Tsunami Evaluation Coalition

Coordination of international humanitarian assistance in tsunami-affected countries

Evaluation findings

Indonesia

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TEC

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I. Introduction

The extent of the damage from the earthquake and resultant tsunamis on 26th December 2004 is well documented. On the island of Sumatra the provinces of North Sumatra and Nangroe Aceh Darussaiam (NAD, but hereafter referred to as Aceh) 129,271[1] people were killed, more than 566,898[2] displaced and 750,000 partially or totally lost their livelihoods, with the provincial capital of Banda Aceh and the West Coast being the worst affected. A review of national capacities in relation to coordination structures must take into account not only the devastation of physical infrastructure but also the personal trauma, loss of family members and property, and collapse of systems of government, banking and commerce. On 26 January a local newspaper reported that 1,083 of Aceh's civil servants were killed[3]. The ILO estimated the unemployment rate in February to be more than 30%, up from 6.8% prior to the tsunami.

Aceh is one of Indonesia's poorest provinces; in spite of being rich in natural resources, pre-tsunami poverty levels were 29.8% on average among its 4 million people.[4] Anti-poor policies and lack of government commitment to poverty eradication have threatened livelihoods, especially for the 90% majority who depend on agriculture, fishing and fish farming for subsistence. The impact of the war economy leads to large disparities in wealth and high levels of corruption. Meanwhile, Aceh provides almost a quarter of Indonesia's total oil and gas output, and oil and gas production make up nearly half of the province's revenues. The recovery of this sector may be relatively quick, but even with the greater local retention of wealth foreseen in the peace agreement, experts predict that the region's known oil reserves will run out by 2011.

At a generic level broad coordination objectives and indicators are discussed in the evaluation Main Report. However, it is instructive to be reminded of the objectives and indicators outlined in the Mid-Term Review of the Flash Appeal, for they provide a reference point for expectations in Indonesia.[5] In summary, monitoring coordination would involve, inter alia:

1. Feedback by humanitarian agencies on the effectiveness and levels of access to coordination/common services;
2. An increase in the efficiency of humanitarian assistance due to better information gathering and dissemination;
3. The extent to which decisions and advocacy are based on accurate information and analysis; and
4. The efficiency of despatch of humanitarian aid.

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[1] Note that officially a further 166,234 "missing or unaccounted for" will be presumed dead after a year.
[2] Source: USAID. (2005). Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunamis: Fact Sheet #38, Fiscal Year (FY) 2005. Washington: United States Agency for International Development. 6 May 2005.
[3] Cited in 'Responding to Aceh's Tsunami: the first 40 days', Eye on Aceh, April 2005.
[4] Human Development Report 2004; Progress Report on MDGs, 2004.
[5] A similar set of objectives and indicators are presented for each country in the Appeal.

The following report is replete with 'problems' of coordination outweighing the success stories. Some of these are an inevitable: in no emergency in modern times have so many well-funded agencies from so many countries descended on one area of the world in such a short space of time. An evaluative challenge is to distinguish between chaos, compassion and the kind of institutional learning that might emerge from the overall experience. Coordination (in the humanitarian world) is a voluntary exercise whose value is appreciated and exercised more readily by experienced agencies. Crucially, coordination is also a question of comparative advantage. Despite its dedicated mandate, UN-OCHA must prove its worth, particularly in the acute emergency phase, otherwise it will simply be ignored or superceded by more capable non-governmental or bilateral agencies.

The "Third Wave" of democracy has radically changed the political context in which disaster relief takes place. Globalization opens societies, communities are more conscious and aware of their human and property rights, and governments and relief/rehabilitation agencies are expected to be more collaborative, bottom-up and participatory in their approaches. The increased importance of civil society organizations, especially International NGOs (INGO), has introduced a significant element of competition to the 'market place' of disaster relief and rehabilitation. Moreover, modern information systems from CNN to www, e-mail and SMS have significantly changed the technological environment in which disaster relief and rehabilitation operates. These developments determine the way in which information is disseminated and acquired, and the behaviour of the actors in disaster situations. They also increase the fund raising capacity of NGOs and INGOs and even individuals.

Concepts Adopted

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[6]. For our purposes here, we will adopt a hybrid definition that includes what coordination *is* and what it ideally *does*[7]. Cross-cutting themes, notably adherence to gender analysis and standards, are assumed. Hence:

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

- **providing leadership and management of representative bodies;**

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[6] For useful discussions over conceptual differences between coordination, cooperation and interdependence see Robinson et al*, (2000), Managing Development*, The Open University.
[7] The definition borrows some elements from Borton, J. et al (1996) *The international Response to Conflict and Genocide, Lessons from the Rwanda Experience, Study 3: Humanitarian Aid and Effects.* Danida, Copenhagen; Minear, L. et al (1992) *United Nations Coordination of the International Humanitarian Response to the Gulf Crisis 1990-1992, Occasional Paper 13*. The Thomas J. Watson Institute for International Studies, Providence; and Bennett, J (1995), *Meeting Needs: NGO Coordination in Practice*, Earthscan, UK.

- **negotiating and maintaining a serviceable framework with host political authorities;**
- **orchestrating a functional division of labour (including civil-military),**
- **strategic planning;**
- **mobilizing resources for integrated programming**
- **gathering data and managing information;**
- **ensuring accountability (including accountability to recipient populations);**
- **providing a focus for joint advocacy.**

The majority of the findings are on institutional practices and how these unfolded in the tsunami response, and what lessons the international community can learn. The evaluation was undertaken at a time when the transition from relief to development was in the early stages. Inevitably, then, the weight of analysis is on the emergency phase. Timelines as such are arbitrary, but the transition 'boundary' presents challenges for government and agencies alike; activities become much more projectised and maintaining a holistic overview of needs is more difficult as the focus of individual agencies is increasingly sectoral.

II. Emergency Phase

National Coordination

Government Coordination

Two days after the tsunami, the President declared Aceh open to the international community to provide emergency relief and high profile news bulletins across the world guaranteed an enormous response. Due to the protracted insurgency by the GAM *(Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* or Free Aceh Movement) Aceh had hitherto been a closed province, with the only international presence on the ground being the ICRC and a small OCHA office.[8] Within a week of the tsunami more than 50 international organisations were on the ground; the figure rose to over 200 by mid-January.

On 27 December the Government of Indonesia (GoI) requested the UN to coordinate incoming international relief assistance, a position endorsed at the International Conference hosted by the GoI on 6 January. A UN-GoI Joint Disaster Management Centre was established at the Office of the Vice-President and the UN's Disaster Management Team (DMT) met on a daily basis throughout January, three times a week in February and weekly thereafter.

The GoI had been in office for just over two months at the time of the disaster. The Coordinating Ministry for People's Welfare (Menko Kesra) already had a standing Council of Disasters, though this had not met in two years. Nevertheless, its Secretariat –

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[8] Some INGOs such as SC-US and Oxfam had a locally staffed office.

BAKORNAS – took immediate control of the situation and became the main interlocutor for donors in Jakarta. There was some confusion in the first week about who was coordinating the response. It was only when the Vice-President appointed Alwi Shihab to take control in Aceh and consolidated the Government's disaster response centre at his office that the situation clarified. However, the destruction of government infrastructure in Aceh required exceptional measures and on day 3, the Vice President, upon travelling to the province, brought in the Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare from Jakarta to take control.

The GoI took decisive action at military and administrative levels, which helped a great deal in directing the international donor response. The military response is discussed in Section 3 below. The political repercussions in Aceh are still being felt. The natural local body for emergency response is SATKORLAK, under the provincial Governor's office. This is an ad hoc collective of line ministry personnel brought together under an appointed head (in this case a retired army general) in times of emergency. It is replicated at district levels. In the aftermath of the tsunami, with SATKORLAK itself being severely compromised in terms of capacity, there was – and still is – some confusion over the lines of responsibility and authority between the senior appointments from Jakarta and these existing bodies. Local authorities, for instance, were unclear as to how to access central emergency funds.[9] In part, the confusion reflects the semi-autonomous status of Aceh, and the complex relationship between Java and Aceh. The evaluation team met SATKORLAK in Banda Aceh and was informed that they were the lead authority in the relief operation, only to be informed later in Jakarta that SATKORLAK no longer existed in Aceh. Meanwhile, at sub-provincial level (Meulaboh, for instance), SATKORLAK evidently *were* in charge, being the main interlocutors with the international community.

The interface between the GoI 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 asked 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. Most INGOs were not known to government officials, and there was no clearly defined liaison mechanism established between the GoI and INGOs. Neither was there a shared understanding of terminology, definitions, and standards. The GoI's decision to curtail the presence of INGOs after three months led to feelings of disillusionment among relief agencies, and to a decrease in or discontinuation of much-needed assistance programmes.[10]

In the recovery phase, the Aceh and Nias Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency (BRR), created in April, has received full support from Indonesian parliament, as the House of Representatives approved the establishment of the agency through a new act. Its

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[9] One of the lessons from the National & Regional Workshops, May-June 2005.
[10] This was one of the findings from the Workshops (ibid.), though there was also a natural reduction of INGO presence as the acute emergency gave way to recovery programmes.

Vice-Director is the acting Governor, though as yet there has been little consultation between the Governor and BRR. Again, there are mutual political jealousies, not least because the BRR has exceptional resources and power (though only a 4-year mandate). With the lifting of the State of Emergency – and the consequent lessening of authority under the regional government/military nexus - the international community has welcomed and begun investing in the BRR as the pre-eminent coordinating authority for reconstruction. Indeed, the BRR's remit includes aggressive transparency, attracting support locally as well as internationally in a country well known for contrary behaviour.

The GoI engaged in the formulation and implementation of a three-stage action plan: emergency measures (December 2004-January 2005), rehabilitation measures (February 2005-February 2007), and reconstruction measures (February 2005-2009). The overlap between these phases has meanwhile meant a pragmatic engagement of the international community with the remaining SATKORLAK authorities at district levels while the BRR establishes itself beyond Banda Aceh.

Aceh Peace Process

The GoI's willingness to open Aceh, to give almost free rein to international and national aid organisations, and to expose itself to the resulting scrutiny and judgement over its own performance in the aid operation was remarkable.[11] For nearly 30 years, a series of government regulations, military operations and Martial Law had restricted access and suppressed the development of civil society movements in Aceh. The Military Operational Area status (DOM) was finally lifted in 1998, ushering in the 'reformasi' period, but it was not until 19 May 2005 that the state of emergency in Aceh was lifted. Meanwhile, atrocities on both sides have been reported,[12] and the 50,000 troops that were sent to Aceh made it the most militarised region of Indonesia.[13]

In 2005, the tide began to turn in favour of a lasting peace. On 15 August a peace treaty (MoU) was signed in Helsinki between the GAM and GoI. The first weapons were handed over to international monitors (EU and ASEAN) on 15 September and Jakarta has begun to remove thousands of soldiers and police. GAM is expected to disarm its roughly 3,000 fighters before the end of the year.

Few dispute that the tsunami accelerated the peace process. "God was angry" is the oft-quoted explanation of government officials and local people. The TNI lost hundreds of its troops stationed along the coast; losses from the predominantly inland-based GAM were much fewer. Yet, in spite of its losses, the widely acknowledged lead role of the TNI in the immediate response to the tsunami improved both national and international relations, and the government were quick to capitalize on this. The peace agreement entails changes in Indonesian law to allow Aceh-based parties to form political parties and participate in

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[11] Restrictions continue regarding travel inland, presumably because these are GAM-held areas.
[12] See, for instance, the UK-based TAPOL human rights report, "A Reign of Terror, Human Rights Violations in Aceh 1998-2000", cited in Ben Terrall, A Brief History of Aceh, Estafeta, Vol. 7, No.1, Winter 2001; and International Crisis Group Report, "Aceh: A Slim Chance for Peace," Jakarta/Brussels, March 27, 2002.
[13] Note on the Peace Agreement, Trocaire, http://www.trocaire.org/newsandinformation/asia/peace.htm

elections due in March 2006; the GAM itself is likely to form a party, while the special autonomous status of Aceh will be retained.

