



Summary report

A ripple in development?

Long term perspectives on the response to the Indian Ocean tsunami 2004

A joint follow-up evaluation of the links between relief,
rehabilitation and development (LRRD)



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Foreword by the chair of the evaluation joint steering committee

This report is a summary version of the follow-up evaluation of linkages between immediate relief, rehabilitation (or reconstruction) and development (LRRD) related to the response to the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004.

The first LRRD evaluation was one of five studies carried out by the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC), which was formed by around 45 bilateral donors, multilateral organisations and international NGOs early in 2005. Four of the TEC studies concentrated largely on process issues – coordination, needs assessment, capacity-building and funding – while a fifth, the LRRD part, looked at outcome issues as well: what were the consequences of successful and unsuccessful linkages between various components of the recovery?

The LRRD2 evaluation report covers experiences from the four years after the disaster in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. A number of organisations and government agencies have supported this evaluation in various ways, and we hope that it provides conclusions and lessons learned that are useful for mitigating the consequences of possible future disasters.

One major conclusion of the evaluation is that the Indian Ocean tsunami – albeit a disaster of enormous proportions – was only a temporary disturbance in development compared to conditions defined by previously existing, long-term situations. Good linkages have occurred, but the lack of planning and overall analyses mean that the return of development was weaker than it could have been.

This abbreviated report is published in five languages: English, Bahasa Indonesia, Acehnese, Sinhalese and Tamil. The full main evaluation report and a comprehensive annotated bibliography and document review comprising over 800 publications on tsunami response are available on the Internet (e.g. www.alnap.org and www.sida.se).

We would like to warmly thank all those who have been involved with and contributed to the evaluation.

Stefan Dahlgren

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June 2009

The following agencies and organisations (usually the evaluation departments at each organisation) were active members of the Joint Steering Committee: Sida; Norad; Danida; the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs; CIDA; BAPPENAS, Indonesia; BRR, Indonesia; Ministry of Plan Implementation, Sri Lanka; Ministry of Nation Building & Estate Infrastructure Development, Sri Lanka; ISDR, Bangkok; IFRC, Bangkok; CARE International; OCHA; UNICEF.

1.1 Context

In late December 2004, the Indian Ocean tsunami wreaked havoc on the coastal populations of the Indian Ocean rim. At least 225,000 people died within hours, and housing, livelihoods and infrastructure were ruined in the affected coastal areas.

The response of international donors, affected governments and local communities was swift in meeting the crisis: as indicated by early evaluations of the recovery effort, a vast amount of community and infrastructure rebuilding occurred within a very short time span.

However aid was not to be applied just towards immediate recovery, but towards making the affected societies socio-economically stronger, more resilient to future risks. Return to the pre-tsunami status quo was not, therefore, a benchmark of success, since it did little to overcome developmental issues that made the region so vulnerable to disaster in the first place.

Linking Relief (immediate life-saving support), Rehabilitation (getting people back on their feet), and Development (long-term change towards socio-economic sustainability), or LRRD, is a standard of quality. It means that both humanitarian relief and development assistance should be planned and implemented in a mutually reinforcing way before, during and after emergencies (in a balanced and effective interaction). The LRRD framework is highly applicable in the tsunami context because it combines the efforts of different actors, and explicitly examines linkages between short and long-term recovery objectives.

An evaluation conducted in 2005 concluded that results were mixed. It was still too early to determine progress in accordance with a long-term perspective on getting beyond the pre-disaster status quo, and local capacities had been ignored. In 2008, in conjunction with other major donors and affected governments, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) took the lead in reas-

sessing the tsunami disaster response, to more clearly understand the articulation between relief and development, after several years of sustained aid effort.

1.2 Approach

The evaluation undertaken by Channel Research assessed the inter-connections of tsunami aid using the same conceptual framework applied in the evaluation of 2005.

The evaluation was designed to yield accurate insights at both the state and community-based levels, across three affected countries: Sri Lanka, Indonesia (with emphasis on Aceh and Nias), and the Maldives. Insights were obtained through documentary study, interviews with government and community leaders (some 470 in total), and other key stakeholders in the recovery effort (mainly through observation and a survey that covered some 3000 individuals), and a broad-based survey of community members in the affected areas of each country.

The study focused on five key development themes:

- *The state and civil society*: Perceived roles of public administration and NGOs and associations in recovery and development, and how these have evolved in the post-tsunami context
- *Poverty, livelihoods and economic recovery*: Poverty alleviation and the rehabilitation or creation of means to generate meaningful household income
- *Social fabric and community development*: How communities have pulled together as self-supporting units after the disaster, for mutual developmental benefit
- *Risk reduction*: The capacity to identify and mitigate risks to society arising from natural disasters in particular
- *Capacity development*: Local capacity to respond to and recover from crises, and international capacity to facilitate local initiatives and hand over sustainable new skills

2 State and civil society

2.1 State and civil society

This refers to changes in governance and civil activity, and the interaction between the two, to better enable sustainable recovery.

In line with the international donor aid effectiveness agenda, the idea is that the state should be central to the recovery process. One would anticipate that the direction of the combined efforts of donor-funded tsunami aid programmes ultimately will reduce affected countries' dependence on international donors for long-term recovery-related development, and increased the capacity of the state and civil society to take the lead.

Positive indications

Donors currently perceive the state in affected areas as the dominant actor in disaster recovery. The shift in public perceptions away from international agencies to the state indicates that, in the three years following the disaster, regional governments have taken on a leading role.

Civil society has not fared as well, but the tsunami did open up opportunities for new forms of civic participation, especially in the growing field of advocacy, or articulating urgent needs and pressing for action on key issues. This role has been helped by the local presence of internationally recognised networks such as the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC).

Perceived weaknesses

The immediate aftermath of the tsunami led to a degree of mass mobilisation and encouraged the formation self-help groups and NGOs. However, after the initial response to the disaster, governments' support for civil society mobilisation waned to previous levels of low interest and moderate distrust. So did public expectation of their value in recovery. In Aceh shortly after the disaster local NGOs were managing the major-

ity of recovery projects; however, three years later public expectation of NGO and self-help support had significantly declined from 2005 levels. In the Maldives civil society groups now receive the bulk of their support from international donors as opposed to local supporters, and are seldom recognised by the state. The ongoing conflict in Sri Lanka has continued to lead to a degree of mistrust between the state and civil society.

