

# **Lessons from past Emergencies**

**In Preparation for a Flood Emergency Response**

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# LESSONS

## In Preparation for a Flood Emergency Response

### **Introduction**

Learning from the past to inform the future is the core of WFP's approach to Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) Knowledge Management. The Emergency Preparedness Division makes available learning from earlier emergencies so that we can continually improve the way we respond. While this is a standard operating procedure for all Level 3 emergencies, any field office can benefit from this wealth of knowledge to prepare for an approaching crisis.<sup>1</sup>

Below is a summary compilation of issues that have arisen in previous emergencies, which are similar in nature and scope to a flood emergency scenario. This summary aims to inform managers and staff involved in the emergency response on previous experiences, possible challenges and good practices that can be applied when responding to the newly-emerging crisis.

### **Key Recommendations**

- The advantages of robust “no regrets preparedness” activities: The use of human resources -- well trained early responders in key functional areas -- as well as the use of both food and non-food supplies already in place prior to the disaster, dramatically reduced the response time. (PHI 2013)<sup>2</sup>
- The value of strong inter-agency and governmental partnerships: The high level of emergency management experience at the inter-agency level in the Philippines and in the region coupled with the fact that staff on the ground had developed close connections with national disaster management authorities (NDMA) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), significantly helped in providing timely and coordinated assistance. (PHI 2013)
- The success of the Regional Response Framework underlined the fact that resource mobilization and an effective response depend on a coherent strategy. Such a strategy must be based on robust analysis of what is possible on the ground at a given time, and so all relevant Country Offices should be involved in its development. (Sahel L2 2012)

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<sup>1</sup> This standard operating procedure has been utilized for the following Corporate Responses: Philippines 2013, C.A.R 2013, South Sudan 2013, and Iraq 2014. It was also employed in preparation for the Sahel Crisis (2012) and Typhoon Hagupit in the Philippines (2014).

<sup>2</sup> Recommendations from the 2013 Philippines Lessons Learned Exercise are draft recommendations.



### **Early Warning**

- As soon as stakeholders reach a consensus on early warning signals, WFP should be ready to respond quickly at CO level and scale up existing operations. Simultaneously, COs should advocate through clusters and with support of RB/HQ senior management for the government/s to declare an emergency. (Sahel L2 2012)
- As soon as early warning information and alerts are issued, cluster working groups and thematic/working groups should advocate for early action and ensure that appropriate actions are taken to prepare and respond to developing emergencies. (L2 Sahel 2012)

### **Programme**

- There was a lack of participation of the disaster affected population in design and implementation of the assistance. (TSU 04)
- Lack of communication with beneficiaries: people affected by traumatic disasters need far better information about what they are going to receive, when they will receive it, and how long they will be beneficiaries of goods or services, whether from WFP, their governments, or other relief agencies. (TSU 04)
- Lack of gender based programming: Tsunami had a stronger impact on women than on men, protection issues for single/fatherless/newly widowed women: importance of having female field monitors. (TSU 04)
- WFP has limited corporate emergency response food baskets and is not flexible – what is needed is not mass food commodities (in 50 kg bags) but small quick and varied ready-to-eat family packages – which is currently not available. (PHI 09)
- Consider scaling up existing activities to kick-start the emergency response (L2 Sahel 2010).
- Where food markets are functioning sufficiently, consider cash transfers for targeted populations if VAM, other in-depth assessments and market analysis deem this strategy to be appropriate (L2 Sahel 2010).
- The blended programming approach of cash and food should be adapted to future emergencies where feasible. (PHI 2013)

### **Logistics**

- Logistics should be involved in all decision-making meetings from the outset and throughout the entire Food Supply Chain, including those concerning the Forward Purchasing Facility process (L2 Sahel 2010)



- Strengthen the concept of “one-stop shop” to act as a coordination cell for channeling within logistics. Consider the deployment within the logistics team of a staff member dedicated to interface with the other support services of WFP. Ideally, the one-stop shop could be used for a systematic debriefing process for all staff involved in the emergency response, as this would also create a wealth of lessons learned. (PHI 2013)
- Careful coordination is needed between Logistics and Programme to ensure adequate time to properly establish distribution plans and partnerships and to avoid an excess of relief items in some remote areas. (PHI 2013)

