

The Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis (EMMA) Review – A Summary

February 2012

Review carried out by Jude Powell, Summary compiled by Carol Brady.

In recent years, international humanitarian agencies have been re-examining their responses to emergencies. Globally, most organisations now recognise the centrality of markets in sustaining people's lives and livelihoods. However, there has also been a subsequent realization that unless emergency responses (both cash and in-kind) are designed with a good understanding of key markets, they may inadvertently damage livelihoods, jobs and businesses, thus undermining livelihood rehabilitation, foregoing opportunities to lay the foundations for early recovery and development interventions, and prolonging dependence on outside assistance.

EMMA helps front-line staff to both understand the important market aspects of an emergency situation that may not otherwise be considered adequately or early enough; and communicate this knowledge promptly and effectively into programme decision-making processes.

(The Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis Toolkit pg. 5)

Developed for non market specialists, the EMMA toolkit was designed¹ to be used in sudden onset crises and has the concept of rapid and realistic, 'good enough' analysis at its core. Using a combination of existing tools, from seasonal calendars to market systems maps, the EMMA combines gap analysis (people's uncovered needs) and market system analysis (markets' core value chain, infrastructures and supporting services, and markets' environment and rules) to offer a systemic and comprehensive understanding of the constraints and capacity of critical market systems. Based on this analysis, EMMA offers a series of response recommendations that detail how far the critical markets analysed can help deliver humanitarian assistance, which areas of the market may need additional support in this aid delivery and can further suggest ways in which interventions may strengthen the market systems in the longer term.

The toolkit was published at the beginning of 2010 as a result of a consultative process combined with four pilots in the field. Since the completion of the toolkit in 2009, 15 EMMA field assessments have taken place in different parts of the world and in different emergency contexts. More than 350 practitioners and decisions makers have been trained around the world.

In order to refine the future priorities and strategy for the development and dissemination of the EMMA toolkit, to account for the large investment in the EMMA process and to further measure the impact of the EMMA toolkit on emergency work, an external review of the EMMA work was carried out in October – November 2011. This work, combining a desk-based review with a survey monkey and interviews with key stakeholders, also aimed at capitalising lessons learnt and best practices to advise future field exercises as well as capacity building initiatives.

This paper aims to summarise the key findings of the EMMA review. The full in-depth review, which offers more detail and graphs, is available upon request to Emily Henderson (Ehenderson@oxfam.org.uk) and Philippa Young (PYoung@Oxfam.org.uk).

¹ The EMMA toolkit was developed by the International Rescue Committee UK (IRC), Oxfam GB (OGB) and Practical Action, in consultation with many other international organisations.

The findings from the review revealed a number of key points:

- The EMMA met its intended objective, in that, in rapid responses, and when designed well, it has provided timely, clear and effective market information. This has enabled the design of a broad and well informed range of interventions, both in-kind and cash, as well as market support activities.
- The EMMA has exceeded its original objective, in that the toolkit's logic has proved to be appropriate, useable and useful in different contexts (other than just rapid onset).
- The EMMA is a very flexible tool that can be light, rapid and resource limited according to need.
- In a number of areas, where the EMMA has been cumbersome or has not performed as expected, this has predominantly arisen from the way in which it has been managed or conceived, or the expectations that have been attached to it.

Key Findings – Strengths

One of the key achievements of EMMA so far has been its ability to contribute to the changing mindset of INGO and NGO staff and managers, of donors and of UN agencies, in terms of both understanding the critical need to undertake market analysis in emergencies and in giving credence to alternative response options. Donors and humanitarian agencies alike have expressed a clear interest in the EMMA toolkit, realising its potential, its relative ease and its importance, through funding for EMMA assessments and increasingly use of the toolkit as part of situation analysis.

Of primary importance, respondents in this EMMA review restated the need for the development of the EMMA and the niche that it occupies, due to the gap in emergency tools that had sufficient and appropriate market analysis. The unique structure of EMMA, which combines market analysis, gap analysis and response analysis, enables the assessment team to form clear, direct and tailored response recommendations in emergencies. In this sense, the EMMA toolkit has fulfilled its objective. The review established that the majority of people asked found that the toolkit was easy to use, helpfully created and provided visually stimulating market information (the market maps) and was, crucially, adaptable to different contexts.