The tsunami response opened up Aceh to high profile international scrutiny. It provided an opportunity for the government to create new response instruments that demonstrated improved accountability and governance. Though low-key conflict continued, the more benign role of the national army together with huge international aid flows was a welcome fillip to the peace process in the province.

UN and NGO presence was important in Aceh to support stability and legitimacy in a rapidly improving political climate. The problems of coordinated distribution of aid were of secondary importance to the peace process in the early months.

International Coordination

United Nations Coordination

Initial Response

At provincial and district levels the GoI initially looked to the UN to take a lead in the coordination of the plethora of international agencies arriving daily. By 4 January, the UN had about 50 staff in position in Banda Aceh and was already looking at the possibility of dedicated passenger flights for technical expertise, and to relieve those who had been working non-stop since the start of the crisis.

The OCHA office was destroyed in the tsunami. Within a week of arrival in Banda Aceh, the UNDAC Team requested and received a support package worth just under US$1 million and set up a new office, including the HIC, which provided information products from 11 January. Daily briefings to incoming agencies took place initially in the tennis court at the UN camp, and thereafter in the Oxfam Office. IOM – the only functional office in Banda Aceh for the first week after the tsunami – became the office for OCHA and about 12 agencies until alternatives were found.

In the early days of the emergency, coordination demands were exceedingly heavy (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). While some individuals were certainly overstretched due to responsibilities for both programme management and coordination, the reality was that the coordination demands were so heavy that it was difficult and indeed unrealistic for agencies to cope with so many meetings and still be able to undertake strategic planning and management.

A systemic problem within the UN and INGOs was that the same individuals responsible for programme and management (and attending coordination meetings) were those with obligations towards implementaion in the field, thus

> overstretching capacities.**[14]** The scope and number of coordination meetings should be limited to ensure an appropriate focus on field implementation.

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.[15]

Four weeks after the tsunami the UN reported[16] that strategic coordination with all key Indonesian actors - Government of Indonesia (GOI), civil society and the private sector - was "strong and well organized."[17], though this has been disputed by a significant number of NGOs cited in this report. It was also reported that UN agency support staff was in place to provide "sufficient technical and logistical support to the Government Disaster Management Centre in the office of the Vice President." The UN also noted that key sectoral advisors had been seconded to Aceh. Later, technical advisory support would be offered to the government for rehabilitation and recovery.

However, the UN recognized at that stage that "further integration of coordination mechanisms with GoI in Banda Aceh and Jakarta" was necessary, along with stronger linkages with effective NGO partners including support for NGOs to improve their own coordination. Most worryingly, in a competitive environment the evaluation found that some organizations were rewarded by donors and their own management for *not* coordinating their actions with others, since their prime objective became to acquire project clients and sites.

A local IASC in Banda Aceh became a focal point for inter-agency 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.

RC/HC, UNDAC, UNJLC and OCHA

UN-OCHA records 77 tsunami-related collective meetings of NGOs, UN, bilaterals and government in Banda Aceh in week 3 of the emergency, with the average remaining

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[14] This point was picked up by UNICEF's 'Documentation of Response to the South Asia Tsunami', September 2005.

[15] It should be noted, though, that NGO and Red Cross personnel were shot in May, after the lifting of the state of emergency.

[16] UN, UN Earthquake and Tsunami - Indonesia Brief for Emergency Relief Coordinator, January 21, 2005 (unpublished)

[17] Indian Ocean Earthquake-Tsunami: Mid term Review, April 2005

above 50 until the third month. The government, including military, met with heads of UN and NGOs each evening, with a highly cooperative spirit recorded by all.

Box 1: Lessons from UNDAC

To fully understand the role of UNDAC, one has to briefly review the chronology of events. UNDAC was able only to reach Banda Aceh in the first week, and hence issued a needs assessment only from there. By then, some temporary shelters were being run by students/volunteers, heads of mosques, and local NGOs. 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 was unable to have first call on assessment flights until the JLC arrived. The NGOs and international military were already self-equipped with aircraft; there was no *common* service for *common* assessment at this early stage, and for various bureaucratic and security reasons UNHAS could not hire aircraft as quickly as others.

On arrival, UNDAC did not have appropriate communications equipment, nor indeed standby staff expertise in this. Satellite phones should have been supplemented with additional equipment and technical expertise to set up quick and efficient reporting across the world. It took too long - six weeks - before an internet connection was established across Aceh.

OCHA Public Information Officers should have been deployed as part of the UNDAC team, especially given the enormous international press interest and presence.

The absence too of a civil military component within the UNDAC team also constrained the access to military assets, a sharing of information and a channel of much needed humanitarian advice to military, especially international, forces.

Not all UNDAC staff were familiar administrative processes, and simple issues such as having no cash or budget codes dogged proceedings. A senior UNDAC team member suggests the solution lies in having a UN-trained administration officer on the team with a suitcase of cash in situations where no offices or banking systems are working.

An integrated UN approach was not served well by establishing only sectoral working groups. A geographic division of labour with one assigned lead agency responsible for a multi-sectoral approach was the preferred model advocated by UNDAC in the first few weeks. This would have involved UN sectoral specialization, with NGO implementers being placed geographically. Following a UNHCR proposal to adopt a geographic approach, the RC/HC issued an email directive to this effect on 22 January, but a voluntary cooperation agreement between agencies was insufficient – firmer management was required.

The adoption of a geographical approach required a thorough examination of coordination vs. management – the latter necessitating a different approach to the coordination mechanism actually in place. In addition, press and donor pressure increased the need to be 'seen' in Banda Aceh and Meulaboh, rather than in less accessible areas; this increased agencies' tendency to work alone rather than as part of a collaborative 'whole'.

Coordination meetings should ideally and minimally, involve information exchange, appropriate allocation of resources, tasking of responsibilities, and a platform for strategic planning. The primary incentive to attend meetings, particularly in the early weeks, was to receive (and impart) regular updated information. Contextual (i.e. political, inter-sectoral, numerical) information was as important as technical sector-specific information, for this was the 'learning period' for most organizations new to the country and/or province.

Full staffing within most UN agencies was not achieved until mid-January; consequently, NGOs were better equipped and 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. In the event, many key INGOs have expressed disappointment over the manner in which the 'assumed' UN leadership translated into inflexibility, even attempted coercion, over methods and practice. For example, Oxfam had already an established and consensual lead on water and sanitation prior to the arrival of UNICEF staff. Was 'joint leadership' therefore necessary?

Nevertheless, the diligence and professionalism of some senior coordinators has also been noted, with certain periods within the first six months of the response being distinguished by good personal and popular leadership. The institutional apparatus and tools of coordination, however sophisticated, are no substitute for the often elusive individual skills of leadership and charisma.

Staff-turnover

The negative impact on coordination of a high turnover of staff, within OCHA as well as other UN and NGO agencies, cannot be overstated. There were several consequences:

1. The reintroduction and/or revision of ideas. 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.
2. Confusion, lack of continuity and poor communication with government officials having to be (frequently) acquainted with a new 'face'.
3. Difficulties for senior staff to establish authority and consensus among the broad humanitarian community, which has to be earned through knowledge and presence on the ground.

There is often a peculiar mismatch between UN agency HR departments issuing short-term contracts "because we can't retain staff for longer"[18] and the expressed desire of some of these staff to remain longer, but having to constantly renegotiate contracts (and, indeed, corresponding visas).

> Rather than acquiring permanent staff after 6 months, as was the case, the aim should be towards 1-year contracts for UN coordination staff after the initial 2 months of the crisis. This would avoid the problems of continuity and legitimacy in managing a crisis of this scale.

Large NGOs, like World Vision and CARE, had greater financial resources than staff capacity. Consequently, in expectation of forthcoming staff, and taking into account the competitive environment, large programme promises were made but not always fulfilled.[19]

Visiting Delegations

Another recognised constraint on the efficiency and effective management of all international agencies is the stream of visiting delegations demanding preparation, housing, transport and hosting. Several UN agencies estimated that as much as 50% of their staff time in the first 3 months was taken up with hosting visitors from their own agency, donors, international politicians, press, and courtesy visits from other agency visitors. This is clearly unacceptable, yet few inter-agency efforts have been made to reduce the load.[20]

> Staff time and strain on logistics from visiting delegations - agency senior staff to politicians, press and 'tsunami tourists' – is unacceptable. 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. This stream of visitors also imposed a burden on local authorities and military forces which were obliged, inter alia, to reprioritise logistics schedules to accommodate the visitors.

Information Structures

The available evidence suggests that the disaster information was slow to reach Jakarta from Banda Aceh and other disaster areas. The ministerial head of disaster management in Jakarta reported that at 4pm on 26 December the only information he had was that about 1,500 people had died in Banda Aceh from a "big tidal wave." His response was to send a group of officials in the mid afternoon on a regular flight from Jakarta. By the

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[18] See, for example, 'Report of the joint OCHA/UNDGO/UNDP mission to Sri Lanka, Maldives and Indonesia', July 2005.

[19] See, for instance, CARE/World Vision, 'Multi-Agency Evaluation of Tsunami Response: Thailand and Indonesia', September 2005. This was also true of smaller NGOs unlikely *ever* to reach full staff capacity; some left and were never seen again.

[20] It is only fair to point out that this evaluation, and the plethora of others, simply adds to the burden that some have referred to as "the second tsunami".

early evening, the full scale of the disaster was gradually being understood, and by about 10pm was already being dealt with directly by the Vice President. By morning relief supplies and support were on the way to Banda Aceh.

The UN stated that by January 21 "critical and time-sensitive information about needs, actors, and program gaps to all response agencies was being provided as required".[21] Yet levels of information sharing in the field during the relief phase were quite varied. Typically, the larger NGOs with more capacity and access to a broad source of information seemed to have less of a need to seek a more coordinated approach to information gathering. For example, UNJLC offered logistics information (transport conditions, etc), yet large NGOs such as World Vision reported that they felt no particular need to go to UNJLC for such information because their own internal sources usually generated such information reliably and quickly. The larger NGOs also shared such information informally.

Humanitarian Information Centre

The UN's Humanitarian Information Centre (HIC), managed through OCHA, was opened in Banda Aceh by 5 January, with satellite offices in Medan, Meulaboh and Calang being set up soon after. These offices did not, however, produce usable products until some weeks later. HIC started collecting data on key areas such as IDPs, shelter, livelihood, health, education, and water and sanitation. This was not primary data collection; it was simply a collation and editing of reporting from government, donors and INGOs. To their credit, HIC staff recognised the need to be dealing with early recovery issues, hence an emphasis on livelihood information and a concerted effort to ensure that GoI received the collated information drawn from secondary sources.

At best, HIC is a dialogue tool for coordination, though its contribution to coherent planning is limited by its lack of both a mandate, and capacity, to analyse data. The HIC's NGO matrix of activities, for example, was a partial failure because many NGOs arrived without a clear idea of what they should be doing. More importantly, a 'who does what where' overview requires a good baseline of needs, one *common* needs assessment, not 50, and coherent data, spatial mapping, etc. Nevertheless, the request for information was pro-actively managed, with humanitarian standards and good practice disseminated, common terminology employed, and liaison officers being present at coordination meetings. (The future for HIC is discussed in a later section.)

Local Information Sources

Not all Banda Aceh information sources are Government, UN and INGO. There were said to be around 100 local NGOs in Banda Aceh at the time of the tsunami. Many new ones were established after it. One local NGO, the Aceh Recovery Forum (ARF), is a local initiative dedicated to the supply of information. As the name suggests its focus is on recovery. The potential for developing this local capacity is apparent (see Box 2).

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[21] Indian Ocean Earthquake-Tsunami: Mid term Review, April 2005.

Box 2: Aceh Recovery Forum

Established in January 2005, ARF obtained one-year funding from DANIDA for its core costs. It has a five person Board of Governors and 14 paid staff for media, monitoring and investigation, networking, public dialogue, data analysis, IT, and finance. ARF describes itself as an "information centre and think tank that is bridging the gap between the people on the one hand and government and other agencies on the other." It holds workshops to bring together stakeholders involved in the reconstruction effort and disseminates information. It also acts as a watchdog especially on issues of tsunami funds and resources. The head of ARF is on the BRR Board.

