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INFORMATION NOTE ON THE UNJLC CORE UNIT REVIEW



* In accordance with the Executive Board's decisions on governance, approved at the Annual and Third Regular Sessions, 2000, items for information should not be discussed unless a Board member specifically requests it, well in advance of the meeting, and the Chair accepts the request on the grounds that it is a proper use of the Board's time.

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NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted for information to the Executive Board.

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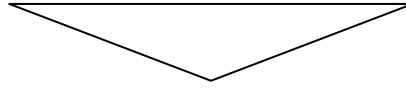
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DRAFT DECISION*



The Board takes note of the information contained in “Information Note on the UNJLC Core Unit Review” (WFP/EB.3/2004/6-F/Rev.1).

* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the Decisions and Recommendations document issued at the end of the session.



INTRODUCTION

1. This review follows three earlier reviews of UNJLC field operations: (i) Afghanistan, June 2003; (ii) Iraq, September 2003; and (iii) Liberia, February 2004. It will be followed before the end of the year by a synthesis evaluation managed jointly by WFP, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The report will be presented to the Executive Board in 2005 for consideration. The objective of all four reviews is to derive lessons and best practices to improve the application of the UNJLC concept in future deployments.
2. This review was undertaken by an external consultant. WFP provided oversight through its Office of Evaluation (OEDE), in cooperation with the Surface Transport Service (OTL) and UNJLC.
3. The UNJLC Core Unit is composed of full-time agency secondments from WFP, UNHCR, UNICEF and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The Core Unit depends primarily on extra-budgetary resources. Its functions are (i) to oversee the institutionalization process, (ii) arrange UNJLC training, (iii) design, implement and support all UNJLC deployments and (iv) provide normative logistics guidance to humanitarian organizations.

THE PROCESS

4. The review is based on a participatory and collaborative approach. It was carried out in two phases: in Phase I, "Preparatory/Documentary: Headquarters", the consultant reviewed documents and interviewed United Nations agency staff; Phase II, "Identifying Lessons: the Report", produced a summary report containing lessons from the UNJLC Core Unit experience and recommendations for improving UNJLC activities in future deployments. The summary report is available from OEDE.
5. This review focuses on the Core Unit, though it is impossible to separate the activities of the Core Unit from UNJLC activity in the field.

CURRENT STATUS OF UNJLC AND THE CORE UNIT

6. UNJLC was originally a WFP initiative to share logistics assets, initially aircraft. It has evolved into an entity that is operationally independent of WFP, though WFP hosts it and provides support services. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working group (IASC/WG) mandated WFP as the custodian of UNJLC in March 2002.
7. WFP provides UNJLC's administration, finance and personnel services. The UNJLC Core Unit reports to the Deputy Director of the Division of Transport, Preparedness and Response (OTP) at WFP Headquarters. The reporting arrangements in WFP may change as part of a planned reorganization of the division to be implemented in August 2004.
8. The stakeholders of UNJLC meet quarterly to review its progress and provide operational and policy guidance. The main stakeholders are UNHCR, UNICEF, OCHA, IOM, the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of Red



Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), consortia of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and WFP. UNJLC reports to IASC/WG, its oversight body, as requested.

9. The Core Unit was established in Rome to provide a base from which to launch and manage UNJLC operations. The Core Unit (i) maintains contact with the other agencies, (ii) contributes to appeals, (iii) relieves field operations of much of the burden of reporting, (iv) links field operations to WFP support services, (v) organizes training, (vi) manages information and (vii) takes the initiative to improve the effectiveness and capacity of UNJLC. The Core Unit is also a central point where UNJLC partners can share views and act on global logistics matters.
10. A WFP staff member on the Programme Support and Administrative (PSA) budget manages the Core Unit. UNICEF, UNHCR and IOM currently second international staff, funded by UNJLC.
11. UNJLC field operations are funded out of WFP's special operations funds. WFP has set up a special account for UNJLC so that it can receive donor funding for the Core Unit and other requirements.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

12. UNJLC has filled gaps in logistics activities, providing a responsive, innovative and practical lead in coordination and implementation. Donors, ICRC and NGOs appreciate UNJLC's "can-do" approach. The Core Unit provides the operational base and the secretariat for discussion and agreement on logistics activities that underpin future operations, for example in strategic warehousing, commodity tracking systems and standardizing trucking fleets.
13. UNJLC has provided logistics coordination in several complex emergencies, principally through (i) inter-agency contingency planning exercises, (ii) rapid positioning of experienced staff, (iii) establishment of the Core Unit, (iv) logistics training with all its partners and (v) expansion and dissemination of information on logistics through surveys, the WFP website and mapping.
14. UNJLC played an important role in identifying operational logistical bottlenecks and issues not covered by other agencies, for example air planning, fuel supply for humanitarian operations and air-cargo prioritization.

