

Part VII – Conclusions and Recommendations

229. This section concludes the analysis of what amounted to a very complex and challenging programme, and attempts to present in summary form the main conclusions, lessons and recommendations produced by the successive evaluation missions.

230. The tsunami was described as a very large and atypical emergency, a “freak event”, and it is unlikely that all the lessons learned from the tsunami response would straightforwardly apply to other emergencies, or even to all sudden-onset disasters. However, it can also be argued that the tsunami has magnified and brought into sharper focus many pre-existing deficiencies in the way FAO and the broader “humanitarian and development community” goes about providing relief to emergency-stricken populations around the world.

231. With the significant resources availed by donors, FAO was able to cover its ground convincingly in the agriculture sector in all countries visited by the RTE, helping a majority of affected farmers restore their capital assets and livelihoods through the distribution of generally appropriate seed, trees, tools and livestock. However, the Organization did little to address the connected issues of drainage and salinity in Indonesia and Sri Lanka. These challenges specific to the tsunami emergency called for innovative interventions, over and beyond the now “classic” seeds and tools distribution modality.

232. The performance in the fisheries sector was found weaker than in agriculture. The contrast between the two sectors largely reflects the long FAO track record in, and experience with, agricultural emergencies as compared with a lack of such FAO emergency experience in the fisheries sector. New modalities had to be invented, each tailored to the needs and varied nature of fishery-based industries and livelihoods in tsunami-affected countries. Sri Lanka represented the most creative and convincing attempt at rebuilding fisheries through a mix of sectoral coordination, technical assistance and the repair and distribution of generally suitable assets. In Indonesia, Thailand and the Maldives, the FAO contribution to the reconstruction of the fisheries sector was less relevant and significant. Although interesting approaches were tested in promoting safety-at-sea and good practices by other actors, the FAO programme and its influence on other partners in capture fisheries and aquaculture were much less visible than in Sri Lanka and tended to get lost in the plethora of initiatives implemented by other organizations.

233. In summary, FAO struggled to invent new operational modalities to tackle the very peculiar nature and massive extent of the tsunami-inflicted damage and the specific policy issues raised by the reconstruction of coastal areas. The Organization lacked the suppleness necessary to rapidly design, experiment with and scale up new, tailor-made technical responses.

234. It should be stressed that livelihoods restoration remains a rather new and ground-breaking domain, still poorly understood and under-funded. Besides, it is an area in which operational modalities cannot be standardised to the same extent as in purely humanitarian operations. It takes time and efforts to study complex livelihoods strategies and find the best ways of rebuilding them. Similarly, considerations of equity, economic efficiency and sustainable management of natural resources are much more complex in livelihoods restoration than in humanitarian interventions.

235. Unwieldy FAO programme procedures and insufficient operational capacity were found to be major constraints during implementation but also in adopting innovative rehabilitation approaches (e.g. cash-for-work, collaboration with community-based organizations). From the evidence at hand, it is clear that low operational capacity negatively affected programme delivery, depleted staff morale, contributed to high staff turn-over rates, and ultimately lessened the cost-effectiveness and the impact of the entire FAO tsunami response. As FAO entered the domain of emergency operations fairly recently (mid-1990s), the Organization has had to approach emergencies with administrative processes and operational resources that were not designed for the

fast-paced emergency arena. Today, the FAO emergency operations represent about 40% of the Organization’s overall financial resources. This calls for a significant reinforcement of its operational capacity in the field and a comprehensive review of its administrative processes as they apply to emergency projects.

236. The lack of a coherent strategic approach at the programme level emerges as a common thread in this report and throughout the response, from needs assessments to programme design, programme implementation, and transition to development. The RTE was perhaps a useful exercise in this regard, as its programme-wide format resulted in debriefing meetings, at headquarters and in the field, where all the concerned FAO staff, consultants, and implementing partners could meet and confront their perspectives on issues of common interest, often for the first time in months.

1. Funding arrangements

Conclusions

237. Donor support was generous and generally more flexible than in previous disaster responses, some donors allowing for the allocation of funds to broad sectors or geographical areas. However, funds channelled through the UN Flash Appeal had to be used in a limited timeframe (progressively extended from 6 months to a year, then to 18 months). This as well as other limitations of timescale tended to negatively affect the response. In-kind donations from the People’s Republic of China also proved difficult to use effectively.

