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SUMMARY REPORT OF THE EVALUATION OF WFP'S CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND OPERATIONS

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NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted to the Executive Board for consideration.

The Secretariat invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document to contact the WFP staff focal points indicated below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this evaluation is to inform the Board's discussions on WFP's strategy for assisting capacity development.

Overall, the evaluation found that WFP's capacity development policy ("the Policy") was well-grounded in WFP's mandate and was, at the time, in line with the ideas of capacity development practitioners. However, the Policy does not provide clear objectives or a results framework. WFP provides capacity development assistance in a wide range of areas and in most countries for two parallel objectives: one is to support its implementation of food assistance programmes; and the other is to address a clear need for locally owned capacities for responding to acute and chronic hunger and malnutrition.

Reporting is uneven and the evaluation found that more work is done than is documented. In relation to capacity development for WFP's implementation of food assistance programmes, most results were achieved in analysis, programming and food management. In relation to local capacities for response, most results were achieved at the policy and institutional levels. The results demonstrate WFP staff's technical capabilities and commitment, despite their very limited capacity development expertise. The main funding mechanisms' dependence on food delivery is not conducive to a systematic approach to capacity development.

The evaluation made recommendations to WFP's management regarding clarifying the Policy, rolling it out and ensuring adequate funding mechanisms.

DRAFT DECISION*

The Board takes note of "Summary Report of the Evaluation of WFP's Capacity Development Policy and Operations" (WFP/EB.A/2008/7) and encourages further action on the recommendations, taking into account considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the Decisions and Recommendations document (WFP/EB.A/2008/16) issued at the end of the session.



BACKGROUND

Context

1. Capacity development has been part of development and emergency assistance for a long time.¹ Recent syntheses of evaluation findings published by the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP),² the Development Assistance Committee³ and others indicate that the humanitarian and development sectors face similar capacity development issues. In the humanitarian sector, a longer-term perspective is needed to address funding, partnerships, the engagement process for capacity development, and bridging the gap between humanitarian and development assistance.

WFP's Capacity Development Policy and Operations

2. WFP's commitment to capacity development dates back to 1994, with the Mission Statement that all assistance – relief, recovery and development – would aim to develop capacities for self-reliance. Since 1997, capacity development has featured in all WFP strategic plans. In October 2004, WFP adopted its policy on capacity development (referred to here as “the Policy”), recognizing that “a shift from ad hoc responses to a coherent and systematic approach to capacity-building” was needed.⁴
3. All of these directives recognized that institutions or individuals do not operate in a vacuum; this implies that assistance should provide not only training. The Policy also places WFP's capacity development assistance within the broader context of international assistance and emphasizes partnerships. Areas for capacity development assistance are consistent throughout all strategic plans: (i) vulnerability assessments, disaster preparedness, emergency management, coordination of food-related humanitarian assistance, commodity tracking and logistics; (ii) community participation, empowerment and strengthening of traditional coping mechanisms; and (iii) local procurement and markets, storage and transport, milling and fortification. Target groups include governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), implementing partners, communities and the private sector. Assistance provided includes on-the-job training, seminars and workshops, non-food and technical support, logistics, technical advice, food for work, cash, and information sharing.
4. In 2007, capacity development was included in 75 percent of operations in 71 countries across all regions. West and Central Africa accounted for 23 percent of the total, followed by Asia and the Pacific and East Africa, with 19 percent each. Capacity development was included in 97 percent of protracted relief and recovery operations, 89 percent of country programmes, 71 percent of development projects, 44 percent of emergency operations and 23 percent of special operations. WFP implemented one stand-alone

¹ The evaluation adopted the term “capacity development” rather than “capacity building”, in line with evolving good practice of capacity development practitioners.

² ALNAP. 2005. *ALNAP Review of Humanitarian Action in 2004 – Capacity Building*.

³ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)/Development Assistance Committee (DAC). 2006. *The Challenge of Capacity Development – Working Towards Good Practice*.