CRITICISMS OF UNJLC

15. The appreciation of donors, ICRC and NGOs has not been matched by similar appreciation in the host agency. Duplication of effort and non-observance of WFP's support-service rules are common criticisms. WFP in the field perceives the efforts of UNJLC as benefiting others and giving an implementation role to the Humanitarian Coordinator, thus eroding its own dominance of the logistics scene.
16. Because UNJLC staff lack knowledge of WFP procedures, and because WFP senior field staff are not familiar with the UNJLC concept, there have been considerable misunderstandings between the two.
17. It has not been possible to delegate financial authority to many UNJLC staff, who are either consultants or seconded/loaned by other agencies and NGOs.
18. It has been difficult for UNJLC to find quickly chiefs of UNJLCs for the field with appropriate experience and with knowledge of WFP support services.



19. UNJLC is weak in terms of briefing and debriefing staff and providing standard administrative guidelines: the majority of consultants do not know their contractual entitlements, medical coverage or administrative requirements.
20. The funding of UNJLC is not always transparent to its partners.

MAIN FINDINGS

21. The Core Unit has responded fully to criticisms of the UNJLC through a detailed internal review of its working relationship with WFP and by commissioning studies of major field operations. There have been formal reviews by the Financial Analysis and Review Branch (FSR) and Human Resources (HR), an information and communications technology (ICT) review is under way and there will be a procurement review in July 2004. Field studies have been undertaken in Afghanistan, Iraq and Liberia. The Core Unit has already taken action on many of the resulting recommendations and incorporated them into its 2004 work plan.
22. The activation of UNJLC will still come from IASC/WG. UNJLC should not have to request its own activation; this should originate at country offices and regional bureaux, with the involvement of OTP, which should ensure senior representation on IASC/WG.
23. The UNJLC should normally deal only with logistics-related issues. Its can-do approach to taking on “issues not addressed by other agencies” (orphan issues) is greatly to its credit – but these should be undertaken very exceptionally and with the agreement of UNJLC partners.
24. The UNJLC preparation for Iraq is an excellent example of preparedness planning; its early activation was clearly appropriate. UNJLC is currently consolidating the emergency preparedness plans of the United Nations country team (UNCT) in Nepal. It is not a complex emergency, but clearly a useful role that could be included in the UNJLC mandate for situations that have a clear potential to develop into complex emergencies. UNJLC must make it clear that its involvement in capacity assessment is (i) temporary, (ii) specific to each emergency and (iii) augments WFP’s information base.
25. The quarterly stakeholder meeting represents the management of UNJLC. There should always be senior representation from WFP at these meetings so that the workings of the UNJLC and its partners can be passed back to WFP independently.
26. The Core Unit should draft a joint memorandum of understanding (MOU) rather than several individual MOUs to clarify the relationship of UNJLC with its partners; this should be discussed with the other partners and should define their roles clearly.
27. In the context of common humanitarian services, the Core Unit should also prepare definitions of relationships with civil/military coordination (CMCoord), humanitarian information centres (HICs) and the Working Group on Emergency Telecommunications (WGET) for discussion in IASC/WG.
28. UNJLC has agreed with the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team (UNDAC) that UNJLC staff will be on the UNDAC roster for deployment within 24 hours as part of its coordination team in the event of a natural disaster. Given the current shortage of staff, UNJLC will let UNDAC know when staff are available for inclusion in a team. This is an innovative approach to inter-agency cooperation.
29. The staffing level of the Core Unit is appropriate to its function, including staff placed in the field for short periods during operations.



30. The Core Unit is currently financed out of non-utilized funds from earlier operations, because no other funding is currently available. Approval of the special account will allow donors to fund the Core Unit directly, for which they have indicated their willingness. Finalization of the special account for UNJLC operations is essential to the operational effectiveness of the Core Unit.
31. The Core Unit plans a review of procurement activities by the Purchasing and Contracts Branch (MSP) in July. Problems over procurement of relatively minor items can cause difficulties, but a close relationship with the country director can make a waiver possible, for example of the rule to obtain three quotes for any procurement. Initial petty cash is included in the kits for rapid deployment of UNJLC staff in an emergency (flyaway kits).
32. UNJLC's high-quality website and mapping have received widespread acknowledgment as valuable tools in logistics coordination and operations. The website is even more useful at the Headquarters and donor level than at the field logistics level, partly because of access problems. The maps and website are so visible and popular that the Core Unit must be strict in crediting the origin of the material used; constant review of what UNJLC's clients need on the website will maintain its focus. Attendance at coordination meetings increases immediately when a bulletin is placed on the website.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

