



BRIEFING NOTE REFUGEE CRISIS - DADAAB

The purpose of this briefing note is to provide agencies participating in the HAP teleconference of 12th May, 2010 with an overview of key issues in Dadaab.

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A visit to Kenya (22 March- 2 April) was undertaken by the HAP Roving Representative to gather feedback from staff working in various emergencies in the region, identify preferred location for the next HAP deployment and better understand the kind of support needed to strengthen accountability in their ongoing responses. During this visit a number of inter-agency and bi-lateral meetings took place at Nairobi and Dadaab with HAP Members, OCHA, UNHCR and other interested agencies.

HAP Members Meeting – 23rd March

An inter-agency meeting was held in Nairobi at the World Vision office on 23rd March. It was attended by staff from: ACTED; NCA; DRC; Diakonia; Merlin; World Vision and CARE.

Dadaab - Situational Analysis and Identification of Support

A visit to Dadaab which was facilitated by the UNHCR took place during 29-31 March. Currently there are 20 agencies operational in Dadaab, including 5 HAP Members (DRC; CARE; LWF; NRC and Save the Children). Over 36 staff members from operational agencies were consulted who highlighted their current operations, significant challenges, level of interest in collective action to strengthen accountability and the kind of support they would need during a possible HAP deployment. All staff spoken to expressed interest to participate in a HAP deployment to Dadaab and considered such support to be timely and beneficial. They also identified information sharing and complaints handling as key areas which need strengthening.

Challenges Identified

A summary of the key challenges faced at agency-specific and operational levels which were identified during the consultations is given below:

1. **Host Community:** The relationship with the host communities varies for each agency. Most agencies felt that a collective platform which can establish consensus on how to deal with issues and also convey unified and accurate information to the host community was needed. Currently conflicting messages and varying policies around hiring, procurement, development projects and benefits for the host community has led to lack of clarity at the inter-agency level and amongst the host communities which has resulted in violence and threats to agency staff. Agencies grapple with the high expectation from the host community and some agencies felt the need to develop guidance/principles to constructively address issues and improve engagement with the host community.
2. **Information:** Some agencies felt that information content and dissemination to refugees, host communities and at inter-agency level regarding roles, responsibilities, project deliverables needs to improve. Varying messages and lack of common information systems had led to cases of misinformation causing confusion and in some cases strong reactions from host community and refugees. The need for similar and agreed messages to relevant stakeholders was strongly emphasised.
3. **Limited Resources:** Human and financial resources are overstretched- increasing ownership, self-reliance and participation of refugees was cited for a more sustained and long-term approach. Some agencies cited the yearly funding cycle of the UN to be challenging as it decreased predictability and continuity of programmes.
4. **Participation:** Due to the protracted camp situation agencies felt that a sense of dependency and malaise has begun to take root amongst refugees and that there is a need for self-reflection to see if agencies were perpetuating this. New ways of engaging and mobilising the community and utilising their skills need to be explored and implemented to increase community participation and ownership. This was thought to be a cost-effective and sustainable way of working as well. The recent refugee governance system implemented was thought to be a positive step in this direction.
5. **Disparity in standards:** Agencies use various standards for programme deliverables (Sphere, agency specific ones and/or UNHCR) in their humanitarian response which causes some confusion and discontent amongst refugees.
6. **Beneficiary selection criteria:** Some agencies felt that due to 'gatekeepers', traditional community structures, and lack of clarity on criteria, some vulnerable refugees continued to be marginalised and overlooked.

7. **Staff capacities:** The role and responsibilities of incentive workers (refugees hired for short term) needed clarity and their capacity and inductions needed to be strengthened. Agencies felt that senior management awareness and commitment to complaints and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) was also needed.
8. **Complaints:** While complaints are being received and addressed, agencies expressed the need to improve these procedures and requested particularly focus on scope, response and referrals of complaints. Most agencies felt refugees and host communities are not aware of what constitutes a legitimate complaint and felt overwhelmed by the number received and were deeply concerned that the current way of raising complaints was aggressive and counterproductive and putting the agency and its staff at risk. A need to have proper channels and ways to raise complaints was strongly expressed. The lack of clarity on systems for sectoral complaints and those related to sexual abuse and exploitation (SEA) adds to the challenges. Staff stressed the need for senior management support and awareness on issues of PSEA. Agencies expressed the need for joint complaints mechanism for refugees and the host-community and some suggested that the Community Development Council (CDC) should be used as an inter-face to buffer and improve the relationship between the host community and the agencies.
9. **Safety and Security in camps:** Currently a total of 350 police are dedicated to camps, which is reported to be too little, the approximate ratio for police to refugees in the camps is 1: 5500, while for rest of Kenya it is 800: 1000. Cases of police charging refugees money for registering incident reports have also come to the notice of agencies. In addition duties outside the camps and frequent transfers contribute towards under-capacitated and loss of police personnel who have been sensitised by the agencies on refugee issues. A project by UNHCR and agencies is underway to establish a well trained, gender-balanced and a full-time police force specifically for and refugees and dedicated to duties inside the camps.
10. **Joint M&E:** Some agencies felt that to establish an overall picture of progress and gaps in programme delivery, and enhance the spirit of collective action, joint monitoring and evaluation was needed.

Key points highlighted:

Staff consulted highlighted the following key points:

- Activities to increase accountability would be facilitated by being conducted under UNHCR leadership and auspices. This would help to bring a larger number of agencies on board for joint action particularly on information sharing and complaints handling, and ensure sustained progress.
- Staff and agencies spoken to stressed the need to undertake collective activities and efforts to improve accountability and quality of the ongoing response. In addition they emphasised that activities/ mechanisms should be not duplicate processes and should be cost-effective.
- Accountability and related activities should be included in budgets and workplans to ensure follow-up and monitoring.
- The need to strengthen senior management awareness and support was highlighted as being a critical need.
- All agencies consulted prioritised information sharing, complaints handling and participation as areas for strengthening accountability. Some agencies also made specific requests for support.

Overview of Consultation:

	Agency	Location	Number of Staff Consulted
1	CARE	Nairobi	3
		Dadaab	3
2	DRC	Nairobi	2
		Dadaab	1
3	Save the Children	Nairobi	2
		Dadaab	2
4	NRC	Dadaab	3
5	LWF	Dadaab	7
6	Film Aid	Dadaab	1
7	IRC	Dadaab	3
8	UNCHR	Dadaab	9
Total			36

Previous activities in Dadaab:

During January 2010, Ester Dross, Complaints Handling officer from the complaints handling unit conducted consultations with staff and refugees in Dadaab for the HAP Standard Review process. During these consultations, the need to strengthen the safety of complaints processes, increasing avenues for participation and improved information sharing were highlighted by beneficiaries.

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