⁴ WFP. 2004. “Building Country and Regional Capacities” (WFP/EB.3/2004/4-B).



operation⁵ in southern Africa and two in Latin America and the Caribbean. Three quarters of these operations aimed to develop the capacities of governments, about 40 percent the capacities of cooperating partners and 40 percent the capacities of communities. The most common areas for capacity development were: project management (65 percent); hunger analysis and assessment, especially nutrition and food security analyses (48 percent); food management and logistics (35 percent); decentralization (34 percent); and disaster preparedness (28 percent). Stand-alone operations and grants – which complement capacity development funding – earmarked 67 percent of their resources for hunger assessments and information sharing/advocacy.

Evaluation

5. The objective of this evaluation is to identify achievements and shortfalls in WFP's capacity development work, and learn from these how to improve performance and outcomes. The evaluation focuses on the Policy's quality, implementation and results, and on WFP's capacity to implement it. The scope of the evaluation included the Policy, two strategic plans (2004–2007 and 2006–2009), 90 operations in 15 countries in all regions, and personnel and financial regulations.
6. The evaluation involved desk reviews of documents; interviews with stakeholders in governments, NGOs and other United Nations agencies, and with WFP staff at Headquarters and in the field; a staff survey; visits to three regional bureaux and five countries; and briefing sessions. Draft reports were shared with stakeholders for comments, which were taken into account when they called for factual corrections or clarifications.
7. The absence of a database made it difficult for the evaluation to identify capacity development operations. Additional challenges were a lack of clear objectives for capacity development, of baseline information, of corporate performance indicators, and of full reporting on activities, outputs and outcomes. Because of financial limitations, the evaluation could visit only a few countries, and could not always include stakeholders outside capitals.

PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

The Quality of the Policy

8. Assessing the quality of the Policy involved examining whether WFP is “doing the right thing”. Policy should guide operations, so it is important to look at whether the policy directions are the “right” ones.
9. The Policy does not provide clear objectives for capacity development or a results framework. Rather, by examining strategic plans and the implementation of operations, the evaluation found that capacity development works toward two parallel objectives: WFP's implementation of food assistance programmes, and the development of locally owned capacities for responding to acute and chronic malnutrition and hunger. This implicit duality leads to various interpretations of definitions and concepts. The Policy proposes developing a systematic approach, which has not evolved.

⁵ According to the *Programme Guidance Manual*, stand-alone operations are cash-only projects for capacity-building activities.



10. The Policy is in line with General Assembly decisions that direct Funds and Programmes to use their own capacities to develop those of others. It is also in keeping with WFP's Mission Statement and strategic plans and other policies, such as those on working with NGOs and exiting emergencies. However, strategic plans and results-based management did not establish the missing results framework for the Policy. Indicators in the strategic plans were at the output level – such as number of trained people – and did not include corporate outcome indicators.
11. The Policy takes into account many elements of cutting-edge good practice but does not fully articulate them. Policy updates could have kept WFP updated on evolving capacity development practice, rather than reporting on implementation progress.
12. Regarding practicability, or likelihood of implementation, the evaluation found that the Policy and other guidance material are flexible to accommodate the various working contexts of WFP, but do not explain what capacity development is. Analysis showed a lack of capacity development objectives to help staff decide whether and how to prioritize capacity development, of an action plan for strengthening WFP's own capacities as promised in the Policy, and of a cost estimate of implementation. The Policy was not widely read. Its lack of definitions resulted in a multitude of interpretations and its lack of clarity about areas in which to undertake capacity development are manifest in the wide variety of capacity development activities.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND RESULTS

13. The evaluation assessed whether WFP was “doing things right” and what results were achieved. It organized its findings into three areas: (i) identification and design of capacity development assistance; (ii) implementation of capacity development approaches, funding levels and efficiency; and (iii) the areas where capacities were developed.
14. The evaluation found a clear need for capacities at the regional, national, sub-national and community levels to address acute and chronic malnutrition and hunger. These challenges require locally owned capacities that can drive sustainable solutions.
15. WFP tends to identify and design its capacity development assistance on the basis of long-term partnerships that lead to an agreement on capacity development needs. This approach, considered good practice, is highly dependent on the quality and capacity development experience of staff. The evaluation found that WFP's approach in some areas is more supply-driven and in others is more demand-driven. The supply-driven approach is usually used to ensure the implementation of operations, and the demand-driven approach to develop local capacities. In a few cases, the supply-driven approach transitions into the demand-driven approach; this usually happens when long-term partnerships exist. The demand-driven approach is sometimes a response to government requests for WFP support resulting from technical consultations with stakeholders. The absence of capacity development objectives and systematic diagnosis of capacity gaps may mean that opportunities are lost for providing strategic and coherent capacity development assistance.
16. The design of capacity development assistance has not changed since the Policy was introduced. This confirms the observation that policy directions are broad and allow for a wide range of interpretations.
17. The evaluation found that operation design documents are unclear about the concept of beneficiaries. The term is inappropriate for capacity development assistance – which good practice suggests should be based on endogenous processes (within each country or region)



