

South Asia Earthquake 2005

Learning from previous earthquake relief operations

This briefing paper provides a synthesis of key lessons learned from relief responses to past earthquakes. The main intended audiences are operational decision-makers and relief programme managers working in the South Asia earthquake relief operation. As agency personnel have expressed a need for clear and concise guidance, this paper aims to provide this, rather than detailed context on earthquakes or the affected region.¹

This is the first of two briefing papers prepared for the humanitarian and development community by ALNAP (www.alnap.org) and the Provention Consortium (www.proventionconsortium.org). The second paper, which will be available in November 2005, will focus on lessons learned on recovery from past earthquake operations.

The current South Asia earthquake presents unique challenges, particularly of scale and logistics, but there are generic lessons to be learned from previous earthquakes, particularly those in Afghanistan in 1998, Turkey in 1999, Gujarat in 2001 and Bam in 2003. This paper aims to provide a distillation of this learning.²

■ LESSON 1 – Needs assessments and working with communities

An effective response requires an **understanding of context** – particularly the socio-economics of affected communities. Where **sound needs assessments** are carried out and acted upon, responses are more appropriate and aid is used more effectively. The record from past earthquakes though is poor. OCHA (2004a) comments that only a few organisations involved people from Bam in the assessment and planning phases there. The DEC (2001) evaluation found a disturbing level of dissatisfaction about consultation and transparency after the Gujarat earthquake. In many cases, people felt that they were consulted only about plans that had already been made.

Key pointers for needs assessment include:

- ◆ They should be ongoing to the extent possible, ie communities should be asked to prioritise needs as the emergency unfolds, perhaps once a month.
- ◆ Joint assessments should be carried out where possible, to make more efficient use of resources, and to ensure that multiple needs assessments by different agencies are not conducted with the same members of the affected population.
- ◆ Needs-assessment teams should be multi-disciplinary, and preferably have prior knowledge of local context.
- ◆ There should be an adequate number of female team members, to enable the involvement of affected women who might not otherwise have a voice.

¹ For context, see the Pakistan Human Development Report (www.un.org.pk/nhdr/) and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/PAKISTANEXTN/Resources/PRSP.pdf>).

² Two main sources for the briefings are the ALNAP Evaluative Reports Database and *Review of Humanitarian Action*, and the Provention Consortium's *Learning Lessons from Disaster Recovery*, a review of lessons learned from recovery after five major natural disasters. Other useful sources, including internet links, can be found at the end of this paper.

For example, after the 1999 Turkey earthquakes the Foundation for the Support of Women's Work in Ankara trained affected women as local researchers to assess needs and capacities, and meet with government officials to discuss the issue of gender-disaggregated needs (Akcar, 2001). After the 2001 earthquakes in El Salvador, single women insisted that the sheeting provided for temporary shelters be opaque and strong. In the past, it had been translucent, making it easy to see when they were alone. Given that it could be easily cut with a machete, many women had been raped (ALNAP, 2003a).

There is accumulated evidence that **people affected by disasters want to participate fully in the response**, even if this means a slower implementation process. However, disbursement pressure – the need to get money out of the door – has in the past partly determined response mechanisms. DEC noted that after the Gujarat earthquake (2001: 10): 'Managers on the ground began to see their task as spending money within the (DEC) time-scale rather than planning good programmes.' Similar pressures have been widely noted in the response to the 2004 tsunami. Clearly this works against the idea of iterative planning and community participation.

Ensuring good communication with local communities is crucial from perspectives of both ethics and efficiency. One lesson from the response to the 1998 Afghanistan earthquakes is that agencies could set up short-wave radio to broadcast relief objectives to survivors, where local capacity to do this exists (IFRC, 2000).

Two examples among many of community structures for participation are of relevance to the current emergency. World Disasters Report 2004 (IFRC, 2004b) notes the role of traditional neighbourhood networks such as the 'notables' or 'white beards' – five or six men of influence based around the local mosque who organised the response of the local community after the Bam earthquake. Women's groups have also been effective in facilitating community response. For example the Self Employed Women's Association was involved in a number of activities after the 2001 Gujarat earthquake, including identifying high- need households, and directing aid to them, and involving women as monitors of housing reconstruction.

