

Inception Report

Real-Time Evaluation of UNICEF's Response to the Sa'ada Conflict in Northern Yemen

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Acronyms

CCCs	(UNICEF) Core Corporate Commitments for Children
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
EPRP	Emergency Preparation and Response Plan
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IT	Information Technology
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
OCHA	(United Nations) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

1 Context and objectives of the evaluation

1. The conflict between Al Houthi rebels and the Government in Northern Yemen has been ongoing in several phases since 2004. The latest round of fighting escalated in August 2009. The conflict has led to an estimated 200.000 to 350.000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and exacerbates an already difficult situation in the country as a whole with an estimated 1,4 million food insecure people, over 130.000 children suffering from malnutrition, unaddressed consequences of flash floods in 2008 and the presence of over 160.000 mainly Somali refugees in the country.

2. Since 2009, the humanitarian response of the international community, as well as of local and national actors, has been scaled up. A Flash Appeal launched in September 2009 raised 19 million US\$ (87,8% of total requested funds) and a Consolidated Appeal for 2010 requested 178 million US\$ (by the end of June 2010, 32,4% of this appeal was funded). A major constraint in relief operations has been the security situation in the Sa'ada Governorate, as well as parts of Amran and Al-Jawf where fighting took place. Since a ceasefire was concluded in February 2010 and with the re-opening of the joint UN office in Sa'ada City, assistance to the northern areas has been slowly increasing. Yet, access remains a strong constraint and humanitarian actors are preparing to scale up interventions once they gain full access.

3. UNICEF is a crucial actor in this response effort. It has a long-term local presence and a work programme agreed with the government (the 2007-2011 Programme of Cooperation). Within the emergency response, UNICEF has received a significant amount of funding: over 9 million US\$ since 2009 as of the end of June 2010, or around 10 percent of total humanitarian funding. UNICEF also plays a critical role as lead agency for the nutrition and WASH clusters, the child-protection sub-cluster and as co-lead for the education cluster.

4. As UNICEF prepares to further expand its activities in the Sa'ada Governorate, this evaluation will assess the performance of its relief activities to date by exploring what works, what doesn't and why in UNICEF's emergency response. As a Real-Time Evaluation, the primary focus of the evaluation will be on learning and on supporting UNICEF staff, primarily at local and capital level in improving the response.¹ A secondary objective of the evaluation is to strengthen accountability, primarily vis-à-vis beneficiaries and UNICEF staff and management.

¹ This follows the definition proposed in the ALNAP guide on real-time evaluations: "A real-time evaluation (RTE) is an evaluation in which the primary objective is to provide feedback in a participatory way in real time (i.e. during the evaluation fieldwork) to those executing and managing the humanitarian response." (Cosgrave et al., 2009, p. 10)

2 Evaluation scope and key questions

5. The evaluation will cover UNICEF's response to the conflict-related emergency in Northern Yemen from emergency preparedness activities before the outbreak of the last round of fighting in August 2009 to current operations and plans for the expansion of activities in the Sa'ada Governorate, as well as the transition to recovery and development. It will seek to involve all major stakeholders (cf. Annex A, for limitations, see section 5).

6. The evaluation will be oriented along the key questions and evaluation criteria outlined in the terms of reference. The following table provides an overview of the criteria and related questions as adapted from the sets of questions contained in the terms of reference:

Table 1: Evaluation criteria and related questions

Evaluation criteria	Key questions
Timeliness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How timely were immediate life-saving interventions and were there any significant delays in the response? 2. How timely was the deployment of additional technical and financial resources towards the response? 3. How well was UNICEF Yemen prepared to respond to the 6th round of the Sa'ada conflict (including measures taken towards the preparation of Government and partners, security, human resources, IT/Telecoms, supplies and logistics) and how well is it now prepared to respond to the humanitarian situation in the Sa'ada Governorate once access restrictions ease further? 4. What has been UNICEF's contribution to the response (especially in health, nutrition, WASH, education, protection and HIV/AIDS interventions)?
Appropriateness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. To what extent is the response meeting the priority needs of the population (as identified by the populations themselves, and in systematic needs assessments), adapted to local conditions and appropriate to the special needs of women, men, boys and girls and socially excluded groups? 6. Was the humanitarian response based on a planning process that allowed to identify, prioritize and address needs? How evidenced-based is the decision-making process for determining interventions? 7. How were initial approaches adapted to changing conditions / to what extent have initial approaches remained relevant with the passage of time / are there lessons being captured during the response and are these being used to inform, and shape interventions strategies, priorities and actions?

