Tsunami Evaluation Coalition

Coordination of international humanitarian assistance in tsunami-affected countries

July 2006

Tsunami Evaluation Coalition

TEC

The Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC) is a multi-agency learning and accountability initiative in the humanitarian sector. It was established in February 2005 in the wake of the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunamis of 26 December 2004.

The TEC is managed by a Core Management Group (CMG) of agencies and TEC staff are hosted by the ALNAP Secretariat. The CMG provides general oversight and direction for the TEC on behalf of its wider membership. Since February 2005 CMG members have included representatives from: *Donors*: Danida, SDC and Sida; *UN agencies*: FAO, OCHA (Chair), UNDP, UNICEF and WHO; *NGOs/Red Cross*: CARE International UK, AIDMI, IFRC and World Vision International; *Networks/research institutes*: the ALNAP Secretariat and Groupe URD.

The TEC has three main aims:
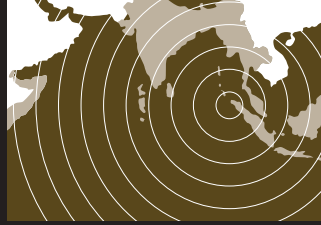
1. To improve the quality of humanitarian action, including linkages to longer term recovery and development.

2. To provide accountability to the donor and affected-country populations on the overall tsunami response (from the point of view of TEC member agencies).

3. To test the TEC approach as a possible model for future joint evaluation.

More information on the TEC can be found in the TEC's Synthesis Report and on the TEC's website: www.tsunami-evaluation.org

The TEC thematic evaluations

This evaluation is one of five thematic joint evaluations undertaken by the TEC. The other four studies in the series comprise: the role of needs assessment in the tsunami response; impact of the tsunami response on local and national capacities; links between relief, rehabilitation and development in the tsunami response; and funding the tsunami response

This evaluation is published alongside these other four studies together with the TEC's Synthesis Report, making a set of six. The Synthesis Report draws together learning and recommendations contained in these TEC studies as well as over 170 additional reports.

Coordination of international humanitarian assistance in tsunami-affected countries

By **Jon Bennett** (principal author)
William Bertrand, Clare Harkin, Stanley Samarasinghe, Hemantha Wickramatillake

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Contents

Acronyms and abbreviations

ACT	Action by Churches Together
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASEAN	Association of South-Eastern Nations
BRR	Aceh and Nias Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency
CAP	Consolidated Appeal Process
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund (formerly Revolving Fund)
CIMIC	Civil–Military Cooperation
CMCoord	Civil–Military Coordination Officers
CMG	Core Management Group (TEC)
CNO	Centre for National Operations (Sri Lanka)
DAD	Development Assistance Database
DEC	Disasters Emergency Committee
DFID	Department for International Development
DSS	Defence Security Service
ERC	Emergency Relief Coordinator (UN)
FTS	Financial Tracking System
GAM	Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka)
GERAK	Gerakan Rakyat Anti-Korupsi (the AntiCorruption Movement; an NGO in Aceh)
GHDI	Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative
GoI	Government of Indonesia
HCS	Humanitarian Common Services
HIC	Humanitarian Information Centre
HR	Human Resources
HRR	Humanitarian Response Review
IASC	Inter Agency Standing Committee (UN)

IAWG	Inter Agency Working Group
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
IDP	Internally displaced person
IFI	International financial institution
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
ILO	International Labour Office
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
JBIC	Japan Bank for International Cooperation
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MDTF	multi-donor trust fund
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN)
OSE	Office of the Special Envoy (UN)
PBWE	Provincial Bureau of Women's Empowerment (Indonesia)
PMI	Indonesian Red Cross/Crescent
PNS	Indonesian National Red Cross/Crescent Societies
P-TOMS	Post-Tsunami Operational Management Structure (Sri Lanka)
RC/HC	Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator (UN)
SITREP	situation report
SORAK	Solidarity of the Common People (an NGO in Aceh)
TAFOR	Presidential Task Force for Relief (Sri Lanka)
TAFREN	Presidential Task Force for Rebuilding the Nation (Sri Lanka)
TEC	Tsunami Evaluation Coalition
TLC	temporary living centres
TRO	Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation
UNCT	UN Country Team
UNDAC	UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination
UNDGO	UN Development Group Office
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNFPA	UN Population Fund
UNHAS	UN Humanitarian Air Services
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees (Office of the)
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
UNIFEM	UN Development Fund for Women
UNIMS	UN Information Management System (Indonesia)
UNJLC	UN Joint Logistics Centre
UNORC	UN Office of the Recovery Coordinator (for Aceh and Nias)
UNV	UN Volunteers
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation

Executive summary

Introduction

Evaluating the coordination of humanitarian actors within the response to the tsunami of December 2004 provides an opportunity to reflect on the behaviour and performance of the international response system when, unusually, financial resources were not a constraint. The recently launched global Humanitarian Response Review (HRR) and the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative (GHDI) provide an important backdrop and focus for the analysis.

This evaluation covers three countries: Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the Maldives, with some additional observations from Thailand. A core team of four people, plus one national consultant (Sri Lanka) visited each country during September–November 2005. With additional stake-holder workshops and headquarters interviews, the number of people consulted exceeded 350. The associated TEC Capacities evaluation team included coordination questions in its survey of affected populations, and the findings are reflected here.

The evaluation focuses on the efficiency, effectiveness, coherence and appropriateness of coordination arrangements within the international humanitarian system and how this related to national government and non-governmental agents. The analysis, drawn from a working definition of coordination and its systems and tools, embodies eight themes:

1   leadership and management of representative bodies

2   negotiation and maintenance of a serviceable framework with host political authorities

3   promotion of a functional division of labour (including civil–military)

4   strategic planning

5   mobilisation of resources for integrated programming

6   gathering data and managing information

7   accountability (including accountability to recipient populations)

8   joint advocacy.

Although the response became a huge international undertaking, its characteristics were determined more by the particularities of each affected country.

Few dispute that the tsunami accelerated the peace process in Indonesia. Unfortunately, the same opportunity did not arise in Sri Lanka where, despite early promises of cooperation between warring factions – and the proposed equity of distributions under the P-TOMS initiative[1] – the conflict there continues.

Coordination in the Maldives benefited from the relatively small numbers of agencies and close proximity of their offices; by contrast, Indonesia and Sri Lanka suffered from the fragmentation of response caused by geographical spread and hundreds of agencies setting up operations in the first month after the disaster.

Leadership and representation

In such a high-profile event, the UN Special Coordinator and (shortly afterwards) the UN Special Envoy were essential as catalysts, advocates and focal points in bringing affected governments and the wider aid community under one roof. However, this evaluation found a need for greater coherence on the responsibilities of reporting and decision making within the various levels of coordination, to avoid time-consuming micro-management and huge demands for information to be sent to New York and Geneva – a point frequently alluded to particularly by UN field respondents in the evaluation.

In the light of discussions currently underway in the HRR, the tsunami response again highlighted the need for a more predictable and centralised coordination structure at field level under the direction of the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC). The evaluation found that the IASC, despite being usefully mirrored at field level, did not sufficiently reflect, nor speak for, the huge diversity of NGOs, including national NGOs. The umbrella groups of the IASC at international level are without operational offices in the field – their representation, if at all, is through the ad hoc election of a member agency. A recurring complaint from senior coordinators was that INGOs did not bring consistent consensus on important issues being discussed, mainly because members of the NGO community were not in agreement about who had the right to speak on their behalf.

In the early stage of the emergency there was no common service for common assessment. In all countries, the relative importance given to the assessment and coordination roles of UNDAC, for instance, should have been made much clearer. In the immediate aftermath of the tsunami, the setting up of an information clearing house (Humanitarian Information Centre [HIC]) and a common platform for inter-sectoral coordination were perhaps more important than assessments as such.

The evaluation found that insufficient efforts were made to disseminate information and explain the purpose of the available UN common services, how they can link with existing capacities, and how they might more readily respond to agency requirements. Operational partners might, for instance, have benefited from common agreements on procurement, staff hire and rental charges, in addition to those services already available.

The evaluation found widespread dissatisfaction with the quality of coordination meetings, particularly during the first six months of the response. The

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1 Post-Tsunami Operational Management Structure, a joint agreement to share tsunami aid, signed on 24 June 2005 by the LTTE, but not implemented due to political opposition.

roles, responsibilities and decision-making authority of participants were often not spelled out, leading to a sometimes unproductive mix of information sharing and decision making. Rarely were meetings monitored or evaluated. The significant opportunity costs of attendance, especially for smaller agencies, outweighed the benefit, particularly when meeting themes and decisions were repeated several times.

A constant stream of visitors imposed a burden on local authorities, military forces and agency staff. The advent of high-profile visitors preoccupied management and logistics staff for up to two weeks in some cases, and logistics schedules had to be re-prioritised to accommodate the visitors. This evaluation suggests that adherence to common reporting and joint missions would go some way toward addressing this urgent issue. The main challenge, however, centres on the quality of personnel, their high turnover and, particularly at district levels, inadequate resourcing and inappropriate levels of seniority, which undermined trust and confidence.

Host political authorities

The relief effort benefited from strong national governments with well-developed national institutions and functioning legal frameworks. However, a strong central government could not compensate for poorly developed local-government coordination mechanisms. The evaluation found that, in all countries, the government's ability to coordinate effectively was constrained by its own limited capacity and access to information. The early closure of ad hoc coordination structures (the Centre for National Operations [CNO] in Sri Lanka, for instance) in the emergency phase and the resumption of regular line-ministry

responsibilities lessened coordination effectiveness, though in Indonesia the BRR (the Aceh and Nias Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency) has proven most effective.

The optimal operational capacity of the UN and INGOs was reached just at a time when skills transfer and capacity building for coordination of the recovery effort were most needed by government entities, yet there was no correlation between numbers on the ground and efforts in this respect.

OCHA's pivotal role in ensuring consistency and cohesion between all international partners and governments at district and sub-district levels was hampered by short-term, ad hoc funding of posts. In Sri Lanka, this essential role was compromised by lack of support from the UN country team in the capital (although this subsequently changed). It was also impaired by junior (and late) deployment in the field, and poor local resources.

A functional division of labour

This evaluation found that the frequent turnover of senior UN coordinators undermined the essential continuity and trust that lies behind effective leadership and coordination. Moreover, the quality of appointed individuals varied considerably, indicating the need for better training, with greater emphasis given to outreach skills that discourage the prevailing UN-centric approach to coordination.

Few respondents questioned the necessity for strategic leadership by senior UN appointees, nor the representational role thus entailed. Yet, under increasing government ownership of the national and provincial recovery process, the comparative advantage of the UN should have been in strategic planning, policy and

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coordination, rather than in direct project implementation.

Some key INGOs expressed disappointment over the manner in which the assumed UN sectoral leadership translated into inflexibility over methods and practice. Given the comparative advantage demonstrated by some NGOs, there is no inherent reason why UN agencies should take a lead in sectoral coordination.

The post-disaster flood of INGOs created a congestion of humanitarian space. With more than enough money to spend, some INGOs preferred to hold on to information as an exclusive entry point to a client population, and to use coordination meetings as a means of broadcasting this exclusivity. Moreover, many extended their mandates beyond areas of traditional competency and made promises that in subsequent months had to be retracted.

The sudden transformation from a small to large international presence of the Red Cross Movement in each country presented unforeseen coordination problems. Donated goods and services from visiting national societies were often determined by their own domestic assumptions of need with little regard to seeking advice from the host country's long-established society. This is not to detract, however, from the essential role played by members of the Movement in relief and recovery in all countries. Coordination problems have to some extent been addressed through the Movement Coordination Framework, developed from January–February and implemented in March 2005.

There was much 'vertical' reporting to donors or headquarters at the expense of 'lateral' coordination around the effective use of resources and common strategic planning within and between sectors. There was quite a lot of repetition and duplication in the situation reports. Many

agencies reported pressure for quick and visible delivery from the media and their own donor constituency, though the evaluation found this to be moreperceptual than empirical.

Inter-NGO coordination was varied. In Aceh, regular INGO interagency meetings may have been attended by only six or seven of the largest agencies, but in terms of coverage these represented perhaps as much as 65 per cent of the resources and project implementation on the ground. The charge of poor inter-NGO coordination – most particularly poor representation, information sharing and adherence to common standards – lies more with the remaining 35 per cent.

In some cases direct implementation was preferred over the more time-consuming approach that would have involved building partnerships and training with local NGOs and CBOs. Although the challenge of capacity building is beyond the scope of this study (and is covered extensively in the TEC Capacities Report, 2006) this evaluation found that a consequence of the 'swamping' of local capacity by the large international presence in Aceh and Sri Lanka was poor representation of, and consultation with, local NGOs and CBOs in coordination meetings. This may have led to the erosion of local emergency capacities.

The evaluation found some evidence of staff 'poaching' from local NGOs by international agencies, particularly during the relief phase. Also, where coordination meetings are dominated by international agencies, English becomes the medium of communication at the expense of already relatively marginalised local participants, whether independent NGOs, government officials or even INGO local staff.

Accountability to the affected population is a cornerstone of good coordination practice. Effective joint-agency communication with the client population,

including a complaints procedure and regular updates on the recovery process, was not an early priority. Frustration and misinformation have resulted. Communication and consultation between the international community and affected people was sporadic and uncoordinated.

The evaluation examines civil–military relationships in some detail. Military logistics were invaluable in the acute phase of the emergency, but not all deployed military forces and tasks undertaken by them were essential to the relief effort. No organisation representing the humanitarian community undertook to provide a coherent picture of needs across all countries affected in order to advise the military forces involved in the response about the most beneficial disposition and use of their assets. The IASC 'Oslo Guidelines' for the use of military and civil-defence assets in disaster relief were found not to be widely known or used by the national ministries responsible for disaster assistance, nor by the humanitarian community or military forces.

Strategic planning for recovery

Coordination efforts in the first year of the tsunami response have been mostly limited to gaining some measure of direction over activities, rather than a strategic prioritisation of outcomes, or gaining a consensus on goals. The evaluation found a heavy emphasis on asset replacement, with relatively less attention paid to sustainable livelihoods. The dearth of disaggregated data, notably on gender, impaired effective targeting of vulnerable groups and reinforced discriminatory practice.

Particularly in Indonesia, the evaluation found a general lack of foresight and strategic thinking on the part of the international community with respect to

shelter provision. This resulted in extraordinarily long delays before an interim solution was in place. Moreover, with disproportionate attention being given to permanent housing, the outstanding requirement for assistance to those in temporary dwellings was neglected until it became a 'crisis'.

There was little evidence in the first months of either direction or management with respect to cross-sectoral integrated resource allocation. A geographic, as well as sectoral, division of labour – with one assigned lead agency responsible for a multi-sectoral approach within one area, combined with sector-specific lead agencies – might have been the preferred model. This was indeed promulgated by the RC/HC in Jakarta, for instance, but not taken up. One consequence was disproportionality in geographical allocations and coverage.

The tsunami response lacked a consistent, quantified and coordinated gender analysis, an omission that has resulted in some serious protection anomalies and the persistence of male-dominated decision-making structures that have largely gone unchallenged. In particular, gender-disaggregated data upon which to base targeted programmes were largely missing in both the relief and recovery phases.

As governments pressed for greater attention and resources to be given to coordinating the international community, and as the plethora of short-term, single project NGOs departed, coordination improved in the latter half of 2005. Staffing in international agencies became regularised, with longer term contracts. New fund tracking mechanisms (DAD) and the consolidation of existing mechanisms (FTS) meant that gaps in assistance could begin to be seen more clearly, though neither of these tools presented an exhaustive picture. In Indonesia and the Maldives, this coincided with the realisation of greater government

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budgetary commitments. Early damage and loss assessments undertaken by international financial institutions (IFIs), and the subsequent introduction of trust funds, led to greater donor coordination in the recovery period, though project funding through the Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) in Indonesia was relatively small.

Mobilising resources for integrated programming

The projected six-month expenditure period of the original Flash Appeal was unrealistic;[2] here, as in some previous emergencies, the calculated reconstruction and recovery period should have been much longer. For many agencies, there was a retroactive allocation of funds toward longer term recovery programmes, but this was not subject to coordinated interagency policy discussion, advocated and argued on a common policy platform. There were exceptions: the IFRC, for instance, presented a preliminary five-year recovery programme in the first month; and in both Sri Lanka and Aceh an early UN transitional strategy became a provisional recovery platform for coordination of those agencies included in the Flash Appeal. The latter, however, was not taken up in any consistent fashion.

In promoting trust funds, the IFIs have enhanced donor coordination through pooled resources, while aligning reconstruction grants with national 'on-budget' planning priorities. Most importantly, trust funds encourage a strategic policy dialogue between key donors and governments. The consortium of donors contributing to the MDTF in

Indonesia, for example, benefited from the World Bank's established relationship with the government and the leverage this had in pushing forward the dialogue on governance and transparency that became a central pillar of the Aceh and Nias Rehabilitaion and Reconstruction Agency (BRR). Slow disbursement, however, has impaired effectiveness.

There remains a persistent preference among donors for highlighting their own individual contributions, and many operational agencies spend disproportional amounts of time writing separate reports for donors on individually funded assistance rendered. Notwithstanding current difficulties in applying the principle, un-earmarked contributions, matched by consolidated reporting and allocations assigned on the basis of agency merit as well as coherence within the appeal as a whole, is an ideal that the evaluators would uphold. However, greater effort is required (particularly in UN reports) to move beyond general statements of programme performance and provide sufficient detail to satisfy the monitoring requirements of donors.

Information management

Cellphones and satellite imagery emerged as important instruments of communication and coordination in the immediate stages of the emergency. Since much of this technology was in the hands of the private sector, greater efforts are required to develop partnerships between local and international groups to improve the quality of the information and the speed of its delivery. For example, an integrated early warning system – using

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2 The Flash Appeal, initially for six months, was subsequently extended to December 2005, and then to June 2006.

new technology and including community-based systems – has yet to have an impact in the field.

The issue of data analysis – how to add value to an abundance of often contradictory data – confounded the Humanitarian Information Centres (HICs) from the outset. The HIC created its own exponential demand, yet its trained human-resource base and toolkit/templates for rapid deployment were limited. Many key agencies simply did not use the service at all in the first two months; their own information sources, formal and informal, were perceived as better.

The evaluation found that the HIC was not a tool fully accessible to the governments. For eventual transfer to government, the exit strategy in each country should include linkages to the Development Assistance Database (DAD) and other information-management programmes under a single umbrella combined with, for example, the UNDP Capacity Building Programmes.

While capacity mapping exercises and agency matrices have some value, there are diminishing returns and in-built redundancy in attempting to capture the activities of the entire humanitarian community. The top 10–15 agencies usually represent about 80 per cent of activities and funds, and it is these that need to be fully reflected in any mapping exercise.

Ensuring accountability

Reporting on corruption was not within the terms of reference of this evaluation. However, the team noted an increased level of awareness and heightened capacity within international and national (including non-governmental) bodies regarding the monitoring of tsunami transactions. In Indonesia, it was encouraging that the BRR

has given high priority to transparency in this respect.

Corruption risks were increased by shortcomings in the existing financial and administrative systems of affected countries. Newly introduced tracking systems – notably the Development Assistance Database (DAD) – make it easy for government and donor countries to check whether funds are being used as expected. The evaluation found that although DAD data were still coming in, a certain 'momentum' was already established in terms of both governments' insistence on cooperation from contributing agencies, and the self-interest of agencies in being seen to be publicly accountable.

Joint advocacy

The evaluation found that in the first six months in particular, most agencies paid insufficient attention to developing a dialogue with governments (and communities) about war/non-war populations and associated protection issues (Indonesia), population consolidation (Maldives) and pre-/post-tsunami displaced populations (Sri Lanka). Some respondents suggested that the limited dialogue was in part due to self-imposed restrictions by agencies with committed project money.

The evaluators accept that, in Aceh for example, priority was rightly given to building a relationship of trust with the government – and the government itself broached the possibility of international assistance beyond tsunami-affected populations. It is also accepted that caution must be exercised in seeking partnerships with some human-rights organisations seeking funding for relief operations beyond their competency. However, the vested interest of committed project money for relief/recovery may have provided a disincentive to engage in advocacy work.

