



Tsunami Evaluation Coalition

Impact of the tsunami response
on local and national capacities

Maldives country report

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April 2006

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**IMPACT OF
THE TSUNAMI RESPONSE
ON LOCAL AND
NATIONAL CAPACITIES**

Maldives Country Report

Smruti Patel
with contributions from
Janey Lawry White

April 2006

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We hope that the report will contribute to good practices that bring improvement to the response in recovery and reconstruction phase and ultimately to the lives of affected people in the Maldives.

TEC Capacities Evaluation: Maldives

ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BRCS	British Red Cross
CBO	Community-Based Organisations
CCC	Core Commitment for Children
DFID	Department for International Development, government of the United Kingdom
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IDC	Island Development Committee
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
NDMC	National Disaster Management Centre
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
MGFSS	Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services
SHE	Society for Health Education
TEC	Tsunami Evaluation Coalition
UN	United Nations
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
WDC	Women's Development Committee
WFP	United Nations World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose of the Review

The overall purpose of the evaluation is to determine the impact of the tsunami response, notably the response of international actors, on local and national capacities for relief, recovery and risk reduction. Specifically, the purpose is to:

- Assess how local and national capacities changed as a result of the tsunami response;
- Assess how well international actors engaged with local and national capacities in providing relief and recovery assistance;
- Assess the intended and unintended changes to local and national capacities as a result of the tsunami response by international actors;
- Assess the extent to which transition/recovery/risk reduction programming, planned and implemented, is likely to influence local and national capacities
- Distil lessons learned for efforts to strengthen local and national capacities for future crisis response and recovery;
- Retain a gender perspective throughout and highlight the varied experiences and perspectives of women and men.

The Maldives Review

Within the Capacities evaluation, Indonesia and Sri Lanka have been studied in more depth than Thailand and the Maldives. Because of wider Tsunami Evaluation Coalition deadlines, the Maldives field study was limited to ten days from 4 to 14 November 2004. This short time was all the more brief because of the time taken to travel between the atolls and islands. The field visit furthermore coincided with the end of Ramadan and other official holidays while many interlocutors were on leave. This report is presented as a reflective review rather than a comprehensive evaluation. Lack of time allowed for only qualitative methods. The key observations in this report were presented in Male during a debriefing at the end of the field visit. On 23 April 2006, an all-day exit stakeholder workshop convened in Male to validate the findings of the near-final report. Participants included high-level government officials and representatives of UN agencies, INGOs and national and atoll-level NGOs and CBOs.

The Setting

The Maldives is made up of small islands with a small but highly dispersed population and with a very unique geography. The shortage of domestic resources means that many items have to be imported. The strong overall economic growth of the Maldives in recent decades has been accompanied by growing regional disparities and by a lack of investment in diverse skills and competencies for development. Skill shortages have often been met by foreign labour. Prior to the tsunami, the ability to access services and opportunities was constrained not only by geography, but also by a strongly centralised public administration. For women, further constraints were imposed by social norms and the fact that there is a remarkably high level of households that are *de facto* headed by women. The ability to access information, to demand quality services and to hold to account was constrained by a centralised and top-down style of governance. Atoll and island chiefs are nominated by the center rather than elected by the local population. There now appears to be a willingness to pursue political reforms, partly as a result of the tsunami disaster, but this will inevitably be a slow process.

The tsunami was the first major disaster to hit the Maldives. The Maldives suffered relatively low losses in terms of human lives, but its national economy has been hit much harder than that of any other affected country, and this affects the ability to recover. Despite years of concern about the potential effects of climate change and the rising level of the sea, there was no significant disaster preparedness at the national or local level before the tsunami. There was no policy, no legal or institutional framework or disaster management expertise. There was also no Red Cross/Crescent Society. There were very few international assistance actors at the time of the tsunami, notably United Nations (UN) agencies, and with a focus on development rather than disasters. Very few Maldivian organisations can count as Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with a national reach, but there is a wide range of community-based associations. Some of these have relevant experience and skills but few had experience in designing or managing large projects.

The Relief Phase

Were the relief programmes, from a capacity perspective, relevant, appropriate and effective? It is not possible to answer such a question beyond reasonable doubt on the basis of a 10-day visit some nine months after the event. Nevertheless, there are some major observations that can be made with reasonable confidence, supported both by documentary sources and by interviews conducted during the field visit:

- 1) From a technical-logistical point of view, the relief operation seems to have been reasonably successful. While the local population spontaneously responded to the situation in the first few

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days, inter-island communications were quickly restored and relief supplies started coming in. The assistance by several foreign navies seems to have been relevant and effective. Although there are some indications that relief items were not always appropriate and that there might have been some discrimination and possibly corruption, it does not appear that there were major gaps.

- 2) The government acted very quickly to set up its task force and a National Disaster Management Centre. The Tsunami Relief and Rehabilitation Fund seem to have been relevant and well functioning. Given the lack of in-house experience, international support to strengthen the capacity of these institutions, and of the different line ministries, seems relevant and appropriate. Some questions can legitimately be raised about the cost-effectiveness of this support and its appropriateness in such unusual terrain.
- 3) Assessments seem to have been more problematic. Although the point has been made several times in the international humanitarian literature that a good assessment looks at both needs *and* capacities, and though there exist specific tools such as Vulnerabilities and Capacities Assessments, it appears that neither national nor international actors paid much attention to existing capacities. Perhaps this is not too surprising, given that quite a number of initial assessments were carried out through the existing public administration infrastructure, with requests from the capital being replied to by the overwhelmingly male atoll and island chiefs. However, international agencies should have been quicker to pick up on this.
- 4) Perhaps because the relief operation was largely carried out by military and security personnel and through the public administration, there seems to have been very little effort to provide information and to solicit and listen to peoples' views, priorities, concerns and complaints.

Transition to Recovery

A too technical and logistical approach to relief delivery often sets a tone for the wider attitudes, relationships and strategies during the reconstruction and recovery phase, unless specific and concentrated efforts are made to reverse this. International aid agencies are by and large not very good at this, and we see that such efforts have also been slow and hesitant in the Maldives:

- 1) For the first eight to nine months after the tsunami, international agencies tended to mirror the national set-up; that is, highly centralised, top-down and dominated by a Male (and predominantly male) perspective. It is only eight to nine months after the disaster, that there is burgeoning recognition of the need to more directly engage with local level structures and with the affected populations and intended claim-holders.

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- 2) There are still few systematic efforts to provide relevant, accurate and timely information to the target groups, nor are there enough clear and effective mechanisms for them to voice their views, concerns and complaints. Some agency staff expressed the belief that people on the islands are passive, which does not correspond to the articulate and critical people whom we encountered during our island visits.
- 3) There also seems to be the belief that there is little or no capacity at the local level. International agencies have sought to contain rather than solve this apparent problem by importing competencies, and by a series of short and somewhat ad hoc trainings. If too many trainees are from Male this may only reinforce the already existing inequalities.
- 4) There has been continued marginalisation of women and longer term displaced people and perhaps a lack of attention to the perspectives of children and youth.
- 5) A very positive contribution by the international assistance community has been the raising of awareness about the rights and entitlements of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and international standards. But there remain major shortcomings in providing the IDPs with adequate protection and adequate information.
- 6) The restoration of income or a regular livelihood is a top priority for disaster-affected people and a major means to reinforce their capacity to cope. Cash-for-work projects and investments in the fisheries sector are evidently very important for many households, but income-generating activities of women have tended to get overlooked.
- 7) Shelter programmes, are progressing more slowly than originally planned. This is a situation that requires concerted information and communication efforts.
- 8) Psychosocial support programmes could not be fully assessed, but clearly there is a need to focus on the long-term IDPs for whom uncertainty and lack of information is depressing. Some interlocutors suggested that more attention should be given to local and traditional ways of coping.
- 9) A strategic approach to create a comprehensive multi-hazard risk management capacity in the Maldives seems to be underway.

Overview

The destruction in the Maldives created a longer term development reversal rather than a major humanitarian crisis. The need for relief was short lived. The relief operation appears to have gone reasonably well with relevant capacity-support to the national authorities. Arguably more capacity support during the relief phase should have been provided to atoll and island administrations, and effective information mechanisms that reached the affected populations should have been set up from the very beginning.

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The performance of the subsequent international assistance for recovery and future disaster preparedness needs to be appreciated against the pre-existing context: a governance style and system that was centralised and top-down and did not encourage participatory approaches; a lack of skilled people; and no effective disaster preparedness. In addition there were intense pressures within the international community (donors, media, the donating public) to spend and rebuild quickly. This created conflicting incentives. Transforming these situations does not happen within the span of a year. It would therefore be unfair to criticise the aid community and the national authorities for not having already made greater progress in this regard. Our main criticism is that it has taken the international agencies much longer than was justified, six to seven months at least, to move out of relief mode. This may be a global problem in humanitarian response and not specific to performance in the Maldives.

The persistence of sectoral rather than more integrated or holistic approaches is one indicator that programming is still not fully in developmental mode. While capacity strengthening has now come much more clearly on the agenda of the international agencies, further thought should be given to the objectives and methods. Whose capacities should be considered and for what?

Recommendations to International Agencies

1. Capacity strengthening of the public sector, civil society and population should become an explicit programme with emphasis on inclusion, equity and risk reduction. In particular:

- There is an opportunity to link tsunami recovery strategy to wider national development challenges. Issues such as regional inequalities, the roles and responsibilities of the public and the private sector, the opportunity cost of investing heavily in future tsunami preparedness and the structural marginalisation of women need to be considered.
- Development debates about issues such as the Focus Island strategy should not be kept within elite policy circles. International agencies have a role to play in encouraging more public information and participation.
- There should be a shift from sectoral to more integrated developmental approaches.
- Civil society should be supported in a constructive manner. There is, for example, interest among Maldivian organisations to create a national federation of NGOs. It should be clearly understood that government, non-governmental actors and international agencies each have their strengths and can play complementary roles. The current political reforms provide an opportunity but naturally create apprehensions and resistances. The attitude of the international community in this

regard could help to reduce apprehensions in the government about allowing more space to non-governmental actors (see also Blunt and Turner, 2005, p 20).

- International actors could also support communication between civil society organisations and the central government about the actual progress, impacts and consequences of national recovery policies and strategies.

2. *More strategic and comprehensive engagement of national and local organisational capacities to provide an enabling environment. In particular:*

- Capacity-strengthening efforts should continue to be broadened beyond the central government to atoll and island administrations and development committees, Women's Development Committees, IDP committees and community-based associations. This should include opportunities for members from different atolls to meet, discuss and exchange experiences, and also to meet up with comparable entities in other affected countries.
- Learn more about local contexts and power dynamics. There may be a tendency to depict the structures and dynamics of all atolls and islands as basically similar, but this is not necessarily the case. Each zone and location has its own smaller or bigger history, and its own social, economic and political dynamics.¹
- Such organisational capacity-strengthening efforts should not be focussed on project administration competencies, but on inclusive and participatory approaches and on transparent and responsive approaches.²
- There is a need to conduct a focussed cross-agency review of capacity assessment and capacity-building methods, strategies and their effectiveness.
- Focussed reflection and possible redefinition of the roles and responsibilities of technical private-sector contractors around the issue of participation should take place.

3. *More vigorous support to affected and vulnerable people so that they can assert their independence and ability to hold others accountable. In particular:*

- More emphasis should be placed on income generation and livelihood opportunities.
- Systematic and sustained information strategies should be targeted at affected people and intended claim-holders, addressing assistance programmes, their intent, criteria, progress and delays. The Maldives media should also be considered a mechanism to encourage wider and informed public debate.
- Focussed efforts should be made to actively engage women, children, youth, longer term displaced people and poor households, thereby building their knowledge and confidence to speak up.

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- Active involvement of long-term IDPs should be promoted in areas of analysis and debates about return or resettlement options, as well as in the design of new settlements and services.
- Additional structured mechanisms should be established in order for people to effectively transmit their views, needs, concerns and complaints to duty-holders and decision-makers.
- Periodic reviews of programmes and policies should be conducted along the lines of social audits. These should involve the affected population and intended claim-holders.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Framework of the Overall Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is to determine the impact of the tsunami response, notably the response of international actors, on local and national capacities for relief, recovery and risk reduction. The countries studied were Indonesia, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand; among these, Indonesia and Sri Lanka were studied in greater depth. The evaluation seeks to:

- Assess how local and national capacities changed as a result of the tsunami response:
- Assess how well international actors engaged with local and national capacities in providing relief and recovery assistance;
- Assess the intended and unintended changes to local and national capacities as a result of the tsunami response by international actors;
- Assess the extent to which transition/recovery/risk reduction programming, planned and being implemented, is likely to influence local and national capacities;
- Distil lessons learned for efforts to strengthen local and national capacities for future crisis response and recovery; and
- Retain a gender perspective throughout and highlight the varied experiences and perspectives of women and men.

The team identified three aspects of 'capacity':

- 1) *Capacity to respond* to the disaster as shown by those affected, NGOs, local women's organisations, the private sector and local and national government. This includes the capacities of women, men and other vulnerable groups in affected communities to participate in decision-making related to relief and recovery efforts, local governance, resource mobilisation, planning and implementation, protection, advocacy, training, and livelihoods recovery.
- 2) *Capacity of community members to access services and markets*, including employment opportunities provided by the private sector, and those services of government related to relief and recovery.
- 3) *Capacity to ensure quality* of service delivery including the capacity of affected people to hold assistance actors accountable.

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The evaluation pays attention to the three phases of the tsunami assistance: immediate emergency, early recovery, and the transition from recovery to development. However, in practice the transition between these phases is blurred between different sectors; phases occur in parallel and last for different lengths of time in different sectors and locations.