	8. How adequate has the Emergency Preparation and Response Plan (EPRP) been in guiding interventions and helping to address priority needs?
Effectiveness	9. How well is the response meeting the core corporate commitments for children (CCCs)? What if any outcome-level results have been observed, above and beyond the CCCs? 10. What, if any, unintended consequences, positive or negative, has the response had on local populations and local institutions? 11. To what extent is the response owned by the government and other national players?
Coverage	12. How well is the response reaching the affected population in terms of total coverage and vulnerable groups within affected populations as identified through needs assessments? 13. Do all priority groups have equal access to services provided?
Coordination	14. How well is the response coordinated, within clusters/sectors and cross-sectorally? 15. What other coordination mechanisms exist that have facilitated response?
Coherence	16. How well is the response converging with a common framework of priorities at inter-cluster and inter-agency level?
Connectedness	17. To what extent is UNICEF's emergency response shaped by a commitment to addressing longer term development issues and goals and how well is UNICEF Yemen prepared for the transition to recovery and development? 18. How do UNICEF's emergency activities link with and support the aims of the 2007-2011 Programme of Cooperation? 19. What level of preparedness exists for phasing out interventions in camps and supporting the return of IDP populations to their places of origin? 20. What linkages are being made to disaster and conflict prevention activities and other cross-cutting issues such as gender and human rights?
Efficiency	21. How effective has the country office been in resource mobilisation and leveraging to address the response and how effectively have internal and external resources been harnessed to achieve results?

	<p>22. Which alternative intervention strategies were used by UNICEF and other humanitarian actors, especially in the areas of WASH and nutrition, how cost-effective were / are they and what are their other advantages and downsides?</p>
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3 Methods

7. The Real-Time Evaluation will mainly employ qualitative methods and conduct quantitative analysis if and where relevant data are available. The following methods will be used:

8. **Document review.** During the inception, data gathering and analysis phases, the evaluation team will review relevant documentation on the response to the emergency in Northern Yemen. These will include among others:

- Appeal documents (Flash Appeal 2009, Consolidated Appeal 2010);
- Needs assessments and situation analyses;
- Internal UNICEF documents: strategies, plans, programmes, internal reports and lessons learned exercises; communications between UNICEF Yemen, the regional office and headquarters, as well as between UNICEF Yemen, OCHA, the Government, partners and implementing agencies;
- Documents of UNICEF implementing partners, especially applications, project proposals and project reports;
- Cluster documents (for Nutrition, WASH and Education), especially cluster strategies, workplans, monitoring data and lessons learned exercises or evaluations (where relevant also cluster meeting minutes);
- Evaluations and reviews, including cluster reviews, the review of the Consolidated Humanitarian Action Plan;
- UN Country Team and Humanitarian Country Team: needs assessments, strategy, planning and coordination documents, including meeting minutes.
- Policy analyses and background studies of think tanks
- Financial data

9. **Interviews.** The evaluation team will conduct semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders at local, capital, regional and headquarters level (phone interviews at the regional and headquarters level). See Annex C for draft interview guidelines.

10. **Group discussions.** To ensure an adequate inclusion of stakeholders in the evaluation process under the given time constraints, several group discussions will be organized, including with the different relevant clusters and sub-clusters, international NGOs, local NGOs and / or implementing partners. These group discussions will include dialogue-oriented methods in which participants are asked to write down their most positive, as well as their most problematic experiences or observations relating to UNICEF's work (strengths / weaknesses analysis). The groups will then work together to prioritize issues and develop ideas on how the problems could be addressed.