238. The SFERA set up by FAO played a critical role to speed up project implementation and cover strategic though yet unfunded needs (e.g. needs assessments or ERCU set up). However, the Fund is currently accounted for as a series of unconnected projects through complex, manual and *ad hoc* accounting processes.

239. While FAO was able to mobilize very significant resources for its early rehabilitation programmes, insufficient resources were made available for longer-term reconstruction and development activities. This may in part reflect donors’ priorities and “fatigue” with an emergency perceived as over-funded as compared to other, more recent ones.

Lessons

240. The Consolidated Appeal Process was designed to fund humanitarian assistance, i.e. to save lives, hence its timescale limited to six months. This timeframe poses significant problems for the funding of livelihoods rehabilitation programmes of the type FAO is implementing and, as underlined by the TEC, contradicts principle 9 of the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative⁴⁵.

Recommendations

1. FAO should review the scope of SFERA operations and the reporting requirements of FAO management, individual donors and governing bodies, and should implement appropriate solutions including financial set-up so as to automate accounting.

Responsible parties

TCE / AFF

⁴⁵ “Provide humanitarian assistance in ways that are supportive of recovery and long-term development, striving to ensure support, where appropriate, to the maintenance and return of sustainable livelihoods and transitions from humanitarian relief to recovery and development activities.”

2. FAO should continue to raise the awareness of donors on how useful SFERA was, on the advantages of flexibility and on the cost of conditionality. TCE itself should be more conscious of the risk it takes when accepting some donors' conditions, and at times should send the right message by turning down funding propositions which come with too many strings attached. TCE

3. FAO and other organizations involved in livelihood rehabilitation should plead the case for longer timeframes in consolidated and flash appeals before OCHA and the IASC, arguing of the differences between humanitarian / relief assistance destined to save life and relying on "kits" easy to quantify and stockpile, and more complex support to the recreation of livelihoods and food security which involves re-capitalizing affected communities with materials that are likely to change from one crisis to the next. TCE

2. Operational capacity

Conclusions

241. Many of the difficulties identified during the RTE and underlined in this report find their roots in the insufficient operational capacity of the Organization, its excessive centralisation of authority and bureaucratic procedures. FAO's performance in this regard was found lagging compared to that of other UN specialized agencies. Substantial bottlenecks in the tsunami programme were identified, which could and often do repeat themselves in other emergencies. Not all of these bottlenecks resulted from inflexible administrative procedures. In Indonesia, the field structure set up by TCE initially lacked coherence and was only entrusted with the human and financial means necessary to achieve programme goals towards the end of 2005.

242. Initiatives taken in 2005 and 2006 to instil more flexibility in FAO operational processes are welcome but remain insufficient. For instance, ceilings for delegation of authority to FAORs have been raised to US\$ 50,000, which merely allows FAORs to regain the purchasing power they lost to inflation since the early 1990s.

243. Instead of dispatching senior operational and technical staff for long periods of time to the field, FAO resorted to hiring technical consultants with little familiarity with FAO project management procedures, backstopped by missions from headquarters.

244. While the employment of short-term staff in emergency operations makes practical sense and gives the Organization a flexible instrument for human resource management, mandatory breaks in service for international and national staff proved a severe problem for programme implementation and in maintaining institutional memory and stable contacts with partners.

245. In Indonesia, FAO has found it difficult to hire and retain a cadre of senior national staff and consultants, and this seriously handicapped the FAO response there.

Lessons

246. Emergency programmes are fast-paced, high-volume operations that cannot be managed by remote control from headquarters, the role of which is to set priorities and define response and exit strategies rather than to implement programmes. The case of Thailand demonstrates that an experienced FAOR with solid operational capacity and appropriate delegation of authority can implement an emergency response faster and more effectively than when most administrative processes are managed from headquarters.

247. The "input risks" (risks of loss or embezzlement) involved in decentralising procurement or contracting pale in comparison with the significant "outcome risks" that FAO is currently taking with its lengthy administrative processes, resulting in a poor reputation of the Organization at the

field level, late delivery of assistance and reduced usefulness of the delivered inputs.

248. Reducing staff absences from the field, staff turn-over and the time devoted by TCEO to managing staff and consultancy contracts are prerequisites to raise the quality of the delivered programmes.

249. National staff of sufficient seniority, experience and credibility are essential to the success of an emergency programme. However, the recruitment of national consultants is beset by numerous problems, including undue limitations in the length of contracts and uncompetitive salary scales.