After the disaster each of the three states established a centralised organisation to coordinate recovery. In Sri Lanka and Indonesia these coordinating structures are now being dissolved. This has already led to a degree of discontinuity in recovery management, partly because local and central governments are missing an important channel for information flows between them. Taking a longer-term view, as advocated in the LRRD model, the dismantling of dedicated recovery coordination structures seems premature.

2.2 Conflict and harmonisation of aid policies

Conflict is a major constraint on recovery and development, and in alignment with the LRRD model, recovery assistance would ideally ease this developmental constraint. Also, recovery would include all necessary stakeholders. Did this occur?

Positive indications

Each of the three states faced conflict prior to the tsunami; conflict has concerned both the nationalist aspirations of sub-national groups (Sri Lanka and Aceh) and intense party opposition (the Maldives).

In Sri Lanka, despite a hard-line stance on the internal conflict by both the government and separatist Tamil Tigers, the tsunami recovery effort forced each side to recognise an agreement that aid would be rightfully distributed in both government and separatist-held areas. The two sides also accepted the existence of a new joint coordination body responsible for equitable aid delivery. In the heat of a very intense conflict, this was one of the very few positive dialogues between the opposing factions for a long time.

In Aceh in 2008, 57 percent of the population believed that the tsunami was still a major force in establishing dialogue between opposing factions (the state and separatist rebels). The recovery effort opened Aceh to the international community, and induced a spirit of open collaboration that still persists.

The Maldives had suffered from a degree of inter-party rivalry featuring a central government unaccustomed to opposition, and burgeoning parties seeking greater representation among key island groups. In some cases this conflict had led to localised violence and repression. The tsunami, which spared the capital city and therefore the hub of politics, led to all parties' immediate willingness to overlook grievances and focus

on recovery, led by the Ministry of Defence. Although short-lived in practice, this spirit of collaboration has contributed to conflict mitigation.

In all three countries, then, the recovery effort led to varying degrees of conflict mitigation as antagonists pulled together to address shared challenges. Even if this spirit has not always persisted, it has at least brought antagonists to the table and created a rough blueprint for future cooperation.

Perceived weaknesses

Tsunami recovery efforts have led to a degree of conflict mitigation in Aceh, though that was not the only factor, nor has conflict been entirely removed from the local political scene.

In Sri Lanka, the strain of a decades-old civil war, and inability of agencies to maintain standards of practice to minimise conflict and maximise peace, led to considerable reluctance on the parts of all stakeholders to build on the initial solidarity, and as a result conflict mitigation has been short-lived.

In the Maldives, although the tsunami's recovery imperative led to cooperation among previously contesting groups, ultimately the government has proceeded with relatively imbalanced economic development plans.

The partial relapse into previous conflictual attitudes is in part attributable to donor reluctance or short-sightedness in building conflict mitigation into their recovery responses. There was often little to no linkage between tsunami recovery planning and broader development issues including, fundamentally, conflict mitigation. It is inspiring that a disaster can bring people together, but assessed against LRRD imperatives, it is also disheartening that the linkage between recovery and conflict reduction has been a dim spot in recovery planning.

2.3 Decentralisation and subsidiarity

A coordinated shift of recovery capacity and authority to local levels is assumed, where local knowledge would be brought to bear on unique recovery and development challenges.

Positive indications

In each of the three states, there was a high degree priority to devolution of authority for recovery efforts in the immediate aftermath of the disaster.

In Aceh, the interaction of national and donor-led aid initiatives led to a higher degree of empowerment of local-level authorities, and this has persisted since the immediate aftermath, though not without challenges, as outlined in other sections of the report.

In both Sri Lanka and the Maldives, there was an immediate government response that included enhanced empowerment of local authorities and civil society to deal with the disaster. While this attitude has not been fully sustained, the tsunami response did open the door for new discourse about the value of decision-making devolution.

Perceived weaknesses

Regarding Aceh, the national-level Multi-Donor Fund to coordinate and allocate aid was based on consensual decision-making and had to take into account the views of a variety of government and civic groups. However, decentralised authority was also not accompanied by matching local-level capacity building. The insistence of separating development aid and recovery aid in donor policy has also hindered decentralisation.

In Sri Lanka and the Maldives, recovery efforts tended to strengthen the central government at the expense of local governments and civil society. In Sri Lanka, recovery planning was often handed to district-level authorities, but capacity-building focused on central authorities. Even then, some key central authorities, including housing and planning, were not fully included in recovery planning. In the Maldives, the central government retained full control of recovery planning, with little delegation of authority after the immediate response to the disaster.

2.4 Participation and accountability

There is often a need to increase stakeholders' participation in rebuilding their own future after a disaster. Getting communities and governments directly involved in a transparent and fair recovery effort, and ensuring equal opportunity to contribute to decision-making is essential to a sense of local empowerment.

Positive indications

Almost all officials and aid workers in each of the three states were clear that there was a high level of mobilisation and participation at a variety of levels in the immediate aftermath of the disaster. Participation in immediate recovery was more or less non-discriminatory and inclusive.

In the case of Indonesia, the national coordinating bodies for recovery aid were particularly effective in establishing grievance systems. This helped to ensure a reasonable degree of stakeholder participation in terms of how and where recovery efforts were most effective.

Perceived weaknesses

One issue was that the balance between speed of disaster response and participation seemed to err on the side of speed. Donors and governments were under tremendous pressure to disburse funds quickly. As a result, affected communities were seldom consulted about their unique needs.

Another aspect of the speed-participation trade-off was a lack of transparency. Disbursing funds without ensuring strong governance systems has often led to corruption and mismanagement. Sri Lanka was perhaps the worst case: aid funds tended to “disappear” and aid allocation was in some cases grossly unfair. Grievance systems to address such imbalances, aside from Indonesia, tended to be lacking.