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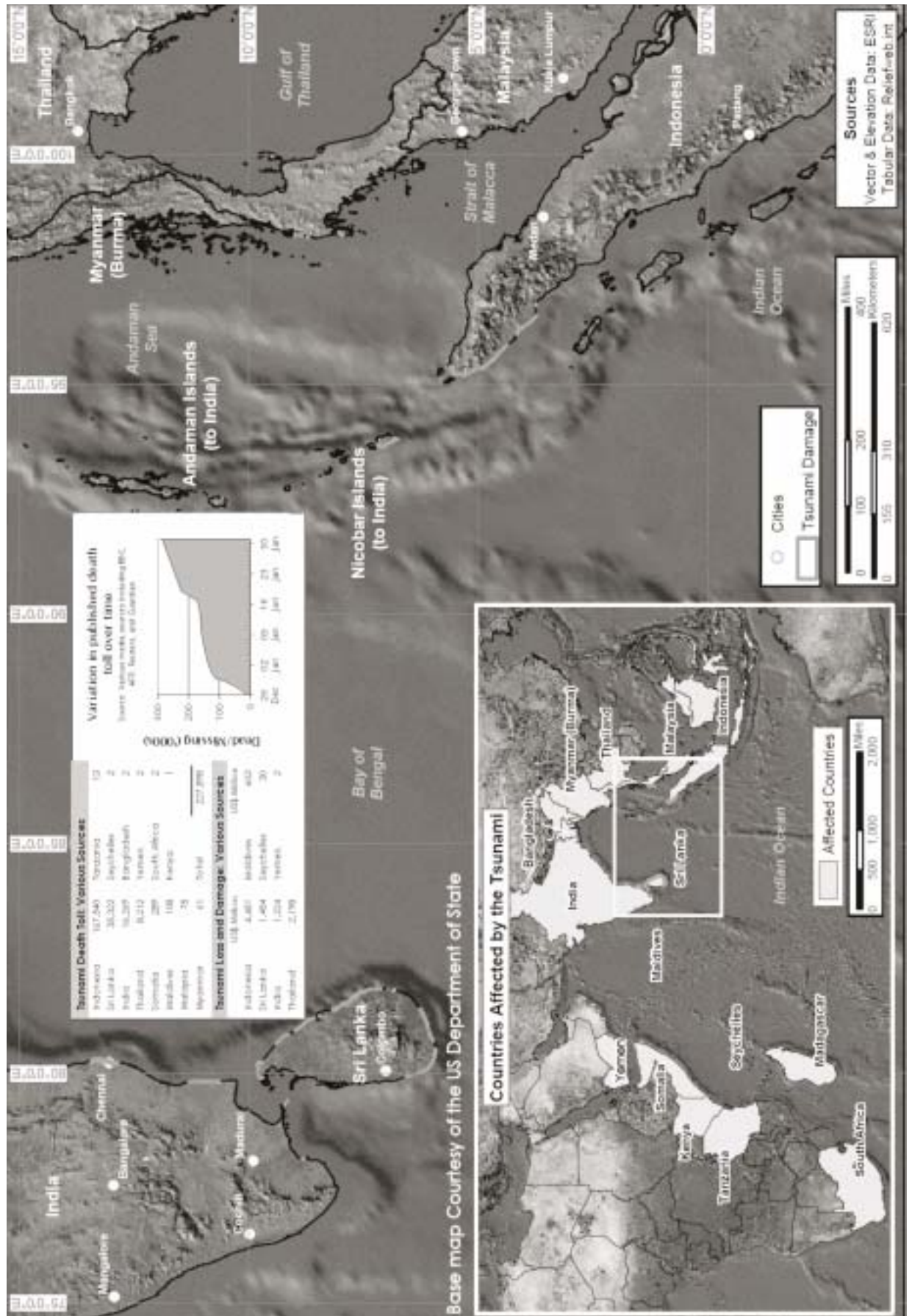
A coordinated common policy framework for human rights was missing, as was a common platform for the protection of minority groups and of relatively voiceless groups such as women. In this respect, several respondents pointed out that the division of responsibilities between UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators was not always clear, having implications for (a) representing the aid community as a whole, and (b) being at the forefront of advocacy around difficult and often political issues.
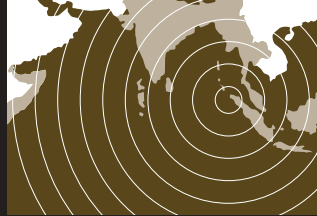
Composite recommendations and actions

1   An international review and consultation should be undertaken with INGOs and local NGOs to develop new approaches to achieving: (a) adequate representation within coordination structures at all levels; (b) consensus that can be translated into common positions and a level of predictability on key issues; and (c) the extent to which a certification process can be introduced to assist governments and donors in choosing responsible NGO partners with whom to work. (Action: IASC, NGO consortia and donors.)

2   In natural disasters as well as complex emergencies, the RC/HC in conjunction with a common NGO/Red Cross viewpoint, should take a lead in promoting joint advocacy on 'difficult' issues such as land tenure/ownership, affected/non-affected populations, access to war-affected populations and improving governance. (Action: IASC, all agencies, RC/HC.)

3   The international community should ensure that sufficient priority is given to enhancing the coordination capacities of local as well as national government bodies. This would include, for instance, deploying senior staff beyond capitals and helping to build the capacity of local authorities to utilise information systems such as HIC. Where large numbers of INGOs are anticipated, the deployment of a senior NGO liaison officer should be considered. (Action: OCHA and all agencies.)

4   Effective, consistent and coordinated communication with recipient populations at all stages of the response – and with a concerted effort to include women in the dialogue – should be prioritised. This should entail dedicated staff resources and tools, with efforts made toward reaching a communications protocol with the host government. A common strategy should be developed, including the use of public meetings, broadcast media, newsletters and posters. (Action: all agencies and OCHA.)

5   The creation and use of a common beneficiary database, provided and endorsed by a central government body, should be an early priority in the emergency phase. (Action: all agencies, with host governments.)

6   With respect to the constant stream of visits by agency staff and donors, the IASC should urgently introduce monitored guidelines requiring all agencies and donors to report on the numbers and cost of visiting delegations. Common reporting under the guidance of the GHDI, for instance, should be used. (Action: all agencies and IASC.)

7   Leadership and coordination skills should include the basics of how to maximise the output of meetings. These skills should be promoted by all agencies, forming part of the induction training for operational staff, along with standard operating procedures. (Action: all agencies and OCHA.)

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8 Benchmark (gender-sensitive) indicators for coordination should be developed, along with a simple monitoring and report-back system for the quality of coordination meetings. (Action: OCHA and all agencies.)

9 In emergencies of this magnitude, the RC/HC office should be supported by the early deployment of a full-time gender officer who remains in post for at least a year to serve as a resource person for the humanitarian community at large and to support the mainstreaming of gender issues through all programme sectors. (Action: RC/HC and all agencies.)

10 In line with UN guidelines issued in May 2006 on accepting pro bono offers, OCHA should take a lead on behalf of the wider humanitarian community in further developing guidance on private sector donations. Initially, an internal policy should be shared with all OCHA staff and should include template stand-by MOUs for pro bono offers. OCHA should also ensure that all major emergencies have a dedicated focal point for liaising with key private sector companies (ideally both in country and at OCHA HQ). (Action: OCHA and IASC.)

11 To avoid high turnover of staff, HR departments should endeavour to deploy long-term (at least one-year) personnel in the field as soon as possible. Urgent attention should be given to the speed with which staff members are recruited, and to expanding the registry of suitable standby staff. (Action: all agencies.)

12 Civil–military coordination should be improved through more extensive promotion of guidelines, principles and procedures. Enhanced in-house and external training and advocacy, as well as joint exercises between humanitarian agencies and the military, would improve civil–military and military–military relations. Senior humanitarian actors – in particular the RC/HC office – should be made more aware of the civil–military resources available to them and the potential contribution they can make in addressing urgent needs, including the rapid deployment of civil–military experts. (Action: ERC, IASC and all agencies.)

13 The RC/HC should strongly advocate and disseminate information on the common services available to all actors: what they provide, how non-UN agencies can supplement capacities, and the purpose of the Humanitarian Common Services 'matrix'. (Action: RC/HC.)

14 Adequate resources for coordination should be ensured through the relief, transition and recovery phases of disasters. This should include support to common services from NGOs and the Red Cross Movement. Emphasis should be given to support to the RC/HC through the transition, irrespective of institutional affiliations and restrictive interpretations of mandates concerning relief, recovery or development. (Action: all agencies, ERC and IASC.)

Countries affected by the tsunami

Base map Courtesy of the US Department of State

Introduction

1.1 Evaluation context and approach

1.1.1 Challenge and scope

It is now 10 years since the largest donor and interagency evaluation of the Rwanda crisis discovered a 'hollow core' at the centre of the international coordination apparatus (Borton et al, 1995). Since then, accountability, quality and performance in humanitarian action have been at the heart of many initiatives promoted by donors and humanitarian organisations.[3] The same period has seen the enactment and field-testing of UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182 that set up the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC),[4] the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) and the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF), the three main tools designed to help the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) with coordination.

Creating dedicated bodies, assigning greater sums of money, heralding new common standards and refining tools of accountability were not sufficient in themselves. In early 2005, the ERC launched a global Humanitarian Response Review (HRR) that recognised the need to develop a joint plan of action to improve the effectiveness and timeliness of what has been referred to as 'a common humanitarian response' to emergencies.[5] The HRR highlighted perennial concerns about how best to represent, manage and lead a diverse humanitarian community; it also re-stated the seemingly intractable dichotomy of the

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3 These include, among others, the Sphere Project, the Humanitarian Accountability Project (HAP), the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP), the final draft of the Code of Conduct for the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement and NGOs, People in Aid, the SMART initiative, the Quality Initiative, and the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative (GHDI).
4 The IASC consists of the UN, IOM, and (as ex-officio members) the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement and NGOs (through three NGO consortia).
5 The review was undertaken from February to June 2005. It assesses the humanitarian response capacities of the UN, NGOs, Red Cross/Red Crescent movement and other key humanitarian actors including the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), to map the gaps and make recommendations to address them.

governmental and non-governmental systems and their respective working styles. In terms of coordination, rather than adding substantially new elements to the debate, the tsunami response exposed more starkly than ever before the highs and lows of the aid industry and the adjustments still required to make it more professionally accountable. It highlighted conflicts between implementation and coordination roles and raised questions about the standard coordination tools of leadership, common services and meetings.

Coordination is a process, and the benchmarks for effectiveness look beyond the mechanisms themselves. In Banda Aceh in the first month after the tsunami, an average of 72 'coordination' meetings per week were underway (Volz, 2005, p 26). Measured purely in quantity terms, this would be the best-coordinated disaster response in history! Yet, a dataset (recording who did what, where and when) is insufficient to capture the ultimate purpose and impact of the plethora of structures, meetings and multiple layers that constituted this process. Many of the findings in this study are either consensual (with the agreement of a sufficient number of respondents to make the point plausible) or intuitive (drawn from the breadth of experience of the evaluators). Where available, we cite examples and secondary-source evidence to back up the points made in this report.

The scope of the study thus has inherent limitations. The effectiveness and impact of coordination – even the process itself – are notoriously difficult to quantify. Indeed, to the authors' knowledge there has never been a cost-effective analysis of humanitarian coordination. The opportunity costs associated with time invested in coordination by a multiplicity of actors are rarely alluded to. Ideally, the evaluation would ask whether the goods and services provided to tsunami-affected communities were timely and sufficient to meet their needs and, crucially, whether coordination (or lack thereof) was a determining factor. On reflection, the answer is incomplete. Efforts were made to incorporate such questions into this and other Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC) thematic studies – and cross-referenced with other studies already available – but causality and impact (as opposed to outputs) depend on a set of indicators not yet developed at the time of writing. There are no agreed benchmark standards for coordination; what we have are observations of experienced people about what seems to have worked and not worked.

Much of the ensuing analysis is after the fact: as the number of actors on the ground increased, so did the need for coordination. A moot point, of course, is whether so many different actors were required – but certainly their numbers and diversity increased the likelihood that coordination systems would be strained to breaking point. In recent years the humanitarian enterprise has explicitly chosen to become more professional, and the price may have to be a small loss of autonomy for the greater good of the whole. The debate is also informed by the pros and cons of a more assertive host-government stance toward regulating, directing and coordinating international agencies (Bennett, 1997). A certification process for NGOs may be one way forward.[6]

This evaluation looked at the international rather than the national response, although the linkages between the two are also evaluated. The majority of the

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6 This is a complex debate, but certification of humanitarian NGOs is still rare. See, for example Shea (2005).

findings are on institutional practices, how these unfolded in the tsunami response and what lessons they provide for the international community.

A clear demarcation between relief and recovery phases is not possible, since at an operational level these were contiguous and concurrent. Nevertheless, some key dates at least indicate intent on the part of the host governments to move beyond the relief phase. In Indonesia, the government requested organisations wishing to continue their activities in Aceh to submit information about their planned recovery activities and sources of funding by 27 April 2005. In Sri Lanka, the government unveiled its post-tsunami, three-year reconstruction Master Plan (Rebuilding Sri Lanka: Action Plan) on 2 March 2005. And in the Maldives, the first draft of the National Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (NRRP) was issued in early February 2005, with a presidential declaration that the emergency phase was over. Because of the contiguous and concurrent nature of the 'phases', this evaluation has chosen to apply the 'recovery' phase to types of intervention and the planning processes around these, rather than according to a strict timeline. Emergency interventions in, for example, the shelter sector, were still being applied in the third quarter of 2005.

Behind the analysis are a number of systemic coordination challenges common to all humanitarian crises, regarding how to:

- create inclusive system-wide coordination mechanisms at international and field levels to which all stakeholders can feel a sense of belonging
- develop trust in, and proficiency of, an inclusive 'lead agency' model for different sectors or clusters, with comparative advantage as a prerequisite
- move beyond the purely consensual and non-binding nature of coordination mechanisms toward the strengthening of mandates for more authoritative structures
- develop efficient, effective and well-resourced systemwide 'common tools' for coordination so that there is no perceived need for competing information, liaison or logistics systems in the field
- build a coordination mechanism that exploits to the full the new information technology that is available
- ensure an integrated response to humanitarian crises among agencies with differing mandates without compromising the bedrock humanitarian principles of independence, impartiality and neutrality.

The solutions are mutually reinforcing and probably indivisible. The tsunami response was an interesting test of progress precisely because financial resources were not a limiting factor.

Using the defined 'ideal' model of coordination (outlined in section 1.1.3 below), the evaluation is structured around the eight key elements of the definition. Explicitly and implicitly, the criteria of efficiency, effectiveness (including timeliness), appropriateness and coherence are commented upon. The sustainability of various coordination mechanisms, particularly with respect to their being inherited by national bodies, is covered, as are various cross-cutting themes such as gender, advocacy and the use of international standards. The heart of the evaluation is on field coordination structures (national and sub-national) used by the international community, with less attention paid to

arrangements at headquarters which, given the plethora of agencies, the team was unable to cover adequately.

1.1.2 Methodology

The evaluation covered Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the Maldives, with some additional observations from Thailand and from a brief review of coordination management and support from regional and international bodies. The evaluation was subject to constraints of time, geographical coverage and availability of key informants. The study was undertaken 9–11 months after the onset of the emergency, and many international personnel had moved on to other posts, while continuity and institutional memory were more evident within national governments and national agencies. Since this depended to some extent on retrospective analysis, it was not always backed by adequate written information, particularly since in the early weeks ad hoc structures and rapid on-the-spot decisions were the norm.

The terms of reference for this evaluation provided a contextual basis for asking some broader questions of the international humanitarian system as a whole.

1   What worked and what did not work in coordination and why?

2   What was the outcome of the various coordination efforts?

– Avoidance of critical gaps at sectoral and geographic levels?

– Absence of duplication?

– Increased/decreased operational costs in the use of assets, resources and funds?

– Appropriate use of common assets and tools?

– Sufficient ownership, inclusion, and knowledge transfer among local actors and beneficiaries?

– Value-added support to national coordination structures?

3   How appropriate was the structure, strategy and style of coordination to the circumstances at country, regional and international level and with specific actors?

4   Did coordination actors bring the right expertise and appropriate critical mass to the relief effort at critical times?

The methods of data collection for the study included a mix of:

• semi-structured, one-to-one interviews with key actors (including by telephone)

• supplementary written inputs

• group interviews (workshop format)

• introduction of key questions into aid-client surveys in Indonesia and Sri Lanka being organised by the TEC Capacities evaluation team – this helped to give some rigour to the otherwise brief impressions gained from field visits

• collection of written data from the field, including (where available) correspondence on decisions taken across the timeline

- a literature search and collation of ongoing/completed agency reviews

- review of country report drafts by TEC steering committee members plus key correspondents from the various UN, IFRC and NGO country teams.

To enable the fullest possible representation of views from the wide range of stakeholders involved, specific findings were cross-checked from one particular data source with those of another. Actors involved included representatives of governments, humanitarian agencies, civil society and bilateral and multilateral donors. Table 1.1 summarises the numbers and locations of interviewees. In addition, the team convened stakeholder consultation workshops/debriefings in Indonesia (3), Sri Lanka (2) and the Maldives (1).

Table 1.1 Informants consulted during the evaluation

Location	INGOs and Red Cross/Crescent	Local NGOs/CBOs	UN	Donors/IFIs	Government	Military
Indonesia	33	11	23	20	19	10
Sri Lanka	19	11	12	5	13	3
Maldives	7	8	11	2	16	
International HQ (Bangkok, Singapore Europe/USA)	12	1	47	7	5	12 + 6 in Manila/ Philippines
Total	71	31	93	34	53	31

With approximately 2.5 weeks per country, the team relied heavily on OCHA and/or local consultants to set up one-to-one and group meetings in advance, and to advise on key stakeholders. One person from the OCHA management team accompanied the team throughout, although she was not a contributor to the team findings, and the independence of the evaluation from OCHA was assured. Further research assistance was rendered in New York (one person) and Sri Lanka (one person) to amass data from web sources, NGOs and evaluative literature.

1.1.3 Definition of coordination

Most dictionaries define coordination simply as the act of working together harmoniously. In development literature, coordination assumes interdependence, the necessity to manage it and a degree of hierarchy.[7] For our purposes here, we adopt a hybrid definition that includes what coordination is and what it ideally does.[8] Cross-cutting themes, notably adherence to gender analysis and standards, are assumed.

Coordination is a process, the orchestration of effort toward appropriate, effective, efficient and coherent delivery of humanitarian services. It involves the systematic use of policy instruments including:

7 For useful discussions about conceptual differences between coordination, cooperation and interdependence, see Robinson et al (2000).
8 The definition borrows some elements from Borton et al (1996), Minear et al (1992) and Bennett (1995).

- providing leadership and management of representative bodies

- negotiating and maintaining a serviceable framework with host political authorities

- orchestrating a functional division of labour (including civil–military)

- strategic planning

- mobilising resources for integrated programming

- gathering data and managing information

- ensuring accountability (including accountability to recipient populations)

- providing a focus for joint advocacy.

Coordination structures are placed along a continuum from facilitation to control, with typologies based on kinds of organisations and the different levels at which coordination takes place (Bennett, 2000). Much of the recent literature on humanitarian coordination highlights the importance of incorporating a command element into the practice of humanitarian coordination and establishing a clear role in coordination for the national authorities. In almost every emergency, the same question arises: who should control the chaos created by the multiplicity of players?

No one – with the possible exception of some host governments – suggests that coordination should be anything other than a voluntary process. Every organisation defines its own threshold of autonomy and the extent to which it will, or will not, be coordinated by others. This voluntary ethos is both a strength and a weakness. The strength lies in strategic variation, a rejection of formulaic approaches and consensual models that are simply replicable anywhere in the world. Sometimes too much time and energy is spent moving the juggernaut forward a few paces when the outriders (those preferring to invest their energies elsewhere) may reach their goal sooner. The weakness is the converse: humanitarian space can become saturated with contenders, and poor performance of just one agency can compromise the effectiveness of all others.

In the humanitarian field, there has been some debate around whether strategic and operational coordination can usefully distinguish the roles between, for instance, agencies mandated to make priority decisions on behalf of the humanitarian community as a whole, and those whose focus is more on the operational aspects of who does what and where. In recent years, however, this distinction has become moribund, particularly in view of a general trend toward decentralised decision making, and the fact that host governments have assumed greater authority at all levels of the process.

1.2 Emerging issues

1.2.1 The Humanitarian Response Review

In late 2004, the ERC raised the issue of predictability within the humanitarian response system and commissioned the HRR to examine the way in which the international humanitarian system responds to crises and to provide

recommendations to improve the system. The HRR's first main report, produced in August 2005, did not look at local and national responses, but rather its focus was at the international level. An immediate outcome of the process was a discussion around assigning UN agencies as 'cluster leads' in sectors where there are often gaps in humanitarian response.

The cluster approach proposes operating at two levels. At the global level, the aim is to strengthen system-wide preparedness and technical capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies by designating 'global cluster' leads accountable for ensuring predictable and effective interagency responses within sectors. At the country level, the objective is to strengthen the coordination framework and response capacity by mobilising clusters of agencies/organisations/NGOs to respond in particular sectors or areas of activity. The intention is to ensure predictable action for needs assessments and analysis, the identification of gaps, and development of updated and agreed response strategies and action plans through the Common Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP).

The tsunami response coincided with much of the 2005 debate over the HRR. Assigning cluster roles and responsibilities came too late for any formal arrangement in the field, but it is nevertheless worth looking at the kinds of solutions that are on the table and asking whether they address the very problems the tsunami raised. The IASC principals agree that, at the country level, the cluster approach will be initially implemented in the DRC, Liberia and Uganda. As agreed by the IASC principals in December 2005, the cluster approach will also be applied to all new major disasters with a phased and flexible implementation. The following agencies act as leads with managerial responsibility and accountability for nine clusters:

- camp coordination and management – UNHCR (for conflict-generated IDPs) and IOM (for natural disasters)
- emergency telecommunications – OCHA as overall process owner; UNICEF for data collection; WFP for common security telecommunications service
- early recovery (formerly called reintegration and recovery) – UNDP
- emergency shelter – UNHCR (for conflict-generated IDPs) and IFRC (for natural disasters)
- health – WHO
- logistics – WFP
- nutrition – UNICEF
- protection – UNHCR (for conflict-generated IDPs) and UNICEF and OHCHR (for natural disasters)
- water and sanitation – UNICEF.

Sectors and areas of activity where no significant gaps have been noted are not included among the nine clusters at a global level. These areas are: food, led by WFP; refugees, led by UNHCR; education, led by UNICEF; and agriculture, led by FAO.

To date, NGO involvement in the clusters has been limited, again highlighting the issue of inclusiveness in the IASC. The NGO Sphere focal points are involved in

four clusters – health, nutrition, emergency shelter, and water and sanitation – and the Norwegian Refugee Council has been brought into the camp coordination and management cluster. A few NGOs participated in the protection cluster, which examined IDP protection and broader protection issues separately (ICVA, 2005b).

