

## Review of Joint Evaluations and the Future of Inter Agency Evaluations

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

On behalf of the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Real Time Evaluation Interest Group

# Final Report

V.3

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The opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the UN Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

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## Glossary of Acronyms

- **CERF** Central Emergency Response Fund
- **CT** Country Team (also refers to the Humanitarian Country Team)
- **DRC** Democratic Republic of the Congo
- **ESS** Evaluation and Studies Section (OCHA)
- **ESC** Emergency Shelter Cluster
- **ERC** Emergency Relief Coordinator
- **DSA** Daily Subsistence Allowance
- **FAO** Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
- **HC** Humanitarian Coordinator
- **IASC (WG)** Inter agency Standing Committee (Working Group)
- **IA IG (or IG)** Inter agency Standing Committee RTE Interest Group
- **IA RTE** Inter agency Real Time Evaluation
- **IDP** Internally Displaced Person
- **INGO** International Non-governmental organisation
- **NGO** Non-governmental organisation
- **OCHA (or UN OCHA)** Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
- **PDSB (OCHA)** Policy Development and Studies Branch
- **PONREPP** Post Nargis Recovery and Preparedness Plan (Myanmar)
- **RC** Resident Coordinator
- **RC Movement** Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement
- **RTE** Real Time Evaluation
- **TOR** Terms of Reference
- **UN** United Nations
- **UNCT** United Nations Country Team
- **UNEG** United Nations Evaluation Group
- **UN-HABITAT** United Nations Human Settlements Programme
- **UNHCR** United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- **UNICEF** United Nations Children's Fund
- **WHO** World Health Organisation
- **WFP** World Food Programme

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- Members of the IA RTE Interest Group who gave of their time to take part in interviews, field visits<sup>1</sup> and in the July 11 and 12, 2009 Geneva workshop.
- Interviewees at both headquarters and in the field, especially Mozambique and Myanmar
- Staff of the OCHA Policy Development and Studies Branch (PDSB), Evaluation and Studies Section (ESS) in New York and Geneva who generously assisted the review through their practical support, professional insights and experience
- Authors of materials on real time and joint evaluations (especially the 14 lessons learned from the Pakistan and Mozambique IA RTE experiences<sup>2</sup>)
- Anyone else who so kindly gave of his/her time, efforts, insights and experience and who is not included in the above list

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<sup>1</sup> Especially Ms. Caroline Heider, Director of Evaluation at WFP and Tijana Bojanic from the UNICEF Evaluation Office, who conducted the country visit to Mozambique and all who supported them from headquarters and in Mozambique.

<sup>2</sup> Lessons learned from the IASC pilot Inter agency Real Time Evaluations conducted in Mozambique, (May 2007) and Pakistan (September 2007) - final draft of 26 December 2007, by Ms. Francine Pickup.

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## Executive Summary

### Background

This is a review of primarily three pilot phase Inter agency Real time Evaluations<sup>3</sup> (IA RTE's) as described in the Terms of Reference (TOR) in the annexes. The review is to inform the drafting of a note to the Inter agency Standing Committee Working Group (IASC WG)<sup>4</sup> regarding the future of IA RTE's. The review differs from an evaluation in many respects. It does not apply standard evaluation criteria. The role of the reviewer is to reflect views collected from IA RTE Interest Group (IG) members and from the review field missions. The methodology was comprised of a desk review, interviewing and a workshop .

### Summary Findings and Conclusions

The following are the main findings of the review:

1. The pilot IA RTE's were poorly rated regarding their 'instrumental' use i.e. in terms of recommendations implemented and corrective actions taken as a *direct* result of each IA RTE. Few examples of such *direct* benefit were encountered during the review. Constraints relate to ownership, perceptions, methods, dissemination/'communication' and follow-up of results. Poor direct use is a generic problem of evaluations of humanitarian action.
2. Other, *indirect*, types of use<sup>5</sup> have been noted, though these are not currently part of the primary objectives of the IA RTE's. A significant number of examples were found where the evaluations influenced the operations (and those working in them) by means other than the final report. Such less visible use is recognized as being important and in some cases determinant in bringing about change (see examples in the main text).
3. The vast majority of those consulted recognize a need for some sort of real time evaluation mechanism. The potential value of an appropriate IA RTE mechanism is widely recognized, albeit from differing perspectives, be they 'learning', 'accountability' or both. Broad agreement exists within the IG for a triggering mechanism that is predictable and perhaps automatic in certain circumstances. The need for criteria is widely understood.
4. An equally important majority identify weaknesses in the current IA RTE model. These weaknesses are present throughout the process: IA RTE timing and predictability; concept, approach and methods; and dissemination, communication and follow-up. Weaknesses in the IA RTE process have impacted negatively on direct utilization of the pilot IA RTE's. Addressing weaknesses in an integral and comprehensive manner can lead to an effective IA RTE mechanism. Failing to address them comprehensively will probably result in a continued lack of satisfactory results and return on investment.
5. Costs and approaches of the IA RTE's are more in line with 'heavier', non-real time evaluations than some single agency RTE's. Interviewees were of mixed views regarding the potential for cost reductions, arguing it depends largely on how useful they may ultimately be. Clarity around the

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<sup>3</sup> IASC Inter agency Real Time Evaluation of the Pakistan Floods/Cyclone Yemyin, October 2007, by Sir Nicholas Young, Dr. Saba Gul Khattak, Prof. Kaiser Bengali, Lucia Elmi; Inter agency Real time Evaluation of the Response to the February 2007 Floods and Cyclone in Mozambique, May 2007, by John Cosgrave, Célia Gonçalves, Daryl Martyris, Riccardo Polastro and Muchimba Sikumba-Dils. Inter Agency Real Time Evaluation of the Humanitarian Response to Cyclone Nargis (final report 17 Dec. 2008), by Robert Turner, Jock Baker, Dr. Zaw Myo Oo and Naing Soe Aye. The evaluations can be found on the ESS website at <http://ochaonline.un.org/essreports>.

<sup>4</sup> IASC Working Group Meeting 13 – 15 July 2009, Hosted by Geneva.

<sup>5</sup> The ALNAP utilization study (see bibliography) describes four types of use: 'instrumental' - direct implementation of findings and recommendations; 'conceptual' - longer-term, gradual influence on broader institutional or global concepts; 'process' - learning as a result of, or during the evaluation process e.g. evaluators playing a catalytic or mentoring role; and, 'legitimizing' where the evaluation legitimizes already existing knowledge or conclusions.

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concept and process is a prerequisite for firm conclusions. Possible avenues for cost-reduction are described in the report.

6. Alternatives to an IA RTE mechanism were briefly examined during the review<sup>6</sup>. Options which emerged include:
  - a. Dropping the ‘real time’ objective and doing just ‘IA emergency evaluations’;
  - b. Offering Country Teams (CT’s) the possibility of choosing between real time or non-real time emergency evaluations based on criteria for an ‘automatic’ emergency evaluation mechanism; and
  - c. Developing pilot ‘impact evaluations’ for emergency operations.
7. As noted above, most responses favour some type of mechanism to facilitate real time feedback and learning for on-going operations and/or for accountability reasons. The second option (to allow CTs choose the type of evaluation) emerged late in the review and could be examined in more detail. Finally, regarding ‘impact-evaluations’, given the complexity and early development stage of the concept, views were clearly mixed among IG members. The Geneva workshop requested that OCHA refine the concept for further discussion.

## ***Summary Recommendations***

The following are the main recommendations of the report. They are presented as background for the July 13 – 15 meeting of the IASC WG in Geneva. Depending on what the IASC WG decides, resultant actions would be required primarily from the IASC WG; the IA RTE IG (collectively and as individual members); and OCHA, as evident from each recommendation.

## **Continuation of an IA RTE Mechanism**

1. **The IASC should continue to give its support to an IA RTE evaluation mechanism which would evolve in function of the conclusions and recommendations in this report.** The following recommendations outline relevant steps.

## **Timing, Predictability and Funding**

2. **The triggering mechanism should be clarified by the IASC and IG. An automatic triggering of IA RTE’s should be considered in certain circumstances.** OCHA should propose to the IG possible criteria for such a mechanism.
3. **In line with the above, OCHA should outline options for more predictable funding of IA RTE’s.** In addition to existing sources, these might be found in Flash Appeals or ear-marked donor funding.
4. **OCHA, in consultation with the IG, should develop an improved management and governance structure for the IG.** In line with other joint-evaluation mechanisms, this should involve a three layer structure. Consideration should be given to inviting donors, other organizations and staff from operational units.
5. **OCHA and the IG should develop appropriate preparedness and standby capacities for the timely launching of IA RTE’s.** Options include standby rosters<sup>7</sup>, framework agreements, training and standard procedures, formats and tools.
6. **OCHA should improve its capacity to coordinate and manage IA RTE’s.** This will include clarification of roles and responsibilities, which will be especially important if IA RTE’s become more predictable, frequent or ‘automatic’.

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<sup>6</sup> Especially in the June 11 and 12 2009 workshop in Geneva and in related discussions and correspondence.

<sup>7</sup> Gender balance should be a criterion for selection.

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## IA RTE Concept, Management and Methods

7. **OCHA, in consultation with the IASC and IG, should draw up an agreed IA RTE outline concept note addressing the conceptual ambiguities outlined in this report.** This should balance, or prioritize, potentially competing objectives and perceptions of IA RTE's.
8. **OCHA and the IG should develop methodological guidance materials in accordance with whatever concept is agreed.** The package should cover tools and methods for achieving expected results in 'real time'<sup>8</sup>.
9. **OCHA, in consultation with the IG, should develop clear guidelines and a tool-box for managing the IA RTE's.** These should address all potential actors, especially those in-country.
10. **The IASC, supported by OCHA and the IG, should mount an information/communication campaign explaining whatever IA RTE concept is ultimately adopted.** The involvement of key potential advocates (such as supportive HC's) should be engaged pro-actively.
11. **OCHA and the IG should consider the development of a 'light IA RTE' model (see under the 'cost' chapter) and/or an 'on-demand' M&E support capacity for emergencies.** This would aim to provide an alternative or complement to full-blown IA RTE's<sup>9</sup>.

## Dissemination/Communication & Follow-up

12. **OCHA, in consultation with the IG, should develop innovative products and approaches for communicating and promoting the use of IA RTE's results.** Options include synopses, user-friendly thematic and key-lessons papers, web-based and other media products, training materials and the like.
13. **OCHA, in consultation with the IG, should draft an options paper setting out possible approaches and responsibilities regarding communication and follow-up of IA RTE's.** The paper should address, especially, responsibilities for implementing (and monitoring the implementation of) IA RTE recommendations. Additionally, it should outline a model communications strategy for IA RTE's (i.e. a strategy that transcends passive dissemination of results).