When considering communities, however, it is important to remember:

- ♦ not to romanticise the coping capacities and resilience of local people and communities – they often face insurmountable difficulties when responding to major disasters;
- ♦ that often 'communities', particularly in areas of high inequality, are made up of different interest groups, and include marginalised groups who may well have difficulty getting their views represented; cultural 'norms' may also, for example, work against women's rights.

Communities and individuals themselves will carry out much relief work, from search and rescue to restoring livelihoods. The role of external agencies then becomes one of **supporting indigenous capacity and working with communities to support their efforts and build their capacities**. At the very least, interventions should not undermine local capacity.

Box 1: How practical is community participation after earthquakes?

Following the earthquakes in Nahrin, Afghanistan, in 2002, agencies launched shelter reconstruction programmes, introducing earthquake-mitigation techniques into the design. While agencies provided technical supervision and wooden beams for roofs, people were expected to build their homes in accordance with earthquake-mitigation techniques, including making bricks and gathering stones.

By the implementation stage, some people were facing difficulties making bricks or gathering stones. Others could not spare time to engage in construction, as they were busy securing their livelihoods. The situation was particularly difficult for households with no able-bodied men. Tension and anger rose as autumn drew near. People's main concern was to finish their shelter according to traditional processes – walls made of dried mud and straw (highly vulnerable to earthquakes) – to be protected from the cold as soon as possible.

The lesson here, and also from the Gujarat earthquake response which faced similar issues, is that agencies need to be realistic about what level of participation is possible, to understand what affected people will be able to contribute, and to discuss the options for response fully with communities. (Source: ALNAP, 2003a)

Useful sources on emergency assessment and community participation in humanitarian action include:

- ♦ the draft ALNAP guide *Participation by Crisis-Affected Populations in Humanitarian Action. A Handbook for Practitioners* (available at: www.alnap.org/pubs/pdfs/GS_Handbook.pdf);
- ♦ the IFRC *Guidelines for Emergency Assessment* (available at: www.proventionconsortium.org/files/tools_CRA/IFRC-guidelines-assessments-LR.pdf).

The on-going **Listening Project** initiative, currently being piloted in the countries affected by the Indian Ocean Tsunami, is supporting a series of community dialogues to improve understanding of how communities analyse and judge disaster assistance. These tools for community dialogue may also have direct relevance for application in assessing community needs, resources and specific ideas and aspirations regarding recovery (www.proventionconsortium.org/toolkit.htm).

■ LESSON 2 – Targeting

Needs assessment and community participation is critically linked to effective targeting. Findings from recent evaluations of humanitarian responses underline the crucial importance of targeting. **Target populations must be identified on the basis of actual need, and beneficiary consultation and participation is essential for effective targeting.**

Multiple agencies are usually involved in relief distribution, and there is likely to be duplication in some areas while others are under-served. **Geographical targeting** can be determined by political considerations as much as by need (Jalali, 2002; DEC, 2001). On the other hand, Gujarat offers a case where some agencies specifically targeted under-served areas. This is likely to be an issue in the current emergency, given that specific efforts will be necessary to reach some communities.

In terms of **community targeting**, agency policies and guides usually talk about targeting the ‘poor’ or ‘vulnerable’. But about 20 evaluations from a number of countries and cultures have found that **agency targeting norms may be at odds with local community norms** (ALNAP, 2004). While agencies may try to target the most vulnerable, relief items are often distributed more equally to the wider community by local leaders or organisations. The rationale for this practice is often that everyone has been hit by the emergency, so everyone should receive a share of aid.

Thus, whether food and tents are air-dropped, or attempts are made to deliver these to the poorest, they may end up being distributed differently. This may lead to discrimination against marginalised groups, or it may not – it all depends on local distribution systems. Despite media reports about fighting over aid, this is an area to watch for in the current response, as community norms are often strong. The best approach for external agencies may be to ensure that local distribution mechanisms at least cover **the most vulnerable – the elderly, poor women, children and disabled people.**

Disability is a significant issue following earthquakes, due to the number of injuries received. Estimates after the Turkey earthquakes suggest that up to 40 per cent of those injured remained permanently disabled. This area has not been well covered in previous responses, but is also likely to be a major factor in the current emergency.