The evaluation found that, initially at least, UN-led cluster work over-emphasised technical rather than policy issues. The shelter cluster, for example, would do a disservice to the sector by concentrating primarily on standards (such as the Sphere standards) and international stockpiles. In Indonesia and Sri Lanka, the main problems in the shelter sector revolved around who would build when, where and what type of houses. Meanwhile, complicated issues around land and property rights, temporary versus transitional and/or permanent shelter, or knowledge of the local customs and culture came up and were not satisfactorily addressed by the sector as a whole. With respect to the Sphere standards, the tsunami response has seen even wider adoption by the UN – a positive impact for coordination, as common standards help to prevent some coordination gaps.

This evaluation acknowledges the rapidly evolving nature of the cluster work which, by 2006, had moved beyond purely technical issues. The importance of addressing cross-cutting issues such as gender, human rights, protection, HIV/AIDS, environment and age was discussed in the April 2006 IASC principals' meeting, as was the HC's and OCHA's role in facilitating strategic integration of cross-cutting issues.

Underlying the HRR and the proposed cluster model is a cry of frustration: the diversity and complexity of the international humanitarian system and its voluntarism persistently misses gaps in assistance and protection. The preferred solution is a more centralised, predictable and top-down structure, orchestrated from the ERC and IASC with responsibilities at field level clearly understood by all. Yet there is one outstanding problem: the majority of the international operational capacity in humanitarian response lies with NGOs and Red Cross (national and international) at field level. Some of these are highly decentralised organisations, while others (such as the IFRC) are still quite centralised. Moreover, the HRR could not, in the time given, include national NGOs in its review, an omission that not only runs contrary to the principle of inclusion but also sidesteps field realities – for instance, the role of national NGOs in the tsunami response (notably in Sri Lanka) was substantial. Below, we examine further the challenges of reflecting and representing NGO/Red Cross inputs in the tsunami response.

1.2.2 The Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative

In June 2003, a number of donor governments, in conjunction with humanitarian actors, launched a long-term Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative (GHDI) that aims to enhance donor accountability by ensuring that the responses of donor governments are effective, equitable and consistent with the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. Donors have endorsed a set of 23 principles and good practices as a common platform for understanding good humanitarian donorship. Based on a shared vision and vocabulary, the GHDI initiative seeks: greater coordination in donor policy approaches to decision-making and resource allocation; more predictable, flexible and timely funding for

crisis response; and international responses based on needs assessments using objective criteria and ensuring equitable funding to all crises.

It is beyond the scope of this study to examine in detail the extent to which GHDI principles have been upheld in the tsunami response (more details are included in the TEC evaluations on funding and on needs assessment). It is important to note, though, that coordination among humanitarian donors lies at the heart of GHDI. Donors individually take quite different approaches to disbursing aid. Some focus on multilateral channels, others favour their own national NGOs and several have significant operational capacity. There are indirect forms of coordination – such as contributing via the Flash Appeal (or the CAP) – and direct collaborations, such as joint offices and joint evaluations. At the policy level, donors are coming together through GHDI to coordinate on reporting requirements, but inertia within administrations, or genuine constraints based on capacity or domestic politics, have so far limited the progress achieved in other fields.[9]

Informal groupings of like-minded donors have made progress on specific issues – for example, joint evaluations (such as the TEC) – and donor collaboration might bear fruit in the design of tools to analyse the impact of interventions, rather than looking solely at outputs, as is common now.[10] The International Humanitarian Partnership (Sweden, Denmark, the UK, Finland, Norway) is an informal body formed in 1995 to support multilateral field operations (mainly UN) with joint relief teams drawn from contributing member countries. Another important donor initiative taken very soon after the tsunami was the moratorium on debt repayments from the worst-affected countries. The broader issue of accountability (including corruption) in the tsunami response is a central concern of the GHDI, also discussed below.

1.3 Evaluation of the tsunami response: overview

The international aid system rarely scrutinises itself as a system as a whole. Efforts including most evaluations tend to focus on improving its constituent parts and measuring progress against objectives set only by an individual agency. An impediment to evaluation is the lack of agreed benchmarks for how the international community should collectively behave. And there is no agreed process for translating recommendations into actual change, rather than simply the shaking or nodding of heads. So many of the generic, systemic coordination problems highlighted here are simply repeats of the same findings from almost every major international aid response since the 1980s.[11]

The tsunami response was unique in several respects, and this uniqueness to some extent underscored the coordination arrangements, as well as the response, of the international community.

9 See, for example, Willitts-King (2005).
10 For example, through the DFID-led 'benchmarks' initiative that aspires to produce a methodology for measuring outcomes.
11 See, for example, ALNAP (2005).

- Unprecedented financial resources show an unusual 'peak' in receipts and disbursements from official sources (as detailed in the TEC Funding Response Report).

- Private sources (mainly channelled through NGOs) were higher in total than official sources, with attendant implications for accountability to public donors.

- The disaster itself was spread across two continents (Asia and Africa) and 14 countries. Yet this entailed more of an international response than a regional one (that is, directed from offices in the region), and its characteristics were determined more by the particularities of each affected country.

- The worst-hit countries had stable governments that took an early and sustained lead in coordination. Despite the fact that affected areas of Sri Lanka included territory that was not under government control, and there were areas of Aceh contested by rebels, these were not 'failed states'. The tsunami response was not immune to political machinations, however – in Sri Lanka, for instance, efforts to extend assistance to LTTE areas led to political dissent and the collapse of what might have been a very useful collaborative endeavour.[12]

- The role of foreign and national military forces was pivotal in the acute emergency period in providing logistical support. As we shall see, they were not immune to the competing environment, and some of the military interventions came at a very high price.[13]

The studies of the TEC have found that the relief phase was effective in ensuring that immediate survival needs were met, due to the mixture of local assistance in the immediate aftermath and international assistance in the first weeks after the disaster. These relief responses were, however, not often based on joint needs assessments and associated coordination. Notwithstanding the inevitable chaos of the first few weeks, this in turn led to duplication in some sectors and gaps in others, as outlined below.

Within a few months there was palpable evidence of the restoration of some basic services. In all countries, children were back in school very quickly, and health facilities and services were partly restored and, in several cases, much improved. More than 80 per cent of damaged fish markets (in Sri Lanka), boats and fishing equipment were rehabilitated, although the sustainability of such asset replacement in an already over-subscribed industry has been questioned.[14] In Aceh, six months after the tsunami, some 500,000 people had a solid roof over their heads (albeit a majority in host families), although 70,000 were still in tents. More than 1,000 new houses were being built each month, and this accelerated to 5,000 per month in October. Here, the reconstruction effort was an opportunity to strengthen the peace between the government and GAM by bringing entire communities together to plan for their future. Few dispute that the disaster in Aceh also provided an unexpected peace dividend.

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12 This was the P-TOMS, the Post-Tsunami Operational Management Structure, a joint agreement for sharing tsunami aid, signed on 24 June 2005 by the LTTE.
13 The support provided by the US military across the region cost in excess of US$250 million.
14 Simon Harris, 'Livelihoods in Post-Tsunami Sri Lanka', Forced Migration Review, July 2005.

Leadership and representation

2.1 The international community

The 'top end' of existing international coordination mechanisms at headquarters and national level is to a large extent UN driven. Where non-UN entities have emerged, their points of contact with the humanitarian system as a whole have been mostly been within structures such as the IASC and arrangements overseen by the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) and his field representatives. Representation within this pyramid structure has been more effective from UN agencies, donors and the Red Cross Movement, but less so from NGOs.

There are four groupings through which the largest international agencies and donors work.

- The UN, under the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), the IASC, OCHA and the Humanitarian Coordinators (HCs) at country level. The HCs coordinate the work of the humanitarian agencies through the UN Country Team (UNCT) forum. The Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement and NGOs may be invited to attend UNCT meetings, but not as a matter of course. Needs assessments, preparedness, appeals and funding, division of labour and security are the main issues discussed at the UNCTs.

- The Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, consisting of the ICRC, the IFRC and the national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies. Under the Seville Agreement, ICRC is designated as lead agency for the general direction and coordination of international relief operations linked to armed conflict and internal strife. In natural disasters, the lead in coordination is assumed by the national society of the affected country or by IFRC (as lead agency) if the national society's capacity is insufficient.

- NGOs have numerous coordination mechanisms, some being sector- or theme-specific (at international and national levels). They can also be coordinated through 'brand' levels – such as the Save the Children Alliance, Oxfam

International and the Caritas Network. They are represented at IASC (observer) level through three consortia – the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA),[15] the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR)[16] and the US-based Interaction.[17] At an international level, NGO coordination takes the form of networks such as the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC), Action by Churches Together (ACT), Alliance 2015 or 'brand' alliances such as the Save the Children Alliance and Oxfam International. Thematic coordination mechanisms are also being developed, for example the Interagency Working Group (IAWG-ECB).[18]

• Bilateral and multilateral donors typically report through local consortia and through national government coordinating committees. The evaluation notes, for instance, good practice by the EU (about US$2 billion from the Commission and member states to the regional appeal) in announcing the opening of a 'European House' in Aceh to coordinate the efforts of its member states. Other donor arrangements are discussed below.

Before reviewing the performance of these various groups, Table 2.1 presents a snapshot example from Indonesia of the levels of funding[19] channelled through each of them (BRR/UN, 2005).

Table 2.1: Funding to Indonesia for the tsunami response, November 2005, US$ million		
	Pledges	Actual project commitments
Government of Indonesia (excluding local government contributions)	2,100	1,060
Institutional donors (UN, EU, ADB, World Bank)	2,000	1,074
NGOs and Red Cross/Crescent	1,800	1,532
Bilateral donors	1,600	695

In terms of committed resources, the largest donor group in 2005 was the NGOs and Red Cross, and the implications of this substantial 'privatisation' of aid form some of the key findings of this evaluation. At a global level the message is clear: to professionalise the NGO sector implies an element of collective responsibility, representation and coordination beyond what is currently available.

15 A network and membership organisation of over 75 members.

16 An alliance for voluntary action of: CARE International, Caritas Internationalis, ICRC, IFRC, the International Save the Children Alliance, the Lutheran World Federation (ACT), Medecins sans Frontieres International, Oxfam International and World Council of Churches (ACT).

17 A coalition of over 150 US-based non-profit organisations.

18 Seven NGOs (CARE, Save the Children, Concern, Oxfam, International Rescue Committee, Mercy Corps and World Vision). In December 2004, the IAWG received a two-year grant from the Gates foundation to strengthen humanitarian response through emergency capacity building. A series of joint learning events would be undertaken to examine issues of accountability, capacity and coordination and lead to the development of indicators for impact. The IAWG has been behind the development of indicators to measure the impact of the tsunami response. This is not, however, related to the impact indicators most widely discussed to date – those introduced jointly by WHO and IFRC.

19 'Aid', of course, is an ambiguous term that may cover a wide variety of methods, such as 'soft' loans or 'tied aid', where the money has to be spent buying goods ands services from the donating country. The terms by which the aid is accepted play a large role in determining how useful it is.

2.2 Special Coordinator for Humanitarian Assistance

Immediately following the disaster the UN Secretary-General appointed the Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ms Margareta Wahlstrom, as the Special Coordinator for Humanitarian Assistance to the Tsunami Affected Communities. She was tasked with providing leadership and support to the UN country teams and with facilitating the delivery of international assistance through high level consultations with the concerned governments.

The evaluation found that in some cases the RC/HC lacked the staff resources to be able to perform the functions required of such a large-scale response. The team appreciates the difficulty of anticipating staff needs for an unprecedented and rapidly unfolding emergency, but the scaling up of staff resources was in some cases slow. The central support offered from Geneva and New York through the office of the Special Coordinator – notably over fund mobilisation, advocacy and additional pressure for valuable staff resources from elsewhere in the world – relieved the burden to some extent.

Acting as a senior spokesperson for the international community, and as a catalyst for improvements in the system-wide response, the Special Coordinator's role was much appreciated by senior UN and government officials interviewed within this evaluation, particularly given the intense media interest in the disaster. The evaluators found her role as a regional focus and instigator of higher-level interagency information sharing to be much needed during a period of relative chaos and fast-evolving events.

2.3 Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery/Global Consortium

Invariably, the designated highest UN official in complex emergencies is the Secretary-General's Special Representative (SRSG); there is no such position for natural disasters that quickly evolve into longer term recovery. To facilitate support for and implementation of the various national recovery plans, the UN Secretary-General in mid-April appointed former US President Bill Clinton as the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery. The post carried four key responsibilities:

1   ensuring funds are 'well spent and accountably spent'

2   coordinating efforts to ensure that money was not wasted or unnecessarily delayed

3   keeping the world's attention on the affected areas

4   championing 'the idea that we have a moral obligation to build these areas back better than they were before the crisis began.'[20]

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20 Responsibilities outlined by Mr Clinton upon his appointment (http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/Archive/2005/Apr/14-504056.html).

This high-profile appointment not only recognised the unprecedented magnitude of the tasks ahead, but perhaps also reflected the need for greater public accountability and transparency within the UN. The Special Envoy's stature, skills, commitment and level of engagement allowed him to act as an honest broker capable of bringing together a broad array of actors, including UN agencies, IFIs, NGOs and both donor and affected governments.

Mr Clinton represented the only system-wide focus, chairing the Global Consortium which, in effect, is the pre-eminent coordinating body for the tsunami recovery, for it includes IASC members, affected governments, IFIs and private sector representatives. There is a systemic challenge confronting the UN and international community: the operational and coordination mechanisms set up for relief are not easily transferred or replicated in the transition to recovery, and the Office of the Special Envoy (OSE) has taken upon itself the responsibility to record and learn lessons from this transition.

The OSE consists of 10 professional personnel, eight of whom are seconded from IASC agencies. Although they chiefly service Mr Clinton's visits, correspondence and briefings, they also serve as a link to the UN system. There is, for example, a high level steering group composed of agencies most closely involved in the work of OSE, a UN headquarters task force involving agencies from both within and outside the UN system, and regular contacts with UN resident coordinators in the field.

The goodwill that the Special Envoy enjoys among many world leaders has enabled him effectively to deliver politically sensitive messages that might be difficult for others to convey. Direct attribution is always difficult to prove (and is not sought), but Mr Clinton's expressions of concern on Sri Lanka's buffer zone requirement may well have influenced the evolution of a more nuanced approach by the government. Likewise, in the Maldives the OSE pressed successfully for a special meeting between the World Bank and the OSE (on 22 September 2005), which resulted in a coordinated and focused effort to address the country's project financing and budget gaps.

The OSE is likely to continue until the end of 2006. As well as continuing his promotion of the basic principles of 'build back better' and accountability to affected peoples, the Special Envoy will give greater attention to private-sector involvement in the recovery process, the improvement of regional early-warning and disaster-reduction practices and mechanisms, and increased dialogue and coordination among INGOs. The post of Special Envoy is unique and not easily replicated for other emergencies (though the model was used for the subsequent Pakistan earthquake), so the legacy is to institutionalise at least some aspects of his work and to ensure that future emergencies benefit from the lessons learned.

2.4 Headquarters and regional coordination

How the response was coordinated within individual agency offices is beyond the scope of this evaluation. The team was able to review some of the regional and headquarters coordination mechanisms employed by the ERC and OCHA, but

> The appointment of the Special Envoy implicitly recognised the need for a catalyst to bring much-needed coherence to the complex organisational architecture of international response.

appreciates that outside the IASC there were numerous NGO-coordinated responses and joint appeals, such as the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC/UK, US$650m), Action by Churches Together (ACT) and those undertaken by the Red Cross/Crescent Movement. The IFRC and its member societies alone raised US$2.2 billion.

In 2004, the ERC broadly divided his secretariat responsibilities between Geneva (natural disasters) and New York (complex emergencies). In the immediate aftermath of the tsunami, OCHA Geneva convened an internal task force and an external interagency body and acted as a filter for daily information coming primarily from UNDAC teams in the field. Media pressure for information was intense, so OCHA produced daily press briefings. UN member states also required daily information briefings. The focus shifted increasingly to New York as a result of the ERC's leadership in coordinating the response, the increasingly global response and accompanying reporting demands of UN permanent secretaries, and the high-profile coordination around the unusually successful Flash Appeal (US$977m, and 60 per cent funded within 10 days of its release).

The demands for feeding information from the field to headquarters were huge, and preoccupied much staff time of every agency on the ground (UN as well as NGO). The confused mix of information sharing and strategic decision making was apparent even at high level meetings in New York and Geneva; indeed, many of the discussions held in, for example, UNCT and IASC meetings in Jakarta, Colombo, Male or Bangkok were almost simultaneously reproduced at headquarters. Modern communications tend to complicate rather than simplify coordination; as one senior UN staff member wryly commented: 'If five water containers were loaded on to a truck in Aceh, we were discussing it among heads of agencies in New York two hours later, and then contacting Aceh to ask what colour the containers were!'

There is a need for greater coherence on the responsibilities of reporting and decision making within the various levels of coordination, to avoid time-consuming micro-management and huge demands for information to be sent to New York and Geneva – a point frequently alluded to by UN field respondents in the evaluation.

Where UN, IFRC and NGO regional offices existed, they essentially provided technical (including staffing) support to the countries affected, but were not regional coordination or management offices as such. For the UN, only the civil–military work was specifically regional (see section 4.2 below). Most UN agencies have a regional office in Bangkok, though coordination between them has been sometimes confounded by the inconsistent definition of countries within the 'region'. High level reporting, fundraising and advocacy were undertaken by occasional visits from the UN Special Coordinator (for the emergency phase), and subsequently by the UN Special Envoy (for recovery).

Although the decision to establish a regional OCHA office was taken in October 2004, it was not until March 2005 that the Regional Office for Asia and Pacific (ROAP) came into being with a mandate to facilitate and enhance the country offices. By the time this regional office was functional, the acute emergency phase had passed. Subsequently, the main activities with respect to the tsunami response have included the organisation of the regional 'lessons learned' workshop (Medan), Thailand-specific workshops and involvement in setting up regional early warning systems.[21]

21 The special session of the World Conference on Disaster Reduction on 20 January 2005 saw more than 160 governments calling for the development of a tsunami early warning system in the Indian Ocean.

Thailand was included in the regional element of the Flash Appeal primarily because the Thai government had not requested a national appeal. Un-earmarked regional appeal funds (US$2.5 million) assigned to Thailand were, nevertheless, not transferred until July. The money was for early phase livelihood recovery, and because of its late arrival had to be reformulated due to other donors having already met those needs.[22]

At the intergovernmental level, an important landmark was the adoption of a Jakarta Declaration[23] in early January by members of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) which not only mobilised support for both relief and recovery programmes, but also stressed the importance of bolstering the capacity of national governments to take a lead in coordinating the response. Many of the concepts of the Jakarta Declaration were contained in the subsequent UN General Assembly Resolution 59/279.

2.5 IASC representation challenges

Many of the recommendations of the HRR are predicated on a more inclusive IASC, where NGOs and the Red Cross Movement become full members rather than observers, thus ensuring that 'hard' decisions and commitments do not rest solely with the UN.

The HRR depicts the three international humanitarian networks – the UN agencies, the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement and the NGOs – as vertical to each other within each network, and considers that collaboration between them needs to be improved.[24] This evaluation found, however, that for the INGOs in particular, this depiction does not adequately capture the nature of their consortia/groupings; they are, in reality, highly diverse agencies with very different structures for decision making. Nonetheless, the issue of precisely how to represent this diverse INGO group came up over and again in the tsunami response.

One unique aspect of the response was that the collective funds available to INGOs and the Red Cross for both emergency and recovery were greater than those available to either the UN or bilateral donors (including IFIs). This 'privatisation' of aid made INGOs the key providers and implementers of immediate as well as medium-term assistance (with the exception of food aid provided through WFP[25]). They became key interlocutors with governments, turning on its head the usual partnership arrangements with bilateral donors and the UN.

A noticeable improvement in field coordination was the establishment of a local IASC in Banda Aceh, for example, that became a focal point for interagency

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Given their prominent profile as funding bodies and implementers, NGOs should have increased levels of representation within the international coordination apparatus, including the IASC.

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22 It is further noted that the RC/HC office was asked to account for the US$2.5 million before having received it! A further difficulty was that the Thai government was not interested in receiving assistance for livelihood recovery as such, unless it fell strictly within the regular UNDP development programme.
23 'Declaration on Action to Strengthen Emergency Relief, Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Prevention in the Aftermath of the Earthquake and Tsunami Disaster on 26th December 2004', adopted in Jakarta on 6 January 2005.
24 HRR, Executive Summary, point 9.
25 WFP did, however, receive a US$50 million donation from the American Red Cross, plus some technical staffing support.

coordination for those who attended. Strictly speaking it was IASC+, since all international actors were invited, whether belonging to IASC groupings or not. Most importantly, principles, standards and policy in, for example, the construction of temporary living centres (TLCs) were promoted through this body.

This did not, however, address the central problem of under-representation. A disparate, numerous and uncoordinated NGO sector is not new to this response. Yet, the IASC, despite being replicated at field level, did not sufficiently reflect, nor speak for, the huge diversity of NGOs, including national NGOs.

In April, ICVA proposed an NGO platform for Aceh that would become a focal point (and secretariat) for NGO coordination in the recovery and rehabilitation phase (ICVA, 2005a). Yet, the ICVA membership was neither able to agree the terms of reference for an NGO liaison officer, nor to the establishment of some kind of NGO liaison office in Aceh.[26]

2.6 Common services

Humanitarian Common Services (HCS) include the HICs, the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS), United Nations Civil–Military Coordination (CM-Coord), Interagency Emergency Telecoms, the UN Joint Logistics Centre (UNJLC) and the UN Disaster Assessment Teams (UNDAC). The HRR briefly addressed the issue of the effectiveness of HCSs and the extent to which pooled capacities serve operational purposes, not only for UN agencies but also for NGOs. A recurring concern – and one echoed by the wider humanitarian community during the tsunami response – was that many were neither aware of the services on offer, nor of the so-called 'matrix' approach adopted by the HCS. The staggered arrival of agency personnel, particularly those outside the UN system, and the presence of some relatively new actors, should perhaps have been served by an 'orientation package' (written and verbal), rather than the passive information available on websites.

