



HOW DID AID AGENCIES CONTRIBUTE TO CHANGE?

On November 8, 2013 Typhoon Haiyan, one of the strongest typhoons ever recorded, swept through the central Philippines. Over 6,300 people were killed, 4.1m made homeless and 1.1m houses were destroyed or damaged. The Disasters Emergency Committee appealed to the British public for emergency funds and raised £95 million.

To evaluate the Philippines disaster response the DEC has piloted a new evaluation method called “Contribution to Change” (CtC). Instead of evaluating a single DEC member agency’s work, or looking at its outcomes, CtC establishes the overall collective contribution of humanitarian aid work to the affected population’s recovery. The aim of CtC is to give the DEC agencies an in-depth and unbiased report on how their work helped communities recover from the disaster caused by Typhoon Haiyan.

METHODOLOGY

Conventional humanitarian evaluations of a disaster tend to examine an individual agency’s programmes and outcomes. Contribution to Change takes a much broader view: rather than looking at the work of one particular agency, it attempts to paint a fuller picture of how the lives of those affected by the disaster have changed as a result of the disaster and the subsequent aid response. CtC looks at the overall effects of the interventions in a sample area, covering the activities of external bodies including aid agencies, local organisations and local and national government.

CtC is an attempt to capture the complexities of a disaster intervention, where the overall context is affected by many organisations working on the ground, as well as broader social, political and economic issues.

CtC works at a household level, attempting to build a picture of their situation before and after the disaster through household surveys and interviews, key informant interviews and focus group discussions. The evaluation focuses on two key questions: Have households’ resources, homes, livelihoods and well-being recovered or even improved since the disaster? And what is the role that the interventions have played in the recovery process?

KEY FINDINGS

The areas chosen for the study, Dulag and Tanauan, suffered from loss of livelihoods and severely damaged housing. The typhoon destroyed boats, bicycles, pedicabs (cycle rickshaws), agricultural equipment and other assets, making it very hard for the disaster affected people to restart work after the initial crisis period. All the households interviewed had damaged houses, with 80% of them being totally damaged.

Around 22% of households surveyed said they had received livelihood assistance. This was generally in the form of:

- cash grants for restarting businesses
- raw materials and livestock – seeds, net-making gear and piglets
- boats, fishing gear, pedicabs (cycle rickshaws), motorbikes and other equipment

Where people's assets were lost or destroyed the research shows that in general households have recouped those losses, and in fact more households now own boats than before the disaster.

Generally, household income has returned to its pre-disaster levels, although for the majority of households this means living on less \$2.30 per day. However, many households feel that their livelihood situation is worse than before, due principally to post-disaster inflation, which has led to hiked costs of food, transport and building materials. Some households are also having to pay off loans they took out for house repairs, to restart small businesses, or simply for day-to-day living.

Most respondents said housing assistance was very timely and appropriate. The intervention has led to improvement in household materials (especially the use of galvanised iron roofing). Some agencies have improved the sanitation in houses, whilst others have enabled some households to move out of shared homes. Everyone found that rebuilding or repairing their home helped them return to a normal life.

However most households have yet to finish their repairs. The cost of carpenters has nearly doubled and materials are also more expensive. Most homes which were originally built from concrete but damaged in the disaster have not yet been repaired. Aid agencies prioritised totally destroyed houses which tended to be built from lighter materials.

Contribution statements

The Contribution to Change approach produces a summary using "contribution statements". This gives a simple way to show the overall contribution of the interventions to people's recovery. A contribution statement is based on deciding which category from 'high' to 'low' applies to each sector for the following:

- A: the level of recovery achieved in relation to what is required;
- B: the contribution of the intervention to the recovery that has been achieved;
- C: the combination of A and B to reveal the contribution to change

Below are the contribution statements from the Philippines study:

Housing

Level of recovery achieved: MEDIUM
Contribution of the intervention to the recovery: HIGH
Contribution to Change: MEDIUM-HIGH

The intervention benefited most households and is regarded positively by the community and many have actually improved the state of their homes. However repairs are still incomplete in the majority of households.

Livelihoods

Level of recovery achieved: MEDIUM
Contribution of the intervention to the recovery: MEDIUM
Contribution to Change: MEDIUM

Most people have returned to work, and incomes and productive assets have generally been restored, although there is a slight increase in the number of people with very low incomes. More households are in debt and all are facing rising commodity prices. Fish catches have decreased and so have rice yields. The coconut harvest will take several more years to recover.

Livelihood assistance has been provided to a minority of households, but when received it has generally been found effective, despite some challenges.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that in general the interventions (including but not limited to work by DEC member agencies) contributed to fairly positive change in household well-being. House building and restoration was the more successful intervention, with most households finding it helpful, even though repairs are usually still incomplete.

The situation with livelihoods is more mixed. Some coconut farmers did not plant the imported seedlings which were given to them, citing concerns about fruit yields, and some of the boats distributed were not of the appropriate size. People also reported having insufficient access to cash in some instances. However, vegetable growing and restoring small businesses have been very helpful, and fishing families have found the interventions of some help in getting them back to work.

Next steps

The household perceptions' of the aid delivered gives an insight into the positive and negative aspects of the response and provides an evidence base for determining the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches to restoring livelihoods and rebuilding homes. It is hoped that the findings of the study will provide a useful overview of the aid response to Haiyan, which will complement other more internally focussed evaluations carried out by aid organisations.

The full evaluation report will shortly be made available on ALNAP's website (<http://www.alnap.org/resources/contribution-to-change-philippines>). The DEC welcomes any feedback on the methodology and is happy to discuss its experience with any organisation or network considering using the approach. To get in touch please email fcrowley@dec.org.uk