### **Resource Management and Procurement**

- To reduce lead time, early planning and food assessment missions to identify needs are crucial. (L2 Sahel 2010)
- The Supply Chain Working Group is a very effective cross-functional forum for coordination and ensuring timely response. It should be maintained and strengthened each time there is a Level 2 or 3 emergency response. (L2 Sahel 2010)
- Ensure that WFP staff are present when large consignments are being bagged and dispatched to the organization. (L2 Sahel 2010)
- WFP should investigate the possibility of diversifying sources of specialized nutritious foods and fortified staple foods through local production. Backup stocks in Dubai and Brindisi and other regional locations would be useful in the event of an emergency or even multiple regional emergencies. (L2 Sahel 2010)
- COs should have a good understanding of the likely food assistance intervention that will be used. This will allow a better estimation of the quantity of food needed to be purchased and a better understanding of the agreements needed with Financial Services Providers for C&V. (PHI 2013)
- Maintain borrowing commodities locally when possible and use in-kind donations to replenish those loans. (PHI 2013)

### **Finance and Administration**

- As a preparedness measure prior to an L3, CO should negotiate an agreement with financial service providers for immediate emergency cash assistance. (PHI 2013)
- Administration’s initial focus should be on staff wellness and wellbeing functions to ensure responders have adequate accommodation, sanitation, food, and water and office space. (PHI 2013)



- Open WINGS II/MSS access to more senior staff during emergencies. Make special arrangements that allow the activation of vendors at any time in the month during the emergency. (L2 Sahel 2012)

### **Human Resources (HR)**

- Too many staff were posted in COs and too few in SOs. (TSU 04)
- Ensure that COs have prepared a staffing strategy for use in the event of a crisis. (L2 Sahel 2012)

### **ICT**

- To the extent possible, ensure that appropriate ICT equipment is in place. (L2 Sahel 2010)
- To improve connectivity, RB's ICT staff should regularly monitor bandwidth to ensure that the Internet service provider is providing the capacity requested. (L2 Sahel 2010)

### **Communications**

- Providing information to the affected populations on notice boards and through the public media means could be strengthened. (L2 Sahel 2010)
- WFP's prioritization of PI deployment as coverage in the first days after a sudden onset emergency is crucial. (PHI 2013)
- COM and IM should work in tandem using WFP standard style and formats to provide timely and accurate public information from the beginning. (PHI 2013)
- Local WFP spokespersons should be considered for emergencies. (PHI 2013)

### **Donor Relations and Private Sector Partnerships**

- Ensure that Donor Relations activities are timed and nuanced in ways that account for differing donor priorities (e.g. relief versus recovery), and ensure sustained engagement with donors through the recovery phase when media coverage can wane. (PAK 2010)
- Defining a coordinated response strategy in close consultation with donors and partners at an early stage during an emergency helps to ensure an early buy-in by donors and other stakeholders, and this secures funding. For the 2012 Sahel response a Regional Response Framework was an effective mechanism for resource mobilization. (L2 Sahel 2010)



- Private sector donors should be involved at the start of the crisis to offset the time lag between requests and responses. (L2 Sahel 2010)
- Clear and coherent messages to the donor community in the early phases of an emergency help attract timely funding. (L2 Sahel 2010)
- The DRO should participate in strategic CO meetings as it is relevant to provide the funding situation, donor visits, and need for visibility. (PHI 2013)
- A CO focal point should ensure proper dissemination of all external WFP reports at the local level with e-mail addresses regularly maintained. (PHI 2013)
- Improve the strategic coordination between public and private partnerships, and Communications in regards to visibility by showcasing our partnerships (e.g. donor visits). (PHI 2013)

### **Operational Information Management (OIM)**

- WFP should ensure sub national office reporting coverage in the initial stages of an emergency (e.g. roaming IM officer, or dedicated reports officers in each SNO). (PHI 2013)
- The head of IM should be someone senior who can easily capture the strategic direction of the response. As well, has expertise in overseeing a strong rapport between the reports, donor relations and communications teams to ensure consistency. (PHI 2013)

### **Early Recovery**

- Early recovery issues excluded (while mentioned in Flash Appeal) – should have been part of initial assessment/ emergency response. This left Early Recovery activities for all agencies generally under-funded. (PHI 09)
- Strategically address Early Recovery, including understanding of what it means and what WFP does, both within WFP and at the inter-agency level (PAK 2010).
- In order to avoid disruption to relief operations, consider reviewing procedures to ensure that enough personnel are available to support WFP engagement in Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA), Post-Conflict Needs Assessment (PCNA) and other recovery and transition assessments. If determined as being necessary, consider engaging with partners to agree optimum timing for such assessments. (PAK 2010)
- Clarify WFP's corporate role in PDNAs and other post disaster joint assessment mechanisms, including their linkages with early recovery efforts, UN Flash Appeals, and other funding mechanisms (Haiti 2010)



- Including innovative programming options in the WFP response enabled WFP to display an ability to offer mechanisms other than GFD in an emergency setting. The emergency operation (EMOP) formulation was partly influenced by the emergence of the resilience agenda in the region that prioritized early recovery and longer-term solutions, thus combining innovative tools such as food for assets and cash and vouchers. (South Sudan 2012)

