



Evaluation Of UNICEF Sudan Country Office's Emergency Preparedness and Response System

Commissioning organisation : UNICEF Sudan

Period covered by the evaluation : 2021-2022

Independent consultant : Farai Magombedze

Email : fjmagombedze@gmail.com

Mobile number : +263772749214

Date: 1 August 2022

Abbreviations

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
AAR	after-action review
AMP	Annual Management Plan
AoR	Area of Responsibility
AWD	Acute Watery Diarrhoea
AWP	Annual Work Plan
BCP	Business Continuity Plan
C4D	Communication for Development
CBCPN	Community-based Child Protection Networks
CCC	Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action
CDA	Civil Defence Act
CLTS	Community-led Total Sanitation
CMAM	Community Management of Acute Malnutrition
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease of 2019
CPiE	Child protection in Emergencies
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
EiE	Education in Emergencies
EMOPS	Emergency Operations Office
EPF	Emergency Programme Fund
EPP	Emergency Preparedness Platform
EPR	Emergency Preparedness and Response
EPRP	Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan
FACE	funding authorisation and certificate of expenditure
FEPRIPs	floods and epidemics Emergency Preparedness and Response Plans
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FO	Field Office
FOE	Field Operations and Emergencies
GHTF	Global Humanitarian Thematic Funding
GOS	Government of Sudan
HAC	Humanitarian Action for Children
HDI	Human Development Index
HDPN	Humanitarian, Development and Peacebuilding Nexus
HQ	Head Quarters
HR	Human Resources
IA	Interagency
IASC	Interagency Standing Committee
IKS	Indigenous Knowledge Systems
INGOs	International Non-Governmental Organisations
IP	Implementing Partner
KII	Key Informant Interview
LTAs	Long-Term Agreements
MENARO	Middle East and North Africa Regional Office
MSG	Mother Support Groups
NCCD	National Council for Civil Defence
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
ORS	Oral Rehydration Solution
PCAs	Programme Cooperation Agreements
PDs	Programme Documents
RIP	Risk Informed Programming
RO	Regional Office
RR	Regular Resources
RRA	Rapid Response Assessment
RUTF	Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food
RVF	Rift Valley Fever
RWP	Rolling Work Plan
SADD	Sex, Age, Disability Disaggregated
SCO	Sudan Country Office
SDF	Sudan Humanitarian Fund
SitAn	Situation Analysis
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNDSS	United Nations Department of Safety and Security
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNHAS	United Nations Humanitarian Air Service
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation

Table of Contents

Abbreviations	i
List of Figures and Tables	v
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	vi
1.0 Introduction	vi
2.0 Methodology	vi
3.0 Evaluation Findings and Conclusions	vi
4.0 Recommendations	x
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Overview	1
1.2 Context	1
1.2.1 Sudan Country Context	1
1.2.2 UNICEF Country Office (CO) Emergency Preparedness Systems	3
1.3 Evaluation Purpose, Objectives and Scope	7
1.4 Evaluation Criteria and Questions	8
1.5 Users of the Evaluation	10
1.6 Structure of this Report	11
CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY	12
2.1 Overarching Approach	12
2.3 Methodology	12
2.4 Data Collection Strategy	12
2.5 Sampling	13
2.6 Peer review, Pilot Testing and Finalisation of Tools	13
2.7 Evaluation Management and Quality Control	14
2.8 Ethical Considerations	14
2.9 Evaluation Limitations	14
CHAPTER 3: EVALUATION FINDINGS	16
3.1 Appropriateness	16
Gender and equity considerations	18
Emergency Preparedness Planning	19
Quality of SCO's Emergency Preparedness Plan	21
3.2 Efficiency	22
3.2.1 Human and Financial Resources	22
3.2.2 Prepositioning of Supplies	28
3.3 Effectiveness	30
Information Management	30

Emergency Preparedness Partnerships.....	31
Timeliness and Strength of Response	33
Quality of Response.....	37
Beneficiary Participation and Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP).....	38
3.4 Connectedness.....	39
National Capacity Building	41
3.5 Coordination.....	42
3.5.1 Internal Coordination and Technical Support	42
3.5.1 Interagency Coordination	43
3.6 Coherence	45
3.7 Coverage	46
CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNT	47
4.1 Conclusions.....	47
4.1.1 Appropriateness.....	47
4.1.2 Efficiency.....	47
4.1.3 Effectiveness	48
4.1.4 Connectedness.....	48
4.1.5 Coordination	49
4.1.6 Coherence	49
4.1.7 Coverage	49
4.2 Lessons Learnt	49
CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS	51

List of Figures and Tables

Figures

Figure 1: Logic Model for Sudan Country Office’s Emergency Preparedness Response System	6
Figure 2: UNICEF Sudan’s Emergency Preparedness Score on the Global KPI dash board	19
Fig 3: Timeliness of Disbursement of Funds to Partners (Proportion of partners whose FACE forms were processed with 14 days)	25
Fig 4: Effectiveness Self-Assessment State-level Flooding Emergency Response Score for 2020 -2021	34

Tables

Table 1: Operational Definition of Evaluation Criteria	8
Table 2: Evaluation Criteria and Questions for the UNICEF SCO Emergency Preparedness Evaluation	8
Table 3: People at Risk of Flood and Disease Outbreak in 2020 as Indicated by Ministry of Health and WHO for Selected States	15
Table 4: 2021 Flood Response Support Team: UNICEF Khartoum Flood Task Force	22
Table 5: Comparative Analysis of Value-for-Money for Deployment for Different Surge Support Arrangements	24
Table 6: UNICEF SCO’s Active PDs/ PCAs in Selected States in 3 rd Quarter, 2020	31
Table 7: Effects of Preparedness on Timeliness and Strength of Response to Cholera	32
Table 8: Reach of Selected UNICEF Response Interventions to 2020 Flooding Emergency	36
Table 9: Recommendations	50
Box 1: Factors that hindered Effectiveness of UNICEF Response to Floods in White Nile (2020 -21)	35
Box 2: InterAgency Assessment and Response Planning for 2020 Kebkabiya Floods, North Darfur	43

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.0 Introduction

a) For nearly seventy years¹, UNICEF has been implementing humanitarian and development programmes in Sudan, saving lives and contributing to fulfilment of the rights of women, girls and boys. Throughout this period, recurrence of predictable emergencies remained a constant, rendering the need for emergency preparedness and response crucial. Accordingly, establishment, maintenance and continuous improvement of Emergency Preparedness and Response Systems have been key priorities for UNICEF Sudan Country Office (SCO), to which massive investments have been made. With massive investments in emergency preparedness being made, the need for accountability and learning lessons has been heightened. Against this background SCO commissioned an evaluation of its emergency preparedness system in December 2021 to assess the system's appropriateness, efficiency, effectiveness, coordination, coherence, coverage and connectedness. The evaluation mainly focused on assessment of preparedness for – and response to – flooding emergencies in Blue Nile, White Nile, Kassala, North Darfur and Sennar states within the period 2020 to 2021.

2.0 Methodology

b) The evaluation was based on UNEG Norms and Standards and OECD-DAC criteria. Human rights, gender and equity issues were taken into consideration. A mixed methods approach was adopted. Data collection and analysis were guided by a log frame and an evaluation framework. Data were collected through a desk review, 47 key informant interviews with selected stakeholders from UNICEF Regional, Country and Field Office levels; other UN agencies, implementing partners, Government of Sudan (GOS) and the private sector, four focus group discussions for selected UNICEF field offices, office level completion of a 'Resource Utilisation Assessment' form by UNICEF SCO and four selected field offices and an online UNICEF staff survey completed by 10 staff members. Data were triangulated during the analysis process.

3.0 Evaluation Findings and Conclusions

Appropriateness

c) SCO's Emergency Preparedness System (EPS) was appropriate to the WASH-related factors that exacerbate the impact of flooding emergencies in Sudan. The WASH-related factors that could exacerbate the impact of floods could be prevented, mitigated and/or responded to through the WASH and health responses that UNICEF planned for during its emergency preparedness processes. The inclusion of health and nutrition preparedness activities helped to prevent and/ or reduce morbidities and mortalities, while education and child protection preparedness activities served to ensure – to the extent possible – the continuity of learning and fulfilment of children's rights despite emergencies.

d) SCO's emergency preparedness was adapted to the cultural nuances of target localities, the needs of women and girls and the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the needs of people with disabilities were not sufficiently taken into consideration during SCO's emergency preparedness and response activities. Also, the EPS could have been more adapted to the cultural traits of at-risk communities had the target beneficiaries been actively involved in the emergency preparedness process and if their indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) had been tapped and applied to enhancing their preparedness for floods.

¹ UNICEF started operating in Sudan in 1952.

e) Maintaining fitness of the EPS to the rapidly changing political context of Sudan has not been easy but UNICEF remained a trusted partner of GOS in both emergency preparedness and response despite the political changes. However, the October 25th, 2021 military coup dented donors' trust in GOS and implementing Emergency Preparedness (EP) activities with or through GOS has been proscribed, necessitating consideration of alternative implementation modalities by UNICEF and other UN agencies.

f) There were challenges around SCO's use of the Emergency Preparedness Platform (EPP). Use of EPP was siloed in FOE with peripheral participation of programme section managers. There was lack of ownership of EPP among most staff. Contributions to EPP were typically tokenistic.

g) EPP is heavy, not user-friendly and of limited practical utility as SCO management and staff have a generally negative attitude towards it and regard its use as a tick-box exercise that needs to be streamlined to reduce the number of heavy online portals that staff and management have to interact with. The need to invest in re-thinking and re-modelling EPP if its practical utility is to be enhanced is clear.

h) The ecological, cultural and other diversities of the states of Sudan make customisation of SCO's Emergency Preparedness necessary in order to make it appropriate to the specific nuances of the broad spectrum of the states and localities. In this regard, SCO's drive towards decentralisation is commendable. There, however, is urgent need to build momentum on the decentralisation initiative, including re-organising staff and supporting FOs in developing EP plans to ensure that the plans are completed and utilised. An organogram that is strengthened at field office would generally augur well with the decentralisation initiative.

Efficiency

i) SCO has performed fairly well in optimising human and financial resources in creating a functionally effective EPS. Hiring consultants, using standby staff, and surge staff arrangements were used to optimise human resources for emergency preparedness and response. Surge support from within Sudan was more likely to reach affected communities in a timely manner and clearly more efficient than surge support from outside the country.

j) Nonetheless, key positions in EP at Khartoum and field office levels have remained unfilled for more than 24 months, rosters have not been used systematically, emergency preparedness related staff capacity building has rarely been done and desktop emergency response simulations have not been done over the past two years. As a result, human resource capacity for EP has been compromised. On the other hand, optimisation of financial resources was enhanced through leveraging UNICEF internal funding mechanisms but was adversely affected by delayed disbursements to implementing partners which led – in some cases – to delayed response. Also, inadequacy of funding to cover identified needs often set a ceiling to the proportion of needs covered. These challenges would generally be better addressed if there was a resource mobilisation strategy for the EPS.

k) Information Management for EP was an area of weakness for UNICEF Sudan. Sex, age and disability disaggregated (SADD) data were rarely disseminated in a timely manner to support decision making and action planning. No systematic mechanism for learning lessons was in place. Early warning systems (EWS) were weak, where available. After Action Reviews (AARs) were largely missing. IKS went untapped. Community participation in information management for EP was lacking. There was a need to strengthen information management

mechanisms for the UNICEF EPS. Further, the need for strengthening GOS' Disaster Management Information System as apparent and UNICEF could consider focussing on this as part of its systems strengthening agenda.

l) There was inadequate information to definitively make conclusions with regards to value-for-money (VfM) although some insights could be obtained. Nearly all the emergency preparedness outputs of SCO apparently have high VfM in terms of cost and time savings. Pre-positioning supplies, standby emergency preparedness partnerships, surge support arrangements on the basis of technical capacities within Sudan, *inter alia*, apparently have high VfM. In instances where local markets have required supplies in appropriate quality and quantities, local procurement tended to have higher value for money in terms of both time and cost savings than offshore procurement. Similarly, international surge support arrangements tended to have lower VfM than surge support arrangements within Sudan as experts with experience in the complex Sudan context are generally more effective in emergencies than international experts with little understanding of the context. Also, experts within Sudan cost less to mobilise and arrive early enough to meaningfully respond to rapid onset disasters like floods. A full-scale VfM study would, however, be required if definitive conclusions with regards to VfM are to be made.

Effectiveness

m) UNICEF responded to flooding emergencies on the basis of its emergency preparedness outputs in most cases. Emergency Preparedness and Response Plans, pre-positioned supplies, emergency preparedness partnerships, technical surge support, government capacity building and advocacy were all used to varying extents in the different states and at national level during response to the flooding emergencies of 2020-2021. However, with particular reference to the use of EPP, there was a tendency to ignore or *forget* to revert to EPP when emergencies occurred and apply common sense and common practice instead, thus limiting the practical utility of EPP.

n) Apparently, heightened preparedness led to strengthened, timelier and better-quality response to flooding emergencies and epidemic outbreaks that occur in their wake. The geographical spread of waterborne epidemics before containment tended to be wider, and the number of cases identified before containment tended to be higher when preparedness levels were lower than when preparedness levels were higher. Similarly, the number of fatalities before containment tended to be higher when preparedness levels were low and lower when preparedness levels were higher. Clearly, improved preparedness was directly correlated with improved emergency response outcomes.

o) SCO's response to 2020-2021 floods was fairly effective, generally in line with CCCs, with an average self-assessment score of 66.7% percent. Key strengths of the response included timely staff deployment to emergency affected communities; availability of pre-positioned supplies at state level; delivering response with GOS through government systems; deliberate focus on the rights of girls and women; and fairly good technical leadership in sectors where it is the sector lead. On the other hand, weaknesses included delayed disbursement of funds and delayed response in some states; slow and low-quality response due to capacity gaps in government and other partners; inadequate standby preparedness partnership agreements for activation during response; general lack of thrust on equity for people with disabilities; and minimal participation of affected communities in preparedness activities.

p) Key factors that adversely affected effectiveness of UNICEF Sudan's emergency response included weak security and accountability mechanisms around pre-positioning of supplies which led to serious leakages, physical and humanitarian access limitations as floods cut off roads and marooned some communities and conflicts that prevailed in some localities in various states.

q) There were gaps in the quality of response. A tendency to deliver supplies to affected communities with neither consistent end-user monitoring nor systematic after-action review left room for perpetually unnoticed decline in quality standards. Without urgent attention to consistent end-user monitoring and systematic after-action review guided by the CCC, UNICEF SCO's response is at risk of dismally failing to meet global humanitarian standards.

r) Beneficiaries were satisfied with the quality of UNICEF response but had concerns with regards to its inadequacy for the depth and width of needs. Beneficiary satisfaction with quality did not necessarily imply that the response met humanitarian quality standards as beneficiary participation in both preparedness and response activities was weak.

s) SCO's emergency preparedness system lacks an institutionalised mechanism for ensuring Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP). While it is notable that SCO took the timeframe for this evaluation as an opportunity to pilot the use of FGD as a method for gathering beneficiary feedback, systematic measures for ensuring AAP have generally been inadequate.

Connectedness

t) SCO's efforts towards connecting short-term response to long-term recovery and development were fragmented; there was no strategy for application of a Humanitarian-Development-Peacebuilding-Nexus (HDPN) approach. Some upstream efforts towards risk informed settlement planning to reduce flood risk have been made in White Nile. A framework for use of HDPN approach has been crafted in North Darfur. Arrangements for enabling peaceful management of water resources between nomadic and sedentary communities have been piloted in various states. The use of CLTS in WASH, e-learning in education, community capacity building in nutrition (CMAM, MSG) and child protection (CBCPN) and capacity building of frontline workers (e.g. in CPIE, EiE etc) during response also contributed to medium- and long-term recovery. However, opportunities for disaster risk reduction capacity building have been missed and system strengthening efforts have repeatedly been affected by high staff turnover in government. As a result, government emergency preparedness capacity has declined in recent years. The October 2021 coup brought a halt to progress in systems strengthening. There generally has been a retreat towards lifesaving humanitarian support. There is a need to re-think and re-strategise around HDPN issues in Sudan.

Coordination

u) SCO has done generally well in both internal and interagency coordination. There however was room for improvement in coordination around development and utilisation of EPP outputs at SCO level despite the current concerns with regards to the platform. SCO's coordination and leadership in its AoR tended to be better in states where UNICEF had field offices than in states where it did not, hence field-level presence was a key factor to ensuring efficient and effective coordination.

Coherence

v) SCO's EPS was rooted in the country programme document and coherent with UN CCA. The system was also coherent with emergency preparedness systems of other UN agencies as well as INGOs. This gave latitude for cooperation and collaboration during emergency preparedness and response activities. Due to this coherence, interagency emergency preparedness and response activities have benefited from UNICEF's technical, material and financial contributions as well as leadership and coordination in sectors where UNICEF is the sector lead. Conversely, UNICEF has benefited from coordination and leadership of OCHA from the UN side and HAC from the government side. UNICEF has also benefited from leveraging capacities of government systems (e.g. health and education systems) and infrastructure (warehouses), as well as capacities of other UN agencies (e.g. air transport from WFP/ UNHAS) in strengthening its emergency preparedness and response.

4.0 Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this evaluation, the following are the recommendations:

No.	Recommendation Description and possible operationalisation	Target Group	Priority	Timeline
1.	Strengthen the human resource capacity of SCO's Emergency preparedness system through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Emergency Preparedness training for staff especially at FO level but also at SCO level. Areas of training could include, <i>inter alia</i>, CCC, AAP and HDPN; ii. Desk top response simulations for floods and/ or other rapid onset emergencies at least once a year; iii. Filling, as a matter of urgency, HR vacancies in the emergency preparedness system; and iv. Consider employing Information Management Officers at field office level v. Improve timeliness and increase duration of orientation and training for Rapid Response Assessment (RRA) teams 	HR and FOE at SCO level with RO support	High Moderate High Moderate moderate	Medium to long term Medium to long Term Immediate to medium term Medium to long term Medium to long term
2	(a) Ensure (internal) coordination across the office in emergency preparedness, including EPP. (b) Improve field level sector coordination, which operational may require: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. re-defining and strengthening reporting lines between sector leads and coordinators at Khartoum level and those at field level; & ii. establishing a field office in Sennar to improve coordination (c) Strengthen advocacy for a coordinated, interagency emergency preparedness approach that guarantees timely, coordinated, holistic response that covers all life-saving interventions if the affected populations' rights to life, health and dignity have to be fulfilled and/ or protected.	FOE at SCO level	High Moderate Moderate High	Immediate Medium to long term Medium to long term Medium to long term
3.	Consider investing in resilience building / strengthening disaster risk reduction (DRR) for at-risk communities, especially as this is expected to reduce exposure and	FOE & Programme Sections	High	Medium to long-term

	<p>vulnerability to emergencies, is in line with UNICEF’s RIP and also has high-value-for money has it potential to eliminate the need for recurrent annual expenditure in flooding emergency response. Specific measures for operationalising this recommendation include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Deliberate programming that includes strong components of use of hazard mapping to influence re-planning and re-location of settlements (with the possibility of working with UNOPS in that regard); (ii) DRR training; (iii) increased use of multi-purpose cash transfers in response as advocated for by beneficiaries; and (iv) Develop a robust early warning system to reduce exposure & vulnerability of at-risk populations with and through implementing partners while advocating for a robust GoS-led early warning system 		<p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p>	<p>Medium to Long-term</p> <p>Immediate</p> <p>Medium to long term</p> <p>Medium to long term</p>
4	<p>The processes leading to signing of PDs and LTAs are complex and take too long, with some PDs being signed. There is need to optimise preparedness partnership development by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Simplifying/ streamlining processes leading to signing of PDs and LTAs to enable signing within 10 working days; and ii. Have pre-signed agreements with an adequate number of new partners at national and state levels. 	PRM & FOE at SCO level	<p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>moderate</p>	<p>Immediate</p> <p>Medium to long term</p>
5	<p>Invest in improving security and accountability mechanisms for pre-positioned supplies. Operationally this may entail:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Develop policies to enhance security and accountability mechanisms for goods-in-transit; ii. Provide financial and other support to upgrading government storage facilities (warehouses) that UNICEF uses for preposition supplies; iii. Develop policies and systems to enhance security, accountability and stock monitoring at state/ FO level warehouses that UNICEF uses; and iv. Establish (pre-fabricated) storage facilities at locality level in Sennar State 	Supply and Logistics at SCO and FO levels	<p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>high</p> <p>moderate</p>	<p>Medium to long term</p> <p>Medium term</p> <p>Medium to long term</p> <p>Medium to long term</p> <p>Medium to long term</p>
6.	<p>(a) Improve Accountability to Affected Populations. This may entail institutionalising AAP mechanisms with support of the MENARO. Annexes 1 and 2 to the March 2018 revised IASC Commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations (Guidance note for Principals and Senior Managers) may be useful in this regard.</p> <p>(b) Strengthen monitoring, evaluation, learning and reporting for emergency response activities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Developing a systematic mechanism for assessment of the quality of response against 	FOE with support of RO	<p>High</p> <p>High</p>	<p>Immediate</p> <p>Immediate</p>

