SOUTH SUDAN REGIONAL CRISIS
REAL TIME EVALUATION, South Sudan
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FINAL

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Background[1]

On the 15th of December 2013 fighting erupted in Juba and spread to 6 out of 10 States in South Sudan. Unity, Jonglei and Upper Nile were particularly affected, with civilian displacement to Lakes and Warrap States among others. The latest UN OCHA[2] sitrep estimates that 716,100 people are internally displaced within South Sudan, and 156,800 have moved to the neighbouring countries of Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia. Access to the affected populations, despite an agreed ceasefire, has been extremely difficult. There are now concerns that the ceasefire has been broken, with reported fighting on 18th February in Malakal, an area where Oxfam staff were working. The situation in country is very uncertain, with agencies lobbying for humanitarian access to civilians who have fled their homes often with nothing. Due to the lack of access, basic needs for many are not being met. There are high levels of concern due to the coming rainy season, which will further delay humanitarian assistance to remote locations.

OGB is lead affiliate of the category 2 response[3], with CLT members and implementing affiliates Novib and Intermon. The programme is based on a response strategy with 2 EP&R teams, and 6 medium/long term locations (2 intermon, 4 OGB). Until now the response has been largely operational, with a planned move to integrate existing Oxfam partners. The response focuses on WASH, EFSVL and Advocacy, and is planning to integrate protection and gender over the coming months. OGB is currently working in UN House in Juba, and is handing over to Intermon in Awerial at the end of February. Assessments to new locations will be carried out as access opens.

The total funded budget for the South Sudan part of the regional response is for 5,506,793 GBP, which totals 48% of the overall budget.

The objectives of the Response are:[4]
- To reduce morbidity and mortality by delivering humanitarian assistance in WASH and EFSL to up to 15% of those affected by the current conflict or around 200-250,000 whichever number is greater.
- To ensure that the humanitarian assistance provided by Oxfam and others promotes the protection of civilians and gender empowerment.
- To influence decision-makers to ensure adequate quantity and quality of humanitarian assistance.
- To influence decision-makers to address the underlying causes and immediate impact of the current conflict

The Real Time Evaluation:[5]
The Primary Objectives of the RTE are:
1. To identify good practices so far
2. To identify weaknesses in program implementation
3. To make recommendations on how the program might be revised to address those weaknesses and improve quality of implementation

Where 'Oxfam' is mentioned the report refers to the response as a whole. Where the report focuses on different affiliates, they will be mentioned as OGB, Intermon or Novib.

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[1] South Sudan Generic Concept Note, January 2014
[2] South Sudan crisis situation report, OCHA, 17 February 2014
[3] This was re-confirmed as a category 2 emergency on 6th January 2014 at the recommendation of the South Sudan Country Team
[4] Oxfam Joint Response Strategy, 12 January 2014
[5] See RTE TOR Annex one

Executive Summary

It is clear that the teams, both in country and in the wider Oxfam community, have worked extremely hard and shown dedication and determination during the first phase of the response, despite working in challenging and frustrating conditions. The team should be congratulated. The overall impression of the evaluation is that the speed of the programme has been rapid, bringing immediate assistance to the affected communities that Oxfam could reach. In doing so, the team has solidified an excellent external reputation that can now be built on for the future of the response. However, this should not detract from the fact that the programme strategy has an ambitious scope and the programme will get larger, and more complicated.   There are significant gaps in the management structure, and the overall capacity of the team to manage a larger, complex programme in an extremely changeable and insecure environment.   Moving forward, key findings and recommendations from the RTE are:

1. Programme, Country and Regional Management raise concerns about the **scale, and future scale,** of the current programme, however this is currently considered appropriate to the level of humanitarian access. Oxfam has plans in place to expand to new areas as soon as the security situation allows more freedom of movement.
2. The response strategy is very ambitious and care has to be taken not to overstretch the capacity of the team. The current management capacity in OGB, as lead affiliate, is **not sufficient to adequately manage the expansion of the current programme**, and the different dimensions of the Oxfam response. The next two months is crucial to ensure an appropriate structure to safely and responsibly manage the programme. High risk.
3. There are multiple key positions currently vacant in the team. It is imperative that the Field Coordinators and Technical Coordinators are highly experienced in their field, have sound management skills, and are used to working in insecure environments. The ability of Oxfam to **recruit highly competent staff** to fit the programme ambitions is one of the highest priority areas, and one of the highest risks for the organisation.
4. The EP&R strategy is well known by the team, and widely accepted. However, the strategy was written for a different context and must be re-visited to ensure its appropriateness. There are a number of risks associated with the 3 month limitation on the EP&R team programmes, which could **compromise Oxfam's programme quality standards**.
5. **Exit from current programme areas has not been sufficiently planned**, and needs to be done responsibly and with a clear timeframe. This should include clear standards and indicators for handover, such as capacity of partners, quality and stage of the Oxfam technical response, and critical milestones of the programme.
6. Oxfam currently has a **good external reputation** for speed of movement and quality of water provision in the first phase of the response, although concerns were raised with regard to safe programming and gender. It is important that programme quality (working towards SPHERE standards, responsible coordination and exit) is not compromised due to the desire to constantly respond rapidly. In sites visited by the RTE team, the technical standard of the WASH hardware, and the EFSVL programme, were at a suitable and expected level for this stage of the response. However, there is significant room for improvement to bring the WASH programme up to Oxfam and international standards, which can only be done with more time and proper planning.
7. The Country Team acknowledges the **lack of planning and communication**. Senior managers in country react quickly to a changing environment, but decisions are not adequately communicated to the rest of the team, which has caused confusion. The rainy season is a cause of high concern for staff, compounded by the lack of certainty about the current volatile situation in the country. As a result of

discussions with the team, a planning workshop will take place in the first week of March, which is an extremely positive move.

8. While valuable progress is being made by separate sectors, there is confusion and a plethora of lost opportunities due to the **segregation** of WASH and EFSVL. Protection and Gender are currently weakly represented in the programme, and Oxfam has a larger role to play in **advocating for beneficiaries' rights** in areas where the organisation has not been allocated a lead role by the cluster system (space, shelter, NFIs, relocation, protection)

9. A new advocacy strategy and a media and communications strategy were drafted for the response – the objectives in these strategies are widely perceived to be useful. There is however a perceived disconnect between Oxfam's advocacy messages outside the country and those being used in South Sudan. This disconnect is now becoming evident to external stakeholders, potentially jeopardising **impact of the messages**, and there is an urgent need for agreement on a unified direction.

10. Commendable progress has been made on the Security Management plan, information gathering and analysis. However staff involvement in the creation of the security guidelines and SOPs has been minimal, and the security procedures and protocols are not embedded in the ways of working of the team. **Day to day security management is not sufficient for the context**. The sharing of security information to the wider team still requires a significant amount of work.

BENCHMARK ONE: The speed and timeliness of the response has been good relative to other actors, with consideration of emergency preparedness measures in place

A) Contingency Planning and Preparedness for Current Crisis

a) Contingency planning was carried out as part of the Key Country process and comprised of a 2 day workshop involving the whole team in June 2013[6]. The OGB decision to change to an EP&R structure was discussed at the contingency planning event, with the objective of freeing up capacity to allow the organisation to respond quickly to emergencies, which were expected to increase. The team were in the process of recruiting the EP&R team when the current conflict began and there was already an important buy-in to the structure and response philosophy.

b) Despite the low levels of international staff at the beginning of the response, many national staff had been freed up by the recent scale-down of the Maban programme and, depending on ethnicity, were available for immediate deployment to affected areas.

c) The scale of the problem was reported as unexpected for all stakeholders, including other external actors. However the team had discussed the political situation during the contingency planning process and had concluded that 2014 may be a volatile year. This had been highlighted by members of the advocacy team, who had urged the importance of looking at political indicators for change as well as programme indicators.

d) There was no Oxfam contingency stock in Juba, which caused delays, but the team were able to borrow from other agencies to be able to respond quickly. Despite the fast response time, it was felt that early capacity to respond quickly and independently was hampered by the need to source basic materials in country.

e) New staff brought in for the current response report that they have not seen the contingency plan, and other key strategy documents. New staff are currently expected to hit the ground running, but this is not backed up with proper communication of programme documents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. As part of the general planning process, the contingency plan needs to be urgently updated to reflect the change in context, the upcoming rainy season and the changes in Oxfam response capacity. The *process* of the contingency planning is as important as the final document, so as many staff as possible should be involved (including support staff).

2. A rapid gender analysis should be done to inform the contingency plan and ensure that women's rights are central to the process. The preparedness plan should include training for staff and partners on Gender in Emergencies.

3. A reading pack of important documents to be compiled by the HPM, sent to staff by HR before deployment and referred to in the induction.

