

Lessons

for conflict emergencies

June 2014

LESSONS

from previous emergencies¹

Introduction

Learning from the past to inform the future is the core of WFP's approach to Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) Knowledge Management. With each new crisis, the Emergency Preparedness Division makes available learning from earlier emergencies so that we can continually improve the way we respond. This is a standard operating procedure for all Level 3 emergencies, and has already been applied to the South Sudan, Philippines, and Central African Republic crises.

Below is a summary compilation of recommendations that have arisen from previous emergencies, which are similar in nature and scope to the 2014 Iraq crisis. This summary aims to inform Managers and staff involved in the Iraq emergency response on previous experiences and possible challenges in order to improve the way we respond this time around.

Early Warning

- The Government of Uzbekistan is a difficult and strong counterpart, even though with this crisis, they made every effort to appear open and helpful. WFP was however caught out by the change in approach once the refugees started to return home. When implementing the initial emergency response, WFP (ODEP) should undertake some basic political and conflict analysis at HQ level to inform the new CO management. This could perhaps be an inter-agency initiative (Kyrg 10).

Management

- WFP should establish a practical compliance structure at management level, as part of the accountability and transparency structure, at the beginning of the emergency (Sahel 10).
- A regular schedule of meetings with heads of Sub-Offices should be maintained (Sahel 10).
- WFP should adopt the concept of two task forces in a CR (RoSS 12).
- The RB should continue to be the first port of call for technical and administrative support in a CR (RoSS12).

¹, Kosovo 1999, Iraq 2003, Indian Ocean Tsunami 2004 Lebanon 2006, Sudan 2006, Kyrgyzstan 2010, Sahel 2010, Republic of South Sudan 2012, and Syria (2012-present)
For more information on Lessons Learned of past emergencies, kindly refer to <http://epweb.wfp.org/ep2/learned/>



Staff Deployment

- Staff with multiple skills should be assigned to large and complex emergencies. This will allow maximum flexibility in situations where geographical location and tasks have to be revised due to the changing operational reality (Iraq 2003).
- Managers should plan for successive rotation so that 2nd wave of TDYers are on board on the 3rd month for proper handover (Iraq 2003).
- WFP urgently needs to review the allocation of staff to different locations. In this operation, there were too many staff in country offices in capital cities and too few with sufficient experience and seniority at field offices and sub-offices. (Tsunami 2004).
- The reconnaissance team lacked some key staff that would have helped get the job done faster during the first days of the emergency.
 - Recommendation: Balance Start-Up Team –if the security situation allows it- also include a finance officer, a reports officer, a programme officer, a public information officer and support staff for the security officer (Leb 06).
- Staff being deployed from HQ were delayed due to the confusion on the procedures of how to get visas quickly.
 - Recommendations: Issue guidance on obtaining visas on the first day of the emergency, and intervene with relevant embassies to request fast-track visa procedures for WFP staff being deployed (LEB 06).
- In the event of a scale up that involves recruitment of new national staff, national staff on TDY should be paired with newly recruited local staff to mentor and pass on their knowledge (RoSS 12).
- Given the complexity of implementation and the need for prioritization of nutrition activities in large scale emergencies, ensure the early deployment of a nutritionist to support CO and field based nutrition personnel. Further, ensure that WFP Programme staff are aware of nutrition and HIV imperatives in emergencies (RoSS 2012).
- The deployment of a Senior Procurement Officer to the CO would facilitate the timely procurement of items required for the scale up of a CR (RoSS 2012).
- In addition to supplementing finance/administration staff, WFP should consider deploying a WINGS expert who can support the significant increase in payments and WINGS processes that characterize the initial stages of a CR (RoSS).
- A dedicated Reports Officer should be deployed at the declaration of a CR and remain in place throughout the CR (RoSS 2012).
- WFP should deploy a dedicated Food Security Cluster Coordinator during a CR so that other technical staff are not used to fill in as the coordinator (RoSS 12).

Staff well-being

- Ensure counsellors continue to be deployed to future emergencies as required. One respondent recommended that counsellors should be fully engaged with emergency work on the ground while providing counsel along the way (described by one respondent as “the Médecins Sans Frontières model”) (Haiti 10).
- In large-scale emergencies with heavy impact on WFP staff, consider deploying counsellors to areas where staff will be evacuated to, or to R&R locations (eg. the official safe-haven) (Haiti 10).

