

Christian Aid Tsunami Evaluation

Synthesis Study

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the many Christian Aid staff, partners, and community members in the Tsunami-affected countries who gave up time to contribute to this evaluation.

1. Introduction

This report is a synthesis of an evaluation of Christian Aid's response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami of December 26 2004. The evaluation, conducted by five independent consultants, covered the response in India, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia, as well as Fundraising, Communications, and Advocacy, and a Review of the Management Response in the UK¹. The purpose of this report, as defined in the Terms of Reference, is to consolidate in one document all the key findings, conclusions and recommendations and to draw out general lessons that will assist both the final stage of the current Tsunami response and future emergency responses.

An earlier draft of this report was circulated widely within Christian Aid, and a large number of comments were received, many of which have been incorporated in this final report.

2. Headlines

Unusually for an evaluation exercise of this breadth, the results are strongly **positive**. The key common elements are the richness and diversity made possible by Christian Aid's partnership approach. This not only allows for a more locally relevant response, but also greatly facilitates the transition process from relief to recovery, and wider social development. The highlights have been the successful provision of housing, especially for the poorest, and the use of tsunami funds to reduce social exclusion in India. The impact of investments in livelihoods has been more mixed; while more critical questions are raised in relation to psycho-social and disaster risk reduction activities. Largely as a result of the conflict in Sri Lanka, the transition to a successful development phase looks more difficult there than in India or Indonesia.

At the corporate level the setting up of a dedicated Programme Management Unit to co-ordinate the whole response has been very successful. However where this unit has had to rely on other parts of the organisation, as in the case of advocacy and communications, the results have been more mixed.

Secondly there is both praise for, and some criticism of, the work undertaken by the agencies with which Christian Aid entered into 'Twinning' arrangements in order to enable a wider group of more specialised agencies to participate in the response to the Tsunami. An underlying theme of the evaluation is the need for Christian Aid to achieve the right balance between decentralisation and the need to follow consistent strategies across the world.

¹ The Country Evaluations were written by Mihir Bhatt (India), Pamela Pieris (Sri Lanka) and Treena Wu (Indonesia.) The UK Communications Study was written by Dee Sullivan, and the UK Management Review by Hugh Goyder.

3. Methodology

Christian Aid drew up the Terms of Reference for this evaluation and recruited a Team Leader in June 2007. After this evaluators were recruited for the 3 country studies (with national consultants for India and Sri Lanka, and a Bahasan speaking international consultant for Indonesia.). This team met for three days in Sri Lanka with the Tsunami Management Team in order to discuss the TOR and refine its methodology. In order to ensure comparable results an Inception Note was prepared which highlighted the key questions to be covered in each country report. The country evaluators were given access to all relevant documentation, and encouraged to recruit local assistants with relevant language skills. They each arranged a schedule of visits and meetings with partners, communities, and Christian Aid staff; they collected and analysed the resulting data. In the UK an independent communications specialist undertook the communications review, while the Team Leader undertook the review of the UK Management Response.

This evaluation was preceded by an internal learning exercise in 2006 which involved a series of consultations with staff and partners in both the three Tsunami-affected countries and the UK. This review raised many useful issues which have been followed up during this external evaluation.

4. The context

The tsunami was caused by a powerful earthquake measuring 9.1 on the Richter scale which struck off the coast of Aceh Province/Sumatra in Indonesia at 0800 hours local time on 26 December 2004. Tidal waves, up to 15 metres in height, had the most devastating impact on the coast of Aceh, but quickly spread across the Indian Ocean to Thailand, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, India, and continued to the Maldives, Somalia and other countries of Africa. The death toll from the tragedy was estimated at some 227,000 people dead and missing in the countries affected, with around 1.9 million people displaced from their homes and livelihoods. The drama and huge geographical scope of the event itself, its swift communication across the world, its timing during the Christmas holiday period, and its widespread impact on local people as well as tourists, all resulted in an unprecedented international response. This in turn put a huge strain both on provincial and local administrative systems, especially in Aceh and Sri Lanka.

In the UK the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) immediately mounted an appeal, which turned out to be the most successful such appeal ever, raising no less than £347 million, of which Christian Aid received £36 million, with a further £10 million from its own appeal.