	<p>the CCC (funds permitting, consider the possibility of engaging a third-party monitoring contractor);</p> <p>ii. generate monitoring reports during and immediately after emergency response; and</p> <p>iii. Do after-action review after response to capture lessons learnt and good practices developed</p>		High	Immediate
			High	Immediate
7.	<p>Harness Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) in enhancing Emergency Preparedness Systems. This may entail:</p> <p>i. Engage and actively involve at-risk communities during emergency preparedness activities;</p> <p>ii. Harness indigenous social messaging/communication systems to disseminate early warning messages; and</p> <p>iii. Working through local/national NGOs, mobilise at-risk communities to establish flooding emergency task forces that will train, guide and raise community awareness of the need for preparedness activities and liaise with government and other emergency preparedness partners (UN, NGOs, other civil society organisations).</p>	FOE and Programme Heads	Moderate	Medium to long term
			High	Immediate
			Moderate	Medium to long term
			Moderate	Medium to long-term
8.	<p>Enhance practical utility at global level of EPP by:</p> <p>i. Simplifying and streamlining EPP as part of the currently ongoing simplification drive in UNICEF;</p>	EMOPS	Moderate	Medium to long term
		EMOPS	High	Medium to long term
9.	<p>Provide technical level capacity building to implementing partners, including relevant GoS Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to enhance timeliness, strength and quality of emergency response.</p>	FOE & Programme Sections	Moderate	Medium to long term

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

1. For nearly seventy years², UNICEF has been implementing humanitarian and development programmes in Sudan, saving lives and contributing to fulfilment of the rights of women, girls and boys. Throughout this period, cyclical recurrence of predictable emergencies remained a constant, threatening lives and livelihoods, rendering the need for emergency preparedness and response crucial. Accordingly, establishment, maintenance and continuous improvement of Emergency Preparedness and Response Systems have been key priorities for UNICEF SCO, to which massive investments have been made. Similarly, with emergencies repeatedly threatening to result – or actually culminating – in reversal of socio-economic gains made over decades, the need to build resilience of people in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to disasters has continually increased, more so in line with Sustainable Development Goal 1³.
2. With massive investments being made in emergency preparedness at country and global levels, the need for accountability has been heightened. Further, with emergency preparedness and response systems being multi-sectoral, interdisciplinary endeavours – which naturally require an ecosystem as opposed to a silo approach – there has been an increased need to document lessons with regards to what works and what does not in effectively preparing for and delivering responses. In this light, evaluation of emergency preparedness and response systems has increasingly gained importance.
3. It is against this background that – in December 2021 - UNICEF SCO commissioned an independent evaluation of its emergency preparedness and response system in order to assess the system's appropriateness, efficiency, effectiveness, coordination, coherence, coverage and connectedness. Initially intended to begin in September/ October 2021, the evaluation was delayed due to the political disturbances and popular unrest that affected Sudan in the wake of a declaration of a state of emergency on the 25th October 2021.

1.2 Context

1.2.1 Sudan Country Context

4. There is a complex crisis in Sudan. The current humanitarian issues include food insecurity, malnutrition, and a lack of access to basic health services. Out of a total estimated population of 46.4 million in 2021, 13.4 million people are in need and 4,836 are displaced⁴. The number of people in need of assistance in Sudan increased by 44%, from 9.3 million in 2020 to 13.4 million in 2021 and is projected to further increase to 14.3 million in 2022 (57% women, 55% children and 15% people with disabilities)⁵. The direct effects of this crisis on women and children include injuries, illness and death.
5. Sudan is a fragile state, ranked eighth on the 2021 Fragile States Index.⁶ It is riddled with conflicts, conflict-induced irregular migration, and an ever-escalating refugee crisis. After independence, the country has frequently experienced internal conflicts. It had a Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.51 in 2020 and more than half (52.3%) of its population living in multidimensional poverty.⁷ On the 2021 Global Peace Index, Sudan sits on number 153 out of

² UNICEF started operating in Sudan in 1952.

³ SDG 1, target 1.5 focuses on resilience building.

⁴ <https://www.acaps.org/country/sudan/crisis/complex-crisis>

⁵ HNO 2022 https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Sudan_2022_HNO_En.pdf

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_Fragile_States_Index

⁷ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/SDN>

163, the lowest such ranking it has ever had since 2014.⁸ The secession of South Sudan in 2011 induced a raft of socio-economic shocks with a domino effect in Sudan: loss of oil revenue, reduced economic growth, double digit inflation rate, increased prices of fuel and violent protests.

6. The country has repeatedly experienced emergencies. Floods, droughts, diseases, economic deterioration as well as ethnic conflict and violence have affected people's lives. COVID-19 and - more recently - civil unrest following a military takeover of government on the 25th October 2021 have worsened the situation. Against the backdrop of weak capacity and worsening poverty levels, exposure and vulnerability to hazards has frequently led to high numbers of deaths, injuries, illnesses and disabilities. Consequently, Sudan has over the years been rated as a high-risk country (with a 2021 risk index of 6.4 out of 10)⁹ on the INFORM Global Risk Index (GRI). The country has consistently been rated a high-risk country and currently is ranked the 15th high disaster risk country in the world.
7. In 2020 alone, the Sudanese authorities declared a state of emergency three times. In March, COVID-19 health emergency was declared; in September, the authorities declared emergency in one state due to floods; and in another in view of economic challenges. There is a clear indication of high frequency and quick succession – and in some cases, concurrent occurrence – of emergencies, rendering the Sudanese emergency landscape complex.
8. Nile River and flash floods remain a threat. From 1990 to 2014, river floods comprised 73% of all disasters Sudan experienced.¹⁰ In 2020, Sudan experienced the worst flooding in 100 years.¹¹ The magnitude and impacts of the floods were unprecedented: they affected nearly 900,000 people and left 140 dead. Children were not spared as nearly 60% of those affected were children. Ninety-four thousand homes were destroyed, 83,000 homes were damaged, and 2.2 million hectares of agricultural land were flooded¹². Flood-related damages amounted to over 3.34 billion.¹³ The flooding exacerbated the already fragile situation as the country faced the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to poor drainage systems, flood waters formed stagnant pools in various places. These pools became breeding grounds for waterborne and vector borne diseases such as Chikungunya, Cholera, Dengue fever, and rift valley fever. While Sudan was yet to fully recover from the impact of the 2020 flooding, it was hit by 2021 floods. By the 29th September 2021, the 2021 flooding had affected 314,547 people, destroyed 15,541 homes and damaged 46,546 others. Thus, floods remain a recurrent hazard in Sudan.
9. The Government of Sudan (GoS) has shown commitment to establishing institutional structures and mechanisms for disaster management. Its Civil Defence Act (CDA) of 2005 provides for establishment of the National Council for Civil Defence (NCCD) as the highest organ for disaster management. The NCCD is headed by the Minister of Interior and every line ministry has a representation therein. The NCCD is the main decision-making body during emergencies and adopts the disaster management policies for the Country.
10. Humanitarian response is coordinated by the Humanitarian Action Commission. The Humanitarian Action Commission is a government entity with structures extending from national

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_Peace_Index

⁹ European Union (EU) Disaster Risk Knowledge Management Centre (DRKMC). 2021. *DRMKC – INFORM Country Profile* (<https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk/Country-Profile>) accessed on 17.10.2021.

¹⁰ World Bank Climate Change Knowledge Portal (<https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/country/sudan/vulnerability>) accessed on 17.10.2021

¹¹ OCHA Services, Reliefweb. September 2021. Sudan Situation Report, 29 Sep 2021

(<https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/sudan-situation-report-29-sep-2021>). Accessed on 17.10.2021

¹² Ibid

¹³ Government of Sudan, March 2021. *Sudan Rapid Post Disaster Needs and Recovery Needs Assessment (Rapid PDNRA)*. Khartoum, Government of Sudan.

to state levels. All non-state agencies providing assistance in Sudan have to sign an agreement with and commit to abide by the conditions set by the Humanitarian Action Commission.

11. Despite the commitment to disaster management, a recent study¹⁴ found that Sudan has significant weakness in policy and legislative architecture, vis-a-vis coordination among multiple public organisations and departments that play a critical role in disaster management and a risk of bureaucracy and duplication that could hamper coordinated response.
12. It is in this context that UNICEF SCO established an Emergency Preparedness System to enable delivery on its Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (CCC) in a timely and effective manner. In view of the high frequency of emergencies due to intra-state conflict, climate change and pandemics that are likely in the foreseeable future, with potentially higher impact on children, it is crucial that UNICEF be optimally prepared so as to minimize loss of life, reduce human suffering, and realize children's rights when emergencies occur.

1.2.2 UNICEF Country Office (CO) Emergency Preparedness Systems

13. UNICEF country office level emergency preparedness systems are generic. They are typically similar from one country to another although some variations may exist. UNICEF SCO's emergency preparedness system largely conforms to the generic framework.
14. The preparedness systems are based on provisions of the UNICEF Procedure on Preparedness for Emergency Response, 2016 Guidance Note on Preparedness for Emergency Response in UNICEF, and Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (CCC).
15. According to the UNICEF Procedure on Emergency Preparedness document, emergency preparedness comprises the *'mechanisms and systems put in place in advance to enable an effective and timely emergency response to humanitarian crises, based on the analysis of risks in a particular context, taking into account national and regional capacities and UNICEF's comparative advantage.'*¹⁵
16. Preparedness is regarded as focusing on strengthening UNICEF, Government and Partners' capacities, mechanisms and systems for timely and effective response and considered a cog in the machinery of Risk Informed Programming (RIP). RIP includes development approaches to address children's vulnerabilities, reduce their exposure to hazards and strengthen systems and infrastructure while short-term emergency preparedness activities enable UNICEF to get ready to support authorities and civil society in responding to a crisis.
17. UNICEF recognises and uses two approaches to emergency preparedness: the long-term and the short-term.¹⁶ Long-term emergency preparedness involves carrying out a risk analysis as part of the Situation Analysis (SitAn) every five years, focusing on the capacities of state and federal government structures and systems, national partners, humanitarian agencies and communities in addition to analysing children and women's exposure and vulnerability to determine residual risk which the country faces and to which UNICEF should be prepared to respond. On the other hand, the short-term emergency preparedness approach entails UNICEF offices following an annual four-step emergency preparedness planning process to prepare to respond to priority risks in their context and then taking appropriate actions on the basis of the planning outputs. Aspects of SCO's emergency preparedness and response system that were of interest to this evaluation included country-level Annual Emergency Preparedness Planning (a

¹⁴ International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2019. **International Disaster Response Law in Sudan**. Geneva, Switzerland. (https://disasterlaw.ifrc.org/sites/default/files/media/disaster_law/2020-09/IDRL_SUDAN_ONLINE.pdf). Accessed on 13.12.2021

¹⁵ What 'preparedness' entails is contentious. There is no unanimously agreed definition of what constitutes preparedness among scholars. This evaluation evades academic discussion around the term 'preparedness' but instead adopts this definition from UNICEF's corporate procedure document 'as is'.

¹⁶ UNICEF, 2016: Preparedness for Emergency Response in UNICEF. Guidance Note 2016, New York, EMOPS

four-step process which includes risk analysis, scenario definition, key elements of UNICEF Response, and preparedness actions), contingency planning, resource mobilisation and allocation (human, material and financial, including pre-positioning of supplies, timeliness of pre-signing of LTAs, etc.), partnerships for emergency preparedness and response, self-assessment against the Minimum Preparedness Standards (MPS) and identification of preparedness actions. Developing Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) appeals, technical assistance to improve GOS's and partners' capacity as well as UNICEF's leadership and coordination in sectors where UNICEF is the sector lead are also key aspects of the preparedness system that were examined during this evaluation.

18 Central to UNICEF's emergency preparedness system is the use of its emergency preparedness platform (EPP). The EPP is a collection of documents, narratives and templates which all countries are obligated to draft, review and update. EPP is meant to perform three functions: i) the process of developing and submitting required documents and information guides thought around preparedness itself and what preparedness activities an office should undertake before an emergency, ii) EPP allows for an assessment of the office's preparedness so that gaps can be addressed before an emergency hits, and iii) EPP provides quick references in the case of an emergency (i.e. as much work as possible is already completed when an emergency hits).

19 EPP is a depository for many templates. It also includes guidance and explanations of key processes. The EPP is comprised of two streams: i) understanding the scenarios, risks and how we are likely to address them in a narrative form; and ii) Minimum Preparedness Standards (MPS), which is divided into 7 categories: 1) Emergency Management, 2) Coordination, 3) Staff, 4) Supply and Logistics, 5) Cash, 6) Partners, and 7) Advocacy, Communication and Resource Mobilization.

20 In Sudan, it has become clear over time that state level preparedness plans are needed and just as useful as national preparedness plans, mostly due to the types of emergencies that either persist or emerge and the variety and distance between states. The Sudan Country Office has initiated a drive towards having decentralized EPP to all Field Offices (FO). Each FO is expected to review their risks and scenarios and go through the process of filling in as many of the MPS templates as possible to ensure preparedness is captured and is reviewable at state level. However, a key lesson from SCO's efforts to decentralise EPP is that – as a tool - EPP was not developed with adequate consideration of field reality and use, does not allow for quick updates in a large, complex set up and, hence not an optimal tool for field use, especially in a country like Sudan.

21 To support the visualisation of the key components of SCO's emergency preparedness system, a schematic representation (logic model) of the system was developed based on the review of UNICEF Procedure on Preparedness for Emergency Response, findings of emergency preparedness evaluation reports for other organisations and also findings of the 2013 global evaluation of the UNICEF's Emergency Preparedness systems (fig 1¹⁷). The logic model illustrates how emergency preparedness outputs are expected to translate into higher likelihood of delivering on Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian action. This rudimentary logic model was used to inform the assessment of SCO's preparedness system.

22 The logic model in fig 1 considers *increased protection of children in emergencies* alongside *reduced property loss, injuries, morbidity and mortality due to emergencies* as the highest-level results to be attained when SCO's preparedness systems are improved. These are premised on *improved timeliness and cost-effectiveness of response* and *improved coordination and effectiveness of response*. *Increased capacity of national and sub-national actors (including local*

¹⁷ Adapted from UNICEF Preparedness Systems: Inferred Logic Model (Annex G of Evaluation of UNICEF Emergency Preparedness Systems, Dec 2013)

communities) to prevent, respond and recover from emergencies will be required in order to buttress these longer-term outcomes and impact. At the level of short-term outcomes, three critical results should be attained as pre-conditions for attainment of the longer-term outcomes and impact. These include (i) Strengthened UNICEF SCO and interagency (IA) preparedness and capacity to respond to emergencies, (ii) strengthened national preparedness and capacities to respond to emergencies and (iii) specific programmatic outcomes achieved that target root causes of emergencies. For these outcomes to occur (courtesy of SCO's preparedness), the preparedness system should have delivered outputs in five categories namely: (i) Evidence generation and tool development; (ii) development of UNICEF and interagency preparedness plans; (iii) preparedness partnership building; (iv) technical assistance and (v) advocacy driven policy change.

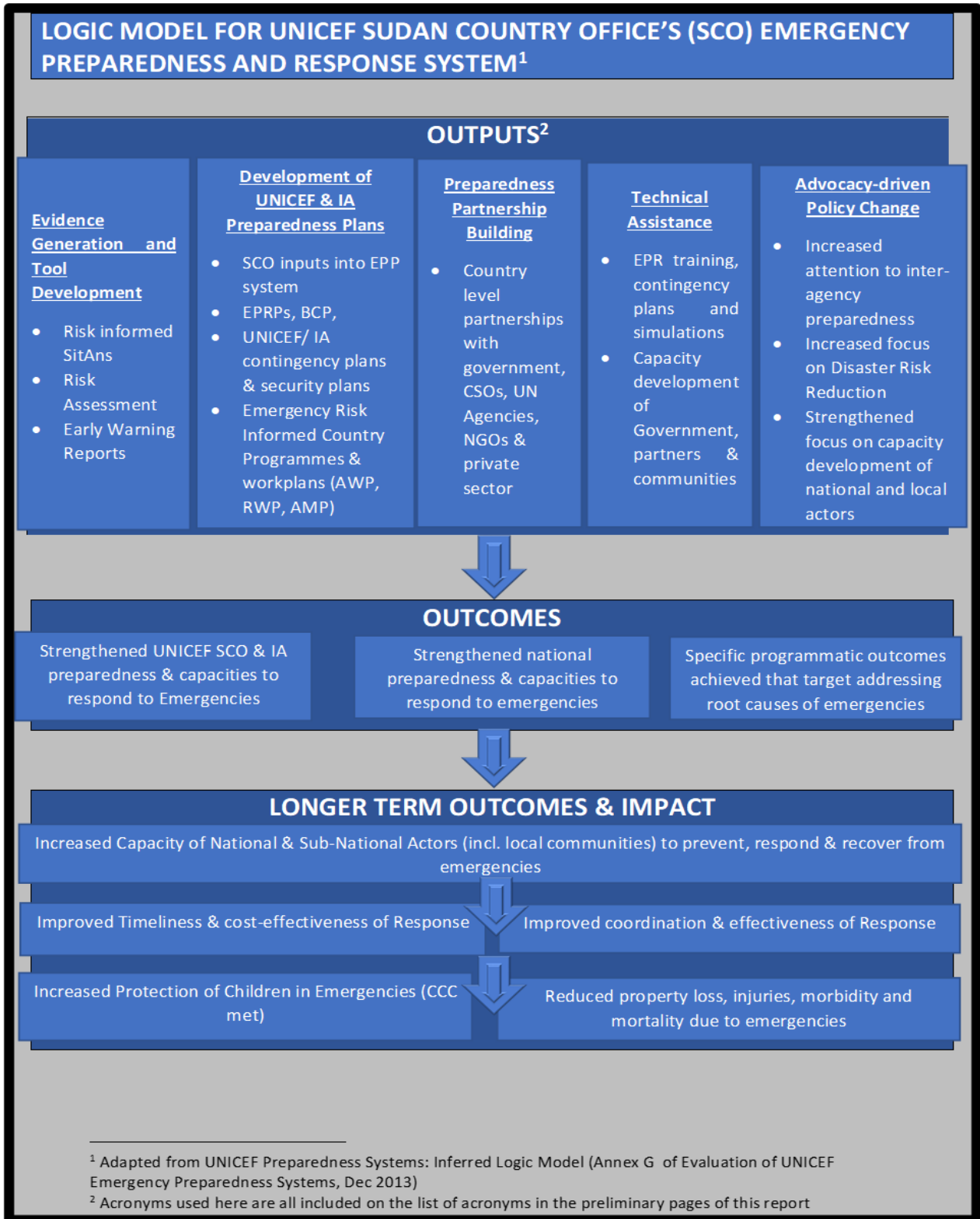


Figure 1: Logic Model for UNICEF Sudan Country Office's (SCO) Emergency Preparedness System

23 The basic assumption in all efforts to improve emergency preparedness is that heightened preparedness improves timeliness, cost-effectiveness, strength and quality of response when emergencies occur. Another assumption is that when emergencies occur and the threshold for response¹⁸ is reached, actors do revert to look at the elements of their preparedness system and perform the actual response on the basis of pre-determined preparedness elements. These are the premises for developing and maintaining preparedness systems (although the assumptions do not always hold true).

1.3 Evaluation Purpose, Objectives and Scope

1.3.1 Purpose of the Evaluation

24 The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the extent to which UNICEF SCO is equipped and prepared to respond to sudden onset emergencies and provide recommendations for improving country level emergency preparedness, response and planning for recovery for UNICEF in Sudan and countries in similar contexts.

26 The evaluation was conducted for both accountability and learning. It served as a tool for accountability primarily to UNICEF SCO itself but also to other stakeholders including - *inter alia* – the Government of Sudan (GOS), other United Nations Agencies, Implementing Partners (IPs) and vulnerable communities affected by emergencies in Sudan.

1.3.2 Objectives of the Evaluation

27 The general evaluation objective was to examine, as systematically and objectively as possible, the appropriateness, efficiency, coordination, coherence, coverage, effectiveness and connectedness of UNICEF Sudan Country Office's emergency preparedness system. Its two specific objectives were to:

- Assess the appropriateness, efficiency, coordination, coherence, coverage, effectiveness and connectedness of UNICEF SCO's emergency preparedness system; and
- Identify and document lessons to strengthen the future preparedness levels of UNICEF Sudan Country Office.

