



# NRC Final Evaluation Report

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**SOUTH SUDAN EMERGENCY RESPONSE,  
DECEMBER 2013 – DECEMBER 2015**

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Responsibility for any omissions or mistakes lies entirely with the evaluation team.

## 1. Executive Summary

NRC, an organization whose mission is to protect the rights of displaced and vulnerable people in situations of humanitarian crisis, has been active in the territory that is now South Sudan since 2004. It set up a country office in Juba, South Sudan, in 2009, and established a programme to support returnees from Sudan's civil war. When violent conflict broke out in Juba on December 15<sup>th</sup> 2013 and rapidly spread across the country, NRC, like many other agencies and diplomatic missions present in South Sudan, was caught unprepared. Amidst high insecurity, NRC's senior management took the decision to suspend programmes and evacuate the majority of its international staff.

Following internal security clearance and having developed an initial strategy to respond, NRC resumed its presence on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014. At this stage, two weeks into the crisis, an estimated 200,000 people had been forcibly displaced, a number that was to rise to one million IDPs by April 2014 and 1,696,962 by the end of 2015. NRC's emergency response started in Juba with relatively small-scale actions, in protection, education in emergencies (EiE), shelter and a strong advocacy component. Over the course of 2014 it grew into a programme spanning the sectors of EiE, ICLA, Shelter, Food and some minor WASH interventions, and in 2015 NRC took on CCCM and additional cluster leadership roles. Constantly facing insecurity, NRC managed to respond to carry out humanitarian operations in the three most affected states (Upper Nile, Jonglei and Unity) where access to IDPs was sporadic and logistically challenging.

In 2016 NRC South Sudan decided to evaluate certain aspects of its emergency response and management, in order to improve its operations in-country and elsewhere. In essence, **NRC wanted to know how timely, relevant, effective and accountable its response had been, and what influence preparedness, coordination and other factors had on its response.** It was also keen to know how its performance differed over the duration of the crisis. For this purpose its response was divided into three phases: 16 December 2013 to 31 March 2014 (Phase 1); 1 April 2014 to 21 December 2014 (Phase 2); and 1 January 2015 – 31 December 2015 (Phase 3).

The evaluation methodology included primary and secondary data sources. Thirty-one people were interviewed and three focus group discussions were carried out in Juba, Nairobi and Oslo; internal programme documentation was reviewed; and data on the context and the wider humanitarian response was located and analysed. Beneficiaries of NRC's assistance were not directly consulted, partly due to persisting insecurity, partly due to the nature of the evaluation questions which focused more on internal factors such as preparedness and overarching organizational response, partly because NRC considered that its staff – including field and management levels – were better placed to comment on the factors that influenced its performance, and partly because of the budget available for the evaluation.

The conclusions of the evaluations are as follows:

Over the three phases, **NRC's performance improved from partially timely in Phase 1, to largely timely in Phase 3**

Its initial reaction was swift and appropriate, seizing good opportunities to respond in a timely manner to protection and education in emergencies needs in Juba with a relevant advocacy component, but its weak emergency preparedness and security management capacity to operate in a violent and volatile environment led to the decision to evacuate, which slowed it down at exactly the time the more contextually-prepared organizations with a strong preparedness system in place were starting up their response. Once its staff returned, NRC was still relatively slow to scale up in response to the evolving crisis beyond Juba. It did not have a long-term presence in the three most affected states on which to build a response, and took time to reorient

its strategy and build appropriate human resources. It also had to develop sufficient logistical capacity from scratch, a process that was jump-started with the deployment of resources and a surge team from Oslo and the Horn of Africa region.

Over time, NRC addressed many of the issues slowing it down. It drew in or recruited additional staff with emergency response experience, adapted its structure to include rapid-response/RRT/mobile teams, established contextually-appropriate procedures for security management, boosted its logistics capacity through skills transfer from expert staff deployed from Oslo and Nairobi, and secured the funds and logistical support it needed to deliver aid swiftly.

**The relevance of NRC's emergency programming in South Sudan improved in every phase, from partially relevant in Phase 1 to largely relevant in Phase 3.**

Initially, NRC's response was small-scale, localised and sectorally-limited in relation to the immense needs of the crisis-affected people across the entire country. Gradually, however, NRC implemented actions in its five core competences (Education, Information, Counseling and Legal Assistance, Food Security, Shelter and WASH), to increase its relevance to the continuing, wide range of needs.

In terms of coverage, NRC started its response in the easiest-to-access areas – the PoCs in Juba, then moved into the government-controlled areas of Minkaman and Bor and, occasionally, the hard-to-access states, and by Phase 3 was reaching IDPs across the country, wherever needs for food and/or NFI-shelter items were greatest, such as in Upper Nile and Unity states.

**Based on data collected from its staff and key external sources, NRC progressed from being a moderately effective actor in South Sudan in Phase 1, to being a largely effective one in Phases 2 and 3.** Although the country office was unprepared for a response in a highly insecure environment, through the deployment of a specialist ERT and the creation of RRT/mobile team it achieved access to IDPs in remote, insecure areas. In addition, through adaptation and expansion of its ongoing Education and ICLA activities it managed to meet new objectives relating to IDPs rather than returnees, on whom it was originally focused. It should be noted, however, that there are significant gaps in documentation relating to its effectiveness, and monitoring was deficient at output and outcome levels.

From Phase 2 onwards NRC began to realize that it could be more effective and relevant if it joined up multiple sectoral interventions in the same locations. However, by the time of the evaluation, it had not managed to incorporate this way of working into the RRT/mobile teams' activities, nor in all 'static' locations. Nevertheless, it is expected that the South Sudan team will continue to seek opportunities to increase sectoral integration, as expressed in its strategy.

**The trend in NRC's accountability to people and communities in South Sudan appears to be positive throughout the 3 phases.** NRC made efforts to consult the affected populations that were accessible in Phase 1, but security severely constrained other aspects of accountability. Step-by-step, its information-provision, participation and feedback mechanisms grew stronger, particularly in areas where NRC was able to establish a longer-term presence by setting up operational bases and stable teams. According to staff and key externals, NRC demonstrated exemplary practices in engagement of community leaders and members in needs assessments, decisions about targeting and monitoring. However, NRC was not able to provide documented procedures, records of actions, or evidence of changes made in response to feedback for the purpose of this evaluation.

It is clear that NRC has made significant improvements to its capacity to respond to emergencies since the start of this crisis. Nevertheless, based on the findings of this evaluation, **NRC in South Sudan is recommended to further improve its relevance, effectiveness and coverage by:**

- Prioritizing hard-to-reach locations in the three most affected states (requiring exit from easier-to-access, better-served areas) and instigating coordinated planning and programme delivery between NRC's different technical teams.
- Budgeting for preparedness planning, including contingency planning, contingency stock, a national 'surge' roster, and capacity-building (see below)
- Creating a Humanitarian Coordinator position, responsible for preparedness, response and quality of the interventions, and as a step-in manager when necessary.
- Establishing complementary standard operating procedures (SOPs) where needed, and ensuring they are fully known by all programme and support areas.
- Assessing the emergency response experience, skills and knowledge of all staff and designing a tailored capacity building plan (including humanitarian standards, and principles, SOPs, sector-focused refreshers, and security drills)
- Developing an overarching Theory of Change or Logframe, an M&E toolkit and indicators suited to the operational context and staff capacity, and an M&E plan with a schedule and responsibilities for data collection, analysis and documentation.

**Based on the South Sudan experience, NRC is also recommended to enhance its global and regional preparedness capacity by:**

- Identifying countries where substantial emergency response and security experience is essential for all senior managers, and recruiting accordingly; include 'temporary redeployment as surge capacity' clause in contracts of all senior managers and advisors.
- Establishing a mandatory requirement for a Security Advisor position in the CO structures in high risk contexts; embedding a security culture within teams through mandatory training/refresher courses for staff and drills for crisis management structures.
- Introducing requirements for knowledge and application of emergency procedures, principles and standards in performance management processes.
- Ensuring staff awareness about current procedures and responsibility for contingency planning at HO, RO and CO levels
- Guaranteeing funding allocations for emergency preparedness planning and emergency capacity building at all levels in annual budgeting process, possibly by incorporating a % of funding for emergency preparedness in global framework agreements.
- Ensuring and reinforcing that the ToRs for Global ERTs include capacity-building activities for COs and exit/handover planning.
- Introducing requirements/guidelines to carry out after Emergency Response Reviews within the first 6-8 weeks of any start of response, and regular After Action Reviews.
- Develop guidelines and tools for M&E and accountability mechanisms in hard-to-reach areas; introducing/enforcing requirements for key M&E-related documentation.
- Promoting experience and knowledge sharing in emergency response between COs by including 'peer learning' sessions (e.g. on assisting hard-to-access people) in regional/global events and meetings.
- Promoting certain adaptations of logistics policies and protocols to each country context without compromising global compliance issues and standards.

## 2. Introduction

NRC's mission is to protect the rights of displaced and vulnerable people in situations of humanitarian crisis. Through humanitarian assistance and advocacy it aims to meet displaced and vulnerable people's immediate needs, uphold their rights, prevent further displacement and contribute to durable solutions.

NRC's presence in South Sudan dates back to 2004, before the country became independent of Sudan. From 2007 NRC began to focus on addressing the needs of returnees and internally displaced people within the Southern Sudan territories. In 2009, due to the mounting challenges of working in and from Sudan, NRC transformed its Juba field office into a country office for South Sudan and began to grow a South Sudan country programme.

When violent conflict escalated in Juba on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2013 and rapidly spread across the country, causing countless lives to be lost and multiple waves of mass displacement, NRC found itself in the midst of a new humanitarian crisis.

Following a period of extreme insecurity in which it suspended operations and temporarily evacuated most of its international staff, NRC launched an emergency response programme, as described in the following sections of this report.

Given NRC's organizational commitment to learning from and improving its work on behalf of displaced people<sup>1</sup>, the country office of South Sudan commissioned this evaluation of its response to the above-mentioned crisis, focusing on the period from mid-December 2013 to December 2015. Further details of the evaluation purpose, audience and methodology are provided in Sections 3 and 4.

### 2.1. South Sudan Emergency Response

#### EXTERNAL CONTEXT

From Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> of December 2013, South Sudan has been engulfed by a brutal civil conflict that has been accompanied by severe human rights abuses against the civilian population and caused massive humanitarian needs. Induced by longstanding political grievances and disagreements within the ruling party Sudan People Liberation Movement (SPLM), in December 2013 violence swept across the capital city of Juba, as the national army, Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) fractured along ethnic and communal lines.

Within weeks armed confrontations between pro-government and opposition forces spread to Greater Upper Nile (Unity, Jonglei and Upper Nile states), destabilised neighbouring states, and encouraged country wide mobilisation of community defence militias.

By April 2014, over 1 million people had been internally displaced and over 300,000 had sought refuge in neighbouring countries (Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Sudan). In South Sudan, thousands sought shelter in UN bases (approx. 75,000 in UN Protection of Civilian areas in Juba, Bentiu, Malakal and Bor) and in camps outside these bases, with little or no access to humanitarian aid due to the volatile security situation. The vast majority (over 90%), however, fled to largely inaccessible areas.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> NRC Evaluation Policy

<sup>2</sup> UNOCHA 12<sup>th</sup> May 2014

Following the outbreak of the conflict, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and key allies within the international community initiated a mediation process that has subsequently led to the signing of multiple Cessation of Hostilities (CoH) agreement, and a transitional governance framework. However, neither the Government nor SPLA-in-Opposition honoured commitments to halt military confrontations, even on humanitarian grounds.

At the end of September 2014, both factions of the SPLM, including SPLM-IO, agreed to a long sought federalisation proposal. Fighting continued, however, and by October 2014, 1.7 million people had fled their homes as a result of insecurity or direct attacks upon their person and property, approximately 10,000 people had been killed by violence, malnutrition and disease, and 2.9 million people were experiencing crisis/emergency levels of food insecurity. Access to most of them remained very difficult, with obstacles including active combat, looting of aid supplies, the killing and harassment of aid workers and bureaucratic impediments on road, river and air travel by both sides to the conflict. Since the violence erupted, five humanitarian workers were killed, many more were wounded, missing, or unable to carry out their work due to ethnic targeting.

The same month (October 2014) the humanitarian community, led by the UN, reassessed the situation and concluded that there were still high levels of unmet needs (new or recurring) across all major sectors-protection, shelter, water and sanitation, nutrition, health, and education, and civilians were still unable to move freely and safely. The assessment also noted the lack of a coherent and appropriate protection monitoring system across South Sudan to enable humanitarian and protection actors to respond effectively to needs and reduce threats and risks to civilian safety and dignity<sup>3</sup>.

Extreme violence continued throughout 2015. Civilians were targeted and subjected to rapes, abductions, extortions, lootings and executions, despite the signing of an agreement to resolve the conflict in August 2015. Humanitarian access continued to be compromised by active hostilities and violence against humanitarian staff and assets, particularly in Unity, Central Equatoria and Upper Nile. By the end of 2015, there were an estimated 1,696,962 IDPs and 3.9 million South Sudanese were deemed to be severely food insecure<sup>3</sup>.

## NRC'S EMERGENCY RESPONSE

After the start of the violence on 15<sup>th</sup> of December 2013, one member of NRC's team remained in Juba throughout the first weeks of the crisis, contributing to the Protection Cluster's analysis of the situation and dissemination of information to the international and humanitarian communities. From 30<sup>th</sup> December 2013, international members of staff began to return to Juba in small numbers, and were joined in mid-January by an Emergency Response Team (ERT) from Oslo. Within days they organised an NFI distributions in Warrap, provision of equipment for emergency education facilities in the PoCs in Juba, and multiple assessments in affected states. Prior to their departure, the ERT set up a new office and team in Minkamman.

In March 2014 NRC South Sudan developed a new country strategy, which led to the creation of rapid response teams to provide emergency assistance in hard-to-access areas, and the expansion and adaptation of existing ICLA and Education programmes to address the needs of IDPs. It also introduced an ambition to respond in all NRC's core competences: Education, ICLA, Shelter, Food Security and WASH.

From May 2014 NRC's emergency response programme in South Sudan expanded significantly, including into hard-to-access areas, and by the end of 2015 had reached beneficiaries in seven states. As shown in Figure 1, the programme – from December 2013 to December 2015 - consisted of:

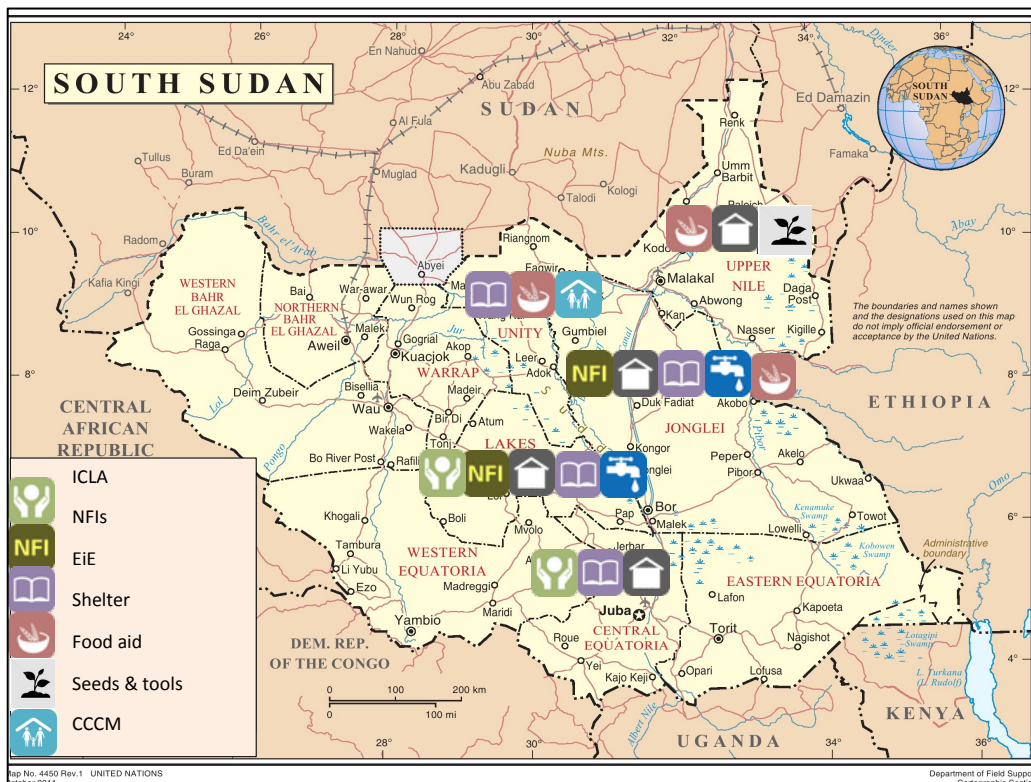
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<sup>3</sup> IPC, September 2015



- Education in emergencies, emergency shelter and ICLA in PoC camps in Juba.
- Education in emergencies, emergency shelter, NFIs and ICLA activities in Minkaman, Lakes State.
- Education in emergencies, emergency shelter, NFIs, WASH and food security in Bor, Jonglei State.
- Education in emergencies, camp coordination and camp management (CCCM) approach to out-of camp IDPs and food security in Leer, Unity State.
- Emergency shelter/NFI provision in Greater Upper Nile (Unity, Upper Nile, Jonglei) through ECHO funding.
- NFI provision, cash approaches and seeds/tools distributions in Greater Upper Nile
- Food aid (through WFP, using airdrops) in hard to reach areas in multiple states
- Camp coordination and camp management capacity-building in PoC camps in multiple states and CCCM approach to out of camp in Leer, Unity State

Figure 1: Geographical and sectoral distribution of NRC's response in South Sudan



NRC also maintained co-leadership of the Protection Cluster throughout the crisis, and in May 2015 took up co-leadership of the WASH and Food Security Clusters. At sub-national level it co-led the Education and Shelter Clusters.