Recommendations

Responsible parties

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| 4. FAO should delegate to FAORs significant authority for LoAs and procurement, up to a minimum of US\$100,000 per transaction, generalize imprest accounts in emergency operations of significant size, and include the delivery of emergency projects in the performance assessment criteria for FAORs. | ODG / OCD / AFD |
| 5. In parallel, FAO should continue to invest in administrative and budget management skills, operational capacity and control mechanisms at the national level (i.e. in FAORs and ERCUs). The emergency training programme developed in 2006 should be progressively refined and expanded. | TCE / AFF / AFS / OCD |
| 6. For significant emergency and rehabilitation programmes, TCE and Technical Departments should strive to deploy experienced staff to the field level. This possibility should be part of Terms of Reference for TCE Operations Officers. | TCE / Technical Departments |
| 7. TCE should stockpile standard equipment for rapid office set up when a disaster strikes (office-in-a-box: MOSS compliance, vehicles, telecommunications, computers, office protocols and operation manuals). | TCE |
| 8. The rules enforcing mandatory breaks in consultancy contracts should be waived for emergency projects, and the recruitment of national consultants and staff (including their re-recruitment after the initial 11 months) should always be handled in the field. | AFH |
| 9. The optimal ERCU team composition should strike a balance between international and national staff (with ample national staff of sufficient seniority and authority), between male and female staff and between younger and older staff so as to balance enthusiasm and experience, but also to reach out to various audiences. ⁴⁶ | TCE |

3. Damage and needs assessments

Conclusions

250. Damage and needs assessments were widely appreciated by partners, but a poor link has been identified with the design of FAO projects. The absence of experienced project planners or implementers in the assessment teams resulted in key elements for programme design not being addressed in the resulting needs assessment reports.

251. Most of the early assessments were piece-meal, following sector and sub-sector technical lines, at the expense of cross-sectoral environmental, social and livelihoods issues.

⁴⁶ Younger staff may lack credibility with ministries and IFIs, but connect well with humanitarian donors and NGOs.

252. Throughout the response, FAO has attempted to monitor the gradual recovery of the fisheries sector in Sri Lanka and to a lesser extent in Indonesia through various recovery assessments. This work has been much noted and appreciated by partners, but could have been communicated more coherently and should have extended to the agriculture sector.

Lessons

253. UN specialised agencies have a comparative advantage in providing consolidated damage and needs assessments in their areas of mandate because these assessments require significant technical expertise. However, involving key national and international partners in joint damage and needs assessments helps build up the quality and credibility of the final report.

254. Needs are constantly changing as communities progressively recover from the initial shock. Hence needs assessments cannot be done once and for all. There is a strong demand for a regular stream of needs and recovery assessments, also called “recovery monitoring”.

Recommendations

Responsible parties

10. In large-scale emergencies, FAO should conduct multi-disciplinary, holistic damage and needs assessments for all areas within its mandate, communicated to all partners through a consolidated document, and should strive to carry them out in cooperation with all relevant FAO technical divisions, and with national agencies and other international organizations (e.g. UNDP, IFIs).

TCE as team leader, Tech. Departments as team members

11. Time and accessibility permitting, needs assessment reports should attempt to cover the following key areas: a) over and beyond damaged assets, an inventory of key assets that were *not* damaged and that could be used to jump-start the recovery (e.g. seed producers, hatcheries, FAO’s projects); b) an analysis of non-production segments of market chains affected by the disaster (e.g. food processing and marketing); c) an identification of the most affected and vulnerable groups, including women-headed households, ethnic minorities, and “have-nots” such as the land-less; and d) a clear articulation between FAO’s proposed role and priorities and the broad needs of the sector to be covered by others.

TCE (team leader) + Technical Departments (team members)

12. In the tsunami response as well as in other contexts, FAO should try to provide regular recovery assessments in areas of its mandate over a period of approximately two to three years after the disaster, depending on the extent of the damage.

FAOR/ERCU + Tech. Dpts

4. Strategy setting and programmatic approaches

Conclusions

255. The RTE highlighted a disconnect between FAO units, linked with a scattered, project-based approach to damage assessments, resource mobilization, project design, implementation and reporting.

256. In particular, the transition from an emergency and immediate rehabilitation phase, mainly orchestrated by TCE, to a reconstruction and development phase conducted by Technical Departments and Regional Offices could have been more explicitly planned.

