled funds management. Many of OCHA’s structural challenges were seen in the reports to arise from a lack of clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

Human resources issues were another major cross-cutting concern within the biennium evaluation set. Reports mentioned problems related to delayed recruitments, slow deployments, chronic skill deficits among staff and occasional inappropriate staff deployments during major humanitarian responses. OCHA has made significant improvements in human resource management over the same time period. The field vacancy rate, for example, reduced from 16 per cent in 2011 to 7.3 per cent by December 2012. In addition, the average recruitment time is currently 58 per cent faster than the 2010 OCHA-wide average.

Specific findings related to OCHA’s core functional areas

Coordination

Coordination challenges are explicitly addressed in the IASC real-time evaluations (IASC-RTEs) of the Horn of Africa drought crisis, the Haiti earthquake and the Pakistan floods. Some key messages from the biennium evaluations regarding coordination are as follows:

The number of humanitarian actors is growing

The number of operational partners in humanitarian response has significantly increased. In some crises, the large number of actors has overwhelmed the system. At times, this resulted in parallel coordination structures. For example, coordination challenges appeared between newly emerging humanitarian actors and existing IASC inter-agency coordination mechanisms during the Horn of Africa drought crisis. In response, OCHA initiated a partnership with the Humanitarian Forum to facilitate dialogue with non-traditional actors who may not be familiar with existing humanitarian coordination structures. Developing a more inclusive humanitarian system continues to be a work in progress and requires ongoing dialogue to ensure that OCHA’s coordination processes create space for new humanitarian actors globally.

An identified good practice:

ROWCA established a strong partnership with IFRC and the Economic Community of West African States. This has been effective in strengthening links between the regional organization and the international humanitarian community active in the region.

The overall effectiveness of inter-agency coordination remains variable

The effectiveness of inter-agency coordination has remained variable in the different responses evaluated during the period. In Pakistan, coordination between the National Disaster Management Authority and the humanitarian system evolved into parallel mechanisms in the case of some clusters. In Ethiopia and Kenya, IASC coordination structures were more successfully adapted to support Government coordination systems, thereby strengthening national capacities. In particular, strategic support by UN agencies and NGOs to Ethiopia’s food security and relief system played a highly positive role in leveraging the Government’s strategy and capability. However, effective coordination systems were not as successfully established in Somalia, where contingency plans for the drought were inadequately developed.
Addressing regional and subnational dimensions of coordination are essential

Evaluations revealed continued weaknesses in coordination at the regional and sub-national levels. The regional Horn of Africa IASC RTE concluded that although the crisis was regional and had clear regional implications, insufficient attention was given to developing a regional planning and fundraising strategy. These weaknesses contributed to a slower roll-out of the overall response than might otherwise have been the case.

The cluster system in Somalia, including the Nairobi-based clusters, made important efforts to support field-level hubs and clusters in Somalia under difficult and dangerous circumstances, however, suffered from the practical difficulties of rolling out an effective field network. Coordination mechanisms matured over time in Pakistan, from the national level through to districts, but also differed largely from province to province and across clusters. Most of Kenya’s coordination systems performed well when they were supported by international agencies, although significant weaknesses tended to emerge at the field level.

Meaningful engagement with disaster-affected people and national structures remains a challenge

Evaluations continue to underline the limited engagement of the coordination system with disaster-affected people and national actors that limits the effectiveness of humanitarian response. In Pakistan, for example, Government and non-governmental local capacities have generally not been involved in providing response. Little advantage was taken of civil society, given that knowledge of the local context was typically poor. The response in Haiti was hindered by the absence of genuine two-way communication. Haitians similarly felt marginalized during the earthquake response and became critical of many humanitarian actors’ work and of the overall aid effort. The response in Kenya did not adequately incorporate representatives from affected communities within the sectoral working groups, even though their knowledge and networks could have been a significant asset.