33. An effective Core Unit is vital to the UNJLC concept, because it provides the base from which to launch UNJLC field operations.
34. UNJLC should only operate where other partners are unable or unwilling to do so, and should have formal agreement from the other partners. Under this "intervention principle" there will inevitably remain numerous important tasks that UNJLC will be required to undertake, as in previous operations. This approach will not weaken UNJLC's hands-on ethos, and will avoid any suggestion of duplication; it will continue to give the UNJLC the strength in coordination that goes with a practical operational role.
35. UNJLC should draw its chiefs of field operations from a variety of sources, which will broaden the pool of available staff with appropriate experience, expedite deployment of missions and reflect its inter-agency role. It is vital that these staff understand WFP support services and that they have delegated financial authority from WFP; they must be high-quality personnel on whom UNJLC can stake its reputation.
36. The quarterly meetings of stakeholders should be maintained, keeping an open approach to the developing roles of agencies regarding common humanitarian service issues and funding. This will be important (i) in developing agreed positions for IASC/WG oversight meetings and (ii) as the other agencies consider even more positive commitments to UNJLC through financing their own staff in UNJLC operations.
37. The UNJLC concept and its evolution have been the initiative of the current Deputy Director of OTP. UNJLC is making a serious effort to separate its management from its founders and has succeeded in eliminating its dependence on them as chiefs of field operations, but for the foreseeable future it should remain under the same leadership. This leadership is recognized and appreciated in the inter-agency environment and is the engine driving its development. A change could weaken donor and partner support at a sensitive time in UNJLC development. This is of strategic importance for WFP as the United Nations moves towards coordinating all humanitarian common services.



38. A formal directive should be issued in WFP by the Office of the Director of Operations (ODO) defining the WFP/UNJLC relationship. **The Core Unit should draft the points it considers should be included in the OD directive, specifying what support WFP should give to UNJLC and what WFP can expect from UNJLC.**
39. The Core Unit should develop a list of services that it can offer to Humanitarian Coordinators and UNCTs.
40. The Core Unit should continue to develop and regularly review exit strategies in coordination with UNCTs.

CONCLUSIONS ON THE UNJLC CORE UNIT

41. Consolidating a mutually positive relationship with WFP while retaining independence is critical to the future success of the UNJLC Core Unit. This is not an easy balance to strike: the Core Unit is making effective progress, however, through (i) a series of WFP reviews, (ii) implementation of the many actions outlined in this report and (iii) through its determination to achieve the synergy that will result from an effective partnership with its host.
42. The Core Unit's reporting line into WFP may change in August of 2004. This is a significant issue for UNJLC, the Core Unit and the development of common humanitarian services, particularly at a time when IASC/WG discussions are taking place on this subject. This review recommends that the present time is not the moment to change the leadership of this initiative. A reporting line through the chief of OTL is under consideration, but it would result in an apparently downgraded UNJLC reporting to one of the units for which it is providing coordination, an arrangement that would seem unbalanced to its partners. If WFP places depersonalizing UNJLC as a priority over arguments for maintaining the current leadership, then UNJLC should report directly to the Director of OTP.
43. The UNJLC Core Unit has become an effective office with sufficient staff to provide the minimum strength and support to new UNJLC operations, with a minimum burden to WFP in terms of costs and administration when there are no emergencies. It is staffed with personnel committed to the UNJLC ethos.
44. The Core Unit at Headquarters is already following up the recommendations of previous reviews – its actions are the basic material for this review – and has included the most important of them in its current concept paper and in the 2004 work plan. It provides the institutional memory of UNJLC operations and the fixed base for institutional development.
45. The Core Unit should continue its self-evaluation programme, having set high standards in evaluation and response to recommendations.
46. UNJLC, with the management and support of the Core Unit, is an attractive concept to donors and is proving useful to the other United Nations agencies, ICRC, IFRC and NGOs.



ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

CMCoord	civil/military coordination (humanitarian)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FSR	Financial Analysis and Review Branch
HIC	humanitarian information centre
HR	human resources
IASC/WG	Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICT	information and communications technology
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IOM	International Organization of Migration
MOU	memorandum of understanding
MSP	Purchasing and Contracts Branch (MS)
NGO	non-governmental organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODO	Office of the Director of Operations
OEDE	Office of Evaluation
OTL	Surface Transport Service (OTP)
OTP	Division of Transport, Preparedness and Response
PSA	Programme Support and Administrative (budget)
UNCT	United Nations country team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDAC	United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNJLC	United Nations Joint Logistics Centre
WGTE	Working Group on Emergency Telecommunications
WHO	World Health Organization