Finally, in the urgent dash to initiate immediate relief, donors and local agencies focused heavily on “disaster-affected” groups. This led to a degree of inflexibility in the recovery and development efforts that followed demonstrated as a result of the narrow focus on the “disaster affected”, rather than vulnerable populations in general. Conflict-affected communities and households, although badly in need of recovery aid, have not had a proportionate voice in development planning.

2.5 Conclusions

There are indications that effective linkage between relief, rehabilitation and development is occurring. The tsunami resulted in a stronger role for national governments in development, and some unique if short-lived opportunities for state-society collaboration. However, constraints arising from preconceptions, power interests, distrust between state and civil society and the initial preference for speed over dialogue have impeded realisation of the LRRD model.

3 Poverty and livelihoods

Much of the suffering caused by the tsunami arose because the livelihoods of poor individual households, in terms of earning a meaningful income, were fragile and bound to be severely disrupted with any major change in their environment.

If disaster recovery is ultimately to lead to development beyond the initial status quo, which made societies so vulnerable to disaster in the first place, then poverty alleviation through enhanced security of livelihoods needs to be achieved. In addition to meeting immediate needs for survival, this implies empowering households and communities to attain resilient means of sustenance, and to adapt to sudden changes in their environment, such as the tsunami and other forms of disaster.

3.1 Aceh and Nias

Aceh and the nearby island of Nias were at the epicentre of the earthquake that caused the tsunami, and were very hard-hit by the disaster.

Positive indications

Overall, macro-level data indicates a moderate positive trend in poverty reduction in Aceh a year following the tsunami response. Poverty increased in 2005 directly after the tsunami, but in 2006 poverty actually decreased somewhat in relation to pre-tsunami levels.

In Aceh, local government agencies are generally regarded by affected communities as a positive force for recovery. Unlike many donors and external and national-level NGOs, the local government has a solid grasp of local market, labour and economic conditions. It is open to negotiation with affected communities towards the provision of tailored resources required to help communities to get back on their feet.

Perceived weaknesses

Despite macro-level indications that the recovery has alleviated poverty, there is little evidence that recovery spending has had a significant impact on job creation and household livelihoods. The focus of aid has often been on rebuilding and improving housing and infrastructure, especially in urban hubs. Meanwhile, most jobs in Aceh and Nias are in the informal sector and likely benefit little from large rebuilding schemes.

Recovery support has also favoured more accessible areas: for example Banda Aceh, the capital of Aceh, received a disproportionate amount of support, partly because of the apparent preference for large rebuilding schemes, and likely also because it is simply more accessible to the government and donors.

However, Nias, whose economy is largely subsistence-based and which has little economic connection to the rest of Sumatra., received an insignificant proportion of foreign recovery support.

Finally, there appears to be a gap in donors and international NGOs' understanding of relevant and meaningful needs of average communities and households in Aceh and Nias. Most livelihoods in these areas are in the informal sector, particularly fishing and agriculture. Labour, market and technological conditions are unique to the area.

3.2 Sri Lanka and the Maldives

Positive indications

The Maldives were stricken very hard by the tsunami, with approximately 62 percent of decrease in its annual GDP in the immediate aftermath. However, there was at least one established recovery mechanism for the industry of principal income – tourism, which comprises roughly a third of GDP. The tourism sector was well insured and post-tsunami tourism has regained vitality. This validates the efficacy of getting beyond subsistence livelihoods, which are not as resilient to disaster having fewer stakeholders and little option for risk transferral, i.e. insurance.

Sri Lanka's coastal areas were badly harmed, but the overall socio-economic impact was marginal in comparison to anticipated damage. This is because inland construction, agriculture and manufacturing have been the predominant bases of livelihoods, and they were not badly affected by the disaster. This again points to the efficacy of diversification.

In Sri Lanka, NGOs were highly effective players in the immediate recovery effort, and although their role proved to be somewhat short-lived, this is evidence that civil society was capable of adaptation to disastrous change and demonstrated self-organisation to help get communities back on their feet.

Perceived weaknesses

In both the Maldives and Sri Lanka there were challenges in getting aid to the communities who really needed it most for livelihood recovery. In the Maldives, the government preferred to centralise distribution through the capital, Male, and this resulted in a bottleneck which was exacerbated by the limited transport links between islands. In Sri Lanka, the Tamil insurgency limited the government's willingness to extend and deliver aid to several northern districts, and NGOs and donor agencies were also wary of extension into potential combat zones.

In both countries, a more fundamental issue has been donors' and the states' failure to grasp that the economy of the most vulnerable communities is based not so much on infrastructure, but on a functioning market and related skills. Equipment is generally easily replaceable, but a major disaster has the potential to wipe out delicately balanced modes of transaction upon which affected livelihoods are based. The tsunami has also led to a discontinuity in the development of skills required to participate in local economies: fishermen, farmers, artisans and traders acquire their skills through continuous work with experienced seniors. When there is no time or means to support skills development, livelihoods suffer.

The emphasis on asset replacement has also, importantly, led to a bias towards male-dominated activities. Men typically acquire the raw materials of commerce using physical equipment (e.g. boats, nets...), but women are more heavily involved in processing and trade. The role and empowerment of women, and their less tangible but critical role in the recovery of local economic systems, is a factor which has often been overlooked in the rush to replace assets.

Finally, after the initial acceleration of civic mobilisation in the tsunami's aftermath, government agencies became the focal points of recovery assistance, and the relevance of local NGOs declined.

3.3 Conclusions

In all three countries, there has been progress towards the rehabilitation of economies and livelihoods among affected poor communities. A strong basis for this has indeed been rebuilding and asset replacement. However, there has been a significant missed opportunity to accelerate economic recovery as a result of insufficient recognition that livelihoods and economic structures are more complex than simply asset replacement. Economic relationships need to be reactivated, the empowerment of women needs to be addressed, and local skills and capacity need to be developed in conjunction with more tangible forms of recovery.

4 Social fabric and community development

The social fabric is the “net” that pulls people together, especially in hard times. It is comprised of shared identities, values and concerns, and most importantly a sense that one’s fate is shared by the community.

