



Emergency Response

Success Story



Context

UNICEF has been responding to population movements and natural disasters in eastern DRC for over a decade.

Eastern Congo is notorious for its shocking levels of sexual violence, high levels of population displacement, and cyclical epidemics of infectious diseases. It is an area still at war, despite regional reconciliation efforts, with ongoing fighting between the undisciplined Congolese army (FARDC), and various rebel groups; especially the FDLR, who were implicated in the Rwandan genocide.

Further north in Province Orientale, the Lord's Resistance Army, known originally for abducting children and conducting severely violent acts in Uganda, continue to destroy villages and force high levels of population displacement.

The 2010 Humanitarian Action Plan (UN, 2009) points out that *"in addition to the population displacements, these factors contribute to an increase in human rights violations, to persistent food insecurity, to high rates of mortality/morbidity, and to an unbearable increase in the number of cases of sexual violence. As long as these large displacements continue they will continue to cause increased medical, health and nutritional problems"*.

Challenge

Initially, UNICEF's emergency response function was ad hoc – each new crisis required a new partner to deliver the humanitarian assistance. As a consequence, emergency response was limited to areas where humanitarian organisations were already operating, and was conducted by non-specialists with limited spare capacity – with for example a medical NGO taking on the distribution of Non Food Items, while at the same time dealing with a substantially increased health care caseload.

As a result, the emergency response arrived slowly (and in some cases not at all), more technical elements of the response, such as the provision of water and sanitation, were often unable to be implemented, and there was limited if any monitoring or learning about how to do emergency response better.

At a Glance

Location: Eastern DRC.

Goal: Improve speed, quality and coverage of emergency response.

Challenge: Continuous population displacements and natural disasters but no emergency response mechanism.

Solution: The Sida-funded RRMP mechanism, replicating a civil defence system – including an surveillance system, standardised assessment criteria, dedicated and pre-financed response partners, involvement of local businesses and an effective monitoring system.

Results: Quality response to all emergency situations within 72 hours, professional staff of emergency response experts.

Solution Overview

In 2004, the Rapid Response to Movements of Populations (RRMP – initially called just RRM) mechanism was established to cover the urgent needs of people who have recently – up to 3 months – been victims of a crisis. RRMP is co-funded by Sida and has the following components:

- Early warning surveillance by local groups who contact RRMP partners.
- Standardised sector-specific or multi-sector assessments (MSA), whose results are also used by the wider humanitarian community to prioritise interventions.
- Initial determination of beneficiary lists by local authorities, who receive training in emergency response.
- Multi-sector emergency response covering Non-food items (NFI), water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), shelter and education, within 72 hours.
- Cash-based fairs supporting local businesses for NFI and shelter materials
- Regular quality monitoring of interventions, including protection and gender.
- Production of analyses and maps on emergency response, and maintenance of a database of assessment and intervention statistics.

Benefits

In 2010, RRMP will directly or indirectly assist 1,770,380 children, women, and men affected by emergencies in DRC.

This innovative programme is clearly needs/vulnerability based, and demonstrates the benefits of un-earmarked funding and operational flexibility. It has created a core group of emergency specialists across the DRC, who one day could become DRC's civil defence function. RRMP has involved local authorities and has created cash-based fairs to support local businesses. It also ensures that the programme continues to adapt and innovate, by providing regular lessons learnt forums between the partners.

This programme could be studied and used as a best practice example for complex emergency situations with regularly occurring crises – either natural disasters and/or population movements.

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