5. How successful was the overall relief and reconstruction effort following the Tsunami?

The wider context

It is essential to place the findings of this Christian Aid evaluation in the context of the many other similar evaluations undertaken after the Tsunami, including both those undertaken by individual agencies, and the thematic evaluations of the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC). The huge amount of funding available and the initial media interest put all DEC agencies under unprecedented pressure. As all these reports note, the overall response to the Tsunami faced many initial constraints – including a long history of conflict in Aceh and Sri Lanka, initial problems of access in Aceh, and too many agencies offering assistance in all areas. The amount of funding meant that relief needs were relatively quickly met, and unlike most other emergencies, there was no shortage of funding for the recovery phase. The TEC reports criticised agencies for too readily making commitments to restore assets like fishing boats without first understanding how local economies worked and who was most in need of assistance, and for not making effective use of local capacity.

For much of the response, especially in Aceh and Sri Lanka, there was an atmosphere more of greater competition than collaboration between agencies as they struggled to spend the enormous sums raised across the world while also dealing with overwhelmed provincial and local administrations. Programmes on the ground also suffered set backs due to problems of co-ordination and changing Government policies – especially in relation to government restrictions on rebuilding in the coastal areas of India and Sri Lanka.

Christian Aid's response

The key questions are to what extent Christian Aid was able to avoid at least some of the difficulties faced by the humanitarian sector as a whole, and more positively, what has been its distinctive contribution to the overall response?

Almost three years after the event, it was difficult for this evaluation to produce new evidence about the impact of the immediate relief phase. However the outcomes of this phase are in any case well known, since it is widely agreed that there were very few deaths from hunger or disease following the tsunami itself. As regards the recovery phase the TEC report argues that *'the engagement of international actors with local capacities was most effective and efficient when it was built on sustained partnerships with the local actors that existed before the disaster.'* Christian Aid's whole response was through local partners, and the evaluation found that partners had the greatest capacity in India, while being relatively weaker in Sri Lanka: it had no previous experience of working in Aceh. Therefore it was not surprising that over half the funds spent in the first year were spent in India (£7.88 million out of £15 million) even though the damage caused by the Tsunami was far greater in Aceh.

6. Overall outcomes of the response

The India research found that a remarkably small part of Appeal funds (less than 12%) was spent on relief, and partners' major emphasis in the recovery phase has been to insist that previously socially excluded groups – especially the *dalits* – not only received their fair share of all the funding available, but that they used this funding to achieve long term changes in their social status. In India Tsunami funds have been used to build a network of small CBO's and other groups dedicated to reducing social exclusion

In Indonesia overall, given Christian Aid's lack of history in the country and the difficulties it experienced working through the Action By Churches Together (ACT) Network, the programme's outcomes are remarkably positive. This is thanks to the excellent work of INGOs like Christian World Service (which had long previous experience in the country), Habitat, and local NGOs like YEU.² The evaluation found that Christian Aid is more effective when there is a direct link between it and the implementing partner, but it can run into problems where it tries to work through an intermediary. This conclusion underlines the clear value added by the partnership model, and the key importance of direct relationships.

The context in Sri Lanka has been difficult, with the worsening conflict, strong competition between donor agencies, and pressures on local NGOs, many with very little capacity or previous emergency experience, to scale up their activities in a very short time after the tsunami. Even so the evaluation finds positive outcomes, especially in relation to shelter, livelihood, and capacity building programmes.

7. Sector-specific achievements

7.1 Shelter: By far the largest share of Tsunami funds went into shelter, and In general the shelter programmes, many of which took far longer to implement than the DEC expected, have in the end been surprisingly successful across all three countries.³ In Sri Lanka, as in India, the most major impact of the shelter programme was that *'Beneficiaries who were economically and socially marginalized and have never owned land before or lived in houses made of temporary materials have a house and land to call their own'*. There are still problems to be resolved: some the houses built by Practical Action were found to have no toilets, and some of Habitat's houses were found to be too small for larger families. In Indonesia in contrast Habitat's approach to shelter is described as *'systematic, well organized and focused'*. It has been able to complete 1500 houses in one area, with strong community co-operation. Local NGOs, like LPAM in Nias, were found to be taking much longer to complete their housing programmes but were still

² However from a funding perspective it is unclear what was the value added by Christian Aid funding to CWS: in 2005-6 its total income was over \$91 million, and was in a very strong position to raise all the funding it needed for its Tsunami response.