## Cost

14. **In light of possible increased frequency, OCHA and the IG should estimate possible savings on the average cost of IA RTE's.** Areas to examine include reducing the number of external consultant evaluators; reducing management trips; and developing an 'IA RTE light' model.

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<sup>8</sup> In a subsequent section, this report explains that varying understandings of the term 'real-time' exist. An agreed definition would be necessary as part of the clarification of basic IA RTE concepts.

<sup>9</sup> It must be recognized, however, that such a model would have serious weaknesses, not the least of which being an absence of direct consultations with beneficiary.

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## Introduction

### **Real Time Evaluations (RTE's)**

According to the January 2009 IASC RTE draft 'Concept Paper and Management Plan'<sup>10</sup>:

*An IA RTE is an evaluation carried out at the early implementation stages of a humanitarian operation which almost simultaneously feeds back its findings for immediate use by the broader humanitarian community at the field level. They are primarily intended for sudden-onset disasters, or protracted crises undergoing a phase of rapid deterioration or escalating violence.*

*The common characteristics of IA RTE's are:*

- *light footprint;*
- *rapidity;*
- *flexibility;*
- *responsiveness; and*
- *rapid feedback to managers on how to improve the response.*

*Ideally, IA RTE's function precisely to unblock problem areas or operational bottlenecks and provide real time learning to the field.*

### **The Review and This Report**

This is the final report for the review of 'Joint Evaluations and the Future of Inter Agency Evaluations'<sup>11</sup>, with primary focus on pilot Inter Agency Real Time Evaluations (see the review Terms of Reference in the annexes). Three IA RTE's<sup>12</sup> have been conducted in this pilot phase<sup>13</sup>. These are the IA RTE's of the humanitarian responses to the:

1. *February 2007 Mozambique floods and cyclone (final report 'May' 2007)*
2. *June 2007 Pakistan floods & cyclone Yemyin (final report 31 Oct. 2007)*
3. *May 2008 Myanmar Cyclone Nargis (final report 17 Dec. 2008)*

A fourth pilot IA RTE planned for 2009 regarding humanitarian operations in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has not taken place<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Draft Inter Agency Real Time Evaluation (IA RTE) Concept Paper and Management Plan Prepared by the Evaluation and Studies Section, UN OCHA for the Inter Agency Standing Committee January 2009.

<sup>11</sup> Full title: Review of Joint Evaluations and the Future of Inter Agency Evaluations: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), on behalf of the Inter agency Standing Committee (IASC) Real Time Evaluation Interest Group (see OCHA ESS website <http://ochaonline.un.org/ToolsServices/EvaluationandStudies/ESSReports/tabid/1325/Default.aspx>).

<sup>12</sup> IASC Inter Agency Real Time Evaluation of the Pakistan Floods/Cyclone Yemyin, October 2007, by Sir Nicholas Young, Dr. Saba Gul Khattak, Prof. Kaiser Bengali, Lucia Elmi; Inter Agency Real Time Evaluation of the Response to the February 2007 Floods and Cyclone in Mozambique, May 2007, by John Cosgrave, Célia Gonçalves, Daryl Martyris, Riccardo Polastro and Muchimba Sikumba-Dils. May 2008. Inter Agency Real Time Evaluation of the Humanitarian Response to Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar (final report 17 Dec. 2008), by Robert Turner, Jock Baker, Dr. Zaw Myo Oo and Naing Soe Aye. The evaluations can be found on the ESS website at <http://ochaonline.un.org/essreports>.

<sup>13</sup> Others have been conducted outside the pilot phase. They may be consulted at the OCHA ESS website, reports section <http://ochaonline.un.org/ToolsServices/EvaluationandStudies/ESSReports/tabid/1325/language/en-US/Default.aspx>.

<sup>14</sup> The absence of clear triggering criteria and mechanisms hampered the launching of the proposed IA RTE. This was despite planning or 'scoping' missions in the region. This observation is also relevant to other proposed IA

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This report looks at the IA RTE's fundamentally in relation to their purpose, or 'use'. It draws on 'The Utilisation of Evaluations' study, by ALNAP<sup>15</sup>, in which types of use are described as being:

1. **Instrumental use:** *Direct implementation of the findings and recommendations ...*
2. **Conceptual use:** *Results and conclusions which trickle down in to the organisation in the form of new ideas and concepts debated and developed over time ...*
3. **Process (learning use):** *Participation in the evaluation can lead to individual learning and changes in behaviour ...*
4. **Legitimizing use:** *The evaluation legitimises – confirms, substantiates, corroborates – a decision or understanding that the organisation or individual already holds ...*

In addition to use, concepts, triggering, timing, management, funding and costs<sup>16</sup> are examined in the report. Though the report contains conclusions and recommendations, this is not an evaluation. It is a 'participatory' review<sup>17</sup>, conducted during May, June and early July of 2009. The report is based on:

- Interviews at the central level (headquarters, either directly or by telephone)
- A desk Review
- Two country visits (Myanmar and Mozambique)<sup>18</sup>
- A workshop with Interest Group members and others, especially from OCHA Geneva
- Email traffic among members of the IG and OCHA (especially in the latter phases of the review)

A planned country visit to Pakistan did not take place due to the current Internally Displaced Person (IDP) humanitarian emergency there. A 'lessons learned' study of the Pakistan IA RTE was conducted in 2007<sup>19</sup>, and was consulted during this review. Country visits were conducted to Mozambique and Myanmar<sup>20</sup>. Staff from INGO's, NNGO's, UN organizations, donor agencies and governmental authorities were interviewed and/or participated in the July 11 and 12<sup>th</sup> workshop in Geneva.

Approximately one hundred people were consulted<sup>21</sup>. An attempted survey was unsuccessful due to the poor response.

In addition to generic guides, most of IA Interest Group member agencies have developed or are developing their own detailed guidance on RTE's. The author thanks all who submitted reports, background documentation and information for the desk study. Approximately one hundred documents fall into the following categories:

1. IA RTE reports (both pilot and non pilot)
2. Individual agency-specific RTE reports
3. IASC/OCHA ESS concept papers and guidance on RTE's
4. Individual agency reviews, concept papers and guidance on RTE's

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RTE's which ultimately did not take place (e.g. Zimbabwe, Iraq and Bangladesh). It underlines the importance of a transparent and systematic triggering mechanism.

<sup>15</sup> The ALNAP Review of Humanitarian Action in 2005, published in December 2006, chapter 3, by Peta Sandison.

<sup>16</sup> A more comprehensive cost analysis than is contained in this report was recommended in initial versions of the Inception Report. Feedback from IG members during a telephone conference, on May 7<sup>th</sup> 2009, suggested that it would not be easy to make such calculations. It was recommended that the analysis be more modest.

<sup>17</sup> Email exchange with OCHA, May 5<sup>th</sup> 2009, regarding the Inception Report and the importance of a participatory process leading to a report reflecting the views of the 'whole group (IG) based on discussions at the workshop ... and evidence of field-level utility from the (country review) teams'.

<sup>18</sup> Missions: May 31<sup>st</sup> to June 7<sup>th</sup> for Myanmar and June 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> for Mozambique.

<sup>19</sup> Already footnoted, paper by Ms. Francine Pickup, dated 26 December 2007.

<sup>20</sup> Conducted by Ms. Caroline Heider, Director Office of Evaluation WFP and Ms. Tijana Bojanic, UNICEF, for Mozambique; and Messrs. Scott Green, Chief of the Evaluation and Studies Section (ESS), OCHA and John Telford, consultant author of this review, for Myanmar.

<sup>21</sup> See list in the annexes.

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5. Lessons learned on RTE's from practice, both IA and individual agency
  6. ALNAP Generic RTE guidance and other HA evaluation materials and tools
  7. Management responses to RTE's
  8. Other documentation, including email correspondence and background notes

Standards or reference documents for the IA RTE's include the following:

- The TOR and Inception Reports for each RTE;
- The IASC IA IG RTE draft Concept Paper and Management Plan (2009);
- The recently launched ALNAP RTE Guide (Pilot Version)<sup>22</sup>;
- United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) evaluation standards<sup>23</sup>
- The ALNAP (evaluation) Quality Proforma 2005 (v. 02/03/05)<sup>24</sup>

### ***Potential Bias, Constraints and Limitations***

Challenges facing the review can be categorized under three headings: time, focus and actors.

Firstly, the time element: similar to those faced by an RTE, this review was conducted under notable time-constraints. The looming mid-July 2009 IASC WG meeting, cast its shadow on practical aspects of the review. Those time constraints have affected the depth and rigour of the study, including: the degree to which it can be inclusive in its planning and execution; the number and type of country locations visited (only capitals); and the number of interviews conducted and analysed (especially beneficiary views). This is doubly significant considering that the review is an inter agency initiative. Coordination, consultation and consensus-building require time and effort, probably more than has been available to the review.

Another time constraint has to do with the gap between the pilot IA RTE's and the review. The lapse in time (one to two years) has meant that many of those involved in the respective IA RTE's were no longer available for consultations. This may have led to an under-estimation of the usefulness of the IA RTE's: some recommendations may have been delivered orally (e.g. in debriefings and interviews) and taken onboard in the operation without necessarily having been reflected in the reports.

A second constraint is to do with the focus of the IA RTE's and thus the review. All three pilot evaluations addressed sudden-onset, natural disasters – cyclone induced floods in all cases. This certainly restricts the scope for reflection on how such a mechanism might operate in armed conflict or slow-onset scenarios.

The third constraint refers to the primary actors involved. There is a strength in having a relatively close group of participants developing, managing, conducting and using directly the outputs of the review (e.g. the IASC, the IG and OCHA). It may facilitate focus and relevance throughout the exercise and hopefully reinforces 'ownership'. On the other hand, all are stakeholders in the process. This may be from institutional or professional perspectives. As with any such study, interests, great and small, implicit or explicit, may well be present.

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<sup>22</sup> See [www.alnap.org](http://www.alnap.org).

<sup>23</sup> Standards for Evaluation in the UN System April 29 2005.

<sup>24</sup> The Quality Proforma, v. of 02/03/05 was used with caution. Firstly, the Proforma was designed for HA evaluations in general and did not focus on RTE's. The ALNAP pilot guide contains more relevant guidance. Secondly, it has been recognized by a number of evaluators that the 'Proforma', takes a 'one-size-fits-all' approach. IA RTE's are far from standardized under-takings.

