

Perceptions of crisis and response:  
A synthesis of evaluations of the  
response to the 2005 Pakistan  
earthquake

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## 4.1 Introduction

Evaluation Syntheses in previous ALNAP Reviews of Humanitarian Action have revealed few surprises, an indication that most of what is right and wrong with the performance of the humanitarian system is known and acknowledged. Hugo Slim's chapter in the last Review (ALNAP, 2006) advanced the idea that there are different modes for *how* we view the very flawed performance of the international humanitarian system. He offered us the concept of 'realistic expectation' to focus efforts for improvement.

The present ALNAP Synthesis aims to draw lessons from evaluations undertaken of the humanitarian response to the Pakistan earthquake of 2005. Like previous ALNAP Syntheses of evaluations, this one has been carried out with the intention of 'stimulating reflection by the humanitarian sector on its activities with a view to enhancing performance and promoting learning and accountability' (Minear, in ALNAP 2005, p 74). The evaluation dataset is outlined in the annexe at the end of this chapter, and the principal evaluations are listed by focus and criteria.

The evaluations that form the dataset for this Synthesis have as their own purposes some mixture of accountability and learning. In aggregate, these evaluations provide material reflecting what happened, what was done, and what can be learned from what was done. The inclusion of material from other reports that are not evaluations as such brings further validation. Synthesising their findings to provide a broader view for the wide audience that is the ALNAP membership and beyond will, it is hoped, enable analysis to rise above the perspectives of specific projects, programmes and groups of programmes.

After a brief account of the disaster itself, this chapter reflects on evaluation findings in relation to the following broad areas of current concern to the humanitarian sector:

- needs assessments
- funding
- response capacities
- ownership and accountability.

It then uses these reflections as a way of assessing the quality of the work done in Pakistan in response to the 2005 earthquake. Finally, it assesses the parameters and criteria intended to describe the components of performance in development and humanitarian programmes in order to judge that performance. These OECD/DAC criteria are also the basis of the ALNAP Quality Pro Forma for judging the quality of evaluations.

## 4.2 The scale and nature of the disaster

On the morning of 8 October 2005, a magnitude 7.6 earthquake struck in the mountain communities along the border between Pakistan's North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Pakistan-administered Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). This was the largest-ever disaster in Pakistan's fifty-year history, and Pakistan was ill prepared. There was no national disaster-management agency worthy of the name, no plans by government or humanitarian actors for coping with such a disaster, and the emergency stocks available were dwarfed by the scale of the disaster.

The earthquake resulted in the death of some 75,000 people, and serious injuries to a similar number. Of those killed, 98 per cent lived in either NWFP or AJK. Relatively small numbers were killed on the Indian side of the 'line of control' that separates Pakistan from Indian-controlled Kashmir. The earthquake's effects were most severe in AJK, partly because of the destruction of the capital, Muzaffarabad (about 20km from the epicentre) and the death of many key officials there. The total damage from the earthquake was estimated to have a monetary value of US\$5.8 billion.

Severe damage from the earthquake stretched over an area of about 30,000 square kilometres. Landslides cut many roads, especially those into the mountains, and helicopters were often the only rapid means of transport. Aftershocks and bad weather further constrained the relief operation. It was weeks before the last of those wounded in the earthquake were evacuated to hospital. Save the Children (UK)'s evaluation report describes the earthquake as 'more challenging than the tsunami' (Khalid and Haider, 2006, p 2). This was true in so far as the earthquake response posed far greater logistical challenges than did the aftermath of the tsunami.

Following natural disasters, the need to provide services is usually paramount. However, the Pakistan earthquake overlaid existing militarised political complexities. AJK is a militarily sensitive area and is effectively closed to foreigners. NWFP is also politically sensitive because of its involvement in the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan. This meant that, arguably, although a natural disaster, the situation in Pakistan had ‘aspects of complex emergency rather than a simple natural disaster’ (Kirkby et al, 2006, p 47).

Following the 2007 floods in Pakistan, the government restricted non-nationals from accessing the affected areas in Baluchistan, leading to delayed assessments (Young et al, 2007, p 8), and to ‘disappointing results’ from the relief effort (Young et al, 2007, p 5). During the earthquake response in 2005, however, Pakistan not only lifted access restrictions but also asked for international assistance.

## 4.3 Needs assessments

The first needs assessments in Pakistan were a form of geographic triage, intended more to establish priorities for assistance than to assess needs as such. They were carried out to ascertain which areas had the greatest damage and needed the quickest assistance. Needs assessment and beneficiary consultation are the main tools within the sector for ensuring the relevance and appropriateness of humanitarian aid. Done well, they increase local ownership, accountability and cost-effectiveness. The importance of good needs assessments is the first lesson identified from previous earthquake responses (ALNAP and Provention Consortium, 2005a, p 4).

Needs assessment in Pakistan in 2005 was particularly difficult for several reasons. Foremost was the difficulty of access due to damage to the road network and the mountain terrain. The access problems were compounded by the large spatial extent of the disaster. In addition, continuing aftershocks provoked further landslides and road closures. For example, a helicopter reconnaissance, five days after the earthquake, of the Allai Valley in NWFP found the road blocked and extensive housing damage in the valley. A medical team flew in on the following day, but it was

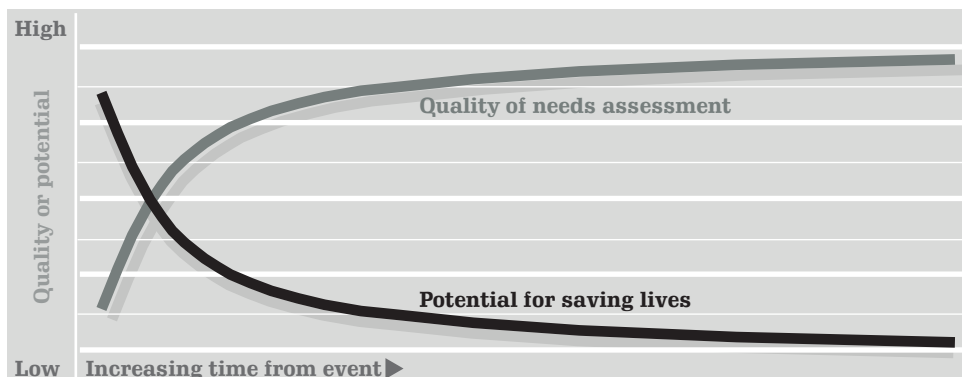
nine days after the earthquake before an assessment of the whole valley began (Kirkby et al, 2007, p 13).

### 4.3.1 Consultation and understanding of context

The greatest potential for saving lives is normally immediately after the occurrence of a sudden-onset disaster. The ECHO evaluation (Cosgrave and Nam, 2007) highlights the trade-off between the time taken to prepare a good-quality proposal and the potential for saving lives in a sudden-onset disaster. If the population has access to resources, the potential for life-saving by external actors decreases rapidly with time, as the most vulnerable die and others begin to solve their problems themselves. However, the more detailed the assessment, the greater the consequent depth of knowledge of the context and the more appropriate an intervention is likely to be (Figure 4.1). Humanitarian agencies therefore have to balance effective interventions based on good assessment, and rapid interventions that have the greatest potential for saving lives.

The ALNAP lessons paper on earthquake response states that an ‘effective response requires an understanding of context – particularly the socio-economics of affected communities’ (ALNAP and Provention Consortium, 2005a, p 4). The impact of contextual knowledge on estimating needs in Pakistan is highlighted by several evaluations. The AusAid review notes that a survey of an affected community before the earthquake by one local NGO had ‘provided useful background information to inform... needs assessment and response’ (Crawford et al, 2006, p XXII in Appendix C).

**Figure 4.1** The assessment–quality dilemma



There are four relevant elements to the context of any particular disaster.

- 1** The disaster type itself – the likely nature of the immediate needs arising from an earthquake is known from previous instances.
- 2** The situation of the affected population before the disaster – different ways of life and livelihood strategies are affected differently by different disasters and require different approaches.
- 3** The context of the local, national, and international response – including the local and national capacity to respond.
- 4** The geography of the disaster – the areas affected.

Some of these elements can be known without involving beneficiaries. For example, knowledge of the context of particular disaster types depends not only on the physics of disasters but also on lessons learned from previous such disasters.<sup>4</sup> However, such knowledge is often overlooked or is clouded by myths about disasters. Such myths led to scares about disease outbreaks after the Pakistan earthquake, even though such outbreaks are rare.<sup>2</sup> The second element, knowledge of the situation of the affected population, is the type of contextual knowledge that is most often referred to in response guidelines. This type of knowledge is particularly important as it can give good clues to both the likely impact of particular geographical patterns, and the likely response ability of the community themselves.

The last two elements, the context of the disaster response and the geographical extent of the disaster, are the most unpredictable. The context of the response is inevitably difficult to predict with any accuracy or detail at the early stages. For example, before the earthquake ‘only a hand-full of foreigners were allowed by Pakistani authorities to access Pakistan controlled Kashmir’ (Ahmed and MacLeod, 2007, p 17). Agencies working in Pakistan were surprised when the government lifted all access controls to the affected area. The scale of funding for the disaster response was also not predictable. The geographical extent of the disaster was quite complicated in the case of the Pakistan earthquake, due to the disruption of roads and because access to mountain communities in the area is difficult at the best of times.

