

# Lessons

**For responding to the Nepal Earthquake Emergency**

**April 2015**

# LESSONS

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### **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 and Support Response 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.

Below is a summary compilation of issues that have arisen in previous emergencies<sup>1</sup>, which may be applicable to an earthquake 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 crisis. In-depth Lessons Learned Exercises can be found on OPweb at <http://opweb.wfp.org/llearned/>.

### **Corporate Response Management:**

- Clearly define the roles of Headquarters, Regional Bureau, and Country Office, reporting lines and chains of command, delegations of authority and business processes for scaling up during corporate responses. Establish a clear set of terms of reference and organograms for each office involved in the emergency response. Ensure these arrangements are broadly understood and easily accessible to all in a sudden-onset emergency. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Consider the opinion expressed by field staff that operational response should ideally be field-driven, and that sufficient confidence should exist in the staff present and deployed at the field level to make recommendations or take decisions. *[Haiti 2010]*
- If necessary, take steps to minimise the risk of disconnects in communications and messaging between Country Offices and Headquarters, including stronger linkages between corporate strategy and operational response. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Explore the possibility, when applicable, of locating the Corporate Response Director as close to the operation as possible. *[Philippines 2014]*<sup>2</sup>
- Prepare Notes for the Record of Strategic Task Force meetings for future reference. *[Syria 2014]*

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<sup>1</sup> 2010 Haiti Earthquake, 2013 Philippines Cyclone, 2014 Syria conflict

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



- Ensure attendance of Operational Task Force (OTF) meetings by senior management of key functional areas. At the outset of an L3 response very frequent meetings are useful. As the response progresses, taper OTF meetings to coincide with critical points in the implementation/ operation, and adopt a stocktaking and monitoring role. *[Syria 2014]*

### **Emergency Deployment:**

- Establish clear responsibilities for staff selection between Headquarters, Regional Bureau and Country Office. Consider that staff should ideally be called forward from the Country Office. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Acknowledge the staff deployment objective of a clear and coherent transition from ‘push’ to ‘pull’, with second-wave staff being called forward by Country Directors and Emergency Coordinators in accordance with operational plans devised by the Country Office and first-wave personnel. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Use an Emergency Response Roster to ensure rapid identification and deployment of staff with the necessary skill-sets and competencies (emergency experience, language etc.) for deployment in corporate responses. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Continue to deploy experienced regional national staff at the onset of emergencies, as proved effective in the Haiti response. Incorporate the significant strengths of national staff into deployment planning while prioritising staff wellbeing following large shocks, and ensure HR capacity to identify and deploy regional national staff. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Encourage a minimum TDY period of 1 month, and a ‘standard’ period of 3 months in corporate responses. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Ensure preparedness for, and implementation of, backstopping of deployed staff as a priority in corporate responses. *[Haiti 2010]*
- As far as possible keep TDY deployments to planned durations to avoid disadvantaging ‘home’ programmes, by planning for transition to short-term contracts or prioritised reassignment of staff to the affected Country Office. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Explore options for ensuring consultants deploying in support of corporate responses are not contractually disadvantaged by doing so. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Place greater emphasis on ensuring a handover-period for staff arriving and departing. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Work to ensure that streamlined information sharing between HR in Country Offices, Regional Bureaus and Headquarters is structured and implemented at the start of the emergency, especially with regards to staffing lists. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Ensure planning for deployment of a senior staff in an emergency. This includes for HR, information management, donor relations, procurement, admin and security. *[Haiti 2010, Phil 2014, Syria 2014,]*
- All staff selected from the Roster for TDY deployment in an L3 must have a clear TOR. To avoid high staff turnover in protracted emergencies, ensure that a regular staffing structure is established as soon as possible — particularly in management positions in key functional areas. *[Syria 2014]*

### **Staff Well-Being**

- Provide staff with clear guidance on the basics of wellbeing in emergencies, including stress management and rest-period. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Ensure emergency-specific medical services and partner agreements are identified and communicated to staff, for example by inclusion in information packages. *[Haiti 2010]*

- Subject to conditions on the ground, consider implementing mandatory rest periods to support sustainable working hours and mitigate the risk of exhaustion. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Ensure deployment planning considers backstopping and coverage for R&R leave. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Ensure counsellors continue to be deployed to future emergencies as required also consider deploying them to R&R locations. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Recognise the stress placed on staff member's families in emergency situations, and work to revise or develop support and communication networks for families. *[Haiti 2010]*
- 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. *[Philippines 2014]*

