Synthesis of key findings from Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations (IAHEs) of the international responses to crises in the Philippines (Typhoon Haiyan), South Sudan and the Central African Republic

July 2016
Synthesis Report

Cover Photo: Damage behind Eastern Visayas Hospital. Tacloban, Philippines. 11/20/13
Cover Photo Credit: Francisco Guerrero

The Synthesis of key findings from Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations (IAHEs) was prepared by James Darcy. This study was commissioned by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) on behalf of the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations Steering Group. Members of the Steering Group are ALNAP, FAO, IFRC, OCHA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, WHO.

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Disclaimer

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James Darcy has more than 20 years of experience of working in the humanitarian sector. As Humanitarian Coordinator at Oxfam GB in the 1990s, he oversaw programmes in East and Central Africa, the Balkans, the Middle East, and South and East Asia. Subsequently, as director of the Humanitarian Policy Group at ODI in London, and then Senior Research Fellow, he specialized in needs assessment, food security, civilian protection and the analysis of aid-related risk. He was closely involved in the development of the Sphere Minimum Standards and was responsible for drafting the related Humanitarian Charter. James now practices as a freelance consultant, conducting humanitarian response evaluations and organizational reviews for international non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies. Currently serving as Vice-Chair of Oxfam GB's Board of Trustees, he chairs Oxfam's Programme Committee.

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CONTENTS

ACRONYMS

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
CAR	Central African Republic
CwC	Communicating with Communities
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
HPC	Humanitarian Programme Cycle
IAHE	Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation
IARRM	Inter-Agency Rapid Response Mechanism
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICWG	Inter-Cluster Working Group
IDP	internally displaced person
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
IRNA	Initial Rapid Needs Assessment
L3	Level-Three Emergency

MIRA	Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment
NGO	non-governmental organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (United Nations)
OPR	Operational Peer Review
SHC	Senior Humanitarian Coordinator
SRP	Strategic Response Plan
UNDAC	United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination
UNDSS	United Nations Department of Safety and Security
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNHAS	United Nations Humanitarian Air Service
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
WASH	water, sanitation and hygiene

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations (IAHEs) are a relatively new innovation, related to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Transformative Agenda and triggered automatically by the declaration of a level-three (L3) system-wide emergency. This Synthesis summarizes and assesses the key lessons from the three IAHEs conducted to date: in the Philippines (the response to Typhoon Haiyan) in 2014, in South Sudan in 2015 and in Central African Republic (CAR), also in 2015. The Synthesis aims to highlight areas of convergence and difference in the main findings of the IAHEs, and to point out common conclusions. While many examples of good and effective practice emerge from the evaluations, the focus here is more on the challenges and areas that need corrective action.

2. Two types of findings emerge from this analysis. The first are those related to the relevance, effectiveness and quality of the United Nations-coordinated inter-agency response viewed as a whole. The second are those related to the inter-agency processes that contributed to the way responses were triggered, informed, planned, resourced, coordinated and reported. Some of the lessons are more relevant to rapid onset and natural disasters (Typhoon Haiyan), while others relate more to slow onset crises or situations of protracted conflict (CAR and South Sudan). A key factor to keep in mind is the difference in the relative levels of development and strength of governance in the three countries, together with the very different operating environments that each presents for humanitarian aid delivery.

3. The findings reflect the fact that in each case, the 'inter-agency response' comprised a set of distinct organizational responses that were more or less well harmonized and coordinated, rather than a unified response guided by a single strategic planning process and managed within a joint strategic framework. This created particular challenges for effective collective action and put a premium on strong senior leadership working across agencies. Each IAHE addresses the particular ways in which these challenges were met, along with the related question: what value do the collective processes add, and at what cost?

4. In reviewing the relevance and appropriateness of the inter-agency responses in each case, the evaluations all considered joint needs assessments and the extent to which they informed joint and single agency planning processes. All suggest that standard IASC joint multi-sector assessment models need to be adapted to the contexts in which they are applied if they are to be useful. Standard approaches risk being irrelevant in practice.

5. Concerning the joint planning processes, three main issues are identified. The first is the commonly reported lack of full ownership and buy-in to the Strategic Response Plans (SRPs), even by Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) members and certainly beyond the HCT. This raises questions about accountability for delivery against collectively agreed objectives. Secondly, the SRP is seen as a fundraising document rather than as a strategic road map that provides a basis for the HCT to manage and guide the overall response. The third issue concerns the operational level of planning, which is generally judged to be weak, based too heavily on outputs and vague indicators ("numbers of people reached"), and an inadequate basis for measuring progress.

6. On the question of effectiveness and the achievement of the SRP objectives, the Typhoon Haiyan evaluation notes that the Philippines country context "created highly favourable conditions for an effective disaster response" and hence was a good test case for inter-agency L3 responses in a positive operating environment. By contrast, neither CAR nor South Sudan provided a favourable context. The response achievements must be seen in this light.

7. The Typhoon Haiyan evaluation is generally positive in its conclusions about the effectiveness of the United Nations-coordinated response, while noting that its contribution to the overall results was "difficult to assess" in the absence of more data on assistance provided outside of the inter-

agency coordinated system (which, strikingly, is estimated by the IAHE team to have made up over 84 per cent of the overall response). The subsequent transition to supporting recovery was judged too slow.

8. In South Sudan, the inter-agency response is credited with saving lives, preventing the crisis from becoming a major public health catastrophe and (probably) averting famine. That said, weaknesses in monitoring and information management made it difficult to determine the results achieved and their impact. Key achievements include stabilizing acute child malnutrition at pre-conflict levels; effective control of a cholera outbreak in 2014; working with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) to protect 100,000 civilians within the mission's own bases; and "strong, innovative work" on livelihoods—although the impact of these on overall food security could not be separately determined from that of food assistance.

9. In CAR, the IAHE found that the response "contributed enormously" to relieving the immediate crisis, saving the lives of many Central Africans, reducing suffering and preventing much worse outcomes. However, considered against the more protracted crisis, the response achieved only "modest results" in providing access to basic services, protection and assistance, and "poor results" in livelihoods and recovery. The response was judged highly unsatisfactory in its approach to resilience. Overall, the IAHE concludes that while successful in terms of relief, the inter-agency response missed the opportunity to use the great surge of capacity to address CAR's protracted crisis.

10. With regard to international engagement with national and local bodies and with affected populations, the picture that emerges from the IAHEs is a mixed one. As might be expected, the Philippines saw the closest collaboration between the United Nations-led inter-agency response and the Government, at both national and provincial or municipal levels. However, the international emergency response initially tended to bypass national systems and capacities, and it took time for the parallel systems to converge. In CAR and South Sudan, given the pre-existing governance and capacity deficits and the politically contested nature of the context, engagement with Government was more limited and circumspect.

11. With respect to civil society engagement, some good practices are noted in each case, but even in the Philippines the level of engagement was less than might be expected. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the Philippines tended to operate separately from the international NGOs and from the HCT system, and the Typhoon Haiyan IAHE found "limited evidence" of effective engagement between the international response and national and local civil society. Mutual lack of trust appeared to be a contributing factor to this. In CAR, few national civil society organizations participated in the inter-agency response, though a minority received funding through the Common Humanitarian Fund. In South Sudan, the evaluation found that while national NGOs lacked the capacity to mount a large response, they could have played a greater role than they did and could have been given more support to access response-wide resources, including pooled funding (they received less than 1 per cent of funding overall). International response stakeholders took positive steps in 2015 to encourage greater participation of national NGOs.

12. Community engagement was a strong feature of the response to Typhoon Haiyan. The evaluation found high levels of attention to Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP), although it lacked some of the necessary feedback elements. In CAR, by contrast, the evaluation found that this aspect of the response, and AAP in particular, was highly unsatisfactory; the failure to listen to the affected population increased "the potential for frustration, fraud and violence". Likewise in South Sudan, the IAHE found that affected people had not been consistently involved in planning, implementation and decision-making, which affected the relevance and sustainability of programmes.

13. On coordination and coverage, a few recurrent themes emerge from the three IAHEs. The emphasis on central strategic coordination was not always matched by adequate operational
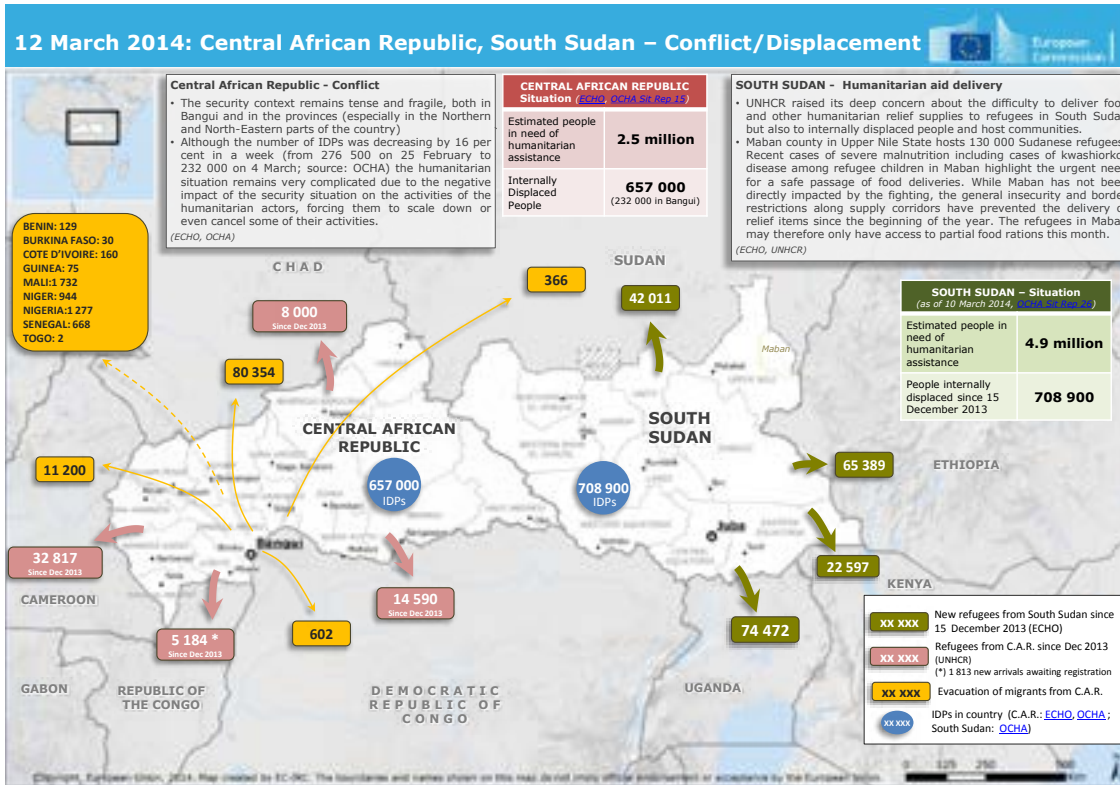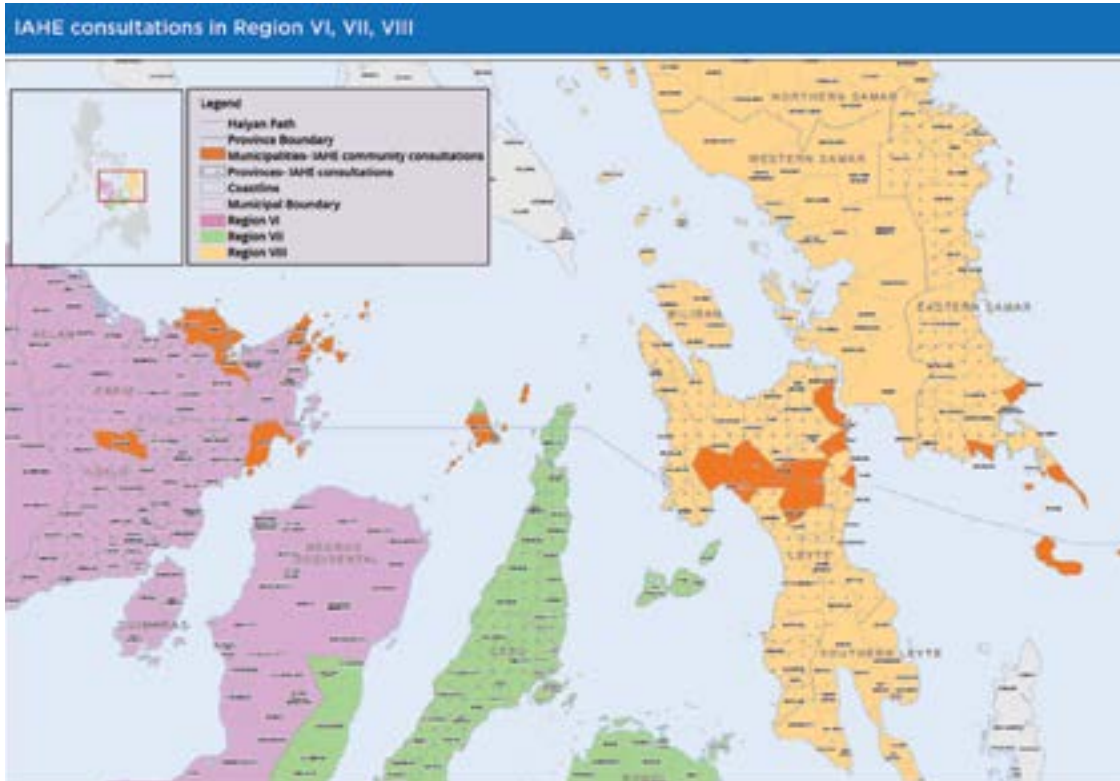
(cluster/sector-level) coordination. Coordination processes tended to be resource-intensive and time consuming; the demand for data to feed information products was seen as "heavy". In the Philippines, the evaluation found that coordination mechanisms were well funded and rapidly established, and that the cluster system functioned as planned—although complicated by running in parallel to the Government's own system. Excellent civil-military coordination greatly assisted the early stage of the response. While there was some unevenness in the geographic distribution of assistance in relation to needs, the IAHE found "no evidence of serious, sustained coverage gaps".