Currently, the ARF database and activities are confined to Banda Aceh. It offers membership to other NGOs that share its goals and ideals. Solidarity of People for Anti-Corruption (SORAK), Movement of People for Anti-Corruption (GEERAK), and Indonesian Corruption Watch (ICW) are among its members. There are several environmental organizations and student bodies. It also works closely with the local business chamber KADIN, and local religious leaders participate in ARF functions.

In early 2005, ARF submitted a proposal to UNFPA and UNDP to conduct an IDP needs assessment. It was not accepted, based on reservations over the capacity of ARF. Subsequently, a senior ARF employee was hired (with UNDP funds) to process data from a 10,000 sample survey that Oxfam and IOM had conducted. The evaluation team can only assume that this person suddenly became miraculously 'capacitated'! This is illustrative of a wider concern expressed by several local NGOs – that not only were some of their best staff 'poached' by international organizations, but 'capacity constraint' was defined not in relation to the individuals, but rather in relation to which agency they worked for. The issue is taken up in more detail in the TEC Capacities study.

Undoubtedly, actual capacity of local NGOs would have been a constraint in the emergency phase, and the small presence of INGOs pre-tsunami would not have leant itself to building viable partnerships. Arguably, this is a priority for the recovery, rather than the emergency phase.

Yet, still this was a point of dispute. The evaluation team met several leaders of local NGOs who complained of the 'information gap' between local and foreign agencies being heightened by the latter's quick access to the web and superior communication facilities. UN funding assistance, if available at all, was very slow in being disbursed. Some saw the local NGOs being used as nothing more than cheap sources of information when INGOs needed some local information. For example, Forum LSM leadership showed the team their visitors' book that was like a who's who of donors and INGOs in Banda Aceh in January and early February but tailed off to very few such visitors later. The point made was that the international community used the local organizations to establish themselves, made promises to make them local partners but later conveniently

forgot those promises, preferring to raise the number of operational expatriate staff. Indonesia was and is not a failed state, but many who came to assist Indonesia treated it as such.

Language appears to have been a significant constraint against better information dissemination and coordination. In almost all meetings English became the medium of communication at the expense of already relatively marginalized local participants, whether independent NGOs, government officials or even INGO local staff.

Geographical Information Systems (GIS)

In Indonesia BAKOSURTANAL - National Coordinating Agency for Surveys and Mapping - is responsible for GIS. The capacity of this agency is quite limited. Its website carries a limited amount of GIS information on tsunami. It appears that there has been little contact between HIC and BAKOSURTANAL. OCHA had invited it once for a meeting that the World Bank had hosted. Thus, BAKOSURTANAL played only a very marginal role as a source of information for tsunami. BRR has invited the agency to work with it on rehabilitation. However, if the goal of making GoI responsible for disaster preparedness is to be realized, BAKOSURTANAL has to be recognized as a key player in that model. The senior officials of the agency envisage a major role for it in Early Warning. In the recent past, agency representatives have participated in international fora on Early Warning sponsored by the International Oceanographic Centre. Several donors have come forward after the tsunami to assist build capacity in BAKOSURTANAL.

Strategy and Resource Mobilization

The collective funds available to INGOs for both emergency and recovery were greater than either UN, bilateral donors (including IFIs) or the GoI. Indeed, just three INGOs – World Vision, CRS, CARE – had greater resources than all UN agencies together. This 'privatization' of aid was unique in contemporary emergencies, for it made INGOs the key providers and implementers of immediate as well as medium-term assistance, established them as key interlocutors with government, and turned on its head the usual partnership arrangements with bilateral donors and the UN. In the emergency phase, bilateral donors turned almost exclusively to the UN and IFRC as outlets for their own generous budgets, finding it increasingly difficult to actually spend money within a given timeframe.

Some INGOs felt morally obliged to close their appeals for funds. These included CRS which by early February had already received $126 million, the UK's Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) which closed its appeal on 26 February having raised an unprecedented £300 million (plus another £60-70 million separately from British NGOs), Australian Red Cross and MSF. To allay concerns of mismanagement of the huge sums raised ($977 million, of which 77% was pledged by 11 January) by the Flash Appeal, the UN accepted the free services of PriceWaterhouseCooper to track resources. Similarly, the EU (about $2 billion from the Commission and member states to the regional appeal)

announced the opening of a 'European House' in Aceh to coordinate the efforts of its member states.

Several agencies reported 'market constraints' or labour shortfalls as reasons for not spending money sooner. More often it was a matter of over-ambitious planning and the lack of agency capacity itself that led to delays. The Humanitarian Response Review calls for all agencies to measure their surge capacity realistically.[22] Meanwhile, some agencies paradoxically recognised capacity constraints in local NGOs and government before their own.[23] In spite of widespread reassigning of funds to recovery (thus allowing a longer timeframe), nine months after the event less than half of total funds raised by the international community had actually been spent.[24]

The 'too much money' thesis is, of course, contentious, because many INGOs and UN agencies would argue that in reassigning funds to longer term recovery needs they were simply recognizing realities of absorption on the ground. From a coordination point of view, though, there was a lack of inter-agency joint thinking, advocacy and public accountability towards restructuring disbursement timetables. Rather, this appears to have been done on individual agency levels as retroactive policy.

> The retroactive allocation of funds towards longer-term recovery programmes was not subject to coordinated inter-agency policy discussion, advocated and argued on a common policy platform and conveyed to recipients. If the (perhaps unfair) charge was failure to spend promised funds in the first six months, it was often self-inflicted.

NGO Coordination

Local Self-Help and NGOs

As might be expected, in the first days and weeks after the tsunami the non-affected community took in the bulk of those displaced. Self-help and hosting of survivors was a natural response from a closely knit community, but this was ad hoc support, not backed by any financial or material assistance from the government, and was little reported or acknowledged. Notably, the local coordination and support centres (poskos) quickly sprung up all over Aceh to deal with distribution, registration and informal tracing. The cursory mention in international agency literature of "local coping mechanisms" was not enough to suppress the myth of disaster victims being wholly dependent on external aid.

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[22] Adinolfi, C., Bassiouni, D. S., Lauritzsen, H. F., & Williams, H. R. (2005). Humanitarian Response Review: An independent report commissioned by the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator & Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA): United Nations.

[23] Ketel, H., Bhat, M., Fernando, U., Marut, D., & Louwes, K. (2005). Real-Time Evaluation of ACT International Tsunami Disaster Programs Appeal - Asia Earthquake & Tsunamis - ASRE51: ACT International.

[24] For a more detailed outline of spending patterns, see the TEC funding study.

Where the international response was largely driven by high-visibility material inputs, little attention was given, for instance, to supporting host families.[25] Those who sought refuge with relatively unaffected neighbours or extended family could not be easily counted or monitored. Their number (over 200,000) is still only a rough estimate 9 months later. There was much debate over how to target IDPs living with host families, but a perennial lack of technical expertise among INGOs (and WFP for food aid) in this respect.

Media reports reflected – perhaps perpetuated – the impression of passive dependency. The IFRC has noted, for instance, that of 67 BBC reports in the first 2 months, self-reliance was mentioned only three times; by contrast, the Indonesian media gave much greater coverage to the resilience and solidarity of the Acehnese.[26]

> 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.

Some debate has ensued over cash-for-work and/or the use of cash vouchers for non-food items. Where there are functioning markets and a robust enough administration to manage the scheme, this would appear to be a viable option. Well funded NGOs – for example, Mercy Corps in Aceh[27] and CARE in Sri Lanka[28] – used their comparative advantage to experiment with such interventions. On the face of things, the logic is incontestable, even though the economic impact is yet to be measured. But some caution may be needed. A key challenge in Aceh, as in other countries, is the 'patchwork quilt' of approaches that may be either mutually incompatable or, at worst, provoke jealousy between neighbouring communities. The evaluation team met several local NGOs who complained that cultural norms were undermined by the new commercial ethos of large scale aid. Cash schemes may, in their view, introduce monetary value into what previously had been a mutual sharing of labour.

The same might be true of the housing schemes: as property values increase, many people now reject the basic housing on offer from certain NGOs, hoping to acquire a 'better model' from another agency. At least one agency had tried to include a 'community contribution' into their scheme by erecting only foundations, floors and walls, leaving the remainder to the recipient family. The result was a number of half-built houses left empty while recipients either moved to another house elsewhere or waited for another agency to provide the roof![29]

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[25] There were exceptions – for instance, SDC had a special grants programme for host families (see, Adams, L., Meehan, L. M., & Satriana, S. (2005). ODI/UNDP Cash Learning Project Workshop in Aceh, Indonesia: To share experience and learning for cash interventions. Workshop report: June 16th and 17th 2005: ODI.

[26] IFRC, World Disasters Report 2005, Chapter 4.

[27] ODI report on ODI/UNDP Cash Projects Learning Workshop, Aceh, June 2005.

[28] IWV/CARE Multi-Agency Evaluation of Tsunami Response, India & Sri Lanka, August 2005.

[29] IWV/CARE, ibid. which outlines the problems inherent in the 'grant' versus 'loan' approaches.

International NGOs

The transaction costs of coordination for NGOs in emergencies are traditionally justified on two levels: first, they allow either a specialist or small NGO to maximize their impact through collaboration and integration with input from others; second, by demonstrating this additionality, NGOs 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 so as to find new ways of spending generous funds available. On the other hand, UN partnership – a traditional avenue of partnership where resources are limited – was rarely sought. Joint inter-agency needs assessments, other than those initiated by the government and World Bank for the recovery phase, were rare.

> The traditional incentives to coordinate – seeking resources bolstered by active partnerships and the need to maximize sector specialization – were absent. With more than enough money to spend, NGOs more typically generated and held on to information as an exclusive entry point to a client population, and extended their mandates beyond areas of traditional competency.

For every aid agency attending coordination meetings in Indonesia there were perhaps as many as two or three that did not.[30] Only between 10-40 of the total 250+ INGOs[31] actually attended meetings at any one time, and these were usually the same agencies. Many INGOs have complained that the purpose and objectives of meetings were rarely outlined, leading to a sometimes unproductive mix of information sharing and decision-making. The roles, responsibilities and decision-making authority of participants were often not spelled out.[32] Indeed, 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. This is one of the most fundamental weaknesses of coordination at field level; in an effort to build consensus through voluntary participation, a lack of leadership can lead to inefficiency and dispondency.

> 'Rudder-less' and ultimately unproductive meetings lacking a clear objective and clarity over roles, responsibilities and decision-making authority are all too common. 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 assure that these are adhered to.

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[30] The figure is estimated by comparing the average number attending general coordination meetings and the known average number of agencies on the ground in the first three months; a rough extraction of those that would only attend sectoral meetings is accounted for.

[31] CARE's Emergency Operations and Preparedness Officer, present at the time, suggests the total number of INGOs was 400 ('Humanitarian coordination in Indonesia: an NGO viewpoint', Forced Migration Review, July 2005). Since there was no formal registration of NGOs and a provisional HIC database was not available until April, the number is speculative.

[32] Forced Migration Review, ibid, though supported almost universally by INGOs interviewed by the evaluation team.

The allocation of resources was often predetermined. Most NGOs and UN agencies knew that sufficient resources were either in hand or forthcoming, and rapid, sometimes over-ambitious, plans were drawn up accordingly. Notwithstanding 'mandate stretch', sector-specific organizations 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. In fact, 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.

Because NGOs, replete with their own funds, were not implementing partners of the UN (as they traditionally would have been), this sometimes acted as a disincentive to coordination and collaboration with UN agencies.

Some studies have suggested that *"agencies were rewarded by donors and senior management for not collaborating"* as this allowed them to expand their 'territory'.[33] For some, the resulting competition was heightened by internal regulations forbidding expenditures to be re-allocated to medium-term recovery/rehabilitation projects. NGO information was in many cases jealously guarded from the wider aid community, for it represented, and justified, exclusive expenditure within a pre-designated client population.