11. **Participatory exercises with affected populations.** The evaluation team will visit and arrange discussions with different groups of affected individuals. These will include IDPs and host populations, as well as affected populations in urban and rural areas, camp and non-camp settings. Due to time constraints, the selected groups of people will not be representative and only serve as spot-checks. The discussions will serve particularly to establish or cross-check the timeliness of interventions, the responsiveness to needs and unintended effects of the response. The discussions will be facilitated through participatory exercises, including timelines and needs prioritization exercises. When holding these discussions, the evaluation team will ensure that no UNICEF staff members or employees of UNICEF's partner organisations are present to avoid answers that are biased by the power relationship between UNICEF and the affected population. The team will strive for a good representation of women, children, and persons with special needs. If necessary, separate discussions will be held with women and children.

12. **Efficiency analysis.** In order to analyse the efficiency of UNICEF's response to the emergency in Northern Yemen, the evaluation team will focus on WASH and nutrition interventions. The team will employ a benchmarking approach. This will involve creating a list of alternative intervention strategies as employed by UNICEF, other international actors and local actors in Northern Yemen and seeking to establish an approximate cost-per-unit value for these strategies, assessing UNICEF, at least one actor employing the same strategies, and one actor per alternative strategy. The efficiency analysis will be complemented by a brief qualitative assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of the different strategies.

13. **Learning Workshops.** Since the primary goal of this evaluation is to facilitate learning and improve the ongoing response in-country, the evaluation will not just have formal debriefing sessions, but organise learning workshops with critical stakeholders. The exact composition and focus of the workshops will be determined during the course of the evaluation. They could for example include workshops with different sections of UNICEF Yemen (for instance senior management, nutrition, WASH, education, assessment teams, information management, etc.) or they could include a UNICEF internal workshop in addition to workshops with cluster members and implementing partners. Workshop participants will work together with the evaluation team to refine and expand recommendations. The groups will cross-check and validate interpretations and suggestions from the evaluation team and, where possible, agree steps for real time implementation of priority recommendations.

4 Timetable

The evaluation will be implemented in five phases:

Phase 1: Inception (until July 18th)

During the inception phase, the newly constituted evaluation team arranges logistics for the country trips, starts gathering and analysing relevant documents, reviews the terms of reference for the evaluation and develops the methodology and tools for the evaluation.

Output: Inception report. Draft submitted on July 14th. Final version July 19th.

Phase 2: Data gathering (July 12th – 28th)

In the data gathering phase, the evaluation team will collect relevant quantitative and qualitative data through document review, interviews, group discussions and participatory exercises with affected populations. The data gathering phase will begin in the week of July 12th and include an in-country phase, approximately from July 16th to July 28th.

Phase 3: Data analysis, interpretation and development of recommendations (July 29th – August 6th)

Following the gathering of data, the evaluation team will analyse and interpret the data and start developing recommendations. These preliminary findings will form the basis for further data triangulation as well as the learning workshops during the second in-country phase.

Output: Presentation with preliminary findings and recommendations; learning workshop programmes and facilitation schemes.

Phase 4: Learning workshops and triangulation (August 7th – 11th, plus later debriefings)

During a second phase in-country, the evaluation team will hold additional interviews to triangulate data or fill remaining information gaps and prepare and implement approximately 2-3 learning workshops. The workshops aim at including critical stakeholders in the refinement of recommendations in order to enhance ownership and feasibility. They will also include a remote debriefing (via video-conference) of UNICEF regional and headquarters staff.

Phase 5: Report writing and feedback (August 12th – September 10th)

After concluding the learning workshops, the evaluation team will draft a summary evaluation report following the draft outline in Annex C. The draft report will go through an internal peer review and quality control process. Following this, it will be circulated for feedback among crucial stakeholders for around ten days and their comments and suggestions will be reflected in a final version. The final version of the report will be available in English and Arabic.

