

5. CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

RELIEF PROGRAMME : NGO PROGRAMMES

Overview

5.1 The NGO relief programme financed by ODA involved allocations from DRU direct to British-based NGOs (£2.140 million) and via the BHC to smaller local NGOs (f.0.549 million). A total of 34 NGOs operating in Bangladesh were financed, but the eight biggest grants (to Concern, Gonoshasthya Kendra, World Vision-Bangladesh, SCF, CARE, Oxfam, Action Aid-Bangladesh and the Salvation Army) accounted for 80% of the funds. Most recipient NGOs obtained financial assistance from a number of donors and ODA's contribution generally ranged from 10% to 50% of the total.

5.2 NGO relief proposals were identified and designed by the NGOs and submitted to DRU or the BHC. Most proposals gave details of the objectives of the programme and a budget but few indicated how their programmes would be organised on the ground or how they would be targeted to meet the needs of the most vulnerable people. The BHC sought some advice from its Health and Population Adviser in appraising projects but, in general, ODA advisers were not involved in appraisal.

5.3 ODA's relief funds were used for shelter and housing (41%), food (18%), hygiene, health and water (17%), clothing and utensils (6%) and other uses, including administration and transport (22%). The reason for the heavy expenditure on shelter and housing is that a number of big relief grants approved by DRU had large rehabilitation components. These accounted for about 45% of the relief programme.

5.4 The large Bangladeshi NGOs financially assisted by ODA responded rapidly to the disaster and were able to mount relief programmes within a few days. The first 15 days or so involved 'Survival Relief' (ensuring that survivors did not starve or die from disease) and the following month, 'Emergency Relief' (ensuring that people had sufficient food and water, and access to health care and shelter). Small NGOs were generally slower than large NGOs in starting relief programmes and these usually only lasted for one or two weeks.

5.5 Overall, the national relief effort, in which the NGOs played a key and leading role, was successful in preventing starvation and reducing suffering. Almost all people had received relief supplies within a week and there were no significant shortages while the relief programmes lasted. Few people died after the cyclone from injuries sustained during the disaster or from disease afterwards. There were no epidemics.

5.6 It is very difficult to estimate the number of beneficiaries of ODA-financed programmes because most NGOs were assisted by a number of donors and NGO record-keeping and reporting does not focus on this aspect. The Evaluators
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estimate, however, that ODA financing may have provided the equivalent of food for

about 33,000 families (200,000 people) for a period of six weeks, as well as other supplies (eg clothing) for some of the same beneficiaries. This is the equivalent of about 8% of the population of the 11 worst-affected upazilas.

5.7 The extent to which NGOs were able effectively to target the most vulnerable households is difficult to assess. While a few NGOs mentioned targeting in their proposals, most did not. Some NGOs were aware of the problems women, in particular, would have in gaining access to relief supplies and implemented their projects accordingly. However, others may not have done the same. Spatial targeting was quite effective in that most of ODA's resources were used in the worst-affected areas, although the Chittagong Hill Tracts had for the most part to be excluded for security reasons. There was generally little overlap or duplication amongst NGOs, but those which already had programmes in the Chittagong area worked in the same locations, which were usually not in the worst-affected belt.

5.8 It is difficult to assess the cost-effectiveness of the different programmes, although there are considerable differences amongst NGOs in (a) the unit costs of key commodities, and (b) the transport and management overhead which they charge ODA. Unit food prices charged by some NGOs are 20-30% higher than those of others, and – somewhat surprisingly – the bigger NGOs are not always the most cost-effective purchasers of supplies. Transport and management margins range from 10% of the cost of the relief supplied for small NGOs to 28% for large NGOs implementing multi-activity programmes. One NGO's margin at 40% seems excessive.

Lessons Learned

5.9 Although NGOs provided a generally effective relief delivery system, stronger linkages between ODA and NGOs, especially Bangladeshi NGOs would be beneficial.

5.10 In order to provide a basis for informed assessment by ODA, projects proposals and reports submitted by NGOs need to be more specific and provide fuller information on practical aspects of project design. Progress and final reports by NGOs should highlight the lessons learned in order to provide feedback in the design of future projects.

5.11 The NGOs' financial reporting need to be more detailed and include the key data needed to assess the cost-effectiveness of the operation (eg unit costs of supplies and transport, breakdown of management overheads, numbers of beneficiaries for each type or 'package' of relief delivered).

5.12 Attention to beneficiary selection is necessary in order to ensure that women, children and other specially vulnerable groups receive a fair share of relief supplies and services.

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5.13 NGOs need to establish their own disaster management units and train selected

staff so as to be better prepared to respond quickly and effectively when disaster strikes.

5.14 NGOs will continue to play a leading role in relief programmes, but there is also a pressing need for an improved Government capacity to respond quickly and efficiently.