257. The ADG tsunami group, specifically set up to coordinate the FAO tsunami response, discussed and explored issues but unfortunately did not elaborate broadly-agreed corporate strategies, e.g. for the transition from early rehabilitation to longer-term reconstruction and development.

Lessons

258. There is a need for more programmatic approaches and for an effective corporate mechanism for strategy setting in FAO emergency programmes. Some decisions must be taken at the level of the Organization, for instance decisions about cross-sectoral priorities and approaches, about the best balance between hardware and software, or about the transition between immediate rehabilitation and longer-term reconstruction and development.

Recommendations

Responsible parties

13. The mandate of high-level corporate coordination groups, such as the ADG tsunami group, should be to define shared goals and strategies for the Organization as a whole, looking forward to an orderly collaboration between units and a smooth transition between early rehabilitation and longer-term reconstruction and development. TCD

5. Balance between intervention types

Conclusions

259. The balance of funds allocated to each country and sector was found generally appropriate. More could have been done to mobilise resources for the rehabilitation of paddy field and related irrigation and drainage infrastructure in Indonesia and to a lesser extent Sri Lanka. In Indonesia, sectoral allocations were more evenly split between fisheries and agriculture, perhaps more as a result of the relative ease of implementation of the two sectoral programmes – agriculture was a “good deliverer” very early on while fisheries struggled for a time to establish a viable *modus operandi* – than as a reflection of the relative needs in each sector.

260. Although the tsunami response was much more varied and included more technical assistance than previous FAO emergency operations, it still tended to be dominated by “hardware activities” designed to help individual producers recover some of their physical production assets (seeds, fertiliser, livestock, boats and fishing gear), at the expense of: a) community infrastructures (irrigation and drainage channels, fish-landing sites); b) non-production segments of the value chain (support services, marketing) even when these were severely affected by the tsunami; c) “software activities” such as policy advice, sectoral planning, capacity building and coordination.

261. This “input bias” does not necessarily take into account the comparative advantages of the Organization, and its administrative limitations add to the risk of failure in ambitious supply, procurement or construction programmes.

262. When present, FAO’s policy guidance and capacity building activities were often much appreciated, particularly in the fisheries sector (e.g. on reconstruction strategies, boat building quality standards and safety at sea). However, many missions from headquarters were poorly coordinated with the concerned ERCU, which reduced their usefulness.

Lessons

263. Physical assistance, when it responds to real and pressing needs, helps rebuild livelihoods. It also establishes commitment, credibility, visibility and funding. However, FAO is not operating in a vacuum. There are many other organizations capable of distributing production inputs, while FAO can provide good quality technical expertise, capacity building and coordination services in the areas of its mandate in a way few others can.

264. Techniques and approaches which are relevant at the onset of a disaster response may not be adequate later on, as affected communities gradually reconstruct their productive means. The response needs to follow and support endogenous recovery strategies and processes.

265. The capture fisheries sector required greater attention to the carrying capacity of the natural resource base than other tsunami-affected sectors, and brought into sharp focus the necessity of adopting a long-term outlook in livelihoods rehabilitation, in order to ensure that the assistance provided in emergency contexts does not lead to unsustainable practices later on.

266. Technical assistance in the context of emergencies cannot rely on the same approaches and formats as in traditional development assistance. It should remain focused, simple and hands-on. There is a great demand, in particular from national and international NGOs, for simple, hands-on and prolonged training and guidelines focussed on key capacity gaps. Another difference is that policy issues tend to be more pressing and critical, but also more risky politically in highly visible post-disaster contexts than in most development situations.

267. FAO could have an important advocacy role in building awareness and commitment among donors and providers of humanitarian assistance concerning the need for a broader and longer-term approach to rehabilitation.

