Result-Based Management and Humanitarian Action – Do We Really Want to Go There?

A study on results management and performance monitoring at Sida’s Humanitarian Unit

By Marie-Louise Kjellström
Abstract

Many actors claim results to be at the heart of their operations and to apply the Result-Based Management (RBM) approach in delivering humanitarian assistance, yet few are capable of clearly defining what it means and the long-term effects of this approach. Although seemingly simple from an outsider's perspective, the long-going debate on how to best measure and handle results demonstrate the complexity of the issue. This research examines how the RBM approach can be used by a humanitarian donor and looks specifically at the humanitarian unit (HUM) at Sida's methods for measuring results. It demonstrates that the difficulty in operationalizing ambitious goals and the lack of clarity of objectives hinder HUM from using results management to its full potential, especially when it comes to using the learning component to inform decision-making. The kind of results obtained depended on the reporting mechanisms and the partnership approach used at HUM facilitates the assessment of results; HUM's extensive knowledge of their partner's work is a comparative advantage which is not part of the RBM approach.

Front page picture courtesy of Frederic Bonamy/EU/ECHO

From the picture story "Eastern DRC civilians on the run again", 13/03/2013
Acronyms

CAP Consolidated Appeal Process
CERF Central Emergency Response Fund
CHF Common Humanitarian Fund
DRC Democratic Republic of Congo
DSRSG Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General
EIA environmental impact analysis
ERF Emergency Response Fund
FTS Financial Tracking Service
GENCAP Gender Standby Capacity Project
GHD Good Humanitarian Donorship
HC Humanitarian Coordinator
HUM Humanitarian department at Sida
HUMSAM Humanitarian Consultative Group
IASC Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IDP Internally Displaced Person
LFA Logical Framework Approach
MBO Management by Objectives
MFA Ministry for Foreign Affairs
MSB Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency
NGO Non-Governmental Organisation
NPM New Public Management
OCHA Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
RAF Results Assessment Framework
RBM Results-Based Management
RC Resident Coordinator
RRM Rapid Response Mechanism
SIA Social impact analysis
Sida Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
UN United Nations
UNDP United Nations Development Programme
WASH Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
# Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................... 1  
Acronyms ......................................................................................................................................... 2  
Chapter 1: Introduction, background, aim and research question .................................................. 4  
Introduction ...................................................................................................................................... 4  
Background ....................................................................................................................................... 5  
Purpose and research question ......................................................................................................... 5  
Methodology ...................................................................................................................................... 8  
Chapter 2: Theoretical approach to results management ................................................................... 11  
2.1. Management approaches ........................................................................................................... 11  
2.2 Desk review on key concepts within RBM: why so much confusion? ........................................ 16  
2.2.1 Indicators and performance levels .......................................................................................... 19  
2.2.2 Understanding impact and the attribution problem ................................................................. 21  
Chapter 3: State of play, donors and the concept of partnership ..................................................... 26  
3.1 Overview of the humanitarian system ......................................................................................... 26  
3.2 Constraints against the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance ...................................... 27  
3.3 Donor politics and Sida’s role within the humanitarian system ................................................ 29  
Chapter 4: Clarity of objectives - Analysis of key policy documents .............................................. 34  
4.1 Management by Results in Swedish government ..................................................................... 34  
4.2 Humanitarian strategy and policy .............................................................................................. 35  
Chapter 5: Measuring Performance throughout the contribution cycle ......................................... 42  
5.1 Work methods and operational aspects ...................................................................................... 42  
5.2 Annual report ............................................................................................................................ 45  
5.3 Attribution and quality of available data ................................................................................... 45  
Chapter 6: Analysis and discussion ................................................................................................. 49  
Chapter 7: Conclusions .................................................................................................................. 54  
Bibliography ..................................................................................................................................... 57  
Annex 1 – Description and assessment of final reports submitted to HUM .................................... 61
Chapter 1: Introduction, background, aim and research question

Introduction

The humanitarian sector is today a highly profession business with a billion euro turnover, yet the debate on how to assess results and “value for money” remain high on the agenda. The Rwanda report was one important awakening for many humanitarians, demonstrating a huge failure on behalf of the humanitarian community in responding to the atrocities and a collective lack of analysis, prolonging the conflict to the detriment of those most in need. The call for change came from within the sector itself but was also externally driven; a new economic reality and greater public demand for tangible results and cost-efficiency have accelerated the reform process. In short, we want to see greater results for less money and we want to know exactly what we get from our taxes.

Organisations are very much aware of the need to adapt to this changing environment and the necessity to demonstrate results and increase accountability. Although many serious parties welcome this development some point to the potential negative implications this might generate, such as: 1) reduced operational effectiveness when more time devoted to reporting; 2) less space for learning and innovations when the emphasis is on upward accountability to donors, and 3) difficulties in receiving funding for projects involving issues which are not easily measured such as protection, advocacy and psychological well-being (SDC Conference on Humanitarian Aid, 2008). These developments have created a surge for professional evaluators that often come in at the end of individual projects to assess the outcomes. Most of the material produced up until this point come from this sub-group of evaluators providing guidelines and lessons learned (Watson, 2006, p. 4).

Within the existing body of literature the interested reader will find studies on Results-Based-Management within NGOs and selected UN agencies. However, there is hardly any study available on results management for the donor community and I have not found a single study addressing the specific challenges for humanitarian donors. On the development side there are studies from Dfid, Danida and Sida. However, I will here argue that the work methods, structures, time frames and indicators differ greatly between the two sectors. Therefore there
is a need to analyse humanitarian donorship separately instead of trying to find a “one size fits all” model for both sectors. This research aims at filling some of the gaps and contributes to the overall debate on results management.

Background
In 2010 an extensive review of Sida’s humanitarian assistance was released and one of the main findings of reports was:

“The pressure to demonstrate concrete results and accountability to taxpayers will continue to increase, and thus that it is imperative that the humanitarian team adopts a greater results orientation, and is supported in concentrating on measuring, monitoring and improving the overall impact of its programmes.” (Mowjee & Randel, 2010, p. 16)

First of all, it is important to understand the context in which the evaluation was carried out. The program officers at the humanitarian unit (HUM) handle more and larger projects per person that any other unit at Sida. In 2010, they experienced an unprecedented staff shortage and thus it not surprising that less attention could be devoted to following-up projects and results. The humanitarian unit is also increasingly subject to the same rules, regulations and contribution handling systems as other units at Sida despite the apparent miss-match with work methods used and operational reality (Mowjee & Randel, 2010, p. 22). Nevertheless, since the release of the evaluation the number staff at the humanitarian unit has increased significantly and it is therefore now better equipped to address the issue of results management then before.

Purpose and research question
The overall aim of this research is to better understand performance monitoring and results assessment in humanitarian action from a donor perspective. It forms part of the debate on how a humanitarian donor should structure its work to better monitor results and contribute towards a better functioning humanitarian system. Results-Based Management is widely considered as an appropriate approach for performance monitoring yet so far little research has been devoted to the application of the approach and the consequences of using this approach in the humanitarian sector. The specific purpose is therefore to look further into the application and effects of the RBM approach or management by results within humanitarian donor agencies: what are the specific conditions within the sector that might influence
performance monitoring and results assessment? How can a RBM system look like within a humanitarian donor? Are there any undesirable side effects of such an approach?

The purpose is not to evaluate the effectiveness, quality or the impact of HUM’s humanitarian assistance. This would require extensive research, possibly at field level, and would be more suitable within the context of an external evaluations or larger impact assessment. Focus will be on performance monitoring and how results are assessed, not on what results are achieved with the action. There are no clear cut answers to the question of how results are best assessed in a challenging humanitarian environment; many humanitarian donors are still at the wake of defining their own methods for assessing the effects and efficiency of their funding. The overall acceptance of the RBM approach makes it important to take stock and try to predict the implications of our actions today as these will not only affect partners but also the end users of the action; the affected population which are entitled to high quality humanitarian assistance. Hence, the following research question has been elaborated:

To what extent is the humanitarian unit (HUM) at Sida implementing a Results-Based-Management (RBM) approach and what are the specific challenges it faces as a humanitarian donor in measuring and reporting results?

To answer the research question and structure this thesis a set of sub-questions have been identified to guide the process:

- What factors influence performance management within the humanitarian sector as a whole and within humanitarian donor agencies in particular?
- In what way are goal formulation, M&E and results analysis handled in the contribution cycle and operational planning process?
- How are performance indicators selected and analysed?
- Are these processes organised appropriately from a RBM point of view?

**Thesis outline**

Chapter 1 will provide the reader with a general introduction to the methodology and purpose of the paper. Chapter 2 will give an overview of the main concepts used within results-based
management (RBM). The utilisation of RBM will be problematized and consideration will be made to the specific conditions in which humanitarian assistance is provided. Chapter 3 will give an overview of the sector and the role of Sida as a humanitarian donor. One main aspect of RBM is to establish reasonable results-chain assumptions, i.e. to clearly stipulate what one wants to achieve, the resources necessary and what indicators one will use to establish that the results have been achieved. I will therefore in my research look at: 1) goals and strategies for Sida's humanitarian assistance, 2) work methods for performance measurement and results analysis throughout the contribution process and 3) investigate the utilisation of these results. This is done in chapter 4 and 5 which together form the investigation section of this paper. The first one focuses on the strategic planning and overall goals for Sida's humanitarian assistance. Chapter 5 will give an overview of work methods and assess the overall quality of information provided by partners (final reports are the main source of information on performance). The findings from chapter 4 and 5 will be analysed in-depth in Chapter 6. Conclusions and suggestions for further research will be made in chapter 7.

Relevance to HA field

This study will in first hand be relevant to Sida and other humanitarian donors as many face the same challenges and external pressure to improve their results management. The debate on results has been in the head-lines for a few years and there is no sign that the call for a more efficient humanitarian assistance with more tangible results will cease in the near future. In fact, the developments observed in this study affect the entire system, either directly or indirectly. It affects the donors in a very direct way, not only do they experience an increased pressure to produce results but must also operate within similar conditions as the development sector, often putting more administrative burden on individual officers. The so called implementing partners, notably NGOs, UN agencies and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Society, will also be affected by this new politic. In combination with the overall professionalization of the sector, increased competition and donor demands, implementing partners must show that they’re capable of living up to this new reality or disappear from the humanitarian scene. It is crucial for them to understand donor behaviour and the mechanisms that influence their funding. In the end, the debate on results and also this study relates back to perhaps the most fundamental question anyone within this sector should ask themselves; are we providing the best possible assistance to those most in need?
Limitations

Being a minor study I will not have the opportunity to travel to the field and interview stakeholders. The view of field staff and beneficiaries could have had an added value as it would provide information on the difficulties in data collection, participation in evaluations and the appropriateness of the Terms of Reference for evaluation. Nevertheless, there are several other studies concerning these questions and secondary sources will be used to fill the gaps. Due to time constraints only a small number of final reports will be analysed; in the future it would therefore be advisable to do a follow-up study to confirm the results and look more into mid-term reports and correspondence between desk officers and partners.

Methodology

This research paper consists of three cornerstones: revision of material submitted by partners, mapping of regulations and structures within which the humanitarian unit operates, and a review of working methods. The objective is to triangulate the results and obtain a good understanding of the constraints and possibilities for effective results measurement within the humanitarian unit. Different work methods have been used to collect material for this dissertation. Participatory observations, undertaken over the course of 3 months within the context of an internship at the unit and with prior consent, will be instrumental in understanding the working processes, the methods and tools used to assess project data. A very recent portfolio analysis of Sida’s humanitarian assistance will provide valuable information on HUM’s overall results in 2011 and the current discussions at the unit. Materials from partners include mainly final narrative and financial reports but also external evaluations when available. Finally, a desk research into different regulations and operating frameworks will be carried out. Bearing in mind the latest criticism of poor political leadership and sometimes conflicting directives from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) I will cross-reference the findings to make sure all relevant material is included.