> Despite huge needs, the international response to the tsunami has been constrained by a lack of agency capacity to spend, and local market to absorb, unprecedented amounts of emergency funds in the short term. Media and donor demands, however, have increased the pressure to be seen to be delivering something tangible, resulting in heightened levels of inter-agency competition.

The subject_object approach to assistance finds its expression in some of the dynamics of international coordination. 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, usually reached 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 depleted local government and have a community sign off on a well-funded, but short-lived, project. The measure of success was in quantitative output terms (houses, tools, medicines, etc.) rather than in a more holistic and sustainable approach to community rebuilding.

The Red Cross/Crescent Movement

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[33] Reed, S., Mashni, A., Sasmitawidjaja, V., Sundhagul, D., & Wright, T. (2005). Multi-agency evaluation of tsunami response: Thailand and Indonesia: Care and World Vision.

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 (PNS) 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 TNI.

The IFRC has its own set of problems over coordinating PNS's, and has been remarkably honest in admitting shortcomings within the Movement. Unsolicited and inappropriate goods caused the Secretary General of the PMI to send a harsh letter to PMSs complaining of the failure to adhere to guidelines putting the PMI's reputation at risk.[34] 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 PNS's domestic needs and perceptions of what was needed, rather than the expressed needs of the affected population.[35] For example, it was extremely difficult to get commitments from PNS's to deal with TLCs, perhaps because they were not as 'visible' as permanent houses.[36] This said, some IFRC member agencies did mitigate urgent wat/san issues in some TLCs upon request.

> Coordination among national Red Cross/Crescent societies, and between themselves and the IFRC and Indonesian Red Cross/Crescent, was chaotic in the first weeks, and has in itself led to a major internal review of the behaviour and obligations of the Movement as a whole [37]. Since overall tsunami funds raised by national societies (all countries) and the IFRC amounted to some $2.2 billion, the urgency of regulating coordination within the movement is self-evident.

The sudden transformation from a small to large IFRC presence in the country was perhaps at the heart of the problem. The Federation itself did not have experts (e.g. in livelihoods), and where this existed in visiting national societies, it was not a shared resource for the Movement as a whole.[38] Ultimately, only the PMI could have exerted a degree of control over operations undertaken by PNSs, but with donor governments often channelling their contributions through their own national societies, this control was limited by capacity and political constraints. 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.

Civil-military Coordination

Military Response

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[34] Cited in Tsunami Real Time Evaluation synthesis report, March 2005.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Interview with IFRC head of delegation in Jakarta, September.
[37] The Movement Coordination Framework, presented in the Regional Strategy and Operational Framework in early March 2005, http://www.ifrc.org/docs/pubs/disasters/ars_en.pdf
[38] Ibid.

In the wake of the tsunami, the President of Indonesia, recognising the sheer scale of the devastation, the inaccessibility of much of the western coastline and the resources required to bring assistance, declared an open sky policy, lifting extant movement restrictions to tsunami-affected areas. Similarly, the GAM leadership declared an immediate cessation of hostilities. In the meantime, and almost immediately after the tsunami struck, the security forces in Aceh, some already engaged in immediate assistance and themselves affected, were instructed to adopt a more defensive posture. On 28 December 2004, Major General Bambang Darmono was despatched to Banda Aceh and on 2 January 2005 was given and assumed operational responsibility, under the overall direction of Minister Alwi Shihab, for the relief effort in the Province. The TNI said it deployed 15,000 of those troops already in Aceh (of which there were about 50,000) to the disaster area, supplementing these with a further 12,000 two weeks later to deal with clearing rubble and bodies.[39]

As an indiscriminate force, the tsunami brought death, injury and destruction to all, including members of the security forces and their families. But it was the military with their authority and command and control systems that was first able to rally the first visible response to the tsunami.[40] In the absence of civil leaders, many of whom had either been killed or severely traumatised by loss, the military assumed command and many troops worked alongside the civilian population, most notably the Indonesian Red Crescent (PMI) and students, to save lives, clear and bury bodies and to maintain law and order.

Civil-Military Cooperation

Within hours of the disaster offers of military assistance were being proffered to the Government of Indonesia particularly from countries in the region. Of the seventeen military force structures eventually present[41], only two were not considered within the Indonesian command structure but nonetheless worked closely with General Bambang Darmono - their presence and activities sanctioned by him. By mid-January 4,478 foreign troops were in Aceh.[42]

> Only two of 17 military forces were outside the Indonesian command structure. This not only facilitated co-ordination, but also demonstrated a respect for the sovereignty of Indonesia and its leadership role which national interlocutors (and others) have commented was not in evidence amongst many civilian organisations.

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[39] Indonesia Defence Department News, 14 January, cited in 'Responding to Aceh's Tsunami: the first 40 days', Eye on Aceh, April 2005.

[40] For example, in Meulaboh, the Military Commander of Aceh Besar recognised the early characteristics of a Tsunami and initiated the evacuation of civilians to higher ground (Indonesia Lessons Learned Conference and interview with the Military Second in Command (2i/c) of Aceh Besar).

[41] Australia, New Zealand and the UK operated under one command structure.

[42] TNI Information Centre (Puspen), 17 January 2005.

With information scarce, many militaries deployed without a clear idea of actual needs on the ground[43] – nonetheless they knew that immediate medical assistance would be required, as would water and food. Thus in the early stages their efforts were directed towards such tasks (including evacuation of casualties) until greater clarity on what was needed was available. In the days that followed engineering teams and civil military specialists (military CIMIC teams) were deployed to ascertain infrastructure damage and refine needs in consultation with local government structures, the UN and NGO community. In terms of early response it was very much supply driven and, in the absence of any direct guidance to the contrary or assurances of civilian capacity to meet needs, remained such for the initial weeks. All interlocutors agreed that the military was fundamental in providing immediate assistance, saving lives and relieving suffering although reservations were expressed (by one particular humanitarian organization but probably harboured by many more) as to the military's true commitment to humanitarian principles alone.

As accessibility improved and civilian organisations were able to take over medical services, shelter provision, food distribution and the like, military resources became surplus to requirement. However, military forces continued to arrive after the immediate phase even as others were planning their departure. Despite this, and any objections that members of the humanitarian community might raise[44], these (like other earlier offers of military assistance - and in some cases donor funded assistance) were agreements reached bilaterally between sovereign governments with a view also, one can speculate, to cementing or improving relations.[45]

> The international community is acutely aware that aid, military or otherwise, may be used to further geo-political agendas. But it is difficult to level criticism against the military in these particular circumstances when there is equal evidence of civilian agencies vying to be more visible than others to satisfy domestic PR and fundraising.
>
> Realistically, in the short term, the humanitarian community is unlikely to exert any influence over such gestures of support and thus should consider putting greater effort into ensuring that assistance offered is put to good use and at the very least does "no harm".

All but a few foreign forces departed well before the official handover of the TNI to civilian leadership at the end of March and the date set by the Government of Indonesia for foreign military withdrawal.

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[43] Commanders of Malaysian and Singaporean forces in Aceh specifically cited this was the case.
[44] It is not known whether any such formal representation was made on behalf of the humanitarian community.
[45] It is also worth highlighting that not all militaries have the same ability to act immediately, some having to go through rigorous national approval mechanisms before deployment. This inevitably contributed to the delay so that a purely political motivation for involvement cannot always be attributed.

Military Forces and the Humanitarian Community

The Government, aware of its responsibilities vis a vis the security of humanitarian workers[46], had to ensure through its military commands in the Province a balance between that responsibility and the access it allowed humanitarian actors into areas deemed insecure. Mistrust and uneasiness were evident on both sides and those dealing with issues of access, etc. at a senior level in both the military and aid community had to tread carefully to ensure their own agendas were not placed in jeopardy.

Access to tsunami affected areas[47] was, by in large, permitted and funds donated by donor and public alike were specifically allocated to tsunami relief. It was on that basis that previous entry restrictions were lifted. By most accounts[48], there is very little evidence of deliberate discrimination in the distribution of assistance to the tsunami-affected populations. Whether or not, in the interests of future conflict prevention, all of those in the province affected by poverty, conflict and neglect should have been helped equally is an issue that needs to be addressed but it also raises many more complex issues regarding our own limiting parameters in humanitarian assistance in crisis response.

Ideally, humanitarian assistance is impartial, independent and neutral. Should there have been greater and earlier advocacy by the international response community to broaden its remit and extend assistance to all in need? The Norwegian Refugee Council, for instance, wished to promote advocacy workshops precisely to look at this issue, but arrangements to hold such workshops in Meulaboh and Banda Aceh were cancelled "due to new regulations obliging all foreign assistance providers to organize activities in conjunction with a government institution".[49]

Experience has demonstrated that assistance delivered only to a specific group based on a particular categorisation – IDPs, refugees, former combatants, those directly affected by conflict, natural disasters etc - without addressing similar needs in the surrounding population may provoke conflict by exacerbating tensions, reinforcing or creating inequality and rendering communities more vulnerable to political manipulation. In Aceh, as the peace process gets underway, this merits considerably greater consideration.

Remarkably, given the background and the normal attitude of humanitarian workers to military forces generally, the TNI is generally credited to have done a 'good job'[50]. However not all was smooth – the tenure of humanitarian workers in the province was precarious, as was the presence and movement of all foreigners including international military forces. Whilst this did cause concern and speculation internationally, it is now

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[46] Some years previously the death of an expatriate in the Province had certainly brought an international opprobrium of Indonesia (Interview with General Darmono)
[47] There is however evidence that some of those affected by the Tsunami fled to higher ground and thus access to them, often on the grounds of security, was also more limited.
[48] This includes TEC .interviews and meetings with humanitarian personnel in Aceh
[49] FMR, July 2005 "Post Tsunami Protection Concerns in Aceh"
[50] Countless interviews and meetings with humanitarian agencies and organisations, plus views of
    participants at Lessons Learned workshops in Jakarta and Chiang Mai and TEC workshops testify to this.

perhaps more understandable as the results of the "compassionate competition"[51] become more evident.

Civil-Military Response Mechanisms

Civil-Military coordination mechanisms are seldom wholly satisfactory to either party and, although there are other limiting factors, rarely wholly effective unless each party is in itself well-coordinated with a coherent view of its overall objectives and an articulation of a plan to meet them. Military-to-military coordination is considerably easier; a common and well understood command and control system, common staff and service delivery structures[52] and military camaraderie facilitates communication and co-operation. In Indonesia, this was complemented by regional forces familiar with the customs, culture and often the language of the country. Many commanders knew each other from previous staff training and exercises and this too helped resolve problems. But military-to-military interaction was not perfect in Indonesia; prior notification, for example, to the Indonesian Commander of military tasking and force arrival did not always occur.[53] However, it was the interaction with the UN and NGOs which, for both the Indonesian civil authorities and the military, was more disjointed and time consuming.[54]

Working with Indonesian military forces and operating on a push basis, the international militaries were able to deliver essential supplies to surviving populations and assist in either the evacuation or treatment, albeit limited in number, of trauma victims. Their logistics assets were put at the disposal of the humanitarian community but waiting for any future plan (as to the use of these and other services available) from the humanitarian community proved frustrating as little direction was forthcoming resulting in a rather ad hoc response to requests[55].

Few abuses were reported from the TNI involvement in the relief operation, but there may still be issues of equity and access not addressed. The Action by Churches Together (ACT) evaluation points to documented abuses against IDPs, women and local population by TNI and GAM.[56] ACT works exclusively through local organisations, which may explain their greater access to such information.

From the very outset of the crisis there was a need for extensive liaison between the GoI, the international military forces and the response community – primarily the UN. At a senior level there were contacts between the Humanitarian Co-ordinator and military forces on an as needed basis but no doubt there were other priorities which took

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[51] Term used by IFRC delegate in, Sri Lanka.

[52] For example, logistics, medical, engineering, personnel, plans, operations, etc.

[53] Indonesia Lessons Learned Workshop and interview with General Darmono.

[54] Interviews with Indonesian Military Commanders and views expressed at the TEC workshop in Medan.