To understand why certain services were either not used (or not known) by the wider humanitarian community, one has to understand the sequence of events. In Banda Aceh in the first week, some temporary shelters were already being run by students/ volunteers, heads of mosques and local NGOs prior to the arrival of any international organisations. These were the first informants. Then came the government and military, then international NGOs, then international military, and finally the establishment of UN offices and UN common services. The sequence is important, for it meant that the UNDAC team, for instance, was unable to have first call on assessment flights until UNHAS was operational (UNJLC staff arrived with the UNDAC team, but did not have access to dedicated air transport). The NGOs and international military were already self-equipped with aircraft, and for various bureaucratic and security reasons UNHAS could not hire aircraft as quickly as others.[27]

A recurring complaint from many stakeholders was that INGOs did not bring consistent consensus on important issues being discussed. The members of the NGO community could not agree among themselves who had the right to speak on their behalf.

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26 Interviews with key INGOs in Aceh and the Deputy RC/HC in February 2005.
27 The delayed deployment of the DFID-funded helicopters to Aceh for UNHAS (managed by WFP) was partly due to rather prolonged discussions on contractual issues and partly to the decision to re-paint the helicopters 'UN white' to make them visible as non-military craft. They were finally deployed about a month after the tsunami struck – that is, the second half of January 2005. DFID subsequently hired an aviation expert familiar with UNHAS to undertake an ex-post review of the deployment.

In the early stage of the emergency there was no common service for common assessment. In all countries, the relative importance given to the assessment and coordination roles of UNDAC should have been made much clearer. In the immediate aftermath of the tsunami, the setting up of an information clearing house (HIC) and a common platform for inter-sectoral coordination were perhaps more important than assessments as such, since the latter were already being undertaken elsewhere.[28]

An immediate challenge to the UN becoming fully operational was the security phase in Banda Aceh (Phase III) and the rest of Aceh (Phase IV). The UN Minimum Operating Security Standards (MOSS) for those phases placed restrictions on staff movement, and there was a concern not to prejudge the outcome of the peace negotiations. Although few disputed the necessity for such restrictions at the time, the lifting of the state of emergency in May was followed by a review of the security situation, yet the phases were still in place by October.[29] The opportunity costs of security rules for the UN should be borne in mind, particularly in a competitive environment where NGOs are not subject to the same constraints.

UNJLC chaired regular logistics coordination meetings at which it shared information on NGO logistics operations with other NGOs and offered space on WFP landing craft. It performed its usual role of providing information (through its website) on mapping, road logistics, air coordination with the military over landing sites, facilitating warehousing and port operations, cargo prioritisation for UNHAS, passenger management and a pouch service. The evaluation found that the website information provided a clear overview of logistics operations from the first bulletin produced on 31 December 2004.

UNJLC is hosted by WFP. In Aceh, from the perspective of OCHA, there was some tension within its relationship with WFP, especially over the use of aircraft (Goyder et al, 2005). There is a view within OCHA that WFP staff tended to use UNHAS assets more for the benefit of WFP than in support of the UN's response as a whole. Meanwhile, some WFP staff members themselves complained that they did not have exclusive call on what were perceived as 'their' aircraft. There appears to be a lack of internal guidance within WFP over the role of the UNJLC.[30]

In Indonesia in particular, the early escalation of airfreight costs, presumably partly due to competition between agencies, could have been avoided if the UNJLC had provided an early coordination platform for the exchange of information on prices. Nevertheless, the establishment by UNJLC and UNHAS of a hub in Subang, near Kuala Lumpur in the very early phase resulted in cost savings, and all agencies, including NGOs, benefited from free air transport from Subang, Jakarta and Medan to Banda Aceh on international military aircraft.

The multiplicity of agencies and their reluctance or lack of capacity to forecast or provide information on their imports meant that neither UNJLC nor UNHAS was unable to establish a consolidated pipeline of information, especially on non-food items.

Some clear recommendations emerge. First, there is a need for the RC/HC to advocate strongly and disseminate information on which common services are available, how they can link with existing capacities on the ground, and what they provide – and to explain the purpose of the HCS 'matrix'. Second, the relationship with host agencies (WFP) should be made transparent in management, planning and

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28 For further discussion on the utility of UNDAC, see the TEC Needs Assessment Report, 2006.
29 It should be noted, though, that NGO and Red Cross personnel were shot in May, after the lifting of the state of emergency.
30 This has to some extent now been addressed through the WFP's review of UNJLC and DFID's review of UNHAS in mid-2005.

Box 2.1: Lessons from UNDAC

In all countries, questions arose over the utility of UNDAC as a 'common service' for assessment and coordination.[31] UNDAC is an inter-governmental system, with all the attendant weaknesses that this implies in terms of the quality of those deployed. In Thailand, and to a lesser extent in Sri Lanka, it was clear that the skill sets were not appropriate. The role of UNDAC in a middle-income country such as Thailand that did not request its services is questionable, especially where the team does not comprise sectoral specialists drawn from the skilled national resource base.

In Thailand, the RC/HC requested an UNDAC team, though international assistance as such was not requested by the Thai government. The preoccupation of the government with identifying bodies of foreign tourists restricted the role of the UNDAC team. Their regular situation reports were perceived as not very useful (better information was available in Bangkok through other sources, especially UNICEF).[32] The weakness was in not having Thais with local knowledge on the team; the RC/HC very soon instigated interagency sectoral assessments that superseded those of UNDAC. UNDP and the World Bank supported the government's efforts in coordinating the rehabilitation/recovery phase, later transferred to TICA (the government national coordination body, created in May 2005).

In Aceh, the prior arrival of NGOs, donor assessment teams (for example, USAID/DART) and foreign militaries meant that the UNDAC team was unable to have first call on assessment flights. The UNDAC team was under-equipped with even the basics for communication; there was no public information or civil–military liaison officer on the team, and no clear administrative procedures for operating in an environment where quick purchase decisions were required.

budgeting. Third, the HCS should be more actively used to promote, among operational partners, common agreements on procurement, staff hire and rental charges.

2.7 The dynamics of coordination meetings

Coordination is not solely about meetings, but since they are so central to the process, it is surprising that little or no training is given to those who run them. Coordination meetings should, ideally and minimally, involve information exchange, appropriate allocation of resources, tasking of responsibilities, and a platform for strategic planning. Appointing a coordinator is insufficient if that person is unable to formulate some basic ground rules in advance and at the outset of a meeting, and ensure that these are followed.

31 Strictly speaking, UNDAC is not a Common Humanitarian Service, but rather a vehicle for carrying the initial HCS antennae.
32 It was noted that the UNDAC SITREPs were actually put together and disseminated by UNDP, further putting into question the added value of the UNDAC.

In all countries, 'rudder-less' and ultimately unproductive meetings were common. The roles, responsibilities and decision-making authority of participants were often not spelled out, leading to a sometimes unproductive mix of information sharing and decision making.[33]

OCHA rarely monitors the effectiveness of its meetings. This evaluation suggests, for example, a combination of monitoring the degrees to which key decision makers attend meetings and to which meetings result in tangible decisions; a simple 'score sheet' evaluation attached to the agenda would provide immediate feedback.

Almost all respondents (UN and INGO) complained of the pressures of multi-tasking and unclear direction given about priorities between one meeting or another. Within the UN and INGOs, the same individuals responsible for their own programmes and management of field operations were also those required to attend – and in some cases (especially the UN) to coordinate meetings. Capacities were overstretched. In Indonesia in particular, in the early days of the emergency, coordination demands were exceedingly heavy, with heads of agency meetings every morning, general coordination meetings every evening, sectoral working group meetings every other day, ad hoc meetings of the Security Management Team, and government coordination meetings every evening.

It is a moot point as to whether fewer meetings means less coordination, but elsewhere in this report we comment on the unnecessary repetition of briefings and information exchange resulting from high staff turnover. Respondents equally complained that decisions they thought were made in one meeting were again opened for debate in another meeting, often because of the change of personnel. Minuted 'outcomes' as opposed to information were rarely separated in the written records examined by the team. There was also a vicious cycle whereby dispirited senior managers would send their junior staff to meetings, and hence these meetings would be even less likely to produce strategic decisions.

In Indonesia during the relief phase (the first three months), only 10–40 of the total 250+ INGOs[34] actually attended meetings at any one time, and these were usually the same agencies. Such was the plethora of 'coordination' meetings that very soon only relatively junior staff attended without having the authority to make on-the-spot decisions. There were a number of deficiencies in OCHA coordination meetings, as expressed by INGOs,[35] and two charges in particular stand out. They concern inconsistent communication of the role of OCHA and its authority relative to government(s), and the function of the Financial Tracking System (FTS) and its centrality in the mapping of collective agency scope and inputs. Single meetings to explain the process are insufficient.

The efficiency and effectiveness of coordination were impaired by the failure to communicate its basic tools. For instance, no general information package was delivered to all known operational agencies, nor were regular NGO meetings held to reinforce the 'common service' role of OCHA and its related agencies.

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33 See, for example, Volz (2005) – and supported almost universally by INGOs interviewed by the evaluation team.
34 CARE's Emergency Operations and Preparedness Officer, present at the time, suggests the total number of INGOs was 400 (Volz, 2005). Since there was no formal registration of NGOs and a provisional HIC database was not available until April, the number is speculative.
35 These findings are drawn from interviews and TEC collective workshops.

2.8 Visiting delegations

A constant stream of visitors imposed a burden on local authorities, military forces and agency staff. The advent of high-profile visitors preoccupied management and logistics staff for up to two weeks in some cases, and logistics schedules had to be re-prioritised to accommodate the visitors.

Staff time and strain on logistics from visiting delegations – agency senior staff to politicians, media representatives and 'tsunami tourists' – is unacceptable. Common reporting is explicit in the GHDI but has not translated into joint missions. The IASC should urgently introduce monitored guidelines on this issue, requiring all agencies and donors to report on the numbers and cost of visiting delegations.

Host political authorities

3.1 Governments' lead in coordination

The terms of reference of the evaluation did not extend to examining the performance of national governments as such; however, in so far as national structures became both the entry and focal point for international responses, their strengths and weaknesses are commented upon. A regional and national 'lessons learned' exercise in May/June 2005, coordinated by OCHA, was an opportunity for governments themselves to reflect on this interface.[36]

The successes and failures of coordination depended very much on the geopolitical environment of each affected country. In general, the relief and recovery effort benefited from strong national governments with well-developed (though not always well functioning) national institutions and legal frameworks. As stated by many national respondents: 'this is not sub-Saharan Africa'.[37]

In Indonesia, the Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare from Jakarta was placed in Aceh to coordinate response activities in the relief phase, ensuring that national and international responses were complementary. There was, however, some incompatibility between the authority invested in local Acehnese government bodies and individuals and those brought in from Jakarta, a reflection of the long-standing complex relationship between Java and Aceh. Local authorities, for instance, were unclear about to how to access central emergency funds.[38] Nevertheless, the tsunami response opened Aceh to high profile international

36 The summary of these deliberations is available on the TEC website www.tsunamievaluation.org
37 Unfortunately, the attitude and behaviour of some international agencies was akin to that used in dealing with either incompetent or severely compromised political entities. The evaluation learned of many instances of minimal contact with governments and a lackadaisical approach to providing timely information to appropriate authorities.
38 One of the lessons from the National & Regional Workshops, May-June 2005. Summary available on the TEC website www.tsunamievaluation.org

scrutiny and provided an opportunity for the government to create new response instruments that demonstrated improved accountability and governance.

The interface between the Government of Indonesia and international actors was sometimes problematic. The role of the UN in East Timor was still fresh in the minds of many government officials and appears to be one of the reasons why the central government pressured UNHCR to leave Aceh in March, even though there was never an official written request to do so. With respect to INGOs, national authorities had limited knowledge and understanding of the complexity, culture, policies, procedures and working mechanisms of international relief organisations, and vice versa. The government's decision to curtail the presence of INGOs after three months[39] led to feelings of disillusionment among relief agencies.

Nevertheless, by mid-September, of 438 NGOs registered with the government, either in Jakarta or Aceh, only 128 had provided their activity reports to BRR.[40] Mitigating circumstances included a confused and over-detailed project outline form initially issued by BRR, duplication with information already submitted to OCHA, and the fact that many NGOs had not informed the government that they had already left the country. A few NGOs showed a disregard and disinterest in supporting the government's growing coordination capacity, and there was an implicit assumption by many government officials that the regulation – and even certification for quality – of NGOs was the responsibility of OCHA, a responsibility it neither welcomed nor encouraged.

In Sri Lanka, the government's coordination of the tsunami response was highly centralised. However, in the early phase of the emergency, local initiative and adaptation was crucial. The international community was somewhat constrained in dealing with local government because decisions on resource allocation were constantly referred upwards. Political appointees headed the government's post-tsunami, ad hoc coordination bodies. First, there was the Centre for National Operations (CNO), then three presidential task forces – TAFRER (rescue and relief) TAFREN (rebuilding the nation) and TAFLOL (logistics, law and order). Following the November 2005 presidential election, these three task forces were disbanded, and replaced by the Authority for Reconstruction and Development, chaired by a presidential appointee. Three changes in coordinating authority over a 10-month period made continuity difficult.

In the Maldives, the government was totally unprepared for a disaster of this magnitude. Nevertheless, the government's strong lead in coordinating a response through the inter-ministerial National Disaster Management Centre – and its openness to adopting international standards in sectoral work – was laudable. The government's coordination overall was impressive, with capacity at the central level very high, though clearly the staff was overstretched and working around the clock.

After a period of uncertainty about the required long-term presence of international agencies in Aceh, the creation of the Aceh and Nias Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency (BRR) in April 2005 introduced greater confidence and closer coordination between all stakeholders.

In Sri Lanka, the early establishment of a central coordinating body, the CNO, in one building in Colombo and under strong government leadership was much applauded. Unfortunately, its abrupt closure was considered by many stakeholders to be premature, particularly in view of the unclear and poorly coordinated delegation of responsibilities immediately following its closure.

39 On March 14, Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare, Alwi Shihab, announced that the government would re-register foreign NGOs before conducting a screening process to decide which of them would be allowed to stay in Aceh or would have to leave by March 26. Only organisations linked to the UN or donor countries would be allowed to continue their work.
40 Sudirman Said, BRR's Communications and Information Deputy, quoted in Indonesia Relief, 14 September 2005.

In the Maldives, the swift creation of special units for housing and IDPs, and their openness to suggestions on standards and protection by external experts such as the Internal Displacement Division (OCHA), was commendable.

In each tsunami-hit country, the government's ability to coordinate effectively was constrained by its own capacity and access to information; both of these areas need greater attention from the international community.

The various phases of the response, from the acute emergency period through to that of recovery/development, were contiguous and concurrent. National governments were particularly keen to ensure an early start to recovery work so that the resources available through the UN, NGOs and bilateral donors were closely aligned to either pre-existing or new 'on-budget'[41] national recovery plans. This would not only facilitate national ownership in terms of a coordinated response, but also ensure budgetary control over multi-year inputs.

3.2 Supporting government coordination

As in many emergencies elsewhere in the world, capacity shortcomings particularly at the level of local government were a real constraint to effective coordination of the international response. The issue of agency capacity is addressed in the TEC evaluation on the impact of the tsunami response on national and local capacities in this series. Here, we comment more specifically on supporting coordination capacity.

The HRR called for the IASC agencies to establish clear, consistent and predictable standards in developing their surge capacity for emergencies. This is important not only to address capacities of the international community, but also because of the value of lending immediate capacity and technical assistance to governments caught up a crisis.

In the Maldives, with government capacity severely overstretched, some questions have been raised about an apparent disparity between the surge capacities of international agencies, including the UN, and that offered to the government.[42] Coordination between government departments and with international agencies was not sufficiently enhanced with additional international staff, despite some welcome UNV support.[43] The island Task Forces were in particular need of increased capacity. In this respect, OCHA's pivotal role in ensuring consistency and cohesion between all international partners and the government – a role that the government itself had not yet been able to embrace fully – was endangered by short-term, ad hoc funding of posts.

The problem continued into the recovery 'transition' phase. This evaluation was unable to obtain wholly accurate data on deployment numbers and dates of personnel from INGOs and the UN. However, from what little evidence there is,[44] it appears that the optimal operational capacity of INGOs and the UN (measured in numbers of staff on the ground) was reached at a time when skills transfer and

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41 Grants are channelled through and aligned to government budgetary plans.
42 The government repeatedly insisted that it wanted Maldivians who could speak Divehi but, despite numerous efforts at advertising for such posts, the UN was unable to find (and fund) such staff placements.
43 Interview with Ministry of Planning and National Development.
44 Obtained from the HIC contact directories in Indonesia and Sri Lanka, which are updated approximately monthly.

capacity building for recovery was most needed by government entities. There was, though, no correlation between these staff numbers and efforts to enhance the coordination capabilities of respective governments.
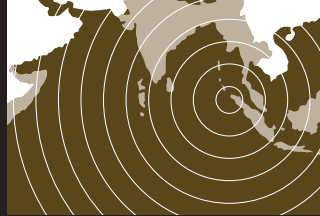
In Sri Lanka, local government agents were unable to take an effective lead in registering and coordinating the activities of the plethora of agencies on the ground, despite having some bolstered capacity from UNVs. Rather than 'regretting' the absence of government capacity and resources to coordinate disaster response effectively at the local level, the international community should ensure that its surge capacity addresses this issue, perhaps as a very first priority.

There is a fundamental difference between OCHA's claims to rapid 'coverage' and 'deployment' and its operational capacity for effective coordination. In the five districts of Sri Lanka the weaknesses were:

- lack of experienced senior staff in the field
- slow deployment of longer term staff, and
- insufficient resources available for even basic administration.

The surge capacity of international agencies is, of course, not infinitely elastic, and the requirements of the tsunami response were unusually large. The normal level of funding available for emergencies is much lower than that available here, so the 'baseline' of staff resources is low. The funding of US$14 billion for this one emergency needs to be compared with the average annual funding for all emergencies of only US$5.4 billion over the previous five years. The system lacks adequate quick funding mechanisms, stand-by capacity, contracting arrangements and effective rosters.

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In Sri Lanka, OCHA's deployment in the districts was late, at an inappropriately junior level, and insufficient in terms of the demands being placed on it. This evaluation learned that the UN country team was not convinced of the necessity for an OCHA presence beyond the capital.

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Chapter four

A functional division of labour

4.1 UN leadership and coordination at field level

Few have questioned the necessity for strategic leadership by senior UN appointees, nor the representational role thus entailed.[45] These functions are not, however, always conveyed effectively to stakeholders on the ground. Where there are hundreds of INGOs as well as national actors meeting the 'system' for the first time, a more concerted effort is required to outline its various elements. In part, this indicates again the need for knowledge transfer from a more representational IASC; but also for a field responsibility and function for OCHA, as outlined below.

Bearing in mind the initially chaotic scene confronting agencies immediately after the tsunami, particularly since much of the infrastructure was destroyed, levels of interagency cooperation and flexibility were high, with offices and resources widely shared. In Aceh, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) had the only functioning office in the first week, and became a clearing office for about 12 agencies until alternatives were found. A small number of INGOs (Save the Children, for instance) also had the advantage of a prior presence.

Field deployment of senior UN coordinating staff in Aceh was timely, and the appointment of a delegated deputy HC appropriate. However, outside the immediate UN institutional hierarchy, authority has to be earned, and the quality of some senior UN staff was questioned, particularly by INGOs.[46] Many respondents pointed to a correlation between the tenure of certain UN individuals and periods of either

45 There have however been some calls for non-UN Humanitarian Coordinators where the role can potentially conflict with, for example, peacekeeping. See for example Jeffreys and Porter (2004). One caveat here is that the post of Humanitarian Coordinator is not accredited with governments, whereas that of Resident Coordinator is.
46 The Humanitarian Response Review repeats the call for better qualified RC/HCs – and the identification and training of such has been underway for some time.

The frequent turnover of senior UN coordinators undermined the essential continuity and trust that lies behind effective leadership and coordination. Moreover, the quality of appointed individuals varied considerably, pointing to the need for better training, with greater emphasis given to outreach skills that discourage the prevailing UN-centric approach to coordination.

good or poor coordination measured by adherence to collective decisions, and clear collective strategic thinking. From the third week of February 2005 (and after a gap of a month when no one was in office) until early September, seven people took the role of senior coordinator in Aceh, and some for only a week or two.

There were several consequences of this lack of continuity.

- The constant re-introduction and/or revision of ideas meant that information, and even decisions, were being shared over and again for weeks on end as new arrivals were accommodated or wished to make their mark.

- There was confusion, lack of continuity and poor communication with government officials who had to be (frequently) acquainted with a new 'face'.

- Senior staff had difficulty in establishing authority and consensus among the broad humanitarian community, which has to be earned through knowledge and presence on the ground.

There is a peculiar mismatch between UN agency HR departments issuing short-term contracts 'because we can't retain staff for longer'[47] and the expressed desire of some of these staff members to remain longer, but constantly having to re-negotiate contracts (and, indeed, corresponding visas). Despite 'expedited procedures' it was still taking up to three months to get a new staff member on the ground.[48] Within OCHA, management and administration are surprisingly little integrated, though improvements are underway.[49] Yet with no Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) for tsunami-hit countries in 2006, coordination costs will be difficult to resource.