14. In CAR, the HCT-led coordination model was questioned and its application widely criticized, especially by international NGOs and global stakeholders. Strategic coordination was considered weak, but operational coordination and efforts to avoid gaps and duplications in assistance were "mostly effective" despite coverage gaps at the sub-national level. In South Sudan, coverage was good in accessible locations and poor in remote locations. Coordination structures and processes were large and complex at the Juba level, but tended to be ad hoc and informal in areas outside the capital and state capitals. Leadership responsibilities were diluted among the various coordination bodies (including HCT and the Inter-Cluster Working Group), and a greater focus was needed on mandates and accountability.

15. The declaration of an L3 system-wide emergency is generally judged to have been appropriate and effective in each case, particularly in raising the profiles of the crises and enabling resources to be mobilized accordingly. Questions arise in each case as to the proper duration of the L3 designation and the need to switch focus in a timely way (and probably earlier) from relief to recovery while continuing to meet basic needs.

16. Interesting lessons emerge concerning the application and perceived relevance of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) and its component elements. In the Philippines, it proved impossible to follow the HPC planning sequence, and the evaluation suggests that the HPC itself needs to be adapted to context, particularly in rapid onset emergencies. In CAR, the HPC was widely viewed as cumbersome and not well suited to a protracted crisis context. In South Sudan, while the letter of the HPC was followed, the spirit was not. Since planning energies were directed more towards resource mobilization than operational planning, a basic principle of the HPC—that plans should follow evidence—was not followed.

17. Finally, with regard to leadership, the concept of empowered leadership was crucial in galvanizing the inter-agency response in CAR, allowing the newly appointed Senior Humanitarian Coordinator (SHC) to provide strong leadership. Tensions were noted in the Philippines, arising from the senior leaders' need to both meet their own organizations' expectations as well as contribute fully to the collective enterprise. All three evaluations raise questions about the leadership by the HCT, Inter-Cluster Working Groups and lower levels of coordination, and suggest that greater focus is needed both on empowering these levels of leadership and holding them to account.

1. INTRODUCTION

1. Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations (IAHEs) are a relatively new innovation. They are closely linked to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Transformative Agenda as an element of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC), triggered automatically by the declaration of a level-three (L3) system-wide emergency. This Synthesis summarizes and assesses the key lessons from the three IAHEs conducted to date: in the Philippines (the response to Typhoon Haiyan) in 2014, in South Sudan in 2015 and in Central African Republic (CAR), also in 2015. The Synthesis aims to highlight areas of commonality and difference in the findings of the IAHEs. While a sample of three evaluations—one of which (Typhoon Haiyan) concerns a crisis quite different in nature to the others—provides a limited basis for drawing general conclusions, some clear lessons emerge.

2. All IAHEs are required to address the following core questions:

    1. Were the results articulated in the Strategic Response Plan (SRP) achieved, and what were both the positive and potentially negative outcomes for the disaster-affected people?

    2. To what extent have national and local stakeholders been involved and their capacities strengthened through the response?

    3. Was the assistance well coordinated, successfully avoiding duplication and filling gaps? What contextual factors help explain results or the lack thereof?

    4. To what extent were IASC core humanitarian programming principles and guidance applied?

3. A more general set of guiding questions for any evaluation of joint or collective humanitarian action might be simply stated as: Did we do the right things? How well did we (jointly) do them? Did they work? And (for each of these questions), how do we know? These give rise to specific questions about relevance, needs analysis and delivery; programme quality, coordination, coverage and efficiency; response effectiveness and impact; and assessment, monitoring, evaluation and accountability. All the IAHEs, to some extent, address this wider range of questions, which overlap with but extend beyond the core IAHE questions. This is reflected in the structure and content of this Synthesis.

4. Two main kinds of findings are included in the Synthesis. The first are those related to the relevance, effectiveness and quality of the United Nations-coordinated inter-agency response viewed as a whole. The second are those related to the inter-agency processes that contributed to the way responses were triggered, informed, planned, resourced, coordinated and reported. Given the nature of the contexts involved, some of the lessons are more relevant to rapid onset and natural disasters (Typhoon Haiyan), while others more to slow onset crises or situations of protracted conflict (CAR and South Sudan). A key factor is the difference between a relatively affluent (middle income) country with strong governance structures (Philippines) and a low-income country with major governance deficits. These distinctions should be borne in mind throughout.

5. While the IAHEs are critical of many of the aspects of inter-agency system performance, we should bear in mind the often extremely challenging, even hostile, operating environments within which the conflict-related responses have taken place. Beyond the immediate context, the constraints imposed by what is described in the South Sudan evaluation as a "global human resources crisis" on emergencies are very real. This and other organizational constraints, including limited management and technical support capacity, all have a bearing on the ability of agencies—individually and collectively—to operate effectively in these environments. So too does the often highly restrictive funding climate, particularly in the less high profile emergency responses. While the three responses covered here were relatively well funded, the global picture is one in which funding deficits of 50 per cent or more are common.

6.   In this context, it is important to note that the phrase 'inter-agency response', which is used in this Synthesis and in the IAHEs, is a potentially misleading one. It might be taken to imply a unified response guided by a single strategic planning process and coordinated or managed within a joint strategic framework. In reality, inter-agency responses typically constitute a set of distinct organizational responses that are more or less well harmonized and coordinated to help ensure that overall needs and priorities are addressed and that the necessary resources can be mobilized. These operational agency responses [United Nations, Red Cross/Crescent and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs)] are the product of individual organizational drivers— including mandates, policies, capacities and agency positioning—as much (or more) as they are of any joint planning and response process. The international NGO responses in particular often bear only a distant relationship to the United Nations-led collective processes and strategies, although the fault lines run across the inter-agency system. National and local NGOs are rarely considered a part of the inter-agency response except as implementing partners of the international agencies— and even then their role is often largely invisible. From the evidence of the IAHEs, they currently play only a peripheral role in joint planning and coordination.

7.   This fragmentation and diversity in the response is in part a reflection of the fact that the official donor responses driving much of the international response have (in most cases) themselves not been coordinated. The autonomous nature of the agencies concerned and the organizational logic that informs their different agendas creates particular challenges for effective collective action, which depends for its success on senior leadership working across agencies and beyond their own institutional brief. Any analysis or critique of the inter-agency response has to recognize the hybrid nature of the collective enterprise and the range of factors that may influence agency decisions. And while the rationale for coordinated action may be clear, one also has to ask the question: what value do the collective processes add, what results from them, who benefits, and at what cost? These processes are a means to an end, not an end in themselves, and their value must be assessed accordingly. Each of the IAHEs highlights these questions in different ways.

8.   In most cases, the United Nations-led inter-agency response forms one part of a wider set of responses—international, national and local. This is dramatically illustrated by the Typhoon Haiyan response, for which the IAHE estimates that "at least 84 per cent of the total response" did *not* flow through the inter-agency coordinated systems. Elements of the inter-agency response to the Syria crisis, notably the response to the refugee crisis in Turkey (the largest in the region), were also dwarfed by the scale of the Government's own response. But in most conflict-affected contexts, including the two covered in this report, the bulk of the humanitarian response continues to be provided through international assistance mechanisms, for which the United Nations-led inter-agency system is the primary vehicle. In any case, the lessons learned from the IAHEs are of significance for the better functioning of the inter-agency system—and therefore for the future welfare and security of all those affected by humanitarian crises that demand a concerted international response.

9.   Finally, it is important to note that the IAHEs contain little analysis of the *politically* driven actions and decisions (local, national or international) that are so often pivotal in determining humanitarian outcomes. These may include anything from decisions about military action or the conduct of war, to official donor decision-making about the scale and type of aid resources allocated. These politically influenced decisions set the context within which humanitarian agencies attempt to provide assistance and protection. Thus, while the IAHEs give a reasonably full picture of the workings of the international aid machinery and its impact on the relevant crisis context, they provide only part of the wider picture necessary to understand the humanitarian outcomes in each case. Any critique of the inter-agency system needs to take this into account and to consider the interplay of political, organizational and other factors in determining outcomes.

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Synthesis of key findings from Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations (IAHEs) of the international responses to crises in the Philippines (Typhoon Haiyan), South Sudan and the Central African Republic

Figure 1: Maps of the crisis contexts

Box 1: The crises and responses covered by the IAHEs

Philippines (Low Middle Income Country): Rapid onset natural hazard-related disaster. Typhoon Haiyan hit the Central Visayas region of the Philippines on 8 November 2013. The typhoon, together with the related storm surge, caused massive devastation. Within four days, the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator declared an L3 emergency and the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) released a Humanitarian Action Plan for international assistance alongside the Government's own response. A massive response was launched with 462 surge personnel deployed within three weeks. The 12-month SRP was published on 10 December 2013. Its total budget of US$788 million was 60 per cent funded.

The subsequent inter-agency response formed only part of a larger set of responses to the emergency including those of the Government, the private sector, Filipino and broader Asian civil society and the Filipino diaspora. On 4 July 2014, the Government announced the end of the humanitarian phase of the Typhoon Haiyan response. In response to this, the HCT decided to close the SRP on 31 August 2014.

South Sudan (Low Income Country): Civil conflict/rapid mass displacement. After achieving independence from Sudan in 2011 following decades of civil war, the newly emerged state of South Sudan was itself plunged into civil war in December 2013. Existing aid operations, largely targeting widespread acute malnutrition, were scaled up in 2014 (following the L3 declaration in February) in the light of escalating needs, including mass internal displacement. By the end of 2014, the planning figure for internally displaced persons (IDPs) had reached 1.95 million, and more than 100,000 people had sought sanctuary in United Nations bases. At the beginning of 2015, 2.5 million people were still facing severe food insecurity.