If agencies are sufficiently aware of the first two elements of the context – and flexible enough to adapt to the changing response context – then establishing the geographical extent of need is the first priority. This is what the initial helicopter

assessments rightly concentrated on in the Pakistan response. However, it became evident that agencies were not always sufficiently aware of the context. When assessments moved beyond geographic triage they were limited and concentrated on needs rather than capacities. The government of Pakistan asked one agency to stop food distributions in Abbotabad, because the government had a pre-existing system of wheat distribution there (Kirkby et al, 2007, p 14). The agency's assessment had identified the need for food aid, but not the existing capacity to meet it.

When evaluations criticise the lack of beneficiary consultation in humanitarian response, the typical rebuttal is that there was no time to consult people before acting. As can be seen from the above, it is perfectly responsible to act in the initial stages without beneficiary consultation if agencies are aware of the relevant context. With time, the information that is needed changes. More precise information is needed later on in the response than at the very beginning (Kirkby et al, 2007, p 16). Needs at the start are simpler and easier to predict, and less diverse, than later on when the context of each family's response varies with their resources. The need for beneficiary consultation grows with time to ensure that interventions are appropriate. 'There is strong evidence that participation of the affected population leads to improved programming and impact [in recovery]' (ALNAP and Provention Consortium, 2005b, p 3).

The CARE evaluation notes that, while communities 'participated appropriately in need assessments in the early phase of the emergency, it is not clear that continuous monitoring of needs was carried on systematically afterwards' (Kirkby et al, 2006, p 30). Echoes of the same issue are seen in other evaluations with calls for continuous monitoring after the initial assessments; in this sense 'continuous monitoring' means renewed assessment for greater contextual understanding.

### 4.3.2 Joint needs assessments

Tony Vaux, in the previous Review of Humanitarian Action (RHA), talks of the attempts to reform the Consolidated Appeals Process, the UN development of an index of humanitarian need and the ECHO adoption of a vulnerability index to decide on the allocation of aid as pointers towards agreement on a common method of 'needs assessment' (ALNAP, 2006, p 74). He further notes that needs assessment 'remains the fundamental flaw of the humanitarian system. There is no accepted

method of assessment' (ALNAP, 2006, p 77). The Pakistan earthquake adds another case, if one were needed, to underline the same point.

Joint assessments are a good way of sharing knowledge of context. While there were good examples of multi-agency assessments, such as the initial assessments by the Pakistan Humanitarian Forum, an INGO forum (Strand and Borchgrevink, 2006, p 8), or the multi-agency assessment led by Save the Children (US) of the Allai Valley in March 2006 (McGinn et al, 2006), these were also rare examples.

The last decade has seen the development of a range of needs assessment-tools, from the Sphere standards to Oxfam's checklists. However such structured tools seem to have been used fairly rarely. The review of the Emergency Capacity Building project identifies 'many forms syndrome', noting two problems underlying repeated assessments: 'the lack of co-ordination between organisations in assessing needs, which leads to duplications and gaps, and the unwillingness of many organisations to share their assessment results in forms that can easily be used by others' (Currian, 2006, p 19). The Oxfam-sponsored women's review of the earthquake response also notes a need to avoid repeated needs assessment (Oxfam, 2007, p 3), something that might have been mitigated by better sharing of information, as has been noted in reviews and evaluations of almost every emergency of any scale over many years.

There is no obvious, and certainly no agreed, way forward on this. Agency processes are not structured to facilitate sharing between agencies. The jealously guarded, independently defined mandates and policies of agencies encourage independence of action – in the pejorative sense. And the same mandates are often also adduced as a bulwark against cooptation into political, that is non-humanitarian, projects happening alongside humanitarian responses (for example, see Stobbaerts et al, 2007). All of this sits rather too well with the chaos that is largely unavoidable in the early days of a response to a disaster, resulting in disordered and dysfunctional collective assessment.

Part of the problem is that there is no agreed common framework for rapid humanitarian assessment. The multi-donor review of the Humanitarian Information Centres observes: 'The issue of rapid needs assessment needs to be agreed at the IASC level, with IASC agencies agreeing on a template format, supported by a robust database, for use in initial rapid assessments at the outset of an emergency' (Joint Review Team et al, 2006, p 12).



However, there is, it appears, little appetite for or faith in the bureaucratic solution of shared assessment formats. The questions of who would design, agree and impose them are all unanswerable. One initiative relevant here is the Global Humanitarian Platform (GHP).<sup>3</sup> Its Principles of Partnership do not address this issue specifically, as they are pitched at a higher level. However, it is clearly intended that the implementation of those Principles in the context of particular countries and emergencies should have a positive effect on agencies by encouraging collaboration, and more willing and effective sharing.

## 4.4 Funding

### 4.4.1 'Official' humanitarian funding

Funding for the Pakistan response was certainly dramatically different from that of the tsunami response.<sup>4</sup> While private donations registered officially provided 41 per cent of the \$13.5 billion raised for the tsunami (Telford et al, 2006a, p 81), they were a much smaller proportion of the \$6.9 billion pledged for the earthquake recovery. Another difference was that loans formed a much larger part of the institutional funding for the earthquake response (58 per cent) than they did for the tsunami (15 per cent). Overall, the Pakistan earthquake response could be seen as more akin to previous patterns of disaster funding, after the exception of the tsunami.

A Flash Appeal launched three days after the earthquake initially struggled to raise the necessary funds. This may be explained partly by the speed with which it was put out, in contrast to the usual 10 days or so, which meant that it was less comprehensive and detailed than donors often require (Polastro, 2007). This mirrors the same issue with assessments – the trade-off between speed and detail. For operational agencies

engaged in life-saving activities, the sluggish start made it difficult to sustain their efforts and plan for early recovery. Slow funding of the Flash Appeal... also temporarily hampered UN efforts, with agencies delaying or scaling down activities until funds became available. (Polastro, 2007)

In situations like the earthquake, where a second wave of lives may be at risk after the initial event, the first principle of the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative (GHD), that of saving lives, should guide official donors who have signed up to those principles to consider the relative value of speed against detail in responding to appeals.

Nevertheless, after six months the Flash Appeal was more than two-thirds funded, and gross shortage of funds was not a problem in this response. It has ended up nearly 98 per cent funded.<sup>5</sup> By contrast, only some 53 per cent of the total of humanitarian funding pledges to the response have been committed.<sup>6</sup> The majority of the default can be attributed to a few very large pledges for reconstruction. This represents a significant failure to follow through on pledges, probably made in the spotlight of the early stages of the emergency, to make large contributions to longer-term reconstruction. The GHD recognises what has long been known among humanitarians – that whoever actually undertakes rehabilitation and reconstruction, it must be funded on a longer-term basis than emergency relief. As almost all of those reported not to have turned their pledges into commitments are not signatories to the GHD, this may be taken as an indication that signing up to the GHD principles encourages donors to make only realistic pledges and/or to fulfil the pledges they make.

However, while the funding from the UK public for the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) appeal for the Pakistan earthquake was generous (£64 million) (DEC, 2006a; 2006b), it was only 15 per cent of the public donations to the DEC for the tsunami appeal (DEC, 2005). If the same ratio was observed globally, then funding from the general public would have been only 12 per cent of the overall earthquake funding.<sup>7</sup>

Many official donors channelled their funds directly through the government, including funding the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) up to 82 per cent. This compares favourably with other emergency situations. Despite humanitarians' worries about the degree of military involvement in the response, and in the ERRA as well as maybe in government more widely, it is appropriate that the leading role of the Pakistani government in the response should meet this kind of practical recognition. (It is also possible that other, less worthy, factors came into play, given the special position afforded to Pakistan in the context of the so-called global war on terror.) Such recognition is

also fitting, given the commitments in the GHD to ‘strengthen[ing] the capacities of affected countries’.

The elements of the Good Donorship Initiative and of the Humanitarian Reform programme are worth tracking, because they are the system’s current main attempts to institute changes to how the admittedly unpredictable flow of funds works on behalf of those who receive official humanitarian assistance. The Pakistan earthquake happened before the reform of the UN’s Central Emergency Revolving Fund (now the Central Emergency Response Fund), so there was no pooled funding for the UN at the start of the crisis. The revolving fund at that time made repayable loans totalling US\$4.2 million to OCHA and the International Organisation for Migration (OCHA et al, 2006, p 182).

#### 4.4.2 Other sources of funding

Official funding totals do not include the increasing amount of funding for humanitarian operations from so-called ‘non-traditional’ or new donors, estimated at 12 per cent of official global humanitarian financing (Walker and Pepper, 2007). Official totals also exclude: the amount of money spent by countries themselves on disasters where they occur; money raised locally by NGOs and other local agencies; the value of provision by ‘host families’ and local people assisting their neighbours; and monies from remittances and similar transfers directly into communities involved in their own salvation. In the last RHA, Hugo Slim called these and more the ‘informal international humanitarian systems’ (ALNAP, 2006),<sup>8</sup> and they are clearly very significant, although they are not represented in any of the figures available for this Synthesis. They are therefore beyond comment here, except very generally as follows.

Unofficial funding is recognised to be a very substantial factor in supporting post-disaster coping strategies. It is possible that it is no more driven by real needs than is the ‘official’ system, the driving forces being, however, ‘local’ rather than (geo-) political. It is also not at all clear how the two systems, official and unofficial, would coordinate effectively. And, as Slim has pointed out (ALNAP, 2006), their use bypasses the mechanisms that the ‘official’ humanitarian sector has chosen to spend time and efforts on over the past ten years to assure quality and

accountability. The challenges arising from these disconnected realities stretch way beyond the case of Pakistan.

