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Annex 1 – Evaluation Consultants hired by ESS (2002-2008)

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ALNAP	the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CHF	Common Humanitarian Fund
ECB2	Emergency Capacity Building Project
ERC	Emergency Relief Coordinator
ERF	Emergency Response Fund
ESS	Evaluation and Studies Section (OCHA)
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HRSU	Humanitarian Reform Support Unit
IA RTE	Inter-Agency Real Time Evaluation
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
OIOS	United Nations Office for Oversight Services
PDSB	Policy Development and Studies Branch (OCHA)
POLR	Provider of Last Resort
PROCAP	Protection Standby Capacity Project
UNCT	UN Country Team
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group

1. Introduction

1.1 OCHA Evaluation and Studies Section

The mandate for conducting, coordinating and overseeing evaluation in OCHA is vested with the Evaluation and Studies Section (ESS) situated within the Policy Development and Studies Branch (PDSB). The mandate covers all sub programmes, management functions and projects of OCHA as well as ESS as the coordinating and managing entity for evaluations performed by OCHA on behalf of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). ESS conducts external evaluations to help support learning and accountability about the results of OCHA's operations. ESS's evaluation work is undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the United Nations General Assembly, and the norms and standards for evaluation in the UN system as provided by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)¹.

Critical performance assessment is a necessary component of the implementation of the humanitarian reform agenda. OCHA is currently taking important steps to strengthen its evaluation function. An up to date policy statement for evaluation in the organization is currently being prepared which will strengthen ESS's ability to provide rigorous, timely and relevant recommendations to OCHA management and other humanitarian partners.

The present annual evaluation report is the fifth of its kind and has been prepared as part of the section's mandate to provide reporting to Governments, OCHA senior management and other OCHA internal units to enable them to review progress made by the organization and to reflect critically on the challenges facing OCHA in delivering its mandate as an inter-agency coordination mechanism.

The report summarizes the main findings of the evaluations undertaken and highlights some of the key recommendations and the current status of follow-up. In addition, the report should be regarded as a part of the current efforts to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework at OCHA.

1.2 Coverage of the 2007-2008 report

The report covers all external evaluations managed and completed by ESS in 2007-2008.² This include three IASC mandated Real-Time Evaluations (RTEs), two OCHA-specific evaluations and two additional inter-agency evaluations. The report also contains a review and brief analysis of the status of the implementation of evaluation recommendations contained during the covered period.

¹ UN Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN system, April 2005

² All evaluations that are included in this report are available on OCHA's website (<http://ochaonline.un.org>).

During much of 2007 and 2008, the Section experienced staff shortages and redeployments. Despite these difficulties, a number of important evaluations were produced such as the Cluster I Evaluation and the evaluation of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). Managing these two evaluations proved to be complex and demanded considerable resources from the section in terms of staff time.

Over the reporting period, ESS has also been involved in the development of the format and methodologies associated with the conduct of a series of pilot inter-agency real time evaluations. In addition to evaluation management, ESS also engaged proactively in methodological backstopping and in providing support to other organizational units within OCHA. ESS also engages with international evaluation networks such as UNEG and ALNAP.

As in the past, this year's bi-annual report provides statistics about the demographics of the independent consultants who undertake ESS's evaluations. See Annex 1 includes a detailed diagram and some brief analysis.

2. Evaluation Activities 2007-2008

This chapter presents findings and lessons learned from those evaluations which were managed by ESS during 2007 and 2008. Key findings are highlighted and especially those related to the implementation of the humanitarian reform agenda and to OCHA's core business and organizational performance.

Specific lessons learned are highlighted as appropriate. Two major evaluations particularly stand out in this regard, 1) the evaluation of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), and 2) the evaluation of the Cluster Approach Phase One. These two evaluations deal directly with core issues of the humanitarian reform agenda and deserve extra attention.

Major objectives of the current humanitarian reform process are i) to make funding more reliable and predictable ii) to combat 'forgotten emergencies,' iii) to strengthen country level coordination for the effective use of limited resources, and finally, iv) to strengthen partnerships with NGOs, civil society, and other actors such as private sector and countries providing military assets who contribute to humanitarian response. The humanitarian reforms in question include new financing mechanisms, including the expanded Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), Common Humanitarian Funds (CHF) and country-specific Emergency Response Funds (ERFs). Roll-out of the Cluster Approach and strengthened humanitarian leadership are also two guiding principles articulated in the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) initiative. ESS's evaluations offer critical insights into how these different components have been operationalized and what the effects have been.