In 2014 the programme had a budget of approximately US \$5,248,991. This doubled in 2015, to approximately \$11,605,499, making a grand total of approximately \$16,854,490 over the two years.

Figure 2 shows a detailed timeline of the crisis and NRC's response.



Figure 2: Timeline of emergency response

TIMELINE SOUTH SUDAN CRISIS	
EXTERNAL EVENTS	INTERNAL EVENTS
	<b>2012</b>
	NRC sets up Global ERTs
	NRC in SS carries out an assessment in Upper Nile state; but decides not to open an office in a new location. .
	<b>2013</b>
	NRC starts process of decentralization of management of country offices to regional offices. New HQ roles created.
	Finance, management and team dynamics challenges in SS office are highlighted in decentralization process.
	<b>September 2013</b>
	Arrival of new CD in SS
	Oslo, Regional and SS staff agree to refocus SS programme on IDP returns
	<b>November 2013</b>
	Security Advisor visits SS to update the security plan
	<b>December 2013</b>
Many UN, INGO and cluster staff go on leave	Many NRC staff in SS, Region and Oslo go on leave
<b>December 15, 2013 – Start of the crisis</b>	
<b>START OF PHASE I</b>	
<i>Within 24 hours, the violence spreads all over Juba</i>	Dec 15-16: CD - on field visit - requests PD in Juba to set up the CMT and lead it until his return.
<i>Within 48 hours the violence spreads to rural areas</i>	Dec 16: Juba airport is closed; NRC staff hibernate; some national staff flee from their homes
Embassies & UN evacuate many staff	Around Dec 16: CMT is formed in Oslo
Unicef, Oxfam, IOM, CRS, Medair carry out assessment in UNMISS camp, Juba	Dec 18: Juba airport re-opens; NRC evacuates international staff
	Dec 20: CD returns to Juba & takes up CMT leadership.
Oxfam distributes food and installs latrines in UN House; Solidarites distributes water	Dec 23: CMT decides NRC Protection Cluster Coordinator should remain in SS, accommodated at UN compound.
	Dec 24: CD evacuates to Nairobi: national staff (Equatorials) are left in charge of the Juba office.
By Dec 25, WFP and partners (ACTED, Concern, JAM, Mercy Corps, Oxfam, SC) distribute food to 17,200+ people in Juba PoCs	
	Dec 29-31: NRC holds Strategic Workshop in Nairobi to plan the response and programme continuity. Participants include: SS CD and PD, RD, RS, RHR, WASH expert/Roving Manager), and Oslo PA for SS
	Dec 30: Crisis Manager Trainer from Oslo/Global Roving Security Advisor arrives in Juba to conduct analysis of security in SS, resulting in approval for NRC international staff's return.

<b>January 2014</b>	
	Throughout January: change of management of SS office from Oslo to Nairobi
	Throughout January, NRC carries out advocacy on protection issues through the Protection cluster and HCT
	Jan 1: Arrival of Interim Emergency Programme Director from Oslo
	Jan 3 or 4: NRC CD returns to Juba with 2 regional emergencies staff, to prepare ground for additional International staff return
Massive displacement in multiple States	Jan 5-10: CMT decides only key international staff to return to SS; CD requests additional emergency staff from Oslo
	Jan 5-10: NRC EC participates in field interagency assessment in Lakes State, representing Education & Protection Cluster.
	13 January: NRC starts ICLA work in Juba PoC3, supporting approximately 12,502 IDPs.
	Jan 15: NRC starts EiE and ICLA activities in Juba PoCs
	Jan 14: Oslo ERT arrives & undertakes first assessment in Minkaman
High insecurity in most affected areas only permits rapid assessments and 'one-off' responses by most humanitarian actors.	Jan 14-15: NRC ERT carries out first NFI distribution in Warrup state
	Jan 16: Several UN agencies request additional staff from their NRC/NORCAP roster
	Jan 17: NRC ERT team carries out assessment in Nazir but is not able to start any response due to high insecurity.
By 21 January Mercy Corps distributed NFIs at UNMISS camps	Jan: NRC ERT carries out first NFI-Shelter Kit distribution in Minkaman, Lakes State (5,000 hh) and recruits NRC staff for the base
	17th January: NRC & UNICEF support the Primary Leaving Certificate Examination for 536 displaced learners in UN Bases in Juba.
By end of January CRS had begun to respond, with food in Lakes and Jonglei	End Jan: NRC establishes office in Minkaman and recruits staff for planned EiE and shelter programme.
<b>February 2014</b>	
Fighting continues in Jonglei, Upper Nile and Unity States. Insecurity only permits sporadic access by humanitarian actors.	<i>Throughout Feb: continued change of management of SS office from Oslo to Nairobi</i>
5 February ICRC are implementing health activities (including vaccinations) in camps and outside, and Intersos and MercyCorps are providing education services	Feb 1: Oslo Financial Controller visits SS office
	Feb 15: First ERT returns to Oslo
	Feb 27 – 1 March: NRC's Secretary General and Board Chairman visits SS (Juba, Bor and Minkaman)
<b>March 2014</b>	
13th March: UNOCHA reports 708,900 IDPs, of whom 70,000 take refuge in UN base	March: NRC agrees new SS country strategy
	March 23: 'Surge' Shelter PM deployed from Oslo

<b>START OF PHASE 2</b>	
<b>April 2014</b>	
	Extension of the NRC response to Bor as well as scale up of activities (NFI, Shelter, Education in Emergencies, and WASH)
	April 2: 2 <sup>nd</sup> ERT from Oslo arrives in SS requested by CD SS.
	NRC starts to build 5000 shelters in PoC 3 in UN house - Juba
	2 <sup>nd</sup> ERT carries out assessment in Upper Nile State, evacuates for security reasons through Ethiopia.
<b>May 2014</b>	
Rainy season starts	New CD for SS with emergency response experience
	NRC's Global Protection Advisor visits SS
<b>June 2014</b>	
	June 1: ERT visits Leer State by helicopter to deliver NFIs to 21,000 families (based on ICRC assessment data).
<b>July 2014</b>	
	ECHO starts to fund NRC RRT/mobile team focused on NFI-Shelter
	'Surge' PM's (2x Rapid Response, 1x Food Security), Head of Office for Leer and Area Manager were deployed from Oslo.
<b>August 2014</b>	
	NRC RRT/mobile team delivers 2nd NFI-Shelter distribution in Unity
	NRC staff from country offices in HoA deployed to SS
	Aug 21: WFP-NRC sign agreement for food distributions
	NRC starts to co-lead the sub-national WASH cluster
	NRC accepts funding from UNHCR to do CCCM, shelter/FSL in Leer
	NRC SS M&E Coordinator recruited.
<b>September 2014</b>	
	First NRC – WFP food distribution team ready to be deployed.
	2nd ERT leaves SS
<b>October 2014</b>	
	Second NRC/WFP food distribution team is recruited.
<b>November 2014</b>	
	NRC establishes base in Unity State, to start CCCM training
	NRC assesses feasibility of responding in Acobo but decides against it, due to insufficient HR and logistical capacity.
	NRC/WFP carry out first food distribution in Unity State.
	NRC distributes NFIs-Shelter to 20,000 hh in Unity state
<b>December 2014</b>	

NRC/WFP (RRT/mobile team) carries out second food distribution
<b>START OF PHASE 3</b>
<b>January 2015</b>
NRC RRT/mobile team carries out 3 <sup>rd</sup> NFI-Shelter distribution in Unity State
<b>February 2015</b>
NRC starts operations in Acobo, carrying out a NFI-Shelter distribution and setting up a base.
<b>March 2015</b>
NRC SS Roving Area Manager takes on management of RRT/mobile team
NRC Conflict and Policy Analyst joins SS team
<b>April 2015</b>
NRC/WFP RRT/mobile team continues to do food distributions
NRC new PD for South Sudan starts in Nairobi
<b>May 2015</b>
Arrival of new CD for SS, replacing the previous CD with Emergency Response and Crisis Management experience
NRC starts to co-lead the food security cluster in Juba
<b>June 2015</b>
Visit by NRC Security and Risk Advisor for SS
<b>July 2015</b>
NRC evacuates international staff from Leer due to insecurity; national teams go into the bush and continue to provide information of the needs on the ground.
NRC carries out assessment in Udier and a decision not to intervene is taken by NRC SS office
NRC Protection and Advocacy Adviser (PAA) arrives to co-lead Protection Cluster in SS
<b>September 2015</b>
NRC carries out assessment in Mayandit and implements a one-off NFI-Shelter distribution
NRC restarts activities in Leer State. NRC is the first agency along with MEDAIR to return to this location to provide humanitarian assistance.
NRC carries out assessment in Nyal (no implementation)
<b>October 2015</b>
NRC distributes NFI-Shelter-hygiene items in Udier and Nyal and provides transport for IDPs from the island to the camps.
NRC phases out ICLA activities in the PoC in Juba
<b>December 2015</b>
NRC 3 <sup>rd</sup> distribution in Leer (Unity), targeting women and elderly men.

### 3. Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the quality and accountability<sup>4</sup> of NRC's response to the December 2013 emergency, and to generate recommendations for how the organization can improve its preparedness for, and the quality of its future emergency responses in South Sudan and elsewhere.<sup>5</sup>

The evaluation focuses on the period from mid-December 2013 to December 2015. Its specific lines of inquiry<sup>6</sup> are:

1. What were the challenges, strengths and weaknesses to the response in terms of preparedness (staffing, logistics, funding, context analysis), effectiveness, timeliness, coverage, external coordination and internal coordination?
2. How have weakness and gaps in the programme and institutional set-up been addressed since the initial response period (December 2013 to June 2014)?
3. What changes should NRC make to its current programme in South Sudan to improve its relevance, effectiveness, and coverage (especially in hard to reach areas)?
4. Based on the South Sudan experience, what else should NRC do at country, regional and head office levels to be better prepared for responding adequately to future emergencies?

These lines of inquiry have been organised by the evaluation team into the following evaluation and learning questions:

#### Evaluation questions:

- To what extent was NRC's response timely? What were the key contributing factors, including preparedness and coordination, and how did they impact the timeliness of the response?
- To what extent was NRC's response relevant? What were the key contributing factors, including preparedness and coordination, and how did they impact the relevance of the response?
- To what extent was NRC's response effective? What were the key contributing factors, including preparedness and coordination, and how did they impact the effectiveness of the response?
- To what extent was NRC's response accountable? What were the key contributing factors, including preparedness and coordination, and how did they impact the accountability of the response?

#### Learning questions:

- Based on the evaluation of the South Sudan emergency response experience, what changes could be made to the current response programme in South Sudan for it to become more timely, appropriate, effective, and accountable humanitarian response?
- Based on the South Sudan emergency response experience, how could NRC become a more timely, appropriate, efficient, effective and accountable humanitarian response organisation?
- What gaps and weaknesses from the initial phase have been addressed, and which remain to be addressed?

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<sup>4</sup> Quality and accountability are used as terms that collectively cover the nine quality criteria expressed in the Core Humanitarian Standard.

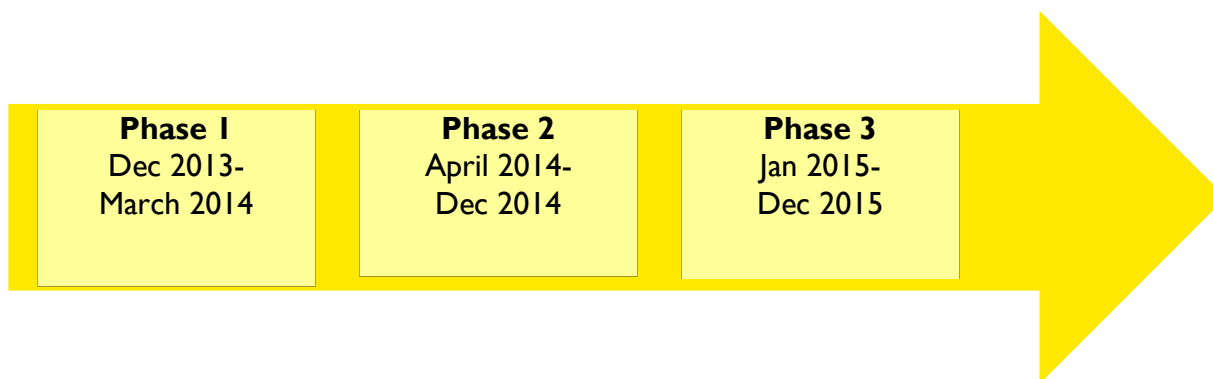
<sup>5</sup> Paraphrased from the Terms of Reference, which contain several slightly different expressions of the purpose of the evaluation.

<sup>6</sup> Terms of Reference

The primary users of the evaluation's findings and recommendations are staff in the South Sudan Office, although the Regional Office (for Horn of Africa) and Head Office (in Oslo) also expect to be able to apply relevant learning regionally and globally. For this reason, the methodology (described in the following section) has been designed with these key features:

- Involvement of key national and international key **staff working for** NRC across South Sudan.
- Involvement of key **staff from all levels** (Country Office, Regional Office, Head Office) and at different stages in the response.
- Involvement of a external actors that interacted with NRC.
- Data collection tools that explore the quality of the response in **three defined phases** (15 December 2013 to 31 March 2014; April 1 – December 31 2014; January to December 2015), and participants' own perceptions of learning and areas for improvement.
- Data collection tools that explore the following quality criteria: timeliness, relevance, effectiveness, and accountability.
- Data collection tools that incorporate questions designed to elicit responses about **preparedness before, during and after the crisis** as well as other contributing factors.
- Validation and Learning workshops in Juba and Nairobi, to **enhance the findings and increase appropriation** of the conclusions and recommendations.

Figure 3: Phases of the response defined for the purpose of this evaluation



## 4. Methodology

### Methods and tools

This evaluation consisted of qualitative methods of data collection, complemented by some minor quantitative elements. Four data collection tools were employed to enable triangulation:

- Review of external and internal documentation, including quantitative data on numbers of people reached.<sup>7</sup>
- Key Informant Interviews, including a scale to score participants' perceptions of NRC's achievement of aspects of quality<sup>8</sup>.
- Focus group discussions
- Validation and Learning workshops

### Sampling

The following samples of inputs and participants were used:

- **Document Review:** The initial set of internal documents was selected by NRC. Further documentation on assessments, programme proposals and reports, and monitoring and accountability (including beneficiary numbers) was requested and provided. The evaluation team found it necessary to search for additional information on-line to validate data collected in interviews, as it was missing from internal documentation.
- **Key Informant Interviews (KII):** The list of key informants to be interviewed was drawn up by NRC. In total, 31 people were interviewed, including staff, former staff, cluster members, partners and others. The full list is provided in Annex I.
- **Focus Group Discussions (FGD):** 3 FGDs were carried out, with the participants listed in Annex I
- **Validation and Learning workshops:** Workshops were organized in Juba and Nairobi at the end of the data collection and initial analysis process, to test and potentially validate the findings. Eighteen staff members participated in Juba, and eight in Nairobi.

### Consideration of affected people's views

As the evaluation methodology does not include visits to affected areas, IDPs targeted by the response were not directly consulted. Efforts were made through the document review and interviews to identify and incorporate their views, but very limited relevant data were available.

### Analysis and judgment

Each of the evaluation questions (EQs) has a set of judgment criteria and anticipated contributing factors (internal and external). These were considered in relation to three<sup>9</sup> phases in the response:

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<sup>7</sup> Numbers of beneficiaries could not be determined from the data provided.

<sup>8</sup> Quality and accountability are used as terms that collectively cover the nine quality criteria expressed in the Core Humanitarian Standard.

<sup>9</sup> The inception report mentions two phases, but once data collection started it became apparent that at least three stages should be considered.