1.2. The Maldives Review

The Maldives field study took place from 4 to 14 November. Prior to the field visit, a desk review had been conducted of available documents. These included assessment reports, project documents, situation briefs and some programme reviews. The desk review was also used to identify actors to meet during the field visit.

Time constraints limited the study mainly to qualitative methods.³ These consisted of individual interviews with government officials and international aid workers (see list of people in Annex 2) and also with affected men and women. Focus group discussions were held with members of community-based associations and organisations (CBOs) and of Maldivian non-governmental organisations (NGOs), as well as with members of Island Development Committees (IDCs), Women's Development Committees (WDCs) and committees of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Quantitative information was derived from documents, and could not usually be crosschecked.

Interviewees were divided into five categories: international actors, national authorities, atoll and island level authorities, communities and vulnerable groups. The performance of international actors is measured with reference to the principles and standards and benchmarks set by themselves. Explicit reference is made here to the Red Cross Code of Conduct, Sphere Standards, Guiding Principles on IDPs, Guidelines for Best Practice on Older People in Disaster and Humanitarian Crisis, and the Principles and Practice of Good Humanitarian Donorship.

The key observations in this report were presented in Male during a debriefing at the end of the field visit. The debriefing was attended by United Nations (UN) and Red Cross/Red Crescent staff, and staff from the Care Society. The team had asked that the government of Maldives be invited, but no representative was present. In January–February 2006, an earlier draft report was circulated and commented upon by some peer reviewers and Maldives-based international agency staff. On 23 April 2006, an all-day exit stakeholder workshop convened in Male to validate the findings of the near-final report. Participants included high-level government officials and representatives of UN agencies, INGOs and national and atoll-level NGOs and CBOs.

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This Maldives study was affected by several constraints.

- The objectives set for the overall evaluation were very ambitious. The task is all the more challenging because the evaluators have to understand the implementation of various programmes before being able to focus on the 'capacity' dimensions.
- The original time frame for the Maldives field study, 14 days, was shortened to 10 days in order to meet wider overriding Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC) deadlines. Clearly a 10 day visit is extremely brief, all the more so because of the time it takes travel between atolls and islands. To complicate matters more, the field visit took place at a time that coincided with the end of Ramadan (6 November) and other official holidays (11 November followed by a weekend). This meant that many government officials and agency staff were on leave. In addition, an intended visit to Hulhudhuffaaruu Island on Raa Atoll had to be cancelled due to unrest on the island.
- An originally planned preparatory visit had to be aborted when the overall team leader fell seriously ill. This meant that the first days of the actual visit were taken up with preparatory work (such as setting up meetings) that otherwise would have been done in advance.
- The health problems of the team leader made it necessary to reallocate tasks and responsibilities. As a result only one core member of the team (Smruti Patel) visited the Maldives supported by Janey Lawry-White, a consultant who is supporting the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Evaluation Office in New York with the management of this evaluation.
- Finally, many of the international aid workers who had been active during the relief phase had left the Maldives by the time the field visit took place.

Visits were made to three atolls: Baa, Raa and Laamu. The island level visits were facilitated by the Care Society, a national NGO that is supported by ActionAid International (a member of the Steering Committee for this TEC team). Care Society was chosen because they work closely with island level CBOs and have access to IDPs and vulnerable groups. The island locations were chosen in consultation with Care Society and the UN Country office. Key considerations in the choice of locations were: damage caused to the island; the number of IDPs; presence of international actors; proximity or remoteness in relation to Male; and the cost of travel to and from the atolls and island. Baa and Raa atolls are to the north of Male, while Laamu is far south. The team felt it was important to try and cover the north and the south and not stick to the easily accessible islands nearby Male. The plan was to visit two or three islands per atoll. Due to time and budgetary constraints, the islands of Malhos and Dharavandhoo in Baa Atoll and Ungoofaaruu in Raa Atoll had to be visited in two and a half days, while the islands of Fonadhoo, Gan and Maabaidhoo in Laamu Atoll had to be visited in only one day.

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Malhos and Dharavandhoo in Baa Atoll are not as badly damaged as some islands. The island of Malhos was chosen because of the presence of a UNDP shelter programme. Dharavandhoo was chosen to gain an understanding of their role of CBOs supported by Care Society in the tsunami response. The island of Ungoofaaru and Halhudhuffaaru were chosen because they host IDPs from the totally destroyed island of Kandholhudhoo and Ungoofaaru has an atoll office, CBOs and hosts IDPs in temporary shelters and host families. The island of Fanadhoo also host IDPs from another atoll. On Maabaidhoo Island, the affected population is displaced on their own island. All these locations have different capacity issues. Interviews with international actors, government departments, NGOs, CBOs and communities indicated that the most prominent issues were livelihoods, shelter, IDPs, gender, psychosocial care and disaster preparedness. These became the focus for the review.

CHAPTER TWO: NATIONAL AND LOCAL CAPACITIES

This chapter introduces the Maldives in terms of general vulnerability to natural disasters. It describes the geographical, socioeconomic and political-institutional setting, and describes how these influence individual and group capacities. It also reviews pre-tsunami capacities for responding to disasters.

2.1. Context

The Maldives is a chain of almost 1,200 small islands in the Indian Ocean spread over a distance of 900 kilometres. There are some 26 geographical atolls, which are re-grouped into 20 administrative atolls. The islands are small and low-lying. The average height above sea level is 1.5 metres. The population is about 300,000 people. While a quarter of the population is now concentrated in the densely populated capital Male, the remainder are very dispersed over the other 198 inhabited islands. One third of these have a population of less than 500, and 78 per cent of them a population of less than 1,000.

The main natural hazards have been identified as rising sea levels associated with global warming and occasional storm surges (the last major one was in 1991). Cyclones bypass the islands (World Bank *et al*, 2005, Annex 15 p 3). The Maldives is vulnerable to earthquakes in the Indian Ocean, but the likelihood of earthquakes with a magnitude of five or above is limited to the southern parts of the country. In addition, the country is susceptible to oil spills and aviation-related hazards. The dependence of the country on tourism and fisheries means that such disasters have serious implications in terms of economic and social vulnerability. The 2004 tsunami was the first major disaster in (recent) Maldives history.

This geography of dispersed and low-lying small islands makes the Maldives vulnerable, but the tsunami did not build up into the same wall of water that hit larger landmasses. The tsunami's pressure wave passed between and over the islands with limited obstruction.

In recent years, the Maldives in general has become prosperous. Since 1978, the country has achieved impressive economic growth averaging 9 per cent per annum. Tourism is the most important economic sector, accounting for some 33 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP), followed by the fishing sector (9.3 per cent of GDP). The tourist industry is almost completely in private-sector hands. Human development indicators have also much improved over the past 35 years. In December 2004 the UN General Assembly adopted resolution A/59/L48, which recommended the graduation of the Maldives from the group of Least Developed Countries to Middle Income level.

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One of the major challenges that confronts the country has been to ensure that the benefits of growth and development are equitably shared among its citizens. According to the Vulnerability and Poverty Analysis Survey 2004, while income poverty exists everywhere in Maldives, the poor are concentrated on certain islands. Although inequality within Male and within atolls has declined, regional inequalities between Male and the atolls are on the increase. Particularly, the northern atolls of the Maldives have high percentages of poor people, for example, Haa Alif (49.14 per cent), Noonu (45.79 per cent), Haa Dhaalu (43.89 per cent) and Raa (41.35 per cent). The lowest percentage of residents counted as income poor appears not surprisingly in Male (3.37 per cent). Income poverty rates on the southernmost atolls are modest: Gnaviyani (10.03 per cent) and Seenu (12.88 per cent) (Government of Maldives, 2005, p3).

In addition, significant differences and disparities exist between Male and the atolls in terms of access to services and infrastructure, including health, water and sanitation. Likewise, while some islands have made considerable strides because of their close proximity to tourism zones or the availability of cultivable land, others have not had the same advantage. The limits and expense of transportation increases the socioeconomic vulnerability of the outlying islands, restricting ability to access services and employment opportunities.

Economic growth and improvements in human development indicators have not translated into adequate skill development of the Maldives population. There remain significant skill shortages that are met by the importation of skilled labour from abroad. This is particularly noticeable in the public sectors of health and education, and also in those companies that own, build and maintain the tourist infrastructure.

Women in the Maldives have generally been marginalised from social and economic developments. There are cultural and social restrictions against women traveling to other islands, and on the type of work that women can accept. This limits their access to employment. The tourism sector is the largest single contributor to economic growth, yet only 4 per cent of its employees are women. In 2000, the overall labour force was estimated to consist of 71.1 per cent male and 37.4 per cent women.

Women maintain farm plots and grow fruits and vegetables in their homes, which are then sold locally, in the atolls, or in Male. Many women are also self-employed and work from home in such trades as tailoring, making traditional foods, curry powders, handicrafts etc. Few if any of these women have registered their businesses, because the process is difficult. Women's participation in decision making remains low, with women making up less than 5 per cent of elected members of Parliament. Traditional attitudes, low accesses to secondary and tertiary education and limited employment opportunities have

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relegated women to the unpaid tasks of family and community life. Employment patterns requiring long absences of men from their families, coupled with a high rate of divorce, result in additional burdens for women. According to the 2000 census, no less than 46.6 per cent of households are in practice headed by women. A report published in September 2004 on 'Gender-Based Violence in the Maldives' found that domestic violence and child abuse were common in the Maldives but some people thought that physical violence toward women was justified, given the subordinate position of women to men in their view of Islam.

The Republic of the Maldives is governed by a strong executive, with much power vested in the president. The president is both head of state and head of government. The president is elected by the People's *Majlis* (parliament), and confirmed by the public in a nationwide referendum. Island chiefs are powerful, especially because all government information is passed through the island office. There is little contact or chance to participate in decision-making processes. IDCs as an institution are supposed to have representation and input from the community, but these institutions frequently remain dominated by the island chief.

This strong centralisation and political control creates certain tensions, but reforms were under consideration even before the tsunami. On 11 November 2003, in his inaugural address to the nation, the president identified five strategic areas of action, including the strengthening of democratic institutions. He also signaled that 'further efforts will be made to increase the role of women in the affairs of the nation and to provide equality of opportunity for women and men in all areas' (The Evening Weekly, 2003b).

The creation of a National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in December 2003 was a significant step. NHRC has been instrumental in advising the government on the matter of acceding to and ratifying international human rights instruments. However, although NHRC has the power to receive complaints, it does not have the power to investigate. Recent efforts by Maldivian citizens to create a non-governmental human rights organisation have met with resistance. International commentary on governance in the Maldives has focussed on political and civil rights⁴.

2.2. Pre-Tsunami Capacities

In the context of the threat of rising sea levels, the government of the Maldives, supported by international financial institutions, was already pursuing a policy of encouraging the movement of people to 85 'Focus Islands' considered to be safer.⁵ Relocation would be voluntary, but incentives are available. The strategy is intended to reduce the cost of public administration and service delivery, and also to

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reduce the pressure on Male. The delivery of services has been highly centralised, with atoll and island-level chiefs taking their orders from the central ministries in Male. Due to internal disparities of growth benefits, there has been recognition of the need to decentralise, encourage more development poles other than Male, and invest in the capacity of the atoll authorities. The Government of Maldives had already formed a partnership with the UN, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and World Bank to reduce poverty and disparities (UN Country Team, 2002, p 3).

There are 20 administrative atolls. Atoll Development Committees have been created as well as IDCs. These institutions are charged with implementing the programmes in the atolls and islands, and can tap into resources from the Atoll Development Fund. Some of these committees have been provided training and are highly active, but on a majority of islands they are inactive or controlled by island chiefs. Since 1996, about 215 Island Women's Committees have been established, although women are sometimes unclear on the committees' purpose.

Post-tsunami international inter-agency missions (World Bank *et al*, 2005) signal that the NGO sector is very limited. Only three 'national' NGOs have been identified. These are:

- Care Society, which traditionally works with people with disabilities. Since the tsunami, and partnering with ActionAid International, Care Society has worked with CBO partners at island level on tsunami response activities;
- Fashan, which works on social problems like drugs, HIV/AIDS and violence against women; and
- The Society for Health Education (SHE), which works for social and family issues and is run by the First Lady.

All of these organisations are based in Male and some have strong links with the government. Legislation covering NGOs is problematic, as it also encompasses political parties and makes it difficult to raise funds from external sources. It has been very difficult for NGOs to register in Male.

But there is a good tradition of community collaboration and association. Often initiatives and projects are undertaken by local people on a voluntary basis to benefit the entire community. Such community-based groups played an important role in the development of services on the islands before the tsunami. Some were registered as sports, cultural or youth clubs. They raised money by doing public works and voluntary activities, for example by building a mosque for women or a pre-school and recreation hall. Some managed to get bank loans to generate electricity for the community. But generally, they have been

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dependent on government funding and the only way they can access this is through the island chief appointed by the central government. Clearly this gives the island chiefs much power and control.

The UN first opened an office in the Maldives in 1965. The UN system was a comparatively small donor in Maldives, with UN grant-based assistance totaling US \$4.48m or 6.3 per cent, of US \$70.74m in Official Development Assistance to Maldives in 2001 (UN Country Team in Maldives, 2002, p 2). Although only five UN organisations – UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Volunteers (UNV) – were resident in the Maldives, with a total staff of 20, the UN is the major development partner of the government. The UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for 2003–2007 anticipated resource allocations through the UN to the order of (US\$): WHO 5.5m, UNDP 4m, UNICEF 3.2m, UNFPA 3m, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) 424,000 and UNV 143,000. The focus of several programmes under UNDAF is to improve the capacities for governance and social mobilisation, the quality of social services and the management of development. UNDP assisted the government to promote social mobilisation through the Atoll Development for Sustainable Livelihood Programme in Shaviyani Atoll.