B) Context analysis

a) General and political context analysis is good – senior humanitarian staff know the country and have worked in South Sudan for a long time. Many national staff have been with Oxfam for a number of years in different programmes and are trusted sources of information. Communication and information sharing on context analysis could be improved and opportunities are missed by management to get contextual and programmatic updates from their team as the practice of team meetings and discussions has been lost.

b) Discussions are on-going about ensuring external perceptions of Oxfam's impartiality and neutrality. This needs to be more explicit and involve the whole team.

c) Due to the lack of a Protection Advisor or a Gender Advisor, there is insufficient information on protection and gender to inform programme policy and programming. A

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[6] South Sudan Contingency Plan July-December 2013

push to carry out programme activities as quickly as possible has meant a below standard level of consultation with the community, which is a missed opportunity for first hand information on context, and has implications for the appropriateness and ownership of activities by beneficiaries.

C) **Speed and scale of response**

a) The majority of Oxfam staff interviewed, and all external stakeholders interviewed considered the initial Oxfam response to be very fast. Oxfam was one of the few INGOs who remained throughout the initial fighting in Juba, and this decision to maintain a presence of key staff was essential to delivering support to the affected populations. The decision to stay has had a significant positive impact on the organisation's external reputation, as well as the Oxfam team's spirits.

b) The initial response was resourceful and energetic in extremely difficult circumstances. The team's commitment to the response, and the ongoing humanitarian programme, is very positive, as is their ability to remain flexible due to the rapidly changing context. OGB and Intermon staff worked together as one team during the initial first weeks, which helped to solidify working relations.

c) Speed of movement in the initial response for assessments was hampered by strict and confusing security justification procedures within the organisation. The management team spent a lot of time getting authorisation up through the line and did not always understand the information required or the correct authorisation procedures. The deployment of an HSP Security Officer has been instrumental in speeding up the process. Although procedures have now been clarified, there is still a perceived lack of trust and a reluctance to delegate security decisions to the CD.

d) During the first 4 weeks of the response, a significant amount of management time was spent on teleconferences, and Oxfam staff from a South Sudan, the RC and HD report that time was wasted arguing over the number of essential staff who should be allowed to stay in, or travel to, Juba. This has been referred to by many as a 'numbers game'. It has been reported that many of these frequent discussions lost sight of *who* was essential for the running of the programme. Focus from senior management not in country was on the need to ensure evacuation for staff, which resulted in authorisation for a lower number of 'essential' staff only. However, the team in South Sudan feel that they were not listened to or trusted to come up with practical plans with safe alternatives to evacuate a higher number of staff.[7]

e) In contrast to the speed of the first phase of the emergency, Oxfam now runs the risk of falling behind in new areas if other NGOs are more proactive on assessments. For example, it is Oxfam's strategic plan to move the EP&R team to Malakal, however the only lead of sector that has not been already allocated to other NGOs by the cluster, is PHP. Other INGOs are already in place in UN compounds in other affected areas, waiting for security clearance to leave the PoC areas into the towns.

f) The current **scale of emergency** activity is considered appropriate for the current level of access, however the current response is *not* appropriate to the overall need of the affected population[8]. In order to maintain an acceptable scale of programme, the organisation needs to ensure that it is ready to move to strategic new areas *as soon as* access becomes possible. However, this should not be to the detriment of programme quality, and OGB should hand over current programmes responsibly.

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[7] Daily teleconferences were held initially, then reduced to 3 a week and now stand at 2 a week. The Deputy Regional Director was able to take the lead on this in country during the first 2/3 weeks to free up time for the rest of the team to respond.

[8] An estimated 707,404 displaced inside South Sudan, another 149,700 have fled to nearby countries – OCHA South Sudan Crisis Situation Report no 19 13 February 2014

g) Recognising the complexity of the response, and the desire for quality programming, the programme strategy[9] aims to reach up to 15%[10] of the affected population. [11]This also factors in Oxfam's organisational capacity to respond in the harder to reach areas, leaving closer and potentially easier areas for smaller organisations. However, care has to be taken to ensure that the implementation of the EP&R rapid response strategy does not undermine the programme quality objectives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. For high risk countries such as South Sudan, a <u>pre-agreed</u> list of 'essential' staff positions should be drawn up as part of the contingency plan, with different limits on numbers and posts to correspond to different scenarios. This work has now been done for South Sudan[12], for different locations, and should be reviewed regularly as more international staff move into the country and priorities change. Technical support on this should be made available from both the OGB HD and RC security advisers, and other affiliates, to ensure agreement across the organisation. It is important that staff are made aware of their status for evacuation as this can cause distress during an already tense evacuation process.
2. Oxfam management in Juba need support to act quickly on the movement to *strategic* new areas, and need to plan team capacity to allow for them to input in different sectors from the beginning. (EFSVL, Protection). Movement should be strategic and practical to ensure that the organisation can back up assessments in new locations with response capacity in order to maintain quality of response and external reputation.
3. Team Leaders need to be informed in advance of movement to new locations so that they can rapidly move their programme teams accordingly and ensure that they are communicating a unified message at coordination meetings.

D) <u>Future Planning</u>

a) The humanitarian response plan is considered ambitious, given the complex context, the desire for constant rapid movement to new areas, the high levels of risk and the need to redefine the development programme and longer term partnerships. Concerns were raised by staff about Oxfam's ability to carry out such an ambitious strategy.
b) The current plan is for 2 EP&R teams to have a mandate to respond to new emergencies in country (approx 19 members in each team – 3 month maximum stay in each area)[13]. This is part of a wider ECHO funded programme in South Sudan and is a pre-agreed formula which Oxfam and other partners work with. Oxfam's original plan was for one team and has been expanded to two, in light of the recent increase in emergency locations and also the need for sensitive geographical deployment on the grounds of staff ethnicity. This strategy has a good acceptance level among the South Sudan team and other areas of the organisation, as well as externally (pre-current crisis). However, the strategy was written with Category 3 emergencies in mind and may not be entirely appropriate, in its previous form, in the current context.[14]
c) The team are aware that the **<u>rainy season</u>** will begin in March/April and the need to plan for it. Feedback from the team is that the planning for the rainy season is usually done too late, and there is a very high level of concern among all levels of staff given the unusually complex context this year.

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[9] Joint Oxfam Response Strategy, 12 January 2014

[10] Against an organisational benchmark of 25% for a rapid onset – Oxfam Humanitarian Commitments RD02

[11] With current estimates at 707,404 this suggests a forecast of increased need over the coming months.

[12] Oxfam Security Management Plan Annex A2, evacuation plan Juba

[13] Joint Oxfam Response Strategy, 12 January 2014

[14] Review of Emergency Preparedness and Response Team June 2013

d) Due to the uncertainty of the situation (security, humanitarian access) there is a general feel of inability to plan for the conflict response further than the next few weeks/months throughout the sector – the OCHA planning period is for 6 months but their planning is vague.

e) <u>Immediate planning</u>: Decisions to leave or hand over areas appear to be made on deadlines to fit in with the 3 months EP&R strategy time-frames, and the decision to free up staff for harder to reach areas.

f) <u>Short/Medium term humanitarian</u>: There is a general confusion among many staff members about the short and medium term response strategy. Decisions are made by management in a fast moving environment, and not always communicated clearly to the team. Team members are often sent to work in an area, then moved without consultation with the team leader or field coordinator, resulting in an inability to plan effectively and confusion due to insufficient handover time.

g) <u>Longer term humanitarian</u>: The EP&R team has likely ECHO funding for another 16 months, which will result in them being deployed in approximately 8/9 new locations during that time period (taking into account time for recruitment, gaps between deployment, and access issues). Of these EP&R responses, only 4 will be considered for longer term engagement by Oxfam GB and 2 for Intermon[15] with the assumption that other engagements will be short term, handed over to partners or stand-alone responses.

EP&R Risks[16]:

- There is a management push to hand over the current OGB locations (Awerial, UN House Juba) as soon as possible, to free up staff for new areas – however, given the increase in INGOs now back in the country, and the perceived race for strategic geographical positions, new areas for Oxfam may not open up quickly resulting in 2 large teams with no programme.
- The EP&R time frame of 3 months for assessments, implementation and handover is very short in the current environment when there is a high level of confusion in coordination, uncertain movement due to security constraints, questionable staff capacity due to key post gaps and an impending rainy season. <u>There is a significant risk that Oxfam will not be able to maintain organisational quality standards.</u>[17] (see section E on Exit)
- Given the short timeframe, there is a risk of not finding a partner and/or leaving poor quality work behind in the drive to keep moving to new locations to satisfy the EP&R framework. Oxfam may be compromising the integrity of the new organisation if teams are not able to hand over responsibly.
- The short timeframe of EP&R particularly affects EFSVL and market based approaches, which take more time to assess and implement meaningfully.
- The current structure and future recruitment challenges may result in key posts being vacant at any given time, particularly given the demanding rotation for R&R. The EP&R strategy is ambitious and the posts will need to be fully filled.
- Many in the team felt concerned that Oxfam GB does not have the capacity to respond in 4 locations at one time with the current structure, particularly at a senior management level.