³ The Sri Lanka report questions the quality of Practical Action's shelter programme there.

working with strong community participation, and were able to work within agreed budgets and timeframes. .

In India in the first two years 13,000 families, most from backward and Dalit castes were successfully re-housed; and 75% of a relatively large sample of households contacted during the India research said that their new houses had *'produced a sense of security, social status and much needed physical comfort and protection across the families in the communities.'*

Given the well documented difficulties, and delays, in providing shelter after the Tsunami, these overall conclusions are remarkably positive.

7.2 Livelihoods: The effectiveness of investment in Livelihoods has been more mixed. Following the Tsunami a number of agencies (for example the Red Cross and Oxfam) gave cash for Work and cash grants. The Christian Aid partners in Indonesia both the INGOs like CWS and local NGOs are applauded for avoiding such cash transfers as which have often been used for consumption rather than investment.

In Sri Lanka it was not surprising that the most successful livelihood interventions were related to the construction industry given the great demand for people with construction skills. In India the initiatives cover a wide range of activities (e.g. shell collectors, small farmers, horticulturists, herb growers, flower growers, crab collectors and others) and have had a mixed success in terms of both of impact and sustainability. Livelihood programmes were often found to have begun too long after the tsunami, and remain too isolated from each other. The India and Sri Lanka research recommend that in future post emergency livelihood interventions, more attention should be given to feasibility studies, greater capital investment, marketing, and skills development. Many of the India partners said that with the strong pressure to implement programmes quickly, they did not feel they had the time to conduct these kinds of studies. Both the India and Indonesia reports agree that for the future partners will have to select a smaller number of livelihood initiatives with the greatest potential – which is exactly the strategy now being followed by the partner YEU in Aceh. The general conclusion is that the partners implementing livelihoods programmes did not always have adequate prior expertise in this sector.

7.3. Health. Only a very small proportion of appeal funding has gone into the Health sector, and the main issue is the effectiveness of psycho-social interventions. There was clearly a case for psycho-social support immediately after the Tsunami, but continuation of this kind of activity a long time after the event may be more questionable. The problem may well be that this has become a popular area with some donors, and once funding has been agreed it is tempting to continue this kind of activity long after it is needed. For example in Indonesia the NGO YEU in Meulaboh *'continues to persist with this intervention although there is no evidence to support it.'* India concluded that *'the impacts of psychosocial activities on individuals are hard to see and it is also difficult to assess what purpose they serve either for victims or partners'* The one exceptions to this was the counselling work done by the

Organization for Eelam Refugees Rehabilitation (OfERR) which works in both Sri Lanka and India, and its work is praised in both reports. What seems to be most appreciated is where partner agencies take the time to listen to beneficiaries and offer them psychological and emotional support as a part of other interventions, rather than as a separate 'programme'.

Recommendation 1: While there is a role for psycho-social interventions in the immediate aftermath of a disaster Christian Aid should be cautious about longer term funding for this kind of work unless the partner agency is able to document well both the exact psycho-social needs and the impact the programme will have.

7.4 Disaster risk reduction:⁴ Overall the evaluation found it difficult to get strong evidence about the impact of DRR. In shelter programmes DRR concepts were incorporated in the site selection and the quality of construction of all new buildings, and in addition the reconstruction of livelihoods was seen as fundamental to reducing people's vulnerability to future disasters. What seems to need more critical analysis is the value of general training offered by partners, especially in situations where this local training is not well integrated with national efforts and (in the case of tsunamis) improved international early warning systems. The India report felt there was *too wide a gap between tsunami recovery efforts and disaster risk reduction*, and argues that the best time to take up DRR activities is immediately after a disaster, and not a long time after it. However some staff feel that it is difficult to focus on DRR during the relief phase, and should rather be taken on as a regular development activity both before and after a disaster.

In Sri Lanka from the communities' perspective by far the greatest threat they face is the conflict, rather than any natural disaster, and (as the Sri Lanka research argues) the Regional DRR training of the type offered in India to all partners did not refer to the conflict and was thus seen to be only partially relevant for the Sri Lankans. The India research sees value in the DRR work being done by partners like CASA, but challenges conventional thinking on DRR *'Christian Aid's disaster risk reduction thinking and work on the ground is still done with the overall community in mind, and not the excluded family. As a result, although their work may well make the community safer, the excluded family may still be vulnerable. More work is required to re-conceive disaster risk reduction with the excluded as the primary concern.'* Even accepting this emphasis on the socially excluded some staff felt that in DRR work there is still a need to work with the whole community, including the higher castes.