■ LESSON 3 – Monitoring

Monitoring of emergency responses in general tends to be poor. Usually, information is collected for specific purposes and is difficult to adapt for other, broader analysis and planning. The best approach to monitoring may be to collect a small amount of quantitative data (eg numbers of people provided with food, broken down by gender), complemented by qualitative data (eg affected people’s accounts of effectiveness and impact), together with information sharing among agencies. Further guidance on monitoring can be found at: www.alnap.org/pubs/pdfs/keymessages2003.pdf.

■ LESSON 4 – Shelter and relocation

Learning on the use of tents and emergency shelter includes the following:³

A range of shelter options should be provided where possible. It is clear that the scale and pattern of damage in the current emergency will necessitate a range of solutions for both temporary and permanent shelter. Agencies will need to address diverse needs for: rural and urban settings, large extended families, single-headed households, the lone elderly, safe and unsafe locations, and on-site construction or relocation.

Standards need to be set from temporary shelter to permanent housing. These should be set by governments with local involvement, and can be informed by the Sphere Minimum Standards in shelter, settlement and non-food items, which can be found at: www.sphereproject.org/handbook/hdbkpdf/hdbk_c4.pdf.

It is important that criteria for eligibility for shelter are transparent and fair, and that people in similar conditions receive similar aid. Options and choices, as well as criteria, should be clearly communicated, preferably through existing customary community mechanisms. Beneficiary consultation is, therefore, a critical component of emergency shelter assistance.

There are unlikely to be sufficient winterised tents in Pakistan, so they should be considered as one of several **complementary strategies for providing emergency shelter**. OCHA has suggested that approximately 50 per cent of the mountainous terrain will be unsuitable for tents.⁴ Winterised tents are heavy – for example they may be too heavy for a mule to carry – and may be difficult to put up. **Options other than tents may include using local materials, repairing damaged housing, and providing roofing materials.** Such materials may also prove more durable than tents and provide better coverage of needs over time until permanent reconstruction can be completed. Media reports from Pakistan have suggested that some housing can be reconstructed with existing materials.⁵ This will depend on the housing stock and extent of damage. The World Bank (2005) notes that in disasters that cause significant damage to housing, taking the time to ensure that all usable building materials are recovered and recycled is one way to ensure that the poor will be able to afford to rebuild.

Governments and agencies may spend excessive money on emergency shelter, to the detriment of transitional shelter or permanent reconstruction. Often, there is inadequate or no finance and human resources left for permanent reconstruction. If there is inadequate planning, transitional shelter can evolve into permanent housing, leaving affected people with poor-quality housing.

Post-disaster shelter should be linked to livelihood promotion, concerning factors such as proximity to services and the workplace, as well as use of housing as a workplace. Shelter and livelihoods are often closely linked in rural settings in South Asia. For example, women may use their homesteads as a place for growing vegetables and raising livestock, for either home consumption or sale.

Agencies involved in earthquake relief should be prepared for large **population movements**. Population movements are often unpredictable and have confounded the expectations of agencies in recent emergencies. For example, after the volcanic eruption in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2002, affected people moved back to their homes much more quickly than agencies expected.

³ This section also draws on a briefing paper for the IFRC (Corsellis and Davis, 2005), and on personal communications from Yasemin Aysan. Emergency shelter refers to impermanent shelter such as plastic sheeting or tents. Examples of transitional shelter are prefabricated buildings and temporary shelter constructed from debris. Transitional shelter refers to 'shelter which provides a habitable covered living space, and a secure, healthy, living environment with privacy and dignity to those within it, over the period between a conflict or natural disaster and achieving a durable shelter solution (Corsellis and Vitale, 2005: 11). Further details on shelter, housing and livelihoods will be included in the second ALNAP/ProVention Consortium briefing paper on recovery.

⁴ www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/EGUA-6HGMX7?OpenDocument.

⁵ www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/IRIN/e7a466af74c19fb4077be4379dd3668d.htm.

Affected people may prefer to stay close to their homes, living in makeshift accommodation or moving in with other family members or neighbours, in order to protect surviving household members, possessions, and to ensure continued control of land. After the Turkey and Bam earthquakes, affected people put up tents next to their property. Relocation should be considered as an option only where communities are seeking this, or where it is not safe for communities to remain, for example where there is danger from landslides or shifting of landmines.

