

Study on the effectiveness of humanitarian partners and funding relations of the Netherlands

Case study report - South Sudan

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Disclaimer: the opinions expressed in this report are those of the evaluation team, and do not necessarily reflect those of IOB.

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June 2022

MDF Training & Consultancy

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1 Introduction

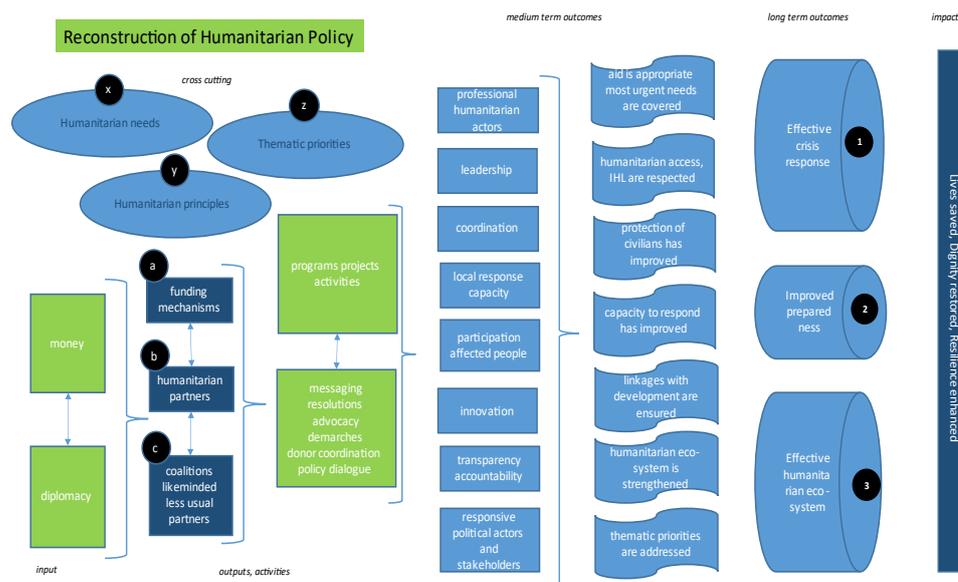
1.1 Background to the study

“The humanitarian objectives of the Netherlands are defined by the wish to save lives, restore dignity and enhance the resilience of people affected by humanitarian disasters and crises”.¹ To meet such objectives, the Dutch government has provided financial support to a number of selected humanitarian partners and funding mechanisms, providing non-earmarked, semi earmarked, and earmarked funding with a global coverage. Furthermore, the support aims “to support an effective crises response, to improve preparedness, and to build an effective humanitarian eco-system”.² Such funding is supplemented by diplomatic and advocacy activities both from the Hague and from in-country embassies.

So as to evaluate the effectiveness of such activities, the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (IOB) has commissioned a number of evaluations and reviews, including this South Sudan case study, being one of three case study countries, the other two being Syria and Yemen. The consolidation of all such evaluation activities will be undertaken by IOB themselves.

Figure 1 below reflects the reconstructed Dutch humanitarian policy between 2015-2020, indicating inputs, outputs, activities, cross-cutting principles, medium-term and long-term expected outcomes, as well as intended impact. It also illustrates the three fundamental pathways adopted to reach the above-mentioned objectives: a) funding mechanisms, b) humanitarian partners, and c) humanitarian diplomacy. These are the key focal areas of this study. Each pathway is further elaborated in detail (see Annex 1) where the assumptions underpinning the expected outcomes are indicated.

Figure 1: Dutch Humanitarian Policy 2015-2020



¹ Terms of reference, Annex 1 Reconstruction of Humanitarian Policy.

² Terms of reference, page 1.

For pathways a and b, the Dutch Government Department for Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid (DSH) “allocates around 40-55% of the humanitarian budget as predictable, flexible, and unearmarked core funding to a limited number of “experienced humanitarian partners”, with whom there is a long-term relationship”.³ Partners include UN organisations such as the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), plus Red Cross partners - the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and the Netherland Red Cross (NLRC) - as well as the Dutch Relief Alliance (DRA). These organisations are trusted to spend such funding where it is needed most, whilst considering the Dutch government’s humanitarian objectives and priorities.

Unearmarked funding through DSH annual contributions to the “experienced humanitarian actors” for the period 2015-2020 are as follows:

Table 1. Annual €M allocation to experienced humanitarian partners by year

Year	WFP ⁴	UNICEF ⁵	UNOCHA	UNHCR	ICRC ⁶	IFRC	NLRC	DRA
2015	36.0	15.0	5.0	33.0	40.0	0	15.0	-
2016	36.0	19.0	5.0	42.0	40.0	0	16.5	-
2017	49.0	17.0	7.0	46.0	40.0	0	17.4	60.0
2018	36.0	17.0	5.0	33.0	40.0	0	17.2	60.0
2019	36.0	10.2	7.0	33.0	40.0	0.2	16.2	70.0
2020	36.0	10.2	7.0	33.0	45.0	0.9	24.9	70.0

Additionally, “softly (semi) earmarked funding is made available for ongoing chronic crises, in response to new developments, and acute crises during the year. On average 30-40% of the overall budget is allocated to partners for humanitarian assistance in specific crises”.⁷ For such specific crises DSH selects the most appropriate partner or funding mechanism that the partner manages, for example the UN Country-Based Pool Fund (CBPF) or the DRA, setting aside approximately €15 million at the start of each year.⁸ DSH also contributes a significant sum annually to the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), often being the second highest donor each year. The balance of DSH’s humanitarian budget has consisted of direct earmarked contributions to experienced partners in specific countries. This method of funding has not been utilised in South Sudan since 2017.

Annual allocations to UN CERF, as well as CBPF and direct funding contributions to South Sudan were as follows:

Table 2. Annual CERF, CBPF and Direct allocations

Year	Netherlands annual	CERF allocation to South Sudan \$M	DSH allocation to South Sudan	DSH direct allocation to South Sudan

³ IOB report: “Dutch decision-making on humanitarian assistance: Strengths and Weaknesses. September 2021

⁴ WFP was supported with €108M for 2019 through 2021.

⁵ UNICEF has received €51M for the period 2109-2023

⁶ The ICRC has been provided €120M to cover three years from 2019 onwards. This was supplemented with a €5M COVID top up in September 2020

⁷ IOB report: “Dutch decision-making on humanitarian assistance: Strengths and Weaknesses. September 2021.

⁸ Ibid.

	contribution to the CERF9 \$M		Humanitarian Fund CBPF \$M	
2015	59.2	13.4	5.3	-
2016	60.5	20.8	7.0	5.0
2017	71.3	15.5	-	6.0
2018	67.9	-	12.5	-
2019	71.3	27.9	7.8	-
2020	98.0	26.6	11.2	-

The CERF and pool funding is allocated in-country by UNOCHA to a range of UN agencies, plus INGOs and NGOs.

DSH also aims to promote crosscutting thematic priorities such as localisation, innovation, and the triple nexus, as well as other specific humanitarian focal areas. Currently there are eighteen thematic priorities, and the ongoing assumption is that the above-mentioned core funding, together with flexible support to ongoing and new crises, will enable the Netherlands to gain influence and promote the adoption and inclusion of such thematic priorities within humanitarian sectoral responses. These assumptions were reviewed within the scope of this study: please refer to the relevant findings sections below.

1.2 Scope, approach and data collection methodologies

This South Sudan study covers the period 2015 to 2020, albeit conversations did naturally focus on recent years and the current ongoing operational context. South Sudan was selected as a case study country due to the complexity of the ongoing humanitarian context, the presence in-country of the “experienced partners”, and the level of support provided to CERF and CBPF.

The main objectives of the case study, as stated in the ToR, are to:

1. Shed light on the effectiveness of Dutch supported partners in the delivery of humanitarian aid.
2. Provide insights into the conditions and circumstances under which the Netherlands as a donor enhances or hampers the effectiveness of these partners in the delivery of humanitarian aid. This includes an evaluation of the effectiveness of a number of funding mechanisms used by the Netherlands: core funding, pooled funds, country earmarking and the DRA.¹⁰

The case study has examined how different funding mechanisms and humanitarian partners have delivered results on three policy objectives of Dutch humanitarian assistance since 2015:

1. The ambition to deliver timely, needs-based, effective, principled and high-quality humanitarian assistance;
2. The ambition to be coherent with broader development approaches and crisis responses; and
3. The ambitions to innovate and localise.¹¹

⁹ Taken from individual CERF annual reports 2015 – 2020.

¹⁰ Terms of reference page 1.

¹¹ Terms of reference, page 2

The study has also looked at the strengths and weaknesses of DSH's humanitarian partners, briefly reviewing partners' operational and programmatic performance, as well as the timeliness and functionality of the mechanisms supported.

Beyond this, the country case study has reviewed the relationship between the Dutch government and its selected partners, whether this relationship has influenced the effectiveness of partner aid delivery, and the extent to which such relations have led to the adoption of the Dutch government's thematic priorities. Furthermore, diplomatic and advocacy initiatives - either individually or alongside other donors - has been assessed. Once more, the assumptions underlying the diplomatic humanitarian pathways have also been reviewed.

Overall, the study has been both summative, in that it has reviewed how effectively funding to date has been utilised, and formative, in that it will look forward, identifying any possible improvements and changes to ongoing practices.

The overall approach of this study was consultative, through a mixture of methodologies, as follows:

Key informant interviews (KIIs) with:

- Recipients of unearmarked funding (UNCHR, UNICEF, WFP, UNOCHA, ICRC, IFRC)
- Recipients of CERF and direct funding (UNCHR, UNICEF, WFP)
- Fund managers (two) and recipient local partners of SSHF (three)
- Recipients of DRA funding - consortium members (five)
- Recipients of DRA funding - consortium member local partners (three)
- South Sudan Red Cross National Society
- Dutch Embassy staff (two)
- Other donors and embassies (British, Swedish, DG ECHO)
- Government Registration Dept officials in Bentiu

The above list includes the recipients of each type of funding mechanism and their implementing partners, as well as the Embassy staff responsible for monitoring DSH funding.

A number of interview guides were elaborated and utilised as relevant based on meeting the research questions, sub questions, and judgement criteria indicated in the research matrix elaborated in the inception report. The above list of country-based interviewees was split between the Team Leader and the local consultant as appropriate.

Observation/Site visits:

The Team Leader, together with a representative of IOB, undertook a two-day trip to Bentiu in Northern South Sudan to talk with key UN partners (UNCHR, UNICEF, WFP, UNOCHA, IOM) and to visit the surrounding camps. Similarly, the local consultant visited Wau, in Bahr al Ghazal, to talk to UN and CBPF/DRA international and local partners, and visit their work sites.

Focus group discussions:

At a beneficiary level, during both site visits a small number of focus group discussions were held. In Bentiu three focus group discussions were undertaken with approximately 30 beneficiaries in total. Two were undertaken in Wau with approximately 24

beneficiaries. A multi sectoral interview guide for such meetings had been elaborated in preparation.

