Thematic synthesis report on evaluation of humanitarian action

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

It is intended to inform discussions about the **evaluation of humanitarian action (EHA)** undertaken by UNICEF – 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

• UNICEF’s work on evaluation of humanitarian action has increased in recent years, producing high quality reports on major emergencies – prompting systematic management consideration, follow up and action.

⚠ But coverage is low and does not fully meet UNICEF’s humanitarian accountability and learning needs:
  - Few evaluations have been commissioned to focus on the results achieved for children and women through humanitarian action.
  - Small-scale (Level 1) country level emergencies have not been evaluated.

• EHA has largely been a headquarters endeavour.
• Joint and inter-agency exercises have become prominent.
Number and percentage of EHAs and other evaluations, 2008-2012:

- 2008: 35 EHAs, 1 Other
- 2009: 100 EHAs, 15 Other
- 2010: 90 EHAs, 20 Other
- 2011: 97 EHAs, 26 Other
- 2012: 73 EHAs, 14 Other
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 the participation of stakeholders, including affected persons.

⚠️ UNICEF is not effectively managing the flood of information generated in and on emergencies.
Have evaluations led to positive changes?

- Survey responses indicate that the quality and usefulness of EHAs have improved overall in the period under review.
- Three examples (Haiti, Sahel, DFID grant) illustrate UNICEF’s use of evaluation to improve its humanitarian work in important ways.
- 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

- Has declined significantly: 7%
- Has declined somewhat: 8%
- Has stayed the same: 15%, 13%
- Has improved somewhat: 31%, 66%
- Has improved significantly: 46%, 13%
(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…