UN staff in the Maldives office had little to no experience or expertise in disaster management and there were no disaster management plans in place. UNICEF staff had participated in a regular UNICEF training on emergency preparedness in November 2004 and had practiced using the Core Commitments for Children (CCC) framework in emergencies. UNICEF had also published a booklet setting out how the CCC would be activated in an emergency (UNICEF, 2005a).

Very few international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) were present in the Maldives before the tsunami. Only Voluntary Services Overseas, working with the department of education, maintained a real programmatic presence in the 1990s, and was the only INGO present at the time of the tsunami (Brown, 2005, p 48).

A Committee on Natural Disasters existed but had been merged with the National Commission for the Protection of the Environment. The understanding was that, in the event of a natural disaster, the Ministry of Home Affairs would take charge. There were no national disaster preparedness plans nor any specific legislation related to disasters (Government of Maldives and UN, 2005, p 4). At the time the tsunami struck, there were no emergency operations centers and no persons designated as information focal points. There was also no Red Cross/Crescent Society in the Maldives.

2.3. Impact of the Tsunami

The tsunami caused 83 deaths in the Maldives and left 25 people missing and believed dead. Approximately 12,500 people were displaced on their own island or to other islands. For a few days the communication links with some of the most affected atolls were broken and it was difficult to get information on the extent of impact and damage caused.

The limited loss of life meant that community response capacities were not heavily affected. People who we interviewed confirmed that the island inhabitants are used to being self-reliant. Food stocks from island shops were used to feed people until help arrived. Eventually, atoll authorities were able to use private speedboats to evacuate people from destroyed islands and place them with host families. External assistance began to arrive after three to five days, depending on the distance from Male. Once the external assistance arrived, island offices were asked by the National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC) to create a Relief Task Force to distribute relief.

The impact of the tsunami has been significant in relation to long-term economic capacities. Severe damage was caused to the physical infrastructure of 53 out of the 199 inhabited islands. Total losses are estimated in the order of US \$470m or 62 per cent of GDP (World Bank *et al*, 2005). Of these, direct losses are US \$298m or 8 per cent of the replacement cost of the national capital stock. The biggest affects have been on the tourist industry (about half of it was insured), fisheries and agriculture (loss of many fruit trees, salinity as medium-term problem). While the losses in the Maldives are relatively low in numbers of human lives, the national economy has been hit much harder than that of any other affected country.

CHAPTER THREE: FINDINGS IN RELATION TO ACTOR GROUPS

3.1. Engagement with Affected People

Assessments and 'visiting missions' were not coordinated (UNICEF, 2005b, p 10). By and large assessments were conducted without the involvement of the affected people. Apparently most information was derived from the national government, which gathered information by fax. Island chiefs usually filled out the assessment forms without consulting the population.

Community capacity was engaged immediately after the tsunami. People who were not affected by the tsunami helped others by offering food, clothes and shelter as host families. As soon as external aid arrived and the Relief Task Force was set up, people became disempowered. Part of the problem was the lack of guidance in the composition and the role of the Relief Task Force. Women were not systematically included in these Task Forces and where they were included they did not have any decision-making power. Relief items were distributed without prior consultation. Not all relief was appropriate; sometimes people received food rations but did not have utensils to cook in or fire to cook on. Some food parcels had cans of fish that people were not familiar with and did not use. Some medical facilities complained that they were given medicines they did not need.

In three of the six islands visited by the evaluators, complaints were made of corruption in aid distribution. On some islands that were visited this was so serious that people rose up against island chiefs and had them removed. Allegations of mismanagement and abuse of tsunami relief have become part of the political debate about democratizing the system of governance. The opposition Maldivian Democratic Party, registered on 9 June 2005, has appealed for more accountability in aid distribution. When asked about accountability mechanisms for people to make complaints, an atoll minister replied that complaints can be sent to the president's office and then there can be an investigation.

The absence of any meaningful consultation let alone real participatory involvement of the affected people in the initial relief response, coupled with a structural situation of political centralism and top-down governance, set the scene for a tsunami response that would show persistent weaknesses with regard to the provision of information, participation, listening and accountability to the intended claim-holders. The Lessons Learned workshop in May 2005 refers to the lack of involvement of affected people and shortcomings in the provision of information as well as the 'lack of participation by women in island level decision-making process' (Government of Maldives and UN, 2005, pp 8–10).

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This widespread and persistent lack of information to and participation of the affected people and intended claim-holders was confirmed in our talks with both government officials and with the affected people, including members of Women Development Committees and CBOs interviewed on the islands.

During March, April and May 2005, UNFPA led interagency missions to assess the situation of IDPs and host communities on Raa, Laamu and Thaa Atolls, with particular reference to reproductive health and psychosocial issues. Lack of income opportunities and livelihoods emerged as a serious issue and tensions between host families and IDP communities were identified. Lack of information was brought up as a serious issue. (UNFPA, 2005a-d). The evaluation team visit six months later revealed that these issues had not been addressed; people's capacities were still not being engaged in any serious way. IDPs, for example, expressed frustration over lack of progress despite many visits by government officials and donor agencies. Most construction work is being handled by contractors rather than providing local employment. The government announced housing policies without any consultation with the population. Tensions between IDPs and host populations have continued and even occasionally escalated to violence. IDP committees were supposed to have decision-making power, but in most cases decisions are still made by the island chief. It appeared to the team that island chiefs were responsible for implementing government tsunami response at the island level, and were also the designated channels through which complaints could be made. This does not promote transparency, or an effective accountability mechanism.

3.2. Engagement with Local Civil Society

One of the most striking aspects of the international response in the Maldives is the widely held belief that there is little or no capacity at the local level. This perception came out consistently in the interviews conducted in Male in the course of this evaluation. As there appear to have been hardly any attempts to actually assess existing capacities, this belief has gone unquestioned. CBOs complain about lack of recognition of their role in the relief phase by island authorities.

Women and WDCs have been actively involved in the immediate response and aftercare, but this has gone largely unnoticed. On the three islands visited by the evaluators, WDCs ensured that community kitchens were organised to feed the IDPs and clothes were provided for them. On Ungoofaaru Island, the WDC arranged for 84 IDPs to be housed with host families.

For much of the first nine months, blindness to local capacities has persisted within the national public administration and among international agencies. Both the public authorities and international assistance agencies remained heavily concentrated in Male – the international agencies thereby imitating the

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centralisation of the government system. This led the agencies to employ staff from Male or abroad, causing resentment among local associations. National NGOs perceived themselves to be trapped in a vicious circle. As one member said: 'There was no capacity assessment, but a general agreement among the international actors that there was no capacity at the island level. This information was then passed on to other actors, and so it went on.'

Where civil society actors have been engaged, there has been a positive change. The disaster opened up space for civil society to get involved, gain exposure and experience. Box 3.1 shows an exceptional example of a constructive partnership between an INGO and a national NGO – a partnership that also engages community-level associations.

Box 3.1: Tamiyyathul Saif: A community organisation on Ungufaroo Island

This organisation was formed over forty years ago to raise money to construct a mosque for women. There are 107 members, of which 55 are men and 52 are women. Women participate equally with men, working on construction projects. Skilled people in the CBO provide supervision of construction projects.

So far, Tamiyyathul Saif has constructed a pre-school in a hall and carried out public works, such as repairing walls and a cemetery. The organisation has a music group that performs to raise money for projects; it also puts on cultural shows on nearby resort islands. Members support each other with small construction works, such as helping to renovate houses.

Previous projects have all been built with money raised locally, for example, Rf 400,000 was donated by the government, and Rf 1m was generated on the island for the mosque project – raised over five years by doing maintenance jobs, expanding the island office building and cleaning the island. When the tsunami hit, other activities were suspended, and tsunami response took priority over everything else.

Immediate post-tsunami relief

Tamiyyathul Saif cooked for and helped to feed 550 IDPs using government rations of flour, sugar and rice. Originally, food was distributed from island stocks (shops), but within three days government rations had started to arrive. IDPs were cared for in this way in the school for one week, after which 79 people were transferred to the pre-school hall, where they stayed for five months, until they could move into the temporary shelters being built by contractors. The CBO built four toilets and a kitchen with materials paid for through the atoll office.

Post-tsunami recovery challenges

The CBO already ran a preschool, but there is now insufficient space, as the number of children increased with the influx of IDP children. The existing school has two shifts a day to cope with the number of children. There are 250 IDP children of pre-school age (between the ages of 2.5 and 6 years old). Their expectation is that the IDPs will remain on Ungufaroo for between two and three years.

Tamiyyathul Saif is currently building an additional six-room preschool with Care Society support and ActionAid International financing. The cost of materials and some labour costs are being provided through ActionAid International, and the CBO is supplying most of the labour. The new pre-school is due to be completed in 2006. While the original pre-school caters to 190 children, the new one will accommodate 300. This is the first time international money has been given to the CBO.

Capacity changes

The president is the deputy atoll chief and is tied in to the local government system. He is also vice-president of the Parents and Teachers Association. Decision making in this CBO is quite centralised through the president, which leaves little opportunity for other people's capacity to be developed. Still, the interviewees believe that the CBO's capacity has been raised by the tsunami. The pre-school project is an important activity for the organisation, and its people feel it will open up other opportunities once it has been completed. They would like to work on building a library and safe disposal of waste. These are projects that the members think are important.

There is 'healthy competition' between this CBO and another local CBO, Club Youth Star.

3.3. National and Local Institutions

Immediately after the tsunami struck, the government set up a Ministerial Task Force.⁶ The latter then established the NDMC under the Ministry of Defense, led by the minister. Government staff from various ministries was drafted in to ensure tsunami coordination. It is worth noting, however, that the Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services (MGFSS) was not initially part of the Task Force. Funding for the emergency relief was quick and effective. While the Ministry of Defense coordinated the overall relief effort, the Ministry of Finance and Treasury took the lead in coordinating donor assistance. The government quickly established a Tsunami Relief and Reconstruction Fund, with its Board of Trustees chaired by the auditor-general and including international agencies. This has worked well. The Ministry of Planning and Development took the lead for data gathering and the long-term response (World Bank *et al*, 2005, p 6). Island task forces were set up to distribute relief and recovery aid.

A month after its creation, the National Disaster Management Centre was structured into two divisions:

- 1) National Disaster Relief Coordination Unit responsible for temporary shelter, repair of damaged homes, provision of relief assistance, logistical support, reconstruction and rehabilitation of social infrastructure; and
- 2) National Economic Recovery and Reconstruction Programme, responsible for the planning and coordinating the redevelopment programme to revitalise those islands most affected, as well as for programmes and projects to revive the overall economy. This is carried out by two units – the National Economic Recovery Unit and Transport and Logistics Unit.

Weaknesses and problems in the relief response are now better acknowledged. The head of NDMC admitted to the evaluation team that the response had been somewhat ad hoc, and that the authorities were learning as they went along. (As this was the first national disaster of this magnitude, this was to be expected.) On some islands, relief apparently became politicised. It has been alleged that people who had voted against the government were denied aid. For example, the people of Fonadhoo Island in Laamu Atoll voted for opposition parliamentarians at the last election and are now out of favour with the national authorities and the atoll chief.

There is a perception that sewing machines were distributed to women according to political biases. A member of one relief task force suggested that when NDMC contracted local companies to carry out repairs, there was no bidding or consultation and the contracts went to friends of officials. Supervision of

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reconstruction is the responsibility of the island offices, but they are part of the same deep-seated system of patronage.

Before the tsunami, donor funding averaged around US \$20m per year, but after the tsunami it reached US \$250m. But by mid-September 2005, the government signaled that there were severe funding constraints for the recovery programme, and that a balance of payments problem had arisen due to a 35 per cent drop in tourism and the rising cost of oil (UN Country Team, 2005, Sit. Rep. no 51).

As in Indonesia and Sri Lanka, the government capacity to cope with the impact of the tsunami and recovery challenges has been heavily stretched. However, the situation in the Maldives is worse, because the public administration cannot easily draw on a substantial pool of qualified staff from unaffected regions. Centralisation of governance is also a major obstacle; central ministry staff makes all decisions. An argument can also be made that, although they may have worked exceptionally hard, the central authorities have created a situation of overload for themselves by neither delegating and empowering local administrations, nor allowing more space for international agencies to operate. A member of the Tender Evaluation Board estimated that the workload had increased by a factor of 10. Significant delays occur in reaching project agreements.⁷ In October 2005, UNDP concluded a review of development coordination in which it observed that:

A feature of development coordination is that it is very much a top-down process. There are few opportunities for the voices of the communities especially those badly affected by the tsunami to be heard. Citizens are not encouraged to give 'voice' to their needs and wants and there are few mechanisms or opportunities for them to make inputs to the development process (Blunt and Turner, 2005, p 20).

In the reconstruction process there is also a serious lack of capacity and skills because of the number of issues, many of them new, that the chiefs have to deal with. The Atoll Development Minister told the evaluation team that seven island chiefs and some atoll chiefs had been replaced due to unsatisfactory performance, adding that, 'Performance of the island chief system is reportedly patchy and may sometimes not articulate popular demands and wishes.'

3.4. International Agencies

Providers of international assistance during the relief phase included foreign navies, the Red Cross family, some INGOs, the UN system and some international financial institutions. The UN Country Team established a disaster task force led by the UN resident coordinator, and the UN presence has grown

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dramatically from fewer than 20 staff members to more than 150. UN agencies include UNDP, UNICEF, United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UNFPA, WHO, FAO and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).⁸ Although there was no Maldives Red Crescent, the Red Cross movement responded actively. Apart from the Federation itself, national societies represented in the Maldives include the American, Canadian, British and French Red Cross.