Apart from the protection of civilians, aid worker security has also been a major concern. Many staff were evacuated or fled at the height of the violence in December 2013 and January 2014. Hundreds of violent incidents against humanitarian actors have been recorded, and many agency compounds have been looted. Logistically, due to its distance from sea ports and the lack of all-season roads, South Sudan is one of the hardest places in the world to deliver a major response.

Central African Republic (Low Income Country): Civil conflict and mass displacement. Between 2012 and 2014, CAR's protracted crisis became increasingly complex as political and inter-communal violence escalated, leaving almost half of the population of 5 million in need of assistance and one in five displaced. Sectarian violence has seen tens of thousands of Muslims flee to other areas of the country and to neighbouring countries as refugees, or else remain trapped in enclaves under the protection of peacekeepers. Humanitarian actors struggled to respond. The L3 declaration in December 2013 was followed by a revised SRP for 2014 targeting 1.8 million people out of an estimated 2.5 million people in need of humanitarian aid. This was relatively well funded (74 per cent), but funding for the 2015 SRP (targeting 2 million people) met only 53 per cent of the requested total.

The situation remains volatile and levels of acute malnutrition among children under age 5 are reported by OCHA (March 2016) to be at emergency levels. Affected populations will need assistance for the foreseeable future.

2. SYNTHESIS OF KEY FINDINGS

2.1 Response relevance and appropriateness: needs analysis and strategic planning

10. Although not included in the core questions stipulated for the IAHEs, all three of the IAHEs address the questions of the relevance to context of the strategic approaches adopted, the appropriateness of the particular forms of assistance provided judged against affected people's priorities, and the adequacy of the needs analysis and consultation on which these judgments were based.[1] Against this backdrop they all consider both joint needs assessment and joint strategic planning processes and their outcome in each case. Some gaps are apparent in the evaluation evidence, notably in terms of gender-disaggregated needs and vulnerability analysis. Such gaps are inevitably reflected in the contents of this Synthesis.

2.1.1 Needs assessment and the analytical basis for planning

11. The Typhoon Haiyan evaluation highlights significant challenges to the prevailing model for response planning and assessment in rapid onset emergencies. Its overall finding here is that, due largely to pressures of the planning timetable, "assessments were conducted at too general a level, and too late, to usefully inform operational planning". The initial Haiyan Action Plan (Flash Appeal) was followed by the SRP, produced 30 days after the typhoon hit. The SRP was informed by the first of two Multi-cluster Initial Rapid Assessments (MIRAs), but it lacked the depth of needs analysis envisaged for a Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) in the HPC and SRP guidance. Specifically, there was "insufficient time to consult in depth with the national Government or with the operational hubs, or to consult with communities". The SRP was developed before detailed cluster assessments had been undertaken. Clusters were pressed into developing cluster plans in the space of a week, with incomplete data, and the cluster plans then became the basis for the SRP. The subsequent MIRA 2 was "felt to have told agencies what they already knew" and there was "no evidence of the MIRA 2 having shaped action".

12. In the case of CAR, the evaluation found that collective needs assessment and analysis was "fairly successful". Both IASC assessment tools (MIRA and HNO) were used, providing a basis for analysis and prioritization. However, "questions arose about the quality of needs assessment", as well as stakeholder involvement and ability to assess evolving needs. Half of all survey respondents felt that the needs assessment made an important contribution to effectiveness, ranking this aspect of the HPC process higher than all others; although international NGOs and national leaders were "notably less convinced". The HNO processes for 2014 and 2015 were useful in identifying gaps and setting priorities. The MIRA had disaggregated primary data by gender and was used to define the scope of interventions and to inform Common Humanitarian Fund decisions. "More than an operational document, it was useful to actors as a strategic reference".

13. The South Sudan evaluation found a rather different picture. Describing the process of needs assessment, it notes that no single methodology was used to determine needs in the initial phases of the response, with many agencies using approaches of their own design. Some senior United Nations staff felt that the MIRA approach was more relevant to natural disasters and so made greater use of existing longitudinal data—particularly relating to food security—against which planning scenarios could be developed. Forty-two nutrition surveys were conducted in 2014,[2] allowing a trend analysis of child malnutrition prevalence. This information was combined with crop assessments and routine food security and nutrition monitoring data to provide a food stress mapping of the country using the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) system. WFP

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[1] There is a strong case for adding a combined relevance and needs analysis question to the four core questions for IAHEs.

[2] These used the Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions (SMART) or Rapid SMART methodology and were built on the 40 surveys conducted in 2013.

and others have used this heat map tool to gauge levels of food insecurity county-by-county and to prioritize food aid, nutrition programmes and livelihoods interventions.

14. During the first three to four months of the South Sudan response, more specific information about population displacement and emerging needs in particular areas came through the cluster system via agencies still working on the ground, and this was augmented by specific assessment visits from Juba or state capitals. The IAHE found evidence that the needs (e.g. food, water and shelter) were appropriately prioritized based on these assessments in this early phase of the response, but that as the crisis unfolded there was a "constant need to reassess the state-level intervention priorities, particularly in relation to new population movements". The main process for this was the Initial Rapid Needs Assessment (IRNA), used to capture data in a holistic and coordinated way across several sectors and in places with reasonable humanitarian access. Although the IRNA approach had several merits, the related process was found to be cumbersome, follow-up was inconsistent and there was a reported lack of quality control.

    The South Sudan IAHE concludes that while the predictive use of longitudinal data was good, especially in relation to food security and nutrition, the main rapid assessment tool (IRNA) "did not meet the needs of the response" in the way that it was used. By the time of the IAHE visit, many of the assessment weaknesses had been recognized and were being addressed.

15. In summary, the evaluations raise questions about the application and relevance of the MIRA and other joint assessment processes in specific contexts. MIRA and other broad spectrum (multi-sector) joint assessments appear to play more of a role in setting overall priorities and joint strategic direction, rather than in informing specific programme responses. Sector or cluster-specific assessments have much more operational significance, and as the Typhoon Haiyan evaluation recommends, they should be conducted "with a clear view to informing operational planning". Assessments need to be timed so as to fit in with the relevant timetables for planning and decision-making (or vice versa). While they should be properly implemented, quality controlled and followed up, the cost of joint assessment—in terms of time, money and opportunity—must be proportionate to the benefits they deliver.

16. The relationship between joint multi-sector assessments, joint single-sector (cluster) assessments and individual agency assessments needs to be better understood, as does the function that each performs (in theory and in practice). The evidence from the IAHEs suggests that the relation of each to the other is currently confused, that synergies among them are not realized, and that joint assessments too often do not perform their intended functions.

2.1.2 Assessing affected people's priorities

17. The South Sudan evaluation found that there was a "lack of consistent practice" in engaging affected people with regard to their needs and priorities. Agencies did not sufficiently go beyond the level of official local administrators or self-appointed community leaders to gather information about the local situation. Where they did, processes tended to be "extractive rather than consultative", driven by the need for technical information and quantitative data rather than the desire to bring local people into a dialogue on how to prioritize response resources according to the local context. The resulting plans were therefore "shaped by the perspectives of the aid professionals" rather than local perspectives. One example given is that of education, on which affected people placed a high priority, but which was given a low priority in the 2014 plans. Overall, the evaluation concludes that although the response's top-line objectives were appropriate to the situation, affected people were not sufficiently involved in assessments or planning.

18. The Typhoon Haiyan evaluation notes that communities were "dissatisfied with the range of beneficiary targeting systems used by agencies", and wanted more consistent and transparent systems for doing so. Vulnerable groups were given some priority in the distribution of assistance. The CAR evaluation concludes that while the overall humanitarian response was

appropriate to people's primary concern for security, assistance was often inappropriate because "too little was done to consider the priorities of the affected populations, consult them in prioritization processes", or deliver assistance in an appropriate manner.

19. Within the various assessment and planning processes, it is clear from the IAHEs that consultation with affected people needs to be more integral to the setting of priorities, just as community involvement needs to be more integral to the delivery of the response itself.

2.1.3 Strategic and operational planning

20. The process of joint planning at the strategic level through the SRP receives considerable attention in the evaluations, particularly in the Typhoon Haiyan and South Sudan reports. Joint planning at the operational level, particularly cluster and inter-cluster planning processes, receives less attention, but its links with the overall planning process are usefully explored.

21. The Typhoon Haiyan evaluation found that the SRP, while appreciated and widely used as a reference by donors, was not used to determine resource allocation to clusters, agencies or projects. Some 60 per cent of all funding provided by donors in response to the Typhoon Haiyan appeal was already allocated *before* the SRP was issued. Overall, the report notes that it was not possible to follow the HPC planning sequence, and that the SRP became "less of a planning document, and more of a synthesis", bringing together, in a single coherent framework, elements of preliminary assessment, cluster planning and agency programming intentions.

22. The Typhoon Haiyan SRP covered a twelve-month period and envisaged supporting recovery through to sustainability and self-sufficiency; although many argued at the time of drafting that it should be a six-month document with emphasis on relief and the early end of the recovery spectrum. This tension between an emergency and a recovery focus is evident within the document, and "this carried through into the relationship between the international community and the national Government". Perhaps as a result, "the SRP was not fully 'owned' by the HCT", and the evaluation found examples of HCT members "favouring their agency interests over the collective interest of the humanitarian response". The transition to recovery was not a smooth one. The inflexibility of emergency-focused surge deployments contributed to this, as did the reluctance of some agencies to request donors to redirect emergency funds to early recovery.

23. In the case of CAR, the evaluation describes the strategic planning process as "highly inadequate, as highlighted by many stakeholders". The SRP process helped resource mobilization, but was "poorly managed, weighed down by IASC expectations". It "generated confusion", and had missed opportunities to develop solutions to displacement. Strategic planning was an area of weakness, and a key opportunity for improving coordination and effectiveness. While the SRP objectives were highly relevant to needs as set out in the HNO, they were based on needs assessments of mixed quality.

24. In South Sudan, despite the problems noted above with assessments, the evaluation found that the response plans, and especially the higher-level objectives, were appropriate for the needs—reflecting the long-term presence and collective experience of the agencies involved. But the key finding of the IAHE is that the plans were mainly written as "fundraising documents" rather than as "strategic plans that would continually guide the response, in the sense of a roadmap or living project document". The lack of truly strategic plans translated into a lack of operational plans, so it was "easy for the overall logic of the response—and each cluster's role in the response—to become obscured in the day-to-day business of cluster work, such as meetings and information sharing". Rather than being useful management tools for the HCT and clusters, the plans were "largely neglected as key project cycle documents". Interviews with senior United Nations and NGO staff in Juba indicated that the focus of the HCT had drifted away from strategic-level leadership of the response as a single unified programme.

25. The South Sudan evaluation, like the Typhoon Haiyan one, comments on the "lack of ownership of the plans", the result of a hurried and non-inclusive consultation process. Various factors lay

behind this, including clusters' lack of outreach to states; their failure to consult affected people about priorities; the rush to meet deadlines, such as the Oslo pledging conference; and the lack of full involvement of NGOs. The processes were "very much Juba-led (i.e. top-down)", with little chance for people to participate at the state or county levels, "let alone at more local levels". The report comments that, although this hurried approach was understandable for earlier iterations of the plans, it was less excusable for later versions.

26. At the operational level, the South Sudan IAHE notes that plans were built around individual cluster plans, focused on activities and outputs (rather than outcomes). These were "often backed by vague or optimistic indicators with no clear means of verification and no clear monitoring plan". Indicators were often "just given as 'number of people reached' by an intervention". These points about measurement, the evaluators comment, are "critical to answering questions about whether the response achieved what it set out to". Some clusters were not able to measure progress against their own indicators and "therefore it is no surprise that OCHA has been unable (at the time of writing) to produce any overall reports on progress against the plans' objectives", other than summary-level data.

