



## **Tsunami Evaluation Coalition**

Coordination of international  
humanitarian assistance in  
tsunami-affected countries

### **Evaluation findings**

The Maldives

Tsunami Evaluation Coalition



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International  
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Countries**

**Evaluation Findings**

**- The Maldives -**

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## I. Introduction

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Maldives is a tropical island nation consisting of 1,190 islands spread over 90,000 sq km in the Indian Ocean.<sup>1</sup> The actual land area is only 300sq km. The coastline is 644km. There are 26 natural atolls in the Maldives that are divided into 20 administrative atolls. The country's estimated total population of about 295,000<sup>2</sup> (July 2005) inhabit around 200 of the islands. Another 100 have been set aside exclusively for tourist resorts. Of this number 87 have resorts and the balance 13 is earmarked for future development. About 99.9% of the population is Muslim. Among SAARCC nations, Maldives has the highest per capita income - US \$ 2,182 in 2002. It has a republican constitution under an executive President.

The impact of the tsunami is closely linked to the geographic, economic, political, and social context of Maldives; these factors also to a large extent determine the characteristics of the coordinated response. Key determinants are:

- A small population compared to other tsunami countries, making the challenge somewhat less formidable in terms of resources required for relief and recovery;
- The population, including tsunami victims, is spread out over a vast area with costly sea and air transport as the only means of access. The cost of recovery is high: whereas it cost around \$5,000 to \$6,000 to build a new house of around 85sqm in Sri Lanka, in the Maldives a similar house would cost \$28,108.<sup>3</sup> Transport, labour and the necessary importation of all materials (even sand) accounts for this.
- The widely dispersed population also makes provision and management of tsunami assistance more complex, especially when human resources and capacity are limited at the atoll and island levels.
- The highly centralised executive form of government in the Maldives centred on the capital city Male (population 80,000 or about one-third of the nation's population) makes tsunami management both easy and difficult at the same time - easy because few officials are under constituency pressure as such, being accountable to the government only,<sup>4</sup> and can make rapid decisions; difficult

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated data for this report is from the following sources: Ministry of Planning and national Development, *Maldives - Key Indicators 2004*, Male; <http://en.wikipedia.org> Sources available at the UN Resident Coordinator's Office, Male. The documents consulted include the following: UN-Male, *Thematic Briefing Book*, Prepared for the Visit of the UN Special Envoy for Tsunami Relief to the Maldives, May 28-30, 2005; Office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, *Maldives: Key Statistics*, July 18, 2005; TEC Coordination Evaluation Team interviews with GOM officials.

<sup>2</sup> There is a serious discrepancy in the total population figure that is cited in different sources. One figure is around 300,000. The other is around 350,000. It is likely that the latter includes non-nationals working in the country and the latter only nationals.

<sup>3</sup> Based on figures provided by Government of the Maldives. (2005). *Tsunami: Impact And Recovery Joint Needs Assessment*: World Bank - Asian Development Bank - UN System. Male: Government of the Maldives.

<sup>4</sup> Island and atoll chiefs are appointed by central government, not elected by the people. Community consultation was, until recently, discouraged.

because effective community consultation is harder to achieve when decision makers are concentrated on one island.

In general, the islands in the Maldives did not suffer the ferocity of the tsunami experienced elsewhere. The most fierce waves struck the eastern islands, whereas other island experienced serious flooding, For the most part, the water washing across the islands completely. The official death toll was 108 (dead or missing), with 29,000 displaced (by June the figure was down to 11,500).<sup>5</sup> About 6,000 homes were either partially or totally destroyed, and a working figure for those ‘affected’ is about 100,000.

The figures obscure the true impact of the tsunami which, unlike other countries, was to create a huge downturn in economic fortune in a country that depends so heavily on tourist income (33% of GDP), fishing (10%) and agriculture (6%). The associated service industry around tourism, from transport to food importation and staffing, is huge. Of the 87 tourist resorts, 21 were seriously damaged and had to be shut down. At the time of this writing (mid November) all but 9 had reopened for business, but not at maximum capacity. But the industry has been slow to recover. As at the end of October tourist arrivals stood at only 46% of the level achieved in 2004.

Unlike other tsunami-hit countries, the economic impact in the Maldives has been immense, from which it could take as much as 3-4 years to recover.

The World Bank, Asian Development Bank and UN joint needs assessment estimated the total loss that tsunami caused to the Maldives economy at \$470m or the equivalent of 62% of the GDP.

In December 2004, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution A/59/L.48 which recommended the graduation of Maldives from the group of Least Developed Countries (LDC) to that of a middle-income country. LDC benefits would, however, continue for three years. The grace period has been extended a further three years until 2011, due to the damage wrought by the tsunami.

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

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<sup>5</sup> Maldives NDMC, April 2005, cited in USAID. (2005). Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunamis: Fact Sheet #38, Fiscal Year (FY) 2005. Washington: United States Agency for International Development. 6 May 2005.

<sup>6</sup> For useful discussions over conceptual differences between coordination, cooperation and interdependence see Robinson et al, (2000), *Managing Development*, The Open University.

<sup>7</sup> 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,

**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;**
- **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, how these unfolded in the tsunami response, and what lessons the international community can learn from these. 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.

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## II. Emergency Phase

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### **National Coordination**

Few dispute that the Maldivian government were totally unprepared for an emergency of this magnitude. The challenge was made greater by the very limited presence of UN agencies prior to the disaster (UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and WHO had small offices)<sup>8</sup>, no national Red Cross/Crescent society, no bilateral donor offices, only one INGO (Voluntary Services Overseas) present, and a very small local NGO sector. The government did have an out of date ‘National Emergency Plan’ that was never used during the tsunami response. The National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC) was established immediately after the tsunami, once the scale of the disaster became apparent. For example, food and medical supplies were sent on the evening of December 26<sup>th</sup> to

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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.

<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that the Maldives (and Cape Verde) were, prior to the tsunami, piloting - as part of the UN reform process – a new harmonized UN office which by definition meant fewer international staff.

some of the affected communities using the National Security Service (NSS). But officials were the first to concede that the response was largely ad hoc with a lot of improvisation and ‘learning by doing’. It was, nevertheless, a very effective response under the circumstances.

Much of the country’s transport infrastructure was lost to the tsunami, with damage to airports, jetties and boats. Entire atolls were out of telephone contact for several days. As in all tsunami-hit countries, an immeasurable amount of assistance was that provided spontaneously by neighbouring populations. In the Maldives, relatively undamaged islands were able to immediately accommodate the homeless. Each island had a pre-existing Island Development Committee that became a key focal point for sending information and receiving goods.