Table 1 Evaluation output 2007- 2008

Type	Level	Evaluation Title	Executing Entity	Date of Completion
Inter-Agency Evaluations				
	Country level	Evaluation of Common/Pooled Humanitarian Funds in DRC and Sudan	External evaluation	December 2007
	Global	Cluster I Evaluation	External evaluation	November 2007
	Country level	IA RTE of the Pakistan Floods/Cyclone Yemyin	External evaluation	October 2007
	Country level	IA RTE of the Response to the Floods and Cyclone in Mozambique in February 2007	External evaluation	May 2007
	Country level	IA RTE of the Response to Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar	External evaluation	October 2008
OCHA Specific Evaluations				
	Global	Two Year Evaluation of the Central Emergency Response Fund (General Assembly Mandated)	External evaluation	July 2008
	Global	Evaluation of the Protection Standby Capacity Project (PROCAP)	External evaluation	March 2007

2.1 Inter-Agency Evaluations

Reflecting the inter-agency nature of OCHA's mandate, ESS works closely with other partners to support joint evaluation work at both the global and country levels. OCHA is committed to promoting and participating in all inter-agency, joint or system-wide evaluations. OCHA may agree to conduct and directly manage external evaluations of inter-agency or joint activities on behalf of either the IASC or the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) to the extent that it has the capacity and the funds to do so. Results arising from inter-agency, system-wide and joint evaluations which are relevant for OCHA will be reviewed and acted upon by senior management in the same manner as if the evaluation has been undertaken by OCHA alone. In 2007 and 2008, ESS managed five inter-agency evaluations. Collectively these evaluations provide an opportunity for the international humanitarian community to reflect upon the systems in place, taking into consideration the individual capacities of agencies on the ground, as well as their unique strengths and challenges.

In recent years, efforts have been increasingly directed towards improving humanitarian response through learning and accountability. The Inter-Agency Real Time Evaluation (IA RTE) – endorsed by the IASC Working Group in March 2007 as a one year pilot, and extended for an additional year until the beginning of 2009, is an important tool for supporting such objectives. In accordance with the IASC mandate, ESS managed three IA RTEs undertaken in relation to the responses in Pakistan, Mozambique, and most recently in Myanmar.

2.1.1 Cluster Approach Evaluation Phase One

When the cluster approach was introduced in 2005, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) called for an external evaluation after two years. The Cluster Evaluation was launched in early 2007 with the specific aim of informing decision-making by both the IASC WG and individual bilateral. The evaluation encompassed field research in four of the cluster rollout countries (Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and Uganda), as well as desk research on the sudden-onset emergencies. The main objective of the Phase 1 Cluster Evaluation was to assess the value-added of the clusters. The overall objectives for both evaluations (Phase 1 and Phase 2 combined) is: 1) to assess the impact of the clusters, in terms of improving the quality and quantity of humanitarian response and consequently better meeting the needs of affected populations, 2) provide recommendations on future efforts to strengthen humanitarian response and impact.³

The evaluation found that, despite a troubled early rollout process resulting in some confusion and coordination problems, there is anecdotal evidence that the Cluster Approach has resulted in some systemic improvement in coordinated humanitarian response. Progress was uneven across country cases, and some clusters performed better

³ The process of undertaking the phase II of the cluster evaluation is currently underway in 2009. The evaluation will be finalized during the fall of 2009. Phase II will be more rigorous than phase I. The evaluation will contain an assessment of the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the effects of the cluster approach.

than others. In most cases improvements were driven solely by the clusters in the field, with little or no support from the global clusters. Partly as a consequence of late receipt of funding, the clusters had not yet completed or implemented the bulk of their capacity projects.

Certain weaknesses within the new approach were also identified, particularly as regards the Provider of Last Resort (POLR) stipulation. Moreover, the new approach has generated a substantive additional workload. Overall, the weight of evaluative evidence points towards the conclusion that the new approach has begun, slowly, to add value. Altogether, the evaluation concluded that the cluster approach merits continuation and expansion.

Monitoring and evaluation continue to represent major deficiencies within the humanitarian response system, and were not found to have improved under the cluster approach.

The evaluation suggests the approach be continued and expanded to other countries. The IASC has taken up most of these recommendations, which as of December 2008 had been fully (39 %) or partially (29 %) implemented. 21 % of the recommendations have thus far not been implemented while some 11 % were deemed not applicable and therefore rejected for implementation.

