

Multilateral Aid Review: Assessment of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

Summary	
Organisation: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)	Date: February 2011
Description of Organisation	
<p>The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is not a UN Agency but an entity within the UN Secretariat which supports the mobilization, funding, coordination and policy setting of humanitarian action in response to both protracted and rapid onset emergencies. OCHA is responsible for providing support to Humanitarian Coordinators who provide overall leadership of the international community's response in emergencies. In 2010, OCHA coordinated humanitarian appeals at country and global level to a value of almost US\$10 billion for the UN System. Its own operational budget is US\$240m. The Head of OCHA is the Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. Including UN volunteers, it has a staff of almost 1,900 worldwide.</p> <p>OCHA's mandate comes from resolution 46/182 [of December 1991]. The mandate is one which has no operational authority but rather it has an advocacy and co-ordination role for the humanitarian system. This by definition means that OCHA can rarely deliver on its own, but requires the support of the key operational agencies, who are independent and have far larger budgets and resources than OCHA. This often presents a real challenge for OCHA particularly where the UN structure provides few incentives for agency cooperation. Despite UN structural challenges OCHA still performs its critical role as an advocate, facilitator and co-ordinator for the entire humanitarian system, and a driver of the humanitarian reform agenda.</p>	

Contribution to UK Development Objectives	Score (1-4)
<p>1a. Critical Role in Meeting International Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Clear and unique humanitarian mandate (Resolution 46/182), global reach and a pivotal leadership role at the heart of UN system. – Inconsistent performance in leadership, cluster coordination and staffing = OCHA received a score of 4 because in spite of many of the challenges it faces, it continues to play a unique and critical role in delivering international humanitarian objectives. 	<p>Strong (4)</p>
<p>1b. Critical Role in Meeting UK Aid Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + OCHA carries out work that supports UK priority objectives for governance and security, meeting humanitarian needs, delivery of MDGs and climate change. 	<p>Strong (4)</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + OCHA is key to delivering an improved and more effective humanitarian response. - There is scope for improvement in OCHA's performance in supporting effective, accountable, and efficient provision for humanitarian assistance = Given the close links and critical nature of OCHA's work with UK priority objectives, the organisation has received a score of 4. 	
<p>2. Attention to Cross-Cutting Issues:</p> <p>2a. Fragile Contexts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + OCHA has extensive experience of working in complex situations, fragile states and conflict affected states. + They tailor their approach to each situation. = OCHA performs well in fragile contexts, with extensive experience working in such areas and with a flexible approach to their work in fragile states. <p>2b. Gender Equality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + All OCHA regional and country offices and HQ branches are required to develop implement and report on a Gender Action Plan (GAP) and OCHA is rolling out the Gender Marker Programme in all country offices in 2011. - The 2009 OCHA Meta-Evaluation showed a perceived lack of gender mainstreaming. = Despite a Gender Action Plan and a Gender Marker Programme, gender has yet to be mainstreamed across all of OCHA's activities. <p>2c. Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + OCHA has increased monitoring mechanisms to help support analysis of climate change on vulnerable populations at regional and national level. + OCHA has close ties with the UN International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) - Lack of evidence that climate change adaptation is mainstreamed through OCHA's work = OCHA has monitoring mechanisms to look at the impact of climate change on vulnerable populations and close lines with UNISDR, but climate change adaptation policies have yet to be thoroughly mainstreamed through OCHA's work. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Strong (4)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Satisfactory (3)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Satisfactory (3)</p>
<p>3. Focus on Poor Countries¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + OCHA is active in those countries deemed to have the greatest humanitarian need (through UN Country Appeals process and ECHO crisis index) and spends a sizable 	<p style="text-align: center;">Strong (4)</p>

¹ Humanitarian agencies have been assessed according to their focus on countries with the greatest humanitarian need