The assessment takes as a premise that housing and affiliated infrastructure is a useful component of quality of life and community dynamics. Housing was indeed identified as a very important concern by local sources. However, when housing initiatives have occurred and been completed, there remains the major issue of societal reintegration after communities have been physically and socially torn asunder. How successful has the recovery effort been in addressing these issues?

4.1 Effect of integrated development on social relations

The tsunami strained social relations at all levels. There has been considerable progress in terms of rebuilding the infrastructural basis of the social fabric (homes, schools, etc.) but a lack of integration with livelihoods and social structures has led to persisting social dislocation.

Positive indications

In Indonesia most respondents agreed that their quality of life, in both economic and social terms, is better than prior to the tsunami, indicating that development efforts were on the whole successful in addressing social relations.

In Sri Lanka, there was a positive attitude to some aspects of social relations, including greater trust in the government, village infrastructure, youth opportunities and women’s status. However, most still consider that from their own individual perspectives, social relations and quality of life have not fully recovered to pre-tsunami levels.

One important point that arose in both Indonesia and Sri Lanka, was the perception that the status and role of women in society had improved since the tsunami, even if the change was seen as only moderate.

Perceived weaknesses

Although much recovery programming has been integrated and nuanced, best practice in this respect is far from universal. When recovery components have been implemented in isolation, community development remains fragile in terms of both quality of life and reconstitution of underlying social roles.

A more specific area that has seen low progress is overcoming feelings and trauma and fear generated by the disaster. In both Indonesia and Sri Lanka, while a sense of trauma decreased by a year after the event, there has been a significant relapse, and in the Maldives it seems from the consultations with community members that trauma remains a major social issue. A reconstitution of social relations will likely be a major factor in rebuilding a sense of stability and security.

4.2 Effect of local initiative on functional communities

Attitudes to change are considerably affected by material dimensions of recovery at the local level where it directly affects people's quality of life. When basic infrastructure and social services are lacking, communities remain dysfunctional.

Positive indications

The reconstruction effort in the affected areas has attained some remarkable successes considering the scale of the devastation, and progress is especially clear in programmes that have directly engaged communities as owners of change.

Flexibility in reconstruction has been another success factor. In Aceh, for example, the transitional shelters set up by the IFRC in coastal areas have allowed affected households to have access to housing in proximity to their traditional fishing grounds, while still retaining their permanent new home in safer areas further inland.

Although there has been progress, challenges and missed opportunities remain to be addressed.

Perceived weaknesses

One shortcoming in local initiatives is that housing has outpaced other essential aspects of rebuilding. In addition, the rush to rebuild housing has often led to a lack of consultation on housing needs, and poor contractor management, with a consequent lack of quality and low relevance to community requirements. The result of the imbalanced rush for housing is that communities might physically exist, but many remain

dysfunctional as other aspects of community rebuilding are not adequately addressed.

Another serious shortcoming is poor policy design. In Sri Lanka, the buffer zone policy, which prohibits people from rebuilding and living permanently in affected coastal areas, has led to considerable hardship and dislocation. Households whose livelihood is based on fishing now face a struggle to get to work every day. This has resulted in the need to find new livelihoods, and families splitting up. Those who remain in fishing often live in temporary shelters on the coast, while others live inland close to their own new source of livelihood.

In the Maldives the government's policy of rewarding island populations who locate to safer island hubs has had a similar effect. Older people often prefer to stay on ancestral lands in spite of the risk, while the young prefer to take advantage of economic incentives to move to designated hubs.

In Aceh, re-housing has been described as a "lottery", not just in terms of the quality of house, but, importantly, where it is. In many cases households are relocated far beyond their original locations and in some cases even into hostile host communities.

The net effect of bad policy is often social fragmentation: families and communities are split, and holistic community development fails to gain grip.

4.3 Effect on micro-politics and culture

The recovery process has seen a significant impact on community-level politics and culturally-defined social status in affected communities. There is evidence that aid distribution has been the principal source of conflict in recovering communities. The long-term effect of recovery should be a balance in terms of helping the most vulnerable strata of society, and avoiding the friction that is inevitable when traditional elites perceive a challenge to their status. This balance has not always been easy.

Positive indications

Social friction and elite efforts to manipulate aid distribution in their own interests were prominent features of recovery in the tsunami's initial aftermath. However, these issues have become markedly less acute as aid programmes have shifted from short-term relief to long-term rehabilitation.

Aceh provides a clear example of this shift. World Bank figures indicate that aid-related conflicts dropped significantly after 2005. There was a strong perception locally that the poorest did indeed benefit most from relief, and that corruption was not a widespread problem.

While there has been a trend in the right direction, micro-politics have indeed posed some acute challenges, and been exacerbated, throughout the relief and recovery process.

Perceived weaknesses

Social disruption has sometimes occurred when aid has targeted the poor for housing recovery at the village level. In Aceh, for example, social status and the right to exercise power is signified in part by wealth, of which better housing is a strong indicator. When village heads and the poor end up with similar housing, traditional influence is eroded. This might be regarded as beneficial in terms of social levelling (see next section) but when social disruption occurs too quickly or blatantly, the social fabric suffers, and community tensions are a probable result.

Between 2006 and 2008 in the Maldives, elites sometimes not only tried to favour themselves in aid allocation, but when realising this was not feasible simply sought to stall significant reconstruction. Greater donor sensitivity to micro-politics might have led to more seamless programming and better community cohesion.

Another source of micro-political friction in recovery has been the continued prioritisation of disaster-affected communities over conflict-affected communities for recovery. For example, in Sri Lanka, the UNDP's budget for replacing a disaster-damaged house was more than twice as much as replacing one damaged by conflict. This imbalance could risk creating social divisions between disaster and conflict-affected households and communities.

Foreign insensitivity in programme design has not just raised the risk of micro-political conflict, but can also lead to unsustainable results. For example, in some cases culturally insensitive house design, in particular putting toilet and cooking facilities in the house where this was culturally prohibited, has effectively made new houses uninhabitable.

4.4 Effect of reconstruction on social exclusion

Long-term development depends in part on a reduction in social exclusion, enabling households and communities to exercise their full socio-economic potential. The record has been mixed, in spite of international efforts to relate to the local context of recovery.