The engagement of private businesses sector was also significant. Local business had the advantage of being close to the ground with local knowledge and resources at their command to provide quick assistance. Senior officials of the Maldives National Chamber of Commerce noted, however, that their role was more constrained in the recovery stage because of the high cost of travel, transport and construction compounded by rising oil prices<sup>9</sup>.

At the very outset, a government Chief Coordinator was appointed – the Minister of Defence. An inter-ministerial committee was created under the NDMC, with data being collected (by telephone) from each island and sent to the NDMC. Under this strong leadership, the Maldives was the first country to prepare its joint needs assessment with the UN, World Bank and ADB. Ministries were, for the first three months, co-located in the NDMC. Working day and night, a backlog of regular ministerial work soon grew.

The government’s strong lead in coordinating a response through the inter-ministerial National Disaster Management Centre – and its openness to adopt international standards in sectoral work - was appreciated and commended.

The government’s coordination overall was impressive, with capacity at the central level very high, though clearly staff numbers were overstretched and working around the clock. The swift creation of housing unit and IDP unit to receive and initiate information and feedback was particularly commendable. The government has also shown a willingness to swiftly adopt and adapt to international standards in housing, IDP Guiding Principles, Sphere standards, etc. A limiting factor has been island, atoll, and especially community level capacity constraints that all stakeholders agree need enhancing for future disaster management at these levels.

A limiting factor in the national response was the tendency of island and atoll government officials to defer decisions to a highly centralised government. However, the demonstration of local community initiative and assistance belies the notion of “lack” of capacity as such.

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<sup>9</sup> Team interview with Chamber of Commerce and with government heads of the Tourism Ministry.

Initially reliable data on the tsunami was scarce, hampering coordination efforts. As with other tsunami-hit countries, needs were ‘assumed’, leading to a certain degree of supply-driven assistance. For example, WHO Maldives cites wasted relief supplies in medicine and clothing. There were also reports that data provided by Atoll Chiefs and Island chiefs were not always reliable, with non-tsunami affected people being included on beneficiary lists.

## **International Coordination**

### **United Nations Coordination**

#### *UN and Bilateral Assistance*

The problem of cherry picking, the lack of fungibility of resources, different actors taking up different pieces of projects, the reluctance to support coordination costs and so on have all contributed to lack of adequate coordination on the ground.

Coordination and consistency even within UN agencies was sometimes questionable. For example, there appears to be something of a disconnect between UNDP’s ongoing (and pre-tsunami, begun in 2003) Atoll Sustainable Livelihoods Programme and its post-tsunami recovery programme. As part of the former programme, in 17 of 20 atolls a series of capacity building workshops were initiated with the Ministry of Atolls, plus many island development planning sessions. The tsunami Livelihoods Recovery programme also entailed a similar outreach consultation. The timescale for the latter proposed projects, due to the pressure to spend, was more compressed. UNDP accepts that there is a need to integrate the more immediate recovery activities with the longer-term development objectives. UNDP’s choice to undertake direct implementation in recovery activities – as opposed to national implementation by island bodies – distinguishes the two approaches. Interestingly, there was a marked difference in levels of leadership from one island to the next, with some having a record of attracting greater assistance than others. Inadvertently, some agencies, including UNDP, may have been influenced by this, though the evaluation could not confirm or deny the claim in the case of post-tsunami assistance.

The strengths of the UN system included the introduction of technical skills and experience from other emergencies at a critical time for a government undergoing a steep learning curve. This, plus generous funding, has opened an unprecedented dialogue with national authorities that will have ramification beyond just the tsunami response.

As in Indonesia and Sri Lanka, UNDP posted a Senior Recovery Advisor early on. This person provided important linkages between the government’s longer term planning and the immediate response of UN agencies; in this respect he epitomised the ‘integrated UN office’ approach. But here, as in other countries, it was not always clear whether this person was pursuing a specific recovery/development agenda or simply adding professional assistance to the daily requirements of the RC/HC, responding to needs as



they arose. In a small office this was perhaps inevitable, with multi-tasking skills being at a premium.

### ***Role of OCHA***

OCHA deployed staff to the Maldives on 28 December 2004. Since then, there has been a Head of Office, IDP Advisor (since May), IDP assistant and (more recently) an intern (since September). OCHA's staffing and role within the RC/HC office was crucial; yet the staffing of the office has been largely reactive, with short-term contracts adding to an overall sense of uncertainty. The official closure date was set for May, then extended to June, then October, and finally until the end of December to include IDP advisory support. The IDP post will extend through 2006 under funding from UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA, and OCHA will continue to fund two national posts in the MIDP.

Environment and human rights are both ongoing activities of UNDP - e.g. a recent UNDP commissioned survey on awareness of human rights, plus recent work UNDP has done in November 2005 on integrating a rights based approach into national development planning processes. The RC/HC has a new Information Officer as of November, and UNDP in conjunction with UNEP is fielding an Environment Advisor as of January 2006. These and other initiatives require continuing support.

Some UN observers in February noted that there was “no consolidated strategy for support to coordination (and) no integrated approaches to address cross-cutting issues (water, environment, protection (of IDPs), gender etc.).”<sup>10</sup> This is surprising for a country where agency offices are extremely close to each other, and the international community as a whole is quite small. Nevertheless, the evaluation found that:

- Until June there was no regular Red Cross/UN/IFI coordination forum; this has since been addressed, with sectoral meetings conducted on a regular basis.
- A multiple set of data was often in circulation, causing some confusion on the ground. The ‘big picture’ was never gained.
- Moreover, in relation to the above, there was no coordinated strategy for informing recipient populations of selection criteria, or of progress as it unfolded.
- Even by November, OCHA was still not receiving all the minutes of sectoral meetings as a matter of course<sup>11</sup>

In 2005, three Joint Coordination Meetings (chaired by the Chief Coordinator of the National Disaster Management Centre) were held between the Government, the UN agencies, the World Bank, the ADB, IFRC, Red Cross/ Red Crescent Organizations, donors and NGOs. RC/HC has pressed the national authorities to more regularly hold such ‘overview meetings’ with all concerned stakeholders. Several agencies noted, nevertheless, that there was no regular inter-agency meeting (i.e. broader than just the

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<sup>10</sup> UN OCHA Office (Male), *Draft Non-Paper*, Male (undated - Unpublished manuscript).

<sup>11</sup> OCHA globally still struggles to play a meaningful role in more technical, sector-based coordination; the fact that OCHA was not receiving all the minutes is not necessarily an indication of poor coordination per se, but rather a poor record of such.

UNCT) called by the RC/HC that would provide an adequate overview of programme direction.