In the relief phase, international agencies focussed on assessments, the distribution of relief, psychosocial support and developing a coordinating mechanism. Among these:

- OCHA deployed a United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination team the day after the tsunami;
- UNICEF provided government with assessment tools used in the 2001 Gujarat earthquake relief efforts and questionnaires for data collection taken from UNICEF sources;
- ActionAid International, seeking to pursue south-south learning, mobilised one of its partners in Bangladesh to carry out an assessment together with the Care Society; and
- The World Bank and ADB, subsequently joined by the Japan Bank for International Cooperation, worked with the government to compile a comprehensive damage and loss assessment.

The national security services helped in distributing relief with the Maldives chief of staff directing the operation. It was perceived by NDMC that it was easier to deal with the security services, as they were disciplined and used to a command and control approach. Navy vessels, some with helicopters, from other countries such as India, Bangladesh and Pakistan, also assisted in the relief operation. They delivered relief supplies to the islands, and some helped to clear debris. Aid distribution on the islands was largely handled by island authorities and security services personnel. The British Navy also helped with restoring electricity and communications.⁹

There appears to have been very early attention to the psychosocial impact of the disaster:

- Four days after the disaster, UNICEF commissioned a team of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), in the absence of any suitable Maldivian organisation, to conduct a rapid assessment on the psychosocial condition of the affected populations. This ultimately took two months to complete.

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- A psychosocial support team of the American Red Cross arrived in the Maldives within 10 days of the tsunami. Its goal was to establish a national community-based psychosocial support programme.

IFRC and other members of the Red Cross family provided direct and indirect assistance in cash or in-kind to relief and rehabilitation efforts. Oxfam provided some island communities with cleanup equipment and funded the work of local NGO partners (for example, Care Society and Fashan) in cash-for-work programmes and cement block-making for shelter. Oxfam completed its work and is no longer present.

Several other INGOs arrived, including faith-based organisations. There were sensitivities about Christian organisations having religious agendas. Citing the discovery of books with Christmas carols in them, the government seized over 100 tons of assistance from an INGO that had been donated in Britain. The head of Friends of Maldives was accused of being a Christian missionary and banned from the Maldives.

In April 2005, the government issued a change in policy for the distribution of relief items. INGOs were asked to register their assistance in detail with the National Disaster Management Centre. INGOs and individuals were required to entrust whatever relief items they wished to distribute to NDMC. Strict restrictions and cumbersome approval processes led several international INGOs to review their programmes.

In the transition phase, IFRC and UN were the main international presence. IFRC is a major participant with a contribution to the order of US \$140m. In addition, efforts are now underway to create a Red Crescent Society in the Maldives. ActionAid International has been supporting the Care Society but does not maintain a permanent presence in the Maldives.

Box 3.2: A Good Example of Partnerships – ActionAid International, the Care Society and CBOs

Originally, ActionAid International intended to facilitate a longer term relationship between the Care Society and one of its partners in Bangladesh (Gono Sasthaya Kendra), but legal complications arose and ActionAid International had to make a direct link. ActionAid International's role includes funding and support in technical and non-technical areas, such as planning and reporting. Strategies are agreed to jointly and developed by local CBOs. Community volunteers are trained in psychosocial care and have supported women and children. Needs assessments had identified home gardening as a source of income on the islands and found that many crop and seed banks had been lost after the tsunami. Plants, seeds, organic manure, fertiliser, agricultural tools and pesticide have been provided. There are projects to construct safer preschools and additional schoolrooms to accommodate some displaced children.

Through these projects the CBOs have been introduced to a new system of responsibility, accountability and sustainability. Recently the Care Society and its CBO partners carried out a joint planning exercise for their activities for the next two years. Activities and budgets were agreed upon together. The Care Society has also started to integrate humanitarian principles and international standards into their projects. In June 2005 the Care Society held a Civil Society Conference on tsunami recovery efforts. Forty representatives from the worst affected atolls attended, as well as four IDP representatives and NGO representatives. The conference concluded with drafting of a Civil Society Charter, which took into account various issues faced by the communities, what was needed most by the affected community, what has been done and what the relevant authorities have not done.

Multilateral agencies provided large amounts of technical assistance to line ministries in order to develop competences and strengthen future disaster preparedness (UN Country Team, 2005, Sit. Rep. no 51). The FAO, for example, has provided technical expertise in overall coordination of emergency related activities in the fisheries sector, as well as undertaking various assessments, evaluations and training. WHO supports the government in strengthening health care and waste management (UN, 2005a, pp 77–78). UNEP seeks to strengthen national and island capacities to design and implement environmental risk reduction and reconstruction activities (Ibid., p 82). ADB has mobilised community development specialists for agriculture and fisheries components, an environmental engineer for the water supply and sanitation component, a transport specialist and an environmental specialist for the transport component and an agronomist for agriculture, fielded in June 2005 (ADB, 2005). All of this international technical assistance was well appreciated, as those interlocutors among the national authorities made very clear. If there were any reservations, they related to delays in the arrival of technical assistance.

Lack of time did not allow a full assessment of the effectiveness of this technical assistance. The short-term nature of such inputs and high turnover of foreign experts and advisers is not always ideal. From January to June 2005, over 33 consultants and external staff from other offices were brought in to the UNICEF office in the Maldives. Each one stayed for an average of two months. One consultant continued

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working for six months while two staff on loan stayed for only 20 days. A recent review of UNDP's programme in the Maldives has questioned whether such short-term inputs have generated benefits for the affected populations commensurate with their cost (Maconick *et al*, 2005, p 4).

Given the absence of any significant disaster management experience even at the national level, technical assistance of the international agencies to the central authorities and line ministries was undoubtedly relevant and appropriate, although bottlenecks still remained. In June 2005, the Joint UN mission reported that, 'It appears that planning for recovery is at an advanced stage in Maldives. However, it is clear that implementation of these plans will face severe capacity constraints.' (UN, 2005c, p 18.)

Rehabilitation and recovery programmes have also been slowed down because managers tended to underestimate the time and cost of bringing supplies from abroad and moving them around within the Maldives¹⁰. National staff might have provided more realistic assessments but repeatedly told the review team that their local knowledge was not called upon by their international colleagues and managers.

International actors are now shifting their strategies. First, agencies are beginning to work more with non-governmental entities. UNICEF, for example, is working with the Faculty of Health Sciences of the Maldives College of Higher Education, SHE and the Boy Scouts of Maldives (UNICEF, 2005b, p 15). UNICEF, UNFPA, IFRC and the Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Security have trained some 320 local teachers in counseling (UN, 2005a, p 80).

Second, there is a move to work more directly with IDCs, Women's Committees and with community associations. The reports of multilateral agencies make increasing reference to this from late spring onwards. For example:

- At the end of June, ADB reported that in agriculture and fisheries, a detailed needs assessment is underway and will be completed by the end of July 2005. CBOs have been identified in 26 islands and will have been identified in another 42 islands. Guidelines for CBO operation are under preparation and inputs will be provided to farmers and fish processors starting August 2005 (ADB, 2005);
- On more than 7 islands, community consultations with island chiefs and magistrates are engendering island prioritised development plans based on community-managed processes. Community contracts specifying house repairs and construction are now being prepared with

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development committees, and community action plans will be ready for implementation by early May (UN Country Team, 2005, Sit. Rep. 38, 26 April);

- IDCs were chosen to act as contractual counterparts for implementation of projects (UN Country Team, 2005, Sit. Rep. 46 and 51). Island WDCs are reportedly involved in implementation (UNDP, 2005c);
- 'Initiatives for capacity building of community-based organisations at the island level are in the tendering and detail planning state' (Ibid).

The few INGOs, notably members of IFRC, are seeking to engage and work more closely with target populations. The American Red Cross, for example, notes in relation to further development of psychosocial services: 'This time we've used people in the villages to identify what is going on in a particular village.' (Simmons, 2005.) The British Red Cross (BRCS) is now using community mobilisers to consult with target groups on all aspects of the recovery programme. This is to ensure that the intended claim-holders are able to influence and shape decisions that affect their lives. The island office is not involved in the implementation of these projects.

In conclusion:

- By and large, the relief operation has been quick and effective, at least from a logistical or technical perspective;
- The relief and early rehabilitation operation looks more problematic in terms of needs assessments, and the provision of relevant information in a timely manner would have been an enabling factor for affected people;
- An overly technical or logistical approach to relief delivery often sets a tone for the wider reconstruction and recovery efforts and relationships, unless specific and concentrated efforts are made to reverse this. Such efforts have been slow and hesitant in the Maldives;
- International agencies with a pre-tsunami presence were very few and felt pressure to respond quickly.¹¹ They had to manage a rapid expansion¹² and found it difficult to provide meaningful and effective capacity-support to others during the relief and early rehabilitation phase;
- International agencies that remain present during the reconstruction phase have tended so far to mirror the national set-up; that is, one highly centralised, top-down and dominated by a Male perspective.
- The marginalisation of women, longer term displaced people and lack of attention to children's perspectives are other major shortcomings in the recovery effort so far;

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- There is a serious shortage of people with relevant skills.¹³ A continued heavy reliance on imported expertise from abroad simply perpetuates the weaknesses of the development strategy pursued so far by the Maldives.

Box 3.3: The Pressure to Spend

Among those interviewed, many managers in the government and the UN said that there was pressure to spend money, and that neither the UN nor the government had the local capacity to deliver. Prior to the tsunami, the UNDP office in the Maldives had an expenditure of approximately US \$2.5m per annum. Post-tsunami, the office set the expenditure target of US \$2m per month. All donor funds committed to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Flash Appeal come with the condition that they had to be spent within 2005. Existing UNDP administration, finance and procurement departments were not geared toward medium-scale recovery interventions, especially when quick actions and interventions were required, and have caused certain delays in the procurement, contracting and similar areas (UNDP, 2005f). This too is adding to the delays.

Pressures to spend can provide distorting incentives for all international (and national) institutions, including favouring the more expensive expatriate skills, external contractors and projects with outlays in hardware. Participatory approaches and sustained capacity building of a multitude of local associations and organisational entities are slower, and often cost less money. Many bilateral donors have attached strict timelines to their funding. There is a humanitarian and development gap, which means that, for some donors, funds that come from the 'humanitarian pocket' must be spent within 12 months or less (six months in the case of one donor to a shelter). In addition, there is pressure to spend that comes from the public and the media – with highly critical reporting on the overall 'slow pace of recovery' around the first anniversary of the tsunami.

CHAPTER FOUR: CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

4.1. Income and Livelihoods

The capacity to restore incomes and livelihoods is very high on the list of people's priorities. People not only lost their livelihoods, but many also lost the savings they kept at home, because there are no bank branches on many of the islands. The government of Maldives announced a policy of urgent support for livelihood restoration (World Bank *et al*, 2005, p 13). The Island Livelihood and Development Programme comprises:

- In-kind equipment (for example, fishing and fish processing equipment, and start-up packages of seeds and tools for agriculture);
- Small and short term cash grants for working capital;
- Subsidised micro-credit for agricultural and other producers;
- Government financing of repairs to fishing vessels; and
- Procurement of new cost-effective fishing vessels to replace those that were lost.

Cash assistance was provided to displaced communities. A total of Rf 30m (US \$2,353,000) has been disbursed to the affected population under an emergency cash transfer programme. The programme disbursed Rf 1,500 (US \$118) per family member for those who lost their houses; Rf 1,000 (US \$79) per person to those whose houses were damaged and needed repairs and Rf 500 (US \$39) per family member whose houses were flooded. They also received food assistance, tents and water (World Bank *et al*, 2005, p 14). However, it appears that not all affected families have received this support. On the islands visited, there were complaints that cash handouts were mishandled. Reportedly, some people were given more than they should have been, while others did not get any cash support. An elderly woman interviewed in an IDP camp on Laamu Atoll did not know anything about this at all; she was very distraught because she had lost the tools she worked with and had no idea what she would do.

Cash-for-Work programmes have been carried out in many of the islands by various agencies. People were encouraged to work on clearing up the islands after the tsunami. This has provided extra income in time of need.

FAO and UNDP have distributed fisheries equipment and agricultural inputs as part of a restoration of assets approach to livelihoods. The distribution of equipment was sometimes slow to start due to delays in tendering, supply and other logistical problems. The distribution had just started in some atolls at the time

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of the field visit (November 2005) and was mostly completed by January 2006, a full year after the tsunami. Other types of activities include boat repairs and newly built fish markets and processing centres to be managed by local communities.

Working in partnership with MGFSS, UNDP sought to provide cash-for-work and asset replacement for women as well as capacity building. Two national agencies were contracted in August 2005 but needed substantive backstopping. (UNDP, 2005f.) UNDP also had difficulty in starting its post-tsunami livelihoods programme because of a lack of capacities. Specialists were eventually brought from Asia through UNV and other specialists arrived over the following months.

Fifteen young Maldivians who had just finished their A-Levels were hired on 1 August as programme assistants, and then had to be trained. Three of these were to work as office assistants, and the other 12 were to be dispatched to the field (UNDP, 2005f, pp 12–13). While this programme strongly supports the hiring and professional development of Maldivians, some questions can be raised about it. Training was supposed to cover 'planning, management, monitoring and evaluation, community development and social mobilisation, communication and coordination, disaster preparedness and personal development skills among others' (UNDP, 2005f, p 13). This seems a tall order for young people. Many of these students were also hired from families living in the capital Male and their future career paths may be different from community development. As such, it is unlikely that a substantial number of them could be retained to work in atoll development and contribute to capacity development at the atolls. More focussed efforts are required to identify and select candidates for longer term training from youth in the affected and more outlying atolls.