The EMMA toolkit was designed to be used in contexts when the situations have begun to stabilise (approximately 3 to 4 weeks after the shock), and 50% of respondents had carried out EMMA assessments in this time period. However, the EMMA's have proved to be flexible in terms of when they have been carried out. The EMMA toolkit has been used in **rapid onset** (for example Haiti's earthquake response and the Abyei refugee crisis in South Sudan), **slow onset** (for example Liberia's influx of refugees from Côte D'Ivoire and Chad's livelihood crisis) and, more recently, as part of **preparedness** (Philippines and Cambodia). Indeed, 80% of those surveyed were happy with the timings of their assessments. Moreover, with good planning, the EMMA process could use fairly minimal financial and human resources.

The EMMA toolkit quickly provides front line staff, with relatively little market experience, with relevant market information which can then be used to produce appropriate and informed response options. Timely EMMA assessments and reports have directly influenced humanitarian responses and programme design, offering a broader range of response options than in traditional interventions, be that for direct or indirect market support responses in emergency or early recovery programming. Examples include grants to local traders in Liberia to reinforce their capacity to supply rice to host communities and refugees in Grand Gedeh, grants combined with loans to grocery stores in Port-au-Prince to restore the capacity of small local retailers, cash for work activities in Haiti and loans to local traders in South Sudan.

EMMA assessments also provide donors with much needed evidence to justify or account for NGO response options, and can, therefore, secure the funding for such programmes. Without this, donors

have no reference for ensuring the responses are appropriate and / or will not cause adverse affects. EMMA results have helped to provide the justification needed for **planned responses** (such as Mercy Corps in South Sudan), for **advocacy purposes**, for example for the increased use of cash programming where feasible and relevant (as in Liberia and Haiti, where the results were directly used to influence WFP strategy), for preparedness or for national staff capacity building.

The toolkit is designed for those staff or humanitarian practitioners that are leading EMMA assessments, and assumes that EMMA leaders are experienced humanitarian practitioners, with good leadership and analytical skills, and experience in carrying out assessments. The composition and size of the EMMA team, and the level of analytical capacity required, will vary according to the context and aims for the market analysis within this context (whether for emergency response, early recovery, preparedness). Implementing EMMA assessments with other agencies is an excellent way to widen the reach, knowledge and impact of EMMA results and it encourages inter-agency coordination in subsequent programming (as in Haiti where the EMMA process contributed to the establishment of the cash coordination working group). However expectations must be clear from the beginning, and roles of each agency defined to try to minimise the reduced efficiency which can come from such coordination as well as from variety of mandates and expectations. It is always worth considering carrying out an EMMA in coordination but if this is not practical or possible, single agency EMMAs can be just as effective and should not be ruled out (example of Liberia). As mentioned before, carrying out EMMAs with agencies with similar mandates and programmatic intentions could greatly ease the working process of the EMMA.

The majority of people surveyed and interviewed, and from the training evaluations, have found the training highly informative, dynamic, enjoyable and well structured. The large majority of the participants felt they met the training objectives, the design and structure of the workshop was well received as were the presentations by the trainers. Moreover, undertaking EMMA training and assessments simultaneously raised the awareness of market analysis and staff capacity.

The EMMA review found that there were positive signs of dissemination. The EMMA website contains useful information, and 79% of those asked responded that they had visited the website at least once. A D-group and a Linked In group have been established: while there is still some way in developing these groups fully, with more investment of time, these groups do have the potential of becoming excellent mechanisms for creating a wider community of practice and allowing members to share ideas, seek advice and spark debates. Moreover, 93% of those who had requested advice or support from the EMMA global team had received their answers in time, and 100% had their requests fully or partially met (65% and 35% respectively).

Challenges

There is no doubt that the very process of designing the EMMA toolkit, together with the EMMA assessments and their results, have highlighted the need for systematic and systemic market analysis in humanitarian emergencies and have changed and broadened response options and interventions. However, it quickly becomes apparent, through a study of the EMMA assessments carried out on the ground, that the usefulness of the results is highly dependent on a number of factors, such as staff capacity, timeliness and coordination with other emergency assessments, the ability to digest and use some of the main EMMA concepts, the different expectations that agencies may hold regarding the role and potential of the EMMA and the time and resources used.