Recommendations

Responsible parties

14. In its responses to natural disasters, FAO should help recapitalize food producers and processors during the initial nine to twelve months through the distribution of new equipment to replace lost assets or, when feasible and cost-effective, by repairing damaged equipment. Unless another shock occurs, the procurement of simple production inputs such as seed or fertilizer should be gradually phased out thereafter. TCE

15. There is a need for stronger emphasis on “software” (policy advice, coordination, overall sector monitoring, community and institutional capacity building, advice on pressing policy issues directly linked with the concerned disaster), but also on the provision of more diversified “hardware” (e.g. rehabilitation of small infrastructures and of entire food and value chains). Concurrently, the Organization must overcome its procedural limitations for the delivery of both “hardware” and “software” (see sections 2. Operational capacity, above, and 6. Procurement and input delivery, below). TCE as the budget holder, with help from FAOR and ERCU

16. The specificities of the fast-paced emergency and reconstruction context need to be recognised when providing technical assistance: a) focus capacity building on key capacity gaps of other aid providers; b) keep policy advice and capacity building events simple, focussed and hands-on; c) be ready to take some political risks in providing clear and timely policy advice on issues of pressing concern. Tech. Depts + FAOR/ERCU to manage political risks

6. Procurement and input delivery

Conclusions

268. Procurements in the fisheries sector tended to be more complicated and less successful than in the agriculture sector, mainly on account of the wide variety and complexity of fishing gear used in any given country. Besides, most fisheries items were not available “off the shelf” and had to be built by the suppliers, which took time.

269. The speed in delivery of inputs and the technical soundness of items delivered varied considerably from one country to the next, in relation to a number of external factors (organizational set-up, presence of the required goods on local markets, degree of competition with other organizations trying to procure the same sorts of items, etc.), but also in relation with the procurement strategy adopted by FAO in a particular country.

270. Local procurements were found generally preferable to international ones both for reasons of efficiency and speed and to contribute to a recovery of local markets and supply chains, but they were not always possible (e.g. fishing gear in Sri Lanka, where local manufacturers could not face up to the demand after the tsunami).

271. Procurement missions in Indonesia and Sri Lanka did not achieve their objectives because technical specifications and suppliers had not been listed beforehand. Rather than rely on procurement missions from headquarters, it seems preferable to build up procurement capacity in the respective field offices.

272. Excessive delivery pressure and over-optimistic schedules sometimes resulted in low-quality items being procured and/or distributed. Risks are especially high when distributed items are alive (fingerlings, seed, saplings). In some instances, poor storage or handling resulted in low germination or survival rates.

Lessons

273. The “prime factor” approach to tender evaluation (tender assessed against *either* the best offer *or* the quickest delivery, as defined in advance) is too simplistic and rigid and may lead to suboptimal choices imposed by the rules.

274. Many units are involved in requesting, clearing, issuing and evaluating international tenders and bids (TCEO, ERCU, Technical Department, AFSP, PRC). This long chain of actors spread across time zones mechanically generates lengthy correspondence, slows down communications, and increases risks of miscommunication.

275. Split orders may be slightly more expensive than bulk orders but they provide for a more flexible response. The savings derived from large bulk orders are generally insignificant as compared to the risks incurred: 1) large international procurements tend to deliver late, at a stage when the affected communities might have already recovered from their losses; and 2) when a large international procurement fails or becomes stalled, it jeopardizes the entire programme.

276. Local orders stimulate the recovery of the local market, but require the capacity to effect payments rapidly, and hence a strong financial capacity and level of authority in the field, in line with recommendation 4 above.

277. Adherence to beneficiaries’ technical and economic requirements often makes the difference between a usable and a non-usable item. Even when beneficiaries will be able to adapt the equipment to their needs by modifying part of the structure or design, the cost of these alterations will be borne by them, thus tapping into household resources that could probably be put to better use in the aftermath of a disaster.

278. The best and easiest way to make sure that delivered items fit beneficiaries’ requirements may have been to let tsunami victims decide for themselves what assets they needed through vouchers schemes and/or input fairs, as already tried by FAO in Africa.

<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Responsible parties</i>
17. Tenders should be analysed against a variety of pre-set criteria, including the track record of the bidders with FAO, and criteria used more for guidance than as a straightjacket.	ODG / AFD / AUD
18. Splitting large procurements in smaller and quicker-to-produce quantities, ordered on the basis of regular recovery assessments, would reduce risks of procurement failure or delay and help progressively test and fine-tune programme implementation modalities.	TCE / AFSP / AUD
19. Training material should be designed and in-depth procurement training provided to local and international staff dealing with purchasing and pre-purchasing functions in the field and at headquarters, to ensure that the tasks are carried out within the rules and regulations of the Organization. This training effort should be financed by TCE and implemented by AFSP.	TCE / AFSP
20. For large-scale emergency / early rehabilitation programmes, technical clearance should be delegated to country offices if the required technical capacity is available at that level. When the capacity does not exist in a country, it should be created, for instance by outposting the appropriate technical officer from headquarters to the country during relevant parts of the programme.	Technical Departments
21. FAO should continue to experiment with voucher schemes on a more significant scale. Partner NGOs and governments would focus on beneficiary selection and documentation, while FAO liaises with suppliers and organizes the fair.	TCE

7. Participatory approaches and SLA

Conclusions

279. FAO has attempted to use participatory approaches in its tsunami response within the sphere of specific projects, through the use of PRAs and the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach. These efforts have often been frustratingly slow, but were useful as they aimed to involve beneficiaries in the design of project activities.