Box 2: Experiences from previous earthquakes of problems with tents

After the Turkey earthquakes, provision of an adequate number of appropriate tents was problematic, and the Turkish government and Turkish Red Crescent Society were heavily criticised. DFID (2001: 7) found that, after the Gujarat earthquake: 'Distribution of certain relief items, such as tents, have undermined local self-help coping strategies.' This report noted further that local semi-permanent constructions could have provided alternative shelter more quickly than the provision of tents that were delayed, and that imported tents are more expensive and less appropriate than locally constructed semi-permanent shelters, which can last for several years.

Useful sources on shelter:

- ◆ The OCHA guide to tents, which can be read in less than an hour, and gives invaluable information for any agencies currently providing or considering providing tents: www.sheltercentre.org/shelterlibrary/publications/201.htm.
- ◆ The AIDMI guide contains succinct details on appropriate construction, and can be found at: www.who.int/hac/techguidance/tools/08Kutch_kashmirEQ.pdf.
- ◆ The sheltercentre publication on transitional settlements, while not specific to earthquakes, is a further useful source: www.sheltercentre.org/shelterlibrary/items/pdf/Transitional_Settlement_Displaced_Populations_2005.pdf.

■ LESSON 5 – Logistics

Wilton Park (2004) notes that up to 90 per cent of emergency budgets after disasters are spent on procurement and logistics including transport. **Air-drops should be seen as one of several complementary strategies for delivering aid.** However, the scale of the disaster, climatic conditions and the local terrain in the current affected area offer unique challenges, and in some cases air-drops may be the best or only solution.

However, over-reliance on air-drops has been criticised because of their expense and poor targeting. For example, in Afghanistan a US Government Accountability Office report noted: 'if the United States had donated the \$50.9 million that it spent on approximately 2.5 million daily rations airdropped by the Department of Defense, WFP could have purchased enough regionally produced commodities to provide food assistance for an estimated 1.0 million people for a year' (ALNAP 2004).

After the Afghanistan earthquakes of 1998, a lack of helicopters seriously hampered many agencies in their attempts to assess and respond to the disaster. Inter-agency competition for limited suppliers of helicopters and fuel pushed up prices. IFRC (2000:80) found: 'NGOs grew increasingly impatient with unworkable hi-tech solutions. The French NGO ACTED commissioned donkey convoys to trek in from Shah-e-Buzurg with badly-needed food and shelter items' (IFRC, 2000: 80). The same source quotes the UNOCHA focal point in Islamabad: 'Our biggest mistake in the second earthquake was the over-reliance on high-tech solutions in a desperately low-tech area.... the obsession to find helicopters consumed huge amounts of time, effort and money – and was not sufficiently questioned' (ibid: 82).

Opportunities for local sourcing of relief materials are often undervalued. While not always sufficient to meet full relief requirements, local procurement brings 'knock-on' effects to local economies and livelihoods strategies.

■ LESSON 6 – Appropriateness of previous responses

Evaluations of the responses to the Gujarat, Turkey and Bam earthquakes have shown that, in general, humanitarian action meets its short-term objectives of saving lives and meeting basic needs of the affected population (DEC, 2001; IFRC, 2001; IFRC, 2004b). Yet there are key lessons that have been identified to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of earthquake relief efforts:

- ◆ Too many relief goods may be imported, and there may be an over-reliance on international staff. After the Bam earthquake, offers of certain kinds of assistance were officially turned down but still sent – eg search and rescue, food, field hospitals (OCHA, 2004b). The lesson is to use local resources and purchase locally where possible.
- ◆ Food is often provided following earthquakes, although earthquakes may not create food shortages (Wilton Park, 2004). After the Gujarat earthquake, Abhiyan (the coordinating local NGO) worked with the government to convince aid agencies to stop distribution of food items, and focus on enabling people to get back to work and use wages for purchasing food. This was felt to be a necessary step to restart the local economy, and for people to start taking control of their lives again (IFRC, 2003b).
- ◆ Sending canned food and used clothing from overseas can be counterproductive (World Bank, 2005). Relief items need to be culturally appropriate. After the Bam earthquake, high-protein biscuits were distributed, marked 'gift for the children of Afghanistan' (OCHA 2004b).
- ◆ Once work opportunities associated with rubble clearance and materials recycling diminish, cash assistance targeted to affected families as they wait for more permanent shelter is important – more important than providing food, blankets and clothing (World Bank, 2005).