Yet, the EMMA logic is not to blame for the majority of the criticisms levied at the toolkit: many of the commonly heard complaints originate from how the toolkit, training and processes are managed. This is not to say that these criticisms do not need to be addressed in both the design of the toolkit and the trainings, but it is important to point out that the issues do not question the core principles of EMMA, just the way that these are carried out. Issues frequently raised in the review

have been that the EMMA process involved a large amount of resources in terms of staff, funding and time and that the toolkit is rather long. Again, for some of these issues a key element of carrying out an EMMA is the quality of the implementing team – and in particular the leader, as well as the quality of the planning.

There was some confusion about some of the terminology and concepts used in the EMMA toolkit, such as “good enough” analysis and “optimal ignorance”. To gauge what these concepts mean in each case requires a solid understanding of the context, the aims of the assessment and the timeframe of the assessment period. However, more detail could be included in a training programme, tailored to staff and context requirements.

For some practitioners, there has been a misunderstanding of what EMMA produces in terms of the Gap Analysis. EMMA does not aim to produce household profile information, but ideally requires that this information has been undertaken by other needs and household livelihood assessments, is in place and of sufficient quality before the EMMA can begin. Although there have been cases where the EMMA has taken place simultaneously with other household profiling assessments, meaning that the EMMA assessment has had to produce and digest the background information to produce the gap analysis, there is a need to reinforce the complementary nature of the EMMA, either in the toolkit or in the training and to try to coordinate the EMMA within the overall emergency assessment framework.

Moreover, the timing of the release of the EMMA results is an important factor to consider when planning an EMMA, in order to have the most impact on programme decision making. In Pakistan the EMMA results were produced after programme decisions had already been made. Whilst this sometimes confirms the choices already made, it does limit the scope of EMMA’s use in broadening the response options. Again this comes down to the planning, the reasons for carrying out an EMMA and the expectations of the stakeholders involved.

There have been frequent calls for more practical examples to be included in the training, to provide staff with the knowledge, skills and understanding needed. The review highlighted calls for ‘real life’ examples and a larger proportion of the training dedicated to practical work. While it is essential to take these issues into account, it is important to rethink or clarify the aims and targeted groups of the EMMA training.

A further criticism and point of debate surrounding EMMA has been the focus on and selection of a few critical markets, rather than looking at sectoral or general market systems. One of the key strengths of EMMA, however, is to help recommend options for direct and indirect market support responses (by comparing quantified needs with the market capacity for a specific good or service), which would be lost if general analysis is done. It is of course up to the assessment team how they manage this challenge, but more detail on choosing critical markets and the merits and / or disadvantages of looking at the markets more broadly should be included in the toolkit. The ability to understand labour markets, (vital in most reconstructive programmes and a key element in cash for work schemes), also arose as a challenge. This is an area that requires further development. Experience, data and guidance need to be gathered and analysed before this element can be fully taken on board.

Key to fully understanding the impact of EMMA is systematic monitoring and follow-up of EMMA results and programme achievements. Without this, agencies will not be able to gauge the real effectiveness of EMMA. Individual agencies as well as the global EMMA team should try to establish systematic capturing of successes and lessons learnt and to regularly share these within the EMMA community.

However, one of the main issues identified is the high level of analytical skills and experience of assessments required to produce a quality EMMA. While EMMA is designed to be used by non market specialists, it still requires staff to be able to process, analyse and apply a large amount of data – without statistical support - and then to use these findings to design appropriate responses. The EMMA requires analytical capacity and judgement. Though these requirements are by no means out of reach of many staff, it needs to be made very clear to those carrying out an EMMA assessment, or selecting staff to undertake this role, that this is the case.

As detailed above, the successful and effective planning, coordination, implementation and use of an EMMA is highly dependent on the EMMA team and, in particular, the team leader. It is towards this lead that the EMMA training was devised and designed. However, of the surveyed participants, around 85% had attended training, but only 35% of respondents then participated in the planning and implementation of an EMMA assessment. While nearly all of those asked felt that they could contribute to an EMMA assessment, only 27% said that they would feel happy to lead an EMMA. Certainly, the training could be adapted to the skill set and needs of the EMMA participants. While this would undoubtedly raise staff capacity, the expectations of what the EMMA might achieve in these circumstances may need to be adjusted. Equally, and perhaps in aiming to consistently produce good quality EMMAs, it may be necessary to balance out the enthusiasm of staff members keen to attend training with a serious evaluation of which staff may have the skills and understanding required.

Whilst many of the thought processes and possible issues arising in the EMMA process are incorporated into the training curriculum, the active dissemination of the Leader's Guide² through the website, D-groups and email lists will help to contribute to improving the quality of EMMA assessments and leaders. The reinvigoration of the website, D-group, and advisory service from the EMMA global team could also benefit the EMMA leaders and assessment participants, through providing a pool of ideas, experiences and advice.