This report does though suggest the need for Christian Aid to review critically the long term impact of DRR work of different partners in the region, in order to see which approaches are having the greatest impact. Normally, as pointed out in the Learning Review, local level DRR work must be supplemented and

⁴ Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) refers to a range of interventions that help reduce people's vulnerability to future disasters – including improved designs for shelter and training to increase people's risk awareness.

linked with investment at the provincial and national levels if it is to be effective. If the aim is to change the way communities both prepare for and respond to disasters, then isolated training courses appear unlikely to be effective, and DRR work usually needs to be continued for a longer period of time and supported by normal development funding.

Recommendation 2: the Humanitarian Division should, with the help of partners and local consultants, document the learning from the DRR work done in response to the Tsunami and produce detailed guidance to partners on what approaches appear to have the greatest success.

7.5 Advocacy ⁵.

This evaluation suggests that the advocacy related to the Tsunami has had a more mixed success, even though the results of much advocacy can only be judged in the long-term. Within the region, some Christian Aid advocacy is viewed as successful and helpful – e.g. capacity building workshops, establishing a regional network on disaster mitigation and preparedness, and support for local advocacy initiatives.

As regards advocacy In the UK there were some inherent difficulties outside Christian Aid's control, in that unlike in most other emergencies, due to the strong public interest, all donors were in any case giving a high political priority to the Tsunami response, and there were few obvious advocacy 'targets' for Christian Aid. However the evaluation found that in London the advocacy function suffered from some management restructuring in 2005/6, and that more could have been done to set clearer advocacy objectives at the outset, and provide stronger guidance to newly recruited staff. Amongst country-level staff and partners there were also varying expectations of the support that London could provide in relation to advocacy, and these expectations were not always met.

At the country level, as all the research emphasise, partners are advocating all the time on behalf of their beneficiaries. In India in particular partners have a great experience of this kind of work, and both partners and staff played a leading role in persuading both government and other agencies to give far greater attention to social equity issues in their Tsunami response. However the Sri Lankan partners faced greater limitations: many of them did not have a clear idea what advocacy would involve; and many partners were not aware that Christian Aid had any kind of broader advocacy programme related to the Tsunami. In the words of the India report *'Local advocacy did not receive the required level of global advocacy support.'*

Given the unusual amount of public interest in this response Christian Aid could have probably done more to bring issues like Social Exclusion in India to a wider public. There could still be possibilities to get major aid donors to engage with these issues (especially as the World Bank has committed huge

⁵ Advocacy means developing policy and presenting information to influence decision makers, sometimes directly and sometimes via the media or public campaigning.

sums of money to the Government of Tamil Nadu for a major rehousing programme) but there is currently no corporate-level advocacy initiative in this respect.

As noted in the Management Review it did not help that the Tsunami management team, including the advocacy role, only came on stream five months after the Tsunami. The result was that several opportunities for helpful advocacy and influencing were missed, especially in India, at just the time when there was most public interest. However in Indonesia the more recent initiative by which the partner YTBI has been commissioned to carry out research on the socio-economic issues of coastal and non-coastal communities in Aceh is seen as a positive first step in working out a relevant advocacy campaign for this Province.

The overall lesson in relation to advocacy is that in any future emergency of this size, given the wide range of possible issues, Christian Aid needs at the earliest possible stage to work out a strong advocacy strategy based on its key strength as a partnership organisation. Secondly it should establish a greater advocacy capacity in the areas affected, combined with strong hands-on co-ordination, and very frequent visits, from London.

7.6 Communications Christian Aid has taken a strong stance on the need to report back to its supporters on its response to the tsunami. It believes it has a duty to inform and educate the public about how money has been spent and that future supporter relationships depend on people trusting the organisation. From the start Christian Aid's external messages were clear and consistent across all printed and online communications. While initially communications focused on partners being on the ground and able to respond straightaway, the focus quickly shifted to rehabilitation and reconstruction. In the longer term Christian Aid was prepared in its communications to tackle some of the complexities thrown up by the tsunami response on the ground – especially the issue of social exclusion in India, and conflict in Sri Lanka. A major issue later in 2005 (which has since been resolved) was the difficulty of accessing from partners information about the number and profile of the beneficiaries they were assisting.