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[15] Minutes from Meeting on South Sudan Response – OGB and Intermon 27 January 2014

[16] Please see additional EFSVL concerns in Annex 4

[17] "we need to set up the camp with a good understanding of the length of time it will be there and for systems to be resilient to any local conditions to establish functional services and environmentally sustainable. If there are existing experienced agencies in place then handover may take place soon after this however, this is very rare" Oxfam Guidelines for deciding how long Oxfam remains engaged in refugee and IDP camps, Nov 2012

E) Exit plans

a) The OGB team do not have a clear idea on programme standard indicators for exit or non-negotiables for hand over. (We are moving out quickly because we said we would leave by a certain date rather than clear handover or programme quality milestones)

b) Continued support to both Awerial and UN House is unclear.
   - In UN House OGB has bilaterally agreed to hand over WASH to Solidarités, however at the time of the evaluation this had not been confirmed with the WASH cluster resulting in general confusion. Without this basic information in place, it is not realistic for the programme to be immediately (within a few weeks) handed over. It is also possible the date might need to be re-evaluated technically due to the works in water supply which may include contracted drilling of a BH, storage tanks yet to be delivered from Oxford, and construction of small distribution system, all of which contains hard to control external elements. This handover depends on the technical quality levels that the team decide are appropriate during discussions.
   - Intermon is currently carrying out recruitment, delivering supplies and receiving hand over for Awerial. This is planned to take place by the end of February. It is currently not clear whether Intermon will continue to take on the WASH cluster focal point role when OGB hands over or what further technical support will be appropriate.

c) The EP&R review carried out in June 2013[18] stated the importance of defining clear exit criteria for EP&R responses. This was also cited as an issue during the April 2012 exit and evaluation from Lakes (Rumbek and Yirol) and Unity (Leer and Mayendit) with high expectations from communities which were not met by Oxfam. [19]

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Immediate full team discussion and clarification on hand over of current programmes (all sectors), areas of assessment, and short and medium term plans for new areas (Malakal, Jonglei). This should include clear standards and indicators for handover, such as capacity of partners, quality and stage of the Oxfam technical response, and critical milestones of the programme.

2. Clear discussion between OGB and Intermon on the Intermon potential role as WASH cluster focal point in Awerial.

3. A rapid review meeting of the EP&R structure with ECHO and other EP&R agencies, to ensure appropriateness to the current crisis.

4. EP&R team should start looking for and working with an appropriate partner from the beginning of their engagement, to ensure that the emergency response strategy aligns with their longer term engagement plans and runs according to requirements of quality and scale.

BENCHMARK 2: Relief provided is of a quality and scale appropriate to the context that would be expected of Oxfam's capacity and is accountable to and valued by the affected population

A) Technical observations

a) External perceptions of the quality of Oxfam's work in water provision are high, including among donors and cluster leads. The level of acceptable response during the early phase of a response in the current programme areas now needs to improve to meet

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[18] Review of Emergency Preparedness and Response Team June 2013

[19] Also see Oxfam Guidelines for deciding how long Oxfam remains engaged in refugee and IDP camps, November 2012

Oxfam Global Quality standards in the next phase,[20] in order not to lose the excellent reputation that the speed of response has earned the team.

b) Technical observations during the RTE found that the WASH response is *working towards* meeting SPHERE standards for water both in Juba and in Awerial, and for sanitation in Juba[21]. The quality of the hardware is appropriate for this stage of the response, and now requires improvement in order to ensure that a full range of SPHERE standards are considered, particularly on protection, community consultation and gender, not just the water supply indicator (see Annex 4 for more detailed WASH, Protection and Gender recommendations). This is in line with Oxfam's position paper on engagement in IDP and refugee camps[22]. Beneficiaries voiced appreciation of the water and latrine provision in both UN House and Awerial

c) There is only a first level understanding by the PH team of who the beneficiaries are, and what they feel and need. In UN House, no water users' survey has been done, and appropriate data is not available on PHP. There is a significant gap on women's requirements, concerns, dignity and leadership. With this in mind, it is not possible for the organisation to satisfy itself that standards are being met. There is a lack of technical leadership (despite an HSP PHP on site), which results in the PHE and PHP officers being unable to take their work to a higher level of analysis.

d) In general, consultation and involvement of communities, particularly women, has been weak in the response, with responsibility given to leaders to allocate sites for water points and latrines, to choose members of focus group discussions, to identify vulnerable groups and to provide feedback on activities. Teams understand the need for community consultation and for inclusion of women and vulnerable groups but claim that they have not had time for this. Community Health Promoters are paid to clean sites; the community are not yet taking responsibility for this. All this has impacted on community ownership and the appropriateness of the response to community needs, and can be worked on.

e) Consideration of protection and gender[23] are widely recognised by the team to be lacking in the WASH response, and this has affected analysis in the field as well as the quality of our response. This is despite appearing prominently in the response strategy[24].

f) There appears to be a general understanding of who Oxfam is[25], and what Oxfam does, among beneficiaries interviewed. This is important for future perceptions of neutrality and independence.

g) After an appropriate initial support to WFP food distributions, the EFSVL intervention has been more considered and strategic. The WFP food distributions in UN House have comprised largely of CSB, which have resulted in negative feedback from the affected populations and requests to Oxfam to intervene. Oxfam has a role to play in advocacy, even in sectors and locations where we are not the lead agency. The team needs to ensure capacity to collect data and analyse the food security situation, and its potential deterioration.

h) As part of the EFSVL programme, a rapid vulnerability analysis was done to allow for more appropriate targeting. Where possible, gender and protection were taken into account and the aim was for the most vulnerable beneficiaries to be targeted for a pilot

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[20] https://sumus.oxfam.org/humanitarian-area/wiki/humanitarian-dossier

[21] There is a common misunderstanding about SPHERE standards and indicators among the team

[22] "Our experience suggests that where people will be living in camps for a protracted period of time then it will take 3 months to set up basic WASH facilities and 6 months to consolidate to Sphere Indicators" Guidelines for deciding how long Oxfam remains engaged in refugee and IDP camps, November 2012

[23] https://sumus.oxfam.org/humanitarian-dossier/documents/gender-emergencies-minimum-standards regardless of Oxfam's allocated cluster status, the organisational requirements state that we must take gender into consideration with the emergency response work that we do.

[24] "To ensure that the humanitarian assistance provided by Oxfam promotes the protection of civilians and gender empowerment" Objective 2, Joint Oxfam Response Strategy, 12 January 2014

[25] Based on focus group discussions and interviews with beneficiaries by the RTE team

charcoal distribution in UN House. However, the most vulnerable community members were chosen by block leaders, which indicates a risk of bias or exclusion.

i) Beneficiary numbers in both locations are still unclear. This is partly due to new arrivals but also a lack of confidence in registrations done by lead agencies (WFP for distributions, IOM). Oxfam is currently using these figures for programme monitoring, which should change in the coming weeks as the registrations finalise and population numbers clarify.

j) Oxfam has a potentially strong role to play in advocacy and beneficiary representation that is not being maximised. This is apparent for issues of PoC Area expansion, camp management, food distributions, health, NFIs and wider protection issues[26]. There is a feeling among Oxfam programme staff that these are 'not our areas' resulting in a lack of interest. However, given the interconnectedness of all sectors in the response, and the influential role that the organisation plays in coordination structures, Oxfam has a responsibility to lobby to ensure that other stakeholders are providing appropriate assistance in their areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS
1. Immediate recruitment of a longer term, highly experienced, TTL for both WASH and EFSVL.
2. Programme meetings to consider *programme* advocacy for complimentary sectors in Oxfam programme locations, such as NFIs, food provision etc and develop programme team strategies to deal with the issues coming up for beneficiaries. This can be done as part of the coordination structures, but also on a more informal basis with other stakeholders and camp management. Field Coordinators may require considerable support on this from the HPM.
3. Strengthen consultation mechanisms and involvement of communities in decision making related to the programmes, ensuring participation of vulnerable groups. This should be repeated regularly to take changing site dynamics into account. Increase community implementation aspects of the response (such as block/area hygiene committees, water point monitors, etc) to improve ownership.
4. SPHERE refresher training with strong field based, practical element. Introduction/refresher for WASH in emergencies, also community mobilisation for all programme staff.

B) Internal coordination/programme integration
a) There are clear achievements being made on a daily basis by separate WASH and EFSVL teams. However there is little to no joint planning between the teams at decision making or implementation levels. WASH tends to dominate the agenda, and strategic decisions seem to be made on that basis. For example, the management decision for 'Oxfam' to leave UN house by the end of February may not have taken into consideration the need for the EFSVL programme to continue for the next 3 months on food security and potential livelihood support. Similarly, the OGB EFSVL team is the lead on EMMA market analysis in the Juba area in February, suggesting a strategic involvement in the geographical area.
b) Outside of the EFSVL team, there is a lack of awareness among other staff of the time needed to implement an EFSVL programme which is more than simple food distributions and is market or LLH based. This should be factored into future planning of EP&R and longer term responses.