<p>proportion of its budget in these contexts.</p>	
<p>4. Contribution to Results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Reform package of 2006 strengthened UN leadership, coordination and established the CERF and country level pooled funds. – Staffing problems are common in many contexts, hampering OCHA’s ability to deliver. – The UN Secretariat’s relationship with OCHA, and the humanitarian system as a whole often compromise OCHA’s ability to deliver its mandate. – Need for OCHA to strengthen its performance in inter-cluster coordination and inter-cluster information management and analysis. = OCHA has often failed to meet the targets and objectives it sets for itself. This has been due to various structural and procedural constraints placed on OCHA. As a result we have given the organisation a score of 2. 	<p>Weak (2)</p>
<p>Organisational Strengths</p>	<p>Score (1-4)</p>
<p>5. Strategic and Performance Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + OCHA has a multi-year global Strategic Framework, an Annual Plan and country-level plans. + OCHA responds to evaluation recommendations, but at times the implementation of recommendations is limited due to internal constraints. – As OCHA is part of the UN Secretariat it does not have an Executive Board (it is accountable to the Secretary General and the General Assembly). – The OCHA Donor Support Group (OSDG) is not a body that officially holds OCHA to account. – OCHA suffers from some serious staffing issues including a lack of staff capacity and a high turnover rate. = Although OCHA has some plans and frameworks in place, it is still hampered by structural issues, reducing its ability to deliver effectively. 	<p>Weak (2)</p>
<p>6. Financial Resources Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + OCHA has annual financial plans in place and conforms to UN secretariat rules on fiduciary risk, anti-corruption and is subject to external audits. + Strong management of the CAP process, with work to develop the CAPs into more strategic documents. – Weak monitoring of some projects and reallocation of funds. – Financial management systems not clear at the country level. = A score of 2 reflects OCHA’s need to strengthen its own internal financial resource management. 	<p>Weak (2)</p>

<p>7. Cost and Value Consciousness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Operates within strict tendering rules for procurement. – OCHA has only just begun to seriously consider the issue of VfM. – OCHA has regularly faced funding shortfalls which has led to the organisation being forced to reduce its operations and reduce the extent to which it delivers against its mandate = While OCHA has recognised and is addressing cost control issues, given the extent of improvement still needed in this area we have awarded OCHA a score of 2 	<p style="text-align: center;">Weak (2)</p>
<p>8. Partnership Behaviour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + OCHA's mandate requires it to establish and maintain a comprehensive network of diverse partners at both headquarters and the field, and it does this effectively. + The Emergency Response Coordinator, leads the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and is part of the leadership team of the Global Humanitarian Platform. OCHA also facilitates the ECOSOC humanitarian segment. + OCHA manages a range of country level pooled funding mechanisms that support joined-up working amongst actors and foster stronger partnerships. – Room for the organisation to strengthen its partnerships with UN agencies in particular, through increasing its reliability in fulfilling its coordination, information management and advocacy role at the field level. = OCHA has scored a 3 to reflect the breadth, complexity and quality of the partnerships it maintains, and the work still to do in developing these further. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Satisfactory (3)</p>
<p>9. Transparency and Accountability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + OCHA is financially accountable to the UN secretariat. At a programmatic country level, it provides presentations and reports on its work and that of the UN humanitarian system more broadly to the UN SG, and UN member states through the UN General Assembly. + It also provides briefings on humanitarian emergencies and its own activities in specific emergencies to the UN Security Council. – We could not find evidence of a disclosure policy or redress for grievances at a local level. – OCHA is not part of the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International (HAPI) initiative and has not undergone peer reviews on accountability to emergency-affected populations. = While OCHA maintains reasonable levels of transparency, 	<p style="text-align: center;">Weak (2)</p>

<p>their accountability structure is relatively weak. We have therefore awarded OCHA 2 for this area of its work.</p>	
Likelihood of Positive Change	Score (1-4)
<p>10. Likelihood of Positive Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + We are able to exert some influence over OCHA through participation to the ODSG and bilaterally. + We expect that OCHA management, now under the leadership of a new Emergency Relief Coordinator (Valerie Amos), will continue to be receptive to ideas for making the organisation even more effective. - Many of the restrictions faced by OCHA are structural. The Emergency Relief Coordinator's ability to make changes for the better is therefore dependent to a large extent on the cooperation of UN agencies. - Continued comments from various sources on staffing issues suggest OCHA is still failing to tackle these areas and bring about necessary changes in a reasonable timeframe. = OCHA has scored a 3 to reflect the fact a change of top leadership is likely to make it more receptive to reform, but that its capacity for change is somewhat hampered. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Likely (3)</p>