Theories enlightening different aspects of the subject have been selected and the overall aim of this paper is to test and question the overwhelming acceptance of RBM (Esaiasson, et al., 2004, p. 35). Results-Based Management will therefore be the main theory used in this dissertation as well as concepts and methods used within program management, such as for example the Logical Framework Approach (LFA). This is a case study to investigate the RBM approach’s applicability on the humanitarian sector from a donor perspective. A so
called typical case has been selected; most donors today conduct the bulk of the work at capital level with few donors benefitting from a strong field presence. In practice this means that many have to rely on secondary sources to assess the results such as reports from partners, external evaluations and field visits.

Before starting this research project I, like most other researchers, had to confront my own pre-understanding of the subject in question (Esaiasson, et al., 2004). Some of my preconceived thoughts originated from the negative press which appear from time to times in Western media regarding aid organisations inability to demonstrate tangible results. At first it was difficult to understand why it would be so difficult to demonstrate tangible results after so many years of operation and I was mainly fretful about upward accountability; what do we exactly get from our taxes? Following a four month internship at the humanitarian unit and having been confronted with some of the issues programme officers struggle with it was clear that the issue was far more complex than I could initially imagine. Whilst doing this internship, I served as a donor focal point and geographical desk office. During this time I worked a lot with closing contributions and wrote final assessment memos. This experience provided me with good insights into the work cycle and processes related to results management.

I specifically recall one conversation when a colleague from another unit working on development issues argued for the option to calculate the number of saved lives. Knowing that vaccines contribute to an improved child survival it would with this logic be possible to estimate the number of lives saved using existing data on quantities of vaccine disbursed in health projects. Humanitarians objected to this idea as child survival is complex issue and depends on a variety of variables such as malnutrition rates, hygiene and time in displacement. Trying to calculate the effects of funded programs in actual numbers using only one or a few parameters might cause one to ignore the complexity of the issue. My initial question was therefore: given the lack of data, the difficult operating contexts and the multitude of actors, can we say anything about the results of a humanitarian intervention?
Country selection

For the section on material from partners it was decided to select reports from the same country to facilitate comparisons. This to avoid arguments that the information provided in these final reports depended on contextual factors such as it being easier to track results in less complex settings. As the aim is to test existing theories it was decided to use a typical case for humanitarian funding and in the evaluation of Sida’s humanitarian assistance it became clear that such a case contain the following components:

- African country since on average, 60 % of Sida’s funding between 2005-2010 went to this continent
- Complex emergency as 78 % of funding was devoted to these crises between 2005-2010
- There should be a UN Appeal process in the country as Sida is very supportive of these mechanisms
- There should be a mix of non-governmental organisations and UN agencies

These variables generate a range of 8-10 countries out of which the Democratic Republic of Congo was finally selected as it is subject to substantial humanitarian funding each year and thus, a good selection of data is available. Subsequently, projects available on www.openaid.se (accessed on 5 April) with funding decisions between the years 2007-2010 were randomly selected, this to ensure that all reporting requirements had been fulfilled; many of the projects last for one year and afterwards the partner got six months or even longer to submit the final report.
Chapter 2: Theoretical approach to results management

2.1. Management approaches

2.1.1 Historic outlook and the rise of New Public Management

For the past decades there has been a constant pressure on governments to be more transparent, accountable and to increase performance. This is particularly apparent in these past years when economic resources are scarce, confidence in political leadership is at an all-time low and the social well-fare in many donor countries is on the decline. New Public Management was first introduced by the Australian government in the mid-1980s and became the leading management philosophy in other Western countries in the mid-1990s. Building on experiences and research within both the private and the public sector it is questionable as to whether it really should be represented as something “new”. A brief overview of the developments in management allows us to better grasp this loosely defined concept.

Governments have for a long time been under the pressure to demonstrate control and good management of taxpayer’s money which in the 1960s started with the Planning, Programming and Budgeting Systems (PPBS) approach. In essence, this meant management of inputs or the human resources, operating and capital costs by with the underlying assumption that if these factors were managed appropriately then good results would follow (Ramalingam & Mitchell, 2009, pp. 14-15).

Programme Management by Activity later became prominent and many of methods and techniques, such as the Gantt Chart, Programme Evaluation and Review Techniques and the Work Breakdown Structure, were derived from the construction engineering field (Meier, 2003, p. 3). As many donors were involved in physical infrastructure and industrial development projects this was a logical step but as the sector evolved and the nature of the programmes changed, the Management-By-Objectives philosophy resurged (Bouckaer, 2008, p. 25). By setting objectives and identifying performance indicators it allowed managers to control the design and implementation of programs. The most commonly used tool derived from this particular management approach is the Logical Framework Approach (LFA) which is today an analytical tool for designing projects. Originally introduced in the 1970s by the
U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) it is somewhat ironic that a tool originally used for military purposed and later developed by NASA to plan space programmes has become so widely accepted within the humanitarian sector (Sorgenfrei & Hailey, 2004, p. 12). However, many are also critical of the LFA for being too simplistic, not being fit for performance monitoring, and not taking into consideration the influence from other stakeholders and programs (Roberts, 2004, p. 17).

It soon became clear that focusing on objectives was not enough and NPM was an attempt to address the issue of poor effectiveness. In essence, New Public Management is a set of broad ideas introducing a more market oriented approach to the public sector which would increase the cost efficiency and accountability. After a short global overview it becomes clear that the actual interpretation and implementation of these ideas vary greatly (Sorgenfrei & Hailey, 2004, pp. 4-8). Within the aid sector NPM is often referred to as increased aid effectiveness and greater monitoring of results; in short, greater value for (less) money (Jensen, 2012, p. 2). The introduction of New Public Management into the development aid sector has been discerned in several papers and many are critical as this might lead more towards a contract culture with an increased focus on the fulfilment of contracted inputs and outputs instead of actual outcomes (Stockton, 1995, p. 34). Moreover, there are trepidations that the system as such tends to prioritise its intervention according to where it can demonstrate impact, such as areas where one already has a greater field presence, greater contextual knowledge and well-known partners, instead of actual needs (Macrae, et al., 2002, p. 66). On the Swedish political scene the influence of New Public Management ideas can be best exemplified by recalling some of the many public statements by the Minister of Development, Gunilla Carlsson, that there should be less “talk-aid”, more actions and a focus on results (Carlsson, 2012, p. 2). There will no longer be room for travels, dialogue or conference but actions. In short, this would signify greater value for less money but also a more contractual culture where the decisions are taken at capital level, far away from the action.

2.1.2 Results-Based Management

As a consequence of the shift in focus from objectives to results new management strategies were called for. One of the main problems with previous Management-by-Objectives (MBO) approach was the confusing of terminology. For example the use of the term “objectives”
which according to modern dictionaries is synonym with aim, goal and purpose; all terms used in MBO approaches without clearly specifying the relationship between the different terms (Meier, 2003, p. 7). The main difference between the Result-Based management (RBM) approach and the MBO one lies in how terms are defined in relationship to one another. Within RBM causality has a central role and uses the above cited concepts of input, output, outcome and impact.

Results-Based Management (RBM) is a management strategy "focusing on performance and achievements of outputs, outcome and impact " (OECD DAC, 2002, p. 5) which provides a framework and tools for not only planning activities but also risk management, performance monitoring and evaluation. It is important to stress that RBM is a broad performance management system not be seen as synonymous with performance measurement which is only one (important) component. (CIDA, Treasury Board Secretariat, 2001, p. 28). It is aimed at achieving changes in the way organisations operate with improving performance as the central orientation. Thus, the main purpose of RBM is to improve efficiency and effectiveness. This is mainly done through organisational learning in which knowledge acquired throughout the project cycle is used to inform decision-making. In the case of a donor agency, decision-making can refer to funding decision, policy modifications, changes in working methods and partnerships. RBM is also used for accountability through performance reporting (Meier, 2003, p. 8). The concepts of organisational learning and accountability will be further explored in coming sections.

RBM integrates several elements such as:

- Identification of objectives and indicators;
- Monitoring system;
- Comparisons with the actual results and intended targets;
- Performance information for accountability, learning and decision-making processes (Sorgenfrei & Hailey, 2004, p. 11).

If successfully implemented, a result-oriented management culture will be put in place which affects all aspects of the project cycle. However, mounting a full-fledge Result-Based
Management approach within an organisation is not the perfect fix for all agencies. It takes time to fundamentally change structures and cultures; there are no guarantees that the purpose of using performance measurements to inform decision-making will be achieved even with the most elaborate management plan. Depending on the organisational culture, external pressure and mandate one aspect might be considered more important in the utilisation of performance information.

2.1.3 Purpose of RBM – organisational learning and accountability

Learning

The concept of learning might appear to be straightforward, after all, it is a word commonly used in everyday conversations. However, there is a need to reflect more on the concept in terms of what, how and for what we want to generate knowledge within our organisations. Knowledge is defined as “a justified personal belief” but there any many specific forms of knowledge (King, 2009, p. 3) In terms of development or humanitarian agencies different forms of knowledge could be acquired on different levels. I will bellow reflect on different kinds of information one might acquire working as a desk officer using personal experiences.

a) Partner organisational level: the performance and capacity of the partner organisation in the field and at head quarter. This might influence future funding decisions or identify needs for capacity building on HQ level or field level. For example, some NGOs might be very successful in one country but fail in another country. Here, the responsible desk officer would have to ask him/herself several questions such as does the partner organisation has the capacity to operate effectively in the specific country (has the issues already been addressed by the partner), is this symptomatic with a more general issue with the partner organisation or should the failure be associated to contextual issues such as lack of access.

b) Humanitarian situation in the country: the needs and contextual settings in a specific country. For example, a project cannot be fully implemented due to the national authority’s unwillingness to issue operating licenses without bribes.

c) The functioning of the humanitarian system in a specific country: will form part of any funding decision but will most probably have to be revised during the course of the project. Questions such as the role of the UN, the involvement of local NGOs, performance of the Humanitarian Coordinator might arise. These issues are not only
important for future funding decisions but can also be important to raise in a policy level.

d) Thematic knowledge regarding innovations and best practice: can involve different methods for cash-for-work programmes or the implementation of gender market in Consolidated Appeal Processes (CAPs).

Here, the term learning refers to what Dixon would call organisational learning or the generating of new and correct knowledge to inform future actions (Dixon, 1999, p. 6). It is thus not a mere question of learning for the purpose of control or accountability but it is equally important that this knowledge is feed back to the organisation and used to inform decision-making. The organisation not only needs to implement appropriate performance measurement structures to generate this learning but also allow for this knowledge to be transmitted to other parts of the organisation (OECD/DAC, 1998, pp. 40-41).