As part of this effort to keep both its supporters and the wider public informed about its response, Christian Aid set up an ambitious mobile exhibition at the time of the first Anniversary of the Tsunami. While media coverage was extensive and positive, this was quite a costly exercise and visitor numbers were fewer than expected. The evaluation suggests that this exhibition could have more effective had there been a higher degree of support for it across the organisation, and it notes that by the end of 2005 the corporate website was crowded with too many different messages.

8. Cross-cutting issues

8.1 Partnership:

All of the country research confirms that Christian Aid's distinctive strength is its ability to build and maintain strong relationships with a wide variety of partners. While this is also at the heart of the organisation's philosophy, it is unusual to get such a consistency of supportive findings across three very different countries. Indonesia research found that Christian Aid's strength lay in its ability *to empower partners to use tried and tested local techniques. Outcomes achieved then reflect the sociological and economic conditions of local communities...* The benefit of this partnership model is the likelihood of sustainability of interventions in Indonesia. Sri Lanka found that *'While most other INGOs have left these affected communities either at the end of relief or the rehabilitation phase, Christian Aid has stood by its partners'*

The peculiar circumstances of the Tsunami put existing partnership arrangements under strain, as well as presenting a most difficult context in which to build new relationships. These strains were related to the huge sums of money that suddenly came available, and the need for many agencies to scale up rapidly at the very time when the human resources they required for this expansion were in most short supply. Only a very small number of partners like CASA in India or CWS in Aceh had the established response capacity and long humanitarian experience that the situation required. In Sri Lanka the assistance on monitoring and finance, including the assistance offered by the Financial Capacity Building Officers (FCBO's) was much appreciated, but in future such help should if possible be offered even earlier.

Working through the Action by Churches Together (ACT) Network in Indonesia

The Indonesia research is clear that Christian Aid is most effective when working directly with partners, and that its effectiveness is diluted if it 'subcontracts' this relationship to an intermediary like ACT. As indicated in the internal learning exercise in 2006, Christian Aid needed ACT at the start, but then faced major problems, both in getting timely reporting, in dealing with the ACT-appointed Indonesia Director, and in transmitting funds through the ACT Head Office in Geneva. DEC reporting requirements are quarterly, whereas ACT's were 6-monthly and reports were often very late. The evaluation suggests that however serious these problems, they did not really have a major impact on implementation, mainly because of the strong quality of work undertaken by the three existing ACT partners.

Both the Management Review and the Indonesia research suggest that given the amounts of money involved (about £11 million from 2005-7), and the reporting requirements of the DEC, Christian Aid should have moved to direct funding and monitoring of all Indonesia partners much earlier. It could have still maintained a strong relationship with ACT especially for overall co-ordination and joint advocacy. In the long term the lesson from the recent Indonesia experience may be that if in the future there is ever a high-profile

emergency in a country where Christian Aid has no existing partners, **it should install its own Programme Manager as soon as possible, rather than relying on ACT or other intermediary organisations.**

8.2 Effectiveness of 'Twins'.

As one might expect the evaluations show a wide variation in the performance of the agencies with which Christian Aid entered 'twinning' arrangements in the UK. More surprisingly, there are considerable variations between countries in the quality of work of these agencies. Thus Habitat in Aceh is applauded for staying focussed on housing and not taking on other sectors in which it had no expertise. Its shelter programme in Aceh was able to complete houses rapidly, and it offered a flexibility in design, which took account of the family's livelihood. It avoided the controversies over the use of timber from suspect sources by using bricks, and was one of only two NGOs to be applauded by the BRR (The Government's Reconstruction Agency). In contrast in Sri Lanka Habitat built houses that were too remote and far too small for larger families. In India there are less questions about the quality of the houses themselves, but the research suggests that the Christian Aid staff never really fully understood or took ownership of the institutional relationship that had been agreed with Habitat in the UK, thus cutting off a valuable potential source of mutual learning.