– and confuses WFP’s traditional definition of beneficiaries of food assistance. Capacity development partners and their needs are more clearly identified during the course of operations.

18. Regarding approaches, the largest number of capacity development activities involve training, partly because people tend to equate training with capacity development. The evaluation found examples of more sophisticated and promising approaches that combine several tools – problem analysis, system development, training, online support, etc. – in a package linked to endogenous capacity development processes. These approaches are more frequent when the objective is to develop locally owned capacities; they should be shared across WFP to ensure replication wherever appropriate. The evaluation confirmed the importance of partnerships with governments, other United Nations agencies and NGOs, and observed that these enabled WFP to draw on partners’ comparative advantage. This practice is in line with the Policy.
19. Financial reports give a rather incomplete picture of the amounts earmarked and spent for capacity development. Capacity development is funded mainly from other direct operational costs (ODOC),⁶ grants and trust funds. The ODOC budget increased substantially in the latest (2008–2009) Management Plan, partly because of capacity development. However, this increase cannot be equated with increased allocations for capacity development, because ODOC funds also cover other expenditures. When funding expectations are not met, capacity development seems to be particularly affected. In the absence of clear capacity development objectives and budget allocations, it is impossible to judge the impact of funding shortfalls on implementation or outcomes. An exception to this is the stand-alone operations: two are well funded, one entirely by the national government, but the third is only 16 percent funded as it draws to a close.
20. It is inherently difficult to assess the efficiency of capacity development, because measurement depends on having a clear strategy and design, costing of activities and information on actual expenditure. These conditions were rarely met, which made it impossible for this evaluation to assess the efficiency of capacity development assistance.
21. Good practice identifies three levels that are important for capacity development: the policy and institutional framework; organizations; and individuals. The evaluation found that results were achieved at all three levels, across partners and within a broad range of WFP sectors, as described below.
 - *Policy and institutional framework.* WFP contributed to generating government commitment to addressing acute and chronic malnutrition and hunger, which created an enabling policy environment for developing organizational and individual capacities. This occurred at the regional and national levels, particularly in disaster preparedness, food fortification, nutrition, safety-net programmes and school feeding.
 - *Analytical capacities.* Investments were made in developing capacities for analysis. Many of these efforts focused on WFP-specific analytical approaches that may – or may not – be those of national partners. While this work ensures that partners understand WFP approaches, it may be less effective for developing national capacities that require approaches and tools tailored to the information needs of decision-makers. Exceptions to this were the recent pilots that undertook detailed capacity diagnostics that form a basis for a capacity development strategy.

⁶ According to the *Programme Guidance Manual*, ODOC include deliverable goods (non-food items), services and training to beneficiaries and/or implementing partners.



- *Risk management.* WFP's expertise in early warning and contingency planning did not translate into a capacity development programme. Capacities in early warning on contingency reserves were developed in some initiatives, but it is not clear that WFP pursues a capacity development objective in this area.
- *Programming and food management.* Capacity development focused on the efficient and effective implementation of operations, and included training and the provision of equipment and vehicles. Whether these capacities are absorbed and become endogenous depends on whether governments adopt and integrate them, and whether they finance them from their own resources. Some governments have developed systems tailored to their own organizational needs rather than following WFP standard practices.
- *Food fortification.* WFP worked at the policy/institutional level, and developed the capacities of fortified-food producers.