**Accountability**

Accountability is another widely used but seldom problematized concept. Depending on the context it can relates to different aspects; direction (up- or down-ward), legitimacy (justification for action), and communication (transparency towards those with less insight into the developments). It can be conflicting with other values such as learning and can undermine on-going negotiations (Hofmann, et al., 2004, p. 10). Accountability also requires a lot from the society and agents involved. If the role of civil society is in part to scrutinise the government there is a need for an open society and a strong civil society in order for this to take place. In this case it might be true if we refer to accountability towards tax-payers in donor countries but many times not in the countries where the action takes place. It becomes even more complex when there is a multitude of foreign stakeholders that should be hold accountable. For NGOs there might not be good incentives to be 100% accountable for their actions as this might affect the possibility of obtaining permission from the national government to operate in the country and funding from donors or pooled funds which becomes apparent in. Thus, we must question to whom we should be accountable and how this process can be realized.
One group which humanitarian agencies are especially poor at being accountable for is the beneficiaries or end-users of the action. This is also a concern when it comes to performance measurement to inform the other corner stones of RBM, learning and impact. Beneficiaries are today not sufficiently participating in monitoring and evaluation although recognized as an important source of information. Many have called for greater participation to increase the accuracy of the data, for a moral obligation to understand how the end-users of service perceive the assistance provided and facilitate the investigation of social dynamics (Watson, 2008, pp. 13-15). With this consensus on the need of greater involvement of beneficiaries in all parts of the project cycle it is intriguing as to why this is not already implemented. Nevertheless, there are different challenges towards participation. Firstly, we need to determine who should be involved and how. It might also put some beneficiaries at risk and distract them from other important tasks such as gathering food or caring for their families. There are also methodological concerns such as to the reliability, standardisation and objectivity of such assessments (Hofmann, et al., 2004, p. 11). Lastly communication might be a concern as some beneficiaries might not understand the purpose of the exercise or try to manipulate data to receive additional assistance. Before these concerns have been sufficiently dealt with monitoring and evaluation within humanitarian action remains top-down designed at providing information to HQ and donors (Hofmann, et al., 2004, p. 11). Participation should also be understood in relation to the above mentioned distinction between institutional objectives of accountability and learning. Furthermore, Kaiser notes that the kind of information sought will determine the methods used and participatory approaches are mainly used in lesson learning exercises. The reason for this can be traced both to the mentality of evaluators and programme staff. It reflects the assumption that evaluations should display only facts and the single truth about the project. It also relates to the fear among programme staff of losing control over the data used in the evaluation, concerns over negative effects on their careers and beneficiaries outing their discontent with individual decisions (Kaiser, 2001, p. 11).

2.2 Desk review on key concepts within RBM: why so much confusion?

When we talk about results we refer to measurable or describable change that is derived from a cause and effect relationship. It is the last link in a chain of events starting with inputs and ending with the achievement of defined objectives. Interestingly enough this definition do not require that we have measurable indicators, just that we can demonstrate a plausible logic.
However, this definition fails to recognize that a wide range of actions and actors influence the target population. It is not always possible to determine even under perfect conditions what event caused a certain change and thus, the so-called “theory of change” needs to be clearly stipulated in the project design in order to identify indicators (Proudlock & Ramalingam, 2009, p. 20). The actions can also lead to unintended outcomes or negative impact. Failure to meet the objectives can be traced back to: poor needs assessment, failed logic, poor performance, lack of resources to meet the needs or external factors. As evident in the above mentioned definition, causality is an important element to measuring results but the complexity of the situation makes it difficult to attribute effects to a particular action. There are two main approaches to determining attribution which are not mutually exclusive: comparative methods and theory-based methods. Using a comparative methods signify asking what would have occurred without the particular intervention. It should perhaps be noted that this is mainly done when comparing different strategies such as either distribute aid in kind or in cash. The theory-based method involves examining a specific case in depth, triangulating data from different sources to determine causality (Proudlock & Ramalingam, 2009, p. 6).

2.1 Definition of key concepts

There is still some confusion as to the use and meaning of different terms used within evaluations and performance measurements. The OECD-DAC definitions are the most common ones and follow the logic of the results chain. It ends with impact which would be seen as the last part in a long, linear chain of activities and effects. What is unfortunate with the linear approach is that the connexion between original needs assessment and impact is not explicit. Nevertheless, there are the most widely used and will therefore be used and problematized in this paper. The definitions are as follows:

- **Inputs**: The financial, human and material resources used for the development of interventions
- **Activity**: Actions taken or work performed through which inputs, such as funds, technical assistance and other types of resources are mobilised to produce specific outputs
- Outputs: The products, capital goods and services which results from a development intervention

- Outcomes: The likely or achieved short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention’s outputs

- Impacts: Positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produces by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended (OECD DAC, 2002, pp. 1-2)

Another widely used definition:

Impact is a significant or lasting change brought about by a given actor or series of action. The systematic analysis of the lasting or significant changes – positive or negative, intended or not – in people’s lives (Roche, 1999, p. 22)

According to the first definition of impact, the main difference between outcome and impact is related to time and thus can only be measured or estimated (long) after the end of the project or program. It is not unheard of that evaluators state that impact cannot be assessed within a humanitarian project, yet impact forms part of OECD/DAC guidelines for evaluation of humanitarian projects. Roche criticised the linear way of thinking about impact and his definition is now the most widely used within the sector. Here, time is no longer part of the parameters and the difference between outcome and impact is more related to the degree of the effects (Alnap, 2006, p. 56). Nevertheless, one problem with Roche’s definition is how to determine what constitutes a significant change in people’s lives; this inevitably involves value judgements about what is significant to whom (Roche, 2000). Even if the latter is the most cited definition there is no consensus on what impact entails. The term has taken on a range of different meanings in the overall aid sector such as participatory impact assessments, studies on final welfare outcome, counterfactual analysis and studies with a specific focus such as environmental impact analysis (EIA) and Social impact analysis (SIA). In this study the definition by Roche will be used and the focus of attention will be changes in people’s lives which is also in line with the overall humanitarian aim of saving lives.

Results can be measured on different levels with increasing complexity the further away we come from the activities. With the adoption of Logical Framework Analysis and Result Based
Management the different levels have come to be viewed as a chain of results according to the following logic Figure 1.

**Figure 1 Chain of logic and attribution**

Input -> Activities -> Outputs -> Outcomes -> Impact

![Causal attribution and Plausible attribution](image)

(HermannConsulting, 2008, p. 15)

What this fails to demonstrate is the difficulty in establishing a clear link or causality between the different steps and that both outcomes and impact are far more iterative. However, it does serve as a starting point and illustrates the different levels of analysis which is widely used within the sector.

### 2.2.1 Indicators and performance levels

One main constraint against measuring results in a humanitarian context is the issue of baselines. It is difficult to show that a specific action have had an impact if we don’t know what was occurring before the intervention and after its implementation (Hofmann, et al., 2004, p. 20). The issue of impact is inherently linked to that of a correct needs assessment and baseline which is not pictured in the linear approach to assessing results. There are ways of making up for the lack of data; by asking beneficiaries to recall situations before the emergency or by compare background information from new beneficiaries to that of existing beneficiaries, a so called “rolling” baseline, we can create retrospective baseline (ibid, p.21).

The choice of indicators is another important area; it would be virtually impossible for any organisation or evaluator to set up a system for measuring all imaginable impact indicators which can be related to the activities carried out. There will inevitably by a selection of indicators depending on our understanding of the causal effects and depending on different
motivations by stakeholders. Therefore, it is important to maintain an open mind and consult all involved stakeholders, most importantly the beneficiaries to avoid a biased result.

Generally speaking there are two different types of indicators: implementation indicators (input, process and output) and effect indicators (outcome and impact). Humanitarians tend to use a mix depending on monitoring and reporting systems (Proudlock & Ramalingam, 2009, p. 22). There is however a tendency towards collecting implementation indicators instead of impact indicators within the humanitarian sector. This can in part be related to the difficulty in measuring impact within a complex and evolving humanitarian context but also due to existing working methods and tools such as the logical framework grid (LFA) (Mitchell, 2009, p. 55). The problem with this often used tool is that it does not indicate problems with attribution, potential conflicts of interests within the target population is not logically included and is mainly used as a tool for communication with donors. Another common tool is the Sphere standards, a handbook to assure a minimum standard of relief provision yet all indicators are on an output level such as minimum average water use per person, access to vitamins, surface area per persons in camps etc. (The Sphere Project, 2004, pp. see pages 52, 104, 205). Within project management indicators are likewise supposed to be SMART: specific, measurable, acceptable, realistic and time-bound. For implementing partners it is tempting to use indicators which can be straightforwardly verified and are within our own control. As demonstrated by the following Figure 2 it is inevitable easier to control implementation indicators than effects indicator.

Figure 2 Performance level and control factor

Planning - Input - Activities - Output - Outcome - Impact

(External influence)

Area of control by ORG

End of project

(Roberts, 2004, p. 15)

In most evaluations concepts such as efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and relevance are included following the OECD-DAC evaluation standards (OECD/DAC, 1999).
Although similar in nature these concepts aim at assessing performance during different stages of the project. Efficiency measures the output using both quantitative and qualitative data in relation to the input. It is about asking whether or not the most efficient process has been used. This is not to be confused with cost-efficiency, a broader concept which takes into account how different outputs best could be produced and used to obtain the same or better outcomes. Hence, cost-efficiency involves assessing the entire project cycle which differentiates it from efficiency which only concern output and input. Effectiveness involves assessing the causality between the output and the outcome. It examines the main reasons why the intervention might have or might have not achieved its particular objectives and the related processes. Finally, relevance is the assessment of the appropriateness of the action, the extent to which the action has achieved the overall objective of the project as demonstrated in Figure 3.

![Figure 3 Evaluating performance](image)

(Mitchell, 2009, p. 38)

### 2.2.2 Understanding impact and the attribution problem

The definition of impact is centred on the vague notion of changes in people’s lives, making it difficult to measure and there are many different interpretations of the concept. Some might even argue that it is impossible to assess the impact of a humanitarian intervention within the
short time frames available for evaluations and the difficulty in attributing change to a specific action. Another difficulty is the interconnectedness between different aspects of humanitarian action. For example, one agency might have distributed x number of food packages in camps but unless all individuals respective vulnerabilities are taken into consideration in the planning phase it will be difficult to guarantee the assistance will reach all those in need. Women and young girls are often more vulnerable than their male counterparts and receiving food packages might expose them to the risk of different forms of violence. Thus, to assess the impact of the action we need to adapt a more holistic view of impact and not just what is directly related to the action. An intervention might intent to target a particular aspect of human life if might also influence other aspects indirectly of unexpectedly which will not be captured in a log frame. Some effects will be immediate whilst others will take years to manifest itself, one major challenge within the humanitarian sector as most projects last between 6 and 12 months with an evaluation conducted shortly after the completion of the project. Another difficulty is the use of different methods and indicators for measuring different aspects of human life or impact. Some require qualitative indicators such as community security (assess community ties and coping mechanisms), environmental security (how people make use of natural resources and effects of deprivations) and personal security (how gender influence personal security). Others can be assessed using quantitative indicators such as health (vaccination coverage), economic (disposable income) and food (malnutrition rates). As donors and implementing partners are becoming under increasing pressure to deliver tangible results within short time frames some practitioners have warned about the potential negative side effect of certain methods being favoured as they are seen as more scientific. It is for example a clear bias towards using quantitative indicators in reporting. In sum, a mix of different methods is recommended to include all aspects of human life. Another tool to illustrate the attribution problem is Figure 4 Level of Analysis commonly found in the field of international relations. It is particularly challenging to attribute change on a country or system level with the increased levels of complexity with increased number of

![Figure 4 Level of Analysis](image-url)
factors and actors. A project may very well generate effects on a country level, yet in our analysis it is important to consider other factors and weight the possible influence by our activity in comparison to these factors. Furthermore, as demonstrated in table 1, depending on the commissioning stakeholder different levels of analysis will be of interest in the evaluation. Depending on what questions are asked and who’s asking the results will differ greatly.