The Management Review argues that, especially in India, Christian Aid failed to promote the 'Twinning' arrangements agreed in the UK sufficiently vigorously: it needed far more discussion with the Country Offices at the outset, and then more active follow-up by the Tsunami Management Team, backed up as necessary by the International Director to ensure that the arrangements worked to their full potential. The conclusion of this evaluation is that the 'Twinning' concept was an imaginative one, which Christian Aid did well to support. In the new, more decentralised structure, any similar arrangement in the future would need to be actively championed by the Regional Director. Similarly, in the UK in future any 'Twins' should be required to acknowledge the DEC contributions they have received through these arrangements on their websites: currently there is no such public acknowledgement from the two agencies (Habitat and Practical Action) which received 85% of this funding.

8.3 Participation and Accountability to beneficiaries and communities

In India the research found strong participation in housing and livelihood needs analysis and decision making, but much weaker participation in psychosocial needs assessment and disaster risk reduction, where the programmes tend to be more externally driven. In Sri Lanka partners have involved beneficiaries at different stages of projects in both housing and livelihoods, but there were external limitations on the depth of this participation – especially the partners' sense of urgency to implement projects, and the system by which all beneficiary lists for shelter provision and

even livelihood assistance had to be approved by the Government. As a result there seems to have been too little participation by people in needs assessments, and participation in planning livelihood activities has been 'essentially the concerned party making a request for financial assistance to the village sub-committee, or the women's group' Underlying this there seems to be a deeper problem of a dependency culture, (related to the long years of conflict and the overwhelming number of NGOs in the Tsunami areas) that appears to be worse in Sri Lanka than elsewhere. Thus 'beneficiaries' tend to look to NGOs for solutions, and the NGOs themselves are relatively uncritical of their donors. Overall this is seen as a difficult context for strong participation and downward accountability.

In contrast beneficiary participation in India appears to be far stronger, with more visible signs of downward accountability as indicated by the large number of signs at project sites showing project budget and decision making processes. In India these same NGOs are now making greater demands on Christian Aid: *there were tensions between Christian Aid and its partners, on the issue of accountability. For example, the partners could not understand how budgets were allocated across sectors and areas, or how budgets were revised.* In Indonesia participation in post-Tsunami activities seems similarly robust. The partners are applauded for their use of a wide range of participatory data collection and monitoring techniques, and one partner, OPPUK 'through an extensive dialogue with community and without the need to depend on cash-for-work, managed to persuade the community to voluntarily clear over 2,000 hectares of communal land, a feat that even UNDP acknowledged it could not have done.'

8.4 Capacity building

The development of the capacity of the organisations involved in the Tsunami response has clearly been happening at many different levels. In Aceh partners like CWS support a wide range of CBOs, and in India, Christian Aid partners have built up and now support a large number of local CBOs that work with the socially excluded. This kind of 'cascading' approach is seen as highly effective, but in India at least it has raised a lot of expectations about a continued flow of funds in the future to these small, and often still vulnerable, organisations, and there are now fears that they may not survive Christian Aid's exit strategy.

The second type of capacity building has been done directly between Christian Aid and its partners. Here the Tsunami response has thrown up two major challenges. The first has been to assist partners manage, report on, and account for hugely increased budgets. In Indonesia, as it had no direct presence Christian Aid was not in a position to help with this kind of capacity building, but the research found that two partners, YTB and CWS have been able to re-vamp their own management systems successfully. In India the overall focus of capacity building was to support partners to work in areas of social exclusion, but there has also been some assistance offered in relation to accounting systems. In Sri Lanka this last type of assistance has been

more intense with the appointment of Finance Capacity Building Officers (FCBO)s at each office and the secondment of a finance consultant from the MANGO⁶ to help with training, and streamlining accounting procedures and systems.

Both the Sri Lanka and Indonesia reports argue the need for a broader analysis of capacity building needs. The Indonesia report says, *financial management training is insufficient if partners have poor organizational management skills*, and the Sri Lankan research concludes that too much Capacity Building is being *'conducted as isolated activities or 'projects' and not as a part of a larger programme initiative. As such various gaps exists, in terms of connecting knowledge and skills building across the whole organisation'*. (Currently Christian Aid is carrying out a Capacity Development survey for all partners in order to identify capacity building needs more strategically.) In addition many local NGOs now work with multiple INGO partners, all offering different types of 'capacity building' help. This evaluation shows the immediate benefits from this type of investment but its long term impact remains more uncertain. As the Tsunami funding phases out, many partners may face the unwelcome challenge of having to reduce, rather than expand, their capacity.

