

# The UN Response to the Lebanon Crisis

## An OCHA Lesson Learning Paper



Man and rubble between the flags of Hezbollah and Lebanon.  
Courtesy of IRIN 2006.

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# 1 Acronyms

CMCoord – Civil Military Coordination  
CMCS – Civil Military Coordination Section – OCHA Geneva  
DO – Designated Official  
DPKO – Department for Peace Keeping Operations  
DSS – Department for Safety and Security  
ERC – Emergency Relief Coordinator [UN]  
ESS – Evaluation Studies Section – in PDSB – OCHA New York  
HC – UN Humanitarian Coordinator  
HIC – Humanitarian Information Centre  
ICRC – International Committee of the Red Cross  
IDD – International Displacement Division – OCHA Geneva  
IDF – Israeli Defense Force  
IDP – Internally Displaced Person  
IFRC – International Federation of the Red Cross  
IHL – International Humanitarian Law  
INGO – International Non Governmental Organization  
MCDA – Military and Civil Defense Assets  
MOSS – Minimum Operating Security Standards  
NGO – Non Governmental Organization  
OCHA – Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs  
OHCHR – Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights  
PDSB – Policy Division Studies Branch – OCHA New York  
RC – UN Resident Coordinator  
SG – Secretary General [UN]  
TOR – Terms of Reference  
UN – United Nations  
UNCT – United Nations Country Team  
UNDP – United Nations Development Program  
UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Fund  
UNIFIL – United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon  
UNJLC – United Nations Joint Logistics Centre  
UXO’s – Unexploded Ordnance  
WFP – World Food Program  
WHO – World Health Organization

## 2 Contents

1	Acronyms.....	2
2	Contents .....	3
3	Executive Summary.....	4
3.1	Lebanon .....	4
3.2	Key findings for OCHA .....	6
3.3	OCHA - Lessons Learned .....	6
4	Purpose .....	11
5	Methodology .....	11
6	Background.....	12
7	Humanitarian Response .....	13
7.1	Flash Appeals and the CERF .....	17
7.2	Relationships and Partners .....	18
7.3	Concurrence Systems and Civil Military Coordination .....	19
7.4	CMCoord – South of the Litani River.....	20
7.5	Civil Military Assets .....	21
8	Security.....	21
9	Deployment of staff.....	24
10	The Humanitarian Coordinator .....	26
11	Information Management .....	26
11.1	The Humanitarian Information Centre .....	29
12	The Cluster Approach .....	30
12.1	Health .....	32
12.2	Logistics .....	32
12.3	Protection .....	32
12.4	Shelter Cluster.....	35
12.5	Early Recovery .....	36
12.6	Water and Sanitation Cluster .....	36
13	Lessons Learned.....	36
14	Conclusions.....	38
15	Annex : Timeline of Main Events.....	40
16	Annex - Humanitarian Response and Lessons Learned in Syria. ....	43
	Background.....	43
16.1	Humanitarian Response .....	43
16.2	UNHCR and protection issues .....	44
16.3	Coordination .....	44
17	Annex: After Action Review Exercise in Lebanon .....	45

### **3 Executive Summary**

This report presents overall findings from a review of the OCHA and UN system wide response in Lebanon between July-October 2006. The aim of the lesson learning review was twofold;

- to review the appropriateness and timeliness of the response and understand what worked well and why
- provide a platform to discuss key issues relevant for OCHA, for action and follow up.

Both primary and secondary information have been used and more than 25 key informant interviews were carried out with stakeholders external to OCHA. Though limited in scope the paper covers key areas that OCHA staff felt most relevant to them, including: a) humanitarian response, b) security, c) deployment d) information management, and e) clusters and protection.

#### **3.1 Lebanon**

The scale, duration and intensity of the conflict in Lebanon caught the international community by surprise. The United Nations didn't have an updated contingency plan on Lebanon and were not well prepared to respond to the humanitarian situation [please see the Beirut Action After Review on this]. The UN warned of a humanitarian disaster on 18<sup>th</sup> July and this warning was then followed through with repeated calls by the Secretary General and the Emergency Relief Coordinator [ERC], for a ceasefire and the need for aid to be allowed into the country. Finally, on 11 August – the Security Council adopted Resolution 1701 – which ended the month long hostilities. The UN Security Council had been criticized for being slow in its deliberations and the credibility of operational UN agencies on the ground wavered in the early days of the crisis, but then recovered, when the large relief program was implemented.

The war lasted 33 days. The humanitarian response was short lived and most needs were met in a timely manner though response times differed for each UN agency. Hostilities were in their sixth day when the ICRC and WFP first deployed its teams and OCHA arrived three days later with a small team of three. The OCHA team expanded to 22 in total and in addition it deployed two personnel: i) IDF liaison cell and ii) one person into UNIFIL south of the Litani River. Its role and contribution to civil/military coordination were perceived as pivotal for the humanitarian community at large.

Though most humanitarian needs were met, many key informants considered the response to be too supply driven and materialistic. Interviewees felt that OCHA played a vital advocacy role during the crisis but that other gaps still existed in protection. Many key informants believe that the needs for vulnerable groups including the elderly, minorities, host families and internally displaced populations

in Southern Beirut were not met and this was partly because agencies did not always share information [i.e. it wasn't always clear who was doing what where]. Assistance was not always targeted because data was often inaccurate, particularly on the location and numbers of primary and secondary displacement and tracking of assistance was poor.

UN agency performance appears to have been mixed. While UNHCR and OHCHR appear to have faced problems scaling up and meeting demands; WFP, UNICEF and ICRC appear to have responded quickly with large teams. It's not clear whether having a prior presence in country helped – but certainly having regional connections as OCHA had, assisted in getting assistance in quickly [resources, access routes, staff]. There is agreement that OCHA was slow and late to deploy and that recruitment procedures and insecurity impacted negatively on the program. However, there is also an appreciation that the challenging relationship between UNDP and OCHA and the confusion around the Humanitarian Coordinator/Resident Coordinator and Designated Official [HC/RC/DO] roles, complicated coordination efforts from the outset. All agencies could have utilized the capacity of local experts and development agencies already existing on the ground and linkages between relief and recovery could have been stronger.

While most key informants agreed the situation was dangerous, many did not understand the rationale behind declaring phase IV. Nor did there appear to be any prior consideration of the implications of declaring phase IV in terms of the capacity [or thereof] of agencies to be MOSS compliant. It appears there was no thorough threat assessment detailing new risks on the situation in Lebanon. Instead, the updated plan revised in July 2006 was built on a hostage taking scenario. Confusing signals were sent out on security; different rules and regulations applied to different agencies; Minimum Operating Security Standards [MOSS] compliance was patchy and the staff ceiling that was imposed was perceived as inappropriate. Interviewees felt strongly that an urgent evaluation of DSS was needed and stated that unless UN security arrangements are made more flexible and can adjust to quick changes in the local context, the ability for the UN to fulfill its mandate will be paralyzed.

Many of the constraints to the operation were mostly rooted within the UN organizations themselves. Lack of experienced staffing, security issues, agency bureaucracies, agency competition and the short term nature of the conflict impacted on how the humanitarian response was shaped and then followed through. The large amounts of funding provided for Lebanon meant that humanitarian needs as well as initial recovery activities were easily met. The lack of funding can not be used as an excuse for shortfalls in programming. The resilience of the affected population being assisted was also strong and Lebanon's ranking as a middle income country contributed to fast return and recovery.

### **3.2 Key findings for OCHA**

- OCHA was slow and late to deploy and finding experienced emergency staff quickly proved difficult throughout the response [in part due to difficulties in recruiting and OCHA's "limited slots" under the security ceiling limits in Lebanon].
- Coordination of the humanitarian response was essential and OCHA's presence and ability to set up humanitarian hubs and field presence was pivotal.
- The original UN Flash Appeal/revised Flash Appeal and Central Emergency Relief Fund [CERF] contributions were timely and realistic.
- OCHA's decision to ask the OHCHR representative to leave Tyre for 48 hrs due to staff ceiling issues was raised as a point of concern, by some key informants [external to OCHA].
- OCHA's advocacy and liaison function was appropriate and had a positive impact on the response. The Humanitarian Coordinator and Emergency Relief Coordinator sent key messages to the public; it seconded personnel into the Israeli Defense Force [IDF] cell in Tel Aviv and into UNIFIL [Civil Military Coordination - CMCoord]. It was slow to deploy its own protection advisor into Beirut.
- Respondents praised the work of the HC – but questioned the transparency and selection process of the HC/RC/DO functions.
- Humanitarian Information Coordination [HIC] should sit within OCHA [and not separate to it]. More work could be done on analysis of information [using the data coming out of clusters but its not clear how this should be taken forward]. Further discussion is required.
- The cluster approach worked well in some areas. While OCHA is clear on clusters and how meetings should be used – other UN agencies were accused of using cluster meetings as fundraising sessions. Some key informants felt that that a disproportionate amount of time was taken attending meetings or writing reports for HQ's rather than getting out into the field.
- OCHA's exit strategy was timely and well coordinated with development actors and government.
- There are mixed opinions on whether international staff working on the development issues in Lebanon could have been used more from the outset of the crisis but most agree, local capacity was not utilized as much as it could have been.
- The Flash Appeal was fully funded within 6 weeks of being issued. OCHA insisted that the target be 100% funded so it worked hard to achieve that [Letters were sent to Heads of Gulf states etc].

### **3.3 OCHA - Lessons Learned**

Many lessons have been learned but for the purpose of this exercise the author has concentrated on five main areas.

- OCHA's internal recruitment standards need to be improved and SURGE capacity within HQ's must be explored. A corporate protocol on emergency response must be established.
- Civil/military liaison functions worked well. However, there appears to have been some disconnect between Geneva, New York, Beirut, Naqura and Tel Aviv on civil military matters. A clear reporting chain and mechanism for sharing information on civ/mil matters would serve to clarify matters.
- The quality, analysis and dissemination of information must be improved [HIC/OCHA relationship must be clarified; rapid needs assessment formats developed; templates for sitreps; a situation room is needed in New York].
- In order to improve the efficiency of task force meetings - senior managers should be given authority to make decisions on the spot. OCHA should decentralize its decision making to Coordination Response Division [CRD] managers for emergency crises.
- Unless UN security arrangements are made more flexible and can adjust to quick changes in the local context, the ability for OCHA to fulfill its mandate will be paralyzed.





# Map of Lebanon



Base 802856A1 (C00059) 5-02



## 4 Purpose

This report presents overall findings from a review of the OCHA response in Lebanon between July–October 2006. The purpose of the lesson learning review was twofold:

- To review the appropriateness and timeliness of the response and understand what worked well, and what went less well and why?
- Provide a platform to discuss key issues relevant to OCHA for action and follow up, based on the perceptions of internal and external stakeholders.

## 5 Methodology

The report draws on both primary and secondary information. All of the findings originate from OCHA facilitated After Action reviews: issues coming out of the internal and external task forces and selected key informant interviews with stakeholders. Twenty interviews were conducted by OCHA in the field and a further 35 interviews were completed from OCHA - New York. Most interviews from HQ were held with Non Governmental Organizations [NGO's] the Red Cross movement, donors and UN partners and some were conducted with key OCHA staff in New York and Geneva. Though limited in scope, the paper covers key areas including humanitarian response, security, deployment, information management, clusters, protection and a short section on the Syria workshop [is annexed]. All findings are relevant to the UN system as a whole and are not exclusive to OCHA. The report is also based in part, on key informant perceptions and we hope key areas or issues have been represented fairly. Many interviewees focused on “issues” that needed improvement rather than on areas of the humanitarian response that worked well and so the report has a critical leaning. It ends with a lessons learned summary and practical steps to consider for follow up.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Key documentation used to support the review includes;

- OCHA led Action After Review [AAR] in Syria and Lebanon and results from key informant interviews in the field; UNHCR Real Time Evaluation – Lebanon; IFRC After Action Review – Syria; UN Flash Appeal; End of Mission report by OCHA Protection consultant; Report of the Humanitarian Coordinator to the Emergency Relief Coordinator, Lebanon Crisis 2006 – Interim Report [12 July to 30 August 2006]; HIC Lesson Learning review; Draft: Strategy for Humanitarian Assistance – Post Cessation of Hostilities; Minutes and notes taken during internal/external task forces. OCHA chronology of events and Protection of Civilians [POC] matrix.

## 6 Background

Between the 12<sup>th</sup> July and 14<sup>th</sup> August, a major military confrontation took place between Israel and Lebanon, following the capture of two Israeli soldiers, and the killing of others by Hezbollah across the border. Ground and aerial bombardment of Lebanon continued for more than four weeks and as a result the country's infrastructure suffered extensive destruction. According to Amnesty International's August 2006 report, the Israel Air force launched more than 7,000 air attacks on about 7,000 targets during the conflict. The damage to civilian infrastructural was significant. Power systems, homes and industry appear to have been deliberately targeted. The direct targeting and damage to infrastructure forced the local population to leave and on the 26<sup>th</sup> July, an estimated one million people fled their homes. Approximately 1,183 people were killed, about one third of whom were children. In a country of fewer than 4 million people, more than 25 percent were internally or externally displaced. Of the 735,000 internally displaced, approximately 600,000 resided with host families or sheltered in public buildings. In addition, a further 230,000 people fled to Syria, Cyprus, Jordan and the Gulf.

While many international agencies were aware of internal tensions, the scale and intensity of the crisis in Lebanon was certainly not anticipated and caught agencies by surprise. Indeed, in the Interagency Standing Committee [IASC] Early Warning report dated July-October 2006 [and issued in June 2006], the Middle East section flagged Iraq and oPt in red and Yemen, Syria and Iran as countries on watch. Lebanon was not mentioned.<sup>2</sup>

The UN warned of a humanitarian disaster on 18<sup>th</sup> July. This warning was then followed through with repeated calls by the Secretary General and the Emergency Relief Coordinator [ERC] for a ceasefire and the need for aid to be allowed into the country. On 31 July, Israel called a 48 hour partial halt to air strikes in southern Lebanon to allow time for an investigation into the attack on Qana and for the United Nations to evacuate civilians from the area. Despite this, the fighting continued and member states maintained their deliberations over details of the resolution until it was adopted by the Security Council finally on 11<sup>th</sup> August 2006. Days before, the Secretary General issued a report criticizing both sides for targeting civilians. UN Security Council Resolution 1701 halted the month long conflict and to date has held reasonably well. Israel, Hezbollah and the Lebanese Government together with key regional and international actors accepted the Security Council as the intermediary in the conflict and all parties agreed to expand UNIFIL's presence on the ground and to

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<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the Action After Reviews in both Lebanon and Syria revealed that system wide preparedness was poor before the crisis. The last Interagency [IA] contingency plan [CP] for Lebanon was updated in 2003.

the deployment of the Lebanese army, south of the Litani River. The crisis in Lebanon has however, presented an image crisis for the UN. <sup>3</sup>

International humanitarian agencies have, by and large, referred to Lebanon as a “protection” crisis. The ERC himself, on mission in Beirut on 23<sup>rd</sup> July pronounced the wide scale destruction and its indiscriminate nature as violating International Humanitarian Law. Under International Humanitarian Law - direct and disproportionate attacks against civilians and civilian objects are prohibited. It is evident that Israel failed to take “constant care to spare civilians” when they launched attacks against apartment buildings, villages and infrastructure including: plants, bridges, main roads, seaports and Beirut’s international airport, which violated international humanitarian law.<sup>4</sup> The long term impact resulting from the destruction of Lebanon’s infrastructure is enormous and it is estimated that it will cost around US \$3.5 billion to rebuild.

## 7 Humanitarian Response

The rapid rate of return was not predicted and caught agencies by surprise as well. Approximately ninety percent of the IDPs started to make their way home to Lebanon when the ceasefire was agreed on 14<sup>th</sup> August 2006. <sup>5</sup> The humanitarian operation in both Syria and within Lebanon was short lived but then changed tact. There was a quick transition from the need to provide support to the displaced population and reaching those in war affected areas, to assisting and protecting returnees. The rapid rate of return was not predicted and caught agencies by surprise as well. Approximately ninety percent of the IDPs started to make their way home to Lebanon when the ceasefire was agreed on 14 August 2006.<sup>6</sup>

The key protection concerns arising from the Lebanese conflict included:

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<sup>3</sup> No distinction was made by many between the UN Security Council and the operational UN agencies on the ground in the beginning and the low opinion of the UN resulting from Security Council deliberations presented security problems for UN staff in Syria (demonstrations outside UNDP offices).

<sup>4</sup> UNIFIL estimated on 15 August 2006 that between 200-300 bombs and missiles per day were being dropped during the airstrikes on areas adjacent to the Blue Line, with a similar amount dropped across other areas in Southern Lebanon.