1.3.3 Scope of the Evaluation

28 The evaluation primarily focused on UNICEF SCO's emergency preparedness and how this has affected the implementation of flooding responses. It was clear that Sudan's emergency landscape is complex, and the spectrum of emergencies that may happen is wide. Flooding was chosen as an example of emergency that would allow the evaluation to focus on a manageable scope within available time and budget, while also enabling SCO to gain insights about its overall emergency preparedness and response system. Further, floods were deemed more evaluable than other types of emergencies due to the availability of documents including flood assessment reports as well as their recency and frequency in various states of Sudan.

29 While realising that UNICEF SCO does not work alone but delivers in an ecosystem, the evaluation was mainly inward looking with its main thrust on the CO's preparedness system. Although a dotted 'accountability ceiling' may cover partners and stakeholders, the solid

¹⁸ In Sudan, any emergency that affects less than 2000 households (or 10 000 people) in a particular location is regarded within government capacity to respond. The threshold for UNICEF and other partners to intervene is at least 2000 households (10 000 people) affected with a given location.

accountability ceiling for UNICEF’s emergency preparedness covers aspects that largely lie within UNICEF’s control.

1.3.3.1 Geographical Scope

30 The evaluation focused on five states: (i) Blue Nile; (ii) White Nile; (iii) Kassala; (iv) North Darfur; and (v) Sennar. These states had experienced flooding through flash floods or Nile floods over the period 2020 to 2021 and hence, offered ample opportunities to study how preparedness affected flooding response. During the 2020 floods, for instance, Blue Nile, Sennar and Kassala were three of the four states that were most affected in terms of damage to planted area.

31 Besides the high magnitude of the 2020 floods in Sennar state, Sennar was also of interest to this evaluation considering the effects of access-related challenges in response efforts and how increased preparedness could mitigate the effects of these challenges.

1.3.3.2 Temporal Scope

32 The evaluation focused on SCO’s emergency preparedness in general but effectiveness of the preparedness system was assessed through UNICEF’s response to floods in Sudan over the 2020-2021 period. This narrow temporal scope, casted in the recent past was expected to minimise recall bias. Sudan experienced flooding emergencies of varying magnitude over these two consecutive years and reports of response to these emergencies were expected to be available.

1.4 Evaluation Criteria and Questions

33 The evaluation was based on OECD-DAC criteria. The OECD-DAC criteria chosen for this evaluation are appropriateness, efficiency, coordination, coherence, coverage, effectiveness and connectedness (table 1).

34 The evaluation did not focus on impact as this would not have been feasible within the allotted time and resources. Also, the lack of theory of change brought challenges with attributional effects of emergency preparedness activities on longer-term response outcomes.

35 Similarly, the evaluation did not focus on sustainability as would generally be expected for humanitarian interventions. Instead, concerns related to sustainability were captured under the connectedness criterion.

Table 1: Operational Definition of Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Operational Definition
Appropriateness	Degree of fit between SCO emergency preparedness system to the context at state and federal levels as well as extent of its adequacy for the depth and breadth of its purpose.
Efficiency	The extent to which time, information, material, financial and human resources were economically used in SCO’s Emergency Preparedness and Response System, including consideration of whether there were more cost-effective alternatives that could have been adopted.
Effectiveness	The extent to which UNICEF SCO’s establishment, operationalisation and strengthening of emergency preparedness system contributed to stronger, timelier responses to flooding emergencies and, in turn, minimized human sufferings and loss of lives and livelihoods and in general improved results for children – in line with CCC - in selected states ¹⁹ of Sudan.

¹⁹ ‘Selected states’ here refers to those within the geographical scope of this evaluation. These are Blue Nile, White Nile, North Darfur, Kassala and Sennar

Connectedness ²⁰	The extent to which SCO emergency preparedness (<i>humanitarian</i>) activities link to long-term development, resilience building, peace building and UNICEF's <i>Risk Informed Programming</i> (RIP) in general.
Coordination	The extent to which UNICEF's hierarchical echelons contributed to, or hindered, SCO preparedness at country and state levels, the extent to which SCO's leadership in its areas of responsibility contributed to/ hindered inter-agency preparedness, and the extent to which inter-agency coordination structures contributed to SCO preparedness.
Coherence	The extent to which preparedness planning aligned with other national strategies, programmes and plans as well as the degree of fit and leverage among UNICEF SCO's, inter-agency and implementing partners' emergency preparedness systems and activities.
Coverage	The extent to which SCO's preparedness system has supported equitable emergency response, and considered the rights of hardest to reach and the most disadvantaged of target populations during preparedness planning and actual emergency response.

36 Table 2 below shows the questions that were addressed under each criterion (as given in the terms of reference and modified through discussions during inception phase).

Table 2: Evaluation Criteria and Questions for the UNICEF SCO Emergency Preparedness Evaluation

CRITERIA	QUESTIONS
Appropriateness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. How "fit for purpose" is UNICEF SCO preparedness system for capturing key contextual factors that influence the likely impact of emergencies? ii. How well informed are the preparedness (and response) processes by solid hazard analysis²¹? 2. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. To what extent does SCO's preparedness plan constitute a necessary and sufficient set of activities that need to be undertaken in order for UNICEF (and its partners) to be as prepared as possible for an emergency? ii. What, if anything, is missing? What if anything is redundant?
Efficiency	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. To what extent has UNICEF SCO utilized (i) human and (ii) financial resources in the response in the most economical manner to achieve its objectives? 4. How effectively has the starting point for preparedness – information and knowledge – been harnessed for maximum preparedness? 5. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. What, if any, of UNICEF SCO's preparedness outputs and activities are particularly high value-for-money in light of response time and cost savings? ii. Which are potentially low value-for-money? what cost-effective alternatives should be considered?
Effectiveness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. To what extent has the preparedness process informed the response? 7. What, if any, evidence is there that heightened preparedness resulted in a timelier response? 8. What, if any, evidence is there that heightened preparedness resulted in a strengthened response and / or lowered risk and vulnerability to the impact of hazards, and helped minimize loss of life and human suffering? 9. What, if any, evidence is there of preparedness contributing to UNICEF meeting quality standards as specified in the CCCs? 10. How well understood and applied are the various aspects of preparedness by key partners (e.g pre-positioning of supplies, ensuring procedures or fast-tracking staff deployment, training and simulation etc)? 11. How have beneficiaries been affected by preparedness action?
Connectedness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. How well does UNICEF SCO preparedness contribute to and relate to Risk Informed Programming Outcomes?

²⁰ Usually considered from a triple (humanitarian-peace-development) nexus perspective.

²¹These include, most prominently, such preparedness exercises as SitAns, regular EW updates in EPP, Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments, Comparative Risk Assessment, and so on.

	<p>ii. To what extent has UNICEF SCO applied a 'nexus approach' in emergency preparedness and response activities?</p> <p>13. To what extent have UNICEF's SCO preparedness interventions supported its commitment under the CCCs to strengthen national capacity?</p>
Coordination	<p>14. How do the different layers of UNICEF offices contribute to preparedness for responses in Sudan?</p> <p>15. To what extent has UNICEF SCO's preparedness contributed to inter-agency coordination structures (e.g. clusters) and response approaches/ mechanisms? Conversely, to what extent have inter-agency coordination structures and response approaches/mechanisms contributed to UNICEF SCO's preparedness?</p>
Coherence	<p>16. What has been UNICEF's added value to and from inter-agency and implementing partners' preparedness efforts?</p> <p>17. To what extent was preparedness connected to broader programming and plans?</p>
Coverage	<p>18. How explicitly has UNICEF sought to identify the likely impact of various emergency scenarios on the most vulnerable, children's and women's rights?</p> <p>19. How much forethought has UNICEF given to identifying where pockets of the hardest-to-reach in emergencies will be and preparing to reach these in the event of an emergency and advocating for equity in its preparedness efforts as part of its national capacity development and upstream activities?</p>

1.5 Users of the Evaluation

- 37 The primary intended users of this evaluation are UNICEF SCO, Regional Office (RO) and Head Quarters (HQ); Government of Sudan (GOS); Other UN agencies; and UNICEF SCO's implementing partners.
- 38 UNICEF SCO used the evaluation process as an opportunity to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their Emergency Preparedness System which in turn would enable SCO to leverage on the current strengths of its preparedness system while conversely working to improve upon its weaknesses. Identification of lessons learnt contributed to SCO's learning and knowledge management agenda. Also, the evaluation findings, lessons learnt and recommendations are expected to help SCO and partners to sharpen their preparedness systems.
- 39 UNICEF RO and HQ benefited from an objective identification of where their support to SCO was appropriate, timely and effective alongside identification of areas where improvements would be needed. The evaluation made clear the gaps that need to be filled to RO and HQ and hence – in a sense – contributed to needs assessment. As such, the findings of this evaluation are expected to help strengthen RO and HQ's oversight and support to SCO's preparedness and response system.
- 40 The evaluation served as a confidential process for the Government of Sudan, implementing partners and other UN agencies to provide feedback to UNICEF with regards to its emergency preparedness and response activities and contributed to lessons learnt. Since emergency preparedness and response almost always occurs in an ecosystem, with several agencies collaborating and/ or coordinating with each other, some of the lessons learnt, good practices developed and recommendations that are documented in the evaluation report will prove useful for practical application in strengthening the preparedness and response systems of other UN agencies and also the Government of Sudan.
- 41 The Government of Sudan is the principal duty bearer in emergency preparedness and response. Its role in this regard includes leadership, regulation, coordination, resource provision and service delivery (implementation of emergency preparedness and response activities). As principal duty bearer, GOS will benefit from the findings of this evaluation through a better understanding of UNICEF's emergency preparedness and response system.

1.6 Structure of this Report

42 The report is organised in five chapters. The first chapter is an introduction. It outlines the purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation and describes the context in Sudan. In chapter two, the methodology for the evaluation is provided while in chapter three the findings of the evaluation are outlined. In the fourth chapter, evaluation conclusions and lessons learnt are laid out. Finally, recommendations are provided in chapter five. The report come accompanied by a booklet which is a compilation of the annexes to the report.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

2.1 Overarching Approach

43 In general, the evaluation compared UNICEF emergency preparedness in Sudan to its response to flooding emergencies in Sudan since *'the value of preparedness can only be tested against the quality of response.'*²²

44 The Evaluation was based on UNEG Norms and Standards for evaluation and guided by relevant UNEG²³ and UNICEF evaluation guidance materials²⁴. Methodological rigour was applied to ensure that the most appropriate sources for answering questions in table 2 were used in an appropriate manner. The evaluation employed a consultative approach to ensure participation of a wide spectrum of stakeholders and capture a diversity of perspectives which were triangulated to obtain credible findings. Broad-based stakeholder involvement was deemed necessary as it was expected to contribute to ownership, relevance, credibility and use of the findings. Constant consultation with the evaluation manager and the steering committee also helped ensure that evidence collected and analyses made were factually accurate. However, utmost independence was maintained throughout the evaluation to ensure that the evaluation stood solely on the basis of solid and impartial analysis of evidence without undue influence of any key stakeholder group. Buttressing the evaluation on methodological rigour, a consultative approach and independence was expected to naturally culminate in credibility of evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations which – in turn – would lead to confidence of UNICEF SCO, RO and HQ in utilisation of the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations.

2.3 Methodology

45 Mixed methods approach was adopted; quantitative and qualitative data were gathered and triangulated. Human rights and gender equality perspectives were integrated throughout the evaluation. Quantitative methods helped to assess the extent of preparedness effectiveness while qualitative methods helped to explain how and why outcomes were (or were not) achieved.

46 Data within the geographic and temporal scope of the evaluation were collected and analysed; however, some cases that served to illustrate effectiveness of the preparedness system that fell slightly out of the scope were included in the collation and analysis.

47 Evaluation criteria were the building blocks of the methodology. The evaluation matrix (annex 5) further clarified the methodology in line with the guidance in the UNEG standards (para. 64).

2.4 Data Collection Strategy

48 For triangulation purposes, data were collected using four methods: (i) desk review; (ii) UNICEF staff survey; (iii) key informant interview (KII), (iv) focus group discussion (FGD), and (v) resource utilization form. Copies of tools used for data collection are available in annexes 7(i)-7(v). Annex 9 provides the list of documents reviewed. Anchoring data collection in secondary review enabled the evaluation to benefit from information that was already available in secondary sources with subsequent primary data and other sources for triangulation.

²² This approach is adapted from the approach used during the Evaluation of UNICEF Emergency Preparedness and Early Response for Iraq (September 2001 – 2003)

²³ United Nations Evaluation Group (2016). *Norms and Standards for Evaluation*. New York: UNEG

²⁴ Such guidance materials include United Nations Evaluation Group Checklist for Evaluation Terms of Reference and Inception Report, United Nations Evaluation Group Checklist for Evaluation Reports and UNEG Guidance on integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation, among others

49 KII of 47 stakeholders selected from UNICEF, other UN agencies, GOS, implementing partners (NGOs) and private sector (contractors) were held. Also, an online UNICEF staff survey questionnaire was sent to 52 staff members. However, only 10 of the selected staff members completed and submitted the questionnaires. The response rate for the staff survey was 19.2%. Most target respondents were reported to have been too busy with other commitments to complete the survey even after three follow up emails by the evaluation manager (in addition to the initial request for participation that she had send out). Confidence in the survey data was low, as a result.

50 Four FGDs were done, one for each of the four field offices representing the five states that participated in the evaluation. To enable collection of rich qualitative data, discussion templates were sent to and completed by each group in their own time, in advance of the FGD.

51 An Emergency Resource Utilisation Form was administered to SCO and four FOs covered by the evaluation (one form per office). The Emergency Coordinator/ focal person oversaw the completion of the form. S/he worked with other members at the office to verify the accuracy of the information provided on the assessment form.

2.5 Sampling

52 Three criteria were used for selection of documents for review:

- Global Normative Guidance: Global Emergency Preparedness Guidance notes and procedure documents within UNICEF that inform what emergency preparedness systems should look like within UNICEF;
- Geographical Scope: The desk review included documents that provide a national perspective of SCO emergency preparedness and response and those from the five²⁵ states selected for this evaluation.
- Emergency Focus: Document review, especially for the effectiveness, were limited to flooding response as required by the TOR.

53 Purposive sampling was used for KIIs and FGDs. Key stakeholders who hold knowledge, information and experience about SCO's and inter-agency emergency preparedness and response system were identified. Only stakeholders who stood on vantage ground to provide relevant input to this evaluation were included in the evaluation.

54 A stakeholder list provided by SCO was used as the sampling frame. The sampling frame had four categories of respondents, which included 52 UNICEF staff members, 41 Government stakeholders, 51 representatives of UN agencies, and 169 representatives from NGOs. From these four respondent categories, 18 UNICEF staff members, 8 government representatives, 9 representatives of other UN agencies and 12 representatives of partner NGOs participated in the evaluation as Key Informants. In addition, 20 UNICEF staff members participated in FGDs while 10 staff members completed the online survey.

2.6 Peer review, Pilot Testing and Finalisation of Tools

55 Data collection tools were reviewed by the evaluation manager, the steering committee and the backstopping team in MENARO. Their comments and suggestions were used to improve the quality of the tools.

56 To pilot test key informant interview guides, three key informant interviews with selected staff members at UNICEF SCO were done. Using a similar approach, two staff survey questionnaires were administered. Upon completion of the interviews the consultant noted the

²⁵ For avoidance of doubt, these are Blue Nile, White Nile, Kassala, and Sennar.

time taken and considered the difficulties encountered. Observations made after the pilot tests were used to improve tools and produce final versions of the data collection tools

2.7 Evaluation Management and Quality Control

57 The evaluation had a two-tier management and quality control system. At country level, the independent evaluator reported to, and was directly supervised and supported by UNICEF SCO's Evaluation Specialist. The Evaluation Specialist reviewed draft deliverables submitted by the consultant, suggested improvements before revised deliverables were submitted to the steering committee and thus constituted the first tier of quality control measures. At the second level, UNICEF MENARO provided technical backstopping on quality assurance.

58 UNICEF SCO provided a supportive role to this evaluation. It helped the consultant identify and gather documents for the secondary review and provided a sampling frame for primary data collection.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

59 Ethical approval was obtained at inception phase (Annex 8). The consultant upheld and put into practice such ethical principles of evaluation as intentionality, independence, impartiality, credibility, honesty, integrity and accountability. The consultant engaged professionally and respectfully with respondents, upholding the principles of dignity and diversity, human rights and avoidance of harm. The evaluator also endeavoured to ensure that evaluation processes and products were accurate, complete, reliable, transparent, fair and balanced (including acknowledgement of different perspectives in reporting). In line with *UNICEF Procedure on ethics in Evidence Generation*, the evaluation upheld respect, beneficence, non-maleficence and justice principles of ethical evidence generation.

2.9 Evaluation Limitations

60 The timing of evaluation was tricky. The evaluation coincided with the peak holiday months (December 2021 – January 2022). Some respondents were difficult to get due to family commitments during this season, affecting data collection.

61 COVID-19 transmission prevention and control measures – in particular, social gathering restrictions resulting in in-person interviews and FGDs being discouraged – as well as the current political and security situation rendered in-country data collection challenging. As a result, data collection was 100% remote, and the consultant was not able to conduct site visits.

62 Although both UNICEF SCO and the evaluator recognise the importance of collecting direct beneficiaries' perceptions of the performance of SCO's emergency preparedness and response system, primary data collection with direct beneficiaries was deemed unfeasible given the time, budget, access and security constraints as articulated in the evaluation terms of reference (para. 30 of Annex 1). The evaluator flagged the lack of secondary documentation of beneficiary perspectives with regards to relevance, timeliness and effectiveness of UNICEF's emergency preparedness and response as a limitation during inception. To mitigate this gap, UNICEF SCO conducted a pilot process of collecting qualitative data from direct beneficiaries through focus group discussions in four of the five target states for this evaluation (North Darfur, Blue Nile, White Nile and Kassala), as part of regular programme monitoring. In Kassala two FGDs were done: one with female beneficiaries and the other with male beneficiaries. The FGD notes were then reviewed as secondary data by the evaluator during this evaluation.

63 The evaluation stated with the assumption that flood emergency response reports for the years 2020-2021 would be available for review by the consultant. This assumption held true only partially. On implementing the evaluation reports that enable comparison planned and actual

emergency response beneficiary could not be found. After-action review reports were not available. As a result, there were limitations with regards to assessment of coverage of responses.

64 Annex 10 provides more details on the methodology used during this evaluation.

CHAPTER 3: EVALUATION FINDINGS

3.1 Appropriateness

- 65** UNICEF SCO's Emergency Preparedness System (EPS) is structured around thematic areas of UNICEF's comparative advantage namely Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), Nutrition, Health, Education and Child Protection. It contributes to preventing loss of lives and minimising suffering associated with emergencies. In any emergency setting – flood, disease outbreak, or other – humanitarian action in these thematic areas is critical. Three of these areas (WASH, Health and Nutrition) are essentially lifesaving and the appropriateness of an EPS woven around these themes is obvious. Also, the fact that the EPS is crafted around UNICEF's traditional areas of competence further makes the system fit for purpose as it ensures that UNICEF can concentrate on its areas of competence during preparedness and response activities, leaving room for other agencies to provide emergency preparedness and response mechanisms for their respective areas of competence. In the context of Sudan, such specialisation has contributed towards improved quality of preparedness outcomes in many instances, and by implication, higher fitness for purpose of the System.
- 66** Over the years, SCO's Emergency Preparedness has remained relevant to the impact of the known annual emergency cycle of floods which is followed by outbreaks of water- and vector-borne diseases. The system has remained appropriate to WASH needs that arise when floods displace households and contaminate drinking water; the health needs that arise when physical access to service delivery centres are cut off and the women and child protection concerns that arise in settlements of people displaced by floods.
- 67** Appropriateness of SCO's EP to the 2020 floods and epidemics emergencies was evidenced by the large number of people at risk of being impacted by the floods and epidemics whose lives UNICEF emergency preparedness and response activities helped to save and suffering it helped to avert (table 3). In light of the huge numbers of people at risk of being impacted by floods and diseases, UNICEF's preparedness for timely provision of WASH, Health and Nutrition responses when the emergencies occurred was appropriate.

