INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE
WEEKLY MEETING

Summary Note

2 May 2007
Geneva

I   Mozambique – Presentation of the Draft Inter-Agency Real Time Evaluation of the Response to the February 2007 Floods and Cyclone in Mozambique

Mr. John Cosgrave, Evaluation Team Leader

Mr. John Cosgrave presented the main findings of the draft Inter-Agency Real Time Evaluation (IA-RTE) of the Response to the February 2007 Floods and Cyclone in Mozambique. This IA-RTE represents the first evaluation exercise of this kind mandated under the auspices of the IASC. The purpose of the IA-RTE is to (i) assess the overall appropriateness, coherence, timeliness and effectiveness of the humanitarian response in context of the humanitarian reform and to (ii) provide real-time feed back to support senior management decision-making, planning and implementation.

Out of the five issues identified to be evaluated, including (i) the Cluster approach (ii) emergency funding mechanisms, (iii) connectedness, (iv) how well the needs of the affected population were met, and (v) support for local institutions, Mr. Cosgrave emphasized the findings on the Cluster evaluation in his briefing and to minor extent addressed the issue of access to CERF funding.

As an outset of his presentation, Mr. Cosgrave stated that the overall application of the Cluster approach was a success in Mozambique, mainly because the coordination was successful and because agencies and NGOs participating in the Clusters all worked towards a common goal. However, while the Cluster approach was successful in terms of coordination with local authorities and prioritization and coordination at the field level, the IA-RTE stresses the need for better identified and more predictable leadership, as well as a strengthened accountability of Cluster leads. Accordingly, it is suggested in the report that Cluster co-leads are replaced with deputy-leads, potentially NGOs. Moreover, it is recommended to strengthen the Cluster approach by introducing an omnibus Cluster, in cases where Cluster leads do not have field presence or simply to coordinate several minor Clusters together.

Formalizing the issue of quality control is central to the Evaluation Team's recommendations, and it is suggested in the report that benchmarks are identified and agreed upon for each Cluster. Equally, and related to the issue of funding, it is proposed that the IASC considers introducing an independent external evaluation of all CERF funds to encourage careful and accountable implementation. Such evaluations could be made public available at a website and there by serve as a check and balance. In relation to the funding issues, Mr. Cosgrave noted that there is

lack of clarity on how CERF funding is accessed. The Evaluation Team has subsequently recommended that the IASC discusses the possibility of developing clearer guidelines to regulate NGOs access to CERF funds and to introduce an umbrella fund or pool fund for NGOs, to be managed by the Humanitarian Coordinator.

Of other issues, the web information management system and the drafting and adoption of the 'Concept of Operations' for the Logistic Cluster were highlighted as best practices to be followed when rolling out the Cluster approach in other countries. Criticalities identified in the report included the high OCHA staff turnover and the lack of language qualifications among available OCHA staff. To avoid such problems, the report recommends that the roster is extended to include personnel with different language skills and who can stay in place for at least six weeks.

When the floor was opened for discussions, several questions were raised as to the issue of partnership and the suggested Cluster deputy-leads. Mr. Cosgrave stressed that one of the biggest challenges when applying the Cluster approach is related to the concept and application of 'full partnership' with NGOs and emphasized that their participation in the Clusters is conditional for full partnership. Mr. Kennedy, moreover, clarified that the replacement of the Cluster co-leads with Cluster deputy leads would help identify a single leadership and a single responsible agency with the purpose of ensuring accountability. The introduction of deputy-leads could, furthermore, serve to strengthen both the effectiveness of the Cluster as a whole and, in particular, the Cluster lead, just as it could provide for broader participation of NGOs.

Given the positive performance of the Early Recovery Cluster in Mozambique, several participants questioned the fact that this aspect was not adequately reflected in the draft report and subsequently recommended the Evaluation Team to address this issue when reviewing the report.

The issue of HIV/AIDS as a cross-cutting issue was also raised by several participants and the fact that the evaluation report illustrates how the displacements following the floods have aggravated the risk of HIV/AIDS transmission was welcomed. Mr. Cosgrave expressed his view by noting that while the floods did not cause any deaths, HIV/AIDS is a real and ongoing catastrophe in Mozambique. He also stated that there is a need for the Clusters to set up a system to ensure the implementation of cross-cutting issues, including HIV/AIDS. However, Mr. Kennedy also noted that while HIV/AIDS can be strengthened as cross cutting issue within the Clusters, several NGOs and agencies in Mozambique are actively working on this issue, also with the support of the Global Fund.

When asked to comment on the methodology adopted for the IA-RTE, Mr. Cosgrave explained that the IA-RTE Terms of Reference specified that the Evaluation Team should conduct beneficiaries' questionnaire. However, as the evaluation team considered that the time available for the evaluation did not allow for proper testing of questionnaires or recruitment and training of assistants to administer and collect relevant data, the Evaluation Team thus opted for the adoption of key-informants interviews and focus group meetings. Finally, Mr. Cosgrave emphasized that the IA-RTE only is a draft and recommended all participants to provide the Evaluation Team with written feed-back to be incorporated in the final version.

Participants

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