Outputs: Draft report (August 24th); Stakeholder comments (September 3rd); Final report (September 10th)

5 Limitations

14. The implementation of the Real-Time Evaluation of UNICEF's response to the emergency in Northern Yemen faces several constraints and limitations, including:

- **Access and security.** The security conditions in Northern Yemen remain tense. The majority of interviews will therefore take place in Sana'a (where most international humanitarian actors are based) and include visits to only a few selected sites, most probably including in Amran and Hajjah.
- **Timing of the evaluation.** The evaluation takes place in July and August 2010. During the summer months, many humanitarian actors take leave. This might make it impossible to include certain actors in the evaluation process. In August, moreover, the Ramadan period begins, which is likely to severely restrict the possibilities for stakeholders in country to provide their feedback on the draft report. Possibilities for extending or shifting the timing of the evaluation were discussed with UNICEF, but no significant shift was possible as UNICEF wanted to maintain at least to some degree the real-time character of the evaluation.
- **Limited involvement of regional and headquarters staff of UNICEF.** While one of the guiding questions of the evaluation is to what extent and how effectively UNICEF's regional office and headquarters supported the response, no face-to-face interviews with regional and headquarters are planned due to budgetary reasons. The evaluation team will seek to conduct phone interviews with relevant staff members, yet the depth of information acquired cannot be expected to be the same. Likewise, at least some of the recommendations developed through the evaluation are likely to be directed at UNICEF's regional office and headquarters, yet no formal briefing or learning workshop with these stakeholders can be scheduled. To try and compensate for this omission, the evaluation team will offer to hold debriefing and learning workshops via videoconference.
- **No generation of quantitative data.** Especially relating to the evaluation criterion of efficiency, it will be necessary to conduct quantitative analysis. The evaluation team will not have the possibility to generate relevant quantitative data itself and therefore depends on the availability of relevant and reliable data, including those relating to UNICEF's activities and the operations of other humanitarian actors in country. The evaluation team will analyze available quantitative and financial data.
- **Potential lack of alternative intervention strategies.** In order to establish the cost-efficiency of UNICEF's interventions, the evaluation team is proposing a benchmarking exercise against intervention strategies used in

Northern Yemen by other actors. Implementing this benchmarking exercise will only be possible if such other strategies are currently being used.

Annex A: Stakeholders of the response

Through a preliminary stakeholder mapping exercise, we have identified the following key stakeholders to UNICEF's response to the emergency in Northern Yemen and will seek their input to the evaluation process:

- Populations affected by the conflict in Northern Yemen (IDPs, host populations and populations otherwise affected by the conflict)
- The Government of Yemen (local authorities, emergency offices of the central government, especially the High-Level Inter-Ministerial Committee for Relief Operations, the Technical Relief Committee and the Relief Committees at governorate level, UNICEF's development partners)
- UNICEF staff members (at local, capital, regional and headquarters level)
- UNICEF's partner organisations (implementing partners, cluster members, local and international NGOs, including the Charitable Society for Social Welfare, the Saleh Foundation, other UN agencies, Red Cross / Red Crescent)
- Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, OCHA, other cluster lead agencies, focal agencies for cross-cutting issues, Humanitarian and UN Country Teams
- Donors (e.g. United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, United States of America, CERF, European Commission and European member states, Japan)

Annex B: Draft outline evaluation report

Total length: ~ 30 pages, plus Annexes and executive summary

Executive summary, including a table with key findings and recommendations (~ 3 pages)