Conclusion

The EMMA toolkit has been a significant development for humanitarian organisations responding to emergencies. The review found that not only did the toolkit meet its stated objective, but actually went beyond this, in that the EMMA logic and framework was flexible enough to be used in a variety of contexts. Moreover, it was a rapid and light tool, when carefully designed and implemented. Where difficulties did arise, they were often the practical issues that arose from the way that the toolkit was handled. This is not to criticise those who had used it in this way. The EMMA is evolving and still represents a learning process. The issues raised in the review and the common problems that practitioners face have led to a series of recommendations, which will be considered. The central point is that, while modifications might be needed, the core logic of the EMMA has been successful, efficient and appropriate.

The toolkit can bring clarity and purpose to programming: it allows the disaster affected population's access to the most appropriate responses and supports market functions and environments to supply basic immediate needs while keeping an eye on future development.

Moreover, the training can be flexible, modified and adapted both to the needs of the participants and to the context. It is essential to remember that in these circumstances, expectations regarding the EMMA analysis and results may need to be adjusted.

The EMMA has been instrumental in changing mindsets about the need for and use of market analysis in emergencies. Whilst this process has begun, there is still much more need for this kind of

² <http://emma-toolkit.org/practice/leading/>

advocacy, and hence the continued and increased need to promote and use EMMA. The potential scope for EMMA is impressive. It has been used across a range of contexts and can continue this trend. There is also the possibility that, given sufficient time, funding and qualified leaders, the EMMA logic and toolkit can be applied on a regional scale, such as in the Sahel, where there may be common issues and similar critical market systems.

Recommendations

- i. **Increase the pool of strong EMMA leaders.** The global EMMA team and individual agencies should focus on building the capacity of national, regional and global staff in understanding and carrying out EMMA assessments. As more people become trained and experienced, the quality and impact of EMMAs will be widened. To ensure that the impact of this spread is maximised in terms of quality, selecting those participants who meet the necessary requirements in terms of analytical capacity is a pertinent issue and one that needs further consideration. Increasing the practical component of the training would be beneficial to maximise transfer of skills to future EMMA leaders. Equally, EMMA baselines for preparedness could be used as practical training ground for future EMMA leaders.
- ii. **Aim for consistent quality of EMMAs.** The EMMA assessments carried out so far have no doubt added value to programme responses in emergencies. However, some EMMAs have provided more value and quality information than others. Ensuring that all EMMAs produce consistent quality information is important not only to maximise the use of the EMMA toolkit itself but also to increase stakeholder buy-in and confidence in using it. As found throughout this paper, selecting and training appropriate EMMA leaders, who can understand, disseminate and act upon the core logic is essential in the drive for consistently good quality EMMA assessments.
- iii. **Gathering evidence of impact of EMMA.** To help widen the influence and usage of the EMMA toolkit, a body of evidence needs to be systematically collated which can be used to advocate the toolkit, to use in trainings and to monitor the growing impact and importance of carrying out EMMA assessments.
- iv. **Improve communication amongst key stakeholders.** It is clear there is a large amount of interest and satisfaction regarding the EMMA logic, toolkit and process. However, the EMMA has also created some questions and areas for discussions which could spark engaging and constructive debate. An expansive and lively community of practice could offer a vital and accessible hub of this debate and could also, crucially, increase ownership and personal investment by a broad range of both practicing and potential EMMA practitioners.
- v. **EMMA in different contexts.** There is debate around whether the EMMA toolkit should be adapted to different contexts or whether it should remain for rapid onset emergencies. In practice, the toolkit is already being used in a variety of contexts, with certain adaptations, with overall success. Because the tools within EMMA have their roots in development contexts it seems that formally adapting EMMA away from emergency contexts is not necessarily needed but some guidance on the use of EMMA in different contexts would be more appropriate. To address this need, a number of tailored guidelines could be produced, such as a shorter and more concise guide containing the EMMA core principles, to be used in the initial stages of emergencies, as well as a more detailed and in-depth guide, looking at applying EMMA to predictive scenarios as part of preparedness. This branching out and extension of the EMMA logic could deepen the impact of the EMMA itself, by incorporating the core principles in different contexts, smoothing the transition between emergency response, recovery and preparedness.