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Attempts to mitigate these constraints have been made, such as: seeking-out alternative views and sources of reflection; the inclusion of the learning workshop; and the IA nature of the missions. Finally, despite an effort to broaden the group of interviewees and workshop participants, it is acknowledged that the majority were from UN agencies.

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## Pilot IA RTE Utilisation

The vast majority of those consulted doubted that the pilot IA RTE's had met their **primary objective of significantly influencing the respective emergency operations in 'real time'**. Both country visits, conducted by separate teams, came to this conclusion<sup>25</sup>. Little evidence was found of direct impact on the emergency operations through the implementation of recommendations<sup>26</sup>. Interviews at the global level supported this conclusion.

Such doubts had already been aired in the 2007 lessons learned paper. On page 12, the document notes that in general:

*There is systematic weakness in the follow-up on evaluation recommendations, leading to poor implementation.*

The paper continues:

*One conclusion coming out of the Pakistan RTE was that lessons from the 2006 Pakistan earthquake, particularly in relation to the operation of the clusters, had not been learned or implemented, and many of the issues that were identified in the earthquake RTE re-emerged this time. Assessing whether recommendations from previous evaluations have been implemented should be a standard component of any evaluation. Regarding both Mozambique and Pakistan, the paper adds: While their ability to feed into emergency decision-making on the ground was limited, considerable interest was generated ...*

Though the above mentioned 2006 Pakistan evaluation was not part of the pilot phase, a trend of poor direct utilization of IA RTE's is evident. It is worth noting that poor direct use is not specific to IA RTE's, however. ALNAP and individual organizations<sup>27</sup> have come to similar conclusions regarding evaluations of humanitarian operations in general.<sup>28</sup>

**Indirect uses and significant value-added were evident.** The December 2007 'lessons learned' paper concluded the following:

*Particularly in the case of Pakistan, the IA RTE's encouraged agencies to step back from their agency-specific interests and address broader issues of the emergency response related to the effectiveness of the implementation of humanitarian reform. IA RTE's provide the opportunity to review the overall direction and coordination of the emergency response rather than agency-specific aspects of it.*

Many indirect uses of the Myanmar and Mozambique IA RTE's were also found. The role of IA RTE's in providing an opportunity for 'front-line aid workers' and NGOs to be heard by managers, especially UN officials, was seen as a clear value-added. A number of interviewees, particularly from INGO's, emphasized the importance of 'downward accountability' dimensions of IA RTE's.

Many agencies found engaging in the evaluation process to be useful in terms of participating in a critical assessment exercise with external actors. In Myanmar, these aspects were sometimes cited as being of more use than the final report itself.

In Mozambique, it was felt that the evaluation provided assurances to communities and local government authorities that checks and balances exist in the international emergency response system and that aid

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<sup>25</sup> In one of the countries visited, a senior UN official went so far as to state bluntly: 'They - the evaluators - can say what they want and we - the Country Team - will do what we want'.

<sup>26</sup> In Myanmar, some issues identified in the report were addressed in subsequent recovery planning. Views are mixed as to whether this was directly as a result of the evaluation or whether they had already been identified and would have been addressed anyway.

<sup>27</sup> E.g. UNHCR.

<sup>28</sup> ALNAP (2006 a) *The Utilisation of Evaluations, chapter 3 Review of Humanitarian Action* (2005), by Peta Sandison see [www.alnap.org](http://www.alnap.org)

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agencies were not operating in a void. In one case, excluded beneficiary groups (who had been late for registration) had been identified by the IA RTE team and access to aid was negotiated with the local chief. Also in Mozambique, evidence exists of a longer-term impact on the response to the floods in the following year, 2008.

That evaluation also identified problems related to information management, resulting in the appointment of a designated person by UN OCHA, UNDP, UNICEF and WFP. In addition, more attention was paid to inter-cluster coordination and cross-cutting issues following the highlighting of these issues by the IA RTE team. In both Mozambique and Myanmar, while it is generally felt that little new information became known as a result of the evaluations, they did help in the prioritization of issues. In particular, they served as channels for INGO concerns regarding operational or coordination matters.

The Mozambique report was generally considered of a good quality and impartial<sup>29</sup>, despite misgivings from observers from some UN agencies who felt that their views were inadequately represented in the evaluation<sup>30</sup>. In short, the Mozambique evaluation provided an opportunity to reflect, highlighted what worked well, pointed to problematic areas and gave a broad perspective on the operation, including documenting the response for future reference (even if the primary use and shelf life of such reports is assumed to be more a matter of months than years).

In the case of Myanmar, a number of 'invisible' or less visible uses also emerged from the review. At a debriefing with senior UN officials in New York, the urgent need for support to the Humanitarian Coordinator's office was emphasized. This was reiterated in writing. These communications are reportedly linked to a subsequent increase in support.

Donors saw a value of having an independent review happening as the response was ongoing (not least for the sake of access to information, which they lamented was not always easy to come by in the operation). Other uses noted in Myanmar include: the 'call-to-order' effect of the evaluation, in that its very existence induced key actors to review their operations and processes and, in the words of one interviewee, act and 'behave correctly'. In another case, the IA RTE served to legitimate approaches being taken by an INGO and was used in soliciting support for those activities. Interestingly, one INGO in Mozambique applied the evaluation results as materials for a training simulation.<sup>31</sup>

In general, many observers regarded the quality of the field work, report and recommendations quite highly. Some of the recommendations were seen as especially pertinent<sup>32</sup>. These views were less prevalent among UN officials, some of whom regarded the report as overly critical. One UN agency regretted that its leading of an important cluster at the outset of the emergency was, in their view, inadequately addressed in the report<sup>33</sup>. Furthermore, the report's prominent conclusions on the role of nationals and the authorities in the response were questioned from two distinct perspectives. Some, from UN agencies, suggested that the contribution of international agencies, compared to that of nationals, was under-estimated in the report. On the other-hand, an INGO interviewee voiced strong concerns that initial official restrictions on international involvement in the response were inadequately reflected. An INGO

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<sup>29</sup> Though one interviewee thought that '... the team leader had in mind the evaluation he wanted to write, which was more about OCHA headquarters. than about the Mozambique response'.

<sup>30</sup> FAO staff, for example, were not interviewed, and just one person (a program officer in the field) was interviewed from the Health Cluster lead agency, WHO. UN Habitat, lead of the Shelter Cluster, felt that the report did not address the issues discussed with the evaluation team. The logistics cluster also felt underrepresented, with just four of the 150 people interviewed in the evaluation coming from that cluster. Members of the cluster thought that they had faced serious problems in the 2007 response which were not reflected in the report and have not been addressed since.

<sup>31</sup> Based on email inputs by a member of the Mozambique IA RTE review.

<sup>32</sup> Such as the proposal to '... consolidate discussions on livelihoods, possibly as a single cluster in support of the PONREPP process'.

<sup>33</sup> UNHCR noted both in written comments to the report and in interviews for this review that mention of the agency was essentially absent throughout the Myanmar IA RTE report. It should be noted, however, that the IA RTE concentrated on the transition phase of the emergency, well after UNHCR had relinquished the lead of the Emergency Shelter Cluster (ESC).

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manager also queried some of the key recommendations, arguing that they were either already being addressed, or in some cases, ill-advised<sup>34</sup>.

Importantly, the Myanmar IA RTE addressed the issue of beneficiary engagement, an area that has consistently been weak in humanitarian operations. A number of interviewees noted the impact that the evaluation team's field level beneficiary consultations had on operational actors. Some of those actors had previously concluded that such consultations were difficult, or next to impossible in the Myanmar context. Not only were the methodologies a learning exercise for some, it was felt by INGO observers that these IA RTE consultations might have been more extensive than just in one location. (It should be noted, however, that the IA RTE in-country advisory group had recommended that the IA RTE team go deeper into issues in a *single* location rather than be thinly spread over a number of locations.)

Interestingly, the 2007 Pakistan and Mozambique 'lessons learned' exercise found that: *In Pakistan, the Steering Committee emphasized the importance of the evaluation team traveling to the field despite the long distance and limited time. In a two week evaluation, they spent almost half their time in Baluchistan and Sindh provinces.*

Finally, over time and when a critical mass of reports exists, they may become a source for analysis of trends related to the humanitarian reform process. This may lead to adjustments in systems and mechanisms. Already, global level recommendations from the Mozambique report regarding humanitarian reform (especially regarding clusters, funding and coordination) were cited specifically by UN managers in Geneva as having had a direct impact on the development of field support mechanisms (i.e. the OCHA surge capacity). There was a value-added, it was argued, even when problems has already been known: the additional noting of these issues reinforced ('legitimated', in ALNAP utilisation language) the need for improvements. They added additional detail, examples and weight.

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<sup>34</sup> It was argued, for instance, that the recommendation to strengthen clusters at the Delta hub level placed undue demands on agencies who had insufficient staff to 'attend all the meetings'. It needs to be said, however, that a separate recommendation in the report advocated for the use of coordination methods other than meetings.

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## A perceived need for some form of IA RTE mechanism

### *Findings and Conclusions*

Despite the repeated doubts about the direct use of the pilot IA RTE's, no one consulted during the review recommended to cease inter agency evaluations of emergencies. On the contrary, the vast majority of interviewees (donors, UN and INGO's) supported the existence of some form of inter agency real time evaluation mechanism. In a number of cases, they made the point quite forcibly. In addition, the IG workshop and a large proportion of interviewees<sup>35</sup> suggested that an 'automatic' or 'mandatory' mechanism be considered in certain circumstances. Arguments for such a mechanism varied. Most centered on one or other of two main *potential* benefits of an appropriate IA RTE mechanism:

- Firstly, a large number suggested that there be an inter agency mechanism for learning at the early stages of a sudden onset emergency (e.g. within the first 3 months, and preferably within the first 6 to 8 weeks). Such initiatives should aim, they argue, at identifying major problems, blockages, bottlenecks or weaknesses in an emergency response in time to take corrective action.
- A second, significant group argued that an inter agency accountability mechanism was necessary given the large amounts of money expended in international emergency operations. One of the strongest utterances came from a senior UN official who asked rhetorically how anyone could expect to get hundreds of millions of dollars for operations without some form of examination. Such sentiments were mirrored by many others who emphasized the moral and managerial obligation to account for the use and effectiveness of funds donated to benefit victims of crises. This accountability, it was argued, should be both up-stream to donors and downwards to beneficiaries. Advocates tended to be more INGO than UN staff and more headquarters-based than country operations staff. Nonetheless, advocates for one or the other approach (learning or accountability) were found among all categories of those consulted.
- A minority of interviewees supported such a mechanism without differentiating between 'learning' and 'accountability', either saying that both were needed and/or saying that they were closely linked concepts.
- Be it for learning and/or accountability, most interviewees are in favour of an 'external-eye' being part of an IA RTE process i.e. that at least one evaluator, probably the team-leader, would not be part of any of the organizations being evaluated.
- A few interviewees recommended an on-demand monitoring and evaluations (M&E) support capacity as part of, or as a complement to an IA RTE mechanism.
- One interviewee recommended dropping the real time component and to run just IA emergency evaluations (arguing that this is what they are in reality, anyway).
- Finally, views among IG members were mixed regarding 'impact-evaluations'. This was partly due to their evident complexity and the early development stage of the concept. The Geneva IG workshop requested that OCHA refine the concept for further discussion.