The above points omit the pivotal role that should be taken by the government in designing and managing an overall coordinated and consolidated strategy. International respondents pointed out that the government has a responsibility to request and guide external assistance appropriate to the needs of the country; the placement of individual expertise should not rely solely on assumptions made by international agencies.

OCHA's pivotal role in ensuring consistency and cohesion between all international partners and the government – a role which the government is not yet able to fully embrace itself – is endangered by short-term ad hoc funding of posts. In 2006, these functions, under the RC/HC, should be strengthening the coordination mechanisms of the government.

The Maldives has no previous experience of IDPs or the tensions and problems this causes. Along with the ongoing reform process, this is a major challenge for all in positions of authority. IDP tensions and lack of action came to head in November 2005 when riots were experienced on Hudhulufaaruu island.

### ***Information Structures***

Unlike other tsunami-hit countries, a Humanitarian Information Centre (HIC) was not set up in the Maldives. In a relatively small office with the close proximity of agencies, information dissemination does not require a formal structure as such, but the HIC's role in providing other services such as monitoring benchmarks would have been useful.

### ***Strategy and Resource Mobilization***

In 2005, as a direct result of the tsunami, bilateral assistance leapt from \$30m to \$150m annually, though there are no permanent aid missions in the country<sup>12</sup>. The scale-up of UN and Red Cross assistance and staffing was equally rapid. UNDP increased its expenditure from \$1m to \$25m in 2005<sup>13</sup>, and its staff from 15 to 80, including about 20% international staff. UNICEF, WHO, UNDP and UNFPA were in the Maldives before the disaster. In addition, there are now WFP, FAO, UNEP and OCHA offices staffed by internationals, with some taking direct implementation responsibilities as well as capacity building programmes with national authorities.

Within 10 days of the tsunami, UN agencies had committed more than \$2.4m in advance from OCHA core reserves. The subsequent Flash Appeal (\$72.7m<sup>14</sup>) was 70% funded by June (90% by November), with \$16m for immediate relief efforts and \$54m for

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<sup>12</sup> Figures from interview with RC/HC.

<sup>13</sup> An interesting initiative is its 'Adopt an Island' scheme that, since February, has raised awareness of the situation in Maldives.

<sup>14</sup> This is the May revised total. Some \$50m had been pledged/released by May, including \$1.9m for WFP food operations.

recovery.<sup>15</sup> Seventeen governments contributed to 9 UN agency programmes. There were, however, some unacceptable delays in translating pledges into cash, and funds pledged beyond 2005 are very limited<sup>16</sup>. By the end of February the \$1.5m that was included in the Flash Appeal for ‘Coordination and Support Services’ was still unfunded. By contrast, UNICEF received \$10m surplus to request, while UNEP by June had received only \$1m of a request for \$6m.<sup>17</sup> The EU and Japan each pledged \$18m; the World Bank and ADB have pledged \$14m and £22m respectively in a combination of grants and loans for recovery. Further bilateral cash and in-kind contributions from 10 countries included, for instance, \$2.5 m of assistance from Saudi Arabia and a 17-member Australian medical team arriving on 1 January.

## NGO Coordination

### *Local Self-help and NGOs*

Local civil society and NGOs are not well developed in the Maldives. There are over 400 local NGOs and CBOs registered with the Maldivian government, but the vast majority are sports clubs, women and youth associations, and single-interest groups. Only a handful - Care Society, FASHAN, Cancer and Diabetic Society, SHE and the Maldives Island Development Association (MIDA) - have partnership potential with UN and Red Cross/Crescent. A lot of NGOs and CBOs on the islands still have to be identified and contacted by the various parties. Often their work is not very visible or recognised. There is a central list of registered NGOs in the Ministry of Youth and Home, though this is not circulated widely. This may improve with a UNV now being stationed at the Ministry to help with administration and the new registration processes.

Clearly a definition of ‘capacity’ is required before assessing its limits in the Maldives,<sup>18</sup> but the universal view from international agencies was that viable partnership was difficult. For their part, local NGOs openly accuse the government and UN agencies of disempowering them over many years. The NDMC did not invite them for coordination meetings during the tsunami response. Some have suggested that, for example, building skills among islanders are widespread, but the international community has preferred to tender outside contractors without first looking at existing capacity<sup>19</sup>. In part, this is due to international regulations (UN rules/regulations oblige them to tender internationally), but agencies also reported that although many winning bids were local, there was a finite number of able or willing contractors to take on the new construction demands.

**Greater attention should be paid to what constitutes ‘local capacity’ and the extent to which existing groups offer potentially viable partnership for UN and**

<sup>15</sup> Six Months On: Maldives Report, OCHA, June 2005.

<sup>16</sup> A no-cost extension into 2006 is permitted under the Flash Appeal.

<sup>17</sup> Thematic Briefing Book, prepared for the Special Envoy, May 2005. In fact, the initial Flash Appeal request by UNEP was predicated on identified gaps in environmental clean-up. These were subsequently “adopted” by the Canadian and Australian Red Cross thereby obviating the need for UNEP to seek additional funding (and as it happens, UNEP has effectively wound down its operations).

<sup>18</sup> This issue is taken up extensively by the TEC Capacities report.

<sup>19</sup> Ironically, some local recipients bid for contracts and won!

Red Cross. The dilemma was highlighted by the contradictions between national and direct implementation in post-tsunami recovery projects.

The legacy of centralised government and poor investment in (or recognition of) civil society is perhaps due to their often being equated with political opposition. If any NGO wishes to access external resources, it must first seek approval from the government. The under-development of the local NGO sector – and hence it being relatively ignored by UN agencies - may change as the political climate becomes more favourable.

Each island has an Island Development Committee (IDC) headed by an Island Chief who is not currently elected and reports upwards to the Atoll Chief and Ministry of Atolls Development. Each island also has an Island Women's Development Committee (IWDC) headed by a Chairwoman who is not necessarily the Island Chief. This Chairwoman generally has a seat on the IDC which is a mix of elected and selected representatives.

Women are engaged in many small businesses, though they may not have a bank account or formal registration and do not appear on any government database. Though their existence is often known to the Island administration, parity with similar men's business can be overlooked. The evaluation heard, for example, of several instances where even non-registered men's businesses had received post-tsunami compensation, but women's groups had not<sup>20</sup>.

### *International NGOs*

Over 20 international NGOs, the IFRC and national Red Cross societies provided direct and/or indirect assistance in cash or in-kind to relief and rehabilitation efforts. Apart from brief visits from donor-INGOs<sup>21</sup>, there are no operational INGOs in the country<sup>22</sup>; thus the lion's share of international work is with the IFRC, UN and various Red Cross societies. Some Red Cross societies were on the ground from the outset of the emergency (American Red Cross, IFRC), while others negotiated a presence later in the year as implementers of the government's NRRP (Canada, Australia, British).