Managing transitions effectively requires a broader coordination framework

Particular challenges were identified in coordination during the tail-end phases of humanitarian responses, as well as during disaster preparedness and early recovery/transition. In Pakistan, issues arising due to the significant scale and geographical scope of the crises were exacerbated by a lack of disaster preparedness. In Haiti, coordination and planning mechanisms could have been better adapted to the context of the transition. There was a disparity in the level of resources across humanitarian, development and government actors that blurred their roles and responsibilities. An overall aid-coordination framework that integrated all phases of assistance was not adequately developed. Addressing these issues posed a particular difficulty, insofar as it would have entailed adding new activities, responsibilities and operational presence to OCHA’s already full plate.

Information Management

Effective information management is critical for coordination

The evaluations continue to underline how information management remains critical for successful coordination, and forms the basis for decision-making, resource mobilization, programme steering and accountability. Generally speaking, evaluation findings point to a set of recurrent issues. Notwithstanding some positive examples, OCHA’s efforts during the biennium to set up information management systems were broadly found to have had limited impact at the country level, mainly due to weak information management capacities within the clusters.

Information management practices were positive in the case of Ethiopia: during the Horn of Africa crisis, needs assessments adequately reflected the situation on the ground and prompted responses that largely addressed the needs of the most vulnerable people. In Somalia, however, information from the 3W/4W mechanism was patchy and unreliable, reflecting the overall challenges faced by the humanitarian system when trying to account for all of...
its basic activities. In Kenya, information management tools struggled to maintain a dynamic information-sharing function. Time and effort were spent trying to collect information that rapidly became obsolete or that lacked the required degree of specificity.

OCHA’s website was widely regarded as an excellent resource during the Horn of Africa crisis, and much useful information was recorded there for internal and external audiences. However, evaluation findings indicate that a more efficient approach could have been followed by dedicating time and attention exclusively to recording, communicating and correcting information for which there was certainty of use and credibility. Overall, despite significant efforts in the Sahel crises to produce data and analysis, and to use these for programming and decision-making purposes, some disagreement remained on the severity of the crisis, the speed of the recovery and priority areas.

**Humanitarian Financing**

Three evaluations of humanitarian financing have been conducted during the biennium: the UN General Assembly mandated the five-year Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) evaluations, an evaluation of Common Humanitarian Funds (CHFs) and the Global Emergency Response Funds (ERFs) evaluation.

**Pooled funds continue to bring significant value-added for coordination**

Evaluation reports were generally positive regarding the value and effectiveness of OCHA’s performance in humanitarian financing. Overall, humanitarian financing instruments have been found to facilitate greater volumes and shorter disbursement times of humanitarian funding flows to emergencies. CERF in particular has increased the predictability of funding, which seriously undermined the performance of humanitarian programmes before 2006. CERF has also increased coverage within humanitarian responses, particularly by supporting less well-funded common services, such as transport or communication. CHF and ERF mechanisms have also positively contributed to improvements in the humanitarian system’s ability to address critical needs.

The use of CHFs and ERFs has significantly increased the funding amounts and the number of countries covered, and has contributed to more collaborative and inclusive working practices. There is evidence that pooled funds have contributed to: 1) strengthening the HC’s leadership; 2) the coordination role of the cluster system and 3) building partnerships. The CHF and ERF evaluations indicate that the funds are increasingly being asked to fund preparedness, resilience, transition or recovery projects, but that their current funding levels are generally insufficient for anything other than clear humanitarian purposes.

**An identified good practice:**

The Regional Office for Middle East and North Africa publishes quarterly funding updates of aid to the region, that feature humanitarian aid from emerging donors in the region. Other offices could adopt this practice to increase visibility of aid from sources other than that of Western donors.

**Pooled funds have successfully broadened their donor base**

More than 120 countries have contributed to CERF over the past five years, some 35 of which have been CERF recipients. More non-traditional donors have emerged in recent years. Saudi Arabia’s contribution to the Haiti ERF following the 2010 earthquake has made the fund the largest single ERF ever; more than 60 per cent of funds received by the ERF in Pakistan have been from six non-traditional/non-OECD donors. Nevertheless, humanitarian donorship remains relatively concentrated overall, with 80 per cent of CERF and ERF funding still coming from traditional donors.