In Indonesia, the requested staffing within most UN agencies was achieved by mid-January. The larger INGOs (World Vision, Care, CRS) had air support, vehicles and personnel in place before the UN,[50] and through their field presence were often better informed. The added value of UN leadership should have been demonstrated (and earned) at two levels – information management, and strategic sector and inter-sector planning.

The scope of the management task for the RC/HC in each country was exponential as more and more individuals and agencies entered each country. In Indonesia, decentralising management to Aceh was done quickly with the appointment of a deputy HC. In Sri Lanka, a similar arrangement would have relieved the pressure on the RC/HC office, and far greater emphasis should have been given to deploying senior, capable and well-equipped coordinators to provincial levels, not only to assist the local Sri Lankan government, but also to enhance interagency coordination in the field.

The assignation of lead roles does not, however, address the potential conflict of interest between implementer and coordinator, and some UN agencies were equal 'competitors' with NGOs over clients and project areas.

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47 See, for example, OCHA/UNDGO/UNDP (2005).
48 The evaluation found that there does not exist a single consolidated list of how many UN personnel were sent to a specific humanitarian event.
49 From 2006, OCHA's administrative budget will increase, and it will for the first time have delegated responsibility to recruit its own staff, including a commitment to recruit a greater number of P5-level staff to strengthen the RC/HC.
50 This was confirmed by the UNDAC in Aceh.

Under increasing government ownership of the national and provincial recovery process, the comparative advantage of the UN should have been in strategic planning, policy and coordination, rather than in direct project implementation.

This evaluation did not explore in any detail the unprecedented role of the private sector in the three countries.[51] WFP made good use of its existing key partner TNT, particularly in Indonesia. OCHA, on behalf of UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA and UN Habitat facilitated donated services with PriceWaterhouseCoopers for the enhancement of accountability mechanisms (outlined in section 8 of this report).

However, the evaluators noted some missed opportunities with respect to closer collaboration between humanitarian actors and companies offering services. OCHA Sri Lanka was approached by Microsoft offering donated IT services, but the lack of capacity and experience to deal with such an offer on the ground meant that it was not followed up. The UN in May 2006 developed guidelines on accepting donated services, and OCHA could in the future provide a 'coordination role' on behalf all agencies regarding participation of the private sector. This might include, for instance, stand-by agreements, MOU templates and guidance on how to deal with such offers.

4.2 Civil–military relationships

The use of military assets in aid delivery has been the subject of controversy within the humanitarian community for many years. In conflict environments it is particularly sensitive, and even in the wake of natural disasters the humanitarian community usually deems their use acceptable 'only as a last resort'[52] and under the direction of the appropriate civilian authority. The unprecedented deployment of so many military forces in response to the tsunami disaster has again brought to the fore a large number of issues regarding the use of military assets and heralded the next stage in the debate on the civil–military nexus. Although dialogue between humanitarian and military actors has improved in recent years, it is often still characterised by a lack of understanding, institutional differences and mutual suspicion.

In the immediate response period, the role of national and international militaries was crucial, and of a greater scale than in any previous natural disaster.

Support to the civil authority in times of crisis has been a part of many militaries' doctrine for years, as has engagement in civil liaison and 'hearts and minds'[53] activities in support of military missions overseas. The latter, in particular, remains controversial, with ongoing debate about, for example, appropriate roles, humanitarian space and the security of humanitarian workers. In natural disasters the use of international military assets in support of a humanitarian/ emergency response is less contentious but tensions still arise over national approaches,

51 USAID in particular has developed strong links with the private sector in the tsunami recovery (see for example http://www.state.gov/e/rls/rm/2005/41312.htm).
52 IASC endorsed 'UN Guidelines for the use of Military and Civil Defence assets in Disaster Relief' (natural, technological and environmental disasters) and 'UN Guidelines on the use of Military and Civil Defence assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies' and in natural and technological disasters. In the course of Drafting and Review Group discussions on the formulation of these guidelines, even the wording 'in exceptional circumstances' was not acceptable to many in the humanitarian community and thus 'as a last resort' remains the terminology used.
53 The motivations behind 'hearts and minds' activities are various and can include gaining the consent of the local population to a military presence (force protection), overt political gain and troop morale. These activities can also, but not always, coincide with responding to priority needs. All this is hotly debated. This report does not specifically address this, although accusations were raised by some organisations and individuals interviewed about the political motivation of some militaries in their government's response to the Tsunami.

activities and funding mechanisms. OCHA, through facilitation of international processes, has drawn up principles for military support to humanitarian operations in natural, technological and environmental disasters, and in complex emergencies, endorsed by the IASC.[54] Greater efforts should be made, possibly after some revision, to publicise the existence of these guidelines and encourage their use.

The tsunami disaster response raised the profile and importance of military assistance as part of the overall architecture of response; the IASC should review the role of the military in rapid-onset emergencies. At the very least the IASC should consider replacing the 'in the last resort' caveat included in the Oslo and MCDA Guidelines with 'in exceptional circumstances',[55] which would better reflect the need for such rapid response. The tsunami response should also bring a new urgency to promoting mutual understanding of respective mandates, capabilities and limitations through joint training and exercises, and developing further joint field-level procedures[56] (civil–military and military–military) for use under similar circumstances in the future.

The operational complexity of responding to a disaster of such magnitude, and its geographic spread, necessitated the immediate despatch of foreign military assets to those countries requesting assistance. Their support was considered vital.[57] The ongoing conflicts in Sri Lanka and Indonesia could have proved a major obstacle to the support offered to humanitarian organisations in those countries by both national and international forces, but this proved not to be the case.

Most foreign military forces involved responded very quickly (some within hours), and put their assets at the disposal of the host government and humanitarian community. Not all deployed military forces, and tasks undertaken by them were essential to the relief effort. There were a number of instances where military forces joined the fray of competing for beneficiaries – for instance, in trying to transfer patients to the surplus of field hospitals they had established.[58] However, the militaries were deployed under bilateral agreements with host governments, over which the humanitarian community has little influence.

Once military forces were deployed, the humanitarian community did have influence over the militaries' activities, but this was not used to best effect. Most civil–military interaction concerned ad hoc tasking on logistics or security briefings but there was a need for greater strategic exchange to refine military planning and response and achieve a degree of synergy with humanitarian priorities and reflect its concerns. More emphasis and advocacy by the international humanitarian community is required to advise governments and their respective militaries on the optimal use of military resources.

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54 More commonly known as the Oslo Guidelines and the MCDA Guidelines, respectively.
55 Recommendations from all OCHA-led Lessons Learned workshops, from the WHO Conference in Phuket and the Cobra Gold 2005 Disaster Relief Workshop in Chiang Mai, Thailand.
56 More practical and comprehensive than the Oslo and MCDA Guidelines, which focus primarily on principles for the use of military and civil defence assets. These annexes will probably disappear with the revised Oslo Guidelines of 2006. OCHA's CMCS in Geneva (successor to the Military Civil Defence Unit) has been working on just such a field manual for civil–military interaction.
57 UN Agency and NGO presentations, Cobra Gold 2005 Disaster Relief Workshop – views frequently endorsed in TEC interviews with a range of humanitarian workers.
58 From correspondence with IFRC.

At a regional level, no organisation representing the humanitarian community (and with its authority) undertook to provide a coherent picture of needs across all countries affected in order to advise those militaries involved in the response and in command of considerable assets about the most beneficial disposition and use of those assets.

The scale of the military response, and the importance of establishing effective communication channels with military forces, at both the strategic and operational levels was not fully appreciated by those leading the response at the field level. This inhibited an effective use and even recognition of those deployed specifically to promote such dialogue, and OCHA's Civil–Military Coordination Officers (CMCoord Officers) were ill equipped institutionally and technically to undertake this task, thus further exacerbating the situation. Senior UN officials, and in particular RC/HCs, should be made aware (through formal training if necessary) of the civil–military liaison function and the importance of ensuring that OCHA's CMCoord officers have the necessary information and support to enable them to provide a professional service.

Civil–military contact within the UN is not restricted solely to the OCHA CMCoord function. In section 2.6 above, we refer to humanitarian common services supporting the RC/HC, and thus the humanitarian community in general, each of which involve liaison with military forces. In the tsunami response this included UNDAC, DSS, UNJLC and CMCoord. Aside from those carrying out common services, UN agencies and NGOs are also directly in contact with the military. The tsunami response exposed unacceptable levels of confusion and duplication, due to the different timing and length of deployment, resources and individuals engaged by each 'common' service.

Civil–military coordination is still inhibited by the lack of technical interconnectivity of communication systems, as is communication between different military forces. One approach to overcoming (partially) such difficulty is to co-locate military coordination with civilian coordination. This is particularly important at the local level where information is crucial for efficient management of logistics.

Only in the Maldives was military and civilian coordination effectively co-located and managed. Communications systems as well as regular coordination would have benefited from such an arrangement in all countries.

Whatever the prevailing view in the humanitarian world, the international military forces assisting in the tsunami response recognised that humanitarian work was neither their forte nor their primary role but at the same time knew that their speed and logistics capability could be put to good use in immediate disaster response. The use of international military assets and other capabilities may become the norm in disaster response (and in natural disasters, the military and civil defence is quite often the primary response at a national level). If so, the humanitarian community, possibly acting in partnership with national governments and regional organisations such as ASEAN[59] and SARRC, should fully engage in any planning and training for such operations and provide advice so that military contributions in the future are both appropriate and effective.

4.3 International NGOs

The transaction costs of coordination for INGOs in emergencies are traditionally justified on three levels: first, with limited resources, specialist or small INGOs

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59 This is already happening to an extent – UNJLC has established strong links with the ASEAN Secretariat.

seek to maximise their impact through collaboration and integration with input from others; second, by demonstrating their additionality, INGOs can attract added funds from bilateral donors; third, common advocacy is essential, especially for mutual security and access. The tsunami response was uniquely devoid of these incentives to coordinate. On the one hand, most agencies actively sought to stretch their mandates beyond traditional competencies to find new ways of spending generous funds available.[60] On the other hand, UN partnership – a traditional approach where resources are limited – was rarely sought.

Some INGOs faced the dilemma of internal regulations forbidding expenditures to be re-allocated to medium-term recovery/rehabilitation projects. Yet, the 'embarrassment of riches' against the evidently huge needs led to some pressure to spend money – and the media added to the demand to demonstrate some tangible and immediate results. Obviously, agency capacity to spend, and local market capacity to absorb, unprecedented amounts of emergency funds in the short term would need to be explained to the wider public (and, indeed, the domestic client population). The IFRC, for instance, presented a tentative five-year plan even in the first month.

There was a heightened competition for 'clients' among agencies and a pronounced demand for vertical reporting to donors/headquarters. This was often at the expense of lateral coordination around the effective use of resources and common strategic planning within and between sectors.

Many coordination meetings became little more than a platform for presenting projects planned or underway. Where ostensibly the 'community came first', the primary stakeholder was in reality the public donor, often reached (especially in the early relief phase) through the international media. The evaluation team found several 'community-based risk-reduction' projects that in reality were little more than a chance to bypass the depleted local government and have a community sign off on a well-funded but short lived project. The measure of success was in terms of quantitative outputs (such as houses, tools or medicines) rather than any more holistic and sustainable approach to community rebuilding.

This broad picture should, of course, be qualified. There were many examples of spontaneous as well as formal levels of good cooperation reported to the evaluation. Good-spirited flexibility, spontaneity and resource sharing were apparent in the early days when key actors met regularly under one roof. In Aceh in early January, an ad hoc small group of INGOs assisted the UN Deputy HC by persuading officials to open the government food warehouse, rather than wait for WFP supplies – thus preventing inevitable shortages among affected families. The team observed the continuance of various INGO ad hoc groupings throughout 2005[61] where, despite their relatively small numbers, some efforts were made to 'represent' and convey consensus to the larger meetings convened by OCHA.

With more than enough money to spend, some INGOs preferred to hold on to information as an exclusive entry point to a client population, and to use coordination meetings as a means of broadcasting this exclusivity. Moreover, many extended their mandates beyond areas of traditional competency and made promises that in subsequent months had to be retracted.

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60 The TEC's LRRD Report (2006) refers to some of the negative consequences of mandate stretch.
61 There was a regular Monday-evening meeting of six or seven of the largest INGOs in Banda Aceh.

In the emergency phase INGOs, due to their lack of previous presence, had to spend considerable time setting up offices, hiring staff, importing vehicles, and so on Ambitious agendas did not fully take the political and security situation into account, and multiple assessments (often not published or accessible to others) were done in the same areas with the same populations; duplication of efforts was noted.[62] The multiple evaluations and audits were also seemingly uncoordinated.

4.3.1 Staff turnover and deployment

The negative impact on coordination of a high turnover of staff, within UN, Red Cross/Crescent Movement and NGOs – and particularly within OCHA as the system-wide coordinating agency – cannot be overstated (and see also section 4.4 below). Large NGOs, like World Vision and CARE, had greater financial resources than staff capacity. There was thus a time lag between the development of quite ambitious programmes and the placing of personnel to undertake these. In some cases promises were made, but other factors (such as higher costs, issues of land rights, NGO registration, identification of local partners and contractors) created delays or cancellations.

The promise of ambitious programmes from well-funded agencies was not always matched with available and adequately skilled staff. The most common cause of delay in programme implementation was the lack of, or delays in deploying, appropriate staff.

In Sri Lanka, a defining element for immediate response from the UN and INGOs was physical presence prior to the disaster, and resultant local knowledge that enabled staff to respond quickly. For example, some INGOs (such as Merlin) had previous experience in IDP communities in the north and east of Sri Lanka and were able, through deploying mainly local staff on hand, to move swiftly into Ampara and Batticaloa.[63] By contrast, scaling up in Indonesia and the Maldives entailed delays, particularly for INGOs, compounded by the relatively greater difficulty in finding local staff (and government counterparts) familiar with how the international system operates.

4.3.2 Repercussions for recovery

Some of these problems had repercussions in the recovery period.

- There was little opportunity or initiative taken to discuss what would be the desired outcome of the collective recovery programme. Nevertheless, INGOs were strong on policy and accountability within sectoral meetings.

In Aceh, regular INGO interagency meetings may have been attended by only six or seven of the largest agencies but in terms of coverage these represented perhaps as much as 65 per cent of the resources and project implementation on the ground. The charge of poor inter-NGO coordination – most particularly poor representation, information sharing and adherence to common standards – lies more with the remaining 35 per cent.

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62 Greater detail on this can be found in the TEC Needs Assessment Report, 2006.
63 The evaluation engaged a local consultant to examine relations between INGOs and local NGOs/CBOs. His report, 'Sri Lanka: Post-Tsunami NGO Coordination' is available on the TEC website www.tsunami-evaluation.org
64 See, for instance, ICVA (2005a).

- Concern was expressed (for example, by local NGOs in Indonesia and Sri Lanka) that INGOs were uncritically accepting government plans that had not been through a community vetting process.[64]

- INGO staffing was still predominantly with emergency people when rehabilitation skills were needed.

- Some donors had restrictive timeframes for the disbursement of funds, and so some INGOs (both local and international) worked in an ad hoc and isolated manner in order to disburse funds quickly. In Indonesia and Sri Lanka, lack of a holistic approach led, for example, to a time lag in some cases between the building of transitional shelters and the associated provision of water and sanitation.[65]

In Sri Lanka, INGOs developed their own ad hoc coordination groups, usually around sector and geographical interests, which seemed to work well. At a national level, the most consistent coordination structure for INGOs and national NGOs has been the Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (CHA), which is also on the Steering Committee of the Global Consortium and was requested by the CNO to act as a focal point for all NGOs. Having **86** members (and **62** pre-tsunami), it works primarily as an advocate of standards and as a mediator between NGOs and government bodies. This evaluation found the CHA's regular meetings better attended by newcomers or smaller agencies, though its campaign platforms (for example, the issue of buffer zones) proved a popular focus for most NGOs.

In the Maldives, there are no operational INGOs in the country;[66] thus the lion's share of international work is with the IFRC, UN and various Red Cross societies. One consequence is that co-financing and partnership with local organisations is rare, though co-financing with government (for example, IFRC with temporary shelter) was possible. Post-tsunami, UN agencies have for the most part undertaken direct implementation in addition to their more traditional roles as providers of technical assistance to government.

4.4 Local self-help and national NGOs

As might be expected, in the first days and weeks after the tsunami the non-affected community provided assistance and took in the bulk of those displaced. Yet insufficient analysis and acknowledgement of community self-help in disasters has two results: first, it perpetuates the myth of dependency on external aid; second, it shields the aid establishment from the responsibility to build their responses on existing local capacities. Self-help and hosting of survivors was backed by little financial or material assistance from the governments, and was

There is no inherent reason why UN agencies should take a lead in sectoral coordination, which should be done according to comparative advantage.

65 An interesting example is provided by Eye on Aceh with Aidswatch 2006. A joint project of IOM and the Queensland government to provide new houses for civil servants in Aceh had major shortcomings in the provision of water. Both agencies disclaimed responsibility, but until December 2005 many houses were not occupied as a result. Moreover, promises to employ local people in construction were not upheld (Eye on Aceh with Aidswatch, 2006, p 27).

66 The exception is VSO, though this is not an operational NGO as such. Oxfam was in the country until May; Handicap International was officially registered in November and then able to open an office.

rarely reported or acknowledged. In Indonesia, for instance, the local coordination and support centres (poskos) quickly sprang up all over Aceh to deal with distribution, registration and informal tracing.

The international response was largely driven by high-visibility material inputs, and – with a few notable exceptions – not enough attention was given to supporting host families. Those who sought refuge with relatively unaffected neighbours or extended family could not be easily counted or monitored. In Aceh, their number (over 200,000) is still only a rough estimates nine months later. Despite much debate about how to target IDPs living with host families, there is a continuing lack of technical expertise in this respect.

Greater attention should be paid to what constitutes 'local capacity' and the extent to which existing groups offer potentially viable partnership for the UN, NGOs and the Red Cross/Crescent Movement. This evaluation was given repeated assurances by INGOs and UN agencies that working through local partners, particularly in Indonesia and the Maldives, was constrained by a lack of capacity. However, the perceived pressure for quick and visible delivery meant that, in some cases, direct implementation was preferred over the more time-consuming approach that would have involved building partnerships and training. Some commentators have suggested that this led to the erosion of local emergency capacities and altered the trajectories of local relationships with diminished community-level prospects for peace (Harris, 2006).

In Sri Lanka, unlike Aceh and Maldives, there is a well-developed local NGO sector and a greater degree of partnership between INGOs and local NGOs.[67] Many of the country's estimated 13,000 NGOs and CBOs mobilised to collect relief supplies; the largest programmes that accounted for a substantial share of the assistance in dollar terms were mounted by the Sarvodaya and Seva Lanka, the two largest Sri Lankan community-service NGOs with a wide network of branches in most areas of the island. As with some INGOs and UN agencies, the pre-tsunami presence on the ground and familiarity with local conditions made a significant difference to the coordinated success of their activities.

In Sri Lanka, reports of poor coordination between INGOs and national/local NGOs was often associated with language barriers, competition and the fact that many agencies were not fully operational in the early stages of the crisis. Several local NGOs felt they were swept aside in the first months of the response.[68] The evaluation found also that long-term relationships between local NGOs and CBOs provided stronger partnerships on the ground. For example, the Family Planning Association of Sri Lanka and the CBO Sareeram in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka collaborated on a useful joint project on sexual and reproductive health counselling.[69]

Although the challenge of capacity building is beyond the scope of this study (and covered extensively in the TEC evaluation on the impact of the tsunami response on national and local capacities), this evaluation notes that a consequence of the 'swamping' of local capacity by the large international presence in Aceh and Sri Lanka was the poor representation of, and consultation with, local NGOs and CBOs in coordination meetings.

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67 The Fritz Institute (December 2005) for example, reports that more than 85 per cent of the local agencies in its survey indicated collaboration in some way with an international agency.
68 For further analysis, see the TEC Capacities Report, 2006.
69 Hemantha Wickramatillake, 'Sri Lanka: Post Tsunami NGO Coordination', a report commissioned by the evaluation, available on the TEC website www.tsunami-evaluation.org

In sections of the north and east territories controlled by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation (TRO) took the lead in coordinating and implementing relief and recovery programmes. The TRO provided efficient and focused leadership,[70] and is believed to have collected substantial sums of money from abroad for tsunami work. It continues to work as an implementing partner with several INGOs.

In both Indonesia and Sri Lanka, there were reports of 'poaching' of staff from local NGOs by international agencies, thus rendering the perceived local incapacity a fact. Language also appears to have been a significant constraint against better information dissemination and coordination.

Where coordination meetings are dominated by international agencies, English becomes the medium of communication at the expense of already relatively marginalised local participants, whether independent NGOs, government officials or even INGO local staff.

4.5 Communicating with affected people

Accountability to affected populations is one of the cornerstones of good coordination practice. Communities need accessible and understandable information about relief and reconstruction efforts, as well as about relief and compensation benefits they are entitled to. In most countries the tsunami occurred amid a mobile, relatively well-informed population aware of the scale of the international response and of the expensive apparatus of aid that very soon appeared on the ground. In no country was there an interagency public information campaign that outlined what international agencies were doing, why there were delays, and what mechanisms existed for beneficiaries to air complaints or questions with implementers. The subject–object approach to assistance – in which aid is 'given' to 'recipients' – was clearly apparent, despite most agencies being well-versed in the theory of community participation.

Communication and consultation between the international community and the affected population was sporadic and uncoordinated. An effective joint-agency communication with the client population, including a complaints procedure and regular updates on the recovery process, was not an early priority. Frustration and misinformation have resulted.

In Indonesia, under the auspices of OCHA, a lot of time was spent trying to get a communications strategy off the ground during May–August 2005 – but obtaining traction around this was not easy, mainly because so few agencies were able to draw on experience from elsewhere in the world. Just getting decision makers to come to meetings and decide what was needed to move ahead on this was not easy. OCHA held a Public Information Workshop at the end of August – attendance was limited, and it did not move the agenda forward.