This is not to say that the billions of dollars going through official DAC channels are insignificant, but only that they are just part of the picture. Within this significant official international system, funding has usually been reactive – and often slow, making the fact that it is reactive both important and an even greater problem. Emergencies such as the Pakistan earthquake are unexpected<sup>9</sup> and therefore require a system that can react rapidly and in a less volatile way than it does now. Such emergencies are also treated by the system as time-bound, which they are not. There are many humanitarian situations that are in fact recurrent and/or open-ended, for which reactive funding is at least as inappropriate. In this sense, the funds provided through remittances and through the government are more appropriate.

Finally on funding, why were such high levels of funding provided by donors in this case? Two reasons are the scale of the disaster, and the profile it received in the media. Also important, however, is Pakistan's strategic geo-political position, then as now, and of course the existence of a large Pakistani diaspora, both of which undoubtedly influenced the United States and the UK to become the two largest donors in the emergency stages. These last two factors represent undeniable internal and external political influences in those two nations. The GHD in principle, as well as purist humanitarianism, would have such factors play a smaller part than they do.

## **4.5 Humanitarian response capacities**

### **4.5.1 Surge capacity and learning**

The Pakistan response placed a large load on a humanitarian system already coping in 2005 and 2006 with the tsunami response and with the crisis in Darfur. Unsurprisingly, many evaluations identified the lack of sufficient skilled staff as a constraint – for example ICRC's review noted that '[s]carcities of technical human resources plagued the operation' (Reed et al, 2007, p 14).

However, we see that agencies had also been paying increasing attention to their surge capacity. The People in Aid review of surge capacity (Houghton, 2007) demonstrates that NGOs are making large strides in improving their ability to respond quickly in emergencies through a better-managed surge capacity. The AusAid review assessed the response of the four Australian affiliates of Oxfam, the Red Cross, CARE, and World Vision. The review comments: ‘all four agencies demonstrated remarkable surge capacity by drawing heavily on international networks and institutional response mechanisms, including the deployment of rapid response teams’ (Crawford et al, 2006, p iii).

Surge capacity involves more than just personnel and the human-resources support system. The ICRC review notes that a ‘key lesson in Pakistan is that rapid deployment does not necessarily equal a rapid response’ (Reed et al, 2007, p 14). It is not enough just to get the people on the ground quickly. In addition to transport and communications equipment, other enablers include role clarity, effective assessment and information management, and other aspects of the wider management of the programme.

The 2004 Review of Humanitarian Action commented that surge capacity locally is ‘rented rather than built’ (ALNAP, 2005, p 33), that is, personnel are removed from existing posts elsewhere in local NGOs and government. In this sense, the international humanitarian system is generally parasitic on the capacities built within the local society rather than based on its own efforts to create those capacities. In this instance incidentally, because of operations in Afghanistan using personnel from Pakistan, there were large numbers of Pakistani nationals who at least had experience of working with relief agencies in the past. Oxfam noted that the availability of Pakistani staff members with prior international exposure improved the response (Oxfam, 2006, p 13).

One consequence of improving international surge capacities through emergency rosters and temporary postings is that these measures only shift the staffing problem within a somewhat lean humanitarian system, rather than solving it. Despite the appearance, or the claim, that there are too many international personnel, in fact the global humanitarian system runs close to the bone, taking into account the high rate of turnover into and out of the system (see Loquercio et al, 2006). Thus, putting some of the most qualified and effective staff into the surge phase of the response is not as easy as putting on extra buses in the rush hour.

Reports on the Pakistan response identified two general problems: the loss of effectiveness in existing programmes caused by the diversion of personnel away from their regular posts (Kirkby et al, 2007, p vii); and the need to replace this first surge wave of emergency staff members. These issues have always existed in humanitarian response but have been highlighted by the progress made in initial surge capacity and the ability to load the system at the start. This was the case for the HIC: '[d]eployment of the HIC was timely, with good initial team deployed...' (Joint Review Team et al, 2006, p 6), as it was for other agencies. The improvements in agency surge capacity demonstrate that capacity is improving within the system, although the fall-out problems remain.

Past Reviews of Humanitarian Action have had to lament the problem that lessons identified in past crises have not been used to modify present practice (ALNAP 2003, p 100; 2002, p 22; 2004, p 11; 2001, p 48). The refrain that the humanitarian community is not good at learning is to be heard in many other places too. Interestingly, Save the Children UK's evaluation highlights that its investment in humanitarian response capacity is based partly on its experience after the tsunami (Khalid and Haider, 2006, p 4).

Of course the application of lessons – finding a solution to an identified problem – does not guarantee future success either. Oxfam piloted its 'Humanitarian Improvement Plan' during the Pakistan emergency response. This includes truncated logistics and finance procedures to speed the first phase of the emergency response. However the AusAid evaluation reports that, in the view of the Oxfam Operations Manager, 'these piloted procedures had not worked well, since they in fact highlighted inadequacies in regular systems' (Crawford et al, 2006, p XXIV in Appendix C).

The earthquake happened less than ten months after the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, and some personnel were moved from the tsunami response to the earthquake response. This contributed to lessons from the tsunami being carried across to the earthquake response. Several evaluations referred to the lessons having been learned. For example, the Save the Children (US) evaluation notes that two identified staff members 'gave valuable advice on effective and ineffective strategies, based on their Tsunami experience' (Kirkby et al, 2007, p 17). The AusAid review notes that:

Several interviewees reported that the Pakistan earthquake response had benefited from institutional learning that took place in other recent emergencies. For example, reference was frequently made to lessons learned about shelter solutions from the tsunami response and Bam earthquake response. (Crawford et al, 2006, p 17)

This last point raises the question of whether the learning noted above is individual or institutional. There was certainly individual learning, but institutional learning (where lessons learned are reflected in changes in the policies, procedures and habitual practices of organisations) was more erratic. The ALNAP 2002 Review notes that while individual learning is the critical building block for learning at all levels, translating this and group learning into whole-organisation learning is difficult (ALNAP, 2002, pp 24–25).

We still lack the deliberate and effective management of organisational and system-wide learning needed to improve performance in the sector, as called for in the ALNAP 2003 review (ALNAP, 2004, p 51). However, there were some clear examples of learning from other disasters.

## 4.5.2 Coordination: the first use of the cluster approach

The Pakistan earthquake happened shortly after the publication of the UN's Humanitarian Response Review (Adinolfi et al, 2005) that heralded the UN's humanitarian reform process.<sup>40</sup> This process initially had three pillars – the cluster approach, better-prepared UN humanitarian coordinators, and an enhanced Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) (Loupforest, 2006) – with a fourth, that of building partnerships, added later. At the time of the earthquake, training humanitarian coordinators had not begun, and the revamped CERF was six months in the future, leaving the cluster approach as the only pillar that might be implemented in Pakistan.

The innovation introduced by the cluster approach, as opposed to traditional sectoral coordination, is that the coordinating agency ('cluster lead') takes some responsibility for the performance of the sector and not just for coordinating the inputs (Box 4.1). The assumption of this responsibility ultimately extends as far as the duty of cluster leads to be the 'provider of last resort'. The cluster approach was

used for the first time in Pakistan, and was premature in that the approach had not yet been ratified and there was no agreement on how it would work. However, the staff members involved deserve praise for seeing an opportunity and jump-starting a system that, whether or not it might otherwise have petered out like so many other attempts at reform, could have become mired in the processes of instigation.

However, this jump-start of course brought problems. It was over seven weeks after the earthquake before the cluster-management guidelines were agreed by the Cluster Heads Meeting. These were later further revised with a final version

#### Box 4.1 Cluster lead responsibilities

##### **Core cluster lead responsibilities**

- Inclusion of key humanitarian partners
- Establishment and maintenance of appropriate humanitarian coordination mechanisms
- Coordination with national/local authorities, state institutions, local civil society and other relevant actors
- Provision of assistance or services as a last resort
- Planning and strategy development
- Advocacy and resource mobilisation

##### **Other cluster lead responsibilities**

- Participatory and community-based approaches
- Attention to priority cross-cutting issues (eg age, diversity, environment, gender, HIV/AIDS and human rights)
- Needs assessment and analysis
- Emergency preparedness
- Application of standards
- Monitoring and reporting
- Training and capacity building



published by OCHA on 12 December – over two months after the earthquake (OCHA office in Mansehra, 2005). The 2002 RHA describes coordination as: ‘a relatively low-cost activity that yields significant returns’ (ALNAP, 2002, p 98). The time of programme staff is a valuable commodity at the height of an emergency, and it will be spent only if it does indeed bring significant returns. Coordination meetings in Pakistan imposed a huge load on humanitarian agencies, with the ICRC noting that 30 per cent of staff time was taken up by such meetings in the first month (Reed et al, 2007, p 14). The sometimes-poor quality of meetings meant that there was no commensurate return on this investment of time, and attendance declined.

Unfortunately, none of the cluster leads had any training for their role. There was therefore little understanding of cluster coordination, with many cluster leads trying to take a directive rather than coordinating role. Another issue for the nascent cluster system was conflict between agency agendas and cluster priorities, which ‘led to the cluster lead pushing forward their agency’s own agenda rather than carrying out their designated role as head of cluster’ (ActionAid, 2006, p 24). The IASC real-time evaluation noted that ‘Several respondents found it difficult to separate the cluster responsibilities from their agency mandates’ (IASC, 2006, p 7).