WFP'S CAPABILITIES

22. The evaluation assessed whether WFP has the right capabilities to implement capacity development, which would help explain the results on the ground.
23. WFP has limited expertise in capacity development, as demonstrated by the generic job profiles of several professional categories. Very few staff members are assigned solely to capacity development, but the staff survey showed enthusiasm for supporting it. The evaluation found that staff's commitment explains the high number of capacity development activities and the results achieved. However, dependence on the initiative and dedication of individuals with no background and training in the complex field of capacity development and no platform for experience exchange reduces WFP's efficiency and effectiveness in an area that it adopted as a Strategic Objective.
24. WFP's financing mechanisms inhibit more systematic capacity development. The priority of funding that depends on food delivery is always to deliver food; additional activities such as capacity development can be funded by whatever remains. The evaluation found many examples where WFP's performance improved when it had more reliable resources for capacity development, allowing it to adopt a more systematic approach. The two well-funded stand-alone operations and grants from several sources represent funding mechanisms that are more similar to those of other organizations assisting capacity development.
25. WFP did not invest in a roll-out programme for the Policy, which would have involved explaining it to the managers and field staff who have to implement it and providing an internal capacity development programme. Guidance materials did not generally supply helpful information. These shortfalls were caused by the very limited human resources assigned to providing support to the field.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall Assessment

26. The Policy is generally coherent with the ideas that capacity development practitioners had at the time and which later developed into good practice standards. It is well-grounded in WFP's legislative background and mandate and coherent with other WFP policies.



However, the priority WFP assigned capacity development by including it among its Strategic Objectives was not reflected in the Policy or in common practice, where capacity development was seen as an optional activity that should not interfere with “core business”. This had implications for the design, implementation, results and sustainability of capacity development. The systematic approach that the Policy proposed, and which could have formed the basis of a results framework, was not articulated and did not evolve.

27. There is a clear need for locally owned capacities to address acute and chronic malnutrition and hunger. Approaches to the identification of capacity gaps and responses were based more on long-standing contacts (for the demand-driven approach) or standard WFP programmes (for the supply-driven approach). For the latter, training is the predominant tool, combined with provision of equipment and vehicles; demand-driven capacity development uses a more sophisticated combination of tools. Information on capacity development expenditure is not consistently compiled, making it impossible to assess the efficiency of these operations.
28. Capacity is being developed in a wide range of areas and in most countries; activities, implementation approaches and practices, and results varied considerably. Reporting on capacity development is uneven, but generally far more work is done than is reflected in design documents and performance reports. Results were achieved at the enabling environment, organization and individual levels. They were found across partners at the regional, national, local and community levels and in a broad range of WFP’s areas of expertise. In relation to WFP’s implementation of food assistance programmes, results were achieved mainly in analysis, programming and food management. In relation to locally owned capacities for responding to acute and chronic malnutrition and hunger, results were observed mainly at the level of the policy and institutional framework.
29. The link between capacity development and hand-over of operations was not always clear or systematic. While the evaluation found examples of the link, it found many capacity development activities that were not directly linked to the hand-over of operations. Whenever capacity development assistance is seen as a substitute for government capacities – human, financial and physical inputs – it is unlikely to have sustainable results.
30. Despite limited capacity development expertise, WFP staff’s technical capabilities and commitment led to large numbers and ranges of activities and results, but dependence on the initiative and dedication of individuals with no capacity development background reduced the efficiency and effectiveness of a WFP Strategic Objective. Funding mechanisms that depend on food delivery are also not conducive to systematic capacity development. The evaluation found that reliable resources lead to a more systematic approach. The absence of roll-out of the Policy and the limited utility of guidance material are mainly the results of insufficient specialist human resources.

31. WFP is seen to have a comparative advantage in its expert specialization, which is essential for developing the capacities of others, and in its field presence, which ensures long-term relationships with national and local partners. These relationships were essential in generating the capacity development results observed. WFP does not seem to have a comparative disadvantage in performance and outcomes, but faced a number of the same capacity development challenges other agencies faced. WFP could benefit from others in the area of guidance materials: the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank and others have vast resources on their websites, which WFP should continue to adapt and use.