- Phase 1: 15 December 2013 – 31 March 2014
- Phase 2: 1 April 2014 - 31 Dec 2014
- Phase 3: 1 January to 31 December 2015

For each stage, a judgment is given using the following scale:

- Quality aspect largely achieved, with minor/few exceptions.
- Quality aspect moderately achieved: a combination of strengths and weaknesses/gaps
- Quality aspect partially achieved: many weaknesses and gaps
- Quality aspect not achieved: no evident achievements

## 5. Findings

### 5.1 Timeliness

The evaluation sought to answer the question: **To what extent was NRC's response timely? What were the key contributing factors, including preparedness, and how did they impact the timeliness of the response?**

To assess timeliness, which is by nature a relative phenomenon, the following judgment criteria were applied to the different phases of the crisis:

- Speed of NRC's initial humanitarian response and scale up in relation to the early evolution of the crisis
- Adaptation of NRC's response in relation to the evolution of the crisis
- Speed of NRC's humanitarian response in relation to responses of other actors

The judgments made for each phase and overall are the result of consideration of data collected from key informants (including the ratings provided in Annex 2), programme and management documentation, correspondence between offices, and external reports on the web (which enabled comparison with actions of other humanitarian actors).

#### PHASE I: 15 December 2013 – 31 March 2014

NRC's humanitarian response began discretely less than 24 hours after the outbreak of violence, through the participation of NRC's Protection and Advocacy Adviser in the first Protection cluster meeting after the start of the crisis. These meetings, in which UN and INGOs also participated throughout the most acute stage of the crisis, served not only to share vital information on the spread of the violence and the number of people displaced, but also for identifying immediate protection needs and raising key advocacy issues at HCT level, such as overcrowding in the camps, the risk of IDPs returning prematurely to areas still affected by violence, dispute resolution, use of schools as refuges, and emergency education for children. As UN and some other INGOs including NRC evacuated their staff, the value of NRC's continued presence in the Protection Cluster grew as it rapidly came to be regarded as the international community's 'eyes and ears' during the first month of the crisis.

During the first 2 weeks after the onset of the crisis, all NRC's international staff apart from the Protection and Advocacy Adviser evacuated South Sudan, as did most foreign nationals, including many UN and diplomatic staff. Inevitably, this had an impact on the timing of the scale up in NRC's response: during the NRC team's absence, on 19th December, Unicef, Oxfam, IOM, CRS and Medair carried out the first emergency assessment in UN House in Juba, and within 3-4 days the first food and water distributions began. By 25th December WFP and partners (ACTED, Concern, Joint Aid Management, Mercy Corps, Oxfam, and SC) had distributed food to 17,200+ people in UNMISS camps in Juba.

*"We played an important role in information management. As most agencies evacuated their staff, the Protection Cluster was the only eyes and ears of the international community in South Sudan." (Source: Protection Cluster co-lead)*

Meanwhile, NRC's South Sudan management team and key staff reconvened in Nairobi, together with the Regional Management Team, the South Sudan programme advisor and one Emergency Specialist, both from Oslo, to plan their return and response. Following a security assessment in Juba on 31st of December by NRC's

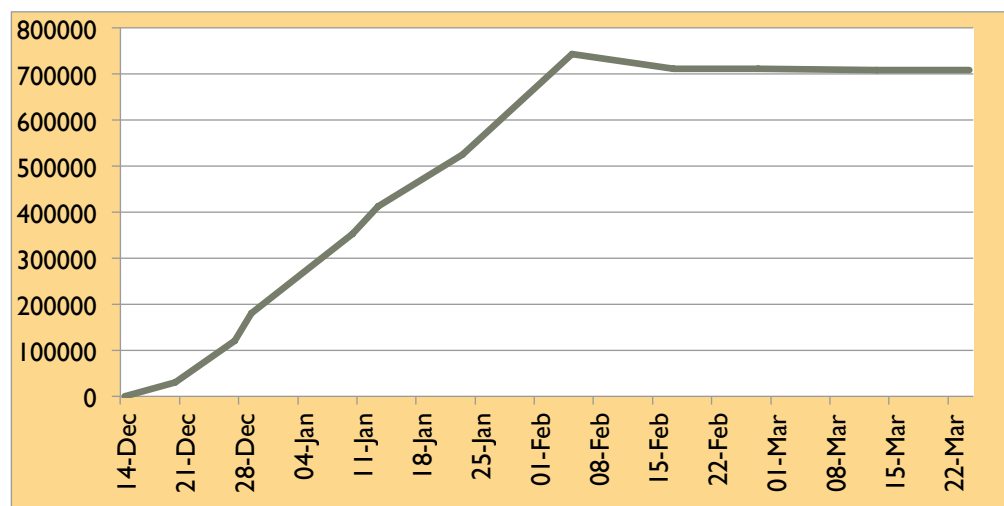
Global Roving Security Advisor, a limited number of international staff returned to Juba over the first week of January, with the intention to implement an emergency response at scale.

The Interim Emergency Programme Director immediately joined multi-agency assessment teams and cluster meetings, seeking opportunities to contribute to the response that was already underway in Juba but just starting to reach beyond the capital. Thanks to the arrival of the Emergency Response Team (ERT) – part of NRC's surge capacity<sup>10</sup> – on the 13th of January, NRC was able to carry out a distribution of NFIs to IDPs in Warrap State on January 14<sup>th</sup>. Despite the fact that one month had passed since the start of the crisis, this was the first shelter assistance the population had received in that location since they were displaced.

Between 15th and 17th of January, NRC staff from the regular South Sudan programme started to implement EiE and ICLA activities in Juba PoCs. NRC provided desks and chairs for students in the PoCs in Juba to sit their exams and thereby graduate from primary school. With this action NRC helped to launch the Education in Emergencies response, which, given the duration of the crisis, has grown in significance.

Between January and March, the number of displaced across the country grew exponentially, as shown in Figure 4. NRC ERT tried to expand its reach to IDPs in other states, through assessments such as the one carried out in Nazir (Upper Nile), but was severely restricted by the continuing fighting and insecure operating environment. At the end of January, the ERT carried out an NFI distribution in Minkaman for 7,000 HH but was not able to complete the target of 20,000 HH that was originally planned, due to heightened insecurity. It also aimed to start the shelter reconstruction programme in Minkaman before the end of its deployment, but due to logistical difficulties it was only able to set up the office and team, and the shelter assistance itself was provided in Phase 2.

Figure 4: Number of IDPs during Phase 1 of the crisis in South Sudan.



<sup>10</sup> After the strategic decision in 2012 to strengthen NRC's emergency response capacity, an Emergency Response Section (ERS) was established in HO. In terms of surge personnel ERS set up one Emergency Response Team (ERT) in 2012 and then created a second one in 2014. Along with this ERS created an emergency roster containing approximately 80 profiles, deployable on short notice for up to 6 months. There are also a number of roving positions employed full time (CD, FM, HR, Log).

Given the combination of opportune actions and delays, **NRC's performance in Phase I is considered by the evaluators to be partially timely.** The factors that enabled it to react and respond quickly to some of the emerging needs were:

- Protection expertise and participation in the Protection Clusters and HCT prior to the crisis and immediately after it.
- Connections in the Education sector and coordination with other education actors.
- Rapid deployment of the Interim Emergency Programme Director Emergency Response Manager, the ERT and security advisor from HQ and support staff from the regional office.
- ERT was self-sufficient and able to operate in areas different to those where the regular team was responding.
- Capacity to develop proposals and obtain additional funding.
- Flexibility for reallocating NMFA funds to address the emergency situation.

Staff consulted for this evaluation pointed almost unanimously to the following internal factors as reasons for not being more timely in Phase I:

- NRC's team did not have emergency response experience and no preparedness plan was in place. The country team's focus prior to this crisis was return and early recovery, and it hired its staff accordingly. The area in which staff had experience – protection and education – were those in which NRC was able to act quickly. For everything else, NRC was ill-prepared to respond at an appropriate scale and speed, and was totally dependent on the ERT. Predictably, when this team left, the staff struggled to implement the plans they put in place, because they lacked experience in all aspects of response: management, logistics, and technical skills, and fundraising. It should be noted that NRC was not the only INGO in this predicament; many others faced a similar situation due to their focus in long term programming, although some were able to react and adapt more quickly.
- NRC in South Sudan did not have an appropriate security plan and the country team lacked experience in dealing with high levels of insecurity, which may have been why it missed the signs of the deteriorating situation from mid-2013. This lack of security preparedness and capacity, also led it to evacuate, which of course had an impact on the timeliness of the response. As noted above, this situation was similar to that of many other INGOs and UN agencies and embassies.
- NRC did not have a presence in the worst affected areas and this was known by the donor community. Establishing new operating bases took time, including hiring of national staff of the same ethnic groups as IDPs or from ethnic groups that would not face challenges in security.
- The transfer of the management line for the South Sudan office from Oslo to Nbi put the South Sudan team between a rock and a hard place: Oslo had experience and resources to respond, but the new management line lay with Nairobi, where there was less experience. Delays were inevitable unless the change process was put on hold, which it was not.
- NRC in South Sudan did not have a contingency plan for any kind of emergency, so much time was invested in discussing and agreeing what to do.
- Delays in recruiting national and international staff with emergency response experience, in part due to a management decision to limit exposure, but also because of HR policies that were ill-adapted for emergency response settings

In the opinion of the evaluation team it also appears that efforts to improve institutional preparedness in NRC had only had a limited sphere of impact by the time the South Sudan crisis broke. Although the ERT

*"There was no security advisor or officer in South Sudan, only a security plan done by a roving security advisor that had stayed on paper ever since. There was no risk management culture and no crisis management structure." (Source: NRC staff member)*

had been created, a culture of emergency management had not penetrated the organisation. SOPs, plans, policies and other standard preparedness were not fully in place at country or regional level, meaning that everything had to be started from scratch.

## PHASE 2: 1 April 2014 – 31 December 2014

From April to December 2014, violence and insecurity continued, triggering further displacements in several locations at the same time and severely restricting humanitarian access, as indicated in Figure 5. The problem of 'humanitarian space' was further compounded by earlier than usual rains, which prevented NRC and other organizations from even doing rapid assessments and/or rapid responses.

Figure 5: Excerpt from OCHA, South Sudan Crisis Humanitarian Access Snapshot (1 - 31 March)

### Humanitarian Access Snapshot (1 - 31 March)

*The number of access incidents increased significantly in March, with a high number of reports on both restrictions of movement and violence against personnel/assets. Restrictions on air and road movement severely affected the humanitarian organizations ability to reach affected communities in a timely and efficient manner. Violence against humanitarian personnel was severe, and looting and robberies from warehouses and compounds of humanitarian actors continued.*

*\*103 incidents reported in March \*53% are violence against personnel and assets*

### Humanitarian Access Snapshot (1 - 30 September)

*The total number of reported access incidents increased to 74 reported cases in September (compared to 58 in August). The most prevalent incidents remained violence against personnel/assets with several incidents of assault, harassment and ambush/hijackings in especially Central Equatoria, and arrest/detention and threats in Unity and Jonglei. Increased insecurity in Lakes lead to suspension of activities in large parts of the state for several weeks, and active hostilities in especially Upper Nile continued to impede humanitarian operations and organizations' ability to reach affected populations.*

*\*74 incidents reported in September \*60% are violence against personnel and assets*

In addition, a 'crisis within a crisis' stealthily grew, as the displaced were unable to return farm their lands. In May 2014 over 1.2 million people were at IPC Stage 4, i.e. at emergency levels of food insecurity.

To address these challenges, NRC developed a new strategy targeting IDPs the worst-affected areas conflict displacement (Jonglei, Upper Nile, Unity State), and restructured its staff accordingly. It recruited additional emergencies staff, redeployed experienced staff from NRC's programmes in Kenya, Congo and Pakistan, and brought in a second ERT. From this enlarged pool of people with appropriate skills and experience it then created 3 new Rapid Response Teams to enable timely, simultaneous delivery of NFI, shelter and food assistance in multiple and hard to reach locations.

Evidently the plan and human resource investment paid off: Despite continuing insecurity and other restrictions, NRC managed to expand its emergency response in the second half of Phase 2, and by December 2014 it was operating in the three worst-affected states and had two operational bases outside Juba from which it could reach out more readily when security conditions permitted.

It is considered that **NRC's response was moderately timely in Phase 2**. The improvement appears to be due to the following internal changes:

- A new, clear and shared strategy was shared in April 2014, uniting staff around a clear plan. The strategy set NRC operations through mobile rapid response teams, allowing the organization rapid deployments in hard to reach areas, making the response timelier to cover the needs of affected populations who were constantly moving looking for safety.
- More people with emergency experience (including the new CD and ERT) were brought into the South Sudan team, thus allowing the team to divide into groups with quicker response times.
- Security management improved with the recruitment of a permanent security advisor for SS, ensuring systematic risk analysis with a protection approach that allowed RRT/mobile teams to operate in highly insecure areas.
- Proactive fundraising efforts were very successful, largely due to NRC's global reputation, thus enabling programmes to start up as quickly and to be implemented without delays.

External factors such as the rainy season, security constraints, lack of reliable and timely information and limited funding affected the capacity of all agencies to meet commitments to communities on time. Interestingly, however, several staff pinpointed NRC's reliance on others (such as in the following examples) as an impediment to acting faster Phase 2:

- Despite having an agreement with WFP and NRC setting up the RRT/mobile teams from September 2014, the first food distribution started in November due to WFP's own internal constraints, meaning that NRC was not able to start to distribute food until the worst months of the food crisis had passed.
- At the beginning of the operation, NRC RRT/mobile team was relying on the shelter cluster for accessing the standard kits and on the logistic cluster for transportation. Given the immense needs in South Sudan, the resources were not enough to cover all areas, resulting in delays of the implementation of activities. This situation was improved when NRC received ECHO funds that allowed the NFI-Shelter team to carry out independent interventions with their own resources.

### PHASE 3 - 1 January to 31 December 2015

In 2015 the scale of need and distribution of displacement remained similar. During this period NRC managed to strengthen and expanded the capacity of its RRT/mobile team mechanism, setting up a third Food distribution team and a third light footprint office, as the key strategy to establish presence and do timely interventions in the three most affected states.

In addition, a new NRC Conflict and Policy Analyst was recruited in May 2015 to support the humanitarian agencies to better understand the humanitarian situation and the context dynamics, allowing more timely interventions by supporting collecting analysis efforts and facilitating decision making.

It is considered that NRC's performance was **largely timely** during Phase 3. The reasons for this include:

- Improved capacity in logistics and finance, resulting in time-saving mechanisms such as framework agreements with suppliers
- Having RRT/mobile team staff who are experienced in emergency response operations
- Improved team dynamics, with increased participation of national staff in senior positions and decision making
- NRC's solid reputation as an emergency response actor in South Sudan resulted in quick clearance from the Government to fly into most of the locations in Jonglei, Unity and Upper Nile States, thereby allowing access rapidly to remote areas.
- Participation in the Protection cluster has also enabled it to have access to timely information and analysis.

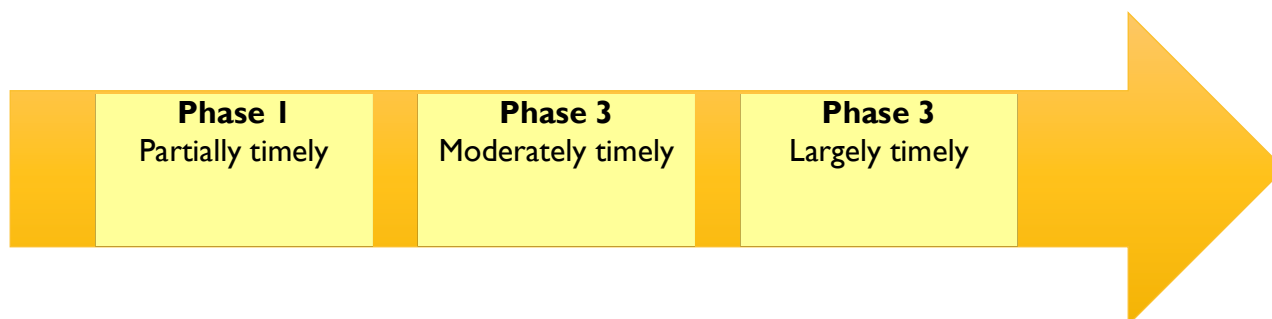
## TIMELINESS TREND

**From the start of the crisis, to the end of 2015, NRC's response changed from being only partially timely to largely timely.** Its first reaction was swift and appropriate, seizing good opportunities to respond in a timely manner to protection and education in emergencies needs in Juba, but its weak capacity to operate in a very insecure environment led to the decision to evacuate, which slowed it down at exactly the time the more contextually-prepared organizations were starting up their response.

Once its staff returned, NRC was still relatively slow to scale up in response to the evolving crisis beyond Juba. It did not have a long-term presence in the most affected areas on which to build a response, and took too long to reorient its strategy and establish appropriate human resource capacity. It also had to develop sufficient logistical capacity for an emergency response from scratch.