70 WFP has noted, however, that the longer-term nutritional status of the Tamil population under the LTTE has not been good (Goyder et al, 2005).

The TEC evaluation on national and local capacities included the following question in its claim-holders' (beneficiary) survey: 'In your village or camp, did local NGOs, INGOs, government officers and others collectively discuss with all of you about what you needed most? How often did this happen, and what form did it take? Did the different organisations and individuals working in your area coordinate well, or did you feel any sense of confusion or duplication? Please explain with specific examples.'

The survey results were mixed. In Sri Lanka, 55 per cent acknowledged that consultations had taken place with them (though this percentage dropped to less than 30 in the recovery phase); 18 per cent claimed that no one had spoken to them, and the remainder noted that either agencies had spoken to selected persons in their community, or that they did not know. A significant number of respondents indicated weaknesses in coordination between agencies; and about 10 per cent complained that information gathering was not matched by subsequent action.[71]

The response in Aceh was more negative, with 62 per cent saying that they had never participated or been informed of discussions with aid agencies, while 28 per cent said that there had been some meetings and/or discussions. In the Maldives, growing frustrations over disparities in assistance between islands, and even within islands, indicates a lack of common policy among donors. A more coordinated approach would have avoided over-concentration of some resources in certain areas and the thin spread of assistance in others. Such fragmentation is a reflection of funding patterns, a lack of coordination capacity in government, and poor communication and consultation with recipient populations.

4.6 The IFRC network

The role played in this emergency response by the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement was unprecedented, as was the level of its financial resources. Taken as one, the Movement became the single largest operational donor. Overall tsunami funds raised by national societies (all countries) and the IFRC amounted to some US$2.2 billion.

Most donations were private, but some donor governments channelled their contributions through their own national societies. In Indonesia, the PMI (Indonesian Red Cross) has 359 district branches in 33 provinces throughout Indonesia. As an established national movement, this explains why the IFRC and its members (the 24 national societies arriving in the first month) operated outside the UN/JLC/NGO coordination systems, as well as outside the military structures. With a prior presence of ICRC, the Red Cross principles were well understood, although distribution plans were shared with the Indonesian army.

The sudden transformation from a small to large international presence of the Red Cross Movement in each country presented unforeseen coordination problems. Donated goods and services from visiting national societies were often determined by their own domestic assumptions of need with little regard to seeking advice from the host country's long-established society.

71 Assessment of the Impact of the International Tsunami Response on National and Local Capacities, TEC, March 2006.

Only the PMI could have exerted a degree of control over operations undertaken by the national societies from donor countries (PNSs). Yet there were understandable capacity and political constraints on the ability of the PMI to control visiting national societies. Unsolicited and inappropriate goods caused the Secretary General of the PMI to send a harsh letter to PNSs complaining of the failure to adhere to guidelines, putting the PMI's reputation at risk (Herson, 2005). Essentially, the problem lay in insufficient knowledge and attention being paid to the specific nature of this disaster and the needs arising from it, and the fact that Indonesia was replete with conventional relief items being sent, guided more by the PNSs' domestic needs and perceptions of what was needed, rather than the expressed needs of the affected population (Herson, 2005). For example, it was extremely difficult to get commitments from PNSs to deal with temporary living centres, perhaps because they were not as 'visible' as permanent houses.[72] This said, some IFRC member agencies did mitigate urgent water and sanitation issues in some temporary living centres upon request.

The IFRC itself was not always informed of the arrival of national societies, and in some cases these were, as auxiliaries of national governments, designated as part of 'bilateral' in-kind assistance. The IFRC did not have experts of its own (for example, in livelihoods), and where these existed in visiting national societies they were not a shared resource for the Movement as a whole.
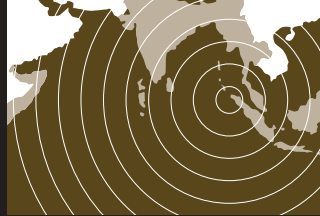
The issue of coordination among national Red Cross/Crescent societies, and between themselves, the IFRC and the recipient country's Red Cross/Crescent has subsequently been addressed through the Movement Coordination Framework, presented in the Regional Strategy and Operational Framework in early March 2005.[73] This provides both a policy foundation and an operational coordination framework for IFRC, ICRC and host and participating societies (about 30 Red Cross/Crescent entities worldwide) and is seen as a new model for policy-based coordination that can be adapted for other emergencies.

These comments refer, of course, only to the issue of intra-agency coordination – and to the laissez-faire approaches thus undertaken – not to the quality of actual work undertaken by PNSs. The role of the IFRC in the shelter sector has been particularly important, in terms of both coordinating its own membership and leading the sector as a whole.

In the Maldives, the picture was quite different. There is no national Red Cross (although one is now under development) and the six visiting national societies, plus the IFRC, have their own legal status. Coordination between member societies and the IFRC, and between themselves and the UN and government, was good. As the only non-UN agencies on the ground, these agencies became key implementers, again mostly in the shelter sector.

72 Interview with IFRC head of delegation in Jakarta, September.
73 http://www.ifrc.org/docs/pubs/disasters/ars_en.pdf

Strategic planning for recovery

In general, the evaluation found that too much emphasis was given to physical asset replacement in the first half of the year, and too little to livelihoods and targeted programmes for the most vulnerable people.

5.1 Coherent interagency approaches

Time constraints prevented a thorough evaluation of coordination undertaken in all sectors. By citing coordination examples from the shelter, food and water/sanitation sectors, the evaluators do not wish to imply that these were the only sectors where challenges arose. The TEC Needs Assessment Report goes into some detail on shortcomings in the health sector.

Because most international agencies concentrated on the replacement of physical assets, this may have overshadowed the broader economic development of communities, and livelihoods within them.[74] Projects to replace assets – such as boats, nets, seeds and tools – invariably favour men's livelihoods. Relatively less attention was paid to re-establishing trade and markets in, for example, handicrafts that pertain to women's livelihoods. Many home industries, such as paddy processing, depend on space within the home, and delays in the housing programmes (Box 5.1) have had a negative knock-on effect.

The bias toward physical asset replacement in part reflected demands for tangible 'evidence' of money spent. It might also mirror the opportunity and demands that the various governments made for bolstering infrastructural development in the affected areas. In Sri Lanka, for example, the government issued a 'requirements list' to arriving INGOs; a constant complaint was that in many districts this was not matched with a beneficiary list, and therefore read more like a development requirement than a response requirement. In the Maldives, emphasis on some sectors and not others is partly a reflection of the combination of male-dominated decision structures and irregular mechanisms for community feedback that compound the rather passive manner in which aid is simply 'received'.

74 This point is developed further in the TEC LRRD Report, 2006.

Box 5.1 Housing issues in Indonesia

The evaluation found – particularly in Indonesia – a general lack of foresight and strategic thinking on the part of the international community with respect to shelter provision. This resulted in extraordinarily long delays before an interim solution was in place. Moreover, with disproportionate attention being given to permanent housing, the outstanding requirement for assistance to those in temporary dwellings was neglected until it became a 'crisis'.

Notwithstanding unreasonably high expectations of the number of permanent houses that could be constructed in the first six months, the failure has several causes.

- The Government of Indonesia (GoI) procrastinated in signing housing agreements with agencies while the national 'blueprint' (begun in March 2005) that launched BRR (opened in May, but not fully functioning until July) was under preparation.
- The issue of land title and government re-allocation of land was far more complex than initially expected.
- The actual capacity of building contractors was overstretched, and materials – some of which had to be imported to avoid depletion of local forests – took time to arrive.
- The GoI was unable to produce a complete list of the 500,000 homeless people and their housing and location preferences.
- With many actors, many models of homes, and most costing in excess of the official government compensation rates, a laissez faire approach abounded.

In Sri Lanka, shelter and water/sanitation sectors were not always planned well together. The preference among many NGOs for constructing permanent shelters resulted in increasing costs, arising from economic inflation due to demand for materials and construction services. This, and the comfortable amounts of money available, led to a certain amount of 'outbidding' among NGOs. In turn, some exceeded minimal standards for housing and found that, for instance, the water/sanitation component was no longer affordable. Although water/sanitation common services are the responsibility of local government, the local authorities were often not in a position to meet these new costs.[75]

The food aid sector is traditionally vulnerable to criticism, particularly in relatively stable and better-off communities where cash is arguably of greater recovery value. WFP in Sri Lanka coupled its food aid with cash contributions in the immediate relief phase, finding that food was sometimes more acceptable, especially to women.[76] There is always the danger that a coordinated response to food insecurity will be undermined by in-kind supply-driven exigencies.

- Fifty thousand metric tons of rice was offered through World Vision/Taiwan and World Vision/Sri Lanka to the Government of Sri Lanka. WFP was very concerned when informed about the proposed gift, as it was feared that it would undermine rice prices for local Sri Lankan farmers who were

75 These comments are attributed to responses given by several INGOs at the Lessons Learned workshops and the feedback workshops organised by the TEC in April 2006.
76 Correspondence with WFP, May 2006. The general debate on food versus cash is beyond the scope of this evaluation.

facing a bumper harvest. WFP/Colombo put pressure on all concerned not to accept this in-kind donation. The rice was never shipped, and the government still (2006) maintains a ban on rice imports.

• In the Maldives, overall food shortages due to the tsunami were not immediately apparent, particularly in view of the government's cash allowance given to victims. WFP's food aid programme in the country should have given greater attention to targeted needs, rather than to assumed needs and a regional supply-driven approach.

• By contrast, in Indonesia, with food delivery being one of the primary immediate reactions by the international community, this well-coordinated and targeted effort under difficult logistical conditions was important and provides evidence of effective coordination.

5.2 Sectoral and geographical gaps

The allocation of resources was often predetermined by agencies. Most INGOs and UN agencies knew that sufficient resources were either in hand or forthcoming. Rapid, sometimes over-ambitious, plans were drawn up accordingly. Notwithstanding 'mandate stretch', sector-specific organisations attended general meetings to assess how, when (and sometimes with whom) they might undertake implementation; but rarely were plans changed or adapted according to geographical priorities or in line with any discernible integrated approach.

The establishment of only sectoral working groups did not support an integrated approach by the international community. A geographic division of labour – with one assigned lead agency responsible for a multi-sectoral approach within one area, combined with sector-specific lead agencies – might have been the preferred model. This was indeed promulgated by the RC/HC in Jakarta, for instance, but not taken up.

In Aceh the correlation between needs and recovery response was compromised by concentrations of agencies in certain geographical locations. Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar had the greatest coverage of NGOs – with over 50 in each. The neighbouring districts (Aceh Jaya and Pidie), also with high numbers of IDPs, had much less support. Similarly, reconstruction funds appeared to be biased in favour of areas close to Banda Aceh, with significantly less funds being allocated to the south and northeast of Aceh, as well as Nias.

Notwithstanding logistical constraints to access, these patterns point to a more fundamental coordination failure.[77] BRR is only now (in 2006) beginning to address the problem through the promotion of interagency policy advisory groups and the creation of sub-district coordination forums. The latter model was piloted in Aceh Besar and Pidie Districts from month six, under a monthly matrix reporting system, the Humanitarian Action Forum (HAF), coordinated by OCHA.[78] The

The evaluation team found little evidence in the first months of either direction or management (a traditional function of the UN) with respect to cross-sectoral integrated resource allocation. One consequence was disproportionality in geographical allocations and coverage.

77 Supportive evidence in terms of registered NGO activities and funding patterns can be found in BRR and international partners (2005).
78 A 'Transitional Settlement Monitoring Mechanism' was conducted by the Norwegian Refugee Council on behalf of OCHA and the HAF.

evaluation found this to be one the few instances of a regularly updated and detailed matrix of agency activities presented each month at district capital levels.

5.3 Gender issues

The tsunami response lacked a consistent, quantified and coordinated gender analysis, an omission that has resulted in some serious protection anomalies and the persistence of male-dominated decision-making structures that have largely gone unchallenged.

Despite the disproportionately high numbers of deaths of women and girls, this evaluation found that there were inadequate interagency efforts to analyse the implications of this and to incorporate a full gender equality dimension into the response. In particular, gender disaggregated data upon which to base targeted programmes were largely missing in both the relief and recovery phases. The IASC has committed itself to the principles and practices embedded in international conventions,[79] and IASC policy statements specifically require member agencies to include gender-specific data collection, analysis and programming in emergencies (IASC, 1999). ILO, IOM, Oxfam, UNFPA, UNHCR and UNIFEM each deployed gender officers in the early days of the emergency, and approximately 40–60 per cent of these agencies' staff was female.[80]

There were notable efforts to address protection in camps, income generation and community education around, for instance, water points, by agencies such as Oxfam. There is also recognition that the demographic impact of fewer women has meant changing (and sometimes difficult) cultural roles for widowed men (Oxfam International, 2005). But these programmes were agency-specific and piecemeal, and were rarely highlighted in mainstream planning around, for instance, shelter requirements. As noted above (section 5.1), this had negative consequences on livelihood support.

In Indonesia, the Provincial Bureau of Women's Empowerment (PBWE) initially had no special plans to address the needs of women, explaining that men and women had suffered equally (Eye on Aceh, 2005). Later, undoubtedly under the influence and pressure of international agencies, this view was qualified, but the near-uniform domination of men in leadership structures (including international structures) led to an unfortunate perception (and, indeed, repetition in agency literature) of women as one of set of 'vulnerable victims' without an appreciation of their respective capacities.

UNFPA, UNIFEM and Oxfam, alongside the PBWE, created a Gender Theme Group with a longer term perspective looking at, for instance, property rights in the reconstruction phase. It did not concentrate on gender mainstreaming as such, and had little direct influence on interagency methods employed in the relief programme. It did, however, derive lessons from the experience as a whole: for example, that a more proactive stance needs to be taken on the national military in providing equipment (such as supplies for female sanitary needs and HIV prevention), the means to disseminate information (such as where to go for ante- and post-natal treatment) and perhaps accompanying personnel in the immediate recovery phase (personal discussions with UNFPA). The Group further noted that

79 Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), for example, provides a full list.
80 Figure cited in the WFP real-time evaluation of September 2005, and confirmed by OCHA Banda Aceh.

women have particular difficulties in accessing government bodies established to respond to the tsunami.

In Sri Lanka, one in five affected households is now headed by a woman, and 91 per cent of women over 15 years old who have been engaged in economic activities now find it hard to revive economic ventures due to: loss of equipment (47 per cent), financial difficulties (53 per cent) and lack of place (24 per cent).[81] During the relief phase, women's groups formed into coalitions (for example, the Coalition for Assisting Tsunami Affected Women – CATAW), mobilised relief for affected women and their families, and advocated for gender-responsive programmes (Government of Sri Lanka and Development Partners, 2005). However, camp management committees include only a few women, and in some instances these women faced hostilities. In other instances, women's names have not been included on titles for new homes (Government of Sri Lanka and Development Partners, 2005).

The extent to which women play a more decisive role in disaster management is essentially a long-term issue that relates to capacity building as well as more fundamental changes of governance and political culture. For example, at island level in the Maldives, more needs to be done by the international community to promote gender equality in managing relief and recovery efforts. Good practice might be learnt from, for example, Oxfam's work with local NGOs in Batticaloa, Sri Lanka, where a women's coordination group for disaster management, Genderwatch, has been formed.

On behalf of the UNCT, UNFPA coordinated the gender-based violence and psychosocial sectors of the international tsunami response. As the focal agency responsible for coordinating gender-sensitive disaster response, UNFPA supported the setting up of a Gender Desk at the National Committee on Women (NCW) in Sri Lanka, and continues to support efforts to monitor and ensure that gender is mainstreamed in reconstruction activities. UNFPA chairs both the UN Gender Working Group as well as the recently initiated Gender-Based Violence Forum. Similarly, UNFPA supported the setting up of the psychosocial desk at the Centre of National Operations and continues to chair the Psychosocial Forum.

5.4 Managing the relief–recovery transition

This evaluation was undertaken when the transition from relief to development was in the early stages. Inevitably, then, the weight of analysis is on the emergency and early-recovery phases. The transition 'boundary' presents challenges for government and agencies alike: activities tend to become more discrete, and maintaining a holistic overview of needs is more difficult as the focus of individual agencies is increasingly sectoral.

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81 These are preliminary figures drawn from a survey undertaken by the National Committee on Women (NCW, 2005).

The skill sets of INGO and UN staff largely reflected the perceived short-term operational nature of the situation. The lack of strategic medium-term thinking was to have unforeseen consequences for the shelter sector, for instance (see above). Also, the increasing focus on long-term recovery planning in the latter half of 2005 may have distracted attention away from remaining (and still, in some places, under-attended) humanitarian needs.

The early deployment of recovery advisors to each RC/HC office in the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Indonesia was valuable in ensuring appropriate attention to sustainable development objectives even as the emergency unfolded.[82] However, with staff capacities overstretched, these individuals (one per country office) were often embroiled in day-to-day reactive engagement on whatever priorities arose. There is a danger that, without additional consistent and committed coordination support to the RC/HC, from either OCHA or elsewhere, the benefits of a coherent link between relief and recovery will be lost. In the Maldives, for instance, many of the mechanisms in place were under served, including those supporting the IDP unit, and advocacy on cross-cutting issues such as environment, protection, gender, human rights and information networking.

In the Maldives, the strengths of the UN and Red Cross Movement included the introduction of technical skills and experience from other emergencies at a critical time for a government on a steep learning curve. The willing introduction of new standards in temporary housing is a case in point. An unprecedented dialogue with national authorities will have ramification beyond just the tsunami response.

This evaluation found that coordination improved in the latter half of 2005 for several reasons.

- Staffing in international agencies became regularised, with longer term contracts.

- In the transition/recovery period there was a 'weeding out' of single-project, short-term INGOs,[83] leaving mainly those agencies with resources capable of tackling interim recovery and development challenges.

- Government bodies pressed for greater attention and resources to be given to coordinating the international community.

- New fund tracking mechanisms (DAD), replacing and consolidating existing mechanisms (FTS), meant that gaps in assistance could begin to be seen more clearly, though neither of these tools presented an exhaustive picture. In Indonesia and the Maldives, this coincided with greater government budgetary commitments coming on line.

- Coordinated trust funds for medium-term recovery provided a forum in which donors and governments could focus on strategic objectives.

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82 US$1 million was allocated to recovery specialists in five countries, the money coming from unallocated OCHA appeal funds – a good example of interagency cooperation in ensuring adequate relief-recovery inclusion from the outset.
83 Across the world, disparagingly called QUINGOs – quick in-and-out NGOs.

The appointment of recovery advisers to the RC/HC was important, but there was always the danger that these individuals would become embroiled in the everyday demands of an office that required additional staff resources.

Affected governments were keen to move from emergency response to recovery as soon as possible, and to use the generous international financial and technical assistance as leverage for addressing some longer term development challenges. In Sri Lanka, the political lobby at provincial and district level to use tsunami funds to promote hitherto dormant peri-urban development objectives was very apparent; in Indonesia, the Jakarta government cleverly used new resources as part of the peace dividend.

Once the recovery period was announced,[84] governments closed their ad hoc coordination structures and resumed regular line-ministry responsibilities. In the short term, this lessened coordination effectiveness, a problem not adequately remedied by technical assistance and capacity building offered by the international community.

In Indonesia, a turning point in the coordination of the recovery process was the establishment of the Aceh and Nias Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency (BRR) in April 2005. The BRR was invested with authority and resources, including dedicated officers attending sectoral, inter-sectoral and cross-cutting issues. With a highly skilled staff, backing from the highest levels of government, and technical assistance from the UN, institutional donors, IFIs and NGOs, BRR fairly rapidly took control of information systems, NGO registration and the formulation of a transitional recovery plan. It was welcomed across the board by the international community, not least because it represented a single government agency through which all business could be done.

If the 'build back better' objective is to mean anything, a more comprehensive strategy for sustainable livelihoods is required by those currently engaged in reconstruction. As we have seen, there has been too great an emphasis on physical-asset replacement and too little on sustainable income replacement and alternatives for those (especially women) who now have become primary bread-winners. Moreover, a coordinated national and regional mechanism for early warning and preparedness requires more than the inter-governmental conventions and arrangements that still dominate the debate. Building capacities for community-based responses is equally if not more important, and should be matched by appropriate investments.

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84 Various government pronouncements were made in this respect (outlined in section 1 of this report): Indonesia (April, and again in May after the formation of BRR), Sri Lanka in March, Maldives in early February.

6

Mobilising resources for integrated programming

6.1 The Flash Appeal

Donor coordination during the tsunami highlighted a number of issues that require considerable improvement. Confusions still abound about funding windows for relief and development and how the CAP (Flash Appeal) should become a tool of coordination rather than just a fundraising mechanism. The convergence of this with national recovery plans (and, in Indonesia, the MDTF) is discussed below in this report (section 6.2).

The projected six-month expenditure of the original Flash Appeal was unrealistic; here, as in some previous emergencies, the calculated reconstruction and recovery period should have been much longer. However, there are divided opinions on whether the Flash Appeal should have included recovery elements. The inclusion of some US$100 million for permanent housing in Indonesia, for example, allowed for the possibility of early financing and planning, though over-ambition (such as UNHCR's early promise of 25,000 houses[85]) was soon to be severely cut back. The project lists presented in the Flash Appeal reflected those agencies on the ground and missed some crucial elements, such as comprehensive environmental recovery.