■ LESSON 7 – Gender equality and protection

The region hit by the 2005 South Asia earthquake is characterised by high levels of gender inequality. A lesson from previous emergencies is that **attention to gender is consistently one of the weakest areas of humanitarian response** (ALNAP, 2004). However, poor women are likely to be among the groups most seriously affected by earthquakes. Older poor women from minorities may be even harder hit, and may be the last to recover. There may also be higher levels of gender-based violence following a disaster. Part of the difficulty is that agencies are often unclear about what they should be doing to promote gender equality.

Because housing is most at risk in disasters, women are more likely to be among those killed, in particular where women's mobility outside the home is restricted by seclusion, custom or culture.⁶ For example, proportionately more women were killed after the February 1998 Afghanistan earthquake, as men were either in the mosque or doing agricultural work, while women and children were preparing the evening meal. Women may also take the lead in disaster response, in particular if men migrate or go in search of relief. This can take many forms – accessing the natural-resource base, rebuilding houses, caring for children and relatives, or working in community groups. However, relief and recovery, because of a focus on logistics and large-scale infrastructure more often used by men, may be gender-insensitive.

For all of these reasons, **gender analysis should be central to the South Asia earthquake response**. Enarson (2001:17) notes that 'Gender analysis of all relief, recovery, and reconstruction projects is essential in order to assess and monitor their direct and indirect impacts on women's time and resources. Gender-equitable reconstruction is not possible without this perspective on economic recovery.'

The Gender and Disaster Network has produced a broadsheet containing six principles for engendered relief and reconstruction, available at: www.unisdr.org/wcdr/preparatory-process/inputs/gender-broadsheet.pdf.

⁶ This paragraph draws on Fordham (nd).

Protection issues have not been at the fore of discussions of responses to past earthquakes.

Because of the social disruption caused by disasters, gender-based violence may become a particular problem – including sexual assault and abuse, trafficking and forced prostitution. Plans are needed to provide immediate assistance (eg rape kits, shelters, legal assistance, peer counselling, reporting mechanisms) and to ensure that agencies are sensitive to the issue of gendered violence in places such as temporary camps, for example in relation to adequate lighting and location of latrines.

In the current response, if entry points for appropriate consultation with women are not identified and utilised, understanding of a number of protection risks may be low. This is especially the case if a woman has lost her male relatives, or they are severely or permanently injured. There can be trade-offs between short-term solutions such as tent camps as opposed to self-construction in relation to protection risks, and these need to be understood in planning for different options.

Other protection issues may arise, given that Pakistan-administered Kashmir is disputed territory. For more guidance, see the ALNAP protection guide at: www.alnap.org/pubs/pdfs/alnap_protection_guide.pdf.

■ **LESSON 8 – Psychosocial support**

The importance of providing psychosocial support after earthquakes is increasingly recognised. The IFRC (2004b: 9–10) notes that after the Bam earthquake: ‘The psychological impact of the earthquake on survivors was enormous. According to the MOH [Ministry of Health] and UNICEF some 25,000 people were in need of psychological support. Apart from concerns that they could not perform their traditional mourning ceremonies because of the summary burial of victims, people were traumatised, afraid of the many aftershocks which occurred and frightened by the dark.’

The World Bank (2005) found that providing survivors with income-earning opportunities tied to physical work often seems to help as much as grief counselling. Participation in post-disaster shelter reconstruction can play a vital role in the personal and collective psychosocial recovery process if there is an active role for disaster survivors.

■ **LESSON 9 – Coordination and partnerships**

Relatively small investments in coordination have been shown to pay off in previous disasters in terms of an overall improved response. However, coordination has offered a considerable challenge after recent earthquakes, with a large number of organisations and multiple levels of government involved. For example, there were 300 NGOs working after the Gujarat earthquake, and 120 in Bam. The main lesson from the 1998 Afghanistan earthquake response was the need for greater cross-agency disaster preparedness at the field and regional levels, a key part of which was greater coordination. In Turkey, Gujarat and Bam, national authorities were initially overwhelmed by the scale of the disaster, the pressure to respond and the influx of international agencies.