**Governance and accountability mechanisms remain a significant challenge**

Governance and accountability are regarded as the most challenging issues for pooled funds. The engagement of advisory and review boards of country-based pooled funds is often limited, and more work needs to be done to strengthen their roles. CERF depends on internal assessments and monitoring of recipient agencies, and neither HCs nor OCHA has the authority to exercise oversight over them. The CERF evaluation indicates that in countries where there is a locally managed CHF, CERF funding integrates well into the joint planning and monitoring of activities. There is scope for further integration of these processes in countries with ERFs.
Building more effective monitoring and evaluation systems remains a priority

Limited country-level monitoring and evaluation is a significant weakness of the country-based pooled funds. Monitoring still focuses on whether or not outputs have been achieved, rather than on beneficiaries, quality of outputs or broader outcomes. Independent evaluations or reviews of CERF-funded activities are infrequent and presently left to the discretion of recipient UN agencies. The size and project base of CHF and ERF grants do not lend themselves to individual evaluations. However, there is scope for thematic or sectoral evaluation of commonly funded project types, which is starting to be explored.

Advocacy

OCHA has no clear advocacy strategy or priorities

Advocacy was not a primary focus of any OCHA evaluation conducted during the biennium, but the subject did arise in the Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) evaluation and the three IASC Real-Time evaluations (RTEs). The lack of any specific examination into OCHA’s advocacy function and evidence of what does and does not work limits OCHA’s ability to act consistently and coherently in this area.

For example, IRIN’s capacity to support OCHA’s advocacy mandate and priorities was constrained by a lack of articulation of the actual advocacy priorities. Partly because advocacy is mainstreamed in OCHA, the evaluation found that there was no clear focal point within headquarters to develop strategic positions. The IASC Real-Time evaluations (RTEs) in Pakistan also raised specific issues around advocacy. Difficulties were identified in relation to linking information on the humanitarian situation to advocacy efforts, developing common advocacy positions among humanitarian actors and using advocacy to highlight important issues with host Governments.

Policy Development

Issues related to policy development, gender and guidance were touched upon in the evaluations of ROWCA, emergency preparedness, global ERFs, GenCap/ProCap and the IASC RTEs.

There is evidence of a growing awareness of gender

Evaluation findings indicate that the awareness, understanding and acceptance of gender among humanitarian actors have increased, as has the inclusion of gender issues in humanitarian planning documents. OCHA has encouraged the participation of gender specialists in assessments, and it has contributed to the development of gender markers for better mainstreaming gender-equality programming in humanitarian action. However, progress is required in standardizing the Gender Marker and gender-equality programming within the CAP guidelines, needs assessment, CHAP and cluster response plans. The Gender Marker has been formally introduced in ERFs, but there is concern regarding whether it is influencing the design and delivery of programmes, or whether it is seen as a compliance-related element of application. CERF applications now require information on beneficiaries’ gender, and the Humanitarian Response Fund guidelines that require agencies applying for funding to outline their work in this area. There were also good examples of practical measures aimed at women, including targeting pregnant and lactating mothers in food programming and livelihoods activities aimed at women.

An identified good practice:

The drought response in Ethiopia sought to take gender issues into account in several areas. Good examples include the Productive Safety Net Programme, that has gender equity as one of its eight principles, and the Humanitarian Response Fund guidelines that require agencies applying for funding to outline their work in this area. There were also good examples of practical measures aimed at women, including targeting pregnant and lactating mothers in food programming and livelihoods activities aimed at women.