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[26] For example, the PHP staff in UN House did not know if people had soap, or sanitary towels as they believed that Oxfam was not involved in NFIs. However, both soap and sanitary protection are integral to Oxfam's PHP programming and their provision is part of Oxfam's Programme Standards. This lack of understanding is a symptom of poor technical leadership.

c) The cluster coordination structures are influential in South Sudan, and Oxfam is well represented on the WASH and EFSVL (as well as the HCT). The OGB WASH team in UN House has compartmentalised itself to only deal with the specific tasks (water provision, sanitation) that they has been allocated. However, this should not deter the team from ensuring that Oxfam's programme standards around PHP are met (soap provision, menstruation hygiene materials[27] etc currently fall under 'NFIs' but are an integral part of Oxfam's PHP programme. If they are not provided by the organisation that manages NFIs Oxfam should lobby responsible agencies or consider providing them) Please see Oxfam's Minimum Standards in Emergencies.

d) Oxfam is not currently clear on its role in advocacy on issues such as camp expansion, planning for camp timeframes, relocation of beneficiaries (Awerial) and other protection issues. This would be clearer with strong representation at the Protection Cluster Meeting.

e) Given recent challenges over coordination between OGB and Intermon, there is be a lack of clarity on shared technical resources that is not clear in the recent MoU on ways of working. The need to share technical direction is also clear in EFSVL, where Oxfam generally advocates for alternatives to food aid. Intermon will potentially be taking food distribution responsibility with WFP, which raises questions about the organisational direction towards market based responses, and a unified technical approach. Intermon are currently looking into alternatives to food.

f) Coordination and collaboration between programme and support teams is lacking mainly due to lack of communication.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The team are very enthusiastic about joint programme meetings on programme content and integration. This needs to be regularly timetabled (monthly?)

2. Joint ways of working in the different sectoral teams – joint beneficiary meetings to promote 'one' Oxfam, joint assessments.

3. Ensure that Intermon and OGB technical staff have clear opportunities for interaction and sharing of ideas and challenges, with sharing of technical resources where possible. This is particularly important on external representation, as the organisations will be perceived under a general Oxfam programme ethos (eg cluster leadership).

4. Introduce protection and gender capacity into programme teams, to improve analysis and to support in gender-sensitive and safe programming

5. Ensure strong representation on all relevant coordination bodies, including protection and gender. This will allow Oxfam to address gender and protection concerns more strategically, as well as to feed in more effectively to policy and advocacy work.

6. Ensure that managers know that they are responsible for programme quality, gender-sensitive and safe programming and what this means, and hold them accountable. Ensure that they know where they can find support on these issues

C) Accountability and Feedback Mechanisms

a) No formal, systematic beneficiary feedback mechanisms are currently in place in the locations where Oxfam is working. A MEAL advisor was requested by the Country Team in January, but HR confusions resulted in the recruitment being halted. This has caused delay in the recruitment of an experienced MEAL person.

b) Beneficiaries in UN House felt that they are able to report issues to Oxfam staff informally, and that they will be reported and responded to, but this was based on personalities of the PHP Officers rather than structure. Beneficiaries in Awerial claim to have reported issues and not received a response. This is further compounded by the fact that Oxfam appears to work with community leaders and the local government, and there is a hierarchical system in place (not designed by Oxfam) for their complaints.

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[27] See https://sumus.oxfam.org/humanitarian-dossier/documents/gender-emergencies-minimum-standards

c) MEAL mechanisms are being put in place but are very weak. Programme decisions are being made, and justified, on the basis of flawed or missing monitoring information. For example a decision was made in UN House to reduce the water provision from an estimated 20Lpp to 15Lpp. This was done as observation showed that some beneficiaries were storing water, there was standing water in the camp[28] and water trucking was very expensive. The team felt that the donor would not accept 20Lpp because the logframe had recommended 15. No water users' survey has been done, the team have no information about equity of water provision (some are using the water for businesses so their consumption is high) and there are no commonly accepted beneficiary figures in the camp. The programme is now at the stage where decisions should be made on monitoring data rather than anecdotal information.
d) The MEAL coordinator is currently mainly focusing on the ECHO logframe which limits the amount of data analysis. Current MEAL capacity in the team is overwhelmed.

RECOMMENDATIONS
1. Recommendations already made by the OGB Regional Programme Quality Advisor should be acted on.
2. Immediate recruitment of the planned Programme Quality Manager position. If this recruitment delays, and immediate visit by the RPQA is recommended to work with the MEAL officer currently in place, but more importantly to work with the programme teams to ensure that monitoring is firmly embedded in their programme design, and they are getting the information that they need to be able to make programme decisions.
3. Put accountability and feedback mechanisms in place that ensure that women are represented and feel safe to complain or comment. Feedback should be documented.

D) Visibility and branding
a) Visibility is extremely poor: community health workers and some staff do not have Oxfam t-shirts or caps, which has implications for their safety and credibility in the field, and structures such as latrines and bathing units are not adequately branded with Oxfam or donor logos. This is partly due to the team waiting for stickers to be sent from Oxford; however there are other means to ensure visibility and this should be rectified immediately.

BENCHMARK 3: **An effective management structure is in place, that provides clarity and well-communicated decision-making and direction (including partners)**

A) Management structure and capacity – South Sudan Country Team
a) The HPM currently covers all strategic, coordination and humanitarian programme management responsibilities which was the previous structure during a period of lower workload. Many decisions are currently made at HPM and OICD level, and this can result in poor communication and bottle necks.
b) Staff generally have respect for, and confidence in, senior management in country.
c) The current Senior Humanitarian Management capacity in country is not sufficient for the size, scale and complexity of the current response. The country management team are significantly underestimating the management capacity needed to grow and implement the programme to Oxfam standards, particularly in a complex situation, with 2 EP&R teams and daily security concerns. The level of coordination, advocacy and influencing that the OICD and HPM will be engaged in necessitates an experienced, senior Humanitarian Operations Manager to take over the day to day programme management

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[28] Drainage has now been improved with soak pits

support to the field teams. This will contribute to ensuring that issues highlighted in this RTE, such as poor communication, programme integration and planning, are covered.

d) The new organogram[29] was recently formalised and has been communicated with the team. However there is a lot of confusion about structure and management lines, particularly in the EP&R team, where there is a new role of Field Coordinator and discussions are yet to take place on how this fits in with the EP&R Coordinator. Two external organisations' staff members were included in the organogram with no formal MoU or agreement. Staff interviewed more often than not did not know who they reported to, or who they managed, which results in a lack of clarity on decision making. This is also a security risk as managers do not know who they are responsible for.

e) Some field level managers/coordinators are very inexperienced in humanitarian response. This makes it difficult for senior managers to delegate, and also results in Technical Officers without strong leadership and management at field locations. Although this was understandable during the first few weeks of the response, care should be taken not to send inexperienced field coordinators to insecure, large or complex programme locations away from the direct support of the country office.

f) Many of the field teams are not yet fixed, which makes it difficult for field coordinators to plan. This is likely to improve after the current round of recruitments.

g) Oxfam Intermon and Oxfam Novib ACDs are on the CLT and are involved in the humanitarian response where it fits with their wider strategy. Intermon is working to ensure that management capacity (ACD) remains in Juba to coordinate and liaise with other affiliates, with a strong Field Coordinator to manage at field level.

RECOMMENDATIONS
1. CLT and SMT to urgently discuss the needs of the growing programme, and take into consideration that the 6 site programme plan is not manageable with the previous senior management structure.
2. A senior Humanitarian Operations Manager or similar should be strongly considered to take the pressure from the OGB HPM and allow them to focus more on strategic and coordination responsibilities.
3. The next 2 months is crucial to ensure that the right level of senior management support is in place, as new areas open up and the response grows in size and complexity. This period of inaccessibility should be used to urgently address the capacity issues.
4. Field coordinators based in remote or insecure areas must be highly experienced in humanitarian response work. This is not only a programme management issue, but a security issue.

B) Decision making in South Sudan
a) Due to the fast moving nature of the response, decisions are often made quickly by senior management. This ability to make quick decisions has partly led to the speed of Oxfam's response. However, Field Coordinators, team leaders and staff do not feel informed or consulted on many programme decisions. Staff cited this as a reason for de-motivation in a humanitarian response.
b) There is a lack of clarity on acceptable levels of decision making that can take place at different levels. Capable field staff feel that they cannot take decisions without checking with the HPM or CD first, and there is a lack of clarity throughout the line. Field Coordination level staff members felt that senior management in country need to delegate decision making powers, and trust them to manage their programmes within a pre-agreed framework. This would free up the HPM and CD to deal with more strategic issues, and would also improve the problems of poor communication on decision making as well as senior 'bottlenecking'.

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[29] Organigramme SSD Humanitarian Response.ppt (no date on document, but created late January 2014)

c) Many staff members reported that they missed the Monday Morning Meeting and opportunities to get together as a team. This has now been reinstated.

d) Decision making among the different affiliates has recently been clarified[30], with inter-affiliate coordination between the OGB HPM and the Intermon ACD. The lead affiliate for a geographical location (OGB 4, Intermon 2, plus OGB EP&R) will manage their location, with any seconded staff to be managed operationally on a day to day basis by the manager in charge in the field.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Regular meetings with the staff on information sharing – Monday morning meeting reinstatement.