The livelihoods programme of the Care Society also encountered delays in the procurement and delivery of materials, but it has been advancing more quickly overall. At the start, it was concerned with providing agriculture-related inputs and technical expertise. Now, it is looking to consolidate the experience and knowledge gained for longer term and sustainable community-managed programmes. One such initiative is the establishment of a Community Nursery and Learning Center, by which the Care Society seeks to address nutritional deficiencies. The programme is also trying to identify alternative livelihood programmes to address the basic needs of IDPs, for example, income generation and marketing related to fisheries. A range of micro-credit schemes was also initiated.

4.2. Shelter

A total of over 5,700 houses need to be built or rehabilitated. The government decided to provide a three-bedroom house for every individual homeowner whose property was damaged beyond repair. It was envisaged that the construction technology would be simple and that the transfer of technology and skills to local communities would be encouraged. As the government owns all land, the issue of ownership is not thought to raise the problems confronted in Indonesia and Sri Lanka. Leaseholds are granted in perpetuity, without the right to sell or transfer land.

UNDP and the Red Cross movement are taking on the bulk of the re-housing work. So far, progress has been slow, and there is a strong need for more intensive engagement of the affected populations and intended claim-holders. The special factors in this sector are: some of the work has been contracted out to commercial companies, or such companies have acted as the crucial interface between international agencies and the island populations (Zonal Implementation Group – see the diagram in UN-HABITAT, 2005a); and pre-tsunami capacities, including CBOs, have not been actively enlisted as partners in the programme.

The Red Cross movement has committed to repair and rebuild 2,000 houses. The reconstruction of permanent houses in most locations is just starting. In some cases it is envisaged that it will take until 2007 to complete. BRCS will build 744 houses on 6 islands, and the French Red Cross will build 800 houses. The programme is designed to support certain aspects of existing national and local development planning and recovery. The Red Cross movement has contracted construction companies to implement the re-housing programme, but the BRCS uses community mobilisation teams to facilitate dialogue between the target communities and BRCS staff, as well as with the local, atoll and central authorities and with other partner organisations. The construction companies have also been asked to incorporate individuals from the community within the construction project. During the evaluation visit to the affected community on Laamu Atoll, however, people from the community said they had applied to work in the construction project but there had been no feedback. There were also issues about whose responsibility it was to clear the land before the house building could begin. It is recommended that the BRCS bring the construction company and the community together to clarify the roles and responsibilities of each party.

A major challenge that remains is the re-housing of people whose islands have been virtually destroyed. The island of Kandholhudoo in Raa Atoll was severely damaged and totally evacuated. IDPs from this island have been distributed to various islands in the atoll and are waiting to be relocated. IFRC is going

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to develop a totally new island with houses, schools, hospitals and the entire social and physical infrastructure, and then hand it over to the government. The government will then relocate the people from Kandholhudoo to this new island. At present, people have no clear idea where their new houses will be; it will be left to the government to allocate the houses. There is not only an opportunity, but even a strong obligation to involve the intended claim-holders in the overall spatial planning of a new settlement.

Work on the construction of temporary shelters for IDPs was under way relatively early on. Initially, temporary housing units were set up on 13 islands, totaling 75 blocks. This had to be increased later to house all of the IDPs. The work was supposed to be completed by the end of October, but is still ongoing on some islands. The shelters were later modified to comply with international standards. They now have two small rooms, one big room, and a bathroom and toilet. They are still overcrowded with people living in very close proximity. MGFSS was not consulted over temporary shelters and, given the prevalence of gender-based violence and child abuse, there is definitely a concern for the safety of women and adolescent girls. UNFPA is now working closely with the Maldivian NGO SHE to ensure that effective steps are undertaken to better protect women and girls, for example, by providing adequate lighting.

4.3. Internally Displaced Persons

The situation of IDPs in the Maldives is a matter of serious concern. The tsunami displaced 29,577 people and around 12,000 still remain displaced. Some 6,650 people are on their own islands and around 5,000 are on safe host islands. The islands of Kandholhudoo in Raa Atoll and Kohufushi in Meemu Atoll are the most seriously affected, having suffered displacements of over 1,000 people. Raa Kandholhudoo was totally evacuated. An estimated 4,130 houses in Raa Atoll are reported to need complete reconstruction or repair. The result is that about one third of the population in Raa Atoll are now IDPs. Five islands: Th. Villifushi, Th. Madifushi, L.Mundoo, Dh. Maaemboodhoo, Ga. Villingili, have displaced populations between 500 and 1,000 people. Thirty-eight other islands have displaced populations of between 50 and 500 (World Bank *et al*, 2005, Annex 2, p 3).

Although the Maldives had a strategy for voluntary internal migration to focus islands, it has no prior experience of citizens becoming internally displaced due to a large-scale natural disaster. It appears that this challenge was picked up rather late, notably in early March, two months after the tsunami, when an OCHA mission (including members of the internally displaced persons division) came to assess the conditions for IDPs. The mission identified a general lack of awareness of international guidelines, and a lack of capacity to meet Sphere standards, regarding such concerns as temporary housing (Brown, 2005, p 49). Subsequently (27–28 April), UNFPA and Dr. Carballo, director of the International Centre for

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Migration and Health, conducted a workshop for government, media, NGOs and donor agencies on IDP issues (UN Country Team, 2005, Sit. Rep. 38). The government created a Unit for the Management of Internally Displaced Persons under the National Disaster Management Centre. OCHA has given the unit US \$25,000 to facilitate the IDP registration exercises with UNICEF adding electronic equipment worth US \$13,600 for the same purpose. The Guiding Principles on IDPs, adapted to the Maldivian context, have been widely distributed to government officials. OCHA and the IDP management unit work in partnership to ensure that the IDP committees function effectively by providing backup support and monitoring. They also advocate in Male that UN agencies, government, and NGOs utilise the IDP committees, particularly to pass on information about their programmes.

IDP committees have been set up in 13 islands on 5 atolls. Intensive training for 12 days was held for 17 trainers. These trainers in turn then spread out over the 5 atolls to train and set up the committees. The aim of the committees was to:

- Improve the information flow to and from the IDPs;
- Empower IDPs to manage their own affairs, identify problems, and suggest solutions, which in turn will reduce social tensions between host populations and IDPs (UN, 2005b, p2).

In principle, displacement of people should be temporary. However, two factors may prolong the uncertainty about the eventual destination of the IDPs. First, some people have indicated a reluctance to return to their original islands or come from islands that are no longer habitable. Second, there are problems related to the preexisting policy of regrouping populations on a voluntary basis in selected focus islands to achieve economies of scale in delivering services, and to protect them from rising sea levels. People have the option to choose one of the five islands that have been identified in the initial phase as new growth centers: Raa Atoll Dhuvaafaru, Alifu Atoll South Maamigili; Dhaalu Atoll Kudahuvadho; Laamu Atoll Gan, and Mandoo. Most of the reconstruction will not be complete until 2007.

There is a lot of uncertainty among the IDP population about what to do. Even though the need for relocation has been increased by the tsunami, Maldivians are traditionally and socially bound to their islands. Some are very attached to their island of origin and do not want to move to a strange island where they will be a minority. Therefore, relocation may prove difficult, especially where the community believes that their island is still inhabitable or fears being dispersed over several islands.

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The IDPs interviewed expressed frustration over lack of progress despite many visits by government and donor agencies. Many claim that visitors make promises and there is no follow-up (see also UNFPA, 2005a-d, p 12). The head of WDC in Raa Atoll expressing her anger and frustration stated, 'They take up a lot of time and then we do not hear anything back. We have other work to do.'

The IDP issue is a challenge for national and international actors. Tensions are developing between host and IDP communities over resources, lifestyle and social behaviour. The potential for conflict is increasing. Host families have started feeling the financial burden. Their capacity and goodwill has been gradually eroded because there no assistance was made available to them.¹⁴

4.4. Women

MGFSS was not initially included in the Ministerial Committee and Task Force for the tsunami response. Information specific to women was missing from the damage and loss assessments. Atoll and island chiefs were providing lists of people who had lost livelihoods (fishing, agriculture), but the small-scale income-generating activities in which women were more engaged were not included. MGFSS staff went to the two worst affected atolls to collect information, visiting households individually to assess needs. Elsewhere, chiefs were asked to provide information through WDCs, but only some of the chiefs complied. Some of those that responded did not consult WDCs for information, and so the information was not accurate. Based on these assessments, the ministry submitted proposals to donors to fund projects for women needing support to re-start their livelihoods or micro-enterprises. In practice, there are only a few projects directly targeting women. UNDP is now funding projects on three atolls that provide equipment or cash to buy materials. The All China Women's Federation has provided sewing machines and women's underwear. The latter had been urgently requested by affected women, but did not arrive until October 2005 and was not distributed until November. Women interviewed during the field visit expressed frustration about the lack of attention to their concerns and priorities and the lack of action. A number of issues were identified many months ago.¹⁵ One member of a WDC expressed fear that aid funds were being spent on assessments, and the aid money would be depleted before the implementation stage begins.

4.5. Psychosocial Issues

The psychological and physical well-being of women and children is a matter of concern. A significant number of women and children have been housed in temporary shelters or moved back to partially rebuilt

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houses. As these are shared with large numbers of people, women and children are vulnerable to physical and sexual violence and abuse. Continued displacement, loss of security, and destitution caused by disaster is often accompanied by increases in depression, suicide and various forms of violence against women and children. The collapse of communities and disruption of the family and social support networks could also leave women and children more vulnerable to psychological and emotional distress.

UNFPA has tried to involve the communities and displaced persons in these issues and to strengthen the capacity of community leaders, managers of IDP camps and others to identify, prevent and mitigate psychosocial problems. There are five new community educators in the atolls with responsibility for IDPs and host families. They act as communication channels reporting problems to Male. While this is a small step forward, it is clear that there is only so much that five people can do.

Initially after the tsunami, emotional support was offered to affected people by volunteers working with MGFSS. Volunteers included people with varied experience, ranging from degrees in related subjects to just a few weeks of training. The American Red Cross and UNICEF have been particularly active in this sector. The American Red Cross established a nationwide community-based psychosocial support programme, offering a two-day training on psychosocial issues and first aid to teachers and community volunteers. The team went on to train 57 counselors in 'psychosocial first aid'. During visits to seven of the most affected atolls, they set up 'emotional support brigades' of community volunteers to continue the activities at local level. A 24-hour help line was set up and manned by volunteers.

UNICEF conducted a psychosocial needs assessment in six islands and developed associated programmes. Around 1,100 adults and children participated in the UNICEF-organised workshops and support sessions. Not all UN agencies are well placed to engage in this type of work. As one UNFPA staff put it, 'UN agencies are good at providing 'hardware' but there needs to be an increased awareness of social needs'. The same UNFPA staff member acknowledged that there is a need to pay more attention to local means of coping with crises, which have not yet been studied. Instead the response may have created an expectation that support will be provided externally to the community through counselors.

4.6. Disaster Preparedness

Much emphasis is now being put on developing a comprehensive disaster management capacity in the Maldives, including an improved early warning system, improved inter-island transportation and the

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creation of emergency shelters-cum-community building on raised ground. Plans also include training for officials, fisher associations, women committees and youth groups, and also the development of community-level volunteer Disaster Preparedness and Response Teams to disseminate early warning alerts and organise the first response (World Bank *et al*, 2005, Annex 15, p 6). Risk transfer through insurance and reinsurance is also proposed (Ibid., p 7).

The UN, and UNDP in particular, has been very active in strengthening national governmental capacities with a variety of assessment and training exercises, such as:

- The Asian Disaster Reduction Centre in Japan was contracted by UNDP to do an assessment of the early warning systems of the Maldives and Risk Management Solutions from India was contracted to undertake a disaster and risk vulnerability profile of the country.
- Various disaster-management training workshops were held for senior government officials, for example in May, July and September 2005.
- Ten high-level government officials went on a study visit to India and Bangladesh in June 2005 to learn about disaster management policy, institutional mechanisms and disaster management capacity.

It was proposed at the Lessons Learned and Best Practices workshop in May 2005 (Government of Maldives and UN, 2005, p 5) that there should be a permanent national institution related to disaster management. This could develop a comprehensive national disaster management plan in coordination with the existing National Plan for Environmental Management and the National Plan for Climate Change Adaptation (see also World Bank *et al*, 2005, Annex 15, p 6). A National Emergency Operations Centre is indeed being set up, with the UN procuring some equipment. But questions remain:

- To what degree are the disaster management strategies being integrated with development strategy? Are they separate efforts, sometimes competing for attention and investment, or is there a close synergy between them?
- Will the disaster management strategy, currently heavily concentrated at the central and government level, be able to reach out and meaningfully include atoll and island administrations as well as community-level preparedness and response skills?
- How much investment should be put into better tsunami-preparedness, given that although its impact is severe, the likelihood of such an event again is fairly small? Are there opportunity costs compared to other investments?

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It is positive to note that multi-hazard (and not just tsunami) risk reduction is treated as a cross-cutting issue in government plans. The 7th National Development plan has been reviewed to include risk reduction components in each ministry. A UNDP project will support the government of the Maldives to review building codes and by-laws and school curricula to ensure that risk reduction is mainstreamed into the development process. The Disaster Risk Profile ranks each island according to socioeconomic and disaster vulnerability. This provides a key input into government decisions on investments in infrastructure and pro-poor policies. Following awareness raising and training at the national level, attention is now broadening to the atoll, island and community levels. Members of the Maldives Association of Guides and Scouts are being given training. Municipal officials from Male and officials from the atoll Administrations have also already been exposed to skills in community disaster preparedness.