As regards **HIV/AIDS** the Indonesia report is unsure about the extent to which Christian Aid should be promoting HIV/AIDS prevention work as part of its post-tsunami activities. It suggests that Christian Aid partners should find out first the magnitude of the HIV / AIDS problem in Aceh and Nias as these areas have historically been cut off from the rest of Indonesia, and it is likely that the incidence of HIV/AIDS will be different in these areas from the rest of the country. Sri Lanka is likely to be at greater risk, given the conflict and high levels of migration, and efforts have been made to ensure partners include HIV/AIDS prevention messages in their work, as is also now happening in India. However the experience of specialist HIV/AIDS organisations is that such general training has little impact on actual behaviour change unless it focuses on particular high-risk groups.

In relation to **conflict** the research suggest that in most cases the interventions planned are conflict sensitive. In Sri Lanka the conflict continues to pose major challenges for the Tsunami recovery programme, and no solution is currently in sight. However in the short term the Sri Lanka report notes that *'partners have attempted to address the conflict situation by organizing cultural and religious events to bring different communities together.'* Aceh has now become a far easier context from a conflict perspective, but the research describes an interesting debate within the partner YEU about whether or not ex-combatants should be given priority in its programmes. The India report makes very little mention of conflict, but recommends the need for more assessment of the potential risks of more caste conflict as a result of the current social exclusion agenda being actively promoted by Christian Aid.

⁶ MANGO is a UK-based NGO that specialises in offering accountancy assistance.

8.5 Collaboration and Coherence

Given the pressures on all the agencies it was perhaps unrealistic to expect Christian Aid to give a lead in relation to co-ordination. In Indonesia Christian Aid was initially dependent on ACT to represent it in co-ordination meetings, The India experience probably applied to equally to the other countries. This research found that *'Christian Aid's coordination with other ongoing efforts by key players were not fully effective, and the Christian Aid team in Chennai found it especially hard to connect their efforts with the efforts of the other key organizations. They tried to be active in DEC coordination meetings but these meetings were not called regularly and for the past year no meeting has taken place.'* . In Sri Lanka Christian Aid did take the lead in getting more co-ordination meetings to be conducted in local languages, but the research does not document the impact this had on co-ordination processes. There is also no record of whether or not this issue was taken up as a major advocacy point with, for instance, UNOCHA, in order to ensure that in future emergencies more co-ordination meetings, especially those at provincial or district levels, should be conducted in local languages. .

As regards the DEC meetings, mentioned here in relation to India, Christian Aid staff seem divided about how useful such meetings are. Given its scarce staff resources, there is a case for Christian Aid to focus on active participation in wider co-ordination forums, which involve Government and UN agencies. However in emergencies where most of the funding is coming from the DEC, Christian Aid should attend meetings of DEC members, and try to ensure that they are useful. We recommend that the Humanitarian Division should re-state its guidance on what it expects of its staff in the way of co-ordination with other agencies (including DEC members) in emergencies.

8.6 Compliance with international standards

The focus of this evaluation has been on reconstruction and recovery work, rather than relief, and therefore the reports do not make that much reference to international standards. The India report (even though it is written by a South Asian champion of these standards) raises important questions about the relevance and in particular of Sphere standards in the current Tsunami reconstruction work in India. However there seems to be strong awareness about the HAP accountability agenda, with Sri Lanka the country where it seems hardest to get all partners to retain a strong sense of accountability to beneficiaries.

8.7 Dealing with funding pressures

A wider challenge posed by this evaluation is that currently partners feel most pressure to spend when they are least able to spend money both quickly and well. Just how the spending pressure from the DEC was expressed is not always clear, but all the researchs show that most partners, especially in the first year, felt that they were under a strong pressure to implement projects and spend what to them seemed very large sums of money. Many partners had several INGO donors and thus felt the same pressure from all their

partners. For shelter work in particular it takes time to put the systems, people, and materials in place. Indian partners felt that too much of the expenditure was 'front-loaded' and they fear that funds will now become scarcer in 2008 just when they have built up a greater spending capacity. However this view suggests that they are in denial about the time-limited nature of the DEC Tsunami funding, which has been very clear from the start. In addition Christian Aid will contribute £500,000 per country per year for 2008 and 2009 and in India this will be used primarily to support partners' work on social exclusion.

