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**INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF
THE DEC TSUNAMI CRISIS RESPONSE**

Final Report

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Acronyms

A+N Islands	Andaman and Nicobar Islands
AAI	Action Aid International
AIDMI	All India Disaster Mitigation Institute
ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance
BRCS	British Red Cross Society
BRR	Badan Rehabilitasi dan Rekonstruksi (Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Agency)
CBDM	Community Based Disaster Risk Mitigation
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CRS	Catholic Relief Services (CAFOD partner)
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (of the OECD)
DEC	Disasters Emergency Committee
DP	Disaster Preparedness
DRP	Disaster Response Proposal
DS	District Secretary
EFSN	Emergency Food Security Network
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GA	Government Authority
GAM	Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (Aceh Freedom Movement)
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
INGO	International Non-governmental Organisation
ITDG	Intermediate Technology Development Group
LNGO	Local Non-governmental Organisation
LRRD	Linking relief, recovery and development (TEC study)
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (Tamil Tigers)
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NFI	Non Food Items
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
RCRC	Red Cross and Red Crescent

RTE	Real Time Evaluation
SC	Save the Children
TEC	Tsunami Evaluation Coalition
T-shelter	Transition shelter
TNI	Indonesian military forces
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
WatSan	Water and Sanitation
WFP	World Food Programme
WV	World Vision

Introduction

The Terms of Reference (Annex 1) cover a wide range of questions as well as various codes and guidelines. After discussion with the DEC, the evaluation team has focused on the Red Cross Code¹ as the key measure of performance used by the DEC, interpreting this in the light of the Sphere Common Standards². A key advantage of this approach is that DEC members must sign up to the Red Cross Code and Sphere Standards and therefore these represent an agreed quality standard. We have used the Analytical Framework, relating the Red Cross Code with Sphere Standards, developed for the DEC Monitoring Missions conducted in April-May 2005 (Annex 2).

In order to respond to the DEC request for an overview as well as a 'normal' evaluation, we have also used the DAC Guidelines as interpreted by the DEC in its evaluation policy³. These represent a standard followed by donor governments and multilateral agencies as well as NGOs. We have used the version of the DAC Guidelines that the DEC adopted some years ago as the basis for its evaluations, setting out the variations in Annex 2. In order to make DEC evaluations more consistent with others, we suggest that the DEC should simply use DAC criteria in future, on the understanding that the Red Cross Code and Sphere Standards will continue to be the main tool for DEC evaluations. The DEC Handbook is somewhat confusing on this and we recommend that it is simplified and clarified.

Section 1 of this report, using the DEC/DAC criteria, also forms the basis for a separate report to the DEC Board. Section 2 assesses the response in relation to the Red Cross Code⁴ and Sphere Standards. Section 3 brings together some examples of good practice and lessons learned with some remarks on human resources issues. Section 4 is the summary of conclusions and Section 5 presents recommendations.

The findings of this report are based primarily on two-week visits to each of the three main affected countries (Indonesia, India and Sri Lanka) and a 12-day visit to Somalia. The evaluation field teams were:

- Indonesia: Michele Lipner and Tony Vaux
- Sri Lanka: Abhijit Bhattacharjee and Kalinga Tudor Silva
- India: Asmita Naik and Vivek Rawal
- Somalia: Jean McCluskey and Isnino Ahmed Muse.

The schedules for the visits are attached to the individual Country Reports (Annexes 7-10) which contain much more detailed analysis of DEC responses. Although the main basis for the evaluation has been discussion with the members (individually and collectively), we have also tried to include meetings with government officials (district head, person in charge of disaster response etc), and at least one meeting with

¹ The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief (Annex 5).

² The Sphere Project (2004) *Humanitarian Charter and Sphere Standards in Disaster Response*.

³ DEC Handbook (2003) p11.

⁴ A weakness of the Red Cross Code is that it was never negotiated with non-Western agencies and there has been no campaign (such as the one for Sphere) to make it better known. Therefore local partners of DEC members are not necessarily signatories. The Berghof Foundation has produced a commentary on the Code in relation to tsunami responses in Sri Lanka (available from the TEC).

UN or large donors, and local civil society associations or similar. No formal structure was used except for the following basic checklist:

- Have the poorest people benefited?
- Has the process been consultative?
- Has the member adapted its ideas to local circumstances?
- What has been the impact?
- Does the response contribute to longer-term security?
- Does it fit well within the wider picture (coordination, government etc)?
- Has the member achieved impact proportionate to its size, inputs and capacity?
- What is special, innovative or good practice?

In addition, short desk studies have been undertaken of the DEC response in Thailand (Tony Vaux), Maldives (Abhijit Bhattacharjee) and Myanmar (Tony Vaux). We regard these as very sketchy investigations and suggest that these countries receive greater attention in future evaluations. The report is in Annex 11.

The process of evaluation in Indonesia, India and Sri Lanka was supported by Community Surveys carried out by teams from the Disaster Mitigation Institute (based in Ahmedabad, India) working with local organisations. The timescale for the evaluation has reduced the scale and scope of these studies considerably. Nevertheless, the findings reflect in-depth discussion with more than 500 people. The survey teams have gained considerable experience since their first collaboration with the DEC after the Gujarat earthquake in 2001. Sarah Routley provided technical support to Mihir Bhatt and his team from DMI. The full Community Survey report is in Annex 6.

DEC members and the evaluation team have been concerned about the very tight timeframe of the evaluation. Project site selection was left to the agencies themselves on the basis of minimal criteria such as places where DEC money was being used, location in areas being visited by the team and spread of projects over all sectors. Staff from the member agencies were usually present during consultations and sometimes carried out translation as required.

Nevertheless our coverage of Indonesia, Sri Lanka and India has been adequate for the designated purposes, largely because we could cross-check findings with the beneficiary surveys, the input of local consultants and reference to other evaluations. Coverage of the other affected countries was very limited. The field visit to Somalia, was supported by a local consultant but only included Puntland and was constrained by logistics and security concerns. (Brief biographies of the team members and potential biases are in Annex 13.)

The report has been compiled in two stages with the Community Surveys and Somalia report being completed after the first draft had been circulated for comment. This 'two track' process is not ideal but was inevitable in the limited time available after finalisation of the ToR and contract with the DEC. We have given an analysis of the timing issue to the DEC recommending that, in future, planning for evaluations should start six months before the report is required.

The evaluation took place around ten months after the disaster and this timing has created some particular difficulties. The reports due from DEC members at the 9-month mark (DRP2s) arrived during or after the field visits. Members were asked by the DEC to draw up financial plans for 2006 before the evaluation team had reported. Up-to-date financial information was only available after the first draft had been written. These issues of timing not only reduce our ability to analyse the response but make the results of the evaluation less useful to the members because they already had to make their plans.

A further significant limitation to this report is the exclusion of issues of financial management and accountability from the evaluation ToR. Normal practice is to include them but in this case the DEC is undertaking a process of internal audit instead. Nonetheless, we consider there should be an external review by independent experts of issues relating to public accountability and a report published. This should examine whether the overall financial systems are sound and, ideally, should make a preliminary analysis of the relationship between overhead costs and programme expenditure. We believe this to be necessary not because we consider there to be anything amiss but because this issue is likely to be a focus of public interest and the credibility of the DEC rests on independent scrutiny.⁵

Time constraints have prevented us from undertaking a detailed review of human resources issues. In Section 3 we make some observations in relation to the Sphere Common Standards on Competencies (7) and Management (8). A more thorough review should be included in the evaluation of the second year of the response.

Our initial plans and methodologies were discussed with representatives of the DEC member agencies in London on 5 October 2005. This meeting was also used to gather a list of issues that were of concern to DEC members. Field visits began with a similar meeting with in-country staff and ended with a debriefing focused around the Red Cross Code.

We have drawn on the DEC Monitoring Mission reports on Indonesia by John Cosgrave, and on India and Sri Lanka by Tony Vaux. The other main written source has been the reports from individual members (DRP2s) submitted around the end of October. As peer reviewer, Peter Wiles has attended team meetings, provided material on proportionality (Annex 4) and DAC/DEC criteria (Annex 2) as well as reviewing the draft reports from a quality perspective, using the ALNAP Quality Pro-forma. The present report is compiled by Tony Vaux.

⁵ DEC members in Australia have already attracted media attention over this issue. See 'Australian NGOs Overheads cut tsunami aid' 7 September 2005 at www.indonesia-relief.org

Acknowledgments

Special thanks are extended to DMI and its partners for carrying out the Community Surveys so efficiently in such a short time. We especially thank Mihir Bhatt, Executive Director and A.W.P. David, Team Leader. The partners were Siyath Foundation in Sri Lanka and Aceh Recovery Forum in Indonesia. In India DMI used its own projects and contacts.

In his capacity as Coordinator of the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC), John Cosgrave participated in our initial team meeting, provided an extensive database and helped with queries on particular issues. Although a number of evaluations are planned by the TEC members, none has yet finalised its report but we were glad to meet members of the team working on Linking Relief, Recovery and Development (LRRD) in Indonesia. We thank Emery Brusset of Channel Research for letting us take part in their discussions, together with Jerry Adams of INTRAC for briefing us on the policy aspects of this study.

We would particularly like to thank our hosts in the field: Arif Khan of Islamic Relief in Indonesia, Prasant Naik of SC UK in Sri Lanka and Ravi Pratap Singh of ActionAid in India (with additional support from Oxfam in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands). Finally thanks to Simon Starling at the DEC in London for steering the overall process and giving general support.

1. Overview

1.0 The tsunami disaster

The tsunami disaster of December 26th 2004 was unique as the most destructive event of its kind recorded and as the subject of the greatest response from people around the world. Although earthquakes occur frequently, and sometimes have their epicentre beneath the oceans, powerful tsunamis are quite rare (see Annex 3).

The DEC appeal received over £350 million before closing on 26th February 2005. In addition to this, members of the DEC raised substantial amounts directly and via their international networks. This income far exceeded any previous DEC appeal and in fact exceeded the total raised from all DEC appeals since 1988 (see Annex 4).

All DEC members have responded to the disaster. Spending in the first year is now projected at £128 million against an initial budget of £151 million as follows:⁶

Projected spending and budgets in 2005: members (£m)

£m	AA	BRCS	CAFOD	CARE	CA	Concern	HTA	Merlin	Oxfam	SC	TF	WV
Projection	11	16	9	9	17	7	3	3	24	19	4	6
Budget	13	32	8	9	17	8	4	4	26	19	5	6

Source: DEC 6/10/05

Projected spending and budgets in 2005: countries (£m)

£m	Indonesia	Sri Lanka	India	Others total	Thailand	Somalia	Maldives	Myanmar	HQ costs
Projection	40	40	32	16	2	5	6	0.3	2.7
Budget	56	41	35	19	2	5	8	1	3

Source: DEC 6/10/05

With 281,379 people reported killed, mortality exceeds that of every other disaster for which a DEC appeal has been made except the Rwanda genocide. However, it is not the most serious disaster of recent years in terms of mortality. It has been estimated that as many as three million people died during the last five years in the Democratic Republic of Congo and yet no appeal was made. This may reflect lack of UK public awareness of this tragedy as well as the inability of DEC members to respond on a large scale to such crises. All these disasters are overshadowed by the Chinese famine of 1958-61 which is thought to have killed more than 30 million people⁷.

Unfortunately, the worst tragedies seem to be those that are kept secret or those that are simply accepted as normal, such as the annual mortality from tropical diseases or the phenomenon of 'missing women'.⁸ By contrast, disasters that are well publicised may attract an overwhelming response.

⁶ Projections are based on figures for the 8 months to August plus estimates for the last 4 months of the year

⁷ See Sen, A (1999) *Development as Freedom*, Oxford p181 and notes

⁸ This refers to the excess mortality of women caused primarily by social factors; Amartya Sen (see note above) p106 gives a lowest estimate of 23 million for India alone.

There has been some concern that the tsunami disaster has focused excessive attention and resources on a single disaster. MSF stopped receiving donations within a week of the tsunami and was reasonably successful in persuading donors to transfer funds to other causes.⁹ Oxfam closed its tsunami appeal at the end of January and sought to persuade donors to give to other appeals. The DEC Appeal continued until 26th February and when it closed the message was ‘thank you’ rather than ‘that’s enough’.

It is difficult to know whether the tsunami disaster had the effect of reducing donations to other causes but it has led to a skewing of overall humanitarian focus. The problem is not so much one of unequal resources but that aid agencies have been forced to give the tsunami their management attention and skilled resources and this will inevitably have had negative effects on other areas. This issue is further explored in Section 2.1 while considering the principle that ‘needs come first’.

The UK government initially pledged to match donations to the Appeal but quietly dropped this when it became apparent that the Appeal would exceed all expectations. This may have enabled the UK government to switch funds into less publicised disasters. If the UK is not to be held to its original pledge, the DEC should at least find out what were the consequences and use the opportunity to press the UK to focus on ‘forgotten disasters’, as proposed in papers by DEC members¹⁰ and in the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative.

The problem is not that the tsunami disaster received too much attention but that other disasters receive too little. If agencies could be certain of similar funding responses for other disasters, they could scale up. The problem in the humanitarian system is that it is uncertain when and how the public will react. Donors and agencies are seeking ways to maximize the impact of the system as a whole. The EU has commendably focused on ‘forgotten disasters’. The donor public should be better informed about how the system works, or might work, as part of an argument for flexibility in donations and setting aside appeal funds for longer-term work to reduce vulnerability and improve the preparedness of the system as a whole. The DEC has an interest in doing so, but it is also consistent with principles of accountability, including Principle 9 of the Red Cross Code.

To its credit, the DEC has moved in the last few years towards longer timescales and wider definitions for public appeals. During the 1980s, concern that DEC members were using appeal funds for longer-term development work led the DEC Board to shorten the period of response to six months. This proved unsuitable for reconstruction processes such as the one needed after the Gujarat earthquake of 2001. The subsequent evaluation emphasized that reconstruction takes several years.

This point was well taken up by the DEC Secretariat and the Board was persuaded to allow a timescale for the tsunami response of 3 years. However the behaviour of the DEC members shows that the timescale needed for house reconstruction is still not properly understood. The response has been badly distorted by a rush to meet unrealistic reconstruction targets in the first year while immediate needs were overlooked. The current three-year timescale is the minimum necessary for a

⁹ See note by Peter Wiles in Annex 4.