*"With more courage, more funds and more emergency response NRC staff the emergency response could have scaled up much faster and to a wider coverage of population and places!" (Source: NRC staff member)*

Over time, NRC addressed many of the issues slowing it down. It drew in or recruited additional staff with emergency response experience, adapted its structure to include rapid-response teams, established contextually-appropriate procedures for security management, jump-started its logistics capacity through skills transfer from expert staff deployed from Oslo and Nairobi, and secured the funds and logistical support it needed to deliver aid swiftly.



### N.B.

Although not strictly within the scope of this evaluation, it came to light during the evaluation that many staff members felt that NRC did not have appropriate systems in place to support staff working under extreme time pressure, in a highly insecure environment, and as witnesses of human trauma. For this reason a pertinent recommendation is included in Section 8 of this report.



## 5.2 Relevance

This evaluation sought to answer the question: **To what extent was NRC's response relevant? What were the key contributing factors (internal and external), including preparedness, and how did they impact the relevance of the response?**

To assess relevance, the following criteria were applied to the different phases of the crisis:

- Type (sectors/activities) of NRC's response in relation to unmet needs, including prioritization of the needs of the most vulnerable people
- Scale of NRC's response in relation to unmet needs

The judgments made for each phase and overall are the result of consideration of data collected from key informants (including the ratings provided in Annex 3), programme and management documentation, and cluster reports posted on the web.

It should be noted, however, that all actors found it almost impossible to obtain reliable information on the extent and type of needs in the first two to three weeks of the crisis. The only numbers that humanitarian actors were able to use with confidence were those relating to the number of people who had fled into the UN compounds, and organizations that had assisted them there; there was very little knowledge about those who had been displaced or were at risk of displacement in the rest of the country until the beginning of January 2014.

From January 2014 onwards the HCT and clusters began to collect data from a wider range of sources, and more systematically. As a result of field assessments and greater information flow between actors in and outside Juba, they began to be able to assess numbers of people in need, and what they were in need of, as well as to gather data on the actions of partners in aid provision. The data were used for planning purpose by clusters and were regularly published by OCHA in 'Snapshots' for stakeholders requiring a larger picture – See Figures 6, 7 and 8. While it is recognized that these data contain many inaccuracies, they are considered to be a 'good enough' information source for depicting trends in displacement overall and in each sector. NRC, along with many other agencies, used data from joint assessments and shared sources for programme design, along with data obtained from government and UN sources by the Protection and Advocacy Advisor.

### PHASE I - 15 December 2013 – 31 March 2014

*Relevance in terms of **type** of needs, including of the most vulnerable*

As shown in excerpt from OCHA's first 'Snapshot of Humanitarian Needs in South Sudan' report (Figure 6), when NRC made its first response action in December 2013, the specific needs of the IDPs thronging into the PoCs in Juba and elsewhere were unknown but **the urgent need for protection** was clear. NRC led the first meeting of the **Protection** cluster and, together with other cluster members still in Juba, initiated the process of assessing numbers, locations and needs of IDPs through field assessments, and compiling and circulating the emerging information. NRC's co-leadership of the protection cluster continued throughout the three phases of the emergency response.

*December was the end of the school year in South Sudan, and the government decided not to allow students without a nationality certificate to take their exams. This affected many of the IDP students who had fled without documents. NRC's advocacy persuaded the GoSS to reverse the decision. (Source: Education Cluster)*

Figure 6: Excerpt from OCHA Snapshot of humanitarian needs and response by humanitarian community, 25 December 2013 (Start of Phase I)

**Number of IDPs in South Sudan: 92,500**

Sector	People in need	Number of people in need reached	% people in need reached
<b>Education</b>			
<b>Food</b>	92,500 displaced, of whom 58,000 seeking refuge in UN bases, mainly in Juba	2,875 households (Juba)	Unknown
<b>Protection</b>			
<b>Shelter</b>			
<b>NFIs</b>		825 households (Juba)	
<b>WASH</b>		289 latrines dug	

\* Source: OCHA South Sudan Humanitarian Dashboard

As the humanitarian community in South Sudan began to build its understanding of sectoral needs in Juba and across the country, NRC made four further relevant contributions to meeting **education** and **basic survival needs** in Phase I:

- Provision of equipment in the Juba PoCs for school exams - and subsequently for ongoing **education** in the PoCs - responded to a specific need of a vulnerable group.
- Adaptation of its long-term education programme to set up **temporary learning and safe spaces** in Minkaman and Boor met a priority need for children, and continued to do so through Phases 2 and 3.
- Distributions of **shelter-NFI** kits consisting of plastic sheeting, mosquito nets, tarpaulins, ropes, buckets and soap to approximately 20,000 families in Minkaman by the end of March, temporarily meeting urgent needs not covered by any other organization in those locations.
- Adaptation of its long-term **ICLA** programme to include conflict prevention/ peaceful conflict resolution and mitigation exercises, coaching and training for the chiefs and 'community police' in PoCs, direct mediation, and monitoring of House, Land and Property issues.

It should be noted that education needs were not reported by the humanitarian community at this stage.

Food needs in Juba, Minkaman and some other accessible locations were addressed (albeit very partially) by CRS and other INGOs, most of which had existing partnership agreements with WFP in South Sudan. WASH needs in PoCs were partially addressed by other organizations, and NRC made a small contribution through hygiene promotion and latrines in Minkaman.

### Relevance in terms of **scale**

On a national scale, NRC's response in Phase I, like that of all organizations, was nowhere near the scale required, although NRC's leadership of the protection cluster and advocacy on protection in general was relevant to the entire response.

It is therefore considered that NRC's response in Phase I was partially relevant in that it met some priority needs, including of some vulnerable groups, but was unable to meet others in sectors that are considered the organisation's core competences and lifesaving activities. It was also very limited in terms of scale compared to the number of IDPs.

The main internal factors that prevented NRC from being fully relevant from the start of its response were:

- Lack of experience of strategizing in response to a fast-moving emergency situation. It took three months for NRC to have an agreed strategy that focused on addressing the needs of the most vulnerable
- Inadequate logistical capacity to carry out any large-scale distributions, such as food or NFIs, until surge-staff deployed from outside South Sudan (the ERT and specialist Shelter PM from the surge roster deployed from Oslo).
- Cap on international staff and slow recruitment of additional national staff needed to implement plans quickly and take advantage of access opportunities and available funding; NRC's existing national team were mainly Dinka, thus limiting their ability to move and operate in insecure circumstances, particularly in the most affected states of Greater Upper Nile.
- Sector specific assessments, leading to partial analysis of the full set of needs in each location.
- Slow adaptation of the long-term programme; the early responses in education and ICLA were minor additions, not a re-orientation to address the humanitarian needs of large numbers of people.
- National and emergency staff communicated little and continued to work separately until the middle of Phase 3 when NRC realized that they could collectively implement actions relating to different core competences in a more coordinated way.
- NRC's funding was limited at the start in relation to the extensive needs, so staff were reluctant to add items to standard kits designed by the Education-NFI cluster, even though they knew they were needed by vulnerable groups.

The most significant external factor preventing greater relevance in Phase I was the continuing extreme insecurity affected the scale of the response and access to the most vulnerable. There was also poor infrastructure in the most affected states due to rains, floods and swampy nature that limited access in addition to insecurity.

## PHASE 2 - 1 April 2014 – 31 Dec 2014

Figure 7: Excerpt from OCHA Snapshot of humanitarian needs and response by humanitarian community, 13 March 2014 (Start of Phase 2)

**Number of IDPs in South Sudan: 708,856**

Sector	People in need	Number of people in need reached	% people in need reached
Education	453,061	4,191	1%

<b>Food security/ livelihoods</b>	3,700,000	451,500	12%
<b>Protection</b>	3,291,500	316,669	10%
<b>Shelter</b>	700,000	36,295	5%
<b>NFIs</b>	700,000	308,270	44%
<b>WASH</b>	4,920,000	247,001	5%

\* Source: OCHA South Sudan Humanitarian Dashboard

*Relevance in terms of **type** of needs, including of the most vulnerable*

At the beginning of April 2014, NRC made a deliberate move to increase its relevance. It adapted its response strategy to focus on reaching the most vulnerable of the affected population in areas that had, until now, been very difficult to access and where humanitarian needs remained largely unmet. To operationalize this, it created mobile Rapid Response Teams (multi-disciplinary, mobile teams) - initially focused on NFIs and shelter and later on food distributions.

At the start of Phase 2, there were **extensive unmet needs** in all sectors (as shown in Figure 7). Even the collective Shelter/NFIs response, the needs for which were estimated to be 47% covered, was still failing to reach over half of the IDP population. There was no information about particularly vulnerable groups in relation to shelter at this stage.

Furthermore, the onset of the rainy season increased the urgency to address WASH and shelter needs, and the need for food and livelihoods support grew exponentially as the number of IDPs experiencing extreme food security grew.

Over the course of Phase 2, NRC implemented the following relevant actions in line with its strategy and the changing context:

- **RRT/mobile teams** focused first on **NFI-shelter interventions**, delivering shelter materials that were more durable and training IDPs in how to protect themselves from floods and water borne diseases caused by the heavy rains.
- The ERT supported the construction of 5,000 shelters in PoC 3 in Juba in order to decongest and completely remove the POC in Tongping and move the people to POC3, which was agreed as a humanitarian priority by the international community at that time.
- The **RRT/mobile teams started to carry out food distributions** in November 2014. It was ready to do so from September, but delays in supply of goods from WFP hampered the start of the activity. In general food aid was provided using a fast track system based on WFP's own vulnerability criteria within the selected beneficiary population, so most of NRC's food distributions are considered to have targeted the most vulnerable people within the targeted population.
- NRC's **EiE programme was restructured** in response to the rapid and drastic change in the context, and NRC took the lead for EiE in PoCs in Juba and in other affected states. EiE activities also involve youth, which regarded one of the most vulnerable groups in South Sudan in terms of its risk of being drawn into the violence; in South Sudan the youth is a sector of the population that does not receive adequate governmental support and there are very limited youth development programmes and agencies working in South Sudan.
- The **ICLA programme was also adapted** to include conflict resolution work outside camps, thereby

targeting very vulnerable groups not previously covered by in-camp activities.

- NRC seconded more staff to the **protection cluster** in Juba in order to improve analysis of protection needs across South Sudan.
- NRC implemented some **small-scale WASH** actions in Minkaman and took up the co-lead of the sub-national WASH cluster in August 2014.
- According to interviews with relevant staff, **all assessments were carried out using vulnerability criteria**, to ensure good targeting.

#### *Relevance in terms of **scale***

One year after the start of this crisis, the scale of needs still dwarfed the overall humanitarian response. NRC managed to carry out several distributions in government and opposition-controlled areas such as Leer and Nyal (most of which were inaccessible until late 2014) though the RRT/mobile teams, thereby reaching large numbers of people who had previously received very little assistance in comparison with those in the PoCs and easier-to-access areas.

Overall it is considered that **NRC's response in Phase 2 was moderately relevant** in that it focused on meeting a range of sectoral needs of the most vulnerable groups, was active in hard-to-access areas, but was still limited in terms of scale.

The main internal factors that increased NRC's relevance in Phase 2 were:

- Changing the profile of senior management staff to include emergency response experience (CD, Programme Director, Logistics, Security)
- Enhanced security management by having a full time dedicated Security Advisor for South Sudan programme based in Juba and support from Regional Security Advisor, enabling NRC to reach the most vulnerable despite persisting insecurity.
- Rapid approval of funding from ECHO to establish the NFI-shelter RRT/mobile team
- Partnership with WFP for food distributions

Many of the factors that prevented NRC from being fully relevant in Phase 2 were external, such as:

- The lack of flexibility and adaptability of the standard kits from the clusters, especially the NFI and Shelter, as they were not always suitable and relevant to the needs of IDPs based on the observations of NRC's RRT/mobile teams.
- The limited capacity of the shelter cluster to organize procurement and the overwhelmed capacity of the logistic cluster to ensure transportation, which was a disincentive to responding to newly-identified needs. For the above two reasons, NRC's relationship with the shelter cluster became strained during this phase.
- The cluster system has difficulties in strategizing and operating in a multi-sectorial way, preventing a more integrated response that would facilitate, for example, appropriate WASH for schools in PoCs
- WFP internal limitations and capacity to supply food and honor commitments on time.

Internally, NRC was also struggling to find ways to coordinate its sectoral responses. For example, it was successful in getting schools operational and implementing educational activities in PoCs and other locations, but it did not ensure that schools had adequate WASH facilities.

### **PHASE 3 - 1 January to 31 December 2015**

*Relevance in terms of **type** of needs, including of the most vulnerable.*

As shown in Figure 8, prior to the start of Phase 3 the number of IDPs in South Sudan was still rising, and humanitarian needs in all sectors were less than half-met. NRC continued to work to meet needs in five sectors, with a focus on the most vulnerable groups and those in hard-to-reach areas. By the end of Phase 3, NRC started to phase out some activities in the PoCs of Juba and scaling down in the camps in Minkaman because, according to clusters and NRC's own analysis, needs were largely met there by other actors.

**Vulnerability criteria for shelter interventions (Source: NRC Final Report, ECHO)**

- i) Female headed households
- ii) Households with disabled family members and/or elderly or sick family members.
- iii) Child headed households
- iv) Households with frail and elderly household members
- v) Households with large family sizes

Figure 8: Excerpt from OCHA Snapshot of humanitarian needs and response by humanitarian community, August 2014 (nearest analysis to start of Phase 3)

**Number of IDPs in South Sudan: 1.3 million**

Sector	People in need	Number of people in need reached	% people in need reached
Education	993,300	173,376	17%
Food security/ livelihoods	4,300,000	2,300,000	53%
Protection	5,640,000	189,535	3%
Shelter	1,905,000	238,605	13%
NFIs	1,905,000	686,155	36%
WASH	5,917,000	2,754,427	47%

*Relevance in terms of **scale***

As described below and shown in the timeline for the response, in Phase 3 NRC's operations continued to scale up in response to the extensive human impacts of the crisis.

NRC's efforts to be relevant in both type and scale of needs in Phase 3 are:

- Creation of a 3rd RRT/mobile team for **food distribution** to IDPs in the hardest to reach areas in Upper Nile, Jonglei and Unity states.
- Establishment of a **3rd operating base** in Acobo, to extend its reach to previously inaccessible, little-assisted IDPs.
- Distribution of **tools and seeds** in collaboration with FAO, to enable IDPs and returnees to restart livelihoods activities.
- Continuation of **education and vocational** training programmes for IDP and host community children and

youth in Juba and Minkaman

- Distribution of over 13,000 shelter kits to areas where needs were identified and other actors were not present, including almost 2,000 dignity kits for women
- In October 2015, NRC carried out a one-off, integrated **NFI-Shelter-hygiene** distribution in Udier and Nyal (Unity). When NRC staff found out that the most vulnerable family members were stranded on the islands, it provided vouchers to pay for their transportation by canoe, and then followed up in December 2015 with more NFIs.

By the end of phase 3 NRC began to explore alternative, more durable shelter options beyond standard kits for some of the calmer areas, as its staff felt that this would be more relevant to people's needs and the context. In doing so, however, its relationship with the shelter cluster deteriorated and NRC's participation dwindled. At the time of this evaluation, the situation had not yet been resolved.

It is considered that, **in phase 3, NRC's response was largely relevant** to the type of needs experienced by IDPs across the country, the special needs of children and youth, and the scale of need in South Sudan.

Most of the factors that contributed to increased relevance in Phase 3 are the same as those of Phase 2. Two additional factors highlighted by key internal and external informants are:

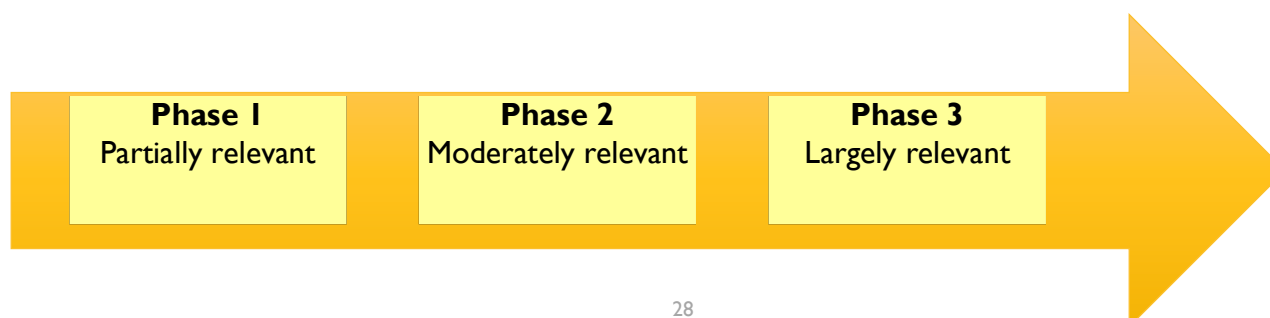
- The South Sudanese government's positive perception of NRC also contributed to increased relevance by facilitating access and coordination of activities
- NRC's continued investment in the cluster system, especially with Education, Protection, WASH and Food Clusters, enabled it to maintain and enhance its relevance over the course of the crisis. Paradoxically, its less positive relationship with the Shelter cluster is also related to the issue of relevant aid.

## RELEVANCE TREND

The relevance of NRC's programming in South Sudan has improved in every phase, from partially relevant in Phase 1 to largely relevant in Phase 3.

Initially, NRC's response was small-scale and sectorally-limited in relation to the immense and broad range of needs of the crisis-affected people across the entire country. Gradually, however, NRC became a largely relevant actor that has been able to stay the course of this protracted crisis, adapting to the changing context and needs of the people affected by it. Over time it implemented actions in its five core competences (Education, Information, Counseling and Legal Assistance, Food Security, Shelter and WASH), to increase its relevance to the continuing, wide and evolving range of needs. In this way, NRC took steps towards an integrated programme that corresponds to the multi-sectoral needs in South Sudan.

Over the two years covered by this evaluation, NRC has become a leading actor in South Sudan in Education in Emergencies, WFP's partner of preference for registration for food distributions, co-lead of sub-national WASH clusters, and continuing co-lead of the Protection, WASH and Food Security clusters.





### 5.3 Effectiveness

It was challenging to judge effectiveness without an overall programme logical framework with explicit objectives, results and indicators, and in the absence of systematic documentation of outputs and analysis of outcomes. Although NRC is aware of these gaps and is currently implementing a plan to strengthen its monitoring and evaluation in South Sudan and globally, an alternative method to analyse effectiveness had to be found for the purpose of this evaluation. It was therefore decided to use the objectives relevant to each phase in various plans and strategies produced by NRC over the period to be evaluated.<sup>11</sup>

The achievements reported in documents provided by NRC and in interviews and focus group discussions with staff and externals were then compared with the strategies or plans for each phase. A judgment of the level of achievement of each aspect of the plans and strategies was made based on the extent to which triangulation could be made between the sources of data.

The results were then summarised in the following ‘Report Cards’, one per phase. In the far right column, green is used to show the objectives that were considered achieved, red denotes those that were only partially achieved or not achieved, grey indicates where the result is not known, and blue indicates where results relating to effectiveness were reported but there was not a corresponding objective.

The numbers of beneficiaries reached could not be established with confidence, for the following reasons:

- Regular monitoring reports including beneficiary numbers were either not produced, not stored, or not made available to the evaluators.
- The South Sudan team recorded ‘units of aid items provided’ rather than the people or households that benefited from them. This means that some households/people might ‘count twice’ as beneficiaries if the units of aid items provided by each sectoral team are added together to calculate the overall number of beneficiaries.
- Country-level reporting contradicts global reporting. One report from NRC South Sudan indicates that the programme reached over 673,322 beneficiaries in 2015 (or, considering the point above, that it provided 673,322 units of aid), while NRC’s global reporting system indicates that over 1.5 million people benefited from NRC’s programme in the same period.

In the opinion of the evaluators, therefore, it was not possible to estimate the total number of beneficiaries reached. Instead, the focus of this section is ‘Did NRC achieve what it set out to achieve?’ As shown in the Report Cards below, ‘what NRC set out to achieve’ is a combination of objectives relating to internal processes, outputs for some sectors, and some outcomes.

#### PHASE I: 15 December 2013 – 31 March 2014

In Phase I NRC had very specific objectives relating to the general set-up and scale up of the operation, that were considered the responsibility of the ERT. It also had a target number of beneficiaries for the Shelter/NFIs sector (10,000 households), as well as objectives for setting up and scaling up programming in the areas of ICLA

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<sup>11</sup> ERT ToR for South Sudan April – June; ERT south Sudan - 12 Jan- 14 Feb 2014 final report; NRC Sit Rep South Sudan 11 November 2014; NRC SS 2013 Q4 Report – Final; South Sudan Strategy - Refocusing the country programme 18.03.2015; SSFE1416 UNICEF Education report November - June 2015 final; SSFF1410 WFP Project Final Report June 2015; SSFY1505 Midyear report to SDC Nov2015 final; LOA SS\_039\_15 NRC FINAL REPORT; SSFY1506 Final Report 6th April 2016

and Education. The latter were considered the domain of the main South Sudan team as they corresponded with the main sectors of the longer-term programme.

As can be seen in Figure 9, NRC met around half of its twenty 'objectives' in Phase I. The ERT achieved most of its objectives relating to planning, coordination, logistics and recruitment. It succeeded in increasing NRC's profile as an emergency response agency in South Sudan and managed to deliver shelter materials and NFIs to 5,000 displaced households in Minkaman. It did not, however, manage to secure access to all of the proposed areas of operation, and did not implement the WASH activities it had planned.

*"NRC schools are functional and their activities are implemented according to the international and South Sudan standards! They are one of the best ranked partners based on the quality of their activities" (Source: Education Cluster)*

The South Sudan team managed to achieve their Protection and ICLA objectives in the PoCs in Juba and in Minkaman, including advocacy actions and at least one of the EiE-related objectives in Phase I.

Some minor activities in WASH and Food security were carried out in Minkaman, even though NRC did not plan to do these. They involved hygiene promotions sessions, training on latrine construction and distributing soap.

The internal factors that enabled these objectives to be achieved in Phase I were identified as follows:

- Continued presence and proactive participation of the NRC Protection Advisor in the Protection cluster at the onset and throughout the first weeks of the crisis
- ERT rapid deployment, with technical expertise in core competences and experience in rapid response mechanisms in insecure environments
- NRC CO presence in Juba and experience in EiE programming
- NRC's ability (largely due to Protection and Advocacy Advisor, the Interim Emergency Programme Director and the ERT Team Leader) to seize opportunities, negotiate funds and resources and make quick decisions to intervene during the first month of the crisis
- Improved security management supported by a visit of a roving security advisor
- NRC's active participation in the HCT enabled it to access information for its own decision-making

The factors that limited NRC's effectiveness in Phase I included:

- Ethnicity of NRC national and internal staff at onset of crisis not allowing them to be deployed to the affected areas due to security constraints
- Difficulties in finding and recruiting national and international staff for the emergency response teams
- ERT working in parallel to the regular country team, limiting each team's ownership of the overall plan and contribution to overcoming challenges.
- NRC's decision to limit the number of international staff in South Sudan
- Absence of NRC programmes in the most affected states during the conflict
- Lack of emergency preparedness and security management capacity

It should be noted that none of NRC's objectives in Phase I included aspects of gender-sensitivity or gender equity; consequently data on the results achieved refer only to individuals or households.

**It is considered that NRC was partially effective in terms of achieving what it set out to achieve in Phase I.**

Figure 9 'Report Card': Phase I

## Key

Achieved	
Partially achieved/not achieved	
Result without corresponding objective	
Not known	

PHASE 1: DECEMBER 15 2013 – MARCH 2014			
Team	Sector	Objectives	Level
First ERT	General	➤ Map available in country response resources: staff, vehicles, premises, funding and materials.	
		➤ Liaise with cluster leads and key stakeholders to identify areas where NRC can add immediate value to the overall humanitarian response	
		➤ Further define a response strategy including geographical and sectoral areas of operation in line with defined NRC response capacity	
		➤ Mobilise third party assistance materials for NRC use as available and appropriate.	
		➤ Secure access to areas of operation in close coordination with NRC SS CD, ERM and RoSA.	
		➤ Establish new base of operations as required. (/2)	
		➤ Initiate activities in identified areas of operation: primary focus on camp based WASH, Shelter and Distribution as pre-identified priority needs.	
		➤ Assist in the mobilization of further financial resources through the development of proposal narratives and draft budgets for inclusion in new proposals developed by the SS Country Team.	
		➤ Secure additional assistance materials through NRC procurement and logistics processes.	
		➤ Identify additional staff needs and advise NRC SS HR on early recruitment requirement.	
		➤ Provide on-site training to 'borrowed' and newly recruited NRC response staff.	
		➤ Undertake further assessment and needs analysis to identify potential areas of expansion.	
		➤ Facilitate the establishment of longer-term NRC activities through to a structured handover to the country team, with a longer term strategy	

	NFI	➤ 5000 HH in Minkamam, Awerial County, Lakes State	
	Shelter	➤ 5000 HH in Minkamam, Awerial County, Lakes State:	
	WASH	➤ No specific objectives but activities undertaken and results reported	
	Food Security	➤ No specific objectives but activities undertaken and results reported	
NRC SS Team	EiE	➤ Ensure Education in Emergencies for IDPs children inside the PoCs in Juba	
		➤ Procure and stock emergency teaching and learning materials and continue with assessments to other sites where implementation will be possible.	
	ICLA	➤ Ensure information, counselling & legal assistance for IDPs inside the Juba PoCs	
		➤ Assess the possibilities for ICLA programming outside of the PoC areas within the UNMISS bases in Juba and in other areas where NRC becomes operational in the future.	
	Protection	➤ Scale up protection monitoring, advocacy and response to the rise in violence and the increase in IDP's to respond to increased protection concerns	

## PHASE 2: 1 April 2014 - 31 December 2014

As shown in Figure 10, NRC met the majority of its management and programmatic objectives in Phase 2. These included new objectives for a second ERT that was deployed from April to September 2014, as well as the new objectives of the country strategy, including very significant achievements such as setting up the Rapid Response Teams to reach IDPs in hard-to-access areas and increasing engagement in Bor and Jonglei states, although in the case of the latter it was not able to establish bases in both of those areas at the onset of the response due to persisting insecurity.

A major new achievement towards the end of the phase was starting food distributions through RRT/mobile teams in partnership with WFP, which were ranked as the most effective RRT/mobile team of all partners.

*WFP provides the same funding to all partners doing food distributions, however, NRC is the most effective in terms of being ready to be deployed rapidly and effectively to any location, and for this reason NRC is the only partner, in addition to WFP teams, to do registration. (Source: WFP staff member, South Sudan).*

NRC did not achieve the objective of providing a holistic package of assistance based on its core competences in all regions. Anecdotal evidence from interviews suggests that multiple sectoral teams intervened in some of the same locations, but aid was not provided as part of a package or coordinated effort.

As shown in Figure 10, activities in ICLA and EiE were carried out in various locations but either did not correspond with any particular objectives for those sectors, or the relevant documentation was not provided to the evaluators. Thus, the extent to which NRC met ICLA and EiE objectives in Phase 2 cannot be gauged by the evaluation team.

The internal factors that enabled objectives to be achieved in Phase 2 were identified as follows:

- NRC country office ability to change the structure and focus of its programme in line with the new strategy, including better internal dynamics and higher inclusion of national staff
- RRT/mobile team composition of national and international staff, with a multidisciplinary structure (logistics, security, protection, etc)
- Regular engagement and proactive participation of NRC in clusters and HCT
- Enhanced security and risk management procedures and protocols
- NRC capacity to develop and negotiate proposals with donors.

It should also be noted that in Phase 2 NRC began reporting male and female beneficiaries separately, thus indicating an awareness of gender-differentiated vulnerability and impacts. Due to a lack of qualitative monitoring data the impacts of such awareness on the programme's effectiveness are not known.

The internal factors that limited effectiveness in phase 2 include:

- Time taken to change the "chip" from development to Emergency Response, including the restructuring of the teams
- Donor and cluster dependence, specially WFP, shelter and logistics cluster
- No WASH expertise in NRC's own team, nor a strong local WASH partner

The external factors that limited effectiveness in Phase 2 were continuing high insecurity, and the independent working style of each cluster, which prevented coordination between clusters to provide a comprehensive, multi-sectoral service to beneficiaries.

**On this basis NRC's response is considered moderately to largely effective in Phase 2.**

Figure 10: 'Report Card': Phase 2

### Key

Achieved	
Partially achieved/not achieved	
Result without corresponding objective	
Not known	

PHASE 2: April – December 2014			
Team	Sector	Objectives	Level
Second ERT	General	➤ Support NRC's response to the South Sudanese crisis by providing Shelter assistance, Logistics support and assessment and access capacity for further developing the response.	

		➤ Increase engagement and access into Bor and Jonglei state, also with a potential view to look at the feasibility of a cross-border operation with NRC in Ethiopia through Gambella	
		➤ Further define the proposed geographical coverage for the Emergency Response Plan Strategy that has been proposed in line with NRCs response capacity, in Jonglei, Upper Nile, Unity State.	
		➤ Identify additional staff needs and advise NRC SS HR on early recruitment requirements if necessary, including support and strengthen Logistical capacity in the Country for a better response.	
		➤ Assist in the mobilization of financial resources through development of proposal narratives and draft budgets for inclusion in new proposals developed by NRC South Sudan and Regional Office.	
	NFI & Shelter	➤ Delivery of shelter assistance in PoC 3 in Juba (4,000 shelters)	
		➤ Provide technical and oversight support to the LCD, a local NGO implementing shelter in Tongping PoC (2,500 Shelters)	
		➤ Set up rain resistant shelters and provide technical support to the Shelter Advisory Group (SAG).	
NRC SS team	General	➤ NRC South Sudan is a financially sound operation based in areas with conflict displacement (Jonglei, Upper Nile, Unity State) with capacity to respond to emergencies and humanitarian needs on the ground.	
		➤ Have a Rapid Response Team (RRT/mobile team) to establish the presence of and do quick interventions in Upper Nile and Unity States, and if needs persist and funds are available a formal light footprint office will be set up in the longer term.	
		➤ Have a programme portfolio consisting of the 5 Core Competencies, establishing the full intervention in each region as far as possible, with clear links and ways of working to enable a holistic, comprehensive package (facilitating) durable solutions.	
		➤ Do a general overhaul of each dept. to enable a smooth running mission with capacity to implement, respond and scale up when emergencies hit. This includes support functions such as Operations/Logistics and HR.	
	EiE	➤ Take the lead in Education activities in the new PoC area (PoC3 in UN House)	
	ICLA	➤ No objective relating to the other results reported	
	Protection	➤ No objective relating to the results reported	

### PHASE 3 (medium-term objectives): 1 January to 31 December 2015

As shown in Figure 11, NRC achieved nearly all or possibly all of its objectives in Phase 3 and is considered largely effective in terms of achieving what it set out to achieve. It established light foot print bases in several locations and continued to use RRT/mobile teams to reach IDPs in areas that had received little assistance due to insecurity, such as Unity and Upper Nile.

NRC's portfolio expanded to include all of its core competences, although with limited activities in WASH. Its achievements in protection and ICLA were considered effective by other organizations, and its actions in EiE led to NRC being considered the 'leader' of EiE in South Sudan. It made progress towards providing a holistic package of sectoral interventions (in one location, Minkaman) but in other locations each sectoral 'action' was implemented independently.

*"NRC establishes local offices in key locations where they operate and recruits staff from the community and also from the IDPs, which improves the effectiveness of their intervention." (Cluster partner)*

The internal factors that enabled objectives to be achieved in Phase 3 were identified as follows:

- NRC completed the restructure of the CO and NRC's current senior management team is inclusive and effective, generating a more positive dynamic within teams and increased participation of national staff in coordination and management positions.
- NRC improved its capacity for context analysis, ensuring a good reading of the current situation in the country as well as scenario planning.
- The composition of the RRT/mobile teams, with a mix of national and international staff ensures that NRC is able to operate in close coordination and acceptance with the population
- Establishing new, light-foot operational bases in strategically key locations while keeping the RRT/mobile teams to access hard to reach areas.
- NRC SS CO has improved its logistic capacity, supporting RRT/mobile teams to be more effective and timely.
- NRC in South Sudan has built a strong security and risk management culture that has been mainstreamed in all the different programmes
- NRC securing funding from donors outside the cluster system (ECHO support for NFI-Shelter RRT/mobile team)

More systematic use of vulnerability criteria may have contributed to effectiveness, although monitoring data on the impact of this are lacking.

The factors that limited effectiveness in Phase 3 were:

- NRC dependence on cluster and UN system to procure goods and receive transportation services
- NRC food distribution teams with very narrow ToRs not allowing them to do assessments and post monitoring evaluations
- Delays in responding to the clusters in terms of reporting, submission of proposals on time
- NRC's lack of capacity and resources to do integrated missions, ensuring sectoral interventions/programmes (WASH, shelter, education, food, ICLA) within the RRT/mobile teams' operations on the ground



Figure 11: Report Card: Phase 3

## Key

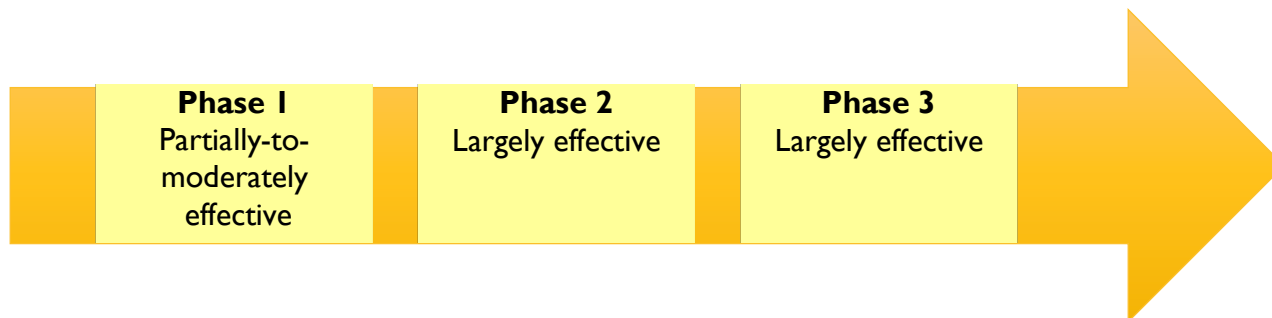
Achieved	
Partially achieved/not achieved	
Result without corresponding objective	
Not known	

Team	Sector	Objectives	Level
NRC SS Team	General	➤ To consolidate its emergency response interventions in areas with conflict displacement (Jonglei, Upper Nile, Unity State) and strengthen capacity to respond to emergencies and humanitarian needs on the ground.	
		➤ Have a programme portfolio consisting of the 5 Core Competencies, establishing the full intervention in each region as far as possible, with clear links and ways of working to enable a holistic, comprehensive package (facilitating) durable solutions.	
	EiE	➤ Children, adolescents and youth affected by displacement and host communities have increased access to a safe and protective learning environment.	
		➤ IDP and host community children have increased access to Emergency education.	
		➤ Psycho-social support and Disaster Risk Reduction measures are mainstreamed into educational policies and programmes.	
	ICLA	➤ No objective relating to the results reported	
	Protection	➤ Improved humanitarian interventions strengthening the protection of civilians in humanitarian emergencies and contributing towards creating conditions conducive to durable solutions in South Sudan.	
	NFI & Shelter	➤ Ensure that the most vulnerable persons affected by displacement including IDPs, returnees and host communities in hard to reach areas of South Sudan have access to emergency shelter/NFI	
	Food distribution	➤ Creation and deployment of 2 NRC RRT/mobile teams to distribute food to IDPs in hard to reach areas in the conflict zones in coordination and support of WFP.	
	Livelihoods	➤ Distribution of FAO emergency livelihood kits to support 13,745 HHs in Upper Nile State and in Unity State	

## EFFECTIVENESS TREND

Overall, in terms of achieving what it set out to achieve, NRC progressed from being a partially-to-moderately effective actor in South Sudan in Phase 1, to being a largely effective one in Phases 2 and 3. Through the deployment of a specialist ERT and the creation of RRT/mobile teams it achieved access to IDPs in remote, insecure areas. In addition, through adaptation and expansion of its ongoing Education and ICLA activities it managed to meet new objectives relating to IDPs rather than returnees, on whom it was originally focused. It also sought to, and appears to have succeeded in reaching particularly vulnerable groups.

From Phase 2 onwards NRC began to realize that it could be more effective and relevant if it joined up multiple sectoral interventions the same locations. In Minkaman, for example, NRC implemented WASH, shelter, NFI and education activities in a coordinated manner, with very good results. However, by the time of the evaluation, it had not managed to incorporate this way of working into the RRT/mobile teams' activities, nor in all 'static' locations. Nevertheless, it is expected that the South Sudan team will continue to seek opportunities to increase sectoral integration, as expressed in its strategy.



### Additional note on issues relating to effectiveness

In the opinion of the evaluation team, three important issues related to effectiveness should also be noted in this report.

- In Phases 1 and 2, NRC did not clearly state the outcomes it sought to achieve. It is not clear whether, or what kind of monitoring of progress towards outcomes was carried out, as little relevant documentation was provided to the evaluation team. This lack of clarity indicates significant deficiencies in programme monitoring that should be addressed as a matter of priority.
- It appears that NRC attempted to disaggregate beneficiary data by gender. However, as no post-distribution monitoring data were collected, and this evaluation did not include a field trip component, it is impossible to know what the gender-related impacts were following distributions.
- References to technical, quality and accountability standards for humanitarian were conspicuous by their absence throughout this evaluation. They were not mentioned by NRC staff in interviews, do not feature in programme proposals or reports, and do not appear to have guided programme design or monitoring. This issue may not have affected programme effectiveness, although given the lack of emergency response experience in phase 1 and the range of challenges faced by staff in all phases, it is likely to be among the contributing factors. This evaluation did not explore the issue further as the use of technical standards was considered outside the scope of the exercise.

## 5.4 Accountability

This evaluation sought to answer the question: **To what extent was NRC's response accountable? What were the key contributing factors, including preparedness and coordination, and how did they impact the accountability of the response?**

To assess accountability, the following criteria were applied to the different phases of the crisis:

- Extent to which affected people were **consulted** and **participated in the design** of the intervention
- Extent to which affected people were **informed of plans**
- Existence and effectiveness of feedback and complaints mechanisms (both ways)

The criteria relate closely to NRC's institutional commitments to accountability, as noted in Figure 13.

The judgments made for each phase and overall are the result of consideration of data collected from key informants (including the ratings provided in Annex 3), programme and management documentation.

*Figure 13: NRC's commitments to accountability*

### NRC Policies pertaining to Accountability

#### NRC Policy Paper 2012

NRC is committed to accountability and transparency in all activities, and adheres to:

- Code of Conduct for the Int. Red Cross/Red Crescent and NGOs in Disaster Relief
- Humanitarian Accountability Partnership
- SPHERE Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response
- INEE Minimum Standards for Education in Emergency
- 'Do No Harm' principle

#### NRC Programme Policy, 2012

NRC is committed to:

Ensuring **the participation of displaced populations in the selection, design and organisation of assistance**; to accountability in the delivery of aid and services; to **transparency of action and provision of information**; and to **considering the perspectives** of displaced populations to guide programme decisions.

#### NRC Protection Policy, 2014

NRC endeavours to ensure the **participation of displaced and vulnerable persons, including host communities, in all aspects of context and protection analysis**, such as the assessment of threats, vulnerabilities, and capacities, as well as the planning, design, and implementation of activities, through recognising individuals' and communities' self-protection capacities. NRC activities are conducted in a transparent and consultative manner, with accountability to beneficiaries and affected populations.

## PHASE I: 15 December 2013 – 31 March 2014

It has been very challenging to triangulate data provided in interviews with other sources of data on accountability. Just two tangential references to accountability in Phase I have been located; one, provided by NRC, is an IRNA report, and the other, a Shelter Cluster report located on the web.

Based on these documents it appears that in the early assessments, all agencies – including NRC - did their best in a very difficult operating environment. The first ERT team that arrived from Oslo, assessing the needs in Minkaman<sup>12</sup>, Awerial Country, Lakes State stayed on the ground for only two and a half hours, interviewing as many IDPs, NGOs and local authorities, including elders, as they could in such a brief visit. In Warrup State, the assessment team -that included three people from NRC – conducted a series of focus groups with Community leaders; Teachers; Women; Youth; Children, in a very short time. Neither document referred to information provided to the affected population about potential assistance or protection as a result of the evaluation.

No documentation was provided and/or found relating to mechanisms for beneficiary participation in the design and implementation of the earliest actions of the response, or to gauge beneficiary satisfaction. It seems likely that, given the circumstances, none exists. However, according to members of the first ERT team interviewed, each NRC assessment and intervention done by the team was largely consulted and agreed with local communities and authorities (traditional and formal) as part of NRC community participatory approach in Emergencies.

Staff who were present in Phase I emphasized that in the first weeks of the crisis, NRC and others prioritized speed over accountability to beneficiaries, in the interests of saving lives and minimizing exposure of staff.

According to these staff, the internal factors that positively influenced NRC's accountability in Phase I include:

### **NRC international staff present in the first phase of the crisis:**

*“The assessments were quickly done without much participation and consultation with the community as lifesaving actions need to be implemented rapidly!”*

*“At the beginning of the response, people were less consulted as the response had to be done quickly for life saving purposes!”*

- NRC community approach and respect of neutrality and impartiality in all their emergency response activities
- ERT teams doing field assessments engaging local and traditional leaders
- NRC field offices recruits staff from the local community and also from the IDPs in the camps

The same staff identified the following internal factors that prevented greater accountability in Phase I:

- ERT working in parallel and not fully integrated into NRC country structure, causing some gaps in communications between teams and with beneficiaries.
- Donor and cluster dependence, especially to access goods and transportation services

In acknowledgement of these difficulties and efforts to overcome them, it is considered that **NRC's performance in Phase I was partially accountable.**

<sup>12</sup> Minkaman IRNA Methodology: Assessment itinerary: 31 December 2013 (the team stayed on the ground for two and half hours for conducting the assessment). Type of key informants interviewed (male/female, boys/girls): IDP groups (men, women and children) NGO representatives on the ground and local authorities were consulted and provided relevant information to the assessment team.

## PHASE 2 - 1 April 2014 – 31 Dec 2014

During this phase there appears to have been an improvement in NRC's accountability to beneficiaries. Security permitting, assessments involved dialogue (information and consultation) with community leaders, elders, and affected men and women. NRC's experience of working with communities in South Sudan stood the organization in good stead, as did its team of national staff who were able to communicate with the IDPs with ease. Having RRT/mobile teams, made of both international and national staff, was particularly helpful in this regard.

Some activities appear to have lent themselves more readily to information provision, consultation, participation and feedback than others. For example, the NRC EiE activities were largely consulted with beneficiaries in the PoCs in Juba. According the Education Cluster, NRC is one of the most accountable organizations due to its community participatory approach.

Another example is through the establishment of a base in Minkaman, Jonglei State, that allowed a sustained engagement required for shelter reconstruction that offered opportunities for weekly meetings, discussion on design, and forums for feedback/problem-solving.

Staff also felt that all aspects of accountability improved in Phase 2, highlighting the visits conducted prior to any distributions to coordinate with leaders and elders, and the PDMs that included questions relating to satisfaction (although examples of such PDMs were not seen during this evaluation).

*"Through a mixed composition of national and international staff, NRC RRT/mobile teams are able to be in touch with communities and leaders on the ground and acceptance of NRC is high in many places, as opposed to other agencies, as the coordination and relationship with local authorities and populations is very good."*

*"NRC develops the local capacities, they involve the local authorities in the monitoring of their activities, they work with parent-teacher's associations -PTA-, they recruit staff from the local community and IDPs population".*

*In the PoCs, "NRC always discuss with the authorities of the camp, with the teachers, with the parents making the response more accountable. For example: the PTA have been given responsibilities for ensuring some key activities: paying the facilitators, ensuring teachers go to work and solving conflicts. (Source: Education Cluster)"*

*"Community leaders were involved from project design to completion, which led to community acceptance, increased access for NRC and ownership of the project deliverables. Weekly meetings held between the community leaders and organizations implementing activities in Bor, Jonglei State created a forum for community feedback. NRC also held frequent meetings with the IDPs during implementation to create awareness as well as train beneficiaries on shelter construction. As a result of these meetings, NRC and the project received increased acceptance by the community. Involvement of the community in the design of the project helped in its implementation. For the shelter project, beneficiaries were able to help construct their shelters with material assistance from NRC. This was the first time this approach was used since the onset of the conflict and enabled people to own the process of establishing their own shelters. This approach will be adopted in 2015 and beyond where similar humanitarian situations manifest in South Sudan." (Source: NRC report to Sida, 14.04.15)*

Other anecdotal evidence of satisfaction includes beneficiaries dancing after distributions, and observations that no evidence was ever found of the items distributed being sold in local markets.

*"A Complaints Desk was set up where NRC staff together with SSRRA staff dealt with issues raised by beneficiaries. The complaints desk was clearly explained to beneficiaries before the start of the exercise and reported cases were dealt with." (Source: NRC Report on Udiar distribution, November 2014)*

NRC staff did, however, report challenges to accountability when working with others, specifically with WFP, where NRC did not have sole responsibility for quality control. During registration and food distributions, NRC staff learned to be cautious about providing detailed information to beneficiaries as there was a risk of delays in the arrival of the goods and last-minute changes to food parcel contents on WFP's side. When working with the Shelter Cluster, agreements over a 'standard contents' of NFI kits and measures to keep transport costs as low as possible made it difficult for NRC to add any additional items, even when people requested them as they were in great need.

*“NRC is the agency that is accountable in front of the population despite not being fully in control of the Food distributions (timing, location and quantity of parcels). WFP changes the quantity of the ration without explanation or at the last minute. Since NRC is on the front, RRT/mobile teams face this accountability problem. There were some exceptions to our accountability due to WFP not providing enough food or removing items from the kits at the last minute.” (Source: NRC staff member of Food Distribution Team).*

The following reasons were cited by most staff as the main influencers of NRC improvement in accountability:

- Technical capacity of national and international staff in protection, including a “protection focal point” in each RRT/mobile team with responsibility to ensure that the “do not harm” principle is always considered and respected.
- NFI-Shelter team doing their own assessments on the ground, engaging directly with local communities from the onset of the interventions
- RRT/mobile team composition, including international and national staff, usually from the same ethnic group of the affected population, ensuring a more direct and transparent participation of local communities throughout all activities.

Internal factors that hampered accountability efforts in Phase 2 include:

- NRC not having enough logistics capacity, transportation means and stocks to do integrated missions that will ensure the coverage of different needs on the ground (NFI, Shelter, Food, EiE, ICLA, WASH).
- NRC food distribution teams not being involved in assessments and post monitoring evaluation of the food aid component. These activities were carried out directly by WFP teams, and NRC does not have access to the reports, although WFP staff informed NRC that no complaints or problems were reported.

**Given the above, NRC is considered moderately accountable in Phase 2. If documentation had been found to corroborate the anecdotal evidence provided by staff, a largely accountable rating would have been given.**

### PHASE 3 - 1 January to 31 December 2015

It appears that NRC maintained some good accountability practices in Phase 3 of the response.

Some documented evidence exists of thoughtful consultation with IDPs in Nyer and taking into account their preferences and cautions in program design, which is an excellent example of the importance of consultation in a complex, conflict situation.

**On preferred types of assistance to the islands:** “In asking IDPs what could be done to support people on the islands, many highlighted two things: helping people to reach Nyal, and sending food up to the islands to tide the population over until a more sustainable solution could be found. **On preferred mode of delivery:** When asked how, some IDPs (particularly those working with humanitarian organizations) said that sending food in via a helicopter would draw attention to the islands and make them a target. They believed sending food up on canoes would carry much less risk, as it is a less visible intervention and would not draw the attention of soldiers. IDPs highlighted that this approach would be particularly useful on Kok, as it serves as somewhat of a small-scale, informal market island, and could help food to reach the islands that are even more cut off.” (Source: NRC Staff notes on Nyal : August 29<sup>th</sup> 2015)

No documented evidence was provided of IDPs’ involvement in the delivery and monitoring of programmes, or of functioning complaints mechanisms. On the other hand, staff brimmed with anecdotes of good communications with local and traditional leaders before distributions, engagement of IDPs in the distribution process, PDMs routinely carried out after distributions by NRC teams on the ground, copies of distribution reports being provided to local authorities and leaders, and complaints desks being set up (although no evidence was provided about what action NRC took in response to this feedback or complaints).

“WFP does post distribution monitoring, however, it is not done systematically right after the distribution and it is usually completed months after and the report is not always shared.” (Source: NRC Staff member)

### The internal factors that contributed to improved accountability in phase 3 are:

- NRC presence in 2 of the 3 priority states, implementing activities in both government and opposition control areas simultaneously in order to reduce the risk of looting and tensions
- Improvement of M&E protocols, with one M&E coordinator and M& focal points recruited and working on improving “community feedback and complaint mechanisms”
- Enhanced security management with a do not harm, and protection approach as well as conflict sensitivity understanding

According to staff, the main challenges to accountability of distributions continued to be working with WFP and the cluster system. WFP carried out PDMs but did not always share the results with NRC. Also, sometimes NRC was asked by WFP to participate in a registration, but was not then involved in the distribution, and vice versa, and so NRC staff felt only partially accountable for the process.

“WFP does post distribution monitoring, however, it is not done systematically right after the distribution and it is usually completed months after and the report is not always shared. There have been some cases in which WFP has supplied less food or items than what was originally offered, so communities have refused to accept the donation.” (Source: NRC staff member)



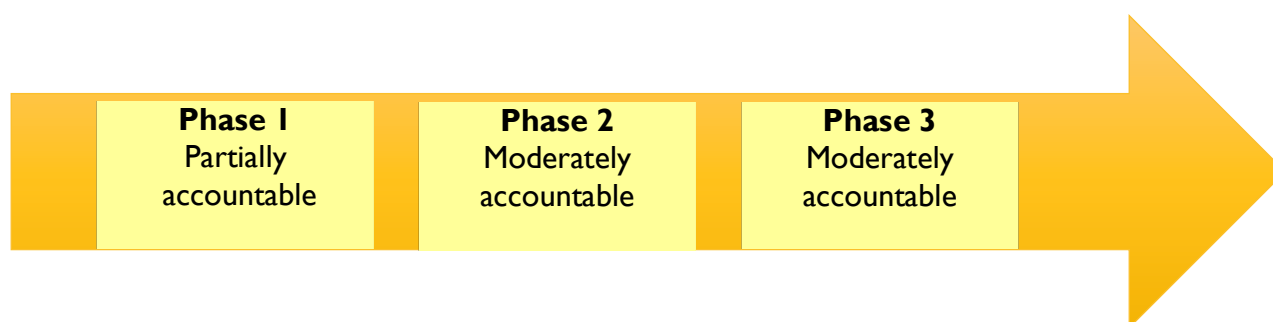
It should also be noted that while mention was made of the humanitarian accountability (HAP) standard in one donor proposal, it were not brought up by NRC staff in interviews. It appears likely that the standard and its benchmarks were not used systematically and possibly were not known to some staff. While good accountability practices do not require the citing of particular standards, as NRC was a HAP member, more proactive usage would have been expected, as would better documentation of efforts.

**Therefore NRC is considered moderately accountable in Phase 3. Due to the lack of documented evidence or use of standards, a higher rating cannot be given.**

### ACCOUNTABILITY TREND

Overall, the trend in NRC's accountability to people and communities affected by the crisis in South Sudan appears to be positive. NRC made efforts to consult the affected populations that were accessible in Phase I, but security severely constrained other aspects of accountability. Step-by-step, however, NRC's information-provision, participation and feedback mechanisms grew stronger, particularly in areas where NRC was able to established a longer-term presence by setting up operational bases and stable teams.

However, despite the many promising practices mentioned by staff, NRC was not able to provide documented procedures, records of actions, or evidence of changes made in response to feedback. On this basis, the evaluation team considers that NRC was, overall, **moderately accountable**.





## 6. Actions taken to improve NRC capacity

*This section seeks to answer the Learning Question: **How have weakness and gaps in the programme and institutional set-up been addressed since the initial response period (December 2013 to December 2015)?***

As of 8<sup>th</sup> May 2016, NRC has taken the following measures to address gaps and issues that affected timeliness:

### Plans and Strategy

A new country strategy was developed in April 2014, which specifically addresses the issues of:

- Operationality in areas of conflict displacement (Jonglei, Upper Nile, Unity State)
- Capacity to respond to humanitarian and emergency needs
- HR structures that permit rapid deployment and quick interventions
- Establishing new, light-foot operational bases if needed
- A programme portfolio reflecting the 5 core competences
- Holistic, sectorally integrated interventions
- Vulnerability reduction and durable solutions

NRC has improved its capacity for context analysis, ensuring a good reading of the current situation in the country as well as likely scenarios for the near future. The most recent strategic context analysis update was carried out in August 2015, however, daily contextual analysis is done as part of the risk management approach.

NRC has a good balance between emergency response operations through the RRT/mobile teams and long term programmes, this approach is required in a context like SS where the needs are a mix between emergency response and early recovery and rehabilitation.

### Preparedness

The South Sudan office has a specific contingency plan document (although it is not clear when this was most recently updated).

At regional level: a Regional emergency response coordinator was hired in September 2015 to strengthen the emergency response capacity of NRC in the region. There have been improvements in how the region should support the logistics aspects of an emergency response at country level; for example, NRC RO has taken steps to ensure COs' use of emergency response guidelines in the logistics handbook, has increased the role of logistics throughout the project cycle, and has hired a regional logistic manager with emergency response experience. A comprehensive regional emergency response plan is still ongoing and will allow a systematic approach to emergency response in Horn of Africa.

However, the regional emergency response position became vacant in December 2015, and NRC RO is seeking an emergency expert to develop protocols, guidelines and training kits, to support staff operating in countries in crisis or at risk of crisis.

### Support Areas: Human Resources and Logistics

NRC carried out a restructuring of the CO operation starting in June 2014 onwards, in order to right-size the organization, clarify roles and responsibilities, recruit staff with emergency response experience and strengthen key areas that have boosted its emergency response capacity in logistics, finance and funding.

RO made a decision in collaboration with HO to replace the leadership in the CO with someone with more leadership experience in emergencies. This shift occurred in May 2014.

NRC's current senior management team is regarded by staff at various levels to be inclusive and effective, generating a more positive dynamic within teams and increased participation of national staff in coordination and management positions.

Currently, NRC has four rapid response teams that are mobile and multidisciplinary and have both international and national staff that are able to reach hard to access areas in the three most affected states. One focuses on NFI-Shelter distributions and the other three specialise in food distribution. These teams can respond in any location at short notice, ensuring NRC's timeliness and relevance. The current composition and size of the RRT/mobile teams is adequate for the types of distributions they carry out, and their skills sets are conducive to designing and implementing effective interventions in NRC's core competence areas. They have the language, cultural and participatory skills to establish good communication, coordination and accountability with local communities and leaders.

NRC SS CO has improved its logistic capacity, supporting RRT/mobile teams to be more effective and timely. There is, however, still ample room for improvement, as described in Section X: Recommendations.

NRC RO has strengthened its programmatic support function by recruiting regional programme core competency advisors. These advisors are responsible for providing technical advice and sharing best practices in their sectors.

### **Coordination**

NRC was very active at HCT and cluster level from the early stages of the crisis. It currently co-leads the WASH, Protection and Food Security Clusters in South Sudan, has deployed a Conflict and Policy Analyst to the Protection Cluster, is contributing to piloting of RRM tools and joint context analysis.

### **M&E**

In 2014, NRC started a global standardization process of M&E, that included setting up of common indicators and standard M&E frameworks, aimed at making M&E more systematic in all its programmes. In addition, country M&E teams have been strengthened. As part of the country restructuring process, every country office now has an M&E coordinator plus M&E officers according to the size and needs of the programmatic portfolio. NRC in SS has now a M&E coordinator who reports to the Head of Programme. It should be noted, however, that the evaluation team did not ask about, or find out how M&E on the ground has changed as a result of this restructuring and hire.

### **Security/Risk Management**

NRC in SS has built a strong security and risk management culture that has been mainstreamed in all the different programmes and areas. A proper risk management structure is in place with clear SoP, plans and a full time security advisor. CMT in SS has been trained, increasing the capacity of NRC SS to operate in a insecure environment and ensure continuity of programmes as well as emergency response operations.

## 7. Conclusions

### TIMELINESS

**From the start of the crisis, to the end of 2015, NRC's response changed from being only partially timely to largely timely.** Its first reaction was swift and appropriate, seizing good opportunities to respond in a timely manner to protection and education in emergencies needs in Juba, but its weak emergency preparedness and security management capacity to operate in a violent and volatile environment led to the decision to evacuate, which slowed it down at exactly the time the more contextually-prepared organizations were starting up their response.

Once its staff returned, NRC was still relatively slow to scale up in response to the evolving crisis beyond Juba. It did not have a long-term presence in the most affected areas on which to build a response, and took too long to reorient its strategy and establish appropriate human resource capacity. It also had to develop sufficient logistical capacity for an emergency response from scratch.

Over time, NRC addressed many of the issues slowing it down. It drew in (as surge capacity from Oslo or Nairobi) or recruited additional staff with emergency response experience, adapted its structure to include RRT/mobile teams, established contextually-appropriate procedures for security management, jump-started its logistics capacity through skills transfer from expert staff deployed from Oslo and Nairobi, and secured the funds and logistical support it needed to deliver aid swiftly. It might have been able to do so even faster if the first ERT had been immediately followed by the second, or if its mission had been extended to allow it to lead and accompany the country team into and through Phase 2.

### RELEVANCE

**The relevance of NRC's programming in South Sudan has improved in every phase, from partially relevant in Phase 1 to largely relevant in Phase 3.**

Initially, NRC's response was small-scale and sectorally-limited in relation to the immense and broad range of needs of the crisis-affected people across the entire country. Gradually, however, NRC became a largely relevant actor that has been able to stay the course of this protracted crisis, adapting to the changing context and needs of the people affected by it. Over time it implemented actions in its five core competences (Education, Information, Counseling and Legal Assistance, Food Security, Shelter and WASH), to increase its relevance to the continuing, wide range of needs.

In terms of coverage, NRC started its response in the easiest-to-access areas – the PoCs in Juba, then moved into the government-controlled areas of Minkaman and Bor and, occasionally, the hard-to-access states, and by Phase 3 was reaching IDPs across the country, wherever needs for food and/or NFI-shelter items were greatest, such as in Upper Nile and Unity states.

Over the two years covered by this evaluation, NRC has become a leading actor in South Sudan in Education in Emergencies, WFP's partner of preference for registration for food distributions, co-lead of the WASH and education clusters, and continuing co-lead of the Protection clusters. Although it is still a work in progress, NRC is working towards integrated programme that corresponds to the multi-sectoral needs in South Sudan.

## EFFECTIVENESS

**Overall, NRC progressed from being a partially-to-moderately effective actor in South Sudan in Phase 1, to being a largely effective one in Phases 2 and 3.** Through the deployment of a specialist ERT and the creation of RRT/mobile teams it achieved access to IDPs in remote, insecure areas. In addition, through adaptation and expansion of its ongoing Education and ICLA activities it managed to meet new objectives relating to IDPs rather than returnees, on whom it was originally focused.

As mentioned above, from Phase 2 onwards NRC began to realize that it could be more effective and relevant if it joined up multiple sectoral interventions the same locations. In Minkaman, for example, NRC implemented WASH, shelter, NFI and education activities in a coordinated manner. However, by the time of the evaluation, it had not managed to incorporate this way of working into the RRT/mobile teams' activities, nor in all 'static' locations. Nevertheless, it is expected that the South Sudan team will continue to seek opportunities to increase sectoral integration, as expressed in its strategy.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

The trend in NRC's accountability to people and communities in South Sudan appears to be positive throughout the 3 phases. NRC made efforts to consult the affected populations that were accessible in Phase I, but security severely constrained other aspects of accountability. Step-by-step, its information-provision, participation and feedback mechanisms grew stronger, particularly in areas where NRC was able to establish a longer-term presence by setting up operational bases and stable teams. According to staff and key externals, NRC demonstrated exemplary practices in engagement of community leaders and members in needs assessments, decisions about targeting and monitoring. However, NRC was not able to provide documented procedures, records of actions, or evidence of changes made in response to feedback for the purpose of this evaluation.

On this basis, the evaluation team considers that NRC was, overall, **moderately accountable**.

## 8. Recommendations

The following recommendations are ordered in response to the learning questions:

- What changes should NRC make to its current programme in South Sudan to improve its relevance, appropriateness, effectiveness, and coverage (especially in hard to reach areas)?
- Based on the South Sudan experience, what else should NRC do at country, regional and head office levels to be better prepared for responding adequately to future emergencies?

### 8.1 What changes should NRC make to its current programme in South Sudan to improve its relevance, effectiveness and coverage (especially in hard to reach areas)?

#### Programme Design

- Explicitly and deliberately aim to integrate multiple sectoral interventions/programmes (WASH, shelter, education, food, ICLA), including through the RRT/mobile teams, as a means to increase relevance, effectiveness and cost effectiveness. Regard multi-sectoral RRT/mobile teams as an entry point and good practice example for integrated programming in new areas. To achieve this will require a number of actions, such as: incorporating integrated programming objectives in staff's performance objectives; developing and using a multi-sectoral logframe or theory of change so that staff can identify their sector's contribution to the greater whole; writing proposals for multi-sectoral programmes, promote and facilitate multi sectoral planning meetings, and leading by example (sharing results of programmes with integrated elements).
- In a tight funding environment, consider phasing out/handing over to local/other NGOs emergency operations in areas where the situation has become more stable (i.e. Minkaman), in order to allocate more resources to the hard-to-reach areas where NRC has developed a capacity to respond and others have not.
- Re-engage with the shelter cluster (national and sub-national levels) to ensure that NRC's actions are coordinated with those of other actors, and to eventually provide leadership in the same way as for other sectors. Engage other clusters members in discussions on appropriate shelter-related actions beyond the distribution of emergency shelter materials and NFIs, such as vouchers for more durable materials and items, and targeting of the most vulnerable households. If necessary, lead/fund a study on future relevant options and share the findings with other shelter actors.
- Be more vocal in support of OCHA's efforts to improve inter cluster coordination and promote multi-sectoral responses. NRC can use its multi sectoral intervention in Minkaman as an example of the complementarity of Shelter, NFIs, WASH and EiE Interventions.
- Reconsider involvement of NRC in HCT as part of the NGO representation role, where the organization can influence key decisions shaping the humanitarian landscape in the country.
- Seek to meet the full range of EiE standards; NRC is doing well in making schools functional, however, there is a need to ensure other key EiE standards, such as WASH facilities (toilets, wash rooms). If NRC cannot do this with its own resources, consider coordinating with other partners that have presence and expertise in these sectors.
- Recruit a sectoral expert to coordinate, scale up and ensure the quality of NRC WASH interventions in South Sudan.
- With Regional programme core competency advisors in place, South Sudan should enlist their support for improved programme quality assurance and delivery.

#### Emergency preparedness

- Consolidate improvements in emergency preparedness by producing, with the involvement of CO, RO and HO staff, a documented and budgeted emergency preparedness plan that includes the items recommended below:
- Contingency planning, based on context analysis and a mapping of geographical locations in South Sudan that are prone to emergencies (conflict, natural hazard, or climate change induced). In 'hotspots' where NRC does not currently have a base or programme, carry out a reconnaissance trip to establish contacts with potential allies, partners, organisations and suppliers, to enable a quick response in future emergencies. A contingency planning schedule should be agreed, detailing when contingency plans should be updated and the process for doing so. In unstable contexts such as that of South Sudan, a quarterly 'check' for relevance of the context analysis and review of supplier details, staff and external contacts etc should be done, as well as ad hoc reviews when the external operating context is changed suddenly or significantly. Prepositioning of a minimum contingency stock (500-1000 hh?) of non-perishable items (including in field locations) that would allow NRC to respond quickly to rapid onset emergencies while larger procurements (if necessary) are carried out. Given the speed with which WFP responded to the crisis, and the effective relationship between NRC and WFP, it is not currently recommended to include food items in NRC's own contingency stocks, although this should also be reviewed periodically based on WFP's capacity and performance.
- Development of complementary SoPs for programme and support areas (HR, Logistics, Finance and funding) and periodic training/refresher sessions for all staff. All SOPs should be based on a categorization of emergencies (by number of people affected, geographic scope, extent of insecurity and other factors) and should include a list of essential steps to be taken within specific timescales, and by whom they should be taken. Investment in capacity building for all South Sudan staff in emergency response and preparedness: leadership (where appropriate), international humanitarian standards, security (see below) and sectoral knowledge and skills, funding in emergencies, etc. This will also help to maintain good morale, 'team spirit', and contribute to retaining staff. NRC should ensure that inductions include basic sessions and materials on the above, and that new staff's needs are immediately incorporated into the capacity building plan.
- Inclusion of preparedness and emergency-related objectives in performance management and Job Descriptions. These should include, at minimum, expectations relating to knowledge and application of emergency SOPs and humanitarian principles and standards. For managers, these should include guaranteeing knowledge and application of SOPs, principles and standards by all the staff they manage.
- Creation of a national roster of people who have worked in the past with NRC or other INGOs, with relevant emergency response experience that is available to support the Country Office in emergency response (fast track recruitment process). Ensure that the HR team with support from technical teams updates it annually (contact details, availability, etc).

## Support areas:

### Logistics

- In addition to continuing to advocate through the cluster system for procurement of relevant items based on field needs assessments (rather than just standard kits) and timely transportation services, NRC South Sudan should increase its internal capacity to be able to manage its own stocks and procurement as a secondary line of supply and reducing its dependence on the UN/Cluster system. This will involve identifying a basic inventory and suppliers list, establishing a basic inventory management system, obtaining storage space, and identifying transport options. As mentioned above, NRC should maintain contingency stocks of basic items and be able to rapidly procure basic stock and additional items as necessary.
- Engage logistics area at the start of all interventions, from the planning/proposal/budgeting stage through to evaluations. Maintain its involvement through regular updates/meetings. This should be reflected in the SOPs for managers, logistics and other relevant areas.

- Systematically allocate and replenish resources for contingency stocks, procurement and transportation of materials to start operations on the ground, while waiting for institutional funds and/or cluster support to come. This may be feasible either through a specific donor with an interest in emergency preparedness, or by allocating a proportion of every grant/donor contract to 'contingency planning' or 'emergency logistics'. If well argued in proposals and accounted for in reports, this may also contribute to strengthening NRC's profile as a rapid emergency responder.
- Enlist the support of a regional/global Logistics Expert Advisor to adapt NRC global logistic policies and protocols (i.e. procurement) for the South Sudan context without compromising internal and donor compliance issues and international standards.