2.2.3 Objectives and utilisation

Another inherent problem with impact assessment within the humanitarian sector is that the objectives of the evaluation exercise are not always clearly stipulated (Sandison, 2007, p. 14). Learning and accountability are the two most cited objectives which seldom can be combined successfully. If the overall aim is learning then this is mainly meant for internal use to inform and improve future interventions. Accountability is more for external use, for example reporting back to donors and is often so called up-ward accountability. The former might induce innovation whilst the other calls for replicating previous successes which are known to receive funding (Hofmann, et al., 2004, p. 11). It is also common for a great variety of stakeholders to have an interest in the assessment and thus it becomes very difficult to remain focused on one objective affecting the overall quality of the report (Sandison, 2007, p. 17). The interests and aims of different stakeholders such as beneficiaries, donor governments, general public, recipient government, NGOs, the media and researched may not be reconcilable within one evaluation. The findings are much more likely to be used if consideration to the end user, it needs an interest are taken into account when designing the evaluation. The interests of stakeholders also influence the level of analysis and the focus of the assessment as demonstrated in
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of analysis</th>
<th>Stakeholder interest</th>
<th>Can be assessed on</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| The impact of particular humanitarian aid project. | Aid agencies: to improve their work and demonstrate impact  
Donors: to choose what to fund and develop policy  
National government: to guide planning and response | 1) Individual level  
2) Household (HH) level  
3) Community level | 1) Easily defined, possible to explore social relations and allow for disaggregated data.  
2) Appreciation of HH coping and survival strategies, estimate links between individuals, HH and community.  
3) Understand collective action and social capital, sustainability and community transformation. | 1) Difficult to attribute and aggregate findings. Most projects have impact beyond the individual.  
2) Difficult to assess exact membership and not disaggregated data(diff effects on members)  
3) Group dynamics diff. to unravel, comparisons are diff. |
| The impact of particular humanitarian organisation | Aid agencies: demonstrate results and fundraise  
Donors: to choose implementing partner  
National government: registration of agencies and partnership | Combination of individual, HH and community levels. Agency level. | Assess sustainability, effects of capacity building, internal performance, relationship with changes on all 3 sub-levels. | NGO dynamics difficult to understand, difficult to compare between NGOs |
| Impact on country or disaster level       | Donors: to know how many lives were saved  
General public: if the money made a difference  
National government: assess own actions and appeal for more aid | Country and agency level | Permits broader change to be assessed, relationship between stakeholders, coordination and sustainability | Difficult to assess all stakeholders’ actions, complex analysis, risk of ignoring important data or sectors, greater problem of attribution |

(Bird, 2002, p. 8).

Whilst donor agencies are interested in impact analysis on different levels the pressure from the general public might gear towards a greater emphasis on sectorial or country level; it is more appealing to leaders to go public with the information that tax payers money has improved the overall mortality rates in country x than to talk about the success of individual projects. At the same time there have been few attempts research impact on a sectorial level; so far the sector has concentrated on the question of needs assessments and overall coordination (Hofmann, et al., 2004, p. 31). The extent to which donors can and should assess...
the overall effectiveness of its humanitarian aid will most probably be at the heart of future policy debates and it is difficult to give a definitive answer given the methodological constraints. What might function well in one context might not be as appropriate in another and whilst one NGO might be very successful in one country it might not be functioning well in another; what can we really say in general terms about the success of the aid provided and about the partnership in these circumstances? A further analysis would be called for to evaluate why these observations can be made and thus it is not surprising that the OECD/DAC in its NGO Evaluation Synthesis Report state the following:

‘One should be careful about comparing the performance of NGO development projects in different geographical locations, and in different socio-economic and political settings, and even in different periods’ OECD/DAC in (Hofmann, et al., 2004, p. 23)

Some have even argued that we should clearly separate evaluations into two categories to avoid further confusion. There is a danger in focusing exclusively on evaluations for accountability and not recognize the importance of learning; it is impossible to use blueprint logical frameworks as every humanitarian context is unique and thus we constantly need to be able to adapt to new circumstances and learn from experiences to improve the work. In the end, the determinants of utilisation of a monitoring exercise or evaluation are due to the degree of participation by key stakeholders, clearly stipulated purpose and adequate approach that fits the end user in mind. Too many evaluations are commissioned to fulfil administrative requirements (Sandison, 2007, p. 18).
Chapter 3: State of play, donors and the concept of partnership

3.1 Overview of the humanitarian system

The humanitarian system has undergone dramatic changes in the past decades with an inordinate increase in number of actors, a broader range of activities and a blurring of the lines between humanitarian workers, the military and development actors. If humanitarian work in the past was restricted to pure life-saving activities humanitarian actors are now to a larger extent involved in prevention and restoration of livelihood. Examples of this include Disaster Risk Reduction within the Hyogo framework and the so called resilience agenda in Sahel. It can therefore sometimes even be difficult to distinguish it from the development sector. (Hofmann, 2003, p. 13) In practice these two sectors often involve different actors, practices and funding mechanisms yet can exist within the same geographical area and context. On the project side there is one major distinction as humanitarian projects tend to be shorter ranging between 6 to a maximum of 18 months since it would be difficult to obtain funding for longer periods. Still, there are several so called protracted situations where humanitarian agencies remain for decades during which it is difficult to make long-term commitments due to funding constraints. The shorter time frames can be understood in light of humanitarian crisis being considered as exceptional situations requiring swift responses during a limited amount of time.

Humanitarian action is needs-based and follows the four humanitarian principles coined by ICRC for more than 100 years ago; humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality. However, these principles are constantly being challenged in the field, especially in view of so-called integrated missions and a greater presence of military actors, private contractors and security firms. The extent to which it is possible to make use of these principles depends on the type of disaster (man-made or natural disaster) but also heavily on the national government. Humanitarian assistance can be manipulated and bring in additional resources to complex situations. There is a strong political dimension to humanitarian action which many actors fail to recognize: even if the delivery could be considered as purely needs-based it will not be perceived as such, it represents an additional resource to fight over and as demonstrated in the forthcoming sections, the funding allocation is far from disconnected to politics. Foreign policy is fundamental in the global allocation of aid which is not in line with one of the fundamental
principles of neutrality in delivery of humanitarian assistance. (Vaux, 2006, p. 8). The politicization of aid and the difficulty in upholding the humanitarian principles are a reality; actors now need to clearly stipulate their strategies for how to operate effectively within the system. Another factor which may contribute towards the perception of humanitarian assistance as highly political is the lack of clearly-stipulated trigger mechanism and benchmarks (Hofmann, 2003). Malnutrition is one area where high levels can be considered normal in certain contexts and acceptable in others; in areas where seasonal hunger periods are reoccurring phenomenon malnutrition rates above 20–30% are not considered as famine whilst it would be in other countries.

3.2 Constraints against the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance

As mentioned above, humanitarian actors are nowadays very much involved in complex circumstances and there is an apparent blurring of lines between the military and humanitarian actors. The term of complex emergencies were first coined in Mozambique in the late 1980s to describe challenging environments where a complex web of vulnerabilities in combination with intrastate conflict generated great human suffering. It is mainly used to describe situations where conflict and/or political instability can be seen as main causes of humanitarian needs (OECD/DAC, 1999, p. 6). It is especially useful to emphasis the particularly complex situations of providing assistance in the midst of civil war and in fragile states.

Even in emergencies caused by natural hazards such as earthquakes, floods, drought and hurricanes we find contexts difficult to operate in. This became apparent in Haiti after the major earthquake devastated an already extremely vulnerable and poor country. Urbanisation, poverty, social structures under pressure and repeated chocks due to a changing climate tend to exacerbate any situation. With no coping mechanisms left, poor delivery of social goods and great overall vulnerability humanitarians often become the sole provider of basic necessities. In the forthcoming sections focus will be on conflict situation due to the added layer of complexity and complicated relationship between different stakeholders. Nonetheless, many of the issues raised can be found in natural disasters as well.

The number of intrastate conflicts increased after the end of the Cold War and is today more common than inter-state conflicts. The objectives of the rebel group(s) or the opposition can vary
greatly involving anything between real grievances, struggle to gain political control or influence, search for security where none is provided by the state and greed; the aim is often very confuse and unclear. Different factions and individuals within the movement can have even conflicting goals and hence it is not uncommon for new rebel groups to form from already existing ones. Humanitarian actors many times have to operate in these confuse settings where the government lack control and it can be very sensitive to deal with the other party to the conflict (OECD/DAC, 1999, p. 7). Nevertheless, it might be necessary for humanitarians to have contact and negotiate with rebel groups to gain humanitarian access or space. This can either be deliberately restricted by road blocks, attacks on humanitarian personnel and illegal taxes on goods or by poor infrastructure and difficult terrain. It is very uncommon for international organisations to join forces and jointly negotiate with the rebels as there is an inherent competition; those who gain access get the funding and thus have guaranteed its organisational survival in the long term.

In areas where there is an ethnic dimension to the conflict the dynamics of war are altered. This can be of historical origin or the result of local leaders successfully dividing the community, making ethnic identity more salient. One of the characteristics of complex emergencies is that violence is directed towards civilians, particularly those of a different social or ethnic group (OECD/DAC, 1999, p. 7). It can also be a callous way of using civilians as shields or manipulate
the political stability. Wars motivated by ethnic division tend to last longer and can also be limited to a smaller geographical area depending on the demographics factors (Eck, 2009, p. 371). There is always the unfortunate possibility that humanitarian interventions prolong conflicts when an abundance of resources are brought in and the party in control over a specific area engage in (illegal) taxation on humanitarian goods or prices on necessary items sky rock (OECD/DAC, 1999, p. 8). This, in combination availability of weapons and crimes, contribute to the fluidity of the situation on the ground. Many times humanitarian actors can find themselves facing the same chronic problems for years with a few sudden urgent crises. It can be difficult to differentiate between the civilian population and rebels when combatants don’t wear uniforms and blend in with civilians. It happens that resources are distributed directly to rebels by mistake, that it is taken from civilian beneficiaries or that the goods are stolen (OECD/DAC, 1999, p. 6). Hence, humanitarian assistance requires an in-depth analysis of local conditions and context. Many stakeholders are involved and influence the intervention as well as the overall context, as demonstrated in Figure 4.

This may be confusing not only to beneficiaries but also to other parties as some parties claim to be independent and neutral while clearly being in contact and sometimes even depending on parties which have a clear interest. One example of this would be humanitarian actors depending on private security companies, heavily armed and often benefiting from impunities for their acts. In some parts, for example Pakistan, the role of the military includes delivering humanitarian assistance, hence clearly compromising the humanitarian principles. A successful stakeholder analysis should put the different parties’ objectives, means, institutions, internal support and relationships with other parties under scrutiny. As an example, some have an economic interest, either in the continuation or the end of the conflict. For others, influence and political power is primordial which might entail gaining either military supremacy or make important alliances. It might be difficult to attribute change in a context where most actors strive towards the same target but even more so when some might have very conflicting objectives. Here, the chain of logic will be extremely difficult to determine beforehand as you never know what might occur in a few months' time.

3.3 Donor politics and Sida’s role within the humanitarian system
Two different funding systems have emerged in with a group of more or less well-organised Western donors being challenged by a more informal system consisting of Gulf States, BRICS
(Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and ASEAN. Within the former group most are adherent to the principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) and are members of OECD-DAC (Slim, 2006, p. 3). There is a big difference between how the different categories of donors channel their funds. Non-DAC donors are more likely not to report to OCHA’s Financial Tracking System (FTS) and give aid directly to other states, in-kind or by twinning\(^1\). It is therefore difficult to track the total number of funding given each year. It should however be noted that Gulf States such as Saudi Arabia lately have altered their funding patterns somewhat and are now increasingly involved in multilateral aid to the UN (Development Initiative, 2013, p. 28). NGOs receive resources either from DAC-donors through different forms of partnership agreements, as implementing partners to UN agencies, through Multi-Donor Trust-Funds (MDTF) and by private fundraising. Changes in funding patterns will have implications on the different actors, stakeholders’ relations and the level of administration required. Receiving agencies are put under increased pressure as the donors require different reporting exercises to be completed. The great levels of funding in combination with a changed political and economic reality in many donor countries have put an increased pressure on all receiving agencies but mostly NGOs to expand their capacity to manage donor relations. Within the sector there have been no serious attempts to streamline the cumbersome application and reporting processes although being one of the Good Humanitarian Donorship principles.