Desk research:

An analysis of partner project documents has provided some guidance as to how well partner interventions have met their objectives. A bibliography of documents can be found in Annex 4.

Data analysis:

The information gathered using the methodologies indicated above were entered into an analysis matrix whereby all feedback to each evaluation question and sub question was gathered into one excel spreadsheet, therefore enabling the consolidation of information and feedback in one location generating the initial findings and conclusions. This greatly facilitated the formulation of the debrief workshop presentations and subsequently this case study report.

Debrief workshops:

Prior to writing up country case study reports, a debrief workshop has been conducted remotely so as to test initial findings and conclusions from the data gathered to date, to identify any gaps in the data gathered, and to answer any initial questions that arose. Attendees were predominantly from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in the Hague and in-country or regional Dutch embassy staff.

Partner survey:

A partner survey has been undertaken, however as the results cannot be sorted on a country basis, this information will be utilised for the synthesis report.

Intended users of the report include:

- MFA staff in the Hague (IOB office, DSH, and other relevant technical departments)
- Embassy staff in South Sudan responsible for programme implementation and monitoring.
- Embassy staff elsewhere, globally
- DRA partners, both in-country and at their global and regional headquarters
- Other donors and interested stakeholders (UN Partners and the Red Cross Movement recipients).

1.3 Research questions

As per the ToR the research questions were as follows:¹²

RQ 1 How effective are Dutch-funded actors in the humanitarian system (UN Agencies, Red Cross family and NGOs) in achieving Dutch humanitarian goals?

1.1 What are relative strengths and weaknesses of various funded humanitarian actors, how can these be explained, and in what way have these delivered added value in the delivery of humanitarian assistance?

1.2 Have Dutch-funded actors in the humanitarian system delivered timely, needs-based and principled humanitarian action? What have been factors of success, or failure?

¹² ToR page 3.

1.3 What has been the contribution of Dutch-funded actors to the objective of innovation, localisation and the coordination with broader development goals? What best practices are identifiable and what has been the added value for the realisation of humanitarian goals?

RQ 2 What kind of funding relation does the MFA have with its various partners, and how does this relation enable or hamper their effectiveness in the delivery of humanitarian aid?

2.1 [How are funding decisions made within the MFA?]

2.2 What different types of relations between MFA and recipient organisations emerge from these funding decisions, and how do these relations enable or hamper the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance?

2.3 In what way have the priority themes innovation and localisation been promoted within these relations?

2.4 How have policy changes in response to the IOB Policy Review of 2015 been implemented, and to what extent have these changes contributed to achieving Dutch humanitarian goals?

Research question 2.1 will not to be addressed by this effectiveness study. This question has been taken up separately by IOB itself. Please note also that question 2.4 was also reduced by IOB, in as much that only the level of ongoing monitoring of Dutch government activities, together with the effect of diplomatic activities has been reviewed.

1.4 Limitations

The short time period in which to assess organisational functionality was the main limitation to the case study. Normally, an evaluation of one of the UN partner's effectiveness in-country would take a period of months utilising a large team of evaluators. In this study on average only one interview per organisation has been undertaken, normally of one hour in length. This has been supplemented at times by field visits and secondary research so that a reasonable impression of each funding recipient's effectiveness has been possible, together with an overview of how they have contributed towards meeting the objectives of the Dutch government's humanitarian policy objectives.

Similarly, this has not been a standard evaluation in that a donor has funded a specific project in one geographical location. The non-earmarked core funding is given at headquarters (HQ) level and as such it cannot be associated with any particular project, moreover the reality is that the Dutch government funding has its "fingers in many pies". This, however, does not make the funding provided easy to evaluate as recipient organisations struggle to identify programmes they feel the Dutch government have funded and as a consequence what they feel they should be presenting to the study team. This has led to delays in terms of how quickly some organisations have responded to the study's initial enquiries.

The breadth of questions the evaluation team has been looking into has also been extensive. This has meant that not every topic has been raised with every interviewee. As

such, although a clear attempt has been made to answer all of the questions set, some answers will be more in-depth and more evidence-based than others.

Finally, the early years of the study scope period have been difficult to discuss/assess due to staff having moved on and the natural focus of discussions towards recent or ongoing contextual circumstances.

2 The South Sudan country context

2.1 Operating context

Figure 2 Geographical map of South Sudan

Source: www.un.org ¹³



South Sudan is bordered on the north by Sudan; on the east by Ethiopia; on the south by Kenya, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and on the west by the Central African Republic. It has a tropical climate with wet and dry seasons, the rainy season beginning as early as April and continuing as late as December. The largest ethnic group is the Dinka, who constitute about 40% of the population, followed by the Nuer, who make up about 20%.¹⁴

South Sudan declared independence on July 9, 2011, following years of conflict and civil wars with Sudan that date back to 1962. Since then, life has been far from plain sailing as internal ethnic and political rivalries have led to an internal civil war creating widespread famine in 2017.¹⁵ A detailed summary of events can be seen in Figure 3 below. As can be seen, a number of ceasefires have been called, only soon to be forgotten. The Africa Centre for Strategic Studies suggests that such violence has led to an estimated 400,000 deaths between 2013 and 2019.¹⁶

¹³ <http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/southsudan.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://www.britannica.com/place/South-Sudan>

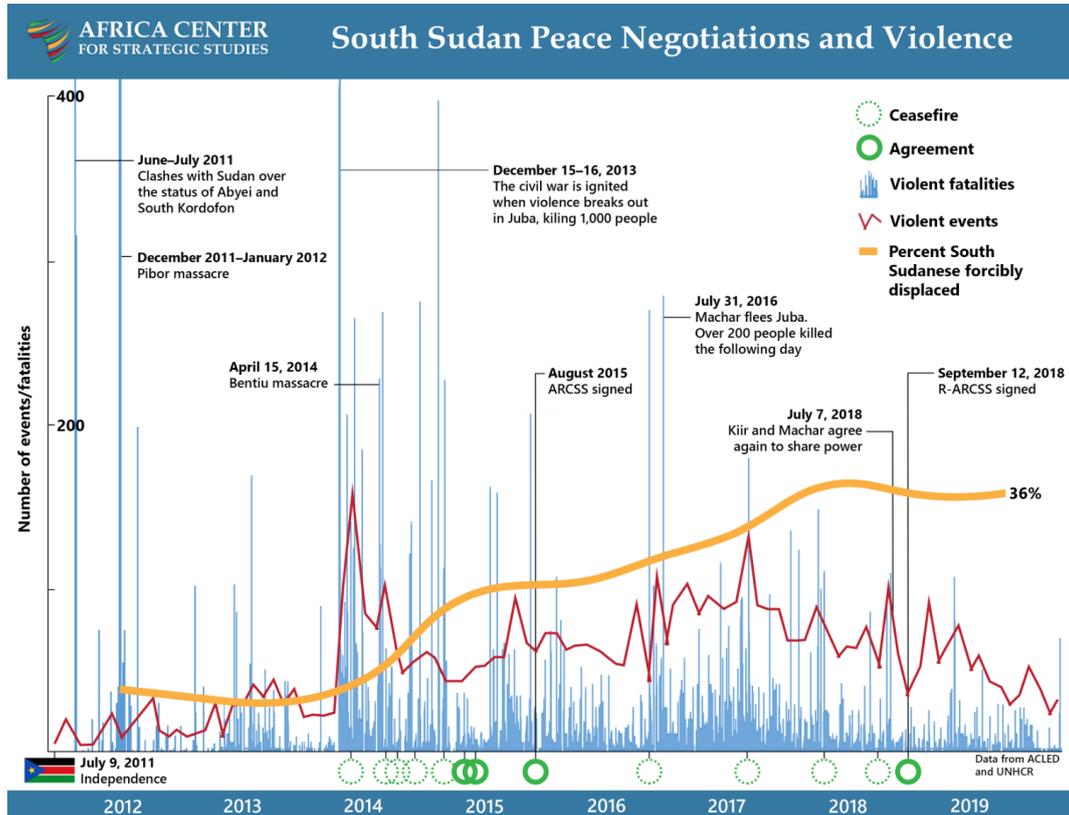
¹⁵ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14019202>

¹⁶ <https://africacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Timeline-of-South-Sudan-Peace-Agreements-and-Violence-printable.pdf>

The power sharing peace deal signed in September 2018 is basically holding, although clashes are still ongoing, for example such as those reported in West Equatoria state between June and October 2021,¹⁷ and elsewhere.¹⁸ South Sudan is a difficult environment for the delivery of humanitarian aid, especially as aid workers are seemingly treated with suspicion. According to the UN, seventy-nine aid workers have been killed between 2013 and 2017.¹⁹

Figure 3 South Sudan Timeline 2012-2019

Source: African Centre for Strategic Studies²⁰



South Sudan’s economic recovery was derailed in 2020 by locust invasions, floods and the COVID–19 pandemic. The oil sector, which accounts for 70% of GDP and more than 90% of public revenues, was damaged by the falling global oil prices, reducing government revenues by 40%, increasing the fiscal deficit to 4.9% of GDP in 2020 from 2.5% in 2019. This economic slowdown is expected to aggravate poverty and unemployment, with a disproportionate effect on youth and women.²¹

According to the 2020 UNDP Human Development Report, South Sudan’s HDI value for 2019 is 0.433, putting the country in the low human development category, positioning it at 185 out of 189 countries and territories. Life expectancy is estimated at 58, and the GNI per capita (2017 PPP\$) is set at 2,003, both of which have been improving since 2015.²²

¹⁷ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/topics/c302m85q54lt/south-sudan>

¹⁸ <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/10-years-after-independence-south-sudan-faces-persistent-crisis/>

¹⁹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-39400650>

²⁰ <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/timeline-of-south-sudan-peace-agreements-and-violence/>

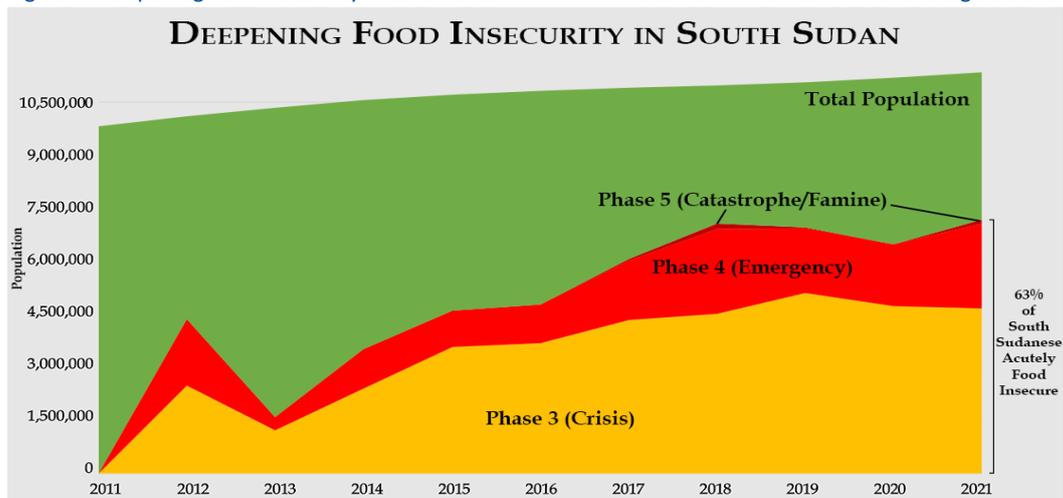
²¹ African Development Bank.