The focus on agency priorities was reflected more generally in the unwillingness of many cluster leads to accept funding for the cluster as a whole rather than just for their own agency (Strand and Borchgrevink, 2006). Confusion at WHO led to the recommendation to avoid ‘mixing [WHO] promotion & visibility tasks with situation analysis... in situation reports and cluster bulletins’ (Baglolle et al, 2006, p 48), as cluster reports should be about the whole cluster and not just promoting the cluster lead.

Inter-cluster coordination was a particular problem: ‘Visibility and sharing of information between the clusters was problematic’ (Bauman, 2006, p 4). Part of this was ascribed to the poor performance of some clusters. The joint evaluation of the WHO response noted: ‘[T]he fact that other clusters were performing rather poor[ly], jeopardises... overall inter cluster coordination’ (Baglolle et al, 2006, p 8).

It was a flawed rather than a false start, as is now apparent. It has been suggested that some of the problems in the Pakistan response may have been due to the newness of the cluster approach. However, the real-time evaluation of clusters in the 2007 Pakistan floods found that lessons from the operation of the clusters in the

earthquake response had still not been applied nearly two years later (Young et al, 2007, p vi).

### 4.5.3 A role for the military

International military forces played an important role in the early stages of the 2005 earthquake response, and the role of the national Pakistani military was significant from the start and continued to be so, although for different reasons. Helicopters played a key role, and the military has a greater stock of these than anyone else. Helicopters are particularly appropriate during floods and after earthquakes in mountain regions. Given that climate change makes flooding disasters more likely in the future, as weather patterns may change faster than population distributions, it is therefore reasonable to expect that military forces will be significantly involved in future humanitarian operations in response to disasters.

Following the response to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, *Forced Migration Review* noted that '[t]he tsunami has set a precedent and it is now very likely that military forces will be significantly involved in future humanitarian operations' (Couldrey and Morris, 2005). In the 2005 earthquake response, this was indeed the case, although the role of the Pakistani military was predominant. Military contingents from 19 different countries participated in the Pakistan earthquake response.

The key document setting out guidelines for the use of military and civil-defence assets in disaster relief are the so-called Oslo Guidelines, first issued in May 1994, following a two-year consultation period and a conference in Oslo. The responses to both the tsunami and the Pakistan earthquake confirmed the need to update these guidelines, and a revised version was issued in November 2006 (OCHA CMCS, 2006), with a further slightly modified version following in November 2007 (OCHA CMCS, 2007). Interestingly, one of the changes for the November 2007 revision was the inclusion of the word 'Foreign' in the title, which is now: *The Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief – 'Oslo Guidelines* (OCHA CMCS, 2007). This is a useful distinction for Pakistan, where foreign military played a significant but supporting role to the extensive intervention of the Pakistani military.

The 1994 Oslo Guidelines specified that:

Military and civil defence assets should be seen as a tool complementing existing relief mechanisms in order to provide specific support to specific requirements, in response to the acknowledged 'humanitarian gap' between the disaster needs that the relief community is being asked to satisfy and the resources available to meet them. (DHA, 1994)

The 2006 revision is much more restrictive in requiring that:

Foreign military and civil defence assets should be requested only where there is no comparable civilian alternative and only the use of military or civil defence assets can meet a critical humanitarian need. The military or civil defence asset must therefore be unique in capability and availability. (OCHA CMCS, 2006, p 4)

Logistics was an important focus for both the Pakistani and foreign militaries, with military helicopters playing a key role in the relief response. Many countries contributed helicopters, medical or engineering teams. Clearly, helicopter transport was expensive, but there was no alternative for reaching mountain villages given that many roads had been cut and aftershocks made road travel dangerous. While commercial helicopters are cheaper to use than military ones (Cosgrave et al, 2004, p 38), the large numbers of helicopters needed meant that military provision was 'unique in capability and availability'. However other aspects of military involvement, such as using tactical military aircraft rather than lower-cost commercial cargo aircraft for air-lifting supplies from Europe to Pakistan, or for sending heavy engineering equipment to Pakistan (NATO, 2006), remain more questionable.

Another issue arising was the question of who should pay for the international military's assistance. All of the versions of the Oslo Guidelines specify that these expenses should not be paid from the ODA budget. The guidelines state that '[i]n principle, the costs involved in using national MCDA [military or civil-defence assets] on disaster relief missions abroad should be covered by funds other than those available for international development activities' (DHA, 1994, p 7; OCHA CMCS, 2006, p 8).

However, military operations are very expensive.<sup>14</sup> NATO's Deputy Assistant Secretary General responsible for Civil Emergency Planning identified the most

important lesson learned from the Pakistan response as that the international military should be recouping costs from humanitarian budgets: ‘if the UN asks us to help why should they not pay a little bit for the running cost’, and:

to put it a bit simply, either the main clients like the United Nations or some of the bigger non-governmental organizations pay for it, or we have to think of a new social contract within NATO nations, between defence ministries and ministries for development cooperation. (NATO, 2006)

There may well be efforts by the military in donor countries to capture parts of humanitarian budgets to cover the costs of international military assets mobilised in support of humanitarian operations. This is a very serious concern; the few comparative cost data available show that military operations cost several times their commercial equivalent (Borton et al, 1996, pp 60–61, 67; Cosgrave et al, 2001, p 38). To be caught in the cleft stick of choosing between the allocation of large amounts of funding to pay for military assets, or to do without them when they can be so useful would be very undesirable.

#### Box 4.2 The military in Pakistan

The Pakistani military plays a large role in Pakistani political life. No government has ever been removed in Pakistan except by military coup (Bamforth and Qureshi, 2007). In total, the Pakistani armed force (army, navy and air-force) constitutes the seventh-largest armed force in the world.

The military also plays a central role economically in Pakistan. One third of manufacturing industry, and over 7 per cent of all private assets in Pakistan are controlled by the military through army-owned and controlled enterprises (Siddiqa-Agha, 2007). ‘The army is considered by many Pakistanis as one of the country’s only functioning institutions’ (Abdullahi, 2007).

Since 1960 Pakistan has contributed forces to 18 UN peacekeeping missions. It is therefore to be expected that the army is familiar with working in a multi-agency environment and in relief operations, although generally in complex emergencies rather than in a natural disaster such as the earthquake.

The Pakistani national military played a pivotal role in the earthquake response. One review refers to an 80/20 split between the aid supplied through the Pakistani military and through the international community in the first weeks of the response (Ahmed and MacLeod, 2007, p 24). The military already had a large role and presence in the affected areas. In Kashmir the military was present in large numbers<sup>12</sup> because of the unresolved conflict with India, and in NWFP the military has been engaged in operations as part of the 'global war on terror'.

In total, the Pakistani military deployed 60,000 troops to assist the earthquake response. This is about 10 per cent of its total strength (Bamforth and Quereshi, 2007). The US military 'After Action Review' notes that: 'The Pakistani military played a central and effective role in the coordination of the relief effort, despite significant logistical challenges and in the absence of an effective, pre-existing federal disaster management structure or coordinating agency' (COEDHMA, 2006, p 1).<sup>13</sup>

The same positive view of the military effort is generally echoed by the humanitarian community in several reports. '[A]lthough its performance was less than perfect, [the army] did a job no one else had the capacity to do at the time, and... they did it well.' (Strand and Borchgrevink, 2006, p 18). The CARE report lists achievements of the military in: the evacuation of wounded and non-wounded people; setting up and running medical camps, relief centres and tent cities; the provision and coordination of airlift supplies of medicines, food, blankets, tents and building materials; distribution of compensation money; clearing and repairing roads; and repairing electricity supplies. However, it also notes that opinions 'differ widely on the effectiveness of army activities' (Kirkby et al, 2006, p 47).

The International Crisis Group points out that: 'the military has, even after the initial emergency phase, excluded elected bodies, civil society organisations and communities and sidelined civil administration from the effort, as well as its reconstruction and rehabilitation plans' (ICG, 2006, p 4). This report presents a scathing verdict on the military intervention: 'While the military lacked the capacity to respond effectively, it insisted on controlling the process.'

Agencies did not have the option of keeping their distance from the military. The OCHA Donor Support Group notes that a 'key characteristic of the earthquake response was strong national leadership in the form of the Pakistani military...'

(ODSG, 2006). Military groups were also running the early coordination meetings in the field. Some agencies appear to have been unconcerned about working with or alongside the military; others were very careful to preserve their neutrality. A local partner of an international agency, reprimanded for using a military helicopter, responded that the humanitarian imperative overrode the objection to associating with the military (Crawford et al, 2006, p XXII in Appendix C).

The military was initially the primary source of knowledge on the location of beneficiaries and their level of needs. The AusAid evaluation states that: ‘agencies depended on the Pakistan military for basic needs information: areas affected; beneficiary numbers; access and logistical issues; etc’ (Crawford et al, 2006, p 12). But there was some criticism of the difficulty of getting information on distributions from the military, which: ‘left enormous gaps in the distribution figures reported... [p]erhaps as much as 50% of the collective data was missing, making data analysis difficult’ (Bauman, 2006, p 3).

The CARE evaluation sums up the involvement of the military by pointing out that military involvement was essential in the early response. However, this evaluation goes on to note that the military’s command-and-control approach was unsuitable for the more nuanced interventions needed for rehabilitation and recovery. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan’s assessment was that military actors are ‘neither trained nor sensitive to the importance of citizen participation. They are generally polite, but not tolerant of criticism and retaliate strongly against citizens when they criticize or protest’ (HRCP, 2005, p 24).