The inter agency nature of evaluation mechanisms was seen as desirable by the majority of interviewees. A small minority, for differing reasons, questioned the efficiency of an inter agency approach (especially regarding the 'real time' speed of the existing model and the delays implicit in an IA model). One interviewee questioned the term 'inter agency', arguing that it was 'meaningless' in that it did not represent the 'humanitarian system'. Key actors left out included affected governments and the Red Cross

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<sup>35</sup> Some interviewees were hesitant regarding an 'automatic' mechanism. The argument certain UN officials made had to do with both 'ownership' (that the CT should own and have a veto over the launching and management of IA RTE's) and the capacity of IA RTE managers to conduct and field operations to receive the larger number of IA RTE's that an automatic mechanism would imply. UN interviewees in Myanmar, for instance, were less in favour of an automatic mechanism than their headquarters colleagues and than non-UN interviewees, be they from headquarters or the field.

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and Red Crescent Movement. This opinion was echoed by others who suggested that the inter agency nature of the current model was more akin to a ‘UN club plus a few large INGO’s’ than to an all-inclusive inter agency mechanism. In Mozambique, government ‘ownership’ of the IA RTE process was seen by most respondents as ideal, but it was recognized that such an approach would be highly context specific<sup>36</sup>.

## ***Recommendation***

1. **The IASC should continue to give its support to an IA RTE evaluation mechanism which would evolve in function of the conclusions and recommendations made in this report.** The following recommendations outline relevant steps.

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<sup>36</sup> This is for a variety of reasons. Firstly, as in the case of Mozambique, authorities will probably have their own monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Secondly, in many emergencies political and administrative sensitivities may come into play.

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## Timing, Predictability and Funding

### **Findings and Conclusions**

All three pilot IA RTE's were regarded by most interviewees as not 'real time'. Either they were seen to be late or, in the case of Mozambique, the emergency was shorter than expected. In spite of being mobilized relatively rapidly, the evaluation ended up being 'wrong-time'<sup>37</sup>. In addition, some IA RTE's were planned but have not as yet taken place<sup>38</sup>. Reasons for the evaluations being 'non-real time' or not taking place at all are multiple. Five stand out:

Firstly the **triggering mechanism** is seen to be cumbersome and subject to negotiation at various levels. It is, thus, vague and unpredictable. Most observers express dissatisfaction with the current approach. This dates back to at least the 2007 Lessons Learned review which recommended that there be '... an automatic trigger for launching an IA-RTE'. There is broad agreement in the IG to adopt a triggering mechanism which is more predictable and, in certain circumstances, 'automatic'. It is also agreed that criteria ought to be developed for such a mechanism. The related issue of 'ownership' (i.e. who controls IA RTE's) is a lively topic. Many members of CT's see IA RTE's as largely headquarters and accountability driven (in some cases seeing them almost as 'inspections'). As a case in point, the triggering of the Myanmar IA RTE was by no means met with universal acclamation within the CT<sup>39</sup>. In the case of Mozambique, smaller UN agencies felt somewhat side-lined in the IA RTE process by larger ones. Varied options for future ownership have been suggested during the review.<sup>40</sup>

Secondly, **the inter agency aspect** involves complicated, unwieldy, at times ill-defined management arrangements. Added to this is the vague membership of and uneven participation in the IG; from the closely and regularly engaged to the virtually entirely absent. This lack of clarity adversely affects efficiency, effectiveness and timing.

Thirdly, some interviewees felt strongly that the **'heavy' traditional evaluation approach** being applied further bogs down the process. This 'heaviness' is described as including: prolonged negotiation of TORs around standard evaluation criteria such as efficiency, effectiveness and relevance; scoping missions; emphasis on employing external evaluators; inception reports; application of rigorous methods, such as demanding triangulation<sup>41</sup>; and reporting which involves various drafts.

Fourthly, **frequent staff turnovers or changing or unclear responsibilities within OCHA** regarding management of the IA RTE mechanism have mitigated against predictability and continuity. Challenges have been compounded by the shortage of standard IA RTE management templates, guidelines, TOR's, sample evaluation team formats and profiles, and expedited financial, administrative and practical support mechanisms. The physical distance and substantial time-difference between New York and Geneva underline the importance of a clear division of tasks and effective delegation.

Finally, **the very concept of 'real time' is unclear**. For some it signifies 'early in an emergency' (e.g. within 6-8 weeks, maximum 3 months, of a sudden onset emergency). For others, it means that results are provided 'immediately' the IA RTE takes place, irrespective of whether it happens early or late.

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<sup>37</sup> The 2001 floods in Mozambique had been taken as a benchmark for anticipating the probable duration of the emergency phase in 2007, but this proved to be an over-estimation. The team arrived relatively rapidly in-country - seven weeks after CT discussions regarding an emergency response and adoption of the cluster approach and six weeks after the Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF) request. Despite this, the emergency response was already winding down when the team arrived. Staff that might otherwise have departed felt obliged to remain to meet with the evaluation team.

<sup>38</sup> E.g. Iraq, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh and so far, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

<sup>39</sup> And reservations continued to be expressed by some during the review.

<sup>40</sup> It is worth repeating that in Mozambique a number of interviewees felt ownership and triggering should lie with the government of an affected country. More commonly, it was argued that ownership should lie with one or more of the following: the RC/HC and/or CTs (even having a veto power, some suggested); the IASC; and/or the ERC.

<sup>41</sup> E.g. Mozambique, where unless a minimum number of sources of evidence were found, emerging conclusions would be systematically discarded.

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It is difficult to make recommendations as to when to execute an IA RTE<sup>42</sup> without firstly addressing such basic conceptual ambiguities. What is certain, however, is that improved preparedness measures are necessary in order to ensure a predictable IA RTE response, irrespective of definitions of ‘real-time’.

## **Recommendations**

To deliver speedy ‘real time’ initiatives, management approaches should be adapted:

2. **The triggering mechanism should be clarified by the IASC and IG. An automatic triggering of IA RTE’s should be considered in certain circumstances.** OCHA should propose to the IG possible criteria for such a mechanism. Criteria could be: large-scale sudden-onset natural disasters; a sudden switch from a protracted emergency to an acute phase where there is a risk of system-overstretch; major epidemics involving many actors; flash appeals exceeding a given threshold amount; and a specific request from the IASC WG, the Emergency Relief Co-ordinator (ERC), the RC/HC or by a majority of CT members.
3. **In line with the above, OCHA should outline options for more predictable funding of IA RTE’s.** In addition to existing sources<sup>43</sup>, funding might be found in Flash Appeals or earmarked donor funds. If the Flash Appeals option is adopted, a seed-fund would probably be required to kick-start the process, given that Flash Appeal funds might take too long to become available for a rapid response. The option of a general appeal should be explored with potential donors<sup>44</sup> in order to establish a global IA RTE fund. The fund could be to provide either seed money on a replenishable basis, or to fund entire IA RTE’s. Other options would be to look to the IASC, IG members, OCHA and perhaps a revised CERF (which currently would most likely not be able to fund such an undertaking).
4. **OCHA, in consultation with the IG, should develop an improved management and governance structure for the IG.** This might include a three layer structure inclusive of a day-to-day management team; a core management support group with agreed ‘rights and responsibilities’<sup>45</sup> involving agencies wishing to be closely and regularly involved; and an outer interest, or steering, or consultation group. Consideration should be given to inviting donors and other organizations (such as representatives of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement<sup>46</sup>) to participate at appropriate levels. The involvement of staff from operational units, not just from evaluation backgrounds, should also be encouraged, in order to strengthen operational learning from IA RTE’s.
5. **OCHA and the IG should develop appropriate preparedness and standby capacities for the timely launching of IA RTE’s.** Options include standby rosters and framework agreements with both IG member agencies and consultancy companies to provide evaluators (with appropriately varied experiences and profiles, including gender balance<sup>47</sup>, language skills and regional experience); standard operating procedures<sup>48</sup>, formats and tools (e.g. IA RTE TORs<sup>49</sup>); and standard management

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<sup>42</sup> The 2007 Lessons Learned paper recommended that: ‘... the evaluation [be] conducted early enough to capture useful data but not so early that no-one has time for the team’. In Mozambique, ‘The difficulty of choosing the precise point in time which is least disruptive and most useful was generally acknowledged’ (feedback from the review team).

<sup>43</sup> Currently from OCHA and discretionary inputs from IG members.

<sup>44</sup> As noted in this report, donors in Mozambique expressed a possible interest in funding, provided the mechanism was independent, of high quality and shows its usefulness.

<sup>45</sup> E.g. clearly recognized voting rights in the IG matched with an undertaking to provide perhaps evaluators, funding and to host an IA RTE in the field.

<sup>46</sup> Contacts with the IFRC are on-going.

<sup>47</sup> All three pilot-phase IA RTE’s were lead by men of Western nationalities.

<sup>48</sup> These should cover the entire evaluation management cycle, from inception to expedited report production, communications strategy and follow-up.

<sup>49</sup> Standardized ToRs should have an inbuilt component for adding context and emergency-specific issues and concerns.

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tools and formats (such as templates for in-country advisory group TORs). Training and capacities development for key potential evaluators and managers should be part of the package of measures.

6. **OCHA should improve its capacity to coordinate and manage IA RTE's.** In addition to the management tools and formats noted above, this requires greater clarity and continuity regarding the roles and responsibilities of OCHA focal points for IA RTE's. This will be especially important if IA RTE's become more predictable, frequent or 'automatic'.

