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# Real-time evaluation of UNHCR's IDP operation in Eastern Chad

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## Evaluation summary

In January 2007, UNHCR issued a document entitled 'Policy Framework and Implementation Strategy: UNHCR's role in support of an enhanced humanitarian response to situations of internal displacement'. The primary purpose of this document was to set out the key considerations and principles guiding UNHCR's engagement with IDPs in the context of the UN's humanitarian reform process, and in particular, within the new institutional arrangements known as the 'cluster approach'.

This evaluation report is one of a series which seeks to analyse UNHCR's initial experience in the implementation of the cluster approach as part of the humanitarian reform process, with the aim of identifying lessons learned and effective practices which may be drawn upon as the cluster approach is rolled out to other operations. The evaluation process also provided an early opportunity to review field operations in the light of the IDP policy framework referred to above, together with UNHCR's paper on the Protection of IDPs and the Role of UNHCR, also issued in February 2007. The countries selected for evaluation were those in which the cluster approach was initially rolled out (the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Somali and Uganda), together with Chad. The generic terms of reference for these evaluations are posted on the UNHCR website.

The evaluation team comprised three staff members, Khassim Diagne (team leader) and Enda Savage from the Internally Displaced Persons Advisory Team, and Esther Kiragu from the Policy Development and Evaluation Service at UNHCR headquarters.

After a series of briefing sessions at UNHCR headquarters, the team travelled to Chad for a nine day mission from 22 to 30 April 2007. During the mission, the team met and held consultations with the UNHCR Representative in Chad and staff of the Branch Office in the capital, Ndjamen, and facilitated a half-day workshop on Humanitarian Reform and the Cluster Approach and an overview of the purpose and scope of Real Time Evaluations. During the mission, the team also met members of the UN Country Team, NGO operational partners and government representatives. Meetings were also held with beneficiaries of the UNHCR programme in Eastern Chad. These meetings included both refugees in Goz Amer Refugee Camp and IDPs in several sites across Dar Sila Department of Eastern Chad. Interactive debriefing sessions with UNHCR management and staff were organized in Abeche and Ndjamen. Similar debriefings were also provided to management and staff at headquarters.

## Recommendations

### *Inter-agency coordination and partnership issues*

- The Humanitarian Coordinator, in consultation with the IASC Country Team, and the UN Country Team should urgently consider requesting the formal activation of the cluster approach in Chad. This should be preceded by a priority OCHA-led workshop on the cluster approach with cluster/sector lead participation.
- The 90 day plan which is being formulated to respond to the IDP needs should be adapted to the evolving operational realities. It should be changed from its short term focus to include medium term requirements.
- A Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator, based in Abeche, as proposed by the Emergency Relief Coordinator during his recent mission in Chad, should be urgently appointed to ensure that operational decision-making is field-based and field-driven. The roles and responsibilities as well as the added value of such position should be clearly defined and understood by all partners.
- OCHA's presence in the field should be strengthened to enable it to carry out the urgently needed tasks of coordination of inter-cluster activities and the provision of overall leadership of the Cluster Approach in Chad.
- All cluster/sector leads, with the support of the global clusters should engage in the identification of suitable/additional implementing and operational partners.
- The establishment of the Early Recovery cluster is also recommended to ensure linkages from the outset between humanitarian agencies and development actors.
- OCHA should provide support to cluster leads in defining and addressing cross-cutting issues (HIV, gender issues and environment) and assume a leadership role in inter-cluster coordination matters.

### *Security management*

- The SMT, having duly consulted with UNDSS, should review the overall security environment with a view to determining whether or not Phase IV is still applicable in all areas of operations.
- The Humanitarian Coordinator and the Country Team should substantively engage the government to provide physical security for its citizens, particularly in border areas.
- The international community, notably countries with influence on the Chadian Government, should engage the latter in materializing the idea of deploying a multi-dimensional force in Eastern Chad for the purpose of enlarging the space for humanitarian interventions and to provide security to persons of concern in Eastern Chad.