Table 3: People at Risk of Flood and Disease Outbreak and Selected Interagency Response Targets in 2020

State	At Risk of Floods 2020	At Risk of Disease Outbreaks	WASH Target	Health & Nutrition Target
Blue Nile	86 625	740 752	108 693	225 948
Kassala	38 805	375 175	106 493	133 729
North Darfur	23 555	333 857	67 478	108 798
Sennar	65 095	651 320	236 829	251 641
White Nile	38 305	1 766 336	424 985	600 954

Source: adapted from UNICEF Sudan EPRP – 30 September 2020 (revised)

- 68** SCO's emergency preparedness system was suitable to addressing factors that influenced the impact of flood and epidemic emergencies in some of the states that suffered the worst impact of the 2020 floods (Blue Nile, Sennar and White Nile). The factors that could exacerbate the impact of floods included, *among others*, poor sanitation and hygiene; poor water quality that could trigger disease outbreaks; low environmental health standards; high density of mosquitos in flood affected areas due to large quantities of stagnant water); and a history of cholera outbreaks (in 2016 and 2019, for instance). These factors were typically WASH-related. Given these WASH-related factors that could potentially exacerbate the impact of floods and subsequent disease outbreaks, SCO's EPS – with WASH and Health support as some of its key

areas served to prevent – as far as possible – the incidence of water and vector borne diseases and control transmission in case infection did occur.

69 All the specific elements (preparedness outputs²⁶) of SCO's Emergency Preparedness System were deemed appropriate. For illustration – the appropriateness of pre-positioning of supplies and preparedness partnership building is demonstrated in this paragraph. When the 2020 floods hit North Darfur, Blue Nile, Kassala and other states, UNICEF leveraged its existing preparedness partnerships with the State Ministry of Health to deliver health and nutrition related responses to flood survivors. Having existing partnerships through which emergency response activities could be implemented was appropriate since delays associated with signing new partnership agreements during an emergency would have severely delayed the actual response. Also, as part of its preparedness, UNICEF had prepositioned health, WASH, Nutrition and other supplies. Since the floods contaminated and – in some cases destroyed²⁷ – drinking water sources and latrines, the chlorine tablets and powder (WASH supplies) that UNICEF had prepositioned clearly became appropriate to the contextual factors that could have worsened the impact of the floods (in this case poor water quality that could have led to cholera and/ or AWD outbreaks).

70 Maintaining fitness of UNICEF SCO's emergency preparedness system to the political context of Sudan has, nonetheless, not been easy in recent years. Sudan's political context has remained fluid. Rapid political changes have set a limit to the extent to which UNICEF Sudan's Emergency Preparedness could be maintained fully aligned to the political context. In the circumstances, UNICEF has maintained a good degree of fitness of its EP activities to the Sudan context by engaging the GoS as its main partner in emergency preparedness and response. A substantial proportion (about 70%) of UNICEF preparedness activities were implemented with and through relevant line ministries, departments and agencies such as the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Water Resources, Ministry of Social Welfare and Ministry of Education.²⁸ Working with and through the structures of the Government of Sudan (GOS) has enabled UNICEF to align its preparedness activities with the GOS' national and sub-national plans and structures for emergency preparedness and response. More importantly, SCO consulted relevant line ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) during emergency preparedness planning and collaborated with relevant line ministries in development of Annual Work Plans (AWPs). Further, UNICEF has maintained a healthy relationship with Sudan's Humanitarian Aid Commission. Partnering with GOS ensured the government's ownership of SCO's preparedness and response activities as well as exposure of GOS MDAs to UN systems, thus contributing to systems strengthening for GOS.

71 Post the October 2021 military takeover, however, most donor agencies, including USAID and SIDA, have expressed reservations over moving resources to or through government systems, a stance that is likely to dent the alignment with the political context, forcing UNICEF to consider alternative implementation modalities.

72 In recent years, SCO has leveraged its presence close to communities at risk to enhance the cultural appropriateness of its emergency preparedness and response activities. Field offices

²⁶ The outputs are shown on the logic model provided above (fig 1).

²⁷As an example, the 2020 floods damaged an elevated water tank in Elekefa Village in Blue Nile. An earth dam in Bout town collapsed, leaving residents of Tadamon with no dry season source of drinking water due to scarcity of ground water. A situation report for 2020 flood response in Sennar shows that 81 water sources and 17 344 latrines were affected. Similarly, an interagency flood impact assessment mission conducted in Sept 2020 in Sennar found out that shortage of safe drinking water, sanitation and long-lasting insecticidal nets (LLIN) were the main problems.

²⁸ The UNICEF Response Plan for 2020 shows the partnerships between GOS line ministries and UNICEF in flood response. Also all state level AWPs reviewed during this evaluation included partnerships with government.

(FOs) served as the stations that enabled UNICEF presence in communities at risk. The FOs are within – or close to – communities-at-risk, within target states. UNICEF presence at state level has enabled UNICEF to better understand cultural nuances of communities at risk and adapt preparedness and response activities accordingly. A specific example of this adaptation was the translation of C4D messages into local languages, including – in some instances – the hiring of local people to support with translation to ensure that messages are clearly understood by target populations.

73 State level preparedness activities have been kept conflict sensitive. During preparedness processes and assessments, UNICEF consulted relevant stakeholders, including resistance committees, to avoid contributing to existing tensions. It participated in the high committee for emergencies (chaired by the Wali²⁹), which is typically activated before an emergency to create readiness for the emergency. This participation enabled UNICEF to align its preparedness activities to state and locality level cultural and conflict dynamics.

Gender and equity considerations

74 UNICEF's preparedness system is adapted to cater for specific needs of girls and women. In its pre-positioning of supplies, it included dignity kits. This ensures that the menstrual hygiene management (MHM) needs of girls and women are catered for during early response. In addition, UNICEF sanitation support during emergencies ensures that girls and women have toilets that are separate from those of boys and men. This has helped to meet not only sanitation, but also protection objectives. However, this evaluation did not find evidence of establishment of separate toilets for people with disabilities (PWDs).

75 There, however, is generally insufficient integration of gender in UNICEF SCO's emergency preparedness planning. Risk analyses do not include sufficient attention to gender and power dynamics in communities at risk prior to the onset of the emergency and how emergencies may affect these. Sex and age disaggregated data (SADD) are not provided in the risk analyses or the emergency scenarios anticipated in the emergency preparedness plans. There is also inadequate analysis of the cultural and security concerns that may differentially affect women and girls' access to services in emergencies even when the services are provided (e.g. some women may not use temporary sanitation facilities set up when they are displaced by conflict or floods due to entrenched cultural issues, including a culture of open defecation). There was also inadequate integration of gender into relevant minimum preparedness standards (MPS), e.g. partnering of agencies that have particular expertise in empowering girls and women and/ or engaging boys and men (MPS 10).

Adaptation to COVID-19

76 The COVID-19 pandemic was unforeseen, unexpected. The pandemic brought a need for new supplies that had not been anticipated, especially Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) and sanitisers. To ensure rapid response in 2020, UNICEF SCO – with the support of UNICEF HQ in relaxing procurement guidelines – did offshore procurement of COVID-19 supplies and flew them into the country in a timely manner. Commendable swiftness was achieved in getting COVID-19 supplies into the country. With the pandemic persisting into 2021 and beyond, SCO adapted its emergency preparedness and response system to the COVID-19 pandemic better.

77 UNICEF took the lead on infection prevention and control (IPC), risk communication and community engagement (RCCE), provision of WASH services to critical facilities, provision of

²⁹ Wali means Governor.

personal protective equipment (PPE) and country-level co-ordination³⁰. At state and locality levels, UNICEF's C4D section supported various government departments, community-based organisations, religious leaders, media outlets, private sector partners, resistance revolutionary groups, and other community groups in raising community awareness towards adoption of precautions against COVID-19. These efforts were often met by community resistance due to myths and misconceptions. Efforts to fully adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic were, however, often hindered when competing emergencies (floods and other diseases like dengue fever and chikungunya perceived to be deadlier than COVID-19 by both communities and some service providers) occurred.³¹

78 In the face of COVID-19, UNICEF's Education Section embraced technology and applied it to ensure that learning continues in emergency settings (despite travel and social gathering restrictions). An e-learning platform was developed and to date the platform continues to be used in ensuring that education continues despite emergencies.

Emergency Preparedness Planning

79 Emergency preparedness planning is necessary and all the components of UNICEF's emergency preparedness plan are appropriate. It provides opportunity to visualise what impact anticipated emergencies could have on girls, women, boys and men as well as to think through measures to prevent loss of lives, avert human suffering and ensure that core commitments on children in humanitarian action are met. There was convergence of evidence from various sources on the crucial role of emergency preparedness planning in UNICEF's emergency preparedness system.

80 Since 2018, the use of the emergency preparedness platform (EPP) has been central to emergency preparedness planning at global, regional and country office levels in UNICEF. However, in UNICEF SCO, there is a perception that EPP is heavy and lacks user-friendliness. EPP is regarded as a portal too complex to be effectively applied to emergency response; one of UNICEF's online portals completing which was considered a tedious additional role to already overburdened staff.

81 Among most of the staff both at country and field office levels, there was no sense of ownership of the process of updating EPP. Updating of EPP was largely *siloed in FOE* with inadequate engagement of programme Sections. Coordination and collaboration between FOE and Programme Sections at Khartoum level was inadequate. The use of the Emergency Preparedness Platform (EPP) in emergency preparedness planning was limited. For many staff members participation in the EPP processes was tokenistic with FOE requesting for their contributions at the 'tail-end' of planning process when the plan is almost complete, after key decisions would have been made. Practical utility of EPP was compromised by lack of its ownership and inadequacy of buy-in among staff (and surprisingly, even among a substantial proportion of section heads and some chiefs). Platform complexity and lack of user-friendliness were the main reasons for lack of staff motivation to complete EPP.

82 Due to lack of ownership of EPP, there was lack of consistency and regularity in SCOs' updating of plans and other documents on EPP over the past four years (2018 -2021). The copy of SCO's Emergency Preparedness Plan on EPP was last approved on the 26th September 2018. SCO's emergency preparedness plan had not been updated and approved again, three years down

³⁰ UNICEF Sudan. 2020. Humanitarian Assistance report.

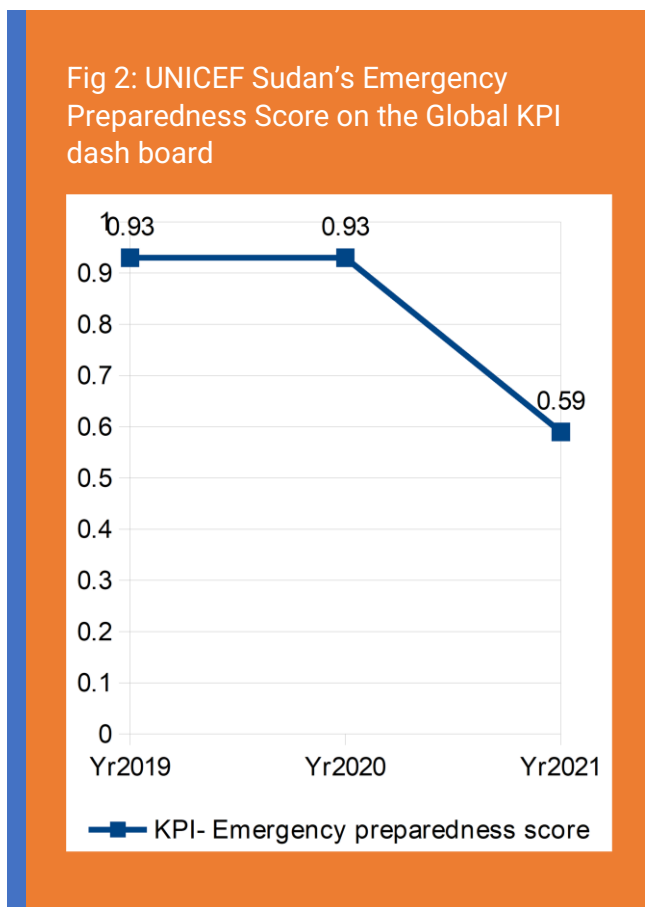
<https://www.unicef.org/sudan/media/6086/file/Thematic%20Report.pdf>

³¹ More evidence and details on this are available in UNICEF C4D Service Provider and Interactive Voice Response Study Report of 2020.

the line. Inconsistency in updating preparedness plans and other outputs on the EPP was corroborated by cursory analysis of the 'activity log' on EPP. The analysis showed that:

- In 2021, there was a high density of activities of updating EPP outputs from September to December (363 EPP updating activities in total) while negligible EPP updating efforts were made from January to August (only four activities).
- No updating of the Emergency Preparedness Platform was done between the 21st May 2019 and the 11th April 2021.
- There was limited activity on EPP during 2019. Only 29 EPP updating activities were done in 2019.

83 By January 2022, SCO's emergency preparedness score on EPP was 81% (12 percentage points down from the 2018 approved score of 93%). UNICEF's global Key Performance Indicator (KPI) dashboard, however, showed a sharper decline in the emergency preparedness score; from the approved score of 93% in 2018 to 59% in December 2021³² (fig 2). The plan on EPP was 29 months overdue and Sudan's compliance score was 30%³³. This reflects on the negative attitudes of staff towards EPP, especially in light of its heaviness and lack of user-friendliness. In another sense, the inconsistency in updating EPP may also imply low levels of leadership commitment to EPP.



84 The planning, monitoring and evaluation (PME) unit at SCO had minimal strategic participation in emergency preparedness planning, emergency needs assessment, emergency preparedness actions and emergency response processes. FOE was, largely, the team in charge of Emergency Preparedness and Response. As a result, internally generated emergency response monitoring or evaluation reports were not available. The knowledge management mechanism for the emergency preparedness system could benefit from more coordination and collaboration between FOE and PME at Khartoum level.

85 Annual Work Plans (AWPs) drafted jointly with relevant government line ministries as partners were clearly used during response (with evidence of relevant government representatives submitting funding requests on FACE forms to implement activities in line with specified expected outcomes and planned outputs stated in AWP). Similarly, UNICEF – in partnership with WHO – drew up and made use of multi-sector floods and epidemics emergency preparedness and response plans during actual flood response in 2020 and 2021. The joint multi-sector emergency

³² The emergency preparedness index is one of the quality assurance core measures displayed on its (internal) Global Performance Score Card available at insight.unicef.org/apps01/KPIDash/pages/KPIDash_KPI.aspx?p_business_area=4020&p_time_id=202112&p_report=CO&p_dimensions=ALL

³³ <https://epp.unicef.org/#!/CO/4020/90/Summary> (accessed on 27 February 2022).

preparedness and response plans and relevant aspects of AWP were used during actual emergency response. Whenever planning for emergencies was done as the AWP process, the resulting planning outputs were used in implementation of response when an emergency occurred.

Quality of SCO's Emergency Preparedness Plan

86 The evaluation assessed the quality of SCO's emergency preparedness plan. The overall finding was that although the plan had gaps and could be strengthened in a variety of ways, it generally constituted a suitable base upon which response to actual emergencies could be built.

87 SCO successfully identified key risks that are likely to affect fulfilment of the rights of girls, boys and women in Sudan. Sudan's plan has been designed to cater for such hazards as floods, droughts, epidemics, armed conflict and economic deterioration. Recently, MENARO has advocated for inclusion of civil unrest among the risks that SCO should prepare for, with consideration of escalation of the same into fully fledged armed conflict. At SCO level, this suggestion has been met by the view that 'Armed Conflict' is a risk but 'civil unrest' is a trigger of 'armed conflict' not a risk on its own. A concomitant degree of unwillingness to prepare for civil unrest as a risk³⁴ was noted although the current mass demonstrations (especially in Khartoum) have already demonstrated that civil unrest is a risk on its own. SCO notes that civil unrest affects operational continuity and, accordingly, is included in the Business Continuity Plan and the Security Plan however it does not give rise to significant humanitarian needs for which emergency response would be required.

88 For each of the risks identified, SCO provided historical narrative analysis which however could be strengthened by increasing the use of statistics from credible sources and enhancing the characterisation of the vulnerabilities of girls, boys and women. Also, the analyses generally lack a forward-looking perspective. There is no discussion of how risks and (emergency) scenarios would be expected to evolve, yet from a planning perspective, this forward-looking dimension of analyses is crucial.

89 The current plans lack analyses of the existing emergency preparedness and response capacities and related gaps, especially on the part of Government.

90 The Emergency Preparedness Plan is long. Much of the sector contributions (for scenarios and responses) are apparently the same from one risk to another. Sector specific scenario descriptions and response plans tend to repeat what would have already been articulated in the 'general risk analysis, scenario description and response plan.' With such redundancy of narratives, it would appear perhaps reasonable and efficient in terms of time savings to create a single multi-hazard plan in cases where the impact of emergencies arising from two or more risks (e.g. floods and epidemics) is similar³⁵. Making the plan shorter would make it more user-friendly and enhance its utility.

91 Incompleteness of some sector preparedness and response plans was one gap in the appropriateness of SCO's EPP. The sector plans of concern did not include estimates of populations that the planned response would target. They also did not have budget estimates.

92 The vast geographical expanse of Sudan makes a single national level Emergency Preparedness Plan insufficiently appropriate to the specific risks characteristic of the diversity of its states and localities. Notably, SCO has since recognised this reality and moved towards decentralisation of emergency preparedness plans to field office level, starting in 2019.

³⁴ This difference in views is also reflected in recent (December 2021) email trails that were reviewed during this evaluation.

³⁵ UNICEF already has experience in producing multi-hazard preparedness plans. An example of a slim, fit-for-purpose plan that UNICEF recently contributed to producing was the 'Sudan Multi-hazard Preparedness and Response Plan of April 2020 which UNICEF produced with WHO.

Decentralising EPPs enables a higher level of customisation of FO EPPs to the specific socio-cultural, security, environmental and other nuances of the state(s) and is generally a commendable move. However, till now, the decentralisation move has not gathered adequate momentum. EPP's complexity, unsuitability for adaptation to multiple field offices under one country office and lack of user-friendliness as discussed in paragraph 80 has been a big hindrance to its practical utility. FO level emergency preparedness planning remains weak and most FOs' plans on the online EPP remain incomplete. Online EPP updates by field offices have – in some cases – been slowed down or disrupted by internet connectivity challenges. Most staff at FO level lack capacity to effectively produce Emergency Preparedness Plan outputs. There is the added challenge of lack of time for EPP activities considering that most staff at Field Office Level are 'double – in some instances triple – hatting'. This constraint is further discussed under efficiency (section 3.2 below).

3.2 Efficiency

3.2.1 Human and Financial Resources

Human Resources

- 93 SCO has a current, updated 'Staff Capacities and Surge Plan' which shows 'who does what' in the first 24 hours of a rapid onset disaster. The plan explicitly specifies roles and responsibilities that have to be done by specific individuals within six-hour intervals of the first 24 hours after the onset of a disaster. This fulfils part of MPS3.
- 94 Efficient mechanisms for re-allocating staff to emergency affected places were evident. During some rapid onset emergencies, for instance, technical staff from Khartoum were timely deployed to places where the emergency had occurred. Also, when an emergency occurred in the jurisdiction of one field office, surge staff were deployed from adjacent (or nearest) field offices, thus optimising human resource utilisation during emergency response.
- 95 Assessment of availability and planning for optimal use of human resource was given due attention during the EP planning process in UNICEF Sudan. SCO's Emergency Preparedness and Response Plans (EPRP) for floods and epidemics (e.g. for August – December 2021) included a matrix for analysis of staff availability for deployment in the event of an emergency and role allocation for the 'Khartoum Flood Task Force' (table 4). These arrangements (showing who will do what when an emergency occurs) contributed towards ensuring that human resources were optimised during emergency response. There, however, was a limitation to this mechanism for HR optimisation: when an emergency occurred, FOE could only request for the services of particular staff members from programme sections and the requested individuals or their section heads could turn down the request, prioritising other commitments. Optimisation of HR in emergency response would be better if FOE is authorised to give instructions that have to be obeyed without excuse when an emergency occurs, thus giving first priority to emergency response.

Table 4: 2021 Flood Response Support Team: UNICEF Khartoum Flood Task Force

Section	Name (<i>not real</i>)	Position	Emergency role	Unavailable dates
FOE	Joe	Emergency Coordinator	Convener	
WASH	Brunehe	WASH specialist	WASH Focal point	
CP	Suman	CP emergency	CP Focal point	
C4D	Xhintheng	C4D consultant	C4D Focal point	
H&N	Sheltaj	H&N Emergency Specialist	Health & Nutrition Focal point	
Edu.	Fimdg	Education Officer	EDU Focal point	
HR	Moldxo	HR Officer	HR in emergencies Focal point	
S & L	Hiaenbgd	Supply specialist	Logs. Coordinator and Focal point	

C&A	Oidmry	Chief Communications	Comms and Advocacy Focal point
PME	Quayki	M&E specialist	PME Focal point

Source: UNICEF Sudan. 2021. *Flood and Epidemics Preparedness and Response Summary Analysis and Plan (August -December 2021)*.