<sup>5</sup> On the 14<sup>th</sup> August – UNHCR deployed monitoring teams on major transit routes south of Beirut and estimated that approximately 6,000 people moved from Beirut to areas in the south that same day. At the same time 10,000 IDPs/refugees moved back into Lebanon from crossing points at Dabbeuesia, Yabous, Al Aarida and Jeseah. UNIFIL also reported the movement of approximately 7,000 – 8,000 persons south to Nabatiye, Tyre, Sarita, Qana and Jwayya.

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- Serious violations of International Humanitarian Law and International human rights law. Since the beginning of hostilities [12<sup>th</sup> July] more than 5,000 Israeli air strikes were recorded over Lebanon. Sustained shelling killed 1,100 people and injured 3,600 and Hezbollah launched over 2500 rockets into Israel killing 36 civilians and injuring many more. Both sides hit civilian targets, dwellings, and vital infrastructure – blurring the distinction between combatant and civilian.
- Threats to safety and security of civilians, particularly returnees, due to unexploded ordnance especially unexploded cluster munitions.
- Unimpeded access to populations – so that humanitarian assistance could be delivered. During the escalation of hostilities, no consistent delivery of humanitarian assistance was possible. Almost all convoys in the week between 6-12 August were delayed and/or cancelled. Agreed windows of concurrence were too limited to permit humanitarian operations until after the ceasefire.

Key informants all agreed that most humanitarian needs were met and that the following factors contributed to its success:

- Lebanon is a middle income country that now rates 78<sup>th</sup> out of 177 countries. It has moved up three places in the HDI since 2005.<sup>7</sup>
- Local communities and organizations – particularly the humanitarian arm of Hezbollah - responded quickly to the crisis.
- UN agencies already present on the ground were able to divert their existing program resources for the crisis [e.g. UNDP, UNWRA, UNHCR and UNICEF].
- Some agencies [UNDP, IFRC, UNHCR, UNICEF, ICRC] had pre-existing partnerships with key government organizations and national non-governmental actors [i.e. the Lebanese Red Cross] which – proved central to the response also.
- The duration of the conflict was short [the Lebanon crisis is often referred to as the 33 day war].

The hostilities were in their sixth day when humanitarian relief started arriving into Lebanon. The ICRC was the first to respond on 18<sup>th</sup> July.<sup>8</sup> At that time, its priorities were to reach the civilian population in villages in former frontline areas and to evacuate the wounded. WFP, which had no prior presence in the country, arrived on 17<sup>th</sup> July. It played a significant role in mobilizing logistics capacity to transport relief goods for UN agencies, NGOs and Government ministries. Despite accusations of high costs associated with importing relief supplies, the UN, including WFP, did buy products locally. WFP was quick to send staff to the

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<sup>7</sup> Some of Lebanon's data shows marked improvement over the years. Among 102 countries ranked according to the number of people living in poverty, it is listed 20th and based on percentage of underweight children [a determinant for malnutrition], Lebanon ranked 7th best out of some 134 countries. [HDI 2005].

<sup>8</sup> Also on that day approximately 1,600 Europeans transferred to Cyprus by France, UK and Italy.

field. On July 26<sup>th</sup>, immediately after the launch of the UN Flash Appeal, the first convoy of food left for Tyre.

Coordination of the humanitarian response was essential and OCHA's presence was appreciated by all key informants interviewed. OCHA arrived with a team of 3 on 20<sup>th</sup> July [after a two day wait in Syria] and it was able to increase the team to 5. The OCHA team was stretched having to focus on the ERC visit; coordinate and draft the Flash Appeal; draft a protection strategy and deploy the civil – military expert into UNIFIL south of the Litani River at the same time. The focus of the response was on the delivery of basic relief items to affected populations, largely in the south of Lebanon and in the aftermath of the war, the humanitarian priorities focused on UXO clearance, the supply of water, food, medicines, medical supplies and providing diesel to keep generators and water pumps working. Though key distributions took place, the UN faced problems in prioritizing needs at times and found it difficult keeping track of information. The reasons appear multi faceted:

- United Nations agencies did not always share all of the information they had.
- There were delays in implementing assessments due, in part, to overlaps in roles and responsibilities between the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Humanitarian Relief Committee, and UNDP.
- The division of responsibility between cluster coordinators and corresponding line ministries proved difficult to manage at times.
- Agencies were well aware of the need to build on existing local capacities but it was less clear, despite the formal guidance issued on 25<sup>th</sup> August, how to work with groups potentially affiliated with non state actors.<sup>9</sup>

Despite these factors, within minutes of the hostilities ending on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August, 24 UN convoys left for Tyre using a makeshift crossing of the Litani River. At this point, a humanitarian hub had been established in Tyre by OCHA [with standby capacity to set one up in Saida if necessary]. On 15<sup>th</sup> August, 40,000-45,000 refugees returned home (with in the first 48 hours). This was one quarter of the total caseload in Syria at the time. On 17<sup>th</sup> of August, WFP had 30 trucks rotating from Beirut to Tyre and back again and ICRC was the second biggest food provider at this point. Many key informants considered the response to be too logistics heavy. It was not always clear whether the quantity of food and non-food items transported was necessary. However this perception has to be balanced with the fact that, it was important that the UN and International community was seen to be active – and that visible signs of support could be seen by the Lebanese people [i.e. trucks moving South].

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<sup>9</sup> UN agencies were formally encouraged, to work with and coordinate through both the Central Government in Beirut; through the Higher Relief Committee as well as line ministries; local institutions; local NGOs and the Red Cross movement.

The logistics effort was impressive and more than 80 trucks were contracted by WFP and more than 294 trucks of food and non-food items were mobilized to conflict affected areas including to households seeking refuge in schools, mosques and collective centers though other key informants complained about the monopolization by WFP of the aid program – and that WFP undermined UN Joint Logistics Centre [JLC] and on telecommunications too. The confusing lines of communication and lack of clarity on cluster leadership verses common humanitarian services appears to have impacted negatively on the tracking of the humanitarian assistance and for the initial 4 weeks, there was reportedly ‘an information break down’. It wasn’t clear where all the aid was going and assessments were frequently not undertaken [due to access constraints]. There were reports of gaps in some areas and duplication in others due to the lack of clear criteria for secondary distributions; lack of monitoring of aid [particularly food and non-food items]; and poor targeting for groups such as the elderly, disabled, minorities and host families.<sup>10</sup> In-kind donations from donor Governments also appeared to duplicate rather than complement aid on the ground. For example, as at 24<sup>th</sup> August 2006 – 56 donor countries had contributed medicines, hygiene kits, blankets, mattresses, vaccines, non food items, tents, generators, Jerri cans, medical staff, ambulances and food, clothes and baby milk. Many of these aid items were already being distributed by international agencies funded out of the UN Flash Appeal in Lebanon.

Assistance was not always targeted because data was often inaccurate on the location and numbers of primary and secondary displacement. It proved difficult for agencies to systematically collect good data on the collective sites and the level of support offered to host families. In some cases, detailed attention to planning [both the formulation and writing of plans] appeared to outweigh certain immediate and practical responses required on the ground. Others felt that the UN prioritized assistance to IDPs without taking into account the highly sophisticated local mechanisms already in place including host families, Arab donors, the Lebanese diaspora, private sector, municipalities, the Red Cross movement and line ministries. UN Joint Logistics Centre [JLC] faced constraints in collecting information on convoy movements as well and they did not appear to have a good grasp what aid had been distributed where. OCHA reported on 22<sup>nd</sup> August that it was impossible to trace where assistance was going – after it had reached the hub in Tyre.

One of the most critical achievements of the UN’s response in Lebanon was the work completed by United Nations Mine Action Coordination Centre [UNMACC]. Mine Action assisted the Lebanese army to clear areas of UXOs in Southern Lebanon, immediately after the ceasefire. All staff in Beirut and those deployed to other areas were given UXO training before traveling. The last situation report

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<sup>10</sup> On 8 August – OCHA reported in its sitrep that host communities in Beirut were experiencing different levels of support, depending on their location. In addition and on the same day, OCHA secondee in Naqoura/UNIFIL reported that civilian communities trapped in frontline areas needed urgent medical assistance and provision of water, food and fuel.



noted that the death toll between 14<sup>th</sup> August and 19<sup>th</sup> September was 14 with 90 people injured from UXO's and that 15,300 other items of UXO were still on the ground in southern Lebanon. As of 26<sup>th</sup> September, the number of cleared UXOs and cluster sub-munitions was 40,000. UNMACC continues to work diligently but estimates that clearance will take between 12 to 15 months.

### **7.1 Flash Appeals and the CERF**

The original 90 day UN Flash Appeal, led and written by OCHA was launched on 24<sup>th</sup> July 4 days after it deployed its two core [and one Internal Displacement Division - IDD] team members to Beirut. It requested \$150m to meet the immediate humanitarian needs for 800,000 affected people. Key informants commented that the appeal was well written; timely and made very realistic demands. The situation then changed from emergency humanitarian to early recovery, and at this point, the leadership for the response moved back to Government. The revised Flash Appeal was then reassessed downwards to \$98.3 million and it included two new programs [one on unexploded munitions and one to cover emergency residual needs for Palestinian refugees].<sup>11</sup> The remainder of the UN's activities were included as part of the Government-led recovery process. Views on how well OCHA consulted with partners on the revised Flash Appeal differ. Some NGOs and UN partners expressed dissatisfaction with the consultation process, but after lengthy negotiations with partners, the matter was settled.<sup>12</sup> The decision to revise the Flash Appeal downwards on 31<sup>st</sup> August was a difficult one, but OCHA needed to support the Government's recovery plans and in doing that needed to move away from short term funding, using UN Flash Appeals. Donors at the Stockholm conference were reportedly happy with OCHA's efforts to prioritize projects in the revised appeal and some of the dissenting agencies eventually came around.

There was overwhelming consensus that the contribution of five million dollars from the Central Emergency Response Fund [CERF] early in the response phase was timely.<sup>13</sup> Some donors questioned why OCHA did not utilize the "loan capacity" of the Central Emergency Response Fund and highlighted that, in their view the UN might have considered reimbursing CERF funds given the generous levels of donor funding.<sup>14</sup> Some senior managers in OCHA believe the token was important because it showed the UN was serious about Lebanon when perceptions on UN performance were low. Other key informants agree with donors and felt the "grant" or loan facility would have been satisfactory, and that money should have been lent then reimbursed.

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<sup>11</sup> Revised Lebanon Crisis Flash Appeal 2006, *Executive Summary*, [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int)

<sup>12</sup> Some agencies were not happy at the time because "transitional" projects dropped from the appeal did not match the Governments priorities for early recovery. At the last minute these projects were taken out of the Early Recovery document.

<sup>13</sup> On 24 July the UN launched a Flash Appeal for 149 million USD to meet the needs of 800,000 people. 5 million was allocated from the CERF.

<sup>14</sup> The US pledged a 30 million aid package to begin on 25 th July.

## **7.2 Relationships and Partners**

The main criticism of the UN [with the exception of WFP] was that it did not always respond with the right people and skill set. UNHCR found in their Real Time Evaluation that too many international staff deployed to Lebanon, often without a clear Terms of Reference. OCHA deployed a total of 22 staff of which 16 were male and 6 female. All UN agencies tried to deploy staff with emergency experience, though the drawing of lines between the end of emergency relief and the beginning of early recovery was difficult to do because phases were blurred [the emergency was short lived]. One key informant said that “what actually took place was a gradual evolution of programming, in a very short space of time”. Most key informants interviewed agreed it was necessary to deploy emergency personnel to this crisis. They felt that the existing United Nations Country Team in Lebanon were too development minded and inexperienced in emergencies.

Key informants stated the Humanitarian Coordinator [HC] did an excellent job in leading coordination efforts including working together with the municipalities. The Humanitarian Coordinator arrived late but was able to muster the necessary support from the region. The original skeleton team from OCHA, however, did not feel they had the same level of support from within the region or headquarters and it is still not clear to them, why the Emergency Relief Coordinator prioritized civil-military and HIC over and above deploying a team of experienced humanitarian affairs officers at the time. Donors also praised the Humanitarian Coordinator and OCHA for its role in coordinating the response.

Relationships between UN personnel and Government representatives appear mixed. Some actors working in Lebanon prior to the conflict believed the UN were too cautious and that - it should have been possible to work with additional counterparts including local NGOs and civil society groups. One key informant in OCHA made the point that using existing local capacity is simply good practice and that it is also part and parcel of good preparedness planning. The UN's position was clear regarding its relationship with Government and non state actors and guidance was issued on this. NGOs did not have their own set of guidance and unfortunately at times were accused of siding against Hezbollah [some NGOs were seen to be “refusing to assist returnees in villages receiving Hezbollah funds”].

Key informants agreed on the whole that the strategic decision to build capacity in nearby Cyprus and Damascus was pivotal, in the early days of the response. Cyprus was considered a suitable location for an alternative UN hub, and in addition it provided sea and air access to Lebanon from mid July – mid August. It was perceived as neutral and did not have a security phase, unlike Lebanon [phase 4] and Syria [phase 1 and 2]. Damascus also functioned very early on as the principal entry point into Lebanon, with direct support being provided by the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in-country. On 20<sup>th</sup> July – all other entry points

were blocked as a result of the IDF military operations and Israeli air and sea blockade.

### **7.3 Concurrence Systems and Civil Military Coordination**

OCHA was fundamentally involved in two key areas relating to civ/mil. It deployed a civ/mil officer [CMCoord] into UNIFIL, south of the Litani River on 22<sup>nd</sup> July and on 5<sup>th</sup> August 2006 it deployed a humanitarian affairs officer into the IDF liaison cell in Tel Aviv. Both deployments had very different functions and both were perceived as successful in their own right.<sup>15</sup>

The purpose of the deployment of the OCHA Humanitarian Affairs officer into the IDF cell had been three fold:

- to assist with getting people into and out of Lebanon
- build the confidence between Israel and Lebanon and to push for safe humanitarian access and delivery
- to facilitate and improve the relationship between the UN and Israel [in particular the IDF and Ministry of Foreign Affairs].<sup>16</sup>

Some key informants stressed the system enabled personal relationships to be developed with the IDF and that this helped hold the Israelis politically responsible for the protection of UN staff.<sup>17</sup> OCHA said that more than 80% concurrence was given, for all requests on travel. The intent behind the liaison cell was not to create boundaries and separation between military and humanitarian spheres, rather to create linkages and improve relationships. A UNTSO military officer started the cell. His insertion of the term “concurrence” instead of “notification” is a point for lessons learned. After the ceasefire of 14<sup>th</sup> August, the UN transitioned to “notification” with limited difficulty.

The UN worked very closely with the Lebanese Government [including, but not limited to the Higher Relief Council, on a wider range of issues [e.g. safe movement of vehicles, goods and staff carrying out humanitarian functions]. According to most key informants inside OCHA – all parties were aware of the liaison cell from the outset and contrary to some views [in some NGOs], there was no voiced concern regarding bias or partiality at the time.<sup>1819</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> NGOs on the whole questioned the value added in deploying personnel into the IDF cell. Some NGOs thought that it was naïve of the UN to think that deploying someone into the IDF would make a difference. However, the UN concurrence procedure was not meant for NGOs in the first instance. Some key informants in the UN felt that NGOs in this case, may have underestimated the value of building relationships [UN – IDF].

<sup>16</sup> Notes from debriefing were taken at the Internal Task Force meeting on 07-Sep-06

<sup>17</sup> On 5 August, a UN humanitarian convoy was narrowly missed during an IDF air strike on a vehicle in front of the convoy near Tyre where one IFRC and one UNRWA staff member were killed.

<sup>18</sup> Medecins Sans Frontieres and ICRC linked directly into the cell but NGO's interviewed didn't.

<sup>19</sup> One key informant stated that “after the end of the open hostilities, the IDF Northern Command Liaison Officer had a meeting with the UN CMCoord officer in Naquoura and stated that the IDF

Tel Aviv played a critical role in the entire operation. However, key informants pointed out that neither CMCS [OCHA Geneva] nor PDSB had any direct link to the officer deployed there [many key informants were not aware of the deployment from within OCHA/Coordination Response Division, New York to work in this cell].

#### **7.4 CMCoord – South of the Litani River**

There was little communication between the UN stationed in the IDF liaison cell and the United Nations Civil Military Coordination officer deployed in UNIFIL south of the Litani river. Key informants perceptions varied, but it appears that most feel that it would be helpful to explore how headquarters and the field could improve reporting lines/sharing information [up from UNIFIL, across to IDF cell – through to New York –Department for Peacekeeping Operations [DPKO] and OCHA Geneva for example]. Key informants believed that the deployment of the OCHA CMCoord officer in UNIFIL Headquarters [in Naqoura - Lebanon] proved to be an excellent strategy for liaison. It was useful in: de-conflicting humanitarian and military operations; the officer was able to assist with the assessment of the humanitarian situation on the ground and to help ensure humanitarian needs were met, though provision of UNIFIL escorts to humanitarian convoys in the South. The presence of the OCHA CMCoord officer in Naqoura and OCHA policy link to senior DPKO management enabled immediate and direct communications between DPKO and OCHA at both ends of the loop. The Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator's decision to advise DPKO to undertake separate negotiations with Israeli Defense Force and informing that OCHA would have no problems if these "separate" negotiations [i.e. humanitarian and military] respectively resulted in UNIFIL's use of the same route along the western coast. A mechanism for de-confliction between humanitarian organizations and UNIFIL was instituted shortly after DPKO also successfully negotiated with the IDF.