The Indonesia report argues the case for a slower disbursement process from the DEC that would encourage more resources to be directed to recovery, rather than relief, but the real problem appears to be that the DEC is set up to meet emergency needs: in the Tsunami, unlike in most other humanitarian situations, there were huge sums to spend but these relief needs were in fact met quite rapidly. One then gets a clash of realities between the UK (where the DEC agencies all do feel under pressure to disburse appeal money rapidly) and the perspective of staff and partners in the Region. At the very least these findings imply a need for a stronger corporate response that both recognises this contradiction and, to the extent possible, finds ways of resolving it. As a first step Christian Aid needs to continue to argue in the DEC the need for a more programme-focused, rather than purely expenditure-focussed response: for example shelter programmes require a long planning and negotiation phase, only after which rapid disbursement is possible.

9. Conclusions

The overall conclusion is that Christian Aid has been able to make a strong and committed response to the Tsunami, in which its use of a wide range of partner agencies has been its distinctive contribution. The major lesson is that the key management units responsible (specifically the Tsunami Management Team and the teams in the three countries) have been able to lead a strong response despite a large number of constraints. The problem areas identified in this evaluation (in relation to advocacy, the Twins Programme, and a perceived pressure to spend DEC funds) could only have been addressed with a stronger corporate response, negotiated more explicitly between London and the Region. This evaluation suggests that a key challenge for Christian Aid is how to achieve clear and coherent decision-taking within an increasingly decentralised structure.

10. Recommendations⁷

At the country level, it is suggested that in **Indonesia** Christian Aid needs to strengthen its assessment and analytical capability and, as it plans its future work there, it needs to make a clearer distinction in both its programming and advocacy work between transitory poverty due to the tsunami and long term systemic poverty. In **India** Christian Aid should conduct a Social Equity Audit of the current Tsunami programme and it should use this method to ensure that the most vulnerable people are able to reduce their risks to future disasters through sound development programmes.

Linked to this, an overall recommendation, on which there is now a degree of consensus across the organisation, is that Christian Aid needs **to review and where necessary strengthen its Disaster Preparedness systems and procedures**. In particular it needs to give greater attention to putting in place the appropriate organisational capacity at the earliest possible stage, to avoid putting individual staff members under excessive pressure. Disasters on the scale of the Tsunami will be relatively rare, but when they do occur capacity support to partners also needs to be implemented and resourced properly from the start of the response.

In addition to the two recommendations above on psychosocial work and DRR, the most important recommendations from this evaluation stress the need for **a more robust advocacy function**, both in the UK and in the countries affected by an emergency. The UK Communications Evaluation stresses that in response to any future emergency, there should be *'clearer discussion in London at the outset about what advocacy function is needed to fulfil short-term objectives; to help partners develop their own capacity; and to identify which issues should influence Christian Aid's global advocacy and feed into public communications in the UK.'* Also there needs to be an **advocacy resource person based within the region or country**, whose role is focused on supporting local advocacy. This person needs to work very closely with a UK-based advocacy person who should take forward key issues into global advocacy and UK communications: this was the approach Christian Aid used in response to the 2001 Afghanistan emergency.

As regards communications, there should in future be greater use of in-country photographers and communication specialists in order to reduce the number of visits by UK-based communications staff. There also need to be continued efforts (preferably in conjunction with other DEC members) to educate the British public about the need for more emergency funding to be used for reconstruction and recovery, rather than just immediate relief.

⁷ This section will focus only on recommendations that are relevant to Christian Aid as a whole: country level recommendations are being addressed by the offices concerned:

The major recommendations from the Management Review are that:

- In relation to HR and the difficulties experienced in recruiting staff after the Tsunami, the planned register of experienced staff, ex-staff, and others should be set up and made fully operational as soon as possible.
- In relation to 'Twinning' arrangements: in the unlikely event of a similar arrangement taking place in the future, there should be more negotiation with the Directors of all the agencies benefiting to ensure that the DEC contribution is publicly acknowledged and there is greater commitment to support these arrangements from all staff in both Christian Aid and the 'Twins'
- In response to any future major emergency, a relatively 'light' external evaluation (or external monitoring mission) should be held at an earlier stage, usually no more than one year after the emergency. The findings of this evaluation should then be used as the basis for an internal process of discussion among staff and partners similar to that used for the 2006 Learning Review.

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