2.1.2 Evaluation of Common/Pooled Humanitarian Funds in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan

This evaluation was managed by OCHA ESS on behalf of the Common Fund Virtual Working Group (VWG). The Evaluation Steering Group was composed of representatives of seven CHF donors plus OCHA and UNDP. The group represented key stakeholders for this evaluation who were involved in managing the funds or who had been fund recipients. The evaluation's main objectives were to: 1) follow up on a previously undertaken evaluation from 2006 and consolidate evidence on the performance of the funds and 2) inform key decision-makers on the effectiveness of the main components of the Funds.

The Funds were established in the DRC and Sudan as pilots in 2006. In Sudan, the Fund is known as the Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF) while it is referred to as the Pooled Fund in the DRC. The evaluation found that good progress has been made towards strengthening the Common/Pooled Funds since the previous evaluation. The funds have also become established parts of the humanitarian funding landscape in Sudan and the DRC and provide a valuable tool for HCs in their efforts to support coordination and to ensure flexible coverage of gaps and the implementation of strategic priorities. The two funds were also found to be complementary to other funding mechanisms such as the CERF.

The evaluation highlights a wide range of issues and provides several recommendations for improved governance, management structures, and accountability mechanisms. The

evaluation concludes that significant challenges remain unresolved which limits the effectiveness of the funds. These include 1) concerns about the decentralized allocation process which in turn depends on highly variable cluster capacity, 2) weak monitoring and evaluation capabilities, and 3) inconsistencies in how the Board is set up. Given the weaknesses found in the monitoring and evaluation systems on the ground, it is difficult to gauge accurately the impact of the CHF.

2.1.3 IA RTE Response to Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar

Inter-Agency Real Time Evaluations (IA RTEs) were endorsed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Working Group in March 2007 as a one year pilot project, and extended for an additional year until the beginning of 2009. The IASC recognized RTEs as a potentially important tool through which humanitarian response may be improved.

Pursuant to the IASC mandate, an IA RTE of the response to Cyclone Nargis was undertaken with the support of the UN Country Team (UNCT) and the humanitarian community within Myanmar.

This IA RTE afforded an opportunity for the international humanitarian community to reflect collectively upon the systems in place, taking into consideration the individual capacities of agencies on the ground, as well as their unique strengths and challenges. It also provided an opportunity for UN and non-UN actors to see their considerable efforts recognized and placed in the context of the overall response.

The evaluation reviewed current operations and provided feedback on the factors and determinants of the provision of aid to affected communities, as well as the effectiveness and relevance of international agencies efforts to facilitate the humanitarian response. Findings and recommendations help to inform and improve ongoing decision-making, and serve as an input to the planning of recovery and rehabilitation efforts.

In accordance with the humanitarian reform agenda, the Cyclone Nargis IA RTE focused on three themes: accountability, predictability, coordination and partnership. Following preliminary research and briefings in New York, Geneva and Bangkok, the IA RTE team spent three weeks in Myanmar, including one week in some of the worst-affected areas.

The overall findings of the IA RTE Myanmar suggested that given the notable logistical, material and access constraints, the humanitarian response went well. The international community, however, could take only limited credit for this success given the sizable spontaneous humanitarian response undertaken by local actors, in part due to limited access by international actors during the first few weeks after the cyclone. Two areas were identified as being of particular import as the aid endeavor progresses: (a) a strong focus on livelihood recovery and (b) disaster risk reduction (DRR), including effective preparedness and contingency planning. Recommendations focus on strengthening consultation with field staff, national organizations, and beneficiary populations; the need

to develop a systematic DDR programme, and strengthening intra- and inter-cluster coordination in the Yangon and Delta areas.

2.1.4 IA RTE Response to Zambezi river floods/Cyclone Favio in Mozambique

The cyclone and associated flooding in Mozambique was a relatively small emergency. This evaluation found that this not only simplified the response but also highlighted some general lessons about emergency response that a larger emergency might obscure. This RTE was requested by the OCHA Regional Office in South Africa in consultation with the UNCT and was commissioned by a group of IASC agencies: OCHA, UNICEF and the Emergency Capacity Building Project (ECB2). The evaluation was managed by ESS on behalf of the IA RTE working group and undertaken mainly to address two key objectives: 1) to assess the overall appropriateness, coherence, timeliness and effectiveness of the response in the context of humanitarian reform, and 2) to provide real-time feedback to support senior management decision-making and to facilitate planning and implementation.

Two key findings from the evaluation need to be highlighted. First, the early deployment of an OCHA staff member from the Humanitarian Reform Support Unit helped to get the cluster system and the CERF application up and off the ground quickly. Despite the early deployment of staff, the evaluators concluded that, OCHA did not deploy a large enough team to ensure sufficient support to the roll-out of cluster system. Second, the CERF proved to be highly successful in this particular disaster. The poor support for both the IFRC the Flash Appeals suggest that without the CERF, relief funds would have been significantly less, especially in the first month of the response.