Some OCHA personnel interviewed did not believe the Resident Coordinator or Humanitarian Coordinator understood the role of Civil Military Coordination Officers [CMCoord] in the case of Lebanon. Despite several efforts by OCHA's [Civil Military Coordination Section - CMCS based in Geneva] the field refused to allow a CMCoord officer to be posted in Beirut. OCHA Geneva maintain that it would have been helpful to advise the Humanitarian Coordinator on civil-military relations and to have established coordination mechanisms with the armed elements (Lebanese military, UNIFIL, Hezbollah and the Israeli Defense Force) from Beirut [rather than in the Israeli Defense Force cell in Tel-Aviv]. In addition, mixed messages were sent to OCHA Geneva from New York on whether or not American passport holders could deploy as OCHA CMCoord officers to the field. Last minute changes in deployment planning had to be made, which then

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Northern Command HQ had received no information concerning humanitarian assistance activities".

resulted in excessive rotation of staff in the field. OCHA's credibility was questioned as a result.<sup>20</sup>

## **7.5 Civil Military Assets**

At one point, OCHA received an informal enquiry from the Department of Safety and Security [DSS] to see if Military and Civil Defense Assets [MCDA] could be mobilized. The request came to provide 15 armored vehicles and military satellite phones. Too many, it made sense to support the request [the UN's capacity on the ground needed strengthening]. However, others felt that reactions from within OCHA actually reflected a lack of understanding of the humanitarian guidelines on MCDA. MCDA guidelines are clear that the *assets are to support humanitarian activities, and must not be used for UN security issues [member states were discussing a possible new international force; satellite phones were available locally and the UNIFIL presence was/is a UN military force and not a humanitarian one]*. One interviewee recommended that OCHA staff performing "response" functions should be encouraged to take the CMCoord course and that policy advice on the appropriate mobilization of MCDA be clarified through PDSB – New York and CMCS Geneva.

## **8 Security**

Two significant events appeared to have influenced the decision making process leading to Phase IV which was put in place on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2006:

- The unexpected start of the war and its violent intensity.
- The fear of a repeat Baghdad situation.<sup>21</sup>

Confusion was expressed concerning the appointment of the Designated Official [DO] and the different chain of command for all areas south of the Litani River.<sup>22</sup> The DO responsibility usually lies with the most senior UN official on the ground but, in this case, the Designated Official from the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia [ESCWA] was evacuated and the Resident Coordinator [RC] became the Designated Official until UNICEF [and deputy Resident Coordinator] took responsibility. Ironically the evacuation of UN staff out of Lebanon occurred while UN emergency teams were preparing to deploy. To many, this call did not make logical sense and it is not clear who and how and where the decision making process took place. UN Department for Safety and

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<sup>20</sup> Four different officers were used to fill one post over an 8 week period. It was then determined that the "no USA passport" restriction was not OCHA or DSS policy.

<sup>21</sup> After phase IV was declared, four UN staff were killed as was an UNWRA staff member and Red Cross Member. Further, there was an attack on the UN building (ESCWA) by Lebanese angry with the UN for not advocating an earlier ceasefire.

<sup>22</sup> The Designated Official [DO] for all areas south of the Litani River remained the UNIFIL Force Commander. The responsibility for road clearances rested with the Force Commander of UNIFIL and the Chief Security Advisor for UNIFIL.

Security [DSS] in Lebanon claimed that HQ was responsible for their inability to move initially because of security constraints, though HQ maintains that this decision came from the field.<sup>23</sup>

While many key informants interviewed clearly agreed the situation was very dangerous, many did not understand the rationale behind declaring a phase IV. There was no evidence of a thorough threat assessment detailing new risks. Instead, it appears the updated security plan revised in July 2006 built on the old hostage taking scenario. It contained a two-part contingency operations plan. Part one was a generic crisis response plan and part two a Lebanon Hostage Incident Management Plan. Arguably neither was appropriate for the situation in Lebanon at the time. The four main security threats as highlighted in the OCHA task force meeting of 14<sup>th</sup> August<sup>24</sup> were as follows:

- UXOs south of the Litani River and in the southern suburbs of Beirut;
- Threat of continued fighting until IDF withdraw completely;
- Car accidents due to conditions of roads;
- Anti-UN sentiment;

There was also concern that insufficient consideration had been given to the implications of designating phase IV in terms of the lack of capacity of UN agencies to be MOSS compliant. In other words, as soon as phase IV was declared many UN staff and agencies were no longer MOSS compliant. As such, had a major incident occurred and staff been killed or injured it is questionable whether they would have been covered by the war-risks insurance.

The recently published Overseas Development Initiative paper on security discusses phasing and evacuation. The research concludes that phasing was designed for situations of increasing internal unrest and violence with evacuation as the final option. It goes on to say that in the post 9/11 world, with political targeting on the increase, it has become clear that risk can not be managed simply through a process of evacuation. While all agree there is a need for vigorous security guidance – many key informants believed restrictions were not flexible or balanced well with the humanitarian imperative to assess needs and deliver assistance. The MOSS requirement and the phase system limited timeliness and flexibility of the response and, despite good attempts, did not integrate programming concerns in the field.

Many key informants argued soft skin vehicles would have been adequate and that hard-skins were unnecessary given the risk from landmines was small but the risk from unexploded cluster munitions was enormous. NGOs interviewed, moved around in soft skin vehicles and taxis, UNIFIL moved in soft skin vehicles south of the Litani River as did the ICRC. One UN partner ignored travel

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<sup>23</sup> One key informant accused DSS of using irrational security advice to ‘scare the country team to the point where they felt that they could not risk the lives of their staff’.

<sup>24</sup> At this stage, the ceasefire was holding.

regulations all together emphasizing the fact that they felt they were forced to break the rules to operate and another non UN agency traveled in a Porsche [according to one key informant]. Some agencies got around some of the security restrictions by requesting their national staff deliver the humanitarian assistance. While this was seen as positive; the same agencies also questioned why internationals had to wear protective clothing and nationals not. One OCHA staff member remarked:

*“No one could tell me why we needed to use armored vehicles – it just became part of the folklore. While on convoy to the south in an armored car, I was met by DSS colleagues who went ahead to check out the route in a soft skin car”.*

UN MOSS compliance was patchy in the beginning but on August 8<sup>th</sup> personal protection equipment and armored vehicles started to arrive though stock levels remained inadequate throughout August. On August 21<sup>st</sup> and one month into the operation – DSS suspended all UN movement because of the lack of resources [and they made specific reference to vehicles in the Lebanon task force meeting].

There was no shortage of security personnel. At one point, it was reported there were forty security staff in Lebanon, outnumbering program officers 4:1.<sup>25</sup> Some of the security officers had little previous experience in the field and many key informants both within and external to the UN, hold the view that it would have been more useful to have had a small team of proven security experts, rather than increasing the numbers [and in doing so unwittingly creating a counterproductive system]. NGO's liked the idea of having a NGO liaison officer in place, dedicated to security and they said that this worked well. Previously, information on security was not disseminated to them, and as is often the case, some personnel relied on CNN news in Lebanon to find out what was happening around them.

Many interviewed did not understand why a formal re-assessment of the security situation was not carried out after the cease fire and why security restrictions did not ease. Instead, it appears the 'security concept of operation' continued to dominate the Humanitarian Operation.

One key informant said that “Department for Safety and Security [DSS] maintained its ‘bunker philosophy’ and ‘cookie cutter approach’”. Some key informants believed that “security too often became a convenient excuse for poor programming”. “Some NGOs used the security as an excuse for not moving as well as the lack of funding but when funding was provided they often continued to be immobilized because they did not have the capacity”!

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<sup>25</sup> The Lebanon task force meeting on August 21 stated that the Senior Management Team were reviewing the staff ceiling but that there were currently 41 deployed on security and with a total of 263 UN staff in country.

The staff ceiling that was imposed (restricting the number of staff to 180 UN staff) was based on evacuation capacity which was seen by several key informants as inappropriate logic.<sup>26</sup> This fuelled tensions within the UN country team on the criteria for recruitment and resulted in an exercise limiting superfluous people as opposed to calculating actual need. In addition to this, the 57 day air and sea blockade that was imposed by Israel on Lebanon from the 13<sup>th</sup> July to 7<sup>th</sup> September further inhibited access for humanitarian personnel and resources.

Finally, some key informants were of the opinion that while security is a complicated issue, protection of UN and NGO personnel is not assured by applying strict DSS security rules/regulations across a given context. Some agencies believe that had the humanitarian response in the South been swifter and had the political and advocacy component to the UN's work been more effective at an earlier stage in the conflict, the UN and its partners, on the whole may have been safer in the first place.

## **9 Deployment of staff**

In the early days of the conflict, the OCHA team was small, with four people on the ground [one in Damascus and three in Beirut]. Some key informants felt the team was "too male". In total 16 male and 6 female staff were deployed to Lebanon from July-October 2006. The advance team consisted of two women and two men. The report of the HC and OCHA in Geneva stated that it had been a challenge to achieve the appropriate gender balance, due to the fact that the Lebanon crisis took place during the summer holiday season and deployments were initially limited to non- Headquarters staff who were willing to travel to the mission area.

Key informants stated that senior managers and desk officers from OCHA were available around the clock to provide support for the operation from the outset and that the working relationship between OCHA GVA and New York was good though could be better - particularly on administration and staff recruitment. Key informants from OCHA in the field said OCHA Geneva was slow to issue staff contracts/daily subsistence allowance and that Geneva did not give the field the necessary information, to help the field make quick decisions [like: roster feedback, availability of L4 staff]. In addition, the confusion over staff ceilings in mid August further complicated matters. On 18<sup>th</sup> August, OCHA reported from Syria that there were "rumors" that staff deployed into hubs were not counted as part of the ceiling and that the UN had gone through the ceiling twice already. It wasn't clear, during most of August how far OCHA was permitted to increase its own staffing levels.

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<sup>26</sup> When Lebanon entered phase 4, HQ New York began its role in the decision making processes about restrictions of movement and staff ceilings



Systems and tools including SURGE, OCHA's duty roster and standby capacity should have been used. As regards Surge Capacity, only one team member was used and this staff member was deployed for four weeks total. Standby partners had been alerted by OCHA Geneva and several candidates were identified for deployment, nevertheless, OCHA Geneva never received the go ahead from OCHA Beirut to proceed with recruitment. It's not clear why the standby agreement was stood down.<sup>27</sup> While it's commendable to have brought in a top team from the region, problems were experienced "backfilling" posts in oPT. It had taken 2 weeks to get three names for deployment – through standby agreements, but OCHA Geneva's offer to help was turned down. OCHA then had to go back to donors and explain that they did not need help. Communication and decision making processes between OCHA Geneva and New York could have been clearer. At no one point did Geneva feel they had a handle of who, was where, when. These issues were recognized by OCHA staff in the field. Key informants feel that despite, their urgent calls for help – few additional staff were deployed to Beirut at the outset.<sup>28</sup>

Staff in Geneva and New York felt OCHA was slow to establish an office to support the RC/HC and the UN Country Team in the capital and equal concern was expressed over the length of time it took to also deploy emergency staff beyond capitals into the field. There were no constraints for the transit via Damascus into Lebanon, for OCHA staff. In principle, OCHA Syria was able to get newly arriving Beirut bound colleagues in a car to the border in a couple of hours after arrival in Damascus. The main reasons as to why this often did not happen, according to an OCHA key informant is:

- There was persistent and recurrent confusion as to whether Security Clearances for Lebanon had been granted or not and whether OCHA still had 'slots' under the security ceiling. Many OCHA staff traveled into Lebanon without hard copy proof that security clearance had been granted.
- Changing instructions as to which staff has to be prioritized and de-prioritized.
- Chronic MOSS-incompliance of most deploying staff.

OCHA key informants in capitals are not sure how deployment and recruitment of staff could have been improved, given delays in approving the cost plan and the lack of surge capacity. OCHA in Geneva were waiting for quick decisions by management on the choice of proposed candidates [most of them were selected outside the rosters prepared by Field Support Section [FSS] colleagues.

The OCHA exit strategy and handover to UNDP was well organized and planned ahead of time but there are still mixed opinions on whether international staff, working on the development issues in Lebanon, could have been used more in

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<sup>28</sup> These issues have been highlighted in end of mission reports by OCHA team members.

the first place. Some agencies complained that the decision to evacuate staff was a poor one, and that knowledge of the context would have been helpful. Local capacity was not utilized as well as it could have been during the response. Key informants made it clear that both UN and NGOs should have tapped into existing expertise from the outset.<sup>29</sup>

By and large, the whole operation remained “Beirut centric” until 14<sup>th</sup> August when continued humanitarian access was possible to the South. Most staff did not speak or were not familiar with Arabic and not everyone had interpreters. OCHA had three speaking Arabic staff deployed in total, of which one was deployed to neighboring Syria. That said, the principle concern of all key informants in all UN agencies was the turn over of staff. Not enough was done to ensure good handover between people. The deployment of the former-RC for Lebanon to assist with recovery efforts was perceived as helpful. And, at the time of the OCHA internal task force on 25<sup>th</sup> August – OCHA had 17 staff in place. All UN agencies began to make plans for scaling down and it was clear the emergency phase was over.

## **10 The Humanitarian Coordinator**

While almost all of the respondents praised the work of the HC, questions were raised surrounding the selection process of the HC/RC/DO during the crisis. Key informants pointed out that the selection process, without exception needs to be transparent and that, despite interagency politics and arrangements, the HC and DO responsibilities should rest with one person, not two or three. The after action report in Lebanon states: “The task is to ensure that the HC has a clear operating environment to carry out their functions’ which may include a closer group of advisors-media, protection, political, analyst etc.

The field argues the HC was in a far better position to balance humanitarian and security priorities; that lines of communication would have been simpler if the DO/RC and HC role were one in the same. While it’s an over simplification to conclude that splitting the DO/HC role fragmented the humanitarian operation, it appears to have had a negative impact. Key informants on balance agree it is worth considering evolving the role of an RC into HC where she/he has proven emergency humanitarian relief experience. And, in an effort to reduce the perception of agency bias, one key informant suggested the HC should try and distance its role from OCHA.

## **11 Information Management**

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<sup>29</sup> One key informant stated that OCHA did try to find out which local actors were on the ground, but that UNDP were not forthcoming with the information requested. Note: at the start of the emergency, local capacity was depleted [ICRC and WFP being the biggest and earliest responders, were quick to recruit good local staff].

OCHA was involved in the production of various reports including Flash Appeals, interim reports, sitreps and reports on blockades and cluster bombs. The reports were very much appreciated by interviewees and sitreps were considered 'reader friendly' and well structured on the whole. Key informants agreed that all sitreps should have come from the field though, and not from HQs. OCHA moved sitrep, writing to Beirut on August 18<sup>th</sup> and dedicated capacity was given for this. However final clearance did continue to take place in NY for several weeks – instead of through the HC. It was also suggested that sitreps should have been plugged into the local media and been more analytical [rather than describing what agency was doing]. As a time saving measure, OCHA staff would like a template and standardization of sitrep requirements.

In both Lebanon and Syria, OCHA was in charge of information management. Most key informants agree OCHA did a good job though the quality of information coming to OCHA was mixed<sup>30</sup>. Moreover, information that was collected and shared was often not disaggregated by age, sex, vulnerable group etc which made it difficult to prioritize and assess needs.

Positive information sharing and analysis was said to take place between the HC, WFP and DSS every day. These were considered to be very efficient meetings which resulted in concrete action points [unlike the SMT meetings]. Information sharing didn't take place between old and new staff and this was a problem as there was often a high turnover of staff leaving Lebanon with out properly briefing those that took over. For this reason the launching of a web-presence, as suggested by the Humanitarian Information centre [HIC] Action After Review, or a central repository for information as suggested by one informant, would help to address this problem.

Internal and task force meetings managed by OCHA in New York were well attended by UN partners, the Red Cross and some NGOs. Key informants said they would have liked to have more NGOs engage in strategic discussions during task force meetings. Meeting minutes were always taken and circulated, though action points were not always followed up, immediately. Senior managers chairing task forces were not given the authority to take major decisions on the spot. While HQ found task force meetings very useful for sharing information – some key informants in the field felt they were too time consuming. In addition, key informants felt an operations room in the Coordination Response division [CRD New York] would be appropriate; templates for sitreps should be developed; sitreps should always be completed by staff in the field [not in HQ] and that individuals should be formally debriefed on return to HQ.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> The UNHCR RTE found however, that on more than one occasion information provided by UNHCR was not passed on by OCHA, which resulted in UNHCR's input not receiving adequate mention in high level briefings on the UN emergency response.