[55] UN OCHA's Request for Assistance and Information (RFA and RFI) process was circulated to the UN and field commanders in late January but, for many in the humanitarian community that process was not followed. In order to give the appropriate advice the process also relies on a clear view of priorities by the UN across the humanitarian spectrum.

[56] Ketel et al, 'Real Time Evaluation of ACT International Tsunami Disaster Response Appeal', June 2005.

precedence. Operationally there were daily meetings to facilitate co-ordination between parties but in the very early days attendance was erratic or lacked clear follow up procedures to ensure that the relevant actors within the UN or larger humanitarian community were informed. This resulted in confusion and delays as many in the military mistakenly took a token UN presence to be representative of the community as a whole.[57] Nor did civil military specialists act as a single Point of contact regarding queries and requests between the humanitarian community and the military resulting in either an already overburdened TNI having to deal with numerous individual enquiries and requests from disparate organisations or, an Agency or NGO "hunting down" military support. Neither was satisfactory. Unlike previous emergencies the UN did not establish a Humanitarian Assistance Operations Centre which "would have brought the major agencies together simplifying communication, liaison and planning."[58]

OCHA's Military and Civil Defence Unit is tasked in emergencies to provide the conduit between the assistance community and military forces. But the impression in Indonesia was that that capacity was weak (or non existent) in the early days. Individuals could and did make a difference but it is difficult on an institutional basis to see what additional value UN CMCOORD in Indonesia brought, or was allowed to bring, in furthering civil military relations. Its only tangible products - the Request for Assistance (RFA) and Request for Information (RFI) forms and procedures - late as their introduction was, is an apparent duplication of the service provided by UNJLC.

Initially the CMCoord Officers, who were deployed from MCDU's Surge Roster on 4 January, were subsumed into UNJLC structures because they lacked the necessary equipment to be self-supporting. This did not help identify them as specialist interlocutors between the humanitarian and military communities. Additionally, Terms of Reference and reporting lines were unclear and the apparent lack of knowledge of the 'service' within the UN system[59] affected or even hindered the potential value of their role. With little to offer (except individual style and character) beyond an apparent duplication of what the UNJLC was doing in matching logistics resources to requirements, it is difficult to see, under the current roster, management and support system, what difference it made. And yet, all interlocutors agreed that there was a need for dedicated civil-military personnel.

The UNJLC also had difficulties in its initial staffing and in its plans to ensure the response community had the civilian logistics support required for the task. The appointment early in proceedings of a senior 'retired' military officer was, however, invaluable in fostering cooperation amongst the military forces present and in accelerating the efficacy of UNJLC operations in its coordinating efforts. Members of serving militaries were also seconded to UNJLC in both Jakarta and Aceh to assist - an arrangement that was of benefit to both parties in terms of timely exchange of information.

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[57] Views expressed by Commander of UK CIMIC team based in Banda Aceh.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Indonesia Lessons Learned Workshop.

The field deployment of a specialised cadre of civil military advisers to rapid onset emergencies is rare. The tsunami changed all of this and brought into sharp focus some of the duplication that exists in the UN system and the weaknesses inherent in the current roster arrangements. It highlighted the importance of staff selection, training, field support and management procedures, the latter two, in particular, being of critical importance but seldom considered.[60]

> A review of the UN's common services (or those at the disposal of the Humanitarian Coordinator), including civil-military expertise, should be considered to examine more thoroughly the synergies particularly between UN CMCOORD, UNJLC, UNDAC and DSS. In Indonesia, overlap and duplication were apparent.

Civil-Military Policy

Policies, endorsed by the IASC, exist regarding the use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in both natural, technological (1994) and complex emergencies (2003). No such policy is available to cover relations with military forces in natural disaster response in a conflict environment. Thus each agency or organisation in Aceh followed its own procedures (if any existed) resulting in a wide variation in approach. At a local level this was not only confusing but could have proved dangerous as some, particularly those with little experience, were totally unaware of the potential risks associated with having too close an affiliation with military forces. This would have been detrimental to all, including the Government of Indonesia, and not least the beneficiaries. Yet there was no one point of contact - with the exception of the Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator already overburdened - within the humanitarian community to provide advice and mediate between parties. The military has such a body, CIMIC, and it was difficult even for them to determine who or what had authority in such a rapidly evolving environment particularly when staff turnover made a mockery of forming relationships for action.

Military vs Humanitarian Approaches

That there were differences between military and humanitarian approaches was unsurprising. All military actions were geared to achieving emergency life saving, evacuation and relocation and it was against these that progress was measured. The time scale envisaged was short – stabilise, hand over to civilian authorities and organisations and depart. On the other hand, the humanitarian community did not appear to have an overall plan, nor was information gathered and analysed in such a way as to identify areas of most need, despite a plethora of assessments undertaken. Few individuals appeared willing to seize the initiative – the notable exception being the agreement between WHO/USAID and US military forces to carry out health assessments from the USS Lincoln, which enabled several agencies to participate in this joint endeavour. This episode is worth paying attention to because it was not universally popular in the humanitarian community as the decision to go ahead was taken without extensive prior

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[60] Numerous interviews with UN personnel involved in the Tsunami response and previous crises.

consultation. Yet to the military it demonstrated that decisive action and planning were possible in partnership with UN agencies and NGOs, and it restored amongst many in the military a degree of credibility in the UN system. The Combined Support Force Commander stated that he would have been very willing to re-prioritise the assets at his disposal to undertake similar assessments, either on a sectoral or geographic basis, in coordination with the international humanitarian community and Government of Indonesia – but these requests were never forthcoming.[61] However, it should be noted that in the early days of January, several agencies sought access to US air assets to undertake assessments down the devastated west coast. These requests, made both in Banda Aceh and routed through other channels to Washington, brought a response from US officers on the ground that there was no time for assessments and that the priority was to drop off aid and transport the injured. The agreement for the WHO/USAID health assessment came only later after considerable pressure had been applied by agencies.

Some have argued that the UN security status delayed making such assessment requests earlier, but Phase 4 security does allow essential humanitarian tasks to continue, though it prohibits overnight stays without adequate protection cover. This was possible using the military assets available, but difficulty in communicating with those having authority over the air assets precluded the possibility of an earlier assessment of needs.

In summary, that each party brought value to the crisis is not in doubt. Most immediately visible was the military's speed of response underpinned by its logistics superiority. Less obvious but fundamental to its performance were the underlying command and control systems, the common understanding between forces and the ability to slot into existing military structures – all of which facilitated action and delivery. But all of which too entailed years of training and well practised and accepted procedures.

The civilian contribution, slower to gain momentum and impact, and distinct from the military's supply and delivery 'push', was a greater understanding of how to reach marginalised or vulnerable groups and the need ensure that adequate protection measures are taken to safeguard them. Moreover, civilian organizations give attention, after the initial trauma, to primary health care and, in all areas of life, to building the capacity of the local structures and community mechanisms. And finally, they have years of experience of working in crisis environments and an awareness of past lessons, many of which have never been learned - so can be a source of considerable advice.

So here are the grounds for a productive partnership in the future. Whether or not the specific circumstances of a particular crisis permit such a close working relationship will always be dependant upon the specifics of the crisis. But by way of preparedness, particularly on a regional basis where local knowledge, customs and relationships plus local resourcing opportunities play such an important role in effective and speedy response, there should be greater efforts made – particularly by humanitarian and recovery actors – to participate in joint exercises and make efforts to truly understand respective systems.

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[61] Interview with Lt General Blackman, Commander CSF 536.

> Mutual understanding between military and humanitarian bodies can only be enhanced through joint exercises, advance agreements to exchange 'liaison' staff at the outset of an emergency response and to follow agreed procedures for cooperation, and a more determined effort to understand and accommodate the particularities of each institutional structure.

Crises of this nature are very context-specific. Yet, experience from the tsunami has shown that in the wake of a huge natural calamity all people even in conflict affected or prone environments work together, at least initially, in a spirit of common humanity. Recent developments in Kashmir indicate that this may not just be unique to the tsunami. If such is the case, it gives greater impetus to nourishing links between military forces and the humanitarian response community.

Coverage

As with all country case studies, the following examples of sector-specific work are highly selective, chosen as a comment on inter (and in some cases intra-) agency coordination. They obviously do not represent the totality of international assistance, nor the totality of any one agency's programme. We have purposely chosen to give greater attention to the health and shelter sectors.

Sectoral and Geographic Coverage

The assumption of responsibilities within sectors often rested with 'lead' agencies. In the first two weeks, the UNDAC team tried to introduce the traditionally preferred model of a UN lead agency per sector and NGO geographical placement (see Box 1). WHO, for instance, took a lead in health, initially launching assessments (in partnership with USAID/DART) from the USS Abraham Lincoln off the west coast; UNICEF led on water and sanitation, and WFP on food aid. Multi-sectoral coordination within each geographical area would have been the preferred approach, but most agencies wanted to be 'seen', resulting in crowding initially around Banda Aceh and Meulaboh.

Several NGOs have commented on the informal and semi-formal coordination they themselves initiated. Throughout the relief and well into the recovery phase, key INGOs met on a Monday evening, made joint decisions and conveyed these to OCHA. World Vision, for example, took the initiative in promoting common agreements over administrative issues (salary scales, house rental, price fixing for construction work and labour laws) to offset the dangers of roaring inflation. Distortions in the labour market, for instance, were resulting in translators being paid $500/day.[62]

> A plethora of well-funded NGOs, an open door policy by government and the enormous media-driven pressure to show short-term "results" lends itself mainly to 'vertical' reporting headquarters and donors rather than 'horizontal'

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[62] CARE/World Vision, 'Multi-Agency Evaluation of Tsunami Response' ibid.

Food Security

WFP's leadership of the food aid sector has not been challenged and its food distribution programme is widely regarded as having been efficient and timely. The initial effort at assessing food aid needs was hampered, however, by difficulties in obtaining priority seats on the helicopter flights from the USS Lincoln, with some dispute with WHO over this matter.[63] The common UN service, UNHAS, also was not particularly efficient in filling the gap[64], and WFP eventually used World Vision helicopters. Their assessment was in close collaboration with Save the Children Alliance (led by SC-US), World Vision, Helen Keller International, CARE, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Mercy Corps. It also had the support of the GoI. The international NGOs, notably CRS and Oxfam, were instrumental in persuading the government to open the BULOG warehouses in Aceh, since WFP's food was still on the high seas by the second week of January.

In Banda Aceh a Food Aid Coordination Committee was established. There is a similar committee in Jakarta that meets once a month for the whole country. Three major factors hampered food distribution in the relief phase:

- Inaccessibility of the communities – the tsunami damaging the roads was the main cause.
- Shortage of landing vessels.
- GoI relaxed security only for a 5km to 8km strip of land from the sea coast. But some IDPs moved in to the interior beyond this belt. They were harder to reach for food relief. The UN agencies for obvious reasons adhered to the official boundaries. However, INGOs in some instances managed to circumvent the rule to reach IDPs in need.

One constraint was the lack of systematic information on who got food and who did not following the tsunami. Many NGOs who reached communities neither attended meetings nor reported what they were doing. New information technologies may have to be used to have coordinating dialogues without necessarily summoning everybody to be physically present at one location.

Water and Sanitation

There were weekly wat/san meetings in Banda Aceh and Meulaboh. Chaired by UNICEF, these were usually attended by technical specialists from NGOs such as CARE and World Vision, two of the larger players. The problem was that although technically their work may have been high standard and in accordance with Sphere standards, the

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[63] This charge is repeated in WFP's own evaluation: WFP Tsunami Real-Time Evaluation, Final Report, September 2005.

[64] After three weeks, UNHAS still had no helicopters in Aceh. Five helicopters offered by DFID to UNHAS were delayed while being repainted.

inter-linkage of wat/san facilities – with each agency taking a specialist branch – was sometimes neglected, and maintenance, ostensibly a community responsibility, was not clearly outlined or advocated for. A Mercy Corps survey in May found sub-standard practices in this regard.[65]

Health

Indonesian health officials generally highly appreciated the role that WHO played to assist GoI. The government was constrained through a lack emergency relief funds, not least because Indonesia's fiscal year ends in December. Money for the new fiscal year usually begins to come only around March. This points to the necessity for a National Disaster Contingency Fund.