Although national authorities are legally responsible for providing and directing/coordinating assistance, experience from past emergencies has shown that often no specific national structures exist for this task, or these structures are weak (Wilton Park, 2004). In Turkey, Jalali (2002) found that the state remained paralysed for several weeks after the disaster. This can create tensions between international personnel and government staff. Expectations of what national and local governments can achieve should therefore be realistic. International agencies also need to consider how governments can be assisted to cope with managing large inflows of foreign aid and international personnel in the early stages of an emergency. Investments in **seconding experienced staff to government authorities** have proved quite effective during the response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami, and may have value in Pakistan as well.

Relations between governments and international and national NGOs are often affected by different work styles and political agendas as much as by coordination. Agencies involved in the Gujarat earthquake response noted the difficulty of working with government, for example delays in finalisation of plans for public building, and confusion between different levels of government, although the DEC evaluation (2001) attributes this mainly to unrealistic timetables on the part of the DEC agencies. There is a tendency to 'blame the victim' and make accusations about under-funded and understaffed government departments. In addition, while international agencies use government service providers, they do not usually cover running costs.

The role of the UN in coordination thus often becomes central. The OCHA report after the Gujarat earthquake (OCHA, 2001) notes that international NGOs expected that the UN would act as a go-between and a link to the government. With the lack of senior and unified UN presence in the Gujarat field operations, the UN could not offer this service.

Past experience shows that **response will be improved if national and international NGOs can work in tandem.** The DEC evaluation (2001) found that DEC NGOs working after the Gujarat earthquake could have developed more effective local partnerships and thereby achieved greater impact. The key to success for DEC members was seen as working with others. Box 3 highlights the example of the successful coordination of local NGOs by an umbrella network after the Gujarat earthquake.

The national military are usually heavily involved in earthquake response, and in the Pakistan case international military are also involved. This has been a contentious issue for humanitarian actors who see potential conflict with the concept of neutrality. It is important, therefore, to recognise that **coordination with the national and international military in earthquake relief operations presents specific challenges for humanitarian organisations.** The UN has produced a guide to civil–military relationships, available at: [www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900SID/DPAL-62GCWL/\\$FILE/ocha-civmil-28jun.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900SID/DPAL-62GCWL/$FILE/ocha-civmil-28jun.pdf?OpenElement).

■ LESSON 10 – Linking relief, recovery and development (LRRD)

Because of the fluidity of the post-earthquake situation **a variety of aid strategies may need to be pursued simultaneously, and relief and recovery may need to proceed in parallel.**

The relief phase is the time to start laying the foundations for recovery. One of the lessons from the 1998 Afghanistan earthquakes was that there is a need to manage the transition from the relief to the recovery phase from the start of the intervention (IFRC, 2000). The World Bank (2005) also notes as important an early role for planning the transition from relief to recovery.

This may seem like mis-timing when there is so much emphasis on providing immediate aid, for example procuring and distributing tents. But unless local and international agencies think about

Box 3: Coordination among NGOs – the successful case of Gujarat

The successful example of coordination among local NGOs in Kutch after the Gujarat earthquake is often cited. This may offer a model for Pakistan.

'A decentralized network of 22 sub-centres was initiated all over Kutch, each managed by senior workers of Abhiyan [an NGO umbrella group] and other local NGOs. At the peak of the relief phase, the number of sub-centres increased to 33 supplying relief to 350 villages. Sub-centres were mandated to set up representative committees at the village level whose main function was to canalize the distribution of relief materials in co-operation with these centres. The sub-centres were also recognized by the Government as the official channel to route all information and assistance.'

(IFRC, 2003a: 43)

Abhiyan initiated meetings for coordination and the exchange of information, also undertaking detailed assessments and gathering information about damage; the organisation was regarded by the local administration as useful in providing this service to the NGOs, thus relieving the government of some of the pressure. Abhiyan undertook these services largely to the exclusion of its own relief efforts.

recovery early on, their activities may contribute to recreating the same vulnerabilities that existed before the disaster.

Getting the timing right – deciding when to fund relief and/or recovery – is difficult. In most emergencies – and Pakistan will likely be no different – agencies are required to disburse relief-earmarked funds within stipulated time periods but may not be able to do so, which means that they must then either ask for extensions or return funds.