*Role of government*

- The Humanitarian Coordinator, together with the Country Team, should urgently host a National Workshop on IDPs in which senior Chadian government officials would be invited to discuss major policy issues particularly those related to government capacity and responsibilities.
- Considering the role of the Chadian civil society organizations, the workshop should be organized in collaboration with these groups.

*Clusters*

- The protection profile of the IDP operations in Eastern Chad should be raised by means of additional staffing, capacity-building through training and additional resources.
- The Protection Working Group in Chad is encouraged to call upon the Global Protection Cluster to discuss those areas requiring further support and assist in the prioritization of protection activities and issues related to surge capacity, staff deployment and capacity-building/training.
- UNHCR, in consultation with the CCCM cluster at the global level as required, should engage government and other relevant actors in order to develop a mutual understanding and policy direction on camp/site management issues in the Chad context.
- The CCCM cluster should also identify staff and resources to assist in site planning, prioritization of activities and implementation strategy with clear roles and responsibilities for all the relevant stakeholders.
- UNHCR should review the assistance package provided to IDPs with a view to developing clear guidance on standards, levels and types of assistance in Eastern Chad. Where necessary, the support of the Emergency Shelter Cluster at the global level should be sought.
- The possibility of merging the CCCM and Emergency Shelter Clusters should be vigorously pursued.

*Sustainability of the operations and beneficiary involvement*

- UNHCR and its partners should review the sustainability of the current interventions for IDPs in Chad by ensuring full participation and ownership of the programmes by the beneficiaries.
- The Protection Working Group should revisit any discrepancies between assistance to IDPs and refugees in order to obviate any potential for conflict and also to have an inclusive strategy for both the host and affected populations.
- The Protection Working group should initiate programmes that promote peaceful co-existence between refugees, IDPs and affected communities, and encourage community participation.

*IDP profiling*

- At the conclusion of the current IDP profiling exercise (conducted with the support of the Field Information and Coordination Support Section (FICSS), and the global Protection and CCCM clusters), UNHCR should plan and conduct a participatory revalidation exercise. This exercise should involve all the relevant stakeholders and should document lessons-learned from the IDP profiling exercise in Eastern Chad so that replication in other operations may be possible.

*Resources*

- UNHCR should undertake a thorough review of the funding as well as staffing levels of the operation to ensure the programme submission properly reflects the operational requirements, notably those close to the point of delivery.
- UNHCR should seek the urgent recruitment of local interpreters (including female interpreters) for the IDP operations in Eastern Chad thus releasing Protection Assistants from this task.
- UNHCR should field a joint DHRM, Staff Welfare and Medical Service mission to Eastern Chad to review living conditions and other medical/welfare issues.

*Visibility of the operations*

- UNHCR should devise an appropriate information campaign strategy to ensure that the operation is better appreciated outside Chad.

# General assessment and key features of the IDP operation in Chad

## Context

1. Chad is currently host to 281,000 refugees from the Central African Republic in the South, from the Darfur area of Sudan in the East, and an urban caseload from several other countries of origin in the capital Ndjamena. In Eastern Chad, refugees are assisted in 12 different camps established between January 2004 and May 2005 at an average distance of 60 kms from the Chadian – Sudanese border. UNHCR has 29 implementing and 10 operational partners involved in different assistance programmes for refugees in these camps.

2. In addition to the refugee caseload, many Chadians living in the southern part of the Eastern Region have been forced to flee their villages due to the on-going conflict. The conflict has essentially three dimensions, all inter-related. The first involves the armed rebellion opposed to the government and seeking to overthrow it; the second involves cross-border elements launching attacks on Chadian villages across the border from Darfur; and the third is inter-communal violence within Chad. The last major attack was at the end of March 2007 on the villages of Tiero and Marena. This was blamed on “Janjaweed” militiamen possibly assisted by Chadian rebels. It was estimated that between 200 and 400 died in the attack. Hundreds of survivors fled to the Habille Camp close to Goz Amer refugee camp.