The American Red Cross provided psychosocial support, now extended to a 3-year programme across 6 Atolls. The German Red Cross was involved in the rehabilitation of health centers, restocking and supplying equipment to clinics. The French Red Cross began a programme to build 500 houses (permanent shelter) together with IFRC (800) and the British Red Cross (700). The Canadian Red Cross is involved in an alternative energy programme and, with the Australian Red Cross, waste management. OXFAM provided the island communities with clean up equipment and funded the work of local NGO partners in cash for work programmes and cement block making for shelter. ActionAid funds and works through local partners, notably Care Society.

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<sup>20</sup> Interviews on Laamu, Raa and Meemu atolls, and confirmed by the Canada Red Cross.

<sup>21</sup> Oxfam, SCF, ActionAid and Handicap International .

<sup>22</sup> The exception is VSO, though this is not an operational NGO as such. Oxfam was in the country until May; Handicap International was officially registered in November and now able to open an office.

Maldives does not yet have a national Red Cross/Crescent society, though this is currently under formation with technical assistance being provided by IFRC and member societies<sup>23</sup>. The concern is to ensure an apolitical organization that has the independent capacity to play its role as an auxiliary to the public authorities, including during emergencies. Meanwhile, the six visiting national societies have their own legal status. The post-June multi-party political registration has caused some delays since political parties, faith-based registration *and* INGO registration are done by the same government body.

With no resident implementing INGOs other than Red Cross societies, co-financing and partnership with local organizations is rare. Post-tsunami, UN agencies have for the most part undertaken direct implementation in addition to their more traditional roles as providers of technical assistance to government.

Paradoxically, the relatively small INGO community – perhaps a welcome contrast to the overwhelming numbers in Indonesia and Sri Lanka – has the disadvantage of their being few viable implementing partners for the UN, and no partnership and co-financing arrangements with local NGOs. UN agencies have compensated for this with direct implementation, though the overzealous quest for ‘client populations’ was not as apparent here as in other countries.

Likewise, there were few ‘wildcat’ NGOs, though the government was swift to expel faith-based agencies such as the Church of Scientology who appeared in the early days and were accused of distributing religious materials. Political (i.e. oppositional) groups such as the Friends of the Maldives were also expelled, though they later reappeared under the name of ‘Maldives Aid’ and became partially operational.

## **Civil-military Coordination**

### **Military Response**

#### ***National Military Response***

The National Security Service (NSS) of the Maldives was established in 1978. Originally encompassing land, air, maritime (coastguard) and police elements, the latter was separated from the NSS in Mid 2004 to differentiate between military and domestic law enforcement duties. Of its estimated 2,500 personnel<sup>24</sup>, some 1500 were directly involved in the Tsunami response. Although a disaster plan existed prior to a Tsunami it had never been exercised as a disaster on this scale was never envisaged. As a consequence few ‘Standing Operating Procedures’ (SOPs) between the NSS and relevant Ministries and Agencies had been agreed for such an operation. The only exception to this were contingency plans and exercises for more localised emergency incidents,

<sup>23</sup> It was, in fact, inaugurated in December 2005.

<sup>24</sup> Official figures are hard to obtain – estimates vary according to the source and date. The Library of Congress, Institute of Peace and Conflict studies, and Wikipedia estimate 1800, 2,400 and 3,500 respectively.

such as plane crashes. Additionally the NSS exercised regularly with military partners from the region (India and Pakistan) and with US and UK forces.<sup>25</sup> When the Tsunami struck, for example, a Pakistani naval vessel was in Male on an official visit. All of this appeared to have a positive effect on the NSS' ability to react with speed and work with foreign military assets.

The Government of the Maldives reacted very quickly to the Tsunami appointing a ministerial Task Force within 12 hours of the disaster. But by that time the NSS, with its 24 hour on call watch facility alerting it to the potential scale of destruction, had already activated a Joint Operations Centre for search and rescue tasks and logistics coordination. Reporting to the National Task Force<sup>26</sup> Coordinator, the Minister of Defence, the NSS immediately undertook the initial and somewhat rudimentary disaster assessments primarily using coastguard vessels but also calling upon the resources of the private sector, foreign naval vessels offered to the Government, and information collected by those islands with communications still intact. Remarkably, given the number and location of islands that had to be surveyed, it was able to ascertain the state of all the populated islands within 48 hours<sup>27</sup>.

Simultaneously the NSS began loading stocks of rice, flour and water from the State Trading Organisation's (STO's) stocks for immediate distribution along with water to the affected islands and populations and established a logistics hub at the main airport to handle incoming assistance. This was also combined with immediate search and rescue tasks, medical and tourist evacuation. As the urgency of those immediate tasks subsided the NSS engaged in rubble clearance, the erection of tents and construction of temporary shelters and the establishment (two to three days after the Tsunami) of seven Forward Coordinating Centres serving the 20 Atolls and tasked to provide a storage facility for incoming goods, ensure onward distribution and monitor assistance required.

As with many national interlocutors in the Maldives the NSS stressed the immediate role of the island communities themselves and the partnership necessary to deliver assistance to those in need. For example, harbour facilities were either unsuitable for coastguard and naval ships (with relatively deep draughts) or had been badly damaged. Thus, although helicopter assets were used their number was insufficient to handle the amounts to be offloaded so local dhonis were called upon to negotiate the shallower water.

Throughout the NSS acted as just one of the many national assets mobilised to assist. It did not set up a parallel system but was fully integrated into the government response. Their personnel and assets made them more visible than others but the NSS took its instructions from the NDMC and saw its role as one of support to the government rather than in the lead.

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<sup>25</sup> Interview with NSS representatives

<sup>26</sup> This then became known as the National Disaster management Centre (NMDC)

<sup>27</sup> Interview with NSS representatives

As in other Tsunami affected countries the hard work of the NSS during the relief period, and its role beyond that of policing and security, did much to boost its image.

### *International Military Response*

Within days five foreign military forces, primarily but not exclusively from the Indian subcontinent, were present. The Pakistan Naval ship already in Male was joined by another, the Government of India despatched three naval and two coastguard vessels and two aircraft, the Bangladeshi and French navies supplied a ship each and the US Navy also provided two vessels – all with helicopter assets. Members of the British naval ships working off Sri Lanka were also deployed and worked with the State energy company, Stelco, to check and repair generators. Whilst all were tasked directly by the NSS Operations Centre their initial deployment went through the normal diplomatic channels and the tasks they undertook were all approved by the NDMC. Again it was noted by both Maldivian civil servants and NSS officers alike that a common military language and previous joint exercises made the coordination of military assets amidst the initial chaos less of a problem than it might otherwise have been. That said, the NSS also expressed satisfaction with its relationship with civilian responders – possibly because that interaction was more limited than in other affected countries.