27. With regard to target setting, although the clusters were asked to plan on the basis of need and encouraged to be as objective as possible (a process that took considerable time and energy), the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and HCT imposed cuts on some cluster targets in order to prioritize life-saving sectors and align the plans with what donors would likely accept. Thus the Education Cluster's budget estimate of $80 million was reduced to $35 million, far below the target of 4 per cent of earmarked humanitarian funds for education called for by the United Nations Secretary-General's 2012 Education First Initiative and not consistent with the widely-expressed wishes of affected South Sudanese people. "Not surprisingly, some clusters have lost faith in the strategic planning process as a result".

28. The Typhoon Haiyan evaluation highlights what it sees as a gap in operational planning at a level below the SRP. Greater investment at that level, ideally following an operationally-oriented needs assessment, would have been "more worthwhile than the effort spent on developing the SRP". There was some division of opinion on whether a cluster basis for operational planning was preferable to a geographic (sub-regional) basis. With regard to cluster planning, the evaluation notes that few cluster response plans integrated needs assessment with agency activities and reporting into a coherent cluster-based management framework, "and which thereby formed the bridge between the SRP and agency projects". By implication, this is what response planning should aspire to do.

29. Overall, the IAHEs highlight three main issues concerning joint strategic and operational planning. The first is the commonly reported lack of full ownership of and buy-in to the SRPs, even by HCT members. This partly reflects the gravitational pull of individual agency agendas, and raises particular questions about accountability for delivery against collectively agreed objectives. The extent of buy-in also seems to depend on the perceived credibility of the strategic planning process as a whole.

30. The second (related) issue is that the SRP is seen much more as a fundraising document than as a strategic road map that provides a basis for the HCT to manage and guide the overall response. This echoes the criticism that used to be made of the Consolidated Appeals. While the SRP has a significant role in setting common fundraising priorities, the Typhoon Haiyan evaluation highlights the reality that it may be of little direct relevance to the funding decisions of at least the larger donors; and that in rapid onset crises, most funding decisions may be made before the SRP is produced. The SRP is thus in danger of being neither an effective fundraising tool nor an effective management tool. The evidence from the IAHEs suggests that emphasizing the common strategic framework role of the SRP, based on agreed needs and priorities, is the appropriate focus. The more convincing the SRP is in this regard, the more credibility it is likely to have with donors, and the more chance it has of providing a platform for donors to

coordinate their own support, at least for the medium-term aspects of the response. The IAHEs also suggest, however, that this framework needs regular review (not re-writing) in order to adjust HCT-agreed priorities to match the evolving context.

31. The third issue concerns the operational level of planning. This is generally judged to be weak, and given too little emphasis relative to strategic planning. It tends to be based on outputs and vague indicators (such as "numbers of people reached"), and provides an inadequate basis for measuring progress and effectiveness. Again, this raises questions about individual and collective accountability for common objectives. While planning may need to be done mostly at an agency level, plans need to be specific enough to allow them to be aligned and for coverage gaps to be clear. The adjustment downwards of individual agency targets (e.g. because of funding deficits) needs to be seen in the context of the response as a whole and the overall picture of needs. Such downward adjustments of targets should be registered as a coverage gap.

32. The IAHEs criticize both the joint assessment and joint planning processes for being too heavy and cumbersome, suggesting that the costs are thought to outweigh the benefits in many cases. This seems to be as much to do with the lack of perceived benefit as with the costs in terms of time and money. The solution may involve lighter processes, as suggested in the Typhoon Haiyan and South Sudan reports, coupled with a process of information generation driven more by local demand. However, there may be a tension here between efficiency of process and breadth of participation.

2.2 Achievement of objectives articulated in the Strategic Response Plans

33. This section considers the effectiveness of the inter-agency responses judged against the SRP objectives, and the factors behind success or failure to achieve those objectives. Here the differences in context and crisis type have a particular bearing on both the challenges faced in the response and the kinds of lessons learned. The weaknesses in objective and target setting noted above carry over to the analysis of achievement of objectives, making it hard to distinguish the impact of different interventions and programme elements. But some common elements emerge in the analysis of those approaches that were relatively successful and those that were less successful.

34. On the question of the effectiveness of the international response to Typhoon Haiyan, the Philippines evaluation is generally positive—while finding that the extent to which the United Nations-led inter-agency response (the subject of the IAHE) contributed to the overall results was "difficult to assess" in the absence of more data on assistance provided *outside* of the inter-agency coordinated system. The evaluation notes that the international response as coordinated through the United Nations-led system formed only part of a larger set of responses to the emergency including that of the Government (national and local), the private sector, Filipino and broader Asian civil society and the Filipino diaspora. Nevertheless, the inter-agency response effectively contributed to emergency needs being met "through a timely and relevant immediate response". Initial assistance was "appropriately prioritized" with a focus on major risks such as communicable disease outbreaks, food insecurity, lack of clean water, emergency shelter and protection. Key cross-cutting challenges were identified early on, including problems of land rights and supply chain bottlenecks, though strategies to address these took time to develop.

35. Among the key interventions of the inter-agency response, the Typhoon Haiyan IAHE notes in particular:

- Pre-deployment of the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team and considerable support from domestic and international militaries, enabling rapid response and access to remote areas

- Early restoration of water supplies including in Tacloban
- Rapid gearing up of health and surveillance services and re-establishment of the immunization service
- Development of a differentiated approach to food security combining cash, food and non-food item distributions relevant to local market conditions
- Large-scale provision of emergency employment, which also helped re-establish public infrastructure such as drainage canals and roads
- Timely distribution of rice seed and associated agricultural inputs enabling local food production to resume and in some cases exceed earlier production levels
- Early identification of key protection issues such as loss of legal documentation
- Rapid establishment of temporary learning spaces for girls and boys

36. On the recovery side, the Typhoon Haiyan IAHE describes the "rapid self-recovery" of the Filipino people, although it notes that this was often based on the use of high-cost credit. It concludes that the inter-agency response needed to be "better able to adapt and customize its activities to support early recovery". While blanket, standard responses to food, water, health and shelter needs were appropriate and effective in the initial phase of the response, it became apparent that more tailored responses were needed to enable households to restore livelihoods quickly.

37. The nature of the Philippines country context created what the evaluation describes as "highly favourable conditions" for an effective disaster response and hence a good test case for inter-agency L3 responses in a positive operating environment. These conditions included its middle-income country status, relatively good health and education indicators, a vibrant local economy, an established and experienced national disaster management system and "a Government that accepts its responsibility to protect the rights of citizens". The absence of significant civil conflict in the affected areas was an important enabling factor. Key external factors included large-scale public sympathy, media coverage, significant diaspora support, long-standing links with important aid donors, and the absence of a high profile competing disaster at that time. The IAHE concludes that "the combination of these underlying contextual factors contributed to its high level of funding and to the effectiveness of the early response".

38. By contrast, neither CAR nor South Sudan provided a favourable response context. Both had faced years of political insecurity, had very low development indicators and major governance deficits. Both had suffered recurrent crises, particularly of food security; but the L3 emergency declarations in both cases reflected a major escalation of human suffering and risk related to conflict and displacement. While the international humanitarian system was already present and programming in both countries, it struggled in each case to adapt to the new context, to the scale of the demands this created and to the deterioration of the operating environment. This had a significant bearing on effectiveness and exposed additional general weaknesses in the inter-agency approach.

39. In CAR, the SRP for 2014 targeted 1.8 million people out of an estimated 2.5 million people in need of humanitarian aid. Funding in 2014 for the CAR response (SRP) was relatively high, with 74 per cent of requirements met. In 2015, humanitarian assistance targeted 2 million people in need, a slight increase on the previous year, concentrating on emergency relief, protection and reinforcement of resilience. But lower funding meant gaps in coverage, with only 53 per cent of total requirements ultimately covered by donor funds.[3]

40. Against this backdrop, the IAHE found that the response "contributed enormously" to relieving the immediate crisis, saving the lives of many Central Africans, reducing suffering, and preventing much worse outcomes. Yet considered against the more protracted crisis, the response achieved only "modest and partial strategic results",[4] with operational actors focused

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[3] According to OCHA's Financial Tracking Service data, accessed on 15 June 2016 at www.fts.unocha.org

"more on process than results". The response achieved "modest results" in providing access to basic services, protection and assistance, and "poor results" in livelihoods and recovery. The response was "highly unsatisfactory" in its approach to resilience: strategic planning on resilience was unclear, operational actors understood resilience mainly as food security, and resilience was a "matter generally deferred to development programmes". Overall, the IAHE concludes that while successful in relief terms, the inter-agency response missed the opportunity to use the great surge of capacity to address CAR's protracted crisis, and did nothing to prevent "worsening aid dependency, an employment boom in the aid sector, and short-termism in national planning".

41. In South Sudan, the IAHE found that the inter-agency response, while initially slower than it should have been, had a positive impact on the lives of many affected people. That said, weaknesses in monitoring and information management made it difficult to determine the results achieved and their impact. The humanitarian response saved lives, prevented the crisis from becoming a major public health catastrophe, and "probably averted a famine". Specific areas of impact are described as follows:

- The prevalence of child malnutrition, which experienced a spike in early 2014, was stabilized within the range of values present in South Sudan before the conflict. IPC food security ratings showed a marked drop (even allowing for seasonal differences) between June 2014 and December 2014.

- Prompt and extensive public health measures contributed to controlling a cholera outbreak in 2014.

- Working with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), the response protected the lives of some 100,000 people, successfully monitored protection issues and supported local protection mechanisms. The opening of UNMISS bases to thousands of civilians in fear for their lives was a "bold and praiseworthy act with immediate humanitarian impacts".

- Needs related to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), health and food security were prioritized and the impact in these sectors was "substantial". Other sectors such as education and protection received less attention, with negative implications for short- and longer-term outcomes.

- "Strong, innovative work" was undertaken for livelihoods, including local seed purchase, agricultural extension and cash-based programming. The Food Security Cluster could not provide data on livelihood outcomes for 2014, but reached approximately half of its target population of 550,000 households with food security inputs during the year. There was evidence that livelihood inputs were "too little too late" in some places, with these inputs receiving low priority on cargo flights. The impact of livelihood support on overall food security could not be separated from that of food aid.

42. Commenting on the challenge of establishing results, the South Sudan IAHE notes that not enough attention was paid to outcomes in response planning, and plans were "written for fundraising purposes rather than as response management tools". As a result, response plan indicators were often weak and based on the "number of people reached"; generally, there was "too much focus on outputs compared with outcomes".[5]

43. More generally, it is apparent from each of the IAHEs that the ambiguities and weaknesses of operational planning processes noted in the previous section have a direct bearing on the ability to measure the progress and effectiveness of the overall response. As the South Sudan report puts it, "The way in which overall response plans were constructed and the low level of attention given to monitoring progress against those plans, make it difficult to evaluate

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[4] The phrase "strategic results" is understood here to refer to sustained or longer-term results, particularly with regard to livelihoods, recovery and the return of IDPs.

[5] A similar issue is noted in the Syria CALL Evaluation Synthesis and Gap Analysis (ESGA 2016). It found that the delivery of outputs and achievement of numbers reached targets was too often taken as a proxy for effectiveness and achievement of objectives. The Syria ESGA also notes a tension between needs-based and capacity- or resource-based target setting, and the problems associated with managing and evaluating against targets and budgets that shift over time depending on available resources.

the degree of achievement against objectives".[6] Recording of outputs delivered, sometimes without specification of schedules and recipients, is an imperfect basis for determining whether programme and strategic objectives are being achieved. The question 'who benefits?' is often not a simple one and requires careful monitoring and analysis.[7] Particularly in complex and insecure environments, delays and operational obstacles can lead to disruption of the assistance pipeline, with potentially devastating consequences for the intended recipients. Delivery to a warehouse does not equate to delivery of benefit to affected people. On the other hand, as the Typhoon Haiyan evaluation points out, if information is not generated at the local level (*barangay* in this case), duplication of aid effort can be missed. At present, these aspects of responses are relatively hidden and are reported or evaluated in only the most general terms, giving a potentially misleading account of response effectiveness.