²² UNDP World Development Report 2020 – South Sudan.

2.2 Humanitarian situation

The overall humanitarian response is led by the UN country team who produce a Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) based on a Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO). The current humanitarian situation in South Sudan is a concern. The 2022 Humanitarian Response Plan are requesting \$1.7 billion to target 6.8 million people who are in need of humanitarian support, which is an increase of 200,000 from 2021, representing more than two-thirds of the entire population. 1.4 million people remain internally displaced.²³ Food insecurity seems of particular concern, as expressed by the Africa Centre for Strategic Studies graphic in Figure 4 below.²⁴

Figure 4: Deepening Food Insecurity in South Sudan Source: African Centre for Strategic Studies



The 2022 HRP is also concerned about food insecurity levels stating that “Extreme levels of food insecurity and malnutrition, affecting two-thirds of the country’s population, make South Sudan one of the worst food insecurity emergencies in the world. An estimated 8.3 million people, including refugees, are expected to experience severe food insecurity at the peak of the 2022 lean season (May-July). This represents a 7% increase from the 7.7 million people in 2021.²⁵ “An estimated 1.4 million children and 480,000 pregnant or lactating women expected to be acutely malnourished and in need of treatment”.²⁶

Other sectors within the HRP with high numbers of planned beneficiaries are Health, WASH, and Protection. UNICEF reported in December 2021 that 4.5 million children were in need of humanitarian assistance, and that during the year 241,108 Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) cases (54% girls) were treated in inpatient and outpatient therapeutic programmes.²⁷ Furthermore, UNHCR reports that as of January 2022 there are 2.3 million South Sudanese living out of the country, mostly in Uganda, Sudan, and Ethiopia. More than half a million have returned since the peace agreement in October 2018,²⁸ although

²³ UNOCHA 2022 HRP South Sudan.

²⁴ <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/10-years-after-independence-south-sudan-faces-persistent-crisis/>

²⁵ UNOCHA 2022 HRP South Sudan

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ December 2021 Situation Report, UNICEF.

²⁸ UNHCR January 2022 Update.

the return process is not simple in that the land of the displaced communities has sometimes been taken by others.

The country is also susceptible to locust infestations, drought and flooding. Since the 2021 rainy season 90% of the Unity State population has been displaced with severe damage to livelihoods.²⁹ Work was underway during the Bentiu field trip to reinforce the current dykes in place to mitigate against further floods during the 2022 rainy season.

Despite the long-term support to the camps and IDP settlements surrounding Bentiu, cross-sectoral needs, such as protection and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) issues, and support to people with disabilities remain significant.³⁰ Similarly, the camp infrastructure is in need of repair i.e. the health facilities, latrines, and the beneficiary shelters themselves.³¹

Camp inhabitants need livelihood activities to lighten the reliance on humanitarian aid.³² There is already a countrywide tendency amongst the general population towards aid dependency,³³ resulting from years of humanitarian support that dates back to before the separation of the two halves of Sudan.

Overall, the humanitarian needs within South Sudan remain immense. A lack of good governance by state authorities, and seemingly minimal engagement with civil society are important shortfalls.³⁴ Ongoing insecurity, at times generated by government factions, only exacerbate the situation, as does the poor infrastructure, notably a lack of decent roads that makes access to many parts of the country difficult, especially in the rainy season.³⁵

2.3 DSH funded activities

DSH's experienced humanitarian partners - UNOCHA, WFP, UNICEF, and UNHCR - together with both the International Committee (ICRC) and the International Federation (IFRC) of the Red Cross Movement³⁶ are fully operational in-country and funded at the Hague level.

CERF funding by year to each of the experienced humanitarian partners can be seen to favour WFP more than the others, reflecting the food security crisis ongoing here. UNICEF have also been consistently funded.

²⁹ UNHCR Update. March 2022.

³⁰ Interviews with HCR protection officers

³¹ FGDs with POC camp inhabitants and dyke committees feedback.

³² FGD feedback and UN agency and donor interviews.

³³ Donor and Dutch embassy staff interviews.

³⁴ Interviews with Donors and UN agency staff

³⁵ Interviews with UN agencies, DRA, members and DRA local partners.

³⁶ Working alongside the Yemen Red Cross

Table 3. CERF funding by experienced humanitarian partner by year – South Sudan³⁷

Year	CERF allocation to South Sudan (in \$M)	CERF Sudan Allocation to WFP (in \$M) ³⁸	CERF Sudan Allocation to UNICEF (in \$M)	CERF Sudan Allocation to HCR (in \$M)
2015	13.4	3.1	4.3	1.4
2016	20.8	2.8	5.7	6.0
2017	15.5	2.2	5.5	-
2018	-	-	-	-
2019	27.9	6.7	3.4	4.4
2020	26.6	18.5	3.2	0.5

The South Sudan Humanitarian fund has been consistently supported by DSH, with Dutch support being one of the top five contributors (apart from 2017) providing more than 10% of the requested funding.³⁹

Table 4 DSH funding to the South Sudan CBPF by year

Year	DSH allocation to the South Sudan CBPF \$M	Total contributions received	DSH %
2015	5.3	99.4	5%
2016	7.0	58.2	12%
2017	-	86.2	-
2018	12.5	88.9	14%
2019	7.8	68.9	11%
2020	11.2	66.3	17%

DRA are funding a multi-sectoral response in South Sudan with a total budget of €7,923,698⁴⁰ (including €1,5 million COVID-19 supplement provided in April 2020) Activities include the food security, nutrition, cash, protection and WASH sectors. The main implementing partners are Save the Children (lead), CARE Nederland, Dorcas, Help a Child, Plan International Nederland, Tearfund Netherlands and War Child, working alongside some local partners.⁴¹ This programme has been operational since at least 2017.⁴² DRA also provided €2.5 million to support the floods response in 2020 through the same consortium. In terms of direct DSH funding to UN agencies in South Sudan, in 2016 WFP were donated €5 million, while in 2017 WFP received €2 million and ICRC €4 million.

³⁷ Taken from the annual CERF reports 2015-2020

³⁸ <https://cerf.un.org/what-we-do/allocation-by-country>

³⁹ As indicated in each annual South Sudan Humanitarian Fund Report.

⁴⁰ https://dutchrelief.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/DRA_Impactbrief-2020_6-compressed.pdf

⁴¹ ACROSS, Centre for Emergency and Development Support (CEDs), Community Empowerment Foundation (CEF), Humanitarian Development Consortium (HDC), Live Well, Mary Help Association (MHA), Smile Again Africa Development Organization (SAADO), Universal Intervention and Development Organization (UNIDOR), Widows and Orphans Charitable Organization (WOCO), Women Development Group (WDG)

⁴² Annual Impact Reports for DRA for 2016 and 2015 have not been accessed.

3 Overview of the effectiveness of support to humanitarian partners (RQ1)

3.1 Strengths, weaknesses and challenges of funded humanitarian actors

3.1.1 Strengths

Each of the “experienced partners” receiving non-earmarked funding - also referred to as the “Big Six” - operate according to their mandate, and bring their own expected sectoral expertise: UNOCHA manages co-ordination, the cluster system and the CERF and pooled funds, UNICEF provides health and supply chain, nutritional (SAM)⁴³ and educational and protection support, WFP covers food security (90% of general food distributions, assisting 5.3 million people in 2020, and the moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) caseload)⁴⁴ and school feeding, UNHCR supports IDP communities in the camps, specifically those with special needs, and facilitates the refugee returnee process. The UN agencies, as by design, complement each other to cover a broad spectrum of activities, co-ordinated within the cluster system which each of them lead on. Similarly, ICRC is working in the conflict areas, and together with the IFRC supports the South Sudan Red Cross in terms of capacity building, concentrating support on the SSRC disaster response and tracing activities. Each funding recipient is an important actor within the South Sudan humanitarian context. Specific programmatic strengths or added value identified within such partners were the logistical support provided by WFP in terms of the provision of the UNHAS flights, without which a nationwide humanitarian intervention would not be possible, plus the work they have undertaken either through Food For Work initiatives, or by themselves, repairing or reconstructing the roads network using larger machinery.⁴⁵

UNOCHA have managed the joint assessments nationwide that feed into the HRP process, plus, from what was witnessed in Bentiu and Wau, have co-ordinated and facilitated the working relations amongst the aid community, as well as led on localised assessments. UNHCR have led on the roll-out of Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)⁴⁶ across the country, and are establishing a system alongside the government to enable affected populations to replace documentation.⁴⁷

Within the Red Cross Movement, ICRC has a specific role in terms of providing medical evacuations and field hospitals to all sides within the ongoing conflict, which gives them a higher level of access than other partners. The South Sudan Red Cross equally has good levels of access, based on a nationwide network of 21 branches and 21,000 volunteers, although at times they are seen as linked with the government which can create some access issues as opposition factions may be wary of working with them. IFRC capacity

⁴³ Treatment of the severely acute malnourished caseload.

⁴⁴ Moderately acutely malnourished

⁴⁵ Supported by Dutch Govt development funding.

⁴⁶ Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

⁴⁷ For example, students need ID certificates in order to attend secondary and tertiary education.

building and programmatic support to the South Sudan Red Cross is provided by nine of the International Red Cross' national societies with different sectoral expertise.⁴⁸

Similar to the UN and Red Cross actors, the DRA INGOs also bring their own complementary sectoral expertise. For example, SAVE, who according to the DRA members have led the consortium very well, bring a wealth of experience in child protection (co-leading the child protection cluster with UNICEF), and education; Help a Child provide psychological support to children, and work on SGBV and domestic violence cases; DORCAS have expertise in food security and livelihoods and WASH; while Tearfund are experienced providers of emergency relief and host the South Sudan NGO Forum.

Local DRA partners facilitate grassroots level interventions – which has greater levels of acceptance in the communities - with their own specialist expertise. For example, the Charity and Empowerment Foundation undertake child protection, Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL), and education activities; the Mary Help Association provide rural agriculture and educational training; and the Women's Development Group work on peacebuilding, SGBV and FSL.

Dutch funding also provides support to local organisations through the South Sudan Humanitarian Fund (SSHF),⁴⁹ for example the Support for Peace Education Development Programme (SPEDP), who undertake education, WASH, protection and health activities; Hold the Child, who work on nutrition, education and child protection; Action for Development, who support nutrition centres; and Nile Hope, who implement child protection interventions such as safe houses.

Together the above provide a broad spectrum of sectoral activities that Dutch government funding has contributed to. The evaluation team has not been able to investigate themselves the extent of the effectiveness of such organisations and their combined contribution, however they do receive recurrent funding through either the DRA or SSHF.