A common military language and previous joint exercises made the coordination of military assets amidst the initial chaos less of a problem than it might otherwise have been.

Forces were assigned to work in the seven sectors established by the NSS and each vessel had with it an NSS Liaison Officer (LO) to ensure adequate communication back to Male and to assist with local translation. Their value was in the immediate relief phase with one NSS interlocutor explaining that the use of the military in the recovery period would be hard to justify on the grounds of expense. He also commented that the military's perceived success was its short engagement, well defined tasks and absence of "mission creep" i.e. getting out "whilst the audience is still clapping"!

### *Civil-military Cooperation and Response Mechanisms*

The primary focus for civil military interaction was through the NDMC. Tasking, even to assist humanitarian agencies such as WFP, was managed through that body where the NSS had its own liaison officers. On the islands the NSS and the foreign forces (through their NSS assigned Liaison Officers) dealt with the island administrators. Arguably, given the importance of logistics to humanitarian and government bodies alike, UNJLC could have played a useful liaison role with the NSS. However, as mentioned by a UN representative, by the time UNJLC arrived some weeks after the Tsunami, arrangements were already in hand either with commercial carriers or the NSS itself. It is however worth noting that those international humanitarian organisations present, and outside the UN system, are usually reluctant to use military assets for the delivery of assistance. No UNCMCOORD person was deployed to the Maldives – understandable given the limited



number of such individuals available for deployment but nevertheless a missed opportunity in terms of providing the NSS with humanitarian insights and priorities.

### ***Future Role***

Work and discussions are still ongoing within government regarding future policy for Disaster Preparedness and Response. It is inevitable that the NSS, as the first national responders to emergencies after the initial local reaction, will play a central role in any plans developed and in emergency operations required. Lack of experience and shock appeared to play no part in the NSS' ability to react quickly and effectively co-ordinate the assets at their disposal. But there is a recognition that much work remains to be done to establish more formal MOUs with regional military forces in particular and to participate in joint exercises. Aware of the "Oslo Guidelines" they also expressed a willingness to gain greater knowledge of humanitarian organisations and to work alongside them in joint exercises. As with ASEAN, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) which called, at its recent summit in Dhaka on 12 November 2005, for greater cooperation within the region to deal with the aftermath of disasters like the Tsunami and Kashmir earthquake may provide the impetus required. No doubt there is also a role for the UN to actively pursue such regional agendas but the cancellation (due to lack of funding) of OCHA's planned deployment of a CMCOORD officer to the UN Regional Office in Bangkok may delay this process.

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), at its November 2005 summit in Dhaka, called for greater cooperation within the region to deal with the aftermath of disasters like the tsunami and Kashmir earthquake. This may provide the impetus to work more closely with humanitarian agencies in joint exercises.

## **Coverage**

As with all country case studies, the examples here are 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 of the totality of any one agency's programme.

### **Sectoral and Geographic Coverage**

#### ***Food Security***

WFP was not present in the Maldives when the tsunami occurred. But it was quick to respond. The first shipment of food – rice, vegetable oil, pulses and sugar totalling 2,000mt - arrived within about 48 hours in December 28<sup>th</sup>. A second shipment of same items and same amount arrived in January. WFP has distributed 39mt of food using the National Security Service. As of mid November 2005 WFP had 73mt still left. It is being distributed to schools in the tsunami affected islands under a school feeding program.



WFP activity must be evaluated in the broader context of the country's overall food policy. Essential food items such as rice, flour and sugar are imported by the State Trading Organisation that is 97% owned by the government and has a monopoly in import of such items. These items are subsidised by the government. Both private traders as well as state-owned retail outlets sell the subsidised items to the consumers. The peculiarity of the Maldives is that nutritional intake varies from island to island due to complex sociological variables, and WFP's level of staffing and skills was unable to fully investigate the implications of this. No nutritional data was available, and UNICEF launched a full survey only much later in the year. A Health and Nutrition sectoral group, chaired by WHO, met irregularly.

The tsunami destroyed home gardens, disrupted food import and distribution, and caused significant livelihood losses in tourism and fishing. When the WFP initially distributed food to tsunami communities, all got the ration irrespective of whether they were tsunami victims or not. Following a WFP needs assessment, distribution was limited to those that were in need and found to be vulnerable. Immediate food relief was provided to 1,250 children of 6-24 months; another 39mt of fortified biscuits were provided to 48,000 older children. An emergency school feeding program utilising 112mt of food was initiated for about 25,000 school children in 77 most affected islands. Later the beneficiary list was broadened. WFP reports supplying 2,115mt of rice, vegetable oil, pulses and sugar for about 41,000 people or about one in seven of the nation's population benefited from this program in the first two months. All food aid was distributed through government channels.

WFP food procurement and distribution in the Maldives appears to have been driven partly by need, partly by government request, and partly by the availability of surplus WFP supplies in the region. The government has requested that WFP continue food distribution until the end of 2005. Between June and December 2005, WFP ordered supplies for 20,000 people, but only 14,000 qualified for food aid by WFP criteria. In some islands the island chiefs refused to accept food aid only for tsunami victims, but changed their position under government pressure.

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

Possibly as a way of reducing stocks WFP agreed to a government request to distribute free food for Ramadan and provided food for all the people in the tsunami islands. WFP's attempt to start a food for work program failed, hardly surprising in a labour scarce economy<sup>28</sup>.

### *Health*

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<sup>28</sup> Traditionally, much of the labour has been hired in from Bangladesh and India.

Approximately 45 health centres that operated in the island were damaged by the tsunami. WHO provided basic supplies that covered the basic health needs of a population of 300,000 for three months. UNICEF trained 61 community health workers. UNFPA assisted the health sector in the area of care for pregnant women. Health authorities successfully contained an outbreak of suspected mumps in one IDP settlement. But UNFPA reported small outbreaks of diarrhoeal diseases and increases in acute respiratory infections, especially, but not only, among children, and not related to the season. There was no major outbreak of disease in any of the tsunami communities – an achievement shared with other tsunami countries – but this cannot be attributable to effective health relief coordination<sup>29</sup>. Nevertheless, routine immunization re-started in February with support from UNICEF as part of the early recovery of the health system and the protection against common diseases.