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# IA RTE Concept, Management and Methods

## ***Findings and Conclusions***

A wide range of understandings exist regarding what IA RTE's are, or should be. All three pilot IA RTE's were notably different in style, coverage, focus and approach. While gradually IA RTE's are becoming better known among staff and agencies, perceptions vary greatly regarding four main aspects. This absence of unanimity around basic concepts makes IA RTE's exceptionally difficult to trigger, manage<sup>50</sup> and follow-up.

### **Their inter agency nature**

A number of questions arose during the review regarding the inter agency nature of IA RTE's.

**Firstly, are they inter agency in management and execution, be it centrally and/or in affected countries?** As already noted, a recurring opinion was that they purported to be inter agency but in fact substantive involvement was restricted to a limited number of international organizations. The use of an in-country advisory group representing a broader set of organizations (e.g. in Myanmar) was an important initiative aimed at widening institutional engagement<sup>51</sup>. Affected governments have been notable in their relative absence from the IA RTE process in all three cases<sup>52</sup>. The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has been involved at country levels. The Movement is not, however, significantly engaged in the IG. Are IA RTE's, therefore, tools for a restricted group of international agencies or for a humanitarian-system-wide set of stakeholders? Doubts ought to be dispelled, at the very least within the IG.

**Secondly, to what extent are they inter agency in focus (e.g. examining coordination, cluster or humanitarian reform aspects of emergency operations)?** Some, for instance the Mozambique IA RTE, dedicated considerable effort to looking at coordination, including global-level support capacities. Others, such as Myanmar, looked at coordination primarily at the operational level, including bringing to the notice of senior UN staff the urgent need to support the HC. As already noted, the 2007 Lessons paper states that ... *the IA RTE's encouraged agencies to step back from their agency-specific interests and address broader issues of the emergency response related to the effectiveness of the implementation of humanitarian reform.*<sup>53</sup> As evident from the TORs, the reports, lessons learned documents and interviews, the pilot IA RTE's were 'catch-all' evaluations, covering a wide range of issues, including, but not restricted to inter agency operational aspects. That coverage is determined, perhaps negotiated, on a case-by-case basis.

**A third aspect of the term 'inter agency' has to do with the use of the IA RTE's – are they used at an inter agency level?** Among the weaknesses regarding use, gaps in dissemination and communication stand out. There is little evidence that the reports were used significantly as tools for inter agency

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<sup>50</sup> In the case of Myanmar, the task of squaring this conceptual circle, so to speak, was described as an exceptionally demanding managerial task, when it came to, for example, putting together an appropriate team, ensuring involvement of NNGO's and organizing beneficiary consultations.

<sup>51</sup> Feedback regarding the Myanmar IA RTE highlighted the roles of both the OCHA evaluation manager and the in-country NGO coordinator who were instrumental in establishing the group. Interestingly, National NGO representatives outnumbered expatriates. Interpretation services were provided. An interviewee for the review suggested, however, that national actors were quite reticent to contribute in the presence of the internationals. A second drawback was the apparently weak linkages between the advisory group and the CT. Perhaps the major weakness was in the dissemination and communication of the final report. As already noted, neither the report nor the executive summary were translated.

<sup>52</sup> In Mozambique, none of the government representatives interviewed could recall the IA RTE and had doubts about its potential. Again, and as in Pakistan, neither the report, nor parts thereof, translated.

<sup>53</sup> Lessons learned from the IASC pilot Inter agency Real time Evaluations conducted in Mozambique (May 2007) and Pakistan (September 2007) 26<sup>th</sup> December Lessons Learned

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learning. In many cases it was found that key interlocutors had not read the reports. Many claim not to have received the final version and, in some cases, any version. The observation was made repeatedly that the evaluations seemed to be accessed by a restricted group (again, a ‘club’) involving principally senior managers and M&E staff of the larger international organisations.

**A final question refers to the extent to which the pilot IA RTE’s were an inter agency mechanism to reduce ‘evaluation overload’.** Did they act as a replacement for, rather than a complement to other evaluations and reviews? This was apparently one of their original ‘selling points’. Anecdotal evidence and interviewee responses suggest that they have not, in reality, acted in this way<sup>54</sup>.

## **Their aims and objectives**

Questions were repeatedly raised during the review about the aims of the IA RTE’s. Do they purport to be primarily:

- reflective learning opportunities to induce immediate corrective action, with a ‘shelf-life’ of months, rather than years?
- for global learning (across different operations) with a longer shelf-life running to several years?
- for accountability up to donors and/or down to beneficiaries
- a combination of these?

As explained in the chapter on the need for some form of IA RTE mechanism, opinions and preferences vary greatly.

## **The approaches taken to the evaluations**

Are IA RTE’s more akin to ‘traditional’ humanitarian evaluations (e.g. adhering to UNEG standards and adopting ‘classical’ evaluation criteria and methods) which are simply ‘done faster’<sup>55</sup>, or are they a different type of undertaking?

An alternative approach, passionately espoused by advocates, would involve: applying light, rapid, field-focused approaches; addressing primarily process issues (e.g. organization, coordination and management); and using highly facilitated, participatory, ‘reflective’ methods (perhaps to the point of developing and delivering *final* recommendations with the main ‘stakeholders’ in the affected countries). The approach is seen by fans as the real IA RTE model.

## **Recommendations**

Agreement among IASC and IG members is required as to what IA RTE’s are meant to be and to achieve.

7. **OCHA, in consultation with the IASC and IG, should draw up an agreed IA RTE outline concept note addressing the conceptual ambiguities outlined in this report.** This should balance, or prioritize, potentially competing objectives and perceptions of IA RTE’s. The outline should describe expected uses, spelling out the weight to be given to direct implementation of recommendations from IA RTE’s versus ‘soft’ uses such as less evident and unrecorded learning<sup>56</sup>. It

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<sup>54</sup> In Myanmar, for example, a wide range of evaluation, or review type reports have been commissioned (by UN agencies, INGO’s and Clusters) as the operation approaches its formal closing. Some have been major undertakings involving large teams. It is not suggested here that these should not have taken place. The point is that IA RTE’s are far from serving as an alternative to other evaluation or review exercises.

<sup>55</sup> See, for instance, the ALNAP pilot guide regarding this approach.

<sup>56</sup> The lack of systematic follow up to recommendations may not, for instance, be the most appropriate indicator for measuring the utility of IA RTE’s.

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should also clarify the inter agency nature of IA RTE's, including whether and how they might eventually link with other IA initiatives such as improved joint needs assessment and 'dashboard'<sup>57</sup>, monitoring tools. A pragmatic approach would be initially (e.g. for two years) to concentrate on inter agency coordination and 'process' aspects of natural disasters. All this would permit the development of standard, focused TOR's<sup>58</sup>, which can be adapted to specific emergencies.

8. **OCHA and the IG should develop methodological guidance materials in accordance with whatever concept is agreed.** The package should cover tools and methods for achieving expected results in 'real time', involving key stakeholders, especially affected beneficiaries, governments and CT members<sup>59</sup>. It should include rapid beneficiary consultation (e.g. 'most salient change' focus groups) and peer-review type methods and tools.
9. **OCHA, in consultation with the IG, should develop clear guidelines and a tool-box for managing the IA RTE's.** These should spell out the roles and responsibilities of all concerned, especially in-country actors such as; the advisory group, CT members, nationals in the team, liaison or 'fixer and arranger' roles, and providers of administrative, financial and practical support. They should also describe: team composition and management arrangements; the expected frequency<sup>60</sup>, duration and 'deep-field presence' of evaluation missions; and the report and other IA RTE product development (including the comments process<sup>61</sup>).
10. **The IASC, supported by OCHA and the IG, should mount an information/communication campaign with all concerned, both centrally and for potentially affected-countries, explaining whatever IA RTE concept is ultimately adopted.** As a start, the proactive involvement of key potential advocates for such an approach ('friends of IA RTE's', so to speak<sup>62</sup>) is required. Once identified, they should be involved in the roll-out of the mechanism (using a variety of communication techniques and means).
11. **OCHA and the IG should consider the development of a 'light IA RTE' model (see under the 'cost' chapter below) and/or an 'on-demand' M&E support capacity for emergencies.** This would aim to provide an alternative, or complement, to full-blown IA RTE's. It would involve making available practical and methodological toolkits and remote guidance and support (i.e. from outside the operational area ... e.g. from an IG member country-office in the region or from agency or OCHA headquarters). Resources permitting, it might extend to in-country mentoring and direct support.

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<sup>57</sup> Currently being developed with the IASC and OCHA as a tool for HC's and CT's to monitor key indicators in their operations.

<sup>58</sup> The 2007 'lessons identified' exercise which analysed the Pakistan and Mozambique IA RTE's (compiled by Ms. Francine Pickup, OCHA) suggested that the focus be on '... broad, cross-cutting and sector wide concerns'.

<sup>59</sup> Preferably including group methodologies, not just classical, time-consuming individual interviews.

<sup>60</sup> The evaluations could include two field missions, incorporating the current 'scoping-mission' into the actual evaluation, followed at an appropriate time by a return mission to verify, develop and finalize conclusions and recommendations in-country with the main actors.

<sup>61</sup> E.g. Whose comments are to be solicited and addressed, in what manner and with what level of transparency. In the Mozambique case, an internet application was used for collecting and sharing comments on the final report.

<sup>62</sup> These could be targeted from among potential advocates within the individual IG agencies and the IASC including RC/HC's and country representatives/directors.

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## Dissemination/Communication & Follow-up

### ***Findings and Conclusions***

Serious weaknesses were noted in the communication of the IA RTE results and outputs. This undermined their usefulness in real time and as learning or corrective mechanisms. A number of issues stand out:

**Distribution:** As already noted, a surprising number of interviewees claim not to have seen or received the final versions of the IA RTE reports. Part of the problem appears to have been a ‘light’ distribution approach (sending to agencies, rather than cluster leads and specifically targeted individuals and agencies).

**Translation:** In none of the three cases, were translations to relevant national languages produced for either the reports or executive summaries.

**Delays and timing:** In at least one case, delays in releasing the final report (almost 2 months following the field mission<sup>63</sup>), and its coinciding with end of year holidays, hampered its real time use.

**Varied styles, approaches and quality of the IA RTE products (reports and other outputs):** Use and communication of the results is in part influenced by the varying nature of the reports produced. The levels at which recommendations were pitched and the clarity (or ‘actionability’) of those recommendations varied greatly (e.g. some dedicating a substantial number of recommendations to actors outside the operation in question).