44. It is clear from the IAHEs that stock responses which may be deployed initially can become less relevant over time—indeed, they can quickly become obsolete. In rapid onset disasters, the initial priority is likely to be the restoration of key services and tackling the most critical risks, as was the case in the Typhoon Haiyan response. Early action and preparedness can make a big difference in cases like this, and the early deployment of the UNDAC team together with effective collaboration with civil defence forces proved their worth in the Philippines. By contrast, the system was too slow to support the recovery efforts of the people and of the Government. It became somewhat fixed in relief mode, partly due to the nature of the surge capacity deployed. Thus, while the SRP relief objectives were well met, those relating to shelter and livelihood restoration were rated only "medium-low". As the IAHE notes, "The development of programmes to support more sustainable, non-agricultural livelihoods beyond emergency employment has been slow and under-funded". Transition, it concludes, needs to be considered in responses from the outset.

45. This theme of relatively strong relief responses but much weaker responses to more structural problems is reflected also in the conflict-related IAHEs. It is arguable that ambition far outstrips capacity to deliver in this respect, particularly with regard to pre-existing, chronic problems and service deficits. Yet these problems often form part of the ambition of the SRPs and must be judged accordingly. So for example, in the CAR 2015 SRP, one of the four strategic objectives was "to facilitate sustainable solutions for displaced individuals and refugees particularly in areas of return or reintegration". This was premised on the ability of the inter-agency response to achieve durable change. Judging by the conclusions of the IAHE, this proved illusory: although relatively well resourced, the response failed to achieve this objective, or indeed to improve the longer-term outlook for affected people. Given the extent and nature of vulnerability in CAR, this is perhaps unsurprising. While the IAHE concludes that the response "missed the opportunity to address CAR's chronic crisis" it is arguable that some of the objectives themselves were unrealistic.

46. The CAR evaluation gives rise to the question as to what extent a surge-based emergency L3 response can be expected to tackle the symptoms and causes of a protracted crisis. It may help deal with acute spikes, but the temporary solutions designed for this purpose are no substitute for the more lasting solutions that protracted crises—or indeed chronically under-developed fragile contexts—call for. In the South Sudan case, on the other hand, work to support the resumption of livelihoods, build resilience, promote self-reliance and strengthen coping strategies was judged essential in helping those affected to regain control over their lives; although the report notes the difficulty of implementing effective livelihood programmes across "vast rural areas and in the middle of a major conflict". But lack of clarity on targets and indicators, and the inadequacy of available data, made it impossible to make any definitive judgements about the effectiveness of the response in this regard. The report also notes that

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[6] The South Sudan report notes that while reasonably comprehensive collective data was available from clusters for the response in 2015, very limited data was available for 2014—in other words, for the earlier and most acute phase of the response. Where data was available, it often proved hard to interpret, and the report suggests that "The use of proportions instead of raw numbers would help the stakeholders involved understand the significance of activities and targets in terms of intended results."

[7] Again in the South Sudan case, the introduction of the 5Ws (who does what, where, when and for whom) data collection format across the clusters represented "a definite improvement over previous systems".

the political crisis was taking place in a context "shaped by long-term socio-economic crisis" where unmet needs were arising in more and more places, nationwide. "Need", in other words, is a moving target and the extent of need is open-ended.

2.3   Engagement with national and local capacities: government, civil society and affected populations

47. The picture that emerges from the IAHEs of international engagement with national and local bodies and with affected populations is a mixed one. Stark differences are apparent across the different contexts—primarily between the Philippines and the less developed (and conflict-affected) contexts. But some common findings and challenges emerge, including major deficits in the extent of international engagement with national and local capacities, along with some useful examples of good practice. Each of the three forms of engagement covered here—with Government, civil society and affected communities—raises different kinds of challenges. The most obvious common challenge is that of finding a way to work effectively with non-system actors who may work in very different ways to the system actors. In each case, some adaptation and flexibility is clearly needed on both sides if collaboration is to work.

2.3.1   Engagement with Government at national and local levels

48. As might be expected, given the Government involvement in the conflicts in CAR and South Sudan and the pre-existing governance and capacity deficits, it was in the Philippines that the closest level of collaboration was found between the United Nations-led inter-agency response and the Government, at both national and provincial or municipal levels. With regard to civil society and community engagement, a few good practices were noted in each case, but even in the relatively strong civil society context of the Philippines, the level of engagement was less than might be expected.

49. Overall, the Typhoon Haiyan IAHE found that the international community engaged well with the government disaster response and risk reduction systems during the preparedness stage and in the immediate days following the typhoon. However, the magnitude of the disaster and the strength of the inter-agency response overwhelmed some government units, with the result that the international and national coordination mechanisms diverged along separate paths. While the evaluation found "many examples of excellent cooperation", and government officials at all levels appreciated both the assistance and the technical and coordination capacity provided, there was also a strong sense that some international surge staff "did not understand national systems or capacity and instead bypassed them".

50. While inter-agency operational priorities "drove the response", the structures and processes were not adjusted sufficiently or early enough to reflect the complementarity of the international community's role in this middle-income country with an established (albeit stretched) government disaster management system. While the inter-agency surge did deliver an effective response, it did so in a way that sidelined many in-country staff, failed to join up adequately with national systems, and ended up creating parallel structures for planning and coordination. Strong leadership and pre-existing institutional working relationships helped to turn this around, and a focus on practical solutions and measures such as co-location helped bring the national and international systems back together to achieve "some very successful cooperation in implementation".

51. In CAR, the evaluation found that the involvement of national and local stakeholders was insufficient. Initially, national and local capacity was "completely disabled" by the military takeover of Bangui (HNO 2014, MIRA), so United Nations actors believed the response "rightly bypassed Government" and only made efforts to work with functional parts of the state, while

global stakeholders felt there was "no Government or State to involve". But the Operational Peer Review (OPR) found the response was not sufficiently aligned with and supportive of the Government and other national/local capacities, plans and responses. Some stakeholders felt that the State was "never entirely absent", and that the response ought to have worked with and through them, while establishing firewalls to preserve humanitarian neutrality.

52. The CAR IAHE concludes that during 2014, the response "largely bypassed an incapacitated Government", and while it made increasing efforts to engage it in 2015, still few national actors participated in the response, and those who did complained of barriers to receiving funding. Although national and local involvement was essential to mobilizing capacity after the L3 capacity surge, "little was done to prepare national leadership and ownership" and there was no handover strategy. The response also did little to build national emergency response capacity and the lack of systematic capacity-building was a "missed opportunity". In 2015, the inter-agency response made increasing efforts to involve national actors and the Government began to participate more, establishing a Coordination Unit and participating in United Nations field assessments (HNO 2015). Communication between the inter-agency response and the Unit was good despite different agendas, and both the Government and national NGOs participated in some clusters. However, United Nations actors felt Government involvement fell short of providing leadership, taking responsibility or addressing the causes of the emergency.

53. The South Sudan IAHE found that the Government "did not have the resources or capacity to respond to the crisis without substantial external assistance. There were also long-standing concerns within the donor community about corruption." While noting the additional barriers to collaboration with a Government that was a party to the conflict, it found that the response worked effectively "with certain well-intentioned ministries" including Education and Health. That said, the Government's capacity to respond to a crisis of this scale was limited. The channelling of most aid funds through the United Nations-led inter-agency response caused resentment within the Government and strained relationships at the highest levels. Overall, however, the evaluation concludes that "a sensible and pragmatic approach" was taken to collaborating with officials "where this could add value to inter-agency efforts without compromising humanitarian principles". Despite the civil war, the Government allowed a massive humanitarian response to operate across conflict lines and within the territory it controlled—primarily out of Juba or other hubs. The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology engaged closely with the relevant clusters, co-chaired meetings and shared key data.

54. As the Typhoon Haiyan response illustrates, where a strong and willing Government exists, the role of the inter-agency system is likely to be secondary (though it may be crucial), and needs to be genuinely complementary to the national and local response. Such collaboration seems to work best where it is based on relations previously built with relevant ministries and other authorities. Where government capacity is weak or overstretched, where the Government is involved in an ongoing conflict or where serious doubts exist about its accountability, the role of the inter-agency system in humanitarian response is likely to be much more central. Yet even in these cases, working judiciously with government ministries and other agencies is both appropriate and necessary to achieve access and coverage—the Government, after all, retains the primary responsibility for ensuring the welfare of the civilian population. In South Sudan this appears to have worked reasonably well, at least with certain ministries. In CAR, the assumption of a governance vacuum seems to have led to missed opportunities to work with, and grow the capacity of, relevant government bodies.

2.3.2 Engagement with national and local civil society organizations

55. With regard to civil society engagement, again the findings are mixed—but the overall picture is one of limited and generally insufficient engagement by international agencies. The Typhoon Haiyan IAHE found "limited evidence" of effective engagement between the international response and national and local civil society. Several efforts were made to engage with national civil

society, including early attempts to reach out to national NGOs through the appointment of an OCHA-financed national NGO liaison officer and special briefing sessions convened for national NGOs by OCHA. The issue was raised in inter-agency meetings at regional levels several times, where agencies agreed on the need to engage more with national NGOs and local civil society, but struggled to work out a strategy to do so. OCHA proposed the creation of an Emergency Response Fund with a national NGO focus (as exists in 20 other countries), but "donors were not interested". Some international humanitarian agencies with pre-existing national NGO programmes and relationships had continued working with them, but the IAHE notes that limited capacity of local civil society organizations was a complicating factor in efforts towards greater engagement.

56. Generally speaking, national NGOs in the Philippines operated separately from the international NGOs and from the HCT system in the Typhoon Haiyan response. A few national NGOs were able to fully participate in the cluster system, but on the whole, increased participation of national and local NGOs in clusters and working groups came only with the decrease in international organizations and staff. The IAHE heard that national NGOs often felt that they were not trusted (especially in terms of financial management) by international NGOs or United Nations agencies. Some national NGOs felt the international relationships were "extractive" and not true partnerships. They also struggled with the high turnover of expatriate staff, which meant that durable relationships could not be established. There was little evidence of new humanitarian relationships or capacity being built; and more generally, little evidence that the international response contributed to the strengthening of national civil society and its role in disaster management.

57. In South Sudan, the evaluation found that civil society "lacked the capacity to mount a large response", but that national NGOs could have played a greater role than they did (they received less than 1 per cent of funds). Some of the national NGOs that did have the capacity to respond were doing work "on a par with some international NGOs", and offered added value compared with their international counterparts. Although there were strong examples of national and international organizations working in effective partnerships, national NGOs could have been given more support to access response-wide resources, including pooled funding. Positive steps were taken in 2015 to encourage greater participation.

58. In CAR, few national civil society organizations participated in the response. A minority received funding through the Common Humanitarian Fund, a few participated in need assessments or cluster meetings, and only two participated in HCT meetings led by the HC. Some national NGOs had (wrongly) understood that they could act only as implementing partners, only accessing Common Humanitarian Funds if they were managed by international NGOs. All complained about the online application system for funding, asking that it be simplified to allow them to access funds. The four government ministries consulted also requested more transparency in the financial management of the response, including through narrative reporting that would allow them to track funds they had helped mobilize.

59. In summary, a mixed picture emerges with regard to the international system's engagement with civil society. Engagement was less than might be expected in the Philippines, given the strength and capacity of national civil society. As with Government collaboration, this seemed in part to do with the lack of 'fit' between the inter-agency system's ways of working and those of others. In South Sudan, while civil society is not so strong, it appears that its capacities were not used and supported to anything like their full potential. The same was true in CAR, although capacities there are perhaps lower still.