1. Country context (~ 3 pages)
 - Nature & history of the emergency
 - Description of humanitarian response (who, what, for how long?)
 - History and development of UNICEF's engagement in Northern Yemen
2. Purpose, scope and method (~ 2 pages)
3. Findings (~ 18 pages)
 - How well was UNICEF prepared for the sixth round of fighting in Northern Yemen, how timely was the response and which factors influence preparedness and timeliness?
 - How good and dynamic has UNICEF's planning process for the response been and in how far did its response address priority needs identified by the population. Which factors influence the appropriateness of UNICEF's response?
 - What has been UNICEF's contribution to the humanitarian response, what have been the outcomes of that response and what were its unintended consequences? Which factors influence coverage and the effectiveness of UNICEF's contribution to the response?
 - How well has the response been coordinated, through which mechanisms and what has been UNICEF's contribution to coordination? Are there common inter-agency priorities and learning mechanisms in place? Which factors influence the quality and effectiveness of clusters and other coordination mechanisms, as well as the coherence of the response?
 - How strongly is UNICEF's response linked to longer-term development goals and preparedness activities and how well is the organisation prepared for phasing out interventions in camps and expanding interventions in the Sa'ada district? Which factors influence the degree of connectedness?
 - How efficiently did UNICEF use available resources in the response and what alternative intervention strategies could have been used? Which factors influence the efficiency of UNICEF's response?
4. Conclusions and recommendations (~ 7 pages)
 - What worked in UNICEF's response to the emergency in Northern Yemen to date?

- What did not work in UNICEF's response to the emergency in Northern Yemen to date?
- Why?
- Which concrete priority steps should be taken by UNICEF to improve its response and activities in Northern Yemen?

Annex: List of persons interviewed and consulted and sites visited

Annex: Original Terms of Reference for the evaluation

Annex C: Draft interview guidelines for different stakeholders

1. UNICEF regional office and headquarters

- What kinds of support did you provide?
- How and for what kinds of support did UNICEF Yemen approach you?
- Were these requests grounded on a) an appropriate analysis of the situation and its developments and b) appropriate planning processes?
- Which major bottlenecks did you observe in UNICEF's response (headquarters, regional office, national office, field office, external constraints)?
- What are the three most important elements you would change, if you could, to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness, timeliness and appropriateness of UNICEF's response in Yemen?

2. UNICEF staff members at national office and field offices (not all questions will be posed to everybody; instead, the evaluation will seek to cover all questions with some opportunity for triangulation through different interviews and document analysis)

- When exactly did immediate life-saving interventions start in the field, how does this compare to other UNICEF operations and were there any significant delays in the response?
- When exactly were additional technical and financial resources deployed? Which ones? Were there any specific issues regarding that deployment?
- Has there been any preparedness measures taken before the outbreak of the 6th round of fighting in Sa'ada, and if so, which ones? Which preparedness measures have been taken now to prepare for an expansion of interventions into Sa'ada Governorate?
- Which interventions did UNICEF implement when, where and how?
- Were there needs assessments conducted and used for planning the response? Which ones and do they identify special needs of different priority groups?
- How were needs prioritized and that prioritization reflected in the response for each target group?
- How have lessons been captured and the response been adapted to changing conditions over time?
- How helpful has the Emergency Preparation and Response Plan (EPRP) been for guiding interventions?

- What evidence do you have regarding the outcomes and effects (intended and unintended) of interventions? What has been the coverage of meeting the needs of various groups?
- Which groups have been receiving what kinds of services from UNICEF and its partners?
- When and how have you worked with the government and other national players during preparedness activities, in the needs analysis, response planning and implementation?
- What has been your experience concerning the quality of cluster coordination and inter-cluster coordination (in terms of information sharing and management, join planning, synergies and cooperation in the field, regularity of meetings, participation, decision making processes, follow up on action points etc.)
- What other coordination mechanisms exist and how functional and helpful have they been?
- Are there any significant divergences in terms of priorities and operational approaches between the different humanitarian actors? What consequences do they have?
- How do UNICEF's emergency activities link to longer term development goals (especially the aims of the 2007-2011 Programme of Cooperation? Which steps have been taken to facilitate the transition to recovery and development?
- Which steps have been taken to prepare and implement the phasing out of interventions in camps and support the safe return of IDPs to their homes?
- How are cross-cutting issues such as disaster and conflict prevention, gender, human rights and the environment integrated in UNICEF's response?
- What has been done and what could have been done to mobilise resources?
- Where do you see missed past and present opportunities for using resources more efficiently?
- Which WASH and nutrition related life-saving interventions did UNICEF implement? Do you have detailed financial information for these interventions (if possible per beneficiary)?
- Do you know any other organizations employing alternative response strategies in WASH or nutrition?