3.1.2 Challenges and weaknesses

The operational context is difficult and not without challenges that can have a detrimental effect on the effectiveness of the above-mentioned partners, even if the partners cannot control such factors. For example, insecurity and access are issues that are mostly beyond the control of the agencies themselves. Similarly, the lack of government engagement in the support or rehabilitation of nationwide public services makes it more difficult for agencies involved in health or education interventions, such as UNICEF and WFP, to include longer-term stability or sustainability into their programming, as it is not clear how such services will be managed in the future.

UNOCHA has seen a prolonged capacity gap in terms of a lack of a country director, and a SSHF pool fund manager. Although now rectified, this has caused some concern and delays. There would also seem to be some disparity between UNOCHA and the humanitarian community, who think of the SSHF as the main tool for localisation, and the SSHF management who don't see it as their responsibility, with the capacity building of the fund recipients being only one element of what they are there to do. Capacity building

⁴⁸ Known as PNSs – Participating National Societies.

⁴⁹ UN agencies are the normal recipients of the CERF funding.

between agencies within the DRA structure is seen by the NNGO DRA members, often recipients of both funds, in a more positive light than in the SSHF.

NNGOs themselves admit they need capacity building on a number of issues, including financial management and reporting, and advance programme management skills.⁵⁰ Such NNGOs lack the logistical capacity to travel during the wet season, and have a problem retaining staff once trained. They have also reported difficulties with diversifying their funding, either through the pooled fund, or direct from INGOs or UN agencies. DG ECHO's constitution does not allow it to fund local NNGOs. Funding cycles are also reported to be short, and NNGOs have complained that at times they are not seen as equal partners in a UN sponsored intervention, but more as the implementing partner.

The lack of a working legal structure makes it difficult to process protection cases. Protection issues around the camps remain a concern within UNHCR. For example, beneficiaries in Bentiu reported issues for women when collecting firewood in that they are open to assault, and UNHCR reported women are exposed to SGBV in the home and elsewhere. Forced recruitment into armed factions, child marriage and child labour are common in Unity State,⁵¹ and one would imagine elsewhere. Population levels in the camps around Bentiu have increased due to recent displacements, and housing in the camps is said by IDPs to be overcrowded.⁵²

3.2 Timeliness and effectiveness of partner interventions

3.2.1 Timeliness

The type of funding that partners receive is an important factor that contributes to the timeliness of partner interventions, therefore having an indirect impact on the effectiveness of partner programming. Conversely, the slow or late timing of funding can have a detrimental effect. It is difficult, however, for the Dutch government to have much influence over the timing of interventions.⁵³

That said, non-earmarked funding, albeit treated slightly differently in each partner organisation, is generally released or pledged to the “experienced partners” at the start of the year, or pledged to cover a number of years, so that partners are aware that funding will be available to kick off activities for that year, while other funding streams fall into place. This is reported by the UN recipient organisations as being extremely important so delays in implementation can be avoided.

Such “thematic funding”, as UNICEF would call it, can also be used to respond to sudden-onset disasters or to plug gaps in programming funding shortfalls.⁵⁴ One agency described the non-earmarked funding as “Gold”. Please note, however, that due to time constraints, the study has not been able to consult with recipient agency beneficiaries as to the timing of actual support provided.

⁵⁰ The Charity and Empowerment Foundation (CEF) and Mary Help Association mentioned their appreciation of the former, while Help the Child (HCO) was appreciative of the latter.

⁵¹ UNHCR Bentiu Field office Brief, January 2022.

⁵² IBID.

⁵³ Interviews Embassy staff members.

⁵⁴ For example UNICEF utilise the non-earmarked funding for the procurement of Plumpy'Nut.

CERF funding can be dispersed quickly, and is also used to plug gaps in programmatic funding shortfalls, predominantly to UN organisations. As per Table 3 above, CERF funding has supported WFP, UNICEF and UNHCR almost annually during the evaluation period, with WFP being the most significant recipient. The IFRC Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) system, which Dutch funding supports, is known to release funds within 48/72 hours of a request. DRA funding is predictable, leading to timely interventions. The SSHF processes however leads to their funding cycles taking longer to be finalised and therefore distributed.

Partner interventions are generally thought to be based on reliable nationwide assessments such as the HNO, UN agencies' own individual assessments, and localised data gathering through DRA and its local partners who enjoy better local access than most INGOs and UN agencies, and can gather information from the local government.

SSHF interventions are prioritised according to relevant cluster-lead criteria utilising a needs-based approach that has identified hotspots and gaps. Affected populations are normally accessible unless there are problems with the roads, insecurity or the weather. The consistent feedback from local partners was that interventions were not subject to political interference, albeit that such feedback has been challenged elsewhere⁵⁵. All partners remain committed to accepted humanitarian principles.

3.2.2 Effectiveness

In terms of the programmatic effectiveness of partners' interventions, a full evaluation has not taken place, but responses from DRA key informants and beneficiaries were mainly positive. Examples include child-friendly spaces set up by Help A Child community groups in Wau, in terms of learning on how to interact with their children and raising awareness of SGBV issues. In 2021, 700 children (420 girls and 280 boys) benefited for Psychosocial Services (PSS) activities conducted in child-friendly spaces.⁵⁶ Similarly, work undertaken to support health centres will likely build local capacity, decrease child mortality and improve child health. Shelter construction by the UNHCR local partner Community against Drugs Abuse was also appreciated by the beneficiaries.

In terms of food security and livelihoods, beyond the clearly necessary general food distributions and malnutrition support programmes, DRA local partners are training beneficiaries on agronomic best practices while distributing seeds and tools and providing small-scale livelihood support. WASH support is provided to both camp inhabitants in Bentiu, as well as in local communities, as mentioned in Wau.⁵⁷

UN and Red Cross partners tend to implement on a larger scale and according to their mandate. WFP themselves have assisted 5.3 million beneficiaries with lifesaving food support in 2020, an increase from 4.8 million in 2019, and both WFP and UNICEF have

⁵⁵ Schouten, P., Matthysen, K. & Muller, T. (2021) Checkpoint economy: the political economy of checkpoints in South Sudan, ten years after independence. Summary Report. Antwerp/Copenhagen: IPIS/DIIS;
Lindsay Hamsik, A thousand papercuts: the impact of NGO regulation in South Sudan HPN at ODI Humanitarian Exchange No 68 Jan 2017;

Erol Yayboke, Accessing South Sudan, Humanitarian Aid in a time of crisis, CSIS Briefs Nov. 2018.

⁵⁶ Help A child Interview in Wau.

⁵⁷ Mary Help Association provides WASH in Bagari County some distance away from Wau while SPEDP provides WASH support in Wau itself.

implemented the MAM/SAM interventions respectively, saving the lives of acutely malnourished children.

3.3 Innovation, localisation, nexus and co-ordination within interventions

3.3.1 Localisation

The Dutch government is currently promoting 18 thematic humanitarian priorities, of which three have been prioritised within this case study review. The thematic priority most prominent within discussions was that of the Grand Bargain pledge of localisation, which is also very much a priority of the UN organisations, the Red Cross Movement, and the DRA consortium participants.

The extent to which Dutch-funded actors have contributed to the objectives of localisation depends intrinsically on the actual relationship between international and local partners and the funding mechanism utilised. Both UN agencies and the international DRA partners work closely with local NNGO and government partners to raise their programmatic and administrative capacity, and improve compliance with humanitarian best practices, while improving their ability to monitor and report on programmes that they implement, both in terms of reaching targets, as well as with respect to narrative and financial reporting. The extent local partners are integrated into the programme cycle correlates to the amount of learning and experience gained.

Partner feedback would suggest that this has increasingly happened within the DRA Consortium where capacity strengthening is seen as a core activity⁵⁸, and interviewed partners have repeatedly mentioned capacity building trainings, for example MEAL, PSEA, human resources and finance, that have occurred. The embassy's humanitarian staff member works closely with the DRA consortium, although a lack of localised funding means she is unable to pursue specific areas of interest.

UN partners, however, have reported that they do not always treat NNGOs as equal partners, but more as implementors, i.e. given a task to do rather than participating in the programme design or decision-making process.

Over time, the DRA consortium has reached out to increasing numbers of local partners and now have nine NNGOs active with the joint humanitarian response programme. Such partners find the DRA framework more successful in integrating NNGOs as full partners than the SSHF, which is seen amongst the humanitarian community as the main mechanism to promote localisation. The SSHF is mostly open only to the INGO/NNGO community, and has almost reached its target of allocating 25% of its funding to local actors.⁵⁹ Nonetheless, OCHA do not feel that they should be the lead localisation actor, as a great deal of time and energy has to be spent on capacity building and oversight.⁶⁰ Furthermore, the top-down target of giving 25% of all funding to local partners is a

⁵⁸ DRA Strategy 2018-2021, priority 4.

⁵⁹ They reached 23% in 2021.

⁶⁰ A large number of NNGOs were recently excluded by the SSHF due to their lack of compliance capacity.

concern, as this may lead to a local NNGO being supported at the expense of a more capable INGO.

3.3.2 Innovation

Innovations within the South Sudan context have occurred amongst both the larger Dutch government supported agencies as well as the local DRA consortium members. For example:

- ✓ WFP has biometrically registered 4.3 million beneficiaries within the SCOPE system, which is new to South Sudan, albeit common elsewhere in WFP global operations. This helps monitor population movement and facilitates the maintenance of beneficiary lists.
- ✓ WFP has increased the number of cash-based transfer recipients (921,000 in 2020) despite a lack of infrastructure and technology until recently.
- ✓ WFP has utilised a fleet of amphibian vehicles, important within the food response to access remote areas, thereby reducing the reliance on air operations.
- ✓ UNOCHA has started to utilise an electronic data gathering tool, albeit mixed with the standard paper documentation in places.
- ✓ UNHCR has introduced the use of menstrual cups and pee/poo bags for beneficiary usage immediately after displacement.
- ✓ UNHCR has organised technical and vocational training activities to improve agricultural production.
- ✓ IFRC has started utilising some forecast-based funding within their operations.
- ✓ Tearfund has been working with local faith-based organisations to establish peacebuilding groups within communities (27 as at 2021).
- ✓ Tearfund also initiated a remote sensing study project to understand and address the frequent breakdown of hand pumps in Northern Bahar el Gazal.

There are still solutions to be found and some localised challenges, for example the solar panning that was meant to provide light around the latrines in the POC camps⁶¹ in Bentiu was stolen, and there is a need to identify a replacement for firewood (briquettes or biogas) that would reduce the need for collecting firewood and therefore the associated protection risks.

Within the DRA consortium it is not clear how much emphasis is put on innovation and in their feedback, partners request an increased budget allocation for innovation. UN organisations have maintained they are very much focused on localisation as a key objective, as have the Red Cross Movement.