Analysis of the involvement of the Pakistani military in the response to the 2005 earthquake generates three general conclusions.

- 1** A strong and well-equipped national military force can bring important benefits to a humanitarian response in a natural disaster, even one with peripheral ‘complexity’ as in Kashmir and NWFP.
- 2** The important logistical and information role of the military should ideally not be allowed to bleed over into roles such as assessment and coordination that are better lodged within a dedicated humanitarian-response capacity sympathetic to the norms espoused by humanitarians and at odds with military culture.

- 3 A military deeply embedded in political structures, as is the Pakistani military, can be mobilised without external political will, but is then unrestrained by appropriate political and administrative forces when that would be better.

## 4.6 Ownership and accountability

The synthesis report of the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC) placed great emphasis on 'ownership' of the humanitarian response. The first of the four recommendations from that report was: 'The international humanitarian community needs a fundamental reorientation from supplying aid to supporting and facilitating communities' own relief and recovery priorities' (Telford et al, 2006a, p 140). This broad idea resonates widely. For example, John Holmes, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator has argued for a re-examination of the nature of partnership, noting that 'International humanitarian response is still a western-dominated enterprise and one which urgently needs to be adapted to reflect the realities of the 21st century.' (Holmes, 2007, p 5).

The TEC's expanded summary of the synthesis report makes clear that ownership is not single and indivisible, but multi-layered (Cosgrave, 2007, p 9). Those who 'own' a process control it; they decide which priorities and policies apply. But these also apply at different levels and in the context of different relationships. If we apply this specific concept of ownership to national government, recognised as the primary duty-bearer in relation to its citizens, we will want to see some kind of legitimacy for that government – usually interpreted these days as through democratic election – and mechanisms that make it accountable to the citizens. In the specific and immediate context of a disaster and the responses to it, this means more than only through the ballot box, of course. If we are thinking of communities having ownership of the response, the same issues of legitimacy and accountability arise in terms of who represents the wishes of the community to those who have the capability to resource the response, and how those representatives are held accountable by the members of the community.

In humanitarian response, the international community dominates because of its possession of resources. It also dominates by means of the application of international norms, standards and policies that belong to it, rather than to the country or community where it is working. It also brings expectations, such as that gender equity should be respected in its work, that may well be at odds with the norms of the people with whom, or even for whom, it is working. From the mid-1990s we have seen the rise of a focus on a 'rights-based' approach in humanitarian response, where agency actions are based on rights of affected persons as established in various international instruments.<sup>44</sup> However, in most of these instruments it is the state, and not the international welfare system, that is the duty-bearer for ensuring the rights of its citizens.

The nature of the relationship between people affected by disaster and their government or their local representatives is at least a known quantity, and has known qualities, for better or worse. It exists within an ongoing context. However, the same is not true of humanitarian agencies that come from outside and do not have fundamental and known social and political relationships with the communities with whom they work. This is also the case even agencies have existing relationships built around longer-term programmes. Consequently, there is a need to find and create complex institutional and practical relationships between agencies and communities, and members of the communities, to meet the pragmatic and moral requirements of both parties. All this results in considerable tension around the issue of ownership.

### 4.6.1 The role of government

The last civilian government of Pakistan was forced from power by a military coup in 1999. The leader of the coup was both president and head of the armed forces at the time of the earthquake in 2005. With the head of state installed by the army, Pakistan is hardly a traditional democracy. Nevertheless there are some elements of democratic 'accountability' at the provincial level, although, as the International Crisis Group (ICG) notes, in NWFP it was the welfare wings of the government parties that were the primary beneficiaries of provincial relief funds (ICG, 2006, p 5).

The Pakistani government and military played the leading role in the earthquake response, giving them 'ownership' of the humanitarian response in the early stages.



The Pakistani government also 'owned' the recovery process, partly through the large cash grants paid for housing reconstruction, and partly through the standards set by the government. However, 'ownership' was also contested between different levels of government, and reflected the close inter-play between civil and military structures. The rapidly formed Federal Relief Commission (FRC) was headed by an army general. The FRC's successor, the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA), has a civilian chair whose deputy is from the military; the Authority's functional structure depends on 'army support'.

Some reviews have noted that institutionalised discrimination was a problem in the earthquake response. The ICG report states that 'Households headed by women were discriminated against, while Afghan refugees, who lacked Pakistani identity cards, were largely overlooked' (ICG, 2006, p 6). The ECHO evaluation praises one project of the Norwegian Refugee Council, that helped people to get their entitlements through assistance with information, counselling and legal assistance, suggesting that this could be a model for future emergencies (Cosgrave and Nam, 2007, p 29). One practical aspect of this project was helping people to get the identity cards that allowed them to access government compensation.

Corruption is a problem in Pakistan, which is ranked 138th in the world in terms of the perception of freedom from corruption by Transparency International (2007). Corruption is one barrier to citizens enjoying their rights, or, in this case, to the legitimacy and accountability of government ownership of the response. It is not news to humanitarian workers and their agencies that they have a duty to have a relationship with host governments, but also to avoid becoming their proxies where there are questions about their legitimacy or accountability. This is always a matter that needs to be worked out on a case-by-case basis. The international norms and standards that humanitarian agencies espouse are a positive element in the negotiations and compromises involved, and it would be wrong to yield 'ownership' fully to a corrupt and unaccountable government.

However, there are important practical areas in which priority at least should be given to government. ALNAP and Provention's analysis of lessons learned on earthquake recovery noted the need for government 'to produce a coordinated strategy as quickly as is feasible' (ALNAP and Provention Consortium, 2005b, p 5). This took time to develop in Pakistan. Officials who were more familiar with the context of the Punjab or Sindh were developing policies for areas with which they

were not familiar. This led to problems such as the initial housing designs being impractical for high-altitude locations (Simpson and Chughtai, 2006, p 4). And the changes in the permitted designs for homes qualifying for grant aid slowed the reconstruction of homes (Simpson and Chughtai, 2006, p 34).

The early ALNAP Reviews of Humanitarian Action (ALNAP, 2001; 2002; 2003) all pointed out that housing is a sector in which the humanitarian community does not excel, talking for example of: ‘the inability of relief interventions to properly support housing reconstruction’ (ALNAP, 2003, p 82). Where government does not do well either, the often-proposed solution to such inadequacies on the part of the humanitarian community to yield ‘ownership’ is also unsatisfactory. As discussed below (Section 2.7.1), giving cash grants to families for reconstruction resulted in quicker rebuilding. The lesson seems to be that the best results are achieved when ownership is invested at the most appropriate level. Thus, when families rather than agencies have ownership of house construction, it happens far more quickly.

## 4.6.2 Inequality within communities

The complexities of the concept of ownership of the response are highlighted by inequalities within communities. Where *within* communities is ownership vested? There were significant differences between the two areas affected by the earthquake. NWFP is a Province of Pakistan. AJK is administered by Pakistan, but has its own government and civil service NWFP is much more conservative than AJK: women are secluded and female school enrolment is much lower. This means that some approaches, for example the use of women’s committees, were possible in some parts of AJK but not in NWFP.<sup>15</sup>

The pattern of land ownership is one major difference between AJK and NWFP. Land in AJK is owner-occupied, but land rights in NWFP are more complex:

in Allai concepts of ownership and tenancy vary somewhat from the English definitions. In the valley, true tenants cultivate the khans’ lands in exchange for grazing their own animals and patronage. They have no inherent rights to these lands and may be asked to leave at any time. Very frequently, they are from the Gujur ethnic minority... Most small farmers, however, have

traditional, inherited rights to plots of land, but still give a portion of their yield to the local khan, who probably holds actual legal ownership. (McGinn et al, 2006, p 27)

Land-rights issues like these make it difficult to agree on who represents 'the community'. To what extent should agencies accept or challenge such social arrangements in order to achieve humanitarian aims? This question is not answered by simply attempting to involve 'the community' in decision-making.

Community consultation is the simplest and most basic way to bring about community participation in a response. Different levels of community participation range from 'consultation' to complete control. As land and water sources may be owned by the elite, UNDP notes that local elites may be the chief interlocutors between an agency and the community: '[a]ll too often though, local participation has been captured by local elites and left the vulnerable behind' (UNDP, 2004, p 81). Elite capture is a problem in NWFP and AJK, as society there is quite stratified, with leaders not coming from among the most vulnerable. It is a particular problem in agriculture because springs and irrigation systems are usually privately owned. Local committees may press for the rehabilitation of systems that serve only the elite. CARE's evaluation notes that 'Committees are useful in making a first approach to communities but they mainly represent elite interests and rarely any of the vulnerable who are the main targets of interventions' (Kirkby et al, 2006, p 40).

The complete seclusion of women is commonly practised in NWFP, but is less common in AJK. It is unusual to see women other than young girls in public in NWFP, but in AJK women play a much larger (albeit still restricted) role in public life. Not all responding agencies initially appreciated these differences. The CARE evaluation notes that:

Pakistan is, due to cultural factors and even in the most developed areas, a difficult area for work with women; one respondent compared it unfavourably with Afghanistan in this respect.... A mildly pessimistic view would be that women and men live separate lives governed by different sets of conventions and that NGOs have to work within this framework. A darker interpretation is that women's lives are effectively outside their own control and that men and particularly a religious elite control absolutely what interventions are possible with women. (Kirkby et al, 2006, p 7)

The restricted access to women's views often biased agency assessments, particularly in NWFP. However, many agencies made determined efforts to hear the voices of women, for example as in Oxfam's *Women's Review* (Oxfam, 2007). Where some people are socially disadvantaged or excluded, humanitarian agencies have found it unacceptable to cede ownership completely without having the power to seek negotiation and compromise with communities.