### *Shelter*

With the assistance of OCHA, the Disaster Management Centre prepared guidelines for transition shelter. The rule was to have a minimum of 2 sq m per person. However, the UN (Male) in March noted “overcrowding of in temporary accommodation (that) fell short of international minimum sphere standards.”<sup>30</sup> This was partly because, like in Banda Aceh, the temporary shelter program was running behind schedule. The IFRC, which is funding all the building materials for the transitional shelters, pointed out to GOM that the SPHERE standard is 3.5 sq metres per person and agreed to fund additional housing blocks to meet this standard. The government were quick to address this situation and commendably open to discussions over international standards.

Early damage assessment painted a misleading picture of priorities and needs, with consequences further down the line (especially with regard to the uneven funding of the recovery effort). UNDP revised down its initial assessment on shelter needs. By October it became clear that they didn't have enough money to complete all of their housing projects, and an internal reallocation of money was necessary.

### *Gender Issues*

UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO noted that of the estimated 4,000 women in the country at the time of the tsunami 1,500 were in the “severely affected populations.”<sup>31</sup> What appears to have happened is that “in most circumstances, disaster and damage assessments were conducted without the involvement of affected communities. In addition, the needs of specific elements of the community, e.g. pregnant women, the disabled and elderly were not always addressed.”<sup>32</sup> The same report also recommended (p.10) that relief supplies

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<sup>29</sup> "The inevitability of epidemics following natural disasters is a myth". Clasen, T., & Smith, L. (2005). *The Drinking Water Response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami Including the Role of Household Water Treatment*: World Health Organisation.

<sup>30</sup> UN, *Minutes of Inter-Agency Meeting*, Male, March 03, 2005, (unpublished manuscript).

<sup>31</sup> UN, *Maldives Briefing Note for the Special Envoy*, 7 February, 2005, p.01.

<sup>32</sup> Government of Maldives and United Nations Post-Tsunami Lessons learned and best Practices Workshop, *Report on Main Findings*, Maldives, 17-18 May, 2005, (unpublished manuscript), p.07.

must include items specially needed by women, women should be involved in emergency management operations and decision making especially at the island level, and disaster management operations must develop special policies to assist vulnerable groups, and that there must be a “clearly designated authority responsible for psycho-social support.” The need for psychosocial support stems partly from observations such as that of the UNFPA made in late February that “among adolescent girls from badly affected islands there are some indications that menstrual bleeding patterns may have been seriously impacted (leading to) physical, social and psychological discomfort.”<sup>33</sup>

The extent to which women can play a more decisive role in disaster management is essentially a long term issue that relates to capacity building as well as more fundamental changes of governance and political culture. Gender equality in managing relief or recovery efforts, especially at island level, is something that UN and NGOs can do much more to promote.

### **Transparency and Accountability**

The regular quarterly submission of demographic data from each atoll administration includes disaggregated data on sex, age, etc, but this has not translated into any thorough appraisal of vulnerability as such<sup>34</sup>. In the immediate aftermath of tsunami great emphasis was given to physical asset replacement. The combination of male-dominated decision structures and irregular mechanisms for community feedback compounded the rather passive manner in which aid was simply ‘received’. Nevertheless, the quality of temporary IDP housing, for instance, was commendable.

As with other tsunami-hit countries, complaints over a ‘two-tier’ recovery approach soon emerged, with IDPs often receiving disproportionate assistance when compared to those relatively unaffected or whose houses were only partially damaged. With significant migration to Male, the question of occupied/unoccupied houses emerged.

Growing frustrations over disparities in assistance between islands, and even within islands, points to a lack of common policy among donors. A more coordinated approach would have avoided the thin spread of assistance in some islands compared to others. The fragmentation is a reflection of funding patterns, a lack of coordination capacity in government, and poor communication and consultation with recipient populations.

The question of accountability and verification of beneficiary lists arose, with some donor agencies being frustrated by the constant shifts in named households and beneficiaries. There were a number of contributing factors towards this: only cursory consultation with island populations, a lack of clearly coordinated and agreed criteria for assistance, and the fragmentation of funding and agencies on the ground.

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<sup>33</sup> UNFPA, *Information for Siteps – 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2005*, OCHA, Male, 2005 (Unpublished manuscript)

<sup>34</sup> UNDP is assisting the government to carry out a comprehensive poverty and vulnerability survey (began in 2004), the data from which will shortly be available.

There are some exceptions. The British Red Cross, in an attempt to relieve the pressure from government, undertook its own tendering and community consultation. In this respect it is one of the only agencies using a community-based approach, ensuring consultation with communities in the recovery process. Using verified beneficiary lists, they gave new houses only to those who had occupied their houses in the last 5 years – government compensation programmes on other islands did not make this distinction. With \$20m and working on 6 islands, the BRC was committed to building 744 new houses (of a total 2,500 needed countrywide). According to some senior government officials, the self-tendering process, though approved by the government, may paradoxically have added to their workload, since separate customs clearance, storage, etc was required. Other Red Cross societies, by contrast, went through the government's own tendering process. The BRC's approach was, however, inherently more difficult than that of the IFRC which was funding a new settlement and its infrastructure on one island and working mostly with re located populations on host islands.

Unlike several other donors, BRC assured accountability through strict verification of beneficiary lists, so that they knew exactly for whom they were building houses. As a member of the UK's Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC) the BRC has followed best practice in ensuring that such a mechanism was in place.

With government capacity severely overstretched, some questions have been raised over an apparent disparity between the surge capacity of international agencies, including the UN, and that offered to the government<sup>35</sup>. Coordination between government departments and with international agencies was not sufficiently enhanced with additional international staff, in spite of some welcome UNV support<sup>36</sup>. The island Task Forces were in particular need of increased capacity.

Using private boat transport a large number of INGOs distributed relief supplies with minimal government oversight. The donors only had to 'inform' the government of what they were doing, though there was no way to check whether everybody complied even with this requirement. However, after two months the government required external donors to channel supplies through government ministries.

Communication between islands was quickly restored, though many harbours and jetties remain broken. The government claims that by the end of the second month all the islands were connected by air or sea.

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### III. Recovery and Rehabilitation Phase

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<sup>35</sup> The government repeatedly insisted that they wanted Maldivians who could speak Divehi, but despite numerous efforts at advertising for such posts, the UN was unable to find (and fund) such staff placements.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Ministry of Planning and National Development.

## National Coordination

The Ministry of Planning and National Development in January 2005 disclosed its decision to develop safe islands in each of the 20 atolls<sup>37</sup>. These islands will get special attention as ‘development nodal points’. The government has not yet issued an edict on where and when the consolidation policy will occur; the political implications and potential for unrest are apparent. It is also a resource issue: the government does not have the resources to satisfy the preferences of all such individuals and families.