Reporting requirements can have different purposes including measuring results and control partners. Few humanitarian donors have a strong field presence, with the exception of the US, European Commission and the UK many donors depend upon external sources and the reporting of their partners. Staff can experience a heavy burden of the increased internal bureaucracy associated with more onerous reporting schemes with less ownership and time for internal learning. Such institutional incentives and focus on up-ward accountability can trump the humanitarian ones and even create perverse incentives to impact assessment (Alnap, 2008, p. 36). Whilst private persons might be satisfied with knowing that their donations reaches the beneficiaries and that assistance is being delivered to those in need, government agencies more complex reporting schemes. A donor focal point needs to transmit and link donor requirement to the field officers whilst people on the fundraising side are not as involved in the operational side. In sum, the fact that receiving agencies are getting the bulk of its funding from government

\(^1\) Twinning means that one state provides in-kind aid such as food or material whilst another donor assume the cost of transportation. For example, a well-known cooperation of this kind includes Brazil and Spain to Southern Africa.
donor agencies clearly impact the requirements associated with these donations and put additional administrative burden on organisations which might lead to reports being performed only for the sake of living up these requirements. In these circumstances there is no room for learning according to the RBM module and organisations might even avoid certain types of projects being well aware of the difficulties in gaining funding or to conduct adequate performance monitoring. Thus, there will be little space for innovations or projects dealing with complex issues such as protection or advocacy.

The relationship between donors and partners is far from equal; emphasis is on partnership but does not reflect a true partnership when one of the parties depends on the other for funding and in the long run, organisational survival. This is particularly true in the case of NGOs, when the number of actors is increasing the competition over resources and space increase. Several scholars have pointed out that NGOs often are burdened with more onerous reporting demands than UN agencies (Hofmann, et al., 2004, p. 19), one major reason being very distinct power relations. Donors require reporting from UN agencies and the Red Cross family but it can be challenging to attribute results to specific contributions or even track to which country the funding went in view of un-earmarked funding or so called core funding. In view of the overall trend of increased earmarking or "bilateralism" reporting requirements are becoming more elaborate also for multilateral support. In view of the RBM module, we should perhaps start asking ourselves what kind of learning and performance measuring system we will get if these unequal partnerships persist. Is there any way we can mount a system where responsibilities and risks are shared between donors and partners with clearly defined and shared accountability?

Once again, we observe a distinctive political dimension to humanitarian action despite the principles of independence and impartiality. The Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) are heavily influenced by what kind of working relationship they can forge with the national government, the actions by the Security Council and UN Member States. It is very difficult for the HC to provide leadership for the humanitarian community and advocate for the respect of the humanitarian principles in context where the national government is contributing to the deterioration of the humanitarian situation, especially if not receiving adequate support from the Security Council (Petrie, 2012, p. 15). One example of this is Sri Lanka where the government forces committed atrocities in front of the world’s eyes since big states in the Security Council’s Members ignored the warnings of genocide, leaving the
HC in a difficult position where access to the population was denied. The subsequent decision of the HC to try to negotiate with the government, and not to make use of advocacy tools, to stop the shelling and deliberate starvation of civilians eventually lead to hundreds of thousands of Tamil civilians’ death (Petrie, 2012, p. 5). It is evident that we still haven’t picked up on the lessons learnt from the Rwanda genocide and are unlikely to do so if no comprehensive evaluation of the entire intervention (and lack of response on behalf of many actors) is conducted and a system with real accountability is mounted (Buchanan-Smith & Collinson, 2002, p. 2). Globally, there have only been two impact evaluations of entire interventions conducted, one for the Rwanda genocide in 1994 and another one for the Tsunami response in 2004. There are however no means of punishing or hold stakeholders accountable for their actions. In the case of Sri Lanka the HC was not held accountable and received a comfortable position within BPRM/UNDP in Geneva after resigning. UN Member States were not at all put under scrutiny or questioned. Then again, if Sida, acting on behalf of the Swedish government, provides funding for projects in Sri Lanka which fail to meet the beforehand set target of providing protection to those most in need due to inaction on behalf of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA), why should we not at the time of assessing the result consider the totality of the response?

The issue of accountability in terms of donors is complex as there is no direct link between performance and the experience of the end-users of the assistance. Humanitarian assistance is provided in context where governance is weak and outside of official, public structures. Hence, in case of deficiencies or even abuse the beneficiaries will have very limited possibilities to complain or make use of national law enforcement mechanisms (Macrae, et al., 2002, p. 7). This is particularly alarming when it comes to abuse on behalf of aid workers; many organisations have mandatory codes of conduct but it remain unclear how these codes should be enforced. Without effective rule of law in the country where the action is undertaken it is very difficult for victims to get justice. Donors are putting increasing pressure on their partners to move forward on these issues but cannot always control the enforcement due to their national legislation. For example, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Bureau of Population Refugees and Migration (BPRM) have introduced contractual obligations for their partners to have codes of conduct against sexual exploitation and abuse but are not allowed by American legislation to review these codes of conduct.
In the case of donors there is an even greater lack of accountability to beneficiaries and questions remain regarding for what, when and how donors should be accountable. There is no quality assurance initiative or overarching body that controls funding allocation (Buchanan-Smith & Collinson, 2002, p. 3); the GHD principles are optional, not requirements and actors are not obliged to report to UN OCHA (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs). Deciding where to allocate aid is highly political and controversial; the processes are not transparent and although assistance should be purely needs based foreign policy considerations are made in many cases (Macrae, et al., 2002, p. 30). The recently published Global Humanitarian Assistance 2013 demonstrates that aid allocations are still being conducted according to colonial past (ex. France giving extensive aid to former colonies), common language (Brazil focusing on Southern Africa and East Timor where Portuguese is spoken), geographical proximity (Australia giving the bulk of its aid to countries within its own hemisphere) and media coverage (Development Initiative, 2013, p. 46). The last factor is clearly noticeable as some countries experience repeated crises and great needs yet receive very little attention and funding. Some emergencies can experience a sharp decrease in funding and media attention in a relative short amount of time. Haiti is one example of this; the amount of funding made available after the earthquake was massive but today actors have a difficult time in applying for funding and the underlying grievances are far from being adequately addressed.
Chapter 4: Clarity of objectives - Analysis of key policy documents

In this chapter relevant policy documents will be analysed in order to establish whether or not important key elements of the RBM approach can be observed. As discussed in chapter 2, RBM incorporates several key elements including identification of objectives and indicators (see p. 14-15 for a more in-depth discussion). Therefore, it is expected that these policy documents contain a description of the issue at stake, objectives and indicators to measure success. Later in chapter 5 I will investigate how the instructions set out in these policy documents are operationalized by examining work methods and data used to assess the overall results. It should be mentioned that the MFA produces numerous documents with instructions, some which might even have conflicting messages and which Sida do not apply in their overall work. I will here only consider those key documents actively utilised by HUM.

4.1 Management by Results in Swedish government

The Swedish Parliament has decided that the management and control of government agencies is to be conducted using the management by results (in other words, RBM). In line with this, explicit instructions are given through an annual regulation letters (in Swedish “Regleringsbrev”) indicating the overarching goals and financial framework for the upcoming year (Performance management at Sida, p. 4). In the case of Sida, the regulation letter is issued by the MFA and the responsible Minister of Development. In accordance with the Swedish government’s ambition to “govern by results” the instructions for each implementing agency should depart from information on results and findings from previous years. This does not imply giving direct instruction on funding allocation (Jacobsson & Sundström, 2001, p. 21). The regulation letter for the year 2013 was released on 12 December and results assessment is mentioned both in the initial list of priorities and the section on reporting demands. It is clearly stated that Sida should prioritise further improve in this area and analyse both achievements and effects in the annual report. The funds allocated to humanitarian action should in addition be used in accordance with the humanitarian strategy (Regeringen - Utrikesdepartementet, 2012, p. 7).
There is a definite ambition to govern by results and to implement the Result-Based Management approach. However, the Annual Regulation Letter is not specific enough and there is no reference to methods and tools for achieving stated intentions of governing by results. Thus, practitioners must rely greatly on the multi-year policy and strategy for guidance.

4.2 Humanitarian strategy and policy

All government agencies involved in the humanitarian sector, namely the MFA, Sida and the Swedish Body for Civil Protection and Preparadness (Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap - MSB), are subject to using the multi-year humanitarian policy. These actors all for part of the so called “Team Sweden” and have complimentary roles. Although the policy is to guide the work of all agencies it should be recalled that the Minister of Development or the MFA to dictate when, where or to whom the support should be allocated for (Mowjee & Randel, 2010, p. 82). On 13 Mars 2011 the Swedish Parliament decided to endorse a humanitarian strategy, which is based on the policy and developed in consultation with Sida to further specify the goals for funding allocation (Mowjee & Randel, 2010, p. 42). Both the humanitarian policy and strategy will be discussed together bellow.

4.2.1 Overall goal and target group

According to the humanitarian policy and the strategy the overall goal of the Swedish humanitarian assistance is:

“To save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity for the benefit of people in need” (Regeringskansliet, 2011, p. 6)

The target group for this action includes those:

“Who are, or are at risk of becoming, affected by armed conflicts, natural disasters or other disaster situations.

(Regeringskansliet, 2011, p. 6)

The policy outlines three focus areas including:

• Flexible, fast and effective humanitarian assistance to meet current and future humanitarian needs
• A strong and coordinated international humanitarian system
• Better interaction with development assistance and other forms of action and actors (Regeringskansliet, 2011, p. 7).

Based on these focus areas a humanitarian strategy has been developed incorporating eight strategic sub-goals and two perspectives. The level of assessment of these sub-goals are all either at an outcome or impact level. Thus, it is surprising to find that no adequate indicators to these sub-goals have been identified and that only a description of the aim is provided in the strategy. The practical use of these goals varies; they’re always cited in assessment memos but are seldom included in contractual agreements and some partner organisations use these goals in the narrative section of their final reports. In September-October each year, the progress and possible achievements of these goals are reported in a so called strategy report, presented by Sida and approved by the MFA. In the forthcoming section an analysis of these important sub-goals will be provided including reflections on the strategy report from 2012.

**Goal 1. Strengthen the capacity to plan and allocate resources based on humanitarian needs**

It is unclear what this first goal aim to target; is the goal to strengthen Sida’s internal capacity to allocate funds, to improve existing methods for needs assessment, to fund specific country Multi-Donor Pooled funds(MDPF) or more general capacity building within the sector. It is possible to envision different types of support ranging from geographic funding, funding to enhance capacity building within Sida’s partners and the humanitarian system as a whole or funding which form part of the methodology portfolio with support to research initiatives. If the goal is more internal to Sida it would not make sense for partners to report on this goal. It would be advisable to provide further information on the assumptions or information this goal is based upon and the causal link between the sub-goal and the overall aim of saving lives.

To understand the operationalization of the sub-goals I’ve also revised the strategy report from 2012 which include references both to the humanitarian system and Sida’s working
methods. Reference to their support to ACAPS (the Assessment Capacities Project)\(^2\), Gender Standby Capacity Project (Gen Cap), Karolinska Institute and the Food Security Needs Assessment Unit is made in the report. In this case, time might be an issue when it comes to presenting results on an impact level; it will take time before these initiatives are completely rolled out and results on the overall delivery of humanitarian assistance will be noticeable. What might have more immediate effects are Sida’s own working methods with enhanced criteria for needs assessments, dedicating the bulk of the funding to on-going crises and participation in pre-seminars to the Consolidated Appeal Processes (CAP). Sweden has pushed for the implementation of the gender marker, a new initiative included in all CAP which indicate the effects on different vulnerable groups such as women, children and elderly according to a simple scale ranging from 0 to 2. It is therefore interesting to find that Sida only supports CAP projects with a gender marker of 1 or 2. This is an example of how changed working methods at Sida can influence the system and most importantly other donors if this experience is shared more broadly at conferences or at a policy level.