### 4.6.3 Being accountable

The Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP-I) defines accountability as: 'the means by which power is used responsibly' (HAP-I, 2007). While this is one formulation among many, it is adequate for a consideration of accountability in the earthquake response.

The Pakistani military lost an undisclosed number of personnel in the earthquake,<sup>16</sup> and the military response dealt with this, and with the security implications, before turning to the civilian population (ICG, 2006, p 3). This initial delay led to some criticism, as the Human Rights Commission for Pakistan noted: 'The slow start by the government and military in carrying out rescue operations cost irreparable loss of lives that could have been saved, and survivors remain deeply embittered over this failure' (HRCF, 2005, p 7). The Pakistani military was reportedly seen as unaccountable to the affected populations. The HRCF report describes military personnel as 'generally polite, but not tolerant of criticism', being inclined to 'retaliate strongly against citizens when they criticize or protest' (HRCF, 2005, p 24).

A similar criticism of being unwilling to listen could be made against the international community. Both the military and the international community were using their power to take responsibility for the welfare of people affected by the earthquake; this is neither trivial nor twisting the meaning of accountability. This is what is expected of governments as duty-bearers, and it is what agencies' mandates require of them. But what is the 'responsible' use of power, as suggested in the HAP definition? In this context the concept of 'ownership' is possibly helpful but, as we have seen, it does not guarantee a solution.

One key to this is paying close attention to the results of the use of power. In terms of humanitarian response, one of the best ways of determining the impact of assistance programmes is by asking the affected populations. However, there were very few surveys of beneficiary opinion in the earthquake response in comparison to the tsunami response.<sup>17</sup> This was disappointing, as the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition's Synthesis report noted that the 'constant surveying of the views of the affected population may be one of the most significant innovations of the tsunami response' (Telford et al, 2006a, p 49).

The international humanitarian community seems to be reluctant to ask its clients how well it is performing, and prefers instead to rely on 'standards' that the humanitarian sector itself has devised to measure its performance. It seems certain that attempting to square this circle through confrontation between the two approaches is unlikely to succeed. Yet attempts to draw down on both approaches are few and far between. Both approaches can have value, as shown in the consideration of needs assessment above (Section 4.3). The humanitarian community should not abandon faith in its own collated understanding of programming to help it understand needs and design responses around that understanding. And certainly at the other end of a programme, when it comes to judging success and impact, we must go beyond merely checking against programme objectives, and should seek the views of people affected by the disaster and the response.

#### 4.6.4 Where did ownership lie?

In the case of Pakistan, the government set the broad policies for reconstruction, and to a lesser extent for relief. It effectively owned the response at the policy level. The military exercised control of the relief process in the field, and owned it to an extent. Relief agencies chose where they worked and the sectors they worked in, although some agencies were allocated particular areas by the military as part of the coordination process.

Community ownership was limited, as many decisions were taken by the military, which was not under democratic control. Even then, community 'leaders', who

'owned' decisions, used their power irresponsibly at times. The policy of paying cash compensation gave people significant ownership of their own house reconstruction, although this was also constrained by rather demanding construction standards.

Relief agencies made some effort to consult with beneficiaries to shape their recovery programmes, but these consultations were sometimes subject to elite capture. Critically, the affected population was not generally surveyed so that agencies could be informed about how the community they were setting out to assist viewed the success of their assistance. The following section considers implications of this for the sector's judgements about its own performance.

## **4.7 The quality of the humanitarian response, by sector**

There is no consensus among aid agencies about how to approach relief and recovery. Where facilities were better before the disaster, should humanitarian efforts go only as far as disaster-related care or should they extend to rebuilding lost capacity? Where services were absent or relatively poor, depending on each agency's attitude to such questions, it may be easier to justify sticking to the necessary minimum, or harder to know how to build what was not there before, especially as the willingness to do that is likely to be linked with a desire for sustainability.

Different sectors become important at different points in the emergency response. With time, needs change, and an original target area may no longer be the area of greatest need or the best match for an agency's capacity. Agency willingness to work in particular sectors or particular geographical areas may also change over time. While agencies intervened in very difficult-to-reach areas at the beginning of the operation in Pakistan, WFP suggested that the low use of its helicopter logistics service in the winter of 2006/07 was partly due to agencies moving away from the most difficult areas and concentrating on more accessible locations. However, the nature of the programmes had changed by the second winter, and many agencies had become used to other means of transport (Cosgrave and Nam, 2007, p 34).

## 4.7.1 Shelter and housing

The earthquake happened in areas where people need protection from very harsh winter conditions, and the main pressure for urgent action was the approaching Himalayan winter. The housing for over three million people was either destroyed or very badly damaged, and suitable 'winterised' tents were in very short supply. With the approach of winter, if communities did not get assistance quickly they would either have to flee to lower altitudes or perish. But lowland towns had also been destroyed in the earthquake and there was little succour there for anyone fleeing from the mountains. Moving to camps in the lowland towns would also bring all the risks associated with such crowded settlements.

The cluster for camp coordination and management decided to take responsibility for organising services only for sites with more than 50 tents. This meant that sites below this size were served on an ad hoc basis, with Oxfam reporting that conditions 'in such camps were often much worse than in official ones' (Oxfam, 2006, p 7). The cluster real-time evaluation recommended (in vain) that the 'Pakistan Camp Coordination Cluster should ensure a comprehensive programme of relief and early recovery assistance to all those in need that are not living in settlements of more than 50 tents' (IASC, 2006, p 28).

While smaller camps are better for refugees and IDPs, as the inhabitants are less dependent on external service provision (Cosgrave, 1996), this does not mean that they have no need for external services. Several evaluations criticised the decision of the cluster not to provide services to smaller camps. The ODSG review comments: '[t]his strategy was inappropriate as it left the majority of the disaster affected families, who were scattered in groups smaller than this close to their home areas, without needed basic services (e.g., water and sanitation, health care, temporary shelter)' (ODSG, 2006, p 4). The ECHO evaluation report observes that the policy 'was a breach of humanitarian principles, which hold that assistance should be proportionate to need rather than based on administrative convenience' (Cosgrave and Nam, 2007, p 40).

The emergency-shelter projects met the need for shelter in the weeks following the earthquake, but temporary shelter expedients are not sustainable in a harsh environment like the earthquake zone. Key to longer-term shelter provision was the government's grant scheme. Reconstruction is slow in many places because families

have to fit it into livelihood activities and because of competition for masons. One third of those who lost homes had got the third housing grant instalment of 25,000PKR and nearly 20 per cent have qualified for the final instalment of 50,000PKR (ERRA, 2007, pp 1–2).

In Pakistan, the approach to housing reconstruction (grants for home-owners) was different from that to social infrastructure (seeking agencies to sponsor and rebuild). Construction has re-started on 98 per cent of rural houses,<sup>48</sup> but on only one third of water schemes and an even smaller proportion of irrigation schemes. This echoes a finding from the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition studies that, when compared to agency-built housing, ‘owner-driven reconstruction is advancing at a much faster pace, despite the modest level of the subsidies compared to the generous input of per capita resource from the international community’ (de Ville de Goyet and Morinière, 2006, p 44).

We know that housing reconstruction is an area of persistent weakness in the humanitarian sector (ALNAP, 2003, pp 81–84). Again, there is no consensus about the extent to which this should be part of the emergency response, if only because experience after experience tells us that it is a very long haul, and the humanitarian sector’s modalities are unsuited to the longer-term. Work on housing is also fraught more than most areas of assistance with interference from the ‘outer’ realm.

Land-rights issues in this case were not academic, but played a significant role in reconstruction, as tenants strove to get compensation to rebuild houses as their own property, while landlords tried to block compensation unless ownership of the rebuilt house was clearly vested in the landlord.<sup>49</sup> The failure to satisfy the aspirations of many of those who lost their homes cannot be put at the door of humanitarian agencies. And yet, when affected people were asked, this was one of their areas of dissatisfaction with the humanitarian response.

## 4.7.2 Water and livelihoods

There was eventually good emergency water coverage in camps of over 50 tents, but coverage for others was far less effective. Unlike with shelter, where most of those affected got emergency shelter assistance, there were relatively few emergency water schemes in rural areas. Many community water schemes were destroyed in



the earthquake. By September 2007, only 20 per cent of the approximately 4000 destroyed water schemes had been repaired, with work started on another 14 per cent (ERRA, 2007, p 8). The multi-agency assessment in the Allai valley notes that '[v]irtually all piped supply systems were damaged (usually entirely destroyed), and at the time of the survey only 40.4% were taking water from protected springs or taps' (McGinn et al, 2006).

Clearly, these populations are at greater risk of water-borne disease than they were before the earthquake, suggesting that there were continuing humanitarian needs. The Pakistani government declared that the relief phase was over in March 2006, but hundreds of thousands of people were still living in temporary accommodation then. Humanitarian first principles suggest that humanitarian assistance should continue as long as the risk of increased mortality or acute suffering, due to the event, continues.

In the area of livelihoods, assistance fell short of what the affected population wanted. The earthquake destroyed irrigation systems but relatively few of these were repaired. Such systems often reflect the investment of considerable labour over many years. The multi-agency assessment in the Allai Valley notes that: 'Irrigation and terracing systems were almost totally destroyed... damage is so extensive that it will likely take years to rebuild necessary infrastructure, rendering the entire valley food insecure for some time to come' (McGinn et al, 2006, p 24). The affected communities were aggrieved at the lack of attention to these livelihood issues. There were clear differences between agencies here, however, with ICRC for example paying far more attention to livelihood issues. But just as relief cannot be a magic bullet to correct decades of under-development, it also cannot re-create decades of development in a short period.