The concentration of population and associated public services should, as the UN stresses, be voluntary. Coordinated advocacy, presumably led by the UN, will be needed. Meanwhile, some confusion and concern exists over whether this broader policy will influence allocations of recovery inputs for those choosing to remain where they are. Some islands will be subject to land fill to raise their levels: will this be done where rebuilding is already completed?

Crucially, resources are being invested to revitalize livelihoods, put into place new sewage and waste treatment plants and rebuild houses without a clear sense of whether these investments will be rendered meaningless due to policy decisions regarding the choice/designation of safe islands. While it is possible to make certain assumptions about whether population consolidation is more likely—and hence worth a serious long-term investments in infrastructure etc. — it is quite possible that certain aspects of the recovery programme—in particular the UNDP-supported shelter projects—are spread too thin when a more cost-effective and logical approach would be for the UN (and others) to concentrate their efforts on a number of key population centres.

The transition towards greater government ownership of the recovery process, in spite of capacity constraints, is apparent in the second half of 2005. The slow dismantling of the NDMC since February (though it is still in existence) saw a resumption of regular line ministry work to the detriment of tsunami work. February also saw the unveiling of the first draft of the National Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (NRRP), with a cost (estimated at rebuilding to the same standard) of \$470m. Although weekly inter-ministerial meetings (with donor invitations) continue to map needs, resources and activities, the more holistic coordinated approach enjoyed through the NDMC is missed.

The incumbent President has governed the country for the past twenty-eight years. The pace of promised political reform has been slow, even by the targets the government has set for itself (e.g. a new constitution by January 2006), yet a good starting point was a multi-party system constitutionally accepted in June 2005. The democratic reform process, its affect on freedom of association (including NGOs), a gradual opening of dialogue on human rights, and more transparent governance, provides a challenging backdrop to the ‘space’ provided to international and national aid organisations as they move from post-tsunami relief to much greater engagement in long term development of the country as a whole. The tsunami response has opened up opportunities for dialogue

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<sup>37</sup> The decision has actually been discussed for at least 5 years, but the delay in publishing the list is due to political difficulties.

with the international community over, for example, human rights and encouraging a more vibrant civil society.

The tsunami response coincided with a political reform process in a hitherto relatively closed society, presented new challenges and opportunities for the international community to act as catalysts and advocates of international standards in governance, human rights, etc.

## **International Coordination**

### *Information Structures*

A February Presidential decree left the handling of all tsunami aid to the Ministry of Finance, though the UN continued to also report through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. UNDP's Aid Coordination Project includes the Development Assistance Database (DAD) and institutional support around the NRRP, with four thematic clusters identified by the government – governance, environment, social sector, and economic development.

Formally launched on 1<sup>st</sup> September, the DAD was 50% 'off the shelf' and 50% adapted to local requirements. As an interactive (restricted access to data upload) tool, it can be linked to the national budget. With a persuasive pull of data from stakeholders, and a relatively small donor community, over 90% of needed data is now included. The DAD team has been proactive in terms of its useage – now most agencies are comfortable with inputs to DAD, though less familiar with outputs. The next stage is to create media outlets to enable verification of data by island committees, plus a small secretariat that will support the various sectors and feedback DAD analysis to key stakeholders.

The take-up of the DAD has been very quick, and the consolidation of data and tracking within the Ministry of Finance promises to greatly improve coordination and tracking of resources.

### *Strategy and Resource Mobilization*

Questions arise over the coordination of information over funding and financial tracking. The Ministry of Finance, now the focal agency for tracking and coordinating external recovery inputs through the Development Assistance Database (DAD) and matching these against the NRRP, has found it difficult to reconcile on-budget requirements with those resources available through, for example, the Flash Appeal (which accounts for about 34% of funds available). Direct expenditure by UN agencies, for instance, is not deducted from on-budget reconstruction, and the Ministry claims that it is still not aware of how much is actually been spent by the UN per sector<sup>38</sup>. Part of the problem is that UN figures have hitherto been compiled elsewhere (regionally)<sup>39</sup>. UNICEF, for example, has

<sup>38</sup> The claim is disputed by UNDP on the basis that expenditure data is provided on a monthly basis.

<sup>39</sup> An agreement has been reached with the FTS/ETS system in Geneva that tsunami-hit countries with a DAD system in place will no longer report directly to the OCHA database.

integrated its Flash Appeal money into the regular programme; the government claims that the commitment of \$37m does not indicate a clear breakdown of expenditure into relief and development<sup>40</sup>.

Questions arise over the coordination of information over funding and financial tracking. Poorly documented aid contributions – and an apparent inability of the UN to break down relief and recovery costs in a manner acceptable to the government – create problems in presenting a true picture of costs associated with the recovery programme.

The Joint Needs Assessment and NRRP required \$375m in reconstruction costs, for which the funding gap in November was \$114m. The government is satisfied that the \$261m so far raised is a commendable proportion, but if, say, \$60m or so is still for relief items recognised under the Flash Appeal, the reconstruction budget gap would be greater than \$114m<sup>41</sup>.

Coordination is closely tied up with transparency and accountability. The Tsunami Relief and Reconstruction Fund Monitoring Board is one such mechanism. The Board consists of the Auditor general, UNDP Resident Coordinator, two government officials and three from the private sector. The Board checks on progress of tsunami work as well as, among other things, project design and procurement.

### *Communication and Participation*

The repeated and uncoordinated surveying of impacted communities by different UN agencies or other stakeholders resulting in minimal changes in circumstances or even sharing of information, has without a doubt contributed significantly to the tension and frustrations felt by both IDPs and host communities.

OCHA has done much to try and push this forward and has had a series of monthly programmes on TV and radio for IDPs. These covered water and sanitation, shelter, reproductive health, IDPs and also produced an IDP newsletter. It was seen as a priority by OCHA, UNICEF and UNFPA, but not by other agencies (particularly UNDP, FAO, UNEP) The RC appears to have unwilling to advocate at higher government and interagency levels for more information sharing.

Sphere standards with respect to community participation and communications were not always adhered to. UN Male in March 2005 observed the “lack of adequate information provided to islanders about their entitlement, duration of stay etc., lack of adequate IDP

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<sup>40</sup> UNICEF’s reply to this charge (Wayne MacDonanld, UNICEF New York) is: “UNICEF’s financial records reflecting funds received, sectoral commitments, and balances was regularly shared with the government ( at least weekly) either directly or through a consolidated report prepared by the RC/HC. In addition, in preparation for the Manila donor meeting, UNICEF sat with the MOE and the MOH (Health/WES) to review availability of funds and their allocation for the reconstruction phase. UNICEF’s commitments were reflected in financial table of the NRRP.”