**Follow-up of recommendations:** While the IASC committed to follow up on recommendations at the same time that they endorsed the pilot phase, interviewees made a variety of suggestions as to who should be *responsible* for follow-up. In Mozambique, the CT was most frequently proposed for the overall follow up and the clusters for specific issues. Another proposal was to place the responsibility on whoever or whatever body initiates the evaluation (e.g. the ERC or IASC). The IA RTE IG was suggested as an option for *monitoring* follow-up, while the RC/HC was also proposed. It was suggested in Mozambique that OCHA, as a member of the CT, should not be placed in the position of monitoring follow-up.

In Myanmar, the application of a standard single-agency management response matrix for recommendation tracking was seen by many as inappropriate in an inter agency environment. In the words of one senior official, ‘if everyone owns it, then nobody owns it’. The dispersion of responsibilities and accountabilities among agencies in the CT and lack of clarity regarding authority to demand detailed reporting hampered the usefulness of the evaluation and the follow-up process.

### ***Recommendations***

A revamped approach to ‘use’ would require a new, beefed up and considerably more pro-active communications strategy for each IA RTE.

12. **OCHA, in consultation with the IG, should develop innovative products and approaches for communicating and promoting the use of IA RTE’s results and outputs.** Options include synopses, user-friendly thematic and key-lessons papers, web-based and other media products, training materials, etc. Guidelines, templates and support capacities should be developed accordingly. These should cover exit briefings; report production, translation, circulation and packaging<sup>64</sup>; and facilitation of IA RTE utilization (e.g. communication workshops; incorporation into training materials, etc.). Explicit criteria for quality assurance of the products (e.g. simple style guides

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<sup>63</sup> In that case, a reason given was the perceived necessity to request a number of drafts before releasing the report.

<sup>64</sup> Sufficient hard copies should be made available, especially where computer and internet use is not prevalent.

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developed specifically for IA RTE's<sup>65</sup>) should also be developed. All the above should be complemented by training for potential team-leaders and managers.

13. **OCHA, in consultation with the IG, should draft an options paper setting out possible approaches and responsibilities regarding communication and follow-up of IA RTE's.** The paper should address the issues highlighted above in this chapter under findings and conclusions, especially responsibilities for implementing (and monitoring the implementation of) IA RTE recommendations. Additionally, it should outline a model pro-active communications strategy for IA RTE's<sup>66</sup>. Expedited methods<sup>67</sup> should be proposed for producing and communicating products in 'real time'. The strategy should specify responsibilities for funding follow-up activities and for reproduction, translation and communication (not just dissemination) of the IA RTE products.

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<sup>65</sup> In Mozambique, interviewees were in favor of brief, user-friendly reports, with a clear structure and a guide to how to read it. The report should be addressed to specific audiences and organized around user needs, with any additional information contained in annexes. To enhance utility, it was strongly suggested that all recommendations presented in the report should be actionable (by, for example, identifying clear steps and who should take the lead responsibility).

<sup>66</sup> Ideally, this should involve members of the evaluation team and of the in-country IA RTE advisory group. If cost is an issue regarding consultant fees, agency members of the team, or IG members, may participate instead of consultants.

<sup>67</sup> e.g. staff specifically tasked and prepared; use of appropriate technologies and methods for emergency environments, be they workshops, hard-copies or IT based, etc. Circulation of the reports to Cluster Leads rather than individual agencies may also expedite the finalization and follow-up process.

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## Cost

### ***Findings and Conclusions***

An in-depth cost review had been suggested in the inception report for this review. Feedback from IG members suggested that this would be unduly complex, especially when opportunity cost is considered.

A significant number of interviewees (especially from INGO's) regarded the average cost of IA RTE's as high: roughly 90,000USD–140,000 USD each<sup>68</sup>. Examples of considerably cheaper RTE's exist, though these are not comparable in nature<sup>69</sup>. As a percentage of the total operational budget of the emergency operation being examined<sup>70</sup>, IA RTE costs may not be excessive.

Value is, obviously, related to use. As one NGO interviewee in Mozambique quipped, *I would not sell all our computers to buy more mosquito nets*. That sentiment was echoed at the Geneva IG workshop, almost verbatim. The potential value-added of IA RTE's may be great or small according to how they are applied<sup>71</sup>. This observation leads back, therefore, to questions on the very concept of the IA RTE's. Until it the concept is refined, a deeper cost-benefit analysis will be difficult. Never-the-less, if deemed necessary, cost-cutting measures are possible.

### ***Recommendations***

**14. In light of possible increased frequency, OCHA and the IG should estimate possible savings on the average cost of IA RTE's. Possibilities include:**

- Reducing the external consultant evaluator presence in the teams to one and increasing the number of agency participants and national team-members.
- Reducing management trips for each IA RTE (e.g. subsuming the scoping mission into the actual IA RTE implementation and eliminating any observer missions).
- Reduce opportunity costs in-country by, for example, applying group methodologies more frequently than individual interviewing and making IA RTE teams self-sustaining (equipped with the administrative and practical capacities to conduct the evaluations with little or no demands on the operation).
- Develop an 'IA RTE light' model<sup>72</sup>. This could be a 'remote-control' review process, run and/or supported by an expert not actually present in-country. It could involve desk reviews of key documents, supported through web-based tools and guidance and telephone interviewing. It could be a stand-alone exercise or a complement to an IA RTE or other evaluation exercise. Its main attraction is its relative speed, simplicity and cost-efficiency. A major drawback of such a 'light' approach is, however, that it would eliminate the engagement of key actors, especially beneficiaries. Their involvement has continually been emphasized throughout the pilot phase as being of paramount importance.

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<sup>68</sup> According to OCHA ESS, overall costs are estimated at 100,000USD +/- 40,000 USD per IA RTE, depending on OCHA mission and other costs. Of this, OCHA contributes some 80 percent or more, on average, and contributing IG member agencies the remainder.

<sup>69</sup> Oxfam can apparently conduct their RTE's for about five to ten percent of the cost, albeit for a much lighter initiative, and using support from within the Oxfam family of agencies.

<sup>70</sup> In the Mozambique case, for example, this was estimated at 0.0045 percent.

<sup>71</sup> While in Myanmar they were less forthcoming, in Mozambique donors expressed an interest in funding such evaluations provided they proved to be useful. They added that if the evaluation teams were embedded in the response, so to speak, that would encourage funding of the response itself.

<sup>72</sup> Currently being applied by Oxfam, as part of their basket of 'real-time' tools.

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## Attendees IA RTE Lessons Learning Workshop

June 11 & 12 2009

<b>Workshop participants</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Alice Croisier	WHO
Andreas Schuetz	OCHA ESS
Claude Hilfiker	OCHA
Jeff Crisp	UNHCR
Jock Baker	ECB/Care International
John Mitchell	ALNAP
John Telford	Consultant
Karen Proudlock	ALNAP
Kimberly Lietz	OCHA
Krishna Belbase	UNICEF
Laura Calvio	OCHA
Maria Risskjaer	UNHCR
Nevio Zagarian	WHO
Pasquale Micheau	OCHA DVPS
Rachel Bedouin	FAO
Rob Smith	OCHA CAP
Sandra Aviles	FAO
Scott Green	OCHA
Simon Lawry White	IASC
Tijana Bojanic	UNICEF
Tony Beck	Consultant
Ysabel Fougery	OCHA CAP

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## IA RTE Review Key Informants

The following people were consulted either face-to-face or by 'remote' means (e.g. by phone, email or survey). In a number of cases, key informants were consulted in their roles as cluster leads.

Apologies are offered for any omissions or errors in the following list. The publishing deadline constrained efforts to verify and complete each and every entry.

Name	Organisation	Country
1. Aimee Ansari	Oxfam, Geneva	Switzerland
2. Alasdair Gordon-Gibson	IFRC	Myanmar
3. Albert Losseau	European Union	Mozambique
4. Allan Jury	WFP	USA
5. Andrea Bagnoli	WFP	Mozambique
6. Anne Thurin	UNHCR (NRC)	Myanmar
7. Antonio Masella	OCHA	Myanmar
8. Audreu Relandeau	CARE	Mozambique
9. Aye Twin	UNICEF	Myanmar
10. Barbara Jenkins	National Director, Mozambican Red Cross	Mozambique
11. Barbara VanLoghen	WFP	Mozambique
12. Barbara VanLogshen	WFP	Mozambique
13. Ben Ramalingam	ALNAP	UK
14. Bernard Pearce	Ausaid	Myanmar
15. Bishow Parajuli	UN RC/HC	Myanmar
16. Bob Turner	Consultant	USA
17. Carl Howorth,	UNICEF	Mozambique
18. Carol Livingston	FAO	Myanmar
19. Caroline Heider	WFP	Italy
20. Casimiro Abreu	Deputy Director, government authority	Mozambique
21. Claude Hilfiker,	OCHA	Switzerland
22. Daire Reilly	Care	Myanmar
23. Dalila Juma	UNFPA	Mozambique

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Country</b>
<b>24. Dan Collison</b>	SCF	<b>Myanmar</b>
<b>25. Deborah Bickler</b>	Sphere Project and HAP	<b>Myanmar</b>
<b>26. Dr Benzerroug El Hadi</b>	WHO	<b>Mozambique</b>
<b>27. Dr. Nkuku</b>	WHO	<b>Mozambique</b>
<b>28. Edwin Salvador</b>	WHO	<b>Myanmar</b>
<b>29. Eunice Mucache</b>	UNDP (formerly Mozambique Red Cross)	<b>Mozambique</b>
<b>30. Eva Von Oerlich</b>	SCHR	<b>Switzerland</b>
<b>31. Francesca Erdelmann</b>	WFP	<b>Mozambique</b>
<b>32. Giovanni Ruggiero</b>	UNICEF	<b>Mozambique</b>
<b>33. Hitesh Kanakrai</b>	WFP	<b>Mozambique</b>
<b>34. Isabel Maria Alves</b>	Donor agency	<b>Mozambique</b>
<b>35. Jaime Comiche</b>	UN-Habitat	<b>Mozambique</b>
<b>36. Jamie McGoldrick</b>	OCHA	<b>Switzerland</b>
<b>37. Janey Lawry-White</b>	UNDP	<b>Switzerland</b>
<b>38. Jeff Crisp</b>	UNHCR	<b>Switzerland</b>
<b>39. Jennifer Worrell</b>	UNDP	<b>Switzerland</b>
<b>40. Jerónimo Tovela</b>	WFP	<b>Mozambique</b>
<b>41. João Caibone</b>	WFP	<b>Mozambique</b>
<b>42. João Ribeiro</b>	Director, INGC, government authority	<b>Mozambique</b>
<b>43. Jock Baker</b>	ECB/Care Int.	<b>Switzerland</b>
<b>44. José da Graça</b>	FAO	<b>Mozambique</b>
<b>45. Jules Pieters</b>	WHO	<b>Switzerland</b>
<b>46. Karen Barsamian</b>	WFP	<b>Mozambique</b>
<b>47. Karin Manente</b>	WFP	<b>Mozambique</b>
<b>48. Kasidis Rochanakorn</b>	OCHA	<b>Switzerland</b>
<b>49. Kate Alley</b>	UNICEF	<b>USA</b>
<b>50. Ken Davies</b>	WFP	<b>Mozambique</b>