2. Regular, structured programme meetings, for team leaders/field coordinators to discuss programme challenges and decisions, should be urgently started.

C) Regional Centre Management – Oxfam GB

a) As the South Sudan Regional Crisis is a Category 2 emergency, the OGB Regional Centre (as humanitarian lead and managing affiliate) has direct management responsibility for the programme, and has been active in support to the country team. This has been limited practically in the early weeks of the response due to the number of staff who could travel to Juba during a higher security level, and the fact that many were on holiday in December. The technical visits have been highly appreciated, the management visits also necessary

b) There <u>is a serious lack of clarity on the management line above the OI Country Director in South Sudan</u>. This lack of clarity is felt by some Senior Managers in the RC and the South Sudan team. This confusion, and its accompanying ambiguity on roles and responsibilities, has the potential to further complicate the layers of decision making and undermine the management line.

c) Although there have been attempts to clarify, sign off levels from the OICD upwards are still unclear and the Country Team sometimes feel disempowered. The lack of communication and understanding on which decisions the country team are authorised to make, results in a feeling that they are not trusted to make day to day programme decisions. The OGB RD is currently speaking to the OICD daily and is very involved in the programme. While this support is appreciated on one level, it is also causing some confusion among other senior managers.

d) During the initial weeks of the response, the RC found it very difficult to get adequate information from the country programme on a wide range of issues. This was extremely frustrating for the teams in the RC and HD trying to support the Country Team. The team in country were overloaded due to the lack of staff, and were unable to prioritise information sharing. Multiple team members fed back that the many teleconferences were time consuming and extractive in nature, often with doubtful added value. This situation has improved recently due to the increase in regional staff visits, and the increase in the numbers of international posts allowed in country.

e) Very soon after the start of the crisis, the managing DRD was changed from a governance and gender specialist to a DRD with a humanitarian focus. This change of DRD had been pre-agreed after a humanitarian simulation and planning session in the region, was expected, and appropriate. However, trust had built over a period of many months with the team, and there was a loss of familiar managers and support structures for the Country Team at a crucial time.

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[30] Minutes from Meeting on South Sudan Response – OGB and Intermon 27 January 2014

RECOMMENDATIONS
1. Immediate clarification on reporting lines and roles and responsibilities from the OICD up through the line, to all staff.
2. Clear pre-agreement on TORs for management visits to Sudan.
3. Pre-planned requests for support from regional advisers, with clear TORs and outputs, with an emphasis on country team requests to compliment their programme needs.
4. Discussion in the RC and HD on how to build and maintain a trust relationship that can be capitalised on during a crisis rather than abandoned.

D) Humanitarian Department - OGB

a) The Key Country team in HD are appreciated by the South Sudan Country Team, and have worked to build up a relationship of trust. This has included systematic engagement with emergency preparedness, humanitarian investment plans and capacity building. The support of the key country team was highly appreciated during the first few days of the emergency (logistics etc). At the onset of the emergency, the Key country team were forced to take a step back from engagement with the team, while senior HD management who had no long term relationship with the team took over – there was substantial feedback of 'mistrust' in the early days. The apparent sidelining of the Key country team was a missed opportunity to capitalise on already strong relationships.
b) The reason for the dis-engagement of technical advisors from HD has not been clear to the country team, and they have been missed. Feedback suggests that the communication became linear and hierarchical, as opposed to the previous triangular engagement before the current crisis. This was not apparent in the logistics team, who kept the former communications channels open, leading to more successful engagement of both RC and HD technical staff.
c) Strong feedback from staff at RC, HD and Country Team levels suggests that the changing roles and responsibilities of very senior management in OGB were not clear. The Acting OICD in country during the initial response had an apparently imposed direct communication to the HD Director. This undermined the existing communication/coordination line, and sidelined the valuable HD support structures that were created with the specific purpose of building relationships and preparing countries for emergency response. Although the subsequent visit of the HD Director was appreciated to clarify the decision to make the response a Cat 2 emergency, the roles and responsibilities of individual very senior managers were not clear during the first weeks of the response which was a time when clarity was essential.
d) Sign off for security clearance for new areas is now clear, although it has taken considerable time to get to this point.

RECOMMENDATIONS
1. Discussion with Country Team, RC and HD on how the input of technical advisers can be incorporated into the response. Country Team to draw up requests for technical advisers based on technical capacity gaps (and strategic timing for new staff, key programme events etc) and send through the HD Key Country team for approval. This should compliment, and work with, the support from the RC advisors, focusing on high level technical support for the programme as an absolute priority.
2. Internal Key Country and HD lessons learned to find ways to maximise the relationship with the South Sudan team for continued engagement, and discuss the KC team role in future emergencies. This should also include clarity on Senior Management roles during the first phase of an emergency, and ways of working within HD to avoid confusing others in the organisation.

E) Assessments and Targeting

a) Assessments have been carried out by the Oxfam team as part of interagency initiatives[31], followed by more detailed technical assessments in areas of work. Oxfam staff are clearly respected and trusted by other stakeholders. Tools used have been pre-agreed multi-agency tools, or SS Oxfam team tools used in the past. Oxfam assessments were not widely shared, and difficult for the RTE team to get hold of.

b) Apart from the UN Cluster initial assessments, which were multi-sectoral, Oxfam assessments have primarily been split sectorally, with rapid WASH assessments followed by longer EFSVL assessments. Taking part in the cluster assessment is essential to influence the process, however it has sometimes resulted in Oxfam not reaching assessment standards and missing information. For example, protection has not been considered by Oxfam staff during assessments (or in early stages of an emergency) and this may partly be due to the fact that is it 'covered' by another agency or cluster. Oxfam has well developed organisational tools that can be used by the team to avoid them having to invent their own.

c) Geographical locations within South Sudan are currently limited by accessibility due to security constraints, and the neutrality objective.

d) Specific targeting within locations is currently done with UN estimates. More sophisticated registration is currently taking place.

- UN House – Juba – Oxfam WASH programming targets the entire PoC area population, assigned to Oxfam by camp manager, ACTED. The space has been allocated to the IDPs by UNMISS and currently comprises of a relatively small area (less than 1kmx1km)
- Lakes State, Awerial County (Minkaman) – Oxfam took part in the IRNA Assessment and the Oxfam PHE was the WASH lead. Due to the simplified IRNA assessment format there were missing WASH technical details, and the Oxfam WASH team used a self-developed, non-standard assessment template for Minkaman following the UN led IRNA assessment. WASH and EFSVL are the target sectors, with WASH targeting the entire population in Minkaman including host community, where EFSVL only targets the IDP's, with host community targeted by other livelihood actors

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Assessment teams should be trained to use Oxfam emergency assessment tools.

F) External perceptions of Oxfam

a) Oxfam has succeeded in rebuilding its external reputation over the past year, and particularly during this response. Feedback from external stakeholders such as OCHA, ECHO, Save the Children, IRC, ICRC and UNHCR is extremely positive, particularly on the speed of Oxfam's response and the decision to stay while most agencies evacuated.

b) MSF in Awerial is currently using Oxfam water for their base because of its high quality.

c) Coordinating agencies have, however, noted that Oxfam seems unable to make quick decisions on security, which is reducing their ability to move quickly at this stage. This was a concern voiced by OCHA during the RTE interview.

d) Feedback from beneficiaries interviewed was very positive. One group of leaders said that they were pleased with the water and latrines from Oxfam, but they wished that Oxfam was also covering food as then they felt that they would get it on time.

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[31] For example, IRNA Minkamman, Awerial County, Lakes State, 31 December 2013 and IRNA, Internally Displaced Persons in Maban County, Upper Nile State 14 January 2014

G) Partners

a) Many programme team members feel passionately that Oxfam should be working with and through partners more, particularly with an EP&R strategy of 3 month engagements. Oxfam GB has recently contacted partners in Malakal and Maban with a view to exchanging information and analysis.

b) Oxfam began implementing in Awerial as the WASH Cluster focal point, and worked closely with two external organisations (RUWASSA and AWODA).   The mission's management knew that the organisations were not partners and were benefiting from Oxfam's actions as the WASH Cluster focal point and pipeline manager, but this was not communicated effectively to field staff; meaning that Oxfam shared substantial materials with both organisations, included them in their organogram and shared vehicles and resources. Oxfam also procured latrine structure materials for the whole response here, which was expensive and will be difficult to report on to donors.

c) Oxfam Novib had already begun work on a Humanitarian Capacity Building Programme, with Novib funding, before the current crisis. They are planning to redesign and continue this programme, with the potential for partners from all affiliates to join. This is an excellent opportunity for all partners, including development, to receive support on response and an excellent opportunity for Oxfam to define its humanitarian work within a stronger partnership framework.