<sup>31</sup> The sitrep template was adapted from the North Korea template. Sitreps were written in NY until mid August [when a dedicated expert was deployed to the field to resume responsibility].

OCHA did not prioritize sending an IRIN journalist to the field in part because of perceived staff ceiling limits [though the IRIN service was offered a number of times during internal task force meetings]. By the time clearance was offered [but not granted] to IRIN one month on it had withdrawn its standby staff from Damascus. In IRIN's eyes, this represented a missed opportunity for OCHA. The staff reporter could have coordinated the coverage of the six freelancers that were based in Lebanon more effectively and it could have dovetailed information needs in Beirut and fed into other humanitarian services including HIC's, situation reports and local media. It is not clear how WFP managed to get its own public information staff in so quickly but some key informants felt that WFP prioritized its own staff first [over and above other UN agency staff]. Some key informants pointed out that the local and international media could have played a more educational role in this crisis. They suggested that heroic picture of convoys getting through could have been balanced with information to educate the public on UXOs. Generally because the conflict took place in such a highly political region, NGO representatives informed OCHA that negative international press made fundraising difficult. For example in London, the press labeled SCFUK as "Save the Arab children". The pro Israel lobby in London also attacked other NGOs for their lack of focus on the one million children in hiding in Northern Israel.

Finally, as highlighted in the internal HIC Lesson learning document – OCHA should have accepted the offer, to deploy an IT expert immediately to Beirut and the field at the beginning of the crisis. The absence of a dedicated IT support officer hindered the effectiveness of the HIC. The HIC document states that a number of challenges could have been resolved with the earlier deployment of an IT specialist [including fixing the servers, which went down more than once].<sup>32</sup>

Relief web contributed a significant amount of information on Lebanon though this is not an area that key informants focused on in interviews. It is important to note however that relief web staff – were able to mobilize for 24/7 coverage of the crisis from July 12 until end August. In addition, the team responded to map requests; encouraged UNOSAT to release previously, unpublished images; linked with the OCHA virtual HIC and circulated information to all Heads of Clusters in the field [encouraging them to use Relief web and the virtual HIC as a tool for sharing information]. Relief web staff also participated in Lebanon task force meetings in New York and Geneva [and briefed on relief web resources available].<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> HIC After Action Review: 19 October 2006, page 3.

<sup>33</sup> Lebanon Publishing Stats 12 July - 31 August (provided by Sumeet, 9 Sept, 2006). The total number of documents posted: 2,374; total number of document sources: 239 and total number of maps posted: 110 (of which 12 were created by ReliefWeb)

## 11.1 The Humanitarian Information Centre

OCHA launched the virtual Humanitarian Information centre website on 28<sup>th</sup> July in Tyre where it established a detailed data base and became a resource for emergency and recovery phases. Most key informants valued the information produced by the HIC but suggested that in future new information should be circulated more rapidly even if it is imperfect as it enables agencies to be more productive in mapping out who, what, where information.

The relationship between OCHA/HC and the HIC was noted to be problematic at times. This is largely due to misunderstandings about the function and mandate of the HIC.

- How far should the HIC be used for advocacy and analysis purposes?
- Should the HIC be located inside the OCHA office?

This confusion seems to have led to conflicting priorities in practice<sup>34</sup> and for this reason guidance is needed to clarify the operational interaction of Humanitarian Information Centre [HIC] and OCHA. The HIC felt that it performed its mandated functions well and that it was well received by the international community at large. It recognized, however that a number of information needs existed which are outside the defined role of a HIC.<sup>35</sup> Repeated calls for the Humanitarian Information Centre [HIC] to do more analysis were made, however the Humanitarian Information Centre is typically staffed by information professionals and not Humanitarian affairs officers. The challenge is that in order for OCHA to provide analysis from the clusters for example, there would need to be OCHA participation [a humanitarian affairs officer], and subsequent reporting, at all of the cluster meetings. But in Beirut, there was little OCHA participation at most cluster meetings outside of the Humanitarian Information Centre representation.<sup>36</sup>

On the whole, feedback on the HIC, from UN agencies external to OCHA was mixed. Many key informants felt the virtual HIC was a very useful information sharing tool and the production of maps were appropriate for planners but others

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<sup>34</sup> As stated in, *An Evaluation of Humanitarian Information Centers*, <http://www.reliefweb.int/library/documents/2004/hicevaluation-24aug.pdf>:

'There is an unintended but real tension between the two halves of the HIC's Terms of Reference. On the one hand the HIC is to support coordination of humanitarian assistance and on the other, contribute to "the creation of a common framework for information management within the humanitarian community". In principle, there should be no contradiction between the two goals and in fact, it can be argued that striving for one helps to achieve the other. Nevertheless, practice has shown this is not a straightforward proposition and actually can lead to conflicting priorities.

<sup>35</sup> The HIC is currently addressing concerns outlined in this paper through a number of processes including the IASC Information Management process; the OCHA inter-branch working group and the OCHA internal Information Management review.

<sup>36</sup> Two key informants highlighted this point.

felt that the detail provided in certain maps was unnecessary and more analytical information would have been more helpful. They suggested that the Humanitarian Information Centre [HIC] quickly set up a standardized system for collecting and passing on information. However, HIC staff feel differently on the subject and argue that the HIC concept paper states clearly that its function is NOT to gather information. Rather, the HIC concept works when it provides the experts the tools they need to organize, analyze and create reports with the information they need to do analysis.

All key informants agreed the virtual HIC worked well and the HIC's Lebanon Product Impact Survey also illustrates that the vHIC "contact directory"; "cluster specific pages"; "who does what where"; and "damage assessment maps were highly utilized". 73.3% of those surveyed by HIC said that vHIC/HIC maps helped inform decision making. Similarly the HIC response team felt that their credibility and trust in their services were enhanced by effective web presence too. The HC's opinion differed slightly. He felt considerable time was wasted discussing between agencies and the HIC, the format of an assessment form and roles and responsibilities in the information gathering process. When seeking clarification on this point, we realize the issue was more complex and the HIC also agrees time was wasted, seeking consultation and consensus on what the form should look like. In the end it was rejected.

The HC report to the Emergency Relief Coordinator [ERC] recommends OCHA revisit its assessment procedures and it also suggested that pre-prepared rapid needs assessment formats be designed in such a way, that they can be adapted quickly to the local context.

## **12 The Cluster Approach**

There are mixed reviews about the success of the cluster approach in Lebanon. The challenge facing OCHA appears less to do with the cluster system itself and more to do with how to improve operational response by using the information coming out of cluster meetings. Simple misunderstandings and communication problems seem to have impacted on the success of the clusters. It wasn't clear to all agencies and donors who were "allowed" to attend cluster meetings.<sup>37</sup> Questions remained over whether or not donors could join the UN led cluster meetings and whether agencies were free to attend the main recovery cluster meeting. Both UN agencies/NGOs questioned the appropriateness and added value of establishing "sub cluster meetings", particularly when intra-cluster and cross cluster coordination remained weak across many sectors.<sup>38</sup> Key informants

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<sup>37</sup> Some key informants referred to cluster meetings as "exclusive clubs". The whereabouts of the meeting was not always made known to agencies and at times the attitude of some UN agencies was "passive" and a submissive "come to us" attitude was adopted.

<sup>38</sup> For example; while the WHO cluster lead was able to attend the UNICEF led WASH cluster – on public health issues – UNICEF did not have the capacity to do the same. Water and health issues are intrinsically linked, particularly in displacement settings.

in the field recommended that formulation of sub-clusters be limited or designed in such a way as to feed directly into the main clusters. One key informant recommended that OCHA needs to work out how to make cluster meetings more action orientated. Others wondered how OCHA can create a coordinated environment for agencies to work in, without being seen to be too controlling.

Each cluster worked quite differently in Lebanon. Some worked well, and others not. The Humanitarian Coordinator report to the Emergency Relief Coordinator, recommended that the cluster approach could have been strengthened by having OCHA participate in more of the meetings. The report also suggested that OCHA could consider conducting training sessions on cluster organization and how to manage meetings, with agency staff most likely to lead clusters in crises. This would help address the complaints coming from key informants that the meetings in Lebanon were too long and time consuming. UNICEF and ICRC deployed a full time cluster attendee to coordinate; listen and take forward action points. Some key informants believed cluster meetings were used to pursue UN mandates; or to collect information for fund raising purposes [in this case, UNICEF was perceived as taking over the floor in some of the UNHCR led cluster meeting and then it went straight to donors requesting funds for protection].<sup>39</sup> Some felt that WFP used its position as head of logistics to exert control over the entire operation and to enhance its own visibility. UNHCR said that WFP in some instances transported their own goods using their own fuel, over and above transporting humanitarian relief supplies for WHO or UNHCR. The UNHCR RTE recommended on page 4 that “cluster leaders should place the interests of cluster members and the UN as a whole above the interests of their respective agency”. Other key informants thought UNHCR and OHCHR should not be cluster leads at all, and that they should instead focus on doing their job in the field, rather than managing cluster meetings.

The general perception by many key informants is that disproportionate amounts of time were taken attending meetings and sharing information – but at the expense of getting out into the field. UNHCR criticized, for example the fact that its own Shelter cluster lead, only managed to get to the field on 11<sup>th</sup> September and more than 3 weeks after the ceasefire.

Donors on the whole agreed they could have done more to help strengthen coordination and perhaps even the cluster system, by working, sharing information and bringing on board the efforts of donors from the Middle East too. It is widely acknowledged there was a significant gap in donor coordination between donors from Europe and the US and donors from Middle Eastern states, and that this was not acceptable, given these contributions far exceeded traditional ones.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> In support of this finding - the UNHCR RTE – also found that “in certain cases, agencies ceased to attend cluster meetings once they had obtained funding for their activities”.

<sup>40</sup> In addition, none of the meetings were in Arabic which further isolated the Arab donors.

## **12.1 Health**

The positive points surrounding clusters deserve credit too. Many agencies were very enthusiastic about setting clusters up and worked hard to make the concept work. The WHO cluster was quickly established and set up good links to their Ministry of Health counter-parts from the outset. Unlike other partners, WHO was able to translate its meeting minutes into Arabic and post these on virtual HIC too.

## **12.2 Logistics**

There are various views on the Logistics cluster and how well it worked. Some key informants felt the WFP led logistics cluster was impressive, particularly given it had no prior presence in Lebanon. They felt that WFP were quickly able to set up a large transport, communications network as well as the concurrence system. Cluster meetings were well attended by NGO's who claimed that meetings provided a forum to identify where they would be of use in terms of "value added". When Government representatives attended meetings, they also co-chaired them. But other key informants raised some concerns on the role of WFP. They felt that WFP was using its position as head of the logistics cluster to enhance its own visibility, and that as a result – their own humanitarian supplies were delayed. According to interviews - UNHCR set up its own trucking system for non-food aid delivery in Lebanon, however having initially relied on WFP – the logistics operation was understaffed and capacity was not reinforced in time.<sup>41</sup>

## **12.3 Protection**

On the ground - key informants agreed with the HC that the "Lebanon crisis was a protection one" yet few appeared to have addressed some of the real protection concerns. Rather, the humanitarian response, in early stages focused on top – down service delivery of emergency humanitarian supplies [tents, food, blankets, water, medicine, vaccination, fuel, hygiene kits]. When the extent of the damage unfolded the response appropriately, turned to cover mine clearance, UXO awareness, support to existing health care systems, and engineering works – long term provision of safe water supply].

There were gaps in the response that could have been addressed better by all implementing agencies. Many key informants felt that agencies overlooked vulnerable groups including war wounded, the elderly, host families; the chronically ill, mine affected; migrant workers and minorities. This aside, key informants agree that the greatest threat on the ground was that from UXO's. The response from the UN and others on this issue was timely and appropriate. It was the UN Mine Action Team under the coordination of UNMAS who activated

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<sup>41</sup> Please see: Page 15 of UNHCR – RTE of UNHCR's Response to the Emergency in Lebanon and Syria – July-September 2006.



the Mine Action Rapid response plan. Under this framework, the UN engaged specialist clearance capacity to manage the UXO problem. A UN Mine Action Advisory Team was established in Beirut to act as the UNMAS focal point and to provide mine action advice and information to OCHA, UNHCR and other agencies. They also offered support to the National demining office.

The protection cluster, for which UNHCR was lead, did not function very well according to many key informants. Interviewees external to OCHA wondered if the main objective of the protection cluster meetings was to produce papers for Geneva and New York. Topics discussed were often theoretical rather than practical and turn over of staff was high with five different chairs in two months. There was no agreed definition of what protection was in the context of Lebanon and so the objective for the cluster was unclear from the start. Further it wasn't clear whether UNHCR should be concerned with IDPs only or the broader civilian population as well. Key informants felt the cluster did not move in the right direction. Whilst OCHA is clear that human rights is part and parcel of the protection agenda – other interviewees said they felt that addressing human rights violations was a separate issue and that they had expected OHCHR to do more. The UNHCR Real Time Evaluation made several concrete recommendations in an effort to improve the protection cluster. Key points are as follows:

- Government representatives should be invited to jointly chair cluster meetings, though this may not be appropriate in all country situations.
- credible cluster leadership requires UNHCR to be directly involved in managing and implementing protection related projects
- there is a need to devise a strategy or mechanism that injects a protection component across all relevant clusters.

The HC report to the ERC recommended that the protection clusters mandate be reviewed. One suggestion included recruiting a protection expert to work closely with the HC and then integrating protection issues across all the other clusters. Furthermore, the Lebanon experience left some key informants wondering which UN agency is mandated and responsible for protecting and caring for civilians that are not IDPs or refugees [i.e. civilians targeted by Israeli fire etc]. The protection cluster should have focused on gathering information on violations of IHL and human rights law. [It should also be noted that this is one view point and that others, including OCHA's Internal Displacement Division, would argue that the Cluster is responsible for needs assessment and strategy development etc, as per the guidance issued on the cluster approach].

Key informants were quick to point out that UN inter-agency competition inhibited the success of protection cluster meetings. Key informants remarked "The agency with 'the loudest voice' often aggravated participants by dominating discussions with requests for figures on women and children". Again, it was

repeated that agencies drove the humanitarian operation through their individual mandates and not necessarily through the needs of the population.

Sub clusters under protection were not perceived as necessary by some key informants. Initial discussion on establishing the protection cluster, instigated by the OCHA –Internal Displacement Division [IDD] staff member, emphasized avoiding sub-clusters, given that child protection and Gender based violence were not considered to be acute issues and therefore did not necessarily warrant sub-cluster groups. Representation was often mixed during sub-cluster meetings and those attending the main protection meeting did not necessarily attend sub-clusters and vice versa.<sup>42</sup> The cluster system appeared to at worst devolve responsibility away from agencies and implementing partners whereas it could have been more inclusive. Partners and bilaterals operating outside the cluster system could have been encouraged to join.

OCHA played a pivotal role in advocacy. Clear messages and high level statements on the use of disproportionate force were given by OCHA senior management in the field and in HQ. The HC's advocacy strategy was positive and UN partners appreciated the key role OCHA played. The statements OCHA had to make were difficult - and the need to burden share, without being perceived as being anti-Israeli was complex. In addition, the Security Council met on a daily basis to discuss violations of humanitarian law. UNHCR was perceived as being quite quiet and made their first statement four weeks into the conflict [though UNHCR staff were frequently interviewed on CNN during the crisis]. OHCHR issued two official statements on violations to human rights. Whilst it may not be useful to compare which agency released the most statements, key informants made the point that in future a coordinated inter-agency approach to advocacy would be very helpful.

Throughout the crisis, OCHA paid particular attention to protection issues. This included through the consecutive deployment of two protection officers from IDD, who were instrumental in ensuring protection was emphasized in the flash appeal, in setting up the protection cluster and pushing efforts to develop a comprehensive protection strategy. It also included the deployment of a senior protection advisor to the HC for 7 weeks on September 1. He was able to provide an analysis of the different institutions working on human rights and International Humanitarian Law [IHL] and in making suggestions on how to improve protection work.

Many agencies suggested that it would be worthwhile for OCHA to continue this type of support to the protection agenda. Others felt that it was worthwhile to have a dedicated “policy type” person - sit close to the HC to advise him/her on program and that similar efforts should be replicated next time. Both the POC and Lebanon chronology both helped keep a record of main protection events

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<sup>42</sup> The UNICEF and UNFPA – Sub cluster meeting on women and children was often given as an example of the unnecessary splitting of clusters.

throughout the crisis but both were managed from HQ and questions remain as to their ultimate use/purpose [the time line however has been useful for checking facts for this lesson learning report]. The intension to create a template for use in other emergencies is a good one though additional staff capacity should be set aside to manage this and responsibility should move back down to the field.