3.3.3 Nexus

In terms of trying to link humanitarian interventions with longer-term development needs, more than anything South Sudan needs the engagement of the government in this concern. Currently there seems to be little social contract between the government and its population, with the former more concerned about maintaining power and forthcoming elections. There is little the aid community can do without the full engagement of the state. That said, the Dutch government partners have incorporated

⁶¹ People of concern camp in Bentiu, established in December 2013.

some resilience building and capacity building aspects in partner programming, for example WFP's road building and food for assets activities,⁶² UNICEF's contribution to capacity building in healthcare services, and local actors' livelihood initiatives.

Programmatic support, however, remains predominantly focused on meeting emergency needs: there is no nexus strategy and a clear gap exists between humanitarian and developmental endeavours. Furthermore, there is seemingly little joint planning between the humanitarian and the development actors. Additionally, there is already a dependency mindset within the local population as a result of 40 years of humanitarian support.

Co-ordination within emergency operations seems to be functioning well with no reports of duplicated activities, with clusters reported as working well. UNOCHA received a number of positive reviews from the humanitarian actors interviewed. The role UNOCHA plays in Bentiu, as witnessed by the evaluation team, created a strong impression of UNOCHA as a leader of the UN collective, both in terms of assessments and response. The co-ordination of the DRA consortium by SAVE was also very much approved by its members. There would also appear to be ongoing donor co-ordination, with the humanitarian donor group meeting weekly, chaired by DG ECHO, who attempt to advocate to the government on various issues.

Overall, the themes and cross-cutting issues promoted by the Dutch government are well accepted and adopted within the humanitarian community, often as standard practice or within organisational policies and procedures, especially in the international community. Some influence in this respect may have come from high-level discussions when annual earmarked contributions are allocated. However, at a field level such themes are seen as individual agency priorities and not related to Dutch government funding initiatives. One positive result would be that the international agencies will have probably passed on such guidance to the NNGO counterparts.

3.4 Assessment of underlying pathway assumptions

Annex 1 contains the three humanitarian pathways elaborated by the Dutch government to illustrate the medium and long-term outcomes expected as a result of the financial and diplomatic inputs provided as consolidated in the humanitarian policy diagram shown in Figure 1 above.

Within these three pathways there are numerous assumptions whose validity each case study has attempted to review. As there are so many, they have been prioritised by IOB: the assumptions highlighted in blue within each pathway and repeated here have been selected for comment. Those most relevant to EQ1 are reviewed here, while the remaining, more relevant to EQ2 ones are reviewed at the end of the next section.

The following key assumptions, mostly taken from the humanitarian pathway, have been assessed on the basis of findings from the South Sudan context as indicated above. Some have been grouped together where appropriate, and a judgement as to the validity of the assumption is indicated:

⁶² According to WFP, they repaired 640 km of roads in 2020.

Assumption	Comment	Validity
<p><i>Humanitarian partners have added value on the basis of specific knowledge and expertise, deliver relevant assistance, and act with integrity, working according to humanitarian principles.</i></p>	<p>The core-funded “experienced partners” do bring a wealth of experience and a broad spectrum of expertise to the South Sudan response, varying from UNICEF child protection programming to IFRC disaster preparedness. Similarly DRA and local partners bring their own specific expertise as well as increased local knowledge and understanding. Interventions are based on field-level assessments which are accepted as reasonable within the humanitarian community, and the services or relief items distributed can invariably be accepted as being relevant to beneficiary needs. Beneficiaries themselves have confirmed this, albeit gaps in coverage and funding shortfalls will mean that not every beneficiary’s needs will be fully met. All humanitarian partners funded would seem to act with the best interests of beneficiaries in mind, and will have signed up to the Red Cross’ Code of Conduct and Sphere Standards.</p>	<p>Agreed</p>
<p><i>UN, Red Cross and NGOs are able to make an independent and impartial assessment of humanitarian needs. Partners address most urgent needs.</i></p>	<p>Although access during assessments can be an issue in South Sudan, generally this is not the case. The funded partners and INGO agencies are very experienced at undertaking assessments and have their own in-house tools to facilitate the process. The impartiality of the assessments has not been questioned. Such tools are being improved within South Sudan,⁶³ though the lack of internet coverage means some paper-based data collection is still necessary. Beneficiaries’ most urgent needs are identified, for example through the HNO process and specific assessments such as the FAO/WFP food security assessment.⁶⁴ In general lifesaving needs are being met: it is the medium to longer-term needs that are not being addressed just now.</p>	<p>Agreed</p>
<p><i>If local organisations are in the driving seat this will lead to better needs assessments and lower cost of aid delivery</i></p>	<p>NNGOs can improve localised assessments due to improved access, having the correct language skills, and in terms of understanding the culture and how communities function. Cost would invariably be cheaper. However, this would be the extent of their capacity in South Sudan where responsibility for running nationwide assessments would remain with the UN actors when present. Perhaps the assumption needs to be reworded to clarify what is meant by being in the driving seat?</p>	<p>Agreed (at a localised level)</p>

⁶³ OCHA introduced a multi sectoral needs assessment in 2021.

⁶⁴ 2020 FAO/WFP CROP AND FOOD SECURITY ASSESSMENT MISSION (CFSAM) TO THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH SUDAN 13 May 2021

Assumption	Comment	Validity
<i>NGOs bring added value to innovation / Partners innovate and address thematic priorities / Innovation will increase effectiveness and efficiency of aid.</i>	The study has not generated a finding that indicates that INGOs/NNGOs are generating more innovative practices than the larger experienced partners. Innovations within the South Sudan context have occurred amongst both the larger Dutch government supported agencies as well as the local DRA consortium members. Innovation can be seen as a risk in an emergency environment when lifesaving is a priority, ⁶⁵ and smaller organisations may be reluctant to take a chance with the small-scale funding that they have. However, the way organisations plan and intervene is seemingly being continually improved, albeit gradually, which has the potential to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the aid provided.	Partially agreed
<i>Partners enhance local response capacity.</i>	It is clear that local partners are in need of capacity enhancement, and that this is taking place, either individually from one partner to another, or through funding mechanisms such as the DRA and the SSHF. UN agencies and international DRA partners have focused on programmatic and administrative capacity in terms of MEAL, human resources and financial reporting, while improving compliance with humanitarian best practices such as PSEA. This should enable local partners to attract and report on funding more successfully than previously.	Agreed
<i>NGOs have large implementing capacities and can often work in places where the UN has no access.</i>	There is a need for such assumptions to clarify within the pathways as to whether or not they are referring to INGOs or NNGOs. In this respect some INGOs do have a large implementing capacity, more so than most NNGOs. Mostly, NNGOs have a small, localised capacity, and at times they can go to areas that neither the UN nor the INGOs can access. For example, the South Sudan Red Cross has better access to conflict zones than the UN, and some of the faith-based partners in Wau had localised access that the UN did not have.	Partially Agreed (with a change of terminology)
<i>DRA will improve the effectiveness of aid and prevent fragmentation.</i>	The DRA consortium in South Sudan is working well, implementing numerous programmes and projects through a collection of local and international NGOs. A consortium enables information sharing, multi-sectoral training and support to each of its members, for example, the capacity building trainings run by SAVE to all the consortium local partners, improving individual agency programmatic effectiveness. Utilising SAVE as a conduit for the funding has generated a less fragmented approach for the Dutch government than having to go through each INGO directly.	Agreed

⁶⁵ As mentioned by DRA partners in Yemen.

Assumption	Comment	Validity
<i>Large-scale crises ask for deployment of big multi-lateral agencies.</i>	The economies of scale and experience of the large UN agencies means they are invariable required for large scale disasters, especially in a context when the government lacks capacity.	Agreed
<i>UN-led co-ordination prevents gaps and overlaps, and determines which actor is best suited to deliver aid on the basis of quality, capacity, presence, access and speed / Partners support UN leadership and actively contribute to humanitarian co-ordination.</i>	All agencies and NGOs spoken to in South Sudan, understand the need for good co-ordination and willingly join co-ordination meetings. There is a need for a central co-ordinating body and UNOCHA is well-experienced in delivering this role.	Agreed
<i>Aid delivery based on humanitarian principles is the best way to guarantee appropriate needs-based effective aid.</i>	The neutrality and impartiality of aid is the only way to earn the respect on both sides of any conflict. The ICRC is a prime example of an organisation within the South Sudan context that adheres to such principles and are therefore granted access to all parties to the conflict.	Agreed
<i>Partners ensure linkages with development.</i>	Partners can incorporate resilience building and developmental aspects into their ongoing programming, but there is no guarantee that such activities will be followed up by development actors, programming or funding. As much as the partners themselves could look for developmental actors to work with, they would not automatically consider this at a programme design stage, nor would they feel it is their inherent responsibility, especially if implementing lifesaving interventions. Partners look to the World Bank and similar actors in this respect, however their presence or willingness to respond is not guaranteed. Ensuring such a link is generally considered as more the responsibility of the UN country team; expecting funding recipients to ensure this is somewhat optimistic.	Not Agreed

4 Relationships with partners (RQ2)

4.1 Types of relations funding mechanisms generate

Non-earmarked core funding is very much appreciated by recipient agencies due to its timeliness, reliability, flexibility and speed of allocation, but it does not generate close relations between recipient organisations in the field and the Dutch government when there is no local contact to ensure linkages, to attend co-ordination meetings, and to make field trips to programme sites.

The role of the humanitarian officer in the Juba embassy is key to ensuring that a relationship between funded partners and the Dutch government exists. Other donors, the UN, OCHA fund recipients and the DRA partners have all reported that they have good working relations with the Dutch embassy, that the embassy is easy to contact, however, the relationship differs depending on the funding mechanism utilised.

DRA partners have a greater reliance on Dutch funding to maintain programming and have closer ties with the embassy and with MFA in the Hague at HQ level. Again the DRA members have reported that relations with the Dutch government are good. Consequently, DRA partners would welcome more field presence from the Dutch embassy, which would also be beneficial in terms of improving monitoring and partner communication.

CERF funding tends to be directed towards the UN partners, and is appreciated for the timeliness of its distribution, while the SSHF takes longer for allocations to be disbursed and is considered more bureaucratic. Neither mechanism is reported as having generated close links between its recipients and the Dutch government, albeit the CERF recipients are also core funding recipients. This is not surprising as both funds have a number of contributors. Similarly, the IFRC/South Sudanese Red Cross (SSRC) have benefited from DREF allocations over the years, and although they are aware that the Dutch government contributes to the DREF, this has not seemingly generated close working relations.

Non-earmarked core funding was reported as being “intensively valuable” and like “gold” due to its flexibility and availability at the start of the year, with a clear linkage being evident between such funding and improved programmatic effectiveness, covering gaps and being movable from one programme to another should alternative funding be found. Recipients were not always immediately aware that the Dutch government is a contributor to such funds, but once informed were very much appreciative.