280. SLA has been used mainly as an analytical tool, identifying needs and priorities, rather than considering it also as an empowering tool.

Lessons

281. The use of rapid and efficient participatory mechanisms is essential to improve the quality and relevance of the FAO emergency programmes. However, there are risks entailed by overly complex and multi-sectoral approaches in a rehabilitation context, most notably the risk of unduly raising expectations and ultimately failing to deliver significant assistance due to long planning and complex processes. More generally, the role of livelihoods approaches in developing social capital to help manage natural resources and collective infrastructure has been under-recognised so far.

<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Responsible parties</i>
22. FAO should continue to develop rapid consultation processes for utilizing livelihoods approaches and practical steps for their implementation under rehabilitation and reconstruction contexts, but it should remain mindful of the risk of delays entailed by such approaches in the very limited timescale typical of many “emergency” projects.	TCE

23. Cross-sectorality should be promoted selectively, focusing on precise and pressing issues that can only be successfully addressed this way, such as the green belt issue in Indonesia. The key is that the synergies tapped by working cross-sectorally should offset the additional cost, time and complexity.

TCE

8. Beneficiary selection

Conclusions

282. Asset replacement projects tended to pursue two distinct and at times conflicting objectives: 1) rebuild the economy rapidly and efficiently, which calls for helping good, established asset managers; and 2) help the most vulnerable segments of society overcome the disaster, under the assumption that the better-off can take care of themselves. This tension is seldom recognised in programme documentation.

283. In the agricultural sector, communities in all countries tended to spread the FAO assistance farther than intended in project documents, i.e. to share the predefined packages when they were easy to split (seed, fertilizer) with a much larger group of beneficiaries than intended, as a way to help maintain a social balance and share amongst other villagers who were also recognized to have lost. This trend even applied to large assets (e.g. tractors, cows): some benefiting communities opted for collective ownership of the assets, again in an attempt to reduce conflicts.

284. However, this tendency to share or redistribute assets was limited to assets contributing to the reconstruction of self-subsistence activities (paddy, small scale vegetable production, and to a certain extent livestock) but applied much less to commercial and competitive domains (commercial vegetable production, fish drying, and boats and fishing gear). In the latter cases, the tendency for elite capture was harder to resist. As a result, beneficiary selection was on average more contentious and difficult in the fisheries than in the agriculture sector.

Lessons

285. By definition, activities that consist in the replacement of lost individual assets lend themselves to helping the relatively better-off segments of society, i.e. those who owned those assets in the first place before the disaster (land owners, boat owners, etc.). An established asset manager is also more likely to make good use of a complex or costly asset than someone who never owned one in the past.

286. However, the goal should be to reconstruct sustainable livelihoods, and not necessarily pre-existing ones ('fitness for purpose' dimension to reconstruction). Well-targeted livelihoods diversification activities can be advisable when coming back to previous practices is impossible or unadvisable. In this sense, the *capacity* to properly manage the donated asset is therefore a more important criterion than the *ownership* of the asset prior to the disaster.

287. When distributed assets are sharable by nature, are not costly and contribute to self-subsistence activities (e.g. most seeds, tools and fertilizer), there does not seem to be any justification to devote extra time and money to sophisticated beneficiary selection processes and stringent criteria, as communities are likely to re-distribute items among their members using their own criteria.

288. Input redistributions among community members are a positive thing as long as they are voluntary and help correct disparities between the supply and the demand for replacement assets. The important thing is not whether standard eligibility criteria have been fulfilled, but whether asset

distributions are perceived as fair locally, at the community levels where they have the greatest potential for creating tensions, and whether they do not create greater disparities than before.