Overall, the response to the crisis was regarded as a success. While the operation was not perfect, no evidence of widespread suffering was found nor was there any avoidable deaths detected. The reasons for this success included: 1) effective preparedness and coordination by the government, and 2) the impact of humanitarian reforms such as the cluster approach and the CERF.

2.1.5 IA RTE Response to the Pakistan floods/Cyclone Yemyin

The Pakistan floods of 2007 devastated large swathes of rural Sindh and Balochistan Provinces in southern Pakistan, destroying homes, crops and roads, and causing the temporary displacement of over 2.5 million people. The evaluation was requested by OCHA's Humanitarian Reform Support Unit (HRSU) in Geneva and the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) with broad support by the evaluation steering committee. It was managed by ESS and guided by the headquarters-based steering group of evaluation

staff of participating agencies and NGO representatives (Care International, FAO, OCHA, WFP, UNICEF, WHO, IFRC and IOM).⁴

The evaluation found that, for a variety of reasons, the Government of Pakistan did not fully support the Country Teams's decision and approach. In addition, the assessment was delayed, the Flash Appeal was issued three weeks after the onset of the emergency and raised only 26% of its target, and the clusters did not achieve their full potential as coordinating mechanisms. As a result, the humanitarian community did not succeed in delivering humanitarian relief to the affected populations of Sindh and Balochistan.

The RTE found, among other things, that the following factors contributed to the poor response to the floods: 1) the One UN pilot and humanitarian reform initiatives were still at an early phase and had not yet been adequately institutionalized, 2) political sensitivities in the affected regions of Pakistan, 3) the GoP, and specifically National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), was uneasy about launching a full-scale international humanitarian response, including a Flash Appeal, 4) decisions made by the IASC CT (for example the establishment of 12 Clusters) were over-ambitious and over-complex given the circumstances.

2.2 OCHA Specific Evaluations

Although much of OCHA's work is being done jointly on an inter agency basis, ESS also undertakes OCHA specific evaluations. In the context of its next Strategic Plan, OCHA will develop a more systematic and cyclical approach to evaluation aimed at ensuring that all major sub-programmes approved by the UN General Assembly are subjected to regular external evaluation at least once every five years.

2.2.1 Evaluation of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)

During the 1990s and early 2000s, funding for appeals was often slow to arrive and sometimes linked to political considerations rather than to needs. Some appeals were funded over 100 percent while others received less than 20 percent of the required funds. In order to address this shortcoming, member states sought to create predictable, timely and equitable means to fund humanitarian crises.

In December 2005, the UN passed a resolution, adding to the existing \$50 million loan facility of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund a grant facility of up to US \$450 million. The CERF was renamed the Central Emergency *Response* Fund (CERF), and was created to compliment the other existing humanitarian funding and coordination mechanisms such as the UN Consolidated Appeals Process.

⁴ The evaluation was broadly organized around the following topics: 1) systems in transitions, 2) assessment and response to the floods, 3) financing mechanisms, and 4) coordination mechanisms.

Resolution 60/124, which created this new Fund, stipulated that a two-year independent evaluation be conducted that would report back to the General Assembly on the progress of the new CERF. ESS was requested to manage this evaluation in consultation with an inter-agency advisory group made up of evaluation experts from UN agencies, NGOs and donors.

The objective of the 2-year independent evaluation was to provide a comprehensive assessment of the fund with the purpose of providing the donor community and the UN with recommendations regarding the state of the fund and directions for the future.⁵

The overall purpose of the evaluation was to “provide strategic guidance to member states and the UN system on the future of the CERF”.

The four member evaluation team visited seven countries as well as UN Agencies, NGOs and governments contributing to the Fund and conducted over 500 interviews and group discussions. The evaluation found that the CERF has made considerable progress towards meeting its principal objectives of improving the timeliness of initial response to sudden-onset emergencies and correcting the inequities of humanitarian financing of ‘neglected’ emergencies. This is a remarkable achievement; however, the ERC still faces many challenges, if the initial positive results of the first two years will be converted into a consistent track record of high quality projects, with a demonstrable benefit to the victims of war and natural disasters.