- 96 SCO used two mechanisms for efficiently mobilising human resources for emergencies: acquiring standby staff and hiring consultants. It hired standby (technical) staff with coordination and support of the UNICEF Geneva office. Since the burden of salaries for these standby staff is borne by their employers with UNICEF just providing them with equipment, SCO made savings on employment costs. Similarly, SCO hired WASH, C4D and other consultants during flooding, epidemic and other emergencies in the recent past at less costs when compared to staff costs. The hiring process for consultants is shorter than that for staff and this contributed to timeliness of staff hire. In addition, hiring consultants led to savings as consultancy fees tend to be lower than staff costs.
- 97 However, across all field offices, human resources for information management were not available. Information Management Officers are not in place. Monitoring and Evaluation staff doubled as information management officers. This gap has contributed to a generally weak information management mechanism for emergency preparedness in SCO.
- 98 At field office level, there were no staff members specifically for sector leadership and coordination in sectors where UNICEF is the sector lead. Programme staff double as sector coordination staff. Double hatting has rendered the staff members over-stretched by heightened workloads during and after flooding emergencies. The net effect has been inefficiencies in sector leadership and coordination at field level during emergency preparedness and response activities.
- 99 Yet even at country office level, some critical vacancies existed. Over the years, the availability of adequately trained/ experienced emergency preparedness personnel willing to work in Sudan has remained a challenge. The position of emergency specialist remained vacant from October 2019 to the end of January 2022 while the position of Emergency Officer was only filled in November 2021. Challenges of recruiting suitably qualified international professionals with requisite skills and willingness to re-locate to the challenging context of Sudan were one factor compromising the efficiency and effectiveness of SCO's Emergency Preparedness.
- 100 UNICEF's corporate policy of international staff rotation has not helped the situation. If anything, it has negatively affected the human resource capacity of SCO's emergency preparedness system, especially in the last half of 2021. There was new leadership in all critical positions in Emergency Preparedness with none of the new leaders having sufficient experience of the fluid emergency context of Sudan (i.e. a new country representative, new deputy country representative, new heads of departments – Education, Child Protection, Emergency, PME, Communication, Health and Nutrition). Inadequate understanding of the context by new leadership was to some extent negatively affecting how emergency preparedness and response activities were done. Some experienced national staff at field level who felt they knew how *'things should be done'* in Sudan tended to be uncomfortable with ways of working suggested by new leadership which they (experienced national staff) already knew would not be the best options for Sudan.
- 101 High staff turnover within UNICEF Sudan, both at country and field office levels negatively affected EP specific institutional memory. One challenge leading to insufficient seriousness and commitment to full adoption and utilisation of EPP in UNICEF Sudan was the reality that many of the people who produced the first EPP analyses in 2018 were no longer with the office by December 2021. The new staff had not been adequately oriented in the updating, use and usefulness of EPP. As a result, there generally were gaps not only related to institutional memory but also to ability to properly complete the EPP.

102 A major hindrance to optimisation of human resources capacity in UNICEF Sudan's Emergency Preparedness System was the inadequacy of emergency preparedness and disaster management specific capacity building. Neither an emergency preparedness training needs assessment report nor an emergency preparedness training plan was in place.

103 Some key principles and international guidelines for emergency preparedness and response (e.g. equity of response, core humanitarian standards) remain unknown to key staff in SCO's EPS. While important online trainings were available and accessible to staff on AGORA (e.g. PSEA, PSHAA, Emergency Preparedness and Response, Humanitarian System, for instance), most staff members typically hurry through *required* courses to obtain certificates and meet the requirements of the Human Resources Management Department (without studying any of the reference documents for further study identified in the online courses or even taking time to digest the course principles, content and practical implications). Key areas that required training in order to improve efficiency of SCO's EPS included Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (CCC), Humanitarian-Development-Peacebuilding Nexus (HDPN) approach, safeguarding, accountability to affected populations (AAP), *among others*.

104 Over the past two years (2020 -2021), no emergency response simulations have been done. None of the staff members had attended any emergency response simulation. The only simulation that some UNICEF staff members attended during the past two years was a 'fire drill' at Khartoum office. The unavailability of emergency response simulations was one factor that adversely affected staff readiness for emergency response.

105 As a preparedness mechanism for ensuring rapid mobilisation of human resources for emergency response, rosters have not been systematically used by UNICEF Sudan. Some programme sections (e.g. WASH) had come up with rosters in recent years, but these had not been updated and it was not clear if the people on the rosters were still available. Since only some – not all – programme sections had rosters, there was room to systematize the use of rosters.

Timeliness of Staff Deployment

106 Over the past two years, SCO leveraged the physical presence of its Field Offices at state level (or near states of concern) to ensure rapid response. Upon declaration of an emergency in a state where UNICEF has presence, UNICEF staff got onto the ground within 48 hours in most instances³⁶, with UNICEF being one among the first organisations to arrive. During the 2020 floods in Kassala State, for instance, UNICEF were among the first agencies to arrive with assistance to flood survivors while in Blue Nile and Sennar, UNICEF staff were on the ground (in accessible flood areas) within 24 hours.

107 Timely arrival of UNICEF, however, was restricted to accessible areas. During the 2020 floods, for instance, some places in Blue Nile and Sennar States became cut off from access by road. In areas where small boats could be used, UN staff security guidelines (UNDSS) prohibited use of the same. Thus, timeliness of staff deployment was, in such instances constrained by either physical or humanitarian accessibility challenges.

³⁶ That is where the place is accessible (the roads are not cut off and security context permits)

108 In terms of surge staff, deployment was timely (within 48 hours) in more than seven in every ten instances if the surge staff members are mobilised from within Sudan. During the 2020 floods, for instance, UNICEF's White Nile Office timely received surge support from Khartoum and other field offices to beef up their six-member staff compliment. However, if surge support is requested from outside Sudan, visa processing and travel authorisation request processes

Table 5: Comparative Analysis of Value-for-Money for Deployment for Different Surge Support Arrangements

Surge staff based outside Sudan	Surge Staff Based in Sudan
Up to 14 days visa processing	No visa Required
Between 7 -14 days within the country prior to visiting field sites, processing Travel Authorisation Request (TAR)	No lengthy travel clearance procedure required in country
Impossible to reach field sites of concern within 48 hours	Highly likely to reach sites of concern within 48 hrs
Additional travel costs related to movement from country of origin to Sudan	No additional travel costs as the staff are already in the country
May have additional remuneration costs	Usually, no additional remuneration costs

within Sudan may together take more than three weeks. Whenever surge support was from outside Sudan, the staff could not reach affected communities within the 48 hours CCC standard for deployments. Also, financial costs of surge support from outside Sudan were also much higher than costs for surge support from within Sudan, yet in most of the cases the same capacities mobilised internationally to participate in flood response in Sudan could have been mobilised within Sudan as they existed in other field offices or at Khartoum level. Overall, surge support from within Sudan had higher value for money than surge support from outside Sudan (table 5). Thus, surge arrangements for rapid onset emergencies may need to be made largely on the basis of the staff compliment within Sudan with consideration of externals only when absolutely necessary or in cases of protracted emergencies where response is expected to continue for more than three months.

Financial Resources

109 UNICEF has two main internal funding streams for emergency preparedness and response. These are the Global Humanitarian Thematic Funding (GHTF) and special Emergency Programme Fund (EPF) from the global office. Additional funding may also be raised from donors. In principle, these mechanisms enable rapid, flexible disbursement of funds to meet core commitments for children in humanitarian action (although in practice, deviations from the ideal have often been experienced).

110 Allocated from regular resources (RR), the EPF is a revolving fund providing reimbursable loans to offices that require immediate funding before receiving donor support. EPF provides timely and flexible funding that enables UNICEF offices to scale up life-saving humanitarian action for children within hours of the occurrence of an emergency.

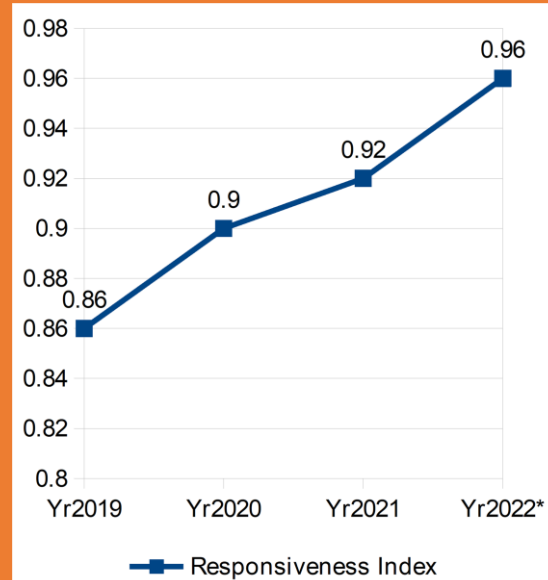
111 GHTF allows UNICEF's partners to support the achievements set out under the UNICEF Humanitarian Action for Children Appeal. It allows UNICEF to deliver rapid and strategic humanitarian responses to most vulnerable children when and where it is needed in a timely and effective manner. It enables UNICEF to invest in preparedness, provide immediate life-saving assistance, save transaction costs and respond equitably on the basis of need. After regular resources, GHTF is the most flexible form of funding. In 2020, Sudan received USD 675 000 in GHTF³⁷.

112 In many cases, internal corporate funding mechanisms have enabled SCO to disburse funding for emergencies in a timely manner for most emergencies in Sudan. In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, UNICEF demonstrated agility in mobilising fundings and rapidly setting up supply and logistics mechanisms that enabled timely offshore procurement as discussed in paragraph 77 above.

113 Recently, SCO came up with an innovative idea of 'pre-positioning funds' for response to floods and other rapid onset emergencies. The country office allocates a contingency fund to each field office at the beginning of the year (e.g. for 2022, this amount is about USD 200 000 per field office). This is a flexible fund for immediate use when a rapid onset disaster e.g. floods occur. The Chief of Field Office leads decision making on how to allocate such funds when an emergency occurs in the area under their jurisdiction, thus empowering local offices for action. A mid-year review of the extent of utilisation of the contingency fund is done, giving SCO latitude to pull back some un- or underutilised funds from one field office and re-allocate to a field office where the contingency funds would have been used up. This contingency fund enhances timeliness of response. It is some form of forward loading of SCO's decentralisation drive; a 'high value for money' emergency preparedness output in terms of timeliness of disbursement of flexible funds for response to emergencies.

114 In terms of timelines of cash disbursements to implementing partners, SCO has increasingly become better over the past three years (2019-2022). Its responsiveness index³⁸ rose from 0.86 in 2019 to 0.96 in 2022 (Fig 3). Although this proxy is not exclusively for partners in

Fig 3: Timeliness of Disbursement of Funds to Partners (Proportion of partners whose FACE forms were processed with 14 days)



*Covers 1 January to 25 February 2022

³⁷ UNICEF Global Annual Results Report, 2020 Humanitarian Thematic Funding.

<https://www.unicef.org/media/103571/file/Global-annual-results-report-2020-humanitarian-action-thematic-funding-annex.pdf>

³⁸ Proportion of FACE forms processed within 14 days (a proxy indicator of timeliness of disbursements). Available at

https://insight.unicef.org/apps01/KPIDash/pages/KPIDash_KPI.aspx?p_business_area=4020&p_time_id=202112&p_report=CO&p_dimensions=ALL

emergency preparedness and response, the upward trend in SCO's overall responsiveness to partners is commendable

115 This aggregate picture, however, conceals variations between states as well as other variations that relate specifically to disbursements in the context of such rapid onset disasters as floods. For instance, cash disbursements for 2020 flood emergency response delayed in Blue Nile, White Nile and Sennar states but were timely in Kassala and North Darfur states. In White Nile, the situation was worsened by the fact that the funds availed were not adequate to cover the planned emergency response activities.

116 In situations that financial disbursements for emergency response delayed, two main reasons for delays were identified. First, disbursement to implementing partners were delayed by the partnering process. The process of developing Programme Documents was generally lengthy, complex and unsuitable for emergency context. Both staff of the prospective IP and staff of UNICEF sometimes found the process frustrating. Second, UNICEF's Financial Disbursement Model/ process at times took more than two weeks before IPs were paid.

117 Financial resource inadequacies have often been a challenge to efficiency of SCO's emergency preparedness and Response system. By the end of September 2020, for instance, the 2020 Humanitarian Appeal for Children remained underfunded by 56%: UNICEF had received only US\$64.5 million against the US\$148 million 2020 HAC appeal³⁹. These funding gaps adversely affected response to urgent needs related to the floods and disease outbreak emergencies of the third and fourth quarters of 2020. However, although underfunding is more the norm than the exception, it often turns out at the end of the financial year, UNICEF has some funds that it carries over to the following year (reflecting – in a sense – underutilisation of available funds). The main reason for these financial carry overs was accessibility challenges for target communities.

118 Interagency emergency funding mechanisms in Sudan were usually characterised by delayed disbursements. Nearly half of the stakeholders consulted felt that disbursement of emergency preparedness and response funds requested from the Sudan Humanitarian Fund (SHF), a multi-donor, country-based pooled fund, were often late leading to late emergency response. There was also a challenge with perceived opaqueness of decisions with regards to allocation of funds from the SHF in some instances, especially in 2021⁴⁰.

119 The extent to which UNICEF could optimally use financial resources in flooding and other emergency responses in 2021 was negatively affected by rising inflation. Budgets were often overshoot by changes in prices. This made planning difficult as less results would be achieved out of every Sudanese pound allocated. Emergency response was further complicated as some vendors were unwilling to deliver services or goods at pre-agreed prices (which had been rendered worthless by falling values of the Sudanese pound relative to the United States Dollar and inflation). This negated the benefit that should have flowed from the presence of some LTAs. Also, fuel shortages, cash withdrawal limits in the banking sector and a generally challenging economic terrain negatively affected efficiency of UNICEF's response to floods in 2021.

120 In some instances, optimisation of funds was hindered by changes in government regimes in Sudan. With changes in government regimes, some CSOs that were partners to UNICEF SCO in emergency preparedness and response became suspects for being aligned to a previous regime and were proscribed by the new government regime. The new regime banned their operations. In such cases, the banned CSOs lost functionality. The funds and other resources disbursed to them

³⁹ UNICEF SCO. 2020. UNICEF External Situation Report. 22 September 2020.

<https://www.unicef.org/sudan/media/4876/file/UNICEF%20External%20Situation%20Report.pdf>

⁴⁰ It was unclear why funding for nutrition and health in 2021 was allocated to specific agencies not others that typically would have received an allocation of the same.

could neither be utilised nor retrieved, the contact persons vanished into thin air and the resources advanced to them ended up being written off.

3.2.2 Prepositioning of Supplies

121 Over the period 2020-2021, pre-positioning of supplies (forward loading) was one of SCO's high-value emergency preparedness outputs. It helped ensure timely availability of WASH, Health, Nutrition, Child Protection and Education supplies well in advance of flooding and other emergencies. To some extent, it was a solution to access problems. Most roads to and/ or within communities prone to floods are navigable and transport costs are cheap during the dry season. When the rainy season comes, the roads to affected localities become difficult to navigate (sometimes entirely cut off), transport costs rise and many transport vendors refuse to provide trucks for transporting supplies to affected localities. Thus, pre-positioning was sometimes the only way to ensure that flood-affected people receive life-saving supplies. Also, pre-positioning supplies ensured that the rainy season started when supplies were already in states where floods would have been anticipated to occur. In the case of offshore supplies, it would have been impossible to ship supplies in time to save lives during rapid onset disasters. Customs clearance processes in Sudan – both at air and sea ports – takes quite some time (sometimes beyond 30 days). Even worse, in 2021 some supplies were stuck at port Sudan due to conflict dynamics leading to delays in the distribution of the supplies. These findings show a gloomier picture than the findings of a time release study undertaken by Sudan Customs in 2015 which showed that the average time to import in Sudan is 10 days.⁴¹ So, without pre-positioning of supplies, it would not have been possible to deliver supplies procured offshore in a timely manner to save lives for people affected by rapid onset disasters.

122 Pre-positioned supplies are 'a preparedness output' that UNICEF SCO almost always used during actual response. Some of UNICEF's pre-positioned life-saving supplies were even distributed during interagency disaster assessment missions as part of the immediate response to the emergency. Prepositioning supplies was clearly a major strength of UNICEF SCO's Emergency Preparedness System although there were concerns that the use of prepositioned supplies 'made UNICEF SCO respond on the basis of what it had instead of what was critically needed' in some cases.

123 Local procurement of all supplies available in acceptable quality and required quantities in local markets (e.g. non-food items like jerricans and soap) was more cost-effective than offshore procurement. Local procurement had higher value-for-money than offshore procurement for two reasons:

- Timeliness: delivery time constraints associated with unduly delayed shipments were reduced, sometimes eliminated; and
- Cost: huge demurrage costs routinely accrued at ports of entry when shipments are delayed were avoided when local procurement was done. When these demurrage costs are incurred, total cost for offshore procurement becomes higher than local procurement (conversely implying that local procurement becomes more efficient).

124 Use of prepositioned supplies substantially contributed to timeliness, strength and quality of UNICEF response to floods. Prepositioned water treatment chemicals, hygiene kits, dignity kits for women and girls, RUTF, C4D and other supplies helped reduce vulnerability of women and children to WASH and nutrition related health problems, for instance. Similarly, prepositioned child protection and education supplies enabled continued fulfilment of children's rights to protection and education. Pre-positioning supplies contributed to reducing vulnerability of affected

⁴¹ Sudan National Trade Facilitation Map 2017 -2021 pp.13. <https://www.tralac.org/images/docs/11046/sudan-national-trade-facilitation-roadmap-2017-2021.pdf>

populations. Its contribution was, however, frequently compromised by pilferage and challenges in 'secondary' logistics from state level warehouses to final distribution points for the supplies. Leakages – especially of RUTF (even in warehouses belonging to government line ministries) - was a concern to most stakeholders. Security of pre-positioned supplies was not guaranteed. On the other hand, challenges in logistics (including on the part of GOS as a key partner of UNICEF in flood preparedness and response) often led to late deliveries of supplies to end-users⁴².

⁴² This mainly refers to transport from state to final distribution points at state level.

3.3 Effectiveness

Information Management

- 125 UNICEF's Emergency Preparedness Information Management System was generally weak, especially at state level where UNICEF does not have staff dedicated to information management (see para.). Modern technology for collection, management and sharing information has not been sufficiently optimised. The existing software for information and knowledge management needs to be upgraded to enable better performance. There were gaps in mechanisms for timely dissemination and sharing of data collected with relevant stakeholders. There was room for improvement in information management at state level.
- 126 Effective information and knowledge management is a critical cog in Emergency Preparedness. With accurate, timely, disaggregated statistical and narrative information outputs, evidence-based decision making with regards to emergency response makes responses better targeted and contributes to intervention effectiveness. It also allows for learning of lessons to improve future preparedness and response activities.
- 127 Notably, SCO created and used data and information outputs to guide flood preparedness and response activities. Population data, maps showing spatial distribution of flash or riverine floods, satellite images showing changes in surface coverage of flood waters over time and other pieces of data were generated and used in the flooding preparedness and response activities. During development of the floods and epidemics Emergency Preparedness and Response Plans (FEPRPs) for both 2020 and 2021, UNICEF made use of data from various sources to create maps using Geographical Information Systems Techniques to show states which were likely to be more exposed to flooding or subsequent epidemic emergencies than others. Also, in 2021 UNICEF produced a flood risk forecast map using data from the Sudan Humanitarian Aid Commission – Flood Task Force, Ministry of Irrigation and Water Resources as well as Sudan Meteorological Authority. The map helped to target communities likely to be impacted by the floods. It also informed prepositioning of supplies.
- 128 When floods occurred in the targeted states and localities, UNICEF responded in accordance with plans based on the data and information outputs created. Other data products generated during flood emergency preparedness processes included estimates of populations to be affected by floods as well as water- and vector-borne diseases (although these were not gender or disability disaggregated), determination of target population and gap per thematic area, estimates of funds required for response and determination of the gap in funding, estimates of value of supplies in warehouses and in the pipeline and determination of the gap in supplies. The maps and datasets were used during response. There were instances, however, when the actual floods exceeded the worst-case scenario that had been modelled and hence, preparedness outputs served to provide a starting point for immediate response while other measures were being put in place. When floods occurred in states where they had not been anticipated (e.g. the 2020 floods in Sennar) challenges in using information outputs generated during the emergency preparedness process occurred as datasets for impacted states had to be created through interagency rapid assessments post onset of the disaster. Such instances also created logistical challenges as prepositioned supplies in states where floods had been anticipated to occur (or in Khartoum) had to be moved to the affected states, leading to higher costs and delays in response.
- 129 There, however, was no evidence of timely, adequate production and dissemination of early warning messages. Early warning systems were fraught with gaps. Each time floods occurred in Sudan, they became real emergencies (as many vulnerable communities were exposed to the floods). So far, UNICEF, other agencies, GoS and stakeholders have not been able to weave an effective flooding early warning system that can help reduce exposure and vulnerability of at-risk populations.