3. However, the start of the violence in Eastern Chad can be traced back to December 2005, but it has escalated in gravity and brutality during 2006 and 2007, according to most of the interlocutors whom the mission met.

4. It is estimated that there are approximately 150,000 IDPs in Eastern Chad, some of whom have been displaced more than once. The evaluation team found that there was still some discussion on numbers of IDPs and their location. A profiling exercise was in progress at the time of the mission to determine the actual numbers but more importantly to establish the age, gender and diversity specifics for purposes of mapping more appropriate interventions in response to their plight. Some are settled in sites around the Goz Amer refugee camp and the mission was able to visit three IDP sites where UNHCR is involved; i.e Gasire, Habille and Aradib. Others have settled in neighbouring villages mainly in Dar Sila (approximately 110,000 IDPs) but also in Assonga (30,000), Oaura and Bahr Azoum departments of Eastern Chad (both of which have an estimated 5,000 IDPs).

## Inter-agency, coordination and partnership issues

5. In response to the IDP humanitarian and protection crisis in Eastern Chad, the UN Country Team under the guidance of the Humanitarian Coordinator decided, in early 2006, to manage the operations through a joint framework modelled on the “Cluster Approach”. While a certain level of coordination took place in the response, a number of agencies told the evaluation team that responsibilities were often not

clearly understood and the accountability framework which is the backbone of the cluster approach was left to the appreciation of each agency. Under the current coordination mechanism, UNHCR has been assigned the leadership role in the Protection, Site Management/Coordination and Emergency Shelter clusters/sectors.

6. The UN Country Team comprises FAO, OCHA, UNAIDS, UNDSS, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. ICRC is also an independent but active observer. The three main agencies (UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP) have a strong presence in Abeche but other agencies less so, UNAIDS, UNFPA and FAO covering the operations from Ndjamena with missions to Abeche.

7. Prior to the IDP phenomenon in Eastern Chad, UNHCR already had a large presence there working on the refugee emergency influx from Darfur in Sudan. ICRC, in line with its mandate, was also already working with IDPs and persons affected by the conflict in the areas bordering Sudan. In addition, there is also a host of international and national non-governmental organizations operational in Eastern Chad. Most of them have implementation agreements with UNHCR and were already involved with refugees operations.

8. When the IDP crisis escalated in 2006, a number of NGOs therefore naturally turned to UNHCR for policy guidance and coordination, a task which should have been performed by OCHA from the beginning. However, OCHA was thin on the ground and by the time the evaluation team visited the area, OCHA was strengthening its presence with additional human resources.

9. Under the current coordination mechanisms regarding the IDP operations, there seems to be a tacit agreement that ICRC will coordinate activities for IDPs in the inaccessible areas at the border while UNHCR would coordinate interventions for IDPs in more accessible sites within the hinterland, a distance away from the border. However, this division of labour was not seen to be always well-defined and on a few occasions, ICRC had raised some concerns on issues related to information flow and coordination of activities.

10. While conducting interviews with the agencies on the ground, the mission found that there is a lack of understanding regarding the true purpose of the cluster approach and there was an urgent need for OCHA to organize an in-country seminar to clarify this. There is clearly a need for capacity-building through training both at the national and field levels. This targeting should be for all stakeholders including the local and traditional authorities on the IDP protection framework, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and more specifically on the Cluster Approach. The planned OCHA-led National Workshop is a welcome initiative and UNHCR has already indicated its involvement and support.

11. Beyond the training, the country clusters in Chad should seek focused support from the Global Clusters, especially in defining the nature and scope of their activities, the implementation modalities in this rapidly evolving context but more importantly in prioritizing activities.

12. With regard to wider coordination issues, a number of agencies cited the lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities and what they viewed as disconnect between Ndjamena and Abeche, and Abeche and the deep field. The matter was reportedly raised during the visit of the Emergency Relief Coordinator which the evaluation



team was told triggered the decision to appoint a Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator based in Abeche.