Key Issues for the Future

32. *Gaining clarity about objectives.* The Policy and strategic plans do not distinguish clearly between the two objectives of improving WFP programme implementation and developing locally owned capacities. The Policy seems to imply that the development of locally owned capacities is an endogenous process and a medium-term need, while strategic plans seemed to emphasize capacities for WFP programme implementation. Neither is better than the other, but they serve different needs and imply different approaches. It is important to be explicit about the two objectives, as they have financial and human resource implications for WFP's approach to capacity development. They also have an impact on the results framework and performance indicators. For instance, capacity development for programme implementation may continue to focus on training and provision of equipment and vehicles, while capacity development for addressing acute and chronic malnutrition and hunger require the more complex approaches that WFP has sometimes taken.
33. *Taking policy directions to the operational level.* Capacity development did not follow the Policy's directions, which were already lenient. No effort was made to explain the Policy's implications, the priority that capacity development should be given, or the need to invest in developing WFP's capacities for capacity development. The Policy recognized the importance of such investment, but it has not taken place. There is a need for commitment to implementing the Policy and developing an action plan that ensures policy directions are understood and followed.
34. *Results framework and indicators.* WFP needs indicators for designing, implementing and monitoring capacity development, but provides limited guidance to the field on what these indicators should entail. Indicators in the strategic plans focus on training, but the concept of capacity development at three levels requires different performance indicators for each level. For instance, the number of people trained is an output indicator at the individual level. Indicators that measure the performance of an organization or unit are needed, such as number of needs assessments of a certain quality carried out in a timely and cost-effective manner. Such indicators would vary depending on the sector in which the organization or unit operates. At the enabling environment level – policy or institutional framework – indicators could be based on policy commitments or coordination mechanisms, but these would not aggregate easily into one or two corporate-level indicators. Instead, performance against each indicator could be rated and a composite rating established for reporting on corporate performance.
35. *Diagnostics: combining intuitive and rigorous approaches.* Capacity gaps and requirements are often identified through WFP staff's long-standing relationships and experience in the field. This is a strength when staff have technical expertise and the skill to do such work. The right combination of skills is not always present, however, and even when it is, a systematic approach is advisable to ensure capacity development needs and



opportunities are not overlooked. The challenge will be to introduce such a systematic approach while maintaining the strengths of the more intuitive and participatory approach practised by successful country offices and regional bureaux: good practice shows that when a rigorous approach becomes a blueprint it loses its effectiveness. Changes to the approach would affect how WFP positions itself in relation to a country and its capacity development needs, and would facilitate better decision-making about when capacity development is appropriate, the integration of capacity development assistance into a country strategy and the combination of capacity development approaches to be used.

36. *Sustained capacities and hand-over.* The term “hand-over” does not sit comfortably with good practice for capacity development, which calls for endogenous and participatory or facilitative processes. This means developing capacities together, with assistance that gradually declines, rather than building and operating capacities and then handing them over. The risk is that capacities will be substituted rather than developed, and this reduces the likelihood of developing sustainable capacities that can address acute and chronic malnutrition and hunger with minimal or no external assistance.
37. *Translating expertise into capacity development services.* The evaluation showed that WFP expertise does not automatically result in capacity development assistance and results. The all-inclusive list of areas in the Policy is not a good basis for deciding to use WFP expertise to develop capacities. Such an approach requires a minimum level of expertise, including: (i) recognizing that enabling others to do a job is different from getting the job done; (ii) setting capacity development objectives; and (iii) developing strategies that use a range of approaches and tools. It also requires recognizing the difference between setting up WFP-specific systems for running a programme and setting up systems based on what is needed in the country.
38. *Employing insights from the field to influence policy decisions.* The evaluation found cases of WFP using its insights from the field – often remote communities – to identify issues that decision-makers needed to be more aware of. This field experience was combined with research and analysis to ensure that advocacy efforts were placed on a sound footing. Advocacy addressed decision-makers across several ministries and fora within a region, to allow comparison among countries and ensure collective commitment. The process resulted in inter-ministerial commitments to addressing malnutrition and allocating national resources. Generally, however, WFP’s influence on policy debates did not seem to be recognized or implemented consistently.
39. *Short-term funding versus medium-term needs.* The evaluation was not the first to underline the contrast between long-term needs and the short-term and unpredictable nature of WFP funding, which is also in contrast with WFP’s long-standing relationships with counterparts and partners in programme countries. Short-term, unpredictable funding – most of which is available only once the delivery of food aid is ensured – undermines the implementation of good practice, which requires a structured, systematic approach. In the absence of dependable funding, WFP uses its long-standing contacts to identify capacity development opportunities whenever funding is available. This approach responds to needs, but is arbitrary. Alternatively, capacity development for programme implementation is sometimes built into programme design and costs, providing skills for the operation in question. In these cases too, capacity development assistance is not based on country needs. More systematic and strategic capacity development depends on having reliable funding arrangements.