5.15 As relief programmes are the first step towards the rehabilitation and subsequent further development of the communities, the role of ODA advisers in considering relief proposals and reports is vital.

5.16 NGOs implementing large relief programmes are the most effective in targeting and responding to need, despite their higher unit transport and management costs.

5.17 Given the frequency of disasters in Bangladesh, ODA's office in Dhaka needs to develop its own disaster preparedness strategy.

RELIEF PROGRAMME : DEPLOYMENT OF UK MILITARY FORCES

5.18 The cost of the operation was high, but, as DRU's relief allocation was not fully used, 'Operation Manna' probably did not involve diversion of resources from other uses. The helicopters and Rapid Raider boats were appropriate for the tasks involved. The operation could have been more effective if the vessel had arrived earlier, during the survival relief phase.

Lessons Learned

5.19 The decision to deploy military resources is best based on a thorough local assessment, including a review of alternative comparable resources. For maximum effectiveness in responding to sudden onset disasters, UK military resources, if they are to be used, need to be deployed quickly after the event. Given the time and cost of mobilisation, an early but informed decision needs to be taken on whether to deploy such resources.

REHABILITATION PROGRAMME

5.20 The projects financed contributed mainly to the long-term rehabilitation and development needs of communities, rather than meeting their short-term rehabilitation needs. Short-term employment and asset replacement for fishing and farming households was desperately needed in the six months following the relief phase's ending in June, in order to help households re-establish their livelihoods. Few NGOs, however, emphasised this in their proposals.

5.21 Inadequate appraisal by ODA resulted in the approval of an unstructured assortment of projects. Separate projects with similar activities were approved with a

plethora of differing
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technical standards, social objectives, and costs. As a result, many of the projects are less cost-effective than they could have been.

5.22 The projects involving the construction of multipurpose cyclone shelters have been successful to the extent that most of the shelters are completed or under construction. Community development activities related to the use of the shelter buildings at times other than cyclones and disaster preparedness, are also being implemented by the NGOs. The full impact of the shelter projects will only be apparent after they have been completed and are in use.

5.23 The planning of the housing projects was weak. Technical, social and economic issues related to housing – many of which were pointed out in the RDI 1988 Post-Flood Rehabilitation Evaluation – were not adequately addressed.

5.24 The employment rehabilitation activities were also successfully implemented but the demand for loans and grants far exceeded the supply planned by the NGOs. Other activities financed, including school building reconstruction, supply of school materials, health programmes and provision of water supply and sanitation facilities, have generally been of benefit.

5.25 The EC-funded food-for-work project to construct temporary embankments to keep out the high monsoon tides was a successful project. It created considerable employment in the six months following the relief phase, helped to secure a bumper *aman* rice crop in November 1991, and stimulated the area's economic recovery.

5.26 The worst-affected areas were not locations where NGOs had previously had a strong presence. The tendency of NGOs to propose long-term rehabilitation projects (eg housing, cyclone shelters) was related to their need to establish their operations in new areas before being able to undertake economic rehabilitation activities.

5.27 If the ODA rehabilitation programme had included more short-term rehabilitation activities, it probably would have had a stronger impact on overall welfare than did the immediate provision of houses and shelter. If adequate employment had been available, survivors would have been able to make their own choices about the type and standard of the houses they wanted to build. The problem of replacement housing being superior to the original would not then have occurred to the same extent.

5.28 Many issues related to the planning and design of shelters require further study because there is only limited information available on how they are used during and after emergencies. Existing designs are expensive and more appropriate and cost-effective ways of protecting people from cyclones and storm surges need to be developed. Ways of protecting individual and community resources from cyclones also need to be addressed, in

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order to reduce their requirement for subsequent relief and rehabilitation programmes.

Lessons Learned

5.29 Guidelines are required to assist NGOs and ODA staff in the identification and design of appropriate rehabilitation projects.

5.30 After the relief phase of a disaster, special attention needs to be given to short term employment and income generating activities.

5.31 Proposals for rehabilitation projects are best appraised together (or, if this is not possible, in batches) so as to ensure that the best projects are selected and funds used most efficiently.

5.32 There is a need for an overall strategy for rehabilitation targeting specific sectors and geographical areas, so as to provide the framework for individual NGO projects.

5.33 The terms and conditions of grant awards to NGOs need to make ODA's requirements and NGO responsibilities clearer.

5.34 Rehabilitation programmes should take account of the wider requirements of affected areas, since NGOs often take too narrow a view of overall development needs.

5.35 Guidelines are required for housing rehabilitation programmes, to avoid recurring problems (eg equity issues, durability, technical standards).

5.36 Routine monitoring of both existing and future rehabilitation programmes is needed, especially when NGOs are undertaking new activities or starting work in new areas.

5.37 Research is needed on the coping strategies of people living in cyclone-prone areas, in order to improve the targeting of short and long-term rehabilitation, within the context of the overall development of affected areas.

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