The evaluation resulted in four key recommendations each of which highlights some of the key challenges that the CERF currently faces to become a more effective funding tool. These are:

1. The CERF should continue under its current mandate. The size of the Fund should be allowed to increase progressively, in line with demands, and in parallel to improvements in the implementation capacity of the UN agencies and the management capacity of the CERF Secretariat.
2. The quality of CERF-funded programmes needs to become more consistent. To that end, the criteria for project approval and their application need to be further refined, including the application of the ‘life saving criteria’, assessments of agencies’ capacity, the timeframe for implementation and the use of needs assessments.
3. The capacity of the CERF secretariat and OCHA field teams need to be strengthened, to ensure timely review of applications and high-quality decisions, and onward disbursement of funds from UN agencies/IOM to implementing partners needs to be speeded up, thereby guaranteeing faster response and better value for money. In addition, overhead charges need to be reviewed and the mandate of the CERF Advisory Group should be extended for a further period.
4. The multiple lines of accountability for CERF need to be clarified, in consultation with the UN Controller and the operational agencies, to specify the roles of each actor; the ERC needs to ensure that the operational agencies have in place appropriate monitoring and reporting systems, and to make use of quality assurance mechanisms for evaluation of CERF projects, without increasing the bureaucratic burdens in implementing humanitarian programmes.

⁵ The CERF evaluation followed after an interim review process of the CERF. This initial review provided the framework for the actual evaluation

The detailed results of the evaluation were submitted to the UN General Assembly. Member States welcomed the evaluation findings, including the proposal to initiate another evaluation in early 2011, so that the conclusions can be presented at the Assembly's 66th session.

2.2.2 Evaluation of the Protection Standby Capacity Project (PROCAP)

PROCAP is an inter-agency UN project aimed at enhancing UN protection response and contributing to global protection capacity through the predictable and effective deployment of personnel with proven protection expertise. Established in October 2005, the project responds to priority gaps and needs in emergency protection response through three principal activities: 1) Deploying members of a core team of Senior Protection Officers (SPOs) on short-term missions, 2) Enhancing the number, quality and effectiveness of protection personnel (at junior to mid-levels) in existing stand-by rosters, 3) Facilitating deployment from existing protection standby rosters and strengthening inter-agency coordination

The evaluation was managed by ESS while the PROCAP support unit provided logistical support to the evaluation team. The evaluation assessed all project components against three main criteria: relevance, effectiveness and efficiency. The evaluation considered what purpose PROCAP was serving, how well it was serving that purpose and whether there might be more cost- and time-effective ways of achieving similar results.

In light of the well-documented capacity gaps on the part of the mandated agencies in addressing this evolving agenda, the evaluation endorsed the original rationale for the PROCAP initiative and recommended that the initiative continue. While the protection-mandated agencies have initiated processes to develop internal emergency capacities, these are currently insufficient to meet needs, particularly at senior levels. The evaluation concluded that the project needs to evolve to ensure better relevance to the current humanitarian environment. In particular, PROCAP should be re-aligned to provide more direct support to the roll-out of the Cluster Approach, and the PSU should work with the Protection Cluster Working Group to identify contexts where this is possible. PROCAP should not be viewed as a permanent mechanism, but should instead be wound down once it is clear that the necessary capacity has been developed within the mandated agencies.

2.3 Other Activities/non-evaluation activities

ESS engages in various activities aside from actual evaluation management. Some of these activities are related to networking and reaching out to other evaluation actors within the humanitarian sector.

Development of the IA RTE concept/methodology

ESS, together with the other agencies in the IA RTE interest group, has been involved in the development of the real-time evaluation methodologies. This has been a joint process

in which ESS has collaborated closely with organizations such as UNICEF, ECB2 (through Care), UNDP, WFP, and the ALNAP Secretariat.

This process has resulted in enhanced expertise in the implementation of IA RTE:s and the continual refined methodology based on the lessons learned from previous IA RTE:s. While progress is being made, there is still a need to further develop the IA approach.

In addition, ESS has contributed to the development of the new ALNAP guidance on RTE:s by reviewing drafts and providing specific inputs.

Hosting the ALNAP biannual meeting in Senegal

The Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP) was established in 1997, following the multi-agency evaluation of the Rwanda genocide. ALNAP is dedicated to improving the quality and accountability of humanitarian action, by sharing lessons; identifying common problems; and where appropriate, building consensus on approaches.

Twice a year ALNAP invites humanitarian aid organizations and other actors to participate in a three-day meeting. More specifically these meetings aim to share information and perspectives on issues and activities relevant to learning, accountability and performance within the humanitarian sector.