There are limited capacities to develop and apply guidance materials

Evaluation findings identified gaps in relation to OCHA’s capacity to develop, disseminate and make use of guidance. In the 2012 Sahel crisis, ROWCA’s effectiveness was impeded by a lack of guidance on OCHA’s role and responsibilities when supporting a Regional Humanitarian Coordinator in a large-scale regional emergency. However, there has been progress in advancing the normative agenda on civil-military coordination in natural disasters and conflict situations. Further areas to be defined include protection of civilians, the police, national military forces and humanitarian space issues in integrated missions. Compliance with civil-military coordination guidelines in the field varies, and it is seen as highly dependent on the existence of standard operating procedures and country-specific guidelines developed and accepted by in-country stakeholders.

The relevance of some guidance materials can also be enhanced. For example, the OCHA disaster preparedness evaluation found that the policy instruction has not been used in the field. Field staff also expressed the need for an additional implementation policy, or guidance on how to implement the Preparedness Policy Instruction, to help all
country offices operate in a coordinated manner. The inclusion of preparedness in the Transformative Agenda has created high expectations, and additional guidance is urgently required on how to articulate operational goals and to work with Governments.

IV. HIGHLIGHTS FROM OCHA’S 2011-2012 INTERNALLY MANDATED EVALUATIONS

OCHA introduced internal evaluations in 2010 to underpin and support learning and accountability within the context of the 2010-2013 OCHA Strategic Framework.

Internally mandated evaluations are commissioned by OCHA senior management, and they seek to assess OCHA’s internal processes, activities and achievements. Internal evaluations make recommendations for improvement. During the 2010-2011 biennium, OCHA’s Senior Management Team commissioned five internal evaluations. The highlights are presented in this section.

EVALUATION OF OCHA’S GLOBAL CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION CAPACITIES

This evaluation: 1) reviewed OCHA’s humanitarian civil-military coordination function, activities and resources; 2) provided information on progress; 3) and collected good practices in implementing the function. The evaluation took place between March and December 2012. It incorporated field missions to Afghanistan, Haiti, Colombia, South Sudan and Somalia; desk reviews of Pakistan and Libya; stakeholder surveys; and interviews with more than 200 key informants.

The evaluation found that at the conceptual level, OCHA, through its Civil-Military Coordination Section (CMCS), has helped to create stronger civil-military coordination guidelines and policies, and enhanced dialogue, advocacy and training. OCHA made efforts to increase its reach on United Nations Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination (UN-CMCoord) through global and regional partnerships. Stakeholders see these efforts as valuable and as contributing to an improved global humanitarian coordination system. At the operational level, the evaluation concluded that the OCHA UN-CMCoord function is achieving results on the ground, such as improved coordination of Military and Civil Defense Assets (MCDA), use of armed escorts and deconfliction.

The evaluation’s conclusion is that OCHA is beginning to implement the right mix of country-specific guidelines to engage in UN-CMCoord, while protecting the humanitarian imperative. This is part of OCHA’s larger effort to clarify and formalize the function over the past decade, and ultimately to make civil-military coordination more effective despite the relatively small size of the function and of OCHA. This has been an incremental process, recently formalized in a policy instruction that clarifies identified issues around roles and responsibilities, policies and tools.

A general lack of systematization of processes and procedures, as well as human resource constraints, are considered important hindrances to achieving better results. OCHA could do a better job in identifying lessons learned regarding the use of MCDA, particularly with regard to learning about situations in which it should be used. Without this information, it is often difficult to
ascertain the benefits of military assistance in humanitarian settings. The findings indicate that greater OCHA engagement with military actors as a preparedness measure would be highly beneficial. After the initial response phase, OCHA should strive to introduce clear mechanisms to facilitate handover to national authorities. Integrated missions in complex emergencies have been particularly challenging in this regard, insofar as they suffer from an absence of clear guidance on how to address humanitarian space issues.

To enhance its effectiveness and reach, the report suggests that OCHA place greater emphasis on the training and capacity-building of national emergency actors with a view to meeting the diverse needs of more audiences. OCHA is taking positive action to apply the learning, and it is developing an accreditation system that will expand its coverage by allowing other training organizations to provide training that meets OCHA standards for quality and consistency. A full management response plan for all the evaluation recommendations has been finalized and implementation has begun.