Some NGOs state that: UNHCR was not present at all border crossings when IDPs returned to Lebanon from Syria and that not all UNHCR staff were experienced. One key informant said “UNHCR must have been confused because it appeared to have been working off a matrix that it had pulled from another emergency, because columns on child soldiers were still highlighted”. But other key informants felt UNHCR contributed positively to many aspects of the crisis too. It made sure it had stocks of non food items ready to distribute to returnees crossing the border while UNICEF carried out its UXO education campaign.<sup>43</sup> It was one of the few agencies out on the ground delivering assistance – tapping into local capacity, when others were constrained by security arrangements. Institutionally, they documented areas they know they could have improved on. UNHCR representatives wondered if they could have done better on the information campaign for example. They recognize that returnees should have had better access to information about their situation of origin. In addition they felt that cross border communication between all UN agencies and implementing partners in Syria and Lebanon could have been better.

Little human rights monitoring and gathering evidence on violations was carried out by OHCHR, in this crisis. Though the OHCHR regional office was based in Lebanon itself, the agency was not able, to quickly deploy a strong team on the ground, and its role according to one key informant from the organization, “was lost”. One experienced team member was deployed under UNHCR auspices, on July 28<sup>th</sup> [with 16 days remaining in the conflict]. The OHCHR representative stated that OHCHR had tried to access Tyre, but that the OCHA representative asked the human rights monitor to leave the field [due to staff ceiling priorities]. There is some confusion over this move – and who called/supported it and why. It is clear however, that OHCHR did face human and fiscal resource constraints during the crisis and that it was difficult to get a full team on the ground.

## ***12.4 Shelter Cluster***

Several reports noted that there was room for improvement in the shelter cluster though it did result in a work plan negotiated with the Government of Lebanon and other agencies for the distribution of shelter repair kits to assist persons whose houses had been partially destroyed. The plan had been developed with the support from Red R and the Danish Refugee Council [DRC]. Key informants

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<sup>43</sup> The pamphlets on the dangers of UXO's did not appear to deter the decision or rate of return.

agree it was regrettable that UNHCR withdrew from Lebanon after the Government decided to abandon the agreed policy – announcing its preference for supporting prefabricated housing instead.

### **12.5 Early Recovery**

The Early Recovery cluster received criticism over its use in terms of value added, as key informants in UN agencies questioned whether tangible results were produced. It acted independently of the HC's office. Most key informants [particularly NGOs] stated that it was difficult to know where and when early recovery cluster meetings were being held. The international NGOs interviewed rarely, if ever, took part in early recovery cluster meetings.

### **12.6 Water and Sanitation Cluster**

With few exceptions the quality of the cluster appears to have been dictated by the strength of the cluster leader and on this, UNICEF was applauded for having a well respected senior cluster leader in place [with UN and INGO experience].<sup>44</sup> The fact that agency representatives continued to attend meetings was viewed by some as a success in itself. The Ministry of Energy and Water, at a municipality level - participated in the cluster meetings and gave direction as well. However, one key informant said that meeting minutes were not systemized and bullet points were not taken for action because of time limitations. The ICRC was part of the water cluster and was considered the most effective agency in the provision of water supply in the first six weeks.

## **13 Lessons Learned**

1. The deployment of OCHA staff into the IDF cell and UNIFIL south of the Litani was highly appreciated and successful. However, it appears there was a disconnect between GVA, NY, Beirut, Naqura and Tel Aviv on civil/military matters. OCHA needs to ensure appropriate communication links between all personnel.

#### Action:

- *Identify a clear reporting chain – and a mechanism for information sharing on civil/military matters.*
- *Maintain a roster for immediate deployable CMCoord officers with a variety of profiles [including language, experience etc]. The roster should only include CMCoord graduates.*

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<sup>44</sup> The UNICEF appointed cluster coordinator for Wash, was reportedly very good. He had a background working with NGOs and was experienced in the field and was known by many NGO/UN representatives.

2. If OCHA doesn't streamline its own internal recruitment standards and make use of current SURGE and standby agreements to its best ability – organization of emergency deployments will remain adhoc and slow. In addition, OCHA needs a HQ standby capacity of its own.

Action:

- *Develop a corporate protocol on emergency response [staff planning, cost planning, seed money to build concept]. \* This is now work in progress [Lead: CRD].*
- *Set up a pre-arranged “go team” with Geneva/new York consisting of 2 HAO's, 1 IT, 1 civ/mil, 1 policy/protection, 1 public information, 1 head of office, HIC [on board] etc.*
- *Develop standby lists of experienced OCHA staff from HQ's – that are able to deploy to emergencies and “co-locate” a team into the situation room.*
- *Make sure adequate MOSS protective equipment available in HQ offices.*
- *Consider complimenting training and twinning, national expertise with international staff.*

3. Unless the quality, analysis and dissemination of information are improved – there will be gaps and areas of duplication in humanitarian assistance.

Action:

- *OCHA needs to take a proactive lead in developing a rapid/joint needs assessment tool [who/how and when].*
- *It needs to help maximize information/analysis coming out of clusters meetings using HICs.*
- *Senior managers need to clarify the HIC/OCHA relationship [this is work in progress].*
- *Clarify use of standardized terminology on International Humanitarian law: eg: “cessation of hostilities” and “ceasefire”; “concurrence verses notification”; “humanitarian corridors verses safe passage”; “war crimes and violations of international humanitarian law”.*
- *Build on and utilize existing local capacity [including development agencies, local NGOs, private sector; civil society groups and beneficiaries].*

4. Task force meetings worked quite well but proved to be a burden at times for field staff. Further, internal leadership in HQ changed as the crisis evolved and task meetings were less efficient because decisions could not be taken on the spot. The efficiency of task force meetings needs to be increased and decision making needs to be decentralized [as a result – meetings could be shorter – and less time consuming for the field].

Action:

- *Senior managers should decentralize decision making to CRD managers [in task force meetings etc]. CRD managers can in turn brief other section chiefs.*
- *Set up an ops or situation room in NY/Geneva [this is now work in progress]. Lead: CRD.*
- *Consider having dedicated policy backup in HQ from PDSB and other branches [this model was used for the Iraq crisis]. This would help to ensure OCHA has one centre of expertise [dedicated staff continually working on the crisis and feeding into/advising/supporting] the field and strategic decision making.*

5. Unless UN security arrangements are made more flexible and can adjust to quick changes in the local context, the ability for the UN to fulfill its mandate will be paralyzed.

Action:

- *OCHA should advocate for an external review to help DSS understand security parameters. UN partners in collaboration with DSS need to revisit the existing security framework. Branch chiefs should provide input into this process [which has now started – further meetings due in March 2007].*
- *OCHA needs to increase its presence, inside DSS.*
- *Ensure the DO/HC function remain as one [and are not split].*
- *Future security arrangements need to be context specific and flexible.*
- *The UN system [OCHA included] should avoid questions over approval or notification from the outset, as was the case with the “concurrence” and “notification” terminology/mindset.*

## **14 Conclusions**

Most key informants interviewed, expressed similar areas of concern over the humanitarian response to Lebanon. The difficulties in getting experienced staff to the field on time were common problems, faced by most agencies, with the exception of WFP. Perceptions differed and key informants were most concerned about: a) the performance of the HIC; b) the role of clusters and sub-clusters; c) the OCHA/HIC and information management; d) the appropriateness or design of the emergency assistance program; and e) protection. OCHA staff recognizes areas it needs to improve on but at the same time, it knows it can only do this, in partnership with other agencies [without being seen to be controlling]. The balance required is a difficult one.

Some clearly thought the response was logistics heavy and supply driven and that more needed to be done on protection and human rights. Most recognized

that local capacity was undermined and that the expertise offered by development staff already present could have been used more.

As always, UN and NGO performance appeared to vary. While key informants praised OCHA for its coordination and advocacy role; others expressed some dissatisfaction on OCHA and clusters and with UNHCR and OHCHR.

Information management could have been improved and results should have been shared. Stakeholders felt that humanitarian needs were met yet the same stakeholders could not easily illustrate who received what assistance, why and how? There were gaps and areas of duplication where aid could have been better targeted to meet vulnerable group needs. The lack of clarity on this appears to have been in part due to poor information flow and lack of joint/thorough assessments and data inaccuracies.

Key informants questioned the Department for Safety and Security [DSS] call for phase IV security. Many agencies ignored the rules and UN partners requested an independent review of DSS [including its engagement with OCHA and the UN during the crisis]. The lack of preparedness planning in both Lebanon and Syria, followed by tight restrictions on security, and shortages of staffing in OCHA, all impacted negatively on coordination and the ability to cover all humanitarian needs in good time.

Despite accusations of high costs associated with importing relief supplies and the high profile nature of the crisis, UN agencies did buy products locally. The revised Flash Appeal was revised downwards to respond to the Government of Lebanon's request to transition from relief [and external assistance] to early recovery. The move away from providing top down relief to more thoughtful ways of providing assistance improved over time.

There is consensus that the Humanitarian coordinator provided strong leadership in the field. He was able to help bridge the transition between emergency relief and recovery in collaboration with donors, NGOs, development agencies and government. However, the lack of transparency on selection criteria for HC/RC/DO – continually fueled UN agency tensions on the ground and key informants felt this may have impacted negatively on the response.

All agencies [NGOs and UN] appeared to have underestimated the resilience and coping mechanisms of the Lebanese population during this short lived crisis. Many key informants pointed out that the humanitarian system needs to be more thoughtful and flexible. Assistance can not simply be a matter of “one size fits all”. It must be tailored; and if possible complement or reinforce [not run parallel to] existing structures on the ground.

## **15 Annex : Timeline of Main Events**

### **July 12**

Hezbollah attacks Israel over the blue line [targeting the town of Shlomi and outputs in the Shebaa Farms area] and captures two Israeli soldiers. The Secretary General condemns the attack. Israel counterattacks.

### **July 16**

Leaders of the G8 nations meet in St Petersburg and blame extremist forces for the crisis, but call on Israel to end military operations. On July 17, United Kingdom Prime Minister Tony Blair and UN Secretary General suggest sending an international force into Lebanon to halt the fighting. The international community steps up its evacuation of foreigners from Beirut and thousands of Lebanese begin fleeing their homes.

### **July 18**

The UN warns of a humanitarian disaster. The Lebanese Prime Minister appeals for a ceasefire and the first ICRC emergency supplies reach Lebanon.

### **July 20**

Israel carries out 80 air strikes and Hezbollah fire 30 rockets into Israel. The UN declares Lebanon a Security Phase IV. The number of civilians seeking shelter in public buildings increases and access to safe drinking water and health care becomes a concern. OCHA deploys a 4 man team [3 to Beirut and 1 to Damascus]. Damascus is used as the entry point into Lebanon as all other routes were blocked.

### **July 22**

The UN continues to advocate for secure UN routes for civilians to escape and much needed aid to be delivered. 30,000 IDPs now reported in Beirut and 80,000 in the Aleye valley. The Emergency Relief Coordinator [Mr Jan Egeland] arrives in Beirut and pronounces the wide scale destruction and its indiscriminate nature an, International Humanitarian Law violation. On the following day, WFP's first shipment of humanitarian assistance reaches Lebanon targeting 300,000 people including 40,000 refugees now in Syria.

### **July 24**

The UN launches its flash appeal for 149 million [USD] to meet the needs of 800,000 people. 5 million USD is allocated from the CERF. On the 26th July the 14 nation summit in Rome fails to reach agreement calling for a ceasefire. However there is support for the deployment of an international force with a UN mandate. On 26<sup>th</sup> July the first large UN convoy from relief reaches southern Lebanon [Tyre] carrying supplies from WFP, UNICEF, WHO and UNRAWA. An



estimated 700,000 people have now left their homes and 5,000 -7,000 refugees arrive in Syria each day.

### **27 July**

First UN inter-agency cluster meeting on protection is held in Beirut. Israel carries out dozens of strikes on Lebanon and Hezbollah fires more than 1,000 rockets into Northern Israel. The Emergency Relief Coordinator calls for a 72 hour truce. OCHA establishes its Virtual Humanitarian Information centre. Other cluster meetings also start.

### **30 July**

Approximately 5,000 protesters gather in downtown Beirut attacking the UN building. Aid convoys are cancelled but ICRC manages to deliver two truckloads of assistance northeast of Tyre. The following day Israel calls for a 48 hour partial halt to air strikes in southern Lebanon to allow time for an investigation into the attack on Qana. The UN Country Team in Lebanon initiates work on an operational plan outlining humanitarian needs and priorities.

### **3 August**

Hezbollah fires rockets from the vicinity of two UN positions and from this date and onwards, OCHA and DPKO are requested to provide daily briefings to the Security Council. And on 4<sup>th</sup> August the humanitarian hub in Cyprus begins to play a key role in dispatching deliveries from abroad to the ports of Beirut, Tyre and Tripoli. Cluster meetings are up and running. Access to populations and delivery of assistance continues to be hampered by insecurity. OCHA makes plans to set up a humanitarian hub in Tyre. Donors continue contributing to the flash appeal [36 million USD is now available].

### **5 August**

UN agencies are working to ensure that in-kind relief commodities arriving in Lebanon match identified needs. In-kind assistance is likely to hinder the arrival of urgently needed supplies by blocking ports of entry, warehouse space and overland distribution networks. On 6<sup>th</sup> August, Lebanon asks the Security Council to revise its resolution. Diplomats continue to struggle to find a workable true amid the violence. Much of Southern Lebanon remains cut off and to date, 987 people are reported killed and 3,408 injured. Host families in Beirut are experiencing different levels of support depending on their location.

### **9 August**

Only one convoy out of the planned 11 – received concurrence by IDF and could travel to Saida. UNMAS now raises serious concerns regarding the increasing danger of large numbers of unexploded ordinance in Southern Lebanon [and cluster bombs]. They express concern over civilian movement and in particular, the prospect of returns. An estimated 7000 houses/apartments have been destroyed – 50% in Southern Beirut alone.

## **12 August**

Israel prepares for wider ground offence in Lebanon. Intensive air raids continue and the leaders of Lebanon and Israel agree to the cessation of hostilities amidst some of the heaviest fighting recorded. A UN backed ceasefire comes into force at 0800 hrs. Israeli air strikes continued until 15 minutes before the truce began. Thousands of displaced in Syria and in Lebanon begin moving home. 24 UN convoys leave for Southern Lebanon. UNHCR estimates that between 30,000-50,000 persons are in the process of returning. UN agencies begin first assessments in Southern Lebanon.

## **17 August**

First commercial flights land in Beirut. All borders are open and UNHCR begins distributing returnee packages and Israeli troops begin to withdraw from the South. Lebanese army forces begin to deploy to the South and UNIFIL capacity increases [within 2 weeks the UN plans to put 3,500 troops on the ground].

## **27 August**

UN revised flash appeal is being discussed. Urgent needs [medical, water, fuel, electricity, food and protection] are being met. Agencies begin to discuss recovery and medium term as the extent of damage unfolds. On 29<sup>th</sup> August the Early Recovery Plan for Lebanon is released in time for the Stockholm donors conference. IDF have withdrawn from areas along the blue line. The operation moves from providing short term assistance to medium term [i.e. fixing water supplies rather than supply of bottled water; supply of generators + fixing existing generators and power sources etc]. The Government of Lebanon and municipalities play the central role in coordination and response efforts, particularly as the emergency phase comes to an end.

## **21 September**

There are reported gaps in coordination appearing in the transition phase. OCHA develops its exit plan for end of October. WFP will also close its office around the same time. The OCHA office in Cyprus closed last week. UXO's continue to be a major challenge – with the existence of as many as one million unexploded cluster sub-munitions. UNHCR will withdraw from the shelter cluster following a lack of agreement with the Government over the type of temporary shelter needed. A high level commission of enquiry arrives into Lebanon on 23 September. The three member team and impartial delegation of the UN Human Rights Council will investigate and report on the human rights violations in Lebanon. Its report was later criticized as being biased.

## **28 September**

A recovery cell is now being staffed inside the Prime Ministers office with UNDP and World Bank staff on board. Recovery efforts continue and the emergency agencies scale down. UNDP continues leading the next phase.

## **12 October**

OCHA hosts the After Action Review in Lebanon [see attached].

**24 October**

OCHA leaves Lebanon.

## **16 Annex - Humanitarian Response and Lessons Learned in Syria. [summary]**

### ***Background***

Of the estimated 980,393 people who fled their homes in Lebanon an estimated 150,000 crossed the border into Syria.<sup>45</sup> The Government of Syria and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent Society (SARC) took the lead in registering, accommodating and assisting the displaced who were in need of assistance. The aim of the Syria response was to not only look after those fleeing Lebanon to other countries in the region and beyond, but also to deliver humanitarian supplies to returnees going back home. Key informants affirmed that the Syrian response was well organized, by agencies and the Syrian government also. Several key informants who moved from Syria to Lebanon observed how Syria was a lot better organized logistically than Lebanon.

### ***16.1 Humanitarian Response***

Agencies may have been individually prepared for emergency response, but it is evident that each agency was not aware of the others' preparedness and response capacity. This issue was raised in the after action review workshop held in Syria. Information given at the initial task force meetings was often confused as, at the outset, it was unclear about whether the cluster approach would be applied or not. Further it was not clear in the beginning who was doing what in Syria. On the whole agencies were able to support their teams in Lebanon, though there was some criticism that coordination could have been stronger between the two countries. One NGO suggested that, had there been mechanisms in place for this kind of coordination, they could have informed UNHCR in the Bekaa valley to prepare for returnees.