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Country</b>
51. Kimberly Lietz	OCHA	USA
52. Kirsi Junnila	WFP	Mozambique
53. Lea Matterson	IOM	Switzerland
54. Leila Pakkala	UNICEF	Mozambique
55. Leonardo da Graca Dimas	Government authority	Mozambique
56. Leonor DomINGO's	USAID	Mozambique
57. Manisha Thomas	ICVA	Switzerland
58. Manuel Freitas	UNICEF	Mozambique
59. Manuel Goncalves	Director, Ministry of Foreign Negotiation and Cooperation	Mozambique
60. Manuel Obijama	WFP	Mozambique
61. Marc Rapoport	UNHCR	Myanmar
62. Marcela Libombo	Director, SETSAN, government authority	Mozambique
63. Margot Vandervelden	WFP	Mozambique
64. Matthew Serventy	OCHA (RedR)	Myanmar
65. Michel Matera	UNDP	Mozambique
66. John McMahon	Donor agency	Mozambique
67. Nely Simbine Chimedza	ARA	Mozambique
68. Nevio Zagaria	WHO	Switzerland
69. Nikolaus Hartz	UN-Habitat	Myanmar
70. Patricia Kormoss	WHO	Switzerland
71. Paul Sender	Merlin	Myanmar
72. Peta Sandison	Consultant	UK
73. Representative	Handicap International	Mozambique
74. Representative	Action Aid	Mozambique
75. Representative	Two evaluation team members	Mozambique
76. Representative	Help Age	Mozambique
77. Representative	IOM	Mozambique

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Country</b>
<b>78. Riccardo Polastro</b>	DARA	<b>Madrid</b>
<b>79. Robert Jerkins</b>	UNICEF	<b>Mozambique</b>
<b>80. Roberto De Bernardi</b>	UNICEF	<b>Mozambique</b>
<b>81. Samson Mabasso</b>	WFP	<b>Mozambique</b>
<b>82. Sarah Gordon-Gibson</b>	WFP	<b>Myanmar</b>
<b>83. Scott Green</b>	OCHA	<b>USA</b>
<b>84. Simon Lawry-White</b>	OCHA	<b>Switzerland</b>
<b>85. Tatenda Mutenga</b>	FAO	<b>Mozambique</b>
<b>86. Teh Tai Ring</b>	UNICEF	<b>Myanmar</b>
<b>87. Tesfai Ghermazien</b>	FAO	<b>Myanmar</b>
<b>88. Thierry Delbreuve</b>	OCHA	<b>Myanmar</b>
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<b>90. Tim Freeman</b>	UNICEF	<b>Mozambique</b>
<b>91. Tony Beck</b>	Consultant	<b>USA</b>
<b>92. Toshihiro Tanaka</b>	UNDP	<b>Myanmar</b>
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<b>94. Vivian Walden</b>	Oxfam	<b>UK</b>
<b>95. Zaw Myo oo</b>	Former national consultant, IA RTE 2008	<b>Myanmar</b>

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The author wishes to thank Tony Beck, consultant, for having shared most of the following documents at the outset of the review. He is also to be thanked for having compiled the original bibliography, upon which this supplemented version is based.

Among the many others who kindly shared documentation (much of it unpublished), special appreciation is due to Claude Hilfiker (OCHA), Kimberley Leitz (OCHA) and Jock Baker (ECB/CARE Int.) for having contributed generously from their extensive files.

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## Lessons from Mozambique & Pakistan IA RTE's

The following list of lessons is taken from: 'Lessons learned from the IASC pilot Inter agency Real time Evaluations conducted in Mozambique (May 2007) and Pakistan (September 2007)<sup>73</sup> DRAFT - 26 DECEMBER 2007' (understood to be by Francine Pickup - the author is not noted on the document)

### Summary of Key Lessons

1. Ensure clarity in the activation mechanism for the evaluation. There needs to be an automatic trigger for launching an IA-RTE;
2. The HQ-level Steering Committee should include an NGO representative. Encourage the establishment of a local level Advisory Group with clear TORs;
3. Ensure that the evaluation is conducted early enough to capture useful data but not so early that no-one has time for the team;
4. Incorporate a briefing for the Team Leader with HQ and / or the regional office at the beginning of the itinerary.
5. An HQ staff person should conduct a pre-mission to the field;
6. Ensure that an Agency with the necessary administrative and logistical capacity hosts the evaluation locally;
7. Include the IA RTE in the Flash Appeal and lobby actively for funds / obtain a commitment from donors to the process;
8. Ideally, the team should consist of three people (unless the emergency is very large and requires multiple teams), including a gender balance, knowledge of the local context and knowledge of the key humanitarian actors and humanitarian reform issues;
9. Consider the development of a training course on humanitarian affairs and reform and evaluation to help build a more diverse roster of evaluators. Such a roster would facilitate the fast and efficient recruitment of consultants;
10. Explore alternative techniques to time-consuming surveys for rapidly collecting information from disaster-affected communities. Furthermore, a matrix of evidence is a useful, quick and transparent way to triangulate and ensure accurate findings;
11. Ensure a transparent and inclusive commenting process. As part of this, country-level debriefings should be made by the evaluation team at the beginning and end of the process;
12. Include evaluation consultants in the communication strategy, which should be planned for the outset, and should involve presentations to HQs, IASC members and NGOs.
13. At a minimum, the executive summary of the report should be translated into the relevant local language.
14. Ensure that there is a strategy in place to follow-up on recommendations addressed to inter agency groups such as the UNCT and IASC WG as well as specific agencies.

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<sup>73</sup> [IASC Inter agency Real Time Evaluation of the Pakistan Floods/Cyclone Yemyin](#), October 2007, by Sir Nicholas Young, Dr. Saba Gul Khattak, Prof. Kaiser Bengali, Lucia Elmi; [Inter agency Real time Evaluation of the Response to the February 2007 Floods and Cyclone in Mozambique](#), May 2007, by John Cosgrave, Célia Gonçalves, Daryl Martyris, Riccardo Polastro and Muchimba Sikumba-Dils

Both evaluations can be found on the ESS website at <http://ochaonline.un.org/essreports>

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# Terms of reference for the IA RTE Review

*Please note actual timelines were adapted and no missions took place for Pakistan or New York.*

Review of Joint Evaluations and the Future of Inter Agency Evaluations

## United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

On behalf of the Inter agency Standing Committee (IASC) Real Time Evaluation Interest Group

### 1. Introduction

Accountability, quality and performance in humanitarian action have been at the core of many often inter-linked debates and initiatives in the last decades<sup>74</sup>, and represent one of the key themes within the humanitarian reform process. The Humanitarian Response Review highlighted the strengths and deficiencies of the humanitarian system in these areas, identifying as a priority the need to develop a more holistic approach to assessing the performance of the humanitarian system. Although the majority of organizations have large and relatively sophisticated evaluation systems in place<sup>75</sup>, their tendency is to focus on Agency or sector-specific monitoring, as opposed to offering a collective assessment of a humanitarian response as a whole.

As such, joint evaluations of humanitarian action have been the focus of recent and growing interest by donors, UN agencies and NGOs. The area remains one where significant learning continues, namely as to how they are to be conducted, including management and organization; when appropriate; by whom; and how they are triggered.<sup>76</sup>

Affording joint evaluations significant importance, a number of different approaches are being investigated; the most prominent of these is the inter agency real time evaluation (IA RTE). As a recent innovation in joint evaluations, the IA RTE is a relatively new mechanism aimed at improving humanitarian operations and accountability. An IA RTE is an evaluation carried out during a humanitarian operation which aims to provide simultaneous findings for immediate use in supporting management decision making at the field level.

While similar to what might categorize as 'traditional' humanitarian evaluation, RTE differs in its restricted scope and greater flexibility due to its application in situations with inherent limitations such as timing, capacity of staff on the ground, and contextual constraints. The aim is to produce important recommendations on key issues to inform the course of an emergency intervention to support management decision-making in the field, and offer information to senior managers in agencies to help them better understand and support programmes under their direction. IA RTE provides a unique framework for interagency system-wide evaluation by reviewing the overall direction, coordination and implementation of an emergency response, rather than solely agency-specific aspects, thus offering a view of the broader effects at the level of the humanitarian system.

The proposed review dates are April - June 2009, the result of which will be a report highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the approaches taken, and a set of recommendations as to how an enhanced joint evaluation tool might be best employed in future situations. The participating Agencies are requested to support, through their Evaluation Units and country offices, the implementation of this review in order to have results and recommendations available to inform future discussions on enhancing joint evaluations.

### 2. Background and Key Issues

The RTE tool was initially constructed to conduct a rapid, participatory, single-agency evaluation looking at a snapshot in time during the early stages of an emergency operation or humanitarian response. Its main

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<sup>74</sup> Sphere Project, the Humanitarian Accountability Project (HAP-I), Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP), the Code of Conduct for the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement and NGOs, People in Aid, the SMART Initiative, the Quality Initiative, the Good Humanitarian Donor Initiative (GHDI).

<sup>75</sup> E.g. ex ante, ex post, and more recently, real time evaluations.

<sup>76</sup> Beck, Tony and Margie Buchanan-Smith. "Joint evaluations coming of age? The quality and future scope of joint evaluations." *ALNAP Review of Humanitarian Action*, pp. 83 – 144. March 2008.

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purpose has been cited as to “review operations, promote immediate lesson learning through the use of external analytical capacity, and improve ongoing country operations. This primary purpose does not exclude other purposes such as briefing senior managers at regional and headquarters levels.”<sup>77</sup>

This RTE tool was suggested for use on a broader interagency level, leading to the development of the IA RTE approach through a series of discussions and drafts in which a wide range of actors participated<sup>78</sup>. The first version of the approach note was discussed during a workshop on RTE at the 19th Biannual ALNAP Meeting in Nairobi in June 2006. This discussion was attended by representatives from the UN system, NGOs and Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, and donors. Following the Nairobi meeting the paper was revised to reflect the dialogue but also to incorporate the experience of NGOs in the area of RTE.