### EVALUATION OF OCHA’S ROLE AND ACTIVITIES IN EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

This evaluation provided an in-depth assessment of how effectively OCHA defines and executes its role in emergency preparedness at the global, regional and national levels. The findings were based on visits to Asia-Pacific, Middle East and North Africa, and Southern Africa. The evaluation found that OCHA’s performance in preparedness has been variable. A key finding was that OCHA’s 2010 Policy Instruction defines its preparedness role in a deliberately narrow frame: coordinating inter-agency activities to prepare for humanitarian response interventions. However, the reality of OCHA’s engagement on the ground in countries reflects a wider breadth and depth of activity. In some regions, such as Asia-Pacific, OCHA not only coordinates, but also enables and leads the overall preparedness effort, both in terms of engaging with host Governments, international partners and regional entities. The evaluation demonstrates that OCHA has made some progress against the three preparedness objectives that were established in the 2010-2013 Strategic Framework. These are i) better defined roles and responsibilities of OCHA and partners; ii) integrated, rigorous analysis to underpin preparedness and response; and iii) a more predictable and scalable suite of OCHA services and tools in preparedness.

The evaluation recommends that OCHA develop a clear policy statement setting out a vision for its institutional role in preparedness. The policy should consider the full range of OCHA’s actual activities in preparedness and address specific challenges around preparedness for conflict-related emergencies. It should clarify the scope, objectives and guiding principles of OCHA’s operational role in preparedness at all levels, and it should define specific preparedness responsibilities and deliverables for the relevant personnel at each level of OCHA. The evaluation recommends the development of detailed operational guidance for the Transformative Agenda (TA), addressing how the TA’s goals for a level-3 emergency response can be operationalized in preparedness activities at the regional and country levels, and how these activities fit within, or can be integrated into, the minimum preparedness package (MPP) process. The evaluation also suggests that OCHA engages in a senior-level dialogue with UNDP on preparedness to further clarify each other’s respective roles, responsibilities and resource commitments. A management response plan is being prepared.

**An identified good practice:**

In Haiti, the rapid construction and implementation of the Joint Operations and Tasking Center (JOTC) supported the application of clear, standardized and organized guidelines on the use of MCDA. The JOTC provided considerable added value by coordinating requests from humanitarian organizations. OCHA UNCMCoord officers supported the work of clusters in selecting, vetting and approving or refusing requests. This enabled

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**An identified good practice:**

OCHA helped Lao PDR and Papua New Guinea Governments to prioritize their preparedness needs and identify capacity gaps that international support could fill. This involved setting up systems for coordinating with the international aid providers and identifying roles and responsibilities, and effecting critical mechanisms within the Government for more effective information management and communications, such as by providing tools and training on rapid needs assessment.

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**An identified good practice:**

In the Asia-Pacific region, OCHA pioneered a Global Focus Model for strategically allocating resources. Together with OCHA’s Southern Africa office, ROAP developed the Minimum Preparedness Package of common standards of support to country-level disaster preparedness.
GLOBAL EVALUATION OF THE EMERGENCY RESPONSE FUND

This was the first global-level evaluation of the Emergency Response Funds (ERFs). Its purpose was to inform the review of ERF operations at the country level and to recommend improvements in ERF management, processes and operations at the country level.

The evaluation found that ERFs play a valued, albeit limited, role in supporting civil society to respond to unforeseen gaps in the overall humanitarian response. The ERF fills an organizational gap in that it is one of the few UN mechanisms that can rapidly respond to NGO requests. Strong support for ERFs is tempered at an operational level by concerns regarding timeliness and lengthy and complex granting procedures. However, the evaluation concluded that the ERF should not be seen as a true first responder, as the very fact that it is designed to fill gaps and meet unforeseen needs implies the existence of a prior plan.