2.3.3 Community engagement and Accountability to Affected Populations

60. This aspect of the Philippines response received considerable attention, both in the response and in the IAHE, which included a significant element of community engagement. The IAHE

notes that "a significant feature of the Typhoon Haiyan response" was the attention to AAP and Communicating with Communities (CwC), two related processes intended to enable community participation in the design and monitoring of assistance in order to increase its relevance and effectiveness, as well as its accountability. There were several elements to this: communication needs and channels were assessed as part of the first MIRA, helping optimize communication strategies; an AAP Plan of Activities was agreed upon; and OCHA CwC and AAP advisors were deployed in the field, supplementing pre-existing in-country capacity. The IAHE found "high levels of attention to accountability among agencies", with multiple communication channels, including community committees, listening exercises, hotlines, monitoring processes, complaints boxes, specific outreach projects such as radio programmes providing information, as well as radio or text channels. The consultation processes took gender differences and other community dynamics into account, with separate means for men, women, older people and children to provide their input.

61. The communication channels noted above were largely agency-specific. Somewhat late in the response, systematic OCHA-coordinated community feedback processes were initiated, and these provided non-agency specific mechanisms to gather community feedback on conditions and assistance, which was then analysed and fed back to the relevant agencies, clusters and, if necessary, the HCT for further action and follow-up. The IAHE found evidence that this feedback did influence the activities of agencies and clusters, although this consequence was not usually transmitted back to the originating communities.

62. The Typhoon Haiyan IAHE identified three key areas for improvement in AAP:

- *Start and scale up earlier* – Earlier establishment of a response-wide, community-level feedback process would have enabled more community participation in response design.

- *Feedback to communities* – Communities consistently reported to the IAHE that they received no response to their complaints. Good use was made of the After-Action Reviews coordinated by OCHA to share community feedback with government officials.

- *Clarify the relationship between CwC and AAP* – The IAHE found that there was sufficient common ground for the two areas to be brought together for greater effect. This is particularly important in a less well-resourced response.

Box 2: The five Inter-Agency Standing Committee Commitments to Accountability to Affected Populations (as summarised in the South Sudan IAHE)

Leadership/governance: Ensuring feedback and accountability mechanisms are integrated into country strategies, programme proposals, monitoring and evaluation, and are highlighted in reporting.

Transparency: Providing accessible and timely information to affected populations, and facilitating dialogue between organizations and affected populations over information provision.

Feedback and complaints: Actively seeking the views of affected people to improve policy and practice, establishing a mechanism to deal with feedback and complaints and ensuring that appropriate procedures for handling them are in place.

Participation: Enabling affected people to play an active role in decision-making and ensuring that marginalized most-affected people are represented.

Design, monitoring and evaluation: Ensuring that the goals and objectives of programmes are designed, monitored and evaluated with the involvement of affected populations.

63. In the case of South Sudan, the IAHE placed considerable emphasis on this aspect of the response and specifically AAP. It found that there was "limited awareness of AAP as an IASC policy priority" and of related policy guidance documents. The HC and the HCT were found to have provided "little leadership" on AAP and several informants felt that it was not a priority during an emergency, but rather a "nice extra" more appropriate for later in the response or during the learning and evaluation phase. That said, there were examples of "excellent practice" being implemented by some agencies, though these depended on the interest of the relevant managers. Staff engaged in rapid response said they found it hard to access representative numbers of local people during their short field missions, instead relying on interactions with local officials. In some locations, there were reports from NGO staff that the traditional leadership was corrupt or self-serving, and that power was maintained through threats and bullying.

64. The IAHE found very few examples of formal feedback and complaint mechanisms; where they did exist, there was no formal approach to recording or analysing feedback or mechanisms to track redress. More concerted efforts to jointly record feedback "could have provided a stronger body of evidence for redress and joint advocacy" on issues that arose. Agencies did however obtain regular feedback via staff embedded in communities or living in the Protection of Civilian sites and through strong networks of community mobilizers and health and hygiene promotion staff.

65. In general, the South Sudan IAHE concludes that affected people had not been consistently involved in planning, implementation and decision-making, and that this impacted the relevance of programmes, as well as long-term sustainability. Greater and more consistent attention to AAP could improve the quality of the future response.

66. In CAR, the evaluation found that the community engagement and AAP aspects of the response were "highly unsatisfactory" and that AAP in particular was "poorly applied". Deploying a thematic adviser was not enough to fulfil the five AAP commitments (see Box 2 above), and the response struggled to make progress on each of them. The OPR had urged IASC members to be more proactive in including AAP in its strategies, processes and activities. An AAP action plan, required by IASC to be implemented within two months of the L3 declaration, was developed at the global level, but it suffered from "lack of ownership, awareness and resources". Transparency and information sharing was also weak and focused on "persuasion as opposed to listening". Some actors recognized the need for better consultation mechanisms, but no CwC projects or expert advisers were in place. Several factors lay behind this: leadership on AAP was lacking, transparency efforts were weak, participation was often inadequate, feedback and complaints did not function well, no interagency complaints mechanism existed, and monitoring and evaluation served purposes other than AAP. The failure to listen well to the affected population increased "the potential for frustration, fraud and violence".

67. Overall, AAP and community engagement receive a very mixed scorecard. On the evidence of the three IAHEs, and particularly those relating to CAR and South Sudan, it seems that community engagement remains a blind spot of the inter-agency system. Rather than being seen as integral to relevant and effective programming, it is often treated as (at best) a secondary aspect of the response and something to be attended to once the programme has been established. This was not true of the Typhoon Haiyan response, although that had its own weaknesses in this respect, particularly with regard to effective feedback and the initial lack of a response-wide, community-level feedback process.

2.4 Strategic and operational coordination issues

68. Each of the IAHEs deals in some depth with the issue of coordination and collaboration at the strategic, sector/cluster and programmatic levels. The question of how the coordination mechanisms ensured effective coverage (or did not) is one recurrent theme. Another is the balance between strategic and operational coordination and the relative under-resourcing of operational (cluster/sector-level) planning. Some fundamental questions are raised about the cost-benefit of coordination mechanisms; about the relationship and accountabilities among the HCT, Inter-Cluster Working Group (ICWG) and clusters; and indeed about the overall model of United Nations/OCHA-led coordination.

2.4.1 General coordination issues

69. The Typhoon Haiyan IAHE notes that the response was a challenge to coordinate: activities took place in three regions and five main coordination hubs with a large range of active responders including government, private sector and charitable foundations. Strikingly, the IAHE estimates that at least 84 per cent of the total response "did not flow through the inter-agency coordinated systems". The issue of coordination with bodies outside the United Nations-led system (and the SRP) assumes particular significance in this context.

70. In general, the Typhoon Haiyan evaluation found that coordination mechanisms were well resourced and rapidly established, and that the cluster system functioned as planned (although complicated by running in parallel to the government's own system—see below). Excellent civil-military coordination had greatly assisted the early stage of the response. While there was some unevenness in the geographic distribution of assistance in relation to needs, the IAHE found "no evidence of serious, sustained coverage gaps"; although there was some concentration of assistance around coordination hubs and signs that the response was slow to adapt to new information on gaps. Coordination processes were resource-intensive and those that included demands for data provision for information products were viewed as "heavy". The mechanisms also struggled to deal with the range of organizations working in the Philippines outside of the SRP. The IAHE found that "lighter coordination mechanisms were most effective".

71. In South Sudan, much of the coordination activity took place at the Juba level, with systems appearing increasingly ad hoc and informal the further away they were from the capital and state capitals. In 2014, OCHA's footprint was extremely light in opposition-held areas, where much of the response was taking place, and only improved slowly in 2015. Coverage was generally good in accessible locations and poor in remote locations. Service coverage in the large (and more accessible) IDP centres was much better than in those settlements in more remote locations that were served via rapid response or mobile response approaches. The IAHE concludes that response leaders "must prepare for a protracted crisis" and that a more sustainable programme is required, adapted to meeting both short- and long-term needs and able to operate with lower levels of funding. Investments in coordination functions can "contribute to a drive towards greater efficiency and effectiveness", using available resources to best effect.

72. In CAR, the HCT-led coordination model was questioned and its application "widely criticized", especially by international NGOs and global stakeholders. International NGOs were most critical of overall coordination in CAR, and in particular of its United Nations leadership, which they considered "too slow, bureaucratic and political". They pointed to the unacceptable rapid turnover of United Nations coordination staff; OCHA's excessive capacity without tangible added value; and disproportionate investment in coordination (except at the operational, cluster level, where it was sorely lacking). The coordination of strategy in the HCT was considered weak, as were coordination mechanisms generally. That said, operational coordination and efforts to avoid gaps and duplications in assistance were mostly effective despite a concentration of effort

in Bangui and coverage gaps at the sub-national level. Overall, HCT-led coordination activities in Bangui absorbed much capacity and left considerable room for improvement, but coordination remained an important factor in the effectiveness of the international response.

73. On the relationship and accountabilities among the HCT, ICWG and clusters, the South Sudan report found that there was too much overlap between the functioning of the ICWG and the HCT and that "leadership responsibilities became diluted between the various coordination bodies". Greater focus was needed on mandates and accountability. In CAR, respondents highlighted weaknesses in inter-cluster coordination, which "did not support HCT with strategic guidance or allow for integrated approaches across clusters". The OPR had observed that weaknesses in inter-cluster coordination led to a proliferation of bilateral operational meetings, and had suggested streamlining meetings by appointing executive committees, but the evaluation found no evidence that this had happened. Evidently the balance and relationships among the HCT, inter-cluster mechanisms and clusters need careful attention, not only to avoid duplication and proliferation of meetings, but also to ensure mutual accountability.

74. The CAR report notes that some international NGOs challenged the overall HCT-led coordinated response model, saying that it was "poorly defined", a "United Nations control mechanism", and an "empty concept". They judged OCHA's capacity to be "excessive", with too many "coordinators and talkers", a duplication of meetings and information, but too few "technically-inclined implementers". This is a common enough perception that it needs to be taken seriously, and it echoes the analysis above concerning the lack of focus on practical cooperation. On the other hand, at least one United Nations respondent had questioned the voluntary nature of coordination, suggesting that it should be "mandatory and contractual among international NGOs to enable accountability".

2.4.2 Cluster coordination

75. In the case of the Typhoon Haiyan response, the evaluation found that most of the international clusters were well resourced, especially in the initial surge, with national cluster coordinators, information management officers, as well as several regional and sub-regional coordination staff. On the whole, clusters with dedicated cluster coordinators (coordinators who were not double-hatting as agency leads) were more effective, as were clusters that had pre-established relationships with government counterparts.

76. The Typhoon Haiyan evaluation noted two particular challenges to sector-level coordination. The first was that "at times, agencies' own agendas complicated the process of forming a common cluster approach". The magnitude and visibility of the disaster attracted high-level attention, and agency staff in the field were pressed to meet agency demands for profile and performance. In some cases these vertical agency allegiances prevailed at the expense of horizontal cluster relations. In some sectors, the pressure to report up along agency lines using agency templates and metrics inhibited the collection of cluster-level data using cluster metrics.

77. The second challenge, one that also applied to coordination mechanisms more generally, was the burden of participation. A significant feature of the coordination mechanisms, noted in the Typhoon Haiyan evaluation, was that agencies found them to be time-consuming in their demands for information and for participation in frequent (and sometimes overlapping) coordination meetings. That said, the evaluation judges that there is "no doubt that coordination processes managed by staff experienced in coordination improved connectedness and coverage, and enhanced results".

78. In South Sudan, the evaluation found that in 2014, the clusters did not have the resources to move beyond their information sharing duties and address aspects such as coverage and quality. The (global) crisis in human resources for emergencies meant there were too many staffing gaps (an issue that the ICWG should have done more to monitor and raise with the HCT). Few cluster coordinators had the time to travel regularly outside of Juba. At the

state level, double-hatted cluster coordinators did their best, but rarely had the time or the confidence to tackle these issues. When experienced, dedicated coordinators were present at the state level, they were able to make a positive difference in addressing duplication and gaps. Overall, the South Sudan evaluation concludes that clusters lacked the human resource capacity to address important areas of their mandate, such as monitoring, quality control and avoiding gaps in services.