Progress is also underway toward the creation of a Maldives Red Crescent Society. This is an important opportunity to strengthen national and local capacities for risk management. A key issue, however, will be whether this new Red Crescent Society will replicate the centralised and top-down approach that currently characterises the country – or exhibit a more equitable and decentralised structure and dynamic.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. From Relief to Transition and Recovery

Relief phase

Were the relief programmes, from a capacity perspective, relevant, appropriate and effective? It is not possible to answer such a question beyond reasonable doubt on the basis of a 10-day visit some nine months after the event. Nevertheless, there are some major observations that can be made with reasonable confidence, supported both by documentary sources and by interviews conducted during the field visit:

- 1) From the technical and logistical points of view, the relief operation seems to have been reasonably successful. While the local population spontaneously responded to the situation in the first few days, inter-island communications were quickly restored and relief supplies started coming in. The assistance by several foreign navies seems to have been relevant and effective. Although there are some indications that relief items were not always appropriate and that there might have been some discrimination and possibly corruption, it does not appear that there were major gaps.
- 2) The government acted very quickly to set up its task force and a National Disaster Management Centre. The Tsunami Relief and Rehabilitation Fund seem to have been relevant and well functioning. Given the lack of in-house experience, international support to strengthen the capacity of these institutions, and of the different line ministries, seems relevant and appropriate. Some questions can legitimately be raised about the cost-effectiveness of this support and its appropriateness in such unusual terrain.¹⁶
- 3) Assessments seem to have been more problematic. Although the point has been made several times in the international humanitarian literature that a good assessment looks at both needs *and* capacities, and though there exist specific tools such as Vulnerabilities and Capacities Assessments, it appears that neither national nor international actors paid much attention to existing capacities. Perhaps this is not too surprising, given that quite a number of initial assessments were carried out through the existing public administration infrastructure, with requests from the capital being replied to by the overwhelmingly male atoll and island chiefs. However, international agencies should have been quicker to pick up on this.
- 4) Perhaps because the relief operation was largely carried out by military and security personnel and through the public administration, there seems to have been very little effort to provide information and to solicit and listen to peoples views, priorities, concerns and complaints.

Transition to recovery

An overly technical and logistical approach to relief delivery often sets a tone for the wider attitudes, relationships and strategies during the reconstruction and recovery phase, unless specific and concentrated efforts are made to reverse this. International aid agencies are by and large not very good at this, and we see that such efforts have also been slow and hesitant in the Maldives:

- 1) For the first eight to nine months after the tsunami, international agencies tended to mirror the national set-up; that is, highly centralised, top-down and dominated by a Male (and a predominantly male) perspective. It is only now that agencies are beginning to recognise the need to engage more directly with local level structures and with the affected populations and intended claim-holders.
- 2) There are still very few systematic efforts to provide relevant, accurate and timely information to the target groups, nor are there enough clear and effective mechanisms for them to voice their views, concerns and complaints. Some agency staff expressed the belief that people on the islands are passive, which does not correspond to the articulate and critical people whom we encountered during our island visits.
- 3) There also seems to be the belief that there is little or no capacity at the local level. International agencies have sought to contain rather than solve this apparent problem by importing competencies, and by a series of short and somewhat ad hoc trainings. If too many trainees are from Male this may only reinforce the already existing inequalities.
- 4) There has been continued marginalisation of women and longer term displaced people and perhaps a lack of attention to the perspectives of children and youth.
- 5) A very positive contribution by the international assistance community has been the raising of awareness about the rights and entitlements of IDPs and international standards. But there remain major shortcomings in providing the IDPs with adequate protection and adequate information.
- 6) The restoration of income or a regular livelihood is a top priority for disaster-affected people and a major means to reinforce their capacity to cope. Cash-for-work projects and investments in the fisheries sector are evidently very important for many households, but income-generating activities of women have tended to get overlooked.
- 7) Shelter programmes are progressing more slowly than originally planned. This is a situation that requires concerted information and communication efforts.
- 8) Psychosocial support programmes could not be fully assessed, but there is a clear need to focus on the long-term IDPs for whom uncertainty and lack of information is depressing. Some

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interlocutors suggested that more attention should be given to local and traditional ways of coping.

- 9) A strategic approach to create a comprehensive multi-hazard risk management capacity in the Maldives seems to be underway.

5.2. International Standards, Guidelines and Learning

Participation is a buzzword that is abused as much as *capacity building*. Participation goes well beyond consultation; that is, having a conversation with people mostly to extract information from them. Participation in the strict sense of the word means that people have a genuine say in what is being decided. For participation to be possible, it is essential to give people timely, relevant, complete and accurate information so that they can really engage in a discussion and a dialogue to make informed choices. One way of putting this high on the agenda is to acknowledge a 'right to information' (Van Brabant, 2001).

The central importance of livelihoods comes out time and again from evaluations of various disaster responses. Lobbying by civil society organisations and reviews and research by the Hazard Management Unit of the World Bank and the ProVention Consortium into past recovery programmes across the globe, have highlighted that the restoration of income and livelihoods, although often a major priority for disaster affected people, generally receives little attention in assistance programmes.¹⁷ UNDP's own Recovery Principles also place restoration of income and livelihoods and community empowerment at the center of any recovery strategy. A particularly useful way of examining the relationship between livelihoods and disasters is the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework developed by the British government's Department for International Development (DFID) and others.¹⁸

5.3. Strengthening Capacities

Four observations on the international response stand out:

- 1) For much of the past year, the capacity-strengthening efforts have been heavily concentrated on the central government in Male. The structures of administrations at atoll and island level were used for delivery, but there is little evidence of capacity building at that level. Given the current attention and available resources, there is now an opportunity to strengthen local capacities. In the medium-term, this can help to reduce the bottlenecks in Male and in the longer term contribute to more equitable relationships between the centre and the peripheries. Power dynamics will be a

key issue. The aim should be to make local capacity more open to participation and wider input. It should be transparent, responsive and accountable.

- 2) No evidence was found of more structured capacity assessments and plans undertaken in dialogue with the intended counterpart. Training, workshops and the secondment of outside experts are pursued as major strategies to strengthen the capacity of organisations. The focus, effectiveness and impact of such strategies should be reviewed and evaluated.
- 3) Current capacity-strengthening efforts have focussed very much on three areas: technical or thematic knowledge on specific issues, basic project management skills and psychosocial counseling. What seems largely missing are other skills areas that may not be within the core competencies of most international assistance agencies, such as skills in listening, consultation and constructive dialogue. A particularly important issue is communication in order to provide timely and accurate information to the target population. There is also a need for inputs on gender-sensitivity and gender-differentiated information collection and project review. Finally, there is a need for inputs related to facilitating group dynamics and more participatory decision and policy-making.
- 4) Capacity strengthening should not be used as a buzzword but more consciously reflected upon.¹⁹ At the moment, that distinction is not made and the implicit understanding of capacity strengthening seems very much biased toward strengthening organisations to provide services.

5.4. Overview

The destruction in the Maldives created a longer term development reversal rather than a major humanitarian crisis. The need for relief was short-lived. The relief operation appears to have gone reasonably well with relevant capacity-support to the national authorities. Arguably more capacity support during the relief phase should have been provided to atoll and island administrations, and effective information mechanisms that reached the affected populations should have been set up from the very beginning.

The performance of the subsequent international assistance for recovery and future disaster preparedness needs to be appreciated in view of the pre-existing context, which includes: a governance style and system that was centralised, top-down and did not encourage participatory approaches; a lack of skilled people and similarly lacking effectiveness of disaster preparedness. In addition, there were intense pressures within the international community (donors, media and the donating public) to spend and rebuild quickly. This created conflicting incentives. Transforming these situations does not happen within the span of a year. It would, therefore, be unfair to criticise the aid community and the national authorities

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for not having already made greater progress in this regard. Our main criticism is that it has taken the international agencies much longer than was justified, six to seven months at least, to move out of relief mode. This may be a global problem in humanitarian response and not specific to performance in the Maldives.

The persistence of sectoral rather than more integrated or holistic approaches is one indicator that programming is still not fully in developmental mode. While capacity strengthening has now come much more clearly on the agenda of the international agencies, further thought should be given to the objectives and methods. Whose capacities should be considered and for what?

5.5. Recommendations to International Agencies

The review proposes:

1. *Capacity strengthening of the public sector, civil society and population should become an explicit programme with emphasis on inclusion, equity and risk reduction. In particular:*

- There is an opportunity to link tsunami recovery strategy to wider national development challenges. Issues such as regional inequalities (Maconick, 2005, p 2), the roles and responsibilities of the public and the private sector, the opportunity cost of investing heavily in future tsunami preparedness and the structural marginalisation of women need to be considered.
- Development debates about issues such as the Focus Island strategy should not be kept within elite policy circles. International agencies have a role to play in encouraging more public information and participation.
- There should be a shift from sectoral to more integrated developmental approaches.
- Civil society should be supported in a constructive manner. There is, for example, interest among Maldivian organisations to create a national federation of NGOs. It should be clearly understood that government, non-governmental actors and international agencies each have their strengths and can play complementary roles. The current political reforms provide an opportunity but naturally create apprehensions and resistances. The attitude of the international community in this regard could help to reduce apprehensions in the government about allowing more space to non-governmental actors (see also Blunt and Turner, 2005, p 20).
- International actors could also support communication between civil society organisations and the central government about the actual progress, impacts and consequences of national recovery policies and strategies.

2. *More strategic and comprehensive engagement of national and local organisational capacities to provide an enabling environment. In particular:*

- Capacity-strengthening efforts should continue to be broadened beyond the central government to atoll and island administrations and development committees, WDC, IDP committees and CBOs. This should include opportunities for members from different atolls to meet, discuss and exchange experiences, and also to meet up with comparable entities in other affected countries.
- More must be learned about local contexts and power dynamics. There may be a tendency to depict the structures and dynamics of all atolls and islands as basically similar, but this is not necessarily the case. Each zone and location has its own smaller or bigger history, and its own social, economic and political dynamics.²⁰
- Such organisational capacity-strengthening efforts should not be focussed on project administration competencies, but on inclusive and participatory approaches and on transparent and responsive approaches.²¹
- There is a need to conduct a focussed cross-agency review of capacity assessment and capacity-building methods, strategies and their effectiveness.
- Focussed reflection and possible redefinition of the roles and responsibilities of technical private-sector contractors around the issue of participation should take place.

3. *More vigorous support to affected and vulnerable people so that they can assert their independence and ability to hold others accountable. In particular:*

- More emphasis should be placed on income generation and livelihood opportunities.
- Systematic and sustained information strategies should be targeted at affected people and intended claim-holders, addressing assistance programmes, their intent, criteria, progress and delays. The Maldives media should also be considered a mechanism to encourage wider and informed public debate.
- Focussed efforts should be made to actively engage women, children, youth, longer term displaced people and poor households, thereby building their knowledge and confidence to speak up.
- Active involvement of long-term IDPs should be promoted in the areas of analysis and debates about return or resettlement options, as well as in the design of new settlements and services.
- Additional structured mechanisms should be established in order for people to effectively transmit their views, needs, concerns and complaints to duty-holders and decision-makers.
- Periodic reviews of programmes and policies, should be conducted along the lines of social audits. These should involve the affected population and intended claim-holders.

5.6. Implications for International Agencies

These proposals imply the need for:

- Constructive but strong leadership, especially from the UN and IFRC and its member societies, to ease the apprehensions that central authorities will understandably feel about what they might initially see as a loss of control.
- Decentralisation from Male with the establishment of strong offices in the more remote atolls.²²
- Hire international staff, not just with technical and project administration skills, but with competences in facilitation and the promotion of participation and constructive debate. Above all, there is a need to invest intensively in the confidence, knowledge and skill development of national staff, including national staff recruited from atolls and islands.²³
- The knowledge and experience of the few national NGOs in the Maldives to be called upon. At the same time, NGOs should not be pursued to become privileged intermediaries for the international agencies; this would simply push them to try and scale up beyond their own capacity, with very likely a resulting loss in quality and credibility.

¹ For example, UNDP is channeling funds for shelter and livelihood projects through Island Development Committees. Women's Development Committees are going to be involved in implementing UNDP livelihood projects for women. Frequently, the island Chiefs dominate such committees. Some island chiefs even seem to be members of Women's Development Committees and, in some instances, the Committee is chaired by the wife of the island chief or dominated by other women from the local elite.

² UNDP's Atoll Development and Sustainable Livelihood Programme is one example of a framework well-suited for this (Maconick, 2005, p 4).

³ The studies in Indonesia and Sri Lanka included surveys. Such surveys were not planned for Thailand or the Maldives and could not have been designed and initiated during such a short visit.

⁴ For example, Amnesty International has recently published several reports, such as *The Republic of Maldives: Prisoners of Conscience Should be Released* (2003) and *Human Rights Violations in the Context of Political Reforms* (2005).

⁵ See *Population and Development Consolidation Policy and Sixth National Development Plan 2001-2005* (1998).

⁶ A Cabinet reshuffle took place on 14 July, changing 80 per cent of Ministers.

⁷ The following quote is illustrative: '*The Government has tried to ensure its full national ownership and centralized decision-making process, which UN/UNDP respect. These factors have prolonged the process of preparation, negotiation and signing of project documents.*' (Shepard and Kato, 2005, p 3.)