It took approximately two weeks for reasonably reliable data to be available to assess the full damage and needs with respect to health in Aceh. The information came mainly from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The Health Ministry had requested the INGOs to report on their respective capacities, the work they did in the field, and the field conditions that they observed. GoI officials say that only the major actors such as UNICEF, WHO, and MSF bothered to report. This was not only neglectful, but potentially dangerous, particularly if medical assistance is given twice over.

Other problems arising from lack of preparedness, information deficiency and coordination failures included:

- Importing drugs with instructions in languages that locals could not understand.
- Wasted capacity (e.g. US hospital ship with 1000 beds had 30 patients).
- Surgeons being on the ground for a month and only administering anti-diarrhea drugs to other aid workers.

There is a lack of standard operating procedures (SOP) for disaster relief in all sectors. However, it is also true that given the scale of this disaster and the response, the best preparation in the world would not have avoided some of the bottlenecks and other problems discussed, though it might help reduce the scale. For example, in health provision, WHO has no SOP. This may have compounded problems when medical supplies arrived from multiple sources for relief. There was no standardization whatsoever. Indonesian health officials complain that they had no resources or the time to categorize the drugs and make them available as appropriate to those who were in need. In fact given complications arising from different dosages, expiry dates, etc, more harm than good could be done if some of these supplies had been used. One solution to this problem may be for WHO offices in country of origin of such donations to be responsible for coordination and delivery of all such supplies. A SOP for this would be helpful to streamline the system.

WHO is assisting Indonesia to set up a Health Information System for Northern Sumatra, including emergency preparedness. Local officials are especially keen to have what they

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[65] Cited in CARE/World Vision, 'Multi-Agency Evaluation of Tsunami Response', September 2005.

described as 'simple guidelines' on how to handle NGOs in emergency situations. These could form a part of the standard operating procedures that the WHO says it lacks but wants to prepare for emergencies.

The major NGOs cooperated with WHO's Emergency Surveillance System. Initially NGOs were asked to fill a simple one-page form to get data to keep track of diseases and implement a program to prevent the spread of disease. Two mobile hotlines were established, one in English and one in Bahasa to permit people call in to report disease. The district level health system was deemed not adequate to launch and maintain this health early warning system. Thus the responsibility for monitoring the information inflow and providing a response was entrusted to the principal health authority.

From July 2005, WHO assisted in the development of a National Integrated Disease Surveillance System (IDS), also known by the Bahasa acronym STP. This is a computer/based system. WHO is training personnel to use the system and also providing a desk top to each of the district health offices. Where computers are not available, real time surveillance via a web-based SMS information supply mechanism is being developed. For this also connectivity is essential. WHO expects BBR to take a lead to persuade the private sector to improve connectivity.

In addition to IDS, WHO has also launched a program called Sympus designed to build capacity in the health sector through assistance to develop health centres with staff training and improved basic equipment.

Examples of coordination sacrificed to expediency were numerous. In the health sector, OCHA's Humanitarian Information Centre (HIC) reported in March that 22 health NGOs were operating between Calang and Meulaboh along Aceh's devastated west coast, while 150,000 people on the east coast were poorly served. Though it was true that the west coast suffered far greater damage, the distribution of such services in Aceh was not based on any rational assessment of needs. By February, ten international field hospitals were set up in Banda Aceh alone, working at much less than maximum capacity. Meanwhile, teams of skilled surgeons and paramedics from across the world could not find enough patients. Some of these teams were on short-term offer from donor governments, others recruited as volunteers attached to either national Red Cross/Crescent societies or to NGOs. The problem was not just geographical distribution; it was also that the difficulties of logistics and access to remote populations had not been foreseen by providers.

Shelter

With high levels of displacement, the government was soon constructing 'temporary' barracks (TLCs) and entreating those in host families to move into the barracks. Having first identified a target number of twenty-four barrack camps to house some 35,000 IDPs in "phase one" of this project, the government promptly revised these figures upwards, to thirty-nine such temporary relocation sites to accommodate 35,000 households, or some

140,000 displaced persons.[66] This might not have been the people's first choice[67], but most understood that immediate needs (food, medicine, temporary shelter materials) were more likely to be found in concentrated populations easily monitored by government and international agencies.

The move to barracks (TLCs) was not universally accepted. It was also a solution that was imposed upon affected communities without consultation as to what they themselves preferred. For some families and communities, a move to a TLC meant moving away from the land they owned as well as from where they could find a job. Had the GoI's plan for transitional shelter been fully implemented (and had *all* the beneficiary population agreed to move in), then why were so many people still in tents later in the year? The desire of people to remain 'connected' to their land was perhaps overlooked in the haste to move people to areas where food, medical care, etc. could be more easily managed.

Human Rights Watch and Human Rights First expressed concern that the new camps could be misused by the military as a way of controlling the population for military purposes unless human rights safeguards are put in place.[68] The local press and several advocacy NGOs argued not only that construction companies and landowners stood to gain from their construction, but also that such TLCs would delay the more permanent housing solutions promised by international agencies (in this they were partially correct). There was also some unease from UN and INGOs afraid that international standards, particularly in water and sanitation, could not be met quickly. Their fears were largely unfounded, but the prolongation of TLCs beyond the few months originally anticipated has again raised fears of sustainability.

There are some fundamental issues here regarding assumptions and approaches promoted by the international community alongside a traditional tendency towards population control by government authorities. 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. Either as a result of INGO inexperience or a narrow technical expertise or mandate, few agencies are attempting to rebuild the traditional village structure as an integrated project[69].

Given the demographic changes brought about not only by the tsunami but also changes in government policy – and, of course, displacement caused by the war – the question is whether UN and INGOs had sufficient knowledge and inclination to facilitate processes

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[66] Bakornas PBP, *Bulletin*, No. 32 (January 25, 2005) and No. 39 (January 31, 2005).
[67] Against the backdrop of recent counterinsurgency campaigns in Aceh, which have featured large-scale forced displacement of civilian populations, sometimes as a deliberate strategy of war under martial law, it was hardly surprising that, in the aftermath of the tsunami, there was a reluctance towards the barracks relocation initiative. See, for instance, 'Back to the Barracks: *Relokasi Pengungsi* in Post-Tsunami Aceh', Eva-Lotta Hedman, Indonesia 80 (October 2005), Oxford University.
[68] Human Rights Watch: 'Indonesia: After Tsunami Acehnese fear forced relocation', New York, February 7, 2005.
[69] UNHCR's proposal in January for a community-based, inter-agency approach in a pilot project to rebuild communities for the sub-district of Krueng Sabee was an exception.

of developing new village structures which better help new communities face such challenges as care of orphaned children, single parent families, female headed households, male household heads with responsibility for rearing children, loss of traditional livelihoods, etc.

> Creating circumscribed 'client populations' intensified inter-agency competition while ignoring more challenging integrated approaches and community ownership of the recovery process.

It is premature to talk of a recovery phase when as late as October there were still 67,000 people in tents and makeshift dwellings, 75,000 in TLCs and 293,000 in host families.[70] A much smaller number was permanently settled in new housing. A new 'emergency' loomed as the rainy season approached; many temporary shelters were simply inadequate in structure and sanitation.

The chain of events and decision-making in terms of how the operation addressed emergency, transitional and permanent shelter needs to be examined. The initial response for emergency shelter was tents, and after some delays, tents were delivered to communities in need. In terms of transitional shelter, the GOI determined early on that its strategy for transitional shelter was 'barracks' - the Temporary Living Centres - with the intention of persons living there for up to two years. By increasing the target to 140,000 displaced persons, the TLCs were targeting the full number of displaced persons not with host families. This decision by the Government, while controversial, represented the transitional shelter solution. Agencies with a long-term shelter mandate should, then, have focused immediately on permanent shelter options. UNHCR attempted to do so with its Krueng Sabee pilot project proposal at the end of January but UNHCR's enforced departure from Aceh at the end of March and its return only at the end of June inevitably spelt delays in implementation of permanent shelter for these communities.

In housing and other sectors, the quest for clients intensified as the number of INGOs increased. INGOs were aware of the need to have signed MoUs with government authorities prior to working in a particular area, but no clear guidance was given as to which level of government was responsible for the MoUs. An ad hoc 'staking out' of a client population guaranteed by paper agreements signed either at national, provincial or district levels was done with little inherent logic or coordination. The result was duplication or upward bargaining (i.e. promises of better housing, plus additional related inputs) among competing agencies for one client population. Yet notably in the shelter sector, in almost all cases the number of houses actually constructed fell far short of the numbers promised in MoUs.

By contrast, in the education sector there was a reasonably successful attempt to coordinate who would rebuild where and who would provide what additional support where. Coordination was not perfect but it certainly helped.

Gender Issues and Vulnerable Groups

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[70] OCHA, Banda Aceh, September 2005.

The IASC has committed itself to the principles and practices embedded in international conventions[71], and IASC policy statements specifically require member agencies to include gender data collection, analysis and programming in emergencies.[72] ILO, IOM, Oxfam, UNFPA, UNHCR and UNIFEM each deployed gender officers in the early days of the emergency and approximately 40-60% of these agencies' staff were women.[73] WFP apparently felt that the urgency of logistics and programming meant that ensuring staff gender balance and mainstreaming of gender issues was not a key concern in the recruitment and deployment of TDYs (temporary staff) at this time. However, nutrition and food security assessments - and some health assessments - included preliminary gender indicators[74], despite the almost total absence of baseline data in the province. Very few of the early UN sitreps contained disagreggated data on women.

> The absence of baseline data and rare occurrence of data collection on vulnerability (or of disaggregated gender data) was apparent not only in the early phase but also in recovery plans, and will undoubtedly adversely affect programmes in, for instance, livelihoods and shelter (particularly land ownership).

The Provincial Bureau of Women Empowerment initially had no special plans to address the needs of women, explaining that men and women had suffered equally.[75] Later (undoubtedly under the influence and pressure of international agencies), the view was qualified, but the near-uniform domination of men in leadership structures (including international) 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. The evaluation noted, for example, that needs assessment data – and baseline data available to HIC even 6 months into the recovery period - was rarely disaggregated along gender lines. 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.[76]

Unusually for an emergency of this nature, one of the first agencies to arrive in Banda Aceh was UNFPA. Recognising that reproductive health, women's participation in decision-making and access to relief goods was a challenge, sectoral coordination groups were set up. UNFPA, UNIFEM and Oxfam, alongside the Aceh Provincial Government's Women's Empowerment Office, created a Gender Theme Group with a longer-term perspective looking at, for instance, property rights in the reconstruction phase. But this was not concentrating on gender mainstreaming as such, and had little direct influence on inter-agency methods employed in the relief programme. They did, however, derive

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[71] Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), for example, provides a full list.

[72] 'Policy Statement for the Integration of a Gender Perspective in Humanitarian Assistance', IASC, May 1999.

[73] Figure cited in WFP Real Time Evaluation, September 2005, and confirmed by OCHA Banda Aceh.

[74] WFP, ibid.

[75] Cited in 'Responding to Aceh's Tsunami: the first 40 days', Eye on Aceh, April 2005.

[76] The tsunami's impact on women, Oxfam Briefing Note, March 2005.

lessons from the experience as a whole; for example, that a more pro-active stance needs to be taken towards the national military in providing them with both equipment (e.g. female sanitary, HIV prevention), the means to disseminate information (where to go for anti- and post- natal treatment) and perhaps accompanying personnel in the immediate recovery phase.

The Livelihoods Working Groups meetings were not managed particularly well. The 'rotating chair' for each meeting led to a lack of continuity, poorly prepared minutes, and no consistent follow up on decisions reached.[77] There was also some evidence of wholly inappropriate and culturally insensitive intentions expressed by some faith-based agencies.[78]

III. Recovery and Rehabilitation Phase

The transition 'boundary' presents challenges for government and agencies alike; activities become much more projectised and maintaining a holistic overview of needs is more difficult as the focus of individual agencies is increasingly sectoral. To a large extent, UN agencies initially treated the tsunami as a 'normal' 90-day disaster, with consequences on staffing among other things (see above). Moreover, the skill sets of INGO and UN staff 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. This said, some concern was expressed that the increasing focus on long-term recovery planning was distracting attention away from ongoing humanitarian needs.[79]

> Coordination and linkages between ongoing humanitarian needs and recovery planning were not well established. The result has been missed opportunities in inter-sectoral planning and, particularly in the temporary shelter sector, an extraordinary miscalculation and neglect of needs.