ESS and the OCHA Regional Office in Dakar hosted the 22nd ALNAP bi-annual meeting in Saly, Senegal. The overall theme for the conference was “Compounding crises: combinations of vulnerabilities, risks and hazards in West Africa”. The meeting aimed to discuss how combinations of different kinds of hazards and risks (for example floods, droughts, conflicts, environmental degradation etc) and different vulnerabilities (social, political, geographic, economic, etc) interact and combine to produce more complex and entrenched vulnerabilities, and how they then impact on various elements of humanitarian action. At the meeting, ALNAP presented a proposal to facilitate and support a process to develop and test an index of performance in humanitarian action. The index is intended to provide the sector with a sense of how it is performing measured against the standards it has adopted and in the eyes of the principal stakeholders. OCHA is part of the steering group leading this exercise.

It was also agreed that over the next 1-2 years ALNAP will lead the trial and development of guidelines for how to carry out RTEs.

Participation in the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)

UNEG is a professional network of evaluators within in the United Nations system. ESS has been actively involved in different working groups of the network such as i) impact evaluation, ii) evaluation quality enhancement and iii) human rights and gender equality task force. ESS benefits greatly from its partnership with UNEG in its efforts to strengthen the evaluation capacity of OCHA and across the humanitarian sector.

ESS planning retreat

The 2008 ESS planning retreat took place at the Tudor City Hotel in New York on 25-26 November.⁶ The retreat was attended by all ESS staff and other OCHA HQ staff considered important evaluation stakeholders/resource people for matters related to evaluation. The two-day event involved rich discussions on a number of different topics related to strengthening the evaluation function at OCHA. The planning retreat served the purpose of providing a platform to develop a “group think” around core challenges and problems that the section is facing with delivering on ESS’s mandate within OCHA. Each individual session of the retreat resulted in a number of action points for ESS to pursue. Some of the more important ones were:

- Prioritize increasing understanding of evaluation and its function within OCHA, and within each section, while concurrently facilitating a sense of ownership and interest in evaluation among OCHA management.
- ESS will initiate a “review” of the IA-RTE:s carried out during the pilot phase. ESS will draft a concept paper for discussion by the IASC IA RTE Interest Group.
- ESS will increase its efforts to provide support to other HQ sections/branches and OCHA offices in developing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and technical guidance on conducting and managing evaluations. ESS will also develop guidance materials and tool kit for conducting and managing evaluations.
- ESS and the OCHA strategic planning unit will collaborate in the development of an OCHA-wide evaluation plan.
- Support the management of studies that would be of major relevance and added-value to the humanitarian community such as ‘best-practices of humanitarian operations within highly-insecure environments’.

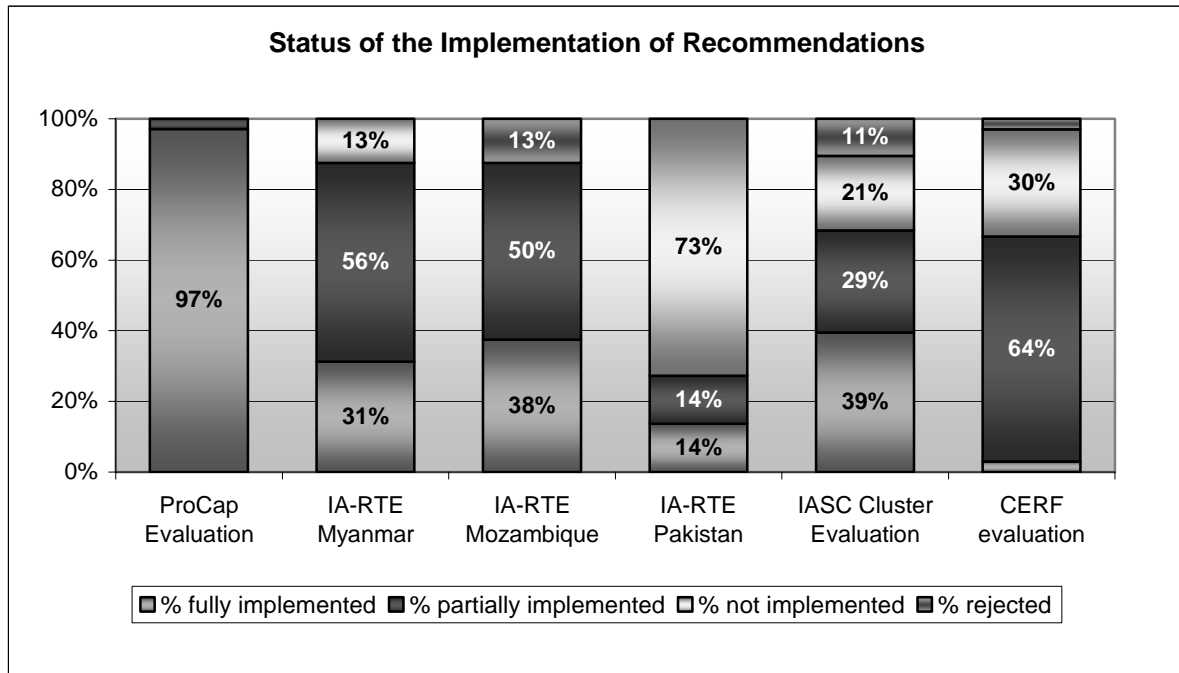
⁶ For further information about the ESS planning retreat, please contact ESS at ochaesu@un.org.