⁸ UNICEF is the largest contributor with over US \$37m.

⁹ In Indonesia, the role, cost-effectiveness and capacity of foreign military help with the relief operation could not be assessed within the time available for the field studies and months after most foreign military had left.

¹⁰ A state-owned enterprise called the State Trading Organisation is the key player in the market. Since the tsunami, there is a huge increase in cost of almost all major construction items due to increased demand. A bag of cement, previously sold for MRF 48, went up to MRF 72 one month after the tsunami. There was also a significant – 30 percent – increase in the costs of other construction materials and fuel, and a ten-fold increase in the cost of inter-island transport, the latter due to not only the increased fuel cost, but also a heightened demand for a limited number of boats. Although such developments affect everybody, they create the greater obstacles for the economically disadvantaged. (Government of Maldives and UN, 2005, p 5.)

¹¹ The pressure to act quickly is acknowledged by UNICEF: 'There is of course always the concern, especially after a major disaster – even though there was comparatively little loss of life in the Maldives- to act quickly and produce “quick results”.' (UNICEF, 2005b, p 10.)

¹² The UNDP office scaled up from an annual expenditure level of US \$1m to \$15m and from 15 to 90 staff members.

¹³ In early June, the Joint UN Regional Mission flags coordination weaknesses within the government and the shortage of project management skills (UN, 2005b, p 17).

¹⁴ This need not be the case. For example, the Swiss federal humanitarian aid operation provided assistance to Balkan families who had taken in IDPs in the late 90s, encouraging the continuation of the practice.

¹⁵ An interagency assessment mission in March is an example. It included representatives from UNFPA, the Ministries of Planning and National Development and of Housing, MGFSS, the government unit for the management of IDPs, Voice of Maldives (radio station) and OCHA. It documented various complaints. (UNFPA, 2005a, p 7.)

¹⁶ Admittedly, following a region-wide disaster, the call on available expertise is intense, extending beyond the international community's ability to mobilize rapidly (see Adinolfi *et al*, 2005).

¹⁷ The other key lesson from these reviews is the need to have strong and meaningful community participation in disaster management.

¹⁸ ChristianAid notes: 'The Sustainable Livelihoods model draws attention to three aspects of any intervention aimed at reducing vulnerability and enhancing livelihood options. First, there is a multiplicity of actors, influences, livelihood strategies and outcomes. Second, livelihoods and the forces that influence them are dynamic. Third, in understanding the many factors that affect livelihoods, their relative importance and the way in which they interact, the involvement of the stakeholders is crucial, and in identifying appropriate entry points for supporting livelihoods their participation is vital. ... This does not mean that traditional techniques and methods are romanticized. Often needs are so great that the community has no option but to seek external support – technical, financial and managerial. But what is crucial is that the decision to seek external aid comes from the community.' (Palakudiyil and Todd, 2003, ch 3.)

¹⁹ Smillie has usefully drawn attention to the need to be more precise about the target of the effort (such as individuals, communities, organisations or sector-wide groupings of institutions) and the end purpose (for example, reduced vulnerability to poverty or disasters, improved service delivery, improved autonomy and independence through a more steady income, improved inter-organisational cooperation, more confidence and competence to access services and to obtain information, claim rights and/or lobby for a more level playing field and a stronger say in public decision-making) (Smillie, 2001, p 10-11/21).

²⁰ See note 1.

²¹ See note 2.

²² The point seems to have been realized by UNDP among others. The Consolidated Appeals Process's *2005 Mid-Term Review* (UN, 2005a, p 75) suggests that there are plans to establish such project office in the 'periphery', and a more recent report commissioned by UNDP makes the same recommendation (Blunt and Turner, 2005).

²³ There are organisations with very strong experience in facilitative and participatory approaches, for example, in India and Bangladesh. Offering Maldivian staff the opportunity to learn from such regional resources and to develop regional professional networks will be more cost-effective than relying on expensive and shorter-term expatriates.

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ANNEX 1: CASE STUDIES

Case Study 1: Tamiyyathul Saif -a Community Organisation on Ungufaroo Island

This organisation was formed over forty years ago to raise money to construct a mosque for women. There are 107 members, of which 55 are men and 52 are women. Women participate equally with the men, working on construction projects. There are some skilled people in the CBO to provide supervision of construction projects.

They have constructed a pre-school in a hall, and carried out public works – repairing walls and cemetery. They have a music group which plays to raise money for projects, and also put on cultural shows on nearby resort islands. Members support each other with small construction works such as helping to renovate houses.

Previous projects have all been built with money raised locally for example, Rf 400,000 was donated by the government and Rf 1m was generated on the island for the mosque project – 'raised over five years by doing maintenance jobs, expanding the island Office building, and cleaning the island. When the tsunami hit, other activities were suspended and tsunami response took priority over everything else.

Immediate post-tsunami relief

They cooked for and helped to feed 550 IDPs using government rations of flour, sugar and rice. Originally food was distributed from island stocks (shops), but within three days government rations had started to arrive. IDPs were looked after in this way in the school for one week, then 79 people were transferred to the pre-school hall, where they stayed for 5 months, until they could move into the temporary shelters being built by contractors. The CBO built four toilets and a kitchen with material paid for through the atoll office.

Post-tsunami recovery challenges

They already ran a preschool but there is now insufficient space as the number of children increased with the influx of IDP children. The existing school has two shifts a day to cope with the number of children. There are 250 IDP children of pre-school age, between the ages of 2.5 and 6 years. Their expectation is that the IDPs will remain on Ungufaroo for between two and three years.

They are currently building an additional six-room preschool with Care Society support and ActionAid International financing. The cost of materials and some labour costs are being provided through

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ActionAid International, and the CBO is supplying most of the labour. The new pre-school is due to be completed in 2006. While the original pre-school caters for 190 children, the new one will cater for 300. This is the first time international money has been given to the CBO.

Capacity Changes

The president is the deputy atoll chief, and tied in to the local government system. He is also vice-president of the Parents and Teachers Association. Decision-making in this CBO is quite centralised through the president, which leaves little opportunity for other people's capacity to be developed. Still, the interviewees believe that the CBO capacity has been raised by the tsunami. The pre-school project is an important activity for them, and they feel it will open-up other opportunities once it has been completed. They would like to work on building a library, and then on safe disposal of waste. These are projects that their members think are important.

There is 'healthy competition' between this CBO and the other CBO Club Youth Star.

Case study 2: Club Youth Star – Ungufaroo Island

Younger members who felt that their views were not being considered in Tamiyyathul Saif started this CBO in 1995. There are 160 members, with roughly equal numbers of men and women (slightly more men). Pre-tsunami, Youth Star was involved in youth, sport and recreation activities.

This group has a large recreation hall (social centre), with kitchen facilities and a sizeable garden. They have established a relationship with an Australian head teacher who was facilitating an exchange between members of his teaching staff and island teachers.

Pre-tsunami, they were involved with training courses (sewing, for example), with organizing circumcision parties, and with certain public works such as fixing water tanks (using government funding). They had offered to do these public works, and the island office agreed and provided them with materials. Members worked voluntarily. Doing contracting work for other community members also raised money.

Immediate post-tsunami relief

All island associations were involved in the initial response. Naval ships delivered relief (tent poles, roofing tin, food, mattresses), but otherwise external agencies came initially to assess damage and not to help with the response. Their members were involved in transporting IDPs to their island. 300 people

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were initially sheltered in their social centre hall, for which the CBO received payment. Youth Star built toilets with materials provided by the government.

Post-tsunami recovery

Club Youth Star is involved in psychosocial work with Care Society (CS) focusing on IDP needs, peace-building and conflict resolution. CS held a workshop and trained three people from this island in psychosocial issues – including one man and one woman from Youth Star. (CS had liaised with the government before to find out in which areas psychosocial workers could refer those with need for more advanced psychosocial support). Psychosocial workers are mainly responsive rather than proactive, responding to individual calls for help but they also conduct activities for women and children – for example, holding focus groups, and initiating recreation activities.

Capacity changes

The CBO representatives believed that the relationship with Care Society has increased their capacity: they have been given a computer; psychosocial workers are paid an allowance and work long hours, although they are not now as busy as in the early days post-tsunami; CS has provided financial management training and they now have a much more transparent financial system; CS and OCHA have also provided training in Raa Atoll in proposal-writing and NGO management. Our interlocutors from Club Youth Star felt that they have learned a lot, and are less reliant on other people. The major stumbling block now on their activities is lack of money. The CBO has plans to build rooms to rent out for income generation in the future, and to run Koran classes for children as well as carrying on their pre-tsunami activities.

They are frustrated by a lack of information and see the atoll office as causing a blockage. Youth Star has submitted two proposals, which have gone to the atoll ministry, to improve island drainage and waste disposal provisions. However, they feel that the island office is not keeping them informed of the progress of the proposals, and are still waiting for an answer. They would also like written appreciation of their work with IDPs.

**Case study 3: UNICEF's Contribution to all Children Returning to School
Within One Month of Tsunami**

Pre-tsunami Baseline

In November 2004, staff in the Maldives had had regular UNICEF training on emergency preparedness and planning with the Core Commitment for Children (CCC) in emergencies, and an emergency preparedness plan had been drawn up. Therefore, although there was no previous experience in dealing with disasters, the staff had thought through some of the issues. A booklet setting out how the CCC would be activated in an emergency had been published. Immediately pre-tsunami the Ministry of Education had also completed an audit of every school in the country noting all material goods in all schools, so there was an accurate baseline against which to assess damage. UNICEF had been advocating for the adoption of child-friendly school initiatives with the government of Maldives. After the tsunami, education authorities in the Maldives extended this initiative nationwide (UNICEF, 2005b, p 25).

Immediately post-tsunami

Following a visit by UNICEF two days after the tsunami, the Ministry of Education set the goal that all children would be back in school within one month. This necessitated:

- An assessment of damage to schools;
- Generation of funds to renovate buildings (provision of toilets etc);
- Provision of temporary accommodation for displaced teachers; and
- Development of a system to provide uniforms and text books to all the children. (It was decided that all children would be given help with these, not just tsunami affected children, to eliminate potential tensions between host and IDP families)

By the 7th day after the tsunami, UNICEF knew the levels of funding they could expect, and the money was physically transferred to the office so they could start spending it.

A newly established taskforce, led by the now deputy minister, mobilised teams of teachers to visit six atolls (Dhaalu, Meemu, Vaavu, Gaafy, Alifu and Laamu) and assess damage and prioritise needs. This was done using forms developed during the 2001 Gujarat earthquake, and checking against the pre-tsunami baseline.

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To supply the 29,000 school-age children, government vouchers (valid for 6 months) were distributed for uniforms, textbooks, and socks and shoes in the presence of island officials, parents and school heads, and had to be countersigned for transparency.

6 local shops were chosen as suppliers. Following a tendering procedure, vouchers were exchanged for items, and were signed by the vendors and suppliers before being refunded by UNICEF.

Initially, contracts to construct temporary classrooms were advertised locally. However, because of limited island capacity they were awarded to Male firms, with a provision that a given per cent of the labour must come from the community. Workers were paid cash. Most of the labour was male. (Traditionally women do not engage in construction in the Maldives.)

At the time of this evaluation, UNICEF had funded 39 temporary classrooms, 8 toilet blocks and 15 teachers' quarters. Basic school equipment, supplies and consumables were provided to replace damaged items in 116 primary and secondary schools. The Ministry of Education and UNICEF achieved their goal of all school age children returning to school by 25 January 2005. This day was celebrated as a national event. (Ibid, p 24.)

Factors in UNICEF's back to school programme

Factors promoting success

- 1) UNICEF's Core Commitments for Children gives a clear guide for action in emergencies, making UNICEF's priorities clear to all staff and enabling a quick response on the ground.
- 2) UNICEF funds arrived quickly and were made available to start their response within seven days.
- 3) UNICEF Maldives had a good operational relationship with the government of Maldives pre-tsunami, which facilitated the creation of an effective partnership and strengthening of existing links. During the relief phase frequent meetings were held with heads of agencies and government.
- 4) The pre-tsunami baseline assessment of school equipment and buildings was in place and accurate.
- 5) Although staff members were inexperienced in emergency response management, the assistance they provided in the relief effort was praised by government partners interviewed for the UNICEF Documentation exercise (Ibid, p 32). The solid dedication of the staff was noted in the UNICEF Documentation (Ibid, p 33). All national staff members took an active part in the response, even

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as their own office was flooded. UNICEF took the opportunity provided by the tsunami to expand the implementation of child-focussed services initiatives, using schools as a convergence point for child-focussed interventions.

Limitations

- 1) A seeming 'loss of drive' was noted as the response continued and participation shifted to junior members. This was accompanied by a move from high-level decision making to lower-level information sharing.
- 2) Programme staff had never faced the challenge of responding to a major emergency before.
- 3) The geography of the Maldives made assessments and logistics complicated.
- 4) There was a lack of NGOs or competent academic institutions capable of conducting rapid assessments in the Maldives. There was also no regional register of consultants/organisations which could be tapped for early deployment to conduct rapid needs assessments
- 5) A weakness in UNICEF's monitoring systems for ongoing response was noted, which meant that data gathering was initially sidelined and left to the government. However, their response was effective in terms of getting children back to school quickly.
- 6) Vital information on women and children was lacking in WB/ADB-led studies.
- 7) Engaging the claim-holders in the whole assessment and monitoring processes was one important aspect that was neglected ... The reason was that staff members did not have the capacity to carry out participatory assessments and there was no practical guide in involving claim-holders. The other factor was the length of time required to involve communities in the assessment process which could delay the need to produce quick results. (Ibid, p 10.)