For many agencies, there was a retroactive allocation of funds to longer term recovery programmes, but this was not subject to coordinated interagency policy discussion, advocated and argued on a common policy platform. There were exceptions – the IFRC, for instance, presented a preliminary five-year recovery

85 UNHCR disputes the 'over-ambition' charge, stating that its targets were cut back partly because of its early unforeseen departure from Aceh, and partly because the initial low-priced house design had to be modified to take account of design specifications to build in resistance to future earthquakes/tsunamis. (correspondence with UNHCR Representative, Robert Ashe).

programme in the first month, and the deputy HC office in Aceh produced an early transition plan.[86]

There remains a persistent preference among donors for highlighting their own individual contributions, and many operational agencies spend dispropor-tionate amounts of time writing separate reports for donors on individual strands of assistance rendered. Notwithstanding current difficulties in applying the principle, un-earmarked contributions, matched by consolidated reporting and allocations assigned on the basis of agency merit as well as coherence within the appeal as a whole, is an ideal that the evaluators would uphold.

6.2 Donor governments and international financial institutions

In promoting trust funds, IFIs have ensured donor coordination through pooled resources, while aligning reconstruction grants with national 'on-budget' planning priorities. Most importantly, trust funds encourage a strategic policy dialogue between key donors and governments. Slow disbursement, however, has impaired their effectiveness.

Teams consisting of government officials and staff from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the UN, the World Bank and some bilateral donors[87] undertook a damage and loss assessment in January in Indonesia, the Maldives and Sri Lanka. Arrangements for grant transfers from bilateral donors and international financial institutions were different in each country – only in Indonesia was there an MDTF specifically for the tsunami recovery. The assessments presented the first opportunity for stakeholders to think beyond immediate needs and to integrate external grant assistance with national recovery plans. Thus, for example, the assessment became part of the national budget under the Indonesian Master Plan and the Maldivian National Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (NRRP).

In Sri Lanka, ADB, Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) and the World Bank jointly carried out a needs assessment, with the UN providing much of the information in the first round, the ADB covering roads and railways and livelihood restoration, the World Bank assessing education, health and housing needs, and JBIC analysing requirements in water supply and sanitation, power and telecommunications. In the second phase of assessment, the UN was also an active participant and member of the steering committee that now also includes bilateral donors, civil society and the private sector. The ADB convened the Reconstruction Steering Committee attended by IFIs and bilateral donors.

IFIs have dealt primarily with central-level authorities and at a macro-level of reconstruction, looking at countries' development needs in the next five years. The danger is that this will lead to a failure to focus on the more modest needs and recovery priorities of the most vulnerable of the tsunami-affected communities, such as the squatter communities in the coastal belt of Sri Lanka who are excluded by TAFREN's policy of 'replacing a house for a house'.

63

86 By its own admission, though, gaining traction on this was difficult, perhaps because of the limited mix of skills in predominantly emergency-orientated agencies in the first three months.
87 ADB, AusAID, Danida, DFID, ECLAC, EU, FAO, GTZ, IFAD, IFC, ILO, IMF, JBIC, KfW Development Bank, The Asia Foundation.

The ADB pledged US$787 million for rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts in Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Indonesia and India. Of this, US$612 million was to be applied as seed money toward the creation of an Asian Tsunami Trust Fund. In coordination with other donors, the ADB is also funding a US$1 million study to develop a tsunami early-warning system for the Indian Ocean.

On-budget allocations made through the ADB and the MDTF have suffered seemingly intractable bureaucratic delays in Indonesia, with grant-disbursement approval often being stuck in the Ministry of Finance. The ADB's US$290 million grant agreement with Indonesia was approved in April, but did not reach local departments in Aceh until late November. Likewise, the MDTF was not utilised until October. Unfamiliarity with new government procedures, and poor capacity to implement them, appears to have been a main cause of the delay.[88]

Indonesia had several donor coordination networks working at different levels. At the development-counsellor level, the Jakarta office of BRR hosted twice-monthly meetings to address cross-cutting and systemic issues. The MDTF of US$500 million that developed from the World Bank and UN-led needs assessment had its own governance and coordination mechanism for 14 key donor members, a somewhat standard model employed throughout the world. But since MDTF donors comprised only a small segment of the donor community – and even MDTF members had greater resources outside the MDTF – the body was only one part of the overall coordination process for recovery.

This evaluation found that the continuity and in-house knowledge of some agencies based in the capitals was an essential counterbalance to newly arrived individuals and organisations in the field. The consortium of donors contributing to the MDTF in Indonesia, for example, benefited from the World Bank's established relationship with the government and the leverage this enabled in pushing forward the dialogue on governance and transparency that became a central pillar of the BRR.

In general, the evaluation found that trust funds promoted more effective coordination of donor activities in several ways:

- pooling donor resources removes the coordination problem among contributing donors
- trust funds permit maximum efficiency in implementation as they use one set of procedures and have one overall management system, thus relieving the burden on government and local authorities
- they ensure that all projects financed will be derived from the countries' own national reconstruction plans
- they permit donor countries to participate in strategic policy dialogue with government on reconstruction approaches.

The MDTF, alone among donors, has two civil-society representatives on its steering committee. However, since the steering committee of the MDTF

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88 Interviews with World Bank officials in October 2005, and cited in Eye on Aceh (2006) p 7.

comprised only a sub-set of the donor community, the BRR, with assistance from the World Bank, proposed a donors' Coordination Forum for Aceh and Nias (CFAN) with the explicit aim of engaging a wider range of stakeholders – bilateral and multilateral donors, INGOs, civil society and central and local government. In the recovery phase from May 2005 onwards, the BRR sought to set up new frameworks for donor coordination. Through allocation of the substantial government resources from Paris Club rescheduling, this became an important source of funds for reconstruction.[89]

In line with the GHDI, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) established weekly donor coordination meetings in Colombo, appointing a rotating donor representative to the CNO. Three NGOs – Oxfam, Sarvodiya and Seva Lanka – attended, and helped to reduce the burden of individual approaches to government.

89 The Paris Club is an informal group of official creditors whose role is to find co-ordinated and sustainable solutions to the payment difficulties experienced by debtor nations.

7

Information management

7.1 Tools available

The information technology revolution, the primary driving force in changes to disaster response, was well reflected in the overall response to the tsunami. Disaster management at all stages is information and communication intensive. Here we focus on those technology issues that emerged as generic and that lead to lessons for future response efforts.

The cell phone emerges as the most important single instrument of communication and coordination, especially in the immediate stages of the emergency. Because of the relatively limited intrusion of the waves, interior cell towers remained operational. Although quality varied between places and countries, cellular technology was the most resilient and affordable. Text messaging was particularly effective because of the lower bandwidth required. This was true for national and international communications. As an early warning system, cell phones were the primary communication tool following the brief scare (unrealised) of a further tsunami after the Nias earthquake.

The UN should introduce more formal reviews and training in the use of cell phones, and conduct research and development in building on cell-phone technology for field data entry and assessment transmission. The UN's International Telecommunication Union (ITU) did not play a large role in the response, sending 14 Inmarsat terminals to Sri Lanka (but without any technical assistance to start with) and then US$250,000 for system damage assessment.[90] More interesting is the coordinated response of the private sector. Local providers in Indonesia quickly restored services in Aceh using their 'Cells on Wheels' – trucks with antennae.

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90 'ITU Responds to Appeal' (http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/emergencytelecoms/).

Significant effort and funding should be dedicated to organising open-source, easily shareable software and training tools to prepare for all stages of disaster response. Rapid and low-cost satellite communications, internet systems and GSM telephone systems need to be examined and made available to UN and UN partners at the national level.

The tsunami response often lacked IT expertise within rapid assessment teams as part of the first response capacity (for example within UNDAC). Rapidly formed groups of diverse individuals with IT expertise and interest were key to the rapid response in Thailand and parts of Sri Lanka. In Thailand a unit from the US Naval Post Graduate School was deployed in early January 2005 and developed and used a wireless network to assist in the efforts for corpse identification and registration. Later the same team worked with the Thai Ministry of Mental Health to create a mental-health support group at the Banf Muang Camp, the hardest-hit area of Thailand. This was supplemented by a computer training centre and cyber café. The UN should build on these good practices, including deciding how best to develop mixed local and international groups from all sectors to improve the quality of information and the speed of its delivery.

Although information technology is intensely utilised to report and locate earthquakes, the initial promise of an integrated early warning system – including community-based systems – seems to have had little impact in the field. The use of information technology should be coordinated at district levels in order to create the best protective system possible for vulnerable populations.

7.2 Humanitarian Information Centres

The TEC Needs Assessment Report (2006) states that, in the first weeks of the response, few formal humanitarian needs assessments were coordinated to serve the broader humanitarian effort, with the exception of some joint assessments undertaken by the UN. Most other assessments were single-agency initiatives. Even the joint efforts produced demographic statistics on needs by geographical areas or groups, but did not provide information on who needed what. They did not permit matching needs and offers at the family or individual level.

In the absence of a comprehensive needs assessment it was all the more important at least to have the myriad reports in one location. The HICs under OCHA are a flagship coordination tool for this purpose. While an HIC is not generally deployed in response to a natural disaster, the large scale of the emergency in Sri Lanka and Aceh, and the rapidly changing operational environment coupled with a large number of new humanitarian actors entering the country, made the deployment of an HIC appropriate. This evaluation found the HIC's GIS and database services well presented and disseminated.

The rapid 'HIC-in-a-box' concept has been field-tested elsewhere; yet the issue of how rapidly a useful service can be set up (and the human-resources issues surrounding this) appears not to have been resolved. Because the HIC creates its

own exponential demand, it needs to expand its trained human-resource base and toolkit/templates for rapid deployment. Many key respondents/agencies simply did not use the service at all in the first two months; their own information sources, formal and informal, were perceived as better. Although the HIC was formally opened on 5 January (Banda Aceh) and 13 January (Sri Lanka), these offices were not producing usable products until some weeks later. In Sri Lanka, the HIC budget was not approved until four months into the response, and it was not deployed in the districts until the fourth quarter of 2005.

In both countries, the HIC started collecting data on key areas such as IDPs, shelter, livelihood, health, education and water and sanitation. This was not primary data collection, but the collation and editing of reporting from government, donors and INGOs. To their credit, HIC personnel recognised the need to be dealing with early recovery issues, hence an emphasis on livelihood information and a concerted effort to ensure that governments received the collated information drawn from secondary sources.

As a first point of call or common service, HIC depends on a level of exclusivity – being the sole source of 'filtered' information supplemented by GIS mapping, activity matrices, and so on. The issue of data analysis has confounded HIC from the outset – how to add value to an abundance of often contradictory data, and how to exclude sub-standard data. Lack of resources and priority prevented HIC from screening documents – to analyse, synthesise and compile the results rapidly in a format practical enough to highlight gaps. A transition from information management to knowledge management would, however, require more funding, staffing and skill sets than are currently available.

The demand for data filtration and analysis requires a closer look at, and perhaps revision of, the HIC mandate With respect to data analysis, for instance, the HIC in Banda Aceh undertook, with UNHCR, a very useful inventory and ongoing monitoring of the number of shelters/houses needed per district or sub-district. As gap analysis this moves beyond just the compilation of information and, as good practice, should be replicated in other sectors.

This evaluation found that UN agencies expend too much energy on capacity-mapping exercises and developing matrices for implementation plans, such as were attempted in Aceh and Sri Lanka (through OCHA and HIC). The value of these exercises is uncertain, and they have an inbuilt redundancy, becoming immediately outdated. The deputy HC in Aceh in February 2005 was quite clear on this matter: 'map the capacity and programmes of the top ten NGOs, invite them in as equal partners, and you will capture 80 per cent of the implementation; don't waste valuable time chasing the elusive remaining 20 per cent'.[91]

The evaluation noted that needs assessment data – and baseline data available to HIC even six months into the recovery period – were rarely disaggregated by

91 Deputy HC, Aceh, interviewed in October 2005.

gender. The exceptions were nutrition and food-security assessments – and some health assessments – that included preliminary gender indicators (Goyder et al, 2005), despite the almost total absence of baseline data in Aceh. Oxfam provides limited but strong evidence that this omission may have repercussions for the recovery efforts, and notes, for example, that the structures responsible for debating the Master Plan for recovery were almost exclusively male (Oxfam International, 2005).

For the recovery phase in Indonesia, the HIC (latterly renamed the UN Information Management System, UNIMS) in late 2005 acquired a data analyst, a statistician and a specialist in monitoring and evaluation. Several major INGOs use UNIMS data or cross-reference their data with UNIMS for additional reliability. UNIMS is also assisting BRR, some line ministries, and district and sub-district administrations to develop their information capacity.

INGOs are keen to see UNIMS create a common template for monitoring and evaluation, with greater standardisation of indicators to avoid current confusions.[92] In the emergency phase no such indicators existed (or at least none were commonly distributed); even in the transition and rehabilitation stages there remains ambiguity on key issues. Currently, an indicator/impact group chaired by WHO/IFRC is developing a generic set of indicators that should yield results in 2006. Meanwhile, BRR has come up with 40 indicators that are simple but adequate (BRR/UN, 2005).

In Sri Lanka, the quantity of required data available through the government to inform the design of the tsunami recovery was inadequate and its quality quite weak. For example, HIC event reporting in Ampara and Galle lacked cross-referenced population data. Denominator information would have made any number of tasks easier if known. Even UN and Government of Sri Lanka official websites have inconsistent and somewhat tenuous tsunami data. No standardised definitions were found in the field for different categories of housing or individuals affected. Meeting schedules and contact lists were produced for all affected districts of Sri Lanka; however, they appear not to have been widely disseminated other than through the HIC website.

The evaluation found that the HIC was not a tool fully accessible to governments. For eventual transfer to government, the exit strategy in each country should include linkages to the DAD and other information-management programmes under a single umbrella combined with, for example, the UNDP Capacity Building Programmes.

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92 For Sri Lanka, the HIC website lists 31 forms for assessment, with accompanying indicators, produced by different agencies.

Ensuring accountability

8.1 Accountability and transparency

The high level of bilateral, multilateral and non-governmental aid flows brought with it the increased risk of corruption at each stage of the response. A key requirement for reducing such risks is the establishment of appropriate coordination mechanisms to track aid flows from source to end-user. Corruption risks were heightened by shortcomings in the existing financial and administrative systems of affected countries.

The scope for corruption after the tsunami prompted anti-corruption watchdog Transparency International (TI), the ADB and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to organise a conference in Jakarta in April 2005. It recommended:

• involving affected communities in planning, implementing and monitoring projects

• providing them with easy-to-understand information about projects and entitlements to relief and compensation

• setting up systems to track aid flows

• independent monitoring of relief and reconstruction programmes

• establishing channels for reporting corruption, and protection for whistleblowers

• including an explicit anti-corruption clause in contracts, with sanctions for any breach.[93]

93 ADB/OECD Anticorruption Initiative for Asia and the Pacific (http://ww1.transparency.org/ pressreleases_archive/2005/dnld/urbing_crruption_tsunami_relief.pdf).

Many large donors, including the EU, have preferred to channel money through trust funds because they offer a more robust form of accountability. In Indonesia, the ADB has worked closely with the recently reformed Corruption Eradication Committee (KPK) to ensure greater transparency of fund disbursement. Meanwhile, the BRR established an Anti-Corruption Unit (SAK) in September 2005 that investigated 120 cases of abuse in the first two months.

Cases of aid abuse at local levels have been reported. Local anti-corruption NGOs in Aceh, such as SORAK (Solidarity of the Common People) and GERAK (Gerakan Rakyat Anti-Korupsi, or the AntiCorruption Movement), amassed evidence showing that the military had siphoned off aid and provided illegal timber for building projects, and that some local government officials have benefited. There have also been alleged cases of bribes paid by international agencies to bypass bureaucratic constraints.[94] One positive initiative has been the MDTF housing programme that encourages self-policing by local communities to minimise corruption in housing committees.[95]

Within the UN, reporting arrangements to donors and governing bodies were already well established. For the UN secretariat, the Office of Internal Oversight Services carried out audit and investigations.[96] Individual UN funds, programmes and agencies have their own audit and investigative functions and report to their respective governing bodies. The UN's External Board of Auditors also prepared an audit for tsunami programmes. The number of internal and external 'real-time' audits has been unusually high, and has led to audits becoming an early accountability tool during emergencies. However, though some have looked at effectiveness of coordination (measured by the qualitative assessment of some key respondents), for the most part they look only at whether money was spent in accordance with established rules, not at how well it was spent.

The tsunami response has been subject to an unprecedented number of evaluations, and hence in theory represents a move toward greater accountability (in contrast, for example, to the Rwanda evaluations ten years previously). The time required of field staff for hosting evaluations has, however, been significant; the interagency TEC itself was launched with a view to reducing this burden, although it has yet to be quantified.[97]

8.2 Financial tracking

The lack of consistent reporting to affected communities is noted above in this report (section 4.5). However, significant improvements have been made in introducing financial tracking systems. These not only trace needs and commitments but also become an effective tool for meeting legitimate

94 Both instances are cited in Eye on Aceh (2006). The latter involved Oxfam, which allegedly paid a bribe to the Department of Forestry for a certificate to transport wood in Aceh (Eye on Aceh, 2006, p 26).
95 MDTF Minutes, 25 August 2005 (http://www.mdtfans.org/minutes-10may2005.html).
96 The drafts of these reports with respect to OCHA were made available to the evaluation team.
97 The ALNAP database and annual review will yield evidence in 2006.

expectations of transparency, accountability and sound governance. The financial tracking system (FTS) managed by OCHA developed a special expenditure-tracking site that shows how much of the funds received by UN agencies and NGOs for projects in the Flash Appeal have been spent, and on what projects, sectors and countries. The site does not show expenditure for projects not listed in the Flash Appeal; also, more often than not it indicates disbursements rather than actual expenditure on the ground – the money may still be held in a foreign bank account. Moreover, the Flash Appeal amounted to only 8 per cent of the total funds pledged for relief, recovery, and reconstruction.
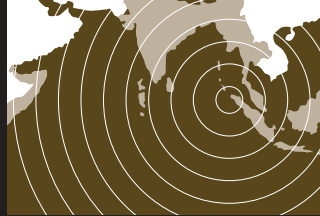
To allay concerns of mismanagement of the huge sums raised by the Flash Appeal, the UN accepted the free services of PriceWaterhouseCooper to track resources. The offer provided technical and expert support in two areas: risk analysis, audit and investigation; and the establishment of a public information system that tracks contributions and their use. WFP, UNHCR, UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF signed on for the donated services – and these agencies account for some 80 per cent of the funds requested in the Flash Appeal.

As a follow-up and more comprehensive system, UNDP has developed in the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand a new online Development Assistance Database (DAD), which collects and tracks aid and assistance data in support of reconstruction projects. Training on use of the DAD has involved the major government stakeholders, donors and NGOs. Online by October 2005, this is a nationally-owned tracking system that will better enable the governments and their partners to align support with needs – avoiding duplication, and filling gaps – by building up a very detailed picture of who is doing what and where. The DAD tracks every major project, covering both the finances (how much was promised and how much has been delivered, project by project) and the expected results. Expected outputs and deadlines for delivery are set for each project. Actual results achieved are measured quantitatively and qualitatively.

Through the online DAD system, members of the public can use the internet to see which projects are planned in which district, and whether these projects are delivering results. The major caveat is that an accurate, timely and easy-to-understand public reporting system requires the cooperation of all entities concerned, in particular on the provision of data.

There are still improvements to be made in aligning and coordinating international contributions with government budgetary systems. In the Maldives, questions have arisen about the coordination of information on funding and financial tracking. Poorly documented aid contributions – and an apparent inability of the UN to break down relief and recovery costs in a manner acceptable to the government – create problems in presenting a true picture of costs associated with the recovery programme.

In principle, the DAD makes it easy for government and donor countries to check whether funds are being used as they expected. The evaluation found that, although data were still coming in, a certain 'momentum' was already established in terms of both governments' insistence on cooperation from contributing agencies, and the self-interest of agencies in being seen to be publicly accountable.

9

Joint advocacy

Common advocacy is included here as one of the pillars of humanitarian coordination. Although dubbed a 'natural disaster', the tsunami occurred in the context of ongoing political and military conflagrations in Sri Lanka and Aceh, and at a time of significant political change in the Maldives. In complex emergencies the debate has most often focused on protection and access; both are important in natural disasters, but to these should be added issues of equity and a guarded response from the international community over political opportunism that might result from the displacement of relatively 'voiceless' ethnic groups. In Thailand, for example, 'sea gypsies' and immigrants from Myanmar were rarely included in any compensation package.

A report issued in January 2006[98] brought this issue to a head by claiming that, one year on from the tsunami, people still suffered discrimination over access to land and basic services. Women in Aceh and the Maldives, especially widows and single women, have been left out of the recovery process and their physical safety has been compromised as incidents of domestic violence increase.

This evaluation found that in the first six months in particular, most agencies paid insufficient attention to developing a dialogue with governments (and communities) over war/non-war populations and associated protection issues (in Indonesia), population-consolidation programmes (in the Maldives), and pre-/post-tsunami displaced populations (in Sri Lanka).

In the Maldives, the Ministry of Planning and National Development in January 2005 disclosed its decision to develop safe islands in each of the 20 atolls. These islands will get special attention as 'development nodal points'. The government has not yet issued an edict on where and when the consolidation policy will occur, and the political implications and potential for unrest are apparent. This is also a resource issue: the government does not have the resources to satisfy the preferences of all individuals and families. The concentration of population and associated public services should, as the UN stresses, be voluntary. Coordinated advocacy, presumably led by the UN, will be needed. Meanwhile, some confusion and concern exists over whether this broader policy will influence allocations of recovery inputs for those

98 AI/PDHRE/HIC (2006): this report is based on interviews conducted in 95 villages in Indonesia, Thailand, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and India in late 2005.

choosing to remain where they are. Some islands will be subject to landfill to raise their levels: will this be done where rebuilding is already completed?