Recommendations

Responsible parties

24. Corporate commitments to vulnerable groups such as women and the poorest of the poor must be translated into action. Activities that tend to be performed by women should be identified and, when they are affected by a disaster, supported on a par with masculine activities. Female-headed households should receive their fair share of distributed assets. There should also be an attempt to reach out to the poorest segments of society and to include them in input distribution programmes on a par with the relatively better-off, even if at times this would mean donating to the poor access to assets that they may not have possessed before the disaster, as long as they have the capacity to use them well. ERCU / TCE / ESW
25. For small or sharable assets (e.g. seeds, fertilizer), a simple beneficiary selection process facilitated by an NGO and involving local officials and community members should normally suffice. ERCU
26. When assets are costly and/or unlikely to be redistributed (planting material for cash crops, tractors, fish processing equipment, fish cages, fishing vessels...) and/or their oversupply likely to have negative consequences (e.g. over production and drops in market prices or over-fishing), beneficiary selection should be carefully planned, conducted and monitored. The beneficiary lists provided by local authorities and village heads should be systematically checked by a neutral third party, e.g. an NGO or an academic institution, and local authorities informed in advance of this independent verification step. For costly assets, FAO should also continue to experiment with sharing arrangements between a small number of beneficiaries, as these seem to have worked well in the tsunami response. ERCU / TCE

9. Strategic and operational partnerships

Conclusions

289. In all countries, the government played a significant and generally useful role in orienting and often co-implementing the FAO-funded programme. However, cases of manipulation of beneficiary lists also occurred.
290. International NGOs displayed advantages over national ones (contracting, reporting and management capacity) but also weaknesses (insufficient knowledge of the local context, weaker links with communities and leaders than local NGOs). The decision to opt for local or international NGOs for the delivery of FAO assistance was largely and appropriately grounded on pragmatic considerations, depending on the capacity and interest of international and national NGOs to work with FAO.
291. Traditional organizations and CBOs have also been partners in implementation, and this may represent an original feature of the tsunami response. However, significant challenges were encountered when trying to contract small and/or informal organizations with no bank account and limited understanding of English, such as the traditional organizations in Aceh (*Panglima Laot, Keujruen Blang*).
292. LoAs were found a generally inflexible document, requiring a high level of detail about the activities to be undertaken by partners at times when activities are not always clearly identified. Amendments to LoAs after contract signature resulted in substantial wrangling and consumed considerable time.

Lessons

293. Large-scale humanitarian programmes can be highly political. Using a combination of governmental and non-governmental partners is a good way to promote neutrality and transparency.
294. The LoA format imparts a rather bureaucratic dimension to partnerships, one in which FAO is merely subcontracting an activity to a service provider rather than partnering with a peer to share risks and benefits.
295. Under the current FAO procedural framework, CBOs, small cooperatives and traditional organizations are best contracted through the conduit of well-established, registered NGOs.

Recommendations

27. As a way to speed up the implementation of initial projects in other crises, stand-by partnership agreements should be explored with interested INGOs, with the United Nations Joint Logistics Center to help develop FAO's logistical capacity, and with WFP to subcontract some logistical functions (storage, transport).

Responsible parties

TCE / OFAD

28. A new, simpler project document format should replace the LoA in most instances, with the legal fine print placed in annex and the objectives and implementation modalities upfront. The document should allow for donations in-kind only, display the contribution of the implementing partner(s), and emphasise the fact that it is a joint effort by FAO and one or several partner(s) rather than a mere sub-contracting relationship.

AFS / OFAD
/ TCE

10. Sectoral coordination

Conclusions

296. According to the context and experience of the Emergency Coordinator as well as the resources available, FAO played different coordinating roles in each of the four countries, with the most credible efforts witnessed in Sri Lanka and to a lesser extent Indonesia. In all cases, these efforts were limited to information sharing, advocacy, and trying to promote a more even geographic coverage and shared beneficiary lists in the fisheries sector in Sri Lanka.

297. Harmonizing the activities of hundreds of NGOs and charitable organizations, who all had their own donors and independent interventions, represented an insurmountable task. Whether NGOs should be better regulated other than voluntarily is also debatable since independence is one of their major strengths.

Lessons

298. The comparative advantage of specialised UN agencies in helping coordinate complex responses through sectoral, multi-stakeholder coordination forums bringing together state and non-state actors was illustrated once again in the tsunami response. If pursued during the entire response, well facilitated and truly participatory, these sectoral coordination forums may easily surpass the delivery of physical assistance in terms of visibility and usefulness.