The new ERF Guidelines are making a positive procedural difference. Additional measures could be taken to streamline them and to increase quality control and management's accountability, especially in relation to the country-level decision-making processes.

The evaluation concluded that OCHA must clarify whether the ERF mechanism is a global priority. It should then more clearly articulate how ERF funds relate to CERF and to clusters.

Additional resources should be allocated at the country level. The evaluation also identified a need to clarify the focus of the ERF mechanism, as there is currently an ambiguity as to whether it should concentrate on filling gaps during an emergency through supporting life-saving and livelihood-saving interventions, or whether it should support preventive resilience-building and DRR measures. OCHA approved a full management response plan in July 2013, which addresses all of the recommendations.

INTEGRATED REGIONAL INFORMATION NETWORK EVALUATION

IRIN is an independent news and analysis service created in 1995 to address the gap in humanitarian reporting exposed by the Rwandan genocide and its aftermath. The evaluation’s main purpose was to assess IRIN’s products and services and provide an evidence base for OCHA to take decisions on IRIN’s future. Specific objectives of the evaluation were to examine the extent to which IRIN has contributed to advancing OCHA’s advocacy mandate, as well as to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, value-added and impact of IRIN’s products and services. The evaluation covered the period from 2003 to 2012. It focused primarily on the geographical zones where IRIN is most active, sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East and Asia.

IRIN’s relevance to its readership varies geographically—it is the highest in the Middle East, where little information and analysis on humanitarian issues is available in Arabic. IRIN’s greatest strength and value-added lie in its analytical products, as it covers contexts and topics not covered well elsewhere. For example, users highly appreciate the consistency and quality of coverage on migration and climate change. Affected people are at the centre of all of IRIN’s reporting, and some 20 per cent of its current coverage has a complete or partial focus on gender issues.

The evaluation concluded that while IRIN has been effective in improving understanding of humanitarian situations among its users, its contribution to early warning and resource allocation has been limited. IRIN’s former niche in humanitarian news is being challenged by a steady increase in new information sources. Since 2009, OCHA has reduced IRIN’s budget, with the result that IRIN has had to modify its structure and services. Budgetary cutbacks...
have negatively affected IRIN’s ability to cover all relevant regions, resulting in a 50 per cent reduction of written content produced over the past four years and a lack of consistency in reporting.

Based on the evaluation’s core findings, four distinct scenarios were proposed for OCHA’s consideration: i) IRIN remains a separate redesigned entity; ii) IRIN is gradually integrated within OCHA; iii) IRIN is outsourced; or iv) IRIN is closed. In response to these findings, OCHA is preparing a detailed feasibility study.

EVALUATION OF OCHA’S REGIONAL OFFICE FOR WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

This evaluation assessed the performance of the Regional Office for West and Central Africa (ROWCA) in Dakar in emergency response, preparedness and regional coordination over the period between 2008 and 2012. There was a special focus on its contributions to the response to the 2012 Sahel crisis.

The evaluation found that ROWCA’s activities and tasks are highly relevant for achieving OCHA’s strategic goals and objectives, and that the regional office has accomplished many important achievements over the past years. ROWCA has made a significant contribution to strengthening preparedness in some countries, supporting emergency response and facilitating regional coordination. The evaluation found that ROWCA successfully set up a regional humanitarian coordination structure, which helped to achieve tangible benefits in the response to the 2012 Sahel crisis. Successful activities included drafting a strategy for a regional response that contributed to early funding pledges by donors, which in turn supported an early response. During the crisis, ROWCA’s effectiveness was challenged by a lack of guidance on its roles and responsibilities in a large-scale regional emergency, as well as the limited degree of authority of the regional office vis-à-vis partner organizations and OCHA country offices. During the response to the Sahel crisis, ROWCA’s performance demonstrated important shortcomings, especially regarding analysis and information management. Key information management products were not made available, and much of the documentation that was made available lacked analytical depth and faced dissemination problems.