### Goal 2. Strengthen the respect of International Humanitarian Law and humanitarian principles

Among the sub-goals this probably the hardest one to operationalize and identify clear indicators for which is mainly due to the nature of the international system. In times of conflict both the national government forces and the opposition should respect the International Humanitarian Law and principles. Unfortunately this is seldom the case in today’s conflicts and we must ask ourselves how the different parties can be influenced. In many cases this is more of a political question and more pressure from the international community and UN member states is needed to tackle for examples states unwillingness to guarantee the most fundamental rights to its citizens. Furthermore, this requires an overall stakeholder analysis in each specific context containing information on which party is not respecting IHL and an analysis of the best way to tackle the issue. Some of Sida’s partners have a protection mandate, the expertise and the position to engage in these issues but will not

\(^2\) A multi-year project aimed at improving the assessment of humanitarian needs in complex emergencies and crises. Conducts needs analysis and training materials
have the same leverage in each individual case. Having a strong position in Palestine is not the same as having the capacity to influence parties in Myanmar. In certain circumstances it could even be justifiable to leave the area as the intervention is fuelling the conflict, causing more harm than good in the end. There are few organisations that are open to discussing these issues and that publicly have denounced that they’re pulling out of a conflict zone based on the difficulty in maintaining the “do no harm” principle. This can partly be attributed to the fear of losing credibility and future funding (i.e. the competition within the sector) but also the difficulty in leaving people and projects behind.

This sub-goal should also be seen as part of the more general debate over what can be qualified as protection, which organisation got the mandate and which methods can be used. It would therefore also be a question of advocating for a broader definition of partner organisations’ mandate which would require having a dialogue also with the MFA as they handle the core support to UN agencies. In addition, the quality of the action must also be assessed. Refugees camps are for example are often very dangerous places where abuse and other crimes can take place. Two clear examples of this is the shelter situation in Haiti and the in Kenya in the Dadaab camps. When can we really say that those most in need are really “protected”?

**Goal 3. Strengthen humanitarian coordination and leadership in the field**

Once again there is a problem of definition as coordination is a widely used term yet it remains to specify what sort of activities can receive funding and which partners. If one interprets the term narrowly one might argue that the bulk of the support to coordination should go to UN OCHA’s (United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) activities as this is the only UN agency with a clear mandate to coordinate humanitarian actors and possible support Global Cluster Leads. To others the picture is far more complex as also other actors must bear the costs of increased coordination and cooperation between agencies. Some organisations might claim it to be unfair that smaller NGOs do not get adequate support to participate in meetings and gather information whilst larger UN agencies can rely on their core funding. There is a competition over funding in the field and if no incentives to participate in coordination are made many organisations will use their limited resources and time to other activities. This can also relate to the overall credibility of the UN; how many
times haven’t we heard field based staff from NGOs making fun of UN staff sitting in their nicely air-conditioned offices whilst they’re out doing “the real work”? Reading the strategy report it becomes apparent that also Sida staff are asking the same questions and that Sida is considering funding co-cluster leads in the future.

**Goal 4. Professionalization of humanitarian actors**

The professionalization of the sector has been an on-going process for the last decades in response to increased pressure to perform better with limited resources. It would be virtually impossible to establish any clear-cut indicators to measure this sub-goal. It is also clear that these more capacity building goals are not to be directly applicable to the core work at the humanitarian unit; the funding of emergencies and protracted crises. Surely, by only channelling their funds through well-established humanitarian partners and pressure these to constantly improve their business one might argue that Sida is contributing towards this goal. However, this would not form part of the main logic for deciding to fund the action and thus, this sub-goal seems more directed towards capacity building and training. In the strategy report it becomes apparent that this is not the most cited sub-goal and reference is made to new working methods within the unit and ATHA (Advanced Training programmes on Humanitarian Action) courses. The distinction between this sub-goal and sub-goal number one is not exactly clear; both concern capacity building and supporting different learning or enhancement initiatives.

**Goal 5. Predictable, fast and flexible allocations of funds to partner organisations**

This sub-goal is more directed towards Sida’s internal working methods such as using benchmarks or adequate indicators for the allocation of funds. Although an important aspect to increase the transparency of the Swedish humanitarian assistance it does not relate to the actions undertaken by Sida’s partners or in other words, the actual projects that Sida funds. The action which can relate to this sub-goal is the funding of pooled funds which are supposed to provide fast and flexible funding based on real needs. Once again, it becomes striking that the goals in the strategy are envisaged for many different actions and scenarios.
which all in the end should ensure the effective saving of lives. Nevertheless, there no clear guidance on determining the target action for each sub-goal is provided or specification of the analysis upon which the causal links between more predictable funding has been made.

---

**Goal 6. Strengthen national and local capacity to meet humanitarian needs**

It can appear difficult to strengthen the national capacity to meet humanitarian needs when the Swedish humanitarian assistance is not meant for state actors, based on the argument that it allocates funds to areas where the state is unable or unwilling to supply its population with fundamental assistance. The alternative would be to support other agencies which are involved in supporting national initiatives. Local capacity should therefore be easier to support in theory but in practice it can be difficult to find suitable projects that work directly with capacity building or coping mechanisms of a local community, often it requires that the organisation is open to use innovative methods or engage more directly with the affected population in the design, implementation and follow-up. One could also envision that donors advocate for a greater portion of pooled funds being allocated to local NGOs.

---

**Goal 7. Increased participation of affected population**

This goal is also closely interlinked with sub-goal number 6 and relates more to the working methods of Sida’s partners. There are several constraints towards increased participation of affected population and it is therefore important to create incentives to change existing working methods. One important aspect is that this would be easier to achieve in an environment which is marked by mutual trust and learning, not that of agencies competing to get funding and fight to be accountable to its donors. By further engage in the so called partnership process Sida may lay the foundation for such a relationship which would increase partners’ willingness to become more innovative and engage more actively with the affected
population. Another method would be to systematically collect feedback from beneficiaries in evaluations.

**Goal 8. Increased quality, learning and innovation in humanitarian aid**

This sub-goal can either relate to all Sida’s interventions in terms of quality assurance and the dialogue with partners on improving and using new working methods. However, it can also be interpreted more narrowly and relate to specific pilot projects aimed at innovation or learning. As with many of the other sub-goals it is not defined which agency should be subject to the realisation of this sub-goal and the use of the term “in humanitarian aid” gives little guidance. Furthermore, it can be somewhat unclear when to apply this sub-goal and goal number 4 relating to the overall professionalization of the sector. Increased quality, learning and innovation can be one way to achieve the aim of professionalizing humanitarian actors.

In sum, it has been demonstrated in the analysis above several clarifications are needed and these policy documents only partly fulfil the requirements laid out within the RBM approach. One main flaw is that there are no accompanying indicators to the goals set out in the strategy; how can we assess the results adequately if we do not have the data to compare over time? This is a main challenge within the humanitarian system as data is often lacking, changes occur very quickly and it is almost impossible to attribute overarching changes at a country or system level to individual projects. Therefore the fact that the sub-goals in the strategy are mainly on a system level it will inevitably be problematic in the process to make credible assessment of impact. This is especially troublesome as stakeholders do not strive towards the same goals; some might even have an interest in the continuation of an emergency and others will have completely different focus than HUM. Maybe the humanitarian sector would need something similar to the Millennium goals in combination with reliable performance monitoring.
Chapter 5: Measuring Performance throughout the contribution cycle

This section aims at describing the work methods used and how the work is structured to gain a better understanding of its compliance with the RBM approach. The annual work cycle, legal and financial regulations as well as the elaboration of the annual report will be discussed first. The findings from the study based on reports from partners will be presented and problematized. The annex includes data from this study which looked at the quality of the reports submitted and level of analysis provided.

5.1 Work methods and operational aspects

Overview of Sida’s humanitarian assistance

Sweden has since 2005 increased its humanitarian funding by 51%, from 3.3 billion SEK to 5 billion in 2012, making Sweden the third biggest bilateral donor in the world in 2012. Out of these 5 billion SEK almost 40% are un-earmarked core support to multilateral organisations from the MFA and 16% are channelled through joint humanitarian financing. In the end, Sida manages roughly 45% of the total humanitarian support which is to be allocated to International Organisations and NGOs (Sida, 2013). The largest recipient countries are the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Sahel region, South Sudan, Sudan, Somalia, Palestine, Myanmar and Syria. There is no specific sectorial focus but the biggest sectors include multi-sectorial support to refugees, coordination, health and food security (Mowjee & Randel, 2010).

Work methods at HUM

HUM restructured its work five years ago which included a re-shuffling of the portfolios. Previously, one program officer was in charge of all the contracts within one country or region. The current system is that of appointing a focal point per partner who will handle all the projects with that organisation, which has also led to the application of so-called program funding which can stretch over one up till three years. The advantage is a good knowledge of the organisation and possibility of having more structured dialogues with the different partners. The work at the humanitarian unit follows a cyclical schedule over the year. The release of the Consolidated Appeal Processes in the beginning on December marks the start of a period of 4 months when the bulk of funding available in the yearly budget is to be
dispersed as part of Sida’s commitments to the principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship and in accordance to one of the sub-goals. During this period there is little time left to follow-up on projects and this is often put off until the end of the summer holidays. The monitoring system throughout the duration of a contribution includes Results Assessment Framework (RAF) (being submitted mid-term or once a year in case of multi-year funding), field visits, continued dialogue with partners and the final report. Although projects should be monitored throughout their implementation this is often not done in a structured manner during the first months of its lifespan due to time constraints. Looking at the lifespan of one project or program, the contract may be signed in spring-time, the RAF submitted in autumn and the project is finally conclude at the end of the year. Once concluded the partners got six months to submit the final reports and it is only once all of the reporting requirement have been fulfilled that the contribution can be closed in Sida’s internal contribution system. This implies that it can take a long time from the end of the project until the results are analysed. The tight time frames leaves a risk of creating a backlog which means that some projects will not be assessed in due time. Sometimes it will be assessed by a new programme officer who does not have previous knowledge about the project and thus needs to read up on an extensive body of documents. It is still too early to predict the long-term effects of the above mentioned trends but the literature predicts a clear risk of the process of following-up and conclude a project becoming another administrative task, a check-list to tick before moving on to more exciting tasks. This would create so called perverse incentives to result management and learning.

Other factors which may also affect incentives are the operational systems, administration as well as financial and legal regulations. In November 2012 a new contribution system was introduced for all departments at Sida with some minor adaptations for the humanitarian unit. However, desk officer still have to operate in a system which has not been designed for humanitarian work, a difficulty in itself as key questions and work methods might vary between the sectors. There is also an overall trend of putting additional administrative tasks on programme officer with the new registration system and staff cuttings at the archive unit. It may be difficult to assess the extent to which the financial and legal regulations contribute to negative incentives to learning. However, in comparison with other donors HUM is considered a rather flexible donor and partners do not perceive the regulations as complex as for example the Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) put in place by the European
Commission. In the case of the later, NGOs are often forced to create positions dealing exclusively with contracts with the Commission.

Interestingly, there is a great difference between the work prior to a funding decisions and results assessments. A funding decision is never taken in solitude; although one programme officer elaborates the assessment memo the decisions are always taken the involvement of at least three persons. If it concerns a new funding decision it is common to present this in front of a committee which discuss the project in detail. This is useful not only for detecting inconsistencies but also for individual’s personal development and commitment. By discussing the project with another team member different aspects are brought up and give food for thought in the process. In case of an application to make use of funds within the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) the funding decision is taken between the officer with the geographical responsibility and the organisational focal point. As noted in the external evaluation the sub-goals are always cited in the assessment memos but without indicators on how the goals should be achieved. It can therefore be difficult closing the contribution to estimate the fulfilment of the sub-goals or impact. Nonetheless, it is still possible to make an assessment of the projects results on other levels and extract knowledge about the organisation’s performance; judgements can also be made based on what is missing in the final reports such as for example logic chain between the objectives and the final results.