3. Compliance with Evaluation Recommendations

Producing high quality evaluations is not enough. Follow-up to, and agreeing on actions to be taken in response to evaluation recommendations, is also critically important. Since 2002, OCHA has had a management response system in place to ensure that knowledge gained and lessons learned through evaluations gets translated into improved practices. ESS promotes operational improvements in OCHA policies and programmes through the tracking of the implementation of action plans arising from evaluation recommendations.

In March 2009, an analysis was undertaken of the current status of the implementation of action plans linked to evaluation recommendations between 2007 and 2008. The graph below shows implementation rate for five of the seven evaluations conducted during this time period with recorded follow-up to the recommendations. On average, 72 percent of all recommendations have been either partially or completely followed-up on. The evaluation of the common/pooled humanitarian funds in DRC and Sudan were at the time of writing this report still awaiting formal responses.

Table 2 Follow-up on the implementation of Evaluation Recommendations



4. Conclusions and Outlook

The evaluations conducted in 2007 and 2008 do not lend themselves to any simple aggregation of findings, but necessitate a more nuanced interpretation of observations and assessments. This situation stems, in part, from the nature of OCHA's core operations which most often takes place in complex conflicts or disaster-ridden areas and also from the fact that new and emergent evaluation methodologies such as IA RTEs still require further development. There is also the notion that evaluations need to be pursued more strategically and that methodologies need to the extent possible be more rigorous. The following paragraphs provide a synthesis of the main lessons learned from the sample of evaluations that have been assessed in this report.

- There are weaknesses within the Cluster Approach as it is currently defined, particularly in the crucial Provider of Last Resort (POLR) stipulation, while there is no disputing the additional workload the new approach has generated. Overall, the weight of evaluative evidence points to the conclusion that the benefits for sector-wide programming exceed the costs and drawbacks of the new approach. Hence, the new approach has begun, slowly, to add value
- The CERF has made considerable progress towards meeting its principal objectives of improving the timeliness of initial response to sudden-onset emergencies and correcting the inequities of humanitarian financing of 'neglected' emergencies. This is a remarkable achievement, but the ERC is confronted with many challenges, if the promise of the first two years is to be converted into a consistent track record of high quality projects, with a demonstrable benefit to the victims of war and natural disasters.
- The experience of undertaking IA RTE:s so far has been mixed. Although the tool shows great potential for being able to enhance accountability and to contribute to learning, it needs to be further developed. The initial development of the Inter Agency RTE approach went through a series of discussions and drafts in which a wide range of actors participated. ESS will continue this work, together with other partners, with the objective of getting greater overall clarity on the definition and how these evaluations should be constructed for the highest possible quality results.
- As in previous years (and previous annual reports), one of the systemic weaknesses in the management of evaluations is still the follow-up of the implementation of action plans tied to recommendations. This is especially critical when looking at interagency evaluations where multiple stakeholders from various organizations are supposed to react in a coherent manner to an often complex set of recommendations. ESS will seek to interact more intensively with OCHA management on recommendations addressed to OCHA and to serve as a catalyst for change.

The evaluation function at OCHA will be further developed in 2009 and during the upcoming years to support the implementation of the OCHA Strategic Framework

through regular performance assessments and to ensure adequate evaluation coverage as per UN General Assembly requirements. Currently, an updated evaluation policy is being drafted.. ESS will also increase its efforts to develop the common approach to impact evaluation which is one of the objectives in OCHA's strategic framework 2007-2009. ESS will convene a meeting with other UN organizations, NGOs and academics to facilitate a discussion on how to develop a comprehensive system for impact assessment of humanitarian relief operations.

ESS will complete a series of evaluations during 2009. The IA RTE tool will be utilized to the greatest possible extent and currently there are discussions within the IA-WG of conducting an RTE in the ongoing conflict in the DR Congo.