BENCHMARK FOUR: Key support functions are sufficiently resourced and are being effectively run. Risks that are being taken are being calculated and documented

A) Capacity of team and experienced staff

Also see benchmark 3 on management capacity

a) Many of the field team are experienced in emergencies, and have worked in field offices in the past. This helps with the understanding of having to work longer hours and be more flexible. The scaling down of the Maban programme resulted in readily available, relatively experienced, Oxfam field staff to be immediately deployed for this emergency, which was a principle objective of the scale-down.

b) Finance, HR and Logistics Managers currently all report directly to the CD.   This represents a significant risk to the organisation as the CD currently does not have time to allocate sufficient management support to these functions.

c) The Finance and HR teams are small, and not sufficient for a larger scale programme. The Finance Manager has been on sick leave for a long time; it has taken six weeks to find a substitute and get them into the country. This temporary cover has now arrived.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. If the programme expands to more locations there is a need for a senior Business Support Manager to ensure support structures keep up with programme ambitions.   The HR Manager, Logistics Manager and Finance and Admin Manager should report to this new post.

B) Recruitment and Human Resources

a) There has been substantial confusion over recruitment of key positions within OGB between the RC, Country level and HD. This was due to lack of clarity on positions needed, which resulted in the RC starting recruitments that had not been formalised by the country. A Ways of Working document[32] has now been produced between RC/HD and the Country office. The highly experienced HSP HR Manager brought in for surge capacity is currently based in Nairobi. Given the history of misunderstandings on

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[32] WOW – Ways of Working with regional emergency response – sdx – 14 February 2014

recruitments, this is a missed opportunity for harmonising expectations and ways of working.

b) There are a number of very key positions currently vacant, with concerns that it is a difficult country to recruit longer term, experienced international staff for, particularly given the current security situation. This needs to be taken into account before over-committing the organisation in areas that we may not be able to staff.

c) At the beginning of the crisis Oxfam allowed staff from ethnic groups involved in the clashes to go home to be with their families, for security reasons. This, and a generally strong feeling of comradeship among the team, has meant that there are no visible tensions between staff from different ethnic backgrounds. This needs to be monitored.

d) Intermon is currently recruiting staff for the Awerial programme, with reports that it is on track for the hand over.

e) There is a lack of gender balance across the programme and especially in the EP&R team, due to a difficulty expressed with recruiting qualified female staff who are able to work in the field. This needs to be considered in the EP&R strategy, as a difficult deployment surrounded by male staff is likely to be extremely difficult for a single female staff member, and appropriate discussions and consultations with female beneficiary communities in high stress environments will also be a big challenge.

f) Staff welfare is an area of concern for many staff members, and a larger structure may warrant a welfare officer. Living conditions in most field locations are extremely basic (tents, no electricity). Some staff members are currently living in PoC areas and are unable to leave for security reasons. They report that they have been well supported by Oxfam, but this needs to be monitored as they may feel increasingly isolated from the rest of the team.

g) Intermon staff who were in Juba at the beginning of the conflict reported that they were called regularly by an Intermon staff psychologist, even after they had been taken out of the country. OGB staff reported that only their close contacts in the RC and HD had been in touch with them, and they felt that this was a gap.

RECOMMENDATIONS
1. An immediate HR capacity assessment exercise should be carried out as part of the planning process, to ensure the correct [33]staff with the correct skills and key competencies are recruited. This should also incorporate analysis on recruitment difficulties and strategies for possible longer term solutions.
2. The response HR Manager HSP brought in for surge capacity should immediately travel to Juba to meet with senior management to discuss urgent recruitments, ensure inductions and recruitments are standardised, help to finalise the organogram , management lines and TORs, and support the HPM on all recruitment issues.
3. Once management lines are finalised, performance management should be initiated, and staff held accountable to their objectives. This should include staff on temporary contracts, as well as HSPs.
4. Immediate recruitment of a senior Humanitarian Operations Manager, BSM, additional Finance Manager, EFSVL Coordinator, WASH Coordinator, Protection Advisor, Gender Advisor, Security Officer, Media and Comms Lead, and Policy and Advocacy Lead. A staff welfare officer should be considered if the programme expands.
5. Consideration should be given to the psychological wellbeing of staff in conflict situations, especially where evacuation becomes necessary. Staff should be given the opportunity to seek counselling or psychological support.

C) Finance capacity (OGB)
a) The Finance team does not currently have a substantive Finance Manager – the previous post holder was evacuated and has been covered by various short term people.

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[33] Key Competencies frameworks can be used to guide TORs and recruitments

There are significant gaps in the finance team in Juba, and current recruitment plans will only take the level back up to where it was before the emergency. – High Risk

b) Setting up in new, insecure locations is high risk for Oxfam finances, particularly with new staff. The current team does not have sufficient capacity to absorb this.

c) There are some misunderstandings between programme and finance in Juba about roles and responsibilities, particularly around finance support for field payments etc. This is partly due to many people multi-tasking and a lack of clarity on roles and management lines.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A senior finance position is needed in addition to the previous structure, to ensure that the finance work in new location is well coordinated and adheres to standards.

2. New staff must have thorough inductions, even if that means they are a few days later to arrive in the field.

D) <u>Logistics capacity and challenges</u>

a) Logistical capacity was brought up very quickly with recruitment of former Maban staff, activation of minimum requirements, and good RC and HD support. This enabled very fast initial cargo plane shipment (1-week) from Oxford enabling programmes to provide services for IDP's faster than most other actors.   The HPM, then acting OICD, has a logistics background, which was beneficial. This highlights the need for programme people to understand logistics, and vice versa.

b) It is felt throughout the organisation that the logistics team in country, in the region and in Oxford did an excellent job in the initial response.

c) There is a current slow down and bottleneck with some specific program procurements, which is delaying some programme activities which are crucial for handover of locations.

d) Price fluctuations and tax exemption at border and customs are causing delays and uncertainties.

e) Limited local market and lack of adequate, dedicated storage space in Awerial. All Oxfam Wash stock scattered in different locations, and mixed with stocks from other actors.

f) Logistics staff did not feel there was need for HSP level logistical support at field level, and when one was sent to Awerial, staff morale was affected.

g) The logistics department is not involved and informed in programme design, or proposal finalisation. Their only knowledge of programme needs comes from requisition orders, which is piece meal and does not help with planning.

h) In Awerial, a potential involvement in WFP food distribution could place huge demands on logistics.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Inclusion of logistic department throughout programme development cycle, and proposals. They should be actively involved in the recommended planning sessions, particularly contingency planning for the rainy season.

2. Minimizing cost and delays by increasing the range of WASH materials which can be regionally sourced (Kampala and Nairobi) with minimal quality difference compared to materials from Oxford.

3. Recruitment for understaffed logistic dept to handle planned programme expansion. This should be done as part of the HR capacity assessment.

4. Mandatory weekly (or bi-weekly) logistic-program coordination meetings to ensure proper communication channel on procurement follow-up.

5. Making program team and advisors/managers aware of fundamental procurement policies and procedures as well as donor guidelines.

E) Funding -
a) The OGB response is currently 48% funded.[34]
b) The South Sudan team is consciously investing in longer term programming, with a two-year funding proposal submitted to the EU. The Funding team has also been in contact with existing longer term donors to inform them about suspended projects, which has been an advantage of having a bigger Funding team with the combined resources of OGB, Oxfam Novib and Intermon. Despite this, there are challenges: staff have continued to be paid on suspended contracts, and there is currently no visibility or direction on how this will be managed.
c) The majority of the current funding for the response ends in March; OGB and intermon will need to spend everything before this deadline, which could be a challenge if access remains limited and we are unable to move to new areas as per the strategy.
d) It has proved consistently difficult for funding team members to get information from the country team, as noted by many other departments. This should hopefully improve now that the South Sudan Funding team has been able to return to Juba, but it will be necessary to clarify communication and decision-making lines both internally and with donors. As reported by other departments, the need for approval and signoff from the HPM and/or the CD (both of whom have a great deal of other work to do) have meant that these processes have been slow.
e) Staffing challenges: at the country level, the OI Funding Coordinator was seconded to the programme team, and the decision process on who would replace her was confused and not well communicated. Oxfam Novib is now supporting in this role. The lack of communication disrupted the positive dynamic between the confederation's funding team, with a lot of work being created in familiarising the Oxfam Novib staff member with OGB procedures, training her on humanitarian funding and supporting her to build relationships with affiliates as well as getting the job done.
f) The main challenge for the Funding team has been related to the ways of working in the confederation: the regional funding proposal has not yet been signed off because of differences between managing affiliates (OGB is leading the South Sudan response, whilst Oxfam Novib is leading the Uganda response. Verbal agreements on a 'joint response' made during the early days of the South Sudan response between OGB and Intermon subsequently led to major disagreements. The Regional Funding team was asked to propose methods of managing the funding situation; however the final agreement to divide the response did not include the Funding team.[35] This has led to a complicated and time-consuming situation which the Funding team is required to sort out and which potentially creates difficulties in grant management; including communicating changes to donors and physically splitting the donor contracts.
g) The lack of global budget for OGB at present does not allow for visibility on risks which this might pose as the funding team are unclear as to what they are fundraising against; and this is compounded by the lack of confirmation of what Intermon's costs are during the first part of the response.
h) There are significant concerns about the availability of funds across the affiliates after the initial rapid onset phase.

