



Building Resilience in DRC: Linking the humanitarian and development sectors

Summary

DRC faces a chronic humanitarian crisis, which needs to be addressed by the right mix of humanitarian and development work. The sectors are currently very poorly coordinated, and more needs to be done to ensure that effective and longer term responses to chronic need are put in place. UK is leading the way in DRC. Suggested recommendations.

Context

DRC faces one of the most complex and enduring humanitarian crises in the world. At the start of 2012 there are an estimated 1.6 million displaced people in DRC, more than 4 million people facing severe food insecurity and 36 million people – over 50% of the population – without access to clean water¹. 43% of children under 5 are stunted due to malnutrition², one of the highest rates in the world. From December 2011 to January 2012 there were an estimated 150,000 new displacements in North and South Kivu provinces alone³. Armed groups regularly commit atrocities, including alarming levels of sexual violence⁴, against the civilian population.

Acute vs chronic need. Emergency needs generated by the activity of armed groups and by natural disasters in DRC will continue to require a traditional humanitarian response for many years to come. However, there are other emergencies – epidemics, food insecurity, malnutrition – which are caused by a combination of chronic state failure and extreme community vulnerability⁵. In DRC chronic vulnerability is the norm for much of the population. Addressing these types of emergencies in a longer-term way which builds lasting capacity and increases the ability of communities to withstand future shocks will reduce these communities' reliance on emergency assistance in the future.

Short term interventions are not solutions to long term problems. The concentration of humanitarian delivery capacity in the East has led to a certain proportion of short-term interventions in relatively stable locations where a longer-term approach focussed on community resilience might be more appropriate. The same communities often face the same types of crises year after year. The impact of recurring shocks can be reduced by responding in a smarter way at the outset, even if this makes the initial response more costly. Humanitarian actors are being asked to respond to a wide range of needs, not only addressing acute threats to lives and livelihoods but also supporting reintegration and livelihoods recovery. Ultimately, however, the short-term nature of humanitarian response, and its focus on acute vulnerability, means that it cannot provide the longer-term solutions required.

¹ DRC Humanitarian Action Plan 2012

² DRC Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2010, WHO

³ ECHO Crisis Report, DRC SitRep No1. February 2012.

⁴ *Estimates and Determinants of Sexual Violence Against women in the DRC*, American Journal of Public Health, 14 April 2011.

⁵ Darcy, J., Foliot, G. 'The limits of humanitarian action: WFP, food assistance and international aid in DRC', ODI 2009

Links between humanitarian and development sectors must be strengthened. Humanitarian and development responses in DRC are currently very poorly coordinated. There are separate coordination mechanisms for each sector, with currently no regular cross-representation. Information sharing and joint planning mechanisms are virtually non-existent. DFID is one of the only donors who manage their humanitarian portfolio as a part of their development programme. Without strengthened links between the development and humanitarian sectors we will be unsuccessful in building communities' resilience in DRC.

UK Response

DFID DRC has committed to develop a resilience strategy over the first half of 2012, building links between development, humanitarian and environmental interventions, and building an evidence base for the types of interventions which are effective in increasing communities' resilience. This is likely to include:

- Multi-year funding to humanitarian projects to enable more sustainable interventions which build resilience.
- Cash and voucher transfers. UNICEF's ARCC programme transfers cash and vouchers to displaced people, enabling them to access essential household and food items including those which help them to generate revenue. Evidence collected from this programme will help us design wider emergency cash transfer programmes which will enable the most vulnerable communities to withstand shocks.
- Longer term approaches to tackling malnutrition. We will provide predictable, multi-year support to UNICEF's provision of emergency feeding supplies for seriously malnourished children, linking with our health programme. We will work in communities with very high malnutrition rates to ensure that after emergency treatment, malnourished children and their families have the means and skills to prevent relapse, including access to tools and knowledge which will improve crop yields.
- Monitoring humanitarian outcomes. In a context of chronic need it is vitally important that the humanitarian system is accountable, and that we understand what humanitarian interventions achieve and leave behind. We will work to ensure that humanitarian interventions are properly evaluated and that lessons contribute to future design. We will also fund research into interventions which contribute towards building resilience.

Recommendations:

1. Encourage humanitarian and development sectors to work together more effectively. This needs to be hardwired into aid coordination mechanisms e.g. in DRC there should be permanent representation from the humanitarian donor group at the board of the donor coordination mechanism.
2. Reform the Common Humanitarian Fund to secure longer-term responses to chronic need, through an expanded multi-sectoral and multi-annual window for funding.
3. Avoid short-term humanitarian support where a longer term development approach is needed and, equally, do not apply development logic prematurely when people's needs are particularly acute.
4. Improve the impact evaluation of humanitarian action.
5. Take sustainability and context-appropriateness into account in humanitarian project selection.