In Sri Lanka, the shortage of land has been a severe problem for housing in the more densely populated coastal areas in the south and the east. The government-imposed 100m buffer zone in the south and the 200m buffer zone in the north aggravated this problem. Under public pressure (and here the intervention of the UN's Special Envoy, former US President Clinton, was important) in October 2005, the government relaxed the rule and scaled down the buffer zone to about 50m, but only in a limited number of districts. For commercial construction and operation, the buffer rule was enforced inconsistently. In Galle much activity was noted in the buffer zone, while in Ampara enforcement had been much more uniform.

Again in Sri Lanka, large disparities in compensation exist between grants pledged prior to the tsunami for IDPs and post-tsunami to those affected (IDPs as well as others). The house-for-house rule meant that former tenants received nothing, yet a landlord with ten houses destroyed was given ten replacements. The issue of equity was further exacerbated by differences in grants according to the extent of damage; and, as well as government grants, tsunami victims were also receiving in-kind assistance from NGOs, increasing the ill feeling between sections of the population. Moreover, there was increasing sensitivity about 'class' issues: was it fair that previous squatters in poor dwellings should now be in receipt of housing equal to that of those who lost substantially larger dwellings?

The dichotomy of affected and non-affected population is artificial and arbitrary, marked by spatial separation into tents, barracks, and temporary houses. Indeed, the very way that agencies assess the community creates ad hoc client groupings. As a result of either INGO inexperience or a narrow technical expertise or mandate, few agencies are attempting to rebuild the traditional village structure as an integrated project.

In Aceh, priority was given to building a relationship of trust with the government, and the government itself broached the possibility of international assistance going beyond tsunami-affected populations.[99] There was nevertheless a general absence of strategy on advocacy and human rights, common to complex emergencies but cautiously avoided in Aceh despite the fact that this was a war zone. UNHCR had already been under pressure to leave, based on the government's perception of its mandatory advocacy for refugees and migrants in Malaysia and a residual unease from the government about its role in East/West Timor. And NGOs were alert to the fact that on more than one occasion the government had talked of 'rooting out' unnecessary NGOs.[100]

Advocacy was, however, raised at the Global Consortium in September 2005 and, later in the year, was gaining increasing attention. Few INGOs (or, indeed, the UN)

99 Correspondence with Joel Boutroue, formerly Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator, Aceh.
100 In early May 2005, the Indonesian government declared that foreign aid groups wanting to continue working in earthquake- and tsunami-devastated Aceh province would have to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that they would not 'interfere in the country's domestic affairs' or support the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) separatist movement.

were to look seriously at supporting local human-rights organisations,[101] although we accept the caution that some human-rights organisations were looking for funding for relief operations beyond their competence. The Norwegian Refugee Council attempted to introduce advocacy workshops around the issue of IDP protection and access, but arrangements to hold such workshops in Meulaboh and Banda Aceh were cancelled 'due to new regulations obliging all foreign assistance providers to organise activities in conjunction with a government institution' (FMR, 2005).

Simply incorporating human-rights language into programme documents does not ensure a human-rights-based approach in disaster response. A process of learning and education on human rights is also needed. Policy mechanisms should be in place to ensure strict adherence to human rights during programme implementation, and all policies should include specific measures for the protection of the human rights of vulnerable groups.

The vested interest of committed project money for relief/recovery may have provided a disincentive to engage in advocacy work. A common policy framework for human rights was missing, as was a common platform for the protection of minority groups and of relatively voiceless groups such as women.

101 Evidence of rejected appeals for assistance to long-established human rights NGOs can be found in Eye on Aceh (2005).

10

Conclusion

From the standpoint of any one agency, coordination 'choices' – the extent to which behaviour can be modified in order to achieve greater efficiency of the wider community – are measured against the demands of institutional survival and growth. In the tsunami, these were equated with visibility and exclusive access to a defined population, essential to the legitimacy of the agency, whether UN or NGO. Interagency competition was not for funds but rather to acquire 'clients' that increased agency profile and met the heightened requirements of accountability to generous (largely private) donors.

Despite the best efforts of OCHA to harness and broadcast information and technical know-how within the humanitarian community, it had neither the authority nor in some cases the influence to direct events. It was thus constantly in a responsive mode, frequently criticised for not providing timely information, though rarely questioned as the pre-eminent international coordinating body. The reduction of operational costs through, for example, common services was not always self-evident, as many well-funded NGOs developed their own logistics and information services, including bilateral relations with military forces. Where there were gaps at sectoral or geographic levels, these were often due to the 'crowding' of agencies in certain areas, the selection of high- visibility sectors and the stretching of traditional mandates within agencies.

Much of this evaluation has concerned systemic improvements to make coordination a more attractive voluntary proposition for participating agencies, and to enhance the capacity of the designated 'coordinator' to do the job more efficiently and effectively. Where coordination requires greater control, this is unlikely to come from within the current international aid architecture. First and foremost, national governments should be encouraged and assisted to increase their capacity to organise international agencies around a coherent relief and recovery plan commensurate with international standards. Though still at an early stage, the BRR in Indonesia sets an interesting precedent for the recovery phase.
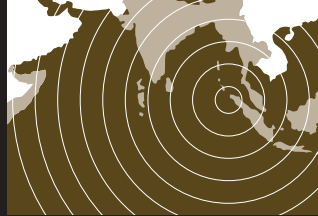
If coordination is also about collective responsibility and accountability, far greater efforts are required to consult with, and include, local communities and their representatives in coordination structures. The congestion of humanitarian space was matched by a general tendency to overlook or deny the existence of local capacities. Patterns thus set in the early phase of the response were difficult to redress later.

Achieving adequate representation and consensus among even the larger, mature INGOs and Red Cross agencies was not easy; but with such a large number of smaller agencies also on the ground in the first six months, coherent joint planning and implementation was unlikely. NGOs are acutely aware of how the dynamics of the 'circus' can adversely affect the credibility of even the best among them. Coordination was not one of the key principles contained in the Red Cross/Crescent and NGO Codes of Conduct promulgated since 1994. Neither are there explicit obligations of collective coordination recognised in the Sphere Standards. Benchmark indicators against which collective action can be evaluated have yet to be developed, and although coordination is one of the most widely recognised issues on the humanitarian agenda, it has yet to be recognised in the form of a set of international principles.

There are, however, avenues that can be further explored. In addressing the challenge of fragmentation, particularly within the NGO world, coordination arrangements can be complemented with an NGO certification process that would enhance the credibility, transparency and accountability of the rated organisations. The feasibility and utility of such a process for NGOs in the humanitarian sector has not been fully explored;[102] neither has the role that donors should play in the development and promotion of such a system.

If the scale of the tsunami response acted as a giant lens that magnified inherent flaws in the humanitarian system, then it also highlighted opportunities for fundamental change. The recommendations contained in this report are mostly institutional and technical, pertaining to individual agency action. Yet there is also scope for strengthening international coordination standards and principles, perhaps through a major international consultation that draws on lessons from the tsunami and other recent emergencies, and outlines a programme for the further rationalisation and professional performance of the humanitarian sector as a whole.

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102 Mechanisms can range from self-certification (codes of ethics), through charity watchdogs, and to independent accreditation agencies. The latter is the least used in the NGO sector.

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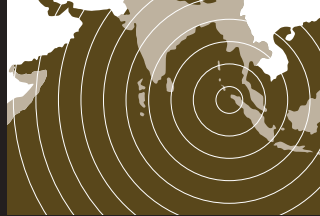
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Annex 1: Terms of reference

Background

The tsunami catastrophe that struck Asia on 26 December 2004 is one of the worst natural disasters in modern history. Although the major impact was felt in India, Indonesia, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand, several other countries were affected, including Myanmar and Somalia, or touched by the tsunami including Bangladesh, Kenya, Malaysia, Seychelles and Tanzania. More than 170,000 people are thought to have died and thousands of people were injured, with many needing urgent medical or surgical treatment. Overall, an estimated two million people have been directly or indirectly affected. Damage and destruction to infrastructure destroyed people's livelihoods, and left many homeless and without adequate water and healthcare facilities.

The world – both governments and people – responded with unprecedented generosity, in solidarity with the rescue and relief efforts of the affected communities and local and national authorities. This has been instrumental in reducing or mitigating the consequences of the disaster, and in boosting the current recovery and rehabilitation efforts.

Purpose, scope and objectives

This evaluation is undertaken as part of the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition. It is a thematic evaluation of the coordination by various actors throughout the first nine months following the tsunami. The evaluation will focus on coordination issues as they relate to national and regional assistance efforts and include country case studies on Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Somalia.

The purpose of the evaluation is three-fold:

(i)   Assess the extent to which immediate and longer-term responses and strategies were guided by timely, relevant and adequate coordination arrangements and address the basic questions of: What was done well and why, and what could have been done better and how?

(ii)   Distil lessons learned for improving coordination practice for future crisis response, and recovery systems and processes i.e. in what way can future coordination arrangements be better organised, and their tools and services rendered more effective?

(iii)   Serve as a test case for undertaking joint but parallel inter-agency evaluations within a larger umbrella evaluation effort, the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition.

The evaluation will take into account three 'phases' or stages of the tsunami assistance period: (I) immediate emergency, (II) early recovery phase, (III) transition from relief to rehabilitation/recovery. It is understood that the last two 'phases' may not necessarily have occurred sequentially but in parallel and that the duration of phase I, II and III will have differed from location to location. Not included in this evaluation is preparedness.

The evaluation will look at the coordination between the UN, NGOs, donors and military as well as between these actors and national actors, and where relevant, with other actors in South-east Asia. Coordination aspects will be also reviewed from a general, sectoral and a geographic perspective.

The evaluation is expected to distil good/best practice; practice-to-be-avoided as well as targeted recommendations to the humanitarian community on how to improve current and future coordination mechanisms.

Evaluation criteria

Coordination performance will be evaluated utilizing the following evaluation criteria: timeliness, efficiency, effectiveness, appropriateness, coherence, value-added, and connectedness. Added to these OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC)-criteria is one additional criteria: leadership effectiveness. Sensitivity to gender issues will be considered whenever appropriate.

Key questions and issues

The evaluation will seek to address five key questions:

• What worked well in coordination and why? What did not work and why?

• Did the various coordination efforts result in:

    a   Avoidance of critical gaps at sectoral and geographic levels?

    b   Absence of duplication?

    c   Increased/decreased operational costs in the use of assets, resources and funds?

    d   Appropriate use of common assets and tools?

    e   Better ownership and/or participation by local actors and beneficiaries?

    f   Value-added support to national coordination structures?

• How appropriate was the structure, strategy and style of coordination to the circumstances at country, regional and international level and with specific actors?

• Did coordination actors bring the right expertise and appropriate critical mass to the relief effort at critical times?

• Were key lessons on coordination from previous major emergencies applied/not applied in the tsunami response? Did early lessons learned exercises and workshop result in immediate action and improvements where needed?

Specific questions to help answer these key questions are contained in Annex I to these TOR and are expected to guide the evaluation team in their work. The team will look at key coordination tasks and techniques, facilitation of coordination and tools and structures used for coordination. It is recognised that this may assume a key set of coordination functions and responsibilities and as such may not be an inclusive list. The team will, as necessary, expand or recast these issues in their inception report.

Management of the evaluation

The evaluation will be managed by OCHA as lead agency with the support of a thematic steering committee.

The draft TOR will be circulated through the ALNAP network and to the Humanitarian Coordinators of the involved countries for sharing these with all relevant stakeholders. The OCHA office in the case study countries will provide logistical support to the evaluation team in preparation for country visits and throughout the team's stay in the country.

Evaluation team and method

It is proposed that the evaluation team would consist of three international consultants, one with humanitarian coordination expertise (team leader), the second a specialist in natural disaster response (evaluator # 2) and the third a specialist on civil-military liaison (evaluator # 3). National consultants (evaluator # 4,5,6,7) will join the core team during each of the country case studies. The evaluation team will be supported by at least one research assistant. To the extent possible the evaluation team shall be balanced geographically as well as gender-wise.

The team may be accompanied by evaluation staff from one of the participating agencies on parts or the entire portion of the field visits. The role of evaluation staff accompanying the team would be to provide policy and operational feedback to the team, facilitate work with country teams and undertake any detailed work as requested by the team leader.

The team leader will work closely with the TEC Evaluation Advisor and Coordinator (EAC) and seek his/her guidance on method and planning the field visits. To the extent feasible the country visits of the various themes will be coordinated and a joint workshop should be organized for all themes in early September. The EAC will seek to ensure that there is no unnecessary duplication between the themes and provide guidance on complementarity and coverage where needed.

The team leader will be responsible for preparing the evaluation report; team members are expected to work under the direction of the team leader and provide inputs as requested by the team leader. The team leader will report to the OCHA manager and liaise with the TEC Lead Evaluator and consult with and inform him/her on methodological issues and timing/implementation issues.

It is anticipated that the Team will make use of the following methods:

- desk review of the most relevant reports, documents and tools used and/or produced in the first 6 months related to coordination and the key-questions above
- desk review of stand-alone evaluation reports and lessons learned meeting documents by Government, UN agencies, NGOs and donors providing assessments on coordination

- key stakeholder interviews in all country case studies, and among those involved in the coordination and priority setting process; key stakeholder interviews with key informants who participated in the response at national and/or international level (presumably much of these will require phone interviews as many actors will have moved on)

- creation of ideal scenario for coordination (actors, instruments, space and time) and match this with what happened and suggest what needed/needs to be done to get there;

- country-level workshops with a broad spectrum of participants

- establishment of timelines – if necessary by issue – to identify key events and key decision-making points

- preparation of a Coordination Performance Indicator checklist (see Annex II) for each country to be annexed to the final report; the format of this checklist should be revised/updated by the team in their inception report

- visits to the disaster affected areas in Sri Lanka and western Sumatra, including interviews with the affected population in the sites visited

- the team will split up to visit Somalia and the Maldives.

It is proposed that country-level workshops will be part of the methodology, to present initial findings following the desk review and discuss emerging key issues and lessons with key stakeholders. This should be part of a broader workshop together with the other studies. The workshops will most likely take place in the month of September.

Outputs

i. An inception report of no more than 2,500 words outlining the team's approach. This inception report is due two weeks after the start-up of the evaluation.

ii. Interim status report (or power point presentation) per country of no more than 1,500 reflecting the key issues identified by the team. These reports should be prepared prior to departure of the in-country visit and be presented to a joint meeting to be organized by the Office of the Humanitarian Coordinator. This meeting should include at minimum agencies that are members of the theme evaluation and relevant Government counterparts.

iii. A report of no more than 20,000 words, excluding an executive summary of no more than 500 words and annexes. The report is expected to meet the standards set by the ALNAP quality proforma and the UN standards for evaluation.

iv. The draft and final report will be made available on the dedicated Tsunami Evaluation Coalition website, and disseminated through all appropriate channels.
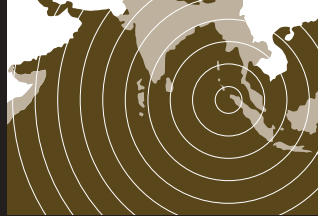
Use of the evaluation report

The evaluation report will be a stand alone report and will be discussed at relevant interagency fora, e.g. the December ALNAP meeting and the February IASC meeting. The report will also feed into the TEC synthesis report – planned to be available in draft form by late December 2005.

The recommendations made by the team should be discussed by the IASC and should be responded to by the concerned agencies. A management response matrix will be prepared once the report has been finalised.

Tentative time schedule

Tentative time schedule		Team leader	Evaluator 1	Evaluator 2	Evaluators 4, 5, 6, 7
By 19 May	Draft TOR ready for TEC meeting in Geneva				
By June 10	Circulate and finalize for discussion at ALNAP meeting in The Hague)				
By 17 June	Post the TOR on the web, for recruitment of consultants				
July	Selection of consultants				
July	Initial briefing visit of team leader to NY or GVA	3			
Week(WK) 1–4	(2 x 5 days) desk review including an inception report and first round of telephone interviews	10	10	10	30 (10+10 +5+5)
End WK 4	Submission of inception report				
WK 5	Review of desk review				
WK 6	Initial HQ interviews in Geneva and Bangkok	7	7	7	
	Preparation of national workshops				8 (2+2+2+2)
WK 7–8	2 weeks Sri Lanka (including national workshop)	14	14	14	14
WK 9–10	2 weeks Aceh (including national workshop)	14	14	14	14
WK 11	Kenya/Somalia (including national workshop)	7			7
	Maldives (including national workshop)		7		7
WK 12	1 week team analysis and joint work	5	5	5	5
WK 13–15	3 weeks (3 x 5 days) writing reports	15	15	15	40 (10+10 + 10+10)
WK 16	Submission of draft report				
WK 16–17	Review of report by Theme Group				
WK 17	Formal debriefing of TL				
Mid Dec	Synthesis workshop (tentative), includes written comments on draft synthesis report	3			
End Dec	Finalisation of report	5	2	2	8 (2+2+2+2)
		96	84	74	125

Annex 2: Biographies of the evaluators
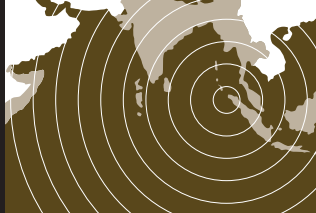
Jon Bennett (principal author) has had 30 years' experience in Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe including Country Representative/Field Director posts and independent consultancies for development agencies – ranging from the UN, EU and NGOs. He is a socioeconomist and specialist in food security, rural development, relief, evaluation and NGO training. He was Executive Director of ACBAR (Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief) from 1990-92, and founding Director of the Global IDP Project (1995-98). From 2004-05 he held a D1 post as UN Team Leader, Joint Assessment Mission, Sudan. He has five published books and has been a Research Associate at the Refugee Studies Programme, Oxford University (1994-2000). He is a board member for Forced Migration Review and is currently Director of Oxford Development Consultants.

Claire Harkin (civil-military issues) has been a Senior Civil Military Affairs Advisor for DFID since 1999, working in Iraq, Afganistan, East Timor, Kosovo, Mozambique and on the Asian Tsunami. Prior to this she was the Chief of Protocol for UNPROFOR. Fluent in Russian, she has many years experience working for both UN and the UK's HM Forces.

William Bertrand has been the Director of the Payson Center for International Development and Technology Transfer, Tulane University since 1998, and has been active in international health and development programmes for more than 20 years. He has been a Principle Investigator on major USAID projects in Niger, Kenya and the DRC, is a board member of the Pan American Health Education Foundation, and is a Wisner Professor of Public Health at Tulane.

Stanley Samarasinghe is the Director of the Arlington Virginia Office of the Payson Center for International Development and Technology Transfer, Tulane University, and a Visiting Associate Professor of that Institute. He was the Principal Investigator for Tsunami Research Projects (1350 Sample survey) in Sri Lanka – a project undertaken by the International Centre for Ethnic Studies and World Vision. He is an economist, having previously worked for USAID, the University of Peradeniya, and the International Center for Ethnic Studies, Sri Lanka.

Hemantha Wickrammatillake (NGOs in Sri Lanka) is the Director of Advisors for Scientific and Health Intelligence, Medical Director of IPPF in Sri Lanka, and a visiting Lecturer, Faculty of Medicine, Colombo University. As an epidemiologist, he has conducted research work for the UK government, EU and World Health Organisation. He has done extensive consultancy work for international NGOs in Sri Lanka.

Annex 3: Financial statement

Estimated expenses	US$
Consultant fees	200,000
Evaluation management	75,000
Travel	140,000
Briefing and debriefing workshops	17,000
Printing and dissemination	5,000
Administration and overheads	64,500
Total	**US$501,500**
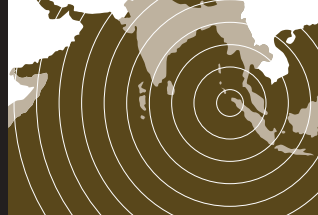
Donors

BMZ (Germany)*	65,000
DaRa International (Spain)	50,000
DFID (UK)	53,178
IFRC	20,000
IOB/MFA (Netherlands)	65,000
MFA (France)	14,000
NORAD (Norway)*	50,000
OCHA	101,467
UNFPA	10,000
UNICEF	50,000
USAID (United States)	28,855
Total	**US$507,500**

* full contribution not yet received

The tsunami response was remarkable not only for amount of money raised (over US$14 billion) but also for the number of international organisations involved. In the first month in Aceh, for example, there were more than 300 agencies on the ground, along with 17 military forces from around the world assisting with search and rescue. Coordinating this number of international and national actors was a mammoth task, and one which has never been fully costed.

Buoyed by generous funding, many agencies competed for 'client' populations which resulted in some duplication and the stretching of traditional agency mandates. Some geographical areas were better served than others, and there was a perceived need among agencies to have 'visible' projects, such as new houses and boats. Livelihoods projects were relatively neglected and needs based on gender, for example, were not always met.

This TEC Coordination Report poses more questions than answers, for the systemic challenge of coordinating the complex humanitarian sector is not unique to the Asian tsunami. The international community has a duty to enable and assist host governments to exert greater coordinating authority over visiting organisations. From the top of government to local community groups, capacity building in this respect is of utmost importance. Perhaps some form of certification would help governments to decide with whom they should work.

The NGOs also need to develop a better form of collective representation at coordination meetings. Improved civil–military coordination would ensure that the latter know where best to use their advantage in transport and personnel. Finally, we should learn how better to harness the considerable resources of the private sector.

The Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC) is a multi-agency learning and accountability initiative in the humanitarian sector. It was established in February 2005 in the wake of the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunamis of 26 December 2004.

This evaluation of the coordination of international humanitarian assistance in tsunami-affected countries is one of a series of five thematic evaluations undertaken by the TEC in 2005/06.

Tsunami Evaluation Coalition

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