### 4.7.3 Health

Health was one area where the reports indicate a positive impact from the earthquake response. Before the earthquake, the health sector, like education, suffered from the general problem of the non-attendance of trained staff. Many health clinics were then destroyed or severely damaged in the earthquake. Normally one would expect extensive damage to the health infrastructure to bring problems, with women expected to suffer disproportionately. In fact the interventions of relief

agencies dramatically increased the availability of health services in the affected areas: ‘there was also an influx of emergency medical agencies and personnel, including female doctors, nurses, and medical officers, giving many women and girls in strict purdah access to health care for the first time’ (McGinn et al, 2006, p 17).

The health-sector picture was not universally positive however. Siddiqi notes that, despite the efforts of many NGOs and agencies, ‘a significant proportion of the population still does not have access to a health facility’ (Siddiqi, 2006, p 986). Given the general consensus that access to health facilities was far better than before the earthquake, it is quite possible that many of those who Siddiqi refers to did not have such access before the earthquake either.

## 4.8 Judging the quality of the humanitarian response

If the humanitarian sector too has its aspirations, and these include progress towards better performance in carrying out humanitarian tasks, and towards a fairer global welfare system, then we need measures that reflect those things. It may be too much to expect to find this in judgements about individual programmes alone. This section tries to build on the judgements found in the evaluations, using also the existing measures of humanitarian activity, and the idea of the viewpoint of those affected by disasters.

An early analysis of the evaluation dataset showed that the evaluations and reviews were broadly positive about the response:

- ‘[T]he emergency response to the earthquake was largely a success’ (Simpson and Chughtai, 2006, p 7)
- ‘feedback from beneficiaries confirmed the perspective of agency staff at all levels that the emergency response had been timely, appropriate and of reasonable quality’ (Crawford et al, 2006, p iv)
- ‘CARE’s response was positive, timely, responded to evidence of huge need and the Government’s appeal’ (Kirkby et al, 2006, p 13)

- ‘SCF-UK’s emergency response was swift, immediate and need based’ (Khalid and Haider, 2006, p iv)
- ‘Norwegian support for the earthquake victims was timely, targeted, effective and efficient. This view is supported by individuals and organisations interviewed in the field’ (Strand and Borchgrevink, 2006, p 30)
- ‘In terms of aid effectiveness the success achieved in the first six months is considerable’ (Thornton, 2006, p i).

However, the one broad external beneficiary survey in the dataset presents a different picture. The Fritz Institute surveyed 621 households in the five most affected districts of NWFP 10 months after the earthquake, with the following results.

- ‘Humanitarian assistance provided was inadequate relative to need. Ten months later, large numbers of earthquake-affected people report having acute needs for basic assistance.
- The Pakistani government, international NGOs (INGOs) and individuals played the major role in both the relief and rehabilitation efforts... National and local NGOs had a relatively small and seemingly subdued presence in the relief and rehabilitation efforts...
- Levels of satisfaction were generally high among those who received aid. Aid recipients were most satisfied with the aid provided by the Pakistani government and international NGOs, respectively...
- Dissatisfaction with assistance received seems to be associated with problems in the aid distribution process rather than with the aid itself...
- Consultation with aid recipients was minimal.’

(Bliss et al, 2006, pp 4–7)

On issues which can be verified from other sources, such as the detailed assessment of the Allai valley (McGinn et al, 2006), there is support for the general picture offered by the Fritz Institute in that there were outstanding needs for basic assistance, incomes had been reduced, and people were happy with the assistance received but that aid had generated community tensions in some cases.

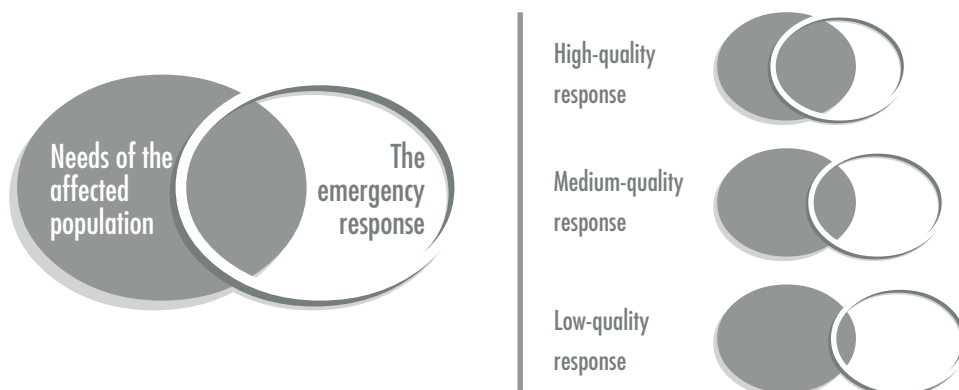
This is not to suggest that the agencies did not do a good job within the limits that they set themselves. They generally did so from the agency perspective, and

beneficiaries were very positive about the assistance that they got. Unlike the tsunami response, where satisfaction declined over time (Scheper et al, 2006, pp 10–11), the earthquake beneficiaries reported that they were generally as satisfied at 10 months as they had been at 2 months (Bliss et al, 2006, pp 4–7).

This raises the question of what can reasonably be expected of the international humanitarian community. More considered analysis of the differences between the agency evaluations and the Fritz survey shows that they are different because they are looking through two different lenses with two different approaches. The evaluations look at the performance of the agencies through the lens of their own mandate and operations. The survey looks at the whole relief effort from the beneficiary perspective.

The agency perspective is obviously not the same as the community one. For example, while many agencies congratulated themselves on the timeliness of their response, there were also reports that injured people had developed gangrene while waiting to be evacuated (Kirkby et al, 2006, p 5; Moszynski, 2005, p 926). It seems that, from the agency perspective, the clock did not start when the effects of the earthquake began but only when they had sufficient capacity on the ground to begin major operations. Why is the agency perspective different from the beneficiary one, and why do the evaluations show a generally more positive picture than the beneficiary surveys? One reason is that agencies and beneficiaries use very different criteria for measuring agencies' work.

**Figure 4.2** The quality of response from the beneficiary perspective



The affected population is not that concerned about any individual assistance project, but about whether the whole package of assistance meets their priority needs. From the perspective of the affected population, the measure of the quality of the response is the extent to which the response fits their needs (Figure 4.2). To complicate matters, the pattern of needs varies between individuals, families and communities, depending on their particular circumstances, while '[t]he humanitarian system is geared to dealing with categories of people' (Vaux, in ALNAP, 2006).

Clearly the affected population's view of the response should have primacy. It is not good enough to make judgements on the basis of whether, for example, programmes meet their targets, given that assessments have their weaknesses, plus all the other factors that inhibit perfection in programme planning, let alone the inevitability of changing circumstances. Nevertheless it is still worthwhile for the humanitarian sector itself to try to create parameters and criteria for judgement about the quality of responses. This is not least because such criteria are valuable in guiding the evaluations that are themselves one of the key tools for both accountability and identification of lessons.

There are two fundamental measures for assessing anything: quality (how good or bad something is for the intended purpose), and value (the cost of something relative to the wanted benefit). Research in the late 1990s led to the OECD/DAC development evaluation criteria.<sup>20</sup> Four of the five criteria deal with measures of the quality of aid (relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and impact), and the fifth deals with value (efficiency).

The original DAC criteria were modified for complex emergencies (Hallam, 1998; OECD Development Assistance Committee, 1999), to reflect some of the problems seen in humanitarian aid in the 1990s such as the lack of coherence between political and humanitarian stances by donors, and uneven coverage of assistance. These revised criteria were further refined in ALNAP's 2006 guide on the use of DAC criteria for humanitarian evaluation (Beck, 2006). However, the DAC criteria are designed from an institutional perspective, and they are inevitably generic to all situations. How then to mesh this generic and institutional perspective with that of the various beneficiary populations?

One method of achieving a beneficiary perspective is to ensure that beneficiary views are sought during every evaluation process. This is indeed included in the

ALNAP Quality Pro Forma as good practice. For each evaluation, this should facilitate the triangulation of the institutional view with that of the population and help to give a composite and more realistic picture. It would be ironical, at an even greater remove from the people affected by the earthquake than the evaluators whose work underpins this chapter, to attempt to second-guess the views of those people here. However it is important to remember that the criteria used by the international humanitarian sector to judge its work are unlikely to be the same as those that affected people may use.

## 4.9 Conclusion

The response to the Pakistan earthquake can be seen as a success, relatively speaking. This is the general picture shown in the evaluations, and is also at least partly supported by the views of people affected. Yet, there remain some causes for concern, in both of Slim's 'inner' and 'outer' realms – what lies within the control of the sector itself and what lies outside it. Inhabiting both of these realms are the people at the centre of the humanitarian enterprise, those affected by disaster. Maintaining a pragmatic but determined view of both the value and the difficulties of involving affected people can only assist further improvement within the sector, whatever one's view of a realistic expectation of the humanitarian system.

Equally, affected people exist within contexts that are beyond our ability to control or improve, and with which we must work, which become part of our context while we do our work. Government and community are simultaneously unavoidable partners and constraints for us, as often is the military. Our response, even our funding, is generally only a very limited part of the response to a disaster. The Pakistan earthquake offers some good examples of how all this works, how we might make the best of it, and how it jeopardises our work.