130 Over the years 2020 and 2021, there was no systematic inclusion of after-action review (AAR) and documentation of achievements, strengths, weakness, challenges and opportunities for Emergency Preparedness and Response to floods and other rapid onset emergencies. Nearly two thirds (65%) of the stakeholders interviewed regarded systematic review and documentation of lessons in UNICEF's emergency preparedness activities as generally inadequate. While notably there were lessons learnt included in EPRPs, the same (old) lessons learnt seemed to be carried over from one year to the next suggesting the inadequacy or absence of a systematic process for learning new lessons.

131 Further, as highlighted in paragraph 75, there was no robust system for generating, analysing, documenting and sharing gender, age, disability, ethnicity and locality disaggregated data with regards to target populations. The unavailability of sex, age and disability disaggregated data in most of the emergency response reports, made gender and other equity-related analyses difficult and made it difficult to ensure that no one is left behind.

132 There were gaps in knowledge management related to emergency response. There was no standardized emergency response reporting template. Some crucial documents were incomplete⁴³. Some reports were undated⁴⁴, making it difficult to ascertain the temporal location of such documents and impossible to use any data from such reports in trend analysis. Apparently, the monitoring and evaluation function is yet to make sufficient contribution to monitoring, documentation and reporting related to the Emergency Preparedness and Response System.

133 Generally, data and information management for emergency preparedness and response is an area of weakness in Sudan. Information management mechanisms for both government and partners are weak. Government lacks a comprehensive Disaster Management Information System (DMIS) and in some cases relies on partners to collect data. There was room for UNICEF to support government in strengthening its disaster management information systems.

Emergency Preparedness Partnerships

134 Emergency preparedness partnership building is an output of the emergency preparedness process which SCO utilised during response to flooding emergencies in 2020 – 2021. All of SCO's responses to flooding emergencies were in partnership GOS (about 70% as stated above) or with other agencies (about 30%) (CSOs, national NGOs and international NGOs). SCO has, however, not adequately harnessed the potential benefits from emergency preparedness partnership building. It suffered from inadequacy of partnerships in emergency preparedness and response: for instance, it had no partners for C4D in Kassala, White Nile and North Darfur during the 2020 flood response (table 6). In Sennar State, the small number of humanitarian agencies helping with the response to floods was a challenge⁴⁵.

⁴³For example, One excel workbook document titled '200514_Assessment Teams_BN_SN' comprised 10 sheets (each of which was supposed to contain information about one state) but only one sheet (for White Nile) had some information on it. Another Excel document entitled 'Emergency Supplies for Ad Damazine for 19th October 2020 (which was supposed to show contingency stock) had three sheets for BN, WN and NR but none of the sheets had been completed (only column headings and row descriptions but without any content in the cells).

⁴⁴ For example, one Ms. Word document entitled 'case study complete' had no date, no clear title, no description of the particular case it referred to.

⁴⁵ Sudanese Red Crescent Society. 2020. Sennar State of Floods Report (05 September 2020), unpublished.

Table 6: UNICEF SCO's Active PDs/ PCAs in Selected States in 3rd Quarter, 2020

Active PDs/PCAs	CP	ED	Health	Nutrition	WASH	C4D
Kassala	3	3	6	8	4	0
Sennar						
White Nile	1	1	1	1	2	0
Blue Nile	3	3	6	6	2	1
North Darfur	3	0	9	7	5	0

Source: Electronic File shared by UNICEF SCO

135 Preparedness partnership building was a high value output for SCO's EPS. Partnerships with Government (established and/ or renewed during the AWP process) had high value for money. UNICEF leveraged on existing government social service delivery systems (e.g. health, education) and took advantage of government warehouses to preposition critical life-saving supplies. Use of existing systems and warehouses have in these past years enabled UNICEF – in many cases - to respond to floods and other rapid onset disasters within 24 to 72 hours of the occurrence of the emergency. Other partnerships that contributed to timeliness of response to floods include partnerships with international and national NGOs as well as LTA for provision of logistics and other services by the private sector. However, capacity gaps on the part of GOS or IPs negated the expected benefits in terms of timelines of response in many cases.

136 Clearly, SCO has not done enough in terms of harnessing the benefits that could be derived from having adequate standby Programme Cooperation Agreements (PCAs). Most PCAs listed on attachments on the Emergency Preparedness Platform had expired. The processing of PCAs and signing of Programme Documents (PDs) with partners often took more than 15 working days, violating the 15-day CCC standard in this regard. The process of developing and signing PCAs and Long-Term Agreements (LTAs) was generally painstaking and lengthy, especially integrated, multi-sector PDs. There was discomfort among stakeholders with regards to the lengthy, iterative, multi-layered process of developing PDs (which – in some cases – was further lengthened by poor work ethic and attitudes of some individuals in programmatic sections or support units within UNICEF). In some cases, the planned project period lapsed before the PD was signed. One LTA for transportation (in North Darfur State) took two years to be signed. The potential value of (pre-positioning) partnerships with local and international NGOs and LTAs with private sector to enhance timeliness of response to floods and/ or other emergencies was not adequately tapped. Simplified procedures to establish timely partnership agreements for humanitarian response have largely not been used. Simplifying/ shortening the partnership process and increasing the number of stand-by partners would help speed up/ scale up response.⁴⁶

137 Emergency preparedness and response activities occur in an interagency context, where the capacity of boundary partners (other UN agencies, NGOs and Civil Society Organisations) could affect UNICEF's preparedness and response. Commendably, there was good understanding and application of preparedness concepts among UN agencies. Management and staff of WHO, WFP, UNHCR and OCHA, for instance, had good understanding of preparedness concepts and applied the concepts in line with their respective mandates. In most emergency preparedness aspects, UN agencies were just as good as UNICEF (e.g. emergency preparedness planning) but effectiveness of UNICEF's use of prepositioned supplies during flood response was outstanding.

138 Similarly, international non-governmental organisations (INGO) had good understanding and application of emergency preparedness concepts although financial and material resource capacity limitations to emergency preparedness for the INGOs were worse than those for UN agencies. However, among local NGOs and community-based organisations, the understanding of

⁴⁶ This finding corroborates findings of MENARO report on a visit to SCO in April 2021.

preparedness conceptions was low. This adversely impacted on emergency response as GOS requires that INGOs (including those with UNICEF PCAs) partner local organisations in order to deliver humanitarian action.

Timeliness and Strength of Response

139 This evaluation sought to determine whether heightened preparedness was associated with improved timeliness, strength and quality of response to flooding emergencies. Secondary data that could be used to assess this association, however, was scanty. The bulk of the documents provided for review were preparedness plans, response plans, interagency emergency assessment reports, and minutes of stakeholder coordination meetings. After Action Review or response monitoring and evaluation reports were not made available to the evaluator. SCO's general tendency has been to respond to emergencies without adequate systematic tracking and documentation of timeliness, quality and results of the response. This, in turn, has rendered the evidence base for assessment of effectiveness thin. In this section, insights into the contribution of heightened preparedness to timeliness, quality and strength of response to flooding and subsequent epidemic outbreaks are shared.

140 Comparative analysis of UNICEF response to cholera outbreaks that occurred in the wake of floods in Blue Nile State in 2016 and 2019⁴⁷ provided some evidence of the contribution of heightened preparedness to timelines and strength of response. In 2016, preparedness levels were low but in 2019 preparedness levels were high (table 7). Key aspects of the 2019 preparedness for flooding and subsequent epidemic emergencies included signing formal agreements with partners (e.g relevant government line ministries and radio stations) to ensure rapid WASH and Health messaging, identifying localities most likely to be affected, fore-conception of the nature of response that would be needed, pre-positioning of WASH and Health Supplies (to the tune of USD 70 000), as well as formation and orientation of response teams. As compared to the 2016 scenario, the contribution of the heightened preparedness to the actual outcomes of emergency response in 2019 was discernible (table 7): the spread of the outbreak in 2016 (2 358 cases identified before containment), where preparedness levels were low, was nearly twelve times worse than in 2019 when preparedness had been heightened (only 202 cases identified before the outbreak was contained). Similarly, the number of fatalities was ten times higher in 2016 than in 2019 where the level of preparedness was high.

Table 7 : Effects of Preparedness on Timeliness and Strength of Response to Cholera⁴⁸

Comparative Parameter	2016	2019
State in which epidemic originated	Blue Nile	Blue Nile
Preparedness Parameters		
Level of Preparedness when Emergency Occurred	Low	High
Month when cholera outbreak occurred	September	September
Had emergency preparedness planning been done in advance?	No	Yes

⁴⁷ Source: A document titled 'Case Study Complete' obtained from UNICEF. The document is undated but its content suggests that it may have been compiled in 2020.

⁴⁸ Source: A document titled 'Case Study Complete' obtained from UNICEF. The document is undated but its content suggests that it may have been compiled in 2020.

Month when emergency preparedness planning was done	None	May
Response Parameters		
Nature of Response	Siloed	Integrated, multi-sectoral
Timeliness of Response	Delayed	Immediate
Supplies	Not immediately available	WASH, Health and Nutrition supplies were on call where they were needed
Speed of Response	Slow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid community mobilisation • Rapid chlorination process for drinking water • Immediate monitoring of response by appointed members of the response teams
Results in Terms of Outbreak Spread/ Containment and Fatalities		
Total Cases	2 358	202
Deaths	78	8
Spread of Epidemic	Rampant across the eastern states	Outbreak was contained in Blue Nile and Sennar. Preparedness activities helped prevent spread across state borders.
Observable effects of preparedness/ lack thereof	Low levels of preparedness presented high risk of disease and death to children	Heightened preparedness minimised the risk of disease and death to children, women and other community members

- 141 Evidence from UNICEF response to the catastrophic 2020 floods further demonstrates the effects of heightened preparedness on timeliness of response. The presence of prepositioned WASH, Health and C4D supplies, partnerships with relevant government line ministries and other preparedness outputs put in place prior to the floods enabled timely and swift response. According to UNICEF SCO's 2020 Annual Thematic Report, '*swift pre-emptive action prevented a cholera outbreak from occurring in the aftermath of floods.*'
- 142 UNICEF responses to 2020 – 2021 floods were to a large extent timely. In most instances, UNICEF staff arrived at accessible flood affected sites within 24 – 48 hours of the emergency. Immediate response helped ensure that potential loss of lives and possible suffering of flood affected populations were averted in a timely manner.
- 143 There was evidence that timeliness of response to floods increased with heightened preparedness. Having adequate, well-trained staff on the ground, pre-positioning supplies, consistency in holding monthly coordination meetings, having adequate stand-by PCAs and financial resources readily available for response contributed towards improved timeliness of response to flood emergencies.
- 144 Although UNICEF's response (comprising health, WASH, nutrition and other support) to flooding in Sennar was immediate, other lifesaving responses (mainly shelter and food) by other agencies delayed. The lives and well-being of the affected populations remained in danger even after receipt of the immediate support from UNICEF. As a result, affected populations became agitated over '*delayed response*' although UNICEF response was immediate. Occurrences such as this emphasized a coordinated, interagency emergency preparedness approach that guarantees timely, coordinated, holistic response that covers all life-saving interventions if the affected populations' rights to life, health and dignity have to be fulfilled and/ or protected.

145 In White Nile, there were delays in SCO's response to the 2020 and 2021 flooding emergencies. The delays were partly due to gaps in UNICEF preparedness and partly due to factors beyond UNICEF's control. There were delays in UNICEF's transfer of cash for emergency response to White Nile and also the funds eventually transferred were inadequate (making it necessary for the field office to prioritise response in some areas before others). Factors beyond UNICEF's control included target beneficiaries' prioritisation of food and shelter during response (yet these are outside UNICEF mandate), restricted - or utter lack of - physical accessibility to some areas as flood waters cut the areas off and lack of warehouses at locality level to strengthen timeliness of distribution of supplies to target populations. Lack of warehouses at locality level was particularly of concern as secondary transportation from the state level warehouses to the points of distribution during emergency response proved difficult to secure, expensive and usually came with logistical delays affecting timeliness of delivery of the supplies (see para. 129 above). Locality level warehouses would have been ideal.

146 In other states, delayed response to floods was due to security issues. In North Darfur and Blue Nile states, for instance, security related access constraints delayed timeliness of response to floods. In other cases, (e.g. the Yabush area in White Nile State which during the 2020 flood response was still controlled by opposition armed forces), security related constraints totally prohibited access. UNDSS travel authority to such areas was not granted. Thus, security related access constraints restricted not only timeliness but also coverage of UNICEF response to flooding.

147 Other factors that restricted timelines and strength of UNICEF response to flooding included slow response by UNICEF partners (including government line ministries in some states), slow/bureaucratic process in UN agencies (delayed surge support and release of funds), weak coordination of response and unavailability and/ or late dissemination of vital data needed for response planning and organisation. These factors generally pointed to the need for increased capacity building for partners and improved response coordination.

148 The strength of UNICEF response to the 2020 and 2021 flooding emergencies varied from state to state even where the same emergency preparedness outputs had been put in place. Self-assessment of effectiveness of response to floods by Field Office level UNICEF staff showed that achievements were uneven from one state to the other. During FGDs, field office staff were asked to rate the extent to which their response to floods was successful. The resultant 2020 flood response scores ranged from 2.5 (for White Nile) to 4 (for Blue Nile/Sennar and Kassala) (Fig 4) out of 5. On the



basis of the self-assessed effectiveness score for the three field offices (representing four states) the average flooding emergency response effectiveness score was 3.5 (or 70%) for 2020 and 3.16 (or 63.2%) for 2021. Other qualitative assessments (desk review and KII) corroborated the self-assessment results. The findings showed that SCO's responses to flooding emergencies were average to above average in terms of effectiveness but never perfect. Key hindrances to effectiveness were similar across the states studied. The hindrances to effectiveness of response to flooding emergencies in White Nile state listed below (box 1) were reflected in other states but to varying degrees.

149 The challenges and gaps noted in response quality and timeliness would typically reduce the effectiveness score to anything within the range 50 – 70% (a score range of 2.5 to 3.5 out of 5) giving an average of about 60%.

150 Since emergency response is typically a people driven process; the ecology of experiences, personalities, aptitudes and attitudes of staff within UNICEF, its response partners and other actors in the response had a bearing on the timeliness, strength and quality of response. In

particular, human resource capacity gaps in government line ministries (especially at locality level) coupled with rapid staff attrition from government (to NGOs and UN agencies as working conditions tend to be better there than within government) were a hindrance to both preparedness and response effectiveness. High staff turnover in government line ministries compromised preparedness effectiveness as trained staff moved to new jobs and were replaced by untrained ones. Further, UNICEF's orientation and training of multi-stakeholder Rapid Response Assessment (RRA) teams for emergencies often come too late - as part of response instead of being provided as part of the preparedness processes (the orientation and training of multi-stakeholder response teams serve to increase readiness of the response machinery and to psyche up the individuals in the teams that are critical to success of emergency response). The RRA training was also considered often too short to achieve desired outcomes.

151 Financial and material resource constraints set an upper limit to the amount of life saving support that UNICEF provided to flood affected communities. While notably UNICEF made substantial contribution to the response (which GOS, other UN agencies and INGOs acknowledge), the reach of UNICEF response was too restricted for the width and depth of needs that arose due to the catastrophic 2020-2021 floods. For instance, during the 2020 flood response, UNICEF reached 11 600 affected people (out of about 65 095 total floods-affected people) in Sennar with WASH interventions (table 8). In fact, even combined response by all agencies was inadequate

Box 1: Factors that hindered Effectiveness of UNICEF Response to Floods in White Nile (2020 -21)

- Human Resource Capacity gaps in UNICEF WN office;
- Limited number of partners, worsened by weak programming capacity of the partners (in a context where Government policy prohibits direct implementation by international NGOs and requires implementation through local NGOs);
- Human resource and logistics capacity gaps in government line ministries which are a major partner in UNICEF preparedness and response activities.
- Limited financial resources necessitating prioritisation of some affected communities, leaving other deserving communities behind.
- Physical and humanitarian access challenges

Source(s): FGDs and stakeholder consultations in White Nile State

to cover all the needs. For instance, by the 19th October 2020, the Humanitarian Aid Commission in Blue Nile State reported that 20% of needs had been covered and needs remained high⁴⁹.

Table 8: Reach of Selected UNICEF Response Interventions to 2020 Flooding Emergency

State	No. of People Affected ⁵⁰	No. of People Supported by UNICEF Response ⁵¹	Interventions
Sennar	65 095	11 600	Water tanks, chlorine tablets, mosquito nets, tents, soaps, hygiene kits, jerricans
Blue Nile	86 625	4 200	Soaps, hygiene kits, jerricans
North Darfur	124 935	8 500	Access to safe drinking water and hygiene & sanitation services
		20 000	Health and nutrition services

152 There, however, was no substantial evidence of any of UNICEF SCO’s preparedness outputs contributing to reduced exposure of vulnerable populations to floods. On the contrary, more than half of the stakeholders consulted noted that UNICEF (and, indeed other actors) has not significantly contributed to strengthening early warning systems, especially ensuring timely dissemination of early warning messages from technical agencies that forecast floods to actual communities where floods are anticipated to occur to ensure that by the onset of the floods, vulnerable community members would have already moved away from harm. It, nonetheless, is notable that UNICEF White Nile Office made tangible upstream efforts to contribute to medium to long-term reduction in exposure to flooding although results from the efforts are yet to be realised (this is further discussed in section 3.4 ‘connectedness’).

Quality of Response

153 Over the period 2020-2021, UNICEF SCO did not have a mechanism for systematic assessment of the quality of its response against the CCCs. Consequently, there were no data on the basis of which the quality of SCO’s emergency response outputs and outcomes could be definitively determined.

154 UNICEF mechanisms for end-user monitoring and accountability to affected populations were apparently weak (if existent at all). As a result, there were gaps in UNICEF’s capacity to ensure quality of deliverables during response, especially considering that UNICEF response was through partners. In some cases, UNICEF timely provided mosquito nets to partners but the partners did not distribute the nets to affected communities timely. In North Darfur, one water bladder provided by UNICEF was shoddily installed on a short stand that the water could not flow out with optimum pressure. This increased the time girls and women spent queuing for water. In West Darfur, a rapid quality assessment mission noted a raft of WASH quality issues for displaced people: no handwashing facilities close to some latrines, no labels on latrines to show which one is for females and which one for males, limited privacy as temporary latrines had no doors, security risk/ limited safety as there was no lighting around latrines, among others⁵². These quality issues may be a tip of the iceberg, signalling the presence of several other quality issues in UNICEF emergency response and requiring increased focus on ensuring quality of response.