Recommendations

40. **Recommendation 1:** The evaluation recommends that the Policy Committee review the findings concerning the dual objectives of capacity development (paragraph 32) and the areas in which WFP provides capacity development assistance (paragraph 37). The Policy Committee should advise the Executive Policy Council on how to address these dual objectives, taking into account the Executive Board's discussion of this evaluation and the financial and human resource implications of each option.
41. **Recommendation 2:** Once the Executive Policy Council has approved the Policy Committee's recommendation, the Policy, Planning and Strategy Division should update the capacity development policy to reflect the Council's decisions and to bring the Policy in line with latest thinking, including on the definition of capacity development and WFP's approach to "beneficiaries". Such updates should be frequent to ensure the Policy reflects the evolution of capacity development.
42. **Recommendation 3:** To ensure that policy decisions are implemented, the Policy should be accompanied by:
- a) *an action plan* for each of the two capacity development objectives specifying how WFP will operationalize the Policy. They should provide milestones, a results framework and guidance on diagnostic tools and hand-over strategies, and should estimate the cost of implementing the Policy, including the cost of developing WFP's own capacities in guidance, technical support, training, etc. The action plans should be developed by the Policy, Planning and Strategy Division and the Programme Design and Support Division, in consultation with regional bureaux and country offices.
 - b) *a communication* from management to the field to explain the position of capacity development among WFP's Strategic Objectives.

The Programme Design and Support Division should provide guidance on the following points:

- c) *guidance on incorporating capacity development into the design of operations.* Capacity development for programme implementation should be mainstreamed into components addressing other Strategic Objectives. Only the development of regionally, nationally and/or locally owned capacities for addressing acute and chronic malnutrition and hunger – rather than for implementing programmes – should remain a separate capacity development objective with associated performance indicators.
 - d) *guidance materials adapted from other partners.* This includes continuing to identify useful websites and sharing them within WFP.
 - e) *capacity development assistance,* which needs to be designed based on an analysis of the risk of capacity substitution and include measures for the gradual hand-over of capacities and for ensured sustainability.
 - f) *administrative guidance* that includes how to treat capacity development in design, country strategy and reporting documents.
43. **Recommendation 4:** The Policy, Planning and Strategy Division and the Programme Design and Support Division should develop performance indicators based on the results framework in the action plans (see Recommendation 2) for the three levels at which capacity development takes place. These indicators should be integrated into the results matrix for the Strategic Plan (2008–2011), taking into account the issues raised in paragraph 34.



44. **Recommendation 5:** Good practice in capacity development and approaches should be shared among WFP capacity development practitioners in country offices, regional bureaux and Headquarters. To promote such exchange, the Programme Support Division could use the programme quality assurance process, at least during the annual consultation on programme quality, or develop a web-based platform.
45. **Recommendation 6:** Certain job profiles should include requirements for capacity development experience. Given the importance of long-term relationships, this know-how might be sought in experienced national officers, who should be recognized for their knowledge and skills in capacity development. The Human Resources Division should develop corresponding profiles for qualifications and competences and encourage managers to consider capacity development expertise in their recruitment strategies.
46. **Recommendation 7:** Funding arrangements for capacity development – other than to support programme implementation – should be reviewed to take into account the specific needs of capacity development (see paragraph 39). Such a review should take place in the context of any overall review of funding arrangements for WFP.

ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
NGO	non-governmental organization
ODOC	other direct operational costs