- Which major problems and bottlenecks did you observe in UNICEF's response (HQ, regional office, national office, field office, external constraints)?
 - What are the three most important elements you would change, if you could, to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness, timeliness and appropriateness of UNICEF's response in Yemen?
3. **Cluster members** (most likely in group discussions, possibly as part of cluster meetings)
- How effective are cluster coordination and inter-cluster coordination from your experience?
 - What are the most important strengths concerning UNICEF's role in this cluster? (card exercise)
 - What are the aspects, approaches or way of working that need to be improved by UNICEF? (card exercise)
 - What are the most important recommendations you would like to make to UNICEF? (card exercise, discussion, prioritisation)
4. **UNICEF cooperation partners (actual and potential).** Interviews and / or group discussions will be conducted without the presence of UNICEF staff members and answers will be treated confidentially / not ascribed to any particular organization or individual.
- How do you currently work / not work with UNICEF? Why? (Only if individual interview)
 - What are the most important strengths of UNICEF as a partner / funder? (If group discussion: Card exercise)
 - What aspects, approaches or way of working that need to be improved by UNICEF? (card exercise if in group discussions)
 - What are the most important recommendations you would like to make to UNICEF? (If group discussion: Card exercise, discussion, prioritisation)
5. **Affected population.** Discussions will be held without the presence of UNICEF staff members or members of UNICEF's partner organizations.
- When did you receive support, what was it and who brought it to you (especially in WASH, nutrition, child protection, education, health)? (Timeline with major events and interventions)

- Which interventions and support are viewed positively (you are satisfied with in terms of quantity and quality), and which are viewed negatively and why? (Discussion)
- What were your priority needs as a result of the conflict and displacement, and which of these needs were the top priorities? (Poster and prioritization exercise). Which of these priority needs have been met and which have not been met?
- Are there any new aspects, issues, skills or behavioural practices you have learnt through awareness raising or training, which you value, and plan to adopt and continue with when you return home? If so what are they? What constraints or hurdles would you expect for adopting these practices at home?
- Is there anything special about UNICEF compared with other organisations that you may have known or heard of/ what makes UNICEF different from other aid organizations?

6. Government and local authorities

- What were your interactions with UNICEF prior to August 2009 in terms of situation analysis, preparedness activities, capacity building?
- How are you included / integrated in the planning and response activities of a) UNICEF's development-oriented activities, b) UNICEF's emergency operations, c) the WASH, nutrition, child protection and protection/education clusters?
- How do UNICEF's emergency activities link to longer term development goals? Which steps have been taken to facilitate the transition to recovery and development?
- Which steps have been taken to prepare and implement the phasing out of interventions in camps and support the safe return of IDPs to their homes?
- What do you see as UNICEF's main strengths?
- What aspects, approaches or ways of working need to be changed or improved by UNICEF to enhance its response? (card exercise if in group discussions)
- What changes would you recommend to UNICEF?

7. Service providers

- What kind of support has this facility received from UNICEF, and how do you view such support in terms of timeliness, quality and quantity?
- Has UNICEF implemented any capacity building measures? If yes, have they been effective?

- Have you been able to serve more people due to UNICEF's support? If yes, how many? How many IDPs remain without this service? What effect has the service on the lives of IDPs?
- How satisfied are IDPs with the service provided?
- What will happen to this facility when IDPs return home? Did UNICEF take this question into account when deciding on its support?

8. Donors

- What is the quality of data and analysis submitted by UNICEF?
- What is the quality of proposals submitted by UNICEF?
- Do you receive well coordinated proposals from clusters?
- Do you have evidence on the quality of projects implemented by UNICEF and its partners?