On the contrary, the process of analysing the results it is almost always a solitary task performed by the focal point. There are several opportunities to raise ones concerns; on a weekly basis there are meetings in the so called Civil Society Group and the Multilateral Group in which staff can discuss their work in addition to meetings involving the entire unit. Hence, there are well-established forums for raising issues and concerns but no individual session during which results of one project is discussed. These forums exist within Sida and therefore there is a risk that learning is not shared with other agencies, most notably the MFA. There are coordination and information sharing meetings, called Hum-Sam, between Sida and the MFA. The question is whether there is enough trust between the parties to permit a full-hearted exchange of lessons learnt, including failures. There are also times when more extensive information is needed such as the humanitarian situation in a specific country and explicit information about the Swedish funding.
5.2 Annual report

In September to October the annual report is elaborated in which an analysis of the progress towards the realization of the strategy is made. This report consists of an overall analysis with illustrating examples at project or organisational level. One of the main issues with the annual reports is that there is no clear methodology laid out for how it should be produced. Each unit have their own work methods for produce this report and at HUM this is mainly done by engaging one or a few co-workers to assess progress so far. The absence of indicators, especially in view of the level of abstraction being very high with individual projects used to exemplify progress on system and country level is another compromising factor. Is it for example enough to state that Sida has actively supported increased respect of IHL simply by providing the support to ICRC as an example? One of the reasons why this exercise does not benefit from more scientific methods is the exertion it takes to track exactly which contributions are aimed at influencing which target due to outdated software programs used; contributions are mostly marked as “humanitarian assistance – mixed sectors”. This process could be facilitated by categorizing the humanitarian support into sub-categorises based on clear guidelines of what each category could entail. HUM is for example a strong supporter of coordination activities in the field and with better tracking of the allocations; what kind of activities and which implementing partners it will be easier to attribute changes and identify best practise. Nevertheless, it will always be hard for HUM to process all of the data needed to demonstrate results on a country, regional or system level. Thus, a discussion on what ambitions Sida should have with their humanitarian assistance could be envisioned.

5.3 Attribution and quality of available data

Selection of projects

Ten projects were randomly selected out of a list of the out of a list of funding decisions from openaid.se which had benefitted from more than five million Swedish crowns in funding, this to capture the biggest actors that can have an impact on the well-being of the target population but also because the humanitarian unit seldom fund smaller projects unless part of a Rapid Response Mechanism which thus would form part of a larger humanitarian programme. Out of these ten projects a final selection of five projects was made; some projects were discarded as they turned out to be development projects and one was classified due to its sensitive
content. In the end, the final selection of projects is representative to the funding decisions for the Democratic Republic of Congo. The projects under review are implemented by INGOs and UN agencies, including one pooled fund report. Here, issues with these reports will be identified and discussed. For a full description of the projects selected, see annex 1.

Results in reports and goal fulfilment

It is apparent that further dialogue on which goals can correspond to the individual organisation is needed, for example the sub-goal number five would mostly be relevant for pooled funds and not NGOs. Furthermore, it would be unrealistic to expect one single organisation to be capable of fulfilling all the sub-goals as this would depend on their mandate, overall profile and work methods. Some of the sub-goals cannot be directly linked to the actual interventions. However, this does by no means indicate that the findings are not relevant for Sida; it would for example be just as important to know that it is supporting an organisation which is actively involved in coordination mechanisms regardless if it can be linked to specific Swedish funding. This initiative to report directly on the humanitarian strategy resurged a few years ago and has been tested on a few partners. This example illustrate how Sida can obtain more information on their partners such as IHL training for staff, cooperation with other stakeholders, work methods, and relationship with local authorities. With regards to the sub-goals which cannot be directly linked to a particular Sida funded intervention it might be questionable as to how much will change over two years; the application of Codes of Conduct and other contractual agreements will for example not change significantly over such a limited time period and the programme officer will most probably already have this information.

Lack of pre-existing data and needs assessments

The overall lack of baselines to justify interventions and credible indicators to measure results remain a big challenge for humanitarians. However, in protracted emergencies such as the DRC where humanitarian actors operate for years one might question this lack of data. If actors are operating in the same area for a longer period of time there should be possible to perform some form of pre-studies. The challenge of repeated displacement would be one impediment but as discussed in the literature section, there are means of establishing retroactive baselines by interviewing beneficiaries and/or compare with new arrivals. Within
the health sector this might be easier to achieve as there is a direct linkage between certain outputs and outcomes. For example the number of measles vaccinations would have a direct impact on the number of children infected and possibly the mortality rates, given that the effects cannot be attributed to other factors.

**Difference between Bilateral and Multilateral support**

Reports from UN agencies are different from the ones coming from NGOs and other partners for numerous reasons. First of all, it is very seldom that UN agencies report on a specific project. Instead, there is a general report sent to all donors on the activities the agencies have performed in one country during one calendar year. It is therefore difficult to conclude exactly where the money from the Swedish contribution went to and the results that can be attributed. Secondly, the reports are often on an output level, listing the number of beneficiaries and assistance delivered. In the portfolio analysis the issue of assessing results from the multilateral support (UN agencies and pooled funds which are managed by UNDP/OCHA) is brought up. This is a problem for many donors as it is difficult to track the results from a particular funding contribution and the data in the final reports are on an output level. The use of a so called scorecard is prosed in which Sida’s percentage of the total funding to the agency is used to calculate how much assistance has been provided using Swedish money. (Mowjee & Poole, 2013, p. 20). By calculating the percentage of money which came from a certain source it is later calculated how many beneficiaries where reached. For example, if the Swedish contribution makes up 15% of one UN agency total funding in one country then 15% of the beneficiaries have benefitted from the funds coming from Sweden. However, this will not tell us anything about the quality or the effectiveness of the intervention. Comparisons with previous years can be made but without additional information it would be difficult to draw any concrete conclusions.

The reporting from pooled funds regardless if it concerns the Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF), Emergency Response Fund (ERF) or CERF (Central Emergency Response Fund), can be problematic due to different conceptions of success; whilst donors want to know if the projects have addressed the needs of the population the agency managing the fund consider rapid disbursement of money and flexibility key indicators for success. Nevertheless, it is possible for programme officers to analyse the overall effects on the humanitarian system in
DRC, considering that the fund represent 17.5% of the entire funding available and the role of the humanitarian coordinator in the allocation. This can be directly related to sub-goal number 3 concerning the strengthening of humanitarian coordination and leadership in the field. The fulfilment of this sub-goal cannot be measured using quantifiable indicators, only by plausible attribution.
Chapter 6: Analysis and discussion

Reverting back to the initial discussion on what Result-Based Management constitutes some key aspects emerged (see p. 13):

- Identification of objectives and indicators
- Monitoring system
- Comparisons between actual results and intended targets
- Performance information, used for accountability, learning and decision-making processes
- Organisational culture.

In the following chapter an analysis of HUM compliance with RBM based on the key aspects above and the two objectives, learning and accountability will be provided.

Objectives, indicators and learning

On the identification of objectives and indicators it became clear in chapter four that the objectives or goals were not well defined. The goals stated are formulated on a system level and in the assessment memos there is no mandatory section to break-down the general goals into measurable sub-goals. Therefore, it is difficult to identify indicators and establish a causal link between the action and any possible results. In this aspect HUM does not appear to be working in line with the RBM module. In order to amend this we would either need to change the objectives to a different level of analysis from the general system level to a country or agency level or break down the goals into measurable sub-goals. For the same reason, the annual report is not a learning exercise to the extent it could be.

In RBM there were two, sometimes conflicting, objectives namely accountability and learning. However, there are different forms of learning and knowledge one can cumulate in a donor agency. HUM’s comparative advantage lays in its flexible organisation and the system with focal points. The accumulated knowledge with the former is not easily measurable but does enable HUM to engage in a more structural dialogue with partners knowing their
strengths, limitations and previous performance. This is a way to avoid funding partners which are not performing in a particular setting or don’t have the capacity to scale up their operations. With the previous system HUM would base its funding decisions mainly on the geographical analysis, which regardless of system will be somewhat limited since the program officers are situated at capital level, and not on an assessment of the partner. The somewhat limited geographical analysis due to the geographical distance between decision-makers and the action as well as limitations in time, is one short-coming with the current system. In combination with the limited exchange of information on geographical issues between HUM and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs it is difficult for Sida to take upon an advocacy role and raise issues at a higher political level. The fulfilment of some of the goals, such as improving the humanitarian system and improve humanitarian coordination, depend not only on HUM but other parts of “team Sweden”, which includes Sida, the MFA and MSB. Sometimes it is necessary to bring up in particularly systemic issues beyond working levels which is not done today. At the same time it can be considered an advantage since Hum is not being influenced by a political agenda and or forced to compromise on the fundamental humanitarian principles such as independency and neutrality.

**Accountability**

The overall objectives for HUM are clearly defined as saving lives and restoring dignity. Nevertheless, it is not always possible to adequately analyse the overall outcomes of the humanitarian assistance in a climate where governments are under pressure to demonstrate exactly where the tax payers’ money has been used for; it is easier to present overwhelming figures of the number of people reached by humanitarian aid then to engage in discussions of long-term impact on end-users. There is also a difference in how stakeholders understand the concept of accountability. Accountability could for example for some signify knowing exactly what the money has been spent on such as the number of mosquito nets and supplementary feedings. Others might be more interested in the overall quality of the action and the outcomes of the intervention. There is also tension between accountability to donors and to affected population which might imply asking different questions. It is a real challenge to satisfy these diverse, and sometimes even conflicting, calls for accountability.

Accountability is a problem within the sector in general and in particular when it comes to accountability to affected population. This is one major issue with applying the RBM module.
to the humanitarian sector; the RBM module was designed for corporate companies with a tangible product and target clientele. A company would receive feed-back from its customer, either directly through complaints or surveys, or indirectly by a drop in sales. This is not the case within the humanitarian sector; it is difficult to get feed-back from the end-users. There are numerous reasons for this: the end-user is not aware of its rights, it is not culturally accepted to complain when provided something for free, there is no complaints mechanism in place and the personnel at the front-line do not communicate any complaints as this may signify a drop in funding or a loss of employment. There is no independent and overarching body that register reports of under-performance or abuse. Clearly a systemic issue it is difficult for HUM as a single actor to come to terms with the poor connexion with the end-user and the lack of incentives for partners to deal with the issue of accountability in the field. One part of this is to strengthen and improve the different parts of the appeal process with more robust assessments (including consulting the beneficiaries), analysis, programing, implementation and evaluation. Another is to improve the working relationship between the donor and the implementing partner, promoting shared accountability. If both parties feel a shared responsibility for the action and take action to establish a working relationship based on trust and openness it would be possible to address the issue of lack of incentives to report back issues and challenges to donors. Trust can only be established over time and require a change in mind-set from the continued competition between organisations for funding. Interestingly enough, learning is also based on trust and forging good working relations of time. The question is if we put more emphasis on accountability to tax-payers and control mechanisms or on accountability to the end-user.

The reporting from partners showed that it can be possible to gather relevant data in certain circumstances but that performance measuring tools such as the log frame and RAF limits the analysis, leading to most results being presented on an output level. In protracted situations such as the Democratic Republic of Congo the working conditions can be extremely challenging but we should also keep in mind that many organisations remain in the same area for decades. More long-term strategic planning and appropriate data collection should not be impossible for many of these agencies. Yet there are few real incentives to conduct these studies in the current working climate. Humanitarian workers are often under a great deal of pressure in the field and the increased reporting demand presents an additional burden. There is also the moral concern of devoting valuable time to gathering information instead of
assisting those most in need. In these circumstances donors might have to create incentives for data collection which could also be motivated by the goal of professionalizing the sector. Moreover, donors should also recognize that the individual organisation form part of a web of interconnected stakeholders; as such, agencies should work together on the issue of accountability and impact assessment.