Partners have reported that relations between themselves and the Dutch government are basically good, but that communication and meetings are not particularly regular. Field visits with UN and DRA partners have facilitated good relations, as has the embassy’s attendance at weekly donor and SSHF meetings. One concern, however, is that the core funding does not generate much in the way of specific reporting, as it is impossible to identify which projects have been supported. Individual experienced partners – such as UNICEF, WFP and the ICRC - produce an annual report for their core funding, however, this is only produced once a year. There are also certain sensitive issue or challenges that partners will not include in the annual reports. This is another reason for better

integration of Dutch embassy humanitarian staff members into the humanitarian community, so they can be involved in informal feedback sessions where matters that tend not to be written down are discussed.

Overall, it is clear that the Dutch government has a good reputation amongst the humanitarian community. It is well known for the provision of flexible funding, which can have an enabling effect on the timeliness and extent of humanitarian assistance. What is not clear is what influence local embassy or regional humanitarian staff are expected to have on local interventions, i.e. their operational relationship, and how exactly their input should be channelled internally in terms of local DRA and pool fund partner activities.

4.2 Promotion of thematic priorities

Although relations with the Dutch government, both locally and with the MFA, are said to be good, there was little evidence arising from discussions in Juba with the UN or Red Cross experienced partners to say that such relations have promoted the adoption of the 18 cross-sectoral themes which the Dutch government supports. There is a sense of ownership within the agencies of such themes, but mainly because they see them as appropriate to good humanitarian practice, not as a result of Dutch government funding or influence. UNHCR for example leads in-country on the adoption of PSEA best practices, having conducted trainings at the nine state level clusters, and the SSRC have recently had all staff sign a PSEA code of conduct, but neither was a result of Dutch government influence. Similarly, UNOCHA have promoted mental health and psychosocial support through the clusters because they “think it is the right thing to do”. Some influence may have happened at a HQ level, however, these key informants were not interviewed in the framework of this field study.

More influence perhaps has occurred at a local level within the DRA structure, as working relations are closer. For example, relations between DORCAS and the Dutch government are the responsibility of their Country Director, who normally visits the embassy and shares programming ideas, i.e. about how DORCAS considered integrating COVID in its programming. Mostly however, the consortium communicates with the Dutch government through SAVE as their lead agency. The Dutch embassy has promoted their priority themes on a local basis through embassy staff at in-country meetings.

4.3 Monitoring and diplomatic activities

It should be noted that this evaluation question has been much reduced by IOB since the ToR was issued, and is now only addressing a) the capacity for and the extent of monitoring ongoing, and whether this has improved since 2015; and b) what diplomatic or advocacy initiatives have the Dutch government undertaken, with what outcome?

With respect to the former, there has not been a significant increase in recent years of embassy-led monitoring at field level due to Covid and security restrictions, but having a 50% dedicated humanitarian officer has seen an improvement in terms of monitoring and engagement with local actors and funding recipients. Interaction at Juba humanitarian level has gone well. It is hoped that more travel and field-level interaction will be possible when the new incumbent humanitarian officer arrives in July 2022.

Similarly, even though the Dutch government is very much a part of the donor forum and humanitarian community, and as such part of the collective that negotiates with the South Sudan government, there is an overall feeling that there have been no significant impact from the diplomatic efforts undertaken by the Dutch government in South Sudan to date.

4.4 Assessment of underlying pathway assumptions

The following key assumptions, mostly taken from the diplomatic⁶⁶ and funding pathways, have been assessed on the basis of findings from the South Sudan context as indicated above, plus feedback from humanitarian actors. Some have been grouped together as appropriate:

⁶⁶ Assumption referring to Hague level capacity and activities have been excluded as these have not been reviewed in this case study.

Assumption	Comment	Validity
<i>Providing non-earmarked, predictable funding to a core number of professional organisations enhances specialisation and necessary scale.</i>	The flexibility of the non-earmarked funding to the experienced partners enables it to be used for whatever purpose best suits the recipient organisation. As such specialisation does happen, for example in terms of UNICEF utilising the funding to buy the therapeutic food Plumpy'Nut when other donors were not available. The funding however, is more likely to fill gaps rather than provide funding at scale. Again for UNICEF, the non-earmarked funding was only \$9 million out of the annual \$180 million budget and therefore was insufficient to ensure programmatic scale.	Partially Agreed
<i>Predictable unearmarked funding leads to efficient, effective and timely delivery of aid.</i>	Again as above, the flexibility of the funding and the fact that it is available at the start of the year, either being a part of a multi-year donation or having been pledged in advance, will ensure to some extent that organisations will be able to kick off the year as planned in the hope that additional funding will arrive. To a certain extent this will ensure the timely delivery of aid. Overall effectiveness will be reliant of other funding contributions. Funding in itself also does not guarantee the organisation's ability to undertake interventions effectively.	Partially Agreed
<i>Partners improve their capacity to respond (especially) if and when receiving unearmarked predictable funding.</i>	Again, the flexibility of the funding should enable experienced partners to fill gaps, should there be a lack of organisational capacity. Funding could be used for salaries or necessary training. However, as above, having the funding does not mean it will be wisely spent. There is an inherent assumption, not mentioned, that organisations have the experience and expertise to utilise funds wisely as required. Perhaps this could be added to future pathway theories.	Partially Agreed
<i>Through dialogue with partners, donor co-ordination and monitoring, NL is able to assess the effectiveness of UN, Red Cross and NGOs.</i>	The Dutch embassy in South Sudan is fortunate to have a 50% dedicated staff member (supported by a regional humanitarian officer based in Nairobi) who liaises with the humanitarian community, undertaking field visits to monitor activities. Due to Covid and security concerns, however, this has not happened enough in recent years, and although the assumption is reasonable, this has not been the case to date. Furthermore, to properly assess the effectiveness of an organisation requires a multi-sectoral evaluation which is only likely to happen if the recipient organisation does this internally or agrees to undertaking such an evaluation if donors ask for one. Working relations need to be solid enough to ensure that copies of in-house evaluations and monitoring reports are shared with the Dutch as a donor. That said, a reasonable impression of the effectiveness of an organisation should be attainable through regular site visits, internal reports and external evaluations.	Agreed

Assumption	Comment	Validity
<i>Accessible knowledge and capacity at DSHH and embassies to assess whether UN, RC NGOs do indeed have the expertise, professionalism and capacity to take decisions according to needs, principles and thematic priorities. / Adequate knowledge of IHL and humanitarian principles at an embassy level.</i>	The regional humanitarian officer together with the South Sudan humanitarian officer, based in Juba, should be able to ascertain a reasonable impression of the effectiveness, and therefore the expertise and professionalism of an organisation, through regular site visits. Knowledge of humanitarian principles and IHL is not difficult to acquire, and although this question was not asked of the incumbent officer, it was assumed that anyone appointed as a humanitarian officer would be trained in these respects. Staff at DSH in the Hague do not seem to undertake site visits, and as such would lack the information on which to make such judgements which should not be made on desk reports alone.	Partially Agreed
<i>The NLs has enough flexibility to adjust to changing contexts and is able to keep updated and solid information position.</i>	Thanks to the availability of the humanitarian partners in Juba, the Dutch government is able to maintain continuous information sources, both donors and partners, within the humanitarian community. Should any changes in context occur, it can be assumed that the embassy will know and relay this to the Hague. More so than the embassy, the assumption should include the notion that the experienced partners and the DRA recipients will react accordingly to the changing context.	Agreed
<i>The NLs has insight into power relations and direct or indirect access to power holders and stakeholders.</i>	The humanitarian officer together with the Dutch ambassador have insight into the ongoing political situation in South Sudan and indirect access to governmental power holders and direct access to humanitarian stakeholders.	Agreed
<i>Multi-annual funding gives the NLs a good reputation and influence./The NLs has influence because of its good reputation as a large predictable and trustworthy humanitarian donor. /Being a large and flexible donor gives the NLs leverage.</i>	Multi-annual flexible funding has given the Dutch government a good reputation in South Sudan, but it has not bought it a great deal of influence nor leverage with the experienced partners. More influence, for example in terms of INGOs asking NNGOs to incorporate PSEA policies and procedures within their organisational structures, can be found within the DRA consortium.	Partially Agreed
<i>NLs is able to influence partners towards desired outcomes./Humanitarian actors and partners can be influenced to act in line with donor policies</i>	As above, only with respect to the DRA partners has any influence been evident.	Partially Agreed

Assumption	Comment	Validity
<i>Strong political engagement is indispensable to the success of humanitarian aid. This asks for continuous interaction between diplomacy and the political arena.</i>	Little progress was seen in terms of the impact of diplomacy within the political arena due to the non-engagement of the South Sudan government. Such efforts are normally undertaken by the UN Representative on behalf of the UN and donor community (including input from the Dutch ambassador). Specifically within the South Sudan context, the government needs to show greater commitment.	Agreed
<i>Working with professional humanitarian partners will help to improve humanitarian access.</i>	The broad range of experienced partners and actors in South Sudan has improved humanitarian coverage and therefore geographical access, whereas the partnerships with local organisations will improve access both geographically and culturally.	Agreed
<i>The NLs has a credible claim and is a credible partner in a particular context.</i>	Within the South Sudan context, the good reputation of the Dutch government as a flexible donor makes it a credible actor. Dutch funding at a reasonable scale has been ongoing for many years, giving it the right to be listened to.	Agreed

5 Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The following conclusions are drawn from the findings indicated above as per the research questions set out in section 1.3

RQ 1 How effective are Dutch-funded actors in the humanitarian system (UN agencies, Red Cross family and NGOs) in achieving Dutch humanitarian goals?

In terms of meeting the Dutch government goals of saving lives, restoring dignity and enhancing resilience, firstly, it is clear that lives are being saved as evident in the food security and health sector activities of WFP, UNICEF and the ICRC. Secondly, funding recipients' livelihood and asset creation interventions, together with health and protection programmes have improved, and will continue to improve beneficiary resilience and general well-being. What remains is the third Dutch government goal of restoring dignity. Beneficiary feedback is clear in this respect that there are severe protection concerns for women and girls in and around the camps. Furthermore there is little dignity in having to live long-term in an IDP settlement being dependent on humanitarian aid and unable to generate your own income. That said, the security and weather-related hazards are generally beyond the control of the humanitarian agencies involved.

The achievement of the above-mentioned goals are the result of the Dutch government funding that supports a number of key UN, Red Cross, INGO and NNGOs who are important actors within the South Sudan humanitarian response, providing a variety of connected complementary sectoral services that generate a broad spectrum of activities. Some relative strengths and weaknesses of the various recipients and funding mechanisms, as well as their effectiveness with respect to priority themes are presented in Annex 2, in as much as the study was able to assess them given the time restraints and limitations the study faced.

Specific strengths or significant contributions above and beyond mandated roles have been identified in that the whole operation might grind to a halt without the WFP UNHAS service, which is utilised by the whole humanitarian community. WFP have also been significantly involved in improving the road infrastructure. OCHA have been especially supportive in terms of leading joint assessment missions. SAVE have been applauded for their role as the leader of the DRA consortium.