Supplies for Syria were acquired locally and internationally and line ministries together with UN agencies and implementing partners were able to quickly respond to needs. WHO and UNICEF's coordination with the Ministry of Health was particularly effective, and a vaccination program was carried out. The MoH responded immediately to the needs of the refugees, by ensuring accessibility to

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<sup>45</sup> This figure comes from the HRC – 12 July-14 August 2006. A total of 220,000 fled the country. The influx into Syria decreased from 5,000 to 1,500 a day by 10<sup>th</sup> August. On 14<sup>th</sup> August, IDPs started returning back home to Lebanon.

health services and free health care for the displaced populations. Some key informants taking part in the AAR in the field criticized the UN for responding, before carrying out coordinated assessments. Some cast doubt for example over whether an EPI vaccination campaign was really necessary in this context [when EPI coverage rates were high].

Another NGO recommended the response should have focused on cash, rather than packaged assistance. “Cash handouts for returnees would have been a more appropriate response. It would have given people the option to decide on their own needs” [rather than the UN and NGOs deciding for them]. Joint assessments did take place and this was seen as a positive aspect of the response. However key informants stated that the form was long and too detailed and that a shorter assessment form would have sufficed. As in Lebanon, the lack of coordination between agencies from the outset meant that some areas were visited repeatedly by different agencies and others not at all.

## ***16.2 UNHCR and protection issues***

UNHCR seemed to be ‘treading on eggshells’ with the GOS and they were not sure if classifying IDP as refugees would have altered the way they were handled. The agency, struggled to gather detailed information on numbers of IDPs/refugees staying with host families. Sources other than UNHCR estimate the ratio of 2:1 [hosts and in reception centers]. It appears the lack of assessments on the capacity of host families was an issue in Syria and agencies felt that UNHCR may have over inflated figures. Whatever the case, it could have done better at distinguishing between those with legitimate needs and those that were going to stay with Syrian relatives and who perhaps did not need assistance.

## ***16.3 Coordination***

Generally the Sector working groups worked well as an information sharing forum but overall, it appeared there was limited knowledge of how the IASC and cluster system were meant to work even in the best case scenario. The Syrian Red Cross remained the focal point for all humanitarian assistance and they criticized the UN for not responding quickly enough.

Compliance with security protocols was reportedly poor [particularly on movement]. The Syria After Action Review workshop suggested, among other things, that all staff should receive basic security management policies and procedures training.

### **Information management and sharing**

The situation reports were well written in Syria and accurately reflected reality on the ground despite the Governments attempts to control the flow of information there. As a result, the heads of agencies were able to provide a realistic assessment of needs through the UN Flash Appeal. SARC noted the need for contingency planning with UN agencies and senior govt. officials as a 'matter of urgency' because of the continuing uncertainty in the region.

Problems were highlighted with the Palestinian IDPs/refugees (of which there were approximately 300) who were stranded at the border in 'no man's land' because their 'stateless' status meant that the GOS was reluctant to let them cross into Syria. UNHCR was said to be weak in this respect, implying that the Palestinian problem was the responsibility of the GOS. OCHA Syria was efficient in sending letter to the GOS about the situation though they never followed up on them when no reply was received. The turnover of staff was rapid in Syria as many staff simply used Syria as a stop gap while they waited for Lebanon to open.

## **17 Annex: After Action Review Exercise in Lebanon**

The following represents issues captured during a one-day workshop for members of the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC). Represented were eleven UN agencies, the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator, seven International NGO's from Interaction and ICVA consortia, as well as the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent and the Lebanon Red Cross.

It is important to note that inherent to this type of forum, participants are often guarded in their comments. They tend to pull their punches and use expressions such as "I recommend this be considered, improved or re-examined" rather than forcibly stating their criticisms and advocating specific changes. Encounters such as this do, however, generate greater transparency through open give-and-take and the exchange of decidedly different views and experiences.

It should also be noted that the Humanitarian Coordinator for Lebanon, and two of the cluster leads who were in Lebanon during the conflict, did not participate in the workshop as they had recently departed the theatre of operations. ICRC was also not represented due to a scheduling clash but has since provided oral comments to OCHA. One of the absent cluster leads has also provided written feedback. The HC is currently producing his own mission report, with recommendations, for the Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs / Emergency Relief Coordinator.

### **Context of Humanitarian Operations**

Please see accompanying chronology of events related to the humanitarian response in Lebanon. It flags, inter alia, the date of arrival of emergency personnel and relief supplies into the country.

## PREPAREDNESS

### *What went well and why?*

- The Lebanese Red Cross, supported by the IFRC and the ICRC, has been present and operational in Lebanon for many years and had a sufficiently high level of preparedness to respond quickly and effectively through its use of national staff and resources. However, protection of its staff was its main concern, particularly as the Israeli forces had no respect for the Red Cross's symbol and this severely restricted its activities.

### *Challenges. What can be improved?*

- Prior to the conflict most agency or inter-agency contingency plans, if they existed, were old and had not been updated for some time.
- When the crisis began little if any attention was paid to those contingency plans that did exist.
- Logistics and getting equipment to areas of need was a problem.
- Many kinds of equipment and relief supplies for the initial response could have been bought within Lebanon and there was no need to import materials already available locally.

### **Recommendations:**

- 1. Contingency planning needs to be built into regular agency programming as well as into on-going inter-agency (IASC Country Team) coordination. It should be continuously reviewed and updated (at least once every three months) and reflect an accurate state of preparedness from which effective management decisions can be made and resources mobilised.**
- 2. Well before a crisis emerges, some staff involved in normal peace-time agency work within the country should be identified and trained to be part of their agency's humanitarian response in time of a crisis rather than being evacuated out of the country. Such staff might also be seconded when feasible to other emergency humanitarian agencies.**
- 3. Agencies should develop contingency and disaster-preparedness plans with the government. These plans should incorporate regional planning components, and include an assessment of the capacities of local organisations and NGOs.**

## RESPONSE (including security requirements vs humanitarian operations)

### *What went well and why?*

- The Red Cross said it used local capacity extensively and had invested heavily in its local staff.
- Response from Lebanese civil society was extremely strong.

- UNDP, WHO and UNICEF, which had a presence in Lebanon before the conflict, said they were able to re-programme existing development resources to meet emerging humanitarian needs within four days of the start of the conflict.
- Vital humanitarian assistance did get provided even in a Phase Four situation, a challenging logistical and security environment. No one died from unmet humanitarian need. However, access constraints during the war prevented the evacuation of the chronically-ill and, in several instances, people trapped under rubble.
- One Lebanese Red Cross staff and one staff member from UNRWA were tragically killed. However, thankfully no other humanitarian assistance providers died in this inherently dangerous and insecure conflict environment.
- The external humanitarian response was perceived to be quite quick. For example, ICRC's first emergency supplies reached Lebanon on 18 July and WFP's first shipment arrived on 23 July.
- The UN was able to inform the IDF daily of UN convoy and personnel movements which ensured the safety of UN personnel and their ability to get relief supplies where needed in a timely fashion. [NB: SCR 1701 stated that there should be humanitarian access to civilian populations, including safe passage for humanitarian convoys].
- With the support of UNSCO, the humanitarian response secured humanitarian access, through a mechanism to notify the IDF of humanitarian movements. The UN had a team liaising with the IDF and based in Tel Aviv. Humanitarian actors felt that this was crucial to the effective operation of the concurrence system, given the absence of free and unimpeded access for the relief community.
- After the ceasefire, HIC and UNMACC were useful sources of security information. Both provided accurate and detailed maps of the locations of UXOs and cluster sub-munitions.
- UNJLC was helpful in supplying accurate road information and mapping as well.
- NGOs had greater flexibility and mobility to make assessments and implement humanitarian programmes as they were able to take more risks than UN agencies that were operating under Phase Four security restrictions.
- UNMAS briefings on UXO and cluster munitions were widely appreciated.
- Information sharing between the UN system and the Red Cross Movement was good.

***Challenges. What can be improved?***

- Some participants felt that international staff already working on development/peace issues within Lebanon could have been used in emergency humanitarian relief efforts once the conflict began. Instead, most were swiftly evacuated from the country. Some agencies complained that the decision to evacuate capable staff was poorly made and that many of the people evacuated had very good knowledge of the country and could have been of tremendous benefit to the humanitarian response.

- Some participants agreed that, as stated above, well before a crisis emerges, some staff involved in normal peace-time agency work within the country should be identified and trained to be part of their agency's humanitarian response in time of a crisis rather than being evacuated out of the country. Such staff might also be seconded to other emergency humanitarian agencies.
- The issue of a limitation in the number of international staff (staff ceiling) allowed in the country during the crisis proved a major restraint. This is an issue that can be better managed with improved contingency planning (involving the government, as well as foreign governments that can provide stand by arrangements for potential staff evacuations) well before a crisis emerges.
- Some participants pointed out that it was difficult to recruit experienced national staff during the conflict as many people left the country or were understandably spending time with their families and were unavailable. ICRC and WFP had an immediate need for 200 and 80 national staff respectively.
- The Government of Lebanon also faced staffing problems as the crisis emerged. At some point the GoL's Higher Relief Committee wanted to increase its staffing and capabilities. In a number of instances staff had been sent home from government agencies or were simply unavailable. These deficiencies can be better addressed with greater coordinated contingency planning well prior to a crisis, and with advanced identification of normal government staff who can be trained to work effectively during a humanitarian crisis.
- Communications systems were often jammed or overloaded with traffic and there was a call for better communication strategies and equipping to be included in contingency planning
- MOSS and Protection of staff, personal protection (pp) equipment, armoured vehicles and other security supplies did not arrive until 8 August, suggesting the need for prior positioning in the future.
- Many felt that UN security regulations were too strict immediately after the ceasefire which impeded operations and negatively affected UN credibility.
- Many participants felt that much of the initial security decision-making took place in New York and given this situation, it would be useful for ICVA/Interaction members to have a representative on security liaising with those making decisions in New York.
- Despite having a UN civil-military relations cell working within the IDF, and one which was considered by most participants to be effective, some communication problems occurred. These problems should be considered in any future contingency plan.



- Many participants expressed unhappiness that although UNIFIL has tried hard to get from the IDF the locations, including coordinates, into which it fired its rockets and artillery and other ordnance, the Israelis have not been forthcoming. Some participants suggested that other channels be used to acquire information critical to post-conflict UXO disposal.
- One participant stated that the international community failed to sufficiently address protection issues. The ability of the international community to put pressure on the parties to the conflict to comply with the Geneva Conventions was weak.

### **Some general complaints**

- Some participants voiced concern that the IDF was dictating the terms of access of UN convoys and humanitarian relief and felt that concurrence with the IDF undercut the humanitarian response.
- Participants agreed that it was important to remind the IDF that humanitarian access is a right and denying such access is a breach of IHL as is access to evacuate casualties under the Geneva Conventions.
- Many felt that the security system was too restrictive and reflected the UN's approach to security since the bombing of UN headquarters in Baghdad.
- DSS found it difficult to pass on accurate information because the IDF could hit anywhere in the country and this made it difficult to provide accurate information.
- Many participants suggested that the IDF did not respect the Red Cross symbol.
- Some participants questioned why it is acceptable for national staff to work when internationals are unable to because of a lack of PP equipment. It was suggested that national staff must also be protected in the field.
- NGO Participants felt that security information provided by the UN was not effectively disseminated to NGOs.

### **DSS position**

DSS stated that the threshold of acceptable risk that agencies were prepared to be exposed to was extremely low (i.e. no agency being willing to risk casualties) and this was a central premise in meetings with the Security Management Team. In this light, agencies could not send people into the field if a risk existed of their being injured or killed. Thus, the easiest way to ensure zero casualties was to restrict and deny staff movement should there be any chance that they would be in harms way. If and when staff travelled, it was only to be with complete protection, including MOSS compliant vehicles and equipment. If the UN is going to place restrictions on staff then it must provide the necessary equipment.

Regarding criticism that too many staff were evacuated in the first days after the conflict started: DSS explained that each agency usually decides who among its staff is essential and who is not, and thus it was heads of agencies that should have made these decisions. DSS also stated that national staff did not require security clearance (although they

stressed that staff safety was paramount regardless of who they were) and that decisions on national staff movement were dependant on individual agencies.

Regarding evacuation of NGOs: DSS said that the UN does not have a security mandate covering NGO members of IASC. While the UN can help, there is no responsibility. Every NGO should have its own security apparatus.

The reality is that the UN may not be able to assist NGO members of the IASC unless there are specific memorandums signed in advance.

Regarding the dissemination of security information to NGOs: DSS said it assigned one NGO liaison officer in early August who shared security information with NGOs.

The DSS felt that the evacuation went fairly smoothly but the cost for evacuation escalated and agencies were reluctant to pay for the increased cost. Regarding the setting of a UN staff ceiling, the DSS said that as a part of its overall security planning, the UN staff ceiling became dictated, in large part, by the need to ensure sufficient assets existed to evacuate all staff should it become necessary.

## **Recommendations**

- 1. Need to re-examine how security information is being disseminated and how that can assist in a better coordinated response.**
- 2. Need for better coordination between agencies already working in the country and those arriving to be part of the humanitarian response.**
- 3. Need for better assessment of local staff capabilities and to use more local staff when a humanitarian crisis emerges.**
- 4. Need to establish and maintain a security information focal point, perhaps placing such a person in a relevant information sharing location such as HIC.**
- 5. Need for more clarity on the formal relationship, if any, between DSS and the NGO members of IASC.**
- 6. DSS should enhance its own liaison capability to ensure that information is shared and risks identified and disseminated.**
- 7. ICVA/Interaction should have staff who can liaise on security at a headquarters level**
- 8. The UN needs to review the problems of tight security limiting operational mobility, to assess what level of security is acceptable to ensure the timely delivery of humanitarian relief without unduly putting staff at risk.**
- 9. If security is phase three or four, PP equipment must be available for all staff, including national and international, and should be stockpiled in advance if possible. Each agency is responsible for ensuring it's staff are properly equipped.**

## **Session 3 – Humanitarian Coordination**

### *What went well and why?*

- The UN Resident Coordinator established a coordinating mechanism with the Higher Relief Council of the GoL. OCHA placed a GIS staff member in the HRC at the beginning of August.
- An IASC Country Team approach to humanitarian coordination was quickly implemented by the HC enabling UN agencies, ICRC, IFRC/LRC and NGOs to share information effectively. This coordinating structure was recommended in the 2005 Humanitarian Response Review and was championed by the Emergency Relief Coordinator.
- The HIC was seen as a very useful tool for sharing and disseminating information.
- Outreach and advocacy were seen as a particular strength and success of the Humanitarian Coordinator. He reported to the media the successes of the humanitarian relief effort by the UN agencies and was a frequent source for the media articulating extremely well the humanitarian face of the operation.
- One cluster lead said the general coordination meetings organised by the HC and OCHA were well-managed.

### *Challenges; what can be improved?*

- Some felt that the initial OCHA presence – three people – was insufficient.
- The HC was appointed somewhat late in the conflict and without sufficient consultation regarding his appointment or as to what his role was to be. Some IASC member agencies said they did not have sufficient input into the appointment.
- Some participants complained that having a separate HC, DO and RC required actors to be involved in an inordinate number of consultative processes, which was time consuming and duplicative. Consequently, coordination between the humanitarian and development community was perceived to be poor.
- Some participants complained that there was very little engagement of national NGOs and local government entities in the UN coordinated humanitarian response.

### **Recommendations**

- 1. The HC should be appointed as early as possible and where possible should either work closely with the RC and the DO or absorb their functions for the crisis period. Dividing functions between an HC, RC and DO does not lead to quick decision-making and rapid response.**
- 2. There is a need for clearer direction from the Emergency Relief Coordinator and Heads of Agency (at HQ level) to the UNCT on issues related to handover between the RC and HC.**
- 3. All IASC member agency staff to increase their knowledge of the 2005 HRR and current Humanitarian Reform issues and associated consultative fora / tasks forces / working groups.**
- 4. Minimum turnover of emergency staff deployed should be encouraged.**

## Session 4 – Resource Mobilisation

*What went well and why?*

### **CERF**

- CERF well received and utilized as a tool for injecting funding into relief response of sudden onset emergencies.
- CERF encourages recognition of and participation in Cluster and IASC Country Team coordination structure as all applications for CERF project funding are, in theory, identified and ratified by cluster lead agency and IASC CT.

*Challenges; what can be improved?*

- Low level of understanding (high level of ignorance) of CERF's existence, its purpose and its application process amongst some IASC members represented.
- Uncertainty over whether CERF can be used for projects that are outside (in most occasions before) any Flash Appeal being mobilised.