- Subject to conditions on the ground, consider implementing mandatory rest periods to support sustainable working hours and mitigate the risk of exhaustion (Haiti 10).
- Ensure emergency-specific medical services and partner agreements are identified and communicated to staff, for example by inclusion in information packages. (one respondent also proposed that medical contact details could be pre-loaded on the SIM cards distributed to staff) (Haiti 10).
- One issue related to national staff was the importance of ensuring that conditions for national staff, particularly those in remote areas of particular hardship, were equal to those of other agencies. It was reported that the retention of national staff was sometimes difficult as other agencies provided better living conditions and incentives.
 - In areas where conditions are very difficult, WFP needs to make sure that conditions for national staff are considered so that staff are retained and that WFP does not lose them to other agencies (RoSS 12).

Resource Management

- Procedure for sharing pipeline info should be agreed upon by all parties (internal WFP, external where applicable) in the beginning of the operation (Iraq 2003).
- Devise a safe and viable system to make sufficient levels of cash available to emergency managers being deployed to emergencies (Leb 06).
- Seek approval from the Country Director (CD) to transfer cash to the Sub-Office through UNHAS (Sahel 10).
- Numerous respondents, in particular those based in Sub-Offices, highlighted the poor state of WFP vehicles. These vehicles are essential for their work, and they recommended that greater efforts be made to ensure proper maintenance and improved availability (Sahel 10).
- The use of pipeline tools is instrumental in highlighting the needs for early funding mechanisms and should be used in a more systematic way to access advance mechanisms (RoSS 12).

OIM

- The Information Unit within the Operations Unit worked closely with the Public Relations and Reporting Units. The co-location in Larnaca was crucial to ensure a good information exchange. Similar arrangements should be replicated in other future emergency operations (Iraq 2003).
- One major recommendation is to ensure that food procurement, pipeline, shipping and land side transport are co-located in order to ease flow of information and respect of timelines (Iraq 2003).
- Consider ways to better consolidate information at Sub-Office, CO and RB levels and to ensure that CD, DCD, PI and concerned technical areas jointly formulate messaging in line with WFP's communications strategy (Sahel 10).
- Respondents in Chad also deplored what they considered to be insufficient support and resources for reporting as this had made the management of reporting streams from six new Sub-Offices especially challenging. Increased training in qualitative reporting was mooted as a partial solution to these challenges (Sahel 10).
- Unit heads should clear the information before it is sent to the reporting team (RoSS 12).

- Reporting staff need to visit all the sub-offices in order to have first-hand knowledge and build rapport with staff (RoSS 12)

Public Information/Donor Relations

- WFP needs increased emphasis/branding towards Iraqi people (public information, advocacy) (Iraq 2003).
- Ensure donors and partners are informed in a timely manner when a WFP-specific CR is declared (RoSS 12).
- WFP needs to determine who is responsible for visibility within the organization and give them a budget (RoSS 12).
- As the situation in Syria becomes more complex and since L3 corporate emergency is declared, donors' interest on WFP operations in Syria and the neighboring countries is growing.
 - In order to ensure consistency, kindly note only CD, Regional External Relations Officer and EC/DEC are authorised to deal with donor representatives at the field level. Emergency Coordinators in each of the COs, who are already doing a great job in liaising with donor focal points in their respective countries, will also continue doing so.
 - All other staff are requested to refrain from giving any statement to donors or external parties unless instructed otherwise by CD or EC/DEC. Any donor requests at the field and regional level should be referred to Regional External Relations Officer or HQ External Relations Officer and they will take it from there (Syria).

ICT

- Pre-deployment guidelines for staff should encourage TDY staff to bring equipment with them (RoSS 2012).
- A stock of VHF radios, GPS and satellite phones (Thurayas) should be held at the logistics hubs for call forward as these items are generally unable to be imported by staff (RoSS 12).

Security

- There needs to be better planning/preparedness to deal with events such as the bombing of 19 August (Iraq 2003).
- Only one Security Coordinator should direct the movement of personnel and goods in the area where the humanitarian operation is taking place (Leb 06).
- Define clear roles and responsibilities of the security personnel both UNDSS and WFP during the onset of an emergency including the security staff deployed in support of the Logistic and Telecommunications Clusters. (Leb 06).
- Ensure that Sub-Offices are MOSS-compliant (Sahel 10).
- Review the security setup at Sub-Offices and, if needed, explore ways to match resources to needs (Sahel 10).
- Despite the deployment of a second international Security Officer for four months, it was still difficult to meet the requirements of the CO. As an example, on a number of occasions security assessments were done after logistics had been obliged to erect the rub halls, and for security this meant that it needed to ensure that staff were adequately and thoroughly briefed on this.
 - The importance of consulting with security should be borne in mind when expanding operations and establishing offices and warehouses (RoSS 12).