13. The need to strengthen OCHA's presence and capacity in Eastern Chad, both in terms of resources and appropriate staffing, was highlighted. This would enable OCHA to take up the much needed leadership and overall coordination of the IDP humanitarian interventions in Eastern Chad.

14. Most significant was the need for a clear country-specific strategic framework compiled and led by OCHA for IDP interventions in Eastern Chad. The mission was informed that there was need for clear guidance on sustainable engagement of the humanitarian community with IDP issues as well as the disengagement criteria.

15. Other concerns raised by the agencies related to lack to proper needs assessment due to insecurity. In areas where access was feasible, there were some disagreements about information provided which pointed to the urgent need for a common assessment framework, or at least some methodological guide on how to collect, compile and disseminate information among partners. In this respect, the profiling exercise, which was still on-going during the mission, was a welcome initiative to at least obtain some qualitative and quantitative baseline data inclusive of age, gender, and diversity profiles of the beneficiaries that would assist in mapping out appropriate interventions.

16. While UN agencies have a limited number of skilled and experienced staff to handle IDP issues, it was noted that agencies met difficulties in attracting senior and experienced staff.

### **Security and protection related issues**

17. The still volatile security situation in Eastern Chad was adversely affecting humanitarian operations. The high turnover of staff across all the partner agencies in the field due to requirements of Security Phase IV was cited as a major obstacle in the delivery of assistance to IDPs; similarly, that insecurity inhibited any larger initiatives by developmental partners. A number of NGOs interviewed by the evaluation team felt that their contribution to the IDP programme represented a minimal contribution to what is largely a development issue.

18. The other concern was the rate of sexual and gender-based violence affecting IDP women both during flight and while out in the bush in search of firewood. The protection cluster in Abeche had received and assisted some cases of this nature by linking them to the law enforcement state institutions which, unfortunately, were far from being operationally effective. Natural resources and especially firewood are a big concern in Eastern Chad given the extent of environmental degradation in the areas hosting large populations of IDPs and refugees.

19. The possible militarization of IDP sites was another issue that agencies will need to bear in mind in their protection interventions. It was evident during the mission, and indeed confirmed by the profiling team, that the majority of homes were female-headed. The absence of adolescent boys in the sites visited was also noted, raising concerns that there may have been forcible recruitment into fighting forces. The evaluation team was informed that SGBV cases and especially early

marriages are two of the main protection challenges which are being addressed by the protection cluster.

20. The issue of the International Security Force was repeatedly raised in all discussions with stakeholders. All agencies stressed the importance and urgency of fielding such a force, as the national Chadian army was unable to provide security notably in the border areas. The vast majority of the agencies felt that the security force would create the much needed humanitarian space. However, discussions on the modalities of the deployment of that force were still pending, with the government arguing about its composition and mandate.

### **Role of government**

21. The evaluation team met with several government interlocutors in the field. Clearly the priority of the government is the return of IDPs to their original homes. The government argues that many IDPs occupy farming land which should be vacated before the rainy season. The government is also opposed to the establishment of IDP camps but does not mind assistance being given to families and individuals on sites where they spontaneously settled.

22. Through a government ministerial decree of 15 January 2007, a National Committee known as the *Comité chargé de l'assistance aux Personnes Déplacées* – (hereinafter referred to as the CCAPD) was established. In a subsequent decree on 9 March 2007, and following disagreements between committee members in relation to the civil society contributions, the responsibilities of the CCAPD were transferred from the Ministry of Solidarity to the Prime Minister's office. Members include both government and civil society. The President approved a grant of US\$ 8 million (40 billion CFA) to assist IDPs. While the Committee's assistance has been appreciated among the local population and IDPs, many agencies felt that there was duplication of effort, and more consultations would have been helpful. Agencies generally complained about two parallel systems of assistance.

23. In interviews conducted with agencies on the ground, there seems to be a lack of substantive government engagement at the central level on humanitarian issues especially on IDP protection concerns. Government participation in the cluster/sector meetings is sporadic and uneven across clusters. There is more representation in the health cluster for instance than in other coordination meetings.