### **Flash Appeal**

The first Flash Appeal - a familiar tool for agencies - was set to run for 90 days and would include life-saving response but no early recovery. It was planned that the three-month, life-saving focus would be reviewed once new information had become available. The Flash Appeal was issued on 24 July, four days after the arrival of a three person OCHA coordination team.

At the end of August, OCHA, along with agencies, planned to run a Revised Appeal until the end of 2006 that would include transitional elements. Following concerns that the emergency response would not be dealing with early recovery, the end date of the revised Appeal was brought back to 24 October. The shortening of the emergency phase and decision to shift to early recovery was largely a decision made by the Government of Lebanon.

*What went well and why ?*

- The Flash Appeal and the Revised Flash Appeal were successfully produced under enormous time pressure.
- The HC responded to the signal that the government was in the driver's seat, that humanitarian needs had largely been met and were swiftly being replaced by the longer-term need for recovery
- The early phasing out of the emergency response signalled to donors the importance of their funding early recovery programmes.
- Early recovery activities began quickly and are expanding rapidly with funds coming principally from Arab states as well as from pledges made at the Stockholm conference.

*Challenges: what can be improved?*

- Some participants felt that the OCHA team was not sufficiently consultative as the Flash Appeal was being drafted.

- Time constraints put pressure on the whole process.
- Consultation with the GoL was limited.
- Some argued strongly that early recovery projects should have been included in the Flash Appeal.
- Some participants questioned whether the use of Flash Appeal funds (inc. CERF injection) were properly prioritised.
- Some NGOs felt left out and left behind at the highest level of coordination and formation of the flash appeal. They felt there was no mechanism for NGOs to introduce their comments and concerns.
- With respect to the revised Flash Appeal, some believed the shortening of the humanitarian phase was too hasty as humanitarian needs remain (e.g. winter approaching and still up to 200,000 people who have lost their homes).
- During the last week of August, when the Revised Flash Appeal was being drafted, much confusion existed over the revised flash appeal process.
- Some participants suggested that linkages between the humanitarian and development actors during the process of revising the Flash appeal and developing the GoL's early recovery document for the Stockholm conference could have been stronger.
- Some participants raised concerns about accountability primarily regarding the GoL and expenditures, for example, questioning how the initial \$90 million raised through the FA mechanism was spent and how did such fit into the national priorities ?

### **Recommendations:**

- 1. Better consultation throughout the flash appeal process and its linkages with the GoL's early recovery strategy.**
- 2. Better consultation on funding through the flash appeal, particularly on budget revisions.**
- 3. More involvement and more opportunity for funding that include all IASC members, not necessarily just UN agencies.**
- 4. Better information sharing as a lot of recovery information was going to go into a revised flash appeal. This was without input from the government and was not shared by the UN country team.**
- 5. Should be more engagement of non-traditional donors, such as Arab donors.**

### **Session 5 - Cluster Approach Coordination**

During the workshop members broke off into five working groups and discussed the application of the cluster approach for Humanitarian Coordination in Lebanon each through the lens of one of the five stages of the "Project Management Cycle" (i.e. Assessment; Analysis; Project Design; Implementation and Monitoring and Evaluation).

*What went well and why?*

- UN and NGO's were generally satisfied with the cluster system although there were some comments that there was not enough commitment by certain agencies.
- Clusters allowed information sharing and wider participation by different actors. This helped to improve UN-NGO relations.
- Clusters were found to be very good for improving visibility and acting as a focal point for programme implementation.
- The "provider of the last resort" concept was taken seriously.
- Basing cluster meetings around three to four key points for discussion / action rather than a round-the-table 'who is doing what'. This encouraged participation.
- Tight Timing. Limiting meeting time to one hour and managing such a time period well.
- Gaps were highlighted through the sharing of information.
- The group looking at monitoring and evaluation felt that the Cluster approach helped to promote accountability.
- Key western donors such as DFID and OFDA embraced and used the cluster mechanism. For example, DFID shared concept notes from potential implementing partners with the relevant cluster leads in order to ensure they were compatible with cluster strategy.

*Challenges. What can be improved?*

- Recognition of cluster approach limitations -- e.g, the common service telecoms cluster commented that many agencies were labouring under the misapprehension that the cluster lead would be all things to all members and more besides in terms of provision of telecoms assistance.
- Some NGOs felt that they needed to fight their way into the cluster and ended up not really knowing what was going on. On the other hand, some NGOs acknowledged that they could make greater efforts to participate in the cluster system.
- VirtualHic, while a useful tool, was not well known to some NGOs, particularly local NGOs. Some had no regular access to the internet and the web making it difficult for them to get HIC supplied information and to share with others.
- The assessment phase needs to be completed more rapidly and because of this there is a need for strong inter-cluster coordination leadership.
- Competition for funding was felt an impediment to joint assessments and led to duplicative assessments as agencies compete for space and funding.
- A participatory approach is needed and willingness to work as a team and this must be coordinated by the cluster
- Security restrictions proved a major impediment to conducting swift inter-agency field assessments. However, assessment information from many NGOs was received by some cluster leads.
- Duplication may have occurred but gaps still arose in the data collection. This needed to be addressed by adopting a methodological approach and using existing data (e.g. government statistics).
- After the ceasefire cluster groups were meeting in Tyre and Beirut and problems arose in information sharing between the two entities.

- More consensus in the clusters could have been sought and some found the clusters too UN-centric.
- Participation by the Government of Lebanon in clusters was uneven, despite calls for them to send representation to key meetings.
- Non-traditional donors did not coordinate at cluster level, deciding to work outside of the system and with their own agenda. This resulted in uncoordinated assistance activities such as the distribution of generators in the south without consultation.

## **Recommendations**

- 1. Cluster approach should not be heavily prescribed. It should be encouraged and formulated in a way that enable the host government, international donors, IASC member agencies and non-member organisations to see the value of the process and want to participate in it**
- 2. Clusters need to be proactive in generating ideas and coordination rather than passive and reactive.**
- 3. Cluster participants should be educated on expectations from and limitations of clusters (particularly the limitations of common service clusters such as Emergency Telecoms).**
- 4. Cluster heads should be skilled in (or trained to be skilled in) facilitation as well as being competent in the technical discipline of their sector. They should not wear any one agency's hat but be seen as representing all cluster member partners equally.**
- 5. Joint assessments need to be conducted using common tools**
- 6. Assessment results from each agency need to be shared and trusted to prevent over assessment and over verification.**
- 7. Donors should link access to its funds on membership of and proven attendance in cluster activities such as joint assessments, analysis and project design**
- 8. Non-traditional humanitarian donors (in this case donors from the Gulf and other neighbouring countries) need to be sensitised on IASC coordination structures and be invited to join on an ad hoc basis.**
- 9. Analysis should be done by sector as this is where the pool of experts resides.**
- 10. Establishing MoUs, ToRs for specific subjects could have helped lead agencies.**
- 11. Attempt to make clusters less UN-centric.**
- 12. Cluster lead does not have to be a staff member of cluster lead agency.**
- 13. Some clusters would like to continue meeting after the end of the cluster approach and move into Early Recovery. These could evolve into sector working groups within the recovery sector**
- 14. The HC needs to promote the level of awareness of Cluster Approach within the government**
- 15. Clearing house for assessments. Build a system where all of the information is compiled. This should be within each cluster where**

specialists can analyse the information and from which projects are well designed and funded. Unavoidable limitations of assessment findings in rapidly changing environments need to be better understood and accepted by agencies and donors.

16. **Cluster leads should strive to achieve a greater degree of consensus in decision-making.**
17. **The Food Assistance/Food Security are not formal clusters. It has been a challenge to run the food assistance activities without a clear forum framed and endorsed by IASC.**
18. **It is better to circulate imperfect information quickly. Cluster participants will rapidly correct wrong information.**

## **Session 6 – IASC Country Team**

*What went well and why?*

- Generally agreed that IASC Country Team structure facilitates better coordination.
- Very positive comments received from prominent international NGOs about the inclusiveness of this structure adding that they felt they were being listened to and their contributions taken seriously.

*Challenges. What can be improved?*

- Questions asked as to why the IASC is not coordinating with national civil society and the national NGOs.
- Low level of knowledge exists at field level about the IASC in general (its history, its mandate, its component parts, its resources, tools and working taskforce groups).

### **Recommendations:**

1. **The IASC Country Team to recognise non-global IASC (i.e. local) organisations with a view to having such join the IASC Country Team as an ad hoc member.**
2. **Need for staff members (at all levels) of member agencies to know more about the IASC global structure, its resources and how the strengths of such a structure and its resources should be replicated at field level as the main inter-agency coordination structure.**

## **Session 7 – Common Services**

*What went well and why?*

- HIC was a very useful method for UNMACC to distribute information to a wider audience.
- HIC widely appreciated by many IASC member agencies as a conduit of access to the UN in general and for information exchange at cluster and general level.



- UNMACC was seen as de-facto common service as the information that they provided was essential for safe operation by other agencies in all areas.
- UNJLC praised for good reliable information and logistics services to the humanitarian community.
- UNHAS Cyprus ops appreciated but was heavily constrained in its operations.

*Challenges. What can be improved?*

- There was some operational tension between HIC's mandate as a UN Common Service and its role in supporting the HC's office.

### **Recommendations:**

- 1. Clarify the role of the HIC vis-à-vis expectations of the HC and OCHA with respect to information management and mapping, particularly with regard to the analysis functions.**

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## **Feedback from AAR Workshop Attendees on Draft Report**

**Text of original email from OCHA accompanying initial draft report (Date: October 16<sup>th</sup>)**

Dear Colleagues,

Please find attached the draft report from last Monday's After Action Review workshop. Please accept my apologies for sending this a few days later than originally envisaged.

As mentioned at the workshop, this draft version is being sent to you, the workshop's attendees, in the first instance, in order to solicit feedback on how the report captures key

issues and recommendations that came out of the workshop. As agreed, it is also been sent to key actors who were unable to attend for comment. We are also looking into the best way of involving the Government of Lebanon in this process.

In replying with any feedback, please ensure that you frame your comments behind your primary recommendation and please also reply to all in order that all benefit from your interpretation and suggestions. For ease of editing, please include any comments in the body of your e-mail reply and not in the document itself.

Please send your comments by 1300 hours Beirut time on Wednesday 18th October. When your comments have been incorporated, I will send the final version to OCHA's Lessons Learned Unit in New York as a contribution to any broader inter-agency evaluation on response to the Lebanon crisis.

Many thanks for your collaboration and for your active contributions to a productive and lively workshop.

**From: DSS, Lebanon (Date: October 16<sup>th</sup>)**

Challenges. What can be improved?

Some participants felt that international staff already working on development/peace issues within Lebanon could have been well used in emergency humanitarian relief efforts once the conflict began. Instead, most were swiftly evacuated from the country. Some agencies complained that the decision to evacuate capable staff was poorly made and that many of the people evacuated had very good knowledge of the country and if agreeable could have been of tremendous benefit to the humanitarian response .

**This statement is rather ludicrous. The agency head is the only person who decides which agency staff are essential and which are not. Are they really criticizing themselves for making uninformed decisions? (Just noticed this is actually covered later)**

The issue of a limitation in the number of international staff (staff ceiling) allowed in the country during the crisis proved a major restraint. This is an issue that can be better managed with improved contingency planning (involving the government) well before a crisis emerges .

**This may be possible, however, the staff ceiling was implemented during this crisis when virtually all forms of egress from the country was cut off through the bombing of transport routes and air and sea embargoes. Even when a solution was provided by chartering a ship, and getting authority for it to travel regularly from Cyprus to Lebanon, it was short lived because of the expense . Agencies could have easily increased the ceiling by absorbing these extra costs.**

Some participants questioned why it is acceptable for national staff to work when internationals are unable to because of a lack of PP equipment. It was suggested that national staff must also be protected in the field.

**I don't understand this statement at all. Requirements for staff working in the field were the same for both national and international staff and this was made clear by the CSA during the After Action Review Workshop.**

NGO Participants felt that security information provided by the UN was not effectively disseminated to NGOs.

**I don't understand this comment either. Prior to the crisis, we had been contacted by only one NGO in Lebanon and had in fact agreed to assist them with some training. In early August, when we received our first security augmentees from DSS, we immediately assigned one to be the DSS liaison officer to the NGO community and he in fact sought out the NGOs. As soon as we started producing a daily security report, we included the NGOs participating in the forum.**

DSS stated that the threshold of acceptable risk that agencies were prepared to be exposed to was extremely low (i.e. no agency being willing to risk casualties) and this was a central premise in meetings with the Security Management Team. In this light, agencies could not send people into the field if a risk existed of their being injured or killed. Thus, the easiest way to ensure zero casualties was to restrict and deny staff movement should there be any chance that they would be in harms way. If and when staff travelled, it was only to be with complete protection, including MOSS compliant vehicles and equipment. If the UN is going to place restrictions on staff then it must provide the necessary equipment.

**This may be a bit misleading. I'm not aware of any required missions which were denied. Some were postponed until a security evaluation was completed and staff members were then allowed to move.**

**From: Representative: UNICEF, Lebanon. (Date: October 16)**

Please get in touch if you would like me to clarify, or expand upon, anything. Assume that if I have not commented upon a particular point, then I agree with it!

I agree with the second paragraph of the introduction; the document comes across as rather "tactful".

#### Preparedness

Why does this concentrate so heavily on the IFRC? I assume that in this context "IFRC" mainly relates to the Lebanese Red Cross (in which case, they should have more prominence). The LRC were, indeed, probably the most effective agency. However, other agencies could be mentioned.

Lack of contingency planning led to slow response, as agencies continued to use administrative, logistics, and procurement systems designed for non emergency situations (this could have been rectified more quickly after the start of the conflict).

### Response

I think that, prior to the ceasefire, the response was quite good. Significant assistance was provided to IDPs. It must be emphasised that access to the South was extremely difficult and dangerous. Some agencies (UN, NGO and Red Cross) were able to get aid into these areas, but conditions outside the control of the humanitarian system imposed enormous constraints. Some clarification should be made about the reasons for which NGOs had "greater flexibility and mobility" after the ceasefire. Most people agreed that the UN security rules were too strict in this period. The insistence on armoured vehicles and security clearance did not seem to make sense in many of the post-conflict areas. MAS / MACC provided accurate, up to date maps showing areas that had been cleared and gave excellent briefing sessions on procedures to follow. The rules impeded UN operations and credibility. I do not question the need for careful security monitoring; however the views I express above reflect numerous conversations that I have had with people throughout the UN system in Lebanon.

I agree that we should capitalise on the experience of people working in the country before the crisis (both national and international). It is also necessary to acknowledge when these people need support from colleagues who are experienced in wartime crisis response (particular skills and experience are needed). A better collaboration between Lebanon experts and war/crisis experts would have improved the response (sadly, bearing in mind Lebanon's recent past, there are plenty of people with both sets of skills). Considering the "DSS position", I suppose everyone coming to Lebanon during July/August knew that they were facing considerable risk. All agencies and individuals have to accept this; of course they should always try to minimise risks but some are inherent in the work.

The security people were put in an impossible position, in the light of the above point. Their job was to minimise casualties. Meanwhile they were working for humanitarian agencies with mandates to help conflict affected people. The issue of risk tolerance should be addressed at the highest level of "the system", in order to ease the burden on field level security staff.

### Humanitarian coordination

I don't think that the recommendation for a "consultative process" for choosing the HC is realistic. Time is of the essence when these people are appointed and it should be assumed that all people on the HC roster have the requisite skills.

More prominence should be given to the contribution of the less glamorous activities of the coordination teams (HC, OCHA, HIC): well-managed coordination meetings and the data management facilities of the HIC were greatly appreciated.

### Resource mobilisation

The document rightly emphasises the political processes that drove the revised flash appeal. What should also be noted is the enormous amount of wasted time that resulted. Cluster coordinators and their colleagues devoted the best part of a week to this process with no result (the watsan revision, after numerous re-workings and consultations, was reduced to zero for external reasons!). This was at a time when we all had many other things to do (including the early recovery plan ...).

In effect (certainly in the watsan sector), there was no difference between "emergency" and "early recovery". What actually took place was a gradual evolution of programming, and I think that the debate about terminology (and the numerous meetings that this entailed) distracted concentration from the real task at hand.

I agree that the consultative process, particularly with regard to NGOs, could have been better (this applies to both the flash appeal and the early recovery plan).

#### Clusters

Point of clarification: DFID did not circulate concept notes, they shared them with the cluster leader to ensure they were compatible with cluster strategy (circulation would not have been advisable as numerous cluster members were seeking DFID funds).

Some points on joint assessment. In the watsan cluster this did not take place for the following reasons: security rules (the cluster leader -- UNICEF -- was not able to move as quickly as the NGOs; after the ceasefire, many NGOs had completed initial assessments before the UN had mobilised to go to the South); agreement on assessment methodology would have been time consuming during a period when swift action was essential (in the watsan sector there was not a burning need for methodological conformity, so long as the basic information was provided -- I can expand upon this if anyone is interested).