<sup>41</sup> By November 2005, the gap was about \$150m, but this includes a largely “un-fundable” governance sector, the budget for which needs revising downwards.



community participation in the assessment of needs and programmes retain to their own welfare, (and the) Government has adopted a top down approach (such as a policy of rebuilding the houses and to hand them over to the communities).<sup>42</sup>

Island Taskforces were established to handle tsunami relief and recovery work. In theory this is a good coordinating body. In practice, however, some Island Chiefs appointed their own family members to this body and reduced the scope for broad-based community coordination.

As in other tsunami-hit countries, an effective and well-coordinated communication strategy with the affected population has been missing. Such a strategy should have been prioritized within the Flash Appeal, with a dedicated staff committed to developing appropriate outreach media and consultation mechanisms. In the event, most communications and public information resources have gone towards informing visiting delegations (UN, international government).

## Coverage

### *Shelter*

The management of IDP (MIDP) unit was set up in February under the NDMC. Soon after, the Internal Displacement Division (IDD) of OCHA responded to requests for technical assistance in several areas – the translation of a modified Guiding Principles document, shelter standards, etc. The first (and ongoing) task was registration of IDPs and the provision of identity cards, for which financial assistance was received through UNICEF and OCHA. By November there remained some 11,300 IDPs, of whom 5,243 remained in temporary shelters, and 80 in tented accommodation away from their original homes. A further 3,909 were hosted by neighbouring families. The balance of IDPs is registered as living in their own damaged homes.

The MIDP not only assisted with relief distribution but also in identifying social and protection issues and referring these to appropriate authorities. By doing so, it exposed one of the fault lines in coordination of the overall response. The momentum created by this – and by the subsequent creation of IDP committees on 15 islands - including an associated training-of-trainers programme in partnership with OCHA - has created a backlog and bottleneck of requests from IDPs that are not readily addressed by the (now) fragmented recovery apparatus within the government and elsewhere. For example, water and sanitation requests have overwhelmed the relevant ministry in Male. It was never intended that the various Red Cross and UN programmes would respond to individual requests, so the MIDP unit, in spite of laudable intentions, has created a problem of its own making. The Maldivian Human Rights Commission (HRC) lacks adequate capacity to support IDPs, although UNICEF and UNFPA support HRC in this area.

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<sup>42</sup> UN, *Minutes of Inter-Agency Meeting*, Male, March 03, 2005, (unpublished manuscript).



The innovative IDP unit –with only 4 staff - set up very soon after the tsunami, has been a victim of its own success. The communication of requests through island IDP committees has created bottlenecks in overstretched ministries and in Red Cross/UN offices not readily able to respond. The only answer is to enhance local island capacities.

The lessons from this experience relate capacity and communication. Community development workers were trained on each island, but with few viable CBOs/NGOs, the process was one of upward reporting of demands without implementation and follow-through on the ground. One example has been the provision (by UNICEF) of water tanks to temporary shelters which in many cases have not even been connected. Complaints have been directed to UNICEF, but they in turn await directions from the Ministry of Water, Energy and Environment as to how to proceed with such requests. Since the ministry itself is one of the least endowed with capacity, long delays ensue. With a \$16m programme for wat/san, UNICEF perhaps should have been more proactive in anticipating and enhancing ministerial capacity.

### ***Early Warning and Preparedness***

Maldives had very little capacity in disaster preparedness and mitigation. One UN report bluntly states that the country has “no comprehensive disaster management policy, no institutional framework for disaster management, (and) no expertise in disaster management.”<sup>43</sup> Maldivian officials also readily admit this was the case.

Following the tsunami, Maldives launched an ambitious DPM programme with the assistance of UNDP. As a first step, a team of private consultants in November presented a report on ‘Developing a Disaster Risk Profile for Maldives’.<sup>44</sup> It proposes a multi-hazard programme and plan of action that covers tsunami as well as earthquake, storm<sup>45</sup> and sea level rise<sup>46</sup> hazards. The proposed programme includes not only physical vulnerability and risk but also social vulnerability risk. UNDP has also paid \$1.9m towards early warning equipment and has completed a number of disaster management trainings for government staff and island communities.

Some preliminary steps are already being taken to improve disaster preparedness. The Maldivian Tourism Ministry, supported by UNDP, is incorporating a disaster preparedness component for all resorts; all resorts will be required to have an elevated ‘platform’ to be used in case of flooding. An expert on disaster preparedness and mitigation has conducted an assessment and will return to train those in the tourism

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<sup>43</sup> UN, *Maldives Recovery Results Table – First Revision*, UN Maldives, 22, May 2005 (Unpublished manuscript), p. 06.

<sup>44</sup> UNDP, *Developing a Disaster Risk Profile for Maldives*, Volume 1: Main Report, Draft Final, Male, October 2005.

<sup>45</sup> Over the past 128 years 11 cyclones had hit the Maldives, *ibid*.

<sup>46</sup> The average elevation of islands is about 1.5m above mean sea level. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climatic Change (IPCC) estimates that over the period 1990-2100 the sea level would rise between 0.09m and 0.88m.

sector. In the Third Tourism Master Plan (2006-10) a disaster preparedness component is to be included.

Many of the features of the Red Cross construction programmes contribute directly to risk reduction and disaster preparedness. For example, the quality of design and materials used in the new houses will ensure that the structures are much more resilient to future shocks than in the past. Agencies such as French RC and British RC are incorporating some form of emergency platform within their design. BRC and UNDP are discussing the viability and appropriateness of constructing communal emergency platforms on some of the worst hit islands and this will be based again on comprehensive community consultation. With Handicap International, various Red Cross agencies are ensuring that disability issues have been incorporated into these plans.

Given the geographic dispersion of the country into atolls and islands, it is recognized that a highly decentralized system of emergency relief for supply of essentials such as food, water and medicine would have to be put in place for an effective disaster preparedness system. Maldivian official sources point out that there are some existing infrastructure facilities that will be helpful to achieve this goal. Good health centres that are found in the inhabited islands are one example. But the same source also recognizes that local capacity for water is inadequate and needs to be strengthened. Officials also say that building codes will have to be strengthened to reduce the risk from earthquakes.

There is no Early Warning (EW) System in place at present. For that, the Maldives will have to join a broader international effort now under consideration. All these plans call for a coordination effort that can be achieved only with a considerable enhancement of present capacity in the central Maldivian government, the atolls and the islands, as well as in the IO and NGO sector. Overall a large amount of resources, training, and public education would be required to make the country fully prepared for a large scale natural disaster. UNDP and the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) have provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Tourism to enhance the disaster management capacity of local industry.