V. Ensuring Effective Learning: Use of Evaluation Results

To ensure that OCHA is continuously learning and improving its planning, design and processes, evaluation results need to efficiently feed back into the planning loop. OCHA’s 2010 Evaluation Policy emphasized the need for a systematic follow-up to evaluations. To achieve this, the new policy introduced a system whereby management response plans are prepared within three months of finalization of internal evaluations. Progress on these plans is tracked through a central database. All internal evaluation reports are posted on the internal repository on OCHAnet.
The follow-up process for externally mandated evaluations depends on the topic and the mandating body. For the evaluations of pooled funding instruments, the follow-up plan is developed by the CERF secretariat or the Funding Coordination Section in consultation with relevant inter-agency bodies, such as the CERF Advisory Group, the Pooled Fund Working Group and IASC sub-working group on humanitarian financing, and the OCHA SMT. For inter-agency RTEs, management response plans are developed by Humanitarian Country Teams with support from OCHA heads of office and the Humanitarian Coordinator. The ERC receives periodic updates on the status of follow-up. All IASC-commissioned evaluation reports are published on OCHA’s website in the evaluation repository.

During the biennium, OCHA concluded a management response plan for the recommendation of the 2010 IASC Cluster Approach Evaluation. Significant follow-up work has been undertaken to address the bulk of the findings. Work is continuing on a handful of recommendations, but these have mostly been taken up under other initiatives, for example, the Transformative Agenda, UN SWAP (gender equality) reporting, the Organizational Learning Strategy Action Plan, or through similar findings/recommendations produced in more recent audits and evaluations.

The results have been used to bring about improvements and better approaches to coordinating the humanitarian system:

Follow-up to the internal evaluation of OCHA’s response to the Haiti earthquake

The 2010 internal evaluation of OCHA’s response to the Haiti earthquake made 20 recommendations, all of which were accepted with implementation plans. Follow-up to these recommendations has taken place over the last two years. Key actions to date include:

- Establishing a Programme Support Branch, which seeks to help humanitarian actors and Member States be better prepared to undertake coordinated humanitarian action, leading to a more effective and targeted delivery of assistance to people affected by crises.
- Using the Humanitarian Dashboard to track the evolution of a humanitarian crisis and progress against the CAP.
- In 2011 and 2012, the newly formed Coordinated Assessment Support Section trained more than 60 OCHA staff in IASC assessment tools and guidance, and supported training for 50 cluster coordinators and members and 25 standby partners. Field missions to carry out orientations and training of IASC policies and methodologies on assessments were carried out in 11 regions and countries and reached more than 500 field staff.
- In 2012, in line with the Organizational Learning Strategy, all official guidance has been summarized and made more easily available to staff through the new Guidance Forum on OCHAnet.
- The Policy Instruction on Emergency Response is being finalized along with a plan for its dissemination to all staff. The policy clarifies the existence of single senior focal point in headquarters to oversee streamlined communication with the country office.
- Management has agreed and endorsed the division of labour between Administration Field Support Unit (AFSU), Administrative Service Branch (ASB) and Emergency Logistics Support Unit ELSU.

Follow-up to IASC Cluster Approach Evaluation

The 2010 IASC Cluster Approach Evaluation contained six recommendations with 52 actions; all have been accepted. Among the actions taken to follow up on the evaluation are:

- Development of IASC Coordination Reference Module, which includes Guidance on Inter-Cluster Coordination.
- Accelerated work on the Common Operational Datasets, with more than 80 per cent in place for the highest-risk countries.
- Contingency planning support, including simulation exercises, provided to various regional and country offices.
- Material on coordination policy/cluster implementation updated and included in UNDAC core training curricular.
- Continued enlargement of the HC pool, with particular attention to people available for immediate deployment in a level-3 emergency.
- Strengthened HC performance appraisal system put in place.
• Needs Assessment Task Force guidance and tools revised based on lessons learned in Pakistan, Libya, Côte d’Ivoire, Sudan, Haiti and Somalia.