In fact, the cluster worked quite well as a pool of assessment information coming from numerous NGOs. The cluster worked well with respect to avoidance of duplication; identification of gaps in coverage was somewhat more problematical.

The presence of large donors who didn't participate in the clusters was a problem (e.g. the Iranian generators). The reason for which the Government came to the meetings sporadically was mainly due to their time constraints. I think that one of the major contributions of the cluster was to provide administrative support to the water authority (through managing databases, passing information between WA and NGOs etc.).

An important lesson learnt: be proactive in mapping "who what where" and "gap" information. It is a good idea to circulate imperfect information quickly (using spreadsheets and maps): people will very quickly provide corrections. I learnt this lesson a little late.

#### IASC

No comments

#### Common services

Agree with all comments

**From: Representative: Humanitarian Affairs Officer, OCHA, Tyre**

**(Date: October 16)**

Very comprehensive and no additional comments my side.

**From: Representative, UNHCR, Lebanon. (Date: October 16). UNHCR was the cluster lead for protection and shelter**

I think it is a good draft which reflects our discussion.

**From: Representative - WFP. (Date October 18<sup>th</sup>)**

Please note the following WFP comments on the draft document.

The proposed changes, additions or comments have been put in red font.

**Page 1, Preparedness (comment) :** The level of preparedness has to also be measured by the response capacity and its timeliness. For instance, WFP had no presence in the country prior to the crisis but the first team arrived 5 days only after the first bombardment and the first humanitarian convoy (WFP, WHO, UNICEF and UNRWA) occurred on the 25th July.

**Page 2, Response, 4th Bullet Point (comment/addition):** The first WFP shipment arrived on the 23rd, but there were local purchases carried out prior to this. The response took place before the first shipment.

**Page 2, Response, 5th Bullet Point (addition):** The UN , through WFP, was able to inform the IDF daily of UN convoy and personnel movements which ensure the safety of UN personnel and its ability to get relief supplies where needed in a timely fashion. [NB: SCR 1701 stated that there should be humanitarian access to civilian populations, including safe passage for humanitarian convoys].

**Page 2, Response, 6th Bullet Point (addition):** With the support of UNSCO, the humanitarian response secured humanitarian access, through a mechanism to notify the IDF of humanitarian movements. The UN had a team liaising with the IDF and based in Tel Aviv. Humanitarian actors felt that this was crucial to the effective operation of the concurrence system, in the absence of the requested free, unlimited and unpeded access for humanitarian actors.

**Page 3, Challenges, 1st Bullet Point (addition):** Although it was clearly indicated that each agency was responsible for selecting essential staff, some participants felt that international staff already working on development/peace issues within Lebanon could have been well used in emergency humanitarian relief efforts once the conflict began. Instead, most were swiftly evacuated from the country. Some agencies complained that the decision to evacuate capable staff was poorly made and that many of the people evacuated had very good knowledge of the country and if agreeable could have been of tremendous benefit to the humanitarian response.

**Page 3, Challenges, 3rd Bullet Point (addition):** The issue of a limitation in the number

of international staff (staff ceiling) allowed in the country during the crisis proved a major restraint. This is an issue that can be better managed with improved contingency planning (involving the government, **as well as foreign governments who can provide stand by arrangements for potential staff evacuations** ) well before a crisis emerges.

**Page 3, Challenges, 4th Bullet Point (addition/change):** Some participants pointed out that it was difficult to recruit experienced national staff during the conflict as many people **left the country** or were understandably spending time with their families and were unavailable. ICRC and WFP had an immediate need for 200 and **80** national staff respectively.

**Page 4, Challenges, 9th Bullet Point (comment/addition needed):** Despite having a UN civil-military relations cell working within the IDF, and one which was considered by most participants to be effective, some **communication problems** occurred. These problems should be considered in any future contingency plan. (*List the communications problems that occurred*).

**Page 4, Challenges, 10th Bullet Point (comment):** Many participants expressed unhappiness that although UNIFIL has tried hard to get from the IDF the locations, including coordinates, into which it fired its rockets and artillery and other ordnance, the Israelis have not been forthcoming. Some participants suggest that other channels need to be used forcibly to get such information which is critical to UXO disposal. (*It is proposed that this statement is reworded since it is highly unlikely that the IDF will provide such information during an ongoing conflict...*)

**Page 4, General Complaints, 6th Bullet Point (addition):** Some participants questioned why it is acceptable for national staff to work when internationals are unable to because of a lack of PP equipment. It was suggested that national staff must also be protected in the field. **An example of how to follow this regulation was WFP where all staff, whether national or international, followed the same rules when proceeding to the field or an official mission.**

**Page 5, Recommendation, 9th Point (comment):** **If security is phase three or four, PP equipment must be available for all staff, including national and international, and should be stockpiled in advance if possible.** (*Specify the agency(ies) responsible for ensuring that the PP equipment is pre-positioned*)

**Page 6, Recommendation, Add First Point (addition):** **Need to have one UN Coordinator for the one UN system. Division of RC and HC (and DOS) functions between different persons does not facilitate quick decision making and response, and can potentially result in incoherent or different approaches.**

**Page 6, Recommendation, Add Fifth Point (addition):** **Minimum turn around of the deployed emergency staff should be endeavoured.**



**Page 7, Recommendation, 7th Bullet Point (addition/comment)** □ With respect to the revised Flash Appeal, some believed the shortening of the ~~emergency-humanitarian~~ phase was too hasty and emergency needs remain (e.g. winter approaching and still up to 200,000 displaced persons). *(Was this figure indicated during the After Action Review workshop? If yes, specify the source)*

**Page 7, Recommendation, 1st Point** □ **Better consultation throughout the flash appeal process and preparation of the early recovery strategy and appeal.**

**Page 8, What Went Well and Why, 4th Bullet Point (addition):** The “provider of the last resort” concept was **very important and was** taken seriously.

**Page 10, Recommendation, 15th Point: Clearing house for assessments (addition). Build a system where all of the information is compiled. This should be within each cluster where specialists can analyse the information and from which projects are well designed and funded. Unavoidable limitations of assessment findings in rapidly changing environments need to be understood better and accepted by the agencies and donors.**

**Page 10, Recommendations, Add Seventh Point (addition): The Food Assistance/Food Security are not formal clusters. It has been a challenge to run the food assistance activities without a clear forum framed and endorsed by IASC, in a way the clusters are.**

**Page 10, What Went Well and Why, 4th Bullet Point (addition):** UNJLC praised for good reliable information and **the Logistics Cluster for the services provided to the whole humanitarian community.**

In terms of attendance, please amend the titles accordingly:

Zlatan Milisic	WFP	Emergency Coordinator
Thomas Keusters	WFP	Logistics Coordinator
Etienne Labande	WFP	WFP Programme
Mark Phillips	WFP	Inter-Agency ICT

**From: Senior Policy Advisor on Protection, OCHA. (Date: October 16<sup>th</sup>)**

I took a look at the papers on the Light Lessons Learnt. A couple of details: the chrono seems to omit reference to the cluster bombing in the last days before the ceasefire.

The attendance list omits OHCHR Rep and me.

Otherwise - congrats to all the colleagues for a superb effort.

**From: UNDP Representative, Lebanon (Date: October 18<sup>th</sup>)**

I, unfortunately, cannot meet the deadline for comments on the draft After-Action Review. I also cannot endorse the draft as it stands, not least, because the review does not start at the beginning of the UN's humanitarian response where, within 4 days of the Israeli offensive, UNICEF, WHO, UNDP (not a humanitarian organization), WFP (which, upon my request, established a presence in Lebanon), and UNHCR were procuring essential supplies from government stocks or from the local market and delivering them to the internally displaced. By the time of the ERC's visit to Lebanon for the launching of the Flash Appeal, we were able to arrange site visits for him in areas where the UN had already distributed humanitarian supplies: in Beirut, for example, he visited a school and a public park sheltering the displaced to which Unicef had provided assistance (water, children's kits) and he visited a public hospital (assisted by WHO/MOH); while in Aley (in Mount Lebanon) he visited one of several public shelters provisioned by UNDP with locally purchased mattresses, blankets, cooking utensils, showers, etc.; while UNHCR was engaged in assessments and setting up a presence in Mount Lebanon). For most of these already established agencies, their capacity to immediately initiate humanitarian response programs (without waiting for contributions from the Flash Appeal) rests on three important factors: the capacity to divert their existing (for the most part, development) program resources to meet the evolving the humanitarian situation; their pre-existing networks of partnerships with key government counterparts at national and local levels as well as with national and local civil society organizations; their "local knowledge" ( of local markets, suppliers, routes, transporters, etc, AND of the complexities of Lebanon's social structure and polity).

If the deadline can be extended, there are several other issues along the same axes of enquiry used for this after-action review which I believe are instructive and important as lessons learnt.

**From: UNICEF Representative, Lebanon (Date: October 20<sup>th</sup>)**

As verbally anticipated I feel the document doesn't accurately portray the essence of key concerns shared at the 'after action review'.. without them any review/lesson learnt exercise sounds sterile.. hence, the critical issues below might require another get together for a more in-depth analysis:

- UN country team role and response pre & post HC appointment - which took place roughly after 2/3 of conflict;
- coordination of cluster leaders vis a vis coordination of heads of agencies as basis for strategizing UN humanitarian action, determining agencies' ceiling.;
- involvement of national NGOs at certain stages of strategic planning;
- UN convoys driving humanitarian/programmes response or vice versa;
- liaison with & involvement of government in UN humanitarian response;

beyond suggesting another more focused review with heads of agencies, i would actually recommend an additional brainstorming with government and

some key local NGOs..

The Lebanese emergency was atypical.. as such it deserves a thoroughly analysis from different spectacles if we want to further refine and better architect future UN humanitarian responses

hope the above is useful

**From: Representative, UNDP, Lebanon (Date: October 20<sup>th</sup>)**

In a nutshell, also not getting an impression that the rich one-day discussions and observations of the workshop are really reflected in the report. Some points:

1. The fact that agencies, which resided here at the onset of the conflict, had the operational and networking assets required for an immediate humanitarian response and actually did effectively and quickly provide that response during the first days/weeks (e.g. UNDP) is not reflected. (Not only IFRC was here.....)
2. The process of preparing the Appeal was not participatory and too 'textbook' driven ("it had to be life-saving only; it had to be 90 days; it could not include early recovery"). It looked as if all decision-making on what went in (and out...) was an exclusive OCHA decision. Draft report was not even shared. We all discovered during the Launch, from the hard print, how the Appeal finally was. (Including that UNDP proposals were not .... included).
3. The fact that by 24 July (the launch date) those agencies residing in-country (such as UNDP) had clearly shown that they had that effective operational response capacity should have been a strategically important consideration in the Appeal. It was however not recognized, and at no time was there a structured effort to channel funding (e.g. from un earmarked contributions) to those agencies (e.g. UNDP) that had some project proposal(s) in the Appeal but had the continuation of their (effective) humanitarian response activities dependent on additional funding.
4. The result was that during the first weeks the humanitarian response was limited (see statistics, as activities only picked up in August, well over the half-way point of the Appeal), because the focus was imported human resources, logistics and cargo, which took time to arrive or be put in place. (Reference observations from WFP during the last week of July and first week of August that there was no cargo to move.....Alternatives, such as continuing to procure from local stocks and distribute through commercial transporters as e.g. UNDP did from the first days were not sufficiently considered - at least as a start-up or second option - in the (evolving) Appeal strategy).
5. Strong resistance (in fact veto) from OCHA to include Early Recovery proposals in the Appeal. Had they been, some immediate work could have been initiated as of 14 August, rather than wait for the funding to come through as of 31 August through the Stockholm meeting. Early Recovery Proposals presented by UNDP during the drafting of

the Appeal (but not 'accepted' by OCHA) would have allowed UN(DP) to also immediately show effective response immediately post-conflict. Fortunately, UNDP managed to mobilize US\$ 2 Million from NY resources start immediate post-conflict early recovery activities of 16 August, including rubble removal in the South and the Southern suburbs. The same applies to resistance (from OCHA) to the establishment of a UNDP-led Recovery Cluster, as proposed by UNDP, and which was finally established because of the strong support of the development agencies.

6. The point about the 'humanitarian team' drawing more strongly on the 'savoir' and 'savoir-faire' of the residing development agencies is made, but should be made stronger.

7. Linked to that is the problematique of a three-headed (or two-headed) coordination structure: RC, DO, HC. Overall coordination should remain with RC. Security and Humanitarian could both be covered through a Deputy arrangement with the RC. Dividing the coordination role over different people has in itself created serious coordination gaps or communication challenges. The fact that HC organized sub-Heads of Agencies meetings has also jeopardized the integrated approach to a one-only Heads of Agencies meeting, chaired by RC, where all issues (security, recovery, development, humanitarian and political) can be looked at in an integrated manner.

8. Excessive monopolization of focus and slots on humanitarian issues. The fact that no sufficient space (in terms of focus and slots) was left to the non-humanitarian agencies (also referring to the restrictive interpretation of Phase 4) resulted in putting preparedness for the Early Recovery Phase at risk. It sometimes looked as if that concern for the post-conflict and post-humanitarian phase was of limited concern to OCHA.

9. Funding clarity from the Appeal was absent. The tracking system was too slow. The Lebanon situation was evolving rapidly as of the second week of August, but clarity on the revised appeal was not forthcoming.

10. Last, but not least, regret that UNDP is not mentioned as one of the participating agencies in the 'Lessons Learned' workshop. I am sure it is just a slip of the pen, but it is not the first time... Is this due to the fact that some of the OCHA colleagues know very well what OCHA does and is about, but have no full understanding of the other world of non-humanitarian agencies?

**Annex: Terms of Reference for Beirut workshop:** "Light" After Action Review.

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OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS

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**To:** Participants of the After Action Review Workshop, IASC CT Lebanon

**From:** David Carden, OCHA Head of Office

**Subject:** **Terms of Reference:** IASC Country Team Lebanon “Light” After Action Review.

*Date: Monday, 9<sup>th</sup> of October, 2006*  
*Time: 1400 to 1800 Hours*  
*Location: Movenpick Hotel conference room, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Beirut*

## **BACKGROUND**

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At the request of the Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator and after consultation with the Resident Coordinator, the OCHA office will organize a half day workshop from 1400 - 1800 hours on Monday the 9th of October, 2006, for Heads of Agencies and Cluster leads.

This workshop is an opportunity for constructive criticism, and as such each participant should come prepared with suggestions for how the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) could better respond to any subsequent humanitarian crisis.

The workshop facilitator will be seeking separate feedback from the Government and donors on the IASC response to the crisis in Lebanon, which will later be collated and dove-tailed into a broader review.

## **DRAFT OUTLINE OF THE WORKSHOP**

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### ***Core Issues***

The inter-agency evaluation/ lessons learned/ after action review workshop will address four major aspects in relation to the response to the recent Lebanon crisis:

- Challenges
- What went well and why ?
- What can be improved and how ?
- Recommendations

### ***Some key ideas for discussion***

Within the broad framework outlined above, key issues for the lesson learning review processes will include:

### **Timeliness of the initial UN Response Including Preparedness**<sup>46</sup>

- Did the UN agencies deploy the appropriate staff at the right time?
- Did the UN anticipate the size and speed of the exodus from the affected areas and the subsequent rapid return? Were agencies prepared and if so, how?

### **Initial Response**

- The ability to prioritize needs, keep track of information and provide appropriate assistance to IDPs and vulnerable groups in Lebanon.

### **Security**

- Relationship between agency security staff, DSS and other key actors on clearance procedures and processes.
- Security and staffing levels

### **Cluster Approach and Humanitarian Reform**

- How this worked?
- How well the “Cluster Approach” and CERF were understood, supported and applied.

### **Coordination**

- What were the main challenges of coordination with respect to IASC inter agency coordination and coordination with government entities at both central and de-centralized level?

### **Analysis and Reporting**

- Quality of joint assessments,
- Quality of analysis,
- Capacity and use of reporting and management of information.

### **Management**

- Field and HQ,
- Emergency staffing and surge capacities,
- Effectiveness of task force and IASC conference calling,
- Decision making processes and clarity of reporting lines.

### **Donor Relations and Funding**

- Flash Appeal,
- Donor Relations.

### **Common Services**<sup>47</sup>

- Experiences of common services
- Support provided to the humanitarian response and the transition to early recovery?

### **Advocacy of UN Humanitarian Efforts**

<sup>46</sup> Early warning, contingency planning and exit strategies

<sup>47</sup> Common Services deployed to support the conflict in Lebanon included as per the UN Flash Appeal: Humanitarian Information Centre (HIC); Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN); Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; United Nations Joint Logistics Unit (UN JLC), and UN Department of Safety and Security (DSS).

- Was there a coordinated coherent strategy, advocacy messaging and “sharing of advocacy” among UN agencies, especially with regard to the protection of civilians?

#### **Transition issues**

- How effective/smooth is the transition from humanitarian response to early recovery?



One boy, many bullets, Courtesy of IRIN 2006.