In order to capitalize on past evaluations ESS is currently in the process of undertaking a meta evaluation that will review the a large body of evaluations and take stock of the findings in these reports and identify recurrent themes and recommendations that keep coming up in ESS's evaluations.

ESS is also evaluating one of OCHA's longest standing private sector partnerships. OCHA's partnership with Ericsson Telecommunications is now in its ninth year of existence and it has been deemed necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of the partnership. This effort is part of the rationale of working more closely with non-traditional donors and to explore the potential benefits of cooperating with the private sector and relying upon these services when delivering humanitarian assistance.

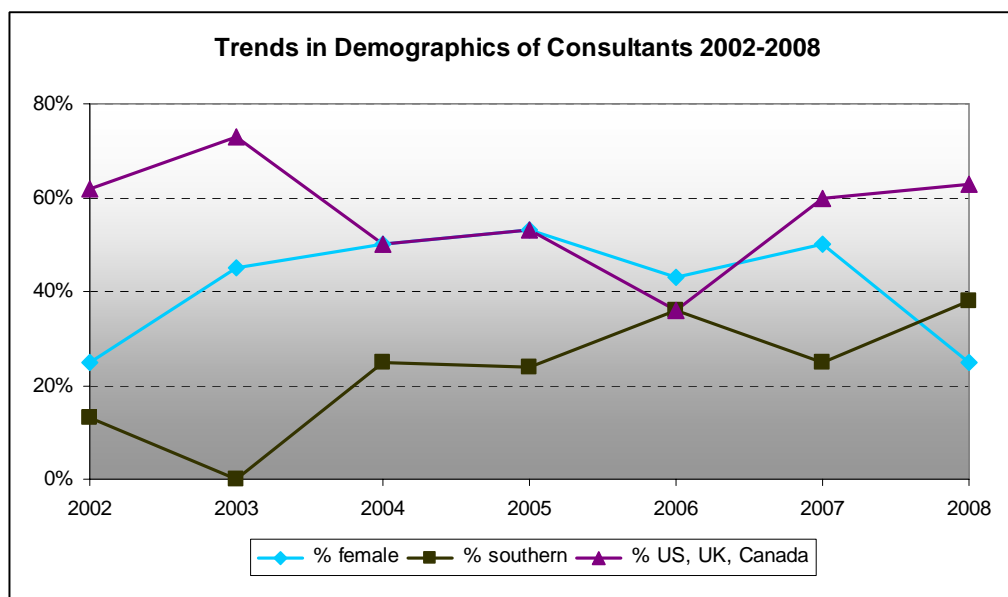
The largest evaluation for 2009 will be the second phase of the evaluation of the Cluster Approach. This evaluation, which is more ambitious than the phase one evaluation, will explicitly evaluate the cluster approach on the results it has had on improving the quality of humanitarian response. The overall objectives, as agreed by the Cluster Evaluation Steering Committee are to:

- Assess the main outcomes of the joint humanitarian response at country level, with particular reference to the role of the cluster approach and other components of the humanitarian reform process.
- Assess the overall operational effectiveness of the cluster approach (including the role of the Global Clusters) in facilitating and supporting the coordinated joint humanitarian response at country level through an analysis of common country-level findings.

Annex 1 - Evaluation consultants hired by ESS (2002-2008)

As in the past, ESS has relied upon independent consultants to undertake the evaluations for the section. No dramatic changes in the composition of the evaluation teams occurred during 2007 and 2008 as compared to previous years. Over the years, certain trends can however be noticed. The share of consultants with an origin in the south has been slowly increasing over the years with a rate of about five percent. The share of consultants originating from the US, Canada or the UK has decreased somewhat but remains around 50-60 percent. The percentage of female consultants has remained stable at about 40 percent.

Country/origin	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
UK	1	3	4	5	2	11	4
US	1	4	2	3	1	1	1
Canada	3	1	-	1	2	-	-
Australia	2	-	1	1	2	-	-
Europe (non UK)	-	3	2	3	1	3	-
Africa	-	-	2	1	2	2	-
Asia	1	-	-	2	3	3	2
Latin America	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Mid East	-	-	1	1	-	-	-
% female	25%	45%	50%	53%	43%	50%	25%
% southern	13%	-	25%	24%	36%	25%	38%
% US, UK, Canada	62%	73%	50%	53%	36%	60%	63%
Total	8	11	12	17	14	20	8



As emphasized in previous annual reports, the expertise required to undertake evaluations for OCHA (a combination of humanitarian experience and track record of conducting evaluations, as well as excellent English language skills) tends to limit the pool of available consultants. ESS will keep up its efforts to diversify the regional origins of consultants that the section is working with.