The following guidance may help:

- ◆ Have a recovery policy/strategy in place for LRRD. A strategic review of the LRRD potential one month into the programme could help.
- ◆ Consider locally available resources. These can include both local knowledge and skills, and physical resources. Can rebuilding be carried out that supports the livelihoods of women and men? Can roads or houses be rebuilt with local labour? Can damaged housing material be used in reconstruction?
- ◆ Discuss with affected people what kind of support they want. A number of evaluations and studies have shown that affected people may be more interested in recovery than relief, for example preferring employment to hand-outs (Enarson, 2001, on the Gujarat earthquake).
- ◆ Contribute to the needs-assessment process for the recovery period. This is usually carried out about four weeks after the earthquake, led by the government (eg the Ministry of Finance) and multilaterals such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and UNDP. These exercises set the priorities and strategy for the recovery period but are usually macro-economic and infrastructure-focused.

■ LESSON 11 – Staff support

The 2004 ALNAP Annual Review reports that the **success or failure of relief operations is largely dependent on the quality of the staff**. In previous emergencies, international agency personnel on the ground have often felt unsupported. They have usually had insufficient time to prepare pre-departure, and only limited briefings on the operation and the wider context.

Recent experience has shown the value of setting aside dedicated time within operations to address progress, consider staff support and resource needs, and promote dialogue between field and headquarters personnel.

In addition, networks such as Aidworkers Net (www.aidworkers.net/) have been useful in linking relief workers to share support, ideas and best practice, and can provide good supplementary sources of information.

■ LESSON 12 – Advocacy and the media

One lesson from recent earthquakes has been recognition of the value of a 'rights'-based approach, which shifts focus to protection issues, community mobilisation and empowerment. In this regard, a key objective is not only to provide material assistance but also to help affected people to access services and entitlements. A lesson from the Gujarat earthquake response was that: '[DEC members] In some cases... substituted for government responses and in others missed the opportunity to influence government by mobilising and representing the affected people' (DEC, 2001: 9). Advocating for homestead rights for marginalised groups may be one area of advocacy in which agencies can be involved.

Jalali (2002: 21, 26–7) notes that advocacy did occur to a certain extent after the Turkey earthquakes: 'Not only did NGOs provide relief services but together with the media acted as 'warning sensors', insisting victim relief remain at the centre of the public agenda... Although NGO involvement in the relief effort was considerable, their contribution was more vital in the public

sphere, as advocates for earthquake survivors. NGOs played a critical role by voicing the suffering of the people and publicly criticising government's poor performance in responding to the crisis.'

Jalali (ibid) also found that the media can play a vital role in: educating the public about disasters; gathering and transmitting information about affected areas; and facilitating discussions about reducing vulnerabilities to future disasters. The local media can play a critical role not just in disseminating important information but also in giving voice to community concerns and perceptions.

Previous disasters have shown that **the international media also has a key role to play by ensuring that the response is adequately funded and that attention is given to longer-term recovery and risk reduction as well as wider geo-political issues.** In contrast, the media can play a negative role through a short-term focus on emergencies, pressuring agencies to disburse funds quickly. Thus, advocacy with the media should be included as an important part of the international relief effort.

This briefing paper was produced by Tony Beck. The author would like to thank the following for their comments and input: Yasemin Aysan, Cynthia Burton, Ian Christopolos, Elaine Enarson, Maurice Herson, Rachel Houghton, John Lakeman, John Mitchell, Ian O'Donnell, David Peppiatt and Antony Spalton.

■ Useful websites

Key findings of ALNAP's work on humanitarian action can be found at: www.alnap.org/alnappubs.html.

The ALNAP Evaluative Reports Database can be accessed at: www.alnap.org/database.html.

The ProVention Consortium lesson-learning studies can be found at: www.proventionconsortium.org/publications.htm.

The ProVention Consortium has compiled a number of needs assessment tools and manuals at: www.proventionconsortium.org/toolkit.htm.

A summary of the World Bank review of responses after natural disasters is available at: www.worldbank.org/oed/disasters/lessons_from_disasters.pdf.
The full report should be available in 2006.

The ILO briefing on gender and natural disasters can be found at: www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/recon/crisis/download/criswp1.pdf.

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