

Quality Disaster Responses

Ernst & Young's second report to the DEC confirmed that overall the results of the DEC Agencies' 2008/09 assessments provide some very positive messages and that excellent progress was made in meeting their Improvement Commitments.

Their report suggested that the DEC may benefit from looking in more detail at the challenges of holding those with delegated responsibility and authority to account, such as partners and alliance members. The new DEC policy on DEC Agencies' independent evaluations will strengthen assurance evidence across all areas.

We use funds as stated

For a second year DEC Agencies were able to demonstrate embedded processes for financial control within their organisations and all articulated confidence in these arrangements.

Good progress was made against the Improvement Commitments that DEC Agencies set themselves for 2008/09.

These focused on systematically ensuring that financial arrangements are responsive to the level of financial risk in disaster response locations. Improvements include:

- consistent use of financial risk registers for emergency operations
- development of a bank credit assessment to ensure the necessary analysis takes place including speed and cost of transfers from the UK.

We aspire to fulfil agreed humanitarian principles, standards and behaviours

The majority of DEC Agencies reported room for improvement in this area. All have clear statements in place setting out the standards to which they work and the vast majority have policies and processes governing the application of these standards.

However for some DEC Agencies these policies and processes need further time to embed within operations to be deemed to be systematically applied and to be capable of systematic assurance.

The majority of Improvement Commitments made by DEC Agencies were met as planned and focussed on improving communication of the standards to staff and partners and ensuring they underpinned programme proposals. Improvements for 2009/10 will continue to focus on these areas. Improvements so far include:

- increased induction and training for staff and partners on standards
- the introduction of a menu of indicators, drawing on humanitarian standards and guidelines, to be applied at proposal development phase.



Abbie Traylor-Smith/Oxfam

Sphere Standard – Access and water quantity

We achieve intended objectives and outcomes

The majority of DEC Agencies have overall confidence in their arrangements for programmatic control, and they all have policies and processes in place and apply these. However the related assurance mechanisms need further time to embed and some require further definition.

A number of Improvement Commitments from 2008 were met as planned. The most significant of these was the identification and management of unintended programme impacts and this needs further development in 2009/10. Improvements include:

- the review of unintended impacts as part of regular monitoring visits
- evaluation and report formats to include a section on beneficiary feedback.

Delivering the best possible disaster responses is the responsibility of the DEC Agencies. To support them, the Board of Trustees has agreed five key priorities for improving delivery and against which DEC Agencies will be held accountable. This Management and Improvement Report sets out performance against these priorities in 2008/09 together with progress against planned Improvement Commitments.



A DEC Members Workshop

We are accountable to beneficiaries

This remains one of the weaker areas of the framework although good progress was made against a significant number of Improvement Commitments.

The majority of DEC Agencies confirmed that they have guidance and templates addressing beneficiary accountability, but for some these are relatively new. There were also improvements in the publication of entitlements to beneficiaries and in capturing and using beneficiary feedback. These include:

- systematic use of new guidance for community consultation and complaints mechanisms
- a new requirement that programme monitoring plans must feature how beneficiary feedback will be collected and processed.

In addition, one DEC Agency became certified by the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership during the year, which is recognised by the framework as providing sufficient evidence of accountability to beneficiaries. DEC Agencies have committed to a range of improvements across all aspects of this accountability priority in 2009/10.

We learn from our experience

This remains the most challenging area of the framework. DEC Agencies confirmed that controls around learning from experience are more difficult to systematically apply and assure compared to financial and programme management areas.

However, the majority of Improvement Commitments were met as planned and most DEC Agencies now have policies and processes in place to effectively capture key learning from a range of sources and to evaluate this learning. Improvements were also made in incorporating learning into processes and future programmes and effectively communicating learning to staff and partners. Improvements include:

- establishment of Knowledge Management functions
- roll out of a new evidence and learning framework
- formal lesson learning reviews three months into the programme.

Improvement commitments for 2009/10 focus on a more systematic application of policies and processes.