Positive indications

Housing recovery is one recovery element that really has had a social levelling effect. The poor and elites have often received equal allotments in terms of land plots and house size and quality, thereby erasing one major former symbol of social division (not without consequences, as noted above). In Indonesia in particular, people have seen a hidden blessing in the tsunami in the dramatic increase in their housing and economic security, a benefit surpassed only by the recovery's impact on peace (See section 2 above, The state and civil society).

As noted in Section 2, The State and Civil Society, although social protection systems remain rudimentary, civil society and local government remain the predominant safety net for individual households, and

this helps to ensure a degree of fairness and accessibility in terms of local access to social support.

Perceived weaknesses

In some cases international interventions have sought to align with the local context, only to find that policy and regulatory gaps have prevented a reduction in social exclusion.

In Sri Lanka, many aid agencies targeted tenured households on the basis that it initially seemed more straightforward and on the understanding that the government would grant land tenure to all who needed re-housing. By default, re-housing has favoured tenured households who are usually not among the poorest. Even if rebuilding could proceed without tenure, it would leave poor households vulnerable to predatory land seizures in the future.

Similarly, in the Maldives there have been delays in registering new houses because of a law that states that tenure can only be granted if the land has a boundary wall. While efforts are underway to grant exemptions, this has favoured wealthier households who already had tenure and at least the remnants of a walled compound.

4.5 Effect of information and participation on social fabric

Transparency and availability of information to recovering communities, consultation, and direct community participation in recovery play a major role in gaining trust and enabling sustainable recovery. The achievement has been mixed.

Positive indications

Across all three countries, positive community-level feedback on information flows and participation has been strong in communities in which aid organisations ensured a high degree of consultation and community-level participation. Even in cases in which the community was initially confused or distrustful of donor commitment, patient guidance and transparency have paid off to enable effective recovery. In general, community perceptions of transparency and sufficiency of information has improved since the early phase of response, if only moderately.

Perceived weaknesses

Weaknesses in transparency and availability of information persist. Communities tend to assume that a lack of information or transparency is often deliberate, and mistrust is a result. This is particularly the case concerning information gaps in the government's selection of priority beneficiaries for aid, and this instance is regrettably common.

Many NGOs have not taken the time to consult and work with local communities, but instead rely heavily on sub-contractors to handle recovery efforts after only a brief needs assessment. In such cases com-

munities tend to perceive NGOs as profit oriented operations, and relations with NGO sub-contractors who remain in the community become strained.

4.6 Conclusions

The social fabric both underpins capacity-building and the re-building of livelihoods, and compared with results of earlier studies, by 2008 there were indications that over time the recovery effort had begun to successfully address this vital element. Some of the key attributes of progress have included:

- **Integrated approaches:** The social fabric, infrastructure and livelihoods are all inter-supportive and are not undertaken in exclusion
- **Inclusiveness:** Approaches which reduce social exclusion, both in gender and income terms, and which treat disaster and conflict-affected communities as equally vulnerable, achieve better long-term results
- **Cultural and conflict sensitivity:** Programmes that acknowledge local micro-political issues, social structures and cultural norms are more apt to succeed
- **Owner-driven:** When affected communities are consulted and included in their own recovery, the results are more relevant and sustainable

Overall, the recovery effort has led to a return to normality and even better conditions for many affected communities, and has appropriately focused on the least advantaged. However, when the above conditions in restoring the social fabric have not been met, waste, delays and conflict have impeded optimal results.

Risk reduction means reducing the probability of disaster being incurred and the extent of harm if it is unavoidable. The framework applied in this study to assess risk reduction covers five areas of progress:

- Changes in institutions and laws to better enable risk reduction
- Knowledge of disasters – how they arise, warning signs and potential impact
- Disaster awareness – an appropriate level of concern and attention
- Risk reduction measures – specific initiatives taken to reduce risk
- Preparedness – disaster early warning and response mechanisms

Importantly, other areas of recovery, specifically livelihoods, infrastructure and the social fabric, are also relevant to risk reduction, since they go a long way towards making society more resilient to shocks.

Risk reduction has received a great deal of attention since the tsunami at both international and national levels, and partly as a result it is perhaps the most successful element of the recovery effort as judged by shared awareness of the issues and coherence of responses. Positive indications outweigh perceived weaknesses.

5.1 Institutions

Positive Indications

Changes at the legislative and administration level have occurred in all three countries: risk reduction has become a priority in the region. Sri Lanka has seen considerable progress at the national level in both new legislation and institutions, and this has been reflected at the district level. Indonesia has also made progress, though new acts and institutions have yet to become fully operational. The Maldives trails, with new legislation still in draft form, but there are new institutions necessary for disaster risk reduction.

5.2 Knowledge and awareness

Changes in knowledge are extensive. This has been driven in part by the great deal of international research on tsunamis in the aftermath of the disaster. Prior to 2004 tsunamis were not regarded as a priority risk for the region. Now they have major visibility, and a lot more is understood about how and when they occur, as well as appropriate risk reduction measures. To varying degrees this learning has been taken on board in each of the three countries to help design appropriate risk reduction measures. Importantly, this new learning has also led to a wider sense of the importance of understanding and addressing other natural hazards generally.

Changes in awareness of disaster risk appear to be one of the most significant outcomes of the tsunami and response to it. Across the region, there is a greater realisation that “This can happen to me”. Sri Lanka experienced the biggest change in awareness, which many people attributed to the tsunami itself as opposed to awareness-raising efforts in the recovery process.

5.3 Risk reduction measures, preparedness and early warning

Risk reduction measures have been planned in each country:

- In Sri Lanka buffer zones, areas of exposed coastline with no permanent housing, have been defined. The buffer concept is also being extended to river flood protection schemes. As noted in previous sections buffers have sometimes led to a backlash as people find themselves too far from their sources of livelihood.
- In Indonesia the buffer concept has also been applied, but the government has been more flexible to account for people who wish to rebuild on the coast. All the same, people generally accept the value of the buffer concept.
- The Maldives are too flat and exposed for a buffer concept to be feasible, but there has been attention to designating safe islands for temporary relocations, and serious discussion around purchasing land away from the Maldives for resettlement to less exposed areas. The notion of incentives for people to move permanently to safer hubs, as noted previously, has not been as successful.