¹⁰ See Cosgrave/ActionAid (2004), Christian Aid (2004), Oxfam GB (2003) and Vaux/CAFOD (2004) in the bibliography in Annex 13.

significant input into reconstruction, and scarcely allows time for proactive measures to reduce future vulnerabilities as required under the Red Cross Code.

There are also some specific extenuating factors that mean the response will be slower after the tsunami than it might have been in another disaster. The unusual nature of the disaster raised very difficult questions:

- Was there a significant likelihood of another tsunami?
- Should people be moved from the coast?
- At what point would people recover from the emotional shock and be able to engage in decisions about their future?

These general uncertainties led to particular problems for DEC members such as:

- Should they wait for government policy and funding to evolve?
- In what circumstances should government policy be ignored or challenged, and what might be the consequences?
- How should safety and people's preferences be balanced?

These problems were particularly acute in Indonesia where the continuing conflict created a fear that the government might expel international agencies at any time (UNHCR had to withdraw in March). Government in the affected region lacked the capacity, largely because of the effects of the tsunami, to make decisions until around the middle of 2005. Moreover, there was an acute problem with sourcing the timber needed for temporary and permanent shelter. Timber obtained within Indonesia is likely to come from illegal sources (even though it may have a legal stamp) and extraction on the scale required after the tsunami might lead to severe environmental consequences as well as promoting corruption. It could even create incentives for conflict (see 2.1). Environmental groups put aid agencies under intense pressure not to buy locally, using quite threatening behaviour, but the Indonesian government threatened to ban imports. These factors partly explain agencies' lack of involvement in temporary shelter and slow progress with permanent reconstruction.

In Sri Lanka, there were suspicions about foreign involvement in highly sensitive issues relating to the conflict, and also a widespread view that external agencies were biased against the Sinhalese majority. There were persistent rumours of aid being used as a cover for religious persuasion. There were constant allegations in the media against local civil society and the international agencies.

In India, the government was not incapacitated to any significant extent and took firm control of the response. The strength of civil society and long experience in humanitarian work meant that suspicions of foreign involvement and religious conversion never materialized as significant problems. But agencies found themselves uncertain what to do because the government response was so pervasive and its ability to enforce its policies so great. The question was whether to rush ahead to use DEC funds before government schemes started, to support action ahead of government policy or simply hold back.

In Thailand, there was a similar relationship with government as in India while in Somalia it was the other extreme with an absence of central authority and need to negotiate with leaders who might or might not enjoy widespread support. Security issues remained a constant concern of the aid agencies.

1.1. Timeliness and appropriateness of the response

The timeliness of the response has already been a focus of media interest and has become an issue in itself, influencing responses and strategies. Although the DEC itself has not applied any pressure, managers in the field often refer to pressures from head office to keep up to spending targets and ensure that presentable projects are completed in time for the rush of media interest expected around the anniversary. In some cases, managers generate their own pressures because of competitive attitudes or fears of media censure.

Regrettably these pressures conflict with the realities of post-disaster reconstruction. Agencies have been tempted to focus too much on the number of houses to be ready for the anniversary. This has led to poor quality in some cases, not simply in terms of building design but in terms of strategic choices, programme focus and beneficiary involvement. Few DEC members possessed in-house expertise on housing and had to find it. This created delays and sometimes led to a mismatch between technical expertise and other considerations. The worst cases are generally where work has been entrusted to unsupervised contractors. While the agency may be able to claim a world record for speed or number of houses built, the level of consumer satisfaction is likely to be low and some of these houses may never be occupied.

This report focuses on shelter rather than other issues. This is because it is the area of greatest concern. DEC members need to take a carefully balanced position, acknowledging failures where they have occurred but also being ready to challenge false expectations rather than distort programme responses.

Initial response

As indicated by the DEC Monitoring Mission Reports of April-May 2005, the initial response to the tsunami disaster was timely and appropriate. The availability of funds enabled DEC members to respond on an unprecedented scale and use methods of delivery, such as helicopters, which are normally too expensive. The success of the response was facilitated by the positive actions and policies of the national governments in the three most affected countries.

Despite the impression commonly given in the media, it is local people and officials who play the major response role in the days immediately following such a disaster. A recent public opinion survey among affected people in India and Sri Lanka indicates that international and national NGOs played only a modest role during the first two days.¹¹ It also shows a strong distinction between India, where civilian government played the major role, and Sri Lanka where military forces and local civil society were the main actors.

¹¹ Fritz Institute (2005) *Lessons from the Tsunami: Top Line Findings*.

Table: Affected families' recall about relief service providers in the first 48 hours

Agency	India %	Sri Lanka %
Government	86	4
Medical	59	23
Religious Groups	54	20
Political Party	45	8
NGOs/Private Sector	40	12
Army/air force/coastguard	20	39
Fire Rescue	16	1
International Organisations	9	14

Source: Fritz Institute op cit p7

Affected families expressed a high level of satisfaction with the timeliness of the general response in the first 60 days. The range is 58-90% for different items, with higher levels of satisfaction in India than in Sri Lanka.¹² This is confirmed by surveys for the DEC, which also confirm that people in Indonesia were satisfied with the initial response (see box below). In all three countries, it was noted that remote areas and marginalised groups were actively sought out and assisted. By the three-month mark, most relief needs were being met – a considerable achievement.

Relief in Indonesia

Though many of the agencies had no prior contacts with the communities, the initial relief has been provided to everyone. And the assistance was provided based on both need and supply. The food was available soon after the first two weeks. Large amounts of food was stored up from various sources. “It was a good harvest year,” said a family of six in Blang Krueng village in Baitussalam. In Ulhee Lheu village in Meuroxa a family of two said “we have gained food but lost mouths to feed” to sum up the discussion on food relief.

DEC Evaluation Community Survey

A number of DEC members began their assessments within the first 48 hours but only a few actually began relief work during this period, and then only where stocks of relief materials were already available. One of the first DEC member responses was in eastern Sri Lanka where agencies had already collected supplies after serious flooding a few days earlier.

The direct impact of DEC members (as opposed to that of local associates acting independently of DEC members¹³) began to be felt a couple of weeks after the disaster but came to play an increasing role in the first stages of recovery. DEC members were particularly active in cash-for-work programmes, clearing debris and helping communities to re-establish links and livelihood income. DEC members also had an important impact on public health through water, sanitation and health-related programmes. All these were activities in which they complemented governments.

¹² Ibid

¹³ Preparation and ongoing agreements between DEC members and local partners no doubt facilitated the process but the initial response was spontaneous and local rather than ‘London-driven’.

One particularly strong complaint about the response concerns the ‘tsunami’ of assessments. The Community Survey team found that ‘the community perspective on assessment was *“Too many assessments without concrete results”*. Assessments delayed progress in key instances. *“How did we help each other in a disaster situation before assessments were formalized?”* asked a Kenchuck (village leader) in Indonesia.’

With such crowding of agencies, it is a pity that DEC members could not collaborate on assessments. This is not simply a matter of efficiency but also of respect for people’s dignity. As SC UK reported in Thailand, children were particularly badly affected by the constant pressure to relive experiences. Arguably the positive impact of the DEC agencies’ psychosocial programmes has been counteracted by its inability to handle the assessment process more sensitively.

The underlying problem was a self-imposed time pressure coupled with a lack of a tradition of cooperation among DEC members. Although members cooperated later in research and evaluations (such as the Multi-Agency evaluation by CARE, Oxfam and World Vision) there was no such collaboration at the start and behaviour was largely competitive with information being deliberately withheld from other actors. This was seen as unfortunate but necessary by many of those involved, but the psychosocial consequences for the affected people have not been sufficiently considered. The lesson from the tsunami experience is that DEC members must set up collaborative arrangements for assessment in advance.

Temporary and transitional shelter

A second set of major weaknesses in the response began to emerge around the middle of the year with a tendency to avoid difficult issues of the transitional stage and rush ahead with reconstruction. The result is that tens of thousands of people are still living in tents and the conditions in temporary shelters are unsafe.

House reconstruction after a major disaster takes at least two years and probably three. There are always serious issues of land tenure, design, community participation and finance. This has been the experience in all recent cases of post-earthquake reconstruction, notably Latur and Gujarat in India and Bam in Iran. The question of timescales is well documented in the literature and ‘lessons learned’ commentaries.

It is unacceptable, especially when almost unlimited resources are available, for people to live in tents for even a year. By implication there has to be a focus on cheap mass housing that will provide an adequate living space (temporary shelter) while permanent solutions are found. This may involve rather cramped conditions that are below the optimum standard. Above all, temporary shelter should be safe.

The most satisfactory performance was in Sri Lanka where DEC members engaged successfully in the design of temporary/transitional housing and are now taking steps to upgrade them for the rainy season. In India and Indonesia, members have tended to be reactive, with government taking the lead and agencies taking time to respond, or deciding to disengage and focus on permanent housing.

Most temporary shelters are of very poor quality, built by contractors whose clear objective has been to cut costs.¹⁴ If the agencies had been more involved, these problems would have been reduced. Supervision could have improved standards and the collective pressure of DEC members could surely have avoided some of the least suitable locations. The Community Survey indicates that the shelters could have been greatly improved by some basic dialogue with the people – an area in which DEC members can claim expertise. A woman living in one such shelter said, “How hot it becomes at midday. Small children can be baked inside. Can they not just raise the height or paint them white?”¹⁵

The unacceptable outcome is that many of the shelters are unsafe, with risks from fire and from toxic materials (e.g. asbestos, which is not banned in India). In Indonesia, people cook on open fires in the long wooden sheds known as ‘barracks’. Very little has been done to reduce the fire hazard or prepare for disaster. There are security problems for women because services such as water and sanitation are located in unsuitable places. Many are prone to flooding because of poor site selection. There is a great need to identify such risks and take preventive action.

A number of agencies engaged constructively with the process, building better shelters or improving those provided by government. The problems of doing this were considerable. World Vision engaged closely in Indonesia but found it difficult to continue in association with government and has more recently constructed its own ‘barracks’. Concern, for example, continues to play a valuable role upgrading sanitation and drainage in the camps in Indonesia. CARE and others have provided health education.

Much has been achieved through Sphere but the standards should not be used as an excuse for withholding aid or using people’s suffering to bargain for changes in government policy and practice. Reportedly, some DEC members did not involve themselves in temporary shelter because of concerns about meeting Sphere Standards. Apart from the questionable morality of such a stance, it would be unlikely to have any influence on governments.¹⁶ For DEC members, the first principle of the Red Cross Code states that ‘needs come first’.

Temporary shelter is inevitably an unsatisfactory solution, but it is not actually intended to be the solution at all. It is a stopgap measure in relation to permanent housing, as recognised in the Sphere Standard on Shelter and Settlement:

‘When such dispersed settlement is not possible, shelter is provided collectively in suitable large public buildings or structures, e.g. warehouses, halls, barracks etc or in temporary planned or self-settled camps’¹⁷.

Sphere Standards can be used as an ideal to move towards but not as a reason to pull out.

¹⁴ In Indonesia they are reported to cost around \$2,500, around half the average for a permanent house, but thousands of units were built in a few weeks.

¹⁵ DEC Community survey (India) p8

¹⁶ Oxfam had the unfortunate experience of being told to leave one District of Tamil Nadu because the Collector thought there was too much talk and not enough action.

¹⁷ The Sphere Project (2004) *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response*.

Unfortunately, agency concerns about temporary shelter in Indonesia have led to the creation of a hybrid known as ‘transitional shelter’. This is compliant with Sphere Standards and is actually a small house, built rather more cheaply and quickly than permanent houses. The materials used can be moved to a new site, in theory at least. The problem is that people are unwilling to accept them because they fear they will be disqualified from receiving permanent houses – perhaps a genuine fear. As far as we know, DEC members are not involved in this venture.¹⁸

It is estimated that around 10% of the necessary permanent houses will have been rebuilt by the end of 2005.¹⁹ This is not a bad result but the main point is that it will not be significantly altered because one DEC member or the other constructs another batch of houses. It remains unacceptable that people still live in tents while millions of pounds lie in the bank accounts of the DEC and others. However instead of a concerted focus by DEC members to address this fundamental problem, each member agency is pursuing its own targets and objectives. No-one takes responsibility for the bigger picture.

Each DEC member may have a reason why this is not their specific responsibility, but the overall effect is that nothing gets done. If the resources available had been limited, this might have been an unfortunate but excusable outcome. As it is, with the spending for 2005 way below budget, this is not excusable. The only solution would have been concerted action by agencies working together to address the strategic priority. This did not happen, and perhaps could not happen with the present competitive and individualised work-style of the DEC members. It would be very regrettable if it takes a fire in the temporary shelters or an epidemic in the tented camps to motivate this change.

Of course, there are some important extenuating circumstances. In Indonesia, human rights organisations were concerned that the temporary shelters, known as ‘barracks’, would be used for forced settlement as they had been during the conflict (which continued until August). There were also concerns about the widespread use of timber in these constructions. The DEC Monitoring Mission to Indonesia in April expressed concern about involvement, although the author now realises that this was a mistake.²⁰ It may have been hard to judge the situation in April, but over the summer months it became clear that there were no alternatives. Barracks and tented camps were part of the picture.

Today there is still a need to identify and address risks. Even in Sri Lanka, where the shelters are generally of better quality, there is still a need to upgrade basic services.

¹⁸ Some prototypes have been erected by IOM. There is a UN/RedCross Plan to build many more.

¹⁹ This figure has been corroborated by the UN in Indonesia and has been accepted as a reasonable estimate by the TEC.

²⁰ John Cosgrave, personal communication.

Lack of focus on temporary shelter in Sri Lanka

At all the locations, people felt that matters concerning temporary shelter were least discussed. Almost all the temporary houses have been constructed without any public consultations on size, design, or even location. Many of them even today lack basic facilities such as kitchen, toilet, and electricity. People from Wenemulla mentioned that their temporary houses get wet frequently. Except Kalmunai, the other two villages surveyed complained about not having direct water supply and lack of electricity. Lack of toilets in Kalmunai and Welegoda villages was repeatedly mentioned.