⁴⁹

https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/SDN_Floods_Humanitarian_Response_Update_%233_2020_1019-2.pdf

⁵⁰ Source: OCHA, 2020. Sudan Flood Snapshot as of 6th October 2020

⁵¹ Source: UNICEF, 2020. UNICEF Sudan- Flood Situation Report_No. -22 September 2020

⁵² MENARO Mission Report – Sudan – 16 – 28 April 2021

Beneficiary Participation and Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP)

- 155** This evaluation sought to establish if beneficiaries participated in the preparedness activities. It also sought to establish if preparedness action contributed to fulfilment of children's rights. Data on beneficiary participation, perceptions and satisfaction was, however, largely not available. As such, apart from the generic data sources described in chapter 2, this section largely relies on secondary review of data from FGDs of beneficiaries done by UNICEF SCO in Kassala, Blue Nile, White Nile and North Darfur states in March 2022 as a pilot '*Accountability to Affected Populations*' activity.
- 156** In general, there were gaps in SCO's AAP. AAP mechanisms were not entrenched and institutionalized in the Emergency Preparedness System. Available preparedness and response reports did not adequately capture beneficiary voices. Data on grassroots populations' perceptions of UNICEF's preparedness and response system efficiency (especially timeliness) and effectiveness were generally unavailable. Observations, concerns or satisfaction of grassroots committees in target communities/ beneficiary representatives with regards to preparedness levels or response efficiency and effectiveness were not systematically captured. Apparently, there was no comprehensive mechanism for capturing such. While evidence of participation of some beneficiary representatives in post disaster needs assessment missions was reflected in field and country office emergency preparedness plans and needs assessment reports, no evidence of beneficiary feedback with regards to appropriateness, effectiveness and possible impact of response efforts was available.
- 157** UNICEF did not actively engage beneficiaries in emergency preparedness activities. There has not been any consistent involvement of target communities in UNICEF EP activities. Similarly, none of the agencies that helped members of the flood affected communities during the 2020 - 2021 emergency response actively engaged them in preparedness activities. The experience and indigenous knowledge systems of the beneficiaries remained largely untapped.
- 158** Community-led/ community-centred disaster risk reduction did not feature as a strong component of UNICEF Sudan's programming yet this would be an important aspect from a risk informed programming perspective. For instance, UNICEF has not been able to meaningfully facilitate or support participation of target communities in early warning messaging. Further, this evaluation has not found substantial evidence of UNICEF engagement of beneficiaries in disaster risk reduction (DRR) training.
- 159** With regards to response, beneficiaries were fairly satisfied. Key aspects of UNICEF's response that beneficiaries mentioned included plastic tarpaulin, health supplies (e.g. medicines, ORS, anti-malaria drugs), nutrition supplies (e.g. RUTF) and cooking utensils. Beneficiaries were generally satisfied with the quality of UNICEF response but had concerns with regards to the quantity of supplies. For instance, UNICEF provided one mosquito net for a family with parents and children implying inadequacy of supplies to cover needs. In Blue Nile, beneficiaries felt that UNICEF response covered about a tenth of the needs. There were also concerns with regards to mis-targeting. Beneficiaries voiced concern over inaccuracies in beneficiary selection (exclusion and inclusion errors).
- 160** Beneficiaries were satisfied with the timeliness of health, nutrition and some WASH supplies but dissatisfied with the delayed distribution of other critical supplies (e.g. tents came more than 20 days late). In some cases, response items arrived when the crisis was already over. For the education sector, the flood affected children could not resume learning for over a month during which schools were occupied by some families whose homes had been destroyed by floods delaying the education sector response as a result. Notably, a major shift in the school calendar now ensures that schools are closed during the flooding season.

161 From the perspective of beneficiaries, humanitarian cash assistance, especially multi-purpose cash assistance would have assisted them to recover faster and better but this was not provided.

3.4 Connectedness

162 Under the connectedness criteria, this evaluation sought to establish whether UNICEF SCO has adequately applied the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus (HDPN) as well as the extent to which UNICEF Preparedness and Response activities included capacity building activities for the Government of Sudan at Federal and State Levels. Some examples of how SCO has applied principles of HDPN in emergency preparedness and response are discussed.

163 In recent years, SCO has emphasized on a drive towards strengthening HDPN and more generally fully adopting UNICEF's Global guidance on Risk Informed Programming (RIP). However, the talk about HDPN has been much stronger than the walk, with much still needed in terms of leadership and commitment in that regard. Currently, SCO does not have a strategy for onboarding HDPN. In the absence of a country level HDPN strategy, efforts to apply HDPN have been fragmented. Apparently, there was no uniform understanding of HDPN across SCO and its field offices, as staff capacity building to ensure that everyone understands what HDPN entails (and what its practical implications to programming are) was largely missing.

164 The pre-coup transitional Government of Sudan, UN and other agencies were quite keen on HDPN. Some donor support for the same was forth coming. Post the coup, however, key donors have prohibited programming with and through government, thus dealing a severe blow to HDPN oriented activities, to a large extent triggering a retreat to mainly life-saving humanitarian activities.

165 In North Darfur, there was palpable movement towards making HDPN (and RIP) a reality prior to the coup. Government was keen to link humanitarian response activities to development programming and peacebuilding. Also, UN agencies convened meetings to look at the nexus and brainstorm how it could be operationalised. They identified good coordination as being key to progress in HDPN programming. UNICEF assumed a lead role in the formulation of a framework for coordination of application of the nexus approach (as OCHA was already available for coordination of humanitarian activities but there were no coordinating agencies for development and peace building activities). UNICEF even drafted and shared a guiding document to support application of an HDPN approach. While notable momentum had been built in the HDPN direction, rapid staff turnover in government and, most recently, the coup have constituted serious threats to application of HDPN approach in North Darfur and Sudan as a whole.

166 Across all its field offices, UNICEF has demonstrated commitment to working in a way that ensures that its efforts take conflict sensitivities into consideration and contribute to peacebuilding although there clearly was plenty of room to do much more and much better in this regard. UNICEF worked with other agencies to study political undertones and issues of access to resources (e.g. water) and map ways of reducing conflict associated with these. In North Darfur, UNICEF formed water committees with farmers and nomads for management of water points. The waterpoints had been established/ rehabilitated with UNICEF support. In Blue Nile, separate water points were provided for nomads and for farmers to minimise conflicts emanating from sharing water sources. Again, in Blue Nile, UNICEF (in partnership with Save the Children) recently completed a conflict sensitivity assessment through engaging in deep discussions with various community groups (leaders, women, men, youth, people with disabilities) to understand root causes of conflicts, identify needs and plan activities to solve the problems together, all through the process mainstreaming peacebuilding initiatives. UNICEF has in the recent past done similar assessments in other states.

- 167** To some extent, UNICEF included medium to long-term development activities within short-term emergency response interventions. In response to AWD and cholera outbreaks in Blue Nile and Sennar states in the aftermath of the 2020 flood emergency, UNICEF used – as one of the interventions - Community-led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach, a long-term prevention and mitigation strategy that reduces the likelihood and scale of AWD outbreaks. An integrated approach was adopted in this regard, with the WASH, C4D and health teams working together. The strategy mobilised survivors of WASH-related emergencies to establish toilets and adopt such hygiene practices as quitting open defecation, washing hands at critical times and keeping water containers closed and thus promoted change in behaviour that would enable beneficiaries to survive similar emergencies in the future.
- 168** Notably, UNICEF’s use of CLTS approach demonstrates not only connectedness but also coherence as it was coherent with Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH) WASH strategy. In 2018, for instance, FMOH announced the Darfur Development Strategy which included adoption of CLTS in Darfur. In fact, CLTS has become a sector wide strategy being used by both Government of Sudan and other agencies: humanitarian agencies like ADRA, COOPI and WHH have been using CLTS in Blue Nile and White Nile, Kebkabiya and Gedarif, for instance. A national WASH Sector coordination meeting held on 25 August 2021 recommended the adoption of CLTS approach as part of the sector response plan to improve sanitation in rural areas.
- 169** Grassroots community capacity building was included in SCO’s emergency response. Mother Support Groups for promoting Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) were established. And so were Community Based Child Protection Networks (CBCPN) and Centres for Community Based Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM). Community based structures established during the emergency response have continued contributing to recovery. Trainings of Community-based cadres has also contributed to medium to long-term effects of UNICEF emergency response efforts. In 2020, for instance, UNICEF WASH and C4D teams trained 1 080 health promoters in Blue Nile and Sennar to support social mobilization around promoting chlorine treatment of drinking water, handwashing at critical times, ending open defecation and other hygiene practices that contribute towards both short- and long-term reduction in morbidity and mortality related to unhygienic living conditions and lifestyles. UNICEF also provided training to caretakers for community waterpoints. These trainings, alongside rehabilitation of WASH infrastructure (e.g. defunct water pumps) served as a package not only for short-term relief but also long-term prevention; connecting humanitarian to development programming. Short-term response was linked to long-term community resilience building in this regard.
- 170** UNICEF’s education sector information technology innovation serves to connect immediate emergency response to long-term recovery; a contribution to building back better (though small). The e-learning technology that SCO invested in in the face of COVID 19 (as highlighted in par. 78) enabled children to continue learning despite COVID-19 restrictions. Mechanisms for remote learning have been established and the e-learning technology can now be used to ensure that learning continues when floods, armed conflict or other crises occur in the future.
- 171** Opportunities for the use of disaster risk reduction aspects of UNICEF’s Risk Informed Programming (RIP) approach – especially with regards to reducing flooding emergencies – have not been adequately tapped. Flood emergency preparedness has not been adequately connected to measures to reduce exposure and vulnerability to flood impacts. Specific places that floods hit (nearly every year) are already known and can easily be mapped using GIS and remote sensing techniques. The opportunity to use hazard mapping to re-plan and re-locate settlements has gone largely untapped. It is noteworthy - however - that in White Nile, UNICEF has made efforts to work with Ministry of Physical Planning as well as the office of the Wali (Governor) in promoting the use of hazard mapping and settlement re-planning to reduce exposure to the impact of floods.

While significant progress had been made in that regard, the Wali was changed and the process has to be continued/ re-started with the new Wali. In light of the repeated flood impacts there are opportunities for advocacy for re-planning of settlements, improvement in drainage systems and better infrastructure design (not only in White Nile but also in other flood affected states) especially considering that research⁵³ already shows that exposure of vulnerable populations to the impact of floods in Sudan is correlated with these factors. There, apparently are also opportunities for UNICEF to work in partnership with UNOPS in supporting GOS in this regard.

172 UNICEF has not done enough in terms of flood resilience building for at-risk communities. From a RIP perspective, disaster risk reduction, mitigation and long-term recovery deserve consideration. In Blue Nile and Sennar, it was indicated that at-risk communities' capacity to absorb flooding shocks had remained low as resilience building interventions (like establishing water sources on higher ground, training communities to make trenches to improve drainage during floods and keeping animals and food commodities on higher ground) had not received priority. In addition, the use of multipurpose humanitarian cash assistance to strengthen adaptive capacities for flood-affected populations was non-existent in the flood affected states studied during this evaluation. Overall, there was room to do much more in terms of building resilience against flood risk. Resilience building stands as a potentially high value for money intervention which could reduce the recurrent annual costs of flood emergency preparedness and response activities. It has potential to solve the problem once and for all!

173 Interestingly at-risk communities realise the need to build back better. In Kassala, beneficiaries preferred humanitarian multipurpose cash assistance to in-kind support considering the role it can play in supporting building of shelter among families whose shelter was destroyed as well as starting new income generating activities as a poverty alleviation strategy. In North Darfur, at-risk community members pointed out the need for supporting the clearing of clogged drainage systems and re-locating settlements to higher ground as medium- to long-term solutions to exposure to flooding hazards which will save costs of (cyclic) annual preparedness and response activities. It was, however, apparent that UNICEF (as well as other agencies in Sudan) have not done much in terms supporting advocacy for re-location of families whose homesteads are in floodplains.

National Capacity Building

174 Globally, national government capacity strengthening is a major facet of UNICEF support. System strengthening is central to UNICEF programming, including emergency preparedness. As stated earlier, in Sudan this has not been easy as the country has remained unstable in recent years and technical capacity of Government line ministries in emergency preparedness and response has declined.

175 The transitional government established in 2019 strived to ensure transparency and collaborated with UN agencies. Processes were initiated to enable government to take charge of emergency preparedness and response coordination, with structures to this effect being set up in the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. At federal level, a high committee for emergency, headed by the permanent secretary had been established. Government also established the Humanitarian Aid Commission to coordinate and regulate humanitarian activities. At national level, a Flood Task Force, chaired by the HAC commissioner was put in place. The coup disrupted functionality of systems set-up during the civilian-led regime. In some cases, civilian technical and political level staff and any other people not aligned to the new military government have been

⁵³ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12517-019-4685-5>; <https://theconversation.com/steps-sudan-must-take-to-prevent-future-flood-destruction-146117>

removed from office. Post the coup, national capacity building has been rendered nearly impossible.

176 Some examples of pre-coup UNICEF contributions towards national emergency preparedness capacity building are worth highlighting here. UNICEF worked with and through Government structures. Through this partnership and cooperation, government benefited from exposure to UNICEF'S transparent systems for administration and financial management. UNICEF also supported government's emergency operation room in Khartoum with IT equipment and human resources. Further, UNICEF took a lead in advocating for promulgation of a WASH policy.

177 At technical level, UNICEF provided various sector-specific trainings that strengthened frontline workers' capacity for emergency response. Training was provided in the Health, WASH, Education, Child Protection and Nutrition Sectors (e.g. Education in Emergencies (EiE), Child Protection in Emergencies (CPiE)). These trainings contributed to improved preparedness and general service delivery capacity, especially at state-level. However, as stated earlier, the capacity building effects have frequently been lost as trained staff transferred to other places or found jobs outside line ministries of GOS. High staff turnover in government has remained a perennial problem.

178 Emergency preparedness capacity for GOS both at Federal and State levels remains low. Every year predictable hazards become real emergencies with government response being characterised by no early warning system, no timely dissemination of necessary information to partners (with GOS relying on partners for data in many cases), weak logistical arrangements, little – if any – funding by government and overall, late and ineffective response. These emergency preparedness and response capacity weaknesses of GOS have often affected UNICEF preparedness and response since GOS has – over the past two years – been SCO's major partner in emergency preparedness and response. The need for continuous capacity strengthening for GOS is clear.

3.5 Coordination

3.5.1 Internal Coordination and Technical Support

179 Over the past two years, coordination between UNICEF SCO and RO was generally good. The political quick sands of Sudan put Sudan in the spotlight and, accordingly, SCO has enjoyed a good dose of support from RO. RO provided timely technical and quality assurance support to SCO through mission visits, staff training, EPP quality assurance exercises, and online advisory services. RO was available when invited to provide support (although at times SCO would then not accommodate requested visits due to other commitments (e.g. SCO became unavailable for a CCC training they had requested from RO in 2021).

180 There, however, was limited trickle down of RO's support to FO level. Also, RO's support tended to be ad hoc and would have been more effective had it been more systematic. A shift towards a more systematic approach that is inclusive of field level would make RO's support more effective.

181 Overall emergency preparedness coordination between Khartoum and field offices was in good shape. Country Management Team meetings were held monthly; so were section meetings and Chief of Field Office meetings. Every six months, section retreats were done. Further, senior management conduct field visits for support, supervision, quality control and coordination. These FOE-led mechanisms have generally kept coordination for emergency preparedness between SCO and FOs functioning well.

182 At sector level, some coordination between Khartoum and field offices is happening but it is not adequate. There was some misalignment between Khartoum and field offices in that there are sector coordinators at Khartoum level but there are no sector coordinators at field level. There is no reporting line between the people responsible for sector coordination in the field and sector

leads in Khartoum. The personnel responsible for sector coordination at field office level are 75% on programming duties and 25% on sector leadership and coordination. The national level coordinators do not frequently/ regularly visit field offices for assessment and collection of information that could help enhance alignment between Khartoum and Field Offices. As a result, Khartoum is apparently in one silo while field offices are in others in terms of sector coordination.

3.5.1 Interagency Coordination

- 183** In the GOS, overall coordination of emergency preparedness and response activities lies in the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC). Among UN and other agencies, UN OCHA has the mandate for coordination of humanitarian activities. In refugee settings, however, the UNHCR takes over the overall coordination role. This – in some places – has created a duplication of coordination structures (OCHA & UNHCR) that heightened pressure on UNICEF staff time as they had to attend both OCHA and UNHCR coordination meetings. In geographic units where OCHA does not have presence, it may appoint an INGO, e.g. Plan International to take the coordination role. At sector level, various agencies have Areas of Responsibility in which they are responsible and accountable for technical leadership and coordination. This section provides a brief look at how UNICEF performed in terms coordination in areas where it is the sector lead.
- 184** UNICEF SCO has done well in coordination of the sectors where it is sector lead (WASH, Education, Nutrition and Child Protection) at Khartoum level. It has put in place human resources specifically for sector coordination and leadership. The sector specialists provided leadership and coordination services and worked well with federal level representatives of the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and other relevant line ministries as well as the Humanitarian Aid Commission. Further, UNICEF successfully provided leadership and coordination of sector inputs (from various agencies) and processes for the compilation of the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) as well as the subsequent development of the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) in its AoR.
- 185** In 2020-2021, UNICEF participated in high committee(s) for emergencies meetings, joint (inter-agency) multi-sector assessment missions and joint response planning sessions at federal, state and locality levels and other relevant coordination fora that served to increase readiness for flooding emergencies and to ensure a coordinated approach to response. In these meetings, UNICEF provided professional leadership in the sectors where it is the lead agency, including in documentation of the who is doing what, where and when (4Ws). Also, in the EPP, coordination and leadership functions were clearly identified at both national and sub-national levels for all of UNICEF's sectors of responsibility. As a result, the most recent EPP quality assessment (December 2021) confirms that SCO has met⁵⁴ the humanitarian coordination MPS across all sectors.
- 186** In collaboration with HAC and relevant line ministries, UNICEF leadership and coordination in its sectors enabled some degree of pre-emergency information sharing (although information sharing before emergencies remains an area of weakness as timeliness of information dissemination has perennially been a challenge. SCO leadership has, in some cases, also contributed to timely post-emergency multi-sectoral inter-agency assessment missions. In many cases, UNICEF coordination has helped to mitigate the challenge of duplication which wastes resources and the challenge of programming gaps which leads to unjustified suffering and possible loss of life for potential target populations (and in many cases aggravates tensions among tribal groupings). This has mainly been achieved through meetings/discussions, consensus building and documentation of who is doing what, where and when (4Ws).

⁵⁴ SCO's December 2021 EPP Quality Assurance Checklist score for humanitarian coordination was '4' which generally means that SCO is prepared to provide high quality humanitarian coordination.

187 Good leadership and coordination by UNICEF in its allocated sectors have contributed to improved inter-agency emergency preparedness and response in Sudan. Key aspects of added value due to UNICEF sector leadership included helping to ensure coordinated response, minimising duplication and gaps, and ensuring that sector standards were upheld and contributing to increased accountability. At state level – especially in North Darfur, Blue Nile and White Nile states, UNICEF leadership led to mainstreaming of a child-centred approach in all emergency preparedness and response efforts, initially in sectors where UNICEF is the sector lead and later across all sectors.

188 UNICEF participated – and in many cases – co-led joint, multi-sector emergency assessment missions with OCHA and relevant government line ministries in sectors where it is responsible for leadership and coordination. In these cases, UNICEF’s technical competence buttressed its technical leadership, overall enhancing assessment effectiveness. For instance, UNICEF participated in its four sectors during the interagency assessment and response planning mission in Kebkabiya, North Darfur, highlighted in box 2.

Box 2: InterAgency Assessment and Response Planning for 2020 Kebkabiya Floods, North Darfur

- **08th August:** Kebkabiya receives heavy rainfall (271mm), two streams invade the town, 14 people dead, 24 others missing;
- **09th August:** OCHA receives reports;
- **9th August:** HAC requests ND’s Intersectoral Coordination Group (ISCG) to deploy an interagency assessment team;
- **10th August:** ISCG convenes meeting to deploy interagency team;
- **13th August:** OCHA-led inter-agency assessment mission deployed (24 members, 4 being from UNICEF)
- Mission team documents key findings and identifies response priorities, UNICEF leading in AoR;
- The team develops a response plan based on the response priorities, indicating priority action by cluster, showing resources needed and determining timeframes for response as well as responsibilities for key actions

189 As sector coordinator and leader, UNICEF also served as provider of last resort. There, however, were situations UNICEF served as provider of first resort as other agencies in the sectors had no resources.

190 With regards to UNICEF inter-agency sector coordination at state-level, however, results were mixed. Coordination was done fairly well in some states but not so well in others. In Sennar state, for instance, the absence of a UNICEF field office reduced UNICEF presence and adversely affected coordination. There was duplication during response, especially in water trucking and water quality monitoring. Response was slow. Gaps in response occurred. The response concentrated around the capital, and remote areas were left behind. In Kassala, however, coordination was much better with less duplication and gaps. Yet, even in Kassala information sharing platforms were weak.

191 UNICEF developed and shared tools which interagency assessment teams used during post flood assessment missions in the sectors where it is the sector lead. These tools helped to systematise post floods assessment parameters.

192 On the other hand, UNICEF’s Emergency Preparedness and Response System benefited from OCHA’s overall coordination role. UNICEF received key official statistics as well as funding from the Sudan Humanitarian Fund (a pooled funding mechanism) through OCHA’s coordination

and facilitatory role. OCHA's humanitarian coordination helped to reduce duplication although many stakeholders felt OCHA could have done more and better if it had more presence at state level. In 2021, UNICEF collaborated with other UN agencies and other partners to develop the Sudan (flooding) Preparedness Plan to ensure timely delivery of assistance to affected communities targeting 540 000 people⁵⁵. In the process UNICEF's preparedness system contributed to and also benefitted from more coordinated inter-agency emergency preparedness and response planning and implementation approaches and techniques.

3.6 Coherence

193 UNICEF SCO's Emergency Preparedness System was anchored in, and coherent with, the CO's Country Programme Document (CPD) for 2018 – 2022. The CPD emphasizes mainstreaming of Risk Informed Programming (RIP) in the country programme to maximise UNICEF contribution to effective preparedness and response to hazards.