Preparedness and early warning have seen considerable progress. At the international level the tsunami led to the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System with sub-centres at the national level. National governments have also invested, but not successfully yet, in “last mile” warning systems, including warning towers (in Sri Lanka, roll-out of a tower network has been partial as a result of conflict in the east of the country, but progress is expected).

In Indonesia, the Red Cross offers support to establish village-level committees on disaster awareness and risk reduction. Preparedness and warning also occurs at the informal level, as disaster awareness has led individuals to keep family and friends informed of signs of emerging risk.

5.4 Significance of impact

Significance of impact has varied, but on the whole is positive. Short of an actual response to a disaster, impact can be assessed through progress in 1) explicit risk reduction initiatives, and 2) through other aspects of the recovery operation which increase socio-economic resilience:

As indicated above, there has been considerable progress in explicit risk reduction, including buffer zones, warning systems, and designation of safer areas for relocation. It remains too early to judge the real impact of these initiatives, but it is clear that risk reduction has gained considerable traction and prominence, and is an area where there is a relatively high level of awareness and agreement on the key issues and options.

In spite of some significant shortcomings as highlighted in previous sections of this report, other related recovery initiatives, for example in the areas of infrastructure and livelihoods, have significantly reduced the vulnerability of the poorest communities who are most exposed to disaster risk.

Perceived weaknesses

In the Maldives, there is a necessary focus on the longer-term effects of climate change and rising water levels. To some extent this focus has delayed institutional responses to major disasters such as the tsunami. What must be recognised is that long-term climate change is in fact likely to incur more frequent major natural disasters, and these then cannot take a backseat to long-term challenges.

In Indonesia, disaster risk reduction sits with several ministries and information and early warning systems are not necessarily compatible. New institutions have yet to develop to the point to which disaster planning harmony and standardisation accrues.

In all cases, the weaknesses in other areas of the recovery process as outlined in other areas of the report, specifically infrastructure, livelihoods, the social fabric and capacity-building, leave gaps in socio-economic resilience. Explicit risk reduction initiatives in themselves will be insufficient to handle risk without at the same time keeping pace with reduction in socio-economic vulnerability.

Finally, there is evidence that some donors have not yet internalised their own stated positions on the importance of risk reduction. The UK, for example, proposed allocating 10 percent of its humanitarian response funding to risk reduction. OECD reporting, however, indicates that as of 2007, the real figure is closer to 2.7 percent.

5.5 Conclusion

Risk reduction is an area of relative strength in the tsunami recovery effort, and evinces strong linkages between relief, rehabilitation and development. These linkages still need to be strengthened, and other areas of the recovery effort need to keep pace in order for societies at risk to realise their optimal risk management potential.

6

Capacity building

Capacity-building refers to the ability to identify and address challenges in order to achieve relief, rehabilitation and development. Capacity entails not just skills, knowledge and resources, but also the ability to exercise ownership over key recovery challenges, and to take meaningful, informed decisions. Capacity-building therefore also means creating an environment in which ownership among those best placed to exercise it is feasible.

The assessment draws upon the wider pool of research, but also three specific case studies, to draw general conclusions:

- In Indonesia the experience of the Indonesian branch of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC), provides useful insights into the experience of an internationally networked but nationally based aid organisation.
- The Sri Lankan case draws on the experience of the Capacity Development and Recovery Programme (CADREP), which was established with considerable international donor support but which was answerable to the Sri Lankan state, and active in local communities.
- The Maldives' case draws on the experience of Care Society, a national NGO which was active in development efforts prior to the tsunami, and which played a grass-roots role in the recovery effort.

6.1 Local development frameworks

Local development frameworks refer to the institutions and civil organisations which play a role in recovery at the national and community level, and the relationship between different levels.

Positive indications

Significant capacity-building, particularly of state-level agencies, has occurred despite tight time constraints in the context of the immediacy of needs, and this has been a major factor in the considerable recovery progress thus far.

Intermediary organisations have played a significant role in bridging the gap between local consultation and national recovery planning. For example, in Sri Lanka, the People's Planning Commission and other organisations have effectively consulted on recovery needs in the less accessible east of the country and relayed these to the state and national NGOs.

Perceived weaknesses

One salient issue is that many recovery programmes are aimed at building other people's capacity, but self-development is often overlooked. Donors, NGOs and the state have often overlooked their own need to prepare internal capacity to address recovery challenges, including their knowledge of local contexts, and sector expertise (e.g. housing). This has sometimes left capacity gaps which are then transferred to the end recipients of local capacity-building programmes.

Another issue is that recovery efforts remain centred around national disaster authorities, and have focused more on service delivery than capacity-building. As previous sections have pointed out, recovery has been most effective when those most affected by the disaster have direct involvement in their recovery, and feel a sense of control over their future. In some cases specific areas of training and equipment have been provided locally, but with little reference to the skills to make the most of these assets and to maintain and build on them.

6.2 International alignment around capacity-building

Priorities

International alignment refers to sharing of practices and knowledge between international agencies, and between international and national /local agencies regarding the significance of capacity-building and how it should be addressed.

Positive indications

There are strong examples of international organisations taking a long-term perspective on local interventions and the formation of local connections. In Indonesia for example, the IFRC has aligned its work on health issues closely with national priorities and technological limitations, with considerable effect. Indonesian aid coordination mechanisms have also managed to successfully align the UN, NGOs and government agencies. In Sri Lanka, CADREP has managed to achieve similar levels of alignment between donors, the government and local communities.

Perceived weaknesses

Foreign organisations operate according to their own standards and practices; they often tend to assume an existing capacity among local partners to align with foreign practices. This in turn leads to an under-estimation of the need for capacity-building. One source of this disconnect is that international donors and NGOs increasingly operate on sector lines (e.g. healthcare), defining and addressing specific areas of technical challenge. At a local level, recovery often depends more on a general understanding of context and culture, and complex conditions are seldom conducive to tidy definition of specific areas of expertise.