RECOMMENDATIONS
1. Management to clarify communications lines and roles, responsibilities and accountability lines between and within affiliates

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[34] https://sumus.oxfam.org/south-sudan-regional-crisis-2013-december/documents/2014022014-oi-funding-grid-emergency-response
[35] The agreement between OGB and Intermon requires OGB to give Intermon $500,000 of a CHF contract; to refund Intermon 100% of their costs since the beginning of the response, plus 10%; and to give Intermon all future proposals until the gap in the funding grid is balanced. OGB will also hand over all assets and materials to Intermon with no cost at the end of February. Intermon will in return contribute €400,000 of their own to their response

2. Ensure that time and resources (human and financial) are given specifically to ironing out the practicalities of inter-affiliate agreements and to establish ways of working on reporting and management. These resources should be dedicated to this task until it is completed, perhaps by forming a 'task force'.
3. Country management team needs to be available to provide information on long-term programming decisions and updates for donors, and to ensure compliance with donor requirements, once future planning has been done. Many of these donors are the same as those funding the humanitarian response – this entails risks and requires ownership of the contract management.
4. Build learning more widely on how to manage responses where more than one affiliate is leading in the different countries in a region – lessons should be learned and best practices established and shared, as internal lack of clarity puts Oxfam's credibility with the donor community at risk.

F) <u>Security management</u>

a) During the initial stage of the response, disagreements between the Country Office and OGB senior management on acceptable numbers of international staff, and the distinction between 'essential' and 'non-essential' staff took a lot of senior management time in country. Staff interviewed from the RC, HD and Country Programme felt that this took an unacceptable amount of time to resolve, taking focus away from pressing programme matters. The level in Juba has now been reduced to level 2, however there is still a perceived lack of trust to allow the Country Office to make security decisions on new areas of movement.

b) Initial confusions over information needed and sign off procedures has been clarified. It is apparent that security management had been questioned in South Sudan before the crisis, and senior management had already highlighted the need for Security Officer support.

c) The priority for the recently arrived HSP Security Officer has been to update the documents for SOPs, evacuation and procedures[36] – these have recently been re-circulated by email, however there is an over-reliance on email which excludes field staff. The documents are thorough, long and perhaps difficult to digest by some staff. It is now crucial that there is a conscious move to move to the next level of security awareness and to integrate security management into the ways of working in the office, ensuring that each staff member knows their responsibilities.

d) There is disconnect between the security policies and the actual implementation of practices.[37] Some of the SOP processes have not been systematically followed or applied, such as the critical security briefing for all new arrivals or departures to specific field locations. There are staff concerns that in-country day to day security management has major gaps and oversights. Unless the security guidelines are imbedded in the ways of working of the team, and signed up to be each and every individual, it is not possible to enforce tight management and a disciplinary process for non-compliance.

e) Staff interviewed in Juba (particularly international staff) and Awerial report that they feel safe. However this is an artificial question as a staff perception of safety or well being may be brought about by either trust in management, or inexperience in insecure situations, and does not necessarily signify that an area is safe.

f) Suggestions on gender related security issues were made by the Regional Change Lead – Women's Rights. This included awareness of different risk levels of female staff. The feedback was relatively widely circulated and positive feedback was received. However, it is unclear as to whether the advice has been operationalised.

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[36] Republic of South Sudan, Security Management Plan & Annexes, January 2014
[37] The RTE team requested the security guidelines and SOPs from 5 different people before travel to South Sudan. None of the staff asked had the documents. On arrival in country the RTE team did not receive radios, radio training, phones/SIM cards, communication tree information, information on cars/drivers etc

g) The evacuation of the Awerial staff was had challenges, but Oxfam was the only agency with an evacuation SOP in place, and other agencies followed. Confusion over other WASH actors being seen as partners meant that their staff were included in Oxfam's evacuation arrangements, which in turn meant that Oxfam did not have enough space and were forced to put staff into other organisations' vehicles. There were daily communications during the Awerial evacuation from the field staff to Juba office. However, RC and HD management were not aware of the evacuation until the following day. This was a serious breach of security protocol.

h) Previously noted lack of communication and meetings means that informal information gathering is done by the Security Officer on an ad hoc basis. Some national staff reported that the political, and therefore security, situation is unstable, and we simply do not know what will happen in the next few months. There are reports that this may be a 'lull' in the fighting[38]. They feel that Oxfam needs to continue to move out to new areas, but that security needs to be very tight with excellent evacuation procedures in place that are known and understood by all staff.

i) The HSP security advisor acknowledges that security communication has room for improvement. A long term security advisor is being recruited. There is a plan to improve security communication and have security workshops in April.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. An agreement on turn-around time for decisions for new locations (for example 36 hours), with a pre-agreed format for minimum information needed from the team, would allow the Country team to respond quickly to new situations as access becomes possible.

2. Security information needs to be collected systematically from the team, and communicated regularly using different forms of communication. (stand up meeting before staff go to field each day, Monday Meetings, programme meetings, email, notice board, briefings on arrival, security workshops)

3. Staff should be involved in the revision and creation of the SOPs so that they own the process. April is clearly too long to wait to have security workshops – they need to be seen as an urgent priority. National staff will have important perspectives on risk and should be involved in all discussions on context. Reviews of SOPs and security guidelines should be done with the different needs and challenges of men and women in mind, and with systematic consultation of female staff.[39]

4. The RTE team feel that there is a need to tighten up security around the guest house (many unsupervised outside people in and out of the house – unlocked at night – some bedrooms don't have keys) and the office (unlocked – who has keys?). Items are regularly taken from both locations. With the growth of the programme and more international staff arriving, there is a need to set up a system of weekend drivers. On a Sunday there is currently one car available for all staff, which is not acceptable for security reasons.

5. It has been suggested that some staff's English language proficiency might not be able to comprehend the technical language in some of the SOP. More explanation is needed than just simply sending out security packages in emails.

6. Follow-up on past security incident lessons learned.

7. Periodic security drills (communication tree verification, evacuation drill, radio check) to identify and patch up missing links.

8. Proper functioning of support departments to ensure team security (payments on time, HR disciplinary actions, budget for vehicles and comms equipment, etc)

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[38] This has been confirmed, with new fighting 'breaking' the ceasefire in Malakal on 18th February 2013

[39] See email on Gender Considerations for Staff Safety – Regional Change Lead – Women's Rights 14 January 2014

BENCHMARK FIVE: **Our internal Oxfam relationships are productive and well coordinated, under the leadership of the Lead Agency, and we are having a positive influence on other actors**

A) <u>CLT – division of responsibilities – clarity of coordination</u>
a) CLT comprises of Intermon, OGB and Novib. The Novib ACD is based partly in Nairobi and manages partner based programmes. OGB and Intermon work through partners and operationally, and have been working jointly at field level in Awerial. The Awerial programme will be fully handed over to Intermon by the end of February.
b) During the initial days of the emergency Oxfam GB and Intermon staff worked well together, sharing information and resources as one team. There were no reported confusions over management lines between the two affiliates in country.
c) Relationships between the affiliates have historically been good. Recent speed of events led to a misunderstanding over 'joint' programming, particularly around funding issues, which has now been resolved at country and regional level. A significant amount of energy and time was lost over negotiations, however an MoU has been agreed on funding arrangements and ways of working, which is a positive step. Positive moves must now be made to re-build the trust lost.
d) At field level, in Awerial, relationships between OGB and Intermon are positive.
e) Novib has an alternative perspective on working in South Sudan that could be very useful for the more operational affiliates to tap into.

RECOMMENDATIONS
1. The team feel that where possible, joint technical and programme meetings, sharing of technical capacity and information and the sharing of partners may help to rebuild trust and work towards a common goal.

B) <u>External Coordination</u>
a) Oxfam's influential role has been previously covered in this report.
b) Oxfam has not participated in the Protection Cluster, although the Country Protection Advisor has been receiving the minutes of Cluster meetings, and the Field Coordinator has discussed protection concerns linked to programme implementation with Protection Cluster representatives. Information from these forums would be extremely useful to inform policy and advocacy work linked to the crisis; but would require capacity in the form of a Protection or Policy staff member.
c) In Awerial, the team is currently attending all possible coordination meetings with a view to assessing which ones Oxfam should participate in and which staff member would be appropriate.
d) Wash actors are currently not seen to be working in a collaborative manner, they are in a competitive environment. At UN House, OGB is the lead on WASH, and coordinates closely with Solidarites (SI) on information sharing. No attempt is made to harmonise or streamline operations.

