

Oxfam GB Humanitarian Quality Assessment Management Response

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Deputy Regional Director: Alex Prats

Country Director: Jose Barahona

Name of Response reviewed: Humanitarian Quality Assurance in Democratic Republic of Congo: Evaluation of Oxfam's Humanitarian Response in the Great Lakes region

Date: October 2014

Summary of Results

Standard	Level of achievement	Rating
1. Timeliness - rapid appraisal/assessment enough to make decisions within 24 hours and initial implementation within three days	Almost met	4/6
2. Coverage uses 10% of affected population as an planned figure (response should reflect the scale of the disaster) with clear justification for final count	Fully met	6/6
3. Technical aspects of programme measured against Sphere standards	Partially met	2/6
4. MEAL strategy and plan in place and being implemented using appropriate indicators	Partially met	1/3
5. Feedback/complaints system for affected population in place and functioning and documented evidence of information sharing, consultation and participation leading to a programme relevant to context and needs	Almost met	2/3
6. Partner relationships defined, capacity assessed and partners fully engaged in all stages of programme cycle	Not met	0/3
7. Programme is considered a safe programme: action taken to avoid harm and programme considered conflict sensitive	Fully met	3/3

8. Programme (including advocacy) addresses gender equity and specific concerns and needs of women, girls, men and boys	Fully met	3/3
9. Programme addresses differentiated needs of clearly identified vulnerable groups ¹	Fully met	3/3
10. Evidence that preparedness measures were in place and effectively actioned	Not met	0/3
11. Programme has an advocacy/campaigns strategy and has incorporated advocacy into programme plans based on evidence from the field	Fully met	3/3
12. Country programme has an integrated approach including reducing and managing risk through existing longer-term development programmes and building resilience for the future	Partially met	1/3
13. Evidence of appropriate staff capacity to ensure quality programming	Partially met	1/3
Final rating <i>Equivalent to</i>		29/48 60%

PRELIMINARY NOTE by Deputy Regional Director, Alex Prats: It is important to mention that the DRC Country Director, the DRC Humanitarian Programme Coordinator, the Deputy Regional Director for DRC as well as the HECA Regional Director at the time of the humanitarian response that has been assessed in the report have all now moved positions or left the organisation. Therefore, the ability of the current team to relate this assessment to the intervention back in 2012/2013 is limited. However, we do appreciate the insights provided in the report and are keen to consider the lessons learned so as to improve Oxfam's humanitarian capacity in DRC in the immediate future.

1. Did the Humanitarian Indicator Toolkit (HIT) identify areas that were particularly strong overall in the programme? (i.e. standards fully met)?

Oxfam's response was particularly strong in the following four areas: i) percentage of coverage of the affected population, ii) integration of safe programming strategies and activities to avoid harm, iii) inclusion of gender equity and consideration of specific concerns and needs to women, girls, men and boys, and iv) development of effective advocacy and campaign strategies based on evidence from the field. Another important strength to mention was the timeliness of the Oxfam's response.

¹ Elderly, disabled, people living with or affected by chronic illness, single women, female-headed households, religious, ethnic or socio-economic minority / marginalised groups are examples

2. Did the HIT identify areas that were weak or very weak in the programme (e.g. standards partly or not met)?

Oxfam's response was weak or very weak in the following areas: i) measurement of technical aspects of the programme against Sphere standards, ii) absence of a solid MEAL strategy and plan, iii) partnership management and collaboration, iv) emergency preparedness, and v) absence of an integrated approach that links response, resilience and long-term development.

3. What actions are being planned in response to the unmet or partially met benchmarks identified?

Oxfam in DRC continues to have today a fairly solid humanitarian capacity in place, given the DRC's context of protracted conflict and the high likelihood of new episodes of violence and displacement, which can sometimes take place in an unpredictable way.

The same capacities identified in the report as critical to have enabled Oxfam to deliver a timely response back in 2012/2013 are still in place, mainly a humanitarian Rapid Response Team (of approx 60 staff), availability of WASH contingency stocks and access to Cat Funds. Our teams in DRC have a sound understanding of the conflict dynamics and have developed over the years useful relationships with the most relevant stakeholders, including communities. Oxfam in DRC also has a large Right in Crisis team in place, thus providing capacity to develop and implement effective advocacy strategies as key part of the response.

There have been in the past months some improvements related to the weak areas identified in the report. This is especially true in the case of Oxfam's MEAL capacity. At the moment, the team has 3 staff specifically dedicated to MEAL, for both development and humanitarian programmes, with presence in Kinshasa as well as in two provinces, including North Kivu. All our programmes now have MEAL strategies and plans integrated, and regular monitoring visits take place and are properly documented, with areas for improvement identified. Improvements in MEAL should also help us improve our capacity to measure technical aspects of the response against the Sphere standards.

However, it is also important to mention that some of the weaknesses identified in the assessment persist. These are the most relevant areas for improvement on which we urgently need to work:

- i) Response Preparedness: although a Contingency Plan has been drafted, it has not been approved yet, and as it is, it fails to provide to necessary elements for response preparedness. It is especially critical that we develop as much clarity as possible in relation to a) exit strategies from current interventions carried out by the humanitarian RTT, and b) capacity gaps vis-a-vis possible scenarios. At the moment, there are signs that significant violence and displacement are likely in the first quarter of 2015 (linked to military intervention against FDLR).

- ii) Building relationships and developing capacities of partners: Given the weak capacity of partners and the challenges of the context, OGB has decided not to work with partners on rapid responses in DRC. OGB does work with partners in other humanitarian work linked to EFSL, protection and WASH in East Congo, but there has been an strategic decision to keep the rapid response team as a direct Oxfam implementation team.
- iii) Elaboration of SITREPS and establishment of adequate analysis sharing and coordination: in the last months, the team in DRC has not produced adequate SITREPs that allow to share context information and analysis internally (eg, with other affiliates), as well as with the OGB RC in Nairobi or Oxford. Mechanisms are being put in place to correct this weakness.
- iv) Linking response, resilience and development: the RRT and the Provincial Offices are have not yet developed adequate joint strategies and operational frameworks. Actually, they still work in different offices. The two teams will move to a single office in Goma before the end of the year. A humanitarian strategy for DRC will also be developed jointly, so that roles and responsibilities over humanitarian responses can be established, as well as criteria on continuum and contiguum between humanitarian and long-term development work can be developed.

High turnover will however continue to be a challenge to implement and consolidate improvements. The report will be shared and discussed (and action plans defined accordingly) with the new Humanitarian Programme Coordinator, who is now in his first month in post.

4. Are there HIT findings that you would recommend for action by the Humanitarian Department? And how can HD support the Region's response to the HITs?

The Key Countries Team in Oxford needs to get involved with and support the elaboration of the Contingency Plan for DRC, as well as the development of a humanitarian strategy for the country (we have already had conversations for this). Regular calls also need to be held so that we can have a joint monitoring of events in DRC. It is also fundamental, once the Contingency Plan is finalised, that we can plan effective responses to fill the possible gaps identified in country. HD's capacity to provide for staff and Cat funds will continue to be key to ensure the DRC's capacity to deliver a timely response.

5. Overall, how would you rate the HIT process in terms of usefulness to the programme?

Although we cannot assess the process for the elaboration of the report, the insights it provides are a very useful base to discuss our current strengths, weaknesses and risks. We believe that many of the conclusions presented in the report are actually still valid today, and we can see how the current situation may deliver similar strengths and weaknesses, with the exception of MEAL, where significant improvements have been achieved.