79. In CAR, the evaluation found that while United Nations and national actors felt cluster coordination was effective, international NGOs strongly criticized the cluster system. The OPR had reported that clusters were strengthened and streamlined at the declaration of L3 status, but held too many meetings, which absorbed too much capacity, monopolized too many participants, and raised questions about effective leadership. Operational actors said there were too many clusters. One international NGO commented that clusters didn't work and had lost sight of their purpose, aiming "only to be self-sustaining". Another said effective clusters depended on leadership that was "dynamic, technically inclined and equipped for decision-making".

80. Some useful lessons emerge about what makes for added value and good practice at the technical and operational level. The Typhoon Haiyan report stresses the need for technical advisors "to be clear from the outset about what they can practically contribute to operations and be careful not to draw energy away from operational capacity (for example by minimizing demands for time, information and data)". Beyond the individual sectors, cross-cutting approaches "enabled the needs, experiences and perspectives of affected populations to be considered as a whole" and are thus vital to ensuring the relevance and effectiveness of the overall response.

2.4.3 External coordination with Government and other national bodies

81. In the Philippines, both the international community and the Government used sector coordination systems as their main vehicle for coordination. However, the system established in the Philippines differed in some respects from the global system. The cluster system in the Philippines had a government lead and international agency co-lead(s), but the respective roles and responsibilities of each were largely undefined. The IAHE found that initially government officials—particularly at the provincial and municipal levels—were very appreciative of international technical expertise and management support to coordinate the scaled-up international assistance. However, this then quickly changed to national structures and systems feeling overwhelmed by international staff, most of whom were new to the country and had not established relationships with their counterparts. While some clusters, such as Health, Agriculture and Education, maintained their national Government leadership role with international agencies in support, most clusters in the initial part of the international response were effectively run by the international cluster co-leads—especially in the hubs where national capacity was most stretched.

82. Despite the pressures of Typhoon Haiyan, the evaluation also found numerous examples of successful cooperation, and noted the eventual re-convergence of the national and international coordination systems. It identifies some key factors enabling closer international-national cooperation including leadership by key figures, practical measures like co-location, pre-existing cooperation and relationships, the involvement of national staff and the creation of customized coordination structures at the local and municipal levels. The evaluation concludes that while there was relatively good alignment between the national and the international cluster systems, roles and responsibilities in co-leadership were not clearly defined, nor were they adjusted to the scale of the disaster and response.

83. In South Sudan, the evaluation noted that the coordination role of the Government and local authorities was "relatively limited". The best collaboration at the Juba level was with the Health

and Education ministries, which continued to coordinate services irrespective of conflict lines and actively participated in cluster meetings when possible. The Government was more involved at the state and county levels, though this varied considerably and depended on the inclinations of individual officials and the general rapport between authorities and agencies at the local level. Where the Government was involved in certain state-level meetings, agencies found it difficult to discuss the activities being conducted across conflict lines in opposition-controlled areas.

2.4.4 The cost-benefit and resourcing of coordination mechanisms

84. On the question of the cost and added value of coordination mechanisms, including the cost of staffing them, none of the evaluations provides a detailed analysis of the financial and other costs of coordination. However, they all tend to the view that processes were too heavy, slow or cumbersome, particularly at the strategic or HCT level. At the cluster or sector level, heavy demands for information and calls on staff time in attending meetings are highlighted in particular. At least by implication, the benefit provided by these processes was (in many cases) not felt to be such as to justify the costs.

85. Operational and cluster-level coordination in both South Sudan and CAR were found to be under-resourced, particularly beyond the capital city level. The South Sudan report notes that "Clusters lacked the human resource capacity to address important areas of their mandate, such as monitoring, quality control and avoiding gaps in services." In CAR, investment at the operational coordination level was found to be "sorely lacking" compared to the overall "disproportionate" investment in coordination.

2.5 Application of Transformative Agenda priorities: L3, HPC and leadership

86. Some aspects of the HPC have been covered in earlier sections. In particular, the process of needs assessment and its relationship to strategic and operational planning was found to be problematic in several different ways in each context. As the Typhoon Haiyan case shows, even in rapid onset crises for which the HPC was originally conceived, it has to be adapted to context; it may also require radical adaptation in protracted situations if it is to serve its purpose. Here we review analysis from the IAHEs on the overall HPC model, on the role played by the system-wide L3 emergency declaration and related processes, and on the leadership provided by the HC and HCT.

2.5.1 The L3 system-wide emergency mechanism

87. As the Philippines evaluation notes, Typhoon Haiyan was the first large-scale sudden onset disaster since the L3 protocols of the Transformative Agenda were developed, the first time that an L3 emergency was deactivated, and the first time that an SRP was shortened by three months from the original planned period. The IAHE reports the view expressed by many observers in the Philippines, "that the L3 status created its own momentum: an international surge that to some extent overwhelmed national systems and sidelined at least some of the incumbent HCT, followed by a sudden and somewhat disorderly closure and transition".

88. In the absence of an agreed plan for scaling back from L3 status and for shifting programming more firmly into early recovery, there was some confusion as to whether the SRP should be revised at the six-month mark (as recommended in the HPC guidance at the time), and there was a lag of several months between the recognition of the need to change direction and actual programming changes.

89. In South Sudan, the HC's request for L3 activation was judged "timely and courageous" by the IAHE, given the uncertain trajectory of the crisis. The impact of L3 status was largely confined to the higher profile it afforded the crisis and its fundraising power. According to the HC and other senior officials, its main utility was to support fundraising efforts, which were very successful. Other aspects of the L3 designation had much less force. The evaluation concludes that continual extensions of L3 status beyond the original time frame "are likely to weaken its impact".

90. The application of the L3 mechanism was judged "highly effective" in CAR, and was seen by many actors as the key factor of success. The L3 had a large positive impact on mobilizing resources for a significantly scaled up response, and prompted the IASC processes to identify and address capacity gaps. United Nations actors believed it significantly increased human resources, expertise and coverage. International NGOs felt it was well applied, as "people and money came to CAR as never before". National actors appreciated the L3 for increasing the scale and reach of assistance and also felt it helped strengthen national capacities. Global stakeholders also agreed that the L3 was pivotal in bringing attention, funding and human resources to CAR. However, it was also judged to have "perpetuated itself instead of preparing transition", again raising the question as to the proper duration of the L3 designation.

91. On the evidence of the three IAHEs, the L3 mechanism has proved its worth as a means of focusing attention on a situation and mobilizing commensurate financial and surge human resources.[8] More uncertain is its value—and that of the related surge deployment mechanisms and fast track procedures—in relation to protracted crises or to the post-emergency recovery phase. There appears to be a significant disconnect between the initial surge support to emergency response (to which the L3 processes are well suited) and the support required in subsequent phases of the response, whether that is recovery or simply prolonged crisis. Related to this are questions about the proper duration of the L3 designation and whether (or for how long) to extend it. This in turn raises the question of donors' willingness to be flexible with regard to the use of funds, to make multi-year funding commitments in protracted crises, and to fund preventive and recovery activities under a humanitarian rubric.[9]

92. Related to the L3 mechanism, the IASC established the Inter-Agency Rapid Response Mechanism (IARRM) to ensure that United Nations agencies would have sufficient capacity to deploy within 72 hours of a sudden onset emergency. In the Typhoon Haiyan case—the kind of crisis for which the mechanism was designed—the IARRM was effective in delivering "an astonishing amount of support in a very short time frame", helping to stabilize the situation quickly by responding to emergency humanitarian needs. As noted above, however, the capacity deployed did not adequately adapt to the country context or to the need to support recovery as well as meet emergency needs. In the CAR case, likewise, the IARRM brought a "rapid surge of senior experienced humanitarians", providing many new people to manage the response (OPR). Again, this brought real benefit to the relief effort, but struggled to tackle the more protracted aspects of the crisis. In South Sudan, the IARRM provided staff for OCHA, UNDSS, UNHCR and UNHAS, as well as other technical functions, but "numbers were limited due to global demand far exceeding supply". The evaluation found that there were "critical shortages of cluster coordinators" and especially technical staff in the WASH Cluster.

93. Regarding the IARRM and the question of human resources, the South Sudan report includes a strong argument that the IARRM "cannot be seen as a solution to the global crisis in human resources for humanitarian action". Addressing this fundamental problem, it argues, "should become a key priority for the IASC". The humanitarian sector "simply cannot cope with any more guidance on policy and practice" given that the necessary staff are not there to implement it "either in numbers or in quality". This relates also to the issue raised above concerning the adequacy of the L3 surge approach to tackle the demands of a protracted crisis, something

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[8] There is an associated global problem relating to conflicting demands posed by multiple L3 emergency responses running in parallel (more than the "2+1" originally envisaged), though that is only alluded to in passing in the IAHE reports. Experience suggests that organizations and the system as a whole can only cope with (and resource) a limited number of priorities at once. That limit seems to have been regularly exceeded in recent years.

[9] This subject is discussed in the South Sudan report (paragraph 53).

that the Syria crisis response also highlights. And again as the South Sudan report notes, it has proved very difficult in practice to replace surge staff with longer-term staff of sufficient quality.

2.5.2 The HPC model and its components

94. The Typhoon Haiyan evaluation found that the components of the HPC were "rigorously" applied, and under exceptionally tight time frames the related components were produced on time and with high quality. However, interlocutors questioned their suitability to the realities of a large-scale sudden onset disaster, and whether the significant effort and opportunity cost invested in them, particularly in the SRP, was justified. As noted above, the SRP was not generally used to determine resource allocation to clusters, agencies or projects, the majority of donor funding having already been allocated before the SRP was issued. Ultimately it was not possible to follow the HPC planning sequence, and the SRP became less of a planning document and more of a synthesis combining elements of preliminary assessment, cluster planning and agency programming intentions.

95. The HPC outlines a logical sequence for the response, starting with a needs assessment, which then leads to identification of strategic priorities and an overall results framework. Cluster plans are then derived from this framework, and projects are developed and costed. In the Typhoon Haiyan case, some of these steps were truncated and some tools were developed in isolation. In particular, assessment and planning documents were not causally connected and the SRP was issued before the results framework was fixed, contributing to the challenge of reporting the results. The L3 status significantly supported the rapid scaling-up and resourcing of the response; but greater attention to adapting to local conditions and collective approaches would have further strengthened it.

96. The Typhoon Haiyan evaluation concludes that the standard SRP model may not be applicable in sudden onset emergencies. In such cases, particularly in a middle-income country with significant experience and capacity for managing sudden onset large-scale disasters, the SRP needs to be flexible. It should have a short time frame, and should anticipate how the strategy and the related coordination machinery will transition to early recovery and local ownership.

97. One aspect of the HPC that the Typhoon Haiyan evaluation found to work well was the OPR. This was "timely and well-executed" identifying, at the 60-day mark, most of the major issues of coordination and transition to early recovery that were encountered by the IAHE. The report concludes that the OPR was a valuable addition to the HPC, and that its peer character and recommendations strengthened both its relevance and the quality of HCT response.

98. In the case of CAR, the HPC process generated little interest among operational actors, who considered it an inefficient burden, and it was poorly understood by response coordinators. United Nations actors observed that the HPC was "too heavy", "too much work for the clusters and OCHA", "unworkable", "too sophisticated", and "not field-friendly". Others felt that the HPC was poorly adapted to CAR and chronic emergencies. Operational actors felt the HPC was imposed by IASC/ED, that it was headquarters- or OCHA-driven, and that it served external audiences (OPR). International NGO actors considered the HPC of little importance with little effect on funding or staffing, and at best a starting point for dialogue that required contextual adaptation. National actors did not participate in the HPC and knew little about it. Some global stakeholders also questioned the HPC's applicability in CAR.