High staff turnover and the consequent loss of institutional memory weakened international agencies' coordination mechanisms at a time when capacity building in areas such as governance and information systems were needed to support government efforts. Donors were setting up institutional mechanisms for longer-term government support (for example, through the Multi-Donor Trust Fund), and NGOs were increasing their more permanent staffing.

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[77] This finding was confirmed by the OIOS audit report.

[78] For example, the US-based missionary group, WorldHelp, on hearing that 40,000 children were orphaned (they weren't) planned to bring some of these children out of Aceh. This, combined with fears of child trafficking (also unfounded), led the local authorities to announce that no children should be taken out of the province (Washington Post, 15 January).

[79] A view expressed by, among others, the Joint OCHA/UNDGO/UNDP Mission to Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Maldives, 8 June.

There are divided opinions as to whether the Flash Appeal should have included recovery elements. The inclusion of some $100 million for permanent housing allowed for the possibility of early financing and planning, though – as we have seen – over-ambition (e.g. UNHCR's early promise of 25,000 houses[80]) was soon to be severely cut back. The projectized lists presented in the Flash Appeal was reflective of those agencies on the ground and missing some crucial elements, such as a comprehensive environmental recovery element.

It was extremely difficult to get local government administration involved in assessing recovery needs when their basic needs in terms of re-establishing offices and personnel were yet to be met. Indeed, the local authorites in Meulaboh and Banda Aceh were, at the time, military persons, not able to provide a holistic overview of recovery needs. Also, evidence-based assessment was sparse, and some felt that the World Bank's push for an early assessment was motivated primarily by competition to ensure that a greater proportion of overall funding was 'on-budget' (through the GoI's regular national budget) rather than 'off-budget' (through unregulated grants and private funds).

A further issue was a general absence of an advocacy and human rights strategy, common to complex emergencies but cautiously avoided in Aceh in spite of the fact that this was a war zone. UNHCR had already been requested to leave (based on the government's perception of its mandatory advocacy towards refugees and migrants in Malaysia and a risidual unease by GoI over its role in East/West Timor), and NGOs were alert to the fact that on more than one occasion the GoI had talked of 'rooting out' unnecessary NGOs. Undoubtedly, the vested interest of commited project money for relief/recovery was providing a strong disincentive to engage in advocacy work around, for example, disparities in assistance between tsunami and war-affected populations. Moreover, few INGOs (or, indeed, the UN) were to look seriously at supporting local human rights organizations.[81]

> Lacking a clear joint advocacy strategy, and cautiously aware of their temporary (and recent) entry to the province, the international community in Aceh remained largely unengaged in broader human rights advocacy or support to local organizations involved in anything other than livelihood and reconstruction work.

National Coordination

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. With a highly skilled staff, backing from the highest levels of GoI, and technical assistance from UN, multilateral donors and NGOs, BRR fairly rapidly took control of information systems,

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[80] UNHCR disputes the 'over-ambition' charge, stating that their targets were cut back partly because of their early unforeseen departure from Aceh, and partly because their 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).

[81] Evidence of rejected appeals for assistance to long established human rights NGOs can be found in 'Responding to Aceh's Tsunami: the first 40 days', Eye on Aceh, April 2005.

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.

In June the GoI proposed a four-tier coordination mechanism for Indonesia, with the BRR taking a lead in each. Since BRR was still being established, substantial assistance was required for the administration and management of each of these levels. The levels are:

- At the **technical sectoral level**, mainly in Banda Aceh, with NGOs being key players in each group.
- At the **development counsellor level**, hosted by the Jakarta office of BRR, twice-monthly meetings to address cross cutting and systemic issues. A multi-donor coordination body – Coordination Forum for Aceh and Nias (CFAN) – is proposed.
- At the ambassadorial/political level, six-monthly **Consultative Group for Indonesia (CGI)** meetings (the first of which was at the end of August).
- The **MDTF Steering Committee** would continue to meet once a month, attended by almost all donors plus representatives of major NGOs and the IFRC. These are supplemented by other coordination platforms around specific implementation issues.

Significant resources and technical expertise are now being invested in the BRR and, particularly in view of its avowed commitment towards transparency and good governance, most international donors are cautiously optimistic that it will succeed in overcoming a hitherto chaotic response by providing a single government-owned and authorized platform through which the international community can work. One thing is clear: neither bilateral donors, NGOs, Red Cross, nor even the UN, can substitute for a strong government lead in this respect.

By July, the BRR had established direct relationships with UN, major INGOs and IFIs working in sectoral recovery groups, and the process for approving recovery projects against a first tranche of $700 million had begun. Recovery strategies were driven largely from the province level, though the promise of greater decentralization was seen in the increasing involvement of local authorities at district and sub-district levels.

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.[82] 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 GoI that they had already left the country. This said, disregard and disinterest in supporting the government's growing coordination capacity were still prevalent.

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[82] Sudirman Said, BRR's Communications and Information Deputy, quoted in Indonesia Relief, 14th September.

International Coordination

United Nations Coordination

RC/HC, UNDAC, UNJLC and OCHA

Earlier – in fact, within 30 days of the disaster - the deputy Humanitarian Coordinator in Banda Aceh, working closely with the key larger NGOs, had produced a brief transition strategy that to some extent informed, and was informed by, the ongoing needs assessment led by the GoI and World Bank. Unfortunately, effective collaboration with the GoI had not been possible at the time because there was no government body to deal with the transition – until the emergence of the BRR, they had only emergency and line ministry development mechanisms.

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. Efforts towards this included placement of a UNDGO-funded recovery specialist in Aceh by week 6.[83] However, the coordination arrangements to link humanitarian (led by OCHA) and recovery (led by GoI-BRR) concerns did not yet exist, resulting in a parallel, but not integrated, actions. Likewise, coordination and planning arrangements at district and sub-district levels for NGOs were weak.

Meanwhile, UN agencies continued to execute projects using Flash Appeal resources. These resources were only a small proportion of the total available for Aceh/Nias through INGOs, IFIs, bilateral donors and the GoI. The governance structure of the World Bank administered Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF, with an initial target base of $500 million) provided a model for inter-agency coordination, but most bilateral, UN and NGO projects lay outside the MDTF.

Pressing humanitarian needs ran parallel to the government's expressed intention to 'move on' from the disaster. The solution proposed[84] and accepted was a unified UN office under a UN Recovery Coordinator (deputy RC/HC) for Aceh and Nias, supported by two senior staff. The Coordinator was in post by late August and the OCHA office was henceforth called the UN Office of the Recovery Coordinator (UNORC). In addition to a few advisory posts, the office benefited from secondments from (among others) UNEP and UNFPA. UNIMS is now formally part of this office.

UNJLC was involved in supplying logistical services in the relief and transition stages of the tsunami response. From 1 October, upon the request of the BRR with which it is doing some capacity building, it has become the principal logistical coordinating agency for rehabilitation and reconstruction.

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[83] UNDGO received $930,000 through OCHA and funded four senior recovery advisors in Colombo, Maldives and Jakarta and (more recently) Aceh, as well as one policy specialist in New York.
[84] Joint OCHA/UNDGO/UNDP Mission, 30 May-8 June.

UNJLC uses both the print media as well as the web to supply logistical information. It uses 'Google Earth' to develop a sophisticated MIS for such key logistical facilities as airports, roads, and warehouses in Indonesia. This initiative, described as a 'preparedness tool' commenced in July 2005 and UNJLC plans to make it available to all humanitarian agencies. It will require UNJLC to both gather data as well as analyse it, and its value will depend on regular updating of the database, which will eventually be managed by the appropriate government office.

One major constraint on developing a logistical MIS is security considerations. From disaster preparedness perspective the system must be as open as possible. But governments are sensitive to the security implications of supplying information on logistics.

Outstanding challenges remain. Ten months after the tsunami, there was still no geographical coordination and planning; inter-clusteral meetings were few, and in spite of UN efforts to regularise inter-sectoral coordination, the will to sustain this was not apparent.

Information Structures

The HIC concept document states that a strategic plan of the HIC must include development of an exit or transition strategy from its inception. No such plan was available, although HIC staff worked under the assumption that they would eventually be transferring to UNDP.

For the reconstruction phase, the HIC (latterly renamed the UN Information Management System, UNIMS) will, in late 2005, get a data analyst, a statistician and M&E specialist. Several major INGOs use UNIMS data or cross-reference their data with UNIMS for additional reliability. UNIMS is also assisting BRR, some line ministries, district level and sub-district (Chamat) administrations to develop their information capacity. At the district level, UN volunteers are being made available. UNDP is providing assistance to the district secretariats, with additional inputs from USAID and OCHA. UNIMS by July was providing training for Chamat information facilitators.

Knowledge management will increasingly be required of UNIMS. For example, INGOs are keen to see UNIMS create a common template for M&E, with greater standardization of indicators to avoid current confusions. 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, which should yield results in 2006. Meanwhile, BRR has come up with 40 indicators that are simple but adequate.

A recent initiative regarding who-does-what-where was the UNIMS/BRR September survey sub-regional and village survey. Finally some clarity was beginning to emerge as the 'competition for communities' among the 90+ NGOs remaining in Aceh had reduced.

Further requests include the need for an M&E coordination group that could be convened by ORC/UNIMS. The future role of UNIMS is undecided; once the BRR is more firmly established, UNIMS's functions should be integrated into the information management function of BRR.

> The Development Assistance Database (DAD) presents a new opportunity for governments to own and manage the tracking of resources and project implementation.

An important new initiative in information management is the Development Assistance Database (DAD), an online financial tracking and project coordination tool, managed by governments at local and national level. The DAD actually has the technical ability to do everything that HIC and the existing Financial Tracking System (FTS) do. The difference is that, as a wholly nationally owned and managed database, it can also register donations against a national plan. In Indonesia, the DAD was operational for data entry by the end of September, with a Regional Tsunami DAD being simultaneously made available through UNDP's Regional Centre in Bangkok. In each country these are very new systems, but the enthusiastic uptake by governments and ongoing training by UNDP should make huge improvements not only to financial and project tracking, but also provide a focus for verifiable and constantly updated information from all agencies on the ground. As a coordination tool, it is invaluable as a snap shot of 'who's doing what where'. Not only is there now a strong incentive for agencies to input data to 'be seen', but also governments will now have the means to insist upon such data inputs as part of their national planning process.

Strategy and Resource Mobilization

In 2005, Aceh local government capital expenditure (including infrastructure) will be less than 2004, in spite of the tsunami damage. Poor budgetary allocations to the provincial government, its weak capacity, and the deferring of reconstruction costs to the aid industry, informed the need for an early damage and loss Needs Assessment to be undertaken by the National Development Planning Agency (Bapenas), the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and UNDP. Largely a table-top exercise, it was completed by the third week of January.[85] The estimate of 'replacement' costs (including lost income) in Aceh and North Sumatra was $4.5 billion, representing about 97% of the GDP of Aceh.

Of the total pledged ($4 billion) at the February CGI meeting, $1.7 billion was pledged for 2005, of which $1.2 billion would be in the form of grants.[86] In response to the GoI's (Bapenas) request for coordination, several key donors produced a blueprint for a Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) specifically for the tsunami/earthquake recovery programme. Initially, $515 million was committed to the MDTF by about 20 donors, with $25 million from the World Bank, which was to be the Secretariat. The MDTF came online in June

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[85] The deadline was tight because of the need to present findings to the G8 meeting mid-February.
[86] MDTF for North Sumatra: Prospectus, 2005-2009.

with initial commitments of $250 million for proposed projects. However, donors soon complained that disbursements were too slow, primarily because, as on-budget support[87], it was subject to delays through the Indonesian bureacracy. Only $60-70 million was expected to be disbursed by the end of the year[88].