299. However, coordination at the local level (district, region, etc.) is best promoted through generalist, area-based forums under the chairmanship of decentralised governments and/or OCHA, in order to avoid a proliferation of local forums leading to "meeting fatigue". Arguably, cross-sectoral, area-based coordination forums are best suited to the local level, while sectoral coordination is best positioned at the national level.

Recommendations

Responsible parties

29. FAO should continue to convene national coordination meetings in its areas of competence as soon as possible, starting with ad hoc meetings, even if the FAO counterparts in the Government are not initially fully convinced of the need for coordination. A governmental chairmanship or co-chairmanship should be instituted as soon as possible. Meetings should be open to all types of actors (Government, donors, NGOs, other UN agencies, etc.), well facilitated, neutral and participatory (pushing one member's agenda too hard will result in a loss in attendance from others), well documented and sharply focussed on important issues requiring coordination.

TCE to provide resources,
ERCU

30. In each country or crisis, FAO and its partners should seek a progressive build up in terms of intensity of coordination, starting with simple exchange of information on needs assessments and programmes, and moving gradually to advocacy, review of project and policy documents, standard setting and, ultimately, trying to promote innovative collaborations in a few locations. Each of these levels is more challenging but also potentially more rewarding than the previous one.

ERCU

11. Monitoring and communication

Conclusions

300. Overall, the FAO tsunami response was not sufficiently monitored, and this weakness contributed to a number of problems not being picked up soon enough, notably in Sri Lanka where the partner in charge of boat repairs was awarded the work without a competitive process and tended to operate in a non-transparent manner. In Indonesia, the agriculture programme did set up formal monitoring processes, requesting FAO implementing partners to produce progress reports and conduct post distribution surveys of beneficiary satisfaction and outcomes. These beneficiary surveys could have generated more useful findings, had they been entrusted to a group of professional surveyors. In Thailand, the programme's outputs, beneficiaries and outcomes were closely monitored by way of frequent field visits by national and international consultants and good process documentation.

301. The RTE observed an encouraging trend toward tackling communication and visibility issues more and more vigorously. Various means were used to disseminate FAO's messages and raise the visibility of its interventions: roadside boards, t-shirts and caps, national media, newsletters. However, the newsletters could have been better exploited and disseminated, and the visibility of the FAO tsunami response in international media remained minimal.

302. The tsunami atlases initially produced by SDRN and posted on the FAO tsunami Web site constituted potentially useful products that should have been disseminated more widely at the country level and through UNHIC and ReliefWeb.

Lessons

303. Stronger monitoring processes would help the Organization manage its rehabilitation programmes and improve upon its reporting to donors by providing the required data on implementation progress and on outcomes at the beneficiaries' level.

304. Requesting implementation partners to conduct beneficiary surveys entails loss of data quality (implementation partners often lack the expertise to collect and analyze such data) as well as a conflict of interest (implementing partners have little interest in reporting low beneficiary satisfaction rates).

305. Tight monitoring systems would be particularly desirable in cases where the choice of implementation partner is not entirely under the control of FAO but imposed by local circumstances.

306. Monitoring systems are certainly useful tools, but do not reduce the need for frequent field visits by project staff and consultants, which remain absolutely essential to identify issues or deepen the analysis of issues identified through other means, and adjust programmes in real time.

Recommendations

Responsible parties

31. TCE should develop standard monitoring processes by intervention type, involving a blend of tools such as: a) a simple reporting system for implementing partners; b) databases of beneficiaries' names and location; c) regular beneficiary surveys contracted to teams of well-trained third-party enumerators; d) rudimentary mapping of programme areas and results; and e) frequent visits by staff and consultants to programme sites. These monitoring processes should be kept simple and be geared toward: a) verifying that FAO's assistance is properly and efficiently channelled to ultimate beneficiaries; b) collating an overview of programme realisations; c) assessing outcomes (use and appreciation of outputs by beneficiaries); and d) facilitating information management and reporting to donors.

TCER /
ERCUs

32. In future crises, FAO should provide mapping and remote sensing services over a longer period, with an emphasis on damage assessments at the onset of the response, moving on during the rehabilitation phase to basic agro-ecological zoning to support a closer fit between rehabilitation assistance and local livelihoods. This work needs to be conducted in partnership with UNHCR and FAO maps posted on ReliefWeb, so as to contribute to the collective effort of the UN system towards better GIS products in support of emergency programmes.

NRCE (ex-
SDRN)