99. Overall, the IAHE found the application of the HPC to be "disappointing" in CAR. Surge staff lacked adequate knowledge of the HPC and IASC protocols (OPR). The HPC did not contribute tangibly to effectiveness, speed, efficiency, transparency, accountability or inclusiveness.

100. In South Sudan, the IAHE found that while most of the basic steps of the HPC were carried out, the HCT had "not embraced the spirit of the HPC" or used it to add value to the response. The response had followed its own version of the HPC (much of which stemmed from generic programming cycles), with only some of its elements conforming to the Transformative Agenda

policy documents. Since planning energies seemed to be directed more towards resource mobilization than operational planning, the logic of the HPC (that plans should be based on evidence etc.) was not followed through. Similarly, the guidance on locating decision-making in the field, monitoring the impact of humanitarian action and adjusting response programmes was not followed in any systematic way.

2.5.3 Leadership by the Humanitarian Coordinator, Humanitarian Country Team and beyond

101. L3 status confers empowered leadership on the designated HC in order to enable timely decisions on setting overall priorities, allocating resources, monitoring performance and dealing with under-performance.[10] In CAR, the IAHE found that the quick deployment of a Senior HC (SHC) from the L3 HC Roster greatly enhanced the coordination of a response that had up to that point "lumbered in reactive mode". Having an empowered leader clearly helped with making decisions instead of relying on HCT consensus, but the SHC's leadership was nonetheless undermined by a "poorly functioning HCT" and weak inter-cluster coordination and information management. The IAHE concludes that in a complex emergency and protracted crisis like that in CAR, "it would be more appropriate to have a SHC for a sustained period instead of deployed quickly for a short time".

Box 3: Extract from the Inter-Agency Standing Committee concept paper on empowered leadership (revised March 2014)

While the existing tools an HC has may be adequate for many situations, especially if used by a skilled HC working together with an effective HCT and strong national partners, for L3 emergencies, the tools available to an HC must be strengthened to permit the HC to:

- take decisions on behalf of the HCT in circumstances where there is no consensus, and where a delay in making a decision could have a serious effect on the welfare of people

- have quick access to all key information on the nature of the crisis, the needs and the response

- better support the accountability of all partners for the overall response, including for results, performance and to affected populations, together with the HCT

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102. In the Typhoon Haiyan case, the concept of empowered leadership was still evolving at the time of the response, and "[did] not seem to have been understood or accepted in the same way" by all the key actors. The IAHE observed that the exercise of empowered leadership was local. Yet according to the IASC's own L3 protocols on System-Wide Activation, "the main decisions on whether and how to activate the L3 response are made outside the country", by the Emergency Relief Coordinator in conjunction with the Emergency Directors and the IASC, after consultation with the HC.

103. In the case of Typhoon Haiyan, the importance of this emergency, combined with a desire to demonstrate the effectiveness of the Transformative Agenda and the L3 protocols, "attracted the highest levels of interest in the HQs of United Nations and other agencies", and also resulted in the mobilization to the field of several very senior (D1 and D2) deployed personnel. As a result, the attention of the in-country teams of some agencies was reportedly often focused "upwards along the line of the respective agency management hierarchies", at the expense of horizontal attention across the clusters and collective response, or a downwards focus on operations.

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[10] Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 'Humanitarian System-Wide Emergency Activation: definition and procedures', reference document PR/1204/4078/7 (IASC, 13 April 2013), section 1, paragraph 3.

This in turn encouraged agency-centric behaviour. Thus it seems that HCT members were at times subject to competing demands. The evaluation's authors conclude that, in a highly visible and significant sudden onset emergency, the pressure from headquarters "can distract HCT members from a collective modus operandi and pull them instead in the direction of agency allegiances".

104. In South Sudan, while a strong HC was already in place when the crisis began, repeated calls for the addition of a dedicated Deputy HC only led to a very belated appointment. The incumbent HC had been in place since 2012 and was triple-hatted (he was also the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Resident Coordinator heading UNDP). He was regarded as a strong leader, not afraid to set priorities. By his own admission, the Transformative Agenda "did not guide his day-to-day work" and his approach to leadership was based on his own experience rather than on the guidelines on empowered leadership. Beneath the level of the HC and the HCT, the IAHE found that there was a "severe deficit in leadership capacity", especially in key coordination roles in the ICWG, the clusters and major state-level hubs.

105. This highlights the case for extending the concept of empowered leadership (and related accountability) throughout the management tiers of the inter-agency system. As the Typhoon Haiyan IAHE comments, the principle of empowered leadership seems to imply that, in times of crisis when decisions need to be quick and evidence-based, "those managers who are most aware of the context and closest to operations" should have greater authority. This could apply at the sub-national level (heads of sub-offices, cluster co-leads) as well as at the national level.

106. In CAR, the evaluation found that HCT leadership was "inadequate" during much of the response. In mid-2014, the IASC reported that the HCT was "not fit for its purpose" and needed immediate strengthening, as most of its members were either interim or the leaders had been in place since before the L3. Global stakeholders expect a visible step-change in leadership at the launch of an L3, but this did not occur, and leaders did not have the skill level to support the HCT and inter-agency response. Operational actors also reported that "few representatives and cluster coordinators attended HCT meetings" and emphasized the body's weak, un-strategic functioning, with some suggesting the leadership led to cumbersome processes and poor NGO coordination. By 2015, the IASC reported that most HCT members had appointed representatives with experience in emergency response, and some international NGOs saw improvements. But some United Nations actors reported that senior representatives continued to send lower-ranked staff to the HCT, and some international NGOs saw a drop in quality of HCT leadership and experience in 2015.

107. In summary, the concept of empowered leadership, still new and unfamiliar at the time of the Typhoon Haiyan response, appears to have proved its worth in the CAR case, enabling a newly deployed HC to take cut-through decisions in the absence of consensus from what appears to have been a dysfunctional HCT. The main lesson from the evaluations appears to be that the concept of empowered leadership should not be limited to the role of the HC: the principle that decisions should be made as close as possible to the operational level by those most familiar with the context requires that the relevant managers (e.g. sub-office heads and cluster co-leads) be empowered and encouraged to take appropriate decisions, while seeking to forge consensus on the issue in question.

3. CONCLUSIONS

108. Although they constitute a limited evidence base, the IAHEs reviewed here present some crucial lessons and challenges for those engaged in collective humanitarian action. Specifically, they hold a critical mirror up to the inter-agency system's attempts to deliver humanitarian responses according to the IASC-approved structures, processes and policies, often in extremely difficult operating environments. What emerges is a picture of a system that even when well resourced and operating in a relatively favourable environment (as in the Philippines case) sometimes struggles to make the collective response add up to more than the sum of its disparate parts. The operating reality in most cases is much less favourable. Funding deficits of 30-50 per cent or more are common, and protracted conflicts in particular tend to present an operating environment that is both insecure and lacking in government systems, basic services and infrastructure.

109. A central question that emerges from this is to what extent the problems encountered in mounting an effective joint response are related to: (i) the environmental and resource constraints involved; (ii) the behaviours and performance of individuals and organizations; and (iii) the nature of the coordination system itself, its structures, policies and processes. The three sets of factors are related, and in many cases all three will be at play. Disentangling them is not simple. But the evaluations give some valuable pointers as to which factors (or combination of factors) appear to pose the main obstacles. In their recommendations, they attempt to identify solutions to the particular challenges observed. Doing so will often require consideration of all three factors described here, although some constant challenges are posed by the nature of the current system, its institutional arrangements and the sometimes conflicting demands to which these give rise. Overcoming these challenges depends on the ability and willingness of agency staff, and particularly senior managers, to work together across organizations for a common purpose.

110. Some aspects of the inter-agency responses worked well, and there is much to learn from these. Progress and collective innovation was notable, for example, in the field of livelihood support, adapted to the particular context and people's priorities, as well as in more traditional areas like food security, nutrition and WASH. But other areas clearly did not work so well. Particularly challenging among the findings of the IAHEs are those that go to the heart of the inter-agency system and challenge the relevance, utility or affordability of the related coordination processes. These seem to demand some re-thinking of the conventional wisdom (and of agreed policy) about the application of standard models. Questions are raised more generally about the cost-benefit of coordination mechanisms and inter-agency processes, which were often perceived to make major demands on time and resources without delivering commensurate benefit.

111. Are the challenges to effective collective action a reflection of under-resourcing, of a lack of team playing, or of a compromised or flawed system? Perhaps our expectations of what these coordinated processes can deliver are themselves unrealistic, given the hybrid and fragmented nature of the system. In any case, two kinds of incentives appear to be in urgent need of strengthening. One concerns the actual and perceived benefits of coordinated action (relative to cost) for those involved and their intended beneficiaries. The other concerns the ownership of, and accountability for, collective goals by individual agencies and their staff. This may require adjustments to the expectations of the organizations and individuals involved.

112. Among the specific lessons from the IAHEs, the following seem to emerge:

- **Needs assessment and prioritization** – The evaluations raise questions about the application and relevance of the MIRA and other joint assessment processes in specific contexts. It seems that the particular role played by these broad-spectrum assessments has to be properly understood:

they appear to be more useful in informing overall joint strategic direction and prioritization, and much less so in informing specific programme responses. They need to be timed in such a way as to fit with the relevant timetables for planning and decision-making (or vice versa): a standard timetable cannot be slavishly followed. And while they should be properly implemented, quality controlled and followed up, the cost of a joint assessment—in terms of time, money and opportunity—must be proportionate to the benefit it delivers.

- **Joint strategic and operational planning** – The IAHEs bring up three main issues. The first is the commonly reported lack of full ownership of and buy-in to the SRPs, even by HCT members. This partly reflects the gravitational pull of individual agency agendas, and raises questions (inter alia) about accountability for delivery against collectively agreed objectives. It appears that incentives need to be realigned, and team behaviours rewarded.

  The second issue is that the SRP is seen as a fundraising document rather than as a strategic road map that provides a basis for the HCT to manage and guide the overall response. This is related to the first issue, and echoes the criticism that used to be made of the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP).

  The third issue concerns the operational level of planning, which is generally judged to be weak, based too heavily on outputs and vague indicators (such as "numbers of people reached"), and an inadequate basis for measuring progress. Again this raises questions about individual and collective accountability for common objectives.

- **Gauging effectiveness** – The ambiguities and weaknesses noted in the planning processes have a direct bearing on the ability to measure the progress and effectiveness of the overall response. Recording of outputs delivered—sometimes without specification of schedules and recipients— gives a very imperfect basis for determining whether programme and strategic objectives are being achieved.

- **Government and civil society engagement** – The nature of engagement that is possible with government and local civil society depends very much on context. The overall impression from the IAHEs, however, is that more can be done on both fronts than is currently acknowledged. The international system provides a potential bridge between civil society capacities (and sometimes government capacities) and the resources necessary to fully mobilize them.

- **Community engagement** – This was clearly given priority in the Typhoon Haiyan response. But the failure to consult and engage with affected people adequately in both CAR and South Sudan increased, on the one hand, "the potential for frustration, fraud and violence" (CAR); and on the other, affected the relevance and sustainability of programmes (South Sudan). Understanding that community engagement is a prerequisite for effective programming, not an optional extra activity, seems to be a lesson the international system finds hard to learn.

- **L3 and the HPC** – The declaration of an L3 system-wide emergency is generally judged to have been appropriate and effective in each case, and particularly effective in raising the profile of the crises and enabling resources to be mobilized accordingly. Questions arise in each case as to the proper duration of the L3 designation and the need to switch focus in a timely way (probably earlier) from relief to recovery while continuing to meet basic needs. Regarding the HPC, several lessons emerge, including the need to adapt the cycle to the context, rather than applying it mechanically.

- **Leadership** – All three evaluations, in different ways, raise questions about the leadership by the HCT, ICWGs and lower levels of coordination, and suggest that greater focus is needed both on empowering these levels of leadership and holding them to account.

Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation Steering Group