194 Risk analyses in the Sudan CO and FO Emergency Preparedness Plans resonate with analyses in the UN Common Country Assessment Report (UN CCA) for 2020 and the Multi-Stakeholder Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) for the 2020 floods although the analyses in the plans lacked the depth that characterised the analyses in the UN CCA. The risk analyses and scenario definitions in the emergency plans did not include citations of text or statistics from the UN CCA, however alignment of risk analyses and scenario descriptions on EPP to UN CCA was still discernible when the content and tone of the documents were analysed.

195 UNICEF preparedness and response efforts in Sudan were coherent with efforts of other UN agencies. There was coherence between UNICEF and WHO emergency preparedness and response efforts especially in flood and epidemic preparedness with WASH and Health staff (UNICEF taking the lead in WASH and WHO taking the lead in Health as per AoR). Similarly, there was coherence between UNICEF nutrition, WFP food aid, and FAO food security and livelihoods as the activities contributed to similar outcomes. In some localities in Gadaref and Kassala, for instance, UNICEF was providing Community Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) to children with severe acute malnutrition (SAM) while WFP was providing a similar intervention to children with Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM).

196 Leveraging common/ similar understanding and approach to application of emergency preparedness concepts UNICEF engaged in joint emergency preparedness and response activities with other UN agencies. For instance, WHO and UNICEF had a joint multi-risk emergency preparedness and response plan for 2020 which provided a basis for joint response to floods and epidemics. Also, UNICEF was in a partnership with WFP in a resilience building project in Nyala. Coherence between UNICEF SCO and other agencies provided latitude for joint programming. UNICEF leadership and coordination in the Nutrition Sector enabled training of frontline workers in the State Ministry of Health (SMoH) in several states as well as community level volunteers in community level assessment of malnutrition, especially through mid-upper arm circumference measurement (MUAC). Numerous examples of similar trainings could also be found in other sectors which are UNICEF AOR: in the Education Sector, some volunteer teachers were provided with Education in Emergencies (EiE) (although this evaluation established much more could – and should – have been done in that regard) and in the child protection sector, UNICEF supported establishment of community-based child protection networks (CBCPN) which it also helped to train.

197 There was evidence of UNICEF leveraging on the capacities of other UN agencies, GOS and INGOs to enhance its emergency preparedness and response and ultimately delivering better results for at-risk communities. For instance, UNICEF staff and supplies were airlifted by GoS or

⁵⁵ OCHA, Snapshot Report. 08th August 2021.

WFP/ UNHAS to reach communities cut off by floods; UNICEF pre-positioned its emergency supplies mainly in GoS warehouses; and UNICEF benefitted from sharing ideas with WHO and sharing tools and templates during development and implementation of the WHO/ UNICEF Multi-hazard Preparedness and Response Plan for Sudan. Further, UNICEF and other UN agencies benefited from humanitarian access breakthroughs to Yabush in Blue Nile and also to South Kordofan that were largely overseen by the WFP Executive Director in 2019.

198 Overall SCO's emergency preparedness system was coherent with emergency preparedness systems of other agencies. Consequently, emergency response by UNICEF was coherent with response by other agencies.

3.7 Coverage

199 UNICEF SCO has made some consideration of how its Emergency Preparedness system will cover various population sub-groups, including those that are hard to reach. In its emergency preparedness plans, scenarios of impact of specified risks focus on how each risk will affect women and children. The analyses are – to a large extent – based on the CCCs. There, however, seems to be inadequate forethought on the differential impacts of risks on various groups (e.g. rural girls and boys, out-of-school girls and boys, girls living with disabilities, ethnic and religious minorities, etc) since SADD were not available as already discussed in paragraph 75 above.

200 There was a clear drive towards improving geographical coverage of at-risk communities. SCO has made deliberate efforts to decentralise Emergency Preparedness Plans. Emergency Preparedness Plans for Field Offices had been uploaded on EPP (although most lacked critical information and were generally incomplete). Although the decentralisation process remains incomplete, it is one step towards customising SCO's emergency preparedness system to the geographical, cultural and other nuances that is generally commendable.

201 UNICEF has made substantial efforts to reach the hard-to-reach in the context of security challenges associated with conflict. Where humanitarian access has been restricted due to conflict-related security concerns, UNICEF has maintained neutrality, and – where entry points were clear – negotiated access with the parties at conflict (all the way maintaining neutrality and impartiality).

202 During response to 2020 floods, UNICEF faced constraints to coverage at state level. Physical access constraints that resulted from some communities being isolated due to floods or access roads being cut off by floods meant that some communities in Sennar (for instance) were left behind. In the Yabus area of Blue Nile, conflict related security concerns affected access and coverage. While notably the UN interagency mission has made substantial humanitarian access breakthroughs in the recent past (to Yabus in Blue Nile and South Kordofan in 2019), conflict-related security concerns remain a barrier to adequate coverage of response to flooding and other emergencies.

203 UNICEF's response was implemented largely on the basis of principles of equality. As confirmed by beneficiaries, this enabled girls, boys and women, including those with disabilities to access aid during emergencies. There, however, seemed to be no evidence of equity-focused programming (in favour of children and women with disabilities) which would have been reflected in deliberate measures to provide preferential treatment for children and women with disabilities since these tend to be more disadvantaged than others when emergencies occur. In emergency preparedness plans, there was no specific analysis of the needs of people with disabilities in the event of floods. As already alluded to above, in providing plastic slabs for emergency latrines (for instance), there apparently was no provision for separate facilities for people living with disabilities. There generally was room for improving a thrust on equity as it relates to women and children with disabilities.

204 With regards to upstream efforts to improve inclusion of the hardest to reach pockets in the communities at risk, this evaluation did not find any evidence of advocacy for improved coverage of marginalised communities.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNT

4.1 Conclusions

On the basis of the findings of this evaluation, the following conclusions are made:

4.1.1 Appropriateness

205 UNICEF's WASH, Health, Nutrition, Education and Child Protection emergency preparedness and response activities were appropriate to the factors that exacerbate the impact of floods in Sudan.

206 SCO's EPS was adapted to the cultural nuances of target localities, the needs of women and girls and the COVID-19 pandemic but it did not adequately cater for the needs of people with disabilities. Nonetheless, lack of active involvement of target beneficiaries in the emergency preparedness activities and failure to tap their indigenous knowledge systems to enhancing their preparedness for floods compromised the adaptation.

207 UNICEF SCO has remained a trusted partner of GOS for over five decades despite the fluidity of the political environment. Provided the environment improves, SCO can leverage this trust to drive upstream efforts that can culminate in improved protection and fulfilment of right for women, girls and boys in Sudan.

208 EPP is a complex and heavy platform whose complexity has contributed staff reluctance to use it. Considering the heaviness of EPP, the current lack of ownership of the EPP process, and the tokenistic staff participation in the EPP process, it is clear that practical utility of EPP is compromised. The need to invest in re-thinking and re-modelling EPP to enhance its practical utility cannot be overemphasized.

209 The diversities of the states of Sudan make customisation of SCO's EP system necessary. As such, the need to build momentum on the decentralisation initiative is urgent. An organogram that is strengthened at field office level would generally augur well with this initiative.

4.1.2 Efficiency

210 UNICEF SCO has performed fairly well in optimising human resources in creating a functionally effective EPS. However, timely filling of vacant posts, emergency preparedness trainings and simulations and systematic use of rosters could have improved the HR efficiency of SCO's EPS.

211 Leveraging UNICEF's internal funding mechanisms (GHTF and EPF) and using other resource mobilisation techniques enabled SCO to harness substantial financial resources for emergency preparedness. However, these were not enough to cover the depth and width of emergency needs. Also, the available resources were often disbursed to IPs late in turn leading to late response.

212 Information Management (IM) for emergency preparedness was an area of weakness for UNICEF SCO and GOS as well. This is an area that need SCO's urgent attention as IM is key to ensuring timely, effective emergency response

213 There was inadequate information to definitively make conclusions with regards to value-for-money although some insights could be obtained. Pre-positioning supplies, standby emergency preparedness partnerships, surge support arrangements on the basis of technical capacities within Sudan, *inter alia*, apparently have high value-for-money. A full-scale value-for-money (VfM) study would, however, be required if definitive conclusions with regards to VfM are to be made.

4.1.3 Effectiveness

- 214 To a large extent, UNICEF responded to flooding emergencies on the basis of its emergency preparedness outputs. Emergency Preparedness and Response Plans, pre-positioned supplies, emergency preparedness partnerships, technical surge support, government capacity building and advocacy were all used to varying extents in the different states and at national level during response to the flooding emergencies of 2020-2021. There, however, was a tendency to ignore or *forget* to revert to EPP when emergencies occurred and apply common sense and common practice instead. This, in turn, underscores the need to have managers and staff whose experience and competences would make their decision-making capacities lead to timely, top quality and effective response.
- 215 Heightened preparedness was associated with improved response to flooding emergencies and epidemic outbreaks that occur in their wake. The geographical spread of waterborne epidemics before containment tended to be wider, and the number of cases identified before containment tended to be higher when preparedness levels were lower than when preparedness levels were higher. Similarly, the number of fatalities before containment tended to be higher when preparedness levels were low and lower when preparedness levels were higher. Thus, improved preparedness was directly correlated with improved emergency response outcomes.
- 216 SCO's response to 2020-2021 floods was fairly effective, generally in line with CCC, with an average self-assessment score of 66.7% percent. Key strengths of the response included timely staff deployment to emergency affected communities; availability of pre-positioned supplies at state level, delivering response with GOS through government systems; deliberate focus on the rights of girls and women; and fairly good technical leadership in sectors where UNICEF has the responsibility for leadership and coordination. On the other hand, weaknesses included delayed disbursement of funds and delayed response in some states; slow and low-quality response due to capacity gaps in government and other partners; inadequacy of standby preparedness partnership agreements for activation during response; general lack of thrust on equity for people with disabilities; and minimal participation of affected communities.
- 217 A tendency to deliver supplies to affected communities with neither consistent end-user monitoring nor systematic after-action review left room for perpetually unnoticed decline in quality standards. Without urgent attention to consistent end-user monitoring and systematic after-action review guided by the CCC, UNICEF SCO's response is at risk of dismally failing to meet global humanitarian standards.
- 218 Beneficiaries were, however, satisfied with the quality of UNICEF response but felt it was inadequate for the depth and width of needs. This satisfaction with quality on the part of beneficiaries does not necessarily imply that the response met quality standards as 'beneficiary participation' a key standard of humanitarian action was not adequately ensured.
- 219 SCO's emergency preparedness system lacks an institutionalised mechanism for ensuring Accountability to Affected Populations. While it is notable that SCO took the timeframe for this evaluation as an opportunity to pilot the use of FGD as a method for gathering beneficiary feedback, systematic measures for ensuring Accountability to Affected Populations could have given a clearer 'voice' to beneficiaries.

4.1.4 Connectedness

- 220 SCO's efforts towards connecting short-term response to long-term recovery and development have remained fragmented. There is no strategy for application of an HDPN approach or RIP in general.

221 Post the October 2021 coup there generally has been a retreat towards lifesaving humanitarian support and as such, there is a need to re-think and re-strategise around HDPN and RIP issues in Sudan.

4.1.5 Coordination

222 SCO has done generally well in both internal and interagency coordination. There however was room for improvement in coordination around development and utilisation of EPP outputs at SCO level. At state level coordination and leadership, UNICEF in sectors where it is responsible tended to be better in states where UNICEF had field offices than in states where UNICEF did not. Field-level presence was a factor in ensuring effective coordination. Given this, establishing a field office in Sennar is likely to improve UNICEF presence, visibility and coordination in sectors where UNICEF is sector lead.

4.1.6 Coherence

223 SCO's emergency preparedness system was rooted in the country programme document; coherent with UN CCA and also with emergency preparedness systems of other UN agencies and some INGOs. This gave latitude for cooperation and collaboration during emergency preparedness and response activities. Due to this coherence, interagency emergency preparedness and response activities have benefited from UNICEF's technical, material and financial contributions as well as leadership and coordination in Child Protection, WASH, Education and Nutrition. Conversely, UNICEF has benefited from coordination and leadership of OCHA from the UN side and HAC from the government side in other sectors. UNICEF has also benefited from leveraging capacities of government systems and infrastructures, as well as capacities of other UN agencies in strengthening its emergency preparedness and response.

4.1.7 Coverage

224 UNICEF has explicitly identified the likely impact of hazards on women and children in its Emergency Preparedness Plan but there are gaps around being explicit with regards to impact of hazards on people with disabilities. Without a deliberate focus on people with disabilities, there is danger that they may inadvertently left behind.

225 There was no evidence of upstream efforts with regards to improving coverage. There was also no evidence of evidence gathering to inform such upstream efforts.

4.2 Lessons Learnt

226 Emergency Preparedness Systems are – by and large – people driven systems. Optimising human resources for emergency preparedness improves the efficiency and effectiveness of emergency preparedness systems.

227 The more complex a platform is, the less likely it is to be effectively used. This has been the case of EPP. Considered a heavy lift, practical utility of the EPP in SCO has been compromised by staff's tokenistic approach to it. The current 'tick-the-box' attitude to EPP is unlikely to culminate in proper utilisation of EPP.

228 Owing to limited communication and coordination between FOE and Heads of programmatic sections at Khartoum level, staff inputs to EPP remains fragmented and practical utilisation of EPP minimal.

229 Where AAP mechanisms are not fully integrated into an EPS, AAP is compromised. In the case of SCO, AAP mechanisms were not entrenched and institutionalized. While this was observed in the SCO's Emergency Preparedness System, there may be need to apply this to regular programming as well.

230 If supplies are transported and/ or stored in circumstances where security and accountability systems are porous, pilferage tends to occur and compromise the value for money associated with prepositioning supplies. Leakages of supplies at various points of the delivery

chain was a big issue with accountability largely missing. Strengthening security and accountability mechanisms for supplies both in transit and in warehouses is required for both emergency preparedness and regular programming.

231 If communities at risk are marginalised from emergency preparedness systems, the benefits of indigenous knowledge systems go largely unharnessed yet these could go a long way in disaster risk reduction.

232 When PD and LTAs processes take too long in the pipeline, the whole idea of developing preparedness partnerships is defeated as there won't be partners available for implementation when emergency response is needed. Long delays in signing of PDs and LTAs was an issue across all states studied and the need to simplify this process henceforth, especially for emergency preparedness but also for regular programming, may not be over-emphasized.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

233 The recommendations here presented were developed through a three-tier process. First, during the data collection process, the independent evaluator noted difficulties that SCO had in finding internally generated secondary data that could talk to beneficiary perspectives (voices) with regards to timeliness and benefits (effectiveness) of SCO's emergency preparedness and response system and regarded this as proxy for gaps in preparedness and response monitoring and/ or accountability to affected populations. Further assessment and analysis as the evaluation moved on confirmed the presence of gaps in both and led to some recommendations here. Second, several issues that need to be addressed became apparent to the consultant during data analysis and subsequent compilation of findings and conclusions. Third, the consultant articulated proposed solutions to these issues as preliminary recommendations which were shared with the evaluation steering committee and other selected key people in UNICEF SCO during the presentation of preliminary findings that the consultant did on the 6th April 2022. Some recommendations were accepted. Others were not accepted. The resultant list of recommendations was adopted and presented in the evaluation report. Thus, in summary, preliminary recommendations generated by the consultant were refined and finalised through a participatory process.

234 Since this evaluation was commissioned by UNICEF SCO, most of the recommendations are applicable at SCO level but may apply at other levels as well. Table 10 below provides the list of recommendations made

Table 10: Recommendations

No.	Recommendation Description and possible operationalisation	Target Group	Priority	Timeline
1.	Strengthen the human resource capacity of SCO's Emergency preparedness system through: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Emergency Preparedness training for staff especially at FO level but also at SCO level. Areas of training could include, <i>inter alia</i>, CCC, AAP and HDPN; ii. Response simulations for floods and/ or other rapid onset emergencies at least once a year; iii. Filling, as a matter of urgency, HR vacancies in the emergency preparedness system; and iv. Consider employing Information Management Officers at field office level v. Improve timeliness and increase duration of orientation and training for Rapid Response Assessment (RRA) teams 	HR and FOE at SCO level with RO support	High Moderate High Moderate moderate	Medium to long term Medium to long Term Immediate to medium term Medium to long term Medium to long term
2	(d) Ensure (internal) coordination across the office in emergency preparedness, including EPP. (e) Improve field level sector coordination, which operational may require: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. re-defining and strengthening reporting lines between sector leads and coordinators at Khartoum level and those at field level; & ii. establishing a field office in Sennar to improve coordination 	FOE at SCO level	High Moderate Moderate	Immediate Medium to long term Medium to long term

	<p>iii. Strengthen advocacy for a coordinated, interagency emergency preparedness approach that guarantees timely, coordinated, holistic response that covers all life-saving interventions if the affected populations' rights to life, health and dignity have to be fulfilled and/ or protected.</p>		High	Medium to long term
3.	<p>Consider investing in resilience building / strengthening disaster risk reduction (DRR) for at-risk communities, especially as this is expected to reduce exposure and vulnerability to emergencies, is in line with UNICEF's RIP and also has high-value-for money has it potential to eliminate the need for recurrent annual expenditure in flooding emergency response. Specific measures for operationalising this recommendation include:</p> <p>i. Deliberate programming that includes strong components of use of hazard mapping to influence re-planning and re-location of settlements (with the possibility of working with UNOPS in that regard);</p> <p>ii. DRR training;</p> <p>iii. increased use of multi-purpose cash transfers in response as advocated for by beneficiaries; and</p> <p>iv. Develop a robust early warning system to reduce exposure & vulnerability of at-risk populations with and through implementing partners while advocating for a robust GoS-led early warning system</p>	FOE & Programme Sections	High	Medium to long-term
			High	Medium to Long-term
			High	Immediate
			High	Medium to long term
			High	Medium to long term
4	<p>The processes leading to signing of PDs and LTAs are complex and take too long, with some PDs being signed. There is need to optimise preparedness partnership development by:</p> <p>i. Simplifying/ streamlining processes leading to signing of PDs and LTAs to enable signing within 10 working days; and</p> <p>ii. Have pre-signed agreements with an adequate number of new partners at national and state levels.</p>	PRM & FOE at SCO level	High	Immediate
			High	Medium to long term
			moderate	
5	<p>Invest in improving security and accountability mechanisms for pre-positioned supplies. Operationally this may entail:</p> <p>i. Develop policies to enhance security and accountability mechanisms for goods-in-transit;</p> <p>ii. Provide financial and other support to upgrading government storage facilities (warehouses) that UNICEF uses for preposition supplies;</p> <p>iii. Develop policies and systems to enhance security, accountability and stock monitoring at state/ FO level warehouses that UNICEF uses; and</p> <p>iv. Establish (pre-fabricated) storage facilities at locality level in Sennar State</p>	Supply and Logistics at SCO and FO levels	High	Medium to long term
			High	Medium term
			High	Medium to long term
			high	Medium to long term
			moderate	Medium to long term

6.	<p>(a) Improve Accountability to Affected Populations. This may entail institutionalising AAP mechanisms with support of the MENARO AAP specialist. Annexes 1 and 2 to the March 2018 revised IASC Commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations (Guidance note for Principals and Senior Managers) may be useful in this regard.</p> <p>(b) Strengthen monitoring, evaluation, learning and reporting for emergency response activities by:</p> <p>i. Developing a systematic mechanism for assessment of the quality of response against the CCC (funds permitting, consider the possibility of engaging a third-party monitoring contractor);</p> <p>ii. generate monitoring reports during and immediately after emergency response; and</p> <p>iii. Do after-action review after response to capture lessons learnt and good practices developed</p>	FOE with support of RO	High	Immediate
7.	<p>Harness Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) in enhancing Emergency Preparedness Systems. This may entail:</p> <p>i. Engage and actively involve at-risk communities during emergency preparedness activities;</p> <p>ii. Harness indigenous social messaging/communication systems to disseminate early warning messages; and</p> <p>iii. Working through local/national NGOs, mobilise at-risk communities to establish flooding emergency task forces that will train, guide and raise community awareness of the need for preparedness activities and liaise with government and other emergency preparedness partners (UN, NGOs, other civil society organisations).</p>	FOE and Programme Heads	Moderate	Medium to long term
8.	<p>Enhance practical utility at global level of EPP by:</p> <p>i. Simplifying and streamlining EPP as part of the currently ongoing simplification drive in UNICEF;</p>	EMOPS EMOPS	Moderate High	Medium to long term Medium to long term
9.	Continually provide technical level capacity building to implementing partners, including relevant GoS Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to enhance timeliness, strength and quality of emergency response.	FOE & Programme Sections	Moderate	Medium to long term