The IASC Transformative Agenda

Based on an analysis of challenges to leadership and coordination, in December 2011 the IASC Principals agreed to adopt and implement the Transformative Agenda, which includes a concerted set of actions to improve the humanitarian response model and overcoming challenges faced by the system and repeatedly identified in evaluations over several years. The Transformative Agenda represents an important collective response to recurring issues regarding accountability, leadership and coordination identified by IASC RTEs.

Inter-agency humanitarian evaluations have played a significant role in identifying many of the gaps that the Transformative Agenda seeks to address. These evaluations are also a critical tool for helping to improve the functioning of the humanitarian system. The new Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) being developed under the Transformative Agenda includes inter-agency humanitarian evaluation as a core coordination activity of the cycle. Evaluations are an important part of learning in OCHA, and the newly developed OCHA Learning Strategy precisely describes the links between evaluation findings, guidance development and learning in OCHA.

VI. Partnerships

OCHA does more than simply conduct evaluations. It also develops the evaluation function within the humanitarian system and across the United Nations.

During the biennium, OCHA intensified efforts to develop tools and methodologies to assess the impact of humanitarian action on affected people’s lives. OCHA also developed and promoted joint and system-wide evaluation initiatives.

IASC Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations Group

OCHA currently chairs the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations (IAHE) Group, which comprises the evaluation functions of IASC agencies. The group is responsible for developing policies, tools and operational guidance to conduct IAHEs. During the biennium, the group focused on IASC Real-Time evaluations (RTEs). The results of these evaluations have been highly seminal in the development of the IASC’s Transformative Agenda.

Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations have played an important role in supporting humanitarian reform and informing the development of the IASC Transformative Agenda by providing strategic feedback on coordination mechanisms, and inter-agency responses. IAHEs will be included as part of a new humanitarian programme cycle.

United Nations Evaluation Group

During the biennium, OCHA was an active member of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG). As co-chair of the UN Evaluation Group Task Force on Joint Evaluations, OCHA has played a key role in facilitating the development of guidance on joint evaluations for the United Nations system. In 2011 and 2012, the working group developed a joint evaluation resource pack, which aims to facilitate planning, conduct and effective follow-up for joint evaluation processes, ensuring that joint evaluations contribute to mutual learning and capacity development. The resource pack will be finalized by the end of 2013.

Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action

ALNAP is a unique sector-wide active learning membership network dedicated to improving the quality and accountability of humanitarian action. As a long-standing member of ALNAP’s Steering Group, OCHA has promoted further development of tools and methodologies for the evaluation of humanitarian action. OCHA supported the global launch of ALNAP’s “State of the Humanitarian System Report”, which represents one of the first attempts by the international humanitarian system to systematically monitor and report on its progress and performance.
VII. Evaluations in 2014 & 2015

Evaluation outlook for 2014

In 2013, OCHA’s evaluation function was relocated out of the Policy Development and Studies Branch and placed within the Office of the Under-Secretary-General. These changes have been made on the basis of recommendations from the UN’s Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS). A major objective of the relocation is to provide the function with greater independence from the immediate concerns of line management and to strengthen its overall credibility.

During 2014, OCHA will review its evaluation policy framework and develop a new Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, which is linked to OCHA’s 2014 - 2017 Strategic Plan. A major objective will be to provide a solid evidence base around the extent to which OCHA makes a difference for the humanitarian system and for disaster-affected people everywhere and to identify lessons learned.

In 2014-2015, OCHA’s evaluation function will continue to lead inter-agency evaluations to support humanitarian operations and inform the IASC Transformative Agenda. Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations (IAHE) have been fully integrated into the Humanitarian Programme Cycle, and will be conducted at regular intervals based on clear trigger criteria to include all level-3 declarations and large-scale natural disasters. During 2014, OCHA will continue its participation in support of UNEG’s efforts to strengthen the effectiveness of the evaluation function across the UN system and to advocate the importance of evaluation for learning, decision making and accountability.