RECOMMENDATIONS
1. OGB currently has excellent relations with UN agencies and donors, however this should not restrict the organisation's ability to lobby and challenge the agencies publicly. (see recommendation on programme lobbying)
2. OGB should attend the Protection Cluster as soon as possible. (This invitation has also come from OCHA)

BENCHMARK SIX: **The programme has considered the longer term implications and has taken connectedness into consideration**

A) Effect on long term programmes – one programme approach

a) The development programme in Jamam has been suspended as a staff base, on the recommendation of the Regional Security Advisor. A second security review will be carried out by the HSP Security Officer in the second week of February. However, programme activities still continue from Kaya.

b) The emergency work in Kaya (Maban) is ongoing, with approximately 60% of staff now back in location. This emergency programme is due to finish in June. Many staff members have been absorbed already into the EP&R team.

c) Development programmes in Bahr el Ghazal and Western Equatoria are not currently affected by the humanitarian situation, although they are on alert due to recent reports that militias may be arming in those areas. The Country Programme is recruiting for a head of development programmes, and this post will be crucial to ensuring a synergy between the longer term programme and the humanitarian response.

d) The team consistently reported that they would like to work more with local emergency and development partners. This is in the programme strategy, but has not yet been fully explored.

e) The team has good context analysis and a link to wider objectives, however the current situation is extremely difficult to predict, which makes it difficult to plan for links to longer term programmes at this stage.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. OGB and Intermon to engage proactively with Novib on partner selection and development.
2. The humanitarian response team should ensure that development programme staff are involved in programme planning and discussions where possible.

BENCHMARK SEVEN: **Campaigning: Advocacy, media and popular communications, or a combination of these tools, are appropriate for the context, are well executed and effective**

A) Agreed strategy before/during crisis

a) Before the emergency, work had been put into an advocacy strategy with two aspects: a RIC strategy, focusing on Protection, Humanitarian elements and some Governance; and a wider country strategy which included work on agricultural development, oil revenue management, governance and civil society empowerment. There had been a disconnect between advocacy and programme strategies but this had been improving over the past year, especially with the work done on the Civil Society Bill. This work was a combination of collaboration between the field and Juba, popular mobilisation both in and outside the country, media work, public and private lobbying – staff feel that all of Oxfam's tools were working together, taking advantage of Oxfam's unique position working both in policy and advocacy and in programming. There was no media and communications strategy in place largely due to funding constraints, but the Regional Media and Communications lead had been working with the country team in a workshop on media in conflict.

b) A new advocacy strategy[40] and a media and communications strategy were drafted for the response – the objectives in these strategies are widely perceived to be useful, although they are non-controversial and still lack nuanced messaging. There is however a perceived disconnect between Oxfam's advocacy messages outside the country and those being used in South Sudan. The South Sudan team strongly feels the strategy

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[40] South Sudan Emergency December 2013 Rights in Crisis Campaign Strategy – 27 December 2013

should be National, focusing on a national solution to a national crisis, and some of the messaging being used at national level is not perceived, by some interviewed, to be in line with Oxfam's global policy lines; such as the global lines on integrated missions.

B) Preparedness and resources

a) Staffing played a large part in the policy and campaigns team's preparedness for the response. The country team did not have a media and communications lead when the conflict started, and the policy lead was put at risk as he belonged to an ethnic group in active conflict, and had to leave the country. This meant that substantial support had to be given by the RC and HD, staff had to be brought in from outside, and there was nobody in country who could dedicate time to collecting and sharing information in the early weeks of the response[41]

b) Those staff who were supporting the response were stretched extremely thinly, which meant that progress was slow in producing strategies and policy and media lines and messages. The media lead role was played from the Regional Centre and HD for the first two weeks, though two reactives were put out and management staff in country and in the Regional Centre were able to act as spokespersons for interviews.

c) Oxfam's Advocacy team, and the South Sudan Country Team had been raising awareness in the international community and within Oxfam of the fragility of the situation in South Sudan, although a number of those interviewed expressed concerns that the programme focus did not necessarily reflect this. When South Sudan's cabinet was dismissed in July 2013, Oxfam's policy teams had analysis warning of a worsening of the situation and potential conflict; but few actors in the World spoke out. Civil Society partners were vocal, and Oxfam could have improved links with them at that time.

C) Advocacy, Media, Communicationss products

a) Advocacy products were on the whole not considered timely; the team plans to have a signed off policy brief by mid March. It has proved difficult to get timely, detailed information and feedback from country team, especially where Protection is concerned. In a crisis where Protection has been such an issue, this is likely to have affected Oxfam's credibility. Signoff of policy messages has been a challenge for the same reasons, and feedback takes a long time to come out of the country.

b) However, media reactives and press releases are considered to have been timely and appropriate despite logistical challenges and initial difficulties in introducing field teams to the idea of facilitating journalists' visits. This was mainly due to the overwhelming workload of the existing staff, and the restrictions on additional staff in country. Oxfam was the first organisation on the ground to support journalists, and is recognised as a key contact giving real information (this is reflected in the quality of the media outlets which have been contacting the team, including AFP, Al Jazeera, Reuters). The media team has had to wait for policy lines to be produced before developing messages, which has made staying ahead in the media extremely challenging; members of the team felt that it would be more useful for the teams to work in parallel, ensuring that messages are consistent but allowing for timeliness in the media.

c) There is a general feeling that whilst Oxfam's media work has been solid and timely, there have been missed opportunities; Oxfam has focused on humanitarian issues and have not pushed other advocacy messages. The media teams have done little where regional media is concerned, instead maintaining a focus on international media.

d) In terms of communications, the team was able to put out a blog post, and raised a lot of interest from foreign correspondents through social media platforms. The team in country were able to facilitate media trips and do interviews, which was very positive.. Products could now shift focus to look at achievements of first two months rather than on the speed of the response. There are also now opportunities to profile staff.

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[41] The country management team had requested a media and communications lead and a policy lead, but due to restrictions on numbers and a lack of available staff within Oxfam this was not possible

e) A daily sitrep was produced in country at the beginning of the crisis; this duty was later given to the Regional Centre. This has raised significant challenges: nuances in contextual information have been missed; it takes a long time to get information from relevant departments; this and irregular communication from country teams and difficulties in contacting people in the field has frequently delayed the process, with errors leading to further delays in sign off. At the time of writing the responsibility for the sitrep has been given back to the country team.

D) Interconnectedness with Programme

a) Most of Oxfam's media work has relied on what is happening from a programmatic point of view, and statements are directly linked to programmatic aspects. This has been a strong point of the response, and the fact that Oxfam has remained in country throughout the emergency has given the organisation credibility in the eyes of the media.

b) There has not been as much interconnectedness with advocacy due in large part to lack of information from the country. This is a missed opportunity. The work carried out more recently with civil society organisations is an exception: Oxfam facilitated a civil society forum in Nairobi, and supported partners around the AU summit in January. In order to mitigate risks, there is a need to ensure that this support is balanced and impartial.

E) Impacts

a) The main impact of Oxfam's advocacy, media and communications response has been in making sure that people have information and are aware of what is happening internally and externally; and we have been able to facilitate and persuade other agencies to report on critical issues around ethnic targeting.

b) Oxfam has become known amongst the humanitarian community, in country and in the region, as an organisation which will speak out and has a lot to say; and has gained a lot of traction in the media as a go-to organisation.

c) Other impacts are less easy to attribute to Oxfam: for example, we lobbied to persuade the US to include human rights language in their public messaging; this can also be attributed to others but Oxfam contributed. The crisis is also consistently in the media.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There is a real need for a unified stance for advocacy – either the external advocacy team should support country positions, or the country should work in line with broader policy. Oxfam has clear lines on integrated missions and proximity to military; senior management must discuss the implications on this in South Sudan.

2. There is still a significant amount of disagreement among staff interviewed on Oxfam's advocacy positions and the different authorisation levels and communication of different lines. This needs to be addressed in a facilitative way, perhaps with a face to face meeting of principle internal stakeholders.

3. Experienced Policy capacity, with a strong background in humanitarian emergencies and lobbying foreign governments, is needed on the ground. This person should link strongly with the country Protection Advisor and Gender Advisor, and with programmes to ensure that nuanced, detailed information and analysis is produced.

4. There is a Media lead in country for the next three months; a additional communications officer would also fill a large gap. A suggestion is to recruit a communications officer full time, with a media officer based in Nairobi and covering both DRC and South Sudan. This could support in case of budgetary restrictions in both countries.

5. Media and policy work should take place in parallel, ensuring that messages are consistent but with allowance for timeliness in media

6. The country team has agreed a two-day limit for signoff – this should be reinforced and implemented.

7. Sitreps have been reassigned to the country team; clear responsibility for communication should be given to the programme management team.

8. The country management team should ensure that the strategies are up to date; a fast-changing situation may need live strategy documents. The strategy should be looking at different time frames: short, medium and long term
9. More use could be made of expertise which we have globally, for example on integrated missions and Protection of Civilians
10. More use could also be made of local and civil society partners; to combine the different tools which Oxfam has available as in the work on the Civil Society Bill last year. Oxfam is in a unique position to bring various different resources and tools to bear to make a difference.

Annexes:
Annex 1: RTE TOR
Annex 2: Methodology
Annex 3: Interview/participants list
Annex 4: WASH, Protection, Gender and EFSVL technical recommendations
Annex 5: Draft Recommendations table – to be handed over to the team