### **Impact on beneficiaries: IDPs**

24. Overall current protection and assistance initiatives by all agencies for IDPs are appreciated. However, their long term sustainability is in doubt partly because of the ad hoc nature of the assistance, the clearly differentiated standards of assistance for refugees and IDPs, and the evident neglect of the host and affected populations. The lack of substantive involvement or engagement of both the beneficiaries and the government in the planning, design and implementation of assistance interventions was also raised by a number of agencies.

25. As stated above, the parallel system of assistance to IDPs, on the one hand by the humanitarian agencies and on the other hand by the CCAPD, further erodes efforts at attaining any measure of sustainability of these interventions.

26. The continuing insecurity and its potential for further displacement in Eastern Chad underscore the need for an urgent, clear, country-specific strategic framework of intervention involving all partners, be they from the government side, operational agencies or the beneficiaries themselves. Indeed, a country-specific strategic framework is required whether or not there is insecurity and displacement.

#### **Impact on beneficiaries: refugees**

27. As stated above, UNHCR and its partners were assisting refugees from Darfur long before the escalation of the conflict and consequent displacement in Eastern Chad. Due to this and the presence of a clear normative legally endorsed framework of intervention, the refugee camps, unlike IDP sites or spontaneous settlements, are properly established and much better supported with the full participation of the refugee community and the government. It should be noted that the majority of the IDPs moved close to refugee camps in order to benefit from the services available there.

28. Refugees, IDPs and often the host populations have the same social, cultural and ethnic affinity in Eastern Chad and interact easily. However, some NGOs felt that there was potential for conflict over resources between these communities especially in areas where they are in close proximity to each other, as is the case in Koukou-Angarana where the Goz Amer refugee camp is located.

#### **UNHCR-specific issues**

29. Over and above the overall constraints facing the humanitarian actors in general in Eastern Chad, UNHCR has its own specific challenges that need to be addressed to better expedite its responsibilities as a cluster-lead in Protection, Site Management/Coordination and Emergency Shelter.

30. In the opinion of the evaluation team, the programme and staffing are not commensurate with the size of the operation, especially with the increasing number of IDPs. In addition to protection staff, consideration must also be given to a moderate increase in the programme, logistics and administration personnel.

31. Although currently there are short term Surge and Procap solutions to the staffing constraints, given the complex nature of IDP protection work, the evolving nature of the situation and major coordination responsibilities within the clusters, measures should be in place to ensure sufficient full-time senior Protection staffing in the field.

32. With regard to the profiling exercise which was underway during the time of the mission, it should be said that it is a timely initiative welcomed by all stakeholders. It is also, in the view of the evaluation team, a best practice that should be documented for possible replication elsewhere. There is need however for a thorough validation exercise at the end of the programme with appropriate support from the profiling experts in headquarters.

33. UNHCR partners in the refugee programme are the same as those involved in implementation of programmes in the IDP sites and are clearly overstretched both in terms of staffing and resources. There is need therefore for the Global Clusters to

support the identification of more suitable partners to support the humanitarian agencies in Eastern Chad.

34. The evaluation team saw first hand the magnificent work being performed by UNHCR staff in the field often in very difficult circumstances. The team believes that work should be better appreciated outside Chad and a sound mass information campaign strategy might help towards this.

### **Concluding observations**

35. The RTE in Chad was an opportunity to review UNHCR's involvement in a country where the cluster-approach has not been formally rolled out and although the ad hoc coordination arrangements worked well in the initial response to the crisis, the magnitude and complexity of the internal displacement at the moment would require a more accountable and predictable framework of interventions.

36. The formal roll-out of the cluster approach would add value to the IDP protection and assistance strategy in Chad and consequently maximize benefits directly to the beneficiaries. The formal activation of the cluster approach, supported by a clear strategic framework and sufficient resources to support it, seems to be the only way to achieve a measure of predictability, coordination, accountability and partnership as envisioned by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC).