Evaluation of the OCHA and UNOCHA

Response and Coordination Services

During the Emergency in Afghanistan

July 2001 to July 2002

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A report commissioned by the Evaluation and Studies Unit of OCHA

by

Carrol Faubert
Laurie Clifford
Humayun Hamidzada
Colin Reynolds   **November 2002**

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Background

On the eve of 11 September 2001, very few people – if any – could foresee the dramatic changes that terrorist attacks thousands of kilometers away would bring to Afghanistan. After more than twenty-two years of internal conflict, six years of a debilitating regime and a long period of international neglect, the country was suddenly propelled to the forefront of the international agenda.

The humanitarian workers who had been struggling to keep the international community committed to alleviating the fate of millions of displaced and vulnerable Afghans had to adapt to this new phase, continuing to provide relief in the midst of a military operation and contributing to shaping up a new, more integrated form of United Nations (UN) presence. For the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (UNOCHA), the long-established UN coordination service for Afghanistan, and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) as the global UN humanitarian coordination office, this was a period of intense activity and, at times, frustrating confusion.

One year into this new phase of the Afghan crisis, the Evaluation and Studies Unit (ESU) of the OCHA commissioned an external evaluation to look at the response and coordination services provided by both OCHA and UNOCHA in support of humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan during the critical phase going from July 2001 to July 2002. The period covers the full span of the transition that the humanitarian structure of the United Nations went through in Afghanistan: from the final weeks of a protracted humanitarian situation up to the phasing out of UNOCHA and the assumption by a new integrated United Mission of the responsibility for the coordination of international assistance.

Overall Assessment

The evaluation team examined the timeliness, appropriateness, effectiveness and impact of OCHA and UNOCHA's contribution to the mobilization, coordination and facilitation of humanitarian assistance for Afghanistan in the period of July 2001 to July 2002. The period was marked by rapid and profound changes for Afghanistan and, as a result, important successive modifications of the operational environment for the humanitarian community. The UN itself went through a major re-definition of its role and of the nature and structure of its presence in the country. In the process, UNOCHA ceased to exist as a UN body and OCHA had to re-define its role in support of a new UN mission, a task still not completed.

In such a changing environment, there cannot be a simple, linear assessment of the performance of OCHA and UNOCHA and the impact of their action. The overall picture that emerges is one of a relatively strong and active humanitarian coordination structure that, on the eve of the tragic events of September 2001, was well equipped to face the emerging challenges. The capacity of both OCHA and UNOCHA to provide effective leadership was gradually eroded, however, during the excessively long transition period leading to the establishment of the new United Nations Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) coordination structure. OCHA still has to define fully its role vis-à-vis the new UN humanitarian coordination structure in Afghanistan. More generally and in the light of its unique mandate related to humanitarian affairs, OCHA needs to assess the consequences of the emerging concept of «integrated» UN missions on the principles of humanity, neutrality and

impartiality that should guide humanitarian action. OCHA also must take concrete steps to provide more effective support to its field staff if it genuinely wants to become an effective field-oriented humanitarian coordination service.

Conclusions, recommendations and lessons identified

1. UNOCHA prior to 11 September 2001

Despite some shortcomings and the difficulties of working in Afghanistan during the Taliban period, UNOCHA, under the direction of the UN Coordinator for Afghanistan, provided coherent and effective leadership to the humanitarian community. The coordination structure suffered from unresolved tensions between the two distinct structures corresponding to the assistance and political functions deriving from the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan, as well as from tensions between the humanitarian and the development components of the Office of the UN Coordinator for Afghanistan. It remains that, on the eve of 11 September 2001, the United Nations could rely on a competent, efficient and active humanitarian coordination service to meet the challenges of the new crisis.

2. Developing a humanitarian response post-11 September

The strength of the coordination structure that already existed prior to 11 September 2001 greatly helped OCHA and UNOCHA in their task of orchestrating the successful response to the initial phase of the new emergency, particularly during the military campaign by the Coalition. OCHA and UNOCHA, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and a number of agencies also developed contingency plans, programmes and appeals in a timely manner. The quality of that planning, however, suffered from the haste in which projects and programmes had to be put together with the result that less than optimum attention was given to defining strategies.

This initial phase, however, already signaled the erosion of the role and authority of the coordination mechanisms put in place prior to 11 September. In the field, a compact Crisis Management Group helped maintain some coherence within the UN around the Coordinator, but the need for operational agencies to increase their visibility with the media and donors meant increased competition and rivalry. In addition, the role and authority of the existing assistance coordination structures suffered from uncertainties and speculations regarding the future shape of the UN presence in Afghanistan and the future of the humanitarian and human rights functions as part of the new structure.

This last point gives rise to a fundamental debate about the desirability of integrating fully the humanitarian and political efforts of the UN. Views diverge on the issue but there is general agreement within the humanitarian community that vigilance is required to ensure that, for the humanitarian community and in the interest of victims, integration does not turn into subordination. OCHA cannot be absent from the debate. OCHA is mandated to preserve the fundamental principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian action and has a duty to ensure this is done in all situations.

The development of "humanitarian" programs and activities by the military have been particularly intensive during the military campaign in Afghanistan. OCHA has successfully managed to build an *ad hoc* UN consensus on some of the related issues but there is still a

need for a comprehensive analysis of this new relationship and for developing common overall guidelines for the humanitarian community.

Finally, the intensity of the Afghan crisis and its highly political context have meant that established internal structures at OCHA headquarters (HQ) could not function as anticipated. As a result, there was confusion about lines of authority within OCHA and about the division of responsibilities between the New York and Geneva parts of OCHA headquarters. OCHA's own management of the situation was weakened by the failure to recognize this reality and issue new management instructions.

At headquarters as in the field, the intensity of the crisis also required that coordination structures, including new ones such as the Integrated Mission Task Force (IMTF), should maintain a balance between the wish to encourage the broadest possible participation and the need to achieve operational and managerial efficiency. Informal but more compact forums often had to be created in the interest of efficiency.

Recommendations:

(1) OCHA should take the lead in developing guidelines meant to ensure that basic principles of humanitarian action are upheld systematically, including in UN Missions where humanitarian assistance is closely associated with political objectives. Such guidelines should include mechanisms to monitor respect of norms, standards and principles of humanitarian assistance in all operations.

(2) Recent developments regarding the humanitarian dimension of military strategy have long-term implications for the humanitarian community. This emerging military doctrine should be analyzed further through an OCHA-led exercise designed to develop a policy framework and revised operational guidelines for adoption by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC).

(3) For each major operation, a single senior OCHA manager must be given a clear lead role with full authority delegated by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC).

Lessons:
- Existing structures and definitions of responsibility and accountability do not necessarily correspond to the requirements of particular large-scale emergencies. When there is a need to modify a management approach originally designed for « quieter » emergencies, this should be done rapidly and in a fully transparent manner.

- Coordination mechanisms established under normal operational circumstances tend to favor a broad participation and an information-sharing approach. In times of crisis, coordination mechanisms with a strictly limited participation are more effective as long as pressure for enlargement can be resisted.

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3. Operational coordination and services

OCHA and UNOCHA, during the pre-11 September period, had developed an impressive range of services that were considered of value by many in the humanitarian community. In addition to the numerous coordination forums created around the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan and the Principled Common Programming, UNOCHA had developed an extensive set of information documents ranging from detailed Weekly Updates on the humanitarian situation to basic briefing kits for newcomers and visitors as well as thematic papers on various issues of concern to the aid community. UNOCHA also ran the flight operations service that facilitated access to all UN staff as well as personnel of non-UN organizations and donors, and developed its field offices as "service centers" for the humanitarian community.

During the initial phase of the crisis and in the transition period leading to the establishment of the new UN mission, some important positive aspects of the previous UN coordination services were neglected or lost. Such was the case for the concept of allowing UN field offices to operate as "service centers" for the whole humanitarian community. That concept later fell victim to restrictive interpretations of financial rules.

Another lost opportunity occurred as a result of the incapacity of UNOCHA to maintain the same level and intensity of relationships with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) after the 11th of September. At the global level, it does not seem that OCHA is promoting sufficiently its role as a coordinating structure for the whole humanitarian community, particularly NGOs, rather than only for the UN. There is a need for OCHA to undertake a review of its capacity to further develop this essential partnership with NGOs.

The Immediate and Transitional Assistance Programme for Afghanistan (ITAP) had to be prepared in a rush and did not meet the expectation of a comprehensive strategic plan and program. The approach, however, emphasized an increased linkage between relief and development, a notion welcomed by many agencies and donors.

Gender sensitive approaches are needed in all areas but they are particularly important with regard to planning processes. Despite the issue of gender equality being highlighted in several documents, including the report of the Secretary-General that defined the mission of the UN in Afghanistan, the theme does not seem to have permeated the programs presented through ITAP.

The new situation that resulted from the events of 11 September put considerable strain on the UN Coordinator's Public Information Section. OCHA could eventually help identify additional resources to support the function but this was staff with little prior experience of humanitarian issues in Afghanistan. Obviously, if OCHA wants to do public information in the future and play a coordination role among specialized PI staff of agencies, it needs a larger number of professional staff of its own.

The Afghan Information Management Service (AIMS) provided useful services, particularly with regard to map-based products. In fact, these generic, map-based products were so highly sought after that they overtaxed the capacity of the service. As a result, criticisms of AIMS often took the form of a perceived inability to meet more specialized demands. In general, information management activities would benefit from additional efforts to develop standard

terms of reference (the Humanitarian Information Centers) or standard formats (the Situation Reports [SITREPs]).

Recommendations:

(4) OCHA should review its current policies and structures with a view to strengthening partnership with NGOs and ensuring that they can participate effectively in the response to humanitarian crises. This should be done in cooperation with NGOs and Governments and be based upon an analysis of appropriate practices.

(5) OCHA should clearly define the role of future Humanitarian Information Centers and maintain their dominant focus on production of quality outputs which directly support key humanitarian tasks. It should develop standard terms of reference and disseminate them widely so as to defuse unrealistic expectations. Appropriate linkages with other information sharing mechanisms should be encouraged to improve the quality of information services.

(6) OCHA should develop a standard SITREP format based on a survey of users' needs and expectations both inside and outside the institution itself. This should be accompanied by guidelines for compilation and distribution. The format should recognize the need for a two-way information flow between field offices and headquarters.

(7) OCHA should ensure that Public Information Officers with relevant experience in humanitarian emergencies systematically form part of emergency standby teams for deployment under the "surge capacity."

Lessons:
- UN field offices adopting the concept of «humanitarian service centers» provide more effective coordination and leadership to the entire humanitarian community. Costs related to allowing the use of UN equipment by other members of the humanitarian community should continue to be considered as legitimate charges to the coordination budget.

- Technical resources for gender equality have to be built into planning processes and strategy development from the beginning, including through timely deployment from headquarters. With adequate technical and financial support and proper institutional commitment to gender equality, appeals can better reflect actual needs and avoid marginalization of women.

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4. <u>Managing the transition</u>

The failure to make timely decisions regarding the appointment of a new Deputy-SRSG and his confirmation as Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) as well as the slow and often unadapted administrative support during the transition period have resulted in inordinate delays that, in turn, have contributed to a gradual erosion of the old coordination structures without a workable alternative being in place for several months. This has weakened the concept of

humanitarian coordination within the UN and requires action on the part of OCHA in preparation for future missions. It has been noted, in addition, that OCHA has not yet defined formally its role and responsibility as the UN central humanitarian coordination service vis-à-vis the new humanitarian coordination structure of UNAMA.

The winding down of UNOCHA, particularly in terms of staff and financial matters showed weaknesses that may result partly from the absence or lack of sufficient dedicated human resources and administrative capacity within OCHA itself. Pakistan-based national staff of UNOCHA, in particular, would have benefited from greater clarity regarding the planning for phasing out UNOCHA.

Recommendations:

(8) OCHA should develop a "fast track" mechanism for the appointment of Humanitarian Coordinators that either restricts severe delays that can be caused by the IASC procedure or gives the ERC executive authority to appoint a Humanitarian Coordinator in specific circumstances.

(9) OCHA should commission a final financial audit of UNOCHA and ensure that outstanding equipment and assets are transferred or sold in accordance with financial rules.

Lesson:
- Timely exit strategies, including phasing out plans should be established well in advance of existing coordination structures being abolished or merged into new structures. Plans should address the needs of existing staff with maximum flexibility with regards to rules and contractual status. They should also foresee the transfer of equipment and assets as well as a thorough audit of the winding down service.

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5.   Promoting gender equality

The absence of a very explicit and visible commitment to gender mainstreaming by OCHA at all levels limits the capacity of the UN to foster an adequate integration of gender considerations in humanitarian strategies and plans. There is a clear gap in terms of policies and implementation, and a role for stronger coordinated action for gender equality in humanitarian assistance operations as well as a role to monitor and track financial commitments and activities. OCHA is well positioned to fill this gap, and to bring the humanitarian assistance community forward on these issues; to ensure that gender equality is placed and maintained on the agenda and integrated into all advocacy initiatives. For this to occur, however, OCHA will require additional resources (both human and financial) and will need to invest in professional development of staff within this sector. OCHA's efforts to secure the necessary additional resources from donors would benefit from the elaboration of a clear and comprehensive strategy and plan on gender issues.

Recommendations:

(10)   OCHA should develop a comprehensive gender equality strategy and action plan that should include:

i) **a review of all core functions of OCHA with a view to adopting specific objectives and concrete plans in each sector of activity;**

ii) **a review of human resources policies and practices, including the training of staff at headquarters and in the field;**

iii) **the creation of fully dedicated senior posts of gender advisors;**

iv) **the establishment of an appropriate field structure to support the objective in larger operations.**

(11)   OCHA should take the lead in promoting the development of country specific gender strategies in countries with important humanitarian activities. The development of such strategies should be undertaken with full participation of the broader humanitarian community, including NGOs and women's groups.

6.   <u>Management: serving field operations</u>

The crisis that hit Afghanistan starting on 11 September 2001 was the first major humanitarian situation in which the management principles and precepts deriving from OCHA's Change Management Process were actually tested. It is clear in retrospect that OCHA and UNOCHA staff would have benefited from a more conscious and transparent effort to develop better communication between management and staff and to document events and major decisions more thoroughly. The institutional objectives of OCHA were not clearly defined and disseminated, for example through a "mission statement," and there was confusion with regard to internal responsibility and accountability for the operation.

Coordination techniques such as the New York Afghanistan Task Force and the intensive use of teleconferencing proved useful for internal information sharing and coherence. The evaluation team noted, however, a generalized absence of readily accessible internal information and documentation even on major events and decisions affecting humanitarian action during the very intense period under review. There is a need for measures to ensure that institutional memory is better preserved for the benefit of future operations or of research.

OCHA generally provided support to the field operation through the deployment of its own staff in an emergency mode (the "surge capacity") in an efficient and timely manner. External recruitment, however, suffered delays that indicate a fundamental weakness of the institution in managing human resources.

National staff performed well in Afghanistan during the more than two months of evacuation of their international colleagues. They played an essential role in ensuring that the UN could continue to provide assistance, even during the bombing campaign. But a number of measures could have been taken to prepare national staff better for such situations and provide them – and their international colleagues – with support in dealing with possible trauma resulting from highly stressful situations. Additional clarity is also required regarding the conditions under which international staff is evacuated or allowed to return.

The most striking management weakness, however, remains OCHA's incapacity to provide its staff with conditions of service and a working and living environment that would compare to those available to most other humanitarian workers. OCHA's capacity to provide leadership and coordination would be greatly improved if it was capable of always attracting staff of the highest caliber and, most importantly, retaining them. The human resources and the

administrative and financial systems under which OCHA operates are woefully incompatible with the ambition of becoming a field-oriented humanitarian coordination service.

There is ample evidence that the senior management of OCHA has tried over the years to address this issue from within the UN Secretariat system. It has not been successful. Perhaps other methods are now required. A number of Governments are strongly committed to supporting the concept and practice of effective humanitarian coordination in the UN. Their voice in appropriate legislative bodies of the United Nations could certainly strengthen the case of a more efficient and field-oriented coordination service.

Recommendations:

(12)   OCHA should make available stress counseling adapted to both national and international staff whenever justified by the nature of the operation. Related costs should be considered as a legitimate budget item for the coordination function.

(13)   OCHA should issue precise instructions related to planning for safety (including possible relocation), roles, and responsibilities of national staff as well as the overall organization of the UN humanitarian presence during periods of evacuation of international personnel. That requirement should be considered as standard for all contingency and security plans. National staff should be associated more closely to management processes, including contingency and security planning. OCHA must ensure that all staff receive appropriate security training.

(14)   OCHA should develop situation-specific mission statements when engaging in new emergencies or in totally new phases of ongoing operations. Mission statements and other important policy documents should be shared with staff at all levels and revised as required.

(15)   OCHA should systematically assign a staff member to perform the function of « historian » in large-scale emergencies and crises. The function should service the entire humanitarian community.

(16)   OCHA should develop a standard briefing/induction kit systematically provided to staff assigned to emergency situations and containing general information on coordination functions and humanitarian work, including codes of conduct. Situation specific information should be prepared for all new emergencies. It should be mandatory for all new recruits to undergo an orientation/briefing session, which should incorporate a section on issues related to cultural awareness and gender equality.

(17)   OCHA, in close coordination with Governments supporting humanitarian coordination and determined to act in the appropriate fora, should:
i) support its emergency deployment of staff with appropriate and timely administrative backup personnel, including personnel dedicated solely to assisting operational staff in establishing adequate working and living conditions;
ii) review emergency/disaster-specific procedures and administrative frameworks with the aim of implementing changes, which maximize speed and flexibility in relief delivery, including increased delegation of authority to appropriate field personnel;

iii) **develop staff as well as financial and administrative rules and procedures that would enable it to become a field-oriented UN department providing its staff with conditions of work and service at par with major operational agencies of the system.**

Lessons:

- Decisions on evacuation and return of international UN staff should be area-specific rather than country-wide. The UN should recognize the usefulness of a more systematic sharing of information with NGOs on security issues.

- Recognizing that staff responsible for coordination at field level must display aptitudes of leadership, knowledge of humanitarian action and of the UN system as well solid experience of field operations, cultural sensitivity and language ability, OCHA's recruitment procedure should aim at ensuring the highest quality of staff upon recruitment or secondment. The capacity of OCHA to attract and retain highly competent staff should also rest on a culture of effective support for the creation of appropriate working and living conditions.

Introduction

Background

1.   In its Weekly Update of 12 September 2001, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (UNOCHA) announced that all international United Nations staff working in Afghanistan had been evacuated. That 429th Weekly Update, probably a record of longevity in humanitarian annals, was to be the last one issued under the name of UNOCHA and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for the United Nations Coordinator's Office for Afghanistan. In the wake of the dramatic events of 11 September in the United States of America, Afghanistan entered a crisis that led to fundamental changes for the country and its people. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and UNOCHA, for their part, had to adapt to this new Afghan environment and re-define their role and presence in support of the Afghan people, of the emerging authorities and of a new United Nations Mission.

2.   Twenty-two years of instability and war, nearly six years of the debilitating Taliban regime and several consecutive years of drought took their toll on the Afghan people, producing large scale displacement and vulnerability. OCHA and UNOCHA played a major role in coordinating the humanitarian response of the international community during this protracted emergency situation. After the 11th of September, during the international military intervention and the period of installation of new authorities, both OCHA and UNOCHA also helped mobilize humanitarian support and contributed to defining the nature and structure of the UN presence in Afghanistan deriving from the Bonn Conference and related Security Council Resolutions.

3.   It was only on 15 November that the first international staff returned to Faizabad. They were followed two days later by the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the UN Coordinator who were leading a group of senior members of the UN country team in their return to Kabul. In the meantime, the international military intervention was in full swing and the Taliban had fled Kabul. In the weeks and months that followed, new Afghan authorities were established and the United Nations set up a new integrated mission of assistance. After nearly fifteen years of presence on the Afghan scene, UNOCHA was scheduled to phase out at the end of October 2002.

4.   In August 2002, the Evaluation and Studies Unit of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) commissioned an external evaluation of OCHA and UNOCHA's response and coordination services provided to the escalating emergency in Afghanistan between July 2001 and July 2002. The review would thus cover different phases of the recent evolution of humanitarian action in Afghanistan, from the final weeks of the protracted emergency situation prevailing under the Taliban regime to the full transfer of strategic and operational coordination responsibilities to the second Pillar (Relief, Recovery and Reconstruction) of the new United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA). Based on events affecting the UN humanitarian response more than the well-known political and military landmarks, the period under review can be divided in the following four major phases:

      i)   the period leading to 11 September 2001, characterized by intensive planning and preparation for rendering humanitarian assistance over the harsh Afghan

winter in a context of continued civil conflict, prolonged drought and displacement and human rights abuses;

ii) the period immediately following the 11th of September up to mid-November 2001, marked by the full evacuation of international UN staff and the efforts to continue assistance despite the military offensive;

iii) the period between mid-November 2001 and March 2002 with the gradual return of the UN to Afghanistan, the establishment of recognized Afghan authorities and the shaping of the new UN integrated mission; and, finally,

iv) the period from April 2002 onwards with the installation of UNAMA and the folding of UNOCHA into the assistance pillar of that new UN mission.

Terms of Reference

5. The full terms of reference for the external evaluation, as produced by OCHA, are attached as Appendix V. Five major areas of investigation have been determined by OCHA:

i) **Humanitarian response and contingency planning**: Were OCHA and UNOCHA able to effectively reassess the situation and facilitate the response as the crisis escalated further after September 11?

ii) **Development of humanitarian strategies**: Were the humanitarian strategies agreed within the UN system coherent, appropriate and effective and what role did OCHA and UNOCHA play in their development?

iii) **Contribution to operational coordination**: What contribution did OCHA and UNOCHA make to establishing and supporting an integrated UN mission in Afghanistan and to inclusive national and on-site coordination?

iv) **Products and services**: Did OCHA and UNOCHA provide timely and valued products and services to UN agencies and NGOs and what impact did this have on humanitarian outcome?

v) **Internal management and field support**: How efficient and effective were OCHA and UNOCHA management and was adequate field support provided?

6. The team was asked to undertake the review bearing in mind the Change Management Process that OCHA initiated in 2000 and to assess the impact of that management process on the Office's response to the Afghan crisis. In addition, the team was asked to give particular attention to issues related to gender equity.

Method

7. The evaluation team was composed of four persons, all institutionally independent from OCHA or UNOCHA. Interviewing and field visits were divided among team members in the interest of an efficient use of time. The members met as often as possible as a full team in order to review progress and findings and to plan the following steps. Appendix 1 provides the itinerary of the evaluation team.

8. This was primarily an assessment of higher order product (i.e. coordination). Hence, it was unavoidable that most of the relevant information available would be derived from subjective sources and be qualitative in nature. Given the subjectivity of the base data, it was important to obtain as complete a cross-section of perspectives from OCHA's personnel and clients as possible. E-mail surveys of key persons were also attempted, but the negligible return rates

resulted in the evaluation defaulting to the use of controlled face-to-face interviews as the primary data acquisition technique, in addition to written documentation.

9. The evaluation team members conducted some 100 different interviews involving more than 150 respondents (see Appendix II). To be able to analyze this quantity of qualitative data, it was essential to structure its collection. This was achieved by providing interviewers with an agreed framework for data collection. Interviewers initially asked respondents to provide any 'observations/issues' they would like to raise in relation to the purpose of the evaluation. For each observation or issue, a consistent set of key details were then sought. These included related events, impact, lessons learned or recommendations, and relevant references or documents as well as suggestions about other persons to be interviewed. Generally, respondents were first given the opportunity to respond with those observations and issues which they thought most important, before any prompting derived from the detailed terms of reference was undertaken.

10. The data was then compiled in a "sortable" spreadsheet format with appropriate generic markers. On input of the information, a set of categorization markers was added, relating to each section of the terms of reference. Once a significant proportion of the evaluation data had been incorporated, a second set of categorization markers were added, as suggested by the commonalities in the data. This second set of markers was useful for sorting the many observations and issues into common 'themes', as identified by respondents. The information from interviews was augmented and triangulated by reference to available documentation (see Appendix III). That most of these references consist of reports or publications is a direct reflection on the lack of time available for the team to do in-depth file reviews, and the general paucity of readily accessible and comprehensible filing systems, particularly in-country.

Constraints

11. The evaluation took place in the context of an on-going response to an active emergency. As in the majority of similar situations, there has been a rapid turnover of staff. Only a few of the people interviewed in the field had served through the full period covered by the exercise or could benefit from direct knowledge of the recent historical background of UN action in Afghanistan. This was compensated only in part by interviews in New York and Geneva and, in some cases, by telephone conversations with staff and other relief workers formerly in Afghanistan. In addition, time constraints have limited the access of the evaluation team to a greater variety of areas outside Kabul and to a larger cross-section of the Afghan people and civil society. The heavy workload of staff in Kabul, coupled with still limited support facilities, has also reduced the capacity of the team to conduct as many interviews as it would have wished.

12. The rapid succession of major events and turning points over the period ascribed, the complexity of consultative, decisional and coordination mechanisms in action as well as the need to look at the performance of both headquarters and field entities represented an enormous challenge. In retrospect, it is evident that the terms of reference were overly ambitious in scope, given that just over five weeks were available for fieldwork in six different locations. The successive drafts of the terms of reference clearly show a gradual expansion of the scope of the evaluation, a phenomenon that should be resisted for future evaluation exercises.

13.   As mentioned earlier, the evaluation team had difficulties accessing internal documents and working papers that would have shed more light on the quality of the analysis of the situation by OCHA and on the impact of their participation in the various coordination and decision-making bodies established, particularly in New York. Such information exists, no doubt, but it is often scattered in personal handfiles or on hard disks of personal computers. For future external evaluations, time has to be foreseen for team members themselves to do this tedious but useful detailed research or dedicated OCHA staff time should be foreseen specifically for that task.

Structure of the Report

14. The report is divided in six main sections. The sections do not follow strictly the five major evaluation issues listed by OCHA under section 3 of the Terms of Reference given to the evaluation team. At the beginning of each of the sections of the report, an initial paragraph explains the correlation between that particular section of the report and the five evaluation issues identified by OCHA. Each section then ends with major conclusions, lessons and recommendations related to the topic. A final section summarizes the main conclusions and recommendations.

1. UNOCHA and the Strategic Framework

15.   This first section looks at UNOCHA as part of the UN Coordinator's Office before 11 September 2001, in the period leading to the crisis. It reviews briefly the historical background of the institution that became known as UNOCHA and some of its strengths and weaknesses as it entered a new phase.

1.1 From UNOCA to UNOCHA

16.   The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian and Economic Assistance Programmes related to Afghanistan (UNOCA – re-named UNOCHA as from January 1993) was created in May 1988, in the wake of the Geneva Accords that would lead, the following year, to the withdrawal of Soviet troops after a decade of foreign military presence in Afghanistan. UNOCA was one of the very first country-specific coordination mechanisms put in place by the United Nations and, interestingly, it already integrated humanitarian and economic aspects.[1] It established its Headquarters initially in Geneva and later in Islamabad, keeping a support unit at the Geneva Headquarters of the UN. In 1988, the UN also created a special trust fund for economic and humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan under the responsibility of UNOCA. The Afghanistan Emergency Trust Fund (AETF) remained active throughout the years in support of activities directly funded by UNOCHA, such as mine action.

17. Experience of UN coordination gained in Afghanistan and later in the Persian Gulf region served in shaping an overall United Nations humanitarian coordination service in the form of the Department for Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) in 1991, and its successor department, OCHA. Throughout the years, however, UNOCHA maintained a special status vis-à-vis DHA and OCHA. The Geneva support unit of UNOCHA was eventually located within the Geneva

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[1] For a comprehensive background on UNOCA, see "The Policies of Mercy: UN Coordination in Afghanistan, Mozambique and Rwanda" by Antonio Donini, Occasional Paper no. 22, Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for Humanitarian Studies, 1996.

office of the DHA/OCHA, but it continued to be answerable to the Director of UNOCHA based in Islamabad. In an internal document produced at the beginning of 2002, the UN Coordinator's Office referred to the Mission Statement of the combined structure of UNOCHA and UNDP as follows:

> *"To lead the coordination of efforts of the international community, in particular those of the United Nations system, to alleviate the human suffering of the people of Afghanistan and to promote sustainable livelihoods consistent with the principles laid out in the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan."*

1.2 The Strategic Framework

18. In April 1997, the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), the United Nations system's central coordination body, agreed on the basic elements of a strategic framework for response to, and recovery from, crises. It also decided that this new approach should be piloted in Afghanistan, under the personal leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General. Following extensive consultations, the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan was finalized in September 1998 after endorsement by all UN agencies. It "defines the principles, goals and institutional arrangements for a more coherent, effective and integrated political strategy and assistance programme."[2] In parallel, the concept of "Principled Common Programming" (PCP) was developed in 1998, instituting "a mechanism for establishing the assistance community's priorities, programmes and projects, based on agreed goals, principles and the expressed needs of the Afghans."[3] In early 1999, human rights were formally recognized as a third major pillar of the Strategic Framework in addition to the political and assistance components.

19. At UN Headquarters, the Deputy Secretary-General was designated as Chair of a Task Force on Afghanistan. The political process was under the responsibility of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA). A "UN Coordinator," in the dual capacity of Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator, was responsible for all assistance activities. In a situation where two very senior Officers each led independent but related parts of the UN effort in Afghanistan, the Strategic Framework document called for the strengthening of vital links between the political process and the assistance program.

20. The Strategic Framework and the Principled Common Programming gave birth to a complex structure of coordination bodies and mechanisms established in 1997 and 1998[4]:
- The Afghan Support Group (ASG) was composed of fifteen Governments representing the major donors and the European Union (EU). The group met for the first time in Geneva in April 1997 and subsequent meetings were generally held in the capital of the country chairing the meeting. The ASG addressed the broader political and humanitarian issues and played an important role in sustaining the interest of capitals in Afghan affairs. The UN and the NGO community also participated in the meetings of the ASG.

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[2] "Strategic Framework for Afghanistan: Towards a Principled Approach to Peace and Reconstruction," United Nations, 15 September 1998.
[3] "Making a Reality of Principled Common Programming," United Nations, April 1998.
[4] A detailed description of this coordination and consultative structure is available through UNOCHA's web site at www.pcpafg.org

- The Afghanistan Programming Body (APB) was an advisory body on issues related to programming policies and priorities. It was composed of fifteen representatives of donor Governments, fifteen members of the UN system and another fifteen from the Afghan and international NGO sector. The World Bank and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) were also members. The Board met regularly in Islamabad under the chairmanship of the representative of the country chairing the Afghan Support Group. The office of the UN Coordinator provided the Secretariat.
- Five Thematic Groups were created, corresponding to the five major strategic objectives of the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan, namely:
  - the alleviation of human suffering;
  - the protection and advancement of human rights, with particular emphasis on gender;
  - the provision of basic social services;
  - the empowerment of Afghans, both women and men, to build sustainable livelihoods, and
  - the return of refugees from neighboring countries.
- Seven Regional Coordination Bodies (RCB) were established inside Afghanistan, in Faizabad, Bamyan, Herat, Jalalabad, Kabul, Kandahar and Mazar-i-Sharif, corresponding to regions covered by UN sub-offices. Under the leadership of the respective Regional Coordination Officer, each RCB was responsible to consult the Afghan constituency and the aid community operating in the region about needs and priorities. They also monitored assistance activities in the region, ensuring adherence to shared objectives and principles.
- An Emergency Task Force (ETF) was the main information-sharing and operational coordination forum, meeting weekly in Islamabad. Regional ETFs were also meeting regularly under the leadership of the Regional Coordination Officers operating in Afghanistan. Meetings of the ETF generally attracted a wide participation, especially from the NGO community. After the 11th of September, the ETF met several times a week, in Islamabad and later in Kabul.

21.   This coordination and consultative structure was considered overly complex and cumbersome by many. Some of the staff from operational agencies even commented that more time was spent meeting and discussing programs than actually dispensing assistance. However complex, this elaborate coordination structure did succeed in generating a broad participation of major stakeholders and, to some extent, it gave Afghans a voice in the absence of a recognized government serving as the principal national interlocutor to the aid community.

22.   The internal structure adopted for the assistance and human rights pillars under the UN Coordinator showed a degree of integration normally not found in UN country offices, a conscious effort deriving from the Strategic Framework concept. In his dual capacity as Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, the UN Coordinator oversaw the work of both UNDP and UNOCHA. While the two components retained their specific activities, for example the mine action program in the case of UNOCHA, they shared premises and common services. They also developed a range of integrated activities, including substantive ones such as the preparation of appeals, the servicing of the APB and the RCBs, and public information. Some cross-cutting issues not exclusively related to either UNDP or UNOCHA were attached directly to the UN Coordinator. This was the case in particular for the human rights and gender functions.

1.3 Tensions within the UN

23.   The efforts described above to ensure better integration between the political and assistance pillars of the Strategic Framework structure and, within the assistance pillar itself, between the development and humanitarian entities were not entirely successful. The performance of the UN, including UNOCHA, was tainted by tensions that were inherent to the absence of clarity in the internal UN structure related to Afghanistan. The issue here was not so much tension and rivalry between the Coordinator and larger operational agencies or between agencies themselves. That type of tension is always relatively tamed in situations where the interest of the media and the donors is low. The next phase would illustrate sufficiently how such tensions can be exacerbated. Tensions in the period preceding 11 September related to two specific relationships. First, that of the Office of the UN Coordinator (and UNOCHA) and the United Nations Special Mission for Afghanistan (UNSMA) and, second, that of UNOCHA and UNDP.

24.   Tension with UNSMA seemed to be due essentially to differences of style and culture between a mission overseeing a political process and one responsible for humanitarian needs. The activities of the Office of the UN Coordinator and UNOCHA related to human rights and protection advocacy, in particular, were often considered irritants by those in charge of political negotiations. On the other hand, the humanitarian actors often had the feeling that political actors ignored or minimized humanitarian considerations. Unfortunately, there is evidence that this tension could have been exploited by the Taliban. For them, there was the "good" UN, the assistance effort under the UN Coordinator, and the "bad" UN, the political UNSMA.[5] That tension continued into the next more intensive phase of the Afghan crisis to the extent that, on 13 November 2001, the Integrated Mission Task Force (IMTF) had to urge UNOCHA and UNSMA to work together to plan the return of UN staff to Afghanistan. The tension between UNDP and UNOCHA, for its part, resulted largely from the perception within UNDP that humanitarian issues dominated the agenda of the UN Coordinator and that UNDP's own mandate was being sidelined. In both cases, it appears that confusion and tension arose as a result of a failure by the UN itself to clarify roles, priorities and lines of authority.

1.4 Coordination and operationalism

25.   As mentioned earlier, UNOCA was entrusted in 1988 with the administration of a trust fund for emergency assistance to Afghanistan and assumed direct implementation responsibilities, some of which remained with UNOCHA until recently. By July 2001, UNOCHA was responsible particularly for the mine action program, the humanitarian flight operations for Afghanistan and a few other smaller projects. This again is at variance with the normal practice of OCHA in other situations where the coordinating entity assumes a direct operational role only in very exceptional circumstances. There had already been discussions, prior to 11 September 2001, about the possibility of reducing this operational role by passing on to other UN bodies the responsibility for the Mine Action Program for Afghanistan (MAPA) and the flight operations. Some of the staff responsible for these activities, particularly long-serving personnel in Islamabad, expressed their dissatisfaction regarding OCHA's readiness to give away operations considered successful. The majority, however, commented that operational responsibilities generally distract from the main task of providing humanitarian leadership through coordination.

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[5] "Review of the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan," Duffield, Gossman and Leader, Commissioned by the Strategic Monitoring Unit for Afghanistan, published in October 2001.

26. It should be noted that the mine action program alone employed nearly 4,800 staff and had a budget of some US$20 million. The transfer of responsibility for flight operations to the World Food Programme (WFP), already decided prior to 11 September, was affected in December 2001. In 2002, the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has gradually assumed full responsibility for the MAPA. UNOCHA also engaged in 2001 in limited direct operational activities for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). It appears, however, that UNOCHA did not have the capacity or the resources to ensure effective assistance and protection for the IDPs. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) eventually offered to assume the lead role for that activity.

1.5 Planning ahead of a difficult winter

27. In August 2001, the newly appointed United Nations Coordinator for Afghanistan[6], alerted the international community to "a crisis of alarming proportions" unfolding in Afghanistan through a combination of poverty, civil strife, drought, displacement and abuse of human rights. The UN Coordinator was appealing for increased financial support to meet the needs of up to six million vulnerable people, including one million internally displaced, affected by three years of drought and faced with the prospect of the severe Afghan winter. On 6 September 2001, the World Food Programme launched an Emergency Appeal for US$151 million to help some 5.5 million people with 366,000 tons of food over the following twelve month period. At the same time, the entire UN country team (UN agencies active in Afghanistan) was getting ready for the preparation of the Consolidated Appeal for year 2002. These plans and the already intensive mobilization of the United Nations system were to prove invaluable assets in meeting the expanded needs of the post-11 September period.

28. These efforts by the country team did receive support from OCHA headquarters. The Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) himself devoted substantial attention to the situation in Afghanistan. Only a few weeks after assuming his functions as Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Kenzo Oshima's very first field visit took him to Afghanistan at the beginning of February 2001. He returned to the region in June of the same year and addressed donors at the meeting of the Afghanistan Support Group in Islamabad.

1.6 Strengths and weaknesses of the pre-11 September coordination set-up

29. No one could have foreseen the succession of events unleashed by the 11 September attacks that completely changed the UN's objectives and working environment in Afghanistan. The strengths and weaknesses of UNOCHA as a humanitarian coordination body need to be reviewed first in relation to the humanitarian situation and the political context that prevailed in Afghanistan prior to the terrorist attacks. During that difficult period of international neglect for Afghanistan, did UNOCHA perform as an efficient field coordination entity? Did UNOCHA and OCHA effectively lead the UN system in developing a sound analysis of, and a coherent response to the humanitarian situation as it then prevailed?

30. By September 2001, UNOCHA had developed into a well-established United Nations entity, in fact a quasi-agency, with the Strategic Framework serving as a mandate and the

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[6] Mr. Mike Sackett was appointed as Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Afghanistan on 15 June 2002 in replacement of Mr. Erick de Mul. The title of UN Coordinator was used by the RC/HC in Afghanistan.

ASG, the APB and the RCBs as executive and consultative bodies. It also had its own budget through the Afghan Emergency Trust Fund (AETF), a headquarters in Islamabad and field offices in Afghanistan, all supported by an independent administrative unit in Geneva, and reporting separately to the UN Controller. In the course of its interviews, the evaluation team came across various and diverging opinions about the performance of UNOCHA.

31.   Most observers concur that one of the major achievements of UNOCHA is that it succeeded over the years in the difficult task of keeping Afghanistan on the agenda of donors. In the process, it developed a very inclusive set of consultative bodies that aimed at ensuring the participation of the broadest possible spectrum of donors, agencies and organizations. As such, UNOCHA was an invaluable testing ground for innovative coordination mechanisms and strategic planning tools. The UN Coordinator's office, including UNOCHA, can also be credited with a highly active and forceful advocacy role on issues related to human rights and protection. It was weaker, however, on promoting the inclusion of the specific needs and priorities of women in UN programs. Many respondents noted, for example, that the UN country team was hesitant to take a firm stand when the Taliban put severe restrictions on UN and NGO female staff.

32.   Many respondents have commended the personal roles of the last two humanitarian coordinators for tirelessly speaking out on a number of issues in favor of the vulnerable Afghans, at times being refreshingly at odds with the traditional prudence of the UN. UNOCHA and the UN country team generally played an effective advocacy role, providing UN and agencies' headquarters as well as donors and the public at large with abundant analysis of the situation in Afghanistan as it related to humanitarian needs. Timely plans, budgets and appeals have also been issued. There is also a general consensus that the Office of the UN Coordinator and UNOCHA provided effective leadership in negotiating some humanitarian space and capacity of initiative with difficult Afghan authorities, including on sensitive issues such as human rights and gender. The various coordination services provided by UNOCHA, from their Weekly Updates to briefings and flight coordination, were highly appreciated.

33.   Observers more critical of UNOCHA note that they – and OCHA – failed in eliciting a solution to the fundamental tensions that weakened coordination, that with UNSMA and that with UNDP. They refer to an overly complex coordination structure supported by an entrenched bureaucracy giving priority to concepts and processes over action. Some have criticized UNOCHA as an Islamabad-centric organization largely out of touch with Afghanistan. Admittedly, the question of ensuring that the Afghans could express their needs and generally be heard in the complex programming and coordination structure put in place since 1998 was complicated by the nature of the Taliban regime and its absence of legitimacy. UNOCHA developed the vision that the coordination and programming structure it had put in place was in fact performing surrogate government functions[7], a notion that some respondents have qualified as a sign of arrogance on the part of the UN.

1.7 Conclusions

34.   Despite the tensions, the internal structural problems, the complexity of coordination mechanisms and the difficulties created by the Taliban, UNOCHA – under the direction of the UN Coordinator – provided coherent and effective leadership to the humanitarian community

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[7] "The Strategic Framework for Afghanistan: A Preliminary Assessment," Antonio Donini, Spring 2000.

working in Afghanistan. Its role in developing and field-testing new coordination structures and mechanisms as well as the efforts between 1998 and 2001 to put in place a highly integrated structure linking the development and humanitarian spheres would deserve more attention than is possible in the scope of this evaluation. It remains that, on the eve of the September terrorist attacks, the UN had in place a humanitarian coordination structure that would allow the system to meet the initial challenges of the new crisis.

2. Developing a humanitarian response

35. With world attention focusing on Afghanistan in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 2001, the work and role of the United Nations in Afghanistan had to be redefined. Much of the attention of the Secretary-General and that of the Security Council had to be devoted to the rapidly evolving Afghan situation. For the humanitarian wing of the United Nations, the period was equally challenging. While orchestrating the response to the growing emergency, OCHA and UNOCHA were engaged in reviewing strategies, operations and priorities as well as budgets on an on-going basis while providing reports on, and analysis of the humanitarian situation on a daily basis. OCHA and UNOCHA were also required to contribute to the definition of the future role of the United Nations and to help define the nature and structure of the UN Mission that would support the new Afghan authorities. This section of the report examines the capacity of OCHA and UNOCHA to analyze the situation during the first phase of the crisis, to provide leadership in developing contingency plans and programs and to address some of the emerging strategic and policy issues. These themes correspond broadly to the first two issues identified by OCHA in the terms of reference given to the evaluation team.

2.1 Contingency Planning

36. On Friday 14 September 2001, the Emergency Relief Coordinator requested the UN Coordinator for Afghanistan to take the lead in developing contingency plans related to the situation in that country. The ERC also requested Resident Coordinators in countries neighboring Afghanistan and their UN country teams to contribute to that effort. The exercise served as the basis for the preparation of the "Donor Alert" issued on 27 September[8].

37. The contingency planning exercise and the Donor Alert were predicated on two fundamental assumptions. The first was that there would be up to 1.5 million new refugees fleeing Afghanistan to neighboring countries. The second, that the period of severe restrictions on access due to security conditions would be prolonged. Indeed, the planning foresaw that the phase leading to the military intervention could last for weeks, possibly months and that the duration of the military intervention itself was unpredictable. In the end, the two assumptions proved wrong: the number of Afghans displaced externally remained negligible – partly due to Afghanistan's neighbors refusing to open their borders despite UN requests – and an international humanitarian presence could be re-established rather rapidly. The planning assumptions were revised initially in mid-November when the Humanitarian Coordinator issued a "30 Day Emergency Operational Assistance Plan for Afghanistan: 15 November – 15 December 2001." The Donor Alert itself was updated on 26 November to take into account the new situation created by the rapid collapse of the Taliban regime. The

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[8] "Donor Alert: To Support an Inter-Agency Emergency Humanitarian Plan for Afghans in Afghanistan and Neighbouring Countries (October 2001 – March 2002)," OCHA, 27 September 2001. The actual "Inter-Agency Regional Contingency Plan for the Crisis in Afghanistan" was finalized on 3 October 2001.

Donor Alert and its Update of November were later incorporated into the "Immediate and Transitional Assistance Programme for the Afghan People - 2002" covering the period from 1 October 2001 to 31 December 2002.

38. Planning under the unpredictable and often obtrusive Taliban regime was not an easy task. But after the September attacks, keeping pace with the rapidly evolving political and military situation and responding to the intense need for information, updated plans, reports and budgets from various capitals and headquarters became a daunting challenge for field staff. Some of the persons interviewed by the evaluation team were highly critical of UNOCHA's and OCHA's capacity to analyze the situation and develop scenarios that could form a sound basis for planning assumptions. Others noted an endemic absence of data and reliable information on humanitarian vulnerability. The decision to base initial post-11 September planning on the assumption that there would be large-scale refugee movements – the so-called exodus scenario – is often criticized. When asked, the former UN Coordinator reiterated his conviction that, in the context then prevailing, the exodus scenario was the most plausible and the most prudent option. The evaluation team was given no convincing reason to believe otherwise.

39. One serious weakness throughout the contingency planning exercise in post-11 September Afghanistan, and indeed throughout the process of preparing the successive plans and appeals, has been the lack of participation of field personnel. Respondents from field offices often referred to the absence of contingency planning and lack of response to their suggestions regarding preventative/preemptive measures. When there is otherwise ample evidence of intensive contingency planning, this perception appears to be due to the absence of information to, and participation of, field staff in the exercise. Experience in other crisis situations has underlined the value of structured internal two-way feedback mechanisms and periodic coordination meetings between head offices and field staff. Time devoted to such meetings and brainstorming sessions, in spite of external pressure and deadlines, cannot be considered a luxury.

40. Contingency planning as it occurred in Afghanistan after 11 September is of course highly *ad hoc* in nature. In the light of the perception of many respondents about the absence in OCHA of any early warning mechanisms or even instructions and guidelines on contingency planning, the evaluation team also looked into OCHA's institutional arrangements related to these issues. The Secretary-General took conflict prevention as the theme of his 1999 annual report and the issue has regularly been on the agenda of both the General Assembly and the Security Council in recent years. Since 1995, the UN system has instituted a "Framework Team" composed of the Secretariat departments directly concerned (DPA, Department of Peacekeeping Affairs [DPKO] and OCHA) as well as relevant UN agencies. The Framework Team focuses on potential complex emergencies rather than existing ones and thus functions as an early warning mechanism. The Framework Team is also overseeing the development of a "tool box" of preventive measures as well as a methodology for inter-agency humanitarian contingency planning. OCHA (New York) is equipped with a unit devoted to early warning and contingency planning. That unit has actively participated in the formulation of guidelines to assist UN country teams engaging in contingency planning.[9] The evaluation team, however, did not have time to review the

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[9] The "Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Guidelines for Humanitarian Assistance," as approved by the IASC, were distributed to all UN field offices through a letter dated 27 March 2002 signed jointly by the ERC and the Administrator of UNDP in his capacity as Chair of the United Nations Development Group.

pertinence of the Framework Group's analysis of the Afghan situation in the months preceding 11 September 2001.

2.2 Meeting humanitarian needs under bombs

41. In the period leading to the military intervention and after the bombing campaign had started on 7 October, the capacity of the UN to obtain precise information on the humanitarian situation was severely limited. International staff had been evacuated and would not return until mid-November. Direct communications with national staff of the UN and NGOs were restricted by the Taliban in most areas and telecommunications equipment was eventually confiscated. After the re-deployment of some international staff to countries surrounding Afghanistan to try to set up cross-border activities, direct contacts could take place in some locations between these teams and their national colleagues. There were, nevertheless, consistent reports of large numbers of persons fleeing cities for fear of bombs or retribution against civilians by Afghan forces of either side. In addition, some 5.5 to 6 million persons had already been identified as needing relief assistance. Despite the difficulties of operating under war conditions, the humanitarian community endeavored to meet the challenge.

42. For food alone, the World Food Programme estimated the requirements at some 52,000 tons per month. It became essential to increase the number of corridors to ferry assistance into Afghanistan. The ERC personally traveled to the region twice during the month of October and pleaded with Afghanistan's neighbors to open their borders both for a possible flow of refugees and for the passage of relief supplies into Afghanistan. As part of this effort to pursue deliveries, the UN Coordinator and UNOCHA decided at the beginning of October to relocate staff evacuated from field offices in Afghanistan to the closest border locations in neighboring countries.

43. During October, only half of the required food could be delivered. This improved steadily in the following weeks with the help of national staff of WFP and other organizations and more than 23,000 tons could be delivered in the first week of December. Although deliveries could be increased, actual distribution to beneficiaries remained more problematic. Realizing that reports concerning deliveries only could be misleading, OCHA took the initiative of approaching WFP to agree on a reporting formula reflecting better the actual impact of the operation. As another example of continued operations during the period, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) also organized in November a successful nationwide polio immunization campaign targeting five million children.

44. The success in avoiding the major humanitarian disaster, large-scale starvation and outbreak of contagious diseases that many had predicted was probably due largely to the resilience of the Afghans. The support they received from the UN and from NGOs during that difficult period certainly helped avoid greater suffering. Later, in March 2002, OCHA and UNOCHA also successfully mobilized emergency support in the wake of an earthquake of a magnitude of 7.2 on the Richter scale that affected northern parts of the country.

2.3 The center of gravity shifts to New York

45. The highly political nature of the Afghan crisis, the personal interest of world leaders in even minute operational details and the intense interest of the media and public opinion have meant that, within the UN, the center of decision-making moved squarely to the senior-most

circles in New York. In this context, the role of the New York headquarters of OCHA and the personal role of the ERC acquired much more visibility and importance than is normally the case in other humanitarian situations. Daily briefings on the humanitarian situation had to be prepared for the Secretary-General in addition to frequent briefings to the Security Council or meetings with member States and donors. OCHA also participated intensively in coordination forums established in New York to plan the UN response to the crisis.

46.   Internal guidelines issued in May 2001 had attempted to clarify the "responsibilities and delegation of authority among the Senior Management Team" of OCHA. In fact, the guidelines wished to address the problem of the dual headquarters in New York and Geneva and their respective roles and authority, a sore point that has plagued the Office of the Coordinator since the early days of 1991 when DHA was created. The guidelines foresee that the Director of the Geneva office is "responsible for the response to natural disasters and complex emergencies, the functioning of humanitarian coordination at field level, and of OCHA offices and staff in the field."[10]

47.   The Afghan crisis was the first large scale complex emergency to occur since the guidelines were issued. The roles and responsibilities that actually emerged were quite different than those foreseen in the guidelines. With its history as a specifically mandated coordination entity, the case of Afghanistan's UNOCHA was already atypical in terms of the relationship between the Humanitarian Coordinator and the Geneva part of OCHA's headquarters. In addition, the intensity of the crisis dictated that the New York headquarters of OCHA should play a leading role. This discrepancy between the agreed management guidelines and reality generated confusion. A sound management approach would have required, as early as possible in the operation, more clarity in defining internal responsibility and accountability within OCHA itself.

2.4 Towards the integrated UN mission

48.   On 3 October, the Secretary-General announced the appointment of Lakhdar Brahimi as his Special Representative for Afghanistan, specifying that the new SRSG would be entrusted with overall authority for the humanitarian and political endeavors of the United Nations in Afghanistan. The following day, the 4th of October, the UN Executive Committee on Peace and Security (ECPS) established an Integrated Mission Task Force (IMTF). The concept of the IMTF derives from the Brahimi report on UN peace operations[11]. The IMTF was conceived as a compact body with the authority to decide or make recommendations on issues of policy and strategy. Its membership, however, was allowed to grow to the extent that it became more of an information-sharing forum than a decision-making body. It gradually lost much of its relevance and was formally disbanded in February 2002[12].

49.   In parallel, the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) chaired by the Administrator of UNDP and including all UN agencies involved in development activities and the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA), chaired by the ERC and

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[10] "Guidelines on the Responsibilities of the OCHA Senior Management Team and on Functional Management." The guidelines were issued on 17 May 2001 in the framework of OCHA's Change Management Process.
[11] "Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations," UN document A/55/305 – S/2000/809, 21 August 2000, paragraphs 198 and 202-217. The panel was chaired by Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, former Foreign Minister of Algeria. The report aims at assessing the shortcomings of UN peacekeeping operations and proposing reforms. It is commonly referred to as the Brahimi Report.
[12] A self-assessment of the IMTF was issued as an internal document on 7 February 2002.

regrouping much of the same agencies, and in addition, those exclusively concerned with humanitarian matters, were endeavoring to coordinate their reflection and planning. In practice, the Head of the Development Group Office and the Deputy-ERC jointly chaired an informal "Afghanistan Management Group" composed of six major UN actors of the development and humanitarian scene in Afghanistan. This informal group occasionally met or had teleconferences at the Heads of Agency level. The joint UNDG/ECHA task force and the more compact "Afghanistan Management Group" played a leading role in developing the humanitarian response in the very initial phase of the crisis, including the concept of the ITAP.

50.   At the field level, the UN Coordinator also opted for a more compact operational advisory group known as the "Crisis Management Group" (CMG) and composed of UNOCHA, UNDP, the major UN operational agencies and UNSMA. The CMG functioned in parallel to the broader Heads of Agencies Meetings that continued to meet regularly but remained more an information-sharing mechanism in view of its large membership. The CMG functioned effectively during the initial phase of the crisis but pressure to have the membership enlarged finally resulted in the usefulness of the group diminishing. During the initial phase of the crisis, however, the CMG became the principal strategic and operational coordination tool in support of the UN Coordinator.

2.5 A voice for humanitarian needs and principles

51.   In its Resolution 46/182 of 1991 creating the function of United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to assume a more direct leadership role in humanitarian affairs through the designation of a high level official (the Emergency Relief Coordinator) who would "work closely with and with direct access to him, in cooperation with the relevant organizations and entities of the system dealing with humanitarian assistance and in full respect of their mandates…"[13] This presence of a voice for the humanitarian community next to the Secretary-General and with access to principal organs of the United Nations, such as the Security Council, was particularly important in post-11 September Afghanistan where the politico-military perspective tended to dominate the debate. Was that voice forceful enough? Was there sufficient coherence among the UN humanitarian players?

52.   As a new Afghan crisis erupted after 11 September 2001, the foremost concern of the international community and the Security Council concerned the military situation and the political process leading to the establishment of new Afghan authorities. The mission concept developed for the UN in Afghanistan emphasized that "all United Nations efforts are harnessed to fully support the implementation of the Bonn Agreement."[14] The structure adopted for UNAMA reflects this high level of integration between the political and assistance (including humanitarian) efforts of the UN. This close association of the humanitarian and military portfolios under the new structure has generated an intense debate within the humanitarian community[15].

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[13] "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations," General Assembly Resolution A/RES/46/182 of 19 December 1991, Annex, paragraphs 33-34.
[14] "The situation in Afghanistan and its implication for international peace and security – Report of the Secretary-General," UN document A/56/875 – S/2002/278 of 18 March 2002, paragraph 95.
[15] See in particular Nicholas Stockton, "Strategic Coordination in Afghanistan," Issue Papers Series, AREU, August 2002.

53. In the course of this evaluation, some respondents have welcomed the linkage and the greater structural integration. They refer to other operations where the humanitarian community very much considered that they were used as a substitute for the absence of a political will to address root causes. Others feel strongly that humanitarian action must be totally consistent and predictable about the basic principles of independence and impartiality. Most observers, however, agree that the risk of an undue subordination of the humanitarian action of the UN to political objectives is a potential threat inherent to the "integrated mission" concept and that vigilance is required. The evaluation team shares the view that there is a potential risk, although there have not yet been specific instances in Afghanistan of situations where political options clashed openly with humanitarian principles. Cases have been reported, however, of emerging tensions related to human rights issues. The Resolution that created DHA/OCHA[16] stated that "humanitarian assistance must be provided in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality." The role entrusted the ERC and his office in the same resolution implies a mandate to ensure the respect of these humanitarian principles in all situations.

2.6 Debate over "military humanitarianism"

54. The international Coalition initiated a number of humanitarian activities in parallel to its purely military operation in Afghanistan. In emerging military doctrine, such humanitarian programs, generally labeled as "hearts and minds operations," aim at increasing the support for, and improving the image of the military intervention among the public both in the country sending troops and in the country of intervention. Ulterior motives could include the gathering of information. In Afghanistan, three major issues have been of concern to the humanitarian community.

55. The first issue concerned the airdrops of food rations by American aircraft in parallel with the bombing campaign. NGOs and some UN officials publicly expressed serious reservations about this blending of military and humanitarian action. Protests were compounded by the fact that the contents of the food rations were considered culturally inappropriate and that the impact was negligible when 52,000 tons of food were required each month. Between 7 October and 14 December 2001 when the airdrops were phased out, a total of 2.4 million individual daily rations were delivered by US aircraft. This represented less than 10 percent of the requirements estimated by the World Food Programme for the period. At mid-course in the operation, military planners decided to change the color of the food packages in order to avoid confusion with unexploded bomblets. On 28 November, the Humanitarian Coordinator reported riots in northeastern Afghanistan as a result of airdrops and mentioned a strong protest by the local commander about the practice. OCHA was slow in providing field offices with a clear policy line on the military food drops, putting unfair pressure particularly on PI staff. Eventually, however, a common UN position could be developed.

56. Coalition forces have also been providing "humanitarian assistance" directly through soldiers, generally reservists. Although some do carry weapons, they do not wear uniforms and are identified as military personnel only through documents in local languages that they carry. Most of the "traditional" humanitarian workers and organizations fear that the necessary independence of humanitarian work is being threatened and that this avoidable confusion between military and humanitarian goals and actors increases security risks for purely humanitarian workers.

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[16] See footnote no. 13 above.

57. The third issue is closely related to the first two above and concerns coordination or at least exchange of information between the Coalition and the humanitarian community. Opinions diverge considerably regarding the desirability of coordination and exchange of information on humanitarian issues. Some emphasize principles and reject any form of association for fear of amalgamation and loss of independence and impartiality. Others take a more pragmatic stand, arguing that the Coalition's role in humanitarian affairs is a reality that must be taken into account. OCHA and some of the larger UN humanitarian agencies detached liaison staff to the Coalition's Central Command in Tampa, Florida, in an effort to promote coordination and foster security for humanitarian staff and convoys. At the field level, and although UNOCHA and OCHA did not establish formal coordination mechanisms, there were of number of *ad hoc* initiatives and forums bringing together the humanitarian organizations and the "humanitarian" wing of the Coalition. UNAMA has now opted to encourage the Government of Afghanistan to take the lead in establishing a civil/military coordination center.

58. Those who strongly oppose any form of humanitarian intervention by military contingents tend to consider that OCHA has been particularly weak in speaking out for basic principles of humanitarian action. Others consider on the contrary that OCHA has been particularly helpful in developing a common UN position on the first two issues mentioned above. The entire future consequences of the "military humanitarianism" model further developed in Afghanistan have not yet been assessed fully by the humanitarian community. There is obviously no consensus among the humanitarian community on how it should relate to this emerging "humanitarian" role of the military and there is a need for OCHA to study further this new aspect of military doctrine and help formulate a common position within the broader humanitarian community.

2.7 Coherence within the humanitarian wing of the UN

59. As mentioned earlier, the resolution that established the function of ERC and his office foresaw that UN humanitarian coordination should be the result of cooperation between the UN agencies active in humanitarian assistance. It also stated that the respective mandates of these agencies should be fully respected. This implies an approach that will favor "coordination by consensus" rather than "coordination by command."[17] It also implies that those being coordinated agree with the process and cooperate with the Coordinator. A senior OCHA manager mentioned to the evaluation team that in the UN system, it seemed that humanitarian coordination had to be re-negotiated on the occasion of each new crisis.

60. As discussed in Section 2 above, the coordinating role of UNOCHA before 11 September was not challenged as such although many agencies felt that the coordination structures of the Strategic Framework and the PCP were overly complex and cumbersome. As soon, however, as a new, media-intensive and highly political and visible situation erupted in Afghanistan, it seems that the classical reference to coordination as an exercise in "herding cats" became the reality once more. There was intense competition for catching donors' ears. UNHCR, for example, went out publicly with its own financial requirements ahead of the consolidated Donor Alert that was just being finalized and a full 24 hours ahead of the announcement of total UN requirements by the Secretary-General.

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[17] "The Policies of Mercy: UN Coordination in Afghanistan, Mozambique and Rwanda" by Antonio Donini, Occasional Paper #22, Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies, 1996. Donini distinguishes three types of coordination situations: coordination by command, by consensus and by default.

61. The appointment of the UN Coordinator for Afghanistan as Regional Humanitarian Coordinator also left an impression of UN inter-agency rivalry among some NGO and donor observers. WFP, UNHCR and UNICEF had already appointed their own regional coordinator prior to the appointment of Mike Sackett in a regional capacity on 27 September 2001. The mandate given the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator included negotiations with countries neighboring Afghanistan for the opening of borders for both relief goods and refugees, issues that some agencies as well as the Resident Coordinators of the countries concerned saw as being their responsibility.

62. In Afghanistan, as in most other situations, it seems that inter-agency rivalries – at times antagonism – increase dramatically as the distance from actual operations grow. Very few comments can be heard in field locations against the principle of coordination. On the contrary, a majority of respondents would have wanted more rather than less coordination and common services. In capitals and at the various headquarters, one has the impression that the need for visibility and financial support dominates the humanitarian agenda. The donors themselves no doubt bear some of the responsibility for that unfortunate situation.

2.8 Conclusions, lessons and recommendations

63. During the first three to four months of the escalating crisis, a flurry of contingency papers, operations plans and appeals were produced under intense time pressure and often unrealistic expectations by donors. The UN Coordinator and his Office, including UNOCHA, managed to orchestrate and lead the preparation of a Donor Alert within two weeks of the 11 September events, and to review assumptions and plans regularly in the period leading to the consolidated presentation of needs under the Immediate and Transitional Assistance Programme (ITAP). With crucial support from UN national staff, in a context of evacuation of all international personnel, the UN succeeded in keeping up the flow of humanitarian assistance throughout the military offensive. The Office of the UN Coordinator (Regional Humanitarian Coordinator as from 27 September), with support from OCHA, played an essential role in orchestrating that response.

64. This initial phase, however, already signals the erosion of the role and authority of the coordination mechanisms put in place prior to 11 September. In the field, a compact Crisis Management Group helped maintain some coherence within the UN around the Coordinator, but the need for operational agencies to increase their visibility with the media and donors meant increased competition and rivalry. In addition, the role and authority of the existing assistance coordination structures suffered from uncertainties and speculations regarding the future shape of the UN presence in Afghanistan and the future of the humanitarian and human rights functions in the new structure.

65. The strategies developed by the UN in response to the emerging crisis in Afghanistan emphasized political objectives and promoted the harnessing of all UN efforts, including in the humanitarian field, in support of these political goals. OCHA contributed to the formulation of these major strategic options through its participation in various Secretariat coordination structures. There is a consensus, however, that the capacity of OCHA to weigh on major strategic decisions diminished rapidly following the appointment of a SRSG with a strong mandate and overarching authority for all aspects of UN action in Afghanistan. This last point gives rise to a fundamental debate about the desirability of integrating fully the humanitarian and political efforts of the UN. Views diverge on the issue but there is general agreement within the humanitarian community that vigilance is required to ensure that, for the

humanitarian community and in the interest of victims, integration does not turn into subordination. OCHA cannot be absent from the debate. OCHA is mandated to preserve the fundamental principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian action and has a duty to ensure this is done in all situations.

66.   The development of "humanitarian" programs and activities by the military have probably never been as intensive as in post-11 September Afghanistan. OCHA has successfully managed to build an *ad hoc* UN consensus on some of the related issues but there is still a need for a comprehensive analysis of this new relationship and for developing common overall guidelines.

67.   Finally, the intensity of the Afghan crisis and its highly political context have meant that established internal structures at headquarters could not function as anticipated. OCHA's own management of the situation was weakened by the failure to recognize this reality and issue new management instructions.

Recommendations:

1. **OCHA should take the lead in developing guidelines meant to ensure that basic principles of humanitarian action are upheld systematically, including in UN Missions where humanitarian assistance is closely associated with political objectives. Such guidelines should include mechanisms to monitor respect of norms, standards and principles of humanitarian assistance in all operations.**

2. **Recent developments regarding the humanitarian dimension of military strategy have long-term implications for the humanitarian community. This emerging military doctrine should be analyzed further through an OCHA-led exercise designed to develop a policy framework and revised operational guidelines for adoption by the IASC.**

3. **For each major operation, a single senior OCHA manager must be given a clear lead role with full authority delegated by the ERC.**

Lessons:
- Existing structures and definitions of responsibility and accountability do not necessarily correspond to the requirements of particular large-scale emergencies. When there is a need to modify a management approach originally designed for « quieter » emergencies, this should be done rapidly and in a fully transparent manner.

- Coordination mechanisms established under normal operational circumstances tend to favor a broad participation and an information-sharing approach. In times of crisis, coordination mechanisms with a strictly limited participation are more effective as long as pressure for enlargement can be resisted.

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68.   One of the roles of the Coordinator is to facilitate the work of others. The operational support and services provided to the various stakeholders in humanitarian affairs are often the most visible "added value" elements that create support for, and commitment to the concept of coordination. A few of the operational coordination issues (3.3 in the TORs) and many of

the services and products issues (3.4 in the TORs) are covered under this third section of the report.

3.1 Field offices as "service centers"

69. UNOCHA's Regional Coordination Officers (RCO) played a major role in servicing the humanitarian community in the seven locations in Afghanistan where the UN had offices. Among respondents, assessments vary greatly between locations, mainly a reflection of the competence and leadership of particular RCOs. The successful ones had managed to transform their offices into "service centers" for the local humanitarian community where NGOs, visitors and UN agency personnel operating without an office of their own could get information on the humanitarian or security situation, have use of an office, communications and transport equipment and obtain support, as required, for discussions with local authorities.

70. Unfortunately, this capacity of regional offices to provide services – and therefore incur expenditure – for non-UN organizations and for UN personnel not belonging to UNAMA was questioned by the DPKO-led administration of the UN Mission. There can be no doubt that a failure to continue to provide services valued by the aid community – if not corrected rapidly – will impair UNAMA's capacity to provide coordination.

3.2 Relations with NGOs

71. There is a sharp contrast in the type of relationship between NGOs and UNOCHA before and after 11 September 2001. At the beginning of the nineties, UNOCHA and the whole UN system had favored the emergence of Afghan NGOs as a vehicle for assistance in that troubled country. Many of the larger international NGOs had also "Afghanized" their staff. Over the last several years, the NGO community had, in fact, become the largest provider of humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan with a combined budget superior to the total available to UNOCHA and all UN operational agencies. In the absence of a recognized national government, the NGOs had also been put in a position to speak for the people of Afghanistan and their needs. Aid coordination and consultative bodies such as the APB and the regional boards made room for NGO representatives and they regularly attended international meetings related to assistance to Afghanistan. Donors, in fact, had agreed to give priority to funding NGOs participating in the APB process and presenting their needs through the consolidated appeal.

72. Even throughout the Taliban period, many NGOs were able to create and maintain opportunities for women to work. Some of the smaller NGOs, including women's organizations, stated that they had limited access to the UN. The NGO community in Afghanistan had a lot to share regarding approaches for engaging in gender and development (GAD) and gender equality activities. UNOCHA and OCHA could have tapped better that knowledge and experience.

73. In the post-11 September Afghanistan, many national NGOs had difficulties differentiating themselves from the richer and larger organizations that received the biggest share of international funding. Local authorities rarely made the difference and even international NGOs had to face demands for extensive resource provision arising from misconceptions that NGOs can offer a level of service similar to that of the UN or other multilateral agencies. This becomes a serious matter when permission to remain in a province is made contingent on meeting such demands. The national NGOs have the added

complication of having in their ranks some organizations that might better be described as profit-taking "contractors." Non-profit local NGOs are therefore, by association, prone to accusations of profiting from the misery of others.

74. In the new phase that started with the terrorist attacks in the USA, a number of factors contributed to modifying the role of NGOs. The emergence of new legitimate national authorities meant that they were no longer the most important voice speaking for the Afghans and Afghanistan. Many NGOs, particularly among the ones that were Afghanistan-specific, still have difficulties adapting to this new operational context after almost one full year. This attitude might explain, in part, the misgivings about the role of NGOs in some government quarters. In parallel, the relative share of the aid "pie" going directly to Afghan NGOs diminished considerably as more donor funds were channeled through the UN, inter-governmental organizations and large international NGOs. UNOCHA itself was overwhelmed by the constant demands for information, analysis, appeals and reports and had little time to nurture relations with NGOs. Just one year after the events of September 2001, one has the impression that the UN and the NGOs have withdrawn to their own respective spheres and have practically stopped talking to each other, except in the limited context of contractual relationships between funding and implementing agencies. This is in stark contrast with the situation that prevailed prior to 11 September 2001. The failure to preserve this essential relationship probably represents one of the important lost opportunities for the UN during the transition period.

75. At the global level, it is surprising to note that OCHA is one of the few UN humanitarian entities not equipped with a dedicated NGO relations unit. Admittedly, "NGO Units" are not necessarily the most appropriate response to the need for improved partnership. The participation of NGOs in global coordination mechanisms such as the IASC is already an indication that OCHA recognizes a broader role and responsibility vis-à-vis the whole humanitarian community, not only the humanitarian wing of the UN system. A lot could be done to foster conditions that would permit the UN, NGOs and Governments to define the modalities and conditions of a productive partnership in anticipation of future emergency situations. There is, for example, an obvious need for UN support to NGOs and Governments for the creation of legislation, administrative procedures and training material that would promote an effective role for NGOs and harmonious cooperation within the humanitarian community.

3.3 Appealing for funds

76. In announcing the appointment of Lakhdar Brahimi on 3 October, the Secretary-General insisted that his SRSG would have full authority over the UN's effort in both the political and the humanitarian spheres. In his report of 6 December 2001 to the Security Council and the General Assembly, he further clarified that the SRSG would also "oversee the development of plans for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the country."[18] In parallel, the UN decided to adopt a different formula for the presentation of the needs identified by the aid community. The "Immediate and Transitional Assistance Programme for the Afghan People - 2002"

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[18] "The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security," Report of the Secretary-General, UN document A/56/861 – S/2001/11157, 6 December 2001.

(ITAP) was born out of this desire to integrate humanitarian, transition and pre-development activities and present them to donors in a single comprehensive document.[19]

77. The ITAP had to be prepared in a rush during the weeks preceding the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan held in Tokyo on 21-22 January 2002. Some observers have noted that the ITAP suffered from a lack of gender input because UNOCHA and other organizations responsible for putting it together had insufficient capacity and expertise in that field. Although the ITAP included specific agency projects and programs to address both women and men, they were not derived from substantive gender analysis.

78. By 19 November 2002, the ITAP had reached a contribution level of 63.4 percent against projected requirements of US$1.77 billion. This compares to a global average of 57 percent for the 25 different appeals tracked by OCHA in 2002. The percentage difference is insignificant when one considers that ITAP covers a 15 month period while the other appeals are based on a calendar year. In absolute terms, however, the US$1.13 billion contributed to ITAP represent the largest total contributed to a UN Appeal in recent years. Seventy-five percent of these funds were pledged towards the programs of three agencies (WFP, UNHCR and UNICEF) that presented relief rather than development activities.

79. Despite its many shortcomings, the ITAP is seen by many as a conceptual advance in the effort of the UN to meet the transition from relief to development. A debate is still going on about the replicability of the ITAP formula in other situations. Some argue that the more traditional CAP[20] formula is much more flexible and can also be used for development-related activities, as was the case for Afghanistan even during the pre-11 September period. It appears that a pragmatic approach is emerging, encouraging joint planning and programming between humanitarian and development agencies combined with a case-by-case decision on the mode of presentation of needs to donors.

3.4 Public information

80. By 2001, a number of front page stories such as the destruction of the Bamyan statues or the death from cold of IDPs in Herat had already increased media interest for the Afghan situation. The Public Information Officer attached to the UN Coordinator's Office had established a public information group with other UN agencies to coordinate the UN response to this renewed interest. UNOCHA also worked with both UN agencies and NGOs in producing the Weekly Update, an essential information tool for the humanitarian community, and in preparing and disseminating press releases or arranging press conferences with various agencies highlighting different aspects of the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. There were also radio programs and publications directed at the Afghan population at large. Public information under the Taliban became increasingly difficult with the denial or delaying of visas, the ban on photographing and filming and varying rules in different places. Insecurity in many areas added to the frustration and difficulties of journalists.

81. The consequences of the events of 11 September were immediately clear for UN public information staff covering Afghanistan from Islamabad. They were immediately

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[19] For a review of the ITAP process, see (i) "End of Mission Report to OCHA," Pat Duggan, 7 April 2002. Pat Duggan oversaw the formulation of ITAP in Islamabad on behalf of OCHA and (b) "Summary of a Participatory Review of ITAP," Rajeev Pillay, 2002.
[20] The term "Consolidated Appeal Process" refers to consolidated appeals prepared by UN country teams to meet the assistance requirements in complex humanitarian situations. The CAP is an OCHA-led process.

overwhelmed by media demands, with eighty interviews in UNOCHA alone on 12 September. The UN Information Center (UNIC) based in Islamabad lent valuable support and helped organize daily press conferences and disseminate press briefing notes to all UN headquarters and concerned offices. Eventually additional support was obtained from OCHA through the deployment of an officer from the UN Department of Public Information (DPI) and the secondment of a second one through OCHA's standby arrangements. The larger UN operational agencies were in a position to re-deploy specialized staff from other operations in a more timely fashion and with the benefit of prior experience of humanitarian emergencies.

82.   The press releases and the press briefing notes prepared by the Public Information Section in Islamabad were approved by the UN Coordinator. Contrary to the practice in some other organizations, OCHA did not insist on a headquarters clearance although they were at times uncomfortable with some statements. This open attitude towards media relations greatly helped to develop a credible PI function.

83.   Because of security and practical limitations on the number of personnel allowed in Kabul during the initial period following the return of the UN, UNOCHA and the agencies staffed with dedicated PI personnel had to agree on a coverage on a rotating basis. This formula worked relatively well although the humanitarian PI Officers could not answer some of the more "political" questions by journalists. That dilemma was finally resolved through the appointment of a UNAMA spokesperson.

3.5 Information Management

84. The Afghan Information Management Service (AIMS) was created at the end of 2001 as a successor to the Programme Management Information Service (ProMIS). In the immediate post-September 11 phase, it was agreed that UNDP's ProMIS project, created in 1997 in cooperation with FAO, would also assume the role of a humanitarian information center (HIC) for Afghanistan in addition to its former development focus. Recognition of this expanded role resulted in the re-labeling of the facility in Afghanistan to AIMS. While this was not necessarily an inappropriate or incompatible mix, the decision to expand the scope of the project should have been accompanied by a timely increase in technical and human resources. The failure to provide that additional capacity contributed to increasing an already important expectation gap among AIMS clients and users.

85. Many of the more generic products of AIMS were very well regarded and actively sought after by agencies across the entire humanitarian community. This is particularly true in regard to their range of map-based products. Unfortunately, this demand for generic outputs was necessarily met at the expense of satisfying the more specific needs of certain client groups. Donors in particular, would have liked more information suitable to report back to their constituencies. It is difficult to harshly criticize the information service on this basis, however, as production of such reporting may have had to come at the expense of services aimed at improving on-the-ground operations.

86. Another issue associated with the development of a humanitarian information facility is that of maintaining an output of appropriate quality standards. Quality may be compromised by organizations wishing to incorporate the findings of poorly designed or politically influenced information gathering exercises into the database. Given that the effectiveness of humanitarian responses often hinge on the accuracy of the data they are based on, this problem should provide an impetus for investigating appropriately candid linkages and

interactions with other information gathering and distribution mechanisms, including within the NGO community.

87.   Situation Reports (SITREPs) have been used intensively by the UN in Afghanistan. For years, UNOCHA issued a Weekly Update that provided some elements of analysis on the general political and security situation, mentioned important events related to coordination or activities of agencies and gave operational information on each region of Afghanistan based on reports from the Regional Coordination Officers. UNOCHA issued the Weekly Updates jointly with UNDP as a publication of the Office of the UN Coordinator. Between 18 September 2001 and 29 January 2002, a total of thirty-seven OCHA Situation Reports were issued, using a different format. As from February 2002, a UNAMA Humanitarian Update was started that later became an "Afghanistan Weekly Situation Report" issued by the Relief, Recovery and Reconstruction Pillar of UNAMA.

88.   Persons interviewed generally felt that the various SITREPs were useful as information tools. Many felt, however, that the successive versions favored raw operational data rather than analysis. It was noted, for example, that critical issues of specific security concern relating to men, and to women and children separately, were not adequately addressed. It was also found that the SITREPs were not always made available to key partners, including NGOs. Most of the organizations dealing with emergencies and humanitarian crises have developed standard formats and instructions for compiling and distributing SITREPs. This does not seem to be the case in OCHA. While a standardized SITREP system would help, it is also apparent that OCHA needs to avoid the traditional one-way format, in which the instrument is only used to communicate information from the field to head offices. Development of a good practice example would entail requiring relevant information from all parts of OCHA, and using the compiled SITREP as an information-sharing and feedback mechanism between field and head offices.

3.6 Conclusions, lessons and recommendations

89.   As already illustrated in section 1 of the report and through the findings above, UNOCHA and OCHA had developed an impressive range of services and products that were considered of value by many in the humanitarian community operating in Afghanistan. In addition to the numerous coordination forums created around the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan and the Principled Common Programming, UNOCHA offered an extensive set of information documents ranging from detailed Weekly Updates on the humanitarian situation to basic briefing kits for newcomers and visitors as well as thematic papers on various issues of concern to the aid community. UNOCHA also ran the flight operations service that facilitated access to all UN staff as well as personnel of non-UN organizations and donors, and developed its field offices as "service centers" for the humanitarian community.

90.   During the initial phase of the crisis and in the transition period leading to the new UN mission, some important positive aspects of the previous UN coordination services were neglected or lost. Such was the case for the concept of allowing UN field offices to operate as "service centers" for the whole humanitarian community. That concept later fell victim to restrictive interpretations of financial rules.

91.   Another lost opportunity occurred as a result of the incapacity of UNOCHA to maintain the same level of relationship with NGOs after the 11th of September, particularly their intense participation in programming bodies. At the global level, it does not seem that OCHA

is promoting sufficiently its role as a coordinating structure for the whole humanitarian community, particularly NGOs, rather than only for the UN. There is a need for OCHA to undertake a review of its capacity to further develop this essential partnership with NGOs.

92. Gender sensitive approaches are needed in all areas but they are particularly important with regard to planning processes. Despite the issue of gender equality being highlighted in several documents, including the report of the Secretary-General that defined the mission of the UN in Afghanistan, the issue does not seem to have permeated the programs presented through ITAP.

93. The new situation that resulted from the events of 11 September put considerable strain on the UN Coordinator's Public Information Section. OCHA could eventually help identify additional resources to support the function, but, this was staff with little prior experience of humanitarian issues in Afghanistan. Obviously, if OCHA wants to do public information in the future and play a coordination role among specialized PI staff of agencies, it needs a larger number of professional staff of its own. Other information management activities would benefit from additional efforts to develop standard terms of reference (the Humanitarian Information Centers) or standard formats (the SITREPs).

Recommendations:

4. **OCHA should review its current policies and structures with a view to strengthening its partnership with NGOs and ensuring that they can participate effectively in the response to humanitarian crises. This should be done in cooperation with NGOs and Governments and be based upon an analysis of appropriate practices.**

5. **OCHA should clearly define the role of future Humanitarian Information Centers and maintain their dominant focus on production of quality outputs which directly support key humanitarian tasks. It should develop standard terms of reference and disseminate them widely so as to defuse unrealistic expectations. Appropriate linkages with other information sharing mechanisms should be encouraged to improve the quality of information services.**

6. **OCHA should develop a standard SITREP format based on a survey of users' needs and expectations both inside and outside the institution itself. This should be accompanied by guidelines for compilation and distribution. The format should recognize the need for a two-way information flow between field offices and headquarters.**

7. **OCHA should ensure that Public Information Officers with relevant experience in humanitarian emergencies systematically form part of emergency standby teams for deployment under the "surge capacity."**

Lessons:

- UN field offices adopting the concept of «humanitarian service centers» provide more effective coordination and leadership to the entire humanitarian community. Costs related to allowing the use of UN equipment by other members of the humanitarian community should continue to be considered as legitimate charges to the coordination budget.

- Technical resources for gender equality have to be built into planning processes and strategy development from the beginning, including through timely deployment from headquarters. With adequate technical and financial support and proper institutional commitment to gender equality, appeals can better reflect actual needs and avoid marginalization of women.

4. Managing the transition

94. This section examines some of the major difficulties related to the management of the transition from the UN Coordinator/UNOCHA set-up to the new assistance structure of UNAMA. It also looks at the consequences of this excessively lengthy process. This section therefore covers relevant issues referred to under items 3.2, 3.3 and 3.5 of the terms of reference prepared by OCHA.

4.1 UNOCHA in a changing environment

95. By December 2001, it was already clear that a new UN Mission would be put in place. The mission would integrate the political, the humanitarian and the reconstruction portfolios in one unified structure under the overarching authority of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. The SRSG, accompanied by a small team, set up his office in Kabul on 21 December 2001. On the occasion of his visit to Kabul, on 25 January 2002, the Secretary-General announced the appointment of Nigel Fischer as Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (D-SRSG) in charge of the assistance Pillar of UNAMA. By 18 March, the Secretary-General had presented to the General Assembly and the Security Council a document outlining the mandate and structure of UNAMA[21]. The structure described in the Secretary-General's report came into being on 28 March with the adoption of Security Council Resolution S/RES/1401 approving a one year mandate for UNAMA. All coordination activities previously performed by UNOCHA were then subsumed under Pillar 2 of UNAMA responsible for relief, recovery and reconstruction. UNOCHA officially ceased to perform coordination functions on the same date. It nevertheless continued to assist the D-SRSG in building up the new assistance Pillar.

96. One senior official of UNOCHA commented that during the first four months that followed the terrorist attacks of September 2001, the office of the Coordinator for Afghanistan had to go through two "mental revolutions." First, while some of the basic principles of the Strategic Framework remained valid, its institutional architecture had become irrelevant with the new strategy developed by the Secretary-General and his Special Representative. Second, UNOCHA had to learn functioning with a legitimate Government when the aid community was used, since the late 1980's, to function in the absence of

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[21] "The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security" Report of the Secretary-General, UN document A/56/875 – S/2002/278, 18 March 2002.

legitimate or effective Government structures and, more recently, to see its role as that of "a surrogate Government."

97. There is evidence, nevertheless, that UNOCHA participated actively in the discussions that were taking place in New York about the future strategy for UN action in Afghanistan. The evaluation team was given three documents, one produced in October and two others in December 2001 that indicate that UNOCHA and the UN Country Team were actively feeding OCHA and their respective headquarters with a number of considerations and proposals. The October paper, a letter from the UN Coordinator to the ERC, does not go much beyond proposing that the Strategic Framework and Principled Common Programming structure be adapted to the new situation. It proposes an "Ashkabad II" meeting[22] to adapt current strategies and structures to the new Afghan environment. By contrast, the December papers[23] reflect more of the thinking than prevailing in higher UN circles. Interestingly, the document expresses the opinion that certain key and sensitive areas such as protection and human rights monitoring should remain independent from the UN Mission – a view that many continue to share today. The paper continues, nevertheless, to refer to the RCBs, the APB and the ASG as models, perhaps fuelling the emerging perception in some quarters that UNOCHA was fighting a rear guard battle and was engaged in a self-perpetuating exercise.

4.2 Learning to interact with a Government

98. The Donor Alert and subsequent plans and programs, up to and including the ITAP, were prepared in a rush by small teams in Islamabad, Geneva, Rome and New York under pressure for new resources and with deadlines imposed by international conferences. One respondent referred to the ITAP as a "conference-driven document" rather than a comprehensive program. When the document was ready, the Director of the Afghan Assistance Coordination Authority (AACA), a statutory body of the Interim Administration, decided to vet all ITAP projects prior to their submission to donors. The AACA approved all humanitarian projects but rejected some of the longer term activities on which it felt the authorities had not been sufficiently consulted. On that occasion, the aid community realized fully what was meant by the objective of supporting and empowering Afghan authorities. And, indeed, the aid community had been used – in the absence of credible national authorities – to formulate strategies, plans and programs on the basis of information it gathered directly and in consultations with self-appointed leaders and local authorities. UNOCHA and OCHA, like the rest of the aid community, adapted to the new objectives and the new environment. The process was probably much easier, however, for those who were new to the Afghan scene and came from operations where such practices were the rule.

4.3 The establishment of UNAMA's assistance pillar

99.   As mentioned earlier, the appointment of a new D-SRSG for relief, recovery and reconstruction was announced at the end of January 2002. In December, it had become clear already that there would be a new humanitarian leadership and that UNOCHA's role was

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[22] In January 1997, an "International Forum on Assistance to Afghanistan" was held in Ashkabad. The Ashkabad meeting launched the process that eventually led to the creation of the ASG and the formulation of a Strategic Framework.

[23] One is undated and seems to be a discussion paper that served as the basis for the elaboration of the second one entitled "CMG Position Paper on the Proposed UN Mission in Afghanistan" and dated 9 December 2001. The CMG refers to the Crisis Management Group," the "inner" circle of UN agencies around the UN Coordinator and UNOCHA.

coming to an end in its current form. According to most observers, the transition period that then started was much too long. It did not end with the appointment of a new D-SRSG. In fact, UNOCHA continued to function much in the same way as it had done before, with little in-depth coordination with the newly-appointed D-SRSG until he was formally confirmed by the IASC in his functions as Humanitarian Coordinator, a full two months after his appointment had been announced by the Secretary-General.

100. The designation of the new Deputy-SRSG in charge of the assistance pillar occurred late. By contrast, a Deputy-SRSG in charge of political affairs had been appointed at the beginning of December 2001, clarifying already to a large extent the merger of the former UNSMA into UNAMA. On the humanitarian side, additional delays occurred as a result of the long and cumbersome process leading to the appointment of Humanitarian Coordinators through the IASC. The case of Afghanistan clearly shows that these combined and cumulated delays have considerably weakened the UN humanitarian coordination function. This long period of uncertainty and – for staff – anxiety, going from the beginning of December 2001 to the end of March 2002 resulted in a gradual erosion of the authority and credibility of the UN Coordinator and the UNOCHA structure, a situation that could have been avoided.

101. An additional delaying factor, beyond the control of OCHA and UNOCHA, was that the new UN Mission was fully dependent administratively DPKO. With a long experience in mounting UN peacekeeping missions, DPKO has well-established operating and administrative procedures, many of them, however, not necessarily coinciding with the *modus operandi* and requirements of institutions dealing with humanitarian emergencies. OCHA probably did not pay enough attention to these "cultural" differences. The evaluation team was informed that several field requests by the Humanitarian Coordinator for administrative support during the early days of the transition period were ignored by OCHA. In the process of transition, it seems that a lot of the institutional memory and the network of relationships of UNOCHA were lost. In September 2002, for example, the destination of the archives of UNOCHA was still not decided upon.

4.4 Winding down UNOCHA

102. UNOCHA did not plan for its phasing out, nor did OCHA. The terminology commonly used to describe the transition process is that UNOCHA would be "folding into" UNAMA. This hides a simple reality: UNOCHA will have disappeared by the end of October 2002. In the process, some of the former staff of UNOCHA would have found employment in UNAMA, but many would have lost their jobs. Could the process have been managed better? Most senior managers of both UNOCHA and UNAMA are convinced that the transition could have been anticipated earlier and appropriate plans developed in a more timely fashion. The discussions that took place in the IMTF, statements made by the Secretary-General and his Special Representative since the beginning of October, the clear message given through the December report of the Secretary-General and, finally, the appointment of a D-SRSG in charge of humanitarian affairs were ample advance warning of things to come.

103. With regard to staff issues, it is only at the beginning of March 2002, however, that an OCHA-led one week mission took place to conduct "an initial assessment of United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan (UNOCHA) staff concerns and other issues related to the anticipated transition to a new integrated United

Nations mission structure in Afghanistan."[24] A follow-up mission took place between 30 June and 6 July 2002. By that time, staff morale, particularly at the Islamabad headquarters of UNOCHA, was at its lowest. This was the case, in particular, for some 30 staff members of Pakistani origin. The specific case of two professional staff of Pakistani origin illustrates the confusion that existed at the time. The two had been short-listed for posts in UNAMA and had received written offers that were then withdrawn without an explanation.

104. Purely administrative issues also caused some concern. Valuable and often brand new equipment, for example, was simply discarded by UNAMA as it did not conform to standards established by DPKO. A total of several hundred thousand dollars worth of equipment was still awaiting an "administrative outcome" in September 2002. Various questions were also raised on financial matters where some donor reports were still missing. It should be noted that a final audit of UNOCHA has not been performed, a situation that seems abnormal when an institution is being dismantled.

4.5 Conclusions, lessons and recommendations

105. The failure to make timely decisions regarding the appointment of a new Deputy-SRSG and his confirmation as Humanitarian Coordinator as well as the slow and often unadapted administrative support during the transition period have resulted in inordinate delays that, in turn, have generated a gradual erosion of the old coordination structures without a workable alternative put in place for several months. This has weakened the concept of humanitarian coordination within the UN and requires action on the part of OCHA in preparation for future missions. It has been noted, in addition, that OCHA has not yet defined formally its role and responsibility as the UN central humanitarian coordination service vis-à-vis the new humanitarian coordination structure of UNAMA.

106. The winding down of UNOCHA, particularly in terms of staff and financial matters, showed weaknesses that may result partly from the absence or lack of sufficient dedicated human resources and administrative functions within OCHA itself. Pakistan-based national staff of UNOCHA, in particular, would have benefited from greater clarity regarding the future course of action.

Recommendations:

8. **OCHA should develop a "fast track" mechanism for the appointment of Humanitarian Coordinators that either restricts severe delays that can be caused by the IASC procedure or gives the ERC executive authority to appoint a Humanitarian Coordinator in specific circumstances.**

9. **OCHA should commission a final financial audit of UNOCHA and ensure that outstanding equipment and assets are transferred or sold in accordance with financial rules.**

Lesson:
- Timely exit strategies, including phasing out plans should be established well in advance of existing coordination structures being abolished or merged into new structures. Plans should address the needs of existing staff with maximum flexibility with regards to rules and contractual status. They should also foresee the transfer of equipment and assets as well as a thorough audit of the winding down service.

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5. Promoting gender equality

107. This section covers most of the issues deriving from the special focus assigned by OCHA to the evaluation team with regard to gender equality. It examines some of UNOCHA's activities related to gender issues and looks at the broader OCHA perspective on gender.

5.1 The UN cuts the post of Gender Advisor

> *"UN Agencies and their implementing partners remain uncertain about their roles in promoting gender equality: there is considerable difference of opinion, and notable tension among these partners. The UN staff are notably unprepared to confront the challenges of reversing gender discrimination; few agencies ensure accountability for gender sensitivity or reward responsiveness to gender concerns.[25]"*

108. From March 1999 to June 2001, the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), through a grant to UNDP, funded a Gender Advisor attached to the UN Coordinator's Office. But it seems that the incumbent did not fully correspond to the profile of the post and, following a DFID evaluation, funding was withdrawn. The UN Coordinator's Office then proposed the creation of a new post at a lower grade that would report to the Human Rights Advisor. A discussion followed between various stakeholders within the UN with the result that by 11 September 2001, the function was unattended. Unfortunately, while sensitive to the issue of gender equality and the needs of women, the human rights unit did not have the resources to specifically devote to gender issues and little support was available at a senior level.

109. In Afghanistan, there was no comprehensive overarching gender strategy into which the various agencies could fit. The response to edict no. 8, in 2000[26], was probably the best example of inter-agency coordination on the gender front. The UN Coordinator, with participation from the UN and NGOs, established a small task force represented by both male and female members. A study by two external consultants reviewed the implications and responses to the edict[27]. The report related to Edict no. 8 underlined the overall weakness, to date, of efforts to operationalize "gender mainstreaming," and an absence of apt leadership, co-ordination, co-operation, and information sharing on gender issues.[28]" Disagreement within the UN on the conclusions of the study resulted in a narrow circulation of the report, under cover of a letter qualifying UN support for it.

110. The report on Edict no. 8 also noted that with "rare exceptions" efforts focused primarily on soliciting women's presence in programs, but little attention was paid to measuring or increasing women's share in decision-making or in prioritization of needs. In his 2002 report on coordination, Nicholas Stockton[29] also refers to the divergence in language and the lack of understanding of the various concepts by the humanitarian and development stakeholders,

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[25] Mission Report on Afghanistan, Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, 1998 (the mission took place in November 1997).
[26] Edict no 8 issued by the Taliban regime in 2000 barred women from working with the United Nations or NGOs outside the health sector.
[27] "Female Employment in Afghanistan: A Study of Decree #8: Interagency Task Force Study on the Decree and Its Implications," Matthew Fielden and Sippi Azerbaijani-Moghadam, 2001.
[28] *Ibid.*
[29] "Strategic Coordination in Afghanistan," Nicholas Stockton, Issues Papers Series, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, August 2002.

including gender issues, and highlights the need for a common gender equality strategy for Afghanistan.

111. The ITAP itself was an example of absence of attention to gender issues. Out of the $1.77 billion budget, it seems that very little was allocated to activities specifically related to gender issues and it was unclear how this was allocated within sectors[30]. As noted in an assessment of the ITAP process, "the rhetoric in the ITAP text is not matched with a well developed set of proposals from agencies. Additionally, issues of gender equality did not in any way get effectively/adequately integrated into the sectoral strategies. Nor was gender equity an obvious goal in key agency programmes…[31]"

5.2 OCHA: promoting gender equality among the humanitarian community

112. OCHA had a limited role in supporting the Afghanistan operation in terms of promoting gender equality. The evaluation team found no indication that, during the Afghan crisis, OCHA addressed issues of gender equality with the media, although there was much interest on their part. There is, nevertheless, a role to play for the ERC and OCHA in promoting gender equality in collaboration with the partner agencies, donors, government and civil society. Many organizations have highlighted the fact they would appreciate OCHA taking the lead in gender-related initiatives both at field and headquarters level. Had there been stronger inter-agency coordination on the gender front in Afghanistan, much could have been gained and a number of problems could have been avoided, including that of improper and culturally insensitive behavior by UN staff.

113. Although OCHA has made official commitments to gender mainstreaming[32], many respondents commented that gender equality is not mainstreamed, or even clearly understood within the institution. A variety of respondents, within and outside the UN and including women and men from OCHA, have described OCHA's institutional environment as not being supportive of gender equality issues. Despite the rhetoric, there appears to be a lack of any real commitment from a large majority of senior managers regarding critical issues of gender equality. Report after report read for this study, written by UN agencies, donors, consultants, OCHA staff and others, demonstrate an incredible lack of attention to the issue.

114. The limited progress to date has included efforts to mainstream issues of gender equality into the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP), mostly due to the support by the relevant IASC sub-working group. OCHA's role in the sub-group, however, has been termed as marginal. There has been some attempt at gender sensitization training by the Geneva focal point, but there seems to have been a lack of interest demonstrated by management in the activity.

115. Currently there is no individual staff at headquarters dedicated solely to gender issues with the level of experience, seniority and time to adequately fill the role of focal point or advisor. There are two gender focal points, respectively in New York and Geneva. The focal

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[30] ITAP documents prepared prior to May 2002 show "gender" as a separate sector accounting for less than one percent (actually 0,7 % only) of total requirements. Subsequent revisions of ITAP have adopted a sectoral presentation based on the Afghan Interim Authority Development Framework in which gender is not a specific sector. It is now much more difficult to identify gender activities and the exact amount of resources devoted to related activities.

[31] "End of Mission Report to OCHA," Pat Duggan, Regional Humanitarian Affairs Officer, April 2002.

[32] As highlighted in the Ottawa Paper #5, prepared by OCHA in March 2001, in which OCHA committed to the preparation of two documents; one for gender staffing profile, and the other for mainstreaming gender perspective within its core functions.

point in Geneva is also a full time desk Officer for West Africa. In New York, the focal point has a full time portfolio for protection issues.

5.3 Conclusions and recommendations

116. The absence of a very explicit and visible commitment to gender mainstreaming by OCHA at all levels limits the capacity of the UN to foster an adequate integration of gender considerations in humanitarian strategies and plans. There is a clear gap in terms of policies and implementation, and a role for stronger coordinated action for gender equality in humanitarian assistance operations as well as a role to monitor and track financial commitments and activities. OCHA is well positioned to fill this gap, and to bring the humanitarian assistance community forward on these issues; to ensure that gender equality is placed and maintained on the agenda and integrated into all advocacy initiatives. For this to occur, however, OCHA will require additional resources (both human and financial) and will need to invest in professional development of staff within this sector. OCHA's efforts to obtain the necessary funding from donors would be helped by the development of a clear and comprehensive strategy and plan related to gender issues.

Recommendations:

10. OCHA should develop a comprehensive gender equality strategy and action plan that should include :
  i)   a review of all core functions of OCHA with a view to adopting specific objectives and concrete plans in each sector of activity;
  ii)   a review of human resources policies and practice, including the training of staff at headquarters and in the field;
  iii) the creation of fully dedicated senior posts of gender advisors;
  iv)   the establishment of an appropriate field structure to support the objective in larger operations.

11. OCHA should take the lead in promoting the development of country specific gender strategies in countries with important humanitarian activities. The development of such strategies should be undertaken with full participation of the broader humanitarian community, including NGOs and women's groups.

6. Management: serving field operations

117. This sixth section of the report deals with internal management issues, with particular emphasis on two of the three major objectives of the Change Management Process started in 2000 by OCHA. Both of theseobjectives concern the wish of OCHA to support better field operations. The report examines the issues listed under item 3.5 of the TORs provided by OCHA in that particular light.

6.1 National staff "holding the fort"

118. By 13 September 2001, the United Nations had evacuated all of its 75 international staff from Afghanistan. Several hundred international staff from NGOs – many with support from the UN – and from the ICRC had also left the country. The humanitarian wing of the UN was acutely conscious, however, that essential life-saving assistance continued to be necessary for up to six million Afghans already identified as vulnerable in August. International UN staff

was allowed back after mid-November. This absence of over two months has been criticized by some of the NGOs that sent their staff back much earlier to certain areas of Afghanistan. This has often left the impression that the UN Security Coordinator (UNSECOORD) gave priority to political rather than humanitarian considerations.

119. The evacuation of its international staff by the UN meant that national staff often found themselves facing the difficulty of dealing with suspicious and often outright hostile local authorities while "keeping the flag up" and maintaining a minimum of activity. National staff interviewed by the evaluation team were justifiably proud of their achievements during that period although they also felt that they had received little recognition for their efforts. Once the international staff returned, in larger numbers and with many newcomers, national staff often had to return to more routine tasks and many considered that their experience was dismissed all too easily. The trauma resulting from the pressure of work under the Taliban was compounded by the difficulties of reintegrating a "normal" environment. That situation is very much the same in almost all cases where international staff is evacuated. The evaluation team had wanted to make a recommendation to OCHA regarding the need for stress counseling for national staff emerging from such situations. In New York, however, the team was told that such assistance was equally missing for international OCHA staff serving under difficult circumstances.

120. Numerous national officers interviewed considered that their safety was not given sufficient consideration. They also confirmed that they were not given precise terms of reference and instructions in anticipation of a possible evacuation of international staff. It is clear that in a volatile situation such as Afghanistan where international staff had been evacuated on a number of occasions already, prudence should have dictated that security and evacuation plans define to the extent possible, the conditions and parameters under which appropriately selected national staff of OCHA and agencies remaining at the duty station were expected to operate. Apparently, this was left to the initiative of each Regional Coordinator and local representatives of agencies. In one field location, national staff had to sit together and select the national officer who would assume a lead role among them.

6.2 Documenting operations

121. In preparing for its fieldwork, the evaluation team asked to be provided with internal OCHA documents that would clearly state what the objectives and priorities the institution set for itself at the beginning of the crisis were and how they were revised periodically. It appears that no such documents existed. The nearest thing to a "mission statement" that could be made available consisted of portions of appeal documents that referred to the coordination function or notes prepared for donors when seeking contributions specifically for expenditure related to coordination. It appears that there have been no documents prepared for the information of OCHA's own staff at headquarters and in the field analyzing the new crisis and the role of the institution within the UN and among the humanitarian community. Nothing that gave the "party line" and could serve as a reference document for staff exposed to questions from Afghan leaders, other organizations, donors or the media. In field offices, staff confirmed that they did not have a clear vision of institutional policy directions.

122. A recent paper on strategic coordination in Afghanistan noted "a strong attachment exhibited by many staff to their mobile phones and other verbal communication gadgetry."[33]

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[33] "Strategic Coordination in Afghanistan," Nicholas Stockton, Issues Paper Series, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, August 2002.

This return to an "oral" culture and the generalization of "instant" communication methods have greatly reduced the recourse to written documents. Teleconferences and telephone conversations rarely leave a written trace and e-mails are often simply kept on the hard drive of personal computers or laptops. Written documentation in an easily accessible and usable form is difficult to come by within OCHA. Perhaps the humanitarian could learn from the military who very often assign an officer – referred to a an "historian" in some national contingents – with the sole task of recording important events, data and decisions for future reference and research.

6.3 The Change Management Process

123. In May 2000, OCHA launched a Change Management Process (CMP) with the goal of determining "how OCHA can:
- Provide better humanitarian coordination in support of the operational agencies, through a more widely accepted concept of coordination;
- Support better its field offices; and
- Manage its own staff in order to ensure maximum effectiveness"[34]

While many issues have already been or are being addressed by OCHA, many remain unsolved. The March 2002 report on "Perceptions of Staff and Managers on the OCHA Change Management Process,"[35] noted that a number of key issues have not sufficiently been addressed and the momentum and expectations created by the process had largely been lost. In reviewing OCHA's role in the context of the Afghan crisis, the evaluation team was particularly mindful of the stated CMP objectives of providing improved support to field offices and staff.

6.4 Improving internal coordination

124. OCHA's management is characterized by the "two headquarters" structure in New York and Geneva and by an important delegation of authority to a Humanitarian Coordinator based in the field. This triangular relationship calls for efficient internal coordination to maintain institutional cohesion and effectiveness. OCHA's intensive use of teleconferencing throughout the Afghan crisis was one of the internal coordination mechanisms that helped maintain cohesion and accelerate exchange of information and operational decision-making. During the early, very intensive phase of the crisis, daily telephone conferences were organized between OCHA New York, OCHA Geneva and the UN Coordinator/UNOCHA in Islamabad and later in Kabul. During the period of deployment of an OCHA liaison officer in Tampa, the incumbent also participated. Teleconferences continue to this date, although they now take place on a weekly basis. This has constituted the most intensive use of that method of communication in OCHA so far and will no doubt be used in future operations. It should be noted, however, that this success is largely due to the strict discipline imposed by the Head of the New York Afghanistan Task Force who was chairing the teleconferences.

125. The task force itself is a mechanism recommended in the Change Management Process[36]. It is meant to be operational at short notice for major emergencies and crises and should include staff drawn from relevant administrative units. The Task Force met early in the New York morning so as to have the daily teleconference with Geneva and Islamabad or Kabul during respective working hours. It was tasked with preparing a daily briefing for the

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[34] "Strengthening OCHA: Report of the Change Manager," New York, 29 November 2000.
[35] Report by Piers Campbell and Judith Hushagan, MANNET, 31 March 2002.
[36] Recommendation 3.6 of the CMP report (full reference in note 34 above)

ERC and the Secretary-General. In addition, a number of operational decisions could be made through the Task Force and the teleconferences it ran.

6.5 The "surge capacity"

126. The notion of "surge capacity" refers to the rapid deployment of additional staff to support field offices when the existing human resources are insufficient to meet an increased workload in a new emergency. Based on recommendations[37] of the CMP, OCHA has recently put in place a permanent standby deployment roster of experienced headquarters staff. In addition, the UNDAC teams are now mobilized occasionally for longer deployment periods. Despite reiterated requests, however, the evaluation team could not obtain a comprehensive list of short-term staff deployed on an emergency basis for the Afghan crisis. This is a reflection of the administrative confusion that prevailed, due in part to the presence of a separate and independent UNOCHA administrative unit in Geneva that did not always coordinate fully with other OCHA support services. The only usable document available to the team indicates that by 11 October 2001, a total of seventeen additional international staff had been, or were in the process of, being deployed.[38]

127. Managers interviewed in the field were generally appreciative, however, of OCHA's capacity to deploy emergency staff in a timely fashion. Some confusion occurred, particularly concerning deployment to countries neighboring Afghanistan when OCHA Geneva, and UNOCHA in Islamabad took parallel and poorly coordinated action. The end result was the simultaneous presence in some of the countries concerned of a team of OCHA emergency staff sent to help the respective Resident/Humanitarian Coordinators and their UN country teams, and the UNOCHA Regional Coordination Officers and other international staff sent to operate in a cross-border mode. There were also strong differences of opinion between the UN Coordinator/UNOCHA and OCHA Geneva about the necessity of emergency deployments, principally to countries surrounding Afghanistan. These problems reinforce the point made earlier of the need for a single senior manager to direct large-scale operations.

128. While the "surge capacity" in the end succeeded in getting support out relatively rapidly, OCHA failed in following up with the assignment of more permanent personnel either to take over from the temporary emergency staff or to perform new functions. As an example, two posts related to IDPs were still vacant in September 2002, seven months after job descriptions had been approved and five months after funding, at least for one of them, had been obtained from a donor. Despite the request for additional assistance to the regions, many positions remained unfilled during the crisis, putting far too much pressure on existing staff. In addition, field staff commented that requests for basic communications supplies went unanswered, as did constant requests for administrative support. The deployment of additional staff was not matched by expanded support, especially in administrative capacity.

129. The unacceptable delays in assigning staff was partly due to uncertainties prevailing as to the future structure of the UN Mission that even made it difficult to decide on the type of contract or the actual employer. At times, pure negligence was responsible as in the case of a candidate who submitted four successive Personal Information Forms (the UN P-11 form) that were repeatedly misplaced at headquarters. But more fundamentally, the problem results

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[37] Recommendations 2.27 to 2.34 of the Change Manager's report (full reference in note 34 above).
[38] Internal worksheet handed over to the team during an interview with OCHA's Field Coordination Support Section in Geneva.

from a basic structural incapacity for OCHA – as a Secretariat entity – to operate as a field-oriented emergency institution. This issue is discussed in more detail later in this report.

6.6 Getting the right staff

130. At all levels of the operation, but particularly in field locations, there is a general consensus among the humanitarian community that the quality of coordination owes much to the personal and professional qualities of staff. Officers with previous experience in other operations, with a good knowledge of the various mandates and strengths of UN agencies and major NGOs, and with strong leadership qualities command the respect required to develop the form of consensual coordination that remains the most realistic approach available to OCHA. However, many respondents echoed the fact that OCHA does not always staff key field positions with individuals who have the requisite skills and experience. In countries like Afghanistan, this is not always an easy task, and the difficulty in deploying the right individual may also be due partly to the terms and conditions offered to OCHA staff. Employers have to invest in quality and reward good performance.

131. Most of the officers interviewed by the evaluation team (both national and international) considered that the briefing they received had been inadequate. It was noted in particular that little information was available to new recruits about the specific tasks and functions of coordination. OCHA staff is also required to provide analysis and develop contingency measures, but this requires specific skills that many of the field staff have never been trained in. The provision of adequate orientation, training and follow-up support is essential.

6.7 Developing a culture of support to the field

132. The level of dissatisfaction of staff with conditions of service, as well as living and working conditions was already high during the UNOCHA phase. The uncertainties accompanying the transition to UNAMA only aggravated that perception. Staff expected to coordinate and lead the effort of the humanitarian community find themselves with conditions of service much less favorable than those of colleagues working in operational UN agencies. One of the major objectives of the Change Management Process was for OCHA to provide better support to field operations and staff. The picture emerging from Afghanistan is one of an appalling failure to support staff and provide them with acceptable living and working conditions. The excuse of difficult local conditions appears irrelevant when most other humanitarian actors have managed to address the basic requirements of their staff in a much more effective and timely manner.

133. A number of cases were brought to the attention of the evaluation team of staff, international and national, not having received salaries for several months even though they had valid contracts. Others were without a contract and could not get answers to their queries from what they perceived as totally unconcerned headquarters' services. But, for staff, problems were not limited to salaries and contracts. All UN operational agencies have developed formal systems of assisted periods of rest and recuperation from stress and isolation away from duty stations with important hardship factors. OCHA staff, as part of the UN Secretariat staff, is not eligible for such benefits. No specific provision is made for the particular needs of female staff working in difficult environments.

134. In addition, there does not appear to be a systematic effort to rotate UNOCHA staff between HQ and the field, resulting in HQ management being perceived as insensitive or

unaware of the realities of field operations. OCHA staff perceives the administrative and personnel rules and procedures governing their work as not being adapted to their work environment. The problem has been identified in several evaluation reports, in the Change Management project as well as in a 2002 follow-up report on staff perceptions[39]. There does not appear to be significant improvement.

135. This fundamental contradiction between a humanitarian coordinator's office wishing to support field operations and the reality of staff in the field being let down by the system has plagued DHA and OCHA since they were created. The Change Management Process report of 2000 had identified the problem already. This was not the first time. Over the years, countless reports and reviews have noted the contradiction mentioned above, relating it to the rigidity of a Secretariat human resources policy for which field service – particularly in working and living conditions different from those of western capitals – is an alien notion. In 1998, an internal review of conditions of service of OCHA field staff[40] had made 20 recommendations for improvement. A cursory review of the recommendations reveals that only about 20 percent have been acted upon. Donors are alerted to the issue: a 2002 report prepared by DFID[41] notes that "…terms of service, staff contracts and opportunities for career development, especially for field staff, are issues of absolutely fundamental importance for OCHA and its future."

136. The administrative problems linked to improving support to field operations are not limited to human resources issues. OCHA has difficulties administering funds in a manner adapted to rapidly evolving humanitarian situations. This institutional limitation largely explains why OCHA allowed the Afghan Emergency Trust Fund to survive over the years as an independent fund. It also explains the difficulties OCHA encountered to administer funds contributed by a particular donor to allow OCHA to support NGO activities in Afghanistan.

6.8 Conclusions, lessons and recommendations

137. The crisis that hit Afghanistan starting on 11 September 2001 was the first major humanitarian situation in which the management principles and precepts deriving from OCHA's Change Management Process were actually tested. It is clear in retrospect that OCHA and UNOCHA staff would have benefited from a more conscious and transparent effort to develop better communication between management and staff and to document events and major decisions more thoroughly. The institutional objectives of OCHA were not clearly defined and disseminated and, as noted earlier in the report, there was confusion with regard to internal responsibility and accountability for the operation. Nevertheless, coordination techniques such as the New York Afghanistan Task Force and the intensive use of teleconferencing proved useful for internal information sharing and coherence.

138. OCHA generally provided support to the field operation through the deployment of its own staff in an emergency mode (the "surge capacity") in an efficient and timely manner. External recruitment, however, suffered delays that indicate a fundamental weakness of the institution in managing human resources.

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[39] "Perceptions of Staff and Managers on the OCHA Change Management Process," report prepared for OCHA by Piers Campbell and Judith Hushagen, MANNET, 31 March 2002.

[40] "Review of Terms and Conditions of OCHA Field Staff," Arjun Katoch, OCHA, June 1998.

[41] Evaluation of the DFID/OCHA Partnership process, September 30, 2002.

139. National staff performed well in Afghanistan during the more than two months of evacuation of their international colleagues. They played an essential role in ensuring that the UN could continue to provide assistance even during the bombing campaign. But a number of measures could have been taken to prepare national staff better for such situations and provide them – and their international colleagues – with support in dealing with possible trauma resulting from highly stressful situations.

140. The most striking management weakness, however, remains OCHA's incapacity to provide its staff with conditions of service, and working and living environments that would compare to those available to most other humanitarian workers. OCHA's capacity to provide leadership and coordination would be greatly improved if it was capable of always attracting staff of the highest caliber and, most importantly, retaining them. The human resources and the administrative and financial systems under which OCHA operates are woefully incompatible with the ambition of becoming a field-oriented humanitarian coordination service.

141. There is ample evidence that the senior management of OCHA has tried over the years to address this issue from within the Secretariat system. It has not been successful. Perhaps other methods are now required. A number of Governments are strongly committed to supporting the concept and practice of effective humanitarian coordination in the UN. Their voice in appropriate legislative bodies of the United Nations could certainly strengthen the case of a more efficient and field-oriented coordination service.

Recommendations:

12. **OCHA should make available stress counseling adapted to both national and international staff whenever justified by the nature of the operation. Related costs should be considered as a legitimate budget item for the coordination function.**

13. **OCHA should issue precise instructions related to planning for safety (including possible relocation), roles, and responsibilities of national staff as well as the overall organization of the UN humanitarian presence during periods of evacuation of international personnel. That requirement should be considered as standard for all contingency and security plans. National staff should be associated more closely to management processes, including contingency and security planning. OCHA must ensure that all staff receive appropriate security training.**

14. **OCHA should develop situation-specific mission statements when engaging in new emergencies or in totally new phases of ongoing operations. Mission statements and other important policy documents should be shared with staff at all levels and revised as required.**

15. **OCHA should systematically assign a staff member to perform the function of « historian » in large-scale emergencies and crises. The function should service the entire humanitarian community.**

16. **OCHA should develop a standard briefing/induction kit systematically provided to staff assigned to emergency situations and containing general information on coordination functions and humanitarian work, including codes of conduct.**

Situation specific information should be prepared for all new emergencies. It should be mandatory for all new recruits to undergo an orientation/briefing session, which should incorporate a section on issues related to cultural awareness and gender equality.

17. **OCHA, in close coordination with Governments supporting humanitarian coordination and determined to act in the appropriate fora, should:**
i) **support its emergency deployment of staff with appropriate and timely administrative backup personnel, including personnel dedicated solely to assisting operational staff in establishing adequate working and living conditions;**
ii) **review emergency/disaster-specific procedures and administrative frameworks with the aim of implementing changes, which maximize speed and flexibility in relief delivery, including increased delegation of authority to appropriate field personnel;**
iii) **develop staff as well as financial and administrative rules and procedures that would enable it to become a field-oriented UN department providing its staff with conditions of work and service at par with major operational agencies of the system.**

Lessons:
- Decisions on evacuation and return of international UN staff should be area-specific rather than country-wide. The UN should recognize the usefulness of a more systematic sharing of information with NGOs on security issues.

- Recognizing that staff responsible for coordination at field level must display aptitudes of leadership, knowledge of humanitarian action and of the UN system, as well solid experience of field operations, cultural sensitivity and language ability, OCHA's recruitment procedure should aim at ensuring the highest quality of staff upon recruitment or secondment. The capacity of OCHA to attract and retain highly competent staff should also rest on a culture of effective support for the creation of appropriate working and living conditions.

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7. Overall conclusions and recommendations

142. Conclusions and, as appropriate, lessons and recommendations appear at the end of each of the preceding sections of this report. The purpose of the present section is to identify the overall key conclusions and provide a consolidated set of lessons and recommendations

Overall conclusions

- By 11 September 2001, the UN could rely on a competent, efficient and active coordination structure through the Office of the UN Coordinator that included UNOCHA. However, tensions with the political wing of the UN in Afghanistan and, within the UN Coordinator's Office, between the development and the humanitarian components had not been resolved and would affect attitudes in the next phase.

- The strength of the then existing coordination structure allowed OCHA and UNOCHA to orchestrate a successful response to the initial phase of the new emergency, particularly during the military campaign by the Coalition. OCHA and UNOCHA, in cooperation with

UNDP and a number of agencies also developed contingency plans, programmes and appeals in a timely manner. The quality of that planning, however, suffered from the haste in which projects and programmes had to be put together with the result that less than optimum attention was given to defining strategies.

- The transition period from the UN Coordinator/UNOCHA humanitarian coordination structure to a new structure under UNAMA was excessively long. This has contributed to a serious erosion of the authority of the UN Coordinator and his capacity – and that of OCHA and UNOCHA – to provide humanitarian leadership and effective coordination. These delays could have been avoided.

- At headquarters level, confusion arose from the failure to appoint a single senior manager for the Afghan operation with authority delegated from the ERC and defined accountability. The absence of clearly defined institutional objectives or mission statement also weakened internal cohesion.

- The Afghan situation has highlighted two major policy issues that still need to be addressed fully. The first one concerns the need to ensure that the basic and universal principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian action are upheld even in situations such as Afghanistan where the UN humanitarian effort is linked closely to the political agenda. The second one concerns the relationship between the humanitarian community and an emerging "military humanitarianism."

- The response of OCHA and UNOCHA to the crisis in Afghanistan did not illustrate an explicit and visible commitment to gender mainstreaming. OCHA needs to provide stronger leadership to the humanitarian community with respect to gender equality and gender sensitivity.

- During the transition period, some of the major strengths of UNOCHA, including its intensive dialogue with NGOs and the utilization of field offices as humanitarian service centers, were neglected. Additional efforts are required to ensure that positive elements from the previous phase are not simply discarded.

- National staff has played a most important role, particularly during the long period of evacuation of international staff. Such situations can be anticipated and prepared as part of contingency and security planning.

- Finally, Afghanistan has illustrated once more that the capacity of OCHA to provide effective coordination in the field hinges on the appropriateness of human resources, administrative and financial rules and procedures. There is still a fundamental contradiction between OCHA's stated objective of being a field-oriented coordinator and its capacity to support staff and field offices.

Recommendations:

i) OCHA should take the lead in developing guidelines meant to ensure that basic principles of humanitarian action are upheld systematically, including in UN Missions where humanitarian assistance is closely associated with political objectives. Such guidelines should include mechanisms to monitor respect of norms, standards and principles of humanitarian assistance in all operations.

ii)   Recent developments regarding the humanitarian dimension of military strategy have long-term implications for the humanitarian community. This emerging military doctrine should be analyzed further through an OCHA-led exercise designed to develop a policy framework and revised operational guidelines for adoption by the IASC.

iii) For each major operation, a single senior OCHA manager must be given a clear lead role with full authority delegated by the ERC.

iv) OCHA should review its current policies and structures with a view to strengthening partnership with NGOs and ensuring that they can participate effectively in the response to humanitarian crises. This should be done in cooperation with NGOs and Governments and be based upon an analysis of appropriate practices.

v)   OCHA should clearly define the role of future Humanitarian Information Centers and maintain their dominant focus on production of quality outputs which directly support key humanitarian tasks. It should develop standard terms of reference and disseminate them widely so as to defuse unrealistic expectations. Appropriate linkages with other information sharing mechanisms should be encouraged to improve the quality of information services.

vi) OCHA should develop a standard SITREP format based on a survey of users' needs and expectations both inside and outside the institution itself. This should be accompanied by guidelines for compilation and distribution. The format should recognize the need for a two-way information flow between field offices and headquarters.

vii) OCHA should ensure that Public Information Officers with relevant experience in humanitarian emergencies systematically form part of emergency standby teams for deployment under the "surge capacity."

viii) OCHA should develop a "fast track" mechanism for the appointment of Humanitarian Coordinators that either restricts severe delays that can be caused by the IASC procedure or gives the ERC executive authority to appoint a Humanitarian Coordinator in specific circumstances.

ix) OCHA should commission a final financial audit of UNOCHA and ensure that outstanding equipment and assets are transferred or sold in accordance with financial rules.

x)   OCHA should develop a comprehensive gender equality strategy and action plan that should include :

   a) a review of all core functions of OCHA with a view to adopting specific objectives and concrete plans in each sector of activity ;
   b) a review of human resources policies and practice, including the training of staff at headquarters and in the field;
   c) the creation of fully dedicated senior posts of gender advisors ;
   d) the establishment of appropriate field structure to support the objective in larger operations.

xi)   OCHA should take the lead in promoting the development of country specific gender strategies in countries with important humanitarian activities. The development of such strategies should be undertaken with full participation of the broader humanitarian community, including NGOs and women's groups.

xii) OCHA should make available stress counseling adapted to both national and international staff whenever justified by the nature of the operation. Related costs should be considered as a legitimate budget item for the coordination function.

xiii)   OCHA should issue precise instructions related to planning for safety (including possible relocation), roles, and responsibilities of national staff as well as the overall organization of the UN humanitarian presence during periods of evacuation of international personnel. That requirement should be considered as standard for all contingency and security plans. National staff should be associated more closely to management processes, including contingency and security planning. OCHA must ensure that all staff receive appropriate security training.

xiv) OCHA should develop situation-specific mission statements when engaging in new emergencies or in totally new phases of ongoing operations. Mission statements and other important policy documents should be shared with staff at all levels and revised as required.

xv) OCHA should systematically assign a staff member to perform the function of « historian » in large-scale emergencies and crises. The function should service the entire humanitarian community.

xvi) OCHA should develop a standard briefing/induction kit systematically provided to staff assigned to emergency situations and containing general information on coordination functions and humanitarian work, including codes of conduct. Situation specific information should be prepared for all new emergencies. It should be mandatory for all new recruits to undergo an orientation/briefing session, which should incorporate a section on issues related to cultural awareness and gender equality.

xvii) OCHA, in close coordination with Governments supporting humanitarian coordination and determined to act in the appropriate fora, should:
   a) support its emergency deployment of staff with appropriate and timely administrative backup personnel, including personnel dedicated solely to assisting operational staff in establishing adequate working and living conditions;
   b) review emergency/disaster-specific procedures and administrative frameworks with the aim of implementing changes, which maximize speed and flexibility in relief delivery, including increased delegation of authority to appropriate field personnel;
   c) develop staff as well as financial and administrative rules and procedures that would enable it to become a field-oriented UN department providing its staff with conditions of work and service at par with major operational agencies of the system.

 Lessons to be applied

a) Existing structures and definitions of responsibility and accountability do not necessarily correspond to the requirements of particular large-scale emergencies. When there is a need to modify a management approach originally designed for « quieter » emergencies, this should be done rapidly and in a fully transparent manner.

b) Coordination mechanisms established under normal operational circumstances tend to favor a broad participation and an information-sharing approach. In times of crisis, coordination mechanisms with a strictly limited participation are more effective as long as pressure for enlargement can be resisted.

c) UN field offices adopting the concept of «humanitarian service centers» provide more effective coordination and leadership to the entire humanitarian community. Costs related to allowing the use of UN equipment by other members of the humanitarian community should continue to be considered as legitimate charges to the coordination budget.

d) Technical resources for gender equality have to be built into planning processes and strategy development from the beginning, including through timely deployment from headquarters. With adequate technical and financial support and proper institutional commitment to gender equality, appeals can better reflect actual needs and avoid marginalization of women.

e) Timely exit strategies, including phasing out plans should be established well in advance of existing coordination structures being abolished or merged into new structures. Plans should address the needs of existing staff with maximum flexibility with regards to rules and contractual status. They should also foresee the transfer of equipment and assets as well as a thorough audit of the winding down service.

f) Decisions on evacuation and return of international UN staff should be area-specific rather than country-wide. The UN should recognize the usefulness of a more systematic sharing of information with NGOs on security issues.

g) Recognizing that staff responsible for coordination at field level must display aptitudes of leadership, knowledge of humanitarian action and of the UN system as well solid experience of field operations, cultural sensitivity and language ability, OCHA's recruitment procedure should aim at ensuring the highest quality of staff upon recruitment or secondment. The capacity of OCHA to attract and retain highly competent staff should also rest on a culture of effective support for the creation of appropriate working and living conditions.

A word of thanks

The Evaluation Team is particularly grateful for the support and guidance provided by Susanne Frueh and Bernard Broughton of the Evaluation and Studies Unit of OCHA. In all locations visited, designated UN focal points have supported the work of the team members, helping them assemble documentation and organize interviews in addition to providing valued advice. Christian Skoog in Geneva, Alex Costy and Charles Petrie in Kabul, Abu Abu-Diek in Herat, Farhana Faruki in Mazar-i-Sharif as well as Antonio Donini, Norah Niland and Tariq Zuberi in Islamabad have provided this invaluable support to the team. A word of thanks also to all of the humanitarian workers who have spared time to share their experience, knowledge and comments.

about the Team

Carrol Faubert, a former staff of UNHCR, has been involved at senior decision-making level in most of the defining humanitarian crisis and emergencies of the past decade. As a senior consultant with Abacus International Management since 2001, he has undertaken work with the Commission on Human Security and the UN-DPKO prior to leading this external evaluation for OCHA.

Laurie Clifford is an independent consultant, who works primarily for the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and various national and international NGOs. The majority of her work has been in the area of social development, gender equality and results based management. She has extensive experience in South Asia, including conflict zones.

Humayun Hamidzada, has a master's degree in Humanitarian Assistance from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy coupled with over ten years of professional experience with the UN system, donors, NGOs, corporate sector and academic/research institutions covering Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Central Asia, DRC and the United States. A native of Afghanistan, he has a particular research and operational interest in the United Nations and international organizations, complex political and humanitarian emergencies and countries in transition.

Colin Reynolds holds Bachelors of Science and Masters of Regional Science (international economics and development planning) Degrees. His special interests include design of community-based peace building initiatives, and monitoring & evaluation in conflict/emergency/disaster scenarios. He is currently 'Monitoring Systems Designer' with AusAID's Office of Review and Evaluation and recently returned from International Peace Monitoring Team (IPMT) duties in Solomon Islands. His focus to date, has been in the Asia-Pacific. He volunteered his own time to participate in this evaluation.

Team Itinerary   **APPENDIX I**

Date	Organization
Aug. 8	DGO/UNDP, OCHA
9	CONCERN, UN-DPA, OCHA and UNDP
25	**Travel to Geneva**
26	OCHA, Team Meeting
27	OCHA, WFP
28	ICRC, IASC, UNHCR, WHO, ICVA, IFRC, SCHR, OCHA
29	UNICEF, UNDP, OHCHR, IOM, USAID-DART (by telephone)
30	**Travel to Kabul**
31	Security Briefing, UNDP, UNAMA
Sept. 1	AACA, UNAMA
2	Head of Agencies Meeting, Embassy of Iran, Embassy of China, Norwegian Embassy, UNDP, UNHCR
3	Team Meeting, ECHO, UNHCR
4	Meeting note write ups, UNAMA, UNHCR, ECHA
5	UNAMA
6	UNAMA
7	Team Meeting and write ups
8	ACBAR, UNICEF, UNAMA, AIMS
9-12	**Field trips to Herat and Mazar-i-Sharif** (see schedules below)
12	Field trip, Herat **Mazar-i-Sharif Team travel to Kabul**, WHO
13	Field trip, Herat
14	**Herat Team travel to Kabul**, Habitat
15	**Travel to Islamabad**, DFID
16	UNOCHA, UNHCR. UNOCHA, SDC
17	**Travel to Kabul**, AERU, UNIFEM
18	Team Meeting, Afghan Women's Network (AWN), European Commission, UNAMA, Team meet
19	Interim Government, WFP, Coalition, UNICEF, National NGOs (AGHCO, IBNSINA, CHA, HAFO, NPO/RRAA, ACLU, ACBAR), UNAMA debriefing
20	Travel to Shomali Plains, Team Meeting
21&22	**Travel to Geneva**
23	Debriefing with OCHA, additional interviews with OCHA, UNHCR
24	HAP, OCHA, UNHCR, former UN Coordinator (by telephone), OCHA New York
25	**Travel to New York**
26	OCHA
27	Team Meeting, OCHA debriefing, DAW, OCHA
Field Mission Schedules	
Date	**Organization**
Herat Field Mission	
9 Sept.	Travel, Security Briefing, UNAMA, WFP
10	Visit IDP Camp, MSF, MDM
11	ICRC, UNHCR, MAPA, WHO, IOM, World Vision, Heart Women's Council, Herat Women's Association, UNAMA
12	Ministry of Planning
13	UNAMA
Mazar-i-Sharif Field Mission	
9 Sept.	UNAMA, CHA
10	IRC, UNHCR, MSF, Provincial Governor, Director of Planning, UNAMA
11	IOM, OCHA-Central Asia, SCF-UK
12	IDP camp site, travel to Kabul

NAME	ORGANIZATION
New York	
CONCERN	Dominic McSorely
DAW	Aparana Mehorta
DGO	Paul Ares, Jason Pronyk, Sally Fegan-Wyles,
OCHA	Manuel Bessler, Mark Bowden, Bernard Broughton, Andrew Cox, Bradly Foerster, Susanne Frueh, Steven Gleason, Kevin Kennedy, Caroline McAskie, Ramesh Rajasingham, Ed Tsui, Oliver Ulrich
UNDP	Julia Taft
UN-DPA	Scott Smith
Geneva	
HAP	Agnes Callamard, Susanna Soederstrom
ICRC	Olivier Dühr
ICVA	Ed Schenkenberg
IFRC	Andree Houle, Kalle Loovi
IOM	Jan de Wilde
OCHA	Imran Akhtar, Elisabeth Byss, Anne Davies, Graciella Guerdat Merete Johansson, Arjun. Katoch, Ute- Kollies Cummings, Oliver Lacey-Hall, Kirsi Madi, Rebecca Maluto, , Guillaume de Montravel, , Ross Mountain, Ingrid Nordstrom-Ho, Gerhard Putman-Cramer, John Rogge, Chuck Royce, Christian Skoog, Aimme Wielechowski
SCHR	Joel McClellan
UNDP	U. Daudzai, P.Pardeshi
UNICEF	David S. Bassiouni, Thoma Davin, Sikander Khan
OHCHR	Bella Kapur, C. Macyver
UNHCR	Peter deClerq, Comfort Lampfry, Joyce Mendes-Cole, Ekber Menemencioglu, K. Morjane
WFP	Daly Belgasmi, Sabrina Izzi ,Werner Schleiffer,
WHO	Khalid Shibib
Kabul	
ACBAR	Shafiq Mirzazada, Rafeal Robbillard,
AACA	Yasin Khosti
AREU	Andrew Wilder
AIMS	(n/a)
DFID	Ann Freckleton, Chris Johnson (former SMU Director)
EC	Sippi Azerbaijani-Moghadam
ECHO	(n/a)
Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran	Saeed Ghaderi
Embassy of the People's Republic of China	Deng Xijun
Habitat	Samantha Reynolds
ICG	Alex Thiel
Ministry of Rural Development/ Reconstruction	Hanif Atmar
Royal Norwegian Embassy	Bjorn Johanessen
UNAMA, Pillar 1 and SRSG's Office	Karl Fisher, Anders Fange, Guido Galli, Fathia Serour,
UNAMA, Pillar 2	Wias Ahmed, Alex Costy, Nigel Fisher, Michele Lipner, Leslie Oqvist, Charles Petrie, Hannan Suliman, , Margareta Wahlstrom
UNDP	Knut Otsby
UNIFEM	Homas Sabris
UNHCR	Filipo Grandi, Pierre-François Pirlot, Salvatore Lombardo, Ewen McLeod
UNICEF	Dermot Carty, Angela Kearney, Eric Larouche, Ekle Wisch
WFP	Karim Rahimi, Susana Rico, Fayyaz Shah,

People Consulted

WHO	Dr. Ann Ancia, Dr. Momin, Dr. Naveed, Dr. Youssouf
heart	
ICRC	Justin Haccis
IOM	Danny Gil
MDM	Julien Bousac, Jabar Mumeen
Mine Action	H. Sadiqqui
Ministry of Planning	Eng. Said Ali Ahmed Mansoori
MSF	Stefano Savi, Lisette Vereyen
UNAMA	Abu-el-Gasim Abu-Diek, Faristha Sakhi
UNHCR	Claire Bourgeois
WFP	Maureen Forsythe
WHO	Dr. Rasooli
Women's Association	Asifa Rohani
Women's Council	Bassera Rohani and various members
World Vision	Jack Asiyo, Brian Ingole
Masir-i Sharif	
Afghan Authorities	Provincial Governor and Director of Planning
IRC	Arnault Serra-Horguelin, Michael Zwak
OCHA (Central Asia)	Piet Vochten
SCF-UK	Rames Puri
UNAMA	Farhana Faruqi, Reena Gelani and Zabihulla
Islamabad	
OCHA	Antonio Donini
SDC	Ruedi Hager
UNOCHA	Asif Karim, Syed Azhar Ali, Tariq Zuberi
UNDP/UNOCHA	Norah Niland
UNHCR	Hasim Utkan
Others (including communications by telephone/email)	
CIDA	Beverley Carmichael, Kristen Chenier, Beth Woroniuk,
UN Coordinator	Mike Sackett
UNDP	Valentin Gatzinski
OCHA	Stephanie Bunker
UNHCR	Carole Leduc
USAID (DART)	Michael Marx, Anita Menghetti, Alex Mahoney, Nate Smith

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ACC	Administrative Committee on Coordination
AACA	Afghan Assistance Coordination Authority
AETF	Afghanistan Emergency Trust Fund
AERU	Afghan Evaluation and Research Unit
AIMS	Afghan Information Management Services
ACBAR	Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief
APB	Afghan Programming Body
ASG	Afghan Support Group
CAP	Consolidated Appeal Process
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CMG	Crisis Management Group
CMP	Change Management Process
CMT	Country Management Team
DAW	UN Department for the Advancement of Women
DFID	Department for International Development
DHA	Department of Humanitarian Affairs
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
D-SRSG	Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General
EC	European Commission
ECHA	Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs
ECPS	Executive Committee on Peace and Security
ERC	Emergency Relief Coordinator
ESB	Emergency Services Branch (of OCHA)
EU	European Union
ESU	Evaluation Studies Unit (of OCHA)
HAP	Humanitarian Accountability Project
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HIC	Humanitarian Information Centre
HIFCA	Humanitarian Information Centre for Afghanistan
HQ	Headquarters
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IASC-WG	Inter-Agency Standing Committee – Working Group
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
IMTF	Integrated Mission Task Force
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
ITAP	Immediate and Transitional Assistance Program
MAPA	Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan
MCDU	Military, Civil Defense and Logistic Section (of OCHA)
MDM	Médecins du Monde
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PCP	Principled Common Programming
PDSB	Policy Development and Studies Branch (of OCHA)
ProMIS	Programme Management Information Services
RC	Resident Coordinator
RCB	Regional Coordinating Bodies

List of Acronyms

RCB	Response Coordination Branch (of OCHA)
RCO	Regional Coordinating Officers
SCHR	Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation
SITREP	Situation Report
SMU	Strategic Monitoring Unit
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Mission in Afghanistan
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNHCR	Office for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian and Economic Assistance Programmes Relating to Afghanistan
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation

**TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR AN EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF OCHA'S
RESPONSE AND COORDINATION SERVICES PROVIDED TO THE
ESCALATING EMERGENCY IN AFGHANISTAN
July 2001 TO July 2002**

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1. Background

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan (UNOCHA) was established as a special United Nations body in 1988 following the 1988 Geneva accords that signaled an end to eight years of war in Afghanistan. UNOCHA was one of the first special UN coordination bodies for humanitarian assistance and was created as a separate entity within the UN secretariat. OCHA (as DHA as it then was) was given responsibility for UNOCHA when OCHA was created in 1992.

UNOCHA became a strong body over the years, promoting and mobilizing resources for and facilitating the provision of humanitarian aid and rehabilitation assistance. UNOCHA also provided a number of common support services for UN agencies working in Afghanistan as well as programme management responsibilities for demining and mine awareness activities and for some camps for internally displaced persons outside of the mandate of other UN agencies.

Peace did not follow the 1998 Geneva accords and civil war in Afghanistan continued between various indigenous factions with an increasingly fragmented state. The Taliban regime ultimately dominated a good portion of the country, while carrying on a war with the Northern Alliance and a number of independent tribes for control over the remainder of the country. By mid-2001 Afghanistan had been through twenty-two years of civil war and was in the midst of a humanitarian crisis exacerbated by three years of drought. This crisis could be characterized as having three main elements: massive internal displacement of the population both from war and food shortages; large areas of food shortage with much of the population at risk of malnutrition, hunger and loss of their livelihoods; and widespread violations of human rights. In the weeks before September 11 the humanitarian community was struggling to provide relief before the winter set in. Relations with the Taliban had been poor for some years, there was little UN presence in Afghanistan and access was difficult. Coordination was undertaken from neighboring countries, primarily Pakistan (Islamabad), with a reliance on local UN staff within Afghanistan to implement relief programmes.

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 the US establishing a coalition of forces to dismantle Osama bin Laden's Al Quaeda movement, the main focus of which became Afghanistan's Taliban government. The war greatly complicated humanitarian action in Afghanistan and threatened to compromise humanitarian outcomes. UN humanitarian agencies including OCHA were under pressure not to deal with the Taliban, and this pressure emanated from the largest donor countries. Moreover, the war further restricted access for the distribution of relief and although local staff maintained sub-offices, most internationals had to operate from neighboring countries.

The challenge for OCHA and UNOCHA was to maintain an effective response, and provide leadership and coordination services, in changing and ever more complex circumstances.

In line with the recommendations of the Brahimi report[42] and in anticipation of an expanded UN role in Afghanistan the Executive Committee on Peace and Security (ECPS) established a 13-member Integrated Mission Task Force for Afghanistan (IMTF), including OCHA on 4 October 2001 with DPA as the chair. In addition, an informal core group of ECHA and UNDG members created an ad hoc ECHA/UNDG Afghanistan management group. This group was instrumental in developing the ITAP concept and the appeal itself, through deployment of staff to the region. As ECPS was designated by the Secretary-General as the lead Executive Committee to deal with this crisis, ECHA was not as engaged in Afghan issues in the fall of 2001 and winter of 2002 as it would normally have been.

The appointment by the Secretary-General of Brahimi as SRSG set the tone for much of what happened in terms of UN assistance to Afghanistan. The UN positioned itself in a facilitation role and sought to remain impartial and acceptable to both sides so its good offices could be used to negotiate with all parties. Early on it was decided to eventually create a common UN office - the UNAMA - to ensure that there would be a well-coordinated and coherent UN programme of assistance for Afghanistan.

Over the period October to December 2001, the UN humanitarian agencies consulted to agree on how to best respond to the evolving situation in Afghanistan. Following the defeat of the Taliban regime, the Bonn conference was convened and in early December agreement was reached on the Interim Authority. Seeking to address the urgent humanitarian needs of the Afghan population, the UN then set out to develop a consolidated appeal for Afghanistan to donors in preparation for a Ministerial Meeting in Tokyo planned for 21-22 January 2002. Although it was originally envisaged by the UN country team that a standard consolidated appeal document (CAP) would be prepared, the ECHA/UNDG group determined that it was crucial to also include recovery, reconstruction and development needs. This led to the formulation of a novel Immediate and Transitional Assistance Programme for Afghanistan (ITAP) that was drafted in close collaboration between the ECHA/UNDG group and the field. The ITAP thus constituted the joint consolidated appeals document of humanitarian and development agencies working in Afghanistan. This was a significant step towards a more integrated and coordinated UN, in line with the vision of the Secretary-General. It was hoped that the ITAP would facilitate 'bridging the gap' between emergency response and recovery.

2. Purpose and scope

The evaluation will assess the timeliness, appropriateness, effectiveness and impact of OCHA's, and within the region UNOCHA's, contribution to the mobilization, coordination and facilitation of humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan during the escalating crisis in the period immediately before September 11 and in the following months.

The evaluation will also be tasked with drawing out concise and action-oriented lessons in order that OCHA may improve humanitarian preparedness, intervention and coordination in future complex emergency environments.

Performance will be assessed in the light of OCHA's overall mission, which is:
> '… to mobilize and coordinate effective and principled humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors in order to: alleviate human suffering in disasters and

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[42] The post-September 11 emergency was the first instance following the Brahimi report on the reform of peacekeeping operations.

emergencies; advocate for the rights of people in need; promote preparedness and prevention; and facilitate sustainable solutions.'

Performance will also be assessed against the specific objectives set by OCHA for its responses before and after September 11. These objectives are not well documented and the evaluation team will need to discern them by interviewing key OCHA staff at the outset of the evaluation.

OCHA's performance will be assessed both at the headquarters level (New York and Geneva) and at the field level (UNOCHA). The evaluation will focus on the period August 2001 to April 2002 inclusive to ensure that the evaluation considers (briefly) UNOCHA's contribution to coordination prior to September 11 and examines the impact of the changing political and humanitarian framework and context post September 11.

The evaluation will take into account the conclusions of OCHA's recent change management process and determine the extent to which recommendations were applied in the emergency, and the impact this had on OCHA's performance and ability to sustain its responsibilities.

3. Evaluation Issues

3.1 Humanitarian response and contingency planning: Was OCHA HQ and UNOCHA able to effectively reassess the situation and facilitate the response as the crisis escalated further after September 11?

Subsidiary issues
- How well did OCHA HQ and UNOCHA cope with the escalating crisis?
- How well did OCHA and its UN partner agencies collaborate at the top level in responding to this crisis in a gender sensitive manner?
- Were effective inter-agency contingency plans subsequently developed and implemented that adequately integrated the specific needs of men, women and children?
- Did OCHA/UNOCHA provide appropriate and gender sensitive analysis on the crisis and on-going situation?

3.2 Development of humanitarian strategies: Were the humanitarian strategies agreed within the UN system coherent, appropriate, gender sensitive and effective and what role did OCHA HQ and UNOCHA play in their development?

Subsidiary issues
- Did OCHA HQ and UNOCHA provide vision and intellectual leadership and what impact did OCHA HQ and UNOCHA have on political analysis and the development and review of humanitarian strategies?
- How well did OCHA HQ and UNOCHA deal with political pressure that was applied post September 11? Were OCHA HQ and UNOCHA principled and impartial? Did OCHA HQ and UNOCHA provide effective international and national advocacy of the needs and concerns of needy and vulnerable Afghans?
- Was sound advice and adequate support provided to the Secretary General, Humanitarian Coordinator and SRSG in developing humanitarian strategies? What advice on humanitarian principles was provided to the interim authorities, other UN agencies, donors and NGOs? To what extent was the issue of gender equality addressed in the strategies?

- Were OCHA HQ and UNOCHA sufficiently and appropriately engaged in interagency structures and in broader peacekeeping and political frameworks?
- What were the strengths and weaknesses of the Immediate and Transitional Plan of Action (ITAP) process and product and the collaboration within ECHA/UNDG? Did the ITAP adequately capture issues of GE and reflect the needs and capacities of men, women and children? Did it take into consideration women's basic and strategic needs? Were issues of gender equality appropriately mainstreamed into the strategy's thematic/sectoral areas?
- Why was a Common Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP) or equivalent not developed?
- Under what circumstances should OCHA seek to develop an integrated program document with development agencies in the future and what standard operating procedures should be followed in such cases?
- How did OCHA HQ and UNOCHA contribute to conceptualizing and planning the transition from providing relief aid to development (including assisting administrative governmental structures)?

3.3 Contribution to operational coordination: What contribution did OCHA HQ and UNOCHA make to establishing and supporting an integrated UN mission in Afghanistan and inclusive national and on site field coordination?

Subsidiary issues
- How effectively did OCHA HQ relate to and utilize inter-agency mechanisms as part of its coordination efforts e.g. the IMTF, ECHA, ECPS, ECHA/UNDG management group, IASC, IASC WG (including the sub working group on GE) and other ad hoc bodies in addition to the ASG and APB donor-driven bodies?
- What changes, for better or worse in terms of UNOCHA's coordination mechanisms, were made post September 11?
- Was humanitarian space protected? How effectively did UNOCHA relate to coalition forces, the interim authorities, the Taliban and Afghan citizens? How well did UNOCHA promote and support the development of an indigenous capacity to implement humanitarian projects? Did OCHA HQ and UNOCHA add value to the humanitarian work of other UN agencies and NGOs/WOs? Did OCHA HQ and UNOCHA facilitate inter-agency gender sensitive needs assessments and play a role in identifying programming gaps and avoiding duplication? How well did thematic and other groups operate? Were there too few/too many meetings?
- How were the specific security needs of women, boys and girls addressed? Did OCHA/UNOCHA promote/advocate for the engagement of women in the peace process, political process and decision-making?
- What role did UNOCHA's sub-offices play in relief coordination?

3.4 Products and services: Did OCHA HQ and UNOCHA provide timely and valued products and services to other UN agencies and NGOs and what impact did this have on humanitarian outcomes?

Subsidiary issues
- What products and services did OCHA HQ and UNOCHA provide to other UN agencies and NGOs (e.g. provision of information about the crisis and response; sectoral and thematic data and reports; assistance with donor relations; facilitation of humanitarian access; communication services; etc)? Were these gender sensitive?
- What role did OCHA HQ and UNOCHA play in the maintenance of operational frameworks for other UN agencies and NGOs?

- Did OCHA HQ and UNOCHA provide an advocacy service for the humanitarian community? Did the advocacy effectively include relevant needs of men, women and children?
- How well did the Afghanistan Information Management System (AIMS) perform?
- How well did OCHA HQ and UNOCHA develop and coordinate protection of civilian projects?
- Has OCHA/UNOCHA produced any specific tools or guidelines on GE? If so, have they been utilised/are staff aware of these tools?
- Has OCHA/UNOCHA developed codes of conduct for humanitarian staff regarding gender issues? Have they coordinated/advocated with the coalition/ISAF on these issues? Is this a role they could play?

3.5 Internal management and field support: How efficient and effective was OCHA HQ and UNOCHA management and was adequate field support provided?

Subsidiary issues
- How efficient and effective were the meetings, teleconferences and decision-making processes within OCHA HQ (New York and Geneva)? Were roles and reporting lines between Islamabad, Kabul, New York, Geneva and between Branches clear and conducive to high performance? Was the right balance struck between leading from HQ and being responsive to the field? How did the change management process impact on performance? To what extent were gender issues discussed during these communications?
- Was staffing and gender balance appropriate (including grade, quality and quantity, temporary vs. longer-term, etc)? Was the staff surge capacity well utilised? Were recruitment procedures and conditions of service appropriate? Are the conditions guiding staff contracts conducive to including women to the same extent as men? Does OCHA/UNOCHA provide specific incentives to ensure there are adequate number/level of female staff (national and international)?
- Were staff adequately briefed and equipped and were they well managed? Was appropriate staff security provided? Was there adequate attention to gender issues? Were staff (men and women) briefed appropriately on GE issues in Afghanistan?
- Was OCHA HQ able to provide adequate financial and administrative support to the field and was UNOCHA in turn able to provide this support to the sub-offices?
- Were work plans, budgets and reports adequate? Were activities monitored? Were donor funds well managed?
- Is staff aware of gender issues both within the organisation and in their programming (i.e. coordination activities and advocacy/lobbying?). Does OCHA/UNOCHA have adequate staff capacity to integrate/mainstream gender into a) programming and b) at the institutional level?

4. Organisation of the evaluation and team composition

<u>Management and review</u>
This will be an independent study, led by an external team leader. PDSB's Evaluation and Studies Unit (ESU) will manage the evaluation, in close consultation with the Humanitarian Emergencies Branch (HEB) in New York and the Response Coordination Branch (RCB) in Geneva. The evaluation will be closely followed by a senior management group (CM, RM, ET, MB), which will meet (or confer by teleconference or email) to review all key evaluation outputs (ToR, inception report, draft and final reports).

Evaluation team

The evaluation team will include three external consultants, one designated as team leader, one Afghanistan expert and one gender expert. In addition, an M&E specialist will integrate himself into the team for the Afghanistan field visit. Between them the external consultants should have:

- at least 15 years experience in humanitarian assistance, including a mix of headquarters and field experience
- direct experience with OCHA and at least one of the other key agencies involved in Afghanistan (i.e. UNHCR, WFP, UNDP, UNICEF)
- a good understanding of UN agencies and the dynamics of change management
- gender expertise
- experience with institutional reviews/evaluations including a fieldwork component; and
- excellent inter-personal and English drafting skills.

The division of tasks between the team leader and the other team members will be determined by the team leader in consultation with ESU and the other team members. The team leader will be ultimately responsible for all outputs. The team leader should discuss any difficulties encountered in the conduct of the evaluation with the evaluation manager as soon as the difficulty arises.

5. Evaluation method and work plan

Evaluation tools

To elicit critical comment from the agencies and organisations that OCHA and UNOCHA sought to serve, a brief questionnaire will be developed by the evaluation team and circulated to OCHA HQ, relevant UNAMA staff, key UN agencies, IOs and NGOs before departing for Kabul to illicit basic information and opinions, to be followed up during the conduct of the evaluation (whether in person or by email). The evaluation team may be able to come up with other ways of adding a peer evaluation element to this evaluation.

The evaluation team will develop semi-structured interview checklists before commencing interviews in New York (for use both in HQ and Afghanistan and customized for the type of interview). The issues and performance indicators included in section 3 above should be drawn upon in developing the questionnaire and semi-structured interview checklists. Wherever possible the evaluation team should triangulate interview responses and opinions expressed in documents.

The briefings, debriefings and presentations referred to in the work plan that follows should be constituted as 'mini-workshops' in which visualization techniques are used to present information and feedback to participants and facilitation techniques are used to engage participants and test and further develop what is presented.

Whenever possible, small group meetings should be organized so as to maximize the team's time.

It will be important to identify key Afghan informants to interview. These may include staff of relevant agencies and organisations, journalists and writers, national and local officials. Means need to be developed by the evaluation team (and addressed in the inception plan) for interviewing representatives of the affected population to gain an understanding of their perceptions of the coordination/lack of coordination of assistance.

<u>Work plan</u>
The evaluation will commence in early August 2002 and the final report should be presented in late September or early October.

Table 1: Draft work plan

Month (2002)	Task	Days per task
August	Desk study and inception paper	5
August	New York interviews	2.5
August	Geneva interviews	1.5
September	Islamabad interviews	2
September	Fieldwork in Afghanistan	17
September	2nd visit to Geneva	2
September	2nd visit to NY	2
October	Drafting report and additional meetings with ESU in New York	8
October	Presentation in New York	1
November	Finalizing report	2
	Total days	**43**

Desk study and inception paper
The team will start by reviewing all relevant information as identified by OCHA and supplemented by the team (an initial list appears below). The team will ensure the issues are well focused, and possibly amend/prioritize them in consultation with the evaluation manager. The team will also consider and further detail the evaluation method. Communication between the team during this period will presumably be by email. At the end of this period the team leader will present a short inception paper describing the evaluation method as further detailed by the team. The evaluation manager may require that changes or additions be made to the inception report, including the evaluation method, while the team is together in New York.

HQ interviews
The team will then interview key staff in OCHA's offices in New York and Geneva (including former UNOCHA staff if available) as well as key staff familiar with the period under review in UNDPKO, UNDPA, relevant UNDG agencies, UNHCR (in Geneva) and UNICEF (in New York). If possible half-day IASC meetings will be organised during a second visit to New York and Geneva, engaging several agencies and organisations in one forum. The team leader should telephone key WFP staff (whether they are in Rome or elsewhere).

In meetings with senior OCHA staff in New York the team leader should start by presenting his/her understanding of the purpose and focus of the evaluation (based on a reading of the ToR) to ensure that there is a shared understanding on these fundamental points from the outset. In initial meetings with senior staff in New York, Geneva and the field the evaluation team should establish what specific objectives were set by OCHA at different times over the relevant period, and what major assumptions underpinned strategic planning.

In Pakistan
The team will visit Islamabad (probably as a side trip from Kabul) to interview OCHA staff familiar with the period under evaluation, as well as key informants from the Pakistan government, partner UN agencies and NGOs.

In Afghanistan
Upon arrival in Kabul the team will participate in a half-day briefing with relevant UNAMA staff together with representatives from key UN partner agencies to discuss the main issues included in these ToR, the evaluation method and the itinerary. It would also be useful to have ACBAR represented. The intention is to ensure that the issues are well focused, that the method is adequately rigorous, that the itinerary is feasible and that key UN partner agencies will be adequately engaged in the evaluation process.

The team will then conduct interviews with former UNOCHA staff and representatives of donor agencies, UN agencies, NGOs and Afghan authorities to gain an understanding of their perception of the timeliness of OCHA's response and the quality of coordination services provided. A three-day visit to two of the sub-offices will be undertaken, including Herat and possibly Mazari. While in Kabul and in the provinces the team should solicit the perceptions of the affected Afghan population, both men and women.

The evaluation team will present key findings and tentative conclusions and recommendations to UNAMA, key partners and the Afghan counterpart authority before leaving Kabul. This will be an oral presentation, supplemented if possible by a visual presentation (e.g. PowerPoint). It should be treated as an opportunity for early feedback, clarifications and a reality-check. If possible, group work around key issues should be undertaken to test and further develop the conclusions and recommendations presented. The presentations should probably be split between a morning and afternoon session, with the former for UNAMA and key partner UN agencies.

The work in Afghanistan may be scheduled as follows:

Table 2: Draft work plan within Afghanistan

Task	Number of days
Arrive in Kabul. Initial briefing with UNAMA and key partners (discussion concerning key issues, methodology and itinerary) and formal introduction to Afghan authorities	1
Interview former UNOCHA staff, key Afghan informants and key informants from other UN agencies, IOs, NGOs and donors.	3
Travel to 1st sub-office and conduct interviews (as above)	4
Travel to 2nd sub-office and conduct interviews (as above	4
Meet again with UNAMA and if necessary other agencies and organisations to clarify issues arising out of visits to sub-offices and otherwise continue to conduct follow-up interviews of key Afghan informants and key informants from other UN agencies, IOs, NGOs and donors. Begin to write aide memoire and sections of report	2
Team meets to finalise aide memoire and prepare for debriefing	1
Debriefing meetings (morning and afternoon sessions)	1
Final team meeting to respond to request for changes to the aide memoire (where relevant) and to clarify final writing tasks. Departure from Kabul.	1
Total	**17**

Debriefing in New York
The team leader will present the team's conclusions, lessons and recommendations to the OCHA senior management group after the evaluation manager has accepted the draft report. This debriefing will take place in New York and will include the Geneva and Kabul offices by teleconference.

6. Reporting

Aide memoire
An aide memoire will be emailed to the evaluation manager and given to the senior OCHA person in UNAMA the day before the presentation of initial findings to stakeholders. The evaluation team will give due consideration to revising the aide memoire before leaving Kabul if requested to do so by the evaluation manager.

Draft report
The proposed table of contents for the draft report (first and second level headings) will be emailed to the evaluation manager within one week of departing from Kabul. The evaluation manager may request changes to the table of contents. A draft report of no more than 15,000 words excluding annexes and including a succinct executive summary of no more than three pages will be submitted to the evaluation manager within three weeks of departing Kabul. The main chapter headings should follow the sub-headings in section three of these ToR, unless agreement to modify the structure is obtained from the evaluation manager.

Conclusions may either be incorporated in the body of the report or listed at the end of each section. Lessons identified and recommendations will be listed at the end of each section. Recommendations may address immediate concerns related to OCHA in Afghanistan but should also address broad policy and programming considerations.

The report will be submitted in electronic form as a Word document. The consultant should arrange for a copy edit and ensure the report is submitted in a presentable format.

Final report
The final draft will be submitted to the evaluation manager within two weeks of attending the debriefing in New York. The evaluation manager will provide the team leader with a formal response to the draft report at the debriefing.

Disputes
If serious differences of opinion emerge at any time that cannot be resolved in the final report, OCHA may elect to indicate its concerns and/or reservations in a document that will be annexed to the final report. OCHA reserves the right to withhold publication of the final report in the event that the quality of the final report does not warrant dissemination.

Payment
The consultants will receive 50 percent of their total payment upon timely submission and acceptance of the draft report and the remaining 50 percent upon timely submission and acceptance of the final report.