The final version of the approach note, “*Agency Experience with Real time Evaluation: Towards an Approach for Inter agency RTE*”, which incorporates the experiences and views of UN agencies, NGOs and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, was presented and endorsed during the 20th Biannual ALNAP meeting in Rome in December 2007. Consensus at this time was that further refinement and testing were necessary, and that specific guidance material incorporating the growing experience with this type of evaluation should be developed during the pilot phase.

The consultative process confirmed a keen interest of agencies in RTE and in developing an inclusive interagency approach to RTE on a sector-wide basis. Nine key tenets for developing an approach to IA RTE were identified:

- The focus will be on broader, cross-cutting and sector-wide concerns.
- The primary purpose is to support field management decision-making; a secondary purpose is to provide information to senior managers in agencies to help better understand and support the programmes under their direction.
- The adopted approach should be light, flexible and responsive to the needs of field actors and the changing nature of the emergency response.
- There needs to be a consistent and timely trigger, ideally included in a Flash Appeal/CAP.
- They should complement, not replace single-agency RTE’s.
- Methodology to emphasize engagement of the affected population.
- Teams should be lean and reflect a mix of agency expertise, methodological skills and sectoral expertise as is appropriate for the emergency.
- They are management-intensive and necessitate a full-time lead management agency, supported by an interagency management group.
- Immediate use and action are paramount, requiring a strong commitment from all participating agencies – both in the field and at headquarters – to respond to recommendations put forth.

The process also confirmed that there should be a standard and ‘automatic’ interagency evaluation mechanism under the overall leadership of the IA RTE. With that, the IASC WG endorsed a pilot approach for one-year until March 2008, entrusting its implementation to the IA RTE Pilot Group. Further, the IASC committed to review and provide management responses on IA RTE reports. This pilot phase was subsequently extended an additional year, to March 2009. At this time it was also agreed that three additional IA RTE’s were to be undertaken, with at least one in a complex emergency setting that has experienced a rapid deterioration or surge in violence.

To date, three IA RTE’s have been undertaken as part of the pilot project:

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<sup>77</sup> Cosgrove, J., Ramalingam, B., and Beck, T. *Real time evaluations of humanitarian action: An ALNAP Guide Pilot Version*. Draft v106.

<sup>78</sup> The actors involved in the IA RTE approach have included Africa Humanitarian Action, American Red Cross, British Red Cross, CARE, Catholic Relief Services, Danish Refugee Council, Food and Agriculture Organization, Groupe URD, International Committee for the Red Cross/Red Crescent, International Federation of the Red Cross, International Rescue Committee, MASAI, Norwegian Refugee Council, Royal Netherlands Embassy, OCHA, OXFAM, Save the Children UK, UNHCR, UNICEF, USAID, WFP, and WHO.

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- *Inter agency real time evaluation of the response to the February 2007 floods and cyclone in Mozambique*
  - *IASC Inter Agency Real Time Evaluation of the Pakistan Floods/ Cyclone Yemyin, October 2007*
  - *Inter Agency Real Time Evaluation of the humanitarian response to Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar, October 2008*

How each was implemented differed considerably, with significant variation in activation, management, team composition, stakeholder involvement, recommendations, etc. Discussions are currently underway regarding a fourth IA RTE during the first quarter of 2009 for the Democratic Republic of Congo.

### **3. Purpose of the Review**

As the end of the extended pilot phase of the IASC IA RTE tools nears, this review is intended to look critically at its application and utility and how it might be enhanced, while also considering the possibility of other types of interagency evaluation, and reviewing the position of joint evaluations within the humanitarian reform process. The consultant will assess the following:

1. The process of initiating and undertaking the IA RTE's, including timing, activation, coordination and management.
2. The various approaches to IA RTE employed during the pilot phase, including intent, purpose, scope, methodology, role of Advisory Group(s) and quality of deliverables;
3. The utility of the IA RTE's undertaken as part of the pilot phase, as measured by lessons learned (versus identified), recommendation uptake levels, and stakeholder perception;
4. The value-added for IA RTE's and other joint evaluation formats, inclusive of cost-effectiveness;
5. Links and synergy between IA RTE's and other joint evaluation processes in support of humanitarian reform (ie. Cluster Evaluation Phase II);
6. How IA RTE's might be enhanced to better suit their intended use, and facilitate a more streamlined process; and
7. Other potential approaches to interagency evaluation which could help support the humanitarian reform process, and simultaneously the demand for accountability and learning at the system level.

The review will result in a report addressing each of the points identified above, with an associated set of recommendations which will subsequently inform a workshop for the IASC IA RTE Interest Group whose objective is the development of a joint evaluation tool, or adaptation of the existing IA RTE tool, for use in support of humanitarian reform.

### **4. Methodology**

The review will be undertaken as a joint effort by members of the IASC IA RTE Interest Group (IG), with assistance provided by an external consultant, and ESS serving in a coordination and management role. The IASC IA RTE IG is envisaged to serve as an Advisory Group/Core Learning Group, to be engaged in each stage of the review process. The IASC IA RTE IG will provide substantive inputs to the development of the methodology and review framework, comment on the inception report, appoint a representative to serve as part of the site visits, comment on the draft and final reports, and participate in the learning workshop.

The review will be carried out through collection and analyses of various data emanating from different sources of information, utilizing a mixed method approach inclusive of desk review, field visits, interviews with key stakeholders and primary clients, and through cross-validation of data. It is envisaged that both quantitative and qualitative methods will be applied.

#### Desk Review and Development of Analytical Framework

An external consultant (Consultant) is to conduct a desk review and develop an analytical framework, including the specific evaluation questions, indicators, tools and format for data collection and reporting, for the review.

#### Site Visits

Site visits to Myanmar, Pakistan and Mozambique will be undertaken by teams of one to two individuals. The IASC IA RTE IG will be asked to nominate an individual from their organization (either located in the

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country of study, or for travel to the locale) to serve on one of the site visit teams. Each team will collect evidence for the review in accordance with the methodology and framework developed by the Consultant. If there is sufficient time, the consultant will also serve as a member on one of the teams. A pre-departure workshop will be conducted and facilitated by the Consultant, in order to ensure uniformity in approaches undertaken during each site visit. Upon return from site visits, the Consultant will also meet with team members (either via group workshop) or individually (dependant upon country of location) for a debriefing.

#### Key-informant interviews

In addition to site visits to assess the level of utilization, the Consultant will undertake semi-structured key informant interviews via telephone of those actors who were involved in the IA RTE process of each country. This includes joint RTE's which were not undertaken as part of the IASC pilot programme, such as the 2006 IA RTE of the drought in the Horn of Africa led by UNICEF.

#### Analysis and synthesis of information

Upon completion of the site visits and information collection, the Consultant will be tasked with analysis and synthesis of the information collected. The Consultant will subsequently produce a written report with relevant recommendations. The purpose is to distill major lessons learned about IA RTE and joint evaluations in the context of the wider evaluation reform.

#### Learning Workshop

Lessons and recommendations from the review will be presented and discussed in the form of a learning workshop, engaging members of the IASC IA RTE Interest Group with the objective of drawing conclusions as to the most appropriate path forward to conducting joint evaluations in support of the humanitarian reform process, and in preparation for the IASC July 2009 meeting which will address IA RTE's. This workshop will be held on June 8 and 9 in Geneva.

### **5. Consultant Profile**

- Proven senior-level evaluations experience with ability to adapt/apply evaluation tools to highly diverse contexts;
- Substantive experience with joint evaluations;
- Good knowledge of strategic and operational management of humanitarian operations;
- Good knowledge of humanitarian system and its reforms, including of UN agencies, IFRC, NGOs, and local government disaster response structures and systems;
- Experience with Real Time Evaluation preferred;
- Ability to rapidly analyze and synthesize large quantities of information;
- Excellent writing and presentation skills in English a must; and
- Immediate availability for the period indicated.

### **6. Management Arrangements**

On behalf of the Inter agency Standing Committee (IASC) Real Time Evaluation Interest Group, OCHA has accepted to undertake the management of this review. OCHA ESS will assign a review manager to oversee the conduct of the exercise and assure quality control, as well as serve as a member of one of the site visit teams. His/her responsibilities will include: 1) provide guidance and institutional support to the external consultant, especially on issues of methodology; 2) facilitate Consultant access to key stakeholders and specific information or expertise needed to complete the review; 3) ensure all stakeholders are kept informed; 4) recommend approval of the final report; 5) help organize and design final learning workshop; and 6) monitor and facilitate follow up to the final report.

### **7. Deliverables**

- Inception Report outlining the proposed methodology, overview of envisaged framework; tools; potential key informants; approach for ensuring uniformity across countries in information collection; and manner in which information collected within each country will be transferred to

Consultant. A format for the Inception Report will be provided by OCHA ESS. The Inception Report should already elaborate a standard report structure for each of the country site visits to facilitate the comparability and analysis for the final synthesis report.

- Framework, tools, pre-departure workshop which will guide how each of the teams engages in the country site visits and how the teams will undertake information collection, organization and presentation.
- A concise and fully edited report in English which addresses each of the bullet points identified above under *Purpose of the Study*, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and recommendations as to how the IA RTE tool, and other joint evaluation mechanisms, might be enhanced to best support the humanitarian reform process.
- Power Point presentation containing key findings and recommendations.
- Learning workshop for key stakeholders.

### 8. Intended Uses and Users

The report will highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the approaches taken, and a set of recommendations as to how an enhanced joint evaluation tool might be best employed in future situations. The Review's conclusions and recommendations will be presented to the IASC in July for action and planning.

### 9. Timeline

The Review will be conducted from April – June 2009

<i>Task</i>	<i>Responsible Party</i>
Desk review of background documents and preparation of Inception Report	Consultant
Preparation of review framework and associated tools	Consultant
Key informant interviews in New York and Geneva (including telecons to Rome)	Consultant
Preparation and facilitation of pre-departure meeting	Consultant
Key informant interviews with stakeholders involved in IA RTE's	Consultant
Site visits – 3 teams deployed to 3 different countries (consultant may also participate in 1-2 site visits)	Appointed members of organizations represented on IASC IA RTE Interest Group
Preparation and facilitation of meeting/debriefing for returning site visit teams	Consultant
Synthesis and analysis of information	Consultant
Preparation of first draft of final report	Consultant
Preparation and facilitation of workshop <b>To be held week of June 8</b>	Consultant Participation by IASC IA RTE Interest Group, and other relevant actors
Preparation of final report	Consultant and review by IA RTE