## M&E

- Develop an overarching Theory of Change or Logframe for the South Sudan programme, with a suite of indicators selected by programming teams that are used as relevant in donor proposals. Ensure all programme staff understand that accountability to beneficiaries requires documentation and systems that enable a third party to verify how beneficiaries were informed, consulted, involved in programme delivery, and supported in the case of complaints. Brainstorm appropriate methods in the South Sudan context and pilot some to establish what works best. Include accountability in performance objectives to ensure it is valued and discussed between employees and managers.
- M&E specialists and programme teams should identify a range of M&E tools and methods suited to the operational context, staff capacity and the indicators selected for the programme. An M&E plan should then be put in place, to establish a schedule and responsibilities for data collection and analysis. Issues emerging from monitoring should be a standard item in sectoral, area and programme team meetings.
- Step up M&E training for all staff, particularly programme and area managers. Gaps identified during the evaluation include real-time beneficiary tracking (not just post-project reporting), gender analysis (more than just disaggregating data), and documenting communications with beneficiaries (FGDs, interviews, etc)
- Ensure SoPs are developed for M&E as well as programming sectors and support functions.

## Funding

- As mentioned above, NRC should consider introducing a standard % allocation of all programmes in South Sudan to contingency planning and stocks for use in emergency response when the situation requires. At minimum, this should be introduced in annual Sida and MFA funding proposals.
- Ensure that country managers know how to rapidly access and activate internal 'free' funds for programme start-up. This step should be included in the South Sudan contingency plan and SOPs.

## Human resources

- Improve staff welfare policy, especially for staff working in the RRT/mobile teams, ensuring psychosocial counseling, team building exercises and R&R protocols adapted to their ways of working and extreme hardship conditions.
- Create a humanitarian coordinator position within the Country Management structure, responsible for preparedness and quality of response, and as a step-in manager when necessary.
- Introduce requirements for emergency response experience in the JDs of all staff. In volatile countries such as SS, senior managers need to have significant (10+ years) emergency experience.
- As mentioned above, introduce requirements for knowledge and application of emergency procedures, principles and standards in performance management systems of countries in or prone to crises.



- Ensure all staff have participated in an assessment of their emergency response capacities and their needs are reflected in the capacity development plan (mentioned under Emergency Preparedness)
- Develop a national roster of staff for scaling up emergency response, (mentioned under Emergency Preparedness)

### Security/Risk management

- Hold a security-focused learning event to capitalize on NRC RRT/mobile teams' accumulated experience and knowledge in responding in hard-to-reach areas. Use the learning to update protocols, guidelines etc, and to inform other countries of the advantages and challenges of RRT/mobile teams.
- In 2014 there was a training on crisis management for the CMT in Juba. Refresher trainings on security should be carried out for all staff at least every two years while the context remains insecure, and/or when significant recruitment/staff turnover takes place. A specific session on crisis management for CMT members should be included.
- Include security drills and reviews of any security incidents in team meetings, with virtual participation of the Regional Security Advisor where feasible.

**Based on the South Sudan experience, what else should NRC do at country, regional and head office levels to be better prepared for responding adequately to future emergencies?**

### Preparedness and response

- Ensure emergency experience is appropriately weighted and verified during recruitment processes for countries prone to or experiencing humanitarian crises.
- As above, for security management
- Clarify that while country level contingency planning is the responsibility of the CD and country office, there need to be clear allocations of responsibility for contingency planning to senior manager in HO and ROs, to ensure that all levels are in agreement with the contingency plan.
- Include contingency planning in performance management processes for all managers.
- Guarantee allocations of funding for emergency preparedness planning and emergency capacity building at all levels in annual budgeting process.
- Approach donors with global framework agreements with NRC about allocating a small % of funding for contingency stocks and other emergency preparedness measures.
- Include an 'immediate deployment for X weeks to emergency responses' clause in regional managers' and advisors' contracts to enable countries to request/receive hands-on support for rapid response and scale-up in all programmatic and support areas.
- Ensure that Global ERTs in collaboration with Regional teams support capacity building activities at CO level. ERT and surge roster staff ToR should include "on the job" capacity building for some international and national staff at country level, through observation, participation/shadowing and other ways that do not delay the ERT's response activities. This will also prevent 'parallel working' between COs and ERTs, and will improve CO ownership of the response activities.
- The ToR of ERT's should always include exit arrangements and transition of responsibilities including a verbal and documented handover. Their achievements and overall performance should be analysed accordingly.
- Promote experience and knowledge sharing in emergency response between COs by always including 'peer learning' sessions in regional/global events and planning meetings. For example, South Sudan RRT/mobile teams' experiences should be shared with other NRC teams in the region through regional workshops, the new learning platform, and "on the job training", and the experience should be documented for future reference/replication.



- Ensure managers and sectoral leads participate in national and sub-national humanitarian fora, for general coordination purposes and so that contacts and relationships are established ahead of crises.

## **Support areas:**

### **HR**

- Set up and maintain a simple Regional Emergency Response Roster for the Horn of Africa, consisting of NRC international and national staff from the RO and COs with relevant emergency response experience and able to be timely deployed to any country in the region to support both preparedness and response activities (a regional version of the Global Surge Roster)
- Include relevant emergency preparedness and response objectives in the performance objectives of staff at all levels. These may refer, for example, to leading contingency planning exercises, training in humanitarian standards, or participating in assessments.
- Ensure that all support areas (logistics, HR, finance) in the RO and CO have staff with emergency response experience and their teams are able to support and/or deploy staff to emergencies while ensuring the continuity of services to the rest of the programmes or countries in the region.

### **Security/Risk management**

- Establish a mandatory requirement for a Security advisor position in the CO structures in high risk contexts.
- Introduce a requirement to have/update training in security and crisis management for all staff in insecure contexts. NRC may wish to consider RedR courses as a complement to internal arrangements.
- Establish security risks indicators that are adapted to each context and location, and ensure continuous analysis. NRC may wish to replicate the UN security levels or establish its own ones. This will enable NRC to objectively analyse the need for evacuation, hibernation, restricted movement, etc.
- Crisis management structures at all levels should be trained, drilled and periodically evaluated.

### **Logistics**

- Permit adaptation of logistics policies and protocols to each country context (subject to approval of central Logistics Unit), without compromising key global compliance issues and standards. For example, adapt the supply and procurement policies to ensure local level access of goods and services.

### **M&E**

- Introduce a requirement/guideline to carry out real time evaluations, within the first 6-8 weeks of any start of response, to enable teams to correct problems and make improvements during responses rather than after multi-year evaluations. In the case of South Sudan, an RTE in March 2014 could have highlighted capacity and quality issues (such as the need for stronger logistics support, or that beneficiary tracking was not systematic) in the early stages of this crisis and thus generated agreements between CO, RO and HO on how to resolve them. Suitable evaluators with experience of NRC may be found on NRC's global roster.
- Introduce a requirement/guideline to carry out regular learning reviews, either at a specific time in the NRC programming/funding cycle or at the end of programmes/projects. To encourage frank discussions that are conducive to learning, these should be facilitated by a member of staff from another level, or a roster member, or an external facilitator who has not been responsible for programming decisions.
- Introduce requirements for producing and storing key M&E-related documentation. This will help greatly facilitate after-action reviews, evaluations, handovers, case studies and learning exercises.
- Develop guidelines and tools for M&E and accountability mechanisms in hard-to-reach areas.

**ANNEX I: List of people interviewed and of participants in focus group discussions**

<b>INTERVIEWS</b>		
Kennedy Mabonga	Nairobi	Regional Programme Director. Former CD South Sudan (from Sept 2013 - May 2014)
Gabriella Waaijman	Nairobi	RD, former deputy RD
Jeff Ohanga	Nairobi	Regional Security Adviser
Ulrika Bloom	Nairobi	Former interim CD South Sudan (May 2014 - May 2015)
Abdirahman Jama	Nairobi	Regional Finance Director
Christine Omundi	Nairobi	Former Controller South Sudan
Zarha Abdi	Nairobi	Regional Logistics Manager
Robert Inzikoa	Nairobi	Regional Human Resource Adviser
Karoline Røsholm	Nairobi	Program Adviser for South Sudan
Mohammed Biely	Nairobi	Regional M&E Manager
Zoran Filipovic	Skype	Logistics specialist ERT team deployed in South Sudan Jan-Feb 2014 and April-Aug 2014
Mads Almaas	Oslo	Head of ERT
Tony Marchant	Oslo	Former regional programme adviser, current PA for Emergency Response Section
Chris Allen	Oslo	Global security adviser
Victor Moses	Juba	Country Director South Sudan
Reginold Patterson	Juba	Security Adviser, South Sudan
Loic Peltier	Juba	Logistics Manager, South Sudan
Gabriel Chacha	Juba	Finance Manager, South Sudan
Bouthaina Toujani	Skype	Roving Area Manager/RRM, South Sudan
Caelin Briggs	Juba	Protection and Advocacy Adviser (PAA) /Protection Cluster Co-Lead
Melody Knight	Juba	Conflict and Policy Analyst
Carina Vedvik Hansen	Juba	Former PA South Sudan, and current PD SS
Justus Kikuvu	Juba	Shelter Team Leader for RRM, South Sudan
Protection Cluster	Juba	
WASH Cluster	Juba	
Shelter Cluster	Juba	
Education Cluster	Juba	
Melody Knight	Juba	
WFP	Juba	
Mary Karanja	Juba	Food security Specialist for SS
Dorcas Keya	Juba	Nutritionist for WFP RRM team
<b>FGDs</b>		
H. Furuguta + team	Juba	WFP RRM Team Leader + team
Fadzai + team	Juba	WFP RRM Team Leader + team
Clemensia + team	Juba	WFP RRM team leader + team
Gabriel Sostein	Juba	ICLA
David Lemeriga	Juba	Education
Support team	Juba	Support group

**ANNEX 2: Topical outline for key informant interviews****INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – MASTER DOCUMENT – V2**

Name:

Role/Position at time of escalation of violence and roles since then:

Date:

**I. TIMELINESS**EQ: To what extent was NRC's response **timely**? What were the key contributing factors (internal and external), including preparedness, and how did they impact the timeliness of the response?**How would you describe NRC's response to the humanitarian needs created by the December violence? Largely timely/moderately timely / partially timely /not very timely?***Prompts for timing:*

- During the first year of the intervention (December 13 to December 14)
- During the second year of the intervention (January 15 to December 15)

**Can you explain your view?***Prompts for the judgement criteria:*

- initial humanitarian response and scale up in relation to evolution of crisis
- adaptation of the response in relation to the evolution of the crisis
- NRC's humanitarian response in relation to responses of other actors

**Were there locations where NRC's response was more timely?.....and others where it was less timely? If so, which ones? Please explain, so I can better understand your perspective.****What influenced timeliness internally? And how did NCR respond to/manage these factors?****What influenced timeliness externally? And how did NCR respond to/manage these factors?****2. RELEVANCE**EQ: To what extent was NRC's response **relevant**? What were the key contributing factors (internal and external), including preparedness, and how did they impact the relevance of the response?**How would you describe NRC's response to unmet needs created by the December violence? Largely relevant/moderately relevant / partially relevant /not very relevant***Prompts for timing:*

- During the first year of the intervention (December 13 to December 14)
- During the second year of the intervention (January 15 to December 15)

**Can you explain your view?****Would you say that the humanitarian response activities targeted the most vulnerable of the affected population? Yes/in part/no/not sure***Prompts for timing:*

- During the first year of the intervention (December 13 to December 14)
- During the second year of the intervention (January 15 to December 15)

**What leads you to say that?**

*Prompts for the judgment criteria:*

- Scale/coverage of NRC's response in relation to unmet needs
- Type (sectors/activities) of NRC's response in relation to unmet needs
- Prioritization of needs of the most vulnerable people

**What influenced relevance internally? And how did NRC respond to/manage these factors?**

**What influenced relevance externally? And how did NRC respond to/manage these factors?**

### 3. EFFECTIVENESS

*Key Question:*

EQ: To what extent was NRC's response **effective**? What were the key contributing factors (internal and external), including preparedness, and how did they impact the effectiveness of the response?

**NRC's objectives in the emergency response were to (add here)**

- A
- B
- C
- D

**What internal factors influenced the extent to which NRC was able to meet them? And how did NCR respond to/manage these factors?**

**What external factors influenced the extent to which NRC was able to meet them? And how did NCR respond to/manage these factors?**

*Prompts for timing:*

- During the first year of the intervention (December 13 to December 14)
- During the second year of the intervention (January 15 to December 15)

### 4. ACCOUNTABILITY

EQ: To what extent was NRC's response **accountable**? What were the key contributing factors (internal and external), including preparedness, and how did they impact the accountability of the response?

*Prompts for timing:*

- During the first year of the intervention (December 13 to December 14)
- During the second year of the intervention (January 15 to December 15)

**How well were people in all locations consulted on the emergency response? Very well/moderately well/partially/not at all? What evidence can you share that makes you hold that view?**

**How regularly did we consult them?**

**Who exactly were consulted?** (listen for mention of women, men, vulnerable groups, different age groups etc)

**How were they consulted?**

**How well were people in all locations adequately informed of NRC's plans? Very well/moderately well/partially/not at all? What evidence can you share that makes you hold that view?**

**To what extent do you think people were satisfied with NRC response?**

**Largely satisfied/moderately satisfied/partially/not at all?**

**Please explain how you know.** (listen for evidence of feedback and complaints mechanism as well as evidence of how those complaints were addressed)

**What are the key factors (internal and/or external) that influenced the accountability of NRC response?**

**Give examples**

## 5. PREPAREDNESS

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RELATED TO ALL EQs: Thinking back to before the crisis, how well prepared was NRC to address a crisis of these proportions?

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**What preparedness measures were in place that contributed positively to NRC's response ?**

*Prompts:*

- *NRC preparedness measures in place prior, during and after to crisis*

**Can you explain how each of those you mentioned influenced the response?**

**What was missing, if anything? And what was the impact of that on the response?**

**What internal factors influenced NRCs preparedness? And how did NRC respond to/manage these factors?**

**In what ways, and to what extent is NRC now better prepared to be a relevant, effective and accountable responder? Give examples.**

## 6. COORDINATION

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RELATED TO ALL EQs: What efforts were made to coordinate (internally and externally), and what effect this these have on the response?

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*Prompts:*

- *Internal (NRC HO, CO and RO) and External*

**What happened in terms of internal coordination that contributed positively to NRC's response? Please describe the influence it had?**

**What was missing, or could have been done better, if anything? And what was the impact of that on the response?**

**What happened in terms of external coordination that contributed positively to NRC's response? Please describe the influence it had?**

**What was missing, or could have been done better, if anything? And what was the impact of that on the response?**

## **7. KEY LEARNING**

**How have weakness and gaps in the programme and institutional set-up been addressed since the initial response period (December 2013 to June 2014)?**

**What changes should NRC make to its current programme in South Sudan to improve its relevance, appropriateness, effectiveness, and coverage (especially in hard to reach areas)?**

**Based on the South Sudan experience, what else should NRC do at country, regional and head office levels to be better prepared for responding adequately to future emergencies?**

**What would be the 3 most important lessons from this response, in your opinion?**

## ANNEX 3: Scoring of response attributes by Key Informants

		1st phase: December 2013 to March 2014			
		Largely	Moderately	Partially	Not very
<b>Greatest</b>					
<b>TIMELINESS</b>					
	Internal	3	3	8	5
	External	1	1	1	
<b>RELEVANCE</b>					
	Internal	6	5	12	
	External	1		2	1
<b>EFFECTIVENESS</b>					
	Internal	6	2	3	6
	External	1		2	
<b>ACCOUNTABILITY</b>					
	Internal	6	5	3	
	External	1		1	
		2nd phase: March to December 2014			
		Largely	Moderately	Partially	Not very
<b>TIMELINESS</b>					
	Internal	4	7	5	
	External	2	2		
<b>RELEVANCE</b>					
	Internal	9	10	2	
	External	3	1	1	
<b>EFFECTIVENESS</b>					
	Internal	7	10	4	
	External	2	3	1	
<b>ACCOUNTABILITY</b>					
	Internal	9	4		
	External	3	2		
		3rd phase: January to December 2015			
		Largely	Moderately	Partially	Not very
<b>TIMELINESS</b>					
	Internal	7	5	2	
	External	2	2		
<b>RELEVANCE</b>					
	Internal	11	2		
	External	4	1		
<b>EFFECTIVENESS</b>					
	Internal	8	5	1	
	External	3	1	2	
<b>ACCOUNTABILITY</b>					
	Internal	10	2		
	External	4	2	1	

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