The MDTF has its own governance and coordination mechanism for its 14 key donor members[89], a somewhat standard model employed throughout the world. But since MDTF donors were 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.

Since the Steering Committee of the MDTF comprised only a sub-set of the donor community, the BRR, with assistance from the World Bank, proposed a donors' (including NGOs) Coordination Forum for Aceh and Nias (CFAN) with the explicit aim of engaging a wider range of stakeholders - bi- and multi-lateral donors, INGOs, civil society, central and local government.

The GoI claims that the Master Plan remains a 'dynamic' document that, in spite of apparent rejection (or at least major reservations) from implementing agencies in Banda Aceh, still is used as the 'matching' document for funds channelled through the MDTF. Yet no clear guidance was given from the government over where the relief-rehabilitation gap exists and what were the mandatory limits of MDTF funds in this respect. Also, could NGOs become a donor to the MDTF?

Communication and Participation

Consultation with local recipient/client populations should have been more consistent. Some implemeting agencies were better than others, but there is quantitative as well as qualitative evidence to show that communication with tsunami victims was very limited[90]. This is not just a question of entitlements and community planning, but also of explaining why certain promises have not been fulfilled. Rather a 'do no harm' strategy towards recipients, there should be a 'explain what you're doing' strategy. Nine months after the tsunami, levels of frustration towards the international community were beginning to rise, even to the extent of having arson attacks on NGO property (Oxfam, near Calang).

There has been no inter-agency public information campaign that outlines what international agencies are doing, why there are delays, and what mechanisms exist for beneficiaries to air complaints or questions with implementors. In Meulaboh, for

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[87] MDTF funds don't officially have to be on-budget; by September, of $300m in the fund, $100m was off-budget, the decision resting with the Steering Committee.

[88] Interview with Joel Hellman, World Bank, Jakarta, September.

[89] The INGO representative is World Vision, selected by the key INGOs in Banda Aceh; there are also two Acehnese civil society organizations on the MDTF Steering Committee, selected by the two Boards established by the President of Indonesia to steer and oversee the recovery programme.

[90] See for example, the quantitative questionnaire survey, 'Where's my house? Improving Communication with Beneficiaries', UNDP, August 2005.

instance, the evaluation team witnessed, in September, ten inexperienced agency representatives (UN and NGO) spending two hours outlining the problem and objectives of a communication strategy that should have been underway months before. Calling for yet another meeting as follow-up, their energies might better have been spent finding campaign resources and lessons from other emergencies, and assigning one agency/person to begin designing a newletter/radio programme/outreach materials for general and urgent distribution.[91]

Under the auspices of OCHA, a lot of time was spent trying to get a communications strategy off the ground in May-August – but obtaining traction around this was not easy. Just getting decision makers to come to meetings and *decide* what was needed to move ahead on this was not easy. OCHA held Public Information Workshop at the end of August – attendance was limited, and it did not move the agenda forward.[92]

> Effective joint agency communication with the client population, including a complaints procedure and regular updates on the recovery process should have been an early priority. Frustration and misinformation have abounded.

NGO Coordination

Local Self-help and NGOs

Banda Aceh's private sector, represented by the Aceh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Kadin) - 1,800 members with 8% large, 25% medium and 67% small businesses - feels distanced and somewhat disengaged from the entire recovery process. Kadin has had discussions with OCHA to explore how INGOs with spending power could link up with local business. This is not yet happening. They see contracts going mainly to Medan and Jakarta. Kadin members say that they hoped for at least one coordinated meeting with INGOs but that has not happened. They also feel left out from the official revaluation programme especially because nobody from Kadin is represented on the BRR Board. With information about contracts coming only at the last moment they express fears that tenders are manipulated buy outside parties.

It is not viable to rebuild the Aceh economy excluding the local private sector. There is a compelling case for giving a more sympathetic hearing to what Kadin has to say. While it is not OCHA's task to get involved in local business, involving local business in coordination mechanisms in the rehabilitation phase has merit. One might also ask whether INGOs have a role here. The problem is that many INGOs talk of targeting the most vulnerable, but lack the experience required to engage with the private sector beyond small scale interventions like cash and voucher interventions to improve food security.

International NGOs

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[91] Some initial attempts in this respect included the preparation of outreach materials by BRR, UNDP, OCHA and UN-HABITAT in September, though these were yet to be disseminated.
[92] Interview with Oliver Lacey-Hall, OCHA head of office at the time.

In the emergency phase, INGOs, due to their lack of previously presence, had to spend considerable time setting up offices, hiring staff, importing vehicles, etc. Ambitious agendas did not fully take into account the political and security situation, and multiple assessments (often not published or accessible to others) were done in the same areas with the same populations, and duplication of efforts was noted (cf. TEC report on Needs Assessment). Most tellingly, local NGOs felt they were swept aside in the first months of the response (cf. TEC report Local Capacities).

Some of these problems had repercussions in the recovery period. These included:

- 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.
- The concern (mostly expressed by local NGOs) that INGOs were uncritically accepting government plans that had not been through a community vetting process, and therefore might undermine aspirations of Acehnese for greater autonomy and freedom.[93]
- Under-representation at IASC meetings meant that INGOs did not bring consistent consensus on important issues being discussed.[94]
- INGO staffing was still predominantly emergency people when rehabilitation skills were needed.
- Donor timeframes for the disbursement of funds - i.e. the pressure on INGOs to spend within a certain period of time - hampered a coordinated approach, resulting in many NGOs (both local and international) working in an ad hoc and isolated manner. A lack of holistic approach led, for example, to a time lag between the building of transitional shelters and the associated provision of water and sanitation.
- International NGOs and donor bilateral programmes apparently 're-prioritized' their areas of support in favour of Aceh, to the disadvantage of populations in need in West Timor, Molucca and Sulawesi. Numerous NGOs departed or discontinued their programmes in these areas during the second half of 2005 for lack of funding or due to re-programming. For example, in Molucca, reintegration programmes for displaced civilians could not be implemented as a result of the departure of over 4 major NGOs within a few weeks due to lack of EU/ECHO funding.[95]

In April, ICVA proposed an NGO Platform that would become a focal point (and Secretariat) for NGO coordination in the recovery and rehabilitation phase.[96] Gaining consensus around issues was next to impossible because the NGO community did not agree amongst themselves who had the right to speak. It appears that ICVA membership

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[93] See, for instance, ICVA (April 2005), 'A Review of NGO Coordination in Aceh'.
[94] In the environment field, a local NGO, Forum Walhi, was able to coordinate INGOs, local NGOs and community groups around common policies.
[95] Correspondence with Thierry Delbreuve, Officer in Charge, OCHA Jakarta, August-October 2005.
[96] ICVA (April 2005) ibid.

was neither able to agree the ToRs for an NGO Liaison Officer, nor to the establishment of some kind of NGO Liaison Office in Aceh.

Coverage

Food Security

Indonesia and India are the only two developing countries that have comprehensive food security mapping data base. WFP started food security mapping in India and Indonesia was the second country chosen to develop such a database.[97] The work for the Food Security Atlas of Indonesia was started in 2003, with much of the work having been done in 2004. This database is now providing valuable information for the post-tsunami rehabilitation effort. In addition, by September 2005 WFP had completed training of officials in 30 provinces (there are 33 provinces now) and 265 districts out of a total of 324. The database made officials aware that the west coast was vulnerable in terms of food security, a useful guide to the tsunami response. WFP conducted an emergency food needs assessment in January.

After the tsunami BARCONAS and UN agencies are trying to set up such a contingency plan for West Sumatra. Food, shelter, health and sanitation, water and education would be some of the main areas covered by the plan. Staring October 2005, provincial and district level contingency plans are expected to be prepared. BARCONAS is talking the lead, with UNDP, WHO and UNESCO as participating agencies. The Western Sumatra model is expected to be replicated for other provinces.

Shelter

In September 2005 the UK's Telegraph newspaper ran a story based on an interview with Eric Morris, the new UN Recovery Coordinator for Aceh. In it, Morris raised the alarm that 60-100,000 people still in tents or temporary wooden shelters (TLCs) could provoke a 'second emergency' as the rainy season approached. This – and the apparent failure of the international community to live up to promises made over permanent shelter – became the predominent concern of late 2005.

Notwithstanding unreasonably high expectations of the number of permanent houses that could be constructed in the first six months, the failure is down to several causes. First, there was GoI procrastination in signing housing agreements with agencies while the national 'blueprint' (begun in March) that launched BRR (opened in May, but not fully functioning until July) was under preparation. Second, the issue of land title and government re-allocation of land was far more complex than initially thoefught. Third, 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. Fourth, the GoI was unable to produce a complete list of the 500,000 homeless and their housing and location preferences. Fifth, with many actors, many models of homes, and most

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[97] UN-WFP, *A Food Insecurity Atlas for Indonesia*, WFP, Jakarta, 2005.

costing in excess of the official government compensation rates, a laissez-faire approach abounded.

Some 1,800 houses were completed by September. The best estimate in September for the number to be completed by the end of the year was 15-20,000. The total requirement is about 120,000[98].

UNHCR chaired the shelter working group until its enforced withdrawal at the end of March, which negated its ability to deliver on the promised 25,000 houses in Aceh Jaya district. In March, UNDP and The Ministry of Public Works took over responsibility for coordinating the shelter working group, but collectively the agencies were unable to take up a commitment of this size. Thus, it should have been evident to the government and remaining agencies that a greater number of temporary shelters was required.

> There was a general lack of foresight and strategic thinking on the part of the international community with respect to shelter that resulted in extraordinarily long delays before, finally, 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 were neglected until it became a 'crisis'. Again, this is down to lack of experience among many international agencies and insufficiently strong UN leadership.

In Jakarta, for instance, the RC/HC and OCHA were aware of the pending crisis in housing, and focussed on the issue from June onwards. Prior to this, there had been a lack of coordinated thinking and advocacy, particularly from March-June. This was partly because of senior staff turnover, partly due to UNHCR's enforced withdrawal and its giving up the corrdination of the shelter working group, and partly because of the 'gap' left between the departure of the Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare (Alwi Shihab) and the late opening of the BRR. The appointment of the new Recovery Coordinator, arriving in September, brought housing to the forefront of agency (and media) attention.

The policy of the UN Recovery Coordinator was to push an action plan with a number of items: (a) improving sanitation and amenities at tented camps and barracks, helping around 100,000 people to live in better conditions in the immediate future; (b) helping more people to move back in temporary shelter to their places of origin; (c) provision of up to 15,000 prefabricated units; (d) upgrading around 100,000 host family houses, to allow IDPs to stay longer while providing a permanent economic gain to the host. The Action Plan involved ICRC as information providers and IFRC as implementers. Since it had only just been launched, the evaluation team is unable to comment on its viability.

Early Warning and Preparedness

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[98] Figure stated by Kuntoro Mangkusubronto, head of BRR, press conference, 14 September 2005.

UN agencies have already begun to develop contingency plans for future disasters. ECHO has funded OCHA and WHO to prepare contingency plans and preparedness capacities. Likewise, UNICEF has a developed contingency plan. In June 2005, OCHA formed a UN Technical Working Group on Disaster Preparedness and Response. It meets in Jakarta, though attendance is not optimal. A similar effort in 2002 apparently failed. The Working Group functions at the Operations Managers level with a sectoral focus; yet there are some major gaps. For example, ILO and FAO are both doing fisheries rehabilitation projects with little apparent coordination. UNHCR has supported the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management since 2004 as a way of institutionalizing the issue into the main regional forum.

Building Back Better

If the "build back better" mantra is to mean anything, a more comprehensive sustainable livelihoods strategy is required by those currently engaged in reconstruction. This would imply not only an integrated and coordinated development programme but also a greater understanding of the adverse impact the aid community itself is having in the province. For example, the World Bank estimates the current inflation rate to be 17%, compared to about 7% in other parts of the country; and much of this is a result of the massive influx of aid workers and money for post-tsunami reconstruction, which pushed up costs for housing, food, and transportation.