State-related agencies continue to receive the bulk of foreign capacity-building assistance. This stems from general donor agreement that the state is the principal owner of recovery, but it has detracted attention from needed local capacity-building initiatives.

Finally, foreign organisations tend to favour a project model in their interventions. This means that both international and local expertise is often employed on temporary terms. After a project is over, experienced teams tend to disperse and become scattered, and face periods of inactivity until they are recruited onto another relevant project. The resulting under-utilisation of human capacity is now being exacerbated by the growing assumption that the tsunami recovery is reaching a late phase, since most immediate recovery needs have been met: experts are now less likely to find new projects and face having to seek livelihoods in other areas. In view of the need for long-term development as a bulwark against future disaster risk, the resulting loss of relevant experts seems very premature.

6.3 Use of existing capacity

In the affected countries there was inevitably some capacity for disaster recovery and development prior to the tsunami. Ideally the tsunami recovery effort would build on this capacity to accelerate development.

Positive indications

As noted, there has been considerable donor attention on capacity-building at the state level, and to a large extent these programmes have successfully built on existing technical and administrative expertise. There is also at least a conceptual recognition of greater need for local capacity-building.

In cases where local NGOs and intermediaries have expressed a strong willingness to work with the state and vice versa, their unique local expertise has accelerated recovery at the local level. Care Society in the Maldives, for example, has successfully increased its relevance to government programmes in spite of the mainly centralised recovery effort.

An important point on the use of existing capacity is the response and adaptation of local workforces and markets to the recovery effort. Traders and labourers have often successfully adapted their skills to cater to recovery programmes, thereby assisting with local knowhow and augmenting their livelihoods, and this in turn accelerates the recovery of local markets.

Perceived weaknesses

Donor emphasis on the state has often left existing and potentially uniquely qualified bases of local capacity to go untapped. In some cases in which mainstream agencies identified strong local expertise, it either has been bypassed, or utilised in short-term consulting work for high-profile projects, rather than applied to necessary long-term recovery efforts in local experts' own communities. This has been cited as a "plunder" of existing personnel.

Another area of sub-optimisation is the failure of national NGOs and agencies to use existing professional development networks to share and build meaningful recovery planning skills. While such networks exist, their knowledge-sharing initiatives are often regarded as a mere "validation" exercise instead of an opportunity to increase real capacity.

Finally, in the three countries considered there have been missed opportunities to link national and local capacity-building with international and regional disaster recovery think tanks, and national academic institutions, both wherein resides considerable intellectual power and / or existing insight into disaster recovery.

6.4 Conclusions

The tsunami response has initiated a diverse range of capacity-building efforts, many of which have seen success. The principal challenges remain a missed opportunity to develop local, community-based capacity to meaningfully contribute to recovery through needs articulation and local-level planning, and to build on existing capacity to accelerate recovery. Best practice in capacity-building at the theoretical level is far from being fully operationalised.

Early post-tsunami estimates of a potential failure to achieve effective and positive linkages between immediate relief, recovery and development efforts have happily not been realised. One can conclude from the evidence that the recovery effort thus far has resulted in real development in terms of reduced vulnerability and increased resilience of affected societies and states in relation to the pre-tsunami situation. We have not just returned to the status quo.

That being said, as one would well expect in any urgent and massive recovery effort involving myriad stakeholders, recovery has been less than optimal given the willingness and resources at hand. Several key lessons can be drawn from the evidence, each with its own recommendation for future improvement, in the tsunami recovery or in other disasters.

7.1 Beyond rebuilding

There appears to have been an almost instinctive sense on the part of aid agencies that the principal recovery task was rebuilding lost assets, and not create capacity. The question of how communities would then revive even with their new physical assets was not an urgent priority. As a result, the facilitation of livelihoods followed the replacement of physical assets, and economic vulnerability thereby persisted beyond rebuilding.

7.2 Integrated approach based on systemic analysis

In the recovery effort there has been a degree of disconnect between rebuilding, livelihoods, rehabilitation of the social fabric, risk reduction and capacity-building. Despite a general awareness of the need for each element, an integrated recovery plan linking all elements of this recovery system and ensuring appropriate pace in each area was often lack-

ing. This has led to situations in which certain elements, in particular rebuilding, have forged ahead while others have trailed behind. The result is systemic imbalance and sub-optimal resilience and development.

7.3 Contextualised solutions based on community consultation and inclusion

It was not uncommon for aid agencies to enthusiastically apply modern technologies and sector expertise to community recovery, only to have these initiatives wasted because of perceived irrelevance by the recipient communities, this irrelevance arising from a mix of haste, inappropriate technologies, cultural rejection, and resentment at having solutions imposed by external state or foreign actors.

7.4 Balancing conflict-sensitivity and reduction of social exclusion

Aid agencies often sought to assist those most affected by the disaster as a priority, namely the poor. This was appropriate not just in terms of saving lives and alleviating hardship, but also in terms of levelling anachronistic social stratification which kept the poor in a perpetual state of disempowerment. However, an emphasis on the poor often had the unexpected result of increasing social disruption and tensions: traditional elites, who exercise considerable influence on the recovery effort, were threatened by social levelling and therefore sought to disrupt or manipulate recovery, thereby raising overall tensions within and between communities and delaying recovery.

7.5 Inclusiveness to ensure development beyond recovery

There has been a tendency among aid agencies to focus on the most obvious groups and functions affected by the tsunami, sometimes to the detriment of longer-term development and resilience. Poor tsunami-affected households have often been a priority over poor non-affected households who face similar hardship and have similar needs; male-dominated livelihoods requiring easily replaced tangible assets, such as fishing equipment, have often received priority over female-dominated livelihoods based more on complex market interaction; and finally disaster-affected communities have received preference over those affected by conflict. Unless all vulnerable and contributing groups are included in the recovery effort, recovery will only be a return to the status quo, not an increase in community resilience and development.