DEC Evaluation Community Survey

Permanent housing

In Indonesia, the capacity of government was itself decimated and even the most basic policies have inevitably taken time to develop. Moreover, land records were lost and many officials lost their lives. Lacking a national building code, Indonesia had to start from scratch to develop new guidelines for house reconstruction. Government has moved quickly to establish the necessary structures, but has shown some unwillingness to take difficult decisions and special powers, such as for compulsory land purchase. The overall political context remains delicate.

In Sri Lanka, the process has been delayed by the government's decision to discourage rebuilding in the 'buffer zone'. Although consolidated statistics for all districts were not available to the evaluation team, discussions with local authorities and NGOs suggest that the ratio between relocation and *in situ* construction is 60-40 to 50-50. In other words, around half of the families will need to be relocated and new sites found. The evaluation found that agencies could have made more progress by moving forward on reconstruction in places where people are not moving and by interpreting government positions more flexibly, in particular by dealing with local rather than national officials. In Jaffna, for example, the Government Authority told the evaluation team that despite the national policy, local government is allowing reconstruction to be carried out within the buffer zone if affected families were willing to go back to their land.

In India, the government was initially adamant about moving people out of the buffer zone but more recently has turned a blind eye to *in situ* housing constructions. The Tsunami Relief and Rehabilitation Coordination cell in Tamil Nadu (TRRC) estimates that of the 130,000 permanent houses promised by government, land has been allocated for 34,000 constructions so far (about 25%). In the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the issues are more difficult because of the scale of destruction and the low capacity of government and civil society. A policy on re-housing has yet to emerge, but reasonable progress has been made on the issue of temporary shelter with support from Oxfam and others.

There are strong indications that DEC members will be in a position to move forward rapidly on reconstruction in 2006. Much of this will be *in situ*. Accordingly, there need be no undue concern at this stage about the level of spend. The problems may arise with longer-term relocation, especially in cases where people are dissatisfied with the options being offered. There may be further questioning of the 'buffer zone' concept as people lose their fear of the tsunami. One issue that has come out strongly

is the need to think in terms of rebuilding communities rather than houses, especially in cases of relocation and generally in Indonesia because of the high level of mortality.

Up to now, some members have been able to isolate themselves in small ‘successful’ projects, where conditions happen to allow them to move quickly. There has been a tendency to cherry-pick the easier locations and avoid the difficult ones. This is understandable and justifiable up to a point. But the funds available create an obligation to think about the totality of reconstruction and to find solutions for the most difficult cases. These will involve intensive negotiation with communities and a greater capacity for advocacy than currently exists. Here too, the DEC members will not be successful without collaboration.

As noted above, the tsunami response has exposed a systemic weakness of the DEC members in the housing sector. Although members such as CAFOD (CRS) have recruited experts on disaster housing for specific projects, as far as we could ascertain this technical capacity is not rooted in any organisation.²¹ The frequent need for such skills in the last few years, and the serious mistakes in housing policy following the Gujarat earthquake and now the tsunami, should give at least a few of the DEC members the impetus to reconsider their position on this. Hiring engineers from RedR and other such organisations is only of limited use in providing short-term technical inputs. What is needed is a more strategic process of developing disaster housing as a key competence, not only by having retained expertise but by integrating housing into policies and research.²²

²¹ Oxfam’s shelter adviser is thought to be on a long-term arrangement.

²² Although Habitat for Humanity has functioned as a Twin of Christian Aid, their experience and expertise should be evaluated before DEC considers this as a resource.

Appropriateness

The DEC monitoring missions in May noted that initial assessments in the days after the disaster had not been followed by more systematic analysis and consultation, as required by the Sphere Common Standard on Assessment. This still seems to be the case. Strategy seems to be largely based on reactive thinking rather than research, although there are some exceptions such as the Save the Children's strategy for Aceh.²³ One problem faced by the evaluation team is that DEC members have not been very forthcoming in sharing strategy documents and evaluations. As part of a more collective response, members should routinely make such reports available to the DEC and its evaluators as well as other members.

Examples of inappropriate inputs encountered by the evaluation team were largely by non-DEC agencies. The Community Survey in Indonesia found that people were unhappy with tinned fish in the food rations,²⁴ while in India second-hand clothes were the least popular item²⁵. However the main complaint from communities is that aid agencies have not responded to changes in needs over time. This reflects the general disengagement from basic needs after the first phase.

Transition in Sri Lanka

Communities considered the initial round of relief extremely successful. Similarly, subsequent relief infusions were also considered useful and well targeted as they were designed based on detailed survey of damages and community needs. DEC agencies have also done a remarkable job for children by reducing trauma. Similarly, special needs of disabled were also taken into consideration by providing wheel chairs at the Wenemulle village of the Galle district. However, people mentioned that during the relocation exercises (transition), the quality and quantity of relief deteriorated due to delayed decisions and lack of clarity on the part of agencies.

DEC Evaluation Community Survey

Similarly, the initial response regarding livelihoods was good, with a wide range of inputs mainly based on replacing lost assets. DEC members were quicker than in the past to move into livelihoods work²⁶, although still not fast enough to meet the expectations of the affected people. Boats, nets, shops and cooking sets (for cake production) were scattered around communities liberally. Islamic Relief (as a Twin of CAFOD) deserves particular credit for its rapid and extensive activity in this field. Beneficiaries interviewed in DEC operating areas in Sri Lanka felt reasonably satisfied that their livelihoods were getting back to normal. In India, the need to focus on communities other than fishermen was identified early on and there has been good progress with livelihoods support to agricultural people and salt-pan workers. In this, DEC members have helped to correct excessive focus on fishing communities by government and NGOs early on. But even by mid-year, people were competing with each other.

²³ Save the Children (2005) *Aceh Earthquake Relief Assistance (AERA) Program 2005-2010*

²⁴ See Annex 6

²⁵ See Fritz Institute (2005) p8

²⁶ Slowness on this point was strongly criticized in the Gujarat evaluation.

The Community Surveys indicate that livelihoods are the top priority for most people, and have been from very soon after the disaster. However competition between agencies, poor research and lack of community involvement have led to over-supply of the means of production in certain sectors, notably of boats for inshore fishing, while other types of boat were unavailable. Thinking has focused around a few shops or a group of fishermen rather than sustainable development. Inputs have been assets rather than skills, market research and development of new markets. This is not as yet a serious fault in the response but it needs to be addressed in 2006. In order to support sustainable livelihoods, agencies may need to work more closely together: there is the challenge.

1.2. Cost effectiveness

The speed and size of the initial response resulted in some cases of duplication, especially in the provision of household utensils. However, in the greater scheme of things these were small losses; overall the initial relief input was effective. There has been much less duplication in the case of more expensive items such as tents, livelihood inputs or houses. A more serious issue is the exaggerated focus on fishing boats of a certain size and provision of poor quality materials because of lack of supervision.

Agencies have used expensive means of transport, including hiring their own helicopters and aircraft. These were probably justified in the early stages but such arrangements have persisted for longer than was absolutely necessary. In Aceh, the UN provides an extensive air service and there seems to be little justification for separate arrangements by DEC members.

Similarly, there have been a few cases where relief flights seem to have been used more for public profile than because of real need. These were the exception rather than the rule. When a massive earthquake occurred off the coast of Sumatra on March 28th affecting Simeulue and Nias Islands, DEC members rightly had recourse to immediate airfreight inputs in order to provide necessary relief materials such as tents. Very little was available on the island and the need was urgent.

Perhaps the most cost effective of all the DEC inputs has been the cash-for-work carried out in the first months after the disaster. This is because the projects have a double benefit in terms of the work done and the cash injected into the local economy (for more on this, see Section 3).

In the case of permanent housing, DEC members in Indonesia are allocating between \$4,000 and \$7,000 per unit, but there may be variations in size and specification. Among the more expensive are CRS/CAFOD houses in Meulaboh but these are 45 square meters in size compared with 36 square meters elsewhere. It would be unwise to assume that lower costs are always better: there is a trade-off between seismic safety (which favours use of timber), environmental concerns (which favour expensive imported timber) and durability (which dictates use of cement and brick). There is actually little difference in cost per square meter between houses built of the different materials, and it is difficult to be clear about cultural preferences (see Section 3.5.). The most important issue is not cost but the bewildering range of house

designs, and the difficulty this presents to local people in making choices (Section 1.1.).

The UK public may be concerned about the issue of overhead costs, and in particular management costs. As already noted, we have not investigated this issue in detail because it is not specified in the ToR. Our general impression is that the response has been inhibited more by delays in scaling up than by extravagant spending. After an initial period when expatriate staff numbers were high, staff ratios have settled to a more reasonable (and economic) balance. In Indonesia, DEC members reported expatriate levels of under 10% and several positions vacant, many of which were training roles intended to equip local staff to take over. DEC members' overhead costs are likely to peak during the first year but reduce later.

It is reasonable to expect the DEC to provide clear figures for overhead costs but currently this is not possible because there is no clear definition for members to work to and each member treats the issue differently. The 5% allowed for HQ management is only part of the picture. Further charges are made for regional offices, national management and local offices. To study the entire chain of overhead charges, and differentiate it from programme costs, would be a Herculean task. Nevertheless we believe that steps should be taken to be more transparent with donors.

The DEC's internal audit system is focused on risk management and should be able to identify any serious risks in accounting systems. Where necessary, the DEC can investigate further. This is almost certainly an adequate system but we feel that the arrangements should be reviewed externally and such a review made available to the public. Our recommendations reflect general principles of public accountability (Red Cross Code Principle 9) rather than any specific concern.

1.3. Impact

It is satisfying to note that the people affected by the tsunami have not suffered further preventable disasters on a significant scale. There have been no major fires or floods in camps of displaced people, nor have there been epidemics, outbreaks of preventable disease or serious malnutrition attributable to failures in the response. Although there were widespread fears of epidemics after the tsunami, these did not materialise. There was some increase in the incidence of respiratory infections such as pneumonia during the first few weeks after the disaster, but thereafter public health patterns have returned close to normal. Indeed, the recorded incidence of malaria in Aceh fell sharply after the tsunami, not simply because of deficiencies in recording but because the brackish water was not conducive to mosquito breeding. Recently there are reports of an increased incidence of dengue fever and malaria, but not to levels that are unusual for the region.

While satisfactory as an outcome, this is not closely related to DEC activity. It simply corroborates experience and expert opinion indicating that major public health problems are extremely rare after natural disasters.²⁷ This does not negate the value of

²⁷ Guha-Sapir, D and W van Panhuis (2005) *The Andaman Nicobar earthquake and tsunami 2004 – impact on diseases in Indonesia*, CRED, Brussels (TEC website)

preventive activity. CARE, Merlin and SC have played valuable roles in health monitoring and surveillance. The incidence of diarrhoea in Aceh was at a high level in the weeks after the disaster (31% according to a UNICEF survey in March²⁸) indicating the need for ongoing public health activity. Public health surveillance is an area of activity that is increasingly well addressed within the DEC and within the humanitarian sector as a whole. As one major health review noted:

*'We would like to underscore that these approaches of prioritizing camp size and water quality are testimonials to the increasing professionalism of humanitarian aid'*²⁹

This is underscored by direct public health responses. Oxfam played an outstanding role in relation to water and sanitation across hundreds or even thousands of locations across the region. Similar work by Concern has already been noted.

There has been little evidence of nutritional problems arising from the disaster. This is not to say that nutrition across the region is satisfactory but that the current problems already existed especially among certain marginalised groups. They arise from fundamental social inequalities that remained after the tsunami and have been effectively addressed by advocacy activity by ActionAid and Christian Aid among others.

Officials in two different districts of Sri Lanka observed that international NGOs have made a real difference in two main sectors: livelihoods and water/sanitation. This reflects a widespread perception that is reflected in community surveys.

1.4. Coverage

Proportionality

The following paragraphs are derived from a section of the DEC Monitoring Report for Indonesia by John Cosgrave. A more complete presentation of his analysis together with a review of other comments on the issues by Peter Wiles is presented in Annex 4.

²⁸ UNICEF (March 2005) Assessment of Tsunami affected districts in Aceh

²⁹ Ibid p10

Table: Mortality and displacement following the Tsunami Disaster

Affected Country	Dead	Missing	Dead /Missing	Displaced	Source of data
Indonesia (Tsunami)	126,732	93,662	220,394	533,770	Govt of Indonesia, 22 March 05
Indonesia (March 28)	626		626	34,000	OCHA - Govt gives only 394 deaths
Indonesia total	127,358	93,662	221,020	567,770	
Sri Lanka	31,147	4,114	35,261	496,282	Govt of Sri Lanka, 9 March 05
India	10,776	5,640	16,416	112,558	Govt of India, 8 February 05
Maldives	82	26	108	21,663	Maldives NDMC, 23 March 2005
Malaysia	68	6	74	8,000	OCHA, 18 Jan 05
Thailand	5,395	2,952	8,347	7,000	Government of Thailand, 01 March 2005
Somalia	150		150	5,000	OCHA 18 Jan 05 - UN CAP of 6 Jan gave a figure of 54,000 affected.
Seychelles	3		3	200	OCHA 18 Jan 05 -Displaced from UN/USAID -40 households.
Totals	174,979	106,400	281,379	1,218,473	

Note: The March 28th earthquake figures are included in the Indonesian total because the DEC decided, like ECHO, to treat this as an aftershock from the December 26th earthquake.

The tsunami disaster caused mortality in eight countries. It is not always fully appreciated that Indonesia was by far the worst affected of the countries with nearly 60% of the total deaths and 32% of the total number of persons displaced. The tsunami waves that hit Indonesia were far bigger than those that hit other countries in the region and the damage is on a much greater scale. The coastal zone devastated by the disaster was the location of practically all the human habitation, especially because of the conflict that had depopulated interior areas. There are no major concentrations of people away from the coast.

However, Indonesia received only 36% of DEC allocations initially and this has decreased and is now the same as Sri Lanka:

Projected expenditure of DEC funds 2005 as % of total spend	
Indonesia	31%
Sri Lanka	31%
India	25%
Others	13%

Source: DEC

There are a number of factors skewing the response.³⁰ Not all the DEC agencies had previously worked in Indonesia, and very few had worked in the Aceh Region. Because of the conflict, civil society in Aceh is poorly developed and this has discouraged DEC members such as ActionAid. By contrast, most of the DEC members have a long history of working in Sri Lanka and India and therefore found it much easier to respond there.