### **Information Management:**

- Include global reporting templates in readiness materials and deployment packages. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Incorporate reporting coverage in deployment planning with flexibility to support Country Office emergency reporting, as well as function-specific reporting responsibilities. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Structure the Country Office teams to ensure a clear focal point is always responsible for answering the cell/sat phone and emails in the Country Office. *[Haiti 2010]*
- COM and IM should work in tandem using WFP standard style and formats to provide timely and accurate public information from the beginning. *[Philippines 2014]*

### **Security:**

- Explore methods for streamlining security briefings during deployment to large-scale emergencies. Consider conducting briefings in Headquarters or supporting offices, and include standard security information and checklists in staff pre-deployment packages. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Consider maintaining central or regional stocks of visibility items (e.g., vests and caps clearly marked "WFP SECURITY") for rapid deployment with security officers. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Ensure specialised equipment is available to security officers deploying from headquarters, including sat-phones, solar chargers, and optimized laptops. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Increase efforts to recruit security personnel conversant with the local language. *[Syria 2014]*

### **Supply Chain:**

- Strengthened interaction between procurement and other actors in the supply chain. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Continue the use of the Supply Chain Working Group/Dashboard in large-scale emergencies. *[Syria 2014]*
- Assess the best way to build the Supply Chain Working Group by clarifying membership, roles and responsibilities, as well as associated timelines. *[Syria 2014]*



## **Procurement:**

- Continue to communicate a clear division of procurement responsibilities between Country Office, Regional Bureau and supporting offices at the outset of emergencies. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Consider procedures for designating a single Country Office focal point for all procurement requests during emergencies. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Ensure country-level staff are present or deployed to manage NFI procurement. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Plan for a minimum period of overlap between procurement staff deployed on TDY to achieve proper transition, hand-over and follow-up. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Deploy staff with NFI procurement experience to support procurement activities during emergencies. *[Haiti 2010]*
- For large emergencies requiring high commodity volumes, enter into long-term commodity purchase contracts from selected origins. *[Syria 2014]*

## **Logistics:**

- Work to streamline coordination between aviation and cluster counterparts. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Ensure readiness to deploy cash resources in support of aviation in emergencies. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Explore measures to improve reliable provision of partner pipeline information. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Explore ways of expediting the process of customs clearances with governments and develop measures to facilitate adequate documentation relating to cargo from NGOs. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Support the rapid availability of personal transport equipment for deployment in emergencies such as earthquakes where debris or traffic may impede quick movement of staff between key locations. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Consider the deployment within the logistics team of a staff member dedicated to interface with the other support services of WFP. *[Philippines 2014]*

## **Civil Military Coordination:**

- Ensure readiness to deploy experts in aviation coordination, both for civilian and for civil-military aviation coordination. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Ensure that WFP has the capacity to handle the significant information management aspects of Civ-mil coordination. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Consider early high-level outreach to militaries in relevant emergencies. *[Haiti 2010]*

## **ICT:**

- Explore ways to encourage 'second-phase' staff deployment periods of at least 3 months, and to expedite the reassignment process. *[Haiti 2010]*
- During corporate responses consider designating a single person in-charge of IT deployment for the entire operation. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Ensure that staff deploy for emergencies with the correct equipment and knowledge on its use and that equipment deployed is 'emergency ready.' *[Haiti 2010]*
- Review mechanisms for coordinating consolidated shipments including standby partners' equipment to avoid unnecessary customs delays. *[Haiti 2010]*



- Consider compiling and maintaining a list of satellite phone numbers in all Country Offices, to be available in Regional Bureaus in sudden-onset emergencies. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Encourage staff members to use systems like ‘teamwork space’ for critical data, so that these can be accessed during a crisis when physical access to the office is not possible. *[Syria 20014]*

### **Programme:**

- Support measures to continue to strengthen early identification, outreach and coordination with local civil society, NGOs and affected communities in programme design and implementation. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Ensure deployment of sufficient staff who are able to speak the local-language, to ensure robust local engagement and coordination early on in large-scale emergencies. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Ensure that initial impact assessment tools are available offline for easy access during an emergency. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Explore feasibility of proactively addressing reconstruction strategies from the beginning of emergencies, potentially via a dedicated team of representatives from the relevant Country Office, Regional Bureau and Headquarters. *[Haiti 2010]*
- The blended programming approach of cash and food should be adapted to future emergencies where feasible. *[Philippines 2014]*
- New M&E indicators and requirements should not be tested in an emergency setting with limited human resources and under time pressure; information should not just be collected because it is stated in a strategic document. Flexibility is needed to adapt to the context. *[Philippines 2014]*
- Deploy gender experts in addition to protection specialists, as they cover separate functions. *[Syria 2014]*