7.6 Capacity-building: the state and beyond

Foreign donors have agreed that the state should be the principal owner of recovery. This makes sense: it accelerates vital state-building and legitimacy in a region where the state has been weak in recent decades, and the state already possesses considerable technical and administrative capacity to build on. However, this focus appears to have created a bias among both international and national aid agencies for capacity-building at the central, national level, to the detriment of badly needed local capacity-building. It has also instilled a degree of myopia in terms of identifying and using valuable existing capacity not currently associated with central authorities. Finally, it has resulted in a service-driven orientation to recovery in which affected communities are disempowered from articulating their own needs and participating in their own re-building.

8 Recommendations

The recommendations presented below are based on the previous conclusions, presented here organised by specific actors. The scope of the recommendations relate to post-disaster efforts in the context of fragile environments.

For affected country and host governments:

Strengthen local level state effectiveness

- 1 *National governments* should, early in the disaster response, formulate a clear division of roles between central and local government.
- 2 *Governments* should document the efforts and successes of local initiatives and solutions to recovery problems during the period from the emergency response to the medium term (up to five years).
- 3 *Governments* should compile and share information about local development NGOs

More long range analysis

- 4 *Governments* should draw lessons from the good practices of the BRR experience, in terms of its high level authority, local presence, coordination.
- 5 *National governments* should review the lessons drawn by others from the management of the international response to natural disasters in Asia

Better targeted livelihoods recovery

- 6 *Local administration* programming should be holistic and related to household level analysis

- 7 *Governments of the region* should consider identifying well aligned and well resourced response capacities as a measure of disaster preparedness

A less restrictive understanding of risk reduction

- 8 Disaster risk assessments must be made a precondition for all development investment decisions in high risk areas
- 9 *Governments* should promote disaster risk reduction from the central government down to the village level, and ensure policies are clearly formulated and consistently applied.

Better notions of capacity development

- 10 *Governments of the region* should make use of the few relevant tools available for capacity development in disasters, such as universities.
- 11 *Government* systems and standards for communicating to communities in disaster-prone areas should be developed.

For donor governments

Strengthen local level state effectiveness

- 1 *Donor agencies* should actively pursue ‘development diplomacy’, including the deployment of technical assistance in the field, identification of risks and bottlenecks in delivery, supplementing pooled funding with targeted bilateral initiatives where required.

More long range analysis

- 2 *Donors* should consider that the timeframes for relief in a phase of natural disaster reconstruction should be multi-year.
- 3 *Donors and governments* should continue to review procedures for multi-donor trust funds in recovery.
- 4 *Donors* should require that project proposals and the functioning of multi-donor funding mechanisms include conflict sensitivity analysis

Better targeted livelihoods recovery

- 5 *Donors* should direct funding to basic needs and reduce the risk of further vulnerability (preventive approaches).
- 6 *Donors* should create stronger policy dialogue and coordination mechanisms at the national level around the issue of support to isolated populations

More integrated area approaches

- 7 *Donors* should consider that joint evaluations have been an effective mechanism to increase local and regional participation in responses

Less restrictive risk reduction

- 8 *Donors* should monitor the local level implementation of risk reduction strategies, and fund targeted projects where this is weak.
- 9 *Donors* should conduct disaster risk assessments prior to providing development grants or loans for projects in high risk areas.

Better notions of capacity building

- 10 *Donors* should consider funding personnel support programmes designed to improve the skills of specialists, assist in placement, and conversion.
- 11 *Donors* should be sensitive to the time needed to accomplish effective and sustainable recovery programmes

For the United Nations, Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and NGOs

Better targeted livelihoods recovery

- 1 Market analyses should form part of *UN and NGO* funding flows aiming to restore livelihoods.
- 2 *NGO* micro-credit schemes and the more sophisticated versions of micro-finance should only follow after the relief phase.

More long range analysis

- 3 *Operational agencies* should identify capacity in the country, and the impact of their actions on these resources.
- 4 *NGOs* should encourage local presence by their personnel, and monitor public perceptions and expectations.
- 5 Conflict sensitivity analysis should be part of all *international organisation and NGO* programming.

Strengthen local level state effectiveness

- 6 *NGOs* should continue to refine participatory approaches, including public consultation and grievance mechanisms.
- 7 *NGOs and UN agencies* should be cooperating with government to re-establish or clarify the legal rights of affected populations to land.

More integrated area approaches

- 8 *NGOs and UN agencies* should target need, articulated in terms of markets future investments.
- 9 *UN agencies* should examine how the early recovery sector leads or cluster approaches should enable a rapid transition to an area based approach.

Less restrictive risk reduction

- 10 UN agencies, the Red Cross Movement, and NGOs should implement their DRR projects with a multi-hazard focus.
- 11 All agencies, in particular the Red Cross Movement, and NGOs, should attempt to design DRR projects that bring short-term as well as long-term benefits to make participation in DRR more attractive for affected communities.

Better notions of capacity building

- 12 *International agencies*, which are affected by a high turnover of staff, should strengthen human resource mechanisms
- 13 *NGOs and UN agencies, as well as donors* should develop operationally verifiable indicators and concepts that can guide agency programming.
- 14 *NGOs and UN agencies* should seek to create more linkages to academic institutions

For Civil society

Less restrictive risk reduction

- 1 *Civil society organisations* working in National Disaster Risk Reduction initiatives should promote a multi-hazard approach.
- 2 *Civil society organisations* should monitor investments to verify that disaster risks have been considered in the investment decision.

More long range analysis

- 3 *Academic institutions* should support a system-wide, well organised and sustained effort to develop a discipline of disaster studies

Better notions of capacity building

- 4 Local civil society should develop 'anti-poaching standards' for local staff that minimise the negative impact on local human resources
- 5 Some recent studies have suggested the need for a high level panel to oversee the *international humanitarian system's* progress for disaster response.

This report presents in a summary format findings, conclusions and recommendations from a follow-up evaluation of linkages between immediate relief, rehabilitation (or reconstruction) and development (LRRD) related to the response to the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004. The first LRRD evaluation was carried out in 2005–06 as part of the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC) set of evaluations.

The second LRRD evaluation covers experiences up to the end of 2008, i.e. from four years after the disaster in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. A number of organisations and government agencies have supported this evaluation with the aim to provide conclusions and lessons learned that are useful for mitigating the consequences of possible future disasters.

The full evaluation report and an extensive annotated bibliography on other tsunami response studies are also available.