Case Study 4: UNDP – Issues of Participation and Capacity

UNDP's shelter recovery programme was designed to be participatory for decision making and execution, and was adopted by the government of Maldives as a model.

The shelter recovery strategy was agreed with the government of Maldives line ministries, and the project document was approved and signed in March 2005. The initial commitment was for building 305 new houses and repairing 2,857 houses. This figure has now been decreased to repair of 2,695 houses and rebuilding 173 houses. However, the cost estimate has increased from US \$19–25m. Given that there is currently only about US \$17.7m available, the number of islands targeted has been reduced from 58 to 46. To meet the repair and reconstruction targets on 46 islands with the available funds will also require cutting back repairs to the essentials only. Discussions are underway to see who can take over the

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remaining 12 islands. In the interim, what information is provided to the affected people waiting for reconstruction of their homes?

Initial estimates for house repair were US \$1,400 per house. However, following technical surveys this rose to an average of US \$3,500, primarily due to inflation in construction costs and underestimation of transport costs.

At the time of the field visit, Zonal Implementing Group (ZIG), a local technical contracting and engineering firm, played an absolutely central role in the shelter programme. This role included planning; calculating requirements and deploying resources to fulfill the plan; guiding, coaching, and coordinating execution of the Shelter plan; linking and collaborating with recovery project and local authorities; and reporting. They were also charged with facilitating the completion of Island Development Plans and facilitating Island Capacity Audits. They also acted as a communication point between the community and UNDP. Several training workshops were held for them on both project implementation and community participation (UN-Habitat, 2005a).

In the earlier months of the recovery phase, monitoring (provided by ZIG) seems to have been weak for two reasons: First, because agencies were concentrated in Male, and second, because few staff members were trained to oversee projects of such a wide geographical coverage. Six sub-regional overseers, who work under UNDP regional supervisors, replaced ZIG after December 2005 (the reasons for this change have not been obtained). The overseers provide monitoring and support services, and visit the affected islands on a regular basis.

Reportedly the programme now invites each island to set up a Shelter Recovery Committee composed of affected householders who would carry out the repair and reconstruction work with UNDP funding. These Committees then become the focal point for information exchange, consensus building and decision making.

This shelter programme is implemented through community grant agreements (US \$13.5m), which include grants for repairs as well as payments for the labour costs of reconstruction projects. They also include the costs of island project implementation for such things as warehousing, banking, island staff (construction supervisor, treasurer, stock controller) unloading of construction materials, stationary. The grant is administered by IDCs (quasi government), which raises questions about who really drives the decisions of the Shelter Recovery Committee of affected householders.

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The scale of reconstruction and repair work under the shelter programme far exceeds the normal supply of building capacity on most islands. This means that only a limited number of houses signed under each grant agreement can be started simultaneously, and that the overall timeframe of the project is considerably delayed. The implementation of this project has been slow for various reasons, among them lack of banking facilities (only three of the designated 58 islands have bank branches – elsewhere mobile banks come once a month or even only once every two months), difficulties in setting up the community grants and necessary budget revisions.

The UNDP shelter programme is complex with an apparent mixture of community- and owner-driven aspects. It operates in an environment of limited technical skills and apparent inflation in the cost of construction materials. The programme appears to have been evolving in its implementation strategy. A serious, participatory, real-time evaluation of different re-housing strategies in the Maldives is recommended, to capture learning and provide management information for their continuation. Given the limited number of agencies involved and the similarities in operating conditions, this should be feasible.

ANNEX 2: CONDITIONS FOR IDPs

The management of longer term IDPs on a host island is proving to be a challenging issue. There are varying standards of accommodation and conditions for IDPs. Most IDPs are in temporary shelters. While water and sanitation services are provided, shelters are over crowded, with up to fourteen people per unit. Some IDPs are still housed in old factories while others remain with host families, still waiting to be housed in temporary shelters. IDPs face a great deal of uncertainty about their future location, as these shelters may be on their own or on a different island. Because reconstruction is proceeding very slowly, many will not be able to move until 2007.

1. Raa Atoll: Conflict with the Host Population

One third of population in Raa Atoll has been displaced. Almost all IDPs are people from Raa Kandholhudhoo, which had to be totally evacuated. Half of the IDPs are now living in the capital of Raa, Ungoofaaruu, the rest are located in four other islands in the atoll: Hulhudhuffaaruu, Alifushi, Meedhoo and Maduvaree.

IFRC is developing a previously uninhabited island in Raa atoll, Dhuvaafaru. Most IDPs are eager to move onto this island. However, the parliamentary committee has raised concerns over the bidding process, creating a delay in the construction process. It is predicted that the reconstruction of the island will not be completed until 2007. IFRC will then handover the island to the government and it will be up to the government to allocate the houses.

Social tensions have been growing in Raa Hulhudhuffaaruu for the last two to three months. There have been small fights between IDP and youth from the host population. A very atypical event for Maldivian society took place on 4 November. After a youth and IDPs argued over an IDP girl, the IDPs contacted friends on other islands for help, causing men from the host population to gather at the island office of Hulhudhuffaaruu to demand protection. An incident the following day restarted the conflict. One hundred to two hundred friends and relatives from Ungoofaaruu Island arrived, some armed with metal bars. Despite the presence of 19 policemen, the coastguard, and a representative from the Ministry of Atoll Development host community houses, the island office and an island chief were attacked. Around 60 National Security Service officers had to be deployed to remain on the island. There has not been any violence since.

Root Causes

The IDPs from Kandholhudhoo come from a very crowded island, with relatively high rates of crime and drug abuse. They are perceived as culturally different from the hosts, who consider them culturally insensitive and disrespectful.

Both IDPs and host population believe that the island chief has been ineffective in dealing with the incident. IDPs feel unrepresented, as their chief went to Ungafaaru rather than coming to Hulhudhuffaar.

OCHA had trained an IDP Committee on the island in August 2005, involving both IDPs and hosts in the committee, but it has not been as active as IDP Committees on other islands. In response, OCHA deployed an IDP support officer who normally works in the government's IDP management unit, to re-energise the committee.

Response

The immediate response from the authorities was to deploy National Security Services and police. A representative from the Ministry of Atoll Development was sent and is now acting atoll chief. The IDP Support Officer worked with the IDP committee to restart dialogue between IDPs and hosts, encouraging them to come to terms with the recent events. A UNFPA programme officer from a psychosocial project worked with the communities in the aftermath of the disturbances. The government unit for the rights of the child deployed counselors to attend to the traumatised children and adults. A community health worker had been dispatched from Ungoogaaru to conduct psychosocial work.

Ungoogaaru

Ungoogaaru is the capital of Raa Atoll and the atoll office administration is based here. IDPs from Raa Kandholhudhoo are also living on Ungoogaaru Island in temporary shelters built by the government. There is high tension in the IDP camp based on Ungoogaaru since violence on other islands broke out. While the review team felt the tense atmosphere when they visited, and IDPs were not willing to talk, the island administration denied that there was any tension, considering that the IDP community is well catered for. When asked to talk to the IDP committee, reviewers were instead introduced to two island chiefs from Kandholhudhoo, an Assistant atoll officer and members of the atoll office administration, all men.

2. Laamu Atoll: Lack of Information and Communication

The IDPs on Gan Island in Laamu Atoll are from Kalhaidhoo Island. Their island was badly damaged and evacuated, though some members of the community chose to remain. The evacuees lived with Gan Island host families for four days before being re-housed in temporary shelter. None of the Kalhaidhoo Island authorities were evacuated to Gan.

The French Red Cross has agreed to construct houses for these IDPs. Meanwhile, they have been provided makeshift housing in a factory, which has been partitioned with wooden panels to provide rooms. Each family has one room, sometimes accommodating up to 12 family members. There is no lighting in the toilet area. There is a communal kitchen, but they lack basic services like drinking water (the drinking tank tap does not work). There is no medical help on site. If someone is sick or pregnant, the IDPs have to hire vehicles to take the person to the hospital.

The government is supposed to provide transport for IDP children to attend school, but since July or August this has not happened, so the children walk to school. The children have, however, received textbooks and bags from UNICEF.

They have little information on the progress of permanent housing, and what information they do have is perceived as contradictory. They understood from the French Red Cross that each family would have a house, with two houses for extended families that had been living together. The Ministry of Planning has said that they will replace only the number of houses that were destroyed.

They feel that their own island authorities let them down, as a week after the tsunami when they had moved to Gan, their own island authorities had not visited. The community NGO/CBOs have no authority to do anything without the approval from the island office. There was a very strong feeling of resentment against the island office and island authorities. The IDP committee felt helpless to resolve conflicts, or instigate complaints.

While our meeting was in progress the person in charge of the camp from the atoll office came and informed the team angrily that, 'it is prohibited to collect information in this way'. The IDPs erupted in anger. They told us that this just illustrated what they were up against. They said they didn't talk to embarrass people but to try to get things done.

Future actions

There needs to be more attention paid to the social needs of the IDPs. Staff experienced in negotiating and conflict resolution needs to be deployed to help the process. It is clear that there is no effective monitoring, either by the island office or the IDP committees.

There needs to be marked improvement in information and communications to the IDP communities, both by the government and by agencies working with them. Transparency in government policy and accountability to the IDP is desperately needed. IDPs need to be involved in the decision-making process to empower and enhance their capacity in the rehabilitation and recovery process.

ANNEX 3: LIST OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

International Community

UN staff

Patrice Coeur-Bizot – RC Maldives

Kari Blindheim – Deputy RC (in UN Country Team meeting)

Babar Sobhan – Snr Advisor for Tsunami Recovery

Man B Thapa – UNDP Disaster Management Specialist

Sean McCarthy – Shelter Manager UN-HABITAT

Abdul Bari Abdulla – Programme Coordinator, Livelihoods Programme (non-tsunami)

Deirdre Boyd – UNDP Recovery Manager

Ibu – Communications Officer, UNDP

Svend Erik Sorensen – Programme Coordinator Post-Tsunami Environmental Recovery Programme,
UNEP

Ewald Spitaler – Post-Tsunami Environmental Recovery Programme – UNEP

Stephanie Knell – OCHA Representative

Ken Maskall – Representative, UNICEF

Martin Hart Hansen – M, E and Reporting Officer, UNICEF

Unni Silkoset – Asst Programme Officer, UNICEF

Dunya – Head, UNFPA

Nina Kolbjornsen – Officer-in-Charge, WFP

Richard Scurfield – Special Representative, World Bank

William H Menninger – Senior Resident Advisor, Asian Development Bank

Nassim Jawad – Livelihood Programme Manager, UNDP – Telephone interview

Red Cross – Group interview

Jerome Duron – IFRC, Head of Delegation

Jill Climents – British Red Cross, Head of Mission

Obaidur Rahman, IFRC, Program Coordinator

Dr Satyabrata Dash, American Red Cross, Country Manager Psychosocial Support

Rachael Siddall, Australian Red Cross, Team Leader, Waste Management

Donna Chanda, Canadian Red Cross, Head of Delegation

Stacey M Winstron – Information and Reporting Consultant, IFRC

TEC Capacities Evaluation: Maldives

Government of Maldives

Ali Amir, Ministry of Construction and Public Infrastructure (transitional shelter)

Hon. Ismail Shafeeu – Minister, Ministry of Defence and National Security

Hudha Ali Shareef – Director, Ministry of Planning and National Development

Hon. Mohamed Waheed Deen, Minister of Atolls Development

Mohamed Zahid – National Programme Coordinator for Atoll Development for Sustainable Livelihoods
(Also founder of NGO Fashan)

Hon. Aishath Mohamed Didi – Minister for Gender, Family and Social Services (MGFSS)

Tracey Larman – Child Protection Advisor, Unit for the Rights of Children, URC – MGFSS

Aishath Sheenaz – Project Officer, URC – MGFSS

Shaliny Faufar – Project Officer, Gender and Development Section, MGFSS

Fathimath Yumna – Asst Director, Gender and Development Section, MGFSS

Maana Rafia – Director General, Gender and Development Section, MGFSS

Civil Society Sector

Khurshid Alam – International Tsunami Programme Coordinator, ActionAid

Fathmath Afiya – Executive Director, Care Society

Ijazulla Abudulla Ali – Director, Projects

Hameed – Care Society Volunteer

Aiman – Communications Officer

Maldives Islands Development Association (MIDA)

Representatives of Care Society's 27 island CBO partners

Island Interviews

Baa Atoll, Dharavandhoo Island

Mohammed Nosih – Chairman, Dharavandhoo Islanders Society (Baa Atoll, Dharavandhoo Isld)

Faleela – Sports Officer, Dharavandhoo Islanders Society and member of WDC

Raa Atoll, Ungufaroo Island

Yahya Ibrahim, Deputy Atoll Chief

Abdulla Rasheed, Asst Atoll Chief

Mohamed Shiham, Asst Atoll Chief

TEC Capacities Evaluation: Maldives

Ahmed Solih, Island Chief, Kandoludu (?Spelling), IDP committee

Mohamed Alifulhu, Asst Island Chief, Kandoludu, IDP committee

Hassanfulhu Ali, Island Chief, Kandoludu, IDP committee

Representatives of Club Youth Star CBO

Representatives of Tamiyyathul Saif CBO

WDC members

Laamu Atoll, Fonadue Island

Nasma, JPA – UNDP Livelihoods Programme

Umar, JPA – UNDP Livelihoods Programme

Laamu Atoll, Gan Island

Ali Abdulla, former member of Island Tsunami Task Force,

Members of IDP committee, and IDPs

Laamu Atoll, Maabaidhoo Island

Agricultural Officer (Alumni)

Psychosocial Officer (Alumni)