### **Finance and Administration:**

- Dedicate a headquarters staff member from facilities management to provide support to the site management team and any engineering staff associated with emergency operations. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Ensure supporting offices are ready to provide temporary support to WINGS II and other corporate processes during periods of interrupted connectivity. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Ensure awareness of available after-hours travel support services during corporate responses, and explore the feasibility of providing such supporting in the same time zone as the emergency operations taking place. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Emphasise the importance of Headquarters support teams, and ensure capacity and preparedness for sustainable 24-hour support during emergencies. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Make more widely known specific guidelines on how to operate in environments where no banking facilities or cash suppliers exist, or where banks are weak. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Where needs and risks warrant, consider increasing cash reserves held at Country Offices, applying WFP standard finance procedures. *[Haiti 2010]*

- A strong financial team should be deployed as part of the support services in the early days of the response to streamline financial systems and procedures and develop local capacity. *[Philippines 2014]*
- Early deployment of an administration team should be automatic at the beginning of a sudden onset L3 response. *[Philippines 2014]*

### **Communications:**

- At the onset of an emergency, deploy PI staff immediately to the region or country/ies to manage mass communications and work with the media. While a sustained effort is essential, the operation must allow for an increase in staff, or at least staff rotation to avoid burnout. *[Syria 2014]*
- Ensuring that field-based Public information officers have clear instructions about minimum video, imagery and information requirements and priorities within the first 48 hours, including donor visibility. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Ensure that print, television and internet ads are developed and circulated within the first 48 hours of the disaster. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Immediately designate or recruit a national PI officer (or in their absence a local language speaker) to implement WFP local messaging activities, and inclusion of that officer in senior management, programme and logistics planning and meetings. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Implement toolkits for local media and communication, including leaflets, text messages, radio campaigns, and other media as appropriate to the context (e.g., loudspeakers) *[Haiti 2010]*
- Carefully plan and coordinate local messaging with national and international media public information activities. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Ensure sufficient consultation with government while balancing neutrality and efficacy. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Obtain feedback from local audiences to continuously evaluate public reception and interpretation, using this information to adjust messaging as necessary. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Account for local factors (e.g., literacy, access to radios) and include questions in In-depth Emergency Food Security Assessments (EFSAs) to assist in identifying most effective communication modalities; *[Haiti 2010]*
- Ensure media training is given to key staff, as close as possible to the outset of an emergency. *[Syria 2014]*
- Prioritize social media and resource it appropriately in an emergency. *[Syria 2014]*

### **Donor Relations:**

- Ensure that WFP participates in the establishment of Multi Donor Trust Funds from the outset. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Work to provide clear guidance to private sector fundraising initiatives on acceptable in-kind donations that are not part of the regular WFP food basket. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Consider ensuring that field staff are briefed on the utility of field-level engagements with specific donors, while balancing donor liaison with priority operational tasks. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Work with WFP Donor Relations to ensure systematic minute-taking and documentation of meetings and agreements with donors. *[Haiti 2010]*
- A CO focal point should ensure proper dissemination of all external WFP reports at the local level with e-mail addresses regularly maintained. *[Philippines 2014]*

- Improve the strategic coordination between public and private partnerships, and Communications in regards to visibility by showcasing our partnerships (e.g. donor visits). *[Philippines 2014]*
- Continue to accept contributions above US\$ 50,000 in which WFP will conduct due diligence reviews of any new donor retroactively in order to mobilize funds rapidly in sudden-onset emergencies. *[Philippines 2014]*

### **Clusters:**

- Ensure that deployment planning includes provisions for continuity of individuals serving as cluster coordinators, as well as dedicated reporting, information management and GIS personnel. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Deploy adequate numbers of staff at the onset of the crisis. To facilitate a more rapid and comprehensive scale-up, this should include additional Information Management officers in the theatre of operation, database experts, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) officers, and national/ international staff with knowledge of the local language. *[Syria 2014]*

### **Recovery:**

- Explore feasibility of proactively addressing reconstruction strategies from the beginning of emergencies, potentially via a dedicated team of representatives from the relevant Country Office, Regional Bureau and Headquarters. *[Haiti 2010]*