Measuring results and impact

It is needless to say that it is extremely difficult to assess relevance and effectiveness if results are only provided on an output level. However, indirect impact is often forgotten within results assessments as it does not form part of the log frame. In the reports it became apparent that the existing project management tools such as the log frame and the results assessment framework influence the type of results presented. They can definitely be very useful to establish causal attribution and pin point the chain of logic. However, we should also be aware of their limitations and try to find additional ways of measuring our results. Sida, in accordance with its commitments to the principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD), accepts the reporting modalities of their partners. This does not mean that Sida can’t question and as part of its overall dialogue with partners discuss what sort of information is provided and what might be missing. The humanitarian unit on its own is probably not in the best position to assess the overall social impact of the interventions due to important constraints such as limited travel budgets, huge work load and limitations in reporting from partners. Nevertheless, there is an apparent interest to address these issues within the unit and plausible attributions can be made by triangulating data. One way to deal with these issues would be to have the organisational focal point and the geographical desk working together on the results assessments whenever possible.

Whilst reviewing the reports from partners the great difference between reporting form NGOs and UN agencies emerged. Assessing the performance of multilateral organisations can be difficult based only on the reports submitted which often lack an analytical approach and specific information about the projects. In these circumstances it might be appealing to publicly announce that one’s contribution have led to x number of people in need receiving food packages to the general public. A scorecard may provide good information on an output level which will serve to assess the efficiency of the organisation but these figures alone do
not tell us much about the quality of the action and the overall impact of the intervention. To assess the overall performance there might be a need to look beyond the final report and make use of information about the overall humanitarian situation where the agency is operating. UN agencies are capable of absorbing large donations to either implement programs themselves or contract NGOs. Thus, they can be very affluent within the sectors and have ample leverage. As demonstrated in previous chapters there is a multitude of actors influencing the affected population in times of emergency. Some have greater leverage than other such as the Government, the party controlling the area, social groups and affluent international agencies such as the UN. There should therefore be possible to analyse their contribution to any improvements in the overall humanitarian system. If we know that one UN agency absorbs 50% of all the funding within one sector and there are little change on the ground at the end of the year donors should be able to question this. This knowledge gap could be partly shrunk if the assessment is done in cooperation with the geographical desk which should have more information on the overall state of play in the country and even agencies’ performance. In other words, one possible way of solving the problem with analysis results of multilateral organisations would be to adopt different routines for these organisations.

Decision-making utility

As previously discussed, learning does not only refer to gaining more knowledge about best practices and partners’ capacities but more importantly the utilisation of knowledge. A learning organisation can make use of different forms of knowledge in decision-making. When it comes to HUM decision-making correspond to funding decisions, thematic policies and the political dialogue. The possibility of feeding back findings and knowledge generated during the course of the projects is limited; it is mainly used to inform future funding decisions of the same organisation. A lot of information is being lost and not used to its full potential due to short time frames or officers not cooperating in assessing results. Currently, programme officers are very knowledgeable about their organisations but information on the humanitarian situation may not be considered a priority.
Chapter 7: Conclusions

In this section I will attempt to answer the initial research question: to what extent is HUM applying the Results-Based Management (RBM) approach and what specific challenges does a humanitarian donor face in measuring results? Breaking down the RBM approach into a few key aspects it became clear that HUM is not working in accordance with RBM in terms of identification of objectives and indicators. Within each individual project or program there are specific indicators but these are not related to the HUM’s internal goals. This is partly due to the formulation of the strategy which includes goals on a system level which is difficult to translate into country or agency specific goals. In addition, there is the inherent difficulty in assessing the impact of one organisation in an environment with actors and external factors that might play an important role in the final outcome. In order to improve in this aspect it would be necessary to translate the overall goals into country (or local in the case of DRC) specific goals. It becomes difficult to measure progress over time and make comparisons between the actual results and intended target, an exercise which ideally would take place in the elaboration of the annual report. Despite these short-comings it was found that lessons learnt were fed into the decision-making process, another aspect of the RBM approach. The program officers at HUM do attain a great deal of knowledge about the partner organisations and are able to feed this into funding decisions. This would include information about working methods, internal organisation, overall capacity, weaknesses and staff policy which combined will influence the success of the project. There are also sub-sectors which cannot be easily translated into measurable indicators such as protection and coordination. For example, the success of a protection intervention may very well be the prevention of atrocities and how can we measure something that did not occur? We might have to accept that not all aspects of humanitarian work can be narrowed down to measurable indicators and that these actions still might generate positive results.

In terms of monitoring system some weaknesses were observed since the projects are not monitored throughout the entire project cycle and the budget constraints which impede program officer from visiting the projects. What also emerged from the analysis is that the purpose of the monitoring system should be clearly stipulated; should it be used as a control mechanism solely or learning? In the literature this is often brought forward as a divide
between the two objectives of RBM, learning and accountability. However, as this paper has demonstrated, we need to separate up-ward accountability to tax-payers and down-ward accountability to the end-users. The latter is a systemic issue for the entire sector that would require a change in mind-set and fundamental changes in the current modus operandi. One important part of this work is to allow a greater information flow between field-workers, the focal points of the respective organisations and the donors. This can only be done if you manage to establish good working relations based on mutual trust and a sense of shared accountability. Time for learning within the thematic, geographical and organisational responsibilities of program officers is necessary and should translate into structural dialogues with partners. There is an increasing competition for funding amongst a growing number of actors and thus the work methods used by a humanitarian donor should also aim at overcoming the negative impacts of such a situation. Future research should look at the factors influencing the relationship between donor and its partners to inform any structural reforms within the sector.

The RBM approach is widely accepted yet it is important to remember that this is fundamentally a theory that emerged within the new Public Management paradigm and draws lessons learnt from the corporate world, it has not been designed for or take into consideration the humanitarian context. Just like we have come to question economic theories which were taken as given in the past we must also question the RBM approach and its applicability. One major difference between humanitarian action and the corporate world is the relationship with the end-user, whilst a company might get direct or indirect feed-back from its clients through a drop in sales the end-users of humanitarian assistance cannot do the same. Another important difference is the operational environment, the number of factors influencing the end-result and the difficulty in finding measurable indicators for all types of actions. It is therefore not enviable to apply the RBM approach fully and instead, there should be further research into how to achieve the same objectives, using performance information in decision-making, enable learning and fulfil accountability requirements within the humanitarian sector.

In the end, the questions of what sort of result can we expect from a single action and from Sida as a humanitarian donor with limited field presence remains. Performance monitoring will never be perfect when the action takes place on a different continent with limited information being transmitted. It has been demonstrated here that a good report from an NGO
will give results on both output and outcome, the tricky issue is how to assess the results of multilateral organisations and pooled fund. Sida is currently working on establishing methods for measuring results in these circumstances using tools such as scorecards etc. It is important not to lose focus on the quality of the action when introducing these methods and use them as tools together with complementary information. It is when we can guarantee relevant and effective responses to real humanitarian needs that we with confidence can talk about the fulfilment of the overall aim; to save lives and warrant human dignity.
Bibliography


Anon., 2013. *Omvärlden*.


Jensen, M., 2012. Securing Value for Money: A Results Focus for Danish Development Aid?. NORRAG NEWS, Value for Money in International Education: A New World of Results, Impacts and Outcomes, pp. April, No. 47.


King, n.d.


Mango, n.d. [Online]
Available at: http://www.mango.org.uk/Guide/WhyRBMnotWork
[Accessed 28 April 2013].


Annex 1 – Description and assessment of final reports submitted to HUM

Report 1

Type of contract: Framework agreement
Implementing partner: NGO
Funding period: 2 years
Sub-sector: Multi-sectorial with protection and livelihood components
Target population: IDPs, returnees and vulnerable population
Area: Orient-Provençale

The first report form part of a larger framework agreement between the Implementing Partner and the Humanitarian Unit. As such, the overall report includes actions in eleven countries and capacity-building at HQ over the duration of two year. The narrative section, which covers the entire humanitarian programme and not just the project in the DR Congo, includes a segment where the organisation analyses the extent to which the program have contributed to the fulfilment of Sida’s strategy and the eight sub-goals.

The specific section on the project in the DRC consists of a Results Assessment Framework (RAF) and a general reporting on results part. The results included in the RAF is as expected all on output level with total number of individuals benefiting from the activities and number of Non Food Items (NFI). A couple of results are presented on an outcome level but these are all health related and can be directly linked to an output. The link between the objectives, activities, indicators and results are not always clear which affects the likelihood to attribute an outcome to the project. In the general reporting on results outcome is included as an individual headline but there are no results on outcome level mentioned. Instead, the same results on an output level is cited which makes it difficult to assess the effectiveness of the action or the impact on the target population. The poor logic chain indicates that the project was not effective in reaching the overall objective with the intervention, yet it can still have had a positive impact on the beneficiaries which is not captured in the reporting.
Report 2

**Type of contract:** Individual project  
**Implementing partner:** NGO  
**Funding period:** 2 years  
**Sub-sector:** WASH and health  
**Target population:** IDPs  
**Area:** North Kivu

This report make clear reference to an initial needs assessment and can therefore present outcome and impact indicators to compare with. One positive aspect included in the report is the section on lessons learnt which demonstrates a learning organisation for donors but will also contribute to a better understanding of the actions within the NGO. In sum, this report successfully provides the reader with results on an outcome level but the influence of a log frame is also apparent. Some results are cited on an output level in relation to the activities. An assessment of the impact would require a more extensive analysis or a follow-up study/evaluation after the completion of the action.

Report 3

**Type of contract:** Earmarked (to specific country, not sector) funding, multilateral  
**Implementing partner:** UN agency  
**Funding period:** 1 year  
**Sub-sector:** Multi-sectorial, including WASH, protection and health components  
**Target population:** vulnerable population and IDPs  
**Area:** Eastern part of Congo (no further specification provided)

Although difficult to assess the exact result merging from the Swedish contribution the report does provide crucial information on the nature of the programmes, the agencies partners and
involvement within the humanitarian system. The statements in the report would of course have to be verified by other sources but as a general rule if the agency is participating in for example coordination mechanism it will make sure to inform its donors about it in the final report. This would be informative for programme officers as some of Sida’s sub-goals aim at addressing issues with the humanitarian system and thus, Sida wants to ensure that their partners act accordingly.

Report 4

**Type of contract:** Individual project, partner organisation

**Funding period:** 1 year

**Sub-sector:** Education

**Target population:** Children, returnees and IDPs

**Area:** Sud-Kivu

The narrative section of this report provides a good background on needs and intervention strategy. Needs assessments are not always adjoin to funding requests and a recapitulation of the original analysis is instructive. A clear causal link can be found and the NGO is surprisingly open-hearted on constraints and sustainability of the project in the reporting. Despite these positive remarks the actual results are almost exclusively on an output level with number of beneficiaries, number of schools rehabilitated, training sessions and school kits disbursed. However, by using all the information jointly it is possible for programme officers to assess the performance of the partner. In order to assess the outcome of the action it would be enviable to make use of an external evaluation, including factors such as the quality of teaching, the number of drop-outs and why some children stopped attending the school.

Report 5

**Type of contract:** Multilateral funding, pooled fund

**Implementing partner:** UN agency
Sub-sector: -

Target population: -

Area: Entire country, mostly Eastern parts

The main focus of this extensive report (100 pages) is the management and mechanisms to run the fund. On a positive note, the report is surprisingly analytical in its approach and includes difficulties in the management of the fund. This can sometimes be sensitive for UN agencies to explore in a final report since these are made public and might influence their chances of fundraising with other donors. The information provided in this report also gives donors which are not present in the country insights to the overall functioning of the humanitarian system in the DRC such as the cluster system and the work of Cluster Leads (although no details on individual agencies are provided).

In the second part of the report information and data of the projects submitted by implementing partners in final reports are displaced in “info-maps”. These figures are all quantitative, providing either figures of the needs or the outputs provided to address these needs. Thus, it is virtually impossible for donors to assess the impact of these projects.