The identified weaknesses of the agencies' interventions tended to be more contextual than organisation-specific, with security concerns, access and a lack of government engagement being the main impeding factors. NNGOs accept they needed more capacity building, especially with respect to financial management and reporting, programme management and logistical capacity. Furthermore, despite long-term support to the camps and IDP communities, cross-sectoral needs remain (PWD, protection/security needs) and infrastructure is in need of repair (health facilities, shelters, dykes). Camp inhabitants need livelihood activities.

In terms of the basis for agency interventions there is a general consensus amongst key informants that both national and localised needs assessments are carried out well enough and provide a reasonable foundation on which interventions can be based. However, without talking to considerably more beneficiaries from all of the agencies involved it is difficult to comment on the timeliness of interventions with any real conviction. That said, the funding mechanisms utilised by the Dutch government have been reported by all recipients as being able to provide timely funding; after that it is the responsibility of the agency involved to deliver on time.

With respect to the effectiveness of interventions, DRA beneficiaries consulted have provided positive feedback, appreciating the support provided, highlighting the short and medium-term impact generated. Furthermore, larger scale interventions such as WFP's food security interventions and the work undertaken with UNICEF managing the malnutrition cases has had a much broader impact. Overall, Dutch government funding has attained wide-ranging impact over a number of sectors. Equally, the Dutch funding facilitated - especially in terms of the support provided to OCHA - the "humanitarian eco system".

Generally, there appears to have been some progress in terms of the localisation of aid, with the number of local partners within the DRA consortium increasing over time, and the SSHF reaching its goal of distributing 25% of its funding to local partners. Capacity building of such partners is ongoing, especially within the DRA consortium. Overall, however, despite the apparent success to date, there is still more progress to be made. NGOs still struggle to compete with INGOs, both in terms of implementation capacity, reporting systems and access to funding. Donors don't normally fund NNGOs directly, they prefer to pass on the risk, monitoring and management to the UN/INGOs, who they believe have more capacity and experience to undertake that role.

The capacity building of the South Sudan Red Cross by the IFRC/ICRC is a good example of institutional capacity building that will have a durable localised impact as the SSRC will remain in-country long after the international and UN agencies have left, with the capacity within their own organisation to respond to and mitigate against localised conflict and disasters.

Similarly, there has been some progress in terms of some small-scale innovative practices that have been introduced, albeit they may only have been new to the South Sudan context. For example, the move towards cash-based transfers, which is comparatively new in South Sudan. What is not in place is the link between humanitarian and development activities i.e. the Nexus predominantly due to the lack of engagement of the government within the process. Although the Dutch government's partners have included resilience building activities within their programming, this will of course tend to be small-scale. What is needed are some large-scale development activities. These have not seemingly been initiated as yet however.

There were no reported issues regarding co-ordination between agencies and clusters, and donors have established their own co-ordination system.

RQ 2 What kind of funding relation does the MFA have with its various partners, and how does this relation enable or hamper their effectiveness in the delivery of humanitarian aid?

All the funding mechanisms, providing a variety of diverse fundraising sources, are well-appreciated by their recipients. For example, non-earmarked core funding at an HQ level has a positive impact at a country level due to the availability and flexibility of such funding, enabling improved humanitarian assistance whether such support has been provided, for example, through UNICEF “Thematic Funds” or the IFRC DREF system. Similar feedback has been received for the CERF contributions.

This has not however generated close working relations between the Dutch government and the recipient agencies at a field level, as some agency field staff are unaware as to who the HQ level donors are. The responsibility for the good working relations that exist locally arise from the ongoing positive interactions of the Juba and Nairobi based humanitarian officers. One concern, however, is that such funding does not generate detailed reporting.

DRA members, however, do feel a closer link with the Dutch government, as they are clearly aware as to who their donor is, and have intermittent interaction with the Dutch government via the consortium lead and DRA HQ. Although local relations are good, and Dutch government thematic priorities have been incorporated into partner activities, there is no evidence at country level to suggest that this is as a result of any influence from the Dutch government. Relations are not so close that the Dutch can have a strong influence on an established organisation’s global policies at local level, although this may be happening at HQ level.

Also, despite its good reputation and the links between the embassy and recipient agencies, programme monitoring levels have not significantly increased in recent years, nor have the results of diplomatic interventions.

Finally, while many of the underlying pathway assumptions remain valid, a substantial percentage are only partially valid or not at all, for example, the assumption that partners will ensure links with development agencies. There also needs to be some clarity as to whether assumptions refer to INGOs or NNGOs.

5.2 Recommendations

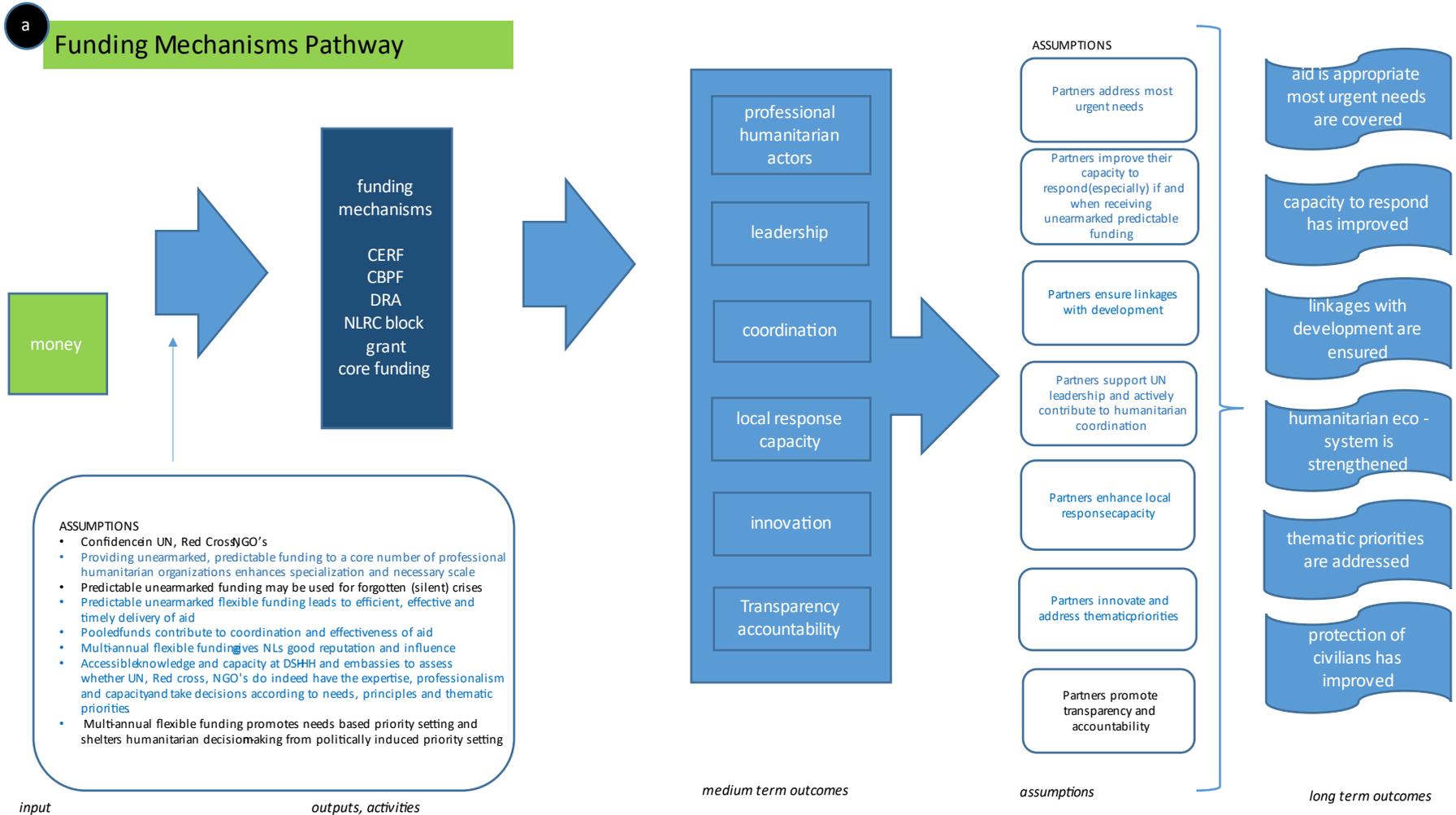
1. The Dutch government should continue to support the diverse range of HQ-based funding mechanisms, but should also consider providing smaller-scale funding to the humanitarian officer in Juba to promote localisation, innovation and thematic priorities.
2. Increased activities at field level and within the humanitarian community for the incoming humanitarian officer should be encouraged. Monitoring targets should be set. The exact relation or expected input they would have in terms of influencing localised programming needs to be clarified. Visits from The Hague DSH staff to the field would also be beneficial.
3. There is a need for the Dutch government to undertake an advocacy initiative with senior levels of the UN in Juba on closing the gap between humanitarian resilience-building activities and the initiatives of the development actors. Furthermore, DSH and embassy

staff need to encourage donor partners to increase support to sustainable resilience-building programming and to provide longer-term funding. The response needs to be moved to a more developmental rather than emergency mindset.

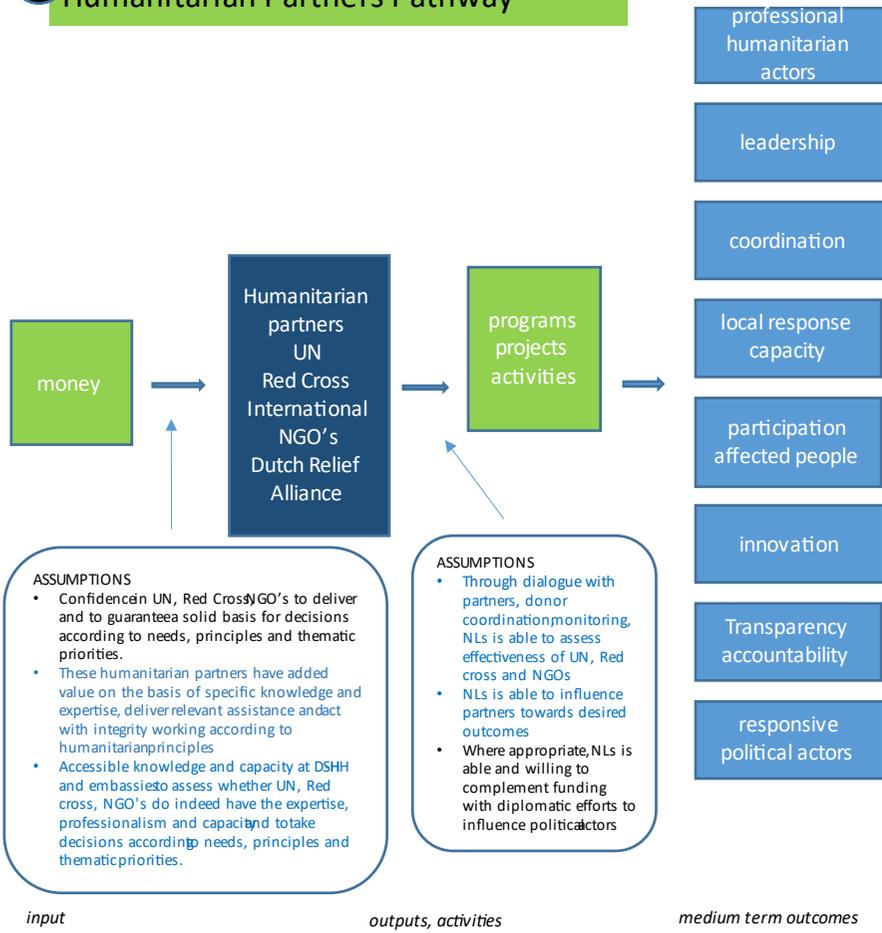
4. Initiatives to encourage the capacity building of local partners and civil society need to be identified and prioritised, including perhaps the expansion of the DRA leadership to include a representative of the NNGOs. Promoting the capacity of local partners with respect to programmatic and financial management, so that they can have equal funding opportunities should be an objective.
5. Implementing partners need to be encouraged to increase protection programming, and expand beneficiary participation in programmes. This should improve beneficiary security and independence, and restore some dignity to their lifestyles.
6. There is a need to revise the underlying policy pathway assumptions, for example, with respect to needs assessments being driven by local actors, and partners being assumed to ensure linkages with development actors, amongst others. Similarly, there is a need to clarify as to whether or not assumptions are referring to INGOs or NNGOs.

