

2016

Lessons from Past Emergencies

FOR THE HURRICANE MATTHEW RESPONSE
OCTOBER 2016



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About the Recommendations Package

WFP's Emergency Preparedness and Response Support Division (OSE) has gathered lessons from earlier emergencies and developed a set of recommendations applicable to the context of the Hurricane Matthew emergency. The below summary offers information on potential challenges and practices that have been proved useful in past emergency responses. A comprehensive database of recommendations gathered from Lessons Learned Exercises can be found on the OPweb: <http://opweb.wfp.org/llearned/>.

Managing the response

- 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]*
- The importance of consulting with security should be borne in mind when expanding operations and establishing offices and warehouses. *[South Sudan 12]*
- Appoint Focal Points for administrative matters in Sub-Offices, in order to facilitate access to key documents. *[Sahel 10]*
- Structure the Country Office teams to ensure a clear focal point is always responsible for answering the cell/sat phone and emails. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Use the mobile app for registrations for SCOPE. *[Nepal 2015]*

Ensuring coordinated action

- Ensure general awareness of principles of humanitarian civil-military coordination in general, and their application by WFP in emergencies specifically. *[Haiti 10]*
- During the Horn of Africa emergency response, reinforcing existing government coordination mechanisms was proved a good practice to replicate in future emergencies. *[Horn of Africa 2012]*
- Ensure that WFP has the capacity to handle the significant information management aspects of civil-military coordination. *[Haiti 2010]*
- Engage in and commit to interagency efforts in Accountability to Affected Populations. *[Nepal 2015]*
- Implement the guidance on the use of military and civilian air assets in emergencies — specifically including CO-level processes to access assets, and roles and responsibilities. *[Pakistan 2010]*

Deploying the right staff

- At the onset of an emergency, ensure sufficient capacity for Finance and Administration support functions. Note that this finding has emerged in earlier LLEs.^[CAR 2015]
- Plan deployment of a senior staff including HR, OIM, donor relations, procurement, admin and security.^{[Haiti 2010] [Philippines 2014] [Syria 2014]}
- 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]

Crafting inclusive and dynamic programmes

Ready-to eat meals

During the Haiti earthquake response, confusion arose around the ready-to-eat commodities due to the lack of a clear ready-to-eat strategy and guidance on procuring and distributing these items. WFP emergency responders struggled to (i) calculate distribution ratios in relation to the agreed caloric intake, (ii) produce clear messages on the food content and (iii) conduct regular donor activities.

The Haiti Lessons Learned report suggests ensuring awareness of strengths and challenges associated with applying ready-to-eat commodities in large-scale sudden onset emergencies.

Similar actions were recommended in the Pakistan Lessons Learned Report:

- When developing options for relief modalities for areas in which cooking facilities are not available, build upon experiences in Pakistan and include ready-to-eat products.^[Pakistan 2010]

Involving affected populations

- Ask beneficiaries for advice as to which means would be the most effective for disseminating information to and communicating with affected communities. Pay particular attention to differences between men's and women's access to information.^[CAR 2015]
- Use food distribution sessions to inform beneficiaries about other activities included in the response operation.^[Sahel 2012]
- 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 the toll-free hotline number availability to beneficiaries, whether it is on the back of a bankcard or through other means. *[Nepal 2015]*
- Obtain feedback from local audiences to continuously evaluate public reception and interpretation, using this information to adjust messaging as necessary. *[Haiti 2010]*

Establishing communication and mobilizing resources

- Define a coordinated response strategy in close consultation with donors and partners in the early stages of an emergency to help ensure early buy-in by donors and other stakeholders. *[Sahel 2012]*
- Heads of Sub-Office should be entrusted to talk with local media with support from the communications unit at the CO. *[Nepal 2015]*
- Prioritize social media and resource it appropriately in an emergency. *[Syria 2014]*
- Continue to include Gender and Protection (along with other cross cutting areas) in the daily operational update agenda. *[Nepal 2015] [Syria 2014]*

Facilitating Logistics, Procurement, Finance and Administration

- Ensure supporting offices are ready to provide temporary support to WINGS II and other corporate processes during periods of interrupted connectivity. *[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]*
- 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]*

Addressing future recovery of the affected region

- 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]*
- Strategically address Early Recovery, including understanding of what it means and what WFP does, both within WFP and at the inter-agency level. *[Pakistan 2010]*

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