While there is still plenty of room for improvement, the humanitarian response system appears to be better prepared to meet the needs of affected populations today than in the past. For example, the improvements in agency surge capacity seen in Pakistan demonstrate that capacity is improving within the system. Incremental

progress such as this is welcome, and should encourage continuing efforts. The Pakistan earthquake response is a snapshot of an international humanitarian system that has been maturing, becoming more predictable and better able to meet the needs of the affected population. The improvements that we are seeing are not isolated from other areas of weakness, however; some of these are constraints that we impose on ourselves, and others have to be worked with. Magic bullets are rare and steady progress needs to be supplemented with innovation, especially in a world where vulnerabilities appear to be increasingly interacting with each other, and both crises and the responses to them are becoming more complex and multifaceted.

## Notes

- 1 This is one reason why ALNAP publishes summaries of lessons identified from previous disasters such as those for the tsunami (Houghton, 2005) or the Pakistan earthquake (ALNAP and Provention Consortium, 2005a; 2005b).
- 2 A review of over 600 geophysical disasters since 1985 found only 3 instances where such disasters led to epidemics (Floret et al, 2006). Nevertheless, the BBC reported on 12 October 2005 that: 'Health officials and aid workers on the scene have warned unless fresh water and food are made available potentially-deadly diseases such as cholera, plague and diarrhoea-related illnesses will take hold' (Triggle, 2005). While diarrhoeal disease (including cholera) is certainly a risk when water supply is interrupted, plague is not.
- 3 See [www.icva.ch/ghp](http://www.icva.ch/ghp) for more information on the GHP and the Principles of Partnership.
- 4 The TEC synthesis report highlighted the uneven performance of the funding system for international response and recommended that 'All actors need to make the current funding system impartial and more efficient, flexible, transparent and better aligned with principles of good donorship' (Telford et al, 2006a, p 122).
- 5 OCHA Financial Tracking Service ([http://ocha.unog.ch/fts/reports/daily/ocha\\_R2\\_A688\\_\\_08011407.pdf](http://ocha.unog.ch/fts/reports/daily/ocha_R2_A688__08011407.pdf)).
- 6 OCHA Financial Tracking Service ([http://ocha.unog.ch/fts/reports/daily/ocha\\_R10\\_E14961\\_\\_08011407.pdf](http://ocha.unog.ch/fts/reports/daily/ocha_R10_E14961__08011407.pdf)). It may well be that some of this shortfall would be accounted for by information not supplied by prospective donors or benefiting agencies.
- 7 Even this may be an overestimate, as public support in the UK was probably greater than elsewhere due to the historic links with Pakistan and the large Pakistani community in the UK, although The Humanitarian Response Index reports that 28 per cent of total donations came from 'private' sources.
- 8 Slim adds: 'they might undermine Western ambitions for a formal global system'.
- 9 There are zones such as the north of the South Asian sub-continent where earthquakes are to be expected, but their timing and scale are unpredictable.
- 10 Although the UN's humanitarian reform process is commonly said to be based on the Humanitarian Response Review, the 'four pillars' address only some of the 36 recommendations made in the Review.
- 11 The US military operation to assist the tsunami survivors cost over US\$251 million (Satow, 2006, p 4).
- 12 Some 250,000 Pakistani military personnel are stationed in AJK (Bamforth and Qureshi, 2007). This is over 40 per cent of the total military manpower.
- 13 A Federal Relief Commission was rapidly set up, however, mandated 'to manage the entire spectrum of the relief effort' (HPN report [www.odihpn.org/report.asp?id=28110](http://www.odihpn.org/report.asp?id=28110)).
- 14 The 'humanitarian charter' in the Sphere Handbook is 'informed by' no less than 18 different international instruments ranging from the universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) to the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998).
- 15 Education levels are higher in AJK, as are both remittance income and overall income. Given that fairer land ownership is associated with higher economic growth (Deininger and World Bank.,



2003, p 18), and that female education is associated with lower child mortality (World Bank, 1993, p 42), and given the loss of field labour due to seclusion, it is hardly surprising that NWFP is poorer than AJK.

- 16** Bamforth and Qureshi (2007) give an estimate of 10,000 personnel lost – but provide no source for the estimate.
- 17** The only published beneficiary studies found were the Fritz survey (Bliss et al, 2006) and the Allai valley study (McGinn et al, 2006). By contrast, the TEC synthesis report listed 15 major surveys of the affected population in the tsunami response (Telford et al, 2006a, p 49, footnote 38).
- 18** The urban pattern is more complex as reconstruction has been forbidden in some towns because of very high seismic risk.
- 19** Oxfam reported that some landlords were demanding half of the compensation payments before they would agree to the tenant receiving compensation (Simpson and Chughtai, 2006, p 10).
- 20** These measures were based largely on the biggest problems found in aid projects in the previous decades. In many cases, projects were found to lack relevance to the beneficiaries, and to be ineffective in what they set out to do; they could not be sustained beyond the end of donor support, and had little impact or negative impacts that outweighed the positive.

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## Annexe Evaluations dataset

This chapter reviews the response to the Pakistan earthquake based on analysis of the evaluations of the response. The principal evaluations reviewed are set out in Table 4A.1. This lists only the principal evaluations that used something approaching formal evaluation criteria. This basic set of evaluations available from the ALNAP database was supplemented by wider searches for evaluation reports and reviews, or references to such reports.

The criteria for inclusion in the general dataset have been that the report is either:

- a formal traditional evaluation, or
- a review, based on a clear research method, that presents a direct or indirect assessment of the response with some analysis.

No evaluation looked at the response as a whole, but some of the less formal reviews did so. The more formal evaluations typically looked at an individual element of the response, such as:

- the efforts of a single agency (Khalid and Haider, 2006; Kirkby et al, 2006, 2007; Baglolle, 2006; Reed et al, 2007; Telford et al, 2006b)
- work sponsored by a particular donor (Cosgrave and Nam, 2007; Crawford et al, 2006; Strand and Borchgrevink, 2006)
- a single topic (ActionAid, 2006; Ahmed and MacLeod, 2007; Bauman, 2006; COEDHMA, 2006; Currion, 2006; IASC, 2006; Krstic, 2006; Thornton, 2006).

The lack of a Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) evaluation was keenly felt; DEC evaluations have often been rated as high quality by ALNAP annual reviews and have often been quoted in Syntheses. The DEC evaluations were particularly good for providing an overview of responses, as they were multi-agency evaluations that also addressed the broader context.<sup>21</sup>

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**21** The UK's Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) stopped publishing the full version of its evaluation reports during the tsunami response, and has since moved away from conducting joint evaluations.

**Table 4A.1** Principal evaluations of the Pakistan earthquake response

Evaluation	Focus	Criteria used in the evaluation report
<b>AusAid</b> (Crawford et al, 2006)	Evaluation of a cluster of agencies funded through a single mechanism, using a set framework	<p><b>Capacity</b> ■ (agency) capacity to deliver emergency response/activity ■ quality of existing relationships with national affiliate, local partners and beneficiaries</p> <p><b>Planning</b> ■ quality of analysis and initial response strategy ■ standard of funding proposal/design</p> <p><b>Implementation</b> ■ efficiency of emergency response ■ (agency) capacity for learning, continuous improvement and accountability to beneficiaries ■ effectiveness of emergency response ■ connectedness/sustainability</p>
<b>CARE</b> (Kirkby et al, 2007)	Evaluation of the emergency activities of a single agency	<p>■ timeliness and appropriateness of response, efficiency</p> <p>■ impact ■ coverage ■ connectedness and sustainability</p>
<b>ECHO</b> (Cosgrave and Nam, 2007)	Evaluation of the projects funded by a single donor	<p>■ appropriateness ■ coverage ■ effectiveness ■ efficiency</p> <p>■ impact and results ■ sustainability and connectedness</p>
<b>IASC real-time evaluation of the cluster approach in the Pakistan earthquake</b> (IASC, 2006)	Real-time evaluation of the cluster coordination mechanism	<p><b>Topics, rather than criteria</b> ■ application and understanding of the approach ■ needs analysis and priority-setting ■ accountability and predictability</p> <p>■ gaps in the response ■ standards and benchmarking</p> <p>■ involvement of stakeholders ■ coordination, leadership, and inter-cluster contact ■ resource mobilisation</p> <p>■ capacity development ■ cross-cutting issues such as gender, human rights, environment and participation</p> <p>■ transition to recovery and rehabilitation</p>
<b>ICRC</b> (Reed et al, 2007)	Evaluation of the mobilisation of a single agency (executive summary only in the public domain)	<p>■ coverage/relevance/appropriateness and effectiveness</p> <p>■ efficiency ■ coordination and coherence ■ adaptability</p>
<b>Save the Children UK</b> (Khalid and Haider, 2006)	Evaluation of the response of a single agency	<p>■ relevance ■ efficiency ■ effectiveness ■ impact</p> <p>■ connectedness/sustainability</p>
<b>Save the Children US</b> (Kirkby et al, 2007)	Process evaluation of the response of a single agency	<p>■ ‘Did we follow the most effective and efficient procedures in identifying needs, targeting beneficiaries, delivering programs of support and monitoring and evaluating the impact of those programs?’</p> <p>■ ‘In the event of any future emergency, what modifications should we make to the approach, process and procedures which we followed in the Pakistan earthquake response?’</p>