- Security personnel reported the difficulty in bridging requirements of UNDSS with WFP operational requirements. In particular, they cited their inability to approve field missions that did not involve the mandatory MOSS-compliant two vehicles.
 - A fleet of MOSS-compliant vehicles should be ready for call forward for CRs (RoSS 12).
- Surge capacity for Security Officers must be a priority in a CR environment, particularly those with a higher security level (RoSS 12).

Programme

- The joint WFP/FAO food economy assessment was undertaken as soon as WFP re-entered Kosovo. This allowed WFP to start out the operation with a clear Exit Strategy, and to lead the food aid sector discussions in a convincing manner with partners and donors (Kos 99)
- The determination of ration sizes and their duration should take into account all factors affecting food intake, including redistribution, inter-familial sharing, and the absence of nutrient-rich commodities for extended periods of time. Criteria for reducing rations should be established and applied systematically (Sudan 03).
- Where there are large disparities in food needs amongst targeted groups, ration sizes and the duration should be weighted towards the most vulnerable/food insecure end of the spectrum, rather than taking an average which would result in considerably less assistance being provided than the most vulnerable require (Sudan 03).
- WFP should determine the extent to which it is meeting its objective of targeting women and children with high nutritional value commodities and devise strategies to rectify problems identified (e.g. in relation to actual consumption within the household) (Sudan 03).
- There was a considerable delay in the food distribution once the food arrived in country. WFP in Lebanon was trying to work with local municipalities and NGOs who were either not available or busy with their own work.
 - Recommendation: Consider direct implementation, depending on the situation. Deploy more staff who have experience in distributing food in emergencies, and who could do the first distribution rounds until alternatives are in place (Leb 06).
- In addition to the biscuits, a strategic stock of MREs at all times, as in all emergencies biscuits are appreciated, but cannot be the only food given to people even for a few days. MREs usually have a long life and we can develop/design a cheaper option to the ones currently available (Kryg 10)
- In the context of emergency operations, high priority should be given to nutrition interventions at the outset of the response because children have different needs that cannot be covered by GFD (RoSS 12).
- Given the limited shelf life and availability of nutrition commodities different options need to be discussed. This could range from programming of nutrition commodities and taking into account unexpected and seasonal fluctuation needs; augmenting storage and pre-positioning capacity at CO and regional level; and ensuring that FPF for nutritious products is capable of managing multiple emergencies (RoSS 2012).

Civil-Military Coordination

- There needs to be a stronger emphasis on proactive operational military liaison (Iraq 2003).
- Ensure general awareness of, and where necessary staff training on, principles of humanitarian civil-military coordination in general, and their application by WFP in emergencies specifically (Haiti 10).



- Ensure readiness to deploy experts in aviation coordination, both for civilian and for civil-military aviation coordination (Haiti 10).

ETC Coordination

- Management of radio rooms for the security of humanitarian workers should remain under the management of the ETC and not be handed over to United Nations missions, as discrepancies in radio protocols and the language barrier between humanitarian workers and military personnel could impair communication (RoSS 12).

Finance and Administration

- Appoint Focal Points for administrative matters in Sub-Offices, in order to facilitate access to key documents (Sahel 10).
- During the initial phase of a CR, when the situation may be fluid, the Regional Director/Director of Finance may consider extending financial reporting periods beyond the 30 days to 90 days (RoSS 12).
- Staff should be encouraged to get their DSA payments prior to deploying as supplies of cash may be limited (RoSS 12).

Monitoring

- Closer monitoring and attention to the equity in the distribution of available commodities to avoid 'retroactive' feeding (Iraq 2003)
- WFP needs to ask more gender specific questions in the post-distribution monitoring, and pay particular attention to monitoring assistance for extremely vulnerable groups (Sudan 06).
- Field monitoring visits by WFP staff are not regular. One FFW project had never been visited/monitored since the start of the project in April 2010. Monitoring checklists for the different activities (school feeding, FFW, nutrition) are not consistently and uniformly used by monitors. There was a lack of proper planning for the coming months on monitoring and evaluation of projects. The SO did not regularly and comprehensively monitor and follow-up on the status of their projects. There were lapses in some food storages. (Haiti 10).
- The staff assigned to monitoring and evaluation beneficiary counting need to be knowledgeable of the system and the issues behind the data to ensure that the data remains reliable (RoSS 12).

Logistics

- Prepare complete, up-to-date logistics and vulnerability maps in advance of emergencies (Sahel 2010).
- In a difficult environment such as the Republic of South Sudan, and in the event of a CR, WFP should consider prioritizing the deployment of Logistics staff with previous experience in the country and/or region (RoSS 12).



- Logistics surge staff should, as much as possible, be incorporated into the existing structure of the CO. By creating a temporary parallel group of people for the CR, there is a risk of weakening the core structure of the CO, which will have to take over sooner or later (RoSS 2012).