Annexes

Annex 1 Humanitarian Pathways



b Humanitarian Partners Pathway



ASSUMPTIONS

- Confidence in UN, Red Cross/NGO's to deliver and to guarantee a solid basis for decisions according to needs, principles and thematic priorities.
- These humanitarian partners have added value on the basis of specific knowledge and expertise, deliver relevant assistance and act with integrity working according to humanitarian principles
- Accessible knowledge and capacity at DSHH and embassies to assess whether UN, Red cross, NGO's do indeed have the expertise, professionalism and capacity and to take decisions according to needs, principles and thematic priorities.

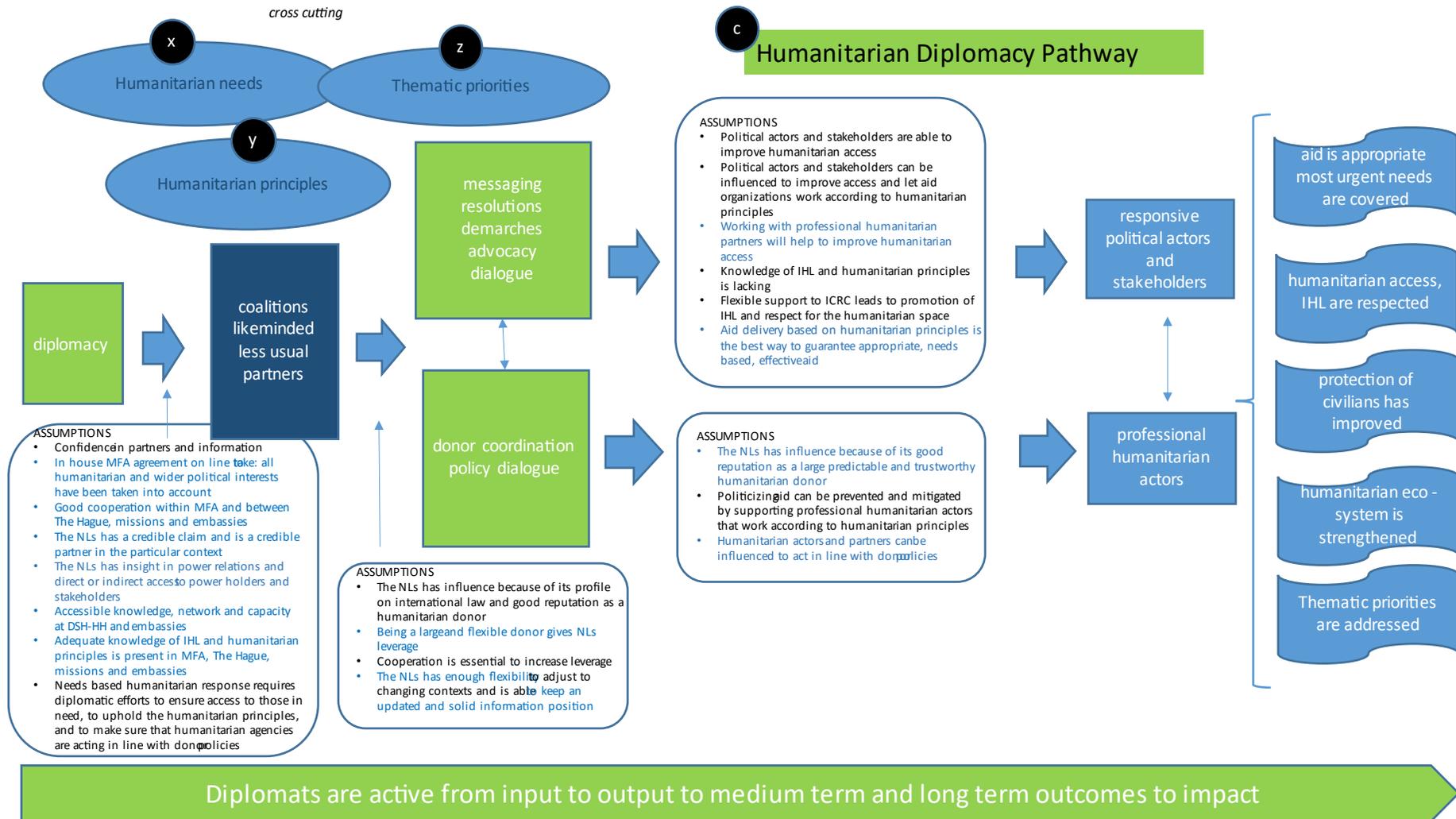
ASSUMPTIONS

- Through dialogue with partners, donor coordination monitoring, NLS is able to assess effectiveness of UN, Red cross and NGOs
- NLS is able to influence partners towards desired outcomes
- Where appropriate, NLS is able and willing to complement funding with diplomatic efforts to influence political actors

ASSUMPTIONS

- Principle aid leads to coverage of most urgent needs
- UN, Red Cross, NGOs are able to make an independent and impartial assessment of humanitarian needs
- UN, Red Cross, NGOs work according to humanitarian principles and will target assistance accordingly
- UN, Red Cross, NGOs may address Dutch thematic priorities
- UN is the best to lead and coordinate international humanitarian action
- Coordination leads to flexible, rapid and effective response
- Cooperation with local partners is key to good access and security of aid workers
- If local organizations are in the driver seat this will lead to better needs assessments and lower costs of aid delivery
- Investing in local preparedness will lead to an effective efficient and a timely response. It will also increase the dignity of affected people
- NGO's bring added value to innovation
- Big Data enables rapid realtime mapping of most urgent needs
- Increased accountability towards the affected population leads to better coverage of needs, more efficiency and lower costs
- Strong political engagement is indispensable to the success of humanitarian aid. This asks for
- continuous interaction between diplomacy and the political arena
- Large scale crises ask for deployment of big multilateral agencies
- NGOs have large implementing capacities and can often work in places where the UN has no access
- Dutch Relief Alliance will improve effectiveness of aid and prevent fragmentation
- ICRC's neutrality provides for the best humanitarian access in conflict areas
- UN led coordination prevents gaps and overlap and determines which actor is best suited to deliver aid on the basis of quality, capacity, presence, access and speed
- Investing in local preparedness will lower humanitarian risks and needs and lower costs for the humanitarian system
- Capacity building of aid organizations in affected countries is crucial for sustainable aid
- If you give humanitarian aid where it is needed and focus on development aid where possible, others will have to step up to link between the two
- Innovation will increase effectiveness and efficiency of aid
- Increased accountability increases cooperation, understanding, learning, control and promotes change
- The NLS has influence because of its good reputation as a large predictable and trustworthy humanitarian donor

- aid is appropriate most urgent needs are covered
- humanitarian access, IHL are respected
- protection of civilians has improved
- capacity to respond has improved
- linkages with development are ensured
- humanitarian eco-system is strengthened
- Thematic priorities are addressed



Annex 2 Strengths and Weaknesses

	Principled Approach	Timely intervention	Needs based	Localisation	Innovation	Nexus	Main strengths	Main weaknesses	Main challenges
OCHA	++	++	++	+	++	0	Leading joint assessments. Co-ordination role.	0	Lack of senior staff in recent months
WFP	++	++	++	+	+	+	Food security coverage, road building, logistical support (UNHAS)	0	Access to conflict areas and acceptance with warring factions
UNHCR	++	0	0	0	+	0	Management of returnee process and support re IDP documentation	Protection needs still to be addressed	Working within govt structure on repatriation
UNICEF	++	0	0	0	0	+	Integrated approach	0	Working within govt structure on health and education
ICRC	++	0	0	++	0	0	Access and acceptance	Low level of reporting	0
Federation	++	0	0	++	0	0	PNS support and the SSRC branch network and volunteers	0	0
CBPF	++	-	++	+	0	0	Based on identified needs, covers a broad spectrum of activities	Bureaucratic, slow disbursement	Seen as pivotal for localisation but not accept the role
CERF	++	++	++	0	0	0	Quick disbursement, covers a broad spectrum of activities	0	0
Core/unearmarked	++	++	++	+++	0	0	Flexible and easily accessed, covers a broad spectrum of activities	Lack of detailed reporting	Lack of Dutch govt visibility
DRA	++	++	++	+++	+	0	Consistent funding stream SAVE leadership Covers a broad spectrum of activities Community level acceptance	Could do more re innovation NNGO lack logistical capacity and have fundraising issues Staff retention	0

Key:

The more triangulation, the darker shade of pink, i.e. 1 to 4 of the following sources

- Mentioned by stakeholders/key informants
- Found in secondary research
- Finding / observation field visit
- Finding one/more focus groups

Rating per priority:

- n/a no findings or not relevant
- 0 information too scant to assess properly
- not OK
- + OK – some activities/progress
- ++ on the right track
- +++ very good channel to fund for this priority

Annex 3 Acronyms

CBPF	UN Country Based Pool Fund
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
DG ECHO	Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
DRA	Dutch Relief Alliance
DREF	Disaster Relief Emergency Fund
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DSH	The Department for Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid
FSL	Food Security and Livelihoods
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
HDI	Human development Index
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
HQ	Headquarters
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
INGO	International Non-governmental organisation
IOB	Policy and Operations Evaluation Department of the Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs
KII	Key informant interview
MAM	Moderate Acute Malnutrition
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NNGO	National Non-Governmental Organisation
NLRC	Netherlands Red Cross
PSEA	Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SAM	Sever Acute Malnutrition
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-based Violence
SPEDP	Support for Peace Education Development Programme
SSHF	South Sudan Humanitarian Fund
SSRC	South Sudanese Red Cross
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNHAS	UN Humanitarian Air Service
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme

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