³⁰ It might be argued that deaths, in particular, are not good measures of current need. However, they are a good proxy for the level of overall devastation and fully reflect the complexity of the task of building communities as well as houses.

To some extent the lack of DEC involvement has been compensated for by others; estimates for total allocations from all sources suggest a more proportional response (see Annex 4). Some DEC members are part of trans-national federations in which responsibilities may be divided up among the different elements, as in the Red Cross Movement.³¹ However the unpalatable fact remains that basic needs in Indonesia are not being met. People are living in tents and shelters are unsafe, while DEC members have millions of pounds unspent. We take the view that the DEC, individually and collectively, has a responsibility to ensure that these needs are met.

There is also a question whether members should operate where they find it easier rather than where the need is greatest. With the massive public response and expectation from the Appeal, the argument that ‘we work through partners and they don’t happen to be in the places of need’ sounds thin and unpersuasive.

Consequently, the evaluation team suggests that strategies should be developed to ensure that at least 40% of total funds will be allocated to Indonesia over the period of spend. In order to achieve this, each member must play its part. Not every member needs to allocate 40%, but they should make efforts in that direction and share in the responsibility for ensuring that the DEC objective is met. We urge those who are not proportionately involved in Indonesia to reconsider their position.

Bearing in mind the inevitably slow pace of reconstruction in Indonesia, we recommend that the DEC’s timescale for basic reconstruction in Indonesia should be extended to four years instead of the three years that applies to the other countries.

Scope of the Appeal

Following the Monitoring Missions, the DEC defined the scope of the Appeal as:

- *Primarily to address people’s needs in the administrative districts affected by the Earthquake and Tsunami and subsequent after shocks and related events.*
- *Secondarily to reduce vulnerability to future disasters in zones bordering the Indian Ocean which are susceptible to natural disasters of this type.’³²*

This wording allows DEC funds to be used for conflict-affected people in the same districts as those affected by the tsunami. The problem is that there is some variation in practice and many programme managers are unaware of the DEC policy.

In Sri Lanka, DEC members’ engagement with conflict-affected groups is extensive. Most agencies have consciously targeted both communities with livelihoods support (e.g. Action Aid, BRCS, CARE, Oxfam, SC) and have also undertaken either repair of some shelters or construction of shelters for conflict-affected people. Merlin’s work in developing health infrastructure caters to all communities as does World Vision’s work on building road access and community infrastructures.

The needs of tsunami-affected and conflict-affected peoples seem to be at a similar level according to the assessment of the ICRC. DEC members have begun to work

³¹ See Section 2.1.

³² DEC Final Strategic Statement -website

together in joint analysis and understanding of the relationship between conflict and the tsunami response. This is very much to be encouraged.

In Aceh, the Memorandum of Understanding signed on 15th August 2005 brought to an end a long period of bitter conflict between military forces (TNI) and the nationalist rebels (GAM). Both groups have played an active role in the relief effort. The continued cessation of hostilities is now crucial for recovery and reconstruction. If war breaks out again, the entire tsunami response will be put in jeopardy.

This poses two different challenges to the DEC. Firstly, the members must take care not to create incentives for war. Because many DEC members are actively involved in timber purchase, an issue closely connected to the political economy of the conflict, they should conduct enough research to ensure that they know the consequences of their actions. This could be done on a collaborative basis, as in Sri Lanka.

Secondly, there is a question whether DEC members should actively engage in post-conflict reconstruction in order to support the peace. There are already some signs that demobilised fighters feel discriminated against because the disaster of war has received so much less attention and funding than the tsunami. A rigid distinction of 'administrative districts', as in the formal DEC policy, could exacerbate inequalities and possible tensions. Hence in the exceptional case of Indonesia, because of the need to reinforce the peace process, there should be a more flexible interpretation of DEC policy to support reconstruction programmes across the whole Aceh Region. This would open the way for programmes such as school reconstruction, child protection and improving health services across the Region. We advise against programmes specifically for the post-conflict areas, but support their inclusion in wider programmes.

As this activity may press at the boundaries of the current scope of the Appeal, DEC members should inform the DEC of such activity and if necessary seek clarification of the rules.

Conflict in Somalia also has to be integrated into responses but this is for a more pragmatic reason. Failure to follow Somali norms in addressing needs arising from conflict could result in security threats or closure of programmes. CARE has had to include in its food deliveries any inland communities within a 5 km radius of a targeted village. World Concern (Tearfund) distributed food to a nearby camp of conflict-displaced people whilst trying to assist tsunami-affected communities. This is clearly necessary and allowable if it falls within the same administrative district.

The scope of the Appeal has also allowed members to be flexible in interpreting who is affected. In Somalia, many women had small businesses before the tsunami that relied upon the income of those in the fishing industry. They also lent money to fishermen. They lost this business with the tsunami disaster, leaving them with large debts even though they were not directly affected. In India and Sri Lanka, questions have been raised about areas of the interior that have been indirectly affected by the disaster. If these are not in the coastal administrative districts, they are technically outside the scope of the Appeal. But as far as we know, DEC members are not proposing substantial programmes in those areas.

The main concern of the evaluation team is that DEC member' managers in the field were unclear about the basic rules and how to interpret them. Unfortunately the policy has not been properly disseminated. We recommend that this should be done now. We also recommend that the DEC should improve its website to make it more useful to members, and especially to field staff.

1.5. Connectedness and coordination

The flavour of the coordination problem is given in the following extract from the Somalia report:

'There are less than 20 organisations³³ responding to tsunami affect areas, including at least 6 international organisations and 10 NGOs.... It could be imagined that co-ordination would have been relatively simple. However, this has not been the case. Whilst the transitional government is institutionally weak, there has allegedly been a lack of co-ordination leadership from the usual international organisations, compounded by reportedly competitive behaviour by NGOs.'

A problem arising from the scale of resources available to international NGOs is that they had no need to coordinate with the UN and donors. Normally they have to do this in order to attract funding. It is a sad reflection that, without this pressure, the agencies have shown so little inclination to work together, and on many occasions behaved in a competitive way. This is not always the case by any means, but some of the worst behaviour will have confirmed the worst suspicions of NGOs held by bodies such as the US Navy:

*'Each will be primarily concerned with fulfilling its own purpose and desire visibility or recognition for its efforts. While this may not appear congruent with being an organization providing relief in a humanitarian crisis, it reflects the reality that NGOs have a charter and they must show results to their constituencies or their funding stream will suffer.'*³⁴

DEC members may be less guilty of this than others. The worst behaviour was by small agencies without experience which simply focused on achieving targets in specific areas, keeping others out and if necessary making promises that they could not fulfil. At worst, false information was spread in order to deter other organisations from involvement.

There is however a question whether DEC members adjusted adequately to the greater responsibility that should have come with the success of the DEC Appeal. Except in Somalia, they conducted separate assessments. This was not simply wasteful: it created additional psychological pressures on local people. SC in Thailand has expressed concern about the effect of repeated questioning of children. Arguably, the benefit of DEC members' psychosocial inputs is outweighed by this negative

³³ UNOCHA, Matrix of Humanitarian Interventions in Puntland; October 2005

³⁴ Navy Warfare Development Command. (2005). Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief (HA/DR) Operations Planning: TacMemo 3-07.6-05. Newport: Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Department of the Navy. Page 4

behaviour. It is an episode that should make senior managers determined to establish mechanisms to prevent this happening again by working more effectively with others.

This is not to say that all coordination efforts have failed. In Tamil Nadu in India, coordination initiated by NCRC³⁵ on agriculture (involving CARE, Christian Aid, Concern, HelpAge, Oxfam) has been particularly fruitful and served to meet the needs of a neglected group in a manner that avoided duplication. But such successes are patchy.

Coordination within the DEC has demonstrated willingness on the part of member representatives to discuss issues with each other and occasionally to develop joint activities. In Indonesia, DEC members have met monthly and there have been some useful discussions about topical issues such as importing timber. The group also provided a useful forum at which HelpAge International could make a presentation about the needs of elderly people. Merlin and Islamic Relief deserve great credit for taking the initiative.

The most successful example was Sri Lanka. Regular meetings of DEC members have taken place in Colombo as well as in the districts. They have led to instances of joint action. For example, Oxfam has agreed to provide water and sanitation in support of World Vision houses in Matara; Merlin is monitoring public health promotion work in camps and coordinating with agencies on delivery of public health outcomes; HelpAge worked with Oxfam in temporary shelters in Batticaloa and ensured that toilets had better access for older people. The DEC members in Sri Lanka have now identified a number of issues for possible joint advocacy.

In India, coordination among DEC members has also improved considerably. Regular meetings have been held and useful outcomes include a comprehensive mapping of DEC activities and joint position papers, e.g. on shelter.

These examples show the potential value of collaboration among DEC members in the field. However earlier and better coordination in all three countries might have mitigated some of the problems that bedevilled the first six months of the response. For example, duplication and over-supply of boats and other materials could have been avoided. Agencies' bargaining position with the government over temporary shelters and other issues could have been enhanced by using a collective voice rather than fragmented individual approaches. For example, joint emergency assessments, joint commissioning of research and sharing analytical material could all be useful functions of the DEC. While this would not address wider coordination problems, good working relations among a core group of agencies could have an important knock-on effect.

The value of coordination is such that it is not adequate to wait until members have the time to take things forward, or a Monitoring Mission gives a push many months after the disaster. By then, many of the best opportunities may have been lost. The DEC should now grasp the issue, establish a regular system and allocate resources to support it. The best way forward may be to agree a 'Lead Member' in each country or region from the start and allocate central resources to ensure that staff capacity is

³⁵ Nagapattinam Coordination and Research Centre

available. There should also be a liaison person or Desk Officer in the DEC Secretariat for each disaster (it seems amazing that there is not) to make sure that the systems are understood and disseminated, manage the flow of information and to support the process of collaboration in whatever way the members agree centrally and at the local level. It is sad to note, however, that similar recommendations have been made in previous DEC evaluations from Kosovo onwards with no result.

1.6.Coherence

Coherence in relation to security issues and conflict is addressed in Section 2.1. In this section we focus on the DEC response as an element within the wider humanitarian system and particularly in relation to governments and civil society.

DEC members are engaged in a range of works such as building shelters, constructing children's playgrounds, providing medical services for older people, providing business grants, all of which can arguably be said to be the responsibility of government. In India, most notably, DEC members have struggled to find a niche for themselves in a context where there is strong government, vibrant civil society and robust local communities. On the whole, members have avoided the risk of simply substituting for government. In Thailand, for example, Tearfund has focused on neglected minorities while ActionAid has developed rights-based programmes intended to ensure that people hold government to account. Where the state is very strong, it is tempting to fall into a role of criticising without engagement.

In Sri Lanka, where the state is not quite so dominant, DEC members have worked together and individually on a range of advocacy issues, and are now working on a public information campaign on entitlements to be launched in Batticaloa and southern Sri Lanka in collaboration with government officials and UNHCR. However it is worth reflecting that India, as a strong state, was more effective in disaster response, according to the Fritz Institute.

In Indonesia, Merlin has established a close and productive relationship with the Ministry of Health. This begins with reconstructing buildings and extends more deeply into capacity-building and professional upgrading. Although DEC members have found many good local partners in civil society, capacity remains an issue. As the BRR (relief and reconstruction agency) gathers strength, members will need to think deeply about their relationship with it.

DEC members should take time to reflect on their relationship with governments across the region, bearing in mind longer-term plans for reducing vulnerability. Does this need a strong state or strong civil society, or just training in communities? The important point to bear in mind is that the scale of the response has given DEC members a wider responsibility: the scale of resources at their disposal make them in some ways more akin to government than usual. Their role is more like that of the UN. They should think about the balance in society between government, civil society and the views of the people. What constitutes a balance that will reduce vulnerability? This is more easily done by thinking of the DEC as a collective group with different approaches, rather than by thinking about the activities of a particular member. It is not that Merlin and SC have the right answer in working with government, or that

ActionAid and Christian Aid are right in promoting advocacy through civil society. The important point is that the approaches of all the international NGOs are part of a wider political interaction with states affected by disaster.

This opens the way for a type of planning based on the concept of DEC members as niche players rather than competitors. This would make it easier to plan for the long-term aim of reducing vulnerability. DEC members could model responses in which members take on different roles in a coherent plan. This could even be extended to planning for other disasters that might occur in the region or elsewhere. If there is another earthquake in the region, or a cyclone, how would the DEC react? It might be useful to do some scenario planning before the event.

2. Review against Red Cross Code and Sphere Standards

2.0. Analytical Framework

Although the following analysis relates principally to the principles of the Red Cross Code, we also make reference to the Sphere Common Standards, using the Analytical Framework developed for the Monitoring Missions in April/May (Annex 2). We have also referred back to specific questions raised in the ToR.

2.1. The Humanitarian Imperative (need comes first)

The most fundamental of all humanitarian principles, emphasized in both the Red Cross Code and Sphere's Humanitarian Charter, is that need comes before all other considerations. This means that the preferences and traditions of agencies, as well as the vagaries of resource allocation, must be adjusted as far as possible to correspond to human need. In short, responses should be proportional to need. In the case of the tsunami disaster, the responsibility is greater because the resources are on such a massive scale. DEC members face questions of proportionality at three levels:

Global – proportionality to other disasters

As observed in Section 1, the needs of the tsunami victims have become elevated above other the needs of other disaster victims because of the success of the Appeal. This is not a new issue.³⁶ However global disparities are now on such a scale (see Annex 4) that it raises the question whether the humanitarian system as a whole is functioning effectively and whether more radical thinking and responses are needed. Given that the Humanitarian Imperative is the most fundamental principle, there is an obligation for DEC members to mitigate the negative consequences of what has happened and seek to avoid such an eventuality in the future.

If it were the case that the tsunami disaster simply received a large amount of money, the problem would not be too serious. The issue is that the response draws staff resources and management capacity from other parts of the world. As a result, people in need in other crises get less attention. Agencies have been quiet on this issue. Suspicions have been raised that agencies are more concerned with increasing their total income than addressing global needs in a proportionate manner.³⁷ It is not easy to see what benefits could be achieved by tackling the issue in public and there are risks of negative reactions. However the issue is now on such a huge scale, and strikes so directly at humanitarian principles, that it is not acceptable to leave it alone. We suggest that the DEC and members should publish an analysis of the issue, develop materials for the DEC website about disasters and the humanitarian system and consider the possibility of a fund that would even out the problems of capacity that arise from 'mega-Appeals'. These recommendations will be developed in Section 5.

³⁶ It was a key issue in the DEC Kosovo evaluation.

³⁷ For evidence of this suspicion see Annex 4 –paper on proportionality by Peter Wiles.

Regional – allocation of funds across the region

This issue has been addressed for the DEC as a whole under Coverage in Section 1.4. The DEC should ensure that at least 40% of total funds are allocated to Indonesia.

The question to be addressed here is whether individual DEC members are playing a proportionate role. The problem arises because each DEC member has a particular set of competencies and qualities. To an extent they are niche actors, specialising in a particular approach. This means that if a specific DEC member decides not to work in an area, the niche may remain unoccupied and needs may not be met.

This has happened in a few cases. HelpAge has been active in India and Sri Lanka promoting the concerns of elderly people among other agencies but it has been absent from Indonesia, apart from a single workshop with other DEC members. HelpAge is now planning to return to Indonesia and engage more deeply, but it could be said that over the last year the needs of elderly people in Indonesia have not been adequately addressed. No other DEC member developed that expertise; they probably expected HelpAge to be there. Similarly the absence of ActionAid from Indonesia is felt in a general lack of advocacy and rights-based work.

There is also a question of proportionality in members' involvements. The projected spending of the BRCS in the Maldives for 2005 is £5.7 million - roughly the same as in Indonesia and higher than Sri Lanka (£5 million). BRCS is not active in India at all. The spending in the Maldives is justifiable up to a point because BRCS was given responsibility for the Maldives within the wider plans of the Red Cross Movement. Moreover, few other agencies were active there and our desk-based review indicates that the quality of work was high (Annex 11). BRCS certainly presents a very skewed portfolio. With one of the highest shares of DEC allocations, this compounds the problem of lack of spending in Indonesia by the DEC as a whole. Many DEC members have to adjust their spending to patterns within their trans-national alliances and this does sometimes produce a skewing effect. This particular case is an extreme.

All DEC members should share in the collective responsibility to make the allocation of Appeal funds proportional to need as this is a natural expectation of donors. The solution in this case may be for BRCS to expand its work in Indonesia – as our report shows, there are still basic needs unmet. Similarly, each DEC member should support the DEC in making an overall response that is proportional to need.

National – needs relating to conflict

Those affected by the tsunami disaster are not the only people with humanitarian needs. In particular, there are people in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Somalia who have been displaced by conflict. While the tsunami victims are receiving help on a large scale, these groups have received little help. Thus the humanitarian imperative also underscores the argument made in Section 1.4 for including those affected by conflict in Aceh and Sri Lanka within the scope of Appeal funds.

Local

In the initial stages, aid was given to everyone and a disproportionate amount probably went to those who were most accessible and vocal. DEC members have been more active than most in seeking out minorities and groups that suffer social discrimination (see next section). But there is still a tendency to focus on the more visible groups, such as house-owners rather than those who lived in rented accommodation and may not be eligible for benefit under reconstruction programmes. There is also an issue concerning squatters in the coastal areas without any title to land. These groups also have a claim to new houses but there is a risk that they will be left out in the rush to get projects started. DEC members are aware of this but the point is worth repeating.

Similarly, DEC members are well aware that fishing communities have tended to receive disproportionate attention, especially in comparison with farmers. The Community Survey confirms that this is still an important issue and needs even greater attention.

Farmers are left out

In Tamil Nadu (India) many agriculture farmers have been missed out even though their lands have become saline due to the tsunami. The issue of over-emphasising economic recovery and neglecting other important sectors such as farming and casual labour was repeatedly raised during the survey. “They farm fish. We farm food. We both are affected. Why should we not receive the same attention?” said a farmer in Tamil Nadu.

DEC Evaluation Community Survey

Communities in Indonesia place great value on equal assistance for all, and sometimes insist that no-one should be left out, even if they are not directly affected by the tsunami disaster. They have even rejected projects outright or refused to move into houses until every single person has been catered for. This can conflict with the priorities of agencies determined to push ahead. Some DEC members have rightly acknowledged that the task is not building houses but building communities.

Despite such egalitarian pressures from the community, there is an overall tendency for aid to increase rather than reduce inequalities. In Somalia it was noted that the families who lost larger assets such as boats and permanent housing tended to be the better-off people. By targeting such groups, agencies will reinforce previously existing power and wealth structures, rather than supporting those most in need who may not have owned assets. Is disaster response a time for social transformation?

Similarly, in Sri Lanka and India there has been an issue of proportionality between fishermen who receive large amounts to replace assets like boats (costing anywhere from £380 to £2,500) compared with farmers and petty labourers who only receive minor support (£40 to £65). At the bottom of the scale, women receive even smaller amounts for cottage industries such as sewing or processing agricultural products. Although it is natural to replace assets lost, the slogan of ‘build back better’, often used by aid agencies, should be taken to include social structures as well as buildings.

This may not have to imply that aid is used to transform social structures, but it implies that the process should be conducted in negotiation with the community.

2.2. Discrimination

DEC members in India have counteracted social discrimination by focusing programmes on *dalits*³⁸, children, older persons and disabled people. Specific examples include cash-for-work for *dalits* in Tamil Nadu by Christian Aid and assistance to the Nicobari and Ranchi tribes by ActionAid in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. CARE has provided solar driers for women fish vendors, and Concern has supported agricultural land reclamation for the '*padyachi*' community. The community surveys in India indicate that targeting *dalits* and other marginalized groups is widely acknowledged by DEC members and that in some cases such very poor families were assisted even though they were not directly affected by the disaster.

No discrimination in Sri Lanka

By and large, aid is distributed without any discrimination by DEC agencies and its local partners. Communities mentioned that no discrimination was experienced on the grounds of caste, religion, or race. "We have received enough relief and every one affected by the tsunami was given, irrespective of any discrimination" said a fishermen from Wenemulle village of the Galle District.

DEC Evaluation Community Survey

DEC members are now making efforts to reach the most needy *within* these groups e.g. targeting the most vulnerable among the elderly, such as those living alone or suffering from chronic illness (HelpAge India). Initiatives for disabled people include ensuring access to shelters and children's play centres, and involvement in cash for work programmes and community volunteering schemes.

DEC members in India have been conscious of social discrimination against women. They have supported women's involvement in cash-for-work programmes by providing crèche facilities. They have insisted on paying men and women equal wages and involved women in traditional male tasks such as pond desalination and self-build schemes. However, the approach to gender is mainly focused on women and girls and there appear to be no special initiatives for boys or men e.g. support to the increased numbers of single fathers or protection measures for orphaned and semi-orphaned boys who are expected to cope as adults from the age of 14 according to customary practice. Some of these cases are picked up through educational or psychosocial programmes but this seems to be an area that merits more focused attention. There is also a need to engage with men to ensure greater representation of women.

³⁸ The term 'dalit' refers to former 'untouchables', 'outcastes' or 'harijans'. It is the term most widely used by dalits themselves.

“We join the activities and, only when invited by men, took up the site selection process,” said a woman in Thittu village who negotiates fish catches at the market. “Why speak when not asked? Why stay mum when asked?” she added.

DEC Evaluation Community Survey

Changing attitudes is slow long-term work and simplistic interventions may have undesirable consequences. For example, assets given directly to older people may make them vulnerable to exploitation by their families, but putting assets under collective ownership of self-help groups may help avert such effects. HelpAge is able to draw on experience to inform other DEC members of such issues, while Christian Aid and ActionAid draw on a wide range of local partners to provide insights into other forms of discrimination. Overall, the DEC has done well in relation to this principle.

2.3. Religion and politics

In Indonesia there has been some concern about religious proselytising but these complaints do not seem to be applicable to the DEC members and partners. It seems to be limited to a number of very small organisations that keep themselves away from the mainstream of aid and seek a low profile, perhaps because they know that they are acting in a manner that others are likely to question.

Because Islam is integrated into state structures in Aceh through recognition of Sharia Law, we suggest that there is an obligation to identify religious minorities and ensure that they are protected. Islamic Relief has expressed interest in pursuing this. As far as we could ascertain, no DEC funds have been used for religious buildings. This is a complicated issue because mosques are often used as general meeting places and could be regarded as a kind of community centre. They are included in most government-supported building projects. It is advisable for members (with twins and partners) to adopt a clear position on this, as Oxfam has done, citing the Red Cross Code as a basis for not engaging in such activity, at least with DEC funds.

Allegations of proselytising emerged in Sri Lanka earlier in the year and there was a fear that some Christian agencies might be expelled. This now seems to be less of an issue.³⁹ There remains a need to ensure that Muslim communities are not excluded.

There has been a long history of missionary work in the A+N Islands of India as well as in many of the mainland coastal areas affected by the tsunami. Although there are many rumours and allegations, DEC members have long experience of the sensitivities and have firm policies against using assistance to promote any religious or political viewpoint.

³⁹ A case involving a DEC member came up during the community survey and is being investigated further.

Religious discrimination

When asked, people unanimously mentioned that there have been no such practices taking place in their communities. Church groups provided aid for all communities. Local NGOs and CBOs also provided aid to all communities. “The area is too well connected to the main road. There are so many NGOs and volunteers that such efforts would have immediately attracted public attention,” explained a relief officer. “We are sensitive to caste and religion for over four elections. Religious influence cannot be exercised here. All are aware.”

DEC Evaluation Community Survey

In Somalia, there are interesting illustrations of agencies of different faiths working together. Muslim Aid was supported by a Christian organisation to carry out food distribution and their visibility showed the two faiths working side by side. World Concern/Tearfund as Christian agencies working in the Islamic south of Somalia have felt isolated as the only international agency supporting tsunami affected populations and are now looking into the possibility of making links with Muslim Aid.

2.4. Foreign policy

This is one of the disasters least susceptible to the risk of influence from foreign policy. Because of the Appeal, DEC members are not tied to funding from the UK government. Indeed, if there is an issue at all it is whether the generous public response has let the UK government off the hook in relation to its early commitment to match DEC funds. Rather than hold government to account for this promise, it may be better to ensure that its funds are used for other, less high profile, disasters and not diverted towards issues of political rather than humanitarian importance. We return to this issue in the Recommendations.

There appears to be a risk that the domestic policies of Western governments in the form of food subsidies may lead to substitution of Western surpluses for locally-bought food aid. Rice distributed to tsunami victims in Indonesia has hitherto been purchased locally but it is said that donors are pressing WFP to use donated grain instead, despite objections from the Indonesian government. There is already anecdotal evidence that the supply is undermining local markets and deterring farmers from growing such crops.⁴⁰ DEC members should be ready to take action if these fears prove well founded.

2.5. Respect for culture and custom

This Red Cross Principle is one that can cause confusion if it is taken to override the Principle on discrimination. Clearly it is unacceptable to accept discriminatory practices simply because they are considered to be the custom. The Principle is best interpreted to mean ‘respect’ but not necessarily ‘follow’.

⁴⁰ LRRD survey of beneficiary perspectives; meeting with DEC evaluation team in Aceh.

One of the main issues for DEC members has been the need to balance issues of cost and safety in house construction against cultural preferences. This applies firstly to the issue of house location, with some communities putting higher value on staying on their traditional land and others want to move because of considerations of safety. The problem for agencies is compounded by lack of clarity about the likelihood of another tsunami. Similarly, some people express a preference for brick/cement structures (seen as modern) while others seem to welcome designs made of wood (seen as traditional).

Location as Culture

People from the Thittu village in Tamil Nadu have been relocated from an island and they are not fully happy with the site selection process and its outcome. They said that their way of living varies from other coastal communities and they are habituated to live on the island.

DEC Evaluation Community Survey

An issue on which DEC members may need to make a stand in relation to cultural values is property rights. DEC members are clearly committed to resist discrimination along gender lines (Principle 2) but few have challenged the common practice of registering houses in the name of a man (only). As far as we could ascertain, this is not because of legal restrictions but is based on male-oriented custom. From a humanitarian perspective, women are often more vulnerable, especially in relation to divorce. DEC members should negotiate with communities, in a respectful manner, to put houses in the name of the woman or in joint names.

This may not be as contrary to custom as it may seem. In parts of the west coast of Aceh, it is reported that women commonly own the family house and that property rights are passed through the maternal line. In other cases, both male and female heads of household have been registered. The issue is not simply one of protecting women's rights but also of giving them a greater stake and influence in house design.

Women and shelter in Sri Lanka

By and large communities were happy with the way DEC agencies and their partners have interacted with them. They felt that their culture and customs were respected. However, they were not happy with some of the interventions such as the construction and design of the temporary shelter, which was considered as gender blind. "If I had to construct my house, I would have a larger kitchen with a water tap inside", said a woman from Welegoda village.

DEC Evaluation Community Survey

In Somalia, SC and CARE have sensitively challenged the ways in which assets are distributed within communities in order to ensure that women and minority groups are better represented. Households have been recognized by their female head, reducing the possibility that a husband with several wives would receive only one family package.

Also in Somalia, agencies often have demands placed upon them by traditional leaders, who try to dictate how the agencies should work, who they should employ, from whom assets should be hired from and which contractors should be engaged for construction. Agencies have had to challenge such 'traditional' ways of working. Experience in the past has shown that whilst accepting such practices may provide short-term solutions, in the long-term they pose a threat.

A number of DEC members have engaged in psychosocial programmes. As far as we could ascertain these have been supported by good professional guidance, as in the case of ActionAid and CARE in India, for example. The imposition of Western cultural responses to stress and bereavement that caused problems in some of the humanitarian responses in the past have been replaced by better respect for local culture and for addressing problems within a local cultural context. But such programmes will have only limited success if basic needs are not met. As one man asked the Community Survey team in India: "*What was this about? Who did they want us to narrate to? Will it change anything for anyone?*"

Arguably, psychosocial work rests on the notion of respect for culture and social systems. The 'psychosocial' label may seem to be trivialised by being applied to children's play activity, as it often is. It is the socialising within a cultural context that is the valuable element rather than the training of teachers and supervisors in recognising stress disorders.

Islamic Relief has played a valuable role in Banda Aceh using cash-for-work to develop the site of a mass grave as a memorial. This was done in close collaboration with the community and is clearly very well received by local people. The Community Survey found that interventions by Islamic Relief were considered appropriate especially because they dealt with men and women with due respect.

Psycho-social needs in Somalia

Often psychosocial support was not considered as part of assessments or dismissed as not necessary due to strong supportive clan systems. It was reported that some people are still suffering from nightmares of the tsunami and it was some time before some communities returned from higher areas. An unexpected benefit from several 'dykes' or sea walls that were built as part of SC's cash-for-work programmes was the psychological support that this gave to communities to feel protected from the sea.

DEC Somalia Evaluation

Arguably, cash-for-work programmes have been the most significant contribution to psychosocial well-being. The World Bank has found that providing survivors with income-earning opportunities tied to physical work often seems to help as much as grief counselling.⁴¹ Experience after the Gujarat earthquake suggests that livelihood inputs can also make a significant contribution to psychological recovery, especially for women.⁴²

Perhaps it is time for psychosocial work to be reintegrated with the mainstream of humanitarian response?

⁴¹ World Bank (2005) Operations Evaluation Department, *Lessons from Natural Disasters and Emergency Reconstruction*, World Bank, New York

⁴² See report on Shanta Project, SEWA – www.sewa.org

2.6. Capacity building

Reconstruction on the scale required after the tsunami disaster amounts to much more than a process of replacing the physical infrastructure. The more difficult part is the re-creation or formation of communities. In parts of Aceh, as many as 80% of the people are dead and so the process of rebuilding capacity is much more demanding than in most other disasters.

Although DEC members are aware of the slogan ‘rebuild communities not houses’, it is easy to become focused on finding plots of land and ordering materials. There is also a temptation for local officials to give approval for such schemes without proper consultation – perhaps because they lack the staff and other capacity to organise this. There are many examples (mainly outside the DEC) of hurried constructions, without adequate attention given to services or to the various social and livelihood parameters. People have sometimes refused to move into such new houses.

One problem, as we have noted in Section 1.1, is that DEC members themselves lack capacity in the shelter sector, and hired engineers are often unfamiliar with the wider aims of the organisation. If such capacity was in-house, it could be better integrated with agency concerns and mandates such as accountability, gender sensitivity and so on.

In Indonesia, the problem is compounded because this capacity scarcely exists in civil society, whereas in India and Sri Lanka it does. Although local organisations are appearing in increasing numbers (Oxfam now works with about 50), the process is slow because everything starts from the basics. The problem is not so much the ability to build houses, which is largely a matter of intensive supervision of contractors, but of building the social skills to support communities and sustain them. This may mean that houses will take longer than the affected communities and UK public have been led to believe. This is one of the key reasons for our recommendation to extend the basic timescale in Indonesia to four years.

This is not to say that everything is perfect elsewhere. In Sri Lanka, the evaluation team noted a perception among local NGOs and networks that international NGOs were behaving arrogantly towards them and that DEC member agencies, being some of the largest, are particularly seen in this light. Use of English as a language in meetings without any consideration for the participants from local organisations is cited as an issue. Another is ‘poaching’ staff from local NGOs and creating a salary structure that local NGOs cannot afford. This may not be based on a wide enough sample and may simply reflect general uneasiness about the donor-recipient relationship. But there is no harm in DEC members reflecting on their behaviour and how it might be perceived by others.

Such comments may also reflect a situation in which local NGOs are overwhelmed by the management and accountability issues and are looking for more support. Some DEC members have responded to this by taking an intensive approach to capacity building for local partners, e.g. providing basic infrastructure and office space, training in financial and project management, advice on technical issues, and sharing

new ideas and good practices. However DEC members themselves have been overwhelmed and in some cases the quality of partnership relationships has suffered. Specifically, DEC members with many local partners have not always been able to provide sufficient supervision and technical support.

Some local NGOs have received inadequate support in taking on issues they have not tackled before. A women's development organisation in India struggled to cope with construction projects. Others need help in applying specialised knowledge in new environments, such as applying child protection policies developed in a stable urban setting to island communities with different social structures. Staff of the DEC members have worked extremely hard to fill these gaps but the problem of scaling up is evident both in operational and non-operational agencies. Indeed while the more operational agencies have now established huge staff capacity and set up complex structures (Oxfam has over 800 staff in Indonesia), less operational agencies seem less well geared for the task of partner support.

Finally, there is the issue of supporting government capacity. In India, government has played a dominating role, laying down parameters rather than seeking support from aid agencies. In Sri Lanka the relationship is more fluid. Several members have worked closely with government and supported in building its capacity in sectors such as education (SC and World Vision) and water/sanitation (Oxfam). Merlin has been particularly effective in Ampara and Batticaloa in restoring health services. Damaged facilities and/or buildings newly assigned as health centers have been rehabilitated and upgraded and temporary facilities constructed. In Indonesia, DEC members could perhaps be more active in supporting government capacity. Merlin is working closely with the Ministry of Health to develop skills and capacities as well as restore buildings. SC is working in a strategic manner to support the Ministry of Social Welfare.

Overall, capacity building has not yet received the focus it deserves. This may reflect the target-driven rush of the first year. There is now a need for more concerted focus both within DEC members and outside. In Somalia, with little prospect of media focus and smaller budgets, DEC members have taken advantage of long timescales to invest in community capacity. This may be what is needed on a wider scale.

2.7. Involving beneficiaries in decision-making

Local people have generally praised cash-for-work programmes but they have been less positive about their lack of involvement in general relief and recovery programmes, most especially in shelter. Habitat for Humanity (Twin with Christian Aid) found that people in Banda Aceh were unwilling to work on building sites: they said they had small shops in the city and were not familiar with building work. This appears to be an exception and other groups wanted to be more closely involved. This is not simply out of a desire for income but reflects a feeling that contractors are inefficient and produce poor quality results.

Shelter and livelihoods disconnected

In two out of three villages temporary shelters were constructed by agencies with the help of contractors and handed over to the people. Local people are not being employed in the construction of permanent shelter either. “We can do more and more. Do give us work. We can enlist others. We can sort out problems. We can call people. We can negotiate and trade,” said a family leader from Peraude.

DEC Evaluation Community Survey

Some agencies have decided to focus on highly connected programmes in specific locations. This approach brings economies in relation to transport costs and enables the agency to deepen its relationships with local people and authorities. CAFOD’s partner CRS in Meulaboh (Indonesia) presents a good example of this approach. Its programmes are highly professional and achieve considerable impact in the designated area. The only question about this approach is that, taken to extremes, it could amount to cherry-picking: taking the easier cases and ignoring the more difficult ones. This is a reasonable way of working up to a point and this is not a complaint directed at CRS. But in the context of massive resources, DEC members should be expected to maintain a focus on the general situation rather than focus on a few places. This point has already been made and need not be stressed further.

The integrated and localised approach does offer greater possibilities for involving local people. This is something to be welcomed especially in Indonesia, where the response has generally been rather top-down. A farmer in Blang Krueng in Baitussalam in Greater Aceh said: “We discuss activities. We discuss outputs. We discuss issues. They decide actions.”

In India, with experienced national staff in the DEC agencies, strong civil society and well-established communities, consultations with beneficiaries are the established norm. DEC members commonly carry out focus group discussions before commencing projects.

There are many good examples of community involvement, especially in India, and it would be invidious to name names. There has been excellent work on community-based public health committees in the A+N islands, farmers groups in Pondicherry and shelter committees in Chennai, where community volunteers have been trained to monitor basic quality assurance in construction. However there are also a few examples of the opposite, even in India. In Sri Lanka, there are several cases of DEC

members (notably Action Aid, CARE, Christian Aid, Oxfam and SCF) engaging in support to camp management, such as training committee members in Participatory Rapid Appraisal.

In both countries, there is good practice in relation to the Sphere Common Standard on Consultation but much less in relation to the Monitoring Standard that requires that ‘women, men and children from all affected groups are regularly consulted and involved in monitoring activities.’ This may make a useful focus for 2006. As Oxfam has noted in a recent report, beneficiaries were included in the initial assessments, but their input has not been fully utilized in the actual design and execution of projects.⁴³ This is reflected by comments made to the DEC Community Survey Team in Indonesia. In all the three villages surveyed, people referred back to their initial involvement with agencies: *“They were new and we had lived here for ages. They asked us everything. But now it is not so. They tell us what to do and how to work.”*

In Somalia, transparency and fairness are also important because they may affect the safety and protection of humanitarian staff. SC UK has used its long experience in Somalia to ensure that all activities are carried out with all parts of the community.

However involvement in decision-making has been generally deficient in housing programmes. The beneficiary surveys reveal considerable dissatisfaction with this.

Lack of involvement in shelter

Construction of temporary and permanent shelter offers a huge opportunity for community involvement. People say, “We can build our own house”. “We can take up the contract for the entire village, if you help manage accounts and materials”. “Whose houses are being built?”

However, communities mentioned that they were consulted initially for the selection of a design from four other designs. They replied, “We can design our rooms and the front yard” and “The rooms are so small, like a prison”. But their participation was limited to deciding the numbers of units and selecting a design from a limited choice. Alterations and suggestions related to construction and use of material were not approved. Nor were any other inputs such as finance, material, design or technology. People said, “I have some money but they do not allow us to add a room”. “The same bricks can be better arranged to make the front view more attractive without any additional cost”. “Brick walls can receive lean-to palm structures. Why not?”

DEC Evaluation Community Survey

DEC members have not quite latched on to the specific nature of the problem. It is not a matter of telling people about the agency but about the choices available, and making those choices as wide as possible and genuine. Oxfam, for example, has deployed staff in the field with special responsibility for programme quality including accountability. ActionAid has an interesting approach through ‘Peer review’, focusing on critical issues such as participation and accountability.⁴⁴ These are welcome

⁴³ DRP2

⁴⁴ ActionAid (July 2005) *Peer review: The Tsunami Response, India and Sri Lanka*.

initiatives. But the issue for people in Indonesia is that they lack basic information about seismic safety and relocation options. In the absence of such information, they cannot participate properly in consultative processes. As a result important decisions may be taken on the basis of rumour, prejudice and personal preferences. A more radical approach is needed focused on handling information as a commodity or sector in itself.

Who wants accountability?

People did not mention activities such as Social Audit or Revalidation of Assessments by DEC members, though the team found traces of it in the communities. When asked, the community said, "That was for them. They must have a copy". Neither were they aware of financial decisions and planned actions, nor found it to be relevant. "What will we do with all that detail? What we want is a good house." "I do not want to know what they have spent on us. I want to know what I can do to earn more."

DEC Evaluation Community Survey

The need for a different approach arises not only because information systems are deficient as in Indonesia but also because the choices are genuinely difficult. Technicians cannot decide these issues, nor can aid managers decide the balance between safety, livelihood and cultural preferences. People must be involved, and to be involved they need information.

It may be better not to hurry people too much. Agencies may want to build houses but the issues are still unclear. In all the most affected countries, governments initially placed a ban on building in the coastal 'buffer zone' but have gradually relaxed this, and now there is uncertainty. They promised to make land available in areas away from the sea, but have made slow progress in identifying such areas. Meanwhile people's views and fears have changed.

Lack of trust in aid agencies is beginning to emerge as a factor in itself. Agencies have made promises of new permanent houses, often with highly optimistic time schedules, but very few have been delivered. As a result of all this confusion, groups of people have decided to buy land for themselves rather than wait. Others have refused housing from one agency in the hope of getting something better from another. People have made decisions that they later regretted. The underlying problem is lack of adequate information.

DEC members recognise this at least in Sri Lanka where DEC members have launched an information campaign about housing. In Somalia, CARE supported and facilitated a set of meetings in which communities were given the opportunity to discuss fisheries policy with ministry representatives. UNDP has published a paper on information about housing in Indonesia.⁴⁵ However what is needed is a mass campaign, and for that there must be collaboration and coordination among the agencies. This seems to be a clear case where the DEC could add value.

⁴⁵ Wall, I (2005) *Where's My House?* UNDP Aceh (TEC website)

There is also a moral issue behind this. Aid agencies have gathered a great deal of information from communities but given very little back. It is now time to treat information as a 'sector' in itself, like water or health.⁴⁶

Information, please.

Accountability towards communities has been poor. People at two locations out of the three surveyed mentioned unfulfilled promises and uncertainties in terms of receiving permanent houses. *"So many agencies came and promised us so much. There was a tsunami of promises, but it had no impact on our life". "Thank our luck that we did not believe all those promises for long and started shelter building on our own"*.

People are unaware about the timeframes for receiving permanent shelter. A fisherman in Blang Krueng said, *"Do not give us a house now. That is OK. We can wait. We understand. But tell us finally when you will have the house ready? It may still not give us a house but it will give us security."*

DEC Evaluation Community Survey

2.8. Reduce future vulnerability

The tsunami disaster was a unique event in location and scale. No reliable evidence is available as to whether such an event may occur again or in what time perspective (see Annex 3). DEC members have accepted the need for seismic safety in building reconstruction but have been reluctant to engage in the debate about reconstruction in the immediate coastal areas. There is no commonly agreed definition of what is 'safe'. The removal of people from 'buffer zones' is not clearly justified by scientific evidence (see Annex 3), but agencies feel reluctant to challenge it. Meanwhile, hotels and beach cabins for tourists are being built in the 'buffer zone', while fishing communities are moved inland. Perhaps they should be more assertive?

The issue on which there is more agreement is the need for long-term reduction of vulnerability. There is a need for wider assessment of risk in the 'administrative districts affected by the tsunami' of the DEC policy definition. These risks include earthquakes, floods and cyclones as far more common events.

These long-term plans need to be integrated into actions that are happening now. Shelter design is an obvious area in which risk can be reduced, but there is also a danger that livelihood inputs are making people vulnerable. Studies by FAO before the tsunami indicated that the coastal waters around Aceh were over-fished. Nevertheless hundreds of boats for coastal fishing have been supplied whereas there has been little provision of canoes for inland fishing or deep-sea boats for the ocean. There is a risk of an environmental disaster exacerbated by the tsunami response. This may be unlikely but it highlights the need to start working on vulnerability reduction now. BRCS has shown particular sensitivity to this issue, conducting reviews with staff and community surveys to begin to map out the issues.

Especially in the case of Aceh, DEC members should broaden their thinking to questions such as 'what would be a sustainable economy for the Region?' and 'what

⁴⁶ For a more general analysis of this issue see World Disaster Report (2005).

is the most strategic level of intervention?’ For example, analysis by CRS (CAFOD) and Oxfam has already shown that the problem in re-establishing industries such as palm and rubber products is not the loss of trees or tools but the death of many middlemen in the disaster. Now there is no-one to advance capital for rubber collection and so the industry is at a standstill. Studies by the World Bank have also indicated that the greatest obstacle to development is not at the level of small producers, where most NGOs focus, but the level of traders. This is the traditional preserve of bilateral and multilateral donors but international NGOs may need to step forward, take on new roles and think at a higher level.⁴⁷

It may be necessary to think laterally. For example, in Somalia roads may be the key to vulnerability reduction:

‘It has been suggested that the greatest contribution to improving the livelihoods of the coastal communities would be to improve the road infrastructure between the main towns and the coast, allowing improved trade between the two, as well as access to air and other sea ports for export of fish and fish products.’ (Somalia Country Report)

It is not that the DEC is inactive (SC has been building roads in Somalia with cash-for-work), but this type of bigger thinking needs further impetus. It may be an issue for collective rather than individual action because much research is needed and there are advantages in sharing the results, or designing coordinated responses.

The other issue is that the current three-year timescale for DEC funding is too short for vulnerability reduction. In practice, the next two years will be dominated by reconstruction and, although plans for vulnerability reduction should begin now, the reality is that they will need at least a couple of years at the end of the main spend period to come to fruition. Hence we recommend a 3+2 formula for DEC spend with three years for reconstruction (four years in Indonesia) with the final period focused on vulnerability reduction.

2.9. Accountability to donors⁴⁸

In the few cases where we have come across wasteful practices, it has been because of lack of proper supervision by the agency. Poor quality of housing in Indonesia, for example, arises from insufficient supervision of contractors rather than design faults. We were pleased to note that DEC members were doing better on this than others.

There have been a very small number of outright failures but it would be invidious to name the ones that we came across as they may not be a representative sample. Cases seemed to be particularly common in boat building where agencies either did not understand the complex requirements of fishermen and failed to involve them, or they allowed boats to be spoilt by poor workmanship.

⁴⁷ Interview with John Clark (World Bank, Banda Aceh)

⁴⁸ Note: this Red Cross Principle also refers to accountability to beneficiaries but, in accordance with previous DEC practice, we have included this in Principle 7.

Twinning

The ways in which DEC members' work have become more complex. The latest development is 'twinning', introduced in the current Appeal in order to widen the scope for spending through other UK agencies. Traditionally, DEC members worked directly from the UK (operationally) or through local partners (non-operationally). In the last decade they have increasingly worked through international networks. In effect they have funded other international organisations either through formal alliances using the same name, as in the case of CARE, SC, World Vision etc, or through international affiliates as Tearfund does with World Concern, a US-based organisation. 'Twinning' is not a radical new departure but more a closing of the circle to include UK agencies. But it is different in the sense that partnerships are formed specifically for the tsunami response, rather than on shared mandates or a history of cooperation.

Inevitably, the procedures and systems have lagged behind the practice. Members have developed their own systems. Papers submitted by CAFOD, Christian Aid and Oxfam indicate that they have taken their responsibilities seriously, devised procedures and anticipated possible problems. CAFOD has asked for monthly reports (as opposed to the initial three-month and later six-month reports required by the DEC) from its twin, Islamic Relief. Christian Aid and Oxfam have developed a detailed format for agreements. Oxfam put out specific guidance for its 'Twin' Muslim Aid on the issue of construction of religious buildings. We were pleased to note a good working relationship between the two organisations in Banda Aceh and a commitment on Oxfam's part to provide capacity-building support to Muslim Aid.

There is no clear distinction between twinning with a UK partner (such as CAFOD and Islamic Relief), being part of a global alliance (as are many DEC members⁴⁹), and funding a local partner especially where the latter is an affiliate such as a local Red Cross Society. But in terms of accountability, twinning does present a risk of opportunistic relationships without proper engagement. There is also a risk that 'twins' will be treated very differently from 'partners' and international affiliates.

The DEC should now make a comprehensive review of such arrangements in order to ensure that there is a consistent and transparent level of accountability to public donors. This should result in some basic standards for accountability that can be applied to all such relationships. This could be part of the review of financial accountability already proposed in this evaluation.

2.10. Respect for dignity

The main publicity materials used during the Appeal contained no visual images and little more than the address to which funds should be sent. Perhaps the media coverage was so great that no further emphasis was needed. The evaluation team was not able to review all publications from all members but did not come across any materials that caused concern. On the contrary, there were a number of case studies on

⁴⁹ It is clear in the case of Oxfam and Save the Children, but what about Tearfund and World Concern? Or CARE and Raks Thai Foundation?

websites depicting beneficiaries as active agents responding to the disaster with resilience and dignity. If there is a concern, it is not about DEC materials but the tendency of the media to focus on the responses of outsiders, such as tourists in Thailand, rather than of local people and national governments.

There has been some concern about the proliferation of signboards and the tendency to mark every item with the agency's name. Some consider this demeaning as a constant reminder to people that they are victims and recipients of charity. But the evidence on this is not clear. The DEC Monitoring Mission in Sri Lanka noted that some beneficiaries had taken the trouble to mark items with agency logos themselves. The Fritz Institute beneficiary surveys in India and Sri Lanka report reasonably high levels of satisfaction in relation to dignity, the lowest scores being for clothes distribution in India and Bedding/Shelter in both countries.⁵⁰

Affected families' satisfaction with dignity in the relief process

Item	India: Dignity %	Sri Lanka: Dignity %
Food	60	66
Bedding/Shelter	54	50
Medical Care	90	75
Clothes	45	67
Counselling	67	NA

Sample respondents: India 802, Sri Lanka 604
Surveys conducted in March/April 2005

Our Community Survey suggests that people feel the greatest affront to their dignity in not being able to work. A person in one of the camps asked: "If we are to be fed, why can not we do some work?" and the translator for the survey team summed up by saying: "Eight hours of honest work is most difficult to find in humanitarian interventions."

This suggests that a wider interpretation of dignity is needed, one that is less concerned with images and more with recognising the capacities of people affected by disasters and their right to involvement and information. This could be related to the call in this evaluation for better information about disasters in general, and the concept of vulnerability as a critical aspect of poverty. This might lead to a more proportional form of giving by the UK public.

2.11. Summary

Earlier DEC evaluations have summarized performance against the Red Cross Code by using a scoring system.⁵¹ The evaluation team has tried to do this but found the results unsatisfactory because the analysis was done by different team members with different perceptions. All that can usefully be said is that the lowest scores were for involvement of beneficiaries in project management (Principle 7), followed by building capacity (6) and reducing vulnerability (8). These are the areas in which members need to focus. The DEC itself should focus on the issues relating to the

⁵⁰ Fritz Institute (2005) *Lessons from the Tsunami Top Line Findings*, TEC website

⁵¹ This system was first used in the DEC evaluation after the Gujarat earthquake.

humanitarian imperative (Principle 1), ensuring that all needs are met regardless of the capacities and preferences of DEC members.

A further general concern is a lack of strategic shift after the initial relief phase. Lack of recognition for the transition stage probably stems from a lack of proper research and reflection around the mid-year period. This allowed agencies to switch focus to permanent housing without analysing needs or considering their wider responsibilities. It may be useful to bear in mind the Sphere Common Standard on assessment:

*'An initial assessment is not an end in itself but should be seen as a first step in a continuous process..... A more in-depth assessment will be needed later to identify gaps in assistance and to provide baseline information.'*⁵²

In general, members may do well to focus more on the Sphere Common Standards rather than the technical ones.

A lesson to be drawn from this (perhaps not a new one) is that disaster response should be conceptualised in three stages:

- Response to immediate needs
- A transitional stage supported by research on basic needs
- Reconstruction linked to reducing future vulnerability.

The critical issue is the strategic review needed between three and six months after the disaster. This is too often bypassed and programmes follow their own logic rather than the logic of needs.

⁵² The Sphere Project (2004) p31

3. Other Issues

Lack of time has caused this evaluation to focus on particular issues and neglect others. We have looked at shelter issues in some depth but covered other sectors such as health and water/sanitation in less detail. Human resources has not been a major focus of this evaluation but in the following paragraphs we offer some tentative findings with reference to Sphere Common Standard 7 (Competencies and responsibilities) and 8 (Management and Support). This is followed by a summary of the lessons learned and a brief review of some areas of good practice that merit further attention.

3.1. Human resources

Despite the rapid process of scaling up, the quality of staff employed by DEC members and their partners has been good. This reflects the members' long experience and extensive operations in India and Sri Lanka, and the availability of highly educated and experienced staff. In India very few international staff have been employed, while in Sri Lanka many of the expatriates have long experience in the country. Where international staff have been employed, there is a concern that this has been at the expense of other programmes around the world.

The area of greatest concern is the lack of specialist expertise in shelter issues. Very few members had in-house expertise and were forced to rely on consultants, some of whom had little understanding of the humanitarian sector. This is an area requiring some capacity building within DEC members.

We have also noted that the smaller DEC members lacked permanent capacity in disaster response and their efforts to scale up were seriously hampered by having to recruit people from outside. There seems to be a strong case for more members to retain experienced staff between emergency operations, as Oxfam and others have done for many years. Islamic Relief has hesitated to do this because of fears that it would not be acceptable to the donor public. This does not seem to have been the case for other agencies. On the contrary, if the DEC is to challenge the current lack of proportionality in disaster response, it should be open about this. To go a step further, Appeal funds should be set aside to support this capacity and to develop the ability to respond to other disasters in the future. This would put the objective of reducing vulnerability on a wider basis. The mechanisms for such a fund, basically designed to support the disaster capacity of smaller members, would need further investigation. It would be a token of a more collective approach if larger agencies supported this, even though they might get less benefit.

DEC members have clearly found it difficult to recruit and retain international staff, especially for Aceh. There was a serious shortage of staff with local experience and conditions were harsh, with most agencies refusing to allow accompanied postings. This resulted in deployment of senior managers for excessively short periods. As an example of an agency-wide problem, the Operations Director of one DEC member in

Aceh is reported to have changed five times in as many months.⁵³ The effectiveness of an agency does depend to some extent on the length of time that its senior managers are in post as their presence facilitates a measured approach to transition and focus on wider issues and strategic objectives. It is possible that the failure of agencies to grasp the need for a transitional stage was partly due to the problem of staff turnover. All this points to the need for greater preparedness and increased capacity.

Turnover of local staff has been less rapid but nonetheless caused problems. One village head (Keuchik) told the DEC survey team: “When NGO representative changes, it is always so sudden, unplanned, and without handing over. A new person appears again on site. He may not know things and leaves out individuals or villages.”

The most effective agencies were those that moved their staffing structures to long-term contracts at an early stage. The British Red Cross did particularly well in deploying expatriates from other parts of Indonesia. Most of its 11 delegates have previous experience in Indonesia and several can speak Bahasa Indonesian (we came across no expatriate able to speak Acehnese). They are developing approaches to livelihoods that show a high level of local involvement and seem likely to deliver impressive results in 2006.

Some of the rapid changes are due to competition among the agencies for local staff. In general, DEC members pay similar salaries. In Indonesia they have discussed this issue among themselves and tried to coordinate scales of pay. The main problem for DEC members is reported to be the high salaries paid by UN agencies and their willingness to directly ‘poach’ staff (meaning to make a direct offer without interview and without informing the employer). Some managers have been reluctant to invest in capacity-building because they are not confident that staff will stay in post.

Local NGOs perceive similar risks in relation to the international NGOs. This has been a cause of contention especially in Sri Lanka. While it is impossible to avoid salary differentials, the basic principle should be to avoid ‘poaching’ (as defined above).

DEC members are increasingly international in their staffing. They have developed human resources systems and salary structures that allow them to re-deploy staff between countries. This contributes to cultural diversity in the humanitarian response and leads to wider learning through the system. Pay scales tend to follow a ‘three tier’ system which can have some negative effects, as described in a recent evaluation:

‘While Indonesians hired outside the country are offered international level salaries and benefits, those hired within Indonesia receive remuneration on a national pay scale. Acehnese hired locally receive lower salaries and/or benefits than national staff. This system provokes constant disharmony.....’⁵⁴

While it is understandable that this might cause disharmony, it is probably an inevitable consequence of the growing and positive trend towards internationalisation. The problem may be that managers have not been sufficiently proactive in handling

⁵³ Mashni, Reed, Sasmitawidjaja, Sundhagul and Wright (August 2005) *Multi-agency evaluation of tsunami response: Thailand and Indonesia*, CARE and World Vision p33

⁵⁴ Ibid p34

the consequences of this development and explaining why and how it works. Local staff may be less resentful if they see a prospect of joining the international cadre at some point.

DEC members have been somewhat slow in putting into place human resources managers and structures, especially in Indonesia, and have tended to limit their role to recruitment issues rather than taking a broader view of staff quality and support, as required under Sphere Standards. But the achievement of scaling up by some members has been impressive and should be documented. We suggest that a deeper examination of human resources issues should be undertaken either as a separate exercise or in the evaluation for Year Two. This may need to refer to the People in Aid Code as well as the Sphere Standards.⁵⁵

3.2. Lessons learned

Especially in countries with fairly strong civil society, markets and government structure, the role of international humanitarian agencies is not so much to save lives as to support the return to normality. Its real value lies in the recovery rather than relief stage. In Indonesia, Sri Lanka and India, while the disaster took a heavy toll of human lives and property, those who survived did so in a situation where the surrounding infrastructure and support mechanisms (family, civil society and government) remained relatively intact. This was not properly recognised in the early weeks when international NGOs rushed into the country, often adding to the chaos. Where international NGOs made a real difference was in organising cash-for-work, supporting ongoing needs and moving rapidly into livelihood support.

Another lesson that has been reinforced by this experience is that regardless of the resources of the humanitarian system, house reconstruction will not take less than two to three years, and only gathers momentum in the second year. This means that adequate temporary shelter must be provided for a similar period.

A third major area for reflection is the need to keep people informed. This is particularly crucial in relation to house reconstruction but it is also part of a wider issue of showing maximum respect for affected people. The DEC Community Survey indicates a disturbing level of dissatisfaction on this score.

Be reliable

Repeated promises and non-fulfilment of needs in reasonable time have made people disillusioned. *“You may not give us anything in our hand, but tell us when you will and do come then and do give what you promised,”* requested a camp resident in Peraude in Indonesia. Predictability, reliability and real schedules make a lot of difference.

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3.3. Good Practice

⁵⁵ As far as we could ascertain only 9 of the 12 DEC members in this Appeal have signed the People in Aid Code; this would make it difficult to apply as an evaluation tool.

We have already referred to a number of examples above. Some specific examples deserving further attention are:

Cash-for-work. Many DEC members have been involved in ‘cash-for-work’ as a means of clearing up the debris and undertaking short-term projects identified by the community. A standard approach has developed, beginning with dialogue in the community and leading through community management of the project to public meetings to discuss the outcome and ways forward. This was successful not only in terms of impact on public health but may also have had an impact on psychosocial problems and developing cohesion among the survivors, especially where the previous concept of community had been destroyed by massive mortality. The projects have put cash into the hands of people and very often served as the basis for restarting livelihoods even before the agencies began to address the issue. Agencies even managed to use the process as a means of establishing a right to equal pay for women. Use of cash grants to start livelihoods activities has also been practised in many instances in this response.

Cash for work in Somalia

SC has had particular success with their cash-for-work activities in being able to target the most need families within communities. Great efforts have been made to work with the community on the criteria for selecting families and finding appropriate work activities that different members of the community can be involved in, where women were often more than 60% of the work force. Not only did these activities give an important cash injection for affected families, but it was also reported that it allowed them an increased sense of dignity for some of the poorest. Some women have also reported to have used their earnings to set up again small business.

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There are, of course, a number of concerns. Elderly and disabled people might not be able to participate fully. Those suffering more serious reactions to their experiences might not want to engage in such activity. There have also been cases in which the community did not fully approve of the work to be done. Our Community Survey in Indonesia reported that people were employed people to gather wood by cutting trees in order to meet the demand for shelter construction. *“Cash to cut woods,”* a school volunteer smiled, *“This may affect environment as already the affected areas have lost many trees during tsunami.”* Other problems are mentioned in Sri Lanka.

Cash for work in Sri Lanka

The cash for work and livelihoods support programme has performed well but is yet to lead to alternative income generation and full economic recovery due to lack of market linkages and business planning. People of Kalmunai village mentioned that the labour charge has increased dramatically. Before the tsunami it was around Rs200 per day per person, but now it has increased to Rs1,000. They opined that increased demands from the construction sector and cash for work programme might have attributed to this change.

DEC Evaluation Community Survey

Cash-for-work has not been used on this scale after a disaster before and it is therefore very important to analyse the experience before it is repeated. Several DEC members are already doing this and some have supported a study by ODI.⁵⁶ In general, the tsunami experience has been positive and points the way towards wider use of cash inputs instead of relief items and as a better response to nutrition than food aid.

Accountability. Agencies have shown a great deal of interest in this issue. Information boards about agency activity have been widely used, but appear to be of little value without processes of dialogue. As already noted, in the extreme case of Aceh, information about an agency was much less useful than information about an issue.

But this is not to say that working on accountability is irrelevant. Some interesting examples have attracted the attention of the evaluators. In Sri Lanka, Christian Aid shares its budget with the Government Authority and with the NGO consortium in Jaffna. In Somalia, there have been innovative efforts by SC UK to bring in accountability to communities through the introduction of Social Audit Committees (SACs). One of the most complete and strategic approaches is by ActionAid, which has put in place mechanisms for enhanced accountability to beneficiaries and the community in the form of social audit and community reviews.

While there are guiding principles, such as those of the Humanitarian Accountability Project International (HAPi), accountability should be adjusted to each situation. The particular context of the tsunami disaster is that people were bombarded with requests for their time and opinions. Accountability came to be seen as agencies drawing attention to themselves rather than the issues that people face. It was most effective when it was about involvement of people in decisions and least effective when it was unfocused information about an aid agency (at worst, about its achievements).

Protection. In Sri Lanka, SC focused on child protection, especially on the issue of under-age recruitment by the LTTE. This has involved working closely with the communities as well as undertaking advocacy on this sensitive issue, which may have exposed the organization to some risks. Similarly, Oxfam in Sri Lanka was vigilant in challenging the deployment of military forces around camps in Sri Lanka and the threat that this presented to women. Such activities are now being put on a more preventive basis. Vulnerable children are protected from being too easily classed as 'orphans' and put in homes. Women are protected from unnecessary risk by careful location of facilities in camps. But perhaps the most significant demonstration of good practice is that specialist agencies are engaging with others to promote wider involvement in these issues. HelpAge has done excellent work to make other members more sensitive to the needs of elderly people, and for that reason was sorely missed in Aceh. But there are still gaps in the system, the major one being in relation to disabled people. No DEC member has significant expertise in this field and so the issue tends to be reduced, at best, to ramps and handrails (as in rebuilt health centres) rather than consultation with disabled people about ways in which the disaster response as a whole could meet their needs. Perhaps one of the DEC members could take this on?

⁵⁶ Harvey, P. (2005) Cash and Vouchers in Emergencies, HPG Discussion Paper, Overseas Development Institute

A final point is that there is not yet a protection ‘mentality’ among aid agencies, as proposed by ALNAP.⁵⁷ Projects are still planned without specific regard for the risks that they create or the impact they may have on the most vulnerable groups. For example, livelihood inputs concentrated on a particular sector may increase risk rather than reduce it. A more radical alternative is to view all aid activity as a form of protection focused around reducing vulnerability or, to put it another way, increasing human security.

⁵⁷ Slim, H and L Eguren (2004) *Humanitarian protection –A Guidance Booklet*, ALNAP London

Section Four: Conclusions

4.1. General conclusions

The tsunami disaster is unique as the most destructive of its kind ever recorded and also as the subject of the biggest response from the public around the world. These factors have led to three major consequences:

- Lack of capacity in the most devastated areas, notably in Indonesia
- Uncertainty about the principles of reconstruction, especially location
- Unprecedented pressure for rapid results.

These factors are not compatible and therefore tensions have been created. Aid managers have sometimes been too much influenced by the third factor, fudged the second and ignored the first.

Nevertheless, the overall response has been an impressive achievement. This is all the more remarkable given the number of factors that complicated the response such as the earthquake of March 28th and the fact that the two most severely affected countries, Indonesia and Sri Lanka, have suffered from civil war for more than two decades.

The evaluation team concluded that, whatever their faults, DEC members have achieved higher standards and shown more good practice than most non-DEC agencies. No DEC member has fallen below the general standard, and each has shown excellence in one activity or another. Particularly positive aspects include:

- Rapid and extensive provision of appropriate relief items
- Effective use of cash-for-work
- Timely and extensive provision of livelihood support
- Sensitivity to marginalised groups.

There have been no significant outbreaks of disease and nutrition rates have been satisfactory.

On the negative side:

- DEC resources have been allocated too much according to capacity rather than need
- Thousands of people are still living in tents, especially in Indonesia, and there are unsafe conditions in the camps
- People have not been properly involved in decision-making.

In making a judgement about the DEC performance, much depends on assumptions and expectations. The likelihood that only about 10% of houses will have been reconstructed by the end of this year is not really an indication of poor performance by DEC members. Uncertainty about reconstruction in the coastal zones creates a genuine dilemma: nobody knows whether another tsunami is likely and accordingly what constitutes 'safe' reconstruction. Shifting policies and contradictory messages from national governments have inevitably slowed down progress on reconstruction.

Expectations of a complete recovery within a year were wildly optimistic. Even now, the extent of damage in Aceh is not properly appreciated. This is not a justification for complacency but a reason for taking a longer-term and strategic view, and not being pressed to set unrealistic targets. Where DEC members have been at fault is in not ensuring that people were living in safe conditions while the reconstruction was being planned.

To an extent the response has been distorted by the success and profile of the Appeal. Media pressures have encouraged an opportunistic approach among the agencies, and this has contributed to the tendency for members to distance themselves from intractable issues such as drainage in camps. It has diverted management attention from the wider picture to a few localised successes. This has led to individual rather than collective responses and prevented DEC members from living up to their potential as one of the largest groups in the response. Members have been disappointed (yet again) by UN performance, but have not yet envisaged or put into practice a humanitarian system that could take its place.

DEC members tend to behave in a competitive way. There is no good reason for this. In a wider perspective they are part of a humanitarian system and occupy different niches within a collective response. Each one tends to see a one-to-one contest with the disaster. It would be better to view it as a team role within a set of different specialisations. The failure of one or other element in that system detracts from the whole. It may oblige other members to extend beyond their current competence.

There are some inherent weaknesses in the system. In particular the DEC agencies are deficient in expertise on shelter issues. It also lacks mechanisms to stimulate collective activity, especially in the early stages of the response.

In relation to the tsunami disaster, the critical issues that now need attention are:

- People living in tents and the state of temporary shelter
- Sustainability in relation to livelihoods
- Information management to ensure that people can make choices, especially about housing.

4.2. Risks to the DEC response

The risk that the Indonesian government might expel aid agencies was significant earlier in the year but has now receded following the peace agreement in Aceh. In Sri Lanka, international NGOs continue to find themselves caught between opposing political forces and are sometimes a target of nationalist elements. The issue is not what specific agencies do but what they do together, and this implies a need for collective monitoring. The best protection is strict adherence to the first principle of the Red Cross Code – make the response proportional to needs. This requires continued flexibility on the part of the DEC.

A second area of concern is the media reaction to progress so far. As the anniversary draws near, there will be a tendency to judge the work of international agencies purely in terms of number of houses constructed or schools built, using unrealistic projections of what is possible. There is a need to admit mistakes, notably the

unjustifiable persistence of tented camps, but also to counter unrealistic expectations in a constructive way. This can be best done collectively and by preparing materials in advance.

4.3. Roles for the DEC

DEC coordination meetings are taking place quite regularly in the three countries and seem to have been particularly effective in Sri Lanka. This experience deserves closer scrutiny. Coordination mechanisms were slow to develop, largely because members did not have spare capacity to initiate them. In future, the DEC should be more proactive.

Coordination through the DEC should never undermine wider and more inclusive mechanisms such as those of governments and the UN. If the UN's system of Humanitarian Information Centres can be made to work effectively and expand, there should be no need for DEC activity in this area. But in practice, the group of larger agencies that form the DEC, with their common standards based on the Red Cross Code and Sphere, may find it useful to work together. Specific areas for further collaboration include:

- Developing information campaign on issues such as seismic safety and house relocation (as in Sri Lanka)
- Pooling expertise in house construction
- Coordinating a long-term and collective process to develop plans for vulnerability reduction across the affected region
- Developing a joint analysis and understanding of the relationship between conflict and humanitarian responses in Sri Lanka and of post-conflict reconstruction in Indonesia.

Section Five: Recommendations

5.1. The DEC

Recommendations to the DEC:

- Add a further two years to the current three-year scope of the appeal, specifically for projects aimed at reducing future vulnerability (i.e. 3+2).
- Extend the time limit for the basic reconstruction phase of the Appeal to four years in the case of Indonesia (i.e. 4+1).
- Monitor the allocation of funds to ensure that at least 40% of total funds are allocated to Indonesia.
- Interpret the scope of the Appeal in a flexible manner consistent with principle one of the Red Cross Code, especially in relation to conflict and interior areas.
- Improve the DEC website to ensure that field staff can easily access basic information about the DEC and the scope of the Appeal.
- Develop materials about disasters, covering such issues as proportionality in responses and timescales.
- Conduct an external review of financial systems and accountability and publish the results, at the latest before the end of Year Two.
- Include in this a comprehensive review of the partnership arrangements of DEC members (alliances, twinning, partnerships etc) in order to ensure that there is a consistent and transparent level of accountability to donors.
- Incorporate the outcome of this review into DEC guidelines and the Handbook.
- Review evaluation guidelines in the DEC Handbook and ensure that timescales are realistic and appropriate.

One of the main findings of this evaluation is that there is a need for a more collective DEC approach. This does not imply the erosion of the independence of members but that they work more effectively together as part of a team delivering results in order to meet public expectations. There are many good examples of this happening in the field but it needs more institutional support and better systems to ensure that it happens in all cases. Specific recommendations are:

- A Lead Member in each major location to be appointed at the beginning of a disaster response.
- DEC resources to be available to provide for designated staff time in the Lead Member agency if required.
- Lead Member to be responsible for developing plans for collective activity on a consensus basis.
- DEC Secretariat to employ a Desk Officer for each disaster with the primary function of information management.
- Develop the 'niche' model of DEC functioning as a method for response planning.

We have suggested that it may be useful to document experience of DEC coordination as in Sri Lanka. If there is already consensus on the above steps, this may not be

necessary. If not, it could be the first step in a longer process of exploring the above proposals.

We have noted that the response has been hampered by lack of availability of experienced agency staff. This has made it difficult for members to scale up. Some DEC members now maintain large stocks of materials and retain experienced staff on a long-term basis. This may be difficult for the smaller members. The DEC should consider reserving a small percentage of appeal funds, including the tsunami appeal, to support long-term emergency capacity. This might include a fund that could be used to retain emergency staff and be drawn on by members or used to support staff that could be available to all members. This requires a great deal more thought and consultation. We suggest that the DEC might wish to commission some initial research in order to bring forward proposals to the members.

5.2. The DEC members

Recommendations to the members:

- Ensure that basic needs are met, that people do not have to live in tents and that conditions in temporary shelter are adequate.
- Reduce the risk of accident and secondary disaster in temporary shelters.
- Develop strategies for sustainable livelihoods rather than simply replacing assets.
- Engage with others to ensure that people have the information necessary to make choices.
- Make greater efforts to involve people in decision-making.
- Coordinate more closely on house design issues and share technical capacity.
- Review current programmes with a view to supporting a DEC target of 40% of funds to be allocated to Indonesia.
- Take an active role in coordination at the district and sub-district levels.
- Use principle one of the Red Cross Code as the basis for a flexible approach to people affected by conflict and those living in interior areas. Inform the DEC of any marginal cases.
- Promote better understanding of the DEC Strategic Statement among staff and partners.
- Support collective activity through the DEC.
- Take responsibility for the totality of the response rather than just for specific programmes.

Tony Vaux (for the evaluation team)
November 2005