

Thematic synthesis report on evaluation of humanitarian action

Evaluation Office UNICEF

Presentation to informal session of the
UNICEF Executive Board

31 May 2013

Purpose and scope of the report

The report presents a snapshot of how evaluation has promoted humanitarian accountability and learning over the past five years.

It is intended to inform discussions about the evaluation of humanitarian action (EHA) – and on humanitarian action itself.

This report is the first “standalone” evaluation synthesis report requested by the Board.

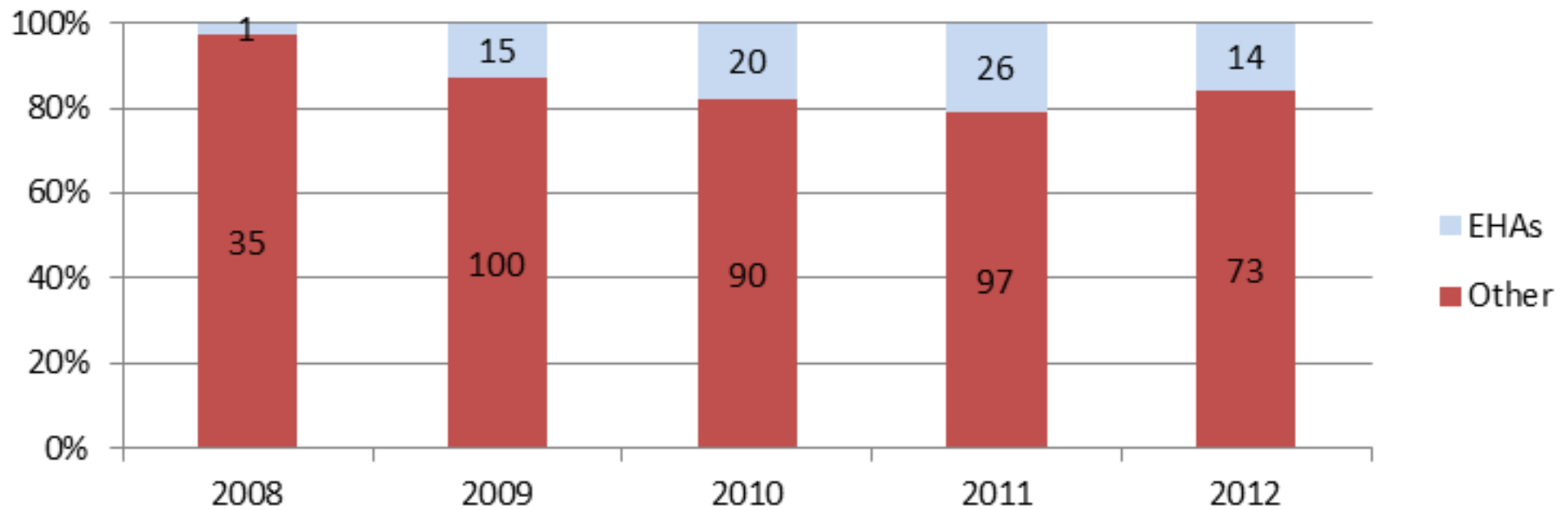
The report presents a series of analyses:

- An overview of EHA coverage and quality
- Key themes emerging from major evaluations concerning UNICEF strengths and challenges in humanitarian action.
- Aspects of EHA utility and use
- Conclusions and recommendations

Findings on coverage

- Evaluation activity has increased, but does not meet the full range of UNICEF humanitarian accountability and learning needs
- The focus on results achieved for children and women in humanitarian action has been low
- EHA has largely been a headquarters endeavour
- Joint and inter-agency exercises have become prominent
- When UNICEF has committed to evaluations of humanitarian action, they have largely been of sufficient quality to warrant management action

Number and percentage of EHAs and other evaluations, 2008-2012



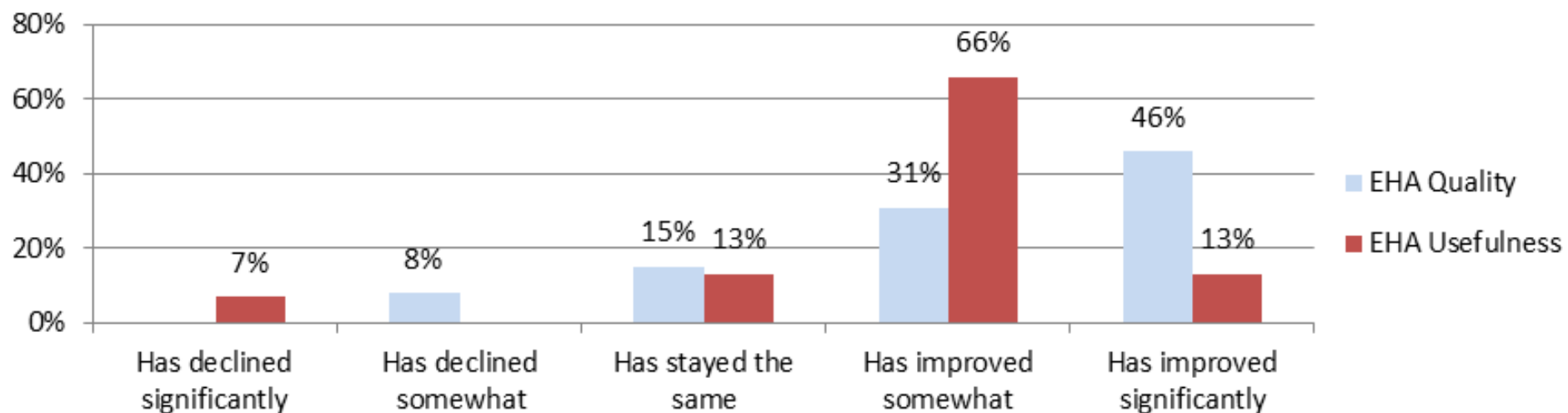
Findings on effectiveness

- UNICEF appears to be contributing to humanitarian effectiveness in significant ways, saving thousands of lives every year.
- Sometimes deemed risk-averse in emergencies, UNICEF is becoming more risk-aware.
- Humanitarian partnerships are challenging, but UNICEF has worked hard to become a better partner.
- UNICEF has learned to work with local capacity - but must do more to foster stakeholder participation – including by affected populations.
- UNICEF is not effectively managing the flood of information generated in and on emergencies.

Have evaluations led to positive changes?

- Three examples (Haiti, Sahel, DFID grant) illustrate UNICEF's use of evaluation to improve its humanitarian work in important ways.
- Survey responses indicate that the quality and usefulness of EHAs have improved overall in the period under review.
- Quality is key in determining evaluation use, but several other factors are equally important:
 - the attention paid by senior management;
 - engagement of stakeholders throughout the evaluation process.

Client perceptions of quality and usefulness of evaluations, 2008-2012



Recommendations

- (a) DHR should incorporate key EHA elements into training of country representatives and deputy representatives, and develop a roster of EHA-qualified M&E staff for surge deployments.
- (b) The Evaluation Office should continue its support for enhancing EHA capacity at decentralized levels.
- (c) EMOPS should follow through on its commitment to integrate humanitarian knowledge management within the organization.
- (d) The Evaluation Office should develop an approach to providing balanced evaluation coverage to meet